

## Façades in Fire, Espoo, Finland 9.10.2014

### Would you choose between fire safety or energy savings when insulating your facade?

Although many believe that insulated façades have no or little impact on the spread of fire and smoke in buildings, a large scale test organised today by Fire Safe Europe<sup>i</sup> and supported by the Finnish Fire Protection Association (SPEK), the Finnish Association of Fire Fighters (SPAL) and the Finnish Association of Fire Officers (SPPL), demonstrated the weaknesses of the current European test practices when it comes to fire safety.

The large-scale test carried out is part of a series of seminar on façade fire around Europe that aims to raise awareness of European stakeholder on fire safety in buildings. In an opening video address to the seminar, Sirpa Pietikäinen, Member of the European Parliament and patron of the event said: "There should be appropriate regulations for fire safety in buildings, which need to be effectively enforced. I would like to stress the commitment of the European Parliament to ensure that the level of safety is of the highest standard".

#### The importance of choosing the right material

Regarding fire safety in buildings, façades are in a particularly crucial role. Not only do they need to meet energy efficiency requirements, but they should also provide effective fire protection and restrain the spreading of fire. A right material choice may turn out to be a life-saver by providing more time for rescue operations.

In fire demonstration four different insulation materials used in buildings' facades was put under so called room corner fire test which is only harmonized large scale fire test method available for façade insulation materials at the moment. All of the tested products are currently allowed and used in façade systems without added fire protection in Finland or Sweden. The live demonstration showed that the current fire test methods do not correlate with the real façade fire situation and current fire classification system for building products is not suitable for all the tested materials.

#### Need for updating existing fire test standards

"The demonstration revealed that the current European fire test methods are not providing the expected safety level for facades. There is an urgent need for one harmonised European fire test standard for façades", says Juliette Albiac, Managing Director of Fire Safe Europe.

#### Energy renovation - a great chance to increase fire protection in buildings

Many on-going energy efficiency initiatives in the Nordics concentrate on improving buildings' insulation. These programs will deliver huge reductions in energy use and create thousands of new jobs. They also offer an unprecedented opportunity to improve the fire safety of the built environment.

"In economically challenging times, priority is usually given to less expensive façade systems rather than those providing both energy efficiency and fire protection. This seminar aims to show that energy efficiency and fire safety can, and should, go hand in hand", was the conclusion of organizers.

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<sup>i</sup> Fire Safe Europe, a Brussels-based European cross-sectorial alliance, which mission is to improve fire safety in buildings for European Citizens, organized a fire seminar with the support of three Finnish associations concerned with fire safety on 9 October in Espoo, Finland.