

Annual Report of the Volunteer Fire Brigades Commission

Before the actual report on the work of the Commission, it is important to thank the long-standing Chair Hubert Vetter from Austria. Hubert first launched the Voluntary Fire Brigades Working Group, developed it from a working group to a commission and shaped its work over the years. I would like to thank him personally, but also on behalf of all members of the Commission, for his commitment. On the occasion of the Assembly of Delegates of the CTIF in Marseille in October 2021 - after prior participation of the ordinary members of the CTIF - the leadership of the Commission was transferred to me by the Executive Council. I would also like to express my sincere thanks for the trust this has placed in me.

On the subject of content: The effects of the coronal pandemic have also left their mark on the Commission's work. The meeting in Slovenia planned for the beginning of 2020 had to be cancelled by the former Chair Hubert Vetter due to the pandemic. Like many national and international committees, however, we have recognised the opportunities that digitalisation offers for transnational work. While in the past there was only an annual exchange in presence, from this reporting year at least two meetings are planned, one of them as a digital meeting, in order to be able to deepen the exchange.

The 7th meeting of the Commission took place in April 2022. Eleven countries participated in the meeting. The first topic was an initial assessment of the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the work of volunteer fire brigades. The discussion revealed different effects on membership numbers and member motivation in the individual countries. However, the participants were unanimous in their description of the problems the pandemic has brought with it in the area of training. Across countries, they would also have liked to see a higher ranking of volunteer fire brigades in vaccination prioritisation. Against the background of the restrictions that still exist in some areas and the uncertain development of the situation, it was agreed that it is still too early to make a final assessment. In a second thematic focus, the comrades of the French Fire Brigades Association reported on an initiative towards the EU Commission regarding the



Working Time Directive. This was followed by a discussion on how to prevent the Working Time Directive from having a negative impact on the "volunteer fire brigade" system. Ideas that were brought into the discussion were the exclusion of fire protection and civil protection from the scope of the directive or the creation of a definition of voluntary work. The participants will continue to keep the topic in focus. The 8th meeting of the Commission will take place in October 2022 in Slovenia.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have brought the work of the Commission to life and helped it to move forward. In addition to the participants of the Commission meetings, I would like to mention Mr Raphael Koller from Austria and Ms Neza Strmole from Slovenia for the technical and substantive preparation and follow-up of the meetings, as well as the Vice-President of CTIF Christophe Marchal as liaison to the Executive Council and the Secretary General of CTIF Roman Sykora, as well as the office of the German Fire Brigades Association with Rudolf Römer at its head for their constant support in all questions that arise.

Korbach, June 2022

Dr. Christoph Weltecke
Chairman



Note: The translation into English has been produced using the translation software www.deepl.com. Native speakers are kindly asked to check for translation errors.

