

**Question for written answer E-002030/2024
to the Commission**
Rule 144
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Subject: Firefighter cuts and the wildfire in Xylokastro

The recent wildfire in Xylokastro has highlighted the tragic state of fire protection and firefighting infrastructure in Greece, as well as the tragic shortage of staff and protective equipment. Two more people have lost their lives. The government cannot keep wheeling out the same old excuses of high temperatures and having to deal with ‘other simultaneous fires’.

According to Eurostat, between 2022 and 2023, ten EU Member States saw a decrease in their firefighter numbers, despite an increase in the number of fires, floods and other emergencies. Among them are countries that experienced huge wildfires in 2023, such as Greece, Italy and Cyprus, where the number of firefighters decreased by 13.5 %, 10.2 % and 28.6 % respectively. At a time when – even with the outdated staffing plans – there are already thousands of unfilled vacancies, the firefighter cuts in Greece present a challenge.

In light of the above:

1. How does the Commission view the call for full compensation from the EU Solidarity Fund for those affected in Xylokastro?
2. How does the Commission view the fact that although it keeps making reference to the ‘climate crisis’, at the same time, critical civil protection services keep getting weaker, as demonstrated by the above data?
3. How does the Commission view the need to fully staff and equip the fire brigade and forest services and set up specialised forest firefighting agencies with appropriate resources and with dedicated full-time staff employed based on actual needs rather than outdated staffing plans, also making good use of Recovery Fund resources, which have been proven to line the pockets of business groups?

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