Improving fire safety in the EU

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Missing links to improve fire safety in the EU

1. Structural fires are not recognized as a disaster
2. Fire safety is squeezed by the subsidiarity principle
3. Gap between emergency services and civil protection
4. Fire is a disjointed matter at EU level
5. Data collecting and cross border sharing of lessons learned
Structural fires are not classified as a disaster

Yes,
- not really leading to disruption
- relatively short time-frame
- mostly limited extend
- not often disturbing the functioning of a community
- mainly not exceeding the ability of the affected community

Yet,
- more structural fire fatalities (4 to 6,000 fatalities a year – nearly 80% in the domestic area) than natural hazard casualties (± 3,200 victims/year [EEA])
- discriminates and mostly affects vulnerable people
Each fire safety strategy should primarily be focusing on the housing of elderly and social vulnerable people.
We should examine the inclusion of structural fires as a permanent disaster because of the equal long-term impact.

We should pay balanced attention on both phenomena: *sudden disasters versus the ongoing daily tragedies*. 
Squeezed by the subsidiarity principle

In the EU context, fire issues are evaluated as a pure national competence.
At national level, fire issues are mostly further laid down at municipal level.

The subsidiarity principle would better be re-evaluated:

- It can continue to exist for building codes and responding to emergencies
- It should be lifted at a higher level for the risk assessment, data collecting, R&D and fire safety science
Gap between emergency services and civpro

• One of the conclusions of the ECPM interim consultation 2016:
  “the commission will assess...making full use of Europe’s expertise and assets for (research), preparedness and response”

• This is where the EU safety science policy should lead us:
  a holistic approach to get the best outcomes using the most efficient processes leading to the highest rate of implementation
• fire safety has no SPOC (single point of contact) at EU-level

• current approach: fragmented and narrow scope (e.g. construction products)

• future approach: holistic and broad scope
“societal benefit “ driven

- defining and determining a set of (existing or modified) test methods, in order to increase survivability and escape capabilities during domestic fires (May 2017)
Data collecting and sharing of lessons learned

• sound data collection to produce harmonised statistics in EU

• sharing of the fire research / fire investigation outcomes leading to an integrated and evidence-based advisory strategy

• emphasizing on disseminating and empowering the implementation at local level
Conclusion: improve the societal debate

- By promoting the coherence and cohesion between all initiatives, the EC could express
  - her **willingness** to be the generator of the global safety approach for a safe Europe
  - her **conviction** that only a holistic approach will protect citizens in the most effective way
  - her **wish** to using all public available means in the EU in the most efficient way
  - her **belief** that sound decisions are made on evidence-based research
A Safer Europe For All