

## Save the Date: Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026

# Europe Must Learn to Live with Fire: Policy Options for Prevention, Resilience, and Fire Adaptation

The Cyprus Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts, in collaboration with the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC), are organizing a policy briefing and a public lecture-panel discussion based on the latest EASAC report *"Changing Wildfires in Europe"*.

The events will address rising wildfire risks in Europe, especially in the Mediterranean, emphasizing the need to enhance proactive, risk-based land management; the presentations and discussion will also focus on Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the proposed European Wildfire Hub.

### 10h30 - Policy Briefing for Media & Stakeholders

Presentation of the EASAC report by its lead authors:

- **Professor Thomas Elmqvist**, Professor, Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University, Sweden, and EASAC Environment Director
- **Dr Orsolya Valkó**, Research Group Leader, HUN-REN Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary

The briefing will be followed by a discussion with media representatives and invited stakeholders, including **Prof Efthymis Lekkas**, Professor at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece, and an expert in the adaptation and management of natural disasters.

*The Cyprus Institute, Andreas Mouskos Auditorium (by invitation only)*

### 15h00 - Public Lecture & Panel Discussion

Public lecture and panel discussion by EASAC, EU and local experts, in addition to **Prof Thomas Elmqvist**, **Dr Orsolya Valkó**, and **Prof Efthymis Lekkas**:

- **Mr Kostakis Papageorgiou**, Chief Conservator of Forests, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development & Environment, Department of Forests

The event panel will be convened by **Prof. Costas N. Papanicolas**, President Emeritus, The Cyprus Institute, and Director of the "Climate Crisis and Sustainable Development" Research Unit of the Cyprus Academy.

Topics covered will include wildfire risk reduction, prevention strategies, and building fire-resilient societies in Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Cyprus.

*The Cyprus Institute, John Ioannides Auditorium (open to the public)*

This event will be streamed live at: <https://youtube.com/live/ff5Mg28Gq9c?feature=share>

For more information, please contact: [info@academyofcyprus.cy](mailto:info@academyofcyprus.cy)

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Co-organizer:



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## **The Cyprus Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts, and EASAC are organizing:**

- A Policy Briefing for Media and Stakeholders Jan 22, at 10:30
- A Public Lecture and Panel Discussion. Jan 22, at 15:00

### **Europe Must Learn to Live with Fire**

The Cyprus Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts, and The European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC) will hold a policy and press briefing on January 22nd, 2026, at the Cyprus Institute to discuss the findings of the newly published EASAC report Changing Wildfires in Europe.

The event will explore the growing wildfire risks across Europe, particularly in the Mediterranean, and their implications for Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean region, and the proposed European Wildfire Hub. The meeting will bring together experts, policy makers, and stakeholders to examine how EU and regional strategies can shift from reactive fire suppression to proactive, risk-based land and landscape management.

The EASAC report highlights that many parts of Europe are facing multi-year droughts, increasing the probability of extreme fires. "Some areas are likely to experience severe events every two years," says Prof. Thomas Elmqvist, EASAC Environment Director, calling for urgent action in EU wildfire policy.

"Europe will increasingly have to learn to live with fire and adapt society to a new challenging reality," warns Dr. Orsolya Valkó, co-chair of the report. "More than twice as many urban areas are at risk of fire in Europe than in North America and Asia." Currently, EU wildfires burn on average half a million hectares yearly, approximately half the size of Cyprus.

The report identifies key drivers behind the surge in wildfire risk, including climate change, rural depopulation, and land-use changes, with droughts and declining summer precipitation expected to double fire risk by 2100. Abandoned farmland and unmanaged vegetation have also created vast landscapes of flammable biomass.

### **Fire Suppression Alone is Not Sufficient**

The report observes that current EU policies are primarily reactive, focusing on fire suppression and emergency response. It advocates for the development of an integrated EU framework for landscape fire-risk governance that shifts the priority toward prevention. "Suppressing fires alone is not enough. We need to address root causes, better fight climate change, invest in resilient landscapes, and engage society in living with fire," says Dr. Cathelijne Stoof, co-chair of EASAC's Wildfires Working Group.

### **Eight Policy Options**

EASAC recommends enhanced institutional capacity, cross-border collaboration, and better resource-sharing, outlining eight policy options to reshape Europe's approach to wildfires:

1. Invest in integrated wildfire risk reduction, including prescribed burning and fuel management.
2. Implement nature-based solutions such as grazing and native species reforestation.
3. Embrace the role of fire, allowing planned burns to maintain ecological balance.
4. Invest in education and communication to increase "fire literacy" and preparedness.

5. Invest in landscape management to reduce vulnerability and maintain resilient landscapes.
6. Harmonize sectoral policies across agriculture, environment, and urban development.
7. Promote compact urban development to limit wildland-urban interface expansion.
8. Encourage sustainable private land management to help landowners adopt fire-resilient practices.

The meetings are co-organized by the Eastern Mediterranean – Middle East Climate Initiative (EMME-CCI, <https://emme-cci.org>), hosted by [the Cyprus Institute](#), and co-sponsored by the Cyprus Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN, <https://sdsn.cyprus.cyi.ac.cy>).

**EASAC Commentary:**

Link: <https://easac.eu/publications/details/changing-wildfires>

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