



European Center for Forest Fires



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry for Climate Crisis
and Civil Protection



Council of Europe
Conseil de l' Europe

**Joint Meeting of the Committee of Permanent
Correspondents and Directors of Specialised Centres
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Videoconference**

ECFF presentation of Activities 2021-2022

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1. ECFF project 2020-2021

Participation to the project "PRESEISMIC ASSESSMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL DWELLINGS, VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND EVACUATION OF THE OLD TOWN OF RHODES",
coordinated by ECPFE

Since there was a real wildfire incident in the Island of Rhodes during Summer 2021, ECFF in cooperation with the Civil Protection in Athens and Rhodes Island Department prepared a book including:

- ✓ Highlights from the real fire event
- ✓ The recordings from the real evacuation including the tourists
- ✓ Elaboration on inclusive fire safety and evacuation at accessible shelters nearby historical places
- ✓ Focus on the community engagement in disaster preparedness and response/ Promotion of risk culture especially for groups with special vulnerability



- Wildfires in the Island of Rhodes in August 2021**

When: August 1st, 2021

Where: Rhodes Island, north edge.

Result: Evacuation for precaution reasons of the Valley of Butterflies



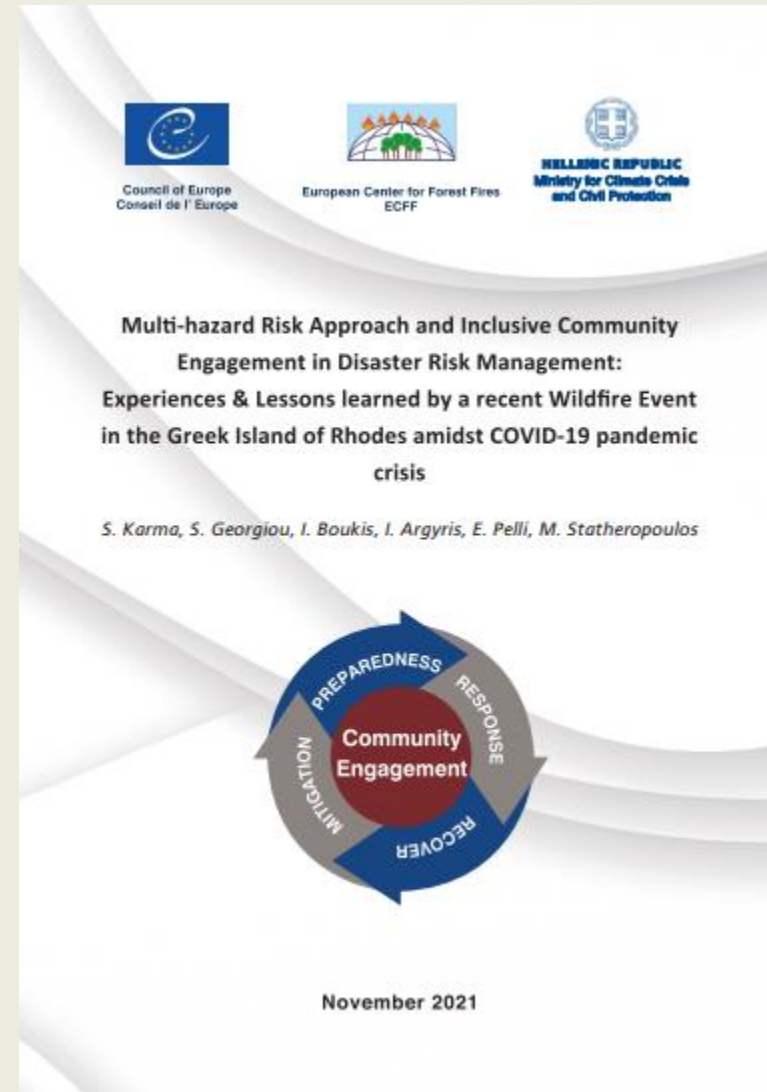


“Multi-hazard Risk Approach and Inclusive Community Engagement in Disaster Risk Management: Experiences & Lessons learned by a recent Wildfire Event in the Greek Island of Rhodes amidst COVID-19 pandemic crisis”

S. Karma, S. Georgiou, I. Boukis, I. Argyris, E. Pelli, M. Statheropoulos

Goal:

- To highlight emerging issues in the field of disaster risk management, such as the need for multi-hazard risk assessment in case of viral pandemics
- To underline the importance of the community engagement for building disaster resilience with inclusive criteria





Briefing the Lessons Learned

1. Management of Complex Emergencies

In case of complex emergencies like the one during the Rhodes Island wildfire amidst the pandemic, it seems that there is a need of prioritization of risks: **“risk triage”** in order to confront the various multiple threats, giving priority each time to the most intensive one; multi-hazard risk assessment.

2. Inclusive Risk Communication - Early Warning Systems

Accessible broadcasting is vital especially for the more vulnerable. The means and modalities of risk communication that need to be selected for a place like the Butterflies Valley are crucial, so that the emergency messages to be accessible for all the visitors and at due time.

3. Inclusive Community Engagement – People Centered approach for Disaster Risk Management

Empowerment of inclusive community engagement in the disaster management cycle is vital for reinforcing sustainable community resilience e.g. for the populations situated in the “Wildland Urban Interface” (WUI).

“Get prepared”, “Get informed”, “Get involved”, “Build Back Better”



Briefing the Lessons Learned (Continue)

4. Inclusive Emergency Preparedness and Response – The importance of People’s Risk Perception

Building a safety culture among the whole community is needed to reduce any type of vulnerabilities; e.g. inclusive training upon disaster risks for enhancing people’s risk perception, emphasizing on children and young people, as well as on people with disabilities considering the specific types of impairment.

5. Data Files of Wildfire Events

A number of data namely, geographical, vegetation - land use and meteorological data, as well as the resources used for suppressing the fire were gathered regarding the wildfire event that took place in the Rhodes Island on the 1st of August 2021, threatening the “Valley of Butterflies”

Data files can contribute to better organizing and managing the information relevant to big wildfire events, upgrading the future preparedness and response procedures.



2. ECFF project proposal for 2022-2023

- **Title:** “Inclusion of Vulnerable groups in Disaster Preparedness and Response for coping with emerging risks: Evacuation exercise including people with disabilities”
- **Coordinating Center:** ECFF, **Partner:** ECPFE
- **Expected Results-Impact 2022-2023**
- *Foster networking among academics, scientists, operational people, experts and people with disabilities*
- *Exchange knowledge and hands on experience in rescuing people with impairments.*
- *Empower community engagement is the disaster management cycle for strengthening disaster resilience*
- *Create a network of people and organizations that share the same interest on emergency response for people with disabilities*
- *Prepare targeted response plans and implement inclusive evacuation exercises*
- *Promote inclusive active citizens’ role in emergency preparedness and response -people-centred approach and local participation for effective disaster risk management*



- **Activities-Deliverables 2022-2023**
- **Activity 1:** “Workshop to prepare the evacuation plan of the exercise with inclusion of people with disabilities (Table-Top exercise)”

Deliverables:

- **Workshop report**-Prepare the evacuation scenario and the table top exercise (ECFF)
- **Determination of accessibility issues** that should be taken into account in the preparation of the evacuation actions that will take place in the second year of the project (ECPFE)
- **Activity 2:** “Organization and execution of an Evacuation Exercise including People with Disabilities”

Deliverables:

- **Report on the evacuation exercise’s debriefing and on the lessons learned** (ECFF)
- **Accessibility evaluation focusing on the obstacles encountered in the evacuation of the selected building** (ECPFE)



2. ECFF Dissemination Activities 2021

SafeGreece 2021 – 8 th International Conference on Civil Protection & New Technologies 24-26 November, on-line | www.safegreece.gr/safegreece2021 | 2021@safegreece.g



Participation with a poster entitled:

“Wildfire Preparedness and Response amidst COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Case study: The Evacuation of the Butterflies Valley in Rhodes during the wildfires of August 2021 in Rhodes during the wildfires of August 2021”

on-line_ **SafeGreece 2021**
new technologies & civil protection

“Wildfire Preparedness and Response amidst COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Case study: The Evacuation of the Butterflies Valley in Rhodes during the wildfires of August 2021”

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ABSTRACT
The extreme weather events that have been recorded the recent years at international level are mostly correlated with the so called “climate crisis” that we currently experience. As a result, prolonged droughts, intense heat waves, destructive wildfires, exceptional rainfall and flash-floods etc are observed in a global basis. Especially for the wildfires, due to the fact that increased number of population has been moved to urban and suburban areas in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), it seems that a wildfire at those areas may result to major impacts in terms of human and property losses. Nowadays, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis situation has intensified the challenges and difficulties for effective disaster risk management. It appears that complex emergencies will be the case for the future and therefore a multi-hazard risk approach might be necessary for coping with the relevant impacts. In that perspective, this work strives to provide with the experiences and lessons learned by a recent complex emergency, namely the management of a wildfire event and evacuation of Butterflies Valley in the Rhodes Island on the 1st of August 2021 under the COVID-19 pandemic conditions; a data file has been prepared including geographical data, vegetation – land use data, meteorological data, the resources used for suppressing the fire etc.

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

- Both foreign and local visitors of the Butterflies Valley evacuated the area with the help of the well trained fire safety personnel of the Valley, guiding them to safe places.
- The evacuation was implemented according to the Valley’s specific fire safety plan.
- The Valley is equipped with its own fire sprinkler system situated at the perimeter. Due to the very high fire risk on the 1st of August the system was used as a precaution measure.
- During the evacuation of the Valley of Butterflies a loud speaker system was used for the early warning of the visitors in different languages.

CONCLUSIONS - LESSONS LEARNED

- In case of complex emergencies like the one during the Rhodes island wildfire amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems that there is a need of prioritization of risks (“risk triage” and multi-hazard risk assessment)
- The early warning messages need to be accessible for all the population which is exposed at different hazards
- Due to the emerging risks like the recent viral pandemic, the need of active citizens’ role seems more urgent than ever: in our case study it proved that the involvement of the volunteers was crucial for the early wildfire control and mitigation
- Data files can contribute to better organizing and managing the information relevant to big wildfire events, upgrading the future preparedness and response procedures.

Indicative References

- Climate change widespread, rapid and intensifying – IPCC, Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ir6-wg2/>, 2021/08/09 pr., Accessed November 2021
- S. Karma et al., 2020. Challenges and Lessons Learned from past major Environmental, Disasters due to Technological or Wildland Urban Interface Fire Incidents. Contributing paper to the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR 2019), UNDRR, Available at: <http://www.preventionweb.net/files/56161/gar2019>
- FFNet, Forest FireNet Volume 5, Forest Fires in Greece during summer 2021: The data file of a case study, European Center for Forest Fires, Council of Europe, Available at: https://www.ecff.eu/forestfires/2021/08/09/ffnet_5.pdf



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Thank you for your Attention