



## Delegate's assembly 2022

### ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT OF CHRISTOPHE MARCHAL, VICE PRESIDENT OF CTIF

#### 1) Annual Report: Forest Fire Commission

The Commission is dealing with the following topics:

- Lessons learned, exchange of experience: with emphasis on practical exchange and passing information to fire-fighting organizations and fire-fighters
  - Standardization of tactics, equipment, procedures in wildland fires
  - Organization and participation on conferences (international, exchange experiences and knowledge with other actors)
  - Simulation and ICT, new technologies (robots, drones, cameras, command and coordination centres, aerial means, GPS, GIS....)
  - Education and training (best practice, school, college)
  - Promotion and public relations (citizens awareness)
  - EU- and international projects regarding forest fires
- *Chairperson of the commission: General Jean-Marc BEDOGNI (FR);*
- *Secretary of the commission: Mario STARČEVIĆ (HR). Mario acted as secretary of the commission for many years. As he has now new professional responsibilities, he will no longer keep the position of secretary.*

In 2022, the meeting of the CTIF forest fires commission took place for the first time in its history in Greece in the city of Athens from 2-5 of May 2022. The topic of the meeting had to do with the lessons learnt of the Fire Season 2021 in Greece, the extreme fire behaviour and the use of aerial firefighting in forest fires.



Representatives from France, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Croatia, Bulgaria and Greece participated. We feel so grateful about the countries that helped us and we thanked them for their feedback.

Fire season 2021 was the most difficult fire season we had to face since 2007. The behaviour of the fires was extreme; we encountered mainly crown fires of Pines forests, mostly plume – driven, with high degree of fire line intensity, rate of spread, flame length, spotting activity, appearance of pyro cumulus, downdrafts and fire tornadoes.

The appearance of all the above characteristics, even without wind, created an unpredictable behaviour of forest fires extremely dangerous for the safety of citizens, staff and all the involved parties. Dealing with such conditions and fire behaviour is extremely difficult to control them.

Fire season 2021 was one of the least windy in the last 20 years, the average temperature was 1.6 ° C higher than normal, the rainfall during both winter and summer season was much less than normal. This led us to two fierce heatwaves, both in terms of intensity and in duration.

We had a relative humidity below 10% from the beginning of July, giving us these extreme wildfire events, which ended up burning more than 101.000 hectares.

EU has mobilized one of the largest European deployments of firefighters and aircrafts in history. In total, 24 firefighting aircrafts, 1301 firefighters and 277 vehicles from 22 countries around the world participated in the battle for tackling the wildfires in Greece. Some of them, where you and we really feel grateful for your help.

The CTIF Commission for Forest Fires has during previous years worked thoroughly and persistently in the exchange of knowledge, experiences and views on forest firefighting and forest fires.

Unfortunately, in the future due to the climate crisis, we will continue to face extreme weather events and very high temperatures during the summer. This will have an impact on our forest ecosystems and will increase the demands on us as firefighters, both on those of us on the ground and on the airborne forces. We will have to be more alert; we need to respond faster, put in more effort, and more hours, not just in terms of employment, but also training and increased specialization.

Firefighters around the world face the same danger and challenges, it is time to talk about them and expand our horizons.

Climate change is here, is happening right now, we must be focus and learn from each other. Knowing our mistakes, knowing our achievements, using new technology and science, we can be more prepared and effective in future challenges. (Special thanks to Ms. Zisoula Ntasiou for the report).

After the successful Athens meeting, the commission is already looking forward its next meeting, which will be held this year in Valabre, France, from 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of November.

The proposed topics are:

- a) COP and Mapping
- b) Personal Protective Equipment
- c) Using Drones during Wildfires
- d) Aerial Coordination and investigation
- e) Ground Fire Fighting tactics

## 2) Annual Report: Volunteer Firefighters Commission

After many month of standby due to the COVID Pandemic, the commission have been relaunch in 2022.

- *Chairperson of the commission: Christoph WELTECKE (DE);*
- *Secretary of the commission: Raphael KOLLER (AT).*

*Many thanks to Hubert VETTER, former Chairperson of the commission. Hubert animated the commission during many years.*

The CTIF Volunteer Firefighters Commission met virtual/online for its seventh meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2022.

Points discussed:

### I Introduction

- Brief history of the Commission and the chairmanship handover
- Wish to meet twice a year in order to fulfil the Commission's missions
- 13 countries present

### II COVID-19 IMPACT ON VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE

- The pandemic is still ongoing in all countries: necessity to discuss about how it has affected the work of volunteer firefighters.
- Netherlands: establishes a positive aspect of the pandemic as a lot more people ended up being available for the fire station (couldn't go to their current work). Helped them and still do even though the restrictions are now less present.

- France: The main issue was to cope with the ambulance services (as it is assured by firefighters): need to adapt the procedure of emergency transport.

Volunteers' implication in vaccination and test centres: a challenge that helped to promote volunteerism among firefighters. Current obligation for a firefighter (either volunteer or professional) to be fully vaccinated: led to a decrease of about 3% of volunteers. However, the Covid issue was successfully faced by emergency services despite the challenge for volunteerism.

- Estonia: Impact of pandemic on the prevention activities usually assured by volunteers.
- Poland: Highlights the use of numeric devices during the pandemic and importance of keeping going with these devices in order to become more efficient in the emergency response.
- Finland: The number of young people taking part to volunteerism has decreased as the fire stations were closed during the pandemic and therefore no educational activities were organised for the youth; but more adults took part to complement the basic rescue service, which happened to increase the global number of volunteers.
- Slovenia: The activity was not affected that much even though their system is based on volunteerism; big impact of COVID on the educational and training sector, especially for the volunteers and the youth. Want to take further measure to be able to maintain their activities in the future and to counteract another pandemic.

Discussion that shows the volunteer system is successful; but it is still too early to draw conclusions as the pandemic still goes on.

### III WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

- The French brigade already started an initiative towards the EU Commission regarding the protection of the volunteer status; French Federation of firefighters promotes a new directive on civic engagement and volunteerism.
- Opportunity of the French Presidency of the Council of EU and interest of the draft conclusions of the EU Commission on civil protection in view of climate change, which emphasizes the importance of volunteerism.
- Not on the scope of the working time directive; necessity to maintain and protect volunteerism. In the face of the threat: need to work together and to raise awareness regarding the side effects for the Commission and Parliament.
- Netherlands: No differentiation between the volunteers and professionals which is a problem for the Dutch Parliament; all fire services were asked their opinion and 50% of volunteers would stop their activities if there were to be a differentiation between them and the professionals.
- Poland: there is no regulation concerning volunteers whereas there is one for professionals.
- Finland: idea of defining voluntary firefighting as a public activity which compensation could be paid as a reward and not a salary; could help to draw the line between the working directive and volunteerism.

**Next meeting of the Volunteers commission : During the two first weeks of October 2022, in Slovenia**

### 3) Other activities of Vice-president Christophe Marchal

#### a) Delegates' Assembly 2021

(For the record): organized the CTIF Delegates' Assembly in Marseille on October 2021

#### b) Meeting with European Parliament Members

Organized a meeting for CTIF members with members of the European Parliament and Mr. SCHMITT, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights. The meeting took place on Thursday 17 February 2022 in the European Parliament in Strasbourg and was also available remotely.

This event was made possible by the support placed by Mrs. Anne Sanders and the contribution of the CTIF.

##### Discussion topic:

In most European countries, emergency response system relies on the selfless commitment of volunteer firefighters, who make up the main part of firefighting and rescue forces.

Firefighters are the cornerstone of public safety in the European Union: 3.5 million committed men and women ensure the safety of people and property every day. They carry out missions that are vital and essential to the framework, the structure and proper functioning of society.

Moreover, volunteers play a key role in Disaster Risk Management. This is even truer in the context of climate change, which tend to increase the frequency and severity of weather and climate events.

However, this system is also undermined for different reasons. This is true especially under the scope of Directive 2003/88/EC (Working Time Directive): on 21 February 2018, the Court of Justice of the European Union handed down a preliminary ruling on a dispute known as "Matazk Case". The CJEU considered that even as a volunteer, Mr Matzak should be considered as a "worker".

In several EU Member states, regional or national court have followed the approach of that case-law, which in practice weakens volunteerism in Fire and Rescue services.

Therefore, the aim of this meeting is to discuss at EU level in order to brainstorm of ow different ways may to preserve volunteerism and civic engagement in civil protection.

#### c) Meeting with EC in Brussel

Took part in CTIF Executive Committee meeting with Mr Janez LENARČIČ, European Commissioner for Crisis Management and Humanitarian Aid on 04 March 2022. I explained and stressed to the Commissioner the threat of the European Working Time Directive, (WTD) as it pertains to volunteers still being able to fulfil their commitments to their volunteer fire duties.

d) Austrian Federal Fire Brigade Association

Went to Austrian Federal Fire Brigade Association Fire brigade day, on June 4, 2022, which was held in St. Pölten.

e) INTERSCHUTZ

Participated in the INTERSCHUTZ Event in Hanover on 20-22 June 2022

f) EU Civil Protection Forum

Participated in the seventh edition of the European Civil Protection Forum, organised by the European Commission in Brussels on 28 and 29 June 2022.