

**MINUTES of the 20th meeting of the CTIF Commission for Women in  
 Fire and Rescue Services (WFRS), Levi, Finland.  
 11 March 2025**

Number of participant countries:12 (9+3)

Participant Country	Organization	First Name	Last Name	Remarks/Details
Finland	<b>FINNISH GOVERNMENT</b>	MIRA	LEINONEN	Senior Fire Officer
Greece	<b>HELLENIC VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION</b>	MARIA	BITRA	International Relations for HVFA- Volunteer Fire Sergeant
Greece	<b>HELLENIC FIRE SERVICE</b>	EIRINI-THEOFANIA	MAVROPOULOU	Fire Second Lieutenant
	<b>HELLENIC FIRE SERVICE</b>	MARIA	GKATZIOU	Fire Second Lieutenant
Sweden	<b>SWEDISH NETWORK FOR WOMEN IN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES</b>	MONA	HJORTZBERG	President of Swedish Network for Women in Fire and Rescue Services
	Industrins Räddningstjänst i Stenungsund AB	CLARA	FREDH	Operations Manager
CERN	<b>CERN FIRE BRIGADE</b>	SARA	HANSEN	Officer
Luxembourg	<b>LUXEMBOURG FIRE&amp;RESCUE CORPS</b>	MARIE	SATTLER	Head of Unit for International Relations
	<b>LUXEMBOURG FIRE&amp;RESCUE CORPS</b>	ANNICK	BAUSTERT	DEP.CHIEF FIRE OFFICER IN LUXEMBOURG CITY
Denmark	Østjyllands Brandvæsen	KIRSTEN	DYRVIG	Fire Officer-Head of Department
France	<b>SAPEURS-POMPIERS FRANCE</b>	VANESA	RICOIL	
Austria	<b>BERUFSFEUERWEHR WIEN</b>	VICTORIA	ZECHMEISTER	Chief/Director of Fire Department of Vienna
Germany	<b>ESSEN FIRE DEPARTMENT</b>	SUSANNE	KLATT	Chief of Training

The Netherlands	<b>NETWERK BRANDWEERVROUWEN NEDERLAND</b>	SASKIA	POUW	Board member of Network for Female Fire in the Netherlands
GUEST	<b>FINLAND</b>	OLIVER	SAAL	Rescue Academy of Finland
ONLINE (TEAMS)				
1. Greece	<b>HELLENIC VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION</b>	SOPHIA	TAVANTZOPOULOU	Volunteer Fire Sergeant
2. South Korea	<b>KNFA, SPECIAL OPERATIONS OF DAEGU METROPOLITAN CITY</b>	Jeonghee	JIN	Chief
3. Ghana		Gladys	HOEK	
4. Slovenia		Brigita	CUFAR	

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

### **Welcome and Opening**

**09:00**

The works of the Meeting began, with the introduction and welcome to delegates and guest Oliver Saal (The Rescue Academy of Finland) and Annika Rinne, Coordinator of the CTIF National Committee Finland, by WFRS Commission Vice Chair, Mira Leinonen (FIN).

Vice Chair Leinonen, talked about programmes in Finland taking place since 2021, with 13 action points. Targets need knowledge and the summary of research that is done is translated so that knowledge can be shared. Also, the need to develop PPE and uniforms was addressed, as station wear is only designed for men. Another topic is pregnancy and special motherhood allowance and firefighters and paramedics not being on the list of receiving this allowance. Ms Leinonen mentioned the tragic loss of the president of the CTIF Extrication and Technology Commission, Mikko Saastamoinen.

**09:30**

Beginning of ten-minute presentation of delegates, country and fire and rescue organization, their role in the Commission.

### **Susanne Klatt (GER)**

Ms Klatt talked about how, although law protects firefighters in many cases, the issues of protective clothing & PPE need to be addressed. Protective clothing is different in most municipalities in the country and there are different, therefore difficult for manufacturers to have station wear and uniform for female firefighters. Also, it is not easy to recruit female applicants, as gender neutral standards and test play a role. Finally, there are cases of firefighters returning to their fire service after leave of absence (pregnancy,etc) and not feel welcome, eg feel that they are not accepted in training. Suggestion to raise awareness with our representatives, other countries being role models.

### **Vanessa Ricoil (FRA)**

Ms Ricoil mentioned how the height requirement some years ago was preventing many women from joining the fire service. However, this has thankfully changed. Twenty per cent of women are now in fire school. Today, French firefighters are making progress in equality and adversity and the numbers of female firefighters is growing steadily. There has been effort to build community and network but there is still a long way to go.

### **Sara Hansen (CERN/SWE)**

In CERN, diversity and inclusion is a priority and there is a goal of reaching 25% of fire staff being women – They are working on it to reach this goal. Inclusion is important but diversity is also something wider and it has to be ensured that there are different nationalities, employees with disability (CERN fire service has employees from 17 different nationalities).

### **Victoria Zechmeister (AU)**

Ms Zechmeister presented the Austrian Fire Brigade Association, which is the umbrella for all fire brigade associations and municipalities. There were 35,379 firefighters in 2024. Since 2008, plus 189% women and girls. In 2024, 2,374 more female firefighters. 99% are volunteers, 10 % are women, but for career officers the percentage of women is half. There is a need for flexibility in being able to do a 24-hour shift. Ms Zechmeister also explained the chain of command, and her work being responsible for facilities as well as being active in incidents (in major damage situation, with more details. Ms Zechmeister was the first female officer in Austria.

**Maria Gatzou and Eirini Mavropoulou (GRE)** presented the history of women in the Greek Fire Service. First women entered the Greek Fire Corps in 1995. At the moment, 6% of staff are women (including all categories of staff. Mental resilience is important as there can be obstacles, with workplace discrimination and harassment (excluded from trainings)-Also, there are challenges in Work and Life balance (family responsibilities), facilities and rest accommodation, uniforms and equipment design. Some female firefighters have a pioneering role in research after a wildfire (data contributing to fire-interaction). Shaping the future is important by enforcing zero tolerance policies, increasing female representation in leadership roles and mentorship and leadership training programs should be created to help women advance in their careers. Discipline and teamwork are necessary to overcome barriers.

### **10:30 Coffee Break**

**11:00 Discussion on the Draft Plan on the future goals in 2025 as well as in the near future**

- **Marie Sattler suggested that exchanges are important and the commission could have more space for discussion and new ideas, eg products coming out of this commission. It has the power to change things. Proposal of Luxemburg to host next meeting (2026-date to be confirmed) but more in the form of workshops. An idea of topics is definitely sexual harassment, how to establish national networks, use of hijabs/religious signs in firefighting, pregnancy/motherhood, female leadership. These topics are suggested in order to be presented in workshops. Finally, it was stressed that promotion in social media is helpful.**
- **Mona Hjortzberg suggested having workshops for pregnancy/menopause. What campaign is in each country and what can be done to be promoted.**

Also, how we can have the Gender question in the agenda of every commission and cooperate with other commissions.

- **Mira Leinonen** suggested having pre webinars on the topics that will be presented in Luxemburg before and then finalize them in the meeting.  
History of this Commission- ideas but always the opportunity to be implemented

**Overall, the goals are:**

- **Next 2026 meeting**
- **Workshops**
- **Pre-workshops in webinars and finalize topics on the live meeting**
- **Cooperation of other commissions in some issues (gender)**
- **Workshops for pregnancy/menopause**
- **Correct terms to be used**
- **Contact WHO, FEU, UN Women and Directorate for EU Civil Protection**

**Next webinars will be pre-workshops for 2026 meeting in Luxemburg**

**First pre-webinar should be in 3 monthtime (June) and then, if possible, meet every two months before the meeting.**

Continuation of presentations

**Saskia Pouw (NETH)**

**Ms Pouw** presented her work in fire prevention since 2009. There are difficulties when issues are addressed by women. They address their problem, they are heard but the issue is not dealt with. The goal in the Netherlands is to increase visibility. There is an annual Fire event, participation in gay pride event, promotion through Facebook. The RCDV in the country embraces the statement of inclusion. There is cooperation and membership with FEU, LHBTI. There are 12 provinces (fire services, disaster response, crisis management, medical assistance). They have had new uniform since 2023, more practical for both women and men. Many women officers but more would be ideal.

8 companies offered/sponsored souvenirs for the delegates.

**12:00 Lunch Break & Group Photo**

**13:00 Continuation of presentations**

**Kirsten DYRVIG (DEN)** Description of system in Denmark. One of the three organizing the management. She is also incident commander. There are gradual steps in the acceptance of female ffs in the fire service. There is no network for women in the fire service. Hopes of establishing a network this year, beginning with webinars. Hopefully, this commission meeting will bring new perspective in what can be done in Denmark.

**Annick BAUSTERT LUX & Marie SATTTLER (LUX)**

Ms Baustert is an Incident Commander in Luxembourg City and a Volunteer in K-9 Unit.

Ms Sattler is responsible for International relations. They have a decision group in their fire service with many things on the agenda(diversity/women) through workshops. They are interested in creating a network in order to raise awareness in participating more in sports events, as well as highlight other diversity issues. They have 22% women in the fire and rescue

(though including technical support and fire youth), 15% career & 7% volunteer. Only 4 females are head of units and there are no women in high management. There is only 1 head of fire station (out of 96), who is deputy and is at the volunteer fire service. There is still room for improvement for leadership positions. They have statistics on sexual harassment. (inappropriate behaviour is an issue but for both sexes).

#### **HJORTZBERG Mona (SWE)**

Ms Hjortzberg addressed the importance to share information about the world. They are active on the media and social media on the works of the Swedish Network for Women in fire and rescue. They cooperate with MSB, Swedish contingency Agency. They created a presentation for pregnancy/parenthood and menopause, to whoever wants to read it and find info. There is an Action plan 2021-2030, with goals to be met by 2030 (develop the working environment into an inclusive work environment, disseminate good examples, initiate research and participate in networks, outreach communication and training activity, increase knowledge about equal treatment). Also, they have a survey on how women in the workplace when they are pregnant and a newsletter. The upcoming network meeting is in Halmstad on 8-9 October 2025. Through collaborating together, working conditions can be improved.

**Presentation by Oliver Saal** (The Rescue Academy of Finland) on Zero Tolerance: fact or fiction?

A one and-a-half-year project that just ended, on Emergency Services-Zero tolerance: fact or fiction. The survey was about inappropriate behavior, what the obstacles are in reporting as well as recommendations. There are seven areas of inappropriate and violent behavior in this project (with comparison to internal and external environment). The statistics include firefighters (career & volunteer) and paramedics. More details were presented on the severity of effects. On the severity of internal experiences, the more you experience inappropriate behavior, the longer are the effects). Reporting can be problematic as there are difficulties in reporting such incidents. Some organizations might have reporting policies but some many not. Generally, the more experiences of IVB you have, the more negative you are towards reporting systems. There is an action plan by the ministry of Interior and these steps seem to be having an effect.

- Must established systems of reporting

- Must help on how to report (procedures), unclear HOW to report

The action research aimed at increasing reporting system usage.

#### **Maria Bitra (GR)**

- Ms Bitra presented the female volunteer firefighters in Greece. Volunteer firefighters (4,586 until now, with the addition of 830 graduating soon) in Greece are staff of the Hellenic Fire Corps, out of which 10% are women. There are retention issues for volunteer firefighters, mostly for women, due to obstacles in the working conditions (bias, harassment, issues with PPE and facilities). The Hellenic Volunteer Firefighters is trying to establish a network of support for women, through online events, webinars and trainings. Further goals are to make interventions to deal with retention issues, help volunteer firefighters understand occupational stress, and create a wider network of support.

Discussion and roundup of the meeting.

**16:30 hours: End of works of the Meeting**

**NEXT MEETING (2026)**

**The next on-site meeting of the CTIF WFRS Commission is to take place in Luxemburg, on a date to be determined.**

**Vice Chair (minutes)**

**Maria Bitra**

**Vice Chair**

**Mira Leinonen**

