



4th EU Fire Safety Day International Conference



University of Zagreb
Faculty of civil engineering



HRVATSKA UDRUGA ZA
ZAŠTITU OD POŽARA
CROATIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR FIRE PROTECTION

MEDIA RELEASE

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How increased electrification in buildings - photovoltaics, batteries with stored energy and e-mobility will affect the safety of people and property in case of fire

We support the green transition in buildings, that is why it must be carried out safely

We absolutely support the transition to green and modern technologies in buildings, said **Birgitte Messerschmidt** from NFPA (National Fire Protection Association, USA) in the opening lecture at the recently held fourth international conference in Zagreb, EU Fire Safety Day 2024. However, she added that this inevitable transition must be carried out in a safe manner for both people and property. According to her, the biggest challenge is that new technologies develop much faster than the regulations that should go side by side. She made a nice analogy, comparing the development of technologies to a rabbit, and laws to a turtle, and emphasized that society must find a way to make the turtle faster, that is, that modern technologies are installed and applied in a safe manner. Unfortunately, laws and standards are mostly changed after major tragedies, and Messerschmidt believes that we already have enough knowledge and expertise to be able to predict the risks that these new technologies bring and thus reduce or avoid them.

This internationally renowned expert comes from an umbrella American organization that cares about safety, she presented their eco system for fire and life safety (NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem) with eight components that play a very important role in protecting people and property. These components are: state responsibility, continuous development of legislation, application of the latest standards, safety in the first place, continuous education of the workforce, compliance with the law throughout the entire life cycle, an educated and modernly equipped fire service and, finally, an informed general public. She emphasized that each of these components has an equally important role and if any of them is missing, a tragedy is likely to occur.

Ivana Banjad Pečur from the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Zagreb pointed out that the main goal of this conference was to draw the attention of Croatian and international experts and stakeholders, as well as decision-makers, but also the general public to the unprecedented transformation of the European building stock, which has already begun, but will only soon gain full momentum and how all this will affect one of the basic requirements of every building, which is fire protection.

"We wanted to connect science, researchers, the economic sector as well as decision-makers at the national and local levels in the field of safety in buildings, and I think we succeeded in that," added Banjad Pečur.



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The seriousness and relevance of this topic is shown by the fact that 28 lecturers and panelists from 11 European countries and the USA participated in the program, all excellent experts, scientists, academics and decision-makers in the field of the topic of this conference.

"Almost 300 participants confirm that this international conference organized by our association together with the Faculty of Civil Engineering is one of the most important conferences on the subject of fire protection in buildings in Europe," said Miodrag Drakulić, president of HUZOP, the Croatian Association for Fire Protection.

"This topic is very important because the European Union, as a result of the decarbonization agenda and the energy crisis after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, initiated this transformation, which encourages the massive use of renewable energy sources on the roofs of buildings and an increase in the share of electric cars in the total vehicle fleet that are charged and park in (public) building garages. All this affects buildings changing their function and becoming places where energy is produced and stored, not just where we live and work," Professor Banjad Pečur explained.

The serious risks of fire, which are already confirmed by previous fires, some of which were of large proportions and with human casualties, and the technical solutions that eliminate these risks were explained in detail by recognized experts in this field, such as Nik Rus, Institute of Civil Engineering Slovenia; Aleš Jug, Slovenian Association for Fire Protection (SZPV); Eric Guillaume, Efectis, France; Peter Sturm, Graz University of Technology (TUG), Austria; Oskar Grönlund, RISE Research Institutes of Sweden; Hans Nieling, CFBT, Netherlands; Grunde Jomaas, ERA & Construction Institute of Slovenia; Jose Torero Cullen, University College London, UK; Victoria Hutchison, NFPA, USA; Hrvoje Bašić, FER, Croatia; Robert McNamee, Society of Fire Protection Engineers Europe Chair (SFPE); Ludger Tegeler, FM Insurance Europe.

According to some forecasts, renewable sources will account for 50 percent of total electricity production by 2030 and 85 percent by 2050. They will help reduce costs and contribute to the well-being of the environment. However, all this will significantly affect fire safety and the protection of people and property.

"It is precisely for this reason that we believe that it is the responsibility of the academic community, researchers, producers and decision-makers to recognize the risks and create the preconditions for this green transition to be successfully carried out in a safe manner," concluded professor Banjad Pečur and the president of the association Drakulić, who organizers of this international conference.

The conference was supported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and State Property, as well as the President of the Republic of Croatia and the Mayor of the City of Zagreb, the Croatian Fire Association and the Croatian Engineering Association. The partner of the conference is SZVP from Slovenia. The main sponsors were ROCKWOOL Adriatic, KNAUF INSULATION, and the gold sponsor was MICROLINE.