



THE EUROPEAN VOICE OF REFRIGERATION,  
AIR CONDITIONING AND HEAT PUMP  
CONTRACTORS

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

# About AREA

Established in 1989, AREA is the European association of national refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump (RACHP) associations, representing RACHP contractors and engineers.

Contractors are responsible for the design, installation, maintenance, and repair of RACHP equipment.

These companies are the indispensable, competent intermediaries between component manufacturers:

- compressors, heat exchangers, chillers, package units, counters, (mechanical industry)
- measurement, control, and safety devices (electronic industry)
- refrigerants, lubricants, and insulation (chemical industry)

and final users:

- cold stores and freezers (food industry)
- refrigerated transportation (food distribution)
- food product wholesalers and retailers (food sales)
- private persons (domestic and household applications)
- industrial refrigeration, materials processing, manufacturing process
- water and machine cooling
- stationary air conditioning
- mobile air conditioning
- special applications (laboratories, medical, military)

## AREA in a nutshell

23  
national  
associations

20  
countries

13,000  
companies

110,000  
people

€23bn  
turnover

# What's inside

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# Foreword by the President



“

**AREA calls for mandatory certification on alternative refrigerants. This is a necessary addition to existing F-gas provisions to ensure safe and efficient handling. Although we need more time, installers need to be retrained rapidly. We do not want to leave any contractor behind.**

AREA is proud of the work that has been carried out by its members on the most topical points of discussion for our sector: illegal trade of F-gases, the European Green Deal and the F-gas Regulation review.

In 2021, AREA issued concrete proposals on the extension of the F-gas certification scheme to alternative refrigerants and calls for mandatory certification on alternative refrigerants. This is as a necessary addition to the existing F-gas provisions and will help to ensure safe and efficient handling of these refrigerants that are gradually replacing fluorinated greenhouse gases.

As President of AREA, I believe our proposals are solid. They are an essential and a much-needed step forward for the European Union, which could also be taken as an example globally.

We have a lot of work ahead of us, particularly, the revision of the following Directives or Regulations:

- F-gas and Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS)
- Energy Performance in Buildings (EPBD)
- Renewable Energy Sources
- Energy Efficiency
- Ecodesign and Ecolabelling

We are active and present directly or indirectly in each of the above discussions with the EU Institutions.

I hope the global scientific community's great achievements will allow us to soon overcome the pandemic we are living in, and that already in 2022, we will be able to meet up more freely, exchange knowledge and work together. We are delighted that our 23 associations are meeting for our general assembly in Athens for the first time after 2 years. We expect a lot more meetings to come, especially during the two main exhibitions of the year: Mostra Convegno Expocomfort, taking place in Milan from 28 June - 1 July, and Chillventa, taking place in Nuremberg from 11 - 13 October.

Of course, our job raising awareness at international meetings and consultation forums has not stopped. For the first time in more than fourteen years, in 2021 the European Conference on the Latest Technology in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning took place in a hybrid format. The globally renowned congress, as usual, was jointly organised by AREA with the United Nations Environment, the International Institute of Refrigeration, the Renewable Energy Institute, the Italian Association of Refrigeration Technicians and Centro Studi Galileo.

In that context, on 11 June 2021, I signed a historical Memorandum of Understanding with Madi Sakandé,

President of the pan-African Union of Associations U-3ARC. Both associations share common goals and objectives and wish to collaborate with transparency and efficiency in areas of mutual interest. This includes the development of initiatives and activities of joint interest within respective mandates and governing regulations.

To inform the international sector, I was interviewed at the end of the year by the renowned magazine “The Economist”, shedding light on the main challenges encountered while applying European regulations, highlighting illegal trade. [Read the full article](#)



In addition to this, we celebrated [World Refrigeration Day](#) on 26 June. AREA was delighted to promote events that our members hosted on this key day for our sector and we look forward to the next edition and the discussions and activities related to the yearly motto “Cooling Matters!”.

To highlight our industry in another important way, we celebrated International Women’s Day on 8 March, showcasing the opportunities in our sector. We were delighted to share the inspiring stories of five women from member companies, coming from a variety of backgrounds and expertise, supporting and playing a key role in shaping our industry. AREA also joined, as the only European partner, the UNEP – WRD initiative titled “International Network for Women in Cooling”.

On 30 November, Paris was the meeting place for the International Special Issue, published by AREA, UNEP, IIF-IIR and Centro Studi Galileo. I further discussed the next steps of the International Training Curriculum, developed in cooperation with UNEP, which will serve as future basis for refrigerants’ management courses worldwide.

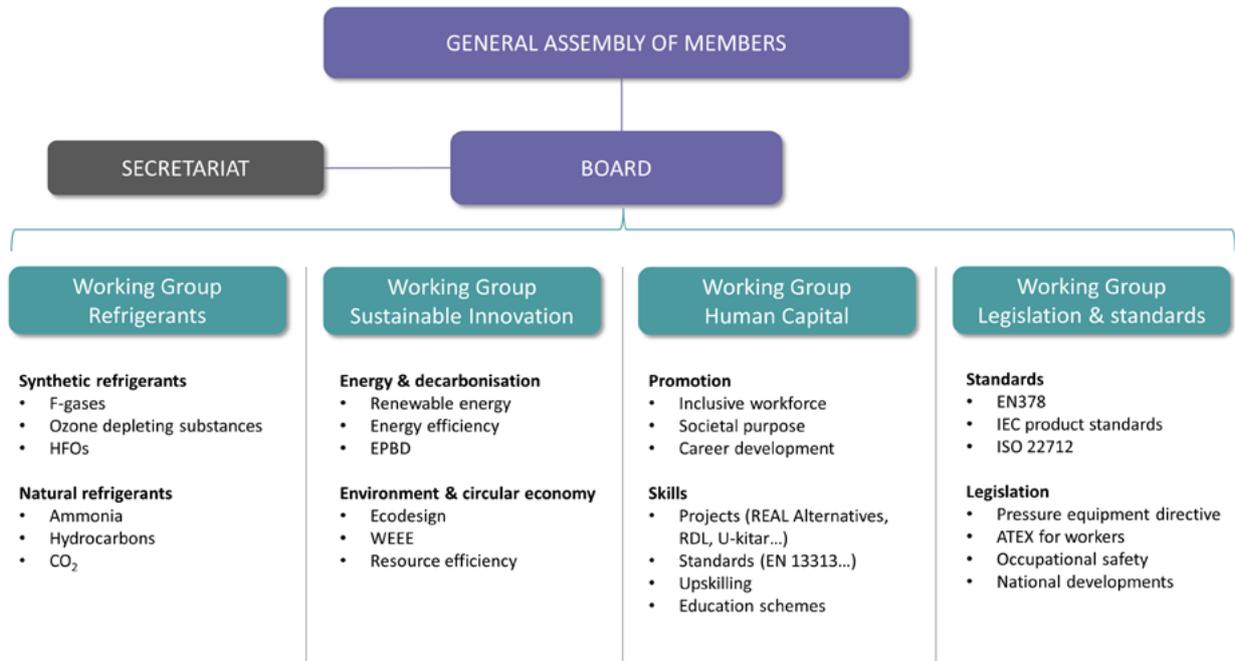
As AREA’s President, I am always grateful for the great cooperation we have with and among our members, and I am looking forward to further developing our international connections.

In a global industry and for global problems, we need and propose global solutions. Growing AREA’s profile and recognition will help us to better support and provide those solutions.

**Marco Buoni, President**

# Organisation

## Working Bodies



## Working Groups

In 2019, AREA restructured its working activities to adapt to the key pillars of focus identified in the AREA Vision 2025. Four working groups now represent the four strategic principles of the vision, thus replacing the existing task forces.

Chairs and Vice-Chairs were nominated per group, alongside Sherpas whose role will be to maintain the link with the Board.

### Human Capital

Chair: Thanos Biris (HUF GAS, Greece)  
 Vice-Chair: Stepan Stojanov (SCHKT, Czech Republic)  
 Sherpa: Marco Buoni (ATF, Italy)

### Legislation and Standards

Chair: Mika Kapanen (FREA, Finland)  
 Vice-Chair: Imre Soorand (EKL, Estonia)  
 Sherpa: Vacant

### Refrigerants

Chair/Sherpa: Graeme Fox (BESA, UK)  
 Vice-Chair: Martyn Cooper (FETA, UK)

### Sustainable Innovation

Chair: Seamus Kerr (IRI, Ireland)  
 Vice-Chair: José Riberio (APIRAC, Portugal)  
 Sherpa: Grzegorz Michalski (KFCh, Portugal)

## Board of Directors

- Marco Buoni (ATF, Italy), President
- Coen van de Sande (NVKL, The Netherlands), Vice-President
- Seamus Kerr (IRI, Ireland), Treasurer
- Grzegorz Michalski (KFCh, Poland), Board Member
- Thanos Biris (HUF GAS, Greece), Board Member
- Mika Kapanen (FREA, Finland), Board Member

# Internal Affairs

## AREA deepens cooperation with its African counterpart U-3ARC

On 11 June, in the framework of the 19th European Conference of the United Nations and Centro Studi Galileo - the leading HVAC/R training institute, the two Presidents Madi Sakandé (U-3ARC) and Marco Buoni (AREA) signed a historic agreement, which marked the beginning of the relationship 2.0 between the European and African RAC sectors.

The Memorandum of Understanding will guarantee great benefits for both associations, establishing new partnerships and exchanging skills. This includes the mutual willingness to attend events giving presentations, to exchange information on the best practices adopted by member technicians, to work together on the development of new standards and green and energy saving strategies and the enhancement of training and skills development, as well as pursuing the phase down of HFCs with high environmental impact.



The decision to proceed with signing the Memorandum of Understanding during the 19th European Conference carried a symbolic meaning. Marco Buoni, being the President of AREA and the Secretary General of ATF (Italian Association of RAC Technicians), is thus Director General of Centro Studi Galileo, for which Madi Sakandé is one of the most appreciated and experienced Expert Trainers, responsible for the Italian branch in Bologna and numerous courses held in Africa, including in Burkina Faso, his homeland. The Mayor of Casale Monferrato (CSG's headquarters), Federico Riboldi, who has also collaborated with CSG over the years, was also present to witness this newly founded union between the two continental Associations.

# Working Groups

## Refrigerants

In the first half of 2021, the preparation of the revision of the F-Gas Regulation dominated the working groups agenda. In March, AREA came forward with [comprehensive proposals](#) on the extension of the F-gas certification scheme to alternative refrigerants. Introducing the concept of 'alternative refrigerant greenhouse gases' in order to remain within the Regulation's legal scope, the proposals consisted of concrete amendments to the F-Gas Regulation. These were complemented with proposed new minimum competence requirements set out in Implementing Regulation 2067/2015. AREA can certainly

pride itself for such an achievement which was recognised by the Commission and supported by most stakeholders, industry and NGOs alike.

AREA did not just focus on training and certification. We took an active part in the review process and contributed to the Regulation's review through input on many other points. Throughout, we kept in close contact with other stakeholders, notably issuing [joint comments](#) post F-gas stakeholder workshop together with 14 other European and national trade associations representing a large spectrum of the refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump industry. The publication of the F-Gas Regulation proposals was eventually postponed to spring 2022.

AREA also worked on the current Regulation, notably supporting actions against illegal trade and addressing unclarities on the concept of ‘commercial use’ in relation to bans.

Moreover, the PFAS issue gained increasing importance over the year, in view of the potentially far-reaching consequences it could have for our industry. AREA leaves the lead to EPEE, supporting its actions where appropriate.

Finally, AREA has got involved in an industry-led initiative on refrigerants recycling.

## Sustainable Innovation

Continuing the work that began in 2020, AREA was active in terms of monitoring and providing feedback to the “Policy Support for the Heating and Cooling Decarbonisation” study, launched by the European Commission - DG Energy, with the aim to develop a 2050 EU heating and cooling roadmap. The Sustainable Innovation Working Group contributed to the study with a position paper, which was further supported through participation in the stakeholder workshops, organised by the Commission and their consultants. The official publication of the roadmap and meta-study are facing delays and should become available in 2022.

In September 2021, under the umbrella of the Informal Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) Gathering, AREA and 6 other organisations co-signed the statement under the title [‘Recognise indoor air pollution as a health risk – industry associations issue urgent COVID-19 statement to EU institutions.’](#) It addressed the importance of the proper use of air quality systems in reducing the transmission of COVID-19 in office spaces. We proposed to add specific standards and policies to a range of relevant directives and frameworks such as the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), the Occupational Safety and Health Strategic Framework, and public procurement practices.

On the basis of the COVID-19 statement and our [‘Healthy Buildings for All’](#) manifesto, shared on 29 October

together with 11 other associations, we issued another [joint statement](#) on indoor environmental quality targeting EU Commissioners. We called on the policy makers to use the opportunity of the Renovation Wave Initiative and the EPBD revision to address in parallel not only the issue of energy efficiency, but also of IEQ through specific measures.

Related to this, the Sustainable Innovation Working Group closely monitored the development of the EPBD revision. We issued a [position paper](#) on the inception impact assessment, participated in the Commission’s stakeholder workshops and responded to the Commission’s public consultation questionnaire. The official revision proposal was adopted on 15 December, to which we quickly reacted with a [welcoming statement](#), expressing our support for the Commission’s intention to apply minimum energy performance standards. We also backed the push for more frequent and encompassing inspections of heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems, combined with renovation passports and energy performance certificates issued by qualified and accredited experts. In addition, we strongly encouraged the proposed measures aiming to solve the major issues of investment in skills and the shortages of qualified staff.

Furthermore, AREA closely monitored the development of the ‘Fit for 55’ legislative package, and in particular the revisions of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED II) and the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED). The Sustainable Innovation and Human Capital Working Groups analysed both files and issued a position paper on the RED II, asserting the role of RACHP system experts. We expressed support for the Commission’s harmonised initiatives to require contractors to obtain the adequate skills and knowledge and increase the number of certified installers of renewable H&C systems. We also called for measures that oblige Member States to require that all subsidised H&C systems are installed by contractors certified to use refrigerants with the certification easily recognised by different Member States.

## Human Capital

In 2021, apart from collaborating with the Sustainable Innovation Working Group on the ‘Fit for 55’ legislative package, the Human Capital Working Group continued work on the revision of the NACE code system. AREA’s request to “repatriate” all RACHP services under one NACE category was blocked by a small majority of Member States who were in favour of the status quo, keeping the current class 43.22 “Plumbing, heat and air-conditioning installation”. This leaves RACHP services split over this and the NACE 33 category “Repair and installation of machinery”.

Back in 2020, the Human Capital Working Group made a proposal for the revision of the ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) Community Forum Database to include a new occupation called “Refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump technician”. In 2021, the European Commission accepted our proposal and included it in the [new version of ESCO](#), which was published in January 2022.

When it comes to projects, the Human Capital Working Group continued to monitor the Refrigerant Driving License (RDL), with implementation slowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, we continued our work on the UNEP project on Universal Training Kit for

Alternative Refrigerants (U-TKitAR), for which AREA developed a training manual and a full kit, tailored for developing countries.

## Legislation and Standards

The Working Group monitors relevant standardisation developments:

- EN378, parts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 is scheduled to be finalised in 2024 at the earliest
- EN13313 is to be turned into an international standard ISO 22712 on refrigerating systems and heat pumps – competence of personnel
- Commission’s request on the development of a European standard on the use of flammable refrigerants
- IEC 60335-2-40: development of additional requirements for A2L, A2 and A3 refrigerants and maintenance
- ISO 14903 Refrigerating systems and heat pumps — Qualification of tightness of components and joints

The WG also reports on relevant national developments, such as guides or national initiatives.

# CHILLVENTA

International Exhibition  
Refrigeration | AC & Ventilation | Heat Pumps

CONNECTING  
EXPERTS.



NOTE THE  
DATE

Nuremberg  
11 – 13.10.2022

NÜRNBERG / MESSE

# Events

## AREA celebrates International Women's Day 2021

The 2021 International Women's Day was a special opportunity to shine the spotlight on women working in our industry, highlighting their unique experiences and expertise, and what led them on this career path.

We shared the inspiring stories of five women, active in AREA, coming from a variety of backgrounds and expertise, supporting and playing a key role in shaping our industry:

[Giulia Gaudino](#), Marketing and Project Manager at Gaudino SRL

[Blanca Gómez García-Verdugo](#), Executive Manager of the Spanish Confederation of Contractors, CNI



[Riina Lönblad](#), Project Manager at Combi Cool

[Laura Pulkki](#), Technical Support at Danfoss

[Susana Rodríguez](#), President of Asofrío

You can find the full article [HERE](#) on our website.

## World Refrigeration Day 2021

Once again, AREA was proud to be a part of the World Refrigeration Air-Conditioning, and Heat-Pump Day, highlighting how essential our sector is all over the globe.

Our members and partners answered the call and numerous events and campaigns took place on this key day for our industry. Click [HERE](#) for a sneak peak of what took place and get inspired for World Refrigeration Day 2022!





## AREA President at UN-FAO Food Systems Summit 2021

On 20 September 2021, AREA's President, Marco Buoni, took part in the UN-FAO Food Systems Summit. The Italian Ministry for Ecological Transition, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Ozone Secretariat hosted an event on the critical role of sustainable cold chains.

In his speech titled "Progress at industry level, focusing on servicing sector trainings – the experience in the European Union" he testified to the key role of HVAC/R Sector in ensuring that food distribution always happens in the safest, most efficient and sustainable way possible. More information [HERE](#).

## AREA at the 11th edition of the ATMOSphere Europe Summit

Taking part once again, AREA was an outreach partner of ATMOSphere (formerly Shecco) for their 11th edition of the ATMOSphere Europe Summit on 28-29 September 2021.

The first global natural refrigerant trade show gathered key industry experts, policy makers, end users and contractors to explore the very latest developments in natural refrigerant-based solutions. Among numerous topics, discussions ranged from the F-Gas Regulation review, through the standards impacting natural refrigerant



adoption in Europe, to the impact of hydrofluoroolefins (HFOs) on health, safety and the environment.

[Visit our website](#) for the full report and access to the event presentations.

## AREA General Assembly meetings

For the second consecutive year, AREA held both its 2021 general assembly meetings online.

The first meeting took place on 25 June. Among the main decisions taken, the 2020 financial results were adopted. Our international partners also joined the call and we welcomed Madi Sakandé, President of U-3ARC, who said a few words about the African association and Mathieu Balay, member of TRA's International Relations Committee, who presented the Thai association TRA.

The Autumn meeting took place on 22 October 2022. A key point regarding the Secretary General position was discussed and AREA's President, Marco Buoni, explained that Claire Grossmann, AREA's Advisor, will gradually become more involved in AREA's management from early 2022 and formally take over as Secretary General at the spring 2022 meeting. Following this, Olivier Janin will continue to be involved only to lead the first few months of advocacy work on the proposed F-Gas Regulation, which is due to be published in spring. Members present at the meeting thanked Olivier for his contribution, welcomed Claire, and validated the proposed process.

## Social Media Presence



**LinkedIn group**

**800 followers**

**LinkedIn page**

**700 followers**

**900 visitors per year**



**Twitter**

**1200+ followers**

**2000 impression per month**



**Facebook**

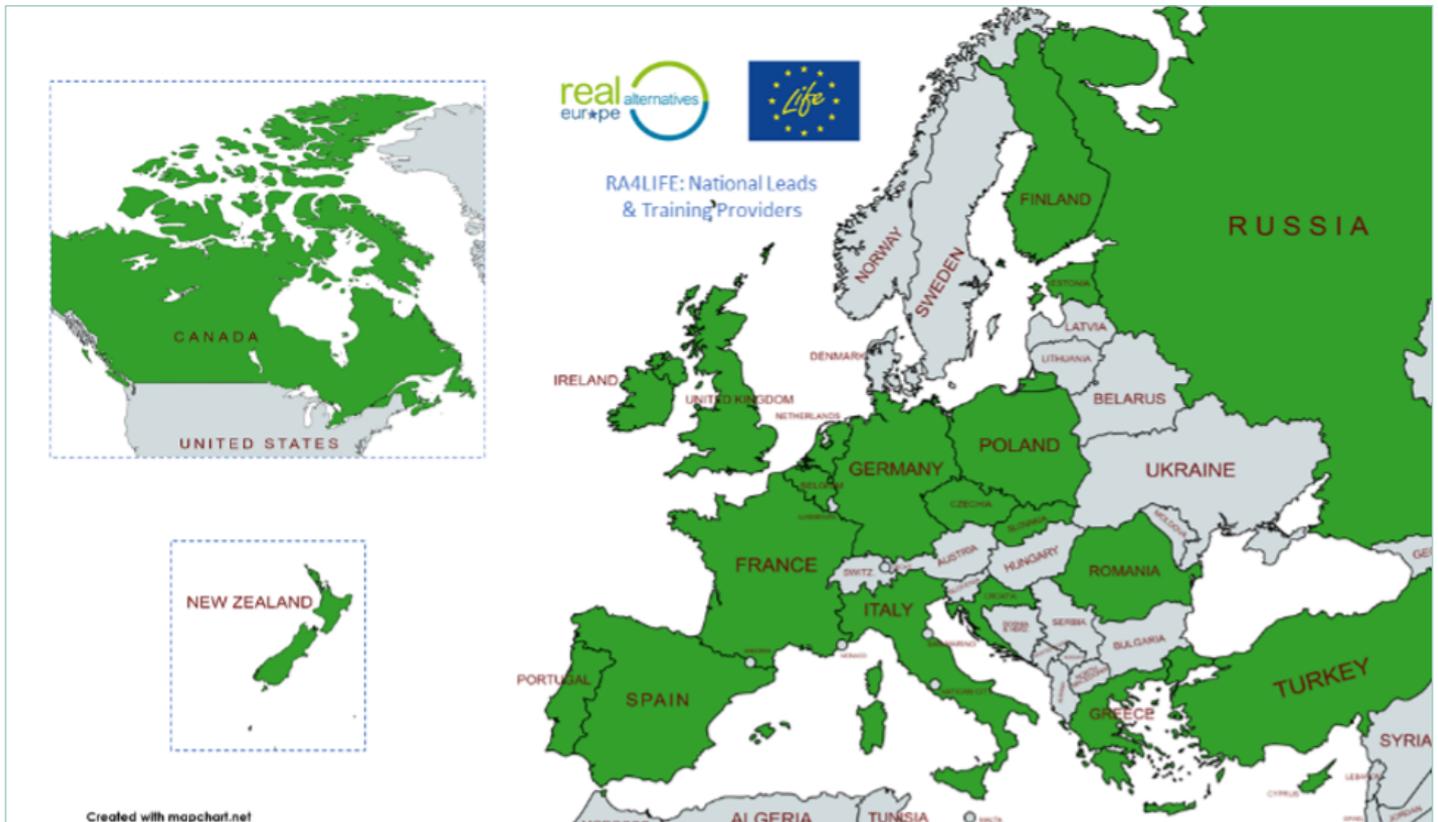
**300 followers**

## Partnership Agreement

**CHILLVENTA**

[www.chillventa.de](http://www.chillventa.de)

# Projects



## REAL Alternatives 4 LIFE

The REAL Alternatives Consortium met virtually twice. The meeting on 24 March 2021, was of particular importance to update the programme's presence and uptake in its [21 Countries](#) of adoption, with 17 languages.

With the recent adding of Canada and Ireland among the countries that officially deliver REAL Alternatives trainings and assessments, the Consortium keeps growing bigger and stronger. This was highlighted through the big attendance at the half-yearly meeting, where all associations taking part in the programme shared their individual progress and updates on national situations.

REAL Alternatives features top quality, and free, blended learning and certification opportunities for alternative and natural refrigerants, both via e-learning and via [in-classroom trainings](#). The programme has now reached

nearly 2,000 certificates issued to technicians, and more than 7,000 users on the e-learning platform. Please visit the programme's website [HERE](#) for more information.

2022 already began as a very exciting year, full of interesting events and big steps for our sector. On 2 March, more than 370 participants joined the live Real Alternatives' webinar for 3 hours of presentations with live training lessons on flammables and carbon dioxide, with simultaneous translation in 6 languages and 13 speakers. This demonstrates the high level of interest that revolves around the topic of alternative refrigerants and proper training, which is now also included in the proposal of the F-gas Regulation (Article 10).

# Publications



## AREA statement on the EPBD revision

[See here](#)



## Joint statement on the EPBD revision

[See here](#)



## Joint statement on Indoor Air Pollution

[See here](#)



## AREA's views on the use of R-290 in new single split AC

[See here](#)

All publications can be downloaded at:

<https://area-eur.be/publications>

# Members

## BELGIUM



[www.frixis.be](http://www.frixis.be)

## CROATIA



[www.hurkt.hr](http://www.hurkt.hr)

## CZECH REPUBLIC



[www.chlazenici.cz](http://www.chlazenici.cz)

## DENMARK



[www.koeleteknik.dk](http://www.koeleteknik.dk)

## ESTONIA



[www.kylmaliit.ee](http://www.kylmaliit.ee)

## FINLAND



[www.skll.fi](http://www.skll.fi)

## FRANCE



[www.snefccca.com](http://www.snefccca.com)

## GERMANY



[www.biv-kaelte.de](http://www.biv-kaelte.de)

## GERMANY



[www.vdkf.de](http://www.vdkf.de)

## GREECE



[www.hufgas.gr](http://www.hufgas.gr)

## IRELAND



[www.instituteofrefrigerationireland.ie](http://www.instituteofrefrigerationireland.ie)

## ITALY



[www.associazioneatf.org](http://www.associazioneatf.org)

## NETHERLANDS



[www.nvkl.nl](http://www.nvkl.nl)

## NORWAY



[www.vke.no](http://www.vke.no)

## POLAND



[www.kfch.pl](http://www.kfch.pl)

## PORTUGAL



[www.apirac.pt](http://www.apirac.pt)

## SLOVAKIA



[www.szchkt.org](http://www.szchkt.org)

## SPAIN



[www.aefyt.es](http://www.aefyt.es)

## SPAIN



[www.cni-instaladores.com](http://www.cni-instaladores.com)

## SWEDEN



[www.skvp.se](http://www.skvp.se)

## TURKEY



[www.sosiad.org.tr](http://www.sosiad.org.tr)

## UNITED KINGDOM



[www.thebesa.com](http://www.thebesa.com)

## UNITED KINGDOM



[www.feta.co.uk](http://www.feta.co.uk)

## International Partners

## THAILAND



[www.tra.or.th](http://www.tra.or.th)

## INDIA



[www.ishrae.in](http://www.ishrae.in)

## AFRICA



[www.u-3arc.org](http://www.u-3arc.org)

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