The "Working time" directive must be applied to all firefighters in France



(19 September 2019) In view of the question from Mrs Sander (2019/2806 (RSP)) that is tabled for discussion in the European Parliament on Thursday 19 September 2019, EPSU stresses that the working time directive and subsequent case law must apply to all firefighters in France, whether they have professional or volunteer status.

French volunteer firefighters have on-call shifts in emergency centres of up to 24 consecutive hours and other duties that must be considered as working time. They perform on-call duties without having sufficient rest time before or after other jobs they may have. The requirements of the European directive on working time are there to ensure the protection of workers by taking into account the risks to their health and the necessary safety at work. In addition, these on on-call shifts are in lieu of employment of professional firefighters and at lower cost. These short-sighted cost savings however bring real long-term costs in terms of health and

safety.

Together with its affiliated French trade union organizations, the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) demands that France applies the provisions of Directive 2003/88/EC and its case-law to all firefighters, professionals and volunteers. The Court of Justice of the European Union in its judgments C-518/15 (Cities of Nivelles / Rudy Matzak) and C-254/18 recalls how Directive 2003/88 / EC concerning certain aspects of work must be applied to firefighters.

The European directive on working time must apply to all firefighters and it should not be possible to exclude a group of firefighters under the indication of a demand for a future specific new directive. An exclusion from the current working time legislation and non-application of case law, in reality only means wanting to reduce health and safety protections and guarantees for volunteer firefighters.

For these reasons, EPSU invites MEPs not to follow through with this approach which promotes social dumping between professional and volunteer firefighters at the expense of their health and safety.

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