

Brussels, 2 August 2007

## Forest fires: 2007 is worst July on record

***With the forest fire season barely started, provisional figures show that 3376 square kilometres of land has already been burned in 2007, compared to a total of 3585 square kilometres in 2006, with July 2007 one of the worst-ever months on record. These figures have been released by the European Forest Fire Information System, managed by the European Commission, which produces early warnings of fire risk and damage assessment.***

Following warnings of high fire risk at the end of June in countries such as Greece and Cyprus, the second half of July saw a sharp increase in fires and burnt areas in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Italy. Using satellite images to map all fires affecting an area of more than 50 hectares in these four countries alone showed a total of 2229 square kilometres of burnt land. Figures for some other countries that have experienced major fires, such as Turkey and Albania, have yet to be included in EFFIS.

EFFIS forecasts continued risk from forest fires for the days ahead and sends these forecasts to the Civil Protection and Forest Services of the Member States every day between 1 February and 31 October. The situation in South-West Europe, which had relatively moderate conditions in July, has changed dramatically, particularly in the south of the Iberian Peninsula and the Canary Islands. These two areas are experiencing increased fires, which have not yet been included in the EFFIS figures, and continued heightened risk.

Spain has, via the European Commission, activated the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters" that aims at providing a unified system of satellite imagery acquisition and delivery to those affected by natural or man-made disasters.

EFFIS is a meteorological and satellite based mapping system developed by the European Commission's in-house scientific arm, the Joint Research Centre (JRC). Its purpose is to provide Member States with daily fire risk warnings and subsequent damage assessments. In 2006, the European Parliament requested an extension of EFFIS services to provide information on the economic and social impacts of forest fires; this aspect is currently being developed.

Further information:

EFFIS: <http://effis.jrc.it/Home>

International Charter "Space and Major disasters":  
[http://www.disasterscharter.org/main\\_e.html](http://www.disasterscharter.org/main_e.html)