



PRESS STATEMENT

Urgent recommendations for EU policy changes following Grenfell Tower fire

European Commission meeting on fire safety of facades to take place on June 16

Strasbourg, June 15 2017: Fire Safe Europe offers its sincere condolences to the families of victims and conveys its deepest sympathy to those injured or otherwise affected by the devastating Grenfell Tower fire in London. We also commend the excellent work of the firefighters, emergency services and community volunteers.

Fire Safe Europe fully supports the statements made by the UK's Fire Protection Association in its media report and on and on its website.

Fire Safe Europe is campaigning for fire safety to be improved in Europe's buildings, and has been calling the European Union to act by developing a Fire Safety Strategy with a clear vision, and tools to reduce the impact of fires.

This tragic loss of lives could have been avoided by ensuring that the construction products do not increase the fire risk, particularly in high-rise buildings where it is difficult to escape. In this case, based on a statement released by the contractor, the Grenfell Tower seemed to respect the current regulations on fire safety, which indicates that those regulations are based on standards and testing methods that do not guarantee a sufficient level of fire safety.

To prevent a tragedy of this scale from happening again, we firmly believe that there are three areas in which the European Institutions must take decisive and rapid action:

1. Urgently change the approach to façade testing

Whilst it hasn't been confirmed, the material and structure of the facade in the Grenfell Tower is being widely cited and analysed as a possible factor that could have caused the fire to spread so rapidly.

Fire Safe Europe has called on the European Commission to develop a harmonised and rigorous performance based testing method for all façade systems. Unfortunately, the European Commission is steering towards an approach that will not guarantee an adequate level of fire safety.

Urgent action is needed to bring about a change of direction. Tomorrow, June 16, the European Commission will meet experts and Member States to discuss the development of a European approach to assess the fire performance of façades. We urge the European Commission to reconsider its current view before more lives are lost or put at severe risk, and to mandate the development of one harmonised test that prioritises the examination of the large-scale reality of many building fires.

Testing focused on real life conditions is the first important step. Fire Safe Europe also highlights that whilst building products can pass a test, real life is always different, as this fire has so tragically highlighted. When it comes to 'high risk buildings' such as high-rise structures, schools, hospitals or other large buildings where occupants may struggle to escape in the event of a fire, all possibility for errors must be designed out: nothing can be



PRESS STATEMENT

left to chance.

Many countries have recently changed their regulations and require non-combustible products to be used on the facades of buildings above a certain height (ranging from 12 to 25 meters.) These include Croatia, Germany, Denmark, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Serbia. Fire Safe Europe believes other countries should follow these examples and urges the European Institutions to set up a platform for Member States to exchange best practice and experience on fire safety issues.

2. Create harmonised classification of the smoke toxicity of construction products

Smoke is the biggest killer in fires, yet smoke toxicity of construction products is not tested. Survivors of the Grenfell fire have spoken of being overcome by smoke. Toxic smoke also has a devastating effect on the firefighters, who are more affected than the general public by 14 types of cancers.

Fire Safe Europe has been calling on the Commission to put in place new requirements to test for and label the toxic smoke produced by construction products in the event of a fire. The European Commission is conducting a study to assess the need to regulate for smoke toxicity. The preliminary findings seem to infer that no requirements are necessary. We urge the European Commission to reconsider its approach.

3. Combining sustainability with Fire Safety

Members of the European Parliament have an immediate opportunity to increase fire safety in buildings. The current revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) allows them to:

Table an amendment to ensure that fire safety is taken into account. Massively support the amendment.

Our buildings are going through great change – the biggest in history. Making a building sustainable and energy efficient is vital but it's important that this is done holistically and that the right products are used in the right application. In other words, the energy performance of buildings should never compromise fire safety, especially since there are materials and construction methods available today allow buildings to be renovated and constructed to be both energy efficient and fire safe.

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.