



Position Paper

13 April 2018

The review of the Construction Products Regulation: An opportunity for the EU to promote excellence in fire safety

Key points for the 2018 CPR review

The Construction Products Regulation (CPR) is a key legislation for fire safety in buildings. Repealing or downgrading its requirements would be negative both for EU citizens and for the EU industry. Europe has been seen providing positive examples in fire safety standards to the rest of the world. This position needs to be maintained and built upon. Fire Safe Europe (FSEU) supports maintaining the CPR and improving the implementation, enforcement and effective standardisation processes.

The 2018 CPR review is an opportunity to tackle major fire safety issues:

- **Product safety:** European standards need to be updated to reflect real fire safety risks by referring back to basic requirements.
- **Product information for end-users:** It is important for consumers to have access to reliable information about the fire performance of construction products. Today, there is still no information available to consumers and builders on the toxicity of smoke produced by burning construction products, whereas the majority of fire-related fatalities are due to the inhalation of toxic smoke. Smoke toxicity should be included in the harmonised standards. Concretely, the CPR should consider both opacity and toxicity of smoke hazard.
- **Innovation in the construction products sector:** Harmonised horizontal standards used to fulfil the requirements of the CPR should be given a fitness check every 5 years to ensure that they are still applicable to new construction products on the market.

Of the importance of the CPR for fire safety

As the review of the Construction Product Regulation progresses, it is important to stress that the Regulation has brought about **key achievements** for fire safety, which could not have been achieved in the same way if construction products were solely regulated at national level. Through harmonised standards, the CPR has brought **better information for consumers, more equal level of fire safety, and removal of barriers to trade**. The CPR is in fact the stepping stone towards harmonizing European Building Codes.

The CPR is meant to ensure reliable information on construction products in relation to their performances, providing information with the CE marking. The CPR establishes a “common technical language”, offering uniform assessment methods of the performance of construction products. These methods have been compiled in harmonised European standards (hEN) and this common technical language is to be applied by the manufacturers when declaring the performance of their products, but also by the authorities of Member States when specifying requirements for them, and by their users (architects, engineers, constructors...) when choosing the products most suitable for their intended use in construction works.

For fire safety, it is important to have European standards defining the fire performance characteristics of a construction material, the test method that has to be used, the reporting format



for informing about the results, and ensuring that the testing/assessment is done in all EU Member States in the same way. Having reliable classifications for systems and keeping European standards updated as well as reflecting real fire risks by referring back to basic requirements is in the interest of European citizens, Member States, and industries alike.

The European Commission should continue to develop harmonised fire safety standards to address the challenges of modern constructions.

Future-proofing the CPR

Going forward, the CPR needs to improve on several aspects: **adaptation to innovation, better information on fire safety of products (e.g. smoke toxicity), including fire safety into the EU framework and synergies with other legislation.**

To ensure that the CPR fulfils its intention of having construction works fit for use according to the 7 defined basic requirements, the test methods and classification systems called upon must be based on sound science and be updated when deemed to be outdated: There must be a way for the system to adapt to innovation and deal with new risks. The CE marking should also evolve to truly become a quality indicator, as it is already perceived as such by consumers. FSEU would like to underscore that for innovative products, the ETA route (voluntary CE marking) remains in the CPR. The CPR could be improved by providing more clarity, aiming at a level playing field, and in the third-party involvement process to arrive at CE marking.

The information provided in supporting documents, which defines how the harmonised standards were developed, has to be kept alive. The guidance paper G for instance provided a link between the fire classification and the performance of the product in a relevant scenario as well as the possibility to adapt the system to take into account the fire behaviour of construction materials, which were not considered when the system was developed. The CPR could also be improved by streamlining the process to revise or create new harmonized standards, thus reducing the time to market for products, and innovations in particular.

FSEU would welcome including in the EU framework aspects relating to the fire safety of construction products, so far entirely under Member States' responsibility. To begin with, there is a need to include smoke toxicity into the equation.

The harmonised testing and classification standards for fire only address smoke opacity and do not deal with smoke toxicity. Considering that over 50% of fatalities and injuries resulting from fire are due to the inhalation of toxic smoke, this is a severe failure of the harmonized fire test and classification system. The final report of the Study to evaluate the need to regulate within the Framework of Regulation (EU) 305/2011 stated that the risk of smoke leaking into areas that are considered to be safe zones or escape routes must be taken into consideration in legislation. The review of the CPR is an opportunity to incorporate this aspect.

Apart from the CPR, other legislation have an impact on fire safety: for example the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the General Products Safety Directive. For fire safety, it is important to have a holistic approach, looking at all the legislation which have an impact (see FSEU's "[Call to action: The EU needs a Fire Safety Strategy](#)"). Future-proofing the CPR will also mean finding positive synergies with their legislation that must also consider fire safety.

The 2018 review of the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) is an opportunity for the EU to promote excellence in fire safety.