



# net risk work

**Communication Framework for a  
Forest Risk Facility Strategy**

**“Connect – Collect – Exchange”**

Enhancing the resilience and adaptive capacity of European forest landscapes by promoting intelligent handling of natural disturbance related risks as an integral part of sustainable forest management.

# European Forest Risk Facility – FRISK – Communication Framework

## Plan Summary

This FRISK Strategic Communications Plan outlines actionable objectives and an implementation approach to guide communicators and others in designing, preparing and executing strategic communications about the FRISK Strategy. Communications and outreach work will be conducted throughout the coming years by FRISK members, the NetRiskWork project and partners to advance key messages about the philosophy of the FRISK Strategy leading to progress towards the vision in the context of the FRISK goals – ***Resilient Forests, Risk Adapted Communities and Safe & Effective, Forest Crisis Response*** under the motto:

**“Connect-Collect-Exchange”**

### OBJECTIVES

- Educate and inform stakeholders about the importance of Resilient Forests, Risk Adapted Communities and Safe, Effective, Forest Crisis Response and how collaborative efforts can address and resolve forest risk issues, including the ecological benefits and impacts of disturbance factors.
- Inform and educate stakeholders about the need for understanding risk, the trade-offs associated with risk-based decisions and the willingness to take short-term risks for long-term gains.
- Inform and educate stakeholders about forest risk and disturbances and how agencies and organizations are working together through collaborative efforts across boundaries and with community engagement to reduce the impacts of disturbances on forests and communities.
- Create a useful database of information tools and consistent messages about the FRISK Strategy approach to achieving the vision and goals based on collaboration and best science.

### ACTIONS

#### Communications Consistency

Ensure consistency in all communications and key messaging, internally and externally in a timely, accurate and proactive manner.

- Continue to conduct ongoing informal analysis of known and potential audiences to create and adapt appropriate messages for internal agency and organizational use as well as external use.
- Keep consistent “look and feel” throughout all current and future dissemination methods to promote recognition of the FRISK Strategy and collaborative efforts to achieve the vision and goals.
- Share progress and accomplishments of FRISK implementation.

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## References

- FRISK Business Plan
- Wildland Fire Executive Council (USA)
- A National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (FEMA)

## Purpose of this Document

*In order to effectively implement a pan-European Forest Risk Facility network the development of a unified communication guidance and direction document is critical.*

The Communication Framework for the European Forest Risk Facility is targeted for use by individuals, agencies, organizations, governmental bodies, forest administrations and interested stakeholders to use as a roadmap for effective communication and collaboration activities related to the FRISK strategy. The intent is to provide timely information, implementation updates and feedback opportunities to enable all stakeholders to understand and support the vision of the European Forest Risk Facility.

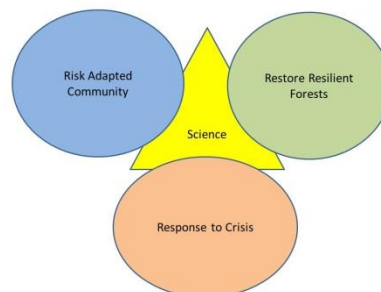
The FRISK Strategy is an all-forest policy that reaches across jurisdictional lines, ownership types and borders. Organisations involved in forest risk and crisis management should work together as collaborative partners, focused on the objectives at hand regardless of their home unit or organization. This guidance is intended to support, simplify and facilitate communication efforts while recognizing and respecting that each organization has its own unique protocol, information distribution methods and communication systems.

Communications among the many individuals and organizations involved in the FRISK network must be consistent, clear, continual, and encourage discussion and an exchange of ideas. This Communication Framework highlights goals, objectives, and core principles, provides overarching messages, suggests a number of actions and products, and concludes with potential methods to evaluate success.

Effective communication is an on-going process. It is anticipated that while the Framework will endure, updates on the messages will be adapted to meet the current situation.

## Elements of a FRISK Forest Risk Management Strategy:

### Elements of a FRISK Strategy



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## Methodology

The European Forest Risk Facility, the FRISK-GO and the NetRiskWork projects need a communications group, with members from the FRISK Nodes and networks, the FRISK Secretariat and related partners and stakeholders to serve as the FRISK Strategy Communications Workgroup.

Initial group discussions in the Freiburg workshop (5/2017) focused on the best practices and procedures in communications and defined strategic and tactical outcomes.

Background information about the FRISK Strategy is provided at [www.friskgo.org](http://www.friskgo.org)

## Goals, Objectives and Principles for the Communication Framework

### Goals

As defined in the tasking, the Framework is designed to meet three overarching communication goals:

Information, Organizational Communication and Collaboration, and Implementation. The intent of these goals is briefly outlined below:

- **Information:** To keep stakeholders, interested parties, and the public informed of progress in the development of the European Forest Risk Facility and its strategy.
- **Organizational Communication and Collaboration:** Facilitate development and implementation of organizational communication processes that enhance and sustain collaboration among stakeholders toward development and implementation of the FRISK vision.
- **Implementation:** Provide management and oversight options for communication efforts during implementation of the Forest Risk Facility.

### Objectives

The strategic communication objectives are focused on:

- Creating a climate where key audiences are thoroughly informed about the basic tenants of the European Forest Risk Facility in order to be aware of the benefits and relevance to their program and;
- Providing stakeholders the opportunity to engage in ongoing dialogue in order to be included in the process to the maximum extent possible.

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## Principles

Such a climate will be created through commitment to the following core principles:

- Leaders at all levels will participate in communications efforts during all phases of the FRISK development.
- Participating individuals and organizations will utilize recommended best practices for communication and collaboration.
- Process transparency will serve as the “golden rule.”
- Aggressive distribution of information will be on-going.
- Meaningful and timely opportunities for stakeholder involvement will occur during all phases in order to sustain collaboration among individuals and organizations.
- Decision-making will be empowered by active participation of the diverse communities across the landscape of forest risk and resilience management.

Full success of this effort will only be accomplished through the combined efforts of leaders, subject matter experts, and stakeholders. While the process must respect established roles and responsibilities for decision-making, it is imperative that the entire community of stakeholders be given a voice in the process.

To maintain consistent messaging and to ensure that stakeholders have equal opportunity to participate, communicators will be provided with the core principles of communication, overarching messages and a number of suggested actions and products that can be easily adapted to their unique communication environments. Long-term tactics are discussed under Implementation of the Communication Framework below.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Communication is the responsibility of every employee or individual or network member involved. This responsibility extends beyond senior managers and officials, those designated to serve as official spokespeople, or subject matter experts who have been recognized as effective communicators. By virtue of association with the European Forest Risk Facility, individuals will serve as ambassadors for the overall goals.

The following positions have critical roles and responsibilities:

- **EFI Representatives and FRISK Secretariat:** Serve as key contacts for agency leadership, overseeing and coordinating communication, collaboration, and stakeholder activities within their respective organisations.

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- **FRISK Nodes Representatives:** Provide advice for coordinated national to regional level forest risk management leadership, direction, and oversight in support of the FRISK Secretariat.
- **Agency or Organization Communication Points of Contact:** Typically, this will be an individual(s) in External Affairs, Public Affairs or a group's communication person, or the motivated and designated FRISK point of contact. It is critical that there be designated point(s) of contact to facilitate organizational specific communications, serve as communication consultants for designated spokespersons for the FRISK Strategy, and to coordinate with senior level officials within the home organization about progress in the communications and collaboration arena. (For example: tracking presentations and delivery to key audiences.) Organizational Point of Contacts, in accordance with their specific guidelines will assist and facilitate designated spokesperson along with informing key audiences, including media and elected officials as appropriate.
- **Designated spokesperson(s):** Credible spokespersons will be chosen by respective administrations, organizations, and groups and these individuals should be well versed in the FRISK Strategy, the principles of forest risk management, disturbance ecology and forest resilience, as well as communication strategies and techniques.
- **Participants in the FRISK Development Process:** Regardless of their individual or group role, all participants in the FRISK process are established leaders known for their expertise and commitment to the FRISK Strategy. As such, participants are requested to assist in the motivating communications effort by recognizing and supporting that communications is the responsibility of all individuals locally, regionally and nationally.

As the FRISK Strategy continues to evolve it is anticipated that forest risk and management for resilience will become a part of our daily conversations.

### Messages

The cornerstone of any communication effort is a set of consistent, compelling messages for use in all proactive and reactive communication. Following are the overarching messages for the Implementation Strategy for the European Forest Risk Facility.

These messages are designed to meet the following criteria:

- **Coincide with and not contradict agency, administration, interagency, intergovernmental, or organization's messages.** It is critical that the communities involved in the FRISK Strategy speak with one voice. The FRISK messages are designed to complement existing messages.
- **Allow for customization.** These messages are a guide, not a script. Users are encouraged to provide additional, local detail to ensure the messages touch audiences in a relevant, credible way.

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**Include a call to action.** In addition to educating, messages should motivate the audiences to act on what they have learned.

**Answer the questions why, how and what.**<sup>1</sup> Categorizing messages in this way will help users recall the messages during appropriate situations. The messages below are presented in the traditional format of a Key Message followed by Supporting Points.

Spokespeople are reminded to use clear text and language and to explain the FRISK Strategy using the “five w’s and the h” of journalism (who, what, when, where, why and how), with particular emphasis on the “why” and the “how” for this project. Tell the story of the FRISK Strategy, of what’s happening. We do not need to define everything that is going on.

**Messages** are not intended to be a script, but are to serve as a guide for communicators to focus on the key themes of the FRISK Strategy. Messages are general concepts that can be incorporated into discussions, print materials, and other resources used in communication, education, information and collaborative discussions.

**Supporting points** provide detail for the messages and enable individuals to further explain the identified topic and reach audiences on a personal level.

### Messages for the European Forest Risk Facility Strategy

#### WHY?

**Because resilient forests are stable forests. Mixed, diverse, continuous cover forestry is the future so that European forests and woodlands can continue to deliver products and ecosystem services.**

#### What is the FRISK Strategy?

The FRISK Strategy is an ongoing effort by European, national, state and local forest administrations, private forest owners and non-government organizations to address growing forest risk challenges in Europe and beyond.

#### Forest disturbances are a dynamic process.

Fire seasons, for instance, are becoming longer, with larger wildfires that are more difficult to put out. In the light of Climate Change, forest disturbances are becoming more frequent and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en)

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more complex. Increasing the diversity and resilience of our woodlands is the only way to reduce the uncertainty of the future.

The FRISK Strategy represents the kind of creative thinking and cooperation that will be needed to meet the challenges of more complex conditions of forest risks. The Strategy promotes safely and effectively responding to disturbances, when needed; using disturbance ecology science where allowable; managing natural resources; and as a forest and land managers, living with forest risks. Forest risks must be managed across appropriate forest landscapes, which are often fragmented into many ownership types and political jurisdictions. An “all-lands” approach is needed and the FRISK Strategy addresses forest risk challenges by restoring resilient forest landscapes.

### **The FRISK Strategy is about more than crisis response.**

Forest risk is more than a forest management and operations problem, it is often a larger land management and even societal issue. To achieve workable solutions, a strategy must ensure the human dimension is accorded equal weight with the physical and ecological science dimensions of forest risk. The FRISK Strategy emphasizes restoring resilient forest landscapes and promoting risk-adapted communities and encourages private forest owners and communities to assume responsibilities for making their properties resilient.

### **No one strategy can solve all the problems faced by Europe’s forest community.**

The FRISK Strategy will provide a common basis for thoughtfully approaching the complexities of forest risks across Europe and determining the best course of action. A key to a FRISK strategy is its inclusiveness – its ability to accommodate the wide diversity of Europe, recognizing a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach does not work across the European countries and regions. It is better to have one cohesive strategy developed with the participation of state and local forest organizations, rather than different strategies from different organizations. The FRISK Strategy will build on past efforts to direct forest risk management across Europe.

### **The FRISK Strategy relies on people working together: Connect-Collect-Exchange.**

A workable strategy must include and define the varying roles and responsibilities of forest managers at all levels and determine how those levels blend and work together. Forest administrations and agencies need to cooperate and be respectful of each others’ process to work collaboratively for the good of all. A Pan-European FRISK Strategy must recognize the differences and tensions that exist among partners and stakeholders and why those differences exist. Success depends on stronger relationships. An effective unifying FRISK strategy must guide all organizations to recognize and accept each others’ management differences and promote a cohesive response to forest risk management challenges across all jurisdictions, ownership types and countries.

### **The FRISK Strategy seeks to reflect the values and concerns of the public and all engaged stakeholders.**

The problems created by forest risks affect all lands and all levels. Therefore, the solutions and options must be collective, shared and strategic. The FRISK Strategy must engage the public, a ‘from-the-ground-up’ effort. Forest risk management officials, the public and all



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levels of administrations will be actively involved. Solutions will come from all stakeholders. The strategy is designed to better align national level decision-making with regional and local interests.

### Audiences

Audiences are those people, groups, organizations, agencies or other levels of forest administrations and owners who affect, are affected by, or have a relationship to the issue at hand. Knowing and understanding that relationship will help in customizing messages and strategies for reaching each audience.

This initiative considers both internal and external audiences, as well as the people who influence those audiences. Audiences for the FRISK Strategy are defined as follows:

- Local, state, and private forest administrations / associations
- Nongovernmental organizations and constituent groups.
- Forest policy makers.
- Citizens / informed individuals
- Academia.

For the partners involved in the crafting of the FRISK Strategy it is critical that messaging to their members and employees is direct and effective because to have consistent communication with external audiences, those involved in the FRISK Strategy must be sure to communicate effectively with the internal audiences. At the same time it must be recognized that several of the internal groups have peers that are external and should not be overlooked – the external distribution of information should not be limited to the policy makers and the individual citizens but to others we work with.

### Collaboration Tips and Resources

Collaborative participation must be as inclusive and equitable as possible. In addition to resources from the participating administrations, agencies, organizations and groups, there are multiple resources about effectively collaborating with partners.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2, <http://www.iap2.org/> see practitioner tools) offers a wealth of suggestions for effective collaboration with stakeholders. One way to view collaboration may be to view the following participatory steps:

- **Inform:** Receives objective information to assist in understanding the problem and alternatives.
- **Consult:** Contributes ideas and comments.
- **Involve:** Participates at key times throughout the process to ensure concerns and aspirations are consistently heard and understood.

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- **Collaborate:** Participation in every aspect of the process, including development of alternatives and identification of the preferred alternative.
- **Empower:** Participation in the final decision

### **“Branding” the FRISK Strategy**

The FRISK Strategy will benefit from communications efforts that exhibit a unifying set of messages, symbols, and overall “look and feel.” This will allow the diverse FRISK Strategy messengers and stakeholders (particularly agencies and organizations) to speak with a unified voice, supported by consistent products and materials (templates, logo, colour scheme, slogan, etc.) The FRISK Strategy is a concept and as such it is suggested that graphic branding be considered and samples provided in a communications toolbox.

### **Tactical Tools**

Recognizing and respecting that each organization has its own unique protocol and information distribution methods, the Communication Framework can serve as a model for integrating FRISK strategy messages and priorities within existing communications systems. The following tactical tools are recommended for any communications professional, public affairs officer, organizations as a whole or any appropriate messenger to use when communicating about forest risk and disturbance in their daily work. They are divided into “internal” and “external” categories, but many of the tools may be appropriate for both. While some items are merely recommended tactics, a number of these items will be produced and compiled into a FRISK Strategy Communications Toolkit to offer template materials and tools that are easy to use and customize while providing a consistent pan-European messaging platform.

### **INTERNAL AUDIENCES**

#### **Resources and Collaterals**

- Briefing papers
- Fact sheets
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Key messages and Message Map
- Key congressional contacts
- “Elevator speech”
- PowerPoint presentation template/slides
- Detailed list of stakeholders by organization
- Sample tweets (Twitter)
- Sample Facebook posts

#### **Outreach**

- E-mail blasts
- Podcasts

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- Webcast for communicators to introduce collateral tools
- Legislative Outreach
- Local elected official outreach
- Specialist Chat – Forest Risk Experts / Specialists video
- Establish a “My Forest FRISK Strategy” working group neighbourhood.
- Articles & reports submitted to agency publications
- Articles/blurbs written for field-level awareness published in applicable publications and electronic mediums.

### **EXTERNAL AUDIENCES**

#### **Media Relations, Resources and Events**

- Webcast press conference
- Face-to-face briefings of key officials
- News releases
- Podcasts
- One-pager on key points of FRISK Strategy
- Presentations based on template

#### **Social Media and Public Relations**

- Regular (weekly) Twitter/Facebook posts around stakeholder channels
- Coordination with risk prevention/awareness weeks/months throughout calendar year

### **Implementation Strategy**

For sustainability of the FRISK Strategy over time, current communication operating procedures in place within all agencies and organizations will be utilized to provide information to employees and members. Administrations and agencies and other collaborators are expected to create and implement their own communication plans to disseminate FRISK Strategy information (see Roles and Responsibilities section). To the extent possible, communication with stakeholders will be through established stakeholder organizations’ sources and channels. Appendix xy offers a list of identified communications contacts at various agencies and organizations that are in a position to effectively broadcast meaningful FRISK Strategy conversations. While this list is not exhaustive, it is meant to serve as a foundational network of messengers that can reach out through various groups and channels, creating a ripple effect and extending the reach of the FRISK network and vision.

A more formal group of communication professionals (from a cross-section of appropriate agencies, organizations and groups) is needed to work on communications during the establishment phase of the FRISK Strategy. Key messages from the FRISK Go and NetRiskWork projects and the FRISK establishment phase will need to be developed and disseminated. The group will support and facilitate communication originated by stakeholders with communication tools, information, and technical assistance. It will work with the FRISK network nodes who will be responsible for their own outreach to their stakeholders within their regions or field of expertise. This level of technical assistance will be important to support stakeholder organization communication efforts.

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## Conclusion

With the FRISK Vision for resilient and diverse forest lands, this framework was created to support the FRISK Strategy process with a focus on the first phase of the FRISK establishment, the creation of a FRISK Secretariat and FRISK network nodes. The framework acts as a guide, to support three overarching communication outcomes: **Information dissemination, Organizational Communication and Collaboration, and Implementation.** The guiding principle of the communication framework approach is that different stakeholder groups can best communicate about the FRISK Strategy to their own constituents using their own established communication systems. Leveraging this is key to successfully communicating the FRISK Strategy to the impacted stakeholders, both external and internal.

Communications and the directions set by this document is a critical part of the FRISK Strategy efforts – without it there will not be an understanding or buy-in by the people who fund these efforts, support these efforts, implement these efforts or are the ultimate customer of these efforts, the woodlands, the forest owners and the citizens of Europe.