



Regional Consultation on Cross-boundary Cooperation in Fire Management

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Skopje, 11 November 2016

Report with Conclusions and Recommendations

The first Regional Consultation on Cross-boundary Cooperation in Fire Management was held on 11 September 2016 in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy. This Regional Consultation was part of the activities of the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)¹ and the Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC)² with the support of the Council of Europe (CoE), Secretariat of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia was co-organizer of the Regional Consultation, as well.

As laid down in the Concept Note (Annex I) the objectives of the Regional Consultation included:

- Evaluation of the current forest fire situation and the fire management capabilities of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia and Serbia
- Share experience in cross-border cooperation (mutual assistance) in wildfire emergency situations, including sharing of aerial assets for firefighting
- Inform participants about the voluntary International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism (IWPM) and the International Fire Aviation Guidelines
- Enhancing the cross-boundary dialogue and inter-operability in fire management between FYR Macedonia and its neighboring countries

The expected outcomes of the Regional Consultation included the recommendations for enhancing the preparedness, inter-operability, efficiency and effectiveness of wildfire emergency management systems of the countries concerned.

The objective of the Regional Consultation were in line with the results of:

- The Regional South East Europe/Caucasus consultation meeting in Skopje 2008, which was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy-Skopje and GFMC and supported by Council of Europe, Secretariat of the Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement [EUR-OPA] and the Environment and Security [ENVSEC] Initiative
- The ADA/REC/ENVSEC/RFMC Project "Environment and Security Initiative: Addressing the Risk of Forest Fires in South East Europe (SEE)" and the resulting country studies for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.
- The translation and potential use of the EuroFire Competency Standards and Training Materials for common border-crossing training and preparedness for mutual assistance in wildfire emergency situations.

The Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC), Skopje and Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Skopje, will support GFMC in the preparation, logistical / organization of the Regional Consultation.

The Regional Consultation was attended by 39 participants from institutions, state organizations and non-governmental organizations responsible for fire management and land management of the host country and the countries bordering FYR Macedonia: Albania (remote contribution, apologies due to the flood crisis in the consultation week), Bulgaria, Greece, Kosovo and Serbia. A full list of participants is provides in Annex II. The consultation was opened by his Excellency, the Minister Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, who underscored the need of strengthening fire management capabilities in the region through cross-boundary cooperation.

¹ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg>

² <http://www.rfmc.mk>

In the first part of the consultation the participating countries presented the wildfire situation in their country and the state of fire management as well as their experiences in cross-boundary cooperation in fire management. These national reports were followed by a report of the Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC) about the national and regional analyses of the fire situation in the Western Balkan countries conducted in 2015 on behalf of the Regional Environment Center (REC).

In the second part of the consultation a discussion was held on enhancing the interoperability, effectiveness and efficiency of cross-boundary fire management in the region. This discussion was preceded by the GFMC presentation of voluntary international instruments of cooperation in fire management: The International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism (IWPM) and the International Fire Aviation Guidelines.³

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the discussion moderated by the RFMC and the GFMC the participants of the consultation stressed some weaknesses of national and regional fire management capabilities. As a result of the consultation the following conclusions and recommendations were adopted:

Sharing of Expertise in Inter-Agency Coordination and Cross-boundary Cooperation in Fire Management

- Systematic evaluation and sharing of experiences and lessons identified of countries in interagency coordination and bilateral agreements on cross-boundary cooperation in fire management should be pursued
- Stronger relationships in fire management between Balkan countries should be developed at all levels.
- Training is most important. The application of the EuroFire Competency Standards and Training Materials are offering a good opportunity for systematic joint training of firefighters in the region, especially since they are available in most languages spoken in the region.⁴

Annual Preparedness Meetings and Exercises

- Annual coordination meetings shall be held every year before the onset of the fire season. Participating countries would include those attending the regional consultation and additional countries of the neighborhood on the Balkan Peninsula.
- The annual meetings should be rotated between the participating countries
- In addition cross-boundary coordination meetings shall be held between local communities and fire services along common borders of the countries in the region.
- e.g. common exercises / training courses at "economic" (cheaper) level

Aerial Firefighting (AFF) Coordination

- There is a strong need for setting up clear procedures for AFF coordination between ground operations and the aerial firefighting resources.
- The countries of the region should develop rules and SOPs for enhancing inter-operability for AFF operations in order to enhance effectiveness, efficiency and safety of AFF.
- In this regard it is recommended to support the finalization and continuous updating of the International Fire Aviation Guidelines and the upcoming Manual of Common Rules for Fire Aviation (in progress).
- Specific training for pilots and aerial advisors (fire management specialists) should be provided as well as clear and swift procedures for decisions in deployment of AFF resources

³ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iwpm/index.htm>

⁴ <http://www.euro-fire.eu/>

- Countries that have AFF resources should regularly meet in the region for sharing experiences. Participation in the European Aerial Firefighting Conferences such as the 2015 AFF Conference in Zadar (2015)⁵ is recommended, the next to be held in Nimes, France (October 2017).⁶

Early Warning of Wildfires

- The role of wildfire early warning systems has to be given high priority
- Countries in the region should consider utilizing the example of the Macedonian Forest Fire Information System (MAKFFIS) as a decision-support tool for wildfire preparedness and fire management.

Other Fire Management Issues

- Given the high share of human-caused fires, notably accidentally or intentionally cause fires, there is a need to analyze fire causes
- The role of voluntary initiatives and contributions in fire management is increasingly recognized. Experiences with countries in which voluntary firefighters are adequately trained and insured should be analyzed for national application.
- Local populations should be trained in prevention and first response to wildfires. The Guidelines "Defence of Villages, Farms and Other Rural Assets against Wildfires: Guidelines for Rural Populations, Local Communities and Municipality Leaders in the Balkan Region" are available in most languages spoken in the region and should be applied systematically.⁷
- Fire management approaches need to take a holistic approach at landscape levels and prioritize addressing the use of fire in agriculture and pasture management.

⁵ http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/course/meeting/2015/meet2015_03.htm

⁶ http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/course/meeting/2017/meet2017_02_AFFE-2017.htm

⁷ http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/Manag/CBFiM_11.htm

ANNEX I



Regional Consultation on Cross-boundary Cooperation in Fire Management

Skopje, 11 November 2016

Announcement, Background Information and Draft Agenda

Background and Rationale

As a consequence of climate change and socio-economic and demographic changes the countries of the Western Balkan region are becoming more vulnerable to be affected by large wildfires. The increasing threats of extreme wildfires, which may lead to emergencies and reach disaster dimensions, are calling for enhancing coordinated preparedness to manage wildfires both at national level and by cross-border cooperation.

The Council of Europe (CoE) through the Secretariat of the Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) cooperates and provides support to CoE Member States in the endeavor to enhance governance for the prevention, preparedness and management of major natural and technological disasters. In the arena of wildfire disaster risk reduction the CoE is working through the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), a Specialised Euro-Mediterranean Center under the EUR-OPA agreement based in Germany.

In order to ensure that initiatives and projects addressing wildfire disaster risk reduction in the Western Balkans are coordinated with the thematic agenda of other regional organizations and agreements the CoE and the GFMC are closely cooperating with the

- UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction / United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) in the implementation of the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*⁸
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in the implementation of the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 6/2014⁹
- Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative of five international organizations – the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)¹⁰
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in following up the *UNECE/FAO Regional Forum on Crossboundary Fire Management* (2013), co-sponsored by CoE EUR-OPA, notably through the establishment of the (voluntary) *International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism* (IWPM)¹¹ and the *International Fire Aviation Guidelines*¹²

On behalf of the CoE EUR-OPA agreement the GFMC has been a founding partner of the Regional Southeast Europe / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network¹³ (one of the 14 Regional Wildland Fire

⁸ <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>

⁹ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/intro/OSCE-Ministerial-Council-2014-Decision-6-Enhancing-DRR.pdf>

¹⁰ http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEEurope/SEEEurope_8.html

¹¹ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iwpm/index.htm>

¹² <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iwpm/ifawg.htm>

¹³ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEEurope/SEEEurope.html>

Networks of the Global Wildland Fire Network¹⁴) and supported the establishment of the Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC) at the Faculty of Forestry in Skopje in 2010.¹⁵

Between 2004 and 2016 a number of activities within countries and at regional level within the Regional SE Europe / Caucasus Wildland fire Network have been conducted.¹⁶ Among other the following activities aimed at supporting nations to develop a National Fire Management Policy and to foster regional cooperation in fire management, notably:

- Proposal for a Regional Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network, presented at the 33rd Session of the FAO European Forestry Commission (Zvolen, Slovakia, 25 May 2006)¹⁷
- Development of the *Guidelines for the Defense of Rural Populations, Local Communities and Municipality Leaders in the Balkan Region* ("Village Defense Guidelines")¹⁸
- Development of the *EuroFire Competency Standards and Training Materials* including translations for the use in the countries of the region (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as well as in neighbouring Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey)¹⁹
- Organization of two regional fire management training courses hosted by Turkey in 2010 and 2014²⁰
- Various national and regional analyses of the fire situation in the Western Balkan countries, the last conducted in 2015 by RFMC on behalf of the Regional Environment Center (REC) (ADA/REC/ENVSEC/RFMC Project *Environment and Security Initiative: Addressing the risk of forest fires in the SEE*), resulting in the publication of country studies for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia²¹

At international level the Western Balkan countries contributed to various voluntary processes and informal agreement address international cooperation in fire management, the latest including

- Continuing participation in the UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group (WFAg)²²
- The above-mentioned *UNECE/FAO Regional Forum on Crossboundary Fire Management* (2013), notably through the establishment of the (voluntary) *International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism* (IWPM) (cf. footnote 4)
- The International Wildland Fire Conferences²³
- The series in International Aerial Firefighting Conferences²⁴
- Development of the International Fire Aviation Guidelines²⁵

With these activities the CoE EUR-OPA Secretariat is encouraging its member states to intensify the dialogue on national cross-sectoral and regional cross-boundary levels to enhance inter-operability, efficiency and effectiveness of fire management, notably by sharing of responsibilities and resources.

¹⁴ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/globalNet.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.rfmc.mk/>

¹⁶ http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEEurope/SEEEurope_1.html

¹⁷ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEEurope/Strategy-WFM-RSEEFWN-2-02-05-2006.pdf>

¹⁸ http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/Manag/CBFiM_11.htm

¹⁹ <http://www.euro-fire.eu/>

²⁰ 2014 regional training: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEEurope/Antalya-2014.html>

²¹ http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEEurope/SEEEurope_2.html

²² <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/Rationale-and-Introduction-1.html>

²³ The last International Wildland Fire Conference was co-sponsored by CoE EUR-OPA and hosted by Republic of Korea in 2015: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/korea-2015.html>

²⁴ The last European / International Aerial Firefighting Conference was co-sponsored by CoE EUR-OPA and hosted by Croatia in 2015: http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/course/meeting/2015/meet2015_03.htm and

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/course/meeting/2015/AFF-Conference-Croatia-2015-Chairmans-Report.pdf>

²⁵ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iwpm/ifawg.htm> - A representative of the aerial firefighting establishment of Croatia and host of the last Aerial Firefighting Conference will be invited to discuss the regional experience and prospects in exchanging aerial firefighting assets

Support by the Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) in 2016

Following the history and experience of the GFMC in establishing and facilitating national inter-agency cooperation and international cross-boundary cooperation in fire management in many countries and regions globally, the Secretariat of the Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) proposed to support the Republic of Macedonia to organize a National Round Table on Fire Management and a Regional Consultation on Cross-border Fire Management in 2016. Both events will be facilitated by the Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC) in Skopje and the GFMC.

The National Round Table is scheduled for 9 November 2016 shall convene the national actors / stakeholders, which have a mandate (agencies) or voluntary commitment (civil society) in fire management (fire management at "landscape level", i.e. on all types of lands including forests, protected areas, agricultural and pasture lands, and the interface areas between residential areas and vegetated lands).

At regional level countries bordering the FYR Macedonia and additionally Croatia are invited to this regional consultation to review past experiences in cross-boundary cooperation in fire management and propose future procedures for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of cross-boundary cooperation in fire management, particularly with regards to enhancing inter-operability for cooperation in wildfire emergency situations.

The Regional Consultation on Cross-boundary Cooperation in Fire Management

The Regional Consultation on Cross-boundary Cooperation Fire Management will be held on 11 November 2016 in Skopje. The objectives of the Regional Consultation include:

- Evaluation of the current forest fire situation and the fire management capabilities of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia and Serbia
- Share experience in cross-border cooperation (mutual assistance) in wildfire emergency situations, including sharing of aerial assets for firefighting
- Inform participants about the voluntary International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism (IWPM) and the International Fire Aviation Guidelines
- Enhancing the cross-boundary dialogue and inter-operability in fire management between FYR Macedonia and its neighboring countries

Expected outcomes of the Regional Consultation:

- A review of current practice of cross-boundary cooperation in fire management in between Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Greece, Kosovo and Serbia
- Recommendations towards enhancing the preparedness, inter-operability, efficiency and effectiveness of wildfire emergency management systems of the countries concerned.

The objective of the Regional Consultation is in line with the results of:

- The Regional South East Europe/Caucasus consultation meeting in Skopje 2008, which was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy-Skopje and GFMC and supported by Council of Europe, Secretariat of the Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement [EUR-OPA] and the Environment and Security [ENVSEC] Initiative
- The ADA/REC/ENVSEC/RFMC Project "Environment and Security Initiative: Addressing the Risk of Forest Fires in South East Europe (SEE)" and the resulting country studies for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.
- The translation and potential use of the EuroFire Competency Standards and Training Materials for common border-crossing training and preparedness for mutual assistance in wildfire emergency situations.

The Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC), Skopje and Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Skopje, will support GFMC in the preparation, logistical / organization of the Regional Consultation.

Agenda and Logistics

Thursday 10 November 2015

Arrival of delegates from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo and Serbia in Skopje.
Details for accommodation will be announced. – Evening: Icebreaker (at hotel)

Friday 11 November 2015

Meeting at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Conference Room, str. Aminta Treti No.2, Skopje.

10:00 – 10:30	Registration
10:30 – 11:00	Opening Session. Welcome and Introduction
11:00 – 13:00	Session I: Presentation of participating countries on the state of wildfire situation, fire management on experiences in cross-boundary cooperation in fire management
13:00 – 13:30	Coffee break with light snacks
13:30 – 15:30	Session II: Discussion for enhancing the interoperability, effectiveness and efficiency of cross-boundary fire management in the region GFMC
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 – 17:00	Summarizing, conclusions and recommendations of the consultation to the Council of Europe and EUR-OPA signatory countries RFMC
19:30	Closing work dinner

Saturday 12 November 2015

Departure of regional participants

Logistics and travel

The CoE EUR-OPA Secretariat through the GFMC will cover the travel costs of participants (transport, accommodation, food). Participants are kindly requested to use economic ways of transport. If private or official cars will be used the costs for fuel will be reimbursed on site.

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ANNEX II



Regional Consultation on Cross-boundary Cooperation in Fire Management Skopje, 11 November 2016

List of participants

No	Name and Surname	Institution / Country
1	Vojo Gogovski	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Macedonia
2	Jordan Zdravkovski	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Macedonia
3	Goran Stojkovski	PE Macedonian Forests, Macedonia
4	Sonja Nikolovska	PE Macedonian Forests, Macedonia
5	Johann G. Goldammer	Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Germany
6	Nikola Nikolov	Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC), Macedonia
7	Stefan Janeski	Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC), Macedonia
8	Zorancho Mihajlov	Directorate for Protection and Rescue, Macedonia
9	Grozdana Naumovska	Directorate for Protection and Rescue, Macedonia
10	Stevko Stefanoski	Crisis Management Center, Macedonia
11	Kire Bogdanoski	Ministry of Defense, Macedonia
12	Nikola Bojkovski	Fire Protection Union of Macedonia, Macedonia
13	Dushko Krstevski	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Macedonia
14	Cele Kostadinovski	PE Parks and Greenery, Macedonia
15	Aleksandar Krstić	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Serbia
16	Dejan Miletić	PE Serbian Forests, Serbia
17	Kamen Dimitrov	Directorate, Executive Forest Agency, Bulgaria
18	Vasili Georgiev	Directorate, Executive Forest Agency, Bulgaria
19	Svetoslav Georgiev	Regional Directorate Fire Safety and Civil Protection, Kyustendil, Bulgaria
20	Dimitrios Spyrou	Hellenic Fire Corps, Special Disaster Response Unit, Greece
21	Dr. Gavriil Xanthopoulos	Institute of Mediterranean Forest Ecosystems, Greece
22	Lulaim Fejfullai	PE Pastures, Macedonia
23	Zoran Zlatevski	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Macedonia
24	Ibrahim Muja	Forest Agency of Kosovo, Kosovo
25	Hajriz Sejdiu	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Kosovo
26	Tahir Ahmeti	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Kosovo
27	Petko Ristevski	PE Macedonian Forests, Macedonia
28	Mihajlo Ristevski	Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC), Macedonia
29	Jeta Demaj	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Kosovo
30	Kastriot Lajgi	Forest Agency of Kosovo, Kosovo
31	Anu Sen	PE Pastures, Macedonia
32	Ejup Juja	PE Pastures, Macedonia
33	Dragan Sharovich	Directorate for Protection and Rescue, Macedonia
34	Stefanka Projchevska	National Park Pelister, Macedonia
35	Zoran Filovski	Crisis Management Center, Macedonia
36	Pejo Kartovski	Directorate for Protection and Rescue, Macedonia
37	Suza Nikolovska	PE Macedonian Forests, Macedonia
38	Shaban Saliu	Director General, Directorate for Protection and Rescue, Macedonia
39	Sretko Cimeski	Fire Protection Brigade of Skopje, Macedonia