

CSG@MCE24, A MEETING WITH THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE NEW F-GAS REGULATION

The conference, organized on March 13th and 14th by Centro Studi Galileo and ATF – Association of Italian Refrigeration Technicians within the 43rd Mostra Convegno Expocomfort, followed the publication of the new European Regulation on F-Gases, published in the official gazette on March 11th and sparked a constructive debate between institutions, companies and trade associations.

Milan, 21 March 2024

The Conference on the New Regulations

The two sessions of the event allowed the audience (more than two hundred attendees) to have a direct confrontation with the European Commission, which promulgated the new Regulation, and with the MASE – Ministry for the Environment and Energy Security, which will have to establish how Italy implements it in the Italian scenario.

Before the very start of the Conference, Mr Marco Buoni (CEO of Centro Studi Galileo, Secretary of ATF and Past President of AREA with a mandate for International Affairs) presented Mr Domenico Belli (MASE) with a position paper that collected the proposals of the main associations in the sector about the new F-Gas Regulation, a symbol of the very close relationship between associations, industry and institutions.

The key points of the debate are well known to all those working in the field: ensuring that there is no "shortage", i.e. lack of refrigerant, in key sectors, allowing the continuation of repairs and maintenance on existing systems, ensuring that the police can intervene on any illegal trafficking, and many others.

The event was attended by many of the main representatives of the HVAC/R sector, from the International Institute of Refrigeration IIF-IIR to the European Partnership for Energy and the Environment - EPEE, the Polytechnics of Milan and Turin, Eurovent, Accredia, Assocold, U-3ARC, Assoclima and AHRI, as well as the numerous corporate partners of Centro Studi Galileo and ATF.

The event was held in two languages, Italian and English, thanks to a simultaneous translation service made available to the participants.

The argument heaten the F-Gas debate

Mrs Bente Tranholm-Schwarz (European Commission DG Clima) pointed out that *"the main innovations of Regulation 2024/573 on F-gases provide for a progressive reduction of HFCs with the aim of eliminating them by 2050. These changes include new bans on the maintenance and placing on the market of F-gas equipment, along with expanded certification and training requirements. The new regulation also aims to facilitate the fight against illegal activities, such as quota-free imports of HFCs, through clearer rules for*

customs and competent authorities. Although the Regulation entered into force on March 11, 2024, some provisions will start later.

*However, equipment that does not comply with GWP limits can only be placed on the market if necessary for safety reasons., with detailed labelling rules to be adopted. **Installation of such equipment depends on site specific conditions** e.g. minimum room size dictated by relevant local codes, national restrictions or European standards.*

*No prior authorisation is needed. If such equipment is installed, the **operator (end-user)** needs to **keep evidence detailing the specific conditions** that made it necessary to trigger the exemption.*

***End-users will need good guidance from the installers!"**, ended Mrs Tranholm-Schwarz.*

Mr Stephen Yurek's (AHRI) opinion was quite different: *"The American association AHRI has expressed strong negative opinions on the new European regulation on fluorinated gases, stressing the need for a notification to the WTO-WTO on this matter. China, Japan and the United States have submitted comments to the World Trade Organization's Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade, with the aim of highlighting the potential unintended consequences of the regulation, such as diverting resources and backlashing out to consumers. It is essential that sustainability is realistic, incremental, and intelligently planned to avoid disaster and achieve desired goals."*

Despite the challenges, the President of the Italian Manufacturers' Association Assoclimate, Mr Maurizio Marchesini, expressed optimism about the opportunities that the sector will encounter: *"We accept the challenges and trust that our sector will be able to take advantage of them, finding many opportunities for growth and innovation."*

New agreements with Africa and Romania

The conference took place throughout two days, March 13th and 14th, and also included a networking cocktail in the setting of the Stella Polare Congress Centre. At the end of the event, Mr Marco Buoni (CEO of Centro Studi Galileo) and Mr Madi Sakandé (President of U-3ARC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding that once again underlined the very close relationship of cooperation and mutual exchange of knowledge between the two realities. The collaboration already came to its first commitment in the following hours, with the organization of a round table between Mr Sakandé, CEO of New Cold System, who is further a trainer at Centro Studi Galileo since almost twenty years, and a delegation of the main representatives of the Italian refrigeration industry.

A similar event took place at the CSG/ATF booth, with the signing of another international MoU, in this case with AFGAS, Asociația Firmelor FGAS, the Romanian Refrigeration Technicians' Association, chaired by Mrs Amalia Păvălucă, which marked the beginning of a new and fruitful collaboration between the parties.

In the middle of everything, training is key

There is only one key to dealing with the change in regulations: the training of technicians. The transition to new refrigerants, which are less polluting but often more demanding and dangerous to handle, requires that Refrigeration Technicians are ready to operate in the best possible way, with the awareness that the margin of risk for the operator will be higher. In addition, companies and professionals will have to learn how to navigate the new regulatory

landscape. For this reason, Centro Studi Galileo used the Expo to organize a training course to give a strong signal to the entire industry. The lecturer Prof Antonio Fierro, responsible for the courses on the new legislation, carried out the theoretical lesson directly in streaming from within the fair, from the beating heart of the Italian and European HVAC/R world: the course was a great success, and showed how it is possible to stay up to date on the latest regulations at any time and in any place, relying on the guidance of the main experts in the sector.

Meetings and Workshops

Centro Studi Galileo and ATF took full advantage of the four days of the fair to take part in and organize dozens of workshops and business meetings with partners and long-standing collaborators, but also with the aim of establishing new agreements and increasing the group's already vast network. During the four days of the fair, in addition to meeting hundreds of technicians and professionals at the stand, the staff of Centro Studi Galileo took part in about eighty appointments with as many stakeholders, confirming the extraordinary strategic value that Mostra Convegno Expocomfort has acquired in Italy and Europe over the course of the very long history of its 43 editions.

Looking to the future

2024 has just begun, MCE has been the forerunner of a year that promises to be full of events and appointments for the sector: in fact, there are just a few months left to the new edition of World Refrigeration Day, on June 26, which like every year recalls the importance of Refrigeration in the modern world, and will come to the end of 2024 with the new edition of Chillventa, in Nuremberg, one of the most eagerly awaited events in the industry, which will close 365 days of historic transition for anyone working in the HVAC/R sector.