

OP. 110 UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN FIRE RISK MANAGEMENT IN PORTUGAL: THE PERSPECTIVE OF MUNICIPAL EXPERTS

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Abstract: In the context of climate change, we are witnessing a significant increase in extreme fires globally, which is evident in size, duration, intensity, and impact. In Portugal, the year 2017 was notorious for fires and constitutes a striking example of this transformation due to the high social, economic, and environmental impact caused by fires.

Given that fires represent a problem with substantial social and economic repercussions, it is crucial to comprehend communities' role in mitigating rural fire risk. This research aims to assess the level of community awareness regarding the risk of rural fires in mainland Portugal from the perspective of local civil protection experts. The ultimate objective is to contribute to developing more effective policies and strategies to prevent and combat rural fires and identify the community's significant challenges in managing the risk of rural fires.

A concise closed-ended questionnaire was distributed to all mainland Portugal municipalities to collect information and data to pinpoint crucial aspects in preventing and managing rural fire risks. The questionnaire was yielding 212 responses. This sample represents 63% of the total municipalities in mainland Portugal, ensuring a confidence level exceeding 95% with a margin of error of 5%. Furthermore, experts from the national entities were consulted through the questionnaire to complement the findings from the municipal survey and provide others' opinions and perceptions.

The results demonstrate divergences in perceptions were identified between municipalities and experts. While 59.9% of municipalities consider the community to be well or very well-informed about the risk of rural fires, only 33.4% of experts share this opinion. The presented study aims to generate knowledge to develop more effective national policies and strategies for preventing and tackling rural fires in mainland Portugal.

Keywords: Community; Fire Risk Management; Preparedness; Municipalities