

## PRESS RELEASE

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### PUBLIC BODIES AND POLICIES

## SDIS AND CIVIL PROTECTION STAFF Challenges to meet and perspectives to redefine

Further to a previous report on the *Départemental* Fire and Rescue Services (SDIS) published in 2011, the Court and 13 regional audit chambers conducted a survey of the General Directorate for Civil Protection and Crisis Management (DGSCGC) and a sample of 34 SDIS, examining the staff of these local public bodies, and the national resources, particularly aerial resources, of the civil protection services.

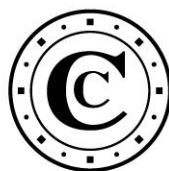
The SDIS are operating in a context characterised by a stagnating workforce, the deteriorating financial situation of the *départements*, which are their main source of funding, and the recent weakening of the legal status of volunteer firefighters. They are also facing growing risks and ever increasing demands, primarily in terms of providing people with emergency assistance, due in particular to medical desertification and the ageing of the population.

This situation, which demonstrates firefighters' availability, commitment and dedication, is not, however, sustainable in the long-term. The State and the *départements* must provide the SDIS with a framework and tools to enable them to better control their staff costs. It is also their responsibility to achieve a review of the missions undertaken by fire and rescue services in order to refocus them on their core role.

### Controlling staff costs: a challenge for the SDIS and the national resources of the civil protection services

The SDIS' activity increasingly centres on assisting victims and providing aid to individuals. Indeed, these two aspects of providing people with emergency assistance grew by 13% and 26.6% respectively between 2011 and 2017, and now account for almost 84% of all SDIS missions (compared with only 7% for fire-fighting).

The total operating budget of the SDIS was €4.6 billion in 2017. Volunteer firefighters provide two-thirds of their intervention time, amounting to one quarter of remunerations. While the number of professional firefighters (about 40,000), volunteer firefighters (about 195,000) and administrative, technical and scientific staff (about 11,000) has been relatively stable since 2011, related salary costs have increased more rapidly than the SDIS' other operating costs, in particular as a result of statutory reforms, the cost of which has not been properly assessed. In addition, their share of the operating costs of these units, which was already very high in 2010 (80%), rose to almost 83% in 2017.



## Scope for improved human resource management

The survey highlighted the insufficient involvement of the DGSCGC in defining the doctrine of use for the SDIS, in drafting statutory texts governing firefighters and in the management of their remuneration.

As such, based on the same regulations, the compensation system for professional firefighters varies significantly between SDIS, which adds to its complexity and the lack of clarity. Similarly, the continued absence of regulation as regards the possibility for professional firefighters to carry out the activities of volunteer firefighters at the same time, and therefore receive allowances which are not subject to tax or social security contributions, encourages abuse.

Good practices are emerging, however, which the DGSCGC must develop and promote. Furthermore, the SDIS face the challenge of professionalising and sharing the management of their human resources, with each other and with the *départements*.

## Organisation of working time to be overhauled

Ways in which the working time of SDIS and civil protection staff is organised are varied and inconsistent and often derogate from the rules of ordinary law. Working time is often lower than the legal annual duration of 1,607 hours, for all types of staff. When the audit was carried out, the working time of civil protection aircraft flight crews was thus almost 20% lower than the legal duration.

Within the SDIS, the trend towards a reduction in the number of shifts carried out by professional firefighters has continued and absenteeism has increased since 2011. In addition, a number of these units do not respect the statutory rest time, which sets the maximum working time limit, in particular when professional firefighters carry out volunteer missions during their statutory rest time.

Finally, a recent ruling delivered by the Court of Justice of the European Union, which considers volunteer firefighters to be the same as workers, undermines the French model of civil protection, forcing a re-examination of the conditions under which volunteers are used, the financial implications of which are yet to be assessed.

The Court makes ten recommendations concerning the State, the SDIS and the *départements*.

**[Read the report](#)**

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