

Pau Costa Foundation: fostering international engagement of wildfire management and research

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Abstract

Every year there are new evidences of changes in the wildfire trends: wildfires are becoming more extreme and destructive around the world (e.g. Australia 2015-2016, Chile 2017, Portugal 2017 and United States 2017, 2018, Greece 2018), natural fire regimes are changing (Turco et al., 2018) and fire seasons are getting longer (Castellnou 2018). Researchers are working to better understand these new patterns. However, the trends are difficult to validate and the scientific knowledge is slower than management needs to efficiently prevent, respond and mitigate wildfires.

Collaborative work is fundamental to identify solutions and to reach out policy makers and society with the right messages and call to actions (Weir et al., 2017). Fire research and management are closer than have ever been in the last 20 years. Yet in many regions of the world, for example in Europe, collaborations are not solid enough to have one single voice to address the new wildfire challenges together.

Since 2011, the Pau Costa Foundation (PCF) serves as a coordination platform and contact point for exchanging knowledge on fire ecology and wildfire and crisis management at a European level and internationally. The Foundation works for and with the fire community to support the exchange of science, lessons learned and experiences from landscape management to crisis management. Moreover, making the existing knowledge accessible to other regions and helping to develop sustainable, efficient and useful research and innovation projects and services.

The objective of the present study is to analyse the current gaps and opportunities to engage landscape and fire managers in R+D+i. This is done by analysing the outcomes from a series actions carried out by PCF to engage different actors of fire community in projects that tackle socio-ecological challenges at different scales, local, regional and global. To complement the analysis, an online survey was conducted through the PCF network and social media in order to obtain specific feedback on how different types of actions impact the R+D+i collaborations of the fire community. The survey was completed by 232 anonymous participants between February and March of 2019.

The results presented focus on (1) the identification of essential aspects that should be considered for increasing the effectiveness of R+D+i collaborations, (2) the topics that are perceived for being better addressed by R+D+i according to the different actors, (3) identification of opportunities for enhancing collaboration within the fire community. The recommendations presented take also into consideration the role of boundary spanners or facilitator entities (or individuals) that have successfully connected management and research in other disciplines (Meadow et al., 2015; Safford et al., 2017; Wall et al., 2017).

References

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