



The Fire Information Exchange Platform (FIEP)

G. Katsarakis (DG GROW.C.1)



Fire Safety: Who does what ?

Under the current provisions of the Treaty on European Union, the Union does not have the competence regarding the fire safety of buildings.

Important differences in the climatic and geographic conditions and also in building traditions exist among the Member States. For this reason fire safety of buildings is better regulated at Member States or local level.

The Commission does not dispose up until today compelling proof that Member States cannot ensure the fire safety of their citizens.



Fire Safety: Who does what ?

The fact that serious fire accidents in the EU (Bucharest disco, Grenfell tower) were caused by **non-compliance with existing fire regulations** points rather at the need to enforce existing Member States regulations than at the need for new regulations at EU level.

The Commission, therefore (under the subsidiarity principle) does not intend to regulate more than what is necessary to achieve the internal market for construction products (Regulation EU 305/2011 on the marketing of construction products).



NEW CHALLENGES

During the last years, technological developments and the need for more energy-performing buildings resulted in a large choice of new construction products offered in the market for buildings and their facades.

These modern ways of construction like, for example, the modern facades systems, and the need to extensively renovate older buildings have changed significantly our buildings.

They may represent a challenge for the regulatory authorities of the Member States.



NEW CHALLENGES NEED CO-OPERATION

The European Commission considers that fire safety in buildings would be enhanced by stimulating the co-operation among Member States and the exchange of information between Member States and relevant stakeholders on best practices and lessons learned in the area of fire safety.

To achieve this fruitful synergy the European Commission, has created the **Fire Information Exchange Platform (FIEP)**. The creation of FIEP was also supported by the Estonian Presidency of the Council.



1st FIEP Plenary

The 1st FIEP meeting took place in Brussels on 16 October 2017 with a large participation of stakeholders

Participants were informed:

- ✓ on already available recommendations for fire safety,
- ✓ on preliminary findings regarding the Grenfell fire,
- ✓ on current Commission studies to address emerging challenges (toxicity of smoke, facades fire assessment), and
- ✓ to map the areas on which FIEP considers necessary to focus the future cooperation.



1st FIEP Plenary

Areas identified for cooperation in FIEP:

- the exchange of **experience** from fire accidents,
- dealing with **new regulatory challenges**,
- the application of **fire prevention** principles,
- common **terminology** and **fire statistics**,
- the use of **a fire engineering approach** in building regulations.

Cross cutting priority is considered to be **domestic fire safety** because the vast majority of the fire victims occur in their houses or apartments.



Progressing the work

The Commission (GROW.C.1) has created 3 Project Teams to prepare proposals for the FIEP Plenary on:

- exchange of **experience** from fire accidents (**PT1**),
- dealing with **new regulatory challenges** e.g. integrated photovoltaic panels and high-rise buildings (**PT2**),
- application of **fire prevention** principles (**PT3**).

All PTs had one meeting (June and September 2018).

The success of FIEP depends on the broad and active participation of Member States, open discussion of the problems encountered, independence and objectivity.



Progressing the work

Regarding the use of **a fire engineering approach** in building regulations the DG GROW is negotiating with DG JRC a contract to:

- examine the feasibility of a European fire safety code ("**Firecodes**") using fire engineering principles and by analogy to the Eurocodes (safety level remains for the Member States through Nationally Determined Parameters - NDPs).
- examine the current CEN work and the current ISO work in order to mandate to CEN the development of European fire design standards and/or recommend the use of the ISO work in Member States regulations.
- develop guidance and training for engineers.



Progressing the work

Regarding **fire terminology** and **fire statistics** DG GROW will outsource a pilot project (funds from European Parliament) to explore the creation of a common fire terminology and a common basis for the collection and analysis of fire data across the EU (fires in buildings).

It will allow for knowledge based decisions at MS and at EU level regarding fire safety of buildings (e.g. houses, apartment blocks, office buildings, commercial buildings).

The terms of reference of the project are under preparation

Next FIEP Plenary meeting planned for early 2019.



Development of a European approach to assess the fire performance of facades

In 2016, the Commission has launched an open call for the development of the European facade fire assessment approach based on a large-scale test (BS 8414) and a medium scale test (DIN 4102-20).

In the Final Report (July 2018) the contractor (in addition to the assessment method described in the ToR) has also developed an "alternative method" which:

- foresees a large and a medium scale test,
- uses one and the same test rig,
- the large scale test covers also the medium one.



Development of a European approach to assess the fire performance of facades

A very large majority of Member States (18-4) prefer the "ALTERNATIVE" method while opinions of the industry are divided.

The EC services will prepare the ToR for a round-robin programme to finalise the assessment method to be introduced in harmonised technical specifications (hENs, EADs) for façade kits.



Smoke toxicity study

The EC services have awarded a study contract to evaluate the need to regulate within the framework of Regulation (EU) 305/2011 on the toxicity of smoke produced by construction products in fires.

The study found that there is no agreement among those interviewed that regulation of toxicity of smoke from construction products is required and they believe there would be limited benefits from regulating on the toxicity of smoke from construction products.

Smoke toxicity study

The study also found that:

- a clear definition of terminology is lacking and data collected varies across Member States, therefore the effectiveness of potential measures cannot be assessed.
- the potential dangers of smoke in general, including toxic smoke, in protected areas / escape routes need to be considered in new or amended regulations.
- a number of Member States have provisions on smoke toxicity.



Smoke toxicity study

The Commission has asked Member States which the study has found to have regulatory provisions on smoke toxicity to provide detailed information on the exact content of these provisions, on their notification under the 98/34/EC regime, and on how they are implemented.

The Commission is now analysing the replies of the Member States to decide on the following steps to take.



Thank You for Your attention!