

**Question for written answer E-004228/2026
to the Commission**

Rule 144

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Subject: Unintended consequences of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 for volunteer firefighters in European border regions

Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 aims to coordinate social security schemes within the European Union and thereby facilitate the free movement of workers. The application of this regulation may have unintended consequences for volunteer firefighters who live in one Member State and work in another. One such example is that of thirty volunteer firefighters from the Dutch province of Zeeland. They live in the Netherlands, work in Belgium and also carry out voluntary firefighting duties in the Netherlands.

As a result of the application of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004, carrying out these voluntary activities may result in Belgian social security legislation being superseded by Dutch legislation with regard to the applicable social security system. This may have significant legal, financial and administrative consequences for both the volunteers concerned and their Belgian employers. Consequently, some volunteers are considering ending their voluntary fire service. This could lead to a reduction in the operational capacity of the fire service in this border region.

1. Does the Commission agree that voluntary service in civil protection should not lead to disproportionate changes in the social security legislation applicable to a person's main occupation?
2. Is the Commission prepared to encourage Member States to make use of the agreements under Article 16 to prevent unintended consequences for volunteer firefighters and other volunteer emergency responders?
3. Will the Commission examine whether Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 and its implementing provisions need to be clarified in order to prevent voluntary work with the fire service or civil protection from leading to disproportionate changes to the applicable social security legislation?

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