

Conclusions of the 13th ΕΦΑ Roundtable Brussels, 9-10 February 2012

On the 9 and 10 February 2012, over 35 participants from eight EU member states attended the 13th ΕΦΑ Roundtable, kindly hosted by the Belgian Ministry of Home Affairs in Brussels.



Philip Willekens, General Director a.i. of Security and Prevention at the Belgian Ministry of Home Affairs, welcomed participants to the 13th ΕΦΑ Roundtable. He noted that in 2010 Belgium launched its new fire brigade zones and the first steps in the first link 'prevention' of the chain of security.

ΕΦΑ President, Albrecht Broemme, thanked Philip and the Ministry for their hospitality and for providing the opportunity for ΕΦΑ to return to Brussels for its Roundtable. Albrecht also noted the interesting discussions held at the Belgian conference on fire prevention, held on 8 February, and highlighted the necessary ongoing discussions between and within fire services, who are the ones involved in the relevant changes.

The first part of the Roundtable was dedicated to **Fire Safety and Prevention in Belgium**, moderated by Philip Willekens, who presented the start of work on fire prevention in Belgium. There is already increasing interest in fire prevention from Belgian fire brigades, and the exchange of best practices through platforms such as ΕΦΑ has been invaluable.

Jérôme Glorie, General Director for Civil Safety at the Home Affairs Ministry, presented the ***Restructuring of the Belgian Fire Services towards a Result-Oriented Approach***, which has not been easy nor has it followed an even trajectory. However, the reforms are moving more quickly now, and the safety zones introduced are due to be in place by the end of 2013. The focus is very much increasingly on fire prevention and on the reform of the fire services, yet informing citizens is equally as important in this process.

Paul Vandevelde, Professor at the University of Gent, then presented ***Academic Research on Fire Prevention in Belgium***. Academics have been important participants, including the development of test methods, the provision of support to regulators, as well as providing educational courses on the subjects, including an Erasmus Mundus course.

Jean-Claude Monserez, Chief of Tielt Fire Service and Fire Prevention Advisor, presented ***Fire Prevention in Houses Embedded in Fire Brigades***, outlining the numerous ways in



which his services have implemented prevention measures and the experiences from which they have learned. Jean-Claude noted that citizens remain extremely important, and that services still need to reach out to them.

The next part of the ΕΦΑ Roundtable was on **Domestic Fire Safety**, moderated by Mike Hagen, Chair of the ΕΦΑ Task Force on Domestic Fire Safety.

Jan Linssen, researcher at the Netherlands Institute for Safety (NiFV), presented ***Increasing the Survival Time of People in Houses***. Jan outlined the origins of fires in the home, highlighting the role played by modern furniture in contrast to traditional furniture. Jan also pointed out the impact of changing demographics, giving the example of the Netherlands' policy designed specifically for elderly people.

Dominiek Viaene, of the European Burns Casualties Association (EBCA), then presented the status of ***Fire Safety of Upholstered Furniture in France*** on behalf of the French Burns Foundation, which has undertaken a cost-benefit analysis study, including on the consequences for the furniture industry, and started an online petition.

Willem Hofland, of the European Flame Retardants Association (EFRA), presented an update on the situation in ***The Netherlands***. Willem described the recent meeting between fire services, industry, national authorities and scientific institutes and other stakeholders. Further meetings will be held in The Netherlands in the hope of creating a shift towards recognition of a solution to the problem of the fire safety of upholstered furniture.

Dominiek Viaene demonstrated EBCA's ***Black Box initiative***, which was designed to bring the trauma of burns victims directly to politicians and to educate them on fire prevention.

Mike Hagen moderated the discussion on the ***Next Steps*** on the issue of ***Upholstered Furniture***, noting that everything is moving in the right direction but that a result is proving difficult to secure. In order to overcome this across Europe, Mike suggested possible initiatives for further consideration by ΕΦΑ, including the use of the European Citizens Initiative and a network to pass information directly onto policy-makers. In the following discussion, Bob Graham of ACFSE highlighted that ΕΦΑ does not need to provide the solution. ΕΦΑ's role is to convince politicians of the unacceptable problem currently existing and to let industry provide the solution. Dieter Nüssler of FEU also suggested that the *Are You Sitting Comfortably* video be circulated more widely to a larger audience.

René Nolten of Sprue Safety Products Ltd. then presented ***First Alert Ultra Compact Smoke Alarm***, the smallest to date.

The first day of the 13th ΕΦΑ Roundtable ended with participants attending a dinner kindly hosted by the Belgian Ministry of Home Affairs.





Day two of the ΕΦΑ Roundtable began with a discussion of **Fire Investigation in Europe**, with Participants sharing experiences in their member states.

Christian Van De Voorde, Fire Chief in Gent, presented ***Fire Investigation in Gent***, and pointed out that in Belgium fire investigation is organised at the national level. However, it should be an integral part of firefighters' work, as the investigation of fire causes helps in fire prevention. In this light, his services are participating in an exchange programme to learn more about fire investigation, with the aim of having fire investigation across Belgium.

Stéphane Boubet, of the French National Firefighters' Federation, presented ***Fire Investigation in France***. He highlighted that it is only recently that fire investigation became a prerogative of French fire services. An important element was reassuring police services that the purpose was not to take over their role. Moving forward, the training of fire officers will continue, particularly given the high levels of interest shown. It was suggested that once the fire investigation database is finalised it could be presented to ΕΦΑ.

Ricardo Weewer, of Amsterdam Fire Brigade, presented ***Fire Investigation in The Netherlands***, noting that until 2010 firefighters did not conduct fire investigation. A national project was begun only in 2008, and now there are five official interregional fire investigation teams in The Netherlands. Although not yet part of legislation, fire services carry out investigation and work on the legal aspects in parallel. The next steps are to try to enact the legislation, a research plan involving statistics, and to join a Chapter of the IAAI.

Fire Investigation in Italy was presented by Sergio Schiaroli and Piergiacomo Cancelliere of the Italian National Fire Brigade. The Italian central office for prevention and technical safety includes an office on fire investigation, which feeds back into fire prevention. In 2009 fire investigation guidelines were issued in an attempt to standardise responses in Italy. It was agreed that a possible starting point to ensure a uniform understanding of fire investigation across Europe would be to translate the Italian guidelines into other languages.

Following a break, the 13th ΕΦΑ Roundtable turned to **Domestic Fire Safety and Communication to Vulnerables**, chaired by Rob Baardse of the Dutch Burns Foundation.

Bert Bruggemans, of the Antwerp Fire Brigade, presented ***Prevention Projects for Vulnerables in Antwerp***. The fire service has made partnerships and focuses on specific target groups. Projects are driven by safety and communications, with firefighters always involved. He presented some examples of projects, and highlighted the future priorities, namely five target groups with specific programmes. Participants noted the difficulty in measuring outcomes, especially quantitatively, as well as the need to find common goals when working with partners.

Dieter Nüssler, President of FEU, then presented ***Communicating Fire Safety to Children***. He presented the project in Floriansdorf, intended to educate young children on fire safety. The project has a didactic concept of experience, understand, and learn. In addition, Dieter presented FEUERBEL, a lifelong learning programme for vocational training in fire safety for teachers, due to be launched at the end of February. The programme provides a tool to learn about and teach fire safety, available in four languages. The suggestion was made of using social media to raise awareness of the tool, as well as ΕΦΑ partners sending it to schools in their own countries.



ΕΦΑ then moved onto the **Roundtable discussion**, with a particular focus on **ΕΦΑ moving forward**, moderated by ΕΦΑ Director Volker Wendt, who highlighted ΕΦΑ's fundamental essence as a platform for exchange of practices, and not a lobby. This Roundtable also provided a governmental dimension to ΕΦΑ, with the Belgian participation. On fire prevention and community safety, it was suggested that the ΕΦΑ Task Force Chairs meet to see how to move discussions forward to the 14th ΕΦΑ Roundtable.



On domestic fire safety, Mike Hagen noted that ΕΦΑ has over time helped the emergence of a shared understanding of fire risk and the need for better information and synergies. Dieter Nüssler updated the group on fire safety in hotels, stating that the Safe Hotel Initiative has been taken on by Accor. The European Commission is to launch its consultation in June, and Dieter asked that ΕΦΑ also play a part, agreeing to keep ΕΦΑ fellows updated as to progress.

On the subject of statistics, the close overlap with fire investigation was highlighted, and it was suggested to connect the efforts as presented at the Roundtable. ΕΦΑ will check the progress of the statistics project currently being undertaken by Dr. Wagner. On communication to vulnerables, Rob Baardse suggested that in future the ΕΦΑ Task Force should be used to share practices, in order to look critically and share and use. It was also suggested that the ΕΦΑ website have a page for sharing all practices, good and bad, in order to share each others' mistakes and learn from them as well as best practices. It was also suggested to use social media and explore innovative communications.

Ricardo Weewer then updated the ΕΦΑ participants on the **14th ΕΦΑ Roundtable**, to be held in **Amsterdam on 1-2 November 2012**. The Roundtable will be held at the same time as The Netherlands' national celebrations of Jan van der Heyden, and ΕΦΑ will use the occasion to hold its Roundtable but also to attend exhibitions and workshops on innovation. ΕΦΑ will also take the opportunity to present its own innovations.

It was also noted that the second **ΕΦΑ pillar on Disaster Management**, will be launched with the first Roundtable in **Berlin on 19-20 March 2012**. The aim is to have the same platform for discussion and exchange of practices, and will discuss EU civil protection modules and critical infrastructure. ΕΦΑ fellows were also asked to inform other interested colleagues to attend this kick-off disaster management Roundtable.

The 2013 spring ΕΦΑ Roundtable will take place in Frankfurt, with exact dates to be finalised. The 2013 autumn Roundtable will again be held in Brussels. The Belgian Ministry of Interior indicated the possibility to host future Brussels Roundtables again at their premises.

ΕΦΑ President Albrecht Broemme then closed the Roundtable, thanking the Belgian Ministry for their kind hospitality, and the 13th ΕΦΑ Roundtable came to a close over lunch.