

Vision & Strategy 2020



**The Voice
of European Air-Conditioning,
Refrigeration
and Heat Pumps Contractors**

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Who are we?

The expert...

Our contractors design, install, service, maintain, repair and decommission refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump (RACHP) systems.

...unbiased...

RACHP contractors use every available solution with complete neutrality towards equipment and refrigerants, using both synthetic and natural fluids.

...and essential...

RACHP contractors operate with the sole aim of ensuring the highest level of reliability, energy efficiency and cost-effectiveness for their customers.

...link between manufacturers
and users of RACHP
equipment.

What are we?

AREA represents the interests of **20 national associations** from **17 European countries**, including more than **13,000 companies**, employing some **110,000 people** and with an annual turnover approaching **€23 billion**.

Our members are very small businesses with the average company employing 8 people and generating €1.8 million turnover.

Our profession is changing with technology moving at a rapid pace and a regulatory framework that has just been profoundly reshaped. Our core duty and fundamental objective is to embrace these changes whilst maintaining and developing our specificity and the high standard that is our trademark.

With this manifesto, we are presenting our midterm Vision & Strategy for a striving European RACHP contracting sector.

Our Challenges

A changing world

Increased use of alternative refrigerants

Use of refrigerants has always evolved with successive cycles: natural refrigerants, CFCs, HCFCs, HFCs. The EU has now taken the decision to phase down HFCs and other countries are in favour of such an approach at international level. This will result in an increased use of alternative refrigerants, both natural and a new generation of low GWP synthetic refrigerants, HFOs.

Central role of energy efficiency

In recent years, energy efficiency has become an essential requirement for customers. Indeed, the constant increase in energy prices, combined with the increased reliability of equipment, means that energy is often the major cost of the equipment throughout its lifetime.

More complex regulatory environment

The regulatory environment surrounding air conditioning, refrigeration and heat pumps has become larger, more varied and consequently more complex. Legislation is wide-ranging, whether linked to equipment and technology (energy performance of buildings, energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, pressure equipment, ecodesign) or substances (ozone depleting substances, fluorinated greenhouse gases).

New / alternative technologies

New refrigeration and cooling technologies (e.g. absorption, adsorption, evaporative cooling) are being developed. Although these are not yet mature enough to fully compete with more traditional solutions, one can expect to see their more widespread use on the market in the years to come.

An evolving job

Technical innovations

Refrigeration and air conditioning is a very innovative industry. This requires contractors to evolve and adapt constantly. For instance, the development of smart units (internet of things) will change after-sales services, whilst the growth of indirect systems and factory-sealed units will challenge the content of contractors' work.

Alternative refrigerants and safety

Alternative refrigerants – and notably the so-called “natural refrigerants” (ammonia, CO2 and hydrocarbons) – are coming back into fashion thanks to their low direct environmental impact and substantial improvements in their energy efficiency. Yet the safety issues they pose (toxicity, high pressure, suffocation, flammability) remain and call for the highest level of competence from contractors manipulating them.

Environmental protection

The emergence of synthetic refrigerants resulted in the increasing importance of environmental aspects in the work of contractors. This has led to a much stronger emphasis on leakage avoidance. Contractors work on the principle that the systems they design, install and maintain should be leak tight.

Energy efficiency

Energy consumption in use phase is a substantial part of the overall lifecycle cost of a RACHP system. Energy efficiency has therefore become a key driver in the choice of the appropriate system and refrigerant for a specific use. Contractors have fully integrated this aspect of their designs.

New technologies

The emergence of completely new RACHP technologies poses unprecedented challenges for contractors who may have to rethink their services in the future.

RACHP contractors must remain the indispensable link between manufacturers and users

— **High standards of competence**

— **Lifelong learning (education & training)**

— **Attract young people**

Our Vision & Strategy

1 • Promote sensible standards and regulations

The RACHP industry in general and the contracting sector in particular are heavily regulated. Whilst regulation can be a tool to ensure a level playing field and impose minimum competence standards, it must not obstruct the performance or development of our sector.

We will:

- > Monitor EU regulatory developments to defend and promote the interests of the European RACHP contracting sector
- > Provide guidance on the application of newly adopted legislation
- > Follow up relevant standardisation activities

2 • Set high-level education, training and competence standards on low GWP refrigerants

The emergence of low GWP refrigerants poses safety challenges that RACHP contractors will have to address. In the absence of a harmonised framework, it is AREA's duty to establish minimum education and training requirements to ensure the highest level of competence. Only then can we ensure safe handling of low GWP refrigerants.

We will work on high standards in the RACHP sectors through:

- > The continued promotion of our Guidance on minimum requirements for contractors' training & certification on low GWP refrigerants in EU Member States and the contracting sector in Europe and worldwide
- > Our involvement in the REAL Alternatives project, the aim of which is to develop training materials for improving workforce skills in alternative refrigerants in the refrigeration and air conditioning sector

3 • Promote energy efficiency

Energy efficiency is a key driver in refrigerant and system choice. RACHP contractors have an important role to play in guiding users on the right solution to suit their requirements.

We will work to:

- > Highlight efficiencies that can be gained at system level, in its design, operation, maintenance, etc.;
- > Ensure that energy efficiency remains a key issue in refrigerant policy at EU regulatory level

4 • Provide guidance on technological developments

The RACHP industry is extremely innovative and contractors must be able to evolve as technological developments emerge. AREA must anticipate these changes and provide contractors with assistance on how to approach these new technologies.

We will monitor technological developments and provide:

- > Guidance on new systems / new refrigerants
- > Guidance on new technologies

5 • Foster exchange of information and best practices

AREA brings together 20 national associations from 17 European countries, representing more than 13,000 companies (mainly small to medium sized enterprises), employing some 110,000 people. One of our missions is therefore to act as a forum for our members to exchange experience.

We will use our network to share information about:

- > Leakage avoidance
- > National programmes to attract young professionals
- > Lifelong learning programmes

6 • European & international cooperation

AREA cannot fulfil its mission in isolation. In order to achieve our objectives, it is essential that we ensure continued collaboration with our institutional partners, our industry colleagues and civil society representatives.

We will cooperate with:

- > Institutional stakeholders: EU, UNEP, UNIDO...
- > Industry and civil society stakeholders: EPEE, EHPA, Eurovent, Eurammon, ASHRAE, EIA...

Our Objectives

- > Work for sensible harmonised standards and regulations
- > Set education & training requirements to foster high-standard uniform qualifications and techniques
- > Promote energy efficiency in an environmentally responsible manner
- > Make recommendations and guidance on technical developments
- > Share information and promote best practices
- > Foster international cooperation at industrial and institutional levels



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