



Annual Report 2023



The European Voice of Refrigeration,
Air Conditioning and Heat Pump Contractors

About AREA

AREA is the European association of refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump contractors. Contractors are the essential link between end users and manufacturers. They design, install and maintain refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump equipment using every available solution with complete neutrality towards equipment and refrigerants, in the sole aim of ensuring the highest level of reliability, energy efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

AREA in a nutshell

24 national associations

22 countries

13,000 companies

110,000 people

€23bn turnover



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CHILLVENTa

International Exhibition
Refrigeration | AC & Ventilation | Heat Pumps

We are part of it!

Nuremberg

8 – 10.10.2024



**CONNECTING
EXPERTS.**

Foreword by the President



Looking at 2023, I am very pleased and proud of what we achieved this year, thanks to great cooperation within AREA. Our activities focused significantly on the revision of the F-gas Regulation, with our Working Group Refrigerants in the spotlight doing an excellent job by influencing the second revision of the Regulation. I would also like to mention our successful advocacy activity regarding Article 10. We were very pleased to see the proposal to extend the current F-gas training and certification scheme to alternative refrigerants, like flammables, Carbon Dioxide and Ammonia, for which AREA has been advocating for, included in the final text.

By repeatedly emphasising that safety is a key priority for a successful refrigerant transition in the coming decade, the EU Institutions finally embraced our proposal and included it in the final version of the Regulation. Next to the Working Group Refrigerants, I thank all of our members for their good work in their own countries, speaking to their Council delegates and Members of the European Parliament.

Immediately after the adoption of the final text, we have begun working on the interpretation of the text and implementing acts which will be published in 2024. This means busy months ahead of us as AREA's work in 2024 will still very much focus on the F-gas Regulation.

In 2023 we also welcomed a new member to the AREA family, the Latvian Association of Refrigeration Engineers. AREA is glad to count 24 member associations from 22 countries, including 19 out of the 27 EU Member States.

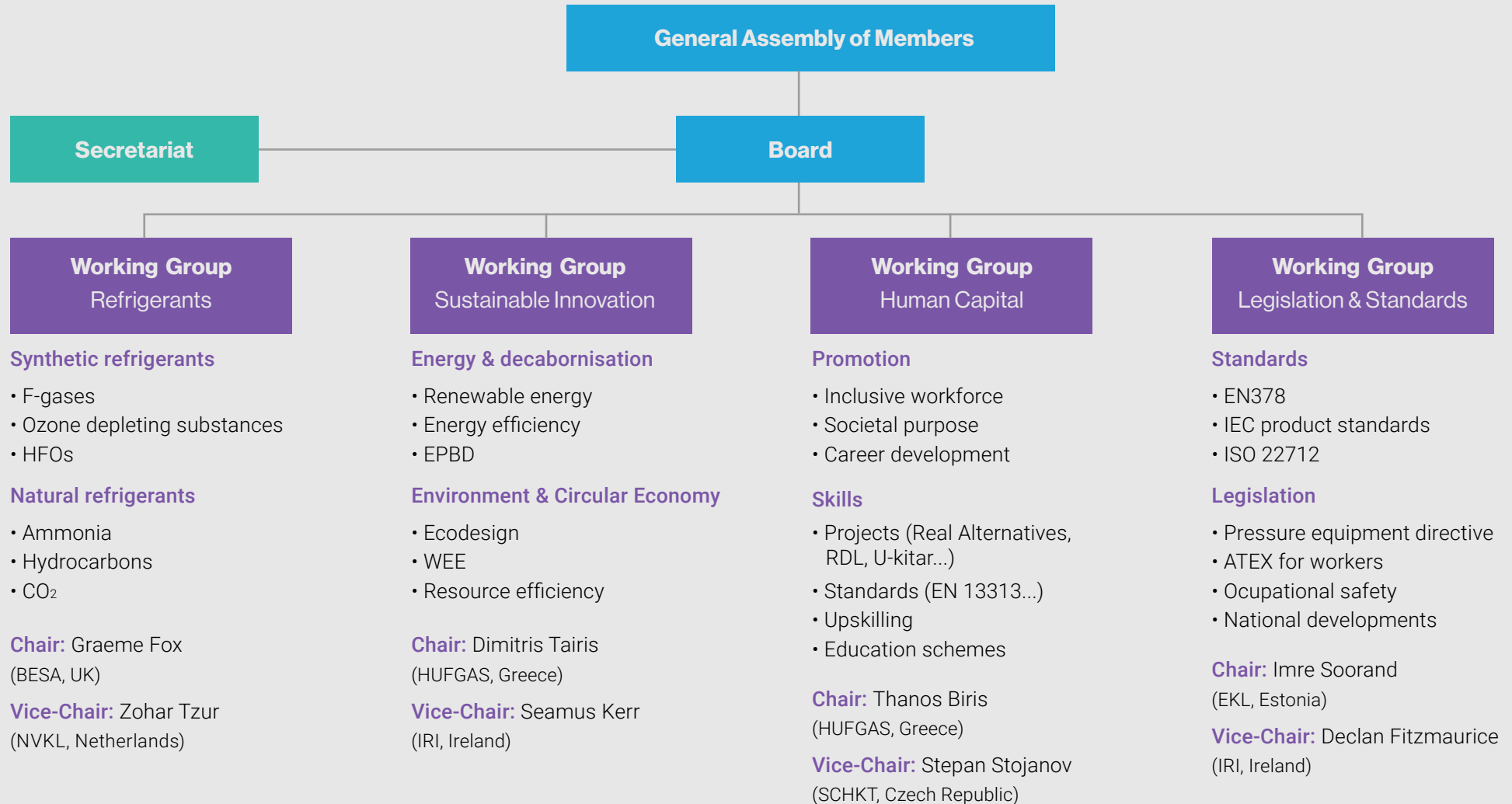
In our continuous efforts to promote our industry and attract new talents, we launched, together with World Refrigeration Day (WRD), a video competition on best practices for all EU women in cooling. We had a very successful first edition and already announced that the competition will be back in 2024!

I look forward to continuing the great cooperation among our members and extending our profile and recognition to make the voice of contractors heard. From that point of view, I am convinced that the 2024 edition of Chillventa, where AREA will have a booth and organise an event, will be as successful as in 2022.



Organisation

Working Bodies



Organisation

Board of Directors



Grzegorz Michalski

KFCh, Poland
Vice-President



Thanos Biris

HUFGAS, Greece
Board member



Coen van de Sande

NVKL, Netherlands
President



Marco Buoni

ATF, Italy
Past President with
a special mandate
“International Affairs”



Espen Rønning

VKE, Norway
Board member



Seamus Kerr

IRI, Ireland
Treasurer



Stepan Stojanov

SCHKT, Czechia
Board member

Internal Affairs

2023 meetings



AREA's Spring meetings took place on 26 May 2023 in Tallinn, Estonia. The event was kindly organised by AREA's Estonian member [EKL](#).

Among the main decisions taken, the 2022 financial results were adopted; AREA welcomed Mrs. Saranina and Mr. Kuznecovs who presented the Association of Refrigeration Equipment Engineers of Latvia (LSIA)

and Marco Buoni unveiled the name of the winner of the EU Women in Cooling Video Competition which was officially announced on 8 June at the UNEP-IIR-AREA-CSG 20th European Conference.



The AREA's Autumn meetings took place on 26 and 27 October 2023 in Brussels. Among the main decisions taken, the 2024 budget was adopted and the official launch of the second edition of the [Women in cooling video competition](#) which will take place in 2024 was announced.

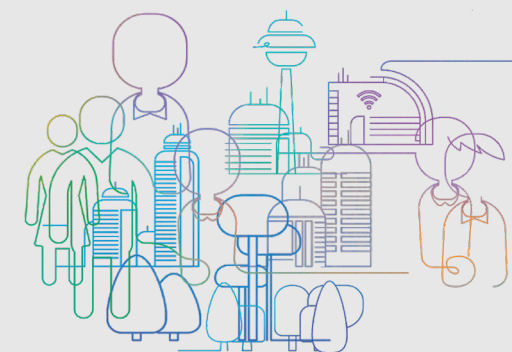
The Latvian Association of Refrigeration Equipment Engineers joins AREA

At the occasion of the Autumn General Assembly meeting, members unanimously approved LSIA's membership application as of 1 January 2024.

Founded in 1998, [LSIA](#) is a non-profit association and a certification organisation based in Riga which brings together refrigeration equipment engineers, technicians, trainers and companies in the sector.



Inna Saranina, Director of the Latvian association, said: **"We are looking forward to becoming a member of the AREA community. AREA offers precious resources with access to exceptional professional experience, practical and legislative knowledge related to the sector and great networking opportunities."**



Working Groups

Refrigerants

In 2023, the work of the Refrigerants Working Group was dominated by the legislative procedure on the revision of the F-gas Regulation. AREA was very active throughout the year to promote our position towards the EU Institutions through both individual actions and joint activities with stakeholders' associations.

In the context of the votes in the European Parliament, we publicly reacted to both the [adoption of the report](#) in the Committee for Environment and to the [final vote in plenary](#). We also published several joint statements, [ahead of the vote in Committee and in plenary](#), and on the [EU Council mandate](#).

Following the agreement between the EU Council and the European Parliament on a final text, the Group has immediately started working on the interpretation of the new Regulation and on the implementing act mandated by Article 10 on certification and training.

In addition, the group closely monitored the revision of the Ozone Depleting Substances Regulation, running in parallel of the F-gas Regulation review.

Finally, the publication of the PFAS restriction proposal was the object of a deep discussion considering its potential huge impact on refrigerants.

Sustainable Innovation

In 2023, the Sustainable Innovation Working Group took the lead on the advocacy action on the Heat Pump Action Plan to accelerate the rollout across the EU. AREA had a meeting with the responsible policy officers at the Directorate-General for Energy of the European Commission in June to discuss our activities, views, and suggestions to overcome the bottlenecks in the area of the necessary skills, training and qualifications for the safe, efficient and quick rollout of heat pumps. AREA also responded to the public consultation on the draft initiative in August. In particular, the second pillar of the Commission's Communication concerning the set-up of heat pump skills partnerships is a key priority for AREA.

The working group closely monitored the relevant reforms under the Fit for 55 legislative Package. Amongst these, it followed the negotiations on the proposed revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), especially regarding the provisions on boilers, inspections, and energy efficiency targets. Two pieces of flagship legislation were published in the Official Journal of the EU in the last quarter of the year, marking the end of their legislative process: the Directive recast on promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (Renewable Energy Directive) and the Energy Efficiency Directive.

The Working Group also followed the developments of key legislations in the framework of Ecodesign & Energy Labelling regulations, concerning refrigeration, industrial fans, and central heating products.



Human Capital

A key priority for the group was the proposal for a framework of measures for strengthening Europe's net-zero technology products manufacturing ecosystem (Net-Zero Industry Act). In late March, AREA published its [reaction](#) to the Commission's proposal, highlighting the necessity for appropriate measures to ensure the training and safety of professionals as well as to attract the skilled workforce.

2023 was the European Year of Skills, which brought several positive initiatives for the group. AREA welcomed the Commission's two Communications on maximising the potential of talent mobility as part of the European Year of Skills and the Recommendation on "the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals" and followed the progress on the proposal for establishing a EU Talent Pool.

The group additionally followed legislative files of mutual interest with the Sustainable Innovation Working Group, such as the EPBD.

Finally, members of the working group continued to promote the dissemination of the flagship projects REAL Alternative 4 LIFE, UNEP-AREA Training Manual, Refrigerant Driving License (RDL), and Women in Cooling.

Legislation and Standards

In 2023, the Legislation & Standards Working Group focused on the revision of the European standard EN 378 "Refrigerating systems and heat pumps" under the supervision of the Technical Committee Working Group 182/WG06 of the European Committee for Standardisation. In February, AREA issued a statement on the conclusions the technical committee on the issue of dangerous occurrences concerning RACHP-units with flammable refrigerants and the requirement of ATEX marked components in ventilated enclosure. AREA members remain involved in the definition of the safety measures to be taken when installing heat pumps and other equipment with flammable refrigerants.

In addition to this, the working group followed the evolvments on ISO 22712 "Refrigerating systems and heat pumps – Competence of personnel" and IEC product standards 60335-2-40:2022 "Household and similar electrical appliances - Safety - Part 2-40: Particular requirements for electrical heat pumps, air-conditioners and dehumidifiers."



News & Events

AREA's President spoke at the REHVA event



On 7 February, AREA's President, Coen Van de Sande, took to the stage for an event organised by REHVA alongside representatives from the European Commission, European Economic and Social Committee, European Parliament and Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences. Discussions took a deep dive into heat pumps and the impact that the F-gas Regulation will have on the industry. Coen highlighted our commitment to the transition to climate-friendly alternatives to f-gases, challenges faced by contractors with a rapid deployment of heat pumps based on natural refrigerants, and set out conditions for a successful transition:

- The timing needs to be aligned with market and technological realities.

- Alternative refrigerants should be properly regulated. In particular, the current F-gas training and certification scheme should be extended to alternative refrigerants. However, ensuring the widespread of training and certifications for those refrigerants across Europe will require time.

AREA welcomed the launch of the European Year of Skills 2023


We gladly welcomed the launch of the #EuropeanYearOfSkills! To achieve decarbonisation goals and the deployment of clean, low carbon heating and cooling technologies, a skilled workforce is essential. [Read our full statement.](#)



“
Our sector welcomes big challenges such as the refrigerant transition, the energy transition and digitalisation. However, to meet these challenges and the evolving landscape, we need to attract new talent. The European Year of Skills presents an exciting opportunity to help us show how attractive our sector is for newcomers and people from other sectors who are looking for meaningful jobs in a dynamic environment.
”

Women in Cooling video competition

On 26 May, the AREA General Assembly in Estonia nominated the winner of the first edition of our “AREA-WRD women in cooling, video competition.”



EU WOMEN IN COOLING VIDEO COMPETITION

Participants shown in the collage include: Miren Josune Zabala (Spain), Chloe Madison (Spain), Ruth Gill (Italy), Lillian Pettersen (Norway), Amaiur Berra, Eider Berridi, Anabel Garcia (Spain), Iaria Guzzetti (Italy), Eylül Adıgüzel (Turkey), Anna Choma (Poland), Zdenka Bukovinová (Czechia), Valentine (France), Rabia Aslan (Turkey), and Léana Khaled Payan (France).

The evaluation committee was composed of:

- our Board of Directors
- our members of our Task Force Skills and Working Group Human Capital
- our representatives in INWIC
- the WRD secretariat

Evaluation criteria were focused on:

- The use of the necessary devices and tools
- The use of security means
- The correct explanation of the task to be performed

The name of the winner was released on 8 June during the conference #20EUconfRAC: Léana Khaled Payan, young French technician of Axima Refrigeration, who was evaluated as the best among the 12 participants. Congratulations to her!

All 12 participating videos can be found on [Youtube](#).

2023 World Refrigeration Day

On Monday 26 June, AREA and its members celebrated World Refrigeration Day 2023.

Titled “Next Generation Cooling: The Future is in our hands”, the WRD 23 campaign focused on the future of cooling technology, the industry, the people working within it, and those that benefit from cooling. Building upon last year’s theme ‘Cooling Matters’, this year’s campaign looked forward with the aim of raising

awareness of how the modern cooling industry is adapting and evolving to meet the challenges and opportunities the sector faces providing the increasing demand for low carbon cooling and heating solutions in a warming climate.

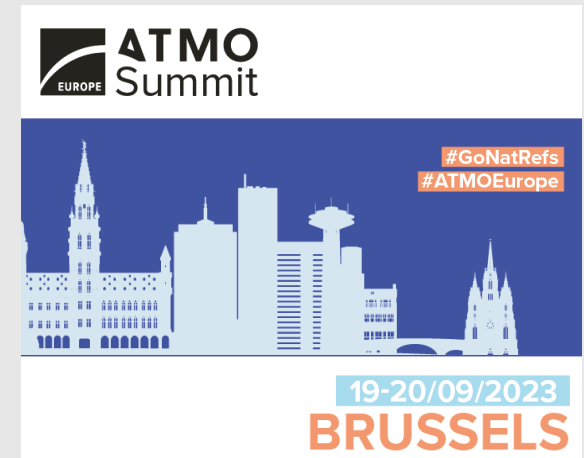


More information on the activities hosted by our members at this occasion can be found on [AREA website](#).

ATMOsphere Europe Summit

On 20 September, AREA’s President, Coen Van de Sande, participated in the Training panel of the annual [ATMOsphere Europe Summit](#) in Brussels. Discussions took a deep dive into training and certification on

alternative refrigerants. Coen highlighted the challenges faced by contractors with a rapid deployment of heat pumps based on alternative refrigerants. Ensuring the widespread of training and certifications for those refrigerants across Europe will require time.



Harald Erös, Founding Member and Chairman, and Andreas Klaudus, Deputy Chairman of our member ÖGKT also participated in the panel to present their training activities related to alternative refrigerants.

Communication

Interview with AREA President

AREA President **Coen van de Sande** spoke at the 20th edition of the CSG EUROPEAN CONFERENCES. The [interview](#) touched on several key points, including AREA's position on the new F-gas Regulation.



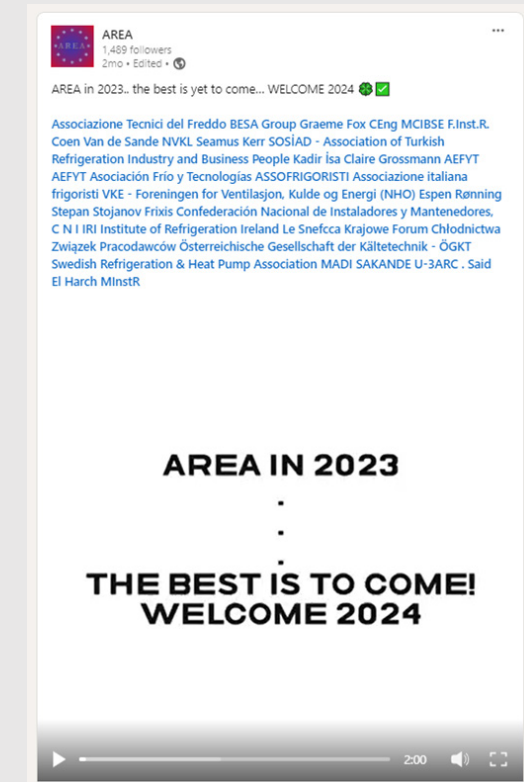
AREA celebrates IWD2023

International Women's Day is a special opportunity to shine the spotlight on women taking an active role in the RACHP industry. In 2023, AREA interviewed Silvia Romanò, an active member of AREA and Chief International Affairs at Centro Studi Galileo and ATF. She highlighted what led her to the HVACR sector, and what could be done to encourage more women to see the many opportunities here!



A video of AREA's 2023 activities

You can watch the video [here](#).



Social media presence



International Affairs

INWIC new website

11 May 2023 marked the launch of the International Network for Women in Cooling (INWIC) [website](https://www.inwic.org).



The website will act as a hub for the organisation and its members with the primary purpose of providing a networking platform for women working in cooling, which broadly covers the heat pumps, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration (HVACR).

AREA interviewed ASHRAE President

During the last ASHRAE Winter meeting and AHR Expo, which took place on 6-8 February 2023 in Atlanta, Georgia, [ASHRAE](#) President [Farooq Mehboob](#) had a long meeting with Marco Buoni, Former President of AREA, with a mandate in International Affairs.



View the full interview [here](#).

AREA at the UNEP events Jordan

In September 2023, AREA was invited by UNEP to participate in two events in Amman, Jordan.

On the agenda: the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer will help protect the climate by phasing down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are commonly used as refrigerants but have a high global warming potential.

Within the framework of this event, Marco Buoni made two presentations on behalf of AREA:

“Available tools capacity building for RAC technicians” (Energy efficiency and saving in maintenance and prompt repair of refrigerant leakages by a certified service technician)

“Good refrigerants management strategy under the Montreal Protocol – Key elements of good refrigerants managements”

New Romanian Association of F-gas companies

Marco Buoni participated in the launch gala of the new Romanian association of F-gas companies. He presented the training and certification schemes for future refrigerants.

The ‘Association of F-gas Companies Romania’, established in November 2023, aims to identify and implement environmentally sustainable solutions in this segment. The association will contribute to a European legislative framework that supports innovation, sustainability, and a cleaner future for all.



Marco Buoni also welcomed the creation of the new association: **“We need such initiatives in Romania because we need technicians, companies and manufacturers who work well and who follow the rules precisely because our sector is growing. Indeed, rules are made in Brussels. But even if we are in Italy, Romania, or wherever we are, we need to unite and discuss together so that the European Commission can make the right decisions.”**

AREA at the conference on “Kigali Amendment”

On 10 November, Marco Buoni moderated the session on “Training and Certification Schemes” at the National Conference Kigali Amendment- Industry advocates for climate protection in Albania. He also presented on behalf of AREA “The European scenario” during this session.

AREA at KGH exhibition and Congress

On 6 and 8 December, Marco Buoni represented AREA at the Refrigeration exhibition and conference KGH in Belgrade to present the European training and certification scheme to handle new alternative refrigerants.



KGH is a key event devoted to the most innovative refrigeration, heating, and air-conditioning technologies. Participants from Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Romania, Bosnia, Greece, and Turkey also participated.

AREA at COP28 in Dubai

This edition featured an exciting addition: for the first time, alongside the printed and [digital versions](#) of the magazine, a dedicated and interactive [website](#) was introduced, available for policymakers and professionals in the HVAC/R industry.

The International Special Issue (ISI) magazine is distributed by the United Nations and the International Institute of Refrigeration during global summits and meetings, to Heads of State from the 180 signatory countries of the Montreal Protocol, as well as to major industry fairs and meetings attended by AREA.



Didier Coulomb, Director General of the International Institute of Refrigeration, and Sonja Wagner, UNEP Programme Management Officer

The Montreal Protocol pavilion at COP28 offered a platform for the Montreal Protocol and the cooling community to enhance their visibility and promote climate action.



Projects

Refrigerant Driving Licence

while AREA follows the practical and hands-on examination. Key international industry associations support it, including ASHRAE, ABRAVA, ACAIRE, EPEE, HRAI, JRAIA, KRAIA, ARAP and U-3ARC.

of the HCFC phase-out, and a smooth start of the HFC phase-down in Article 5 countries in line with the Kigali Amendment. An important component of the RDL is that it includes assessment of technician knowledge and skills in the handling A2L and A3 refrigerants now entering the market as lower GWP alternatives to traditional refrigerants. The side event at the MOP has described the benefits of the RDL, the online and hands-on testing components, and how National Ozone Units can implement the RDL in their countries.

Graeme Fox, Director of Technical at BESA Group and IOR President, commented on the launch of the programme: **“Nearly 90 people turning up for a lunchtime side session during the Montreal Protocol open ended working group meeting is unusual, but it’s really encouraging to see this Refrigerant Driving Licence programme being launched with some great feedback from Grenada and the Maldives, who were our certification pilot Nations - thank you! The many years of developing the programme has resulted in a successful launch and now it’s over to the National Ozone Units to step forward and ensure that their RACHP technicians are ready for the next generation of refrigerants in use. What an absolute pleasure and privilege it has been to see this through from conception in May 2014 to delivery in July 2023. We would like to thank AREA for their support throughout the process - particularly Marco Buoni whose enthusiasm got us over many hurdles over the last 9 years!”**



Centro Studi Galileo took part to the latest RDL sessions in June, following the local assessors in Granada and Maldives

Responding to the needs of Developing Countries - mentioned as Article 5 countries in this article as defined by the protocol of Montreal - for a safe and environmentally responsible transition to next generation refrigerants, the Refrigerant Driving License (RDL) is a comprehensive refrigerant management qualification program jointly developed by UNEP OzonAction and AHRI for the theoretical assessment,

The RDL sets minimum competencies and skills for the Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning (RAC) servicing sector, creating an industry and association-endorsed international qualification programme that is available to industry and governments alike. The RDL is an important tool for benchmarking of essential competencies and skills required for the proper and safe handling of refrigerants, supporting the completion

Members

Austria



Belgium



Croatia



Czech Republic



Denmark



Estonia



Finland



France



Germany



Greece



Ireland



Italy



Italy



Latvia



Netherlands



Norway



Poland



Portugal



Slovakia



Spain



Spain



Sweden



Turkey



United Kingdom



International Partners

Thailand



India



Africa



Fair Partners



Contact



Claire
Grossmann

Secretary General



Dimitar
Kolichev

Policy Advisor
Until December 2023



Christelle
Vandermeuter

Secretariat



Silvia
Alessi

Policy Advisor

Air Conditioning and Refrigeration
European Association - AREA aisbl

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