



STRENGTHENING ALBANIA'S FIRE RISK MANAGEMENT AND SEARCH AND RESCUE CAPACITY (FRISC) PROJECT

The Validation Workshop

EU Technical Assistance Financing Facility (TAFF)
for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness



Funded by
the European Union



GFDRR
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery



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PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Project	Strengthening Albania's Fire Risk Management and Search and Rescue Capacity (FRISC) Project
Country	Albania
Duration	September 2024 – August 2026
Focus	Fire risk management
Key outputs:	Institutional review • Fire services roadmap • Risk-based resource planning • Wildfire assessment • Investment recommendations

Albania's fire and rescue system is operating in an environment that has changed more quickly than the system itself. Climate change, longer periods of fire danger, land-use transitions, increasing exposure in urban and peri-urban areas, and wider multi-hazard pressures are all placing greater demands on a service that must respond across wildfire, urban fire, rescue operations, accidents, technological incidents, and other emergencies.

The Strengthening Albania's Fire Risk Management and Search and Rescue Capacity (FRISC) project was launched to support the Government of Albania in building a more modern, risk-informed, and coordinated fire protection system. Financed by the European Union / Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO through the Technical Assistance Financing Facility for Prevention and Preparedness (TAFF) and implemented by the World Bank and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), the project aims to strengthen national and municipal capacities while laying the foundation for future investments in fire risk management.

The project combines technical analysis, institutional engagement, and knowledge sharing to support evidence-based decision-making. Its key outputs include a comprehensive institutional and capacity review of Albania's Fire Protection and Rescue Service, a national roadmap for strengthening fire protection and rescue capacities, a risk-informed resource planning methodology, technical guidance for infrastructure and equipment standardization, and recommendations to strengthen wildfire preparedness and operational readiness.

Beyond producing technical studies, FRISC seeks to establish a common framework for institutional reform, investment prioritization, and long-term capacity development. By bringing together national authorities, municipalities, development partners, and technical experts, the project supports a shared vision for strengthening Albania's resilience to fires and other emergencies while contributing to future World Bank investment planning in the sector.



THE VALIDATION WORKSHOP

A milestone towards strengthening Albania's fire protection and rescue system



The Validation Workshop of the FRISC project was held in Tirana on 21 May 2026. The event brought together 33 participants from national institutions, the Fire Protection and Rescue Service (MZSH), municipalities, technical agencies, development partners, and other stakeholders to review the main analytical and technical outputs prepared under the technical assistance.

Discussions focused on how the FRISC outputs can support modernization of Albania's fire protection and rescue system, including risk-informed planning, standardization, investment prioritization, wildfire preparedness, and coordination with the broader civil protection system.

The event was structured as an interactive technical dialogue. Presentations by Prepared International were followed by guided discussions, operational inputs from municipalities and fire services, and a final plenary focused on moving from analysis to implementation.

Workshop Participation

Participants included representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the General Directorate of MZSH, National Civil Protection Agency (NCPA), municipalities and local MZSH structures, relevant line ministries and technical agencies, the World Bank, DG ECHO / European Commission, United Nations Development Program, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Embassy of Switzerland / Swiss Cooperation, and other partners. The workshop also benefited from the participation of the Prizren Fire and Rescue Unit from Kosovo, which shared regional experiences and lessons learned.

Engagement with Ministry of Interior Leadership

Prior to the workshop, on 20 May 2026, the World Bank team held a preparatory meeting with Deputy Minister of Interior Mr. Xhemal Qefalia. The meeting discussed the relevance of FRISC to the MZSH reform agenda, and the need to mature priority investments, clarify budget implications, and strengthen institutional coordination.

KEY MESSAGES AND HIGHLIGHTS

A shared technical basis for strengthening Albania's fire protection, rescue, and wildfire management system

The workshop confirmed strong institutional and partner interest in using the FRISC outputs as a practical basis for strengthening Albania's fire protection, rescue, and wildfire management system. Discussions focused on how the project outputs provide a much-needed institutional review and contributed to standardization, risk-informed planning, and prioritized investments.

01 Use FRISC outputs as a basis for MZSH modernization.

The FRISC roadmap and guidance documents provide a common technical reference for moving from fragmented capacity development toward a more unified, professional, and risk-informed Fire Protection and Rescue Service.

02 Move from population-based criteria to risk-informed planning.

The capacity sizing methodology proposes complementing population ratios with risk exposure, geography, response times, access, industrial and transport risks, wildfire exposure, water supply, hydrants, and existing operational capacities.

03 Strengthen standardization for procurement and interoperability.

Guidance on stations, vehicles, equipment, modules, and operational requirements can support more coherent procurement, training, maintenance, logistics, and mutual support between municipalities.

04 Prioritize investments through a phased implementation pathway.

The investment analysis highlights the need to sequence support for stations, vehicles, modular equipment, personal protective equipment, training, and support systems, while linking financing opportunities to a coherent reform pathway.

05 Strengthen wildfire preparedness and operational readiness.

The wildfire analysis highlighted gaps in Incident Command System implementation, air-ground coordination, early warning, equipment, training, access routes, water supply points, and municipal preparedness.

06 Sustain institutional ownership and partner alignment.

The Ministry of Interior and the General Directorate of MZSH could lead the next phase of technical review, institutional follow-up, and coordination with municipalities, NCPA, line ministries, and international partners.



TECHNICAL SESSIONS

FRISC outputs discussed during the workshop

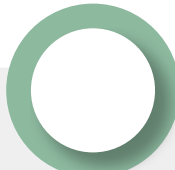
The technical sessions reviewed the principal outputs prepared under FRISC. The outputs were presented as guidance documents and analytical tools to support future sector planning, standardization, resource allocation, and investment decision-making.



FRISC outputs, key findings, and validation

The session presented the main FRISC outputs, including the fire risk management roadmap, capacity sizing work, wildfire analysis, station and equipment standardization guidance, and operational recommendations. These outputs confirmed that Albania's Fire Protection and Rescue Service requires a coherent modernization pathway, linking institutional reform, risk-based planning, standardization, investment prioritization, and operational preparedness.

Discussions highlighted uneven municipal capacities, including gaps in station infrastructure, fleet condition, equipment readiness, training, logistics, and coordination. Participants also emphasized the need for stronger institutional ownership and a clear pathway for using the outputs after project completion. It was clarified that the project produced guidance documents rather than formal standards. These documents can now serve as a common technical reference for institutional review, possible formal adoption, procurement planning, and future MZSH reform.



Risk-based fire resource planning methodology

The session demonstrated how risk-based planning can support more objective and transparent decisions on municipal fire and rescue capacities. The methodology proposes moving beyond population-based staffing and resource allocation criteria by also considering risk exposure, geography, terrain, road access, response times, settlement patterns, industrial and transport risks, wildfire exposure, water supply, hydrants, existing stations, vehicles, equipment, and personnel. The application and testing of the Austrian model in selected Albanian municipalities, including Patos, Mirdita, and Lezha, showed that municipalities with similar population levels may require different capacities because their operational environments and risk profiles differ substantially.

Participants confirmed the relevance of adapting capacity planning to local realities. The main recommendation is to use the methodology as an iterative tool for future staffing, station location, fleet composition, equipment planning, and phased investment decisions.



Investment needs and implementation priorities

The session discussed the scale of investment required to modernize Albania's fire protection and rescue system and the need to sequence implementation realistically. The capacity modeling work provided, for the first time, an indicative national investment envelope covering station infrastructure, vehicles, modular equipment, containers, personal protective equipment, training, and support systems. The findings showed that modernization should not focus only on vehicles, but also on station functionality, standardized equipment packages, procurement readiness, training capacity, logistics, and life-cycle maintenance.

Participants emphasized the need to align future financing with national priorities, avoid overlaps between projects, and ensure stronger coordination between national and municipal levels. Key recommendations included using the FRISC outputs to guide phased implementation, prioritizing critical operational gaps, and linking future financing opportunities, including AL-PACT and partner support, to a coherent reform pathway.



Wildfire preparedness and operational readiness

Albania is facing increasingly severe wildfire seasons, exposing significant gaps in prevention, preparedness, response capacity, and coordination. The wildfire session presented key findings from the analysis and field missions, highlighting weaknesses in wildfire response planning, Incident Command System (ICS) implementation, air-ground coordination, equipment and fleet capacity, training, early warning, water supply points, access routes, and use of technology. Participants also raised practical operational issues, including hydrants, reservoirs, helicopter water supply points, road corridors, communication with pilots, and coordination with local communities. The study emphasized the need to strengthen municipal wildfire preparedness, modernize response systems, and improve risk-informed planning. Key recommendations included nationwide ICS training, development of a Fire Early Warning System, strengthening of training arrangements through a National Fire Academy / Training Center, improved aerial-ground coordination, and further operationalization of EU-compatible Ground Forest Fire Fighting capacities.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES RAISED

Operational and municipal representatives provided practical inputs on constraints affecting response capacity at the local level. These inputs linked the FRISC technical outputs to operational realities across Albania's fire protection and rescue services.

- **Fire station infrastructure remains uneven.**

Several services operate from deteriorated, inadequate, or rented premises or lack purpose-built station facilities.

- **Vehicle and equipment gaps remain significant.**

Shortages include fire engines, aerial ladder capacity, rescue vehicles, personal protective equipment (PPE), water-carrying capacity, and specialized equipment for complex risk areas.

- **Water supply and access are critical constraints.**

Hydrants, reservoirs, access roads, fire corridors, and water supply points are essential for both urban fire response and wildfire operations.

- **Training and logistics require stronger arrangements.**

Participants referred to systematic training, a National Training Center or Fire Academy, standardized equipment packages, and clearer readiness procedures.

- **Volunteer and professional capacities should be differentiated by context.**

Paid volunteer units may complement rural or dispersed areas, while professional firefighters remain essential in dense urban and complex risk settings.

- **Implementation needs clearer institutional coordination.**

Follow-up should align with broader civil protection reforms and clarify coordination among the Ministry of Interior, the General Directorate of Fire Protection and Rescue Service (MZSH), The National Civil Protection Agency (NCPA), municipalities, line ministries, and partners.



FROM ANALYSIS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Indicative areas for institutional follow-up

The final plenary discussion focused on how FRISC technical outputs could be translated into institutional follow-up, operational improvements, investment planning, and coordinated partner support. Participants identified several areas requiring further consideration by the Ministry of Interior, the General Directorate of Fire Protection and Rescue Service, municipalities, relevant institutions, and partners.



Institutionalizing FRISC outputs

Review, validate, and consider the formal use of FRISC guidance documents as a technical basis for policy, planning, procurement, investment decisions, and future MZSH reform.



Standardizing fire protection and rescue capacities

Advance standardization of vehicles, equipment, modules, station requirements, acceptance procedures, maintenance logic, and procurement specifications.



Applying risk-informed resource planning

Further apply and refine the risk-based fire and rescue resource planning methodology, using improved municipal data, incident statistics, response-time information, and local risk assessments.



Strengthening wildfire preparedness

Improve access routes, water supply points, hydrant mapping, aerial-ground coordination, local preparedness arrangements, early warning, and Ground Forest Fire Fighting capacities.



Clarifying coordination arrangements

Clarify roles and coordination channels among the Ministry of Interior, the General Directorate of MZSH, NCPA, municipalities, line ministries, operational structures, and partners.



Aligning partner support and financing

Coordinate future partner support, avoid overlaps between projects, identify financing opportunities, and consider a donor-oriented technical discussion around prioritized investment needs.

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