

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0380/04
by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Contract-holders at the Fire Service

Every year the Fire Service takes on approximately 5 500 fire-fighting/rescue workers on contracts; it states that this is because of a lack of staff (3 500 vacant posts). These workers, who have been the same for decades, are taken on every year on a fixed-term contract, usually for five months, based on a five-year list. The basic qualification for being on the list was the fact that the workers in question had served as volunteer forest fire-fighters. These workers, however, are called upon to intervene in events (road accidents, floods, earthquakes, etc.) throughout the duration of the year and after their contracts have ended, unpaid, on the grounds that they are volunteer fire-fighters. Under the Fire Service's regulations, any refusal by them to work on a volunteer basis may have a consequence on the renewal of their contracts.

1. In view of Directive 2000/78¹, do the above facts not constitute victimisation under the terms of Article 11?
2. Can those of the workers who, despite this, yield to pressure and agree to carry out duties whenever they are called on and not only in exceptional circumstances (at least four times per month) – thus making it impossible for them to be employed by another employer – argue that they are meeting fixed and constant needs of the Fire Service?

¹ OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.