



EPSU Firefighters' Network Meeting

23 September 2009_EESC Brussels

Brief report

<u>Present:</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Country</u>
CRIJNS Guy	CSC	Belgium
LUYTEN Mil	ACOD CGSP	Belgium
JANDA Francis	CGSP	Belgium
VANDERHULST Joris	VSOA	Belgium
LINDHART Gert	FOA	Denmark
POULSEN Asger	FOA	Denmark
PAULUS Ivo	ROTAL	Estonia
LUJA Kimmo	JHL	Finland
SILJANDER Mikko	JHL	Finland
HYNNINEN Petri	KTN	Finland
NIKULA Kim	KTN	Finland
SVANBERG Mikael	KTN	Finland
BOUVIER Sébastien	CFDT	France
BJÖRNSSON Sverrir Björn	National Union of Firefighters	Iceland
FLANAGAN Mike	SIPTU	Ireland
KIDD John	SIPTU	Ireland
TAYLOR Deirdre	SIPTU	Ireland
NOLAN Peter	IMPACT	Ireland
MORETTI Franco	FP CGIL	Italy
SPALIS Janis	LAKRS	Latvia
JAERLING Mike	FNCTTFEL	Luxemburg
WEITEN Alain	FNCTTFEL	Luxembourg
DE ZEEUW Jobde	AbvaKabo	Netherlands
VAN HENGST Fred	AbvaKabo	Netherlands (The)
SKASETH Dag	NUMGE	Norway
ALVES Mario	STAL	Portugal
MARQUES Jose Manuel	STAL	Portugal
KRIŽANSKY Peter	F.F. SK Republic	Slovakia
FERNANDEZ Pepe	FSC-CCOO	Spain
PARADA Manuel	FSC- CCOO	Spain
HALVORS Owe	Kommunal	Sweden
SHAW Michael	FBU	United Kingdom
CLARKE Penny	EPSU	Belgium
FISCHBACH-PYTTEL Carola	EPSU	Belgium
POND Richard	EPSU	Belgium

1) Update on topical issues

After welcoming participants, Carola Fischbach-Pyttel, EPSU General Secretary gave an introduction to the key EPSU priorities following the EPSU Congress in June 2009. The EPSU work programme 2010 – 2014 will be presented to the Executive Committee in November. Carola referred to the developments regarding the working time Directive.

The EPSU work programme is on the EPSU website at <http://www.epsu.org/a/5759> and for update on working time see <http://www.epsu.org/r/152>

2) Improving firefighters' health and safety

Stefano Boy, ETUI presented the work of the ETUC's health and safety Institute with a focus on standardisation. You can download his presentation from the ETUI website [http://hesa.etui-rehs.org/uk/newsevents/files/EPSU %20firefighters.pdf](http://hesa.etui-rehs.org/uk/newsevents/files/EPSU_%20firefighters.pdf)

Stefano pointed out that there are some 800 EU technical standards / specifications flowing from the Machinery Directive alone, 25 of which concern the firefighting services. Many actors are involved in drawing up these specifications – but unfortunately not many of these come from the trade unions. There is an obligation however to involve social partners and the EU standard-setting body CEN is obliged to seek feedback from end-users (i.e. also workers!). Trade union participation is all the more important as it now possible to also take into account ergonomic factors (e.g., stress, fatigue) in standard design. Stefano also pointed out that social partners should also be involved with standard bodies at national level and he added that there is an obligation on employers to carry out risk assessments when introducing new equipment. Stefano asked for the involvement of some members of the network in the ETUI work on standardisation.

In discussion colleagues agreed that we the network should work on standardisation, including in the area of personal protective equipment. **Members are invited to inform the EPSU secretariat if they would like to be involved in the work on standards and/or to nominate experts from their organisations.**

We also discussed with Stefano how to make sure that EU framework on health and safety is known and applied in the fire service. We will explore this further with the ETUI.

Stefano Supino, University of Urbino / Franco Moretti FP-CGIL gave a presentation of the Mediterranean firefighters' health and safety project. The project involved firefighters' unions in Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Malta and Greece and was supported financially by the European Commission. The project built on the EPSU firefighters' Charter and helped to strengthen links between the participating unions. **Similar projects could be considered by other members of the network.** The project produced a 'vademecum' on health and safety, details of which you can find on <http://www.hssfmed.eu> or on the EPSU website under the firefighters' section <http://www.epsu.org/r/315/>. One of the conclusions of the project is that we need an EU law on forest fires to strengthen in particular prevention measures (e.g., to combat fires that are started deliberately).

3) Preventing man-made and natural disasters: Overview of the European Commission's Civil Protection Unit

Roman Birvon, Civil Protection Unit, European Commission informed the network about the civil protection unit and of the different cooperation activities and projects. You can find his presentation on <http://www.epsu.org/IMG/pdf/ECppt.pdf>. The Lisbon Treaty gives a new legal

basis for civil protection and this will give more scope for EU solidarity programmes and prevention activities. Roman said that national contact points from each country are active in the civil protection activities.

The discussion highlighted that in (all?) countries civil protection is a national responsibility whereas fire service is mostly local, and that there is not always close cooperation. The discussion showed that we need to improve the involvement of fire-fighters in civil protection, and in particular their involvement in the organisation and decision-making processes. In general it is important for to stress in civil protection prevention as the first focus, as opposed to intervention.

Although we had an interesting discussion on this item, there was no clear conclusion to our debate. We can come back to this.

4) Update on collective bargaining developments

Richard Pond gave an update on EPSU collective bargaining activities and the epsucob@ network (see <http://www.epsu.org/a/4039>) which includes regular newsletters on developments regarding wages and working conditions, broken down also by sector. **Members are reminded that they can join the network (just send your contact details to rpond@epsu.org) and should keep us informed of bargaining developments.**

We also discussed working time and agreed that we should update the 2006 survey <http://www.epsu.org/a/2633> that we did among members (including retirement age). This is an important area also in light of developments regarding the working time Directive and of expected new proposals regarding on-call work. We shall prepare this with Richard for the next meeting of the network. **A short questionnaire will be sent to you soon to fill in!**

5) Future work of the network

We had some discussion on the future working of the network. Clearly there are a lot of issues that are of interest to members, from 'workplace' issues such as working time, training, health and safety to broader concerns regarding the role, organisation and funding on the fire service (including the question of voluntary fire-fighters). The key question is how to work on these and what results / objectives are expected?

In any event the day's discussion helped to set a number of objectives for the next meeting(s).

- ✓ To establish our **standardisation taskforce** and to follow-up on other health and safety issues (including those identified and the Mediterranean Vedemecum)
- ✓ To prepare a broader discussion on **working time** in order to influence the direction of EU discussion on on-call work as well as to identify issues that would be useful to work on together (shift work patterns for example)
- ✓ To improve the **exchange of information** among network members, in particular through epsucob@
- ✓ To **monitor developments regarding civil protection** and to see, once the Lisbon Treaty is in force, how to make progress on our demand for a EU directive on forest fires

We also had some discussion on establishing a **steering group** to help to develop activities of the network and/or developing a rotation system whereby one or two affiliates work with the EPSU secretariat to prepare meetings etc. (as the UK FBU did when the network was first set up). **We suggest to return to this discussion at the next.**