

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001485/24
to the Commission
Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR), Galato Alexandraki (ECR)
(7 August 2024)**

Subject: Better fire protection in Greece

Fires in Greece are getting worse every year, with harmful effects on the environment and people.

In the midst of rising temperatures that bring heatwaves, every year we see fires destroying entire areas, homes, businesses and hundreds of hectares of forested land. These fires have brought about the overall decline of many parts of the country.

Sadly, despite this devastation, fears remain concerning the long-standing deficiencies in fire protection and prevention and concerning understaffed civil protection agencies.

In view of this:

If the Commission does not see a dramatic improvement in Greece's annual handling of the problem, does it have any clear proposals for decisively improving fire protection?

Submitted: 7.8.2024

**Answer given by Mr Lenarčič on behalf of the European Commission
(15 October 2024)**

The primary responsibility for disaster risk management lies with Member States authorities. The Commission's main role is to coordinate a quick and efficient response through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) ⁽¹⁾ when activated.

The Commission also works with national civil protection authorities to support, complement and coordinate their efforts in managing wildfire risks.

After the 2023 wildfire season, the General Secretariat for Civil Protection under the Ministry for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection of Greece requested a UCPM independent peer review of its wildfire risk management system.

The result of this process is a report, published on 20 June 2024 ⁽²⁾, which highlights the strengths of the current system and puts forward recommendations for reinforcing it.

The report advocates for building a more integrated wildfire risk management system, with a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, and with a long-term dedicated wildfire prevention budget.

Moreover, the Greek Recovery and Resilience Plan foresees actions to enforce Greece's fire prevention efforts and at the same time to support forest restoration in areas affected by wildfires in the last years.

In addition, as part of 2024 European Semester: Spring package ⁽³⁾, the Commission recommended to the Council to address a Country Specific Recommendation to Greece to take action in 2024 and 2025 to strengthen management of natural disasters by putting in place an effective early warning and risk prevention system.

The Council addressed that recommendation to Greece in July 2024 ⁽⁴⁾. Greece can benefit in this regard from funding through two thematic programmes, the 'Civil Protection' programme ⁽⁵⁾ and the 'Environment and Climate Change' programme ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁾ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/eu-civil-protection-mechanism_en

⁽²⁾ <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/news/ucpm-wildfire-peer-review-report-handed-over-greek-authorities>

⁽³⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2024-european-semester-spring-package_en

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/07/16/european-semester-2024-council-agrees-on-country-specific-recommendations/>

⁽⁵⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/in-your-country/programmes/2021-2027/el/2021el16rfpr001_en

⁽⁶⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/in-your-country/programmes/2021-2027/el/2021el16ffpr003_en