

Conclusions of the 12th ΕΦΑ Roundtable Revinge, 5-6 May 2011

On the 5th and 6th May 2011 over 30 participants from seven EU member states attended the 12th meeting of the ΕΦΑ Roundtable, held at the MSB College in Revinge, Sweden. Participants included senior fire officers, representatives from burns victims organisations and technology partners.

The Roundtable began with a welcome from head of the MSB College Mats Ingelström, and an opening from ΕΦΑ President Albrecht Broemme. Mr. Broemme presented the new ΕΦΑ structure, noting the formal inclusion of disaster response management. Mats Ingelström then gave a brief history of the MSB College, and presented its functioning and role today.



Presentations began with Marijke Deroover, of the Belgian Federal Public Service, and Christian Van De Voorde, of the Ghent Fire Brigade, and their insights on the restructuring of the Belgian Fire Services, providing both a fire brigade and a Ministry perspective. A fruitful discussion followed, with notice being given to the role of ΕΦΑ in sharing best practices and the successful visit of Mike Hagen, of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, to discuss the restructuring in Belgium. Participants agreed on the welcome addition of a new paradigm in the discussion on fire services, extending to fire prevention as well as intervention.

Jonathan Wahlqvist of Lund University then presented a simulation of critical evaluation conditions for fire scenarios involving different cables, on behalf of Europacable. He noted that further research remains to be done, but that the study concluded that the correct methodology was used in the assessment, and that cables do indeed perform differently.

René Nolten of Sprue Safety Products Ltd then presented a new smoke alarm model, Thermoptek, demonstrating its benefits to users and its improvements with regard to previous models, based on feedback from fire fighters and consumers.

After a short coffee break, participants broke off into the three Task Forces.



Task Force 1 on Domestic Fire Safety was chaired by Mike Hagen of the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. He presented ways in which fire services can move from intervention to including prevention and mitigation within their tasks. A discussion followed on different ways in which ΕΦΑ can play a role, with participants agreeing that the Community Safety Principles should be circulated with the aim of defining elements that would make it safer in the home, for endorsement by ΕΦΑ.

Participants agreed overall that there is a role for ΕΦΑ to play in working on product safety and regulation, and in identifying and connecting best practices and expertise.

Task Force 2 on Communication to Consumers and Vulnerables was chaired by Rob Baardse of the Dutch Burns Foundation. The Task Force focussed its discussion on how to reach vulnerable groups which are unreachable by today's fire prevention campaigns, and on ways to change or influence human behaviour in order to prevent fires. Rob Baardse presented an educational programme taught by fire fighters in the Netherlands to change human behaviour in a neighbourhood where an incident took place. Steve Turek from the London Fire Brigade presented the Sprinkler Campaign recently launched in London to increase the fire safety of vulnerables and dispell misconceptions about sprinklers. The Task Force agreed to continue exchanging ideas and best practices on ways to reach vulnerables and change behaviours, being convinced that this is the best way to find solutions.

Task Force 3 was the **Joint ΕΦΑ – FEU Task Force on Statistics**, and was jointly chaired by Colonel Pascal LePrince of the French Fire Fighters' Association and Finian Joyce of FEU. Starting off, the group exchanged the efforts undertaken in the past by FEU, Vfdb and ΕΦΑ to collate EU fire statistics. Participants agreed that the current absence of reliable statistical data is deplorable, particularly as a basis for any future EU regulation in the field of fire prevention. Therefore, the group agreed to present a case to the European Commission. To do so, the following steps were agreed:

1. Dr. Peter Wagner to collect statistical material available of a number of EU member states (5 – 8 TBD to begin, enlarging to as many as possible) based on the input of FEU, Vfdb and ΕΦΑ;
2. FEU and ΕΦΑ to jointly prepare a paper outlining the potential benefits the availability of fire statistics would have for political decision making and society; and
3. Presenting the available statistical data and the potential benefits of more in depth datapoints to the Commission during the course of 2012.

It was agreed that the key people of contact would be:

- Dr. Peter Wagner, VfDB
- Finian Joyce, FEU
- Pascal Le Prince and Volker Wendt, ΕΦΑ



Participants were given a tour of the MSB College's facilities and the opportunity to watch trainings on site, before having a dinner in the College restaurant, with a speech by Per Widlundh, of the Swedish Rescue Service Association South.



Day 2 of the Roundtable was opened by ΕΦΑ Director Volker Wendt, who moderated the discussion on the transformation of fire services in light of the financial crisis.

Mike Hagen presented the British perspective, noting the impacts that the economic and financial crisis has had and is having on fire services, highlighting the cutbacks in personnel and resources.

The Swedish perspective was presented by Per Widlundh, who stressed that cuts had been ongoing for twenty years, yet it took time to move to a new strategy in the fire service. He also stressed the need to work in a wider perspective than simply intervention.

René Hagen, ΕΦΑ Vice-President, presented the Dutch perspective, pointing out that the fire service itself suggested investments destined to provide significant longer-term returns. He added that it is now a race between politicians who want to implement cuts, and fire services who want to see improvements before the cuts are made.

Dr. Peer Rechenbach of the Hamburg Ministry of the Interior described the situation in Germany, noting the contradiction between the requirement to cut budgets but the need to maintain frontline services.

Raimund Bücher then presented an industrial fire perspective, stating that industry no longer faces the impact of the crisis, yet still has many services to undertake in the face of strong requirements for cost review.

Colonel Pascal Leprince gave a brief presentation of developments on the Working Time Directive (WTD), and outlined France's position on the matter. He asked ΕΦΑ participants to join in support of this position, as reform of the WTD would have a significant impact on the way in which fire services will work. A team of participants was set up to support the French Firefighters' Association, in connection with FEU's



current work on the subject. It was agreed to bring the concerns to the attention of the European Commission.

Following a coffee break, the Roundtable discussion began, with participants discussing the numerous difficulties facing fire services and possible ways to surmount them. It was agreed that a short questionnaire would be circulated amongst ΕΦΑ fellows, in order to obtain a concrete overview of the situation in all countries.

René Hagen and Willem Hofland updated participants on the European Parliament event on the fire safety of upholstered furniture that took place on 3 May, and noted the need to reflect on ways in which to move the debate forward following a European Commission report on the subject.

Participants also agreed that reflection was required on the possibility of merging Task Forces 1 and 2 on Domestic Fire Safety and on Communication to Consumers and Vulnerables. They also looked at a draft ΕΦΑ poster, outlining its main aims, and suggested additions for its completion.

Ortwin Neuschwander, ΕΦΑ Vice-President, talked about the second pillar of ΕΦΑ, disaster response management, and informed participants of a workshop to be held in Hamburg on the issue, inviting them to participate or identify interested colleagues.

René Hagen announced the next Roundtable, to be held in Belgium and in cooperation with the Belgian government in early February 2012. ΕΦΑ President Albrecht Broemme then thanked all participants for their attendance and input, and closed the 12th ΕΦΑ Roundtable.

