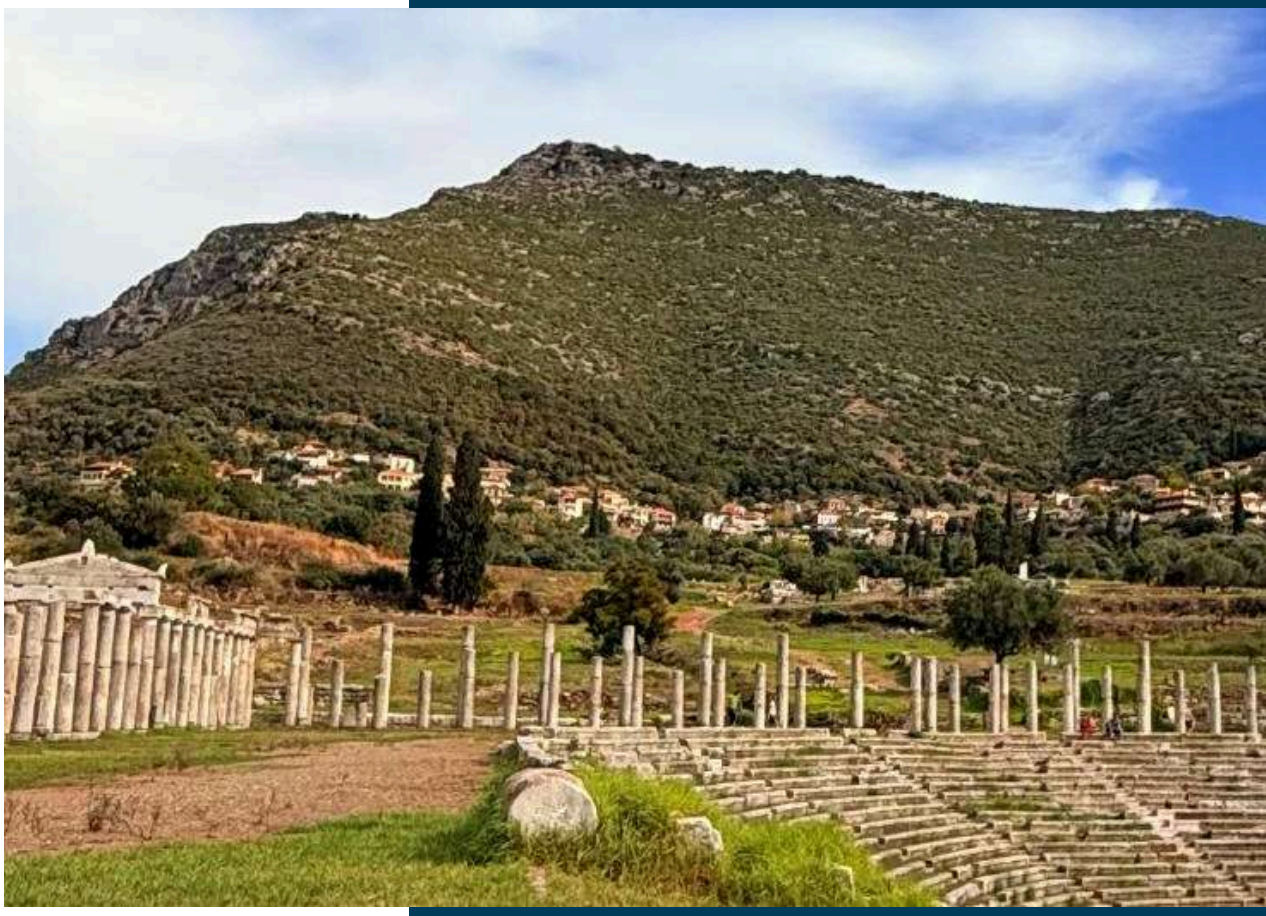
DIALOGUE & ACTION AGAINST WILDFIRES



ANCIENT MESSINI

CASE STUDY

Dialogue, participatory planning and collective action to reduce the risk of disasters from forest fires within the framework of the project Dialogue and Action Against Wildfires: Empowering Communities for Resilience to Natural Disasters

NOVEMBER 2024

ANCIENT MESSINA
CASE STUDY

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NOVEMBER 2024

This is part of the "Toolkit for Reducing Disaster Risk from Wildfires". It was created by the implementation team of the pilot project "Dialogue and Action Against Wildfires: Empowering Communities for Resilience to Natural Disasters" with the support of the research program ACCTING (AdvanCing behavioural Change Through an INclusive Green deal): European Union's Horizon 2020, No 101036504. For more information about the toolkit, go to the website https://dock-sse.org/tool/disaster-risk-reduction/

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Message from the Project Team

As small mountain villages increasingly face the threat of wildfires, exacerbated by climate change, the role of communities as a first line of defense becomes more important than ever.

As part of the Dialogue and Action Against Wildfires: Empowering Communities for Resilience to Natural Disasters program, we collaborated with four communities in Messinia – Ancient Messini, Manganiako, Trikorfo and Koromilia – to reduce the risk of natural disasters and strengthen their preparedness. Through participatory planning and collective action processes, we highlighted the specificities of each region, combining the experience of residents with innovative approaches.

These four communities are examples of small rural settlements that share challenges, such as an aging population and limited resources, but also have unique characteristics and potential. Based on these, we developed separate case studies that analyze the strengths and weaknesses, challenges and opportunities of each area.

This case study aspires to be a source of inspiration and a tool for action for similar communities, strengthening their capacity to respond to the challenges of the future.

To access the remaining studies, the tools we developed and a practical action guide for organizing communities, visit the website: https://dock-sse.org/tool/disaster-risk-reduction.

The project team,

Elena Tzamuranou, Dock - Social Solidarity Economy Zone.
Panagiotis Giannakopoulos, Nostos Koinsep
Panagiota Arapi, Koukouva Koinsep
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CONTENTS

The Ancient Messini case study is organized in a way that highlights the process, findings, and proposals that emerged from the community engagement. The goal is to provide a comprehensive picture of the experience and lessons learned.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

2. COLLECTIVE ANALYSIS

MAR. ‘24

DEC. ‘23

1. ACQUAINTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING

Connecting and getting to know the community, collecting stories and data, initial understanding of attitudes and needs

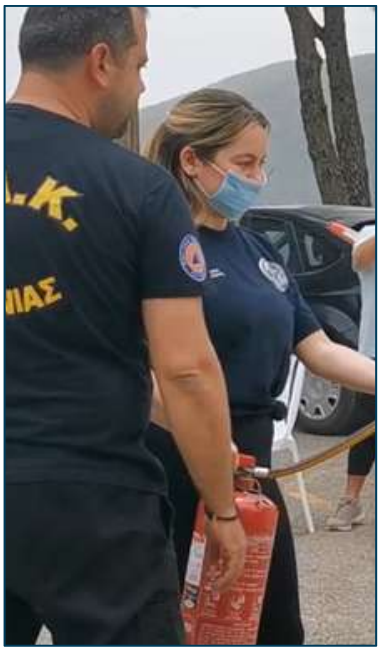
On-site inspection, identification of strengths and weaknesses, recording of local opportunities and problems

JUNE ‘24

4. EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

APR. ‘24

3. PARTICIPATORY PLANNING



Educational processes, development of proposals and prevention and response plans through collective processes and dialogue

Review of actions, discussion of results and formulation of proposals for next steps

PROFILE OF ANCIENT MESSINI

Ancient Messini consists of the settlements of Mavromati and Petralona and is built on the slope of Mount Ithomi. It is located approximately 35 kilometers northwest of Kalamata and at an altitude of 393 meters. Based on the 2021 census, the population is 181 residents. The area has particular historical and cultural importance, as it hosts the archaeological site of Ancient Messini, one of the most important archaeological destinations in Greece.

KEY FEATURES

- Altitude: 495 meters
- Administrative Subordination: Municipality of Messina
- Population (2021 Census): 181 inhabitants

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- Agriculture: Olive, fig, grape cultivation. Livestock:
- Minimal compared to the past.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- On the slope of "Ithomi", a Mediterranean natural environment. The area is characterized by the presence of olive groves, while the vegetation includes typical Mediterranean plants, such as shrubs and phrygana.

HISTORICAL FIRE

- The area has been hit by serious fires in the past, with the most devastating ones in 1987, 1992, 1998 and 2014.
- The last fire in 2014, caused by arson, caused extensive damage to agricultural lands, without human casualties or destruction of homes.
- The wider area remains vulnerable to forest fires.

THE DYNAMICS OF ANCIENT MESSINI: AN EXAMPLE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND RESISTANCE TO NATURAL DISASTERS

Ancient Messini is a special case, as it is the community that has experienced the most fire incidents in the past, in the wider region. The frequent fires have provided the community with valuable experience and knowledge about what works effectively in risk management and what does not. This accumulated experience can be used to create strategies that respond to the real needs of the region. At the same time, the geographical location of Ancient Messini and its proximity to other communities create opportunities for support, as neighbors know that the protection of Ancient Messini is critical for their own safety as well.

Strong Ties with Neighboring Communities

Ancient Messini has close ties with neighboring communities, who realize the importance of protecting the area for their own safety. These ties create a broader network of mutual support, crucial for the immediate response to fires.

The Role of the Archaeological Site

The presence of the archaeological site mobilizes the State and the competent bodies, while acting as an incentive for the protection of the environment. Its cultural value enhances the possibilities of implementing prevention and protection measures.

Cultural Association with a Mood for Action

The local cultural association has shown interest in taking action on risk management. With appropriate support, it can act as a nucleus for organizing collective initiatives and strengthening community resilience.

Analyzing the content of the dialogue in the community of Ancient Messini, it emerges that the residents realize that they have strong points that can form the basis for the development of a more effective strategy for preventing and dealing with forest fires.

STRENGTHS

- **Strong Sense of Solidarity and Cooperation** with neighboring villages, which are immediately activated in cases of fires
- **Local Knowledge:** Residents have significant experience in dealing with fires and are familiar with local conditions
- **Willingness to React Immediately:** Many residents show a willingness to self-organize and mobilize immediately when needed using their own resources.
- **Suggestions for Equipment and Organization:** There is foresight and strong intention to create local structures that will improve the response, such as the provision of water tanks and the creation of volunteer groups.

WEAK POINTS

- **Insufficient Equipment and Infrastructure:** Lack of basic equipment and infrastructure and dependence on external agencies
- **Generational Gap:** The limited participation of middle-aged residents, combined with the misconception that there are not enough of them to act, highlighted a gap in generational priorities. Older residents focused mainly on equipment shortages, while younger residents prioritized improving organization and cooperation with neighboring villages.
- **Fragmentation due to the existence of the two Settlements:** The existence of two separate settlements in the community affected cohesion and participation in discussions. This fragmentation made it difficult to achieve uniform representation, creating challenges for the unified action of the community.

The conclusions emerging from the dialogue with the community of Ancient Messini highlight both its strengths and the challenges that need to be addressed. The community stands out for its strong sense of solidarity and its experience in managing many fire incidents, which constitutes a valuable foundation for improving prevention and readiness. At the same time, the presence of organizations such as the cultural association indicates the willingness of some community members to take action, despite limited mobilisation possibilities.

However, the community is called upon to bridge the gaps between two settlements and different age groups, as well as to adapt its communication methods to meet the needs of all. Furthermore, dependence on external actors for basic infrastructure and the lack of adequate equipment remain significant obstacles that limit the autonomy and effectiveness of the community. **Overall, Ancient Messini has the foundations to develop into a strong local example of resilience, provided that the existing challenges are addressed through enhanced cooperation with the competent Authorities, improved communication and targeted interventions that will strengthen local initiatives.**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Community Engagement: An Ongoing Process

The community of Ancient Messini actively participated in all stages of the process, through a total of 14 actions that included online and in-person meetings, community events, the formation of a steering committee and the use of tools such as information boards, GIS maps and participatory planning canvases. In addition, interviews, on-site inspections, educational meetings and participatory planning sessions were carried out, while the submitted proposals were prioritized and validated by the residents themselves. Finally, the community was represented in an interview and contributed at a relevant public event, strengthening its collective voice and visibility.

ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

The analysis of perceptions was based primarily on the content that emerged from discussions, interviews and open meetings with the community. The focus was on recording the opinions, needs and priorities of the residents. The data was organized and analyzed with the aim of highlighting the issues that concern the community, as well as the ethical dilemmas and attitudes related to forest fires.

ISSUES RAISED BY THE COMMUNITY IN THE DIALOGUE

- ☐ PReadiness Issues
- ☐ Prevention Issues
- ☐ Challenges and Limitations
- ☐ Infrastructure and Equipment
- ☐ Solidarity and Own Means
- ☐ Relations with Local Authorities

> *Equipment and training are the basis for a community to be able to protect its homes and lives until the competent authorities arrive.*

ETHICAL DILEMMAS

The management of wildfires in Ancient Messini has raised ethical dilemmas without clear answers. Recognizing them is the first step towards more balanced policies that respond to the needs of communities. The following examples illuminate the complexity of these issues and the search for solutions by residents:

- ☐ **Balance between "community cohesion" and "symbiosis":** The presence of an arsonist in the community causes tension and difficulties in coexistence. Residents do not know how to deal with the situation, making the restoration of trust crucial for collective action and solidarity.
- ☐ **Balancing "needs" and "available resources":** The topography of the village makes it difficult to distribute water equitably during fires. Residents in lower areas often use the water to water their homes, leaving those in higher areas without water. Equitable distribution of resources is crucial to protecting all residents.
- ☐ **Balance between "permanent" and "non-permanent" residents:** The relations between permanent and non-permanent residents highlight issues of solidarity. Permanent residents consider themselves to bear the greater burden of protecting the area. Cultivating a shared sense of responsibility is essential to bridge this gap.

The residents of the community of Ancient Messini focus on preparedness, previous experiences, cooperation and coordination between communities, own means and the availability of water resources. The residents are willing to act and protect their area, but feel that they need more infrastructure, means and training to do so effectively.

ANCIENT MESSINI FOCUSED ON READINESS ISSUES, ORIENTED ON PROPOSALS FOR EQUIPMENT, COORDINATION AND TRAINING. THEY BELIEVE THAT EQUIPMENT AND IMMEDIATE RESPONSE WILL BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN A FIRE THAN PREVENTION.

Previous Experiences and Age

Residents draw on their experience from previous fires, but the advanced age of many limits their physical participation.

Cooperation and Coordination Between Communities

Cooperation with neighboring villages emerges as crucial for effective firefighting

Solidarity and Own Means

The community shows a strong sense of solidarity, utilizing agricultural equipment and other resources to respond immediately to fires

Prevention

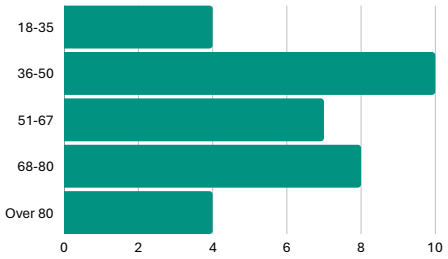
Uncleared land and a lack of maintained firebreaks increase the risk, while the availability of water resources remains inadequate.

A survey was then conducted based on a questionnaire completed by permanent residents of the two settlements of Ancient Messini, with an emphasis on individuals who did not have the opportunity to participate in the meetings. The study focuses on their perceptions of fire risk, readiness, collective action and education. The results provide valuable information on the needs and priorities of the community.

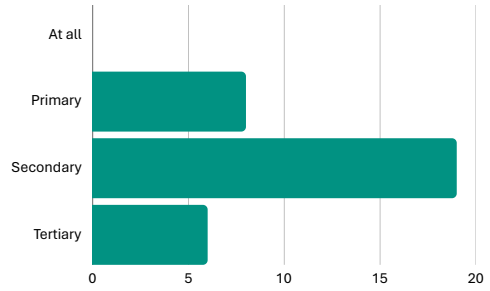
100%

The total sample consists of 33 people

In terms of gender, out of the 33 individuals, 18 were identified as female, 15 as male.



Regarding the ages of the respondents, 4 people belong to the age group of 18-35, 10 to 36-50, 7 to 51-67, 8 to 68-79, while 4 people are over 80 years old.



8 people out of 33 completed primary education, 19 completed secondary education and 6 people completed university education.

Divergence of Opinions and Complementarity of Methods

The results of the questionnaire in Ancient Messini confirm the existence of divergences that had already been highlighted by the content analysis. The community presents a diversity of views, reflecting different age groups, social experiences and degrees of involvement. Although this heterogeneity makes coordinated action difficult, it provides opportunities for more tailored interventions that meet diverse needs.

The only strong convergence is around concern about wildfire risk, which is identified as a key issue. This common ground can form the basis for a unified strategy, fostering cooperation despite differences. While it takes effort to build trust, shared recognition of the threat can act as a catalyst for collective action.

The research highlights the need for enhanced education, improved infrastructure and better cooperation with the authorities, while underlining the importance of having a fire prevention and response plan. At the same time, the strong willingness of the residents of Ancient Messini for collective action constitutes a solid basis for sustainable and participatory solutions.

RISK PERCEPTION

The majority is highly concerned about the risk of fires (94%)

85% consider a fire prevention and response plan important for the village

INDIVIDUAL & COLLECTIVE ROLE

Moderate confidence in individual abilities (mean value: 3.12 out of 5, high standard deviation 1.43)

Moderate trust in collective action (mean value: 3.00 out of 5, high standard deviation 1.12)

The responses show significant dispersion and are not particularly concentrated around the mean. Dispersion indicates very different opinions or experiences among participants

64% **believe in the importance of equal participation of all**

39% **believe that community knowledge can contribute to fire management**

EDUCATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Insufficient education and information (average value: 2.1 out of 5)

Recognition of the importance of education (average value: 4.1 out of 5)

21% **refer to the need for investment in infrastructure and equipment in the community**

RELATIONS WITH AUTHORITIES

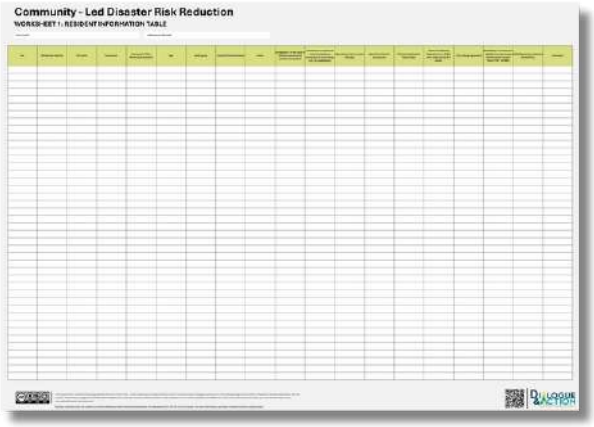
Low trust in the authorities (6% positive opinion)

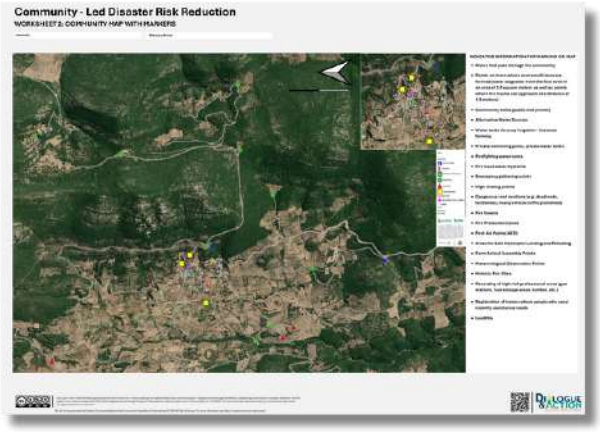
33% consider cooperation with the Authorities a significant obstacle in managing fires

COLLECTIVE ANALYSIS

The collective analysis describes the existing situation of the community for the period 2023-2024 and constitutes the basis for understanding the current situation (Scenario 0) of the community of Ancient Messini. Its aim is to identify the key priorities and gaps that need to be addressed to strengthen the resilience of the community against wildfires. The analysis focuses on identifying vulnerabilities and available resources, taking into account the experience of residents who actively participated in the process, the local geography and infrastructure. The process is based on the risk management cycle (prevention, readiness, response & recovery) and focuses mainly on the stages of prevention and readiness, which are crucial for reducing the likelihood of fire and better preparing the community.

Data collection was carried out by analyzing the content of statements from the community event, conducting a focus group with women in the community, completing an information table by residents, marking critical points and resources on a detailed map using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), as well as an on-site inspection to evaluate existing infrastructure, which was conducted in collaboration with the Messinia Natural Disaster Response Team.





The main prevention and treatment issues that emerged through the collective analysis are the following:

Prevention (preventive measures and practices aimed at minimizing the likelihood of a fire occurring)

- ☐ Vegetation Management (Roads, Private Properties)
- ☐ Management of Flammable Materials
- ☐ (Garbage) Autonomy in Basic Services (Water Resources, Energy)
- ☐ Awareness (Information)

Preparedness (preparation for potential fire outbreaks to ensure quick and effective response)

- ☐ Infrastructure and Equipment Assessment (Inspection, Repairs / Supplies)
- ☐ Fire Detection (Human Resources, Monitoring)
- Emergency Plan (Community Notification,
- ☐ Roles & Responsibilities)
- ☐ Awareness (Motivation & Educational Activities)

On pages 18 and 19, a tool is presented that illustrates the prevention and response points, with critical points in orange and potential points in green. This categorization facilitates understanding and future action.

The on-site inspection revealed serious issues regarding water infrastructure and its accessibility. In Ancient Messini, fire hydrants had insufficient pressure, such as the hydrant in the cemetery, where the pressure was frequently interrupted due to damage to the pipeline, and the first hydrant at the entrance to the village, which was covered by vegetation and did not have sufficient pressure for fire engines. Also, the water supply in the square was found to be inaccessible due to vegetation and leaks in the valve.

In Petralona, the water supplies near the square and at the exit of the village were hidden in the vegetation and without adequate signage, which highlights the need to improve their visibility and accessibility.

Reducing the Risk of Disasters from Forest Fires

WORKSHEET 3: PREVENTION AND READINESS MEASURES

Community: Ancient Messini **Reporting Period:** 2023 - 2024 (Scenario 0)

PREVENTION

Preventive measures and practices aimed at minimizing the possibility of fire

1. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Roads

- Road Cleaning and Maintenance

Cleaning of roads, rural roads and paths

Private Properties

- Gross Plots

Mandatory vegetation management for property owners

Buildings

Removal of trees located near houses and buildings

Forests

Use of sustainable forest management practices & protection of biodiversity

2. MANAGEMENT OF FLAMMABLE MATERIALS

Bulky Waste

Handling items that do not fit into standard waste collection systems

Construction waste

Waste from construction, demolition, renovation and remodeling

Waste Minimization

Changing social patterns of consumption and production

Junk

- Garbage especially during events
- Save your hood

Cleaning and maintenance of public spaces, neighborhoods and natural areas

3. AUTONOMY IN BASIC SERVICES

Water Resources

- Village water supply (pipes?)
- Water management (lower houses and upper houses)

Ensuring continuous access and effective management

Energy

- Dependence on PPC

Ensuring and maintaining an independent, reliable, local energy supply

Communication Systems

Installation of alternative networks for redundancy and consistency

Infrastructure

Increasing the strength and resilience of infrastructure

4. AWARENESS

Information

- Insufficient Information

Informing & motivating behavior change towards prevention strategies

Fireproof Houses

Presentation of the concept of fire-resistant homes and buildings

Fire-Resistant Fields

Presentation of the concept of fire-resistant fields and crops

Relevant Legislation

Information & advice on relevant legislation issues

This is part of the "Toolkit for Reducing Disaster Risk from Forest Fires". It was created by the implementation team of the pilot project "Dialogue and Action on Fires: Empowering Communities for Resilience to Natural Disasters" with support of the research program ACCTING (AdvanCingbehavioural Change Through anINclusiveGreen deal): European Union's Horizon 2020, No 101036504. For more information about the toolkit, go to the website https://docksse.org/tool/disaster-risk-reduction/

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READINESS

- It was judged that there is a need at all levels

Preparation for potential fire outbreaks to ensure quick and effective response

1. INFRASTRUCTURE & EQUIPMENT EVALUATION

Documentation	Infrastructure Inspection	Repairs / Supplies	Use of Technology
	• 4-5 tractors with tankers	• A tank that existed in the community but was taken by the Municipality	
Mapping of data and allocation of relevant resources	*On-site thorough inspections of infrastructure and equipment*	*Depending on the results of the audit and the specific needs of the community*	*Leveraging technology to identify further vulnerabilities*

2. FIRE DETECTION

Human Resources	Viewpoints	High Risk Days	Monitoring
• Insufficient in number, elderly in age • Disposition for reaction and self-organization			• Patrols are organized only after fires and are abandoned
Ensuring volunteer commitment and availability	*Identification of suitable viewing points and possible patrol routes*	*Determination of days for performing actions for fire detection*	*Monitoring & performing patrols during high-risk days*

3. EMERGENCY PLAN

- The problem is the absence

Community Notification	Gathering Points	Moving Assistance	Roles & Responsibilities
• Mobile Phones • 2 church bells			• Need for better coordination
Procedures for quick and effective updating	*Identification of assembly points for people and equipment*	*Identifying people who need assistance during evacuation*	*Assignment of coordination, equipment management and population relocation*

4. INFORMATION AND TRAINING

Fire Protection Period	Urge	Educational Activities	Readiness Exercises
	• Arsonist community member • Non-permanent residents	• Insufficient Education	
Notification of the start/end of the fire season and useful instructions	*Disseminating the Community Action Plan and encouraging active participation*	*Training seminars for basic skills and knowledge*	*Organizing preparedness exercises aimed at improving response capabilities*

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DIALOGUE & ACTION AGAINST WILDFIRES

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Participatory planning is the next critical step in strengthening the resilience of the community of Ancient Messini to wildfires. The aim of the participatory planning was to capture the views of residents on the actions proposed for prevention and readiness, and to ensure that the resulting plan is the result of collective thinking and action, responding to the needs and capabilities of the community.

Based on the findings of the collective analysis, a framework of prevention and readiness actions (Scenario B) was developed, which focused on improvements and actions to address vulnerabilities, while being based on the real needs of the community and the active participation of residents. Through this process, it was sought to strengthen cooperation, leverage local knowledge and ensure that the proposed solutions respond to the specific conditions of the area.

Participatory planning included the following key steps:

INFORMATION SESSION	GROUP SEPARATION	RECORDING SUGGESTIONS
Before the start of the process, participants were familiarized with the risk management cycle (prevention, readiness, response, recovery), in order to facilitate understanding of the topics and focus on the areas that concern their community.	The participants were divided into two working groups, where through an open discussion they proposed specific actions to strengthen prevention and readiness. Although the areas of response and recovery were discussed to a lesser extent, specific instructions were given for the preparation of future actions.	The proposals submitted were recorded and graphically captured in the tool presented during the collective analysis, in order to provide a clear picture of the proposed actions and facilitate discussion and decision-making.

The key prevention and response issues that emerged through the collective analysis are listed below, while pages 22 and 23 present all the proposals that emerged from the planning in more detail.

Prevention (preventive measures and practices aimed at minimizing the likelihood of a fire occurring)

- ☐ Vegetation Management (Roads)
- ☐ Management of Flammable Materials
- ☐ (Garbage) Autonomy in Basic Services
- ☐ (Energy) Awareness (Information, Relevant Legislation)

Readiness (preparation for potential fire outbreaks to ensure quick and effective response)

- ☐ Infrastructure and Equipment Assessment (Documentation, Inspection, Repairs / Supplies)
- ☐ Fire Detection (High Risk Days, Monitoring)
- ☐ Emergency Plan (Community Notification, Assembly Point, Assistance for Relocation)
- ☐ Information / Training (Fire Season, Motivation, Readiness Exercises)

Through participatory planning that leveraged collective local knowledge and experience, the community of Ancient Messini developed a forest fire prevention and response plan. The plan responds to the specific conditions of the area and incorporates the voice and priorities of the residents, strengthening its resilience to future risks.

Reducing the Risk of Disasters from Forest Fires

WORKSHEET 3: PREVENTION AND READINESS MEASURES

Community: Ancient Messini **Reporting Period:** 2024 - 2025 (Scenario B)

PREVENTION

Preventive measures and practices aimed at minimizing the possibility of fire

1. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Roads

- Road cleaning and maintenance
- Cleaning and maintenance of paths

Cleaning of roads, rural roads and paths

Private Properties

Mandatory vegetation management for property owners

Buildings

Removal of trees located near houses and buildings

Forests

Use of sustainable forest management practices & protection of biodiversity

2. MANAGEMENT OF FLAMMABLE MATERIALS

Bulky Waste

Handling items that do not fit into standard waste collection systems

Construction waste

Waste from construction, demolition, renovation and remodeling

Waste Minimization

Changing social patterns of consumption and production

Junk

- Garbage especially during events
- Save your hood

Cleaning and maintenance of public spaces, neighborhoods and natural areas

3. AUTONOMY IN BASIC SERVICES

Water Resources

Ensuring continuous access and effective management

Energy

- Generator to ensure water supply

Ensuring and maintaining an independent, reliable, local energy supply

Communication Systems

Installation of alternative networks for redundancy and consistency

Infrastructure

Increasing the strength and resilience of infrastructure

4. AWARENESS

Information

- Information activities at key points in the village (brochures, posters, QR Code)

Informing & motivating behavior change towards prevention strategies

Fireproof Houses

Presentation of the concept of fire-resistant homes and buildings

Fire-Resistant Fields

Presentation of the concept of fire-resistant fields and crops

Relevant Legislation

- Cutting down trees

Information & advice on relevant legislation issues

This is part of the "Toolkit for Reducing Disaster Risk from Forest Fires". It was created by the implementation team of the pilot project "Dialogue and Action on Fires: Empowering Communities for Resilience to Natural Disasters" with the support of the research program ACCTING (AdvanCingbehavioural Change Through anINclusiveGreen deal): European Union's Horizon 2020, No 101036504. For more information about the toolkit, go to the website https://dock sse.org/tool/disaster-risk-reduction/

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READINESS

Preparation for potential fire outbreaks to ensure quick and effective response

1. INFRASTRUCTURE & EQUIPMENT EVALUATION

Documentation

- Updated map and resident information board

Mapping of data and allocation of relevant resources

Infrastructure Inspection

- 4-5 tractors with tanks

On-site thorough inspections of infrastructure and equipment

Repairs / Supplies

- Basic Equipment
- Fire Truck
- Additional Tank in the Faucet

Depending on the results of the audit and the specific needs of the community

Use of Technology

Leveraging technology to identify further vulnerabilities

2. FIRE DETECTION

Human Resources

Ensuring volunteer commitment and availability

Viewpoints

Identification of suitable viewing points and possible patrol routes

High Risk Days

- Monitoring the map and sharing on the Association's social media

Determination of days for performing actions for fire detection

Monitoring

- Patrols only on dangerous days & times

Monitoring & performing patrols during high-risk days

3. EMERGENCY PLAN

Community Notification

- Mobile Phones
- 2 church bells
- Viber Group in collaboration with the other villages

Procedures for quick and effective updating

Gathering Points

- Petralona: Square
- Ancient Messini: School
- 2 points within the archaeological site

Identification of assembly points for people and equipment

Moving Assistance

- Data on people with mobility problems

Identifying people who need assistance during evacuation

Roles & Responsibilities

Assignment of coordination, equipment management and population relocation

4. INFORMATION AND TRAINING

Fire Protection Period

- Start/end notification and notification of instructions

Notification of the start/end of the fire season and useful instructions

Urge

- Arsonist community member
- Non-permanent residents
- Volunteer Group Certified in collaboration with the other villages

Disseminating the Community Action Plan and encouraging active participation

Educational Activities

Training seminars for basic skills and knowledge

Readiness Exercises

- Instructions for 112/199

Organizing preparedness exercises aimed at improving response capabilities

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DIALOGUE & ACTION AGAINST WILDFIRES

Learning from Ancient Messini

The risk management process in Ancient Messini highlighted the importance of leveraging existing community knowledge and skills, as well as the power of active citizen participation. Despite its small size, the community demonstrated that it can enhance its resilience when actions are adapted to local specificities and leverage collective bonds.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Local knowledge is a valuable resource for the community. Drawing on the experience and knowledge of the residents, Ancient Messini was able to map critical points using GIS and highlight its opportunities and vulnerabilities. This process showed that even small communities have the necessary knowledge to address complex challenges, as long as they are given the right guidance.

COOPERATION WITH NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES

Cooperation with neighboring communities, such as Arsinoe and Manganiako, remains critical in responding to crises. Mutual support in terms of human and material resources provides significant reinforcement to local efforts and serves as an example for other communities to emulate.

STRENGTHENING PREPAREDNESS THROUGH THE ASSOCIATION

The cultural association, which already implements clean-up actions, could expand its initiatives to include regular cleaning of vegetation around taps and water intake points. This action not only strengthens local readiness, but also engages the community in a practical approach to crisis prevention and response.

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION AND COLLECTIVENESS

The cultural association, through the willingness shown by the Board of Directors during the program, has the opportunity to expand its role beyond cultural activities. The low familiarity of the community with collective actions demonstrates the need to cultivate a collective culture, paving the way for informational initiatives that will enhance participation and local resilience.

Ancient Messini can serve as an example for areas that lack strong social cohesion, demonstrating that even through challenges, such as low familiarity with collective actions, opportunities can emerge. The program showed that, by leveraging local knowledge, networking with neighboring communities and gradually activating institutions such as cultural associations, a dynamic can be created that enhances resilience, regardless of the initial level of organization.

As resilience is a dynamic process of continuous improvement, it requires systematic adaptation to new challenges and the utilization of available resources and knowledge. By implementing the following suggestions, Ancient Messini can further strengthen its ability to manage risks and shape a more resilient future.

Continuous Improvement of Information and Infrastructure

- ☐ Annual update of the information board and GIS map to ensure they remain accurate and up-to-date
- ☐ Annual on-site inspection to assess the condition of water tanks, fire hydrants and rural roads

Systematic monitoring of the progress of implementation of measures

- ☐ Immediate repair and maintenance of fire hydrants, with priority given to restoring water pressure, especially at the cemetery and at the entrance to the village.
- ☐ Clearing vegetation around water intake points and marking hydrants with color and signs, so that they are easily located in cases of emergency.

Promoting Collective Action and Cooperation with Neighboring Villages

- ☐ Creation of a permanent inter-municipal group that will operate as a prevention and immediate response network in cases of fire.
- ☐ Examine the possibility of certification by the Civil Protection, in order to increase the effectiveness of actions and strengthen cooperation with the competent Authorities.

Expanding the Role of the Cultural Association

- ☐ Integrating awareness-raising and fire prevention actions within the context of the association's activities, such as cleaning public spaces and information events.
- ☐ Promoting the association as a central point of information and mobilization of residents, contributing to the cultivation of collective culture beyond cultural actions.

The completion of this study would not have been possible without the warm support and active participation of the community of Ancient Messini. We thank all the residents who shared their experiences, knowledge and concerns, contributing decisively to the formation of the findings and proposals. Special thanks are addressed to the president of the community of Ancient Messina, Mr. Konstantinos Panousis, to Ms. Danae Athanasakakopoulou who acted as a motivator and coordinator, to the members of the Cultural Association of Apantachos Mavrommati and to the individuals who participated in the actions, dedicating their time and energy to the protection and strengthening of their community. Their commitment is an example of collective action and cooperation in addressing critical challenges.

The study is part of a wildfire risk reduction toolkit that includes a guide for communities, a guide for trainers to implement a relevant workshop, worksheets and four case studies, so that communities can design and implement solutions that meet their own needs and capabilities.

The Wildfire Risk Reduction Toolkit is aimed at communities who wish to take action to reduce the risk they face from wildfires.

It focuses on self-activity and the taking of initiatives by the communities themselves while taking into account the knowledge capital, experience, available resources, as well as the structure and composition of the communities.

The toolkit is available online at:
dock-sse.org/tool/disaster-risk-reduction

The 12-month Dialogue and Action Against Wildfires project was implemented between 01/12/2023 - 01/12/2024 and is a pilot project of ACCTING (AdvanCing behavioural Change Through an INclusive Green deal), which is an EU-funded project (European Union's Horizon 2020, No 101036504) that analyzes the impact of Green Deal policies on vulnerable groups and generates knowledge and innovations to promote behavioural change at an individual and collective level. Partners of the Dialogue and Action Against Forest Wildfires Project are: