

# Minutes

## of the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CTIF Volunteer Firefighters Commission 18/10/2023 Hydra, Greece

**Participants:** 21 participants from Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia

Country	Organisation	First Name	Last Name	Remarks
Austria	Austrian Fire Brigade Association	Raphael	Koller	Minutes
Bulgaria	National Association of Volunteers - Bulgaria	Martin	Georgiev	
Estonia	Estonian Rescue Association	Piia	Kallas	
Finland	Suomen Pelastusalan Keskusjärjestö, SPEK	Petri	Jaatinen	
France	Fédération Nationale des Sapeurs-Pompiers de France	Angélique	Friedrich	
Germany	Deutscher Feuerwehrverband	Christoph	Weltecke	Chairman
Greece	Hellenic Volunteer Firefighters Association	Serafeim	Tsiougris	
Greece	Hellenic Volunteer Firefighters Association	Dimitrios	Zervas	
Greece	Hellenic Volunteer Firefighters Association	Pavlos	Kokkos	
Greece	Hellenic Volunteer Firefighters Association	Maria	Bitra	
Greece	Hellenic Fire Corps	Alexios	Roukos	
Greece	Hellenic Fire Corps	Christina	Chrisikou	
Greece	Hellenic Fire Corps	Vassilios	Mpikas	
Netherlands	Vakvereniging Brandweer Vrijwilligers	Ronald	Kraan	
Netherlands	Brandweer Nederland	Karin	Groenewegenter Morsche	
Norway	Eidfjord kommune	Arne	Bu	
Slovenia	Gasilska zveza Slovenije	Neža	Strmole	
Slovenia	Gasilska zveza Slovenije	Janja	Kramer Stanjko	
Slovenia	Gasilska zveza Slovenije	Janko	Cerkvenik	
Hungary	Director Budapest fire association	Oszkár	Cziva	online
Italy	Associazione Italiana Vigili del fuoco Volontari	Robert	Zanin	online

### 1. Welcome and Opening

Chairman WELTECKE welcomed the members of the commission in Greece on the Island Hydra and thanked the Hellenic Volunteer Firefighters Association for their hospitality.

Secretary General KOKKOS and Vice President ZERVAS and Mrs. BITRA (all Hellenic Volunteer Firefighters Association) also welcomed the commission to Hydra.

## **2. Introduction of new members**

## **3. Climate change and its impact volunteer fire service**

## **4. Public Relations, best practices from members**

The agenda points 2-4 were presented together by the members. The Slides are enclosed.

WELTECKE noted that a common definition of a volunteer firefighter is very difficult. However, one goal unites every firefighter: "Help people in emergencies."

The Dutch representative explained the challenges in the Netherlands especially the EU WTD. A big challenge will be the rise of the sea-level and keeping the dams high enough.

The representative from Estonia presented the structure and further Projects including support for Ukraine.

The representatives from Greece presented facts about the effects of climate change (July was hottest Month on record, forest fires, but also floods). 2021 was the biggest UCPM response. In 2022 and 2023 "Prepositioning" was established. Greece deployed "Support officers", most of them were volunteers.

The representatives of Slovenia looked back to disasters in Slovenia (ice-rain, forest fires, floods...) and explained common findings (e.g. measures by the state).

The French representative spoke about the challenges with the EU WTD. There will be a meeting with president von der Leyen. France tries to increase the number of volunteers up to 250.000 and to build up a new status of VFF.

The representative of Norway spoke about the impact on volunteers because of climate change.

The representative of Finland spoke about heavy storms as an effect of climate change.

The Austrian representative presented some initiatives as best practices (e.g. education initiative "Gemeinsam.Sicher.Feuerwehr" or the Award for "Fire service friendly employers").

The representative of Bulgaria presented some best practices: "Storz-Card-Game" and the "Race for volunteers". In Bulgaria there is no national law for volunteer fire brigades. There is a national association, but no obligation to join the association.

## **5. Research projects**

GROENEWEGEN-TER MORSCHE (NL) presented the findings on recruitment and retention of retained (volunteer) firefighters in the Netherlands. General conclusion:

- There needs to be more customization instead of uniformity.
- There should be more attention and support for the post commander and the volunteers.
- More needs to be done to ensure the correct image of citizens, employers and the man-

agement organization.

BITRA and ZERVAS (GR) presented findings on the topic “Retention Issues for Female Volunteer Firefighters in Greece-The Importance of Mentoring and Women Networks”

### 5. Next meeting

Virtual Meeting in Spring 2024.

Presence Meeting in Autumn 2024 (The Netherlands); Meeting will be in uniform.

### 6. Any other business

WELTECKE explained the “Norderney Declaration”, a declaration between the fire brigade associations of Germany, Austria and Poland concerning the support for Ukraine. The commission made a joint statement to support this declaration.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm.

Minutes:

Raphael KOLLER, BSc MSc

Chairman:

Dr. Christoph WELTECKE

### Enclosures:

- Presentations (TOP 2,3,4,5) of Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Greece (2), Italy (2), Netherlands (2), Norway, Slovenia (2).
- Hydra Statement.



*Photo of commission members during a visit to Penteli Volunteer Fire Station (© Georgiev)*

## CTIF Volunteer Firefighters Commission

# Hydra Statement

Volunteer fire fighters rescue, extinguish, recover and protect citizens in their community and beyond. Women and men are ready to volunteer to serve others: 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In the case of the volunteer fire fighters in Ukraine, the special circumstances of a war are added to the situation: increased deployment volume coupled with a lack of resources and the constant threat of attack.

Strong volunteer fire fighters need strong associations to coordinate their firefighting efforts and represent their interests. Convinced that volunteer fire protection is rooted in the community and develops in democratic structures with elected representatives up to the state level, the German Fire Service Association, the Austrian Fire Brigades Association and the Association of Volunteer Fire Brigades of Poland agreed in the “Norderney-Declaration” in April 2023 as follows:

*We want to continue our commitment to the comrades of the fire departments in Ukraine. As soon as the situation in Ukraine allows it, we will also be a partner for all municipalities and volunteer fire fighters that want to organize themselves in a self-created association. We will share the knowledge of association organization, which has grown in more than 100 years, and where necessary we will support as a non-material partner in the establishment of an association.*

The CTIF Volunteer Fire Fighters Commission supports the position of the “Norderney-Declaration” and asks the national fire service associations to join and support this position as well.

Hydra, 18th Oct. 2023