



QUARTERLY PERIODICAL FOR THE EUROPEAN CONTRACTORS SOCIETY WORKING
IN THE REFRIGERATION, AIR-CONDITIONING AND HEAT PUMP SECTOR
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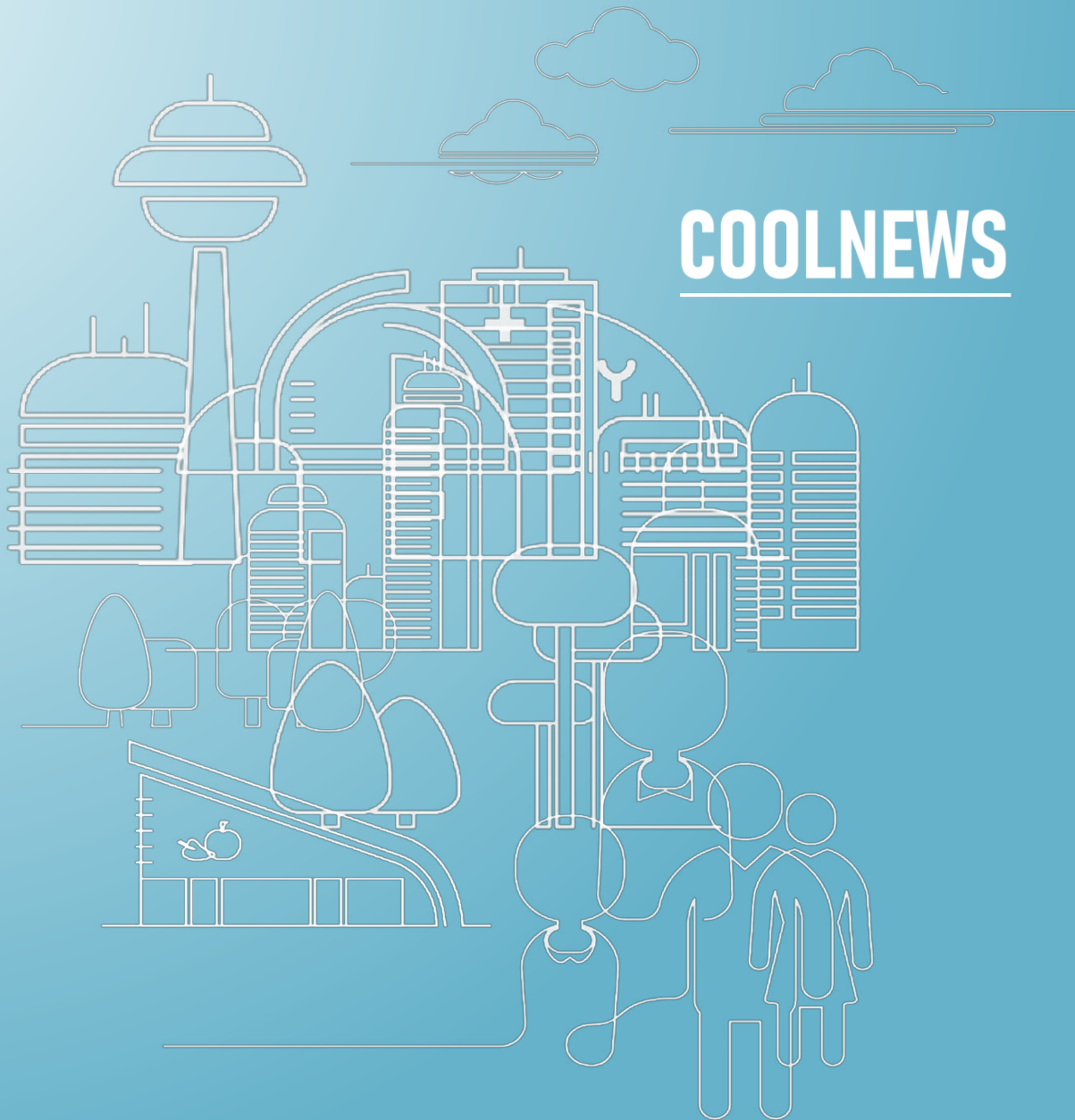


TABLE OF CONTENTS

AREA AFFAIRS	2
AREA SPRING MEETINGS IN MADRID	2
EUROPEAN RISING STARS 2026 COMPETITION	3
AREA STARTS PREPARING FOR CHILLVENTA	4
JOIN AREA AS OBSERVING PARTNER	5
LEGISLATION	6
F-GAS REGULATION	6
PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES (PFAS)	6
REGULATION ESTABLISHING AN EU TALENT POOL	7
REFRIGERATION, AIR-CONDITIONING & HEAT PUMP NEWS	9
2025-2026 CALENDAR	9
RACC ASEAN 2026	10
REAL ALTERNATIVES AND SKILLSAFE EU STRENGTHENING SAFETY TRAINING	11
REAL ALTERNATIVES TRAIN THE TRAINER (TOT) SESSION IN IRELAND	12
AREA AT THE EU-KOREA SEMINAR	13

AREA AFFAIRS

AREA SPRING MEETINGS IN MADRID

AREA held its 2026 spring meetings and General Assembly on 21-22 May in Madrid, bringing together members from across Europe. This event was kindly organised by [AREA's Spanish members](#), CNI and AEFYT.

A key highlight of the Assembly was the **election of a new Board**, marking an important moment of both continuity and renewal for the association. Following his term as Vice-President, **Stepan Stojanov was elected President**, while Coen van de Sande concluded his presidency and continues to serve as Past President, ensuring continuity. The General Assembly also elected Thanos Biris as Vice-President and Espen Rønning as Treasurer. The Board also welcomed a new member, Karl-Heinz Thielmann (VDKF, Germany), while Grzegorz Michalski concluded his term and stepped down from the Board.



👉 Find out more on the [AREA website](#).

The General Assembly also celebrated the **winners of the European Rising Stars 2026 competition**, recognising outstanding young talent and women in the cooling sector. The awards ceremony, held during the event, highlighted the importance of attracting and supporting the next generation of professionals in refrigeration, air conditioning, and heat pumps.

Participants also had the opportunity to enjoy Madrid as a vibrant host city, with the Gala dinner as a memorable highlight, taking place in the beautiful Papagena Restaurant on the sixth floor of the Teatro Real.

Beyond governance and celebrations, the Assembly reaffirmed AREA's role as a strong and united voice for the RACHP sector in Europe. Discussions focused on key priorities, including:

- Supporting contractors in adapting to evolving regulations
- Promoting training and skills, particularly for alternative refrigerants
- Ensuring safety and compliance in HVAC installation
- Tackling illegal practices
- Advancing digitalisation and cybersecurity

The event also offered valuable opportunities for exchange and collaboration, with national associations, partners, and stakeholders gathering in Madrid to share insights and strengthen cooperation across the European HVACR community.

EUROPEAN RISING STARS 2026 COMPETITION

Celebrating the Next Generation of HVAC/R Professionals

The winners of the 2026 edition of the European Rising Stars competition have been officially announced during the AREA General Assembly in Madrid, highlighting outstanding young professionals and women in the refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump sector.

Organised by AREA in partnership with World Refrigeration Day, the initiative aims to showcase inspiring talent and promote diversity within the sector. Participants submitted short videos demonstrating their technical skills, passion and commitment to sustainability, safety and innovation.

This year's winners are **Edouard Letot (France)**, recognised in the Youth Best Practice category, and **Milena Boettcher (Germany)**, awarded in the Women in Cooling category.



Edouard Letot and Milena Boettcher during the ceremony

Beyond recognising excellence, the competition underlines the importance of attracting new talent and strengthening diversity in the workforce at a time when the sector is undergoing significant transformation towards sustainable cooling solutions. Initiatives such as European Rising Stars play a key role in inspiring future professionals and showcasing the breadth of career opportunities in the HVAC/R industry. More information: <https://area-eur.be/competitions>

📺 Watch all competition videos [HERE](#).

AREA STARTS PREPARING FOR CHILLVENTA

This year's AREA Autumn Meetings will take place in Nuremberg, once again alongside the renowned Chillventa exhibition — a key event for the refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump sector.

The **AREA Autumn Meetings** themselves will be held at the NH Collection Nuremberg City hotel **on Friday 16 October**, with a dinner the night before.

AREA will also be present at Chillventa with its own booth (**Hall 9, Stand 9.131**), serving as a meeting point for members and partners throughout the exhibition. In line with previous years, **a joint cocktail** event will be organised together with ASERCOM, EPEE and INWIC. Additional activities and networking moments are also being planned to further enrich the programme.

Do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat for more information regarding hotel bookings and meeting documents. **Mark your calendar [and stay tuned!](#)**

JOIN AREA AS OBSERVING PARTNER

AREA - The voice of European Refrigeration, Air Conditioning, and Heat Pump Contractors

Join our network as an Observing Partner

Who we are

AREA is the European Association of refrigeration, air conditioning, and heat pump (RACHP) contractors. Contractors are the essential link between end users and manufacturers. They design, install and maintain RACHP 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.

With members from 26 National Associations, covering 22 countries, AREA represents 13.000 companies that:

- Employ 110.000 people
- Have an annual turnover of €2.3 billion

Spread the word on the exciting opportunity to join AREA as an Observing Partner!

By becoming an Observing Partner, organisations will join a unique network of peers where they can:

- Connect with Europe's RACHP contractors and organisations active in the sector.
- Receive key updates on European policy and regulation that impacts our industry.
- Gain insights that help you to stay up to date on industry trends.

The brochure is available on our [website](#), and we are promoting it on [social media](#).

Your support in sharing this information is crucial to the success of this initiative. We greatly appreciate your help in disseminating and promoting this opportunity within your network.

F-GAS REGULATION

HFC prices

Öko-Recherche released the Q1/2026 excerpt of the HFC prices monitoring. The main findings are:

- Compared to Q1/2025, throughout the entire supply chain, prices for the high GWP gases/mixtures went down slightly (end user prices excluded): R410A and R134a -4%, respectively.
- From one quarter to the next, when considering the whole supply chain (end user prices excluded), prices increased by +3% for R410A and decreased by +1% for R134a.
- Compared to 2014, prices of R134a are 3.9 (end user) to 9.3 (distributor) and R410A prices are 3.6 (end-user) to 10.8 (distributor) times higher. For comparison: on the world market, producer prices increased by a factor of 3 for R134a and 6 for R410A in the same time period.
- When it comes to alternatives, price levels along the supply chain changed as follows relative to Q4/25 (end user prices omitted): R448A and R449A -1, R513A +4%, R452A +2%, and R32 -1%.
- Compared to Q4/2025, the purchase price of reclaimed R404A increased by +12% on service company level and by +2% on distributor level. In Q1/2026, the purchase price of reclaimed R404A was approximately 3% higher than the price level of virgin R404A material.
- The price of quota authorisations indicated ranges from 17.25 to 18.25 €/t CO₂e (purchasing price). On average, purchasing prices for quota authorisations amounted to 17.19 €/t CO₂e, approximately. Compared to Q4/2025, the purchasing price of quota authorisations increased by 7 %. Taking a more long-term perspective, e.g. compared to Q1/2025, prices also increased by 5%.
- In general, the EU refrigerant market appears to have been stable in terms of supply, with only isolated indications of limited regional availability indicated by companies.

PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES (PFAS)

ECHA's Socio-Economic Assessment Committee (SEAC) launched the [stakeholder consultation on its draft opinion](#) on 26 March. The feedback period closed on 25 May. The draft opinion delivers the provisional conclusions of SEAC on the proposed EU-wide restriction of PFAS, focusing on its potential impact on costs, revenues, job losses, as well as regarding the availability of suitable alternatives and the practicability and enforceability of the restriction as a whole.

In practice, the consultation consisted of a "general survey" on the horizontal aspects addressed in the draft opinion, and 15 uses-specific questionnaires for each of the sectors originally considered in the

scope of the restriction. This included the sectors identified as “Application of fluorinated gases” and “Transport”, with questions on PFAS functions, impact on business, and feasibility of alternatives on refrigeration equipment, chillers, refrigerants for maintenance and refilling of existing HVACR equipment, air-conditioning equipment, self-contained and monoblock heat pumps, split systems, as well as mobile air conditioning and heat pumps in vehicles.

SEAC’s conclusion is not to recommend the previously proposed derogations on the use of PFAS in these applications on the grounds that the F-gas regulation already prohibits certain uses of f-gases which are also PFAS, while time-limited derogations are supported (to reduce emissions) for those F-gases which are exempted under the F-gas regulation for safety reasons.

Once both ECHA’s scientific committees have submitted their opinions, the restriction will be handed over to the European Commission, through a legislative procedure known as “Comitology”. Stakeholders can advocate the Commission and the national delegations via the REACH Committee. AREA will then resume discussions on a possible position on the future restriction regulation on PFAS substances.

REGULATION ESTABLISHING AN EU TALENT POOL

The Regulation establishing an EU Talent Pool was [published in the Official Journal](#) in May 2026, after almost three years of negotiations.

The new law sets out rules and procedures for the functioning of the IT platform underpinning the Talent Pool, which is defined as the first EU-wide tool facilitating recruitment of qualified third-country nationals to work in sectors identified as of strategic relevance for the EU labour market, through an automatic matching algorithm between vacancies in the EU and skilled non-EU candidates. Jobseekers can apply to openings (except for traineeships) on the work fields featured in the List of Union-wide shortage occupations, based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008 of the International Labour Office (ISCO-08). This list includes electrical and mechanical engineers, air conditioning and refrigeration mechanics, electricians, plumbers, and pipe fitters.

The Regulation allows for the set-up of [Talent Partnerships](#), namely bilateral arrangement on the development and validation of skills in a third country. The list of third countries and participating Member States taking part in a Talent Partnership will be made available soon.

Member States’ membership to the EU Talent Pool is voluntary. The United Kingdom requested to participate, while Denmark opted out.

This new tool represents a valuable opportunity for AREA members, including in the context of the partnerships.

LEGISLATIVE TRACKER

Initiative	Legislative milestones	AREA Activities
<p>Heating & Cooling Strategy</p> <p>Status: ACTIVE</p>	<p>Commission’s consultation: 20 August - 10 November 2025</p> <p>Next steps: Adoption by the Commission: 22 July 2026</p>	<p>AREA position paper: 20 November 2025</p>
<p>F-gas Regulation</p> <p>Status: ACTIVE</p>	<p>Commission proposal: 5 April 2022 European Parliament (EP) position: 30 March 2023 EU Council General Approach: 5 April 2023 Final agreement: 5 October 2023 EP adoption in Plenary of trilogue agreement: 16 January 2024 Council adoption of trilogue agreement: 29 January 2024 Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU: 7 February 2024 Implementing Act on certification and training mandated by Article 10 published: 6 September 2024</p>	<p>AREA reply to the public consultation: 24 December 2020 Reaction to the Commission proposal: 6 April 2022 AREA Position Paper on the F-gas Regulation: 24 August 2022 AREA proposal for amendments: 18 November 2022 AREA reaction to the EP position: 4 April 2023 AREA reply to public consultation on IA on certification and training: 10 June 2024 <i>Additional statements and joint letters are available on our website or upon request.</i> Numerous meetings with EU officials, MEPs, EP policy advisors, MSs representatives and stakeholders.</p>
<p>EU Talent Pool</p> <p>Status: COMPLETED</p>	<p>Commission proposal: 15 November 2023 Council General Approach: 13 June 2024 EP LIBE Committee position: 19 March 2025 Plenary adoption: 3 April First trilogue: 7 April Second trilogue: 24 September Third trilogue: 17 October Final trilogue: 18 November Publication in the OJEU: 29 April 2026</p>	

2025-2026 CALENDAR

CHILLVENTA	Chillventa	13-15 October 2026	Nuremberg
	AREA Autumn Meetings	16 October 2026	Nuremberg

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

RACC ASEAN 2026

Marco Buoni will represent AREA at the RACC ASEAN 2026 Technical Forum, scheduled for 1–2 July 2026 in Bangkok. Marco will speak within the framework of the Chillventa Global Network, providing updates on technical training, international standards and best practices in refrigeration.

Day 1 - Intelligent and Green Growth: Emerging Technologies and Market Transformation in the ASEAN Cooling Industry: The first day will focus on innovation, energy efficiency and the technological evolution of HVAC&R systems in tropical and fast-growing markets. Topics will include advanced thermal management for new energy applications and artificial intelligence, HVAC system optimisation in tropical climates, high-efficiency compressors and chillers, data centre cooling technologies, and the integration of heat pumps with HVAC systems and multi-energy storage solutions.

Day 2 - Carbon Neutrality and System Resilience: Sustainable Transition Pathways for the Global Cooling Industry: The second day will address the long-term sustainability of the cooling sector, with a focus on refrigerant management, low-GWP technologies, market access, carbon neutrality and resilient cold chain systems. Particular attention will be given to the full lifecycle of refrigerants, from leak prevention to recovery and reclamation, as well as to natural and eco-friendly refrigerant applications.

Extra Info: www.raccasean.com

Registration: www.raccasean.com/registration

AI Leads the Future

Marco Buoni

- Board Member, w/ International Affairs special mandate AREA (European Association of AREA Contractors) represents 25 National Associations from 22 EU Member Countries and beyond, 13,000 companies employing 110,000 people
- Secretary General, ATF (Italian Association of Refrigeration Technicians)
- Director General, Centro Studi Galileo (Training Provider)

Featured Speaker

2026 RACC ASEAN | Refrigeration & HVAC Technology Forum

July 1-3

PROJECTS

REAL ALTERNATIVES AND SKILLSAFE EU COLLABORATE TO STRENGTHEN SAFETY TRAINING IN THE HVACR SECTOR

The Real Alternatives project and SKILLSAFE EU are pleased to announce the launch of strategic collaboration aimed at enhancing safety training for professionals working with flammable refrigerants, with a particular focus on R290 heat pump systems.



This joint initiative reflects a shared commitment to supporting the safe and sustainable transition towards low-GWP refrigerants across Europe, by strengthening skills, improving accessibility to training, and promoting harmonised standards.

Building on an Established European Training Framework: With training materials available in over 20 languages and implemented in more than 20 countries, Real Alternatives has become a recognised reference framework for skills development and certification in the HVACR sector across Europe. Within this context, the integration of SKILLSAFE EU represents a natural evolution of the platform.

Integrating SKILLSAFE EU into the Real Alternatives Ecosystem: SKILLSAFE EU has developed a specialised training programme focused on the safe handling and use of R290 heat pump systems. Initially developed to be delivered as an in-person course, the programme will be further developed into a digital learning module through its integration into the Real Alternatives e-learning platform. This integration will enrich the existing training offer by adding dedicated safety content on flammable refrigerants, while leveraging an already structured and widely adopted learning environment.

Integration and Certification Alignment: By combining SKILLSAFE's focused expertise on R290 safety with the established infrastructure of Real Alternatives, the initiative will:

- strengthen access to high-quality training resources
- support consistent safety practices across different markets
- enhance the availability of flexible, multilingual learning pathways

Next steps: The central component of the collaboration will be the integration of SKILLSAFE training materials into the [Real Alternatives e-learning platform](#). In parallel, both projects will work towards aligning their certification approaches, with the objective of facilitating broader European recognition of acquired competences.

REAL ALTERNATIVES TRAIN THE TRAINER (TOT) SESSION IN IRELAND

From 11 to 15 May 2026, participants from across Europe gathered in Killybegs, Ireland, for a new Real Alternatives Train the Trainer (TOT) session hosted by ECAC, one of the most renowned European training providers and the Irish National Lead, and co-organised with ATF, the project management leader.



The event brought together trainers and experts for an intensive week dedicated to alternative refrigerants, practical training methodologies, and the future development of skills within the HVACR sector.

Read the full article at: <https://www.realalternatives.eu>

AREA AT THE EU–KOREA SEMINAR

On Wednesday 25 March 2026, the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Korea, as part of the EU-Korea Green Partnership, hosted an expert-level seminar on the reduction and management of F-gases.

Among the international speakers, Marco Buoni contributed remotely.



The seminar opened with institutional remarks from Ugo Astuto, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Korea, and Wang-jin Seo, Member of the Korean National Assembly, who highlighted the shared commitment to climate action and energy transition. Representatives from the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA) and the Korean Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment

(MCEE) then presented their respective policy frameworks and strategies for achieving climate neutrality.

With over 100 participants, the seminar addressed the application of F-gases in the HVAC-R and semiconductor sectors, focusing in particular on workforce training, technical certification, and technological solutions for emissions reduction. In this context, Marco Buoni’s contribution emphasised the European model of professional qualification and the crucial role of technical training in ensuring the safe and efficient use of alternative refrigerants.

The discussions also explored the challenges related to regulatory adaptation and industrial specificities, especially in the semiconductor sector, underlining the need to balance environmental sustainability with industrial competitiveness. A strong willingness emerged to further strengthen EU–Korea cooperation, with follow-up initiatives already under consideration for autumn 2026.

CHILLVENTA

WE'RE PART OF IT!



Nuremberg,
13–15.10.2026

CONNECTING EXPERTS



THIS NEWSLETTER IS RESERVED TO AREA MEMBERS. FOR ANY ENQUIRY, PLEASE CONTACT :

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