

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003490/25
to the Commission
Nicolás González Casares (S&D)
(9 September 2025)**

Subject: Fires and climate change

Climate change is a scientifically proven phenomenon, the consequences of which can be seen more and more clearly throughout Europe. One of the most serious effects is the increased frequency and intensity of forest fires, especially in southern and south-west Europe. In the north-west Iberian Peninsula, forest fires have become more intense and destructive, with devastating consequences for ecosystems, especially in protected areas such as the Natura 2000 network.

In light of the above:

1. Does the Commission believe climate change has had a positive or negative impact on forest fires in the north-west Iberian Peninsula in recent years?
2. Is the Commission aware that, based on scientific data, CO₂ mitigation steps taken in a particular European region have led to significantly less climate change-driven warming compared to other regions?
3. Does the Commission consider it appropriate to use the term ‘climate shelter’ for an entire European region when areas of that region see temperatures over 40°C for several days in a row for a number of periods in summer, and what scientific criteria does the Commission recommend applying to classify a territory as a ‘climate shelter’?

Submitted: 9.9.2025

**Answer given by Mr Hoekstra on behalf of the European Commission
(3 November 2025)**

1. Multiple peer-reviewed papers ⁽¹⁾ establish a strong link between climate change and the increase in frequency, intensity, and destructiveness of forest fires. Warmer climates create conditions more conducive to large and severe wildfires, such as drier vegetation, longer fire seasons, increased fire weather (e.g. heat waves), and more dry fuel associated with higher tree mortality.

Other studies on recent increase in fire weather conditions found that Europe has experienced a marked increase in the intensity of fire-prone weather conditions ⁽²⁾, and another found an increase in the area affected by severe fire weather conditions, especially in central Europe and the Mediterranean in spring and summer ⁽³⁾. For Spain, statistics collected by the European Forest Fire Information System ⁽⁴⁾ show a clear increasing trend for both the number of fires and the area burnt since the measurements began in 2006.

2. Greenhouse gases spread globally affect the planet's climate universally (but differently across the globe), regardless of their origin. Local emissions reductions are crucial as every reduced tonne slows down global warming. However, more reductions in one region do not mean stronger local effects.
3. The Commission is familiar with the concept of ‘climate shelter’, and there are some EU-funded projects/initiatives ⁽⁵⁾ supporting these spaces in different regions. However, the Commission does not have a position nor criteria to classify a territory as such.

⁽¹⁾ 1. Burton, C., Lampe, S., Kelley, D.I. *et al.* Global burned area increasingly explained by climate change. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* 14, 1186-1192 (2024); <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-024-02140-w>; Costa, H., de Rigo, D., Libertà, G., Houston Durrant, T., San-Miguel-Ayanz, J., European wildfire danger and vulnerability in a changing climate: towards integrating risk dimensions, EUR 30116 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN: 978-92-76-16898-0, doi:10.2760/46951, JRC119980 https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/projects-and-activities/peseta-climate-change-projects/jrc-peseta-iv/wildfires_en; Dennison, P. E., S. C. Brewer, J. D. Arnold, and M. A. Moritz (2014), Large wildfire trends in the western United States, 1984-2011, *Geophys. Res. Lett.*, 41, 2928-2933, doi:10.1002/2014GL059576. Flannigan, M.D., Amiro, B.D., Logan, K.A. *et al.* Forest Fires and Climate Change in the 21st Century. *Mitig Adapt Strat Glob Change* 11, 847-859 (2006). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11027-005-9020-7>.

⁽²⁾ Hetzer, J., Forrest, M., Ribalaygua, J., Prado-López, C., & Hickler, T. (2024). The fire weather in Europe: Large-scale trends towards higher danger. *Environmental Research Letters*, 19(8), 084017. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ad5b09>.

⁽³⁾ Torres-Vázquez, M. Á., Di Giuseppe, F., Moreno-Torreira, A., Gincheva, A., Jerez, S., & Turco, M. (2025). Large increase in extreme fire weather synchronicity over Europe. *Environmental Research Letters*, 20(2), 024045: <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ada8c2>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://forest-fire.emergency.copernicus.eu/apps/effis.statistics/estimates>.

⁽⁵⁾ For example: https://eu-mayors.ec.europa.eu/en/Valencia-Climate-Shelters-Network?utm_medium=website&utm_source=archdaily.com and <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/mission/solutions/mission-stories/storytelling-for-climate-action-in-athens-story62>.