
COMMON DECLARATION ON CESI FIREFIGHTERS' DAY – VIOLENCE AGAINST FIREFIGHTERS IS AN ATTACK AGAINST US ALL!

The representatives of firefighter unions member of CESI, united in Brussels on the occasion of CESI's Firefighters' Day, vehemently condemn any type of attack against representatives of public security and emergency/rescue personnel in various places in Europe.

The New Year's celebrations marked, yet again, a culminating point of violence against the state and rule of law, public order and human rights. The total number of victims of violence reported in Berlin alone include 40 officers and 15 firefighters¹.

These incidences are part of a wider development. Evidence has shown an increase in third party violence against public service officials and more particularly also an increase of up to 22% in the number of attacks on law enforcement officers in Germany between 2012 and 2022². Public sector union member organisations of CESI from across Europe report similar experiences.

As already pointed out in CESI's [Manifest on third party violence against public sector personnel](#), *"public services, and its workforce in particular, have seemingly become the target of dissatisfaction due to rising social inequalities and frustration for which the State and governments are held responsible. Sadly enough, the situation is worsening due to the health, social and economic crisis caused by the Covid19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures. The immediate consequences of increasing social tensions and people's mounting frustration can be seen in the rise in aggressive behaviour towards public service workers. It appears that the pandemic has brought an additional source of stress to the work of public services, hindering the prevention of violence in the workplace."*

It is now more important than ever to step up efforts to valorise the rescuing professions and their vital role in preserving lives. People in uniform or protective equipment remain citizens and are protected by the same antiracism and antidiscrimination laws, including from hate, contempt, or hostility or physical aggression.

¹ <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2023-01-10/germany-consequences-new-years-eve-riots>

² 'In 2021, the Federal Criminal Police Office reported that the number of acts of violence against police officers had increased by 689 cases to 39,649 when compared with the previous year. Since 2012, cases of violence against police officers had increased by a total of 22.5%.' <https://www.dw.com/en/whats-behind-nye-attacks-on-german-police-firefighters/a-64266080>

It is important to stand firmly not only in the interest of safety and public order, but also for the sake of our values, liberal democracy, tolerance, and the rule of law. An attack against the state and its employees represents an attack against us all.

Radicalization and the rise of extremist attitudes must be brought down. This must include, as required, preventive as well as and repressive measures, but must naturally always respect fundamental rights and the rule of law towards all citizens as enshrined by national constitutions and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Law and order are prevailing European values which should be conveyed, shared and protected by everyone collectively for resilient, tolerant and socially inclusive societies.

Trade-unions can and must play a central role in the fight against third-party violence against civil servants and public sector employees most notably by:

1. keeping the phenomenon in the public spotlight and strongly condemning third-party violence through awareness-raising campaigns of zero-tolerance against violence;
2. bringing together workers and management to identify best practices on how to prevent and manage third-party violence and on how to valorise public sector professions more than before – especially firefighters, police forces and emergency/rescue personnel;
3. including measures for a better prevention and management of third-party violence in collective agreements and legislative advocacy at national level;
4. accompanying victims of third-party violence by offering them psychological support and assistance in legal proceedings and by facilitating their access to information and possible remedies that they require.