
Day of Forests: EU Commission, “new guidelines” for “wildfire prevention and effective responses”

Following the International Day of Forests (21 March), the Commission has today published “new guidelines to facilitate a better understanding of land-based wildfire prevention and effective responses”. The document provides guidance on “prevention measures” and indications on how EU Member States can “access EU funding for wildfire resilience and work together at EU level”. “We have to protect, restore and manage forests sustainably, as they are crucial for our lives and livelihoods”, the statement reads. Considering the increasing impact of wildfires on people and nature in recent years, the document “looks at interconnected factors behind this increase” and provides an “overview of existing principles and experiences on managing landscapes, forests and woodlands that can save lives”. A new EU Forest Strategy will be launched in 2021 under the Green Deal to ensure effective afforestation and forest preservation and restoration in Europe. According to Frans Timmermans, commissioner in charge of the Green Deal, “with the risk of wildfires exacerbated by rising temperatures and increasing droughts, stronger forest protection, better prevention and faster responses are crucial”. In 2020, there were around 159 million hectares of forests in the EU, 10% more than in 1990, according to Eurostat. And forest ecosystems, according to Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for the Environment, “are home to 80% of the world’s known terrestrial plants and animals, and their destruction puts us all at risk”.

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