

**Vice President Frans Timmermans**

European Commission

copy to:

Vice President Margrethe Vestager

Commissioner Kadri Simson

Commissioner Thierry Breton

Commissioner Elisa Ferreira

Commissioner Janez Lenarčič

12<sup>th</sup> June 2023

## **Subject: coordination on fire safety will help achieving the Green Deal's objectives**

**Dear Mr Vice President Frans Timmermans,**

The undersigning organisations working on improving the fire safety of European citizens call on you to establish a structural coordination of all EU Commission initiatives related to fire safety of European buildings. While fire safety of buildings is a national competence, it is impacted by and impacts many EU policies and initiatives of the EU Green Deal. A better coordination will ensure that fire safety is properly addressed and complements the energy transition. And even now the fire safety challenges are truly serious in the EU because every year, cautious estimates suggest that over 5,000 people die from residential fires. The number of people injured is, also according to cautious estimates, in the absence of harmonised EU-wide fire data, about 10 times as high<sup>1</sup>.

### Fire safety must accompany the energy transition

As highlighted by the Transition pathway for Construction<sup>2</sup>, the green and digital transitions will mean the use of new materials, products, and technologies bringing along new types of risks about which the experience and knowledge base is thin. If not addressed properly, it can seriously compromise fire safety and the success of the energy transition.

For example, while electrical fires account today for 25-30% of residential fires<sup>3</sup>, obsolete electrical installations and inadequate fire safety rules may hinder the deployment of solar photovoltaic, heat pump and electric vehicles charging points. Batteries, electric vehicles and solar panels have specific fire behaviour and influence the fire behaviour of buildings. New methods of construction and new materials, aiming to improve the environmental profile of buildings, may also go in contradiction with existing fire safety rules or not be adequately considered by these rules.

In some cases, current fire safety regulations and standards may slow down the deployment of solutions and technologies aiming to decarbonise the built environment, because they have not been designed for these solutions. In other cases, they may not sufficiently address the new risks, which may result in new fire accidents and as a consequence might lead to resistance to energy transition solutions.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.europeanfiresafetyalliance.org/our-focus/statistics/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/53854>

<sup>3</sup> Forum for European Electrical Safety (FEEDS) "White Paper on Residential Electrical Safety: how to ensure progress", 2020

While fire safety of buildings is a national competence, the EU Commission has historically a strategic interest to coordinate action with Member States to ensure the fire safety risk is not hindering the objectives of the EU Green Deal.

Fire safety is currently also closely related to several objectives of the EU that are interlinked with fire safety. For example, the New European Bauhaus aims to inspire the transformation of our societies and living spaces considering sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion. Fire safety is a precondition of these objectives. The EU is also committed to tackling energy poverty and to the protection of vulnerable consumers. Fire safety and energy poverty professionals see a strong correlation between energy poverty and fire risk<sup>4</sup>.

#### The European Union needs a holistic approach on fire safety

Currently, fire safety of buildings is addressed by the EU in several initiatives such as the revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), The Construction Product Regulations (CPR), EU co-funded programmes (e.g. Erasmus+, Horizon Europe), pan-European assistance in case of fire emergencies (e.g. EU Civil Protection Mechanism) and the Fire Information Exchange Platform (FIEP). However, these initiatives are often developed in silos and would need a better coordination from the European Commission to be more effective and better achieve the goals of the European Union for the transformation of the built environment. Some other initiatives on skills, energy poverty or the energy transition should integrate fire safety considerations.

For the above reasons, the undersigning organisations call on the European Commission to establish a structural coordination of all policy initiatives impacting or related to the fire safety of European buildings across Directorate Generals. Coordinating and exchanging best practices among Commission services and with Member States will protect EU citizens and ensure fire safety is aligned with the objectives of the EU Green Deal.

We offer to support this work and list in annex the relevant initiatives we have identified.

We look forward to hearing from you,

on behalf of the signatory organizations

Kind regards,

**Krzysztof Biskup**

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*Signatory organisations – see following pages*

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.feedsnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Energy-Poverty-and-Fire-Risk.pdf>

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## List of the EU initiatives related to fire safety identified by the signatories

### DG ENER:

- Energy Performance of Buildings Directive
- RePowerEU
- Action plan on accelerating Heat Pump market and deployment
- EU solar energy strategy
- Energy Poverty Advisory Hub

### DG GROW:

- Fire Information Exchange Platform (FIEP)
- Construction Products Regulation
- EU FireStat
- European approach to assess the fire performance of facades
- Transition Pathway Construction
- Pact for skills
- The EU Agenda for Tourism 2030

### DG MOVE

- Task force Fire safety of recharging infrastructure in roofed parking garages

### DG JUST

- General Product Safety Regulation
- RAPEX

### DG ECHO

- EU Civil Protection Knowledge Network

### JRC

- Fire Safety Engineering Network
- New European Bauhaus
- Eurocodes

### Horizon Europe funded projects

- FRISSBE, fire safe built environment

### Erasmus+ funded project

- International Master of Science in Fire Safety Engineering
- BFireSafe@School