

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003075/25
to the Commission
Lefteris Nikolaou-Alavanos (NI)
(24 July 2025)**

Subject: The exhausting working conditions of firefighters

For all the fanfare about supposedly ‘strengthening’ civil protection — as exhibited by the Greek Prime Minister in the presence of the Commissioner responsible for crisis management, Hadja Lahbib, in relation to the receipt of the first firefighting vehicles after 6 whole years of governance — firefighters continue to face the perpetuation of stand-by duties, intensifying work and lack of proper rest. The fact that the vast majority of the vehicles announced by the government are personnel carriers reveals the gameplan followed by the EU and national governments: firefighters should be understaffed, flexible and permanently mobile.

In Greece, there are still more than 4 000 unfilled posts. The flexibility of employment relationships is continuing and growing, with four parallel staff categories currently in place: permanent, five-year, seasonal and contract staff. The coverage of needs through seasonal workers is institutionally established, with governments’ longstanding responsibilities set out in Laws 3938/2011 and 4662/2020.

In view of the above, the Commission is asked:

1. What view does it take of the fact that the intensification of work and the overwork of firefighters in Greece and other EU Member States is the result of chronic understaffing, the generalisation of labour flexibility and mobility, the underfunding of public firefighting and civil protection services under the EU’s ‘cost-benefit’ policy and the commercialisation of civil protection structures?
2. What view does it take of the fact that the establishment of the EU’s rescEU mechanism, far from solving the above problems, exacerbates them by preserving and recycling the scant and exhausted firefighting personnel and resources from country to country?

Submitted: 24.7.2025

**Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission
(22 September 2025)**

The organisation of firefighting services, as well as the decision to develop and host rescEU ⁽¹⁾ capacities, is a responsibility of Member States. RescEU focuses on pooling resources and supporting countries that choose to participate, striving for a more effective response to large-scale emergencies, while operating within the framework of the Working Time Directive 2003/88/EC ⁽²⁾ as the relevant instrument safeguarding workers’ health and safety.

The directive sets minimum requirements for workers’ health and safety, including 11 consecutive hours of daily rest and 35 hours of weekly rest, with a 48-hour average weekly working time limit. Member States may adopt derogations from daily and weekly rest requirements for activities with continuous service or production, such as fire and civil protection services. In such cases, workers must receive equivalent periods of compensatory rest or, exceptionally, appropriate protection.

RescEU consists of disaster response capacities designed to supplement, and not replace, national capacities, acting as a last line of defence when disasters overwhelm a Member State’s resources and the assistance available in the European Civil Protection Pool ⁽³⁾. RescEU enables the EU to coordinate and finance cross-border assistance, enhancing and strengthening collective resilience. The EU has invested EUR 600 million in 12 new firefighting planes, hosted by six Member States, including Greece.

⁽¹⁾ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/resceu_en.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2003/88/oj/eng>.

⁽³⁾ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/european-civil-protection-pool_en.