Strengthening cross-border disaster management with local life & fire safety

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• Barriers

1. Fires are not classified as a disaster
2. Fire safety is squeezed by the subsidiarity principle
3. Gap between emergency services and civil protection
4. Fire is a disjointed matter at EU level
5. The fire service as the residual risk company
Fires are not classified as a disaster

Yes,
- not really leading to disruption
- relatively short time-frame
- mostly limited extend
- not often disturbing the functioning of a community
- mainly not exceeding the ability of the affected community

Yet,
- more fire fatalities than natural hazard casualties
- not predictable
- discriminates and affect vulnerable people
- the local ability is becoming more and more performant
we should examine the inclusion of fire as a permanent disaster

• equal-long term impact
• chronic disaster

we should pay balanced attention on both phenomena:

sudden disaster versus the ongoing daily tragedies
Squeezed by the subsidiarity principle

In the EU context, fire issues are evaluated as a pure national competence.
At national level, fire issues are mostly further laid down at municipal level.

The subsidiarity principle would better be splitted in 2 parts:
• It can continue to exist for responding to emergencies
• It should be abandoned for the R&D and fire science
One of the conclusion of the ECPM interim consultation 2016: “the commission will assess...making full use of Europe’s expertise and assets for preparedness and response”

This is where the EU safety science policy should lead us: a holistic approach to get the best outcomes using the most efficient processes leading to the highest rate of implementation.
Fire as a disjointed matter at EU-level

• Fire safety has no SPOC (single point of contact) at EU-level

• Changing the meaning of the acronym ECHO
  
  ECHO  [European Civil protection and Humanitarian aid Organisation]
  
  ECHO  [Emergency services Civil protection Humanitarian aid Organisation]

• Connecting all levels and all partners in civil safety
• By doing this, the EC could express
  o her **willigness** to be the promotor of the global safety approach for a robust safe Europe
  o her **conviction** that only a holistic approach will protect citizens in the most effective way
  o her **wish** to using all public available means in the EU in the most efficient way
  o her **belief** that sound decisions are made on evidence-based research
The fire service as the residual company

• “If a risk cannot be covered, there is still the fire service to deal with the impossible or unthinkable”

• Fire services should be considered as an essential advising service in the public RIE

• It therefore is elementary that fire services can lean on a recognized center of excellence like the DRMKC
Domestic fires

- 5 to 6000 fire fatalities
- 80% of them in the domestic area
- Smoking being a main cause
- Soft furnishing the main fire developer

Sources of ignition in accidental fires in dwellings

- Cooking appliances: 52%
- Other electrical appliances: 12%
- Other electrical distribution: 12%
- Smokers’ materials: 6%
- Space heating appliances: 4%
- Other: 12%
- Un-specified: 2%
Ageing society

- 65+ population 3 till 4 times more at risk
- 65+ population will double between 2010 and 2050
Who’s at risk: fire discriminates

vulnerable people living in vulnerable conditions

Cooking

Smoking

Drinking

Lives alone

Often already known to services – refuses help & support

Victim Profile

Young and old people

Medication

Mobility difficulties

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What’s triggering us

Less fires but more dangerous and complex structural fires

- Changing “fire dynamics”
- Old fire tactics based on semi-empirical findings
- Fire behavior, fire spread and smoke propagation but also the impact of fire fighting should be the future drivers

Need for real scale experiments and fundamental investigation of real fire cases: “Connecting FRS with universities and research institutes in order to develop joint research”
Exponentially increasing number and size of wildfires

• Complex interaction between climate, forestry management and urban planning (new fire triangle)

• Assigning the FRS as a fully-fledged public agency in the risk assessing of public decision making

• Upgrading the FRS from “last in line” to “front line” advisors in the societal debate
Improve the societal debate

• sound data collection to produce harmonised statistics in EU

• sharing of the research outcomes leading to integrated and evidence-based advisory strategy

• emphasizing on implementation using the disseminating opportunities of the FEU network
supporting a new approach

- real-scale testing as a complement for lab-scale testing
- building a public partnership: academical and practitioners to strengthen the independent voice by delivering evidence-based opinions regarding comprehensive disaster (incl fire) investigation and mitigation
- opting for a version 2.0 whereas a complementary and innovative thinking will be seen as an opportunity to improve citizens safety in Europe
• defining and determining a set of (existing or modified) test methods, in order to increase survivability and escape capabilities during domestic fires (May 2017)
Towards a **PRACADEMIC** research: merging the practical research and investigation with the theoretical academic research

Therefore we should accelerate

- awareness
- understanding
- adoption and
- implementation

of all readily available information on life safety
• Extending the DRMKC with a complementary fire section [FRMKC (Fire Risk Management Knowledge Center)]
• doing so, upgrading the DRMKC to the holistic center of excellence of citizens safety and DRR
• and becoming the “hub” connecting all networks, covering all initiatives on life safety in Europe
• The EC should therefore recognize the extended DRMKC to be the catalyst for a sustainable development towards “A safer Europe for all”
A Safer Europe For All