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

2020

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 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)

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## AREA in a nutshell

24

national  
associations

21

countries

13,000

companies

110,000

people

€23bn

turnover

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# Foreword by the President



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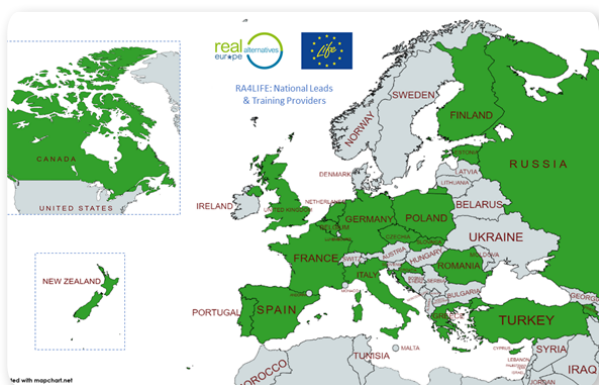
**Last year more than ever, RACHP equipment and technicians played a key role in allowing hospitals, supermarkets and companies to run and provide us all with essential services.**

Contractors are the essential link between end users and manufacturers. Last year more than ever, we witnessed that HVACR Technicians play a key role in everyone's lives: thanks to their work, facilities such as supermarkets, hospitals, companies are able to run and provide us all with essential services.

As part of the European Green Deal and decarbonisation process, the EU is aiming to reach 55% reduction in emissions in 9 years and carbon neutrality by 2050. HVACR systems have an important role to help achieve these ambitious objectives.

Despite challenging circumstances, there is plenty of work that AREA achieved in 2020: COVID-19 guides about operation and maintenance of air conditioning systems, Real Alternatives 4 LIFE training and certification, and international cooperation. We also actively started to work on the revision of the F-gas Regulation and we re-affirmed our opposition to illegal trade of HFCs by co-signing a global pledge.

In 2020 we concluded the European funded programme Real Alternatives which achieved outstanding results with 21 countries involved in a common and recognised training for alternative refrigerants. It has been translated in 17 languages with already 1000 certificates issued by the several training providers qualified by the consortium.



2020 was the year of virtual events: during that year we partnered with many virtual conferences, seminars and even exhibitions all over the world: Chillventa E-Special, VTS Atmosphere, MOP32 United Nations Environment Programme's Summit, World refrigeration day, to name a few.

In 2020 we welcomed and helped the establishment of the new Pan-African Association U-3ARC with the President Madi Sakande who joined our General Assembly together with two Members of the Board. We had the hospitality returned by participating in the ceremony of the first U-3ARC GA held in Burkina Faso. In my speech, I opened our arms to cooperation with the 35 African Associations. A MoU with U-3ARC is going to be signed in the next few months.

A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed with the Indian Association ISHRAE to consolidate an already long cooperation with that growing market. We also established first contacts with different associations and institutions in Middle East, and reinforced cooperation with Thailand and South-East Asia.

In 2021 we will still participate in hybrid events, such as the 19th European Conference, to be held on June 10-11 in Milano in cooperation with AREA, Centro Studi Galileo, United Nations Environment Programme and the International Institute of Refrigeration.

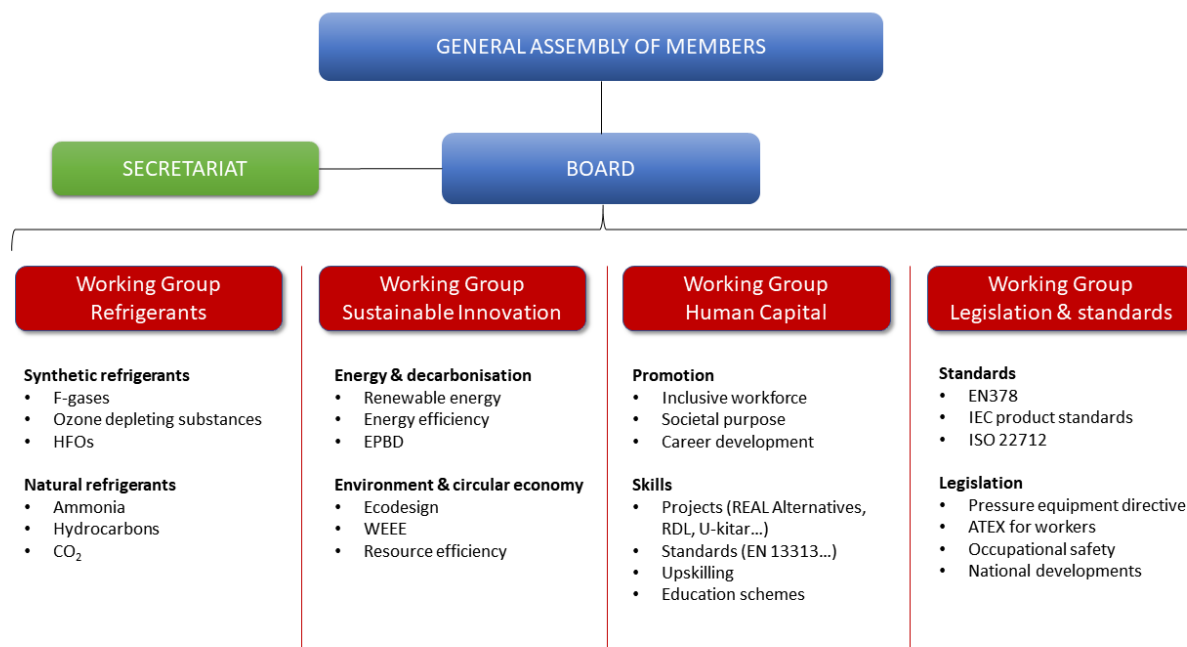
We wish to finally meet again in person and to celebrate the great achievements that the whole HVACR sector reaches every day: together, globally.

At the top of the agenda now is the European Green Deal, the F-Gas Regulation revision, mandatory certification for alternative refrigerants and the conservation and distribution of refrigerated vaccines against COVID-19, which hopefully will save the world from this latest threat. We, as Refrigeration Industry, can say that we are doing our part!

**Marco Buoni, President**

# Organisation

## Working bodies



## Working Groups

In 2019, AREA restructured its working activities in order 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.

### Refrigerants

Chair/Sherpa: Graeme Fox (BEASA, 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)

### Human Capital

Chair: Thanos Biris (HUFAS, 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*

## 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 (HUFAS, Greece), Board Member
- Mika Kapanen (FREA, Finland), Board Member

# Internal Affairs



MARCO BUONI

AREA President

“

*I am looking forward to reach even greater goals with the new board who has enthusiastically accepted the mandate and the next challenges.*

*At the top of the agenda now is the European Green Deal, the F-Gas regulation review, mandatory certification for alternative refrigerants and the upcoming conservation and distribution of refrigerated vaccines against COVID-19.*

## Marco Buoni re-elected President of AREA

On 13 November 2020, AREA members unanimously re-elected Marco Buoni (ATF, Italy) as President of AREA. He will serve a second term until 2022. Coen van de Sande (NVKL, Netherlands) was elected Vice-President.

Marco Buoni was elected for a second term as President, alongside Grzegorz Michalski (KFCh, Poland), who remains Director. They were joined by four new faces: Coen van de Sande (NVKL, Netherlands) re-joined the Board as Vice-President – a position he held two years ago. Seamus Kerr (IRI, Ireland) was elected Treasurer, whilst Thanos Biris (HUFAS, Greece) and Mika Kapanen (FREA, Finland) joined as Directors.

AREA President Marco Buoni said: “I salute the leaving board with admiration for the great work we have achieved together such as the AREA Vision 2025, COVID-19 guides, real alternatives training and certification and international cooperation. I am looking forward to reach even greater goals with the new board who has enthusiastically accepted the mandate and the next challenges. At the top of the agenda now is

the European Green Deal, the F-Gas regulation review, mandatory certification for alternative refrigerants and the upcoming conservation and distribution of refrigerated vaccines against COVID-19.”

## AREA & ISHRAE sign a Memorandum of Understanding

On 2nd February 2020, in the frame of the 31st Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, AREA signed a collaboration agreement with the Indian Society of Engineers ISHRAE (Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers) in the premises of the ASHRAE Winter Meeting.

Through this signature, AREA President Mr. Buoni and ISHRAE President Mr. Murthy share their common vision of how much the global HVACR sector can profit from mutual cooperation, especially in this historical moment of technological and legislative innovation.

The scope of the agreement is to support and initiate activities to promote the industry and its high standards





From left to right: Mr. Richie Mittal, Mr. Marco Buoni, Mr. Vikram Murthy and Ms. Nivedita Jadhaw.



of quality, in order to serve users' interest in a safe and uninterrupted usage of efficient refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump equipment, and to create and maintain a favourable business climate for

European refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump contractors, in terms of quality, safety, employment, fair competition and profitability.

## AREA Vision 2025

The activities of each Working Group are driven by the overarching objectives set out in AREA's Vision 2025.

The COVID-19 pandemic shun the spotlight on the cooling sector. In times of lockdown and overwhelmed healthcare systems, the importance of refrigeration and air conditioning was recognised on many levels, whether in relation to food, room ventilation or refrigerated transport and storage of vaccines.

Despite the exceptional circumstances, AREA worked relentlessly on the implementation of the Vision.



We would like to highlight the following initiatives in particular:

- **Refrigerants:** we [signed the pledge](#) against illegally traded HFCs and initiated work on a set of concrete proposals on the extension of the F-gas certification scheme to alternative refrigerants
- **Sustainable Innovation:** we co-signed a [Joint Industry Statement on Healthy Buildings for All](#) and started working on a contribution to the upcoming Heating & Cooling Strategy
- **Human Capital:** we issued guidance on safe maintenance of air conditioning systems in COVID-19 circumstances and highlighted [our industry's essential role](#) to fulfil our European citizens' most essential needs, notably for food and health care.
- **Legislation and standards:** we worked closely with our European and international partners, notably welcoming African, Indian and Thai representatives at our autumn general assembly meeting.

With the upcoming revision of the ODS and F-gas Regulation, and the implementation of the decarbonisation agenda, the next few years will provide many opportunities to drive AREA's cooling agenda.

# Working Groups

## Refrigerants

Illegal trade and the preparation for the revision of the F-gas Regulation dominated last year's agenda.

In spring, AREA undertook a comprehensive internal survey in order to evaluate members' feeling on the impact of the F-gas Regulation. This preparatory exercise aimed at highlighting the main principles of a future AREA position, in particular in relation to the Regulation's major provision (phase-down, bans, certification, leak checks...). The review and impact assessment of the Regulation kicked off in the summer with the publication of a roadmap to which AREA reacted. Interestingly, training on alternatives was mentioned as one of the priority issues to be assessed by the consultant. The Working Group agreed on an Advocacy Plan to guide its activities and coordinate AREA and members' actions at EU and national levels.

A detailed consultation questionnaire was then released in the autumn. Several Working Group's meetings took place to go through the questionnaire and form a [comprehensive reply](#) which was sent out before the Christmas break.

Meanwhile, it was decided to set up an ad hoc Task Force to work on concrete proposals on an EU certification scheme on alternative refrigerants. The Task Force met a couple of times at the end of the year and established 4 deliverables based on the principle that such a scheme should form part of an extension of the existing F-gas certification scheme.

Throughout this process, AREA kept close contacts with several stakeholders, whether industry or NGOs, and with the European Commission. This preparatory process gives major opportunities for AREA to influence the content of the upcoming proposal for a revision expected by the end of 2021.

The Working Group also worked on illegal trade, notably by co-signing an [industry pledge](#) led by EFCTC, who presented its actions at a WG meeting in December. Finally, AREA continues to follow the preparation of a revision of the ODS Regulation, expected mid-2021.

## Sustainable Innovation

The European Green Deal was published on 11 December 2019, and since then the European Commission has been busy presenting the strategies and action plans which will be the building blocks for decarbonising the economy. In particular, the Sustainable Innovation Working Group closely monitored the Renovation wave initiative, published in October, which aims for more and deeper renovation with the final expected result to have 35 million building units renovated by 2030 and up to 160,000 additional green jobs created in the construction. Decarbonisation of heating and cooling is one of the three areas prioritised by this initiative.

AREA also closely followed the implementation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), and in particular the development of the Smart Readiness Indicator (SRI). The objective of this voluntary scheme is to help raise awareness on the availability of smart services in buildings and to promote their uptake. When Member States consider it appropriate, experts accredited for the energy performance certification of buildings, or for the inspection of heating, air conditioning and combined heating or air-conditioning and ventilation systems, or for performing energy audits on energy efficiency, should be allowed to be considered competent also to assess the smart readiness of buildings or building units. As the implementation of the EPBD varies amongst Member States, in some countries AREA members are responsible for performing the EPBD inspections. Therefore, while these new requirements could open new income streams, it would also entail some refrigeration contractors having to obtain new certification or complete new training.

In the continuity of the work begun in 2018, AREA remained very active in the field of Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) last year. On 19 June, AREA, together with 7 partner associations, published the Joint Manifesto on Indoor Environmental Quality: [“HEALTHY BUILDINGS FOR ALL - Putting people's health and well-being at the centre of the EU built environment”](#). With the objective of collectively promoting healthy buildings with an adequate level of indoor environmental quality, this document draws some policy recommendations



towards policymakers to ensure that IEQ is high in the political agenda, particularly under the framework of the upcoming Renovation Wave. The manifesto was launched during a workshop side event of the EU Sustainable Energy Week. Representing AREA, the Chair of Sustainable Innovation Seamus Kerr addressed the main recommendations and priorities from the perspective of refrigeration installers: a particular focus on skills, competences and certifications for building operators, as well as the important link between IEQ and Energy Efficiency.

In 2020, the European Commission -DG Energy launched a study on “Policy Support for the Heating and Cooling Decarbonisation”, with the final aim to develop a 2050 EU heating and cooling roadmap. It will serve as a practical tool for policy makers at national and EU level to help design tailored approaches to decarbonise the heating and cooling sector. Members of the Sustainable Innovation Working Group have started working on a position paper to contribute to the study. The roadmap should be published in June 2021.

## Human Capital

In 2020, the working group continued the work on the revision of the NACE code system. AREA's request to repatriate all the RACHP services under code 33 (repair and installation of machinery) was included in Eurostat draft report on the Public Consultation published in February. The NACE review Task force expects to finalise the analysis of the proposals that would have an impact on the structure at the beginning of 2021 and will then start preparing a first draft of the new classification. The new NACE code is also depending on the discussions on the ISIC classification (the United Nations economic activities classification). This is expected to be a very long process, since all the NACE codes are being re-evaluated.

The Human Capital Working Group was also regularly in contact with the European Commission- DG EMPL (Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion) to ensure that RACHP occupations and skills will be included in the ongoing revision of the ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) Community Forum Database. The ESCO Database works as a dictionary describing, identifying and classifying

professional occupations, skills, and qualifications relevant for the EU labour market and education and training. Following several meetings with the DG EMPL, the ESCO team approved the definition for a “RACHP technician” proposed by AREA. The updated classification should be published in the ESCO portal at the end of 2021.

As far as projects are concerned, the REAL Alternatives 4 LIFE project officially came to an end on 14th June 2020. The last substantial contribution of AREA was the production of the layman report, which presents the aims and achievements of the project. AREA explained the reasons for taking part, its role on communication and dissemination and also presented the layman report at the closing webinar in May.

## Legislation and Standards

COVID-19 became a major issue for the Working Group. Quickly after the pandemic broke out, the secretariat set up a regular monitoring report on EU developments on a variety of COVID-related issues, such a free movement or recovery measures. Meetings gave members the opportunity to exchange on the situation locally and in particular on how RACHP contractors were affected. Building on its information platform role, a dedicated section was created on our website, serving as a library of existing COVID-19 guidance put together by AREA membership.

Meanwhile, the Working Group continued to follow standardisation developments. Comprehensive reports were given during meetings, notably thanks to Stig Rath's help. Former AREA delegate for Norway, Stig is Technical Expert for SBS (Small Business Standards), representing small and medium-sized RACHP installers in standardization discussions. His role as Expert is supported by AREA.

EN 378 certainly received most of the focus. At its autumn meeting, the Working Group decided to work on a general guidance document on how to build a risk assessment. Discussions also took place on whether to produce a template for flammables but it was felt this deserved further considerations. Reports were also given on developments with ISO 22712 and several relevant IEC standards.

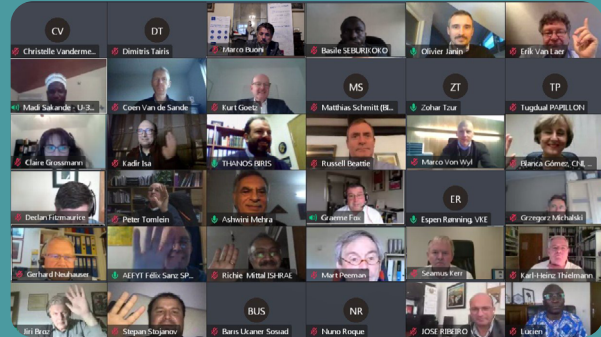
# Events

## AREA General Assembly meetings

Due to the pandemic AREA had to hold both its 2020 general assembly meetings by video conference.

The first one took place on 15th May. For the first time in many years, it was attended by all AREA members. Among the main decisions taken, the 2019 financial results were adopted, and the elections of a new Board were postponed to the autumn meeting.

A staggering 43 delegates representing 23 (out of 25) member associations, 2 international partners from Thailand and India and 2 guest associations from Switzerland and Africa took part in the autumn meeting of the AREA General Assembly on 13 November. Four



longstanding prominent figures left the Board: former Presidents Graeme Fox (BESA, UK), Gerhard Neuhauser (OEKKV, Austria) and Per Jonasson (ex-SKVP, Sweden), as well as Stig Rath (ex-VKE, Norway). Members paid tribute to their outstanding contribution and commitment to the management of the organisation.



## AREA in Orlando AHR Expo and ASHRAE Winter meeting

On 3 February 2020, AREA President Marco Buoni interviewed 2019-2020 ASHRAE President, P.Eng. Darryl K. Boyce. The interview took place during the ASHRAE Winter Conference in Orlando in which ASHRAE celebrated its 125th anniversary. Mr. Boyce previously served on the Board of Directors as treasurer, vice president and director-at-large. He is the recipient of ASHRAE's Distinguished Service Award, Exceptional



Service Award and Regional Award of Merit. His theme for the Society year is "Building for People and Performance".

The video interview can be watched at:



<http://bit.ly/interviewASHRAE>

## World Refrigeration Day 2020

Despite the circumstances, the second edition of World Refrigeration Day generated numerous initiatives from our members. Celebrated on 26th June every year, it provides an opportunity to shed the spotlight on the societal contribution of refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pumps (RACHP).

In Spain, Portugal, Italy, our member showed a great deal of energy and creativity to promote our industry through a variety of initiatives: conferences, news articles, webinars, videos, graphics, fun facts... All these activities resonated loudly in social media too.

In the current dramatic circumstances, all these actions and discussions showed just how important our work



is and how it can impact the quality of life and the protection of human health and the environment all over the world. Playing our part in achieving such developments for society, AREA is proud to be a part of such events highlighting how essential our sector is today all over the globe.

We look forward to seeing what we can bring for World Refrigeration Day 2021, the “coolest day of the year”!

## AREA becomes partner of the world's first natural refrigerant virtual trade show

On 1-2 September, AREA partnered with ATMOSphere who launched the world's first natural refrigerant virtual trade show.

The LIVE event took place over a 24-hour period, encompassing every time-zone, starting with Europe,



the Middle East and Africa, followed by North, Central and South America, and finishing with the Asia Pacific region on 2 September.

## AREA welcomes a Union of African Associations in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning

In 2020, AREA was delighted to welcome the creation of the Union of Associations of African Actors in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (U-3ARC). The first General Assembly of the newly founded U-3ARC took place on 24 September 2020, seen by many

as the beginning of a new chapter in the history of refrigeration.

Thanks to AREA's support, Madi Sakandé, the first president of U-3ARC and expert trainer for Centro Studi Galileo, achieved the goal of bringing together 29 national associations, all coming from different African countries. This ambitious project is set to guarantee the growth of the air conditioning and refrigeration sector in the continent with positive consequences for both health and living standards.



The General Assembly took place over two days and involved both in-person and on-line participation, following international regulations and safeguarding everyone's health, in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Several HVAC/R experts from around the world attended along with key industry figures

including: Marco Buoni, AREA president; Ayman Eltalouny and Yamar Guissé of UNEP; Ole Nielsen of UNIDO; Stephen Gill, World Refrigeration Day founder and members from the Ministries of Burkina Faso Government - Mr Sakandé's home country and the first nation to actively join the project.

## AREA and the first Chillventa eSpecial

On 13-15 October, AREA continued its long-standing partnership with Nuremberg Messe as a sponsor of the Chillventa eSpecial.

Over three days, participants from all around the globe met on a virtual platform to make new contacts, share knowledge and work collectively to drive innovation in the sector alongside experts from research and practice who shared their knowledge in numerous lectures.

With its own personalised virtual booth, AREA was able to present its key areas of focus and ongoing projects while AREA representatives, including President Marco Buoni and Olivier Janin, Secretary General, were on hand to interact with visitors and share personal experience and expertise.

AREA was delighted to be a speaker at the EPEE-ASERCOM event at the Chillventa Congress on the first day, "Campfire COVID-19 and EU Recovery Plan:

a Challenge or an opportunity". On the final day of the event, Marco Buoni also took part in a round table discussion "REAL Alternatives – the next generation of training and certifications" and presented the work AREA is doing on this project and the impact of training and certification across Europe, while also sharing background information on the EU F-gas revision.



In continuing our participation in this new online format, AREA was glad to maintain its long-standing cooperation with the leading international exhibition of the international refrigeration, AC and ventilation and heat pump community.

## Social Media Presence



**LinkedIn group**  
650 followers

**LinkedIn page**  
490 followers  
900 visitors per year



**Twitter**  
1000+ followers  
2000 impression per month

# Projects

After a closing webinar attracted over 100 participants, the REAL Alternatives 4 LIFE project officially came to an end on 14th June 2020. The last substantial contribution of AREA was the production of the layman report, which presents the project's aims and achievements of the REAL Alternatives 4 LIFE project.

One can say that the project was a success with 21 countries involved in a common and recognised training for alternative refrigerants. The materials are now available 17 languages and some 1000 certificates have already been issued by the several training providers qualified by the consortium.



With contribution of the LIFE programme of the European Union

As AREA is calling for mandatory certification on alternative refrigerants, the outcome of the project represents valuable materials for the discussions to come. Industry has done its job by setting the standard.

Going forward, consortium members remain involved to keep the project alive and financially stable.

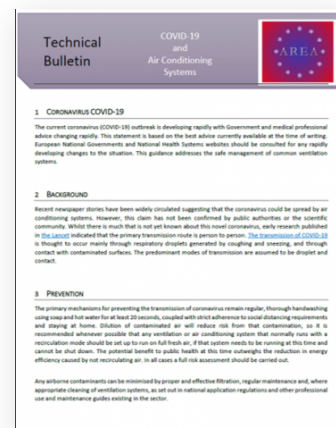
# Publications



JUNE 2020

## Layman report REAL Alternatives 4 LIFE

[See here](#)



MAY 2020

## Technical Bulletin on COVID-19 & air conditioning systems

[See here](#)

All publications can be downloaded at:

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



# Members

## AUSTRIA



[www.oekkv.at](http://www.oekkv.at)

## BELGIUM



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

## CROATIA



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

## CZECH REPUBLIC



[www.chlazení.cz](http://www.chlazení.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/el-gr](http://www.hufgas.gr/el-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)

## SWEDEN



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

## TURKEY



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

UNITED  
KINGDOM

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

UNITED  
KINGDOM

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

## Partners

## THAILAND



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

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