

**Question for written answer P-000709/2012
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Dominique Vlasto (PPE)

Subject: Classification of volunteer firefighters' activities as an occupation

Of the 2.5 million firemen in Europe, 2 million are voluntary, having chosen to make themselves available to the public safety forces, often in parallel to their careers.

However, CJEU judgments and the draft revision of the 2003 Working Time Directive threaten the ability of volunteer firefighters to reconcile their working lives with the voluntary work they do alongside professional firefighters.

By classifying voluntary firefighters' activities as an occupation, the Commission is acknowledging the important role they play in Europeans' safety. However, imposing excessive conditions, particularly relating to the mobilisation of volunteers, represents a major obstacle to the sound organisation of rescue activities and to ensuring that there are enough firefighters to respond to emergencies.

According to the Commission's timetable, the draft of the Working Time Directive will be debated again in the European Parliament during the first half of 2012.

For several years, the Commission has made the classification of voluntary firefighters' activities as an occupation dependent on the outcome of impact assessments and consultations with social partners. Professional and voluntary firefighters are all concerned that such classification will spell an end to volunteering and lead to a significant and alarming drop in numbers in civil protection forces; it also runs counter to national legislation on this issue.

1. In light of the impact assessments and debates undertaken by the Commission, does it still intend to include the classification of voluntary firefighters' activities as an occupation in its proposal for a directive?
2. Does the Commission envisage proposing a specific or opt-out scheme for the benefit of voluntary firemen in order to take account of the clear specificities of this activity and of the need for the fire service to be able to count on its volunteers?