



EUFFAS
c/o Deutscher Feuerwehrverband e. V. (DFV)
Bundesgeschäftsstelle
Reinhardtstraße 25
10117 Berlin
Germany

Baarn(NL), 22 Juli 2026

Subject: Joint European initiative to protect volunteer firefighters in border regions

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the Vakvereniging Brandweer Vrijwilligers (VBV), we would like to draw your attention to an urgent issue currently affecting approximately 30 volunteer firefighters in the Dutch province of Zeeland.

These firefighters live in the Netherlands, have their main employment in Belgium and additionally serve as volunteer firefighters in the Netherlands. As a consequence of the application of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004, their service with the Dutch fire brigade may result in Dutch social security legislation becoming applicable to their overall employment situation. This may have significant financial, administrative and social security consequences, both for the firefighters concerned and for their main employers in Belgium.

The situation is causing considerable personal uncertainty and distress among our members. At the same time, there is a real risk that volunteer firefighters may decide to resign from the fire service as a result of these consequences. A social security coordination issue is therefore increasingly becoming an issue affecting fire service operational readiness and resilience in European border regions.

In our view, this should not be regarded solely as a Dutch-Belgian issue. Similar situations may affect volunteer firefighters and other voluntary emergency responders in border regions throughout Europe.

The VBV therefore intends to raise this issue at European level. In particular, we intend to approach the European Parliament's Intergroup on Resilience, Disaster Management and Civil Protection and ask the Intergroup to place this matter on the European political agenda.

We would very much welcome EUFFAS's support for this initiative and would like to invite EUFFAS to join the VBV as a co-signatory or co-sender of a joint letter to the Intergroup.

In our view, a joint initiative by VBV and EUFFAS would make clear that this is not merely about the individual difficulties faced by approximately 30 Dutch volunteer firefighters. It raises a fundamental European question: European social security legislation should not discourage people from serving as volunteer firefighters and contributing to the safety and resilience of our communities.

In particular, we propose asking the Intergroup to:

- a) discuss the issue within the Intergroup;

Vakvereniging Brandweer Vrijwilligers (VBV)

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- b) request the European Commission to examine the unintended consequences of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 for volunteer firefighters in border regions;
- c) investigate whether similar problems occur in other EU Member States;
- d) support a short-term solution, in particular through agreements under Article 16 of the Regulation;
- e) and, in the longer term, advocate a solution ensuring that limited voluntary service in firefighting and civil protection does not trigger disproportionate changes to the social security system applicable to a person's main employment.

We would also appreciate it if EUFFAS could explore whether its member organizations are aware of similar cases in other European countries. Such a European overview would significantly strengthen our joint initiative.

We would, of course, be pleased to provide further information about the situation and its background and to prepare a draft joint letter to the Intergroup for further discussion.

We very much hope that EUFFAS will be willing to take this initiative forward together with us.

With kind and collegial regards,

Vakvereniging Brandweer Vrijwilligers (VBV)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Dokter", is written over a faint, stylized blue line that resembles a signature or a decorative flourish.

Marcel Dokter
President