

10 ACTIONS THAT WILL IMPROVE EUROPEAN FIRE SAFETY

The 6 focus areas indicate where the biggest fire safety problems lie and where the focus should be in order to improve fire safety in Europe in the coming years. This focus has led to an action plan of 10-points. If followed-up correctly, these points will result in fewer residential fires and fewer casualties in the event of such a fire in general, but especially with regards to Europe's most vulnerable citizens.

Naturally, the basis of a fire-safe (residential) environment needs to be established. Fire safety knowledge, appropriate regulations and qualified and competent fire safety engineers must ensure that buildings, newly built or renovated, are fire safe. Moreover, compliance with product and building requirements is essential. However, the fire in Grenfell Tower has shown that one cannot always assume that a building is fire safe. Therefore, more needs to be done to make the EU's citizens more fire safe.

Fire safety is always a co-production, as well as with this action plan. Only through (multidisciplinary) cooperation can the action points be effectively tackled and the fire safety of Europe's citizens be improved.



Increase the fire safety of the growing vulnerable community

It is known which groups of people are most vulnerable to a residential fire. Also, sufficient international research is available to identify the risk factors which can be influenced and those which cannot be influenced and also which (type of) interventions should be focussed on. Naturally, attention must be paid to the factors and the effective interventions that can be influenced.

Action 1

Establish a European approach of improving the fire safety of the vulnerable community and the most vulnerable groups – elderly people (65+), children and people with a mental or physical disability (and focus on those living independently).



Improve the reduced escape time of people during a fire

To counteract the main effect of the increased smoke development and smoke propagation (i.e. people have less time to escape), the most effective action is to avoid (or limit) smoke development in the first place. This is especially true because the effectiveness of any possible measures (such as preventing the fast propagation of smoke or the early warning of people) is highly dependent on the degree of self-reliance of those present. Without help, most elderly people and people with a physical disability cannot escape quickly enough or cannot escape at all. Children are also often in need of guidance to be able to escape safely and in time.

Action 2

Improve and increase the use of fire-safe upholstered furniture and mattresses through the introduction of an EU-standard for end-use products.

Action 3

Ensure that smoke detectors have a much broader application in European homes. If people are not able to escape quickly enough or cannot escape at all, install domestic sprinklers as they are an indispensable solution in these circumstances.

Action 4

Evaluate and improve the functioning of Lower Ignition Propensity (LIP) cigarettes.



Fire safety must be an inseparable part of the energy transition

There is insufficient awareness, knowledge and competency regarding the new fire hazards associated with the energy transition. The already established rise of fires associated with this development demands that fire safety is seen as an essential aspect of the energy transition and circular construction. This will prevent an increase in fire casualties in the coming years.

Action 5

Develop knowledge and competency to ensure fire safety adequately accompanies the energy transition. Address the fire risks associated with the new forms of energy and ensure regular inspections.



Raise the awareness of fire safety

People being aware of their responsibilities regarding fire safety is of utmost importance. If people act fire safe, the chances of a fire breaking out are reduced. And if people know how to act when a fire does break out, the chance of casualties is decreased. Education in and awareness of fire safety is therefore an essential aspect of a more fire-safe Europe. Because, in the end, people make the difference.

Action 6

Encourage and support the activities of the Fire Rescue Services regarding Community Fire Safety projects, both at a national and international level, and change the mentality from 'nice to have' to 'need to have'.

Action 7

Stimulate (or foster) scientific research on improving the fire safe behaviour of people and the effectiveness of interventions in the field of Community Fire Safety.



Realise EU-wide data on residential fires

Good, up-to-date and reliable data is an essential part of pursuing a good fire prevention policy. In Europe, data is collected on almost everything, but not on residential fires. This needs to change.

Action 8

As soon as the results of the EU pilot project on fire statistics are known, a start needs to be made with the actual data collection of (at least) residential fires at a European level and the integration of them within Eurostat.



Improve EU-wide communication and collaboration

EU-wide communication and collaboration is essential in order to share (and connect) successful initiatives and best practices with each other and to realise a broad application of innovations. At the moment, this is still lacking.

Action 9

Give more room to other actors within the FIEP (such as the Fire Rescue Services and other Directorates-General) and focus the FIEP on the exchange of knowledge and innovation in fire safety, with vulnerable citizens as its most important target group.

Action 10

Realise better cooperation between the Member States and industry on market surveillance.