

## **Fire brigades in Europe are calling for an integral and coordinated approach to wildfires**

The average global temperature has risen by 1.1°C (1.1K) since pre-industrial times. This has resulted in record-breaking temperatures across Europe and the rest of the world. This summer was the hottest in Europe ever recorded. Many European countries such as France, Spain and Portugal faced devastating (wild)fires and health hazards associated with extreme heat. Even parts of northern European countries such as Sweden and the United Kingdom experienced hazardous temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius (313,15 Kelvin) and beyond.

Even the most optimistic and conservative estimates say that the average global temperature will rise at least another 0.4°C (0.4K). The grimmest scenarios predict that the average global temperature may rise as much as 3°C (3K) by the year 2100. Such increases require fire and rescue services, along with the rest of society, to prepare for the challenges to come. This does not just mean having sufficient resources, it also means investing in proper coordination both on a grassroots and macro-strategic level, up-to-date legislation with powerful enough jurisdictions and possibilities to participate in resilient urban planning.

As a climate crisis is a systemic and holistic challenge, it requires an integral and coordinated approach. Fire and rescue services need to cooperate with research institutes, public authorities, private companies, individuals and local communities. National decision-making has historically played and will continue to play a vocal role in both the prevention and mitigation of a climate crisis. In addition to national efforts, a crisis calls for international cooperation and EU funded prevention and mitigation programmes. If efforts are too dispersed, they will lose their impact.

Although the effects of a climate crisis will vary from country to country, the basic principles of fires and how to extinguish them will remain the same. Even a local or regional programme can produce knowledge for all of us to learn from. An exemplary financial tool for international cooperation is EU's Exchange of Experts, a programme that has huge development potential.

In addition to wildfires, climate change also brings new challenges. For example: droughts lead to water scarcity which means that fire and rescue services can't rely on natural water sources for their extinguishing water. Extreme weather may also result in catastrophic floods as experienced in central Europe in the summer of 2021. Heat waves are a health hazard that puts a strain on fire and rescue services. This summer, we saw European rail and road infrastructure malfunctioning due to extreme heat. Nuclear power plants had to reduce their energy output as the river water used for cooling was too warm. European fire and rescue services need resources and determination to prepare for an increase in such climate crisis effects.

The EC upgraded the Civil Protection Mechanism and created rescEU: a success story. It proved to be an essential mechanism when Covid-19 broke out and when Ukraine needed immediate help. These stressful and testing times have shown that the mechanism needs some adjusting, but the Federation of European fire officers (FEU) welcomes it as an additional layer of preparedness that will enhance people's safety. FEU also wants to highlight that Host Nation Support is an essential part of international help and cooperation. If a country can't utilise the help it receives, the mechanism will not function well.

For the European fire and rescue services, it is important to be able to take responsibility and contribute to sustainable developments and measures that will limit emissions and their impact on the climate. This is therefore a clear and shared ambition across the FEU. But as part of public resilience and mitigation, fire and rescue services first need resources, coordination, jurisdiction and plans to fight the effects that we are inevitably going to face. Such resources include staff, gear, vehicles, fire stations ICT, management systems and training. In addition, nothing can substitute a holistic approach to resilience and preparedness throughout our societies. The core purpose of fire and rescue services is to protect people and we need adequate tools and resources to do so.