



prevention,  
preparedness,  
response to  
natural  
and man-made  
disasters

للوقاية  
من الكوارث الطبيعية  
والناجمة عن النشاط البشري  
والاستعداد  
والاستجابة لها

prévention,  
préparation,  
réponse  
aux désastres  
naturels et  
humains

pprd  
south  
programme

## PRESS RELEASE

### PPRD South pushes Mediterranean cooperation on investigation of wildfire causes

Five days in Beirut will be dedicated to new techniques and tools for investigating causes of fires during a training course organized by the EU-funded Programme on Civil Protection and the Lebanese Civil Defence. From 28 March to 1st April, 20 Lebanese fire-fighters, together with Italian experts from Fire-fighters and Forest Corps will discuss and learn how to examine a fire scene, collect evidences, make hypothesis on the origin and causes of fire and simulate fire scenarios.

“Developing Lebanese fire-fighters’ investigation skills is essential”, says Nabil Salhani, Director of the Training Department in the Lebanese Civil Defence. “Ensure that police is adequately assisted in apprehending the perpetrators of malicious firing is important as it is to determine the origin and causes of all fire incidents to permit Civil Defence dispose of proper fire statistics and find out where fire prevention measures are most necessary around the country”.

Participants will explore software based techniques for the simulation of fire in confined spaces such as the use of virtual fire rooms created through digital pictures taken on a fire scene. These help simulate what has happened on the basis of available evidences.

The fire-fighters will be also guided through the various stages of a fire investigation in open or confined spaces, from field survey to interviewing eye witnesses, from locating the fire source to collection, evaluation of evidence and preparation of a report. The last day of the training will be dedicated to a field exercise in a forest area recently affected by a wildfire during which participants will simulate a complete fire investigation process.

Due to climate change effects, wildfires are a growing problem in Lebanon. According to the Ministry of Environment and the Central Administration of Statistics, since 2004 Lebanon assisted to a sharp increase in the number of forest fires and of hectares of burnt land. In 2004, 583 hectares of forest were burnt, while in 2007 - the worst year ever for wildfires in Lebanon - 4,000 hectares of land were ravaged with more than 21,000 interventions by the Civil Protection. During the months of October and November 2007 the total cost of losses due to forest fires was estimated at 24 million €, 1.25 % of the total GDP of the country.

The five-day training course falls within the PPRD (Program for the Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-Made Disasters) South Technical Assistance actions. Following a specific request by the Programme Partner Countries, PPRD South designs and implements ad-hoc technical assistance activities such as the study visit to the Swedish Civil Protection by Palestinian and Jordanian experts, a national workshop on “ Strengthened Civil Protection system to better manage emergencies in Tunisia”. It also organises the Training Workshop on “How to use and develop the PPRD South Risk Atlas” in Egypt or the study visit by Montenegrin experts to Slovenia on “Standard Operational Procedures for the implementation of the single call number 112”.

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A project implemented by the “PPRD South Managing Consortium” grouping the Italian Civil Protection Department, as leader, the Civil Protection Authorities of Algeria, Egypt and France and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR).

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This project is funded by the European Union

The European Commission is the EU’s executive body.

“The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders”.