

Minutes

of the 12th meeting of the CTIF Volunteer Firefighters Commission

24/09/2024

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Participants: 30 participants from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Norway, Romania and Slovenia

Country	Organisation	First Name	Last Name	Remarks
Austria	Austrian Firebrigade Association (ÖBFV)	Raphael	Koller	Minutes
Belgium	CTIF Vice-President	Luc	Faes	
Bulgaria	National Association of Volunteers in Republic Bulgaria (NAVRB)	Martin	Georgiev	
Bulgaria	General directorate "Fire safety and civil protection" - MoI	Ralica Slavcheva	Todorova	
Estonia	Estonian Rescue Association	Piia	Kallas	
Estonia	Estonian Rescue Association	Hendrik	Tali	
Estonia	Estonian Rescue Board	Merike	Tammearu	
Finland	The Finnish National Rescue Association (SPEK)	Petri	Jaatinen	
France	Fédération Nationale des Sapeurs-Pompiers de France	Angélique	Friedrich	
Germany	Deutscher Feuerwehrverband	Thomas	Wittschurky	
Germany	Deutscher Feuerwehrverband	Christoph	Weltecke	Chair
Greece	Hellenic Volunteer Firefighters Association (VFU)	Pavlos	Kokkos	
Greece	Hellenic Volunteer Firefighters Association (VFU)	Serafeim	Tsiougris	
Greece	Hellenic Fire Corps	Alexios	Roukos	
Greece	Hellenic Fire Corps	Christina	Chryssikou	
Hungary	Director Budapest fire association	Oszkár	Cziva	
Italy	Associazione Italiana Vigili del fuoco Volontari	Robert	Zanin	
Luxembourg	Fédération Nationale des Pompiers	Marc	Mamer	
Netherlands	Brandweer Twente	Karin	Groenewegen	
Netherlands	Vakvereniging Brandweer Vrijwilligers	Ronald	Kraan	
Netherlands	Expertisebureau risicobeheer	Philippine	Stevens	
Netherlands	Brandweer Nederland	Sanaâ	El Mourabit	
Netherlands	Brandweer Amsterdam-Amstelland	Jos	Laumen	
Norway	Eidfjord fire service	Arne	Bu	
Romania	Harghita County Volunteer Firefighter's Association	Albert	Csaba	
Romania	Harghita County Volunteer Firefighter's Association	Lucian	Cebuc	
Romania	Harghita County Volunteer Firefighter's Association	George	Secareanu	
Slovenia	Firefighting Association of Slovenia	Tomaž	Vilfan	
Slovenia	Gasilska zveza Slovenije	Janja	Kramer Stajnko	
Slovenia	Gasilska zveza Slovenije	Janko	Cerkvenik	

1. Welcome and Opening

Chairman WELTECKE welcomed the members of the commission in Amsterdam. He stated that all the participating member states are united by the shared commitment to developing the volunteer fire service. He noted that more and more countries are joining this commission to exchange and discuss relevant topics. He thanked the organizers of this meeting and looked back to an interesting visit of the oldest, but newly renovated, fire station “Dirk” in Amsterdam.

FEU President Stefan WEVERS welcomed the participants in a video call. He highlighted the strong collaboration between CTIF and FEU and the focus of FEU on Leadership (e.g. Officer development program. ODP). Although the fire service differs, they are united by a shared passion to fighting fires.

Director Fred HEERINK extended a warm welcome the commission in a video message.

CTIF Vice-President Luc FAES, representing Vice-President Christophe MARCHAL, underlined the importance of this commission. He presented the new “CTIF EXPO” Magazine.

A minute of silence was held for deceased firefighters from Austria, Italy and Portugal.

2. Introduction of new commission-members

The representatives of Romania and Hungary presented the System of volunteer fire service in the respective countries.

Romania presented a video showcasing various activities. Fire Service is organized at the provincial level. The provincial fire service associations start to connect with each other, but it is too early to present a formal report. Fire service is responsible for fighting fires, natural disasters and other emergencies.

Hungary gave an overview of the fire service. The Hungarian Firefighter Association (HFA) consists of 767 voluntary Fire Brigades, 60 Municipality fire brigades and 72 Industrial Fire Brigades. (*File: 2024_HU_Organisation.pdf*).

3. Insurance and social security for members of voluntary fire brigades

The participants were asked to present about insurance social security for members of voluntary fire brigades. The question is, if there is a difference between professional firefighters and volunteers.

Netherlands: The switch from insurance to risk management was presented. By Director Philippine STEVENS. There was a mismatch between coverage and expectations. New uniform/national terms & conditions were created, and an expert centre was set up for implementation.

(*File: 2024_NL_Insurance and social security.pdf*)

Germany: Volunteer firefighters who suffer an accident while on duty therefore receive the same cover as employees. The accident insurance funds of the German federal states (which are responsible for compensating volunteer firefighters) often grant additional individual benefits to injured firefighters following a work related accident.

(File: 2024_DE_Insurance and social security.pdf)

Slovenia: By a law, municipalities are responsible for covering the insurance of volunteer firefighters (also professional). The quality and extent of insurance coverage for firefighters vary across the state. Future challenges are to take over the insurance by the state (municipalities would be relieved) and to set up a unique insurance program for all firefighters.

(File: 2024_SI_Insurance and social security.pdf)

Hungary: Firefighting and technical rescue are a state task. Insurance coverage applies to voluntary fire brigades under the professional supervision of the professional disaster prevention body during the intervention, as well as for the duration of their participation in documented exercises organized by themselves and the professional disaster prevention bodies.

(File: 2024_HU_Insurance and social security.pdf)

Romania: Professional firefighters are part of the army, while private (company) firefighters are insured as employees of the company. For insurance of volunteer fire fighters the municipality is responsible. Not every volunteer fire fighter is adequately insured.

Luxembourg: There are differences of insurance coverage due to the organization of the fire and rescue service of Luxembourg (difference between the "Corps Grand-Ducal Incendie & secours - CGDIS" and the "Clubs", which bring volunteers and professionals together. Activities of CGDIS are fully insured.

(File: 2024_LU_Insurance and social security.pdf)

Greece: In case of an accident during training or on duty, volunteer firefighters are covered by social security of their basic job. The accident is considered to have taken place as they were in their main job. In case of an accident during basic training or on duty, hospital and medical care is provided to Volunteer Firefighters at the expense of the State. But volunteer firefighters have no access to Armed Forces hospitals (Career fire fighters have access).

(Files: 2024_GR_Insurance and social security.pdf, 2024_GR_Insurance and social security2.pdf)

France: With Law No. 91-1389 of December 31, 1991 established a comprehensive social protection for volunteer firefighters. It provides a legal framework ensuring similar to that of professionals. The Federal Insurance Contract is an additional insurance for volunteers and provides compensation that supplements state benefits.

(File: 2024_FR_Insurance and social security.pdf)

Norway: Volunteer firefighters are "part-time" Firefighters. They are insured as employees under the relevant insurance policies.

Finland: Those who have taken rescue action on their own or are members of the contract fire brigades are insured by the state (Occupational Safety and Health Act). This also applies to training activities, equipment maintenance and first response activities.

(File: 2024_FI_Insurance and social security.pdf)

Estonia: Since 2022, social guarantees for volunteer rescuers have been regulated in the Rescue Act in the same way as for professional rescuers. There is additional private insurance for volunteers by the Estonian Rescue Association.

(File: 2024_EE_Insurance and social security.pdf)

Austria: Members of voluntary fire service are insured by law, free of charge (even if the firefighter is not insured for any other reason). Fire brigade associations pay for additional insurance coverage. All volunteer fire fighters (Active Service, Youth fire fighters, Reserve) are insured during operation, training, education and all tasks specified in the fire-service-law (provincial level).

(File: 2024_AT_Insurance and social security.pdf)

Bulgaria: There is an insurance coverage for volunteers, but there are requirements such as an activation order (by the affected municipality), a safety briefing, initial training and the use of personal protective equipment. The correct activation of volunteers is quite complex.

(File: 2024_BG_Insurance and social security.pdf)

In many countries there is a formal equality between volunteers and professionals. Some countries have to tackle some challenges in this area. The participants also see the need of Legal protection insurance for volunteers.

4. Next meeting

Virtual Meeting in Spring 2025.

Presence Meeting in Autumn 2025 (Norway); Meeting will be in uniform.

5. Any other business

The commission supports the name of the commission, “Volunteer Firefighters”, although there are different definitions in the member countries, such as “part-time” or “retained”. A common understanding of volunteers is that “they do it not for a living”.

Karin GROENEWEGEN (NL) presented the campaign “Gewone mensen, bijzondere inzet” (“Ordinary people, special efforts”). Result of the project was the development of a national image campaign supported by the safety regions that has an impact by ensuring a change in the perception among citizens about volunteering in the fire service.

<https://www.brandweer.nl/onderwerpen/brandweervrijwilligers/>

(File: 2024_NL_Campaign volunteer firefighters.pdf)

The topic “Recruitment of young people - How to invite them to the organization?” will be addressed.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm.

Minutes:

Raphael KOLLER, BSc MSc

Chairman:

Dr. Christoph WELTECKE

Enclosures:

- Presentations as mentioned in the document.



Photo of commission members (@ Päästeliit / Hendrik Tali)

More Fotos: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/155023592@N06/albums/72177720320575770/>
Credit: Hendrik Tali /Estonian Rescue Association