

13 October 2025

WGAFADC online seminar



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ECA Audit: EU funding to tackle forest fires (*Special Report N°16/2025*)

Audit approach and conclusions

01
Why did we do this audit?

02
Our audit approach

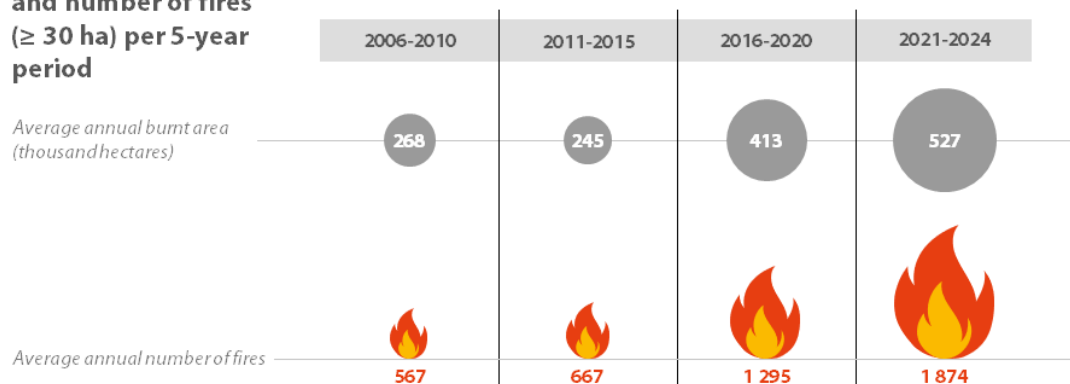
03
What did we find?

01

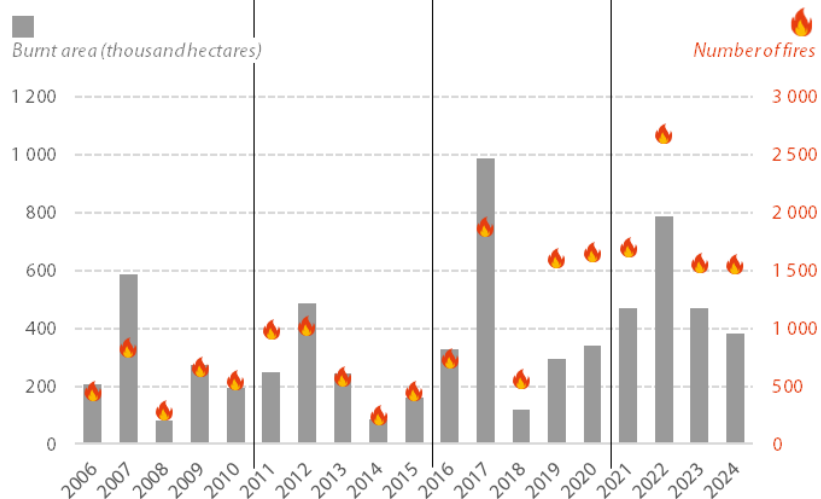
Why did we do this audit?

- Economic and ecological importance of forests in the EU
- The EU funding allocated to tackling forest fires
- The projected expansion of fire-prone areas and longer fire seasons in most EU regions

Average burnt area and number of fires (≥ 30 ha) per 5-year period



Burnt area and number of fires (≥ 30 ha), 2006-2024



02

Planning

- **No overview at the EU level of the amounts spent on forest fires related measures**
- **Initial mapping of the projects and funding instruments -> overall consistency of actions addressed by each funding instrument**



	Prevention	Preparedness	Recovery/ restoration
Examples of projects	• Thinning and removal of vegetation • Controlled burning • Forest roads as firebreaks • Drafting projects/ studies • Monitoring, fire detection systems • Construction of buildings	• Firefighting vehicles and equipment • Patrolling vehicles • Water tanks and ponds • Forest roads to ensure access for firefighting vehicles • Monitoring, fire detection systems • Construction/ renovation of buildings	• Reforestation • Removal of burnt trees • Hydrological works
Main funding instruments	• EAFRD	• ERDF (incl. Interreg) • Cohesion Fund	• EAFRD
Temporary or one-off instruments	• RRF	• RRF	• RRF • European Union Solidarity Fund

02 What did we look at?

How is the EU funding used to address forest fires in the EU?

- | Design and coordination of the EU funded measures
- | Selection procedures of the projects
- | Monitoring for assessing the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the measures/projects

02 Implementation: Our audit approach



Review of relevant data and documents, including strategic, legislative, policy and project documents, performance data, and monitoring reports.



Interviews with staff of relevant national and regional authorities in the selected member states.



Interviews with staff of five Commission directorates-general (Agriculture and Rural Development, Regional and Urban Policy, Environment, Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, and Joint Research Centre).



Analysis of 62 projects in the selected member states, through desk review and on-the-spot visits (23 projects were visited or discussed during on-the-spot visits).



Discussions with stakeholders and experts (e.g. NGO, institutes).

02 Implementation: Our audit approach

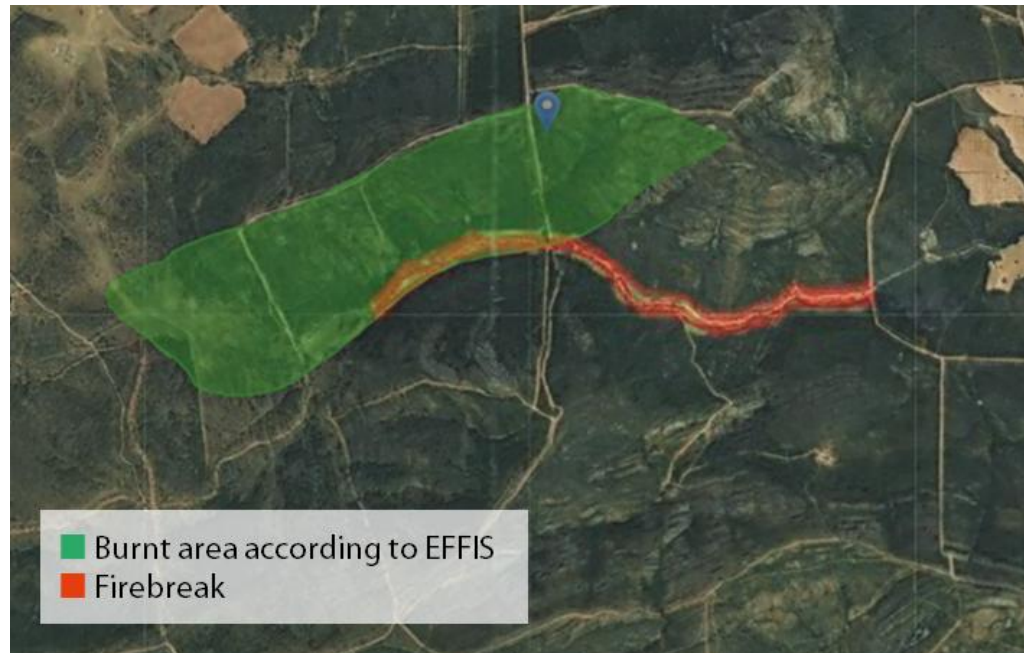
- **Project selection and scoping:** when selecting the projects, it can be difficult to find the right balance in covering a broad spectrum of different types of projects vs having a meaningful sample that allows to draw conclusions and make comparisons.

Analysed projects by fund and area

	Prevention	Prevention/ preparedness	Preparedness	Restoration
EAFRD	9		3	11
ERDF	5	1	14	
Interreg			7	
Cohesion Fund	1	1		
RRF	3	1	1	2
EU Solidarity Fund				2
LIFE	1			
<i>Total number of projects</i>	19	3	25	15

02 Implementation: Our audit approach

- We found no assessment or evaluation of the effectiveness of the projects, but with the help of the JRC, we were able to assess the effectiveness of the EU-financed preventive works project conducted in 2019.



Source: ECA, EFFIS/JRC.

03 What did we find?

More money on prevention, but insufficient evidence of results and their long-term sustainability

- | More preventive measures, but incomplete overview of the amounts of EU funding spent on forest fires-related projects/measures
- | There were shortcomings in the project selection process (e.g. outdated forest fire risk maps; no guarantee that the EU financed the most impactful actions)
- | Long-term sustainability of the financed projects was not consistently ensured
- | Monitoring revealed little about the results achieved with the EU money



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THANK YOU

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