

Understanding Community Wildfire Preparedness and Needs in Switzerland

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Abstract:

Wildfires pose an urgent social problem in Europe due to demographic and climatic changes. As the threat increases, community preparedness has a critical role to play in mitigating the risk and easing the burden on civil protection personnel. This presentation focuses on wildfire awareness and preparedness among at-risk communities in Switzerland. Building on an online survey and interviews with residents in the Cantons of Bern, Wallis, Ticino and Graubünden, we examine the cultural, socioeconomic, political and environmental factors that influence risk perceptions, awareness raising and coping strategies. The results provide valuable insights into dominant narratives, local needs, motivations and vulnerabilities among different communities. These insights can assist official and community efforts to build wildfire resilience in Switzerland before the predicted threat becomes acute on the southern *and* northern sides of the Alps. They also contribute to a multi-year comparative study of different European countries as part of the SNSF-funded FiRES project.

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