



LV/TM

Brussels, 11 September 2024

To: Paolo Gentiloni, European
Commissioner for Economy

cab-gentiloni-contact@ec.europa.eu

[Letter sent by e-mail]

Dear Commissioner Gentiloni,

We are writing to you regarding newly published Eurostat data on the number of firefighters in the European Union.

While there were substantial, and very welcome, increases in the number of staff in a few member states, the number of firefighters has fallen in twelve member states – the majority of the countries for which data is available. Also, the number of overall professional firefighters in the last 5 years has decreased.

Last year's cuts coincided with the second warmest year in Europe's history, according to the European Union's Copernicus programme. Consequently, it meant that countries where there was an increased risk of wildfires had fewer firefighters to deal with them.

For example, Greece lost 2,540 firefighters at a time when the country was victim to what the European Commission itself [called](#) the “biggest wildfire ever recorded in the EU.” In that regard, the main trade union of firefighters in Greece is already requesting an urgent meeting with Prime Minister Mitsotakis.

Italy also had to respond to wildfires which devastated almost 100,000 hectares with 4,240 fewer firefighters than the previous year. The story is repeated across Europe. Half of all firefighters lost their jobs in Lithuania last year, according to Eurostat data, while Cyprus and Finland lost almost a third of their firefighters.

This data follows cuts of a similar scale in [2022](#) and was published at the same time as firefighters fought to control another summer of wildfires. Cutting the number of firefighters at a time when the climate crisis is increasing the risk of fires is clearly irresponsible. Human resources are a key element.

Cuts put the public at an unnecessary risk, means the environment is more likely to be destroyed, and leaves the remaining firefighters facing growing danger with fewer resources. That puts firefighters under increasing psychosocial stress (burnout, stress) as well as in physical danger (cancer, chemical exposure).



I would ask you to raise this situation as a matter of urgency with member states and impress upon them the importance of ensuring that our fire services have the staff and resources, they need in order to tackle the growing threat posed by climate change. The European Commission must also play its part in that by ensuring that it does not put member states under pressure to reduce spending on public services.

Italy is among countries which has been placed under the Excessive Deficit Procedure. Instead, the climate crisis requires us to increase public investment to properly fund our services and deliver a green economy that creates quality jobs.

In that sense we would like to have a meeting with you and your services in the shortest delay possible.

Yours sincerely,

Jan-Willem Goudriaan, EPSU General Secretary
Ludovic Voet, ETUC Confederal Secretary