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Interview with CFPA Chairwoman Elisabetta Carrea:

Exchange of knowledge enriches and offers the opportunity to adopt other perspectives



SUMMARY

The exchange of Expertise and country-specific experience is also an important tool for fire protection, safety strategies and dealing with natural Hazards - not only for the transfer of knowledge, but also for the pooling of resources to pursue common goals. CFPA Europe, the European confederation of national fire protection organisations, has been leading the way since 1974. We spoke to CFPA Chairwoman Elisabetta Carrea PhD about the work of the CFPA and its strategy for the future.

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1 *Mrs Carrea, why was the CFPA Europe founded already 50 years ago in 1974 and what are its tasks?*

Elisabetta Carrea: The Confederation of Fire Protection Associations Europe (CFPA-Europe) is an association of national organisations in Europe that are mainly concerned with fire prevention and protection, safety and other related risks.

It currently has 26 members and a unique network. It was founded 50

years ago by the most active fire protection organisations (Fire Protection Associations - FPA) in Europe and has since been governed by its statutes, which are available to everyone on the CFPA Europe website.

While the original purpose of the Confederation was the exchange of expertise in the field of fire prevention and protection, the Confederation's activities have expanded to the wider field of security and natural hazards. The main activities today include the development of technical guidelines and training programmes as well as the dissemination of information in order to expand knowledge about fire prevention and protection, security and natural hazards.

The objectives of CFPA Europe are primarily to promote knowledge and understanding of matters relating to fire science, fire safety, health and safety and the risks posed by environmental and other natural hazards.

2 *Fire protection is strongly emphasised in the name of your organisation - how important are other areas of loss prevention?*

Elisabetta Carrea: Due to their history, the member organisations are particularly active in the area of fire protection, although today they are



After graduating from Turin Polytechnic in 2001 with a Phd in process engineering, Elisabetta Carrea worked as a scientist and project manager at Alstom Power in Switzerland until 2005. After holding positions as Project Manager and later Business Unit Manager at Pöyry Energy, Switzerland, and as Vice Director and Head of Gas and District Heating at the Swiss Gas and Water Industry Association (SVGW), she joined the Swiss Safety Center in 2018, initially as Head of Expertise Services and since 2021 as CEO. Elisabetta Carrea was elected Chairwoman of CFPA Europe in May 2024.

increasingly pursuing other safety-related priorities in the areas of safety, security and natural hazards. For this reason, new commissions have also been established in recent years, focussing on other areas of prevention, namely security and natural hazards. Today, there are five commissions whose work products are organised according to the spe-

cialist topics they deal with: Fire Protection and Prevention (including Explosion Protection and Prevention), Security and Natural Hazards.

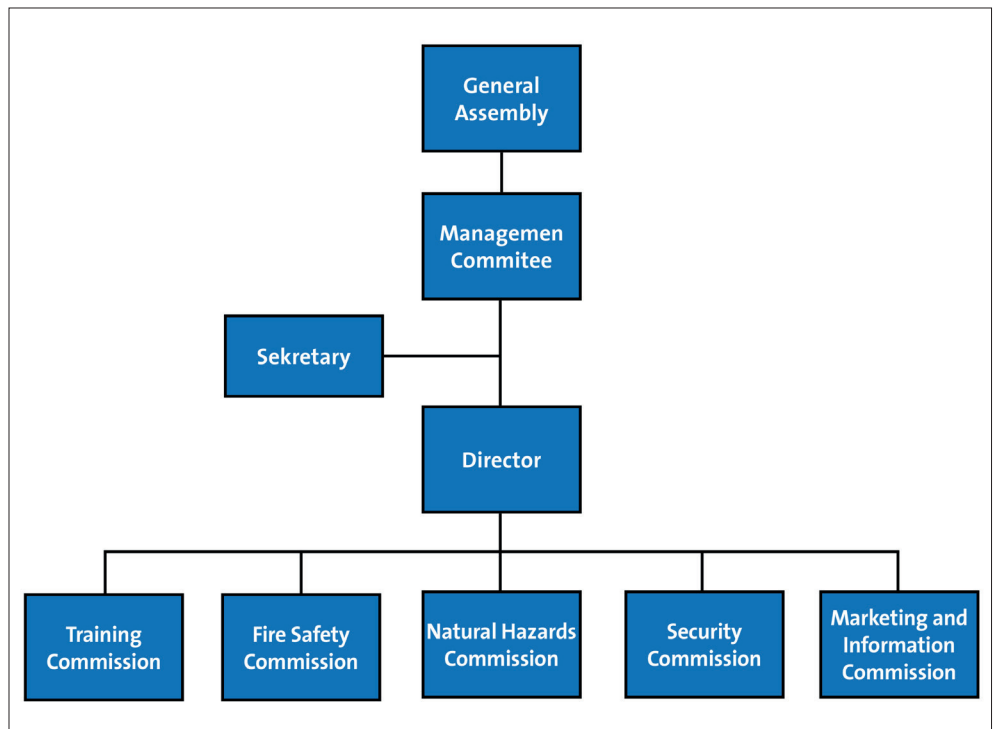
And these are available to download free of charge from the website: The CFPA Europe has so far published 41 guidelines in the area of fire protection, 10 in the area of natural hazards and 11 in the area of security

3 What is the relationship between CFPA Europe and its national member organisations? How do national guidelines affect the European level and how do CFPA guidelines influence national rules?

Elisabetta Carrea: The CFPA Europe has the legal form of an association and consists of a large number of European country representatives.

Each member country has one seat and one vote in the General Assembly, the highest and decision-making body of CFPA Europe. As such, the member organisations representing their countries determine the structure and work of CFPA Europe and decide on all issues related to the strategy and general objectives of CFPA Europe. In this way, the statutes ensure that the member organisations lead the confederation in the common interest of the majority of the members and the countries represented.

And there is of course an interaction between international and national regulations: The member organisations also translate the CFPA guidelines into the national language as required and publish them - with country-specific additions where necessary. This gives all members the opportunity to access an international knowledge base and best practices



4 How do you promote cooperation between the member organisations? What role does the exchange of knowledge and experience play?

Elisabetta Carrea: Elisabetta Carrea: CFPA Europe promotes collaboration between member organisations by organising conferences, seminars and workshops where knowledge and experience can be shared. This exchange of knowledge plays a crucial role as it enables member organisations to learn from the best practices of others, gain new insights and jointly develop solutions to challenges. In this way, co-operation is strengthened and the common goals of CFPA Europe can be pursued effectively.

However, the relationship between CFPA Europe and the member organisations also goes in the opposite direction, with member organisations making their resources available in the form of knowledge, manpower, procedures and other tools to support the work of the Commission.

5 Through the member organisations, you provide harmonised training programmes, but also experts as experienced contacts. How is this knowledge transfer and how are the CFPA diplomas, certificates and attestations received and what are the benefits for the market and the public through CFPA Europe?

Elisabetta Carrea: The transfer of knowledge within CFPA Europe takes place through harmonised training programmes and the provision of experts from the member organisations as competent contacts. The CFPA's diplomas, certificates and attestations are recognised in the industry as proof of quality and are valued by companies, authorities and the public.

By participating in training programmes and obtaining CFPA certificates, professionals can demonstrate their knowledge and skills, leading to greater competence and safety in the field of fire prevention, safety and security. This helps to raise standards in the industry, impro-

Organisational structure of CFPA Europe (Graphic: CFPA Europe)



Cooperation at European level: CFPA General Assembly 2024 (Photo: CFPA Europe)

ve safety in the workplace and ultimately protect the market and the public.

The harmonised training programmes are also of great interest to companies operating internationally: CFPA can organise training courses, e.g. for fire safety officers, in different countries and languages, taking into account the respective local legislation.

6 *You define yourself as an organisation that is active in the countries on the European continent. What is your relationship to the EU as a political entity, which is not the same?*

Elisabetta Carrea: Our aim is to strengthen and expand our relations with the European Commission and other European institutions.

For example, the European insurance association Insurance Europe has ratified several CFPA Europe guidelines since 2012, which is very important for all users of our guidelines and of course shows that our work

is of a high standard and has gained importance at European level.

Our efforts are aimed at further expanding our existing relationships with the European Commission and exploring opportunities to qualify national training courses in cooperation with the European Qualifications Framework.

7 *Do Europe's interests differ greatly from those of other continents and how do you manage to communicate European positions on loss prevention issues worldwide? To put it the other way round: despite all the differences in detail, isn't loss prevention ultimately a global task?*

Elisabetta Carrea: It's always a compromise. The ultimate goal is of course to create the safest possible conditions and eliminate the risk. But it is also true that it is often not possible to really eliminate risk. The aim is then to achieve the lowest acceptable level of risk.

Although this approach is followed in most countries and regions of the world, the implementation of the measures taken can vary greatly and is influenced by various factors such as climate and geographical location, availability of resources, centralised or decentralised management, etc.

Our work has spread considerably in recent years, which has led to other countries outside our continent expressing an interest in becoming members. For example, South Africa and South Korea have recently become members in order to promote exchange.

The exchange highlights the differences, but is also an enrichment, as certain aspects can be viewed from a different perspective and measures can therefore be implemented even more efficiently and in a more targeted manner.

8 *What strategy are you pursuing with regard to global cooperation?*

Elisabetta Carrea: Just in time for its 50th anniversary, CFPA Europe has published its new strategy. This was adopted by the General Assembly in Istanbul in May. One pillar of the strategy is „a global association“. We are in regular contact with other associations in other continents, promote the exchange of expertise between countries and are open to members from other continents who wish to join CFPA Europe in order to strengthen expertise in the protection of people, animals, nature and infrastructure.

9 *How does the cooperation work in practice?*

Elisabetta Carrea: This is where the second pillar of our strategy comes into play, which is to strengthen our course and training activities. By ratifying the CFPA-E guidelines, these serve as a reliable and recognised

basis for the further development of courses and training.

Further development will be strongly influenced by global trends, such as the energy transition (solar energy, batteries, hydrogen technology, urban green facades, etc.), artificial intelligence (think of cyber security, for example), new materials, new working and living models, etc. The CFPA-E commissions are already working on these topics and how these new trends will influence fire protection and protection against natural hazards.

Of course, we also communicate this to the public at large: we provide free guidelines, technical information, training videos and numerous other sources of information via the cfpa-e.eu website. And if you want to keep up to date with European trends and positions on fire protection, security and protection against natural hazards, the free CFPA newsletter is a first-class source of information.

10 *Where do you see CFPA Europe in the next 10 to 15 years?*

Elisabetta Carrea: In the next 10 to 15 years, CFPA Europe can develop into an even more influential and forward-looking organisation that plays a key role in ensuring the safety of people, nature and infrastructure in Europe.

I see CFPA Europe as an established voice and contact point for all fire safety issues in Europe. It sets standards in research, training and standardisation and actively promotes the exchange of best practices between all players in fire safety.

Our organisation plays an active role on the international stage and represents the interests of European fire safety at global conferences and in committees. It works with other organisations to develop

global standards and improve fire safety worldwide. We bring together all those involved in security, fire and natural hazard protection to promote the exchange of information and best practices.

You find CFPA Europe's website at cfpa-e.eu or via our QR code:



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