

‘No more deaths and no more risk’

Safety experts demand update of Europe’s deadly fire regulations

Brussels, February 25, 2015 — Urgent action is needed now to stop the tragedy of out-dated fire safety regulations that claims the lives of thousands every year.

That was the stark message issued today following a high-level meeting between Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), the European Fire Fighters Unions Alliance (EFFUA) and building industry experts, organised by Fire Safe Europe (FSEU).

Top of the agenda was a call to tackle deadly, out-dated and inconsistent building fire safety irregularities across Europe and the need for tough new fire testing standards for construction materials.

“We assume that we are safe in our homes, offices, schools and hospitals but are we?” said Birgitte Messerschmidt, Fire Safety expert and Chair of Fire Safe Europe’s Technical Task Force. “Europe is a deadly patchwork of inconsistent building fire regulations many of which are dangerously out-dated. In Germany the distance to a school fire exit is 10 metres compared to 60 metres in Italy.”¹

Fire fighter and International Secretary of EFFUA Mikael Svanberg said: “Today fires are more unpredictable and dangerous than ever before. In the past we could anticipate what to expect, but now buildings are more complicated and the materials used to construct them are not always fire safe.”

“Fire safety risks in buildings are a daily reality and recognising this is the first step in addressing the issue. It’s time to take effective action,” said Czech MEP and Host of the event, Olga Sehnalová.

Fire kills 4,000 people every year in Europe² and nearly 200 people are hospitalised daily as a result of smoke inhalation or fire injuries³ according to a new White Paper published by Fire Safe Europe. And where do 90% of fires occur? In buildings,⁴ where we spend 90% of our time⁵.

¹ Fire Safe Europe internal study, 2014

² *Bulletin of Fire Statistics*, Geneva Association

³ *Consumer fire safety: European statistics and potential fire safety measures*, Netherlands Institute for safety NIBRA, January 2009, Versie: 431N8032/3.0, pp. 10

⁴ S. V. Sokolov, P. Wagner, J. R. Hall, *Report No 10 of Centre of Fire Statistics of CTIF*, World Fire Statistics, 2006

From the lively debate a general agreement emerged on the need for more and better facts and statistics on fire safety, as well as more funding for research on the issue. On top of that, stakeholders recognised the social discriminatory dimension of fire.

“EU institutions are turning a blind eye to fire safety and putting lives at risk,” added Juliette Albiac, Managing Director of Fire Safe Europe. “In the 1950s it would take around 25 minutes for a full blaze to take hold, but today a major fire can be out of control in less than 3 minutes⁶. We need urgent action now.”

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About Fire Safe Europe

Fire Safe Europe (FSEU) is a broad and unique cross-sectorial alliance of fire experts, fire fighters, European associations, and international companies, including construction manufacturers and material suppliers of insulation, cable, concrete, ceiling, and fire protection equipment.

FSEU’s mission is to improve fire safety in buildings for European citizens through the FireSafetyFirst campaign, large-scale fire tests and sharing of expertise.

Fire Safe Europe’s call to action on fire safety in buildings can be found on: www.firesafeeurope.eu.

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⁵ *Indoor air pollution: new EU research reveals higher risks than previously thought*, European Commission Press Release Database, IP/03/1278, Brussels, 22 September 2003

⁶ SRSA/Rof/Bjørn Albinson, *Alternate Ways To Achieve Fire Safety*, Swedish Rescue Services Agency, August 2002, pp. 1;
S. Kerber, *Analysis of Changing Residential Fire Dynamics and its Implications on Firefighter Operational Timeframes*, UL, 2011, pp. 2