

Euralarm proposes EU Directive on Fire safety and security for tourism accommodations.

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In 2013, over 560 million international travelers arrived in Europe. This makes Europe the number one tourism destination in the world. All these consumers expect to have the highest level of safety regardless of their choice of accommodation or destination within the EU. However, this cannot be guaranteed at the moment because no specific horizontal legislation exists at EU level and no standard approach with regard to safety of tourism accommodation services is in place at national level. Euralarm believes that the European tourism sector needs to adopt world-class safety standards which have to be enforced and regulated at European level.

Dominique Taudin, Euralarm Vice-President and Chairman Fire Section: “Currently, national fire safety measures are inconsistent across Europe and lack harmonization. For instance, some countries require installation of fire detectors inside bedrooms and corridors while others only require fire detectors in hotel corridors. The frequency of fire inspections carried out by local fire authorities also vary from one country to another and even among cities in the same country”. Euralarm believes that decisive actions at European level are necessary to ensure that safety in tourism accommodations is regulated more consistently, more effectively and properly enforced.

Current market surveillance is insufficient. This is proven by the high number of fires in tourism accommodations due to breaches in fire protection. The speed and amount of damage in a fire condition have increased, which can be related to modern materials used for furniture. In addition, safe exit times are also lower than 20 years ago, because fire spreads faster. Taudin continues: “To improve fire safety, Euralarm believes that an European Commission Directive should require Member States to implement national legislation on fire safety and security in hotels fulfilling minimum requirements established at EU level.”

Emphasis for this directive should be on the following three topics:

- Fire protection product/system compliance to EN-standards demonstrated by third-party with EU wide approval.
- Qualified companies required for planning/design, installation, commissioning and maintenance complying with relevant European standards.
- Mandatory site inspections by independent third-parties with a fixed periodicity, depending on the type, size and height of facilities.

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Not only the safety measures are inconsistent across Member states, but also the definitions of accommodation type, room height, size and so on differ. This makes the synchronization of standards extremely difficult and hard to implement. Taudin states: "Euralarm believes the definitions should be harmonized across the EU for safety regulation purpose. At the moment, visitor flats and bungalows, cottages, cabins without housekeeping services and Bed and Breakfasts fall under private housing. They should be categorized under "tourism accommodation" and have tailored fire safety requirements'. This renewed categorization improves and ensures safety for all accommodation types.

Besides fire safety, Euralarm strongly supports EU-wide regulations addressing CO-related risks. Taudin: "Unlike fire, Carbon Monoxide is a deadly poison at very low concentrations. Since it is invisible and odorless it cannot be detected by guests. There have been tragic incidents of CO leakage, especially in vacation rented facilities with fossil fuel appliances that could be avoided with a minimum level detection. The use in residential living spaces has proven to save a considerable number of lives."

Additional to the basic safety regulations, specific attention is required for elderly, children and the physically impaired. It is expected that in 2020 20% of the population will be aged over 65. This population group has high purchasing power and leisure time and therefore represents a significant market potential. "Some EU Member States have already addressed accessibility requirements in their national regulations. Closer cooperation between Member States will help to share best practices," according to Taudin. Intelligent evacuation systems using both visual and voice alarm could save lives of the most vulnerable people. The 30 million EU citizens who are visually impaired or even blind won't be able to evacuate themselves when there are only visual alarms installed. There are even more adults between the age of 18 to 80 with a hearing loss greater than 25 dB, namely 70 million people across the EU Member States. They require specific visual alarms to keep them from being harmed.

To assess the current level of safety of tourism accommodations across Europe, sufficient and harmonized measurement tools and statistics are required. This factual information is lacking and in the countries where data exists, the sources are not harmonized and cannot be aggregated. Taudin states: "Euralarm supports the establishment of European harmonized fire statistics. Accurate fire data and reporting by national authorities are essential to understand the current level of fire risk in tourism accommodations." There is a need to standardize statistical methods. He continues: "One possible approach would be to collect the data from the fire and rescue services, if an EU central data collection was implemented." Transparency is needed to get reliable data to implement future measurements and instruments. EU and international travelers can legitimately expect such transparency.

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Euralarm supports the introduction of EU-wide standards where relevant and is ready to provide expertise and resources to ad-hoc CEN and CENELEC Technical Committees. Taudin: "We believe that the development of European standards and guidance document by the European Standards Bodies is the only realistic route to achieve a consensus on safety measures to be implemented in all European tourism accommodation facilities." The scale effect of a European approach instead of a national approach could moreover minimize the costs for the European tourism industry. Euralarm believes that the issue of enforcement cannot be treated separately from the regulation of standards. "We call for more binding EU-wide regulations requiring adequate enforcement measures and market surveillance processes to be implemented by Member States," says Taudin.

Euralarm's position is clearly in favor of an EU-wide binding instrument. Not adopting strong measures would constitute a missed opportunity to put an end to what in many cases are preventable deaths and injuries.

About Euralarm

Euralarm represents the electronic fire and security industry, providing leadership and expertise for industry, market, policy makers and standards bodies. Our members make society safer and secure through systems and services for fire detection, intrusion detection, access control, video monitoring, alarm transmission and alarm receiving centres. Founded in 1970, Euralarm represents over 5000 companies with an estimated cumulated revenue of 18 bn Euros. Euralarm members are national associations and individual companies from more than 17 European countries.

More information

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