

Auditing governance of wildland fire risks – the role of Supreme Audit Institutions

Conselheiros Maria dos Anjos Capote e Mário Serrano



8TH
INTERNATIONAL
WILDLAND FIRE
CONFERENCE

GOVERNANCE
PRINCIPLES:
Towards an
International
Framework

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Portugal and Spain have consistently been in the group of european countries with the higher incidence of fires

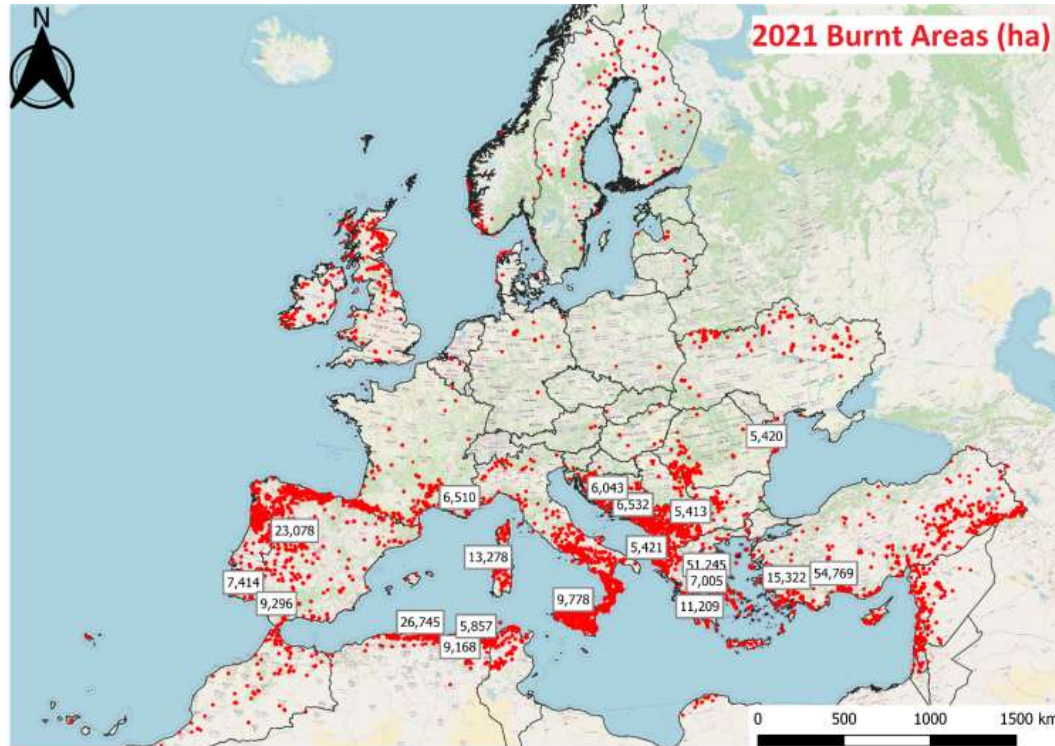


Figure 1. Burnt areas mapped during the 2021 fire season. Largest fires are indicated in ha.

Increasing intense forest fires



- **High risks for environment and sustainability**
- **Important economical and fiscal impact**

Tribunal de Contas

Conducted several audits, on:

- **The municipal strategic and operational plans to protect forest against fires**
- **The new national strategy to prevent and fight rural fires and the operational system to combat them (DECIR)**
- **The funding of Firemen Organisations by local authorities**
- **The use of funds to provide aid to victims of fires, notably as regards damages in their houses**

Tribunal de Contas

Audits on the municipal strategic and operational plans to protect the forest against fires

<https://www.tcontas.pt/pt-pt/ProdutosTC/Relatorios/RelatoriosAuditoria/Documents/2019/rel023-2019-2s.pdf>

- **Objectives:**

- ❖ Verify whether the plans are coherent with the applicable regulations and guidance
- ❖ Assess the adopted strategies and measures to protect the forests, notably whether resources are allocated to appropriate goals and used according to sound financial management principles

Tribunal de Contas

Audits on the municipal strategic and operational plans to protect the forest against fires

- *Recommendations:*

- Enhance the quality and effectiveness of the Plans, clarifying and strengthening the monitoring arrangements and responsibilities to ensure their implementation
- Strengthen the operability of local structures
- Design Plans that are fit to the specificities of each territory, including relevant and feasible activities
- Effectively monitor the physical and financial implementation of Plans and publish the results annually

Tribunal de Contas

Audit on the national strategy and system to prevent and fight fires (DECIR)

<https://www.tcontas.pt/pt-pt/ProdutosTC/Relatorios/RelatoriosAuditoria/Documents/2021/rel004-2021-2s.pdf>

- **Objectives:**

- ❖ **Examine the implementation and effectiveness of the measures included in the 2017 reform of the national strategy to prevent and fight rural fires** (rural fires include wildland ones but also those that affect nearby villages, persons and their properties)
- ❖ **Assess the functioning of the national system to combat fires, concerning the planification, organisation, coordination, operational command and performance of the human, ground and aerial fire-fighting means, as well as the information and communication systems used**

Tribunal de Contas

Audit on the national strategies and system to prevent and fight fires (DECIR)

- *Recommendations:*

- ❖ **Fully implement the 2017 reform** (mainly as concerns regional planning, operational structures yet to be put in place and coordination of civil protection agents)
- ❖ **Enhance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**
- ❖ **Manage the forest in a more active way** (discontinuity, vegetation and combustible materials management)
- ❖ **Improve the planning and coordination of operational resources management**
- ❖ **Reinforce an earlier fire combat and the aerial fire-fighting means**
- ❖ **Improve the integration and interoperability of fire related information and communication systems**

Tribunal de Contas

Audits on the funding of firemen organisations by local authorities

<https://www.tcontas.pt/pt-pt/ProdutosTC/Relatorios/RelatoriosAuditoria/Documents/2022/rel005-2022-2s.pdf>

- *Objectives:*

- ❖ Analyse and map the instruments to fund firemen organisations and their legal framework
- ❖ Assess whether those resources are applied on the appropriate goals and according to sound management principles

Tribunal de Contas

Audits on the funding of firemen organisations by local authorities

- *Recommendations:*

- ❖ Ensure a legal framework that allows an adjustment of the organisational model of firemen bodies so as to induce:
 - Territorial cohesion
 - Reinforced professionalisation and training of human resources
 - Adequate amounts of public funding
 - Appropriate roles and responsibilities in controlling the use of those funds

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Audits on the use of funds to provide aid to victims of fires, notably as regards damages in their houses

<https://www.tcontas.pt/pt-pt/ProdutosTC/Relatorios/RelatoriosAuditoria/Documents/2019/rel020-2019-2s.pdf>

<https://www.tcontas.pt/pt-pt/ProdutosTC/Relatorios/RelatoriosAuditoria/Documents/2022/rel004-2022-2s.pdf>

- **Objectives:**

- Determine whether the schemes applied to provide aid to victims were adequate, considering the origin of funds: solidarity donations in some cases and public funding in others
- Examine the applied internal control systems, including as regards integrity and fraud prevention
- Assess compliance, transparency and effectiveness of the use of those funds

Tribunal de Contas

Audits on the use of funds to provide aid to victims of fires, notably as regards damages in their houses

- ***Recommendations:***
 - Create a legal framework to regulate the use and control of solidarity donations
 - Introduce a coordinated system to plan and provide aid to victims of disasters, reducing the risks of overlaps, gaps, differences in criteria, conflicts of interests, fraud and lack of transparency

Joint Report of the SAIs of Portugal and Spain

prevention and fight against forest and rural fires

www.tcontas.pt/pt-pt/ProdutosTC/Relatorios/relatorios-isc/Documents/2023/relatorio_conjunto_tce_tcp.pdf

- ***Conclusions and Recommendations:***

- **Although Portugal and Spain have adopted strategies, plans and policies to prevent and fight wildland fires, both countries are continuously suffering intense fire situations**
- **There has been progress in the planning and implementation of operational means to extinguish fires**
- **There is a good level of cooperation and assistance between Portugal and Spain** (mainly when fighting fires close to borders between the countries)

Joint Report of the SAIs of Portugal and Spain

prevention and fight against forest and rural fires

- *Conclusions and Recommendations:*

- Even though, there is a need to improve:

- The planning processes
- The policies, measures and financial resources dedicated to fire prevention
- The active management of forests
- The articulation and coordination among different levels of administration and the several entities involved
- The integration, interoperability and timeliness of fire related information
- The modernisation of operational means, the capabilities and the integrated management of resources to combat fires, specially to face challenges of 6th generation wildland fires
- Professionalisation and appropriate funding of firemen organisations
- Awareness raising and alert activities next to populations

Thank you very much!