

ADVANCING FIRE SAFETY IN BUILDINGS AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

Our recommendations for the legislative term 2019-2024

Our vision

We believe a holistic, data-based and performance-oriented approach is key to advancing fire safety and aim to inspire improvements in fire safety practices across Europe.

- **Adopt a holistic approach to improve fire safety in buildings**

A holistic approach must consider the 7 layers of fire safety in buildings: preventing the start of any fires, detecting and suppressing them as early as possible, anticipating effective evacuation, designing proper fire and smoke compartmentation and ensuring structural safety via performance-based approaches, and finally, having the right firefighting means.

THE 7 LAYERS OF FIRE SAFETY IN BUILDINGS



It requires technical measures such as building codes or product standards and policies, but also effective organisation to support the enforcement and maintenance of safety, and the supporting of education and awareness measures.

- **Fire safety measures should be grounded in accurate data, and more comprehensive and harmonised statistical data will help drive policy action**

Fire casualties and sources can only be understood with common reliable data. While most Member States have developed their own data gathering system, harmonised statistics, as well as common definitions and methodologies at the EU-level, are needed to better analyse the causes of fires and subsequently identify the most efficient EU-wide fire safety measures.

- **Fire safety is tackled by building codes and national regulations, but increased cooperation and harmonised EU standards will bring added value**

It is a Member State responsibility to design and enforce building legislations, however, the European Union must provide those national authorities with a harmonised framework for construction products and the tools for setting their own criteria and requirements. While fully respecting the subsidiarity principle, the European Union also has a role to play in facilitating cooperation on fire safety, especially in the collection of reliable data and the exchange of best practices.

Our recommendations for the legislative term 2019-2024

- **Ensure the 7 layers of fire safety in buildings are embedded in any EU initiative and increase collaboration between all relevant Commission services**

Since the end of 2017, the European Commission's DG GROW has been leading the Fire Information Exchange Platform (FIEP)¹. Several other European Commission services have responsibilities connected to fire safety and should, therefore, be far more involved in the discussion. Fire safety would benefit from looking at other policies and initiatives beyond construction products. For example, fire safety science is one area to be supported by EU research programmes².

Both the European Commission and the European Parliament must have a holistic view and consider their role and possible actions for each of the 7 layers of fire safety in buildings.

- **Ensure the Fire Information Exchange Platform (FIEP) is of benefit to Member States by supporting and improving the way of working of certain workstreams**

The FIEP was announced in 2017 and EU policy makers should continue to support its work, like the Parliament did in 2018 with the pilot project on fire statistics. MEPs can also contribute to the smooth functioning of the FIEP by organising regular events to take stock of progress made, and by encouraging their national authorities to be involved.

Furthermore, because of national (and regional) diversity in fire safety regulations, the exchange of information between Member States is not always easy on certain topics such as: regulatory approaches for taller buildings; or establishing a harmonised EU large scale fire façade test³. In this case, having roadmaps and more structured work plans for the FIEP would be beneficial (see our [proposed](#) regulatory framework for high and medium rise buildings).

With regards to the "Exchange of experience from fire accidents" workstream, we believe it should be transformed into a permanent forum of experts who scientifically analyse the causes of fire and the sharing of fire safety strategies.

- **Build upon the on-going pilot project to enhance the collection of fire statistics in the European Union**

Following the adoption of the Pilot project on fire statistics in 2018⁴, MEPs need to support the on-going work and follow-up on its implementation. This could be done by asking the European Commission to produce a comprehensive implementation report by 2021.

Building on this collection of fire statistics, the Commission should investigate how to include them in the mandatory Eurostat program so as to bring consistency and to create a clear European picture on the status and trends regarding deaths and damages at the EU and national levels.

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¹ More information on the FIEP : <http://www.modernbuildingalliance.eu/eu-fire-information-exchange-platform/>

² See joint letter of Modern Building Alliance and other stakeholders on fire safety research into Horizon Europe <http://www.modernbuildingalliance.eu/joint-letter-C-Moedas>

³ Modern Building Alliance, "Position paper on the development of a European approach to assess the Fire Performance of façades", November 2018, http://www.modernbuildingalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MBA-position-paper-on-facade-testing_final-1.pdf

⁴ More information on the pilot project: <http://www.modernbuildingalliance.eu/pilot-project-on-fire-safety>

About the Modern Building Alliance

We're an alliance of trade associations and companies representing the plastics industry in the construction sector. Plastics are increasingly used in building and construction applications to make our buildings more sustainable, from window frames and durable pipes to state-of-the-art insulation solutions. An essential pillar of our cause is the ambition for greater fire safety across the construction industry. It is a key driver of our product design and manufacturing: improving the fire safety in buildings is a joint responsibility of the whole value chain involved in building and construction. That's why, by engaging with policy makers and stakeholders, we are committed to supporting the EU in ensuring safe and sustainable construction for people across Europe.

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