

Conclusions of the 14th ΕΦΑ Roundtable Amsterdam, 1-2 November 2012

On the 1st and 2nd November 2012 over 25 participants from six EU member states attended the 14th ΕΦΑ Roundtable in Amsterdam. The Roundtable was held in conjunction with the NVBR's Annual Conference to celebrate its 10th anniversary and national celebrations of Jan van der Heijden. The theme of the ΕΦΑ Roundtable was **Innovation in the Fire Service**.



IJle Stelstra welcomed ΕΦΑ participants on behalf of the Amsterdam-Amstelland Fire Brigade. He noted that the NVBR conference was dedicated to the technical content of the fire fighting profession, with the theme 'Red United'. This was the first time that the Dutch conference had an international dimension, including the participation of ΕΦΑ and of FEU. IJle noted that the Conference would look back at and commemorate the work of the pioneer Jan van der Heijden, as well as look forward to the new direction of the fire service. IJle also shared a short film, demonstrating the work of the Amsterdam Fire Brigade.

Albrecht Broemme, ΕΦΑ President, thanked Amsterdam and the NVBR for hosting ΕΦΑ and welcomed all ΕΦΑ participants to the Roundtable.

ΕΦΑ participants listened to presentations on the work of the Dutch Fire Brigade. Jan Dirk van de Ven, Senior Fire Officer, Amsterdam-Amstelland Fire Brigade, provided an overview of the **Fire Service in The Netherlands**, showing that its activities span prevention and suppression, emergency services, disaster management and preparation, and advising and inspection. He noted the new strategic doctrine of the fire service and the move towards further innovation in the fire service.

Ricardo Weewer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Amsterdam-Amstelland Fire Brigade, presented **Innovation in the Dutch Fire Service**, in light of its new vision. Innovations presented included research on arrival times, the number of people on a fire engine and false alarms. Ricardo also noted that on R&D and innovation, a lot of research is being conducted in The Netherlands and a scientific board has been founded, exploring fire and smoke spread models and domestic fires. Field experiments have been conducted on innovative fire fighting techniques, and a new sprinkler head for domestic sprinklers is being developed. Ricardo also noted an experiment, in cooperation with fire brigades in Flanders, thanks to ΕΦΑ, on big smoke clouds. Ricardo asked how to ensure that knowledge from fire brigades is

shared, and suggested the eventual creation of a European Fire Service R&D Institute. As a starting point, he suggested a minimum of sharing research abstracts in English.

Ricardo also gave an update on the issue of **upholstered furniture in The Netherlands**, noting agreement from the public administration, insurance companies and industry of the need for fire safe furniture, but that moving forward proves to be difficult. Ricardo noted that the furniture industry is itself innovating in fire safety, for instance with hemp and 3D knitting systems.

Rene Hagen, EFA Vice President, then presented a case study of **Fatal Fire in Healthcare Building ‘Rivierduinen’**. Rene presented a report on the fire in the nursing home, and highlighted why three people were killed in the fire despite the fact that the building was deemed to comply with relevant regulations. Rene noted that the approach to fire safety had not been integrated and did not take account of the psychological condition of the people inhabiting the building. Such a behavioural condition should be added to fire safety conditions. In addition, mistakes had been made by the fire wardens in training exercises, but were not subsequently acted on and lessons had not been learned.

After a short coffee break, EFA participants were kindly invited to join an **NVBR Masterclass on the New Dutch Fire Service Doctrine**, held by Ricardo Weewer and Ed Oomes, a former professor of Fire Service Science. The speakers described The Netherlands’ journey to a new fire service doctrine, the inception of which began after a fire in a warehouse, De Punt, at which fire fighters were killed.



After this, it was concluded that a system approach was needed to address structural problems. The new fire service doctrine includes risk control, new suppression and fire investigation and evaluation. The speakers noted that change at the grass roots level is needed for things to move forward. All participants, including EFA, FEU and the NVBR, were invited to openly discuss the new fire service doctrine, and to give feedback on how it might work.

The Masterclass was followed by networking drinks with FEU and the NVBR, and dinner and celebrations in the evening.

Day two of the EFA Roundtable began with a presentation from Michal Ramczykowski, of EFA Technology Partner, the Copper Alliance. Michal presented a **case study of the dynamic modelling of the performance of safety electrical cables**. He outlined the details of a study performed, which was aimed to emphasise the selection of conductors.

An **EFA Roundtable discussion** followed, moderated by EFA Director, Volker Wendt. Volker updated participants that the EFA Board and Chairs had met in



Beverwijk, and proposed some changes to ΕΦΑ Task Forces, as well as the addition of a fourth topic – innovation.

The first **Task Force**, on **Statistics and Fire Research**, was presented by Chair Pascal Leprince. Pascal updated ΕΦΑ participants on the statistics project currently being carried out in conjunction with FEU, with which the ΕΦΑ Roundtable participants agreed to proceed. The group also agreed to have ΕΦΑ follow up with Dr. Peter Wagner, who is conducting the research, and to invite him to the next ΕΦΑ Roundtable. Dominiek Viaene, from EBCA, noted that he might also have an update on a statistics project, and will provide further news at the next ΕΦΑ Roundtable.

Mike Hagen then presented developments from the **ΕΦΑ Task Force on Fire Safety in the Home**. He updated the group that five Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have put forward a Written Declaration on home fire safety. There will be a three month period for MEPs to sign the Declaration, and a launch event will be held in the European Parliament on 28 November. ACFSE will provide letters for ΕΦΑ members to send to their national MEPs. Rene Hagen noted that the 25 fire chiefs of The Netherlands would be willing to write letters to MEPs. It was suggested that MEPs who received EBCA's Black Box should also be asked to sign.

Rob Baardse then presented the **ΕΦΑ Task Force on High Risk Groups**, and within the theme of Innovation, had three speakers to present innovative projects carried out in The Netherlands. Rene van Santvoort presented the project of Professor Blussemans, aimed at children and raising awareness of fire safety. The project created a brand aimed specifically at children, and allowed them to learn more about the subject through exploration. Digital communication tools were also widely used, and it was noted that the Dutch public health system now wants to create a similar initiative. Marieke van Daal then presented the social media aspect of a broader campaign held during fire prevention weeks, with the goal of reaching 25,000 people. The project involved an interactive quiz and test, and used media such as Twitter and Facebook. Bert Pol presented a project on fire prevention in student residences. The project looked at how to change students' behaviour, using new intervention techniques, such as social validation and stickers, to influence students.

During the open Roundtable discussion, ΕΦΑ fellows were **invited to the next ΕΦΑ Roundtable, to be held in Frankfurt in spring 2013**. ΕΦΑ has also been invited to host the autumn Roundtable in Brussels, which the ΕΦΑ Board kindly accepted. The group discussed the use of social media, and agreed to include it in the ΕΦΑ topic on Innovation, noting the many uses it can provide to the work of the fire services. ΕΦΑ fellows were asked to send any additional ideas they have to the ΕΦΑ Secretariat, to compile and to discuss them at future ΕΦΑ Roundtables.

Volker Wendt noted ΕΦΑ's 'succession challenge', and the difficulty of replacing retired fellows. ΕΦΑ fellows were asked to speak to any fire officers they might know that are interested in cooperation. Tapping into the FEU network was also raised as a possibility. In this light, Volker noted that the ΕΦΑ website will undergo a

significant update, in order to make it more accessible for potential fellows, but that personal contacts are the best route to encourage new fellows.

Volker also invited EΦA's Technology Partners to highlight any way in which they envisage better working with EΦA, and reminded the group that ideas of new partners are always welcome.

Ortwin Neuschwander, EΦA Vice President, updated the group on the first EΦA Disaster Management Roundtable, held in Berlin in March 2012. The Roundtable demonstrated people's interest in the subject. Markus von der Forst, of Frankfurt am Main Fire and Rescue Service, asked EΦA fellows to highlight the Disaster Management Roundtable to any colleagues that could be interested in the subject.

After a break, EΦA's special guests Martyn Emberson, CFO of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, and Vij Randeniya, CFO of the West Midlands Fire Service, presented a **Workshop on European Innovation in Fire Fighting**. Martyn presented the use of Cobra, the cutting extinguishing concept, as a way of changing fire fighting tactics. Cobra was introduced in his fire brigade, with the fundamental objective of enhancing fire fighter safety, and is incorporated into all aspects of the fire brigade's work, resulting in a cultural change.

Vij presented innovations in the West Midlands Fire Brigade, noting the need for the fire service to be more precise in its implementation. He demonstrated the use of a new type of vehicle as one example of tailoring the tools to the desired outcome. He noted that the fire service should be a toolbox, rather than a blunt instrument. Such work is necessary as current budget cuts will continue in the future. Vij also highlighted the use of a new thermal imager, and the need to set a heightened level of professional excellence, including technical, physical and cognitive competence, as well as empowered leadership.

EΦA fellows were very interested to hear about the innovations, and discussed their implementation and possible future uses.



Rene Nolten, of EΦA Technology Partner Sprue Safety Products, presented various new models of smoke alarms, including a mobile misting system. He also presented new models such as a fire alarm for the hard of hearing, a low frequency sounder, and cooker shut off valves.

The 14th EΦA Roundtable closed with thank you from EΦA Vice President Rene Hagen.