

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002132/26
to the Commission
Kostas Papadakis (NI)
(26 May 2026)**

Subject: The new fire season: Lack of staff, infrastructure and integrated forest management by the EU and national governments make for a highly flammable situation

With over 1 million hectares of land burned — including 400 000 hectares in Natura 2000 protected areas and 500 000 hectares in Greece alone — 2025 was the EU's most destructive wildfire season. This is the result of EU and national policies, which treat environmental protection as a cost.

All this at a time when the EU is fully integrating civil protection structures into war preparations by promoting 'dual-use investments' and already weakening and diverting even more attention from dealing with natural phenomena based on capabilities and scientific and technological progress.

In view of the above:

1. What is the Commission's position on the fact that, after last year's unprecedented scale of destruction to the natural environment, the separation of forest fire prevention and firefighting is set to continue, as well as the lack of integrated forest management as part of which fireproof design could also be effectively addressed?
2. How does the Commission intend to address the fact that there are still huge shortages of personnel and ground resources, which are also perpetuated by the rescEU mechanism, as it recycles minimal forces and infrastructure from country to country while at the same time the war economy is given a premium?
3. Why are no modern and science-based measures taken to protect the health and safety of firefighters and, given the carcinogenic nature of firefighting as a profession, why are firefighters still working unacceptable amounts of overtime and unable to take their accumulated leave?

Submitted: 26.5.2026

**Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission
(6 August 2026)**

The Commission promotes a holistic, integrated approach to wildfire risk management, as set out in its communication ⁽¹⁾, aiming at improving coordination between national, regional and local authorities and across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

The Commission intends to publish guidance by 2027 on best practices for governance and funding. While Member States remain primarily responsible, this and other proposed actions aim to support coordinated efforts at the EU level.

Reflecting a strong political commitment, a Council Recommendation on integrated wildfire risk management ⁽²⁾ was adopted under the Cypriot Presidency.

Member States are competent to determine the level of firefighting staff and assets. The Commission's rescEU ⁽³⁾ capacity acts as a safety net and strengthens crisis response, including for wildfires. It has proved effective in delivering vital assistance to countries in need.

Directive 89/391/EEC ⁽⁴⁾ sets the general EU framework for protecting workers' safety and health at work and applies to all workers, including firefighters.

It is complemented by Directive 2004/37/EC ⁽⁵⁾, laying down minimum requirements for protecting workers from exposure to carcinogens, mutagens or reprotoxic substances.

The Commission tracks scientific and technological developments in occupational safety and health, including the occupational exposure to carcinogens with support from the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work and the European Chemicals Agency.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52026DC0330>.

⁽²⁾ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11280-2026-INIT/en/pdf>.

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

⁽⁴⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/1989/391/oj/eng>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2004/37/oj/eng>.

It also monitors Member States' compliance with the Working Time Directive 2003/88/EC ⁽⁶⁾ setting minimum requirements on rest, working time, and paid annual leave. As guardian of the Treaties, the Commission may take any action it deems necessary.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2003/88/oj/eng>.