

What are
**EUROPE'S CIVIL
PROTECTION
GOALS?**



Fédération Nationale
SAPEURS - POMPIERS
DE FRANCE

WHAT ARE
EUROPE'S CIVIL
PROTECTION GOALS?

MANIFESTO FOR THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

FIREFIGHTERS IN FRANCE AND EUROPE

FRANCE'S FIREFIGHTERS

252,700
MEN AND WOMEN

17%
are professionals
(public employees
of regional authorities)

They are the backbone
of this public service

78%
are volunteers

They ensure 66%
of intervention hours

They carry out missions
during their personal time

5%

are military personnel
based in Paris, greater
Paris, Marseille and
with public safety
military units

11,300

administrative, technical
and specialised staff

28,200

youth firefighters

They are between the ages of 11 and 18.
They train on Wednesdays and Saturdays with
the adult firefighters they will later replace,
and already demonstrate real commitment.



4.68 MILLION
EMERGENCY RESPONSES

84% rapid medical assistance /
medical rescue

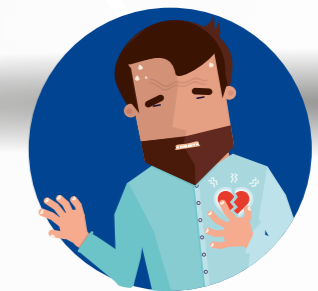


RECEIVE
16.6 MILLION
CALLS PER YEAR

18, the traditional emergency #,
and 112, the new European #



Around 1,000
animal interventions
each year



3.85 MILLION
casualties treated annually

FRANCE'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Our emergency response system, shaped by national public safety policy¹, covers:



RISK PREVENTION OF ALL KINDS

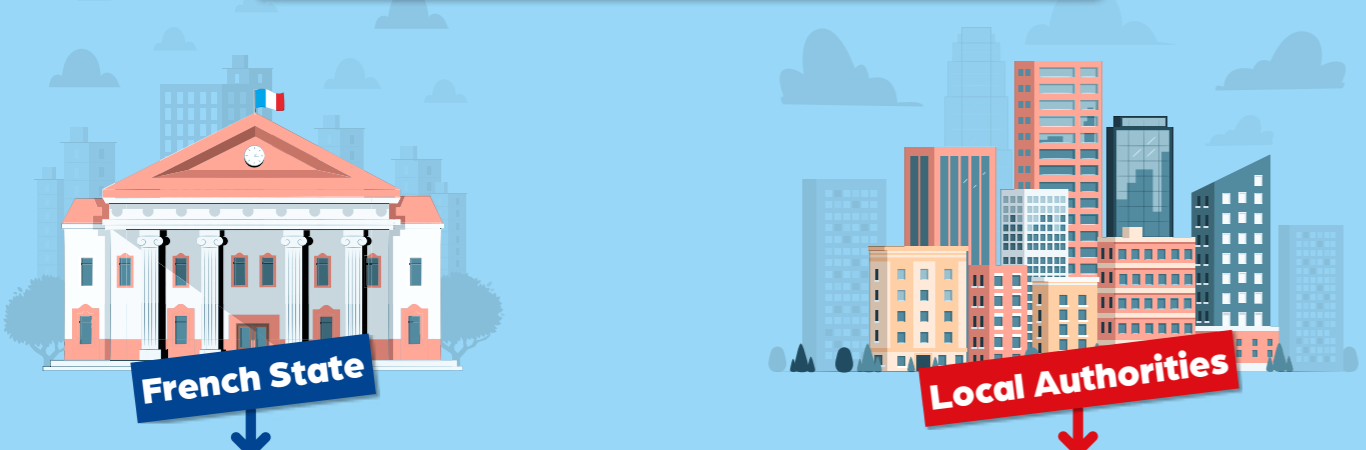


PROTECTING PEOPLE, PROPERTY AND THE ENVIRONMENT
against accidents, damage and disasters.



INFORMATION AND ALERTING THE PUBLIC

A responsibility shared between the French State and local authorities.



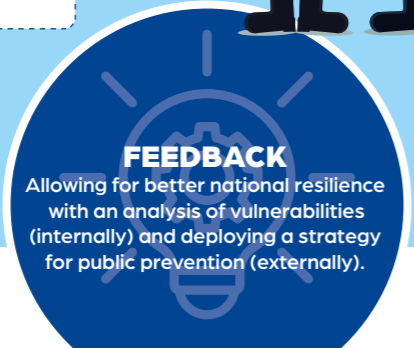
National public safety resources
DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE DE LA SÉCURITÉ CIVILE ET DE LA GESTION DES CRISES

- Central authorities
- Water bomber planes and helicopters
- Bomb disposal experts
- Public safety military units (FORMISC)

Additional support is provided by:

- various government services,
- certified public safety associations,
- community reserve volunteers (RCSC)
- requisitioned private resources

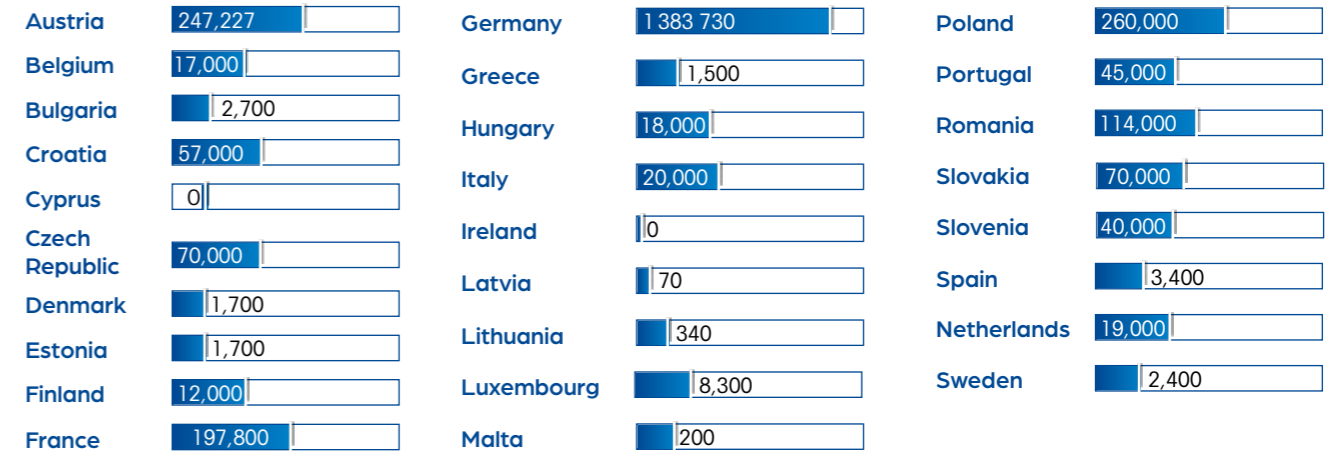
- EMERGENCY RESPONSE SERVICES ARE ENSURED BY FIREFIGHTERS**
- BASED AT**
- Regional fire and rescue services (SDIS)
 - Communal fire brigades
 - **Military Units**
The Paris Fire Brigade (BSPP) and the Marseille Naval Fire Battalion



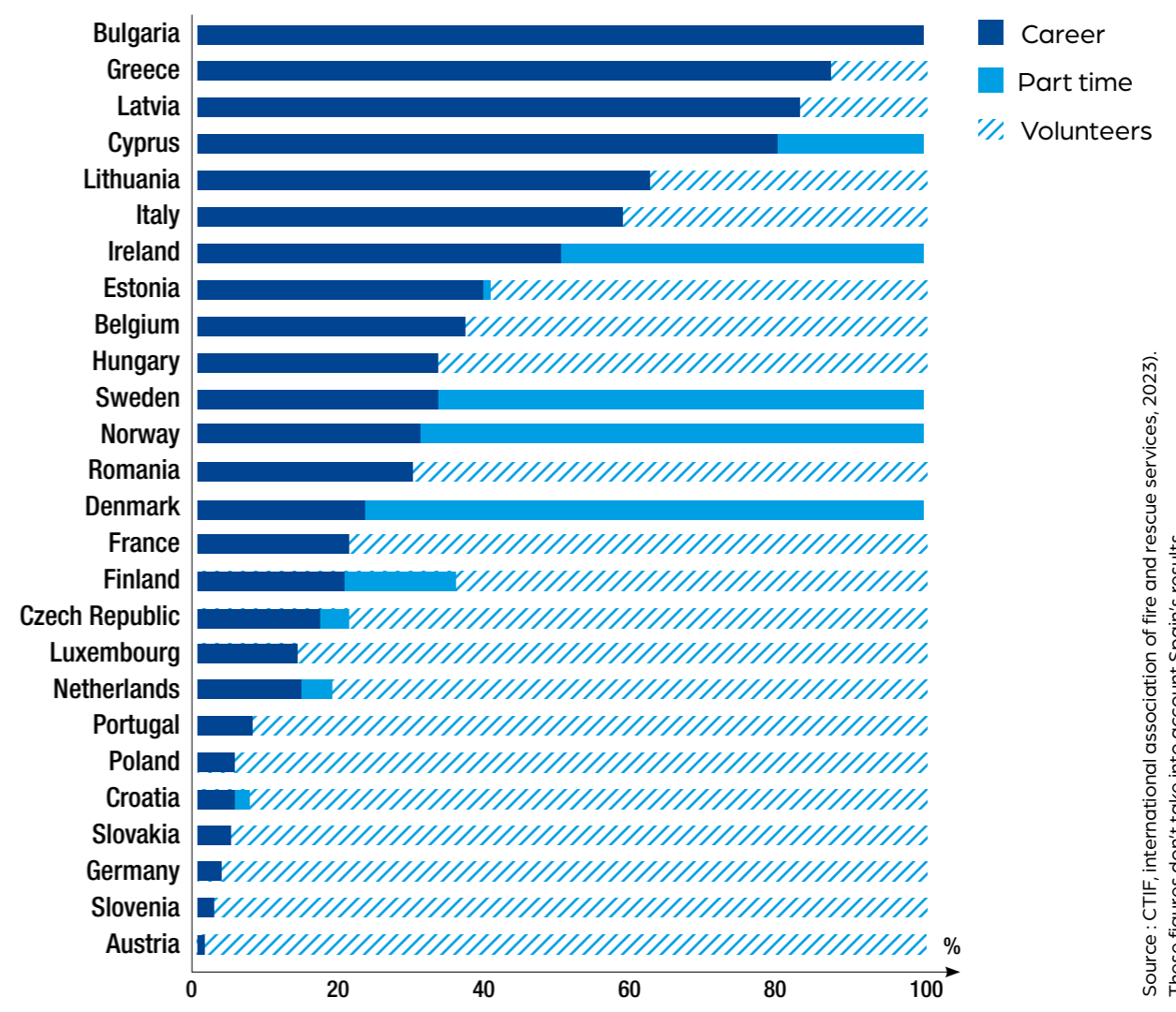
FEEDBACK
Allowing for better national resilience with an analysis of vulnerabilities (internally) and deploying a strategy for public prevention (externally).

¹The European Union employs the term 'civil protection'.

EUROPEAN FIREFIGHTERS



CONTRIBUTION OF FIREFIGHTER CATEGORIES TO TOTAL FIREFIGHTERS



Source : CTIF, international association of fire and rescue services, 2023). These figures don't take into account Spain's results.

EDITORIAL

JEAN-PAUL BOSLAND

President of the FNSPF

Ladies and Gentlemen, candidates for the European elections,

Your wish to become a member of the European Parliament is an immense responsibility. In the event that you are successful, you will have the duty to represent and defend the interests of all Europeans, and above all, their security.

The urgency of this has never been more important. We live in an era where climate challenges have increased the risk of natural disasters. The constant challenge posed by terrorist threats, the importance of distributing aid during pandemics such as COVID-19, and the recent devastating summer that struck southern Europe, especially Greece, with a 40% increase in burned surface area compared to the average of the last fifteen years, are eloquent reminders of these issues. The "mega-fires" of 2023, more frequent, stronger, and more extensive throughout the year, have shown us that our current systems of protection need to evolve. The data from the European Earth Observatory Copernicus only reinforces this statement.

"A Europe that Protects" is not just a slogan from the past, it is an urgent call to action for

the future. Based on the civic engagement of paid and unpaid volunteers, civil protection in Europe, although organised around the principle of subsidiarity, requires urgent modernisation. We are at a turning point where, without a renewed European initiative, the day-to-day safety of our citizens in the face of climate change could be compromised.

The 285,000 French firefighters, alongside their 3.5 million European colleagues of all statuses (professional, volunteer, military, private), driven by the same values of commitment and altruism, alert you to the urgency of strengthening our resources. We witnessed this solidarity and bravery in action during the response under the rescEU mechanism, activated seven times last summer. But this bravery must be supported by strong policies, resources, and a clear vision for the future.

As a result, we call for concrete action during the 2024-2029 term to build a better prepared, more resilient, and more united Europe facing these growing challenges. The security of our citizens and the stability of our societies depend on it.

**"A Europe that Protects"
is not just a slogan from
the past, it is an urgent call
to action for the future**



GOALS

of

SAPEURS - POMPIERS

DE FRANCE



3

GOALS TO REACH

1
**CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT
IN CIVIL
SOCIETY**

2
**TO PROTECT
AND SERVE**

3
**ADAPTING AND
STRENGTHENING
THE EUROPEAN
CIVIL PROTECTION
FRAMEWORK**



The structure of the emergency services in France, as in many other EU member states, relies heavily on the motivation and generosity of the 197,100 volunteer firefighters, who voluntarily commit, alongside their personal, family, and professional lives, to serving the community, in addition to the 41,800 professional firefighters, territorial civil servants, and 13,200 military firefighters². Making up 79% of the country's firefighting workforce and 67% of incident time, volunteer firefighters ensure proximity and fair distribution of emergency intervention. However, their dedication and, consequently, their activities remain, due to the lack of a specific legal framework, under threat from a European Directive that, if implemented, could hinder their commitment, and thus challenge the civil protection systems in France and many other member states. In particular, Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time could, under the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union, reclassify them not as citizens voluntarily dedicated to a cause of general interest, but as workers.

²Paris and the surrounding departments, Marseille.

197,800
volunteer
firefighters

41,800
professional
firefighters

13,200
sapeurs-pompiers
militaires

KEY NUMBERS

79 %
of the country's
firefighting workforce



67 %
incident time

**Directive 2003/88/EC
of the European Parliament
and of the Council
of 4 November 2003
concerning certain aspects
of the organisation
of working time**



AN INCREASINGLY **WORRYING**
LEGAL CONTEXT...

On 21 February 2018, the European Court of Justice ruled on a case (C-518/15) concerning Mr. Rudy Matzak, a Belgian volunteer firefighter in dispute with the municipality of Nivelles regarding the payment for his "on-call time." The court established that according to the Directive, and despite his volunteer status, Mr. Matzak should be considered a "worker" and his duties be considered as working time, given the restrictions imposed on him, which prevented him from undertaking other activities.

The conclusions of this ruling are not necessarily applicable to all volunteer firefighters, in domestic law as in other member states, as has already been noted by the European Commission, but they already weaken or are likely to challenge volunteer work and our entire civil security/protection model, notably by raising questions and doubts about its reliability and legal status (which inevitably weakens decisions or the willingness to volunteer).

In France, law No. 2011-851 dated 20 July 2011, concerning the commitment of volunteer firefighters and its legal framework, adopted after consultation with the State Council and embedded within the Internal Security Code, highlights the specific nature of volunteering among firefighters. It presents this commitment as a voluntary contribution to the community, distinct from professional work and not governed by employment law or civil service status with certain legal exceptions. Despite this, disputes have arisen in recent years, seeking to apply the qualification of "worker" to French volunteer firefighters, seeking to apply the precedent set by the Matzak case.

The Court of Justice of the European Union has indeed subsequently taken opportunities to clarify certain points regarding legal precedents, for example, concerning on-call duty periods through two new decisions on 9 March 2021. In case number C-580/19, a public employee occupying the position of firefighter in Offenbach-sur-le-Main, Germany, was on-call, in addition to their normal working hours, for

(...) the Internal Security Code, highlights the specific nature of volunteering among firefighters. It presents this commitment as a voluntary contribution to the community, distinct from professional work and not governed by employment law or civil service status with certain legal exceptions. Despite this, disputes have arisen in recent years, seeking to apply the qualification of "worker" to French volunteer firefighters, seeking to apply the precedent set by the Matzak case.

on-call duty periods. During these periods, the firefighter was not required to stay at a specific location defined by the employer but had to remain reachable and able to go to the town's incident response sector within a maximum of twenty minutes, equipped with his firefighting gear and the provided service vehicle. Similarly, case C-344/19 concerned a technician in Slovenia responsible for the proper functioning of television transmission stations in the mountains for several consecutive days. Beyond his usual twelve-hour work shifts, he had to perform six-hour on-call duties per day, without being required to stay on-site but being reachable by phone and able to return to the transmission centre within an hour if necessary.

THE EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE THUS REITERATED:

- 1** The need for an overall analysis and assessment of all circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
- 2** That an on-call duty period does not constitute working time.
- 3** Even with resources provided by the employer (accommodation, equipment, vehicle).
- 4** Even when required to remain reachable.
- 5** Even when given a time limit to reach a position or assignment.
- 6** Even with certain imposed constraints.
- 7** As long as there remains a certain ability to freely manage one's available time and dedicate it to personal interests (even if the immediate environment of the on-call location is not conducive to leisure activities).

In a similar vein, following an appeal against the decision of the Administrative Court of Lyon on 27 February 2020, the Administrative Court of Appeal of Lyon, in its judgments of 15 February 2023, refused to apply Directive 2003/88/EC to volunteer firefighters, relying on the principles and legal framework for volunteer firefighters provided by the Internal Security Code, notably the willing and voluntary commitment to the performance of an ancillary activity according to the individual's availability, and the signing of a commitment charter reminding the volunteer firefighter of the need to maintain a balance between their professional, personal, and social activities, and their commitment.

Confirming these legal decisions, the Council of State, in a decision on 13 October 2023, confirmed the refusal to refer to the Constitutional Council the priority question of constitutionality directed against the provisions of Article L. 723-15 of the Internal Security Code raised by three volunteer firefighters from the Ain SDIS (departmental fire and rescue service) and the Rhône SDMIS aiming to provoke the application of Directive 2003/88/EC of 4 November 2003, on working time (known as the Working Time Directive), based notably on Article L. 723-15 of the Internal Security Code³.

Despite these confirmations of principles, other disputes remain pending before French courts. One cannot be content to leave such an essential question in the hands of national or European courts, risking continuous instability, long delayed and perhaps even uncertain solutions (possible reversal). In order to achieve legal clarity, it is incumbent on parliamentarians and member governments to establish rules setting out their political will, leaving the courts to fulfil their role in monitoring their application.

³ "The activities of a volunteer firefighter, members of civil security associations and members of the reserve civil security association are not subject to legal requirements relative to work time".

REFERENCES



1. CJEU, 9 March 2021, two types: case C-344/19 D.J./ Radiotelevizija Slovenija and C-580/19 RJ/Stadt Offenbach am Main.
2. CJEU, 21 February 2018, C-518/15/ case Ville de Nivelles v. Rudy Matzak.
3. CJEU, 11 November 2021, C-214/20, MG / Dublin City Council.
4. Directive 2003/88/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003, concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time (published in OJEU 2003, L. 299, p. 9).
5. Three judgments of the Lyon Administrative Court of 27 February 2020, requests No. 1807900, 1807901, and 1808159, regarding unpaid rest periods for volunteer firefighters. ([link](#))
6. Administrative Court of Appeal, Lyon, 3rd Chamber, 15 February 2023 – No. 20LY01494
7. Council of State, 3rd – 8th joint chambers, 13 October 2023, 473321

A commitment charter reminding the volunteer firefighter of the need to maintain a balance between their professional, personal, and social activities, and their commitment.

It is incumbent on parliamentarians and member governments to establish rules setting out their political will, leaving the courts to fulfil their role in monitoring their application.





Recognising
VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS
 AS
WORKERS
 OR
**"KICKING A MAN
 WHILST HE'S DOWN"**

The report submitted to the French Interior Minister on 23 May 2018, by the Volunteering Mission emphasises that volunteering, which is profoundly altruistic and generous, cannot be equated with a mere provision of service.



If this were the case, this noble initiative would collapse: the time dedicated to participating in the public fire and rescue service would be subject to regulatory constraints on working time and rest periods. Thus, rather than being based on their availability and agreements with their employers, volunteer firefighters would face complex management, similar to having multiple simultaneous jobs. Such disruption would be detrimental to volunteer firefighters, (of whom 69% are employees), and their employers. It would compromise the balance between volunteer work, personal life, and professional activity. Fire and rescue services would then have to hire part-time professionals, replacing volunteers. This change would have major legal, fiscal, and social consequences for volunteer firefighters and would heavily impact public finances for lesser service provided to the population (increased response delays, reduced mobilisable human resources in crisis situations). A transition to a completely professional service is also debatable due to its



prohibitive cost⁴ and implications on the quality of rescue services. The debate goes beyond the legal framework; it is deeply political, reflecting a societal choice. A volunteer firefighter commits to serve their community, much like a dedicated local elected official to their territory, and not merely for pay. Challenging this principle would threaten other forms of civic engagement and our ideal of a supportive society. Faced with current challenges such as access to health-care, an ageing demographic, terrorism, or climate change, more than ever, France and Europe need this civic mobilisation in support of professional forces. It is essential to value commitment, solidarity, and fraternity. While on the one hand society encourages youth engagement, it is a paradox to be questioning altruism towards rescue services and society in general. Drafted in a different context and a true social progress for the health and safety of European workers, Directive 2003/88/EC should not threaten volunteer work as a whole, especially civil protection volunteer work which was not considered when it was drafted. The European legislator's contribution is crucial to preserve this civic commitment, essential for the population's civil protection across many European countries. Finally, the situation of certain member states, which have chosen a more professionalised approach and have noted limitations in local responses and reduced capacity in crises, forcing them to appeal to European solidarity, highlights, on the contrary, the importance of perpetuating and strengthening volunteer work.

⁴ In its report from October 2022 on the financing of departmental fire and rescue services (SDIS) the administration's General Inspection estimated the budget at more than 1.1 billion euros to replace the volunteer firefighters on posted shift. 4,324 volunteer firefighters during the day and 3,646 volunteer firefighters at night, replaced by 22,000 professional firefighters on 12h shifts.

A SPECIFIC EUROPEAN DIRECTIVE: THE ONLY "VACCINE" TO SAVE & CONSOLIDATE OUR EUROPEAN MODELS OF CIVIL PROTECTION

As early as 2017, French President Emmanuel Macron pledged to protect the French rescue model against the threat of applying Directive 2003/88/EC to volunteer firefighters. Motions from the French Senate and the National Assembly addressed to President Juncker in 2018 reinforced this position, reaffirmed by the Head of State at the national congress of firefighters on 16 October 2021, in Marseille.

Adopted during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2022, led by Gérald Darmanin, Minister of the Interior and Overseas departments, the conclusions 2022/C 322/02 of the Council of the European Union of August 26, 2022, regarding action on civil protection against climate change, affirm the willingness of heads of state and governments to offer better protection of European populations facing different crises related to this phenomenon. They notably invite the European Commission to support the active commitment of civil society as paid or unpaid civil protection volunteers in preventing and operationally responding to climate change, to strengthen security and resilience.

To this end, firefighters are calling for the initiation and adoption of a specific directive on civic engagement during the upcoming European Parliament term.

Indeed, resorting to the derogations provided by the Working Time Directive (WTD) would implicitly recognise volunteering as work, contrary to its definition in France. Furthermore, these exemptions wouldn't address all the issues. Similarly, revising the WTD seems both unlikely and undesirable given past unsuccessful attempts.

Therefore, a dedicated directive appears to be the best solution to

protect the altruistic commitment of paid and unpaid volunteers and reservists in civil protection.

Such a European initiative would align with previous actions undertaken by European institutions:

The European Union has long recognised and repeatedly acknowledged the significant importance and value of voluntary engagement. The substantial contribution of these activities to the development of social solidarity, social and economic cohesion, and their fundamental aspect amongst young people is notably attested by:

- The adoption by the Intergovernmental Conference in 1997 of Declaration 38 on volunteering, annexed to the final act of the Treaty of Amsterdam;
- The Commission's Communication of June 1997 on promoting the role of associations and foundations in Europe;
- Council resolutions from 27 June 2002, and 16 November 2007, and the recommendation from 20 Nov. 2008;

- The "Report of the European Parliament in March 2008 on the contribution of volunteering to economic and social cohesion";
- Council Decision 2010/37/CE of 27 November 2009, concerning the European Year of Volunteering for promoting active citizenship (2011);
- The European Parliament's Resolution of 10 December 2013, on volunteering and volunteer activities in Europe;
- Decision (EU) 2019/420 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2019, amending Decision No. 1313/2013/EU on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

Protecting and securing volunteer work also provides the EU and its member states with the means and capabilities to implement all aspects of a genuine comprehensive civil protection policy and to ensure the protection of its citizens.

⁴ Speech from 6 October 2017 thanking the forces that mobilised for the forest fires and hurricanes.

FIREFIGHTERS: THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG!

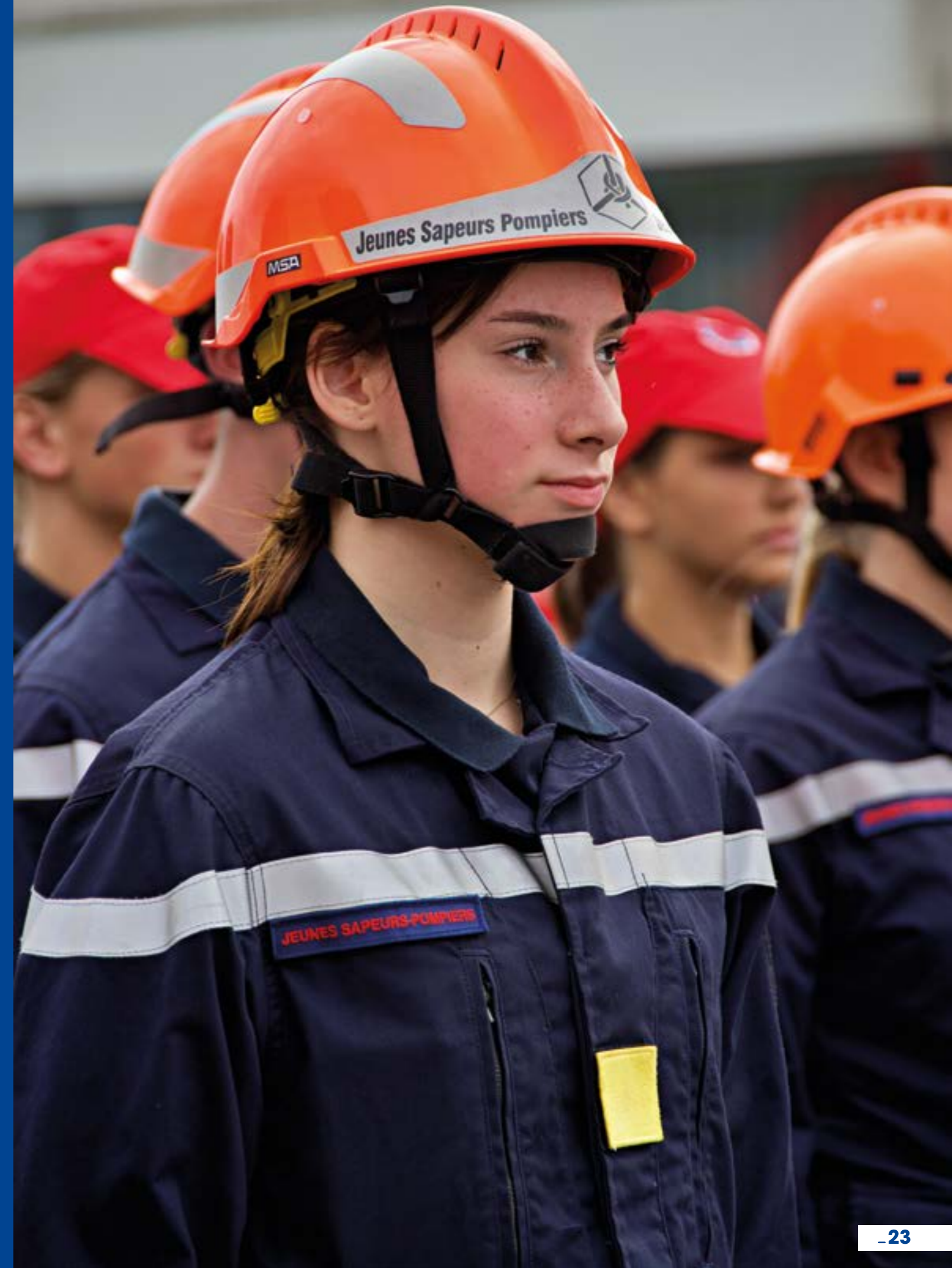
All the nation's public servants are threatened!

The Matzak ruling, which reclassifies volunteer firefighters as workers, goes far beyond emergency services. This legal turning point could redefine the nature of civic engagement as a whole, affecting various forms of volunteering in the European Union member states. The implications of this decision extend beyond firefighters to all local elected officials: mayors, deputy mayors, vice-presidents of intermunicipal public establishments, as well as reservists in the gendarmerie and national police. Indeed, local elected officials receive allowances and carry out their duties in addition to their professional activities!

Therefore, would a deputy mayor, who comes to support a grieving family in the middle of the night following a call from the emergency services, be considered a worker and have to choose between helping their constituents and going to work the next day?

Under employment law, a mayor and all elected officials would no longer be able to attend evening municipal council meetings, usually held from 7:30 pm to around 11 pm, if they have full-time professional activities.

This is an invitation to reflect on the future of civic engagement and to assess the risks that this legal evolution poses to the nation's public servants. This legal threat not only endangers our civil security model but also our democracy.



2

TO PROTECT AND SERVE: humanity at the heart of civil security

Civil security, a cornerstone of our societies' protection, is above all about human commitment. The men and women who dedicate themselves on a daily basis to protect and serve their fellow citizens, embody the true essence of this mission. In this context, neglecting their wellbeing, their health, or their training, would be a serious mistake. These people are not only the beating heart of our protection system, they also reflect the collective determination to invest in a safer future. Therefore, the training and care provided for these everyday heroes should not be seen as mere costs, but essential investments for the sustainability and effectiveness of our civil security.

Protect and better train those who protect us

Today's firefighters, who protect life and the climate, are exposed daily to multiple dangers whilst carrying out their duties, including potentially harmful chemical substances. The recent discovery of neurotoxic and carcinogenic chemicals in firefighter's bodies highlights the urgency to rethink their protection. Some of these compounds, such as flame retardants, which can be found everywhere in our homes, have been linked to an increased risk of specific cancers, requiring their recognition as occupational illnesses.

While protecting the population is the firefighters' mission, it is imperative to "protect those who protect us." This protection involves not only deploying post-response disinfection methods but also operational changes to reduce exposure to dangerous substances. Furthermore, increased medical surveillance, ongoing research, and studies are necessary to guarantee their long-term safety. After all, investing in their health and well-being is essential to guaranteeing a secure future for society as a whole.

In an increasingly interconnected Europe, it is essential to ensure that the training of firefighters in the European Union makes use of the latest technology and response techniques but is also harmonised on a continent-wide scale. By guaranteeing standardised training, it ensures that firefighters from different member states can work together during cross-border call-outs, whether major fires, floods, or any other emergencies. However, standardisation should not come at the expense of local specificities or particular skills acquired by certain member states. It is essential to strike a balance between standardisation and territorial differentiation to respect singularities and capitalise on each country's strengths.



Within the European Union, despite linguistic diversity, the issue of harmonising training and operational procedures calls for the determination of a common frame of reference. A concrete example of this unification is the adoption of the European emergency call number, 112, across all Union member countries, similar to the American 911. This measure significantly facilitates inter-service coordination during emergencies, especially in cross-border situations, and offers simplicity for all European citizens, whether residents or travellers.

The continued existence of different emergency call numbers in certain member states can lead to confusion for residents and tourists, representing an additional challenge for the full integration of European harmonisation. It is therefore essential for France and other late-comers to follow the example of its European partners and fully align with established standards, thus ensuring better responsiveness and efficiency in the event of emergencies on French and European soil.

Creation of a "Civil Protection ERASMUS": uniting to face challenges!

For decades, the Erasmus programme has proven its ability to unite the people of Europe through education, fostering mutual understanding, sharing knowledge, and building a sense of European identity.



A similar programme dedicated to civil protection would be a significant step forward. This programme would create a space where our firefighters, rescuers, crisis management specialists, and other civil protection professionals could exchange experiences, methodologies, and skills across our diverse borders. A space where a young French firefighter could learn mountain rescue techniques in Austria, and where an Italian earthquake management specialist could share knowledge with counterparts in Greece.

Beyond being a mere exchange initiative, this programme would embody a vision of Europe where each member state, armed with this strengthened collaboration, is better prepared and can rely on the swift and effective support of its neighbours in the event of a major disaster. A Europe where equipment, training, and knowledge are standardised to ensure a rapid and effective response in emergencies. The benefit of such an initiative wouldn't be purely operational. As with Erasmus, this programme would become a living symbol of our European solidarity in action. It would demonstrate our collective commitment to protecting every citizen, strengthening cohesion among nations, and building a stronger and more

resilient Europe to face future challenges. Europe is an economic and cultural space; it's time to make it a global leader in civil protection.

The creation of a new programme at the European level inevitably raises questions about financing. The current system, although robust, might need revising to better reflect contemporary needs and future challenges. The evolving context of disasters, amplified by climate challenges and cross-border threats, supports the case for a more agile and better-adapted financial approach.

As with "Erasmus" this programme, open to all firefighters (volunteers, professionals, youth, support staff, etc.) for varying lengths of time, from a few days (exercises, procedures, short training, immersions) to several weeks (exchanges, long-term training, wildfire campaigns), will be supported by public institutions responsible for the relevant skills. Just as universities do, the Departmental Fire and Rescue Services (SDIS) could contribute by submitting projects based on the annual reference frameworks of priority policies decided by European bodies and receive EU funding for its implementation.

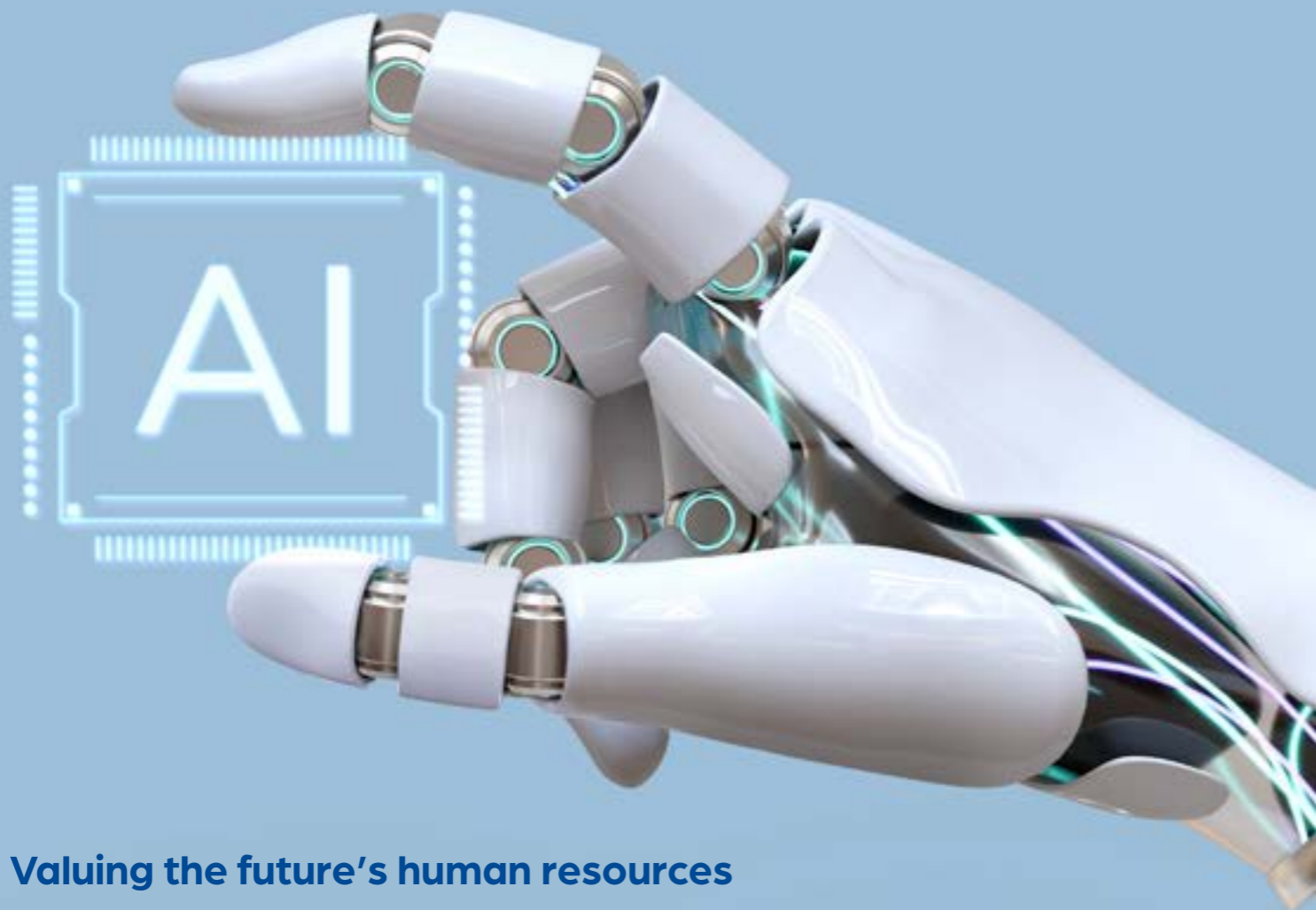
It would be wise to consider the funding mechanisms for civil protection at the EU level, not only for training and equipment but also for research and the development of new technologies and methodologies. Increasing budgets could be supported by contributions from member states and external financing, such as public-private partnerships.

Civil protection on a European scale may identify deficiencies in terms of coordination and communication between nations. The recent example of the wildfires in Gironde in the summer of 2022 illustrates this well. When foreign reinforcements were sent to assist, the lack of prior communication hindered the effectiveness of operations on the ground. To overcome such situations, it's imperative to facilitate not only the sharing of human and material resources in real-time but also the pooling of feedback reports. A dedicated exchange channel would enable better anticipation of specific needs for reinforcements, equipment, or expertise, depending on the nature of the crisis. Furthermore, regular joint training and exercises could be organised to enhance synergy between different European civil security units.

A revised financial structure could also provide incentives for member states implementing innovative civil protection initiatives, thereby encouraging ongoing evolution in this vital area. Revisiting the current financing of European civil protection could also pave the way for better collaboration with other international entities, facilitating the development of comprehensive crisis strategies. This includes strengthening ties with accredited civil security associations.



Innovation at the heart of Civil Protection



Valuing the future's human resources

Valuing citizens as alert triggers is crucial. By working with collaborative technologies, we can optimise alerts in the event of major risks. Implementing modules on popular platforms such as Waze would allow the public to report various risks in real-time, such as fires, accidents, or icy patches. Introducing standardised national icons would help make alerts more readable and consistent for everyone.

The future of civil security lies in a technologically advanced approach. Technological innovations, especially those related to AI, will offer faster and more effective means of detection and prevention. Drones, biometrics, video surveillance, smart sensors, and the Internet of Things (IoT) will become essential tools for Departmental Fire and Rescue Services (SDIS) and other civil security units.

Using AI, satellite data, and geolocation, we can improve risk monitoring. Equipping forests and suburban areas threatened by fires with innovative detection sensors is essential. The goal is to obtain automated real-time alerts, thereby helping to detect fire outbreaks more quickly.

It is crucial to mobilise European funds to support innovation in civil protection. The HORIZON EUROPE programme offers a unique opportunity, as does the FIIPRM (Interministerial funds towards innovations for protection against major risks) and the Banque Publique d'Investissement. Efforts should focus on developing and adopting new technologies whilst maintaining national and European independence.

The digital era offers unprecedented opportunities for civil security. By placing innovation at the heart of our concerns, we can ensure more effective, preventive, and collaborative protection for our citizens.



3

ADAPTING AND STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK in the face of climate change

"rescEU", the European civil security fleet, is the European Union's essential initiative designed to optimise collective responses to major emergencies and natural disasters that exceed the capabilities of a single member state. Created under the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism, this initiative aims to consolidate cooperation and coordination between member states, particularly with regards to disaster prevention, preparedness, and response.

rescEU serves as a centralised reserve of civil security resources at the European level, supporting the national capabilities of member states.

This reserve consists of various equipment, including fire-fighting aircraft, high-capacity hydraulic pumps, search and rescue units, as well as rapid medical intervention teams. These resources are intended to assist nations facing disasters such as floods, forest fires, earthquakes, or epidemics.

The fleet currently includes aircraft and helicopters adapted to fight forest fires, as well as emergency medical teams and other crucial materials and human resources for effective crisis intervention. These resources are provided by member states and coordinated by the European Commission, which can promptly mobilise them within the European Union and, if necessary, beyond.

The practical management of this reserve is maintained in one or more host member states. These states are responsible for acquiring the equipment, funded 90% by the European Commission. Initially, the EU had allocated a budget of 50 million euros for this reserve. However, following the recovery plan adopted by the heads of state and government in July 2020, the European Commission increased this funding to 1.9 billion euros for the 2020-2023 period. The EU's Civil Protection Mechanism is endowed by the EU with 3.3 billion euros for the 2021-2027 period.

It would seem contradictory for member states to continue strengthening European solidarity while certain European legal decisions question the sustainability of its human forces deployed daily. Moreover, faced with increasing climate challenges, evident during recent natural disasters, it is imperative to review and improve this mechanism. The goal is to establish increased responsiveness and better efficiency while reducing dependence on national resources often simultaneously called upon by several countries. This optimisation requires enhanced collaboration and dedicated resources at the European Union level.

rescEU

A solution to increase European Response to natural disasters

The growing importance of European coordination in disasters, particularly natural ones, is evident in the revision of the mechanism initiated by the “rescEU” project. This agreement, agreed upon by the European Parliament and Council in 2018, envisions establishing a reserve of civil protection resources at the EU level, complementing the individual capacities of each member state.



Through this reserve, modern tools such as firefighting drones, advanced earthquake detection systems, or rapid response units for health crises can be quickly deployed to manage emergency situations like forest fires, floods, or epidemics.

Whilst the European Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) coordinates these efforts, the pooling of resources and capacities is still in the early stages of development. This is mainly because the response currently relies on the voluntary commitment of member states.

rescEU should not only serve as a capacity reserve. There is enormous potential to standardise procedures, create shared scenarios, and develop unified response protocols. In this regard, certification by entities like INSARAG is crucial. The long-term ambition for rescEU is to forge a European mobile unit supported by abundant numbers of professional, volunteer, and military firefighters across Europe, capable of swift and sustainable responses.

It is essential to ensure that the rescEU project is correctly put in place and resourced beyond 2025. This vision, although distant, can only be realised if volunteer work is valued, respected, and protected. Without these volunteers, the response capacity would be heavily compromised, as with solidarity, on both a national and European level.



European firefighting unit: a reinforced aerial fleet to protect Europe's future

Increasingly powerful natural disasters linked to climate change, notably forest fires which ravage vast areas in Europe, highlight the importance of coordination and solidarity between states.

The need for a European aircraft fleet specialised in firefighting has never been so important. Many member states, despite their own resources, sometimes find themselves overwhelmed when faced with the scale of fires. In this context, a modern, robust, and diverse European fleet becomes a crucial tool to ensure a rapid, coordinated, and efficient response.

In a recent announcement from the European Commission with regards to crisis management, Janez Lenarčič, makes a decisive step in this direction. As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the ERCC, the reinforcement of an aerial firefighting fleet translates into a collective realisation of the challenges which member states face. It is question of a practical engagement, echoing the promise made in 2022 by the president of the European commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

The eventual doubling of the European fleet, going from 13 to 28 planes with a range of strategically placed machines, bears witness to the Union's drive to respond in an agile manner, adapted to the different fire contexts, complementing member state and territorial collectivities. This should be encouraged and put in place before the conclusion of the next mandate.

The distribution of planes, going from water bomber planes to light amphibious planes as well as helicopters, and placing them in 10 key member states, will ensure optimal territorial cover. Whether a fire in Croatia, in Italy, in Greece, on the Iberian Peninsula, in France or in Sweden, Europe must be ready to respond with appropriate resources.

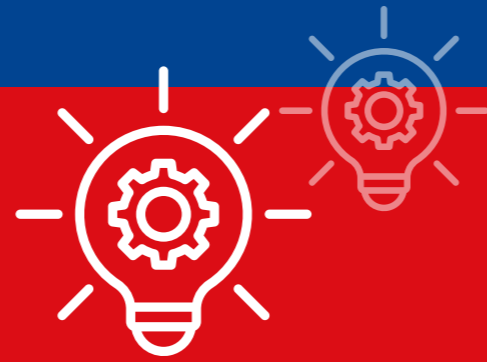
Furthermore, the addition of a team of more than 440 professionals, including firefighters and experts, pre-positioned in strategic zones such as France, Greece, and Portugal, reinforces this response capacity. These experts would be not only the first responders in case of a crisis, but also key actors in training and the coordination of responses. To summarise, this initiative is a tangible demonstration of Europe's commitment to protect its citizens and territories faced with the increasing threat of forest fires. These announcements should be acted upon and supported by investment plans in the context of the renewal and strengthening required for each term.

In parallel, the European Union must maintain its financial and legal support (grouped tender processes) to the member states to renew their national fleet of water bomber planes.

A European capacity review must be conducted to achieve sufficient production volume and enable the EU to adopt an industrial strategy to address the opportunities of sovereignty, industrial and operational, and competitiveness offered by the emergence of a European firefighting aircraft.

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN CIVIL SOCIETY: the pillar of resilience of our civil protection

- Vote for a specific European directive to protect and encourage citizen engagement, paid and unpaid voluntary work, and prevent any reclassification in employment law to safeguard and strengthen European civil protection systems and promote European solidarity.

2

PROTECT AND SERVE: people at the heart of civil security

- Harmonise training and operational methodologies at the European level and promote the generalisation by member states of 112 as the single emergency call number to improve conditions for carrying out rescue missions and fighting major risks.
- Propose a European exchange programme for civil protection, following the Erasmus model for students, to create a common basis among European civil protection forces.
- Transform the Nîmes-Garons airbase into a European excellence technopole, a real innovation hub in civil protection (AI, satellite data, geolocation...)

3

ADAPT AND STRENGTHEN THE EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION SYSTEM to climate change

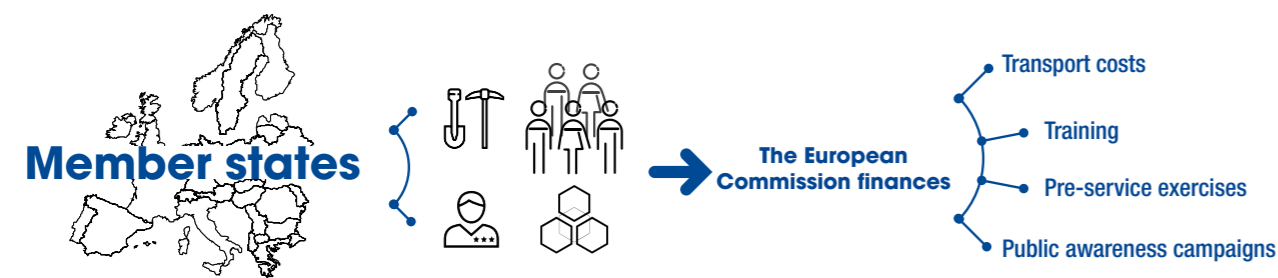
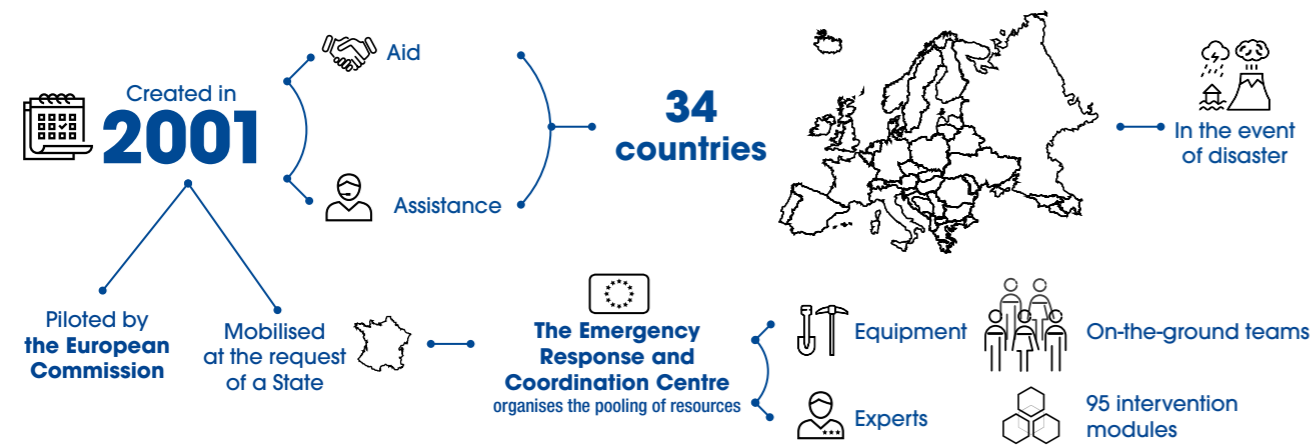
- Ensure the implementation and development of the rescEU system beyond 2025.
- Implement the announced doubling of the European civil protection fleet and initiate discussions on the geographical positioning of resources.
- Conduct a European capacity review to achieve a sufficient production volume of firefighting aircraft and address industrial and operational sovereignty and economic competitiveness issues.



THE EU CIVIL PROTECTION MECHANISM (MPCU)

The ECPM, created in 2001 to coordinate aid and assistance among its 34 participating countries in the event of disaster, is piloted by the European Commission (via the DG for ECHO). It is mobilised at the request of a State (European or otherwise) and the Emergency Response Coordination Centre organises the pooling of resources (equipment, experts, on-the-ground teams and intervention modules) offered by member states which are able to respond.

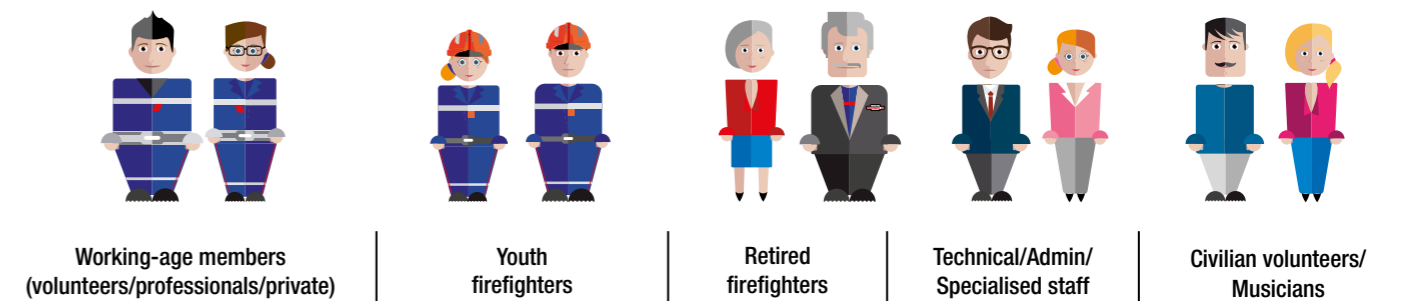
Since 2001, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has been activated over 700 times to respond to emergencies. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated 260 times between 2020 and 2022 due to the COVID-19-related health crisis, marking the highest number of activations in the history of the mechanism. Member States provide a voluntary pool, and the Commission finances general operations, a portion of transport costs, training, pre-service exercises and public awareness campaigns.



THE FEDERATION NATIONALE DES SAPEURS-POMPIERS DE FRANCE HEADS A NETWORK OF FIREFIGHTING ASSOCIATIONS, UNITED IRRESPECTIVE OF RANK, STATUS OR CATEGORY.



285,000 members*



*Numbers as of 31/12/2023.





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