

pinfa Advisory Board – Seventh Meeting

Wednesday 27 May 2020

10:00 – 12:00 CET

VIRTUAL

The content of this report is a capture of the inputs from individual participants. The views included are therefore those of single participants and not the consensus of the group as a whole.

This report

1. Participants
2. Purpose of the meeting
3. The 7th pinfa advisory board meeting
4. Ideas to move forward
5. Annexe

1. Participants

External representatives

Jacob De Boer, *Head of Department Environment and Health, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*

Quentin De Hults, *Senior Manager Construction Advocacy and Sustainability, BASF and Executive Chair of the Modern Building Alliance*

Henrik Edin, *Policy Advisor, ChemSec*

Hervé Feuchter, *Fire Safety Engineer, CREPIM*

Lillemor Franzen, *Product Requirement Specialist, IKEA*

Stephen Fuller, *Senior Criteria Manager, TCO Development*

Frank Kuebart, *Managing Director, ECO Institut Germany GmbH*

Pim Leonards, *Professor in Environmental Bioanalytical Chemistry, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*

Margaret McNamee, *Professor at Division of Fire Safety Engineering, Lund University*

Lisa Melymuk, *Assistant Professor at RECETOX, Research Centre for Toxic Compounds in the Environment*

Rudolf Pfaendner, *Division Director, Fraunhofer LBF*

Franck Poutch, *Director, CREPIM*

Monika Sabaranska, *EMEA Material Program & Poland Sustainability Manager, EMEA, HP*

Marcus Runefors, *Lecturer in Fire Safety Engineering, Lund University*

Elie Van Strien, *Chairman, European Fire Safety Alliance*

Nick Wolter, *Polymeric Materials and Mechanical Engineering Scientist, Fraunhofer IFAM*

pinfa representatives

Esther Agyeman-Budu, *EMPA General Secretary*

Adrian Beard, *Chairman*

Vicente Mans, *Technical Advisor*

External moderators

Simon Levitt *Moderator, Harwood Levitt Consulting*

Lars Stollenwerk *Assistant moderator, Harwood Levitt Consulting*

2. Purpose of the meeting

Pinfa represents the manufacturers of phosphorus, inorganic and nitrogen flame retardants (PIN FRs) and is a Sector Group within Cefic, the European Chemical Industry Council. The members of pinfa share the common vision of continuously improving the environmental and health profile of their flame-retardant products. In addition, pinfa regards and promotes flame retardants as an essential element of fire safety technologies. These are the reasons why pinfa members seek to maintain a dialogue with the users of PIN FRs to identify the needs and technologies they are looking for.

In recent years, there has been increased public discussion about FRs. Concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of FRs, largely, but not solely, regarding halogenated FRs. Conversely, where FR use has decreased, concerns have been raised about fire safety. Subsequently, a debate emerged about the appropriate use of FRs and if alternatives being used provide sufficient fire safety.

This group convenes on average twice a year. It is an open group, meaning pinfa extends invitations to new stakeholders depending on the topics discussed.

This seventh edition took place in May 2020, when travel in Europe had largely been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that for the first time the Advisory Board meeting took place virtually. The meeting was shortened to two hours to ensure optimal participation and engagement. The main focus of the meeting was for the participants to exchange opinions and experiences on the impact of COVID on fire safety and environmental developments.

This report does not capture the content of the previous Advisory Board meetings, which is available in the separate document on Background & Previous Meetings.

The Chatham House Rule

The meetings follow the Chatham House rule, whereby minutes include who attended and what was discussed, but opinions are not attributed to individual participants.

Competition and Compliance

The meetings are held in strict compliance with EU and international antitrust laws as well as Cefic dos and don'ts.

3. The 7th pinfa advisory board meeting

The 7th pinfa advisory board meeting took place on the 27th of May 2020 with a diverse group of stakeholders from the flame-retardant (FR) industry, downstream user industries, testing and research institutes.

Due to COVID-related restrictions on international travel, the meeting took place online. Instead of a full-day workshop, the meeting was scheduled to last for two hours to ensure optimal participation and engagement. Participants were invited to share their inputs beforehand via a survey to facilitate the exchange of information and opinions.

The goal of the session was to surpass general commentary on the current COVID-19 situation and to zoom in on the effects of COVID on the most relevant sectors: fire safety and environmental developments. In addition, the concept and future instalments of the pinfa Advisory Board meetings were discussed. The survey results formed the foundation of the discussion taking place in the meeting and can be found in annexe 1.

a. Fire safety

Participant input on the surveys identified three potential trends that impact fire safety in the near future: 1) It is likely that there will be an increase in residential fires and fewer fires in workplaces due to a shift in where people reside. 2) Fire safety will slide down the priority list of governments and public authorities due to the prioritisation of healthcare and economic revival. 3) On an individual level, people are more likely to be aware of fire safety as a general trend that prioritises safety.

During the meeting, some participants argued that the number of residential fires is not increasing as much as one would expect. This is for two main reasons. Firstly, given the external context, people are currently very safety-focused. The risk of residential fires will likely increase as this focus diminishes. A potential solution for this is that fire services expand their prevention-related activities in their community. A second reason that the number of residential fires is not increasing as one might expect, is because most of these fires happen at night or in winter when people are not home. Now that people are spending considerably more time at home in spring/summer, fires are spotted quicker and stopped before they warrant an intervention. This also means that an increase in fires could be noted in autumn/winter. A third reason for the number of residential fires not increasing is that the majority of fatalities in house fires already lived in isolated circumstances even prior to the implemented lockdown measures. As such, an increase in the number of isolated people does not necessarily impact the number of fatal fires.

Some participants said that it is possible for fire safety advocates to use the increased awareness and public attention for safety to increase awareness for fire safety specifically. More people consume media and commentary at the moment, which suggests more exposure and growing awareness of safety in elderly homes, for example. This can increase the reach of fire safety messaging. The group acknowledged that there will be considerably more competition to attract the public's attention on this matter. The group agreed that fire safety messages are more likely to be transmitted successfully if they are integrated with broader issues, for example by emphasizing 'people safety' or 'community safety' and not only house fires. The role of fire brigades, for example, is already more than 'just' putting out fires. Often, they also take on the role of serving the broader community.

The group acknowledged that the true impact of COVID-19 on fire safety will take time, perhaps years, to manifest itself. The economic damage of the pandemic can cause a decline in socioeconomic status and an increase in alcoholism. People of low socioeconomic status, alcoholics and the elderly are risk categories for house fires, especially in combination with each other.

It is important to recognise that fire safety is a multi-faceted subject. Social factors are important but data to support hypotheses will not be available in the near future. At the same time, not all insights are based on data. For example, what do firefighters consider now at a fire scene that they did not previously think of? These insights can be very important in developing policymaking. Some participants agreed that it would be interesting for certain stakeholders of this group to cooperate on longitudinal studies. This would be a good moment to liaise and determine what aspects are relevant to analyse in the upcoming months so they can be included in this type of studies.

As the last point, the European Fire Safety Alliance developed an Action Plan to improve fire safety in the EU. This could be of interest to various stakeholders present in the meeting. The Action Plan is a potential subject of discussion at the next pinfa Advisory Board meeting.

Potential actions

- Participants or stakeholders who are interested in discussing longitudinal studies concerning fire safety in COVID-context can contact lars.stollenwerk@harwood-levitt.com.
- Participants will be sent the Action Plan of the European Fire Safety Alliance, which can be a topic for discussion at the next Advisory Board meeting.

b. Environmental developments

The inputs of the group in the survey concerning environmental developments indicated that there are two schools of thought. On the one hand, there are signs that COVID can lead to a slow-down of the environmental agenda due to the urgent need to support the economic revival. On the other hand, this lockdown can also be a moment to reflect on where we want society to head towards and help advocate for a stronger environmental agenda. Overall, the consensus is that it is too early to know which way the pendulum will swing.

The participants agreed that where the economic and environmental interests align, there can be win-win issues. At other points where there is no alignment, trade-offs will need to be made. If industry can connect itself to the Green Deal it is likely to benefit. Yet, that this alignment would be beneficial is not new to the economic revival after COVID. Industry usually benefits if it combines economic and environmental interests.

The group does not have the impression that the legislative efforts of the European institutions are slowing down significantly. While some deadlines for industry participation have been postponed to allow for more processing time, policy roadmaps remain ambitious. The European Commission, for example, seems eager to push environmental policies forward. As to how far they will face pushback on a national level remains to be seen. Divisions between European institutions and the national level are likely to centre on where the funding will go.

Additionally, COVID has triggered a renewed political momentum for the environmental agenda, as there have been evident environmental benefits from the lockdown measures, (i.e. less travel has resulted in a decrease in pollution). At the same time, new legislation should not smother or shut down industry. Industry should help implement the Green Deal and promote the circular economy, advocating for more transparency in the value chains.

It will be interesting to analyse the shift in behavioural changes after COVID. Previous crises were often financial in nature, meaning that health was not impacted and societal behaviour could resume relatively quickly. With COVID, major awareness has been raised about the importance of washing hands and disinfecting surfaces to avoid dermal transmission. Perhaps this type of awareness can be raised for chemicals too. This will be necessary as the economic

crisis will likely have people replacing individual products less often which can increase the chemical exposure of older products that should be substituted.

Zooming in on chemicals, a roadmap for the *Chemicals - strategy for sustainability (toxic-free EU environment)* has been published (link available [here](#)). This will have important legislative impacts for flame retardants and the broader sector. While Pinfa attempts to promote more sustainable flame retardants, these remain more expensive than 'legacy' ones. With the economic damage of COVID, customer companies are increasingly becoming cost-conscious which can harm the adoption of more sustainable products.

c. Value / Future of Advisory Board meetings

In preparation for the meeting, participants were invited to share their view on the value of Advisory Board meetings and their use as a forum for the exchange of information. This way pinfa can better gauge whether participants find these meetings beneficial, and whether or not there may be something missing or other topics to include in the discussion.

Participants indicated being satisfied with the value the Advisory Board meetings provide and consider it a suitable forum for the exchange of information. The diverse range of stakeholders and the network the group offers are seen as strong positives. It is beneficial that the group brings together the experience and views of academics, industry, firefighters, etc.

One participant expressed that there is not enough communication about the activities pinfa takes on as a result of the Advisory Board meetings. While pinfa does not have the resources to pursue every suggestion or proposal, it will provide updates on what work it is carrying out as a result of the Advisory Board meetings.

The format of a virtual meeting was well-received. The participants agreed that a virtual meeting forms a lower barrier to entry. Yet, physical meetings should still take place going forward, once international travel is permitted again, due to the social potential and added value of in-person discussions. Moving forward, the opportunity to host shorter meetings dedicated to specific topics will also be considered.

The next Advisory Board meeting will most likely be held in late September, again in a virtual format. The exact date will be determined and communicated at a later stage.

4. Ideas to Move Forward

The group was again positive about the initiative of the Advisory Board Meetings. The fact that there were participants from the scientific community was welcomed, particularly given the range of backgrounds and expertise in the room.

The solutions proposed in this document are high-level and can be difficult and costly to implement. For example, pinfa has neither the resources nor the power to change standards alone. Nonetheless, the group believes there are concrete actions this group can take in assessing what key questions need to be answered and what possible solutions other relevant stakeholders can take forward.

The next meeting will likely take place in late September 2020.

Once agreed by the participants, this document can be used by any of the group in discussions with others, to show the areas of exchange and to encourage collaboration on the topics involved.

5. Annexe

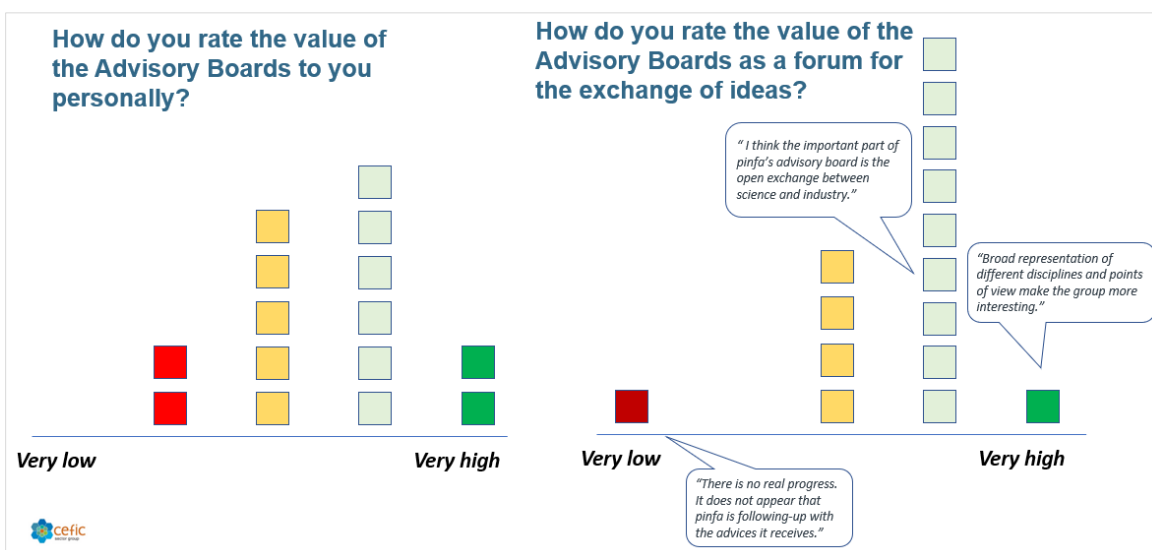
1. Participant input resulting from the survey

From a fire safety perspective, what impacts or changes do you think there could be as a result of COVID-19?

Negative changes	Neutral	Positive changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "People stay at home more so there could be more fires in homes." • "More residential fires." • "More people cook at home because restaurants are closed, this means fire calls go up." • "Firefighters tested positive are unable to work." • "Even less attention to fire safety from governments." • "Borderline personality disorder is closely linked to fire fatalities (through unemployment, alcohol, etc.) so the numbers will probably increase due to this." • "Less attention for prevention due to shifting priorities and lack of resources." • "Evacuation drills will change to avoid transmission and the fire service will be impacted by exposure to the public and by working together in close spaces." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "No changes expected." • "COVID-19 will probably not impact on actual fire-fighting missions because protective equipment and distancing are already in place." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "People will be more aware and think more about safety." • "Less office and industrial fires." • "People spend more time at home, which has to be a safe space. The role of fire services will become more important in influencing awareness of fire safety."

How do you think that COVID-19 and its aftermath will impact the environment, environmental policy, attitudes towards the environment?

Environment deprioritised	Neutral	Environment prioritised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Strain on the economy often gets in the way of green policy. As people are struggling to make ends meet, things like environmental awareness and long-term, rather than short-term objectives, are given lower priority." • "Greener policies will be slowed down." • "Environmental policies will probably slow down due to more national agendas." • "We are missing the chance for a green recovery by investing billions of tax money in bailing out oil industry, airlines, etc. There should be green terms to this money." • "I think that this crisis will slow down all greener policies. Priority will be on delivery energy and the economy." • "The negative impact on public transportation (rail, coach) will increase personal car use, which will slow green policies." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Normally one would expect a shift of funds in Europe to fight COVID-19. However, the Green Deal will have a large impact as well and make research funds available." • "COVID-19 is having a huge economical impact and it will be necessary to check if the restart can include environmental constraints in addition to unemployment issue... The risk is a delay of the environmental rules implementation by countries facing depreciation." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The intention of the Commission is to accelerate the green transition as a recovery plan. All sections creating jobs will be prioritised (e.g. building renovation activities)." • "More movement towards green policies, especially in the transportation sector, e.g., related to vehicle emissions, air quality. Likely prioritisation of climate change and air quality over chemical use and management." • "Increased support of sustainable developments through anti-recession money." • "Yes, it will move to greener policies as much as the economic needs will allow them to. Yes, CO2 reduction and recyclability are examples." • "I think there will be some impact on speeding up greener policies. This because people have noticed that the earth is recovering if there is a decrease of contaminations/pollutions."



2. Action Plan of the European Fire Safety Alliance

A short summary of the Action Plan can be found on the [website](#) of the European Fire Safety Alliance.

The full report can be ordered by contacting the European Fire Safety Alliance (info@eu-rofsa.org).