



## Bringing together Belgium's wildfire stakeholders to initiate the design of an integrated wildfire management and policy in Belgium

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Given the complex administrative, organisational and operational structure of Belgium, and acknowledging the limited and scattered wildfire expertise in this country, two of Belgium's universities (Ghent University and the University of Liège) took the initiative to bring together all Belgium's wildfire stakeholders in the light of the emerging wildfire risk for the very first time in the fall of 2025. This first assembly of the Belgian Wildfire Network (BWN) was further catalysed by the favourable wildfire conditions throughout the course of 2025, which made that there was also an increased interest from policymakers to make a start with a comprehensive wildfire policy for Belgium.

Designing such a policy or even setting nationwide priorities is complicated considerably by the fact that responsibilities, ownership and resources are scattered over numerous agencies, services and ministries at the national and regional levels. For that reason, together with the key stakeholders in the BWN, the involved academic partners suggested to move forward in shaping Belgium's integrated wildfire management in a scientifically supported way and define clear priorities and possible ways out. The latter was done by means of a white paper, entitled 'Towards scientifically supported and integrated wildfire management and policy in Belgium', identifying the current shortcomings in Belgium's wildfire policy and highlighting possible solutions and opportunities. More specifically, it calls for setting up methodologies, initiatives systems for wildfire data collection, risk, danger and fuel assessment, training, and increasing wildfire awareness that are scientifically supported, aligned with established approaches in nearby countries facing similar wildfire conditions, uniform across the country and involving a cross-boundary collaboration between similar agencies and services in the country's three different regions (Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia).

In this way, we hope to unite the limited wildfire expertise in Belgium and avoid that different systems are being developed independently in different regions of the country because this would not only complicate communication to the general public, but would also imply inefficient use of the limited means that are available to develop an integrated wildfire management policy for the country.

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Agentschap Natuur en Bos, Leefmilieu Brussel, Netwerk Brandweer, RéZonWal, Brandweer Brussel, Federal Public Service Interior - National Crisis Center, Federal Public Service Interior - Federal Services Governor Antwerp, Federal Public Service Interior - Federal Services Governor Limburg, Royal Meteorological Institute