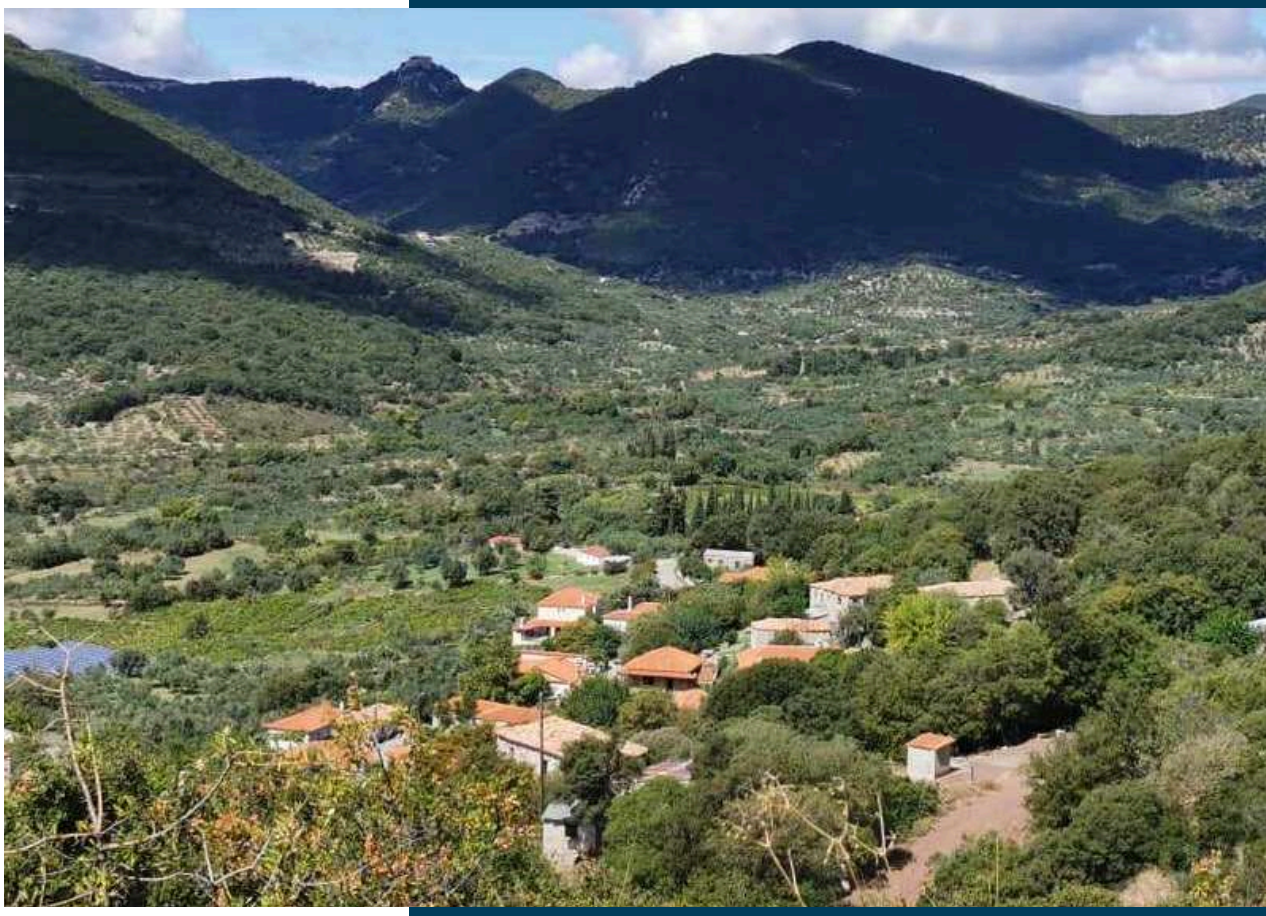
DIALOGUE & ACTION AGAINST WILDFIRES



KOROMILIA

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

KOROMILIA

CASE STUDY

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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/

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 readiness. 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
Costas Vlachonikolos, Messinia Disaster Response Team

CONTENTS

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

IMPLEMENTATION TIMETABLE

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

Development of proposals and a prevention and response plan through collective processes and dialogue

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

KOROMILIA PROFILE

Koromilia is a small mountain village in the central Messinia region, built at the foothills of the Kalligas mountain range. It is located about 40 kilometers northwest of Kalamata and at an altitude of 495 meters. Based on the 2021 census, the population is 35 residents, although in reality only 26 people live there year-round. The majority of the residents are elderly women, with their children visiting the village frequently, especially in the summer.

KEY FEATURES

- Altitude: 495 meters
- Administrative Subordination: Municipality of Messina
- Population (2021 Census): 35 residents

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

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

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Area: At the foothill of "Kalligas", with rich natural vegetation
- Trees: Oak, holly, wild oak, maples
- Shrubs: Glatzini, kokorevythies, cottonwood

HISTORICAL FIRE

- 1992: A major fire started in Ancient Messini, destroying part of the "Kalliga" wildlife refuge
- Fires: were immediately tackled by residents
- A demonstration of a strong spirit of collectivism

THE POWER OF THE KOROMILIA: AN EXAMPLE OF COLLECTIVENESS AND RESILIENCE

Koromilia stands out for its residents' deep connection to the natural environment and strong sense of community. Despite the difficulties, the residents have successfully coped with small-scale fires, maintaining strong ties to their land. Despite the challenges, the residents have developed a spirit of cooperation and solidarity that is strengthened by their relationships with the wider region. This combination of local action and extroversion makes Koromilia an ideal model for studies aimed at risk management and strengthening the resilience of very small communities.

Strong Ties with Cities

Many residents living in nearby Kalamata, as well as Athens, maintain close ties with Koromilia and visit the village frequently to take care of relatives and property. During the summer months, they return for vacations, increasing the number of visitors during the high fire risk period.

Collaboration with Trikorfo

Koromilia's close relations with the larger nearby settlement of Trikorfo create a strong support base. Koromilia knows that in case of an emergency it can rely on Trikorfos for immediate assistance.

Collective Spirit and Action

The residents of Koromilia have shown remarkable action in dealing with small fires, using their own resources such as tractors and tankers. This self-organization is an example of local resilience and cooperation.

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

STRENGTHS

- **Community Spirit:** Strong sense of collective action and solidarity among residents
- **Local Knowledge:** Residents have significant experience in dealing with fires and are familiar with local conditions
- **Immediate Mobilization:** Residents mobilize immediately, both for prevention and responding with the knowledge and means they have at their disposal
- **Perception of Responsibilities and Ethical Awareness:** The community recognizes responsibilities at the individual, community and institutional levels, and is aware of the ethical dilemmas in fire management.

WEAK POINTS

- **Limited Resources:** Lack of people, equipment and funding for prevention and immediate response
- **Challenges in Cooperation with Authorities:** Cooperation with local authorities is hampered by bureaucracy and limited resources, while the need for immediate support remains strong.
- **Lack of a Functional Legal Framework:** The non-implementation of the legal framework and the lack of adaptation to local specificities limit the effectiveness of prevention
- **Reduced Access and Infrastructure:** Poor condition of rural roads and limited access for fire trucks

The conclusions that can be drawn from the dialogue with the community of Koromilia highlight both opportunities and critical challenges. The strong solidarity and experience of the residents highlight that the community has a valuable basis for strengthening fire prevention and response measures. However, this willingness to participate and local initiatives need to be reinforced with appropriate institutional support, both in terms of cooperation with the Authorities and by ensuring adequate resources and infrastructure.

On the other hand, the lack of implementation of the legal framework and the insufficient cooperation with the competent Authorities show that the community cannot rely only on its own initiatives. Better coordination between the community and local government organizations is required, as well as the development of infrastructure that will ensure immediate access and rapid response in the event of a fire. Therefore, the main conclusion is that the community has the potential to play an important role in fire prevention/readiness and response, if supported by appropriate tools, partnerships and infrastructure.

Community Engagement: An Ongoing Process

The community of Koromilia actively participated in all the 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

- ☐ Prevention/Readiness Issues
- ☐ Collective Action
- ☐ Traditional Practices
- ☐ Infrastructure and Equipment
- ☐ Legal Framework
- ☐ Relations with Local Authorities

> *Strengthening cooperation between communities and competent authorities is crucial for effective risk management and protection of the natural environment.*

ETHICAL DILEMMAS

The management of the forest fires in Koromilia has highlighted 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:

- ☐ **Balancing the "legal" and the "practical":** Forest protection legislation often fails to take into account local needs and specificities. Residents are faced with dilemmas when they have to choose between complying with the laws and timely fire prevention, especially when government procedures delay critical actions.

- ☐ **Balance between the "individual" and the "collective":** Koromilia shows a strong spirit of collectivity, but individual responsibility for prevention often conflicts with maintaining community order. Residents choose not to create tensions, for example over the issue of untidy plots, even when individual negligence affects overall preparation.

- ☐ **Balance between the "local" and the "public":** Beyond the self-activity of residents, cooperation with the competent bodies is necessary for the holistic management of fires. Local knowledge can only be strengthened with the necessary support, so that solutions are sustainable and adapted to the specific conditions of the area.

The residents of the Koromilia community focus on prevention, collective action, distrust of the authorities, the need for equipment and dealing with bureaucratic obstacles. The residents are willing to act and protect their area, but feel they need more support and freedom to do so effectively.

KAROMILIA IS CLEARLY ORIENTED TOWARDS FIRE PREVENTION, RECOGNIZING THAT SUPPRESSION, ONCE A FIRE HAS STARTED, IS VERY DIFFICULT. THEY BELIEVE THAT EARLY ACTION AND PREVENTION CAN AVERT DISASTERS.

Sense of Responsibility and Participation
Residents are taking action with their own means, while demanding recognition of their role

Distrust of Local Authorities
Disappointment over the inaction and lack of support from the competent authorities

Need for Infrastructure and Equipment
Lack of resources is considered a serious obstacle to prevention and treatment

Problems with Legislation
Bureaucratic restrictions prevent necessary actions

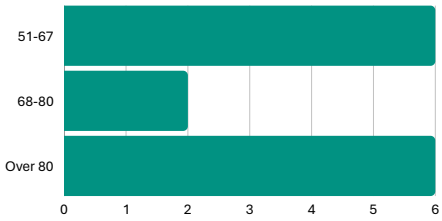
Climate Change
Residents are concerned about the impacts and are calling for long-term strategies

A survey was then conducted based on a questionnaire completed by permanent and temporary residents of Koromilia, 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.

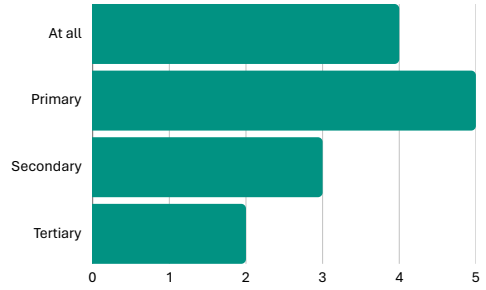
100%

The total sample consists of 14 people

In relation to gender, out of the 14 individuals, 9 identified as female, 4 as male and 1 chose not to be identified based on gender.



Regarding the ages of the respondents, the entire sample is over 50 years old. 6 people belong to the age group of 51-67, 2 to 68-80, while 6 people are over 80 years old.



Of the 14 people, 4 have not completed elementary school. 5 people completed primary education, 3 secondary education and 2 tertiary education.

Convergence of Views and Complementarity of Methods

The results of the questionnaire confirm and enrich the conclusions drawn from the content analysis. The community of Koromilia shows impressive convergence in the views of its residents, which reflects the strong spirit of collectivism and the coherent understanding of the challenges it faces.

The absence of strong divergences in responses highlights the coherence and stability of community perceptions regarding fire prevention and management. This unanimity strengthens the community's ability to act in a coordinated manner, providing an important example for the development of collaborative and participatory policies in rural areas.

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 Koromilia for collective action constitutes a solid basis for sustainable and participatory solutions.

RISK PERCEPTION

The whole is very concerned about the risk of fires (100%)

93% consider a fire prevention and response plan important for the village

INDIVIDUAL & COLLECTIVE ROLE

Low confidence in individual abilities (average: 2.93 out of 5)

High trust in collective action (average value: 4.5 out of 5)

Collective action is considered the main strength of the community, while individual preparation is considered insufficient.

86% **believe in the importance of equal participation of all**

71% **believe that community knowledge can contribute to fire management**

EDUCATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Insufficient education and information (average value: 2.75 out of 5)

Recognition of the importance of education (average value: 3.77 out of 5)

21% **they refer to the need for infrastructure such as water tanks and smoke detection cameras**

RELATIONS WITH AUTHORITIES

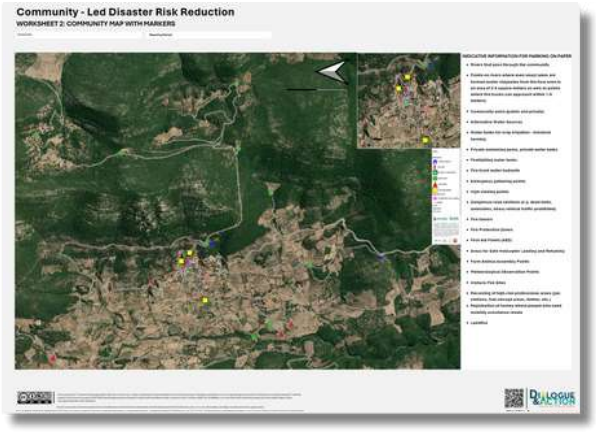
Low trust in the authorities (31.5% positive opinion)

21% 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 Koromilia. Its aim is to identify the key priorities and gaps that need to be addressed to strengthen the community's resilience to forest fires. 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, preparedness, response & recovery) and focuses mainly on the stages of prevention and preparedness, which are crucial for reducing the likelihood of fire and better preparing the community.

Data collection was carried out by analyzing the content of posts from the community event, 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 carried out 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, Forests) Management of
- ☐ Flammable Materials (Bulk Waste)
- Awareness (Information, Relevant
- ☐ Legislation)

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

- ☐ Infrastructure and Equipment Assessment (Repairs / Supplies)
- ☐ Fire Detection (Human Resources) Emergency
- ☐ Plan (Community Notification, Assembly Point)

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 highlighted the significant existence of water infrastructure, as the largest amount of tanks was recorded, both numerically and in cubic meters of water, compared to the other communities.

At the same time, the need to replace the main tank connection, which is not compatible with fire trucks, was identified, as well as the cleaning and maintenance of the fire hydrant, which presents serious problems due to wear and accumulation of grass.

In addition, the existence of a private swimming pool in the village was recorded, which can be used for pumping water in case of emergency.

Community - Led Disaster Risk Reduction

WORKSHEET 3: PREVENTION AND READINESS MEASUREMENTS

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

PREVENTION

Preventive measures and practices aimed at minimizing the possibility of fire

1. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Roads	Private Properties	Buildings	Forests
• Lack of interconnection with Manganiako	• There are undeveloped plots of land • Tree felling vs forestry		• Lack of livestock -> dense vegetation • Insufficient cooperation with the Forest Service
Cleaning of roads, rural roads and paths	*Mandatory vegetation management for property owners*	*Removal of trees located near houses and buildings*	*Use of sustainable forest management practices & protection of biodiversity*

2. MANAGEMENT OF FLAMMABLE MATERIALS

Bulky Waste	Construction waste	Waste Minimization	Junk
• An informal landfill has been created on a private plot of land.			
Handling items that do not fit into standard waste collection systems	*Waste from construction, demolition, renovation and remodeling*	*Changing social patterns of consumption and production*	*Cleaning and maintenance of public spaces, neighborhoods and natural areas*

3. AUTONOMY IN BASIC SERVICES

Water Resources	Energy	Communication Systems	Infrastructure
Ensuring continuous access and effective management	*Ensuring and maintaining an independent, reliable, local energy supply*	*Installation of alternative networks for redundancy and consistency*	*Increasing the strength and resilience of infrastructure*

4. AWARENESS

Information	Fireproof Houses	Fire-Resistant Fields	Relevant Legislation
• Lack of knowledge about possible actions in a prevention plan			• Management for bulky waste • Tree felling
Informing & motivating behavior change towards prevention strategies	*Presentation of the concept of fire-resistant homes and buildings*	*Presentation of the concept of fire-resistant fields and crops*	*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://dock sse.org/tool/disaster-risk-reduction/

READINESS

Preparation for potential fire outbreaks to ensure quick and effective response

1. INFRASTRUCTURE & EQUIPMENT EVALUATION

Documentation

Mapping of data and allocation of relevant resources

Infrastructure Inspection

On-site thorough inspections of infrastructure and equipment

Repairs / Supplies

- Tank with connection incompatible with fire trucks
- Faucet covered with a large gap underneath
- Private swimming pool as an alternative water supply

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

- Lack of resources, mainly elderly residents
- Seven people reported previous experience
- A member of the community is a Retired Firefighter
- Active participation of close relatives

Ensuring volunteer commitment and availability

Viewpoints

Identification of suitable viewing points and possible patrol routes

High Risk Days

Determination of days for performing actions for fire detection

Monitoring

Monitoring & performing patrols during high-risk days

3. EMERGENCY PLAN

Community Notification

- Use of the church bell
- Telephone Calls

Procedures for quick and effective updating

Gathering Points

- Outside the village church

Identification of assembly points for people and equipment

Moving Assistance

Identifying people who need assistance during evacuation

Roles & Responsibilities

Assignment of coordination, equipment management and population relocation

4. INFORMATION AND TRAINING

Fire Protection Period

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

Urge

Disseminating the Community Action Plan and encouraging active participation

Educational Activities

Training seminars for basic skills and knowledge

Readiness Exercises

Organizing preparedness exercises aimed at improving response capabilities

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Participatory planning is the next critical step in strengthening the resilience of the Koromilia community to forest fires. The goal of the participatory planning was to capture the views of residents on the actions proposed for prevention and preparedness, 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 preparedness 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, Private Properties)
- ☐ Management of Flammable Materials (Bulk Waste)
- ☐ Autonomy in Basic Services (Water Resources)
- ☐ Awareness (Information, Relevant Legislation)

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

- ☐ Infrastructure and Equipment Assessment (Documentation, Repairs/Supplies, Use of Technology)
- ☐ Fire Detection (Human Resources, Observation Points, High Risk Days, Monitoring)
- ☐ Emergency Plan (Community Notification, Assembly Point, Assistance for Relocation)
- ☐ Information/Training (Fire Season)

Through participatory planning that leveraged collective knowledge and local experience, the community of Koromilia 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.

Community - Led Disaster Risk Reduction

WORKSHEET 3: PREVENTION AND READINESS MEASUREMENTS

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

PREVENTION

Preventive measures and practices aimed at minimizing the possibility of fire

1. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Roads	Private Properties	Buildings	Forests
• Street Cleaning (Municipality) • New study on access to Manganiako • Study for a Fire Zone	• Recording and communicating with owners		
Cleaning of roads, rural roads and paths	*Mandatory vegetation management for property owners*	*Removal of trees located near houses and buildings*	*Use of sustainable forest management practices & protection of biodiversity*

2. MANAGEMENT OF FLAMMABLE MATERIALS

Bulky Waste	Construction waste	Waste Minimization	Junk
• Notification of the president and management (Municipality)			
Handling items that do not fit into standard waste collection systems	*Waste from construction, demolition, renovation and remodeling*	*Changing social patterns of consumption and production*	*Cleaning and maintenance of public spaces, neighborhoods and natural areas*

3. AUTONOMY IN BASIC SERVICES

Water Resources	Energy	Communication Systems	Infrastructure
• Installation of an existing generator at the pumping station			
Ensuring continuous access and effective management	*Ensuring and maintaining an independent, reliable, local energy supply*	*Installation of alternative networks for redundancy and consistency*	*Increasing the strength and resilience of infrastructure*

4. AWARENESS

Information	Fireproof Houses	Fire-Resistant Fields	Relevant Legislation
• Informing residents about Recycling • Informing residents about the action plan			• Update on the cleaning of plots
Informing & motivating behavior change towards prevention strategies	*Presentation of the concept of fire-resistant homes and buildings*	*Presentation of the concept of fire-resistant fields and crops*	*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://dock sse.org/tool/disaster-risk-reduction/

READINESS

Preparation for potential fire outbreaks to ensure quick and effective response

1. INFRASTRUCTURE & EQUIPMENT EVALUATION

Documentation

- Annual renewal of infrastructure map and information table

Mapping of data and allocation of relevant resources

Infrastructure Inspection

On-site thorough inspections of infrastructure and equipment

Repairs / Supplies

- Tank Connection
- "Covered" Faucet
- Basic Equipment in the Community Office

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

Use of Technology

- Installing a Camera or Smoke Detection Sensor

Leveraging technology to identify further vulnerabilities

2. FIRE DETECTION

Human Resources

- Recording 2-3 people on an annual basis

Ensuring volunteer commitment and availability

Viewpoints

- Houses with a view

Identification of suitable viewing points and possible patrol routes

High Risk Days

- Windy days / Empirically

Determination of days for performing actions for fire detection

Monitoring

- Home monitoring

Monitoring & performing patrols during high-risk days

3. EMERGENCY PLAN

Community Notification

- Use of the church bell
- Telephone Calls

Procedures for quick and effective updating

Gathering Points

- Outside the village church

Identification of assembly points for people and equipment

Moving Assistance

- Seven people need help

Identifying people who need assistance during evacuation

Roles & Responsibilities

- It remains to be determined

Assignment of coordination, equipment management and population relocation

4. INFORMATION AND TRAINING

Fire Protection Period

- Village President: community by word of mouth
- Association President: Facebook
- Viber Group

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

Urge

Disseminating the Community Action Plan and encouraging active participation

Educational Activities

Training seminars for basic skills and knowledge

Readiness Exercises

Organizing preparedness exercises aimed at improving response capabilities

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DIALOGUE & ACTION AGAINST WILDFIRES

Learning from Koromilia

The risk management process in Koromilia 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 strengthen 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, Koromilia was able to map critical points 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.

NETWORKS BEYOND THE COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

The case of Koromilia highlighted the power of networks that extend beyond its geographical boundaries. Links with nearby cities, such as Kalamata and Athens, proved crucial. Community members residing in these areas actively participated in the process, offering human and material resources when needed. This expanded collaboration significantly strengthened the community's capabilities, making it more resilient.

SOCIAL COHESION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Social cohesion was a cornerstone of the process. Members of the Koromilia community demonstrated an exceptional sense of ownership, clearly separating responsibilities at the individual, community and institutional levels. This approach allowed the community to take an active role in fire management, ensuring that all voices were heard and taken into account.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS AND RESILIENCE

The community responded immediately to the needs that arose from the process. It immediately proceeded to clean the fire hydrant and prepare basic infrastructure. It also organized monitoring during the dangerous days of the summer, proving that with a little guidance and knowledge, it is able to significantly increase its resilience to natural disasters.

Koromilia is a role model, demonstrating that even the smallest communities can be empowered and act effectively through collective processes. The use of local knowledge, social cohesion and expanded ties with neighboring areas offer a comprehensive model that can be applied to other areas.

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, Koromilia 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

- ☐ Strengthening Education and Information
- ☐ Organizing educational activities for fire management, with the participation of specialized agencies
- ☐ Continuous information on changes in legislation and residents' obligations
- ☐ Raising community awareness about the value of prevention

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.
- ☐ Once a group is created, investigate the possibility of certification by the Civil Protection, in order to increase the effectiveness of actions and strengthen cooperation with the competent Authorities.

Permanent Communication Channels with the Authorities

- ☐ Creating regular communication channels with the Municipality, the Fire Department and the Forestry Department, for better cooperation and faster response in cases of danger.
- ☐ Designating coordinators within the community who will ensure immediate and effective communication.

The completion of this study would not have been possible without the warm support and active participation of the community of Koromilia. 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 Koromilia, Mr. Theodoros Tserpes, to Mr. Periklis Argyropoulos who acted as a motivator and coordinator, to the members of the coordination committee and to all 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 local 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 Wildfires Project are: