

Policy makers and experts exchange views on assessing the smoke toxicity of construction products.

Brussels, 19 November 2020: MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen (EPP, Finland) and Fire Safe Europe co-organised a roundtable on “Improving fire safety by assessing the toxicity of smoke from burning construction products”. Speakers raised key questions and brought interesting elements of response to the table, whether from a regulatory perspective or a fire engineering perspective.

MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen opened the roundtable, emphasising that as we build higher and higher buildings, with requirements for sustainability, it is important to take into account fire safety, and notably to tackle toxic fumes. Ms Pietikäinen raised several essential questions, and other speakers brought some interesting answers.

Ms Fulvia Raffaelli, Head of the DG GROW Unit on ‘Circular Economy and Construction’, provided an update on the Commission’s work following the [2018 Smoke Toxicity Study](#). She highlighted that as a result of the lack of data highlighted in this study, the European Commission, with the support of the European parliament, launched a project on fire safety data and terminology. “We would be happy and able to support efforts made by different interlocutors and actors to see how we can look at the toxicity of fire in practical terms”, said Ms Raffaelli.

Mr Peter Woodburn, Director in the Fire Safety Practice at Arup, shared his perspective as a fire safety engineer on the current situation regarding smoke toxicity, as well as why and how smoke toxicity should be included in design. Mr Woodburn emphasized that “as a designer, I want to know that I have adequately mitigated the risks of fire, and that includes toxicity”.

Interestingly, the UK is currently working on a research project to understand if and how smoke toxicity could be regulated. Mr Brian Martin, from the United Kingdom Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, introduced this work. The UK conducted a call for evidence was to ask whether there should be measures to control smoke toxicity for construction products, and if so, how should this be done. One hundred forty detailed responses were collected and shared in 2019. A research project has now started and focuses on three objectives:

1. Scoping study and literature review to gather all relevant information on the subject
2. Is there a need to regulate toxic effluents from construction products?
3. What form could regulation of construction products take?

Lastly, Ms Sarah Debbiche Krichen, Public Affairs Manager at Fire Safe Europe, presented on a proposal to test and classify smoke toxicity of construction products. Fire Safe Europe has produced two technical documents, available in the [European Fire Safety Community](#), which can serve as a basis to develop a robust testing and classification system to assess the smoke toxicity of construction products in fire. Ms Debbiche Krichen invited everyone



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with relevant knowledge to join the [Smoke Toxicity Advisory Panel](#) of the European Fire Safety Community, where further work will be conducted on the basis of the technical documents.

These presentations were followed by a lively Q&A session. To catch up and take part in this crucial discussion, you can watch the full replay of the roundtable [here](#) and join the European Fire Safety Community [here](#).

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About Fire Safe Europe

Fire Safe Europe (FSEU) is a broad and unique cross-sectorial alliance of fire experts, fire fighters, European associations, and international companies. FSEU's mission is to improve fire safety in buildings for European citizens. Together with our partners, we believe it is time for the EU to act on fire safety in buildings.

About the European Fire Safety Community

The European Fire Safety Community is a place to connect, pool knowledge and work collaboratively on solutions to improve fire safety in buildings. The Community also fosters exchanges and collective work on specific topics like facades, data collection, smoke toxicity, etc. In particular, the Advisory Panel on Sustainable Buildings offers the latest updates on buildings' sustainability and fire safety.

<https://eufiresafety.community/signup>