

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4235/09

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to the Commission

Subject: Forest fire prevention in the Prefecture of Attica

Exactly two years after the tragic fires in Greece, history is unfortunately repeating itself: once again catastrophic fires have devastated the forests of northern and eastern Attica, thereby depriving the Prefecture of its few remaining green 'lungs'.

Bearing in mind that in a communication of March 2009, the Commission had proposed a series of specific measures and mechanisms aimed at improving the Union's prevention, readiness and response capabilities in the event of disasters, such as fires, and recognising the dramatic reduction in forest cover in southern Europe, will the Commission say:

1. How well has the European preventive mechanism worked and to what extent have existing anti-fire mechanisms been set in motion this summer in southern Europe, bearing in mind that according to latest estimates by the European Forest Fire Information System, up to the middle of this year (2009) 200 000 hectares had been burnt in EU Member States, that is some 20 000 hectares more than in 2008?
2. Has any assessment been carried out of planned measures to create and operate a European training network to address disasters and for the early warning of the intervention and rehabilitation phases in the event of disasters, inter alia, through the Global Monitoring for the Environment and Security (GMES) initiative and the use of the European single emergency call number (112)?
3. What progress has been made in the execution of projects in Greece for the 2007-2013 period under the European Regional Fund and the Cohesion Fund to prevent and address risks, in particular as regards the Operational Programme for the Environment (2007-2013) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development as regards the restoration of forestry capacity and the introduction of preventive measures?
4. How does it view the information contained in a recent WWF Greece report (July 2009) condemning the failure to include fire brigade and civil protection group volunteers in the Greek framework? How does it view the accusations made by the Association of Fire Brigade Officials regarding shortages of personnel, shortcomings in material and technical infrastructures and in the critical sector of prevention? What information is available about the take-up rate and the use of the available Community aid resources by Greece to carry out preventive measures in 2008-2009?