



**ANNUAL REPORT
2019**

**European Furniture Industries
Confederation**









European Furniture Industries Confederation

EFIC is the voice of the furniture industries in Europe. Founded in 2006 by seven national federations representing furniture producers, EFIC now represents more than the 70% of the total turnover of the industry. Our members come from national federations and single companies. We collaborate with many partners.

EFIC members strongly support the European project and values. We believe in the importance of working united for promoting a Furniture Grow Agenda. Most of the companies we represent are small, but with a big vision. We support a well-functioning EU Single Market, improved trade opportunities and sustainable & circular business models.

EU furniture industry in a snapshot

					
1 MILLION EMPLOYEES	120 THOUSAND ENTERPRISES, MAINLY SMEs	96 BILLION TURNOVER	25% OF WORLD FURNITURE PRODUCTION	40% OF TOTAL WORLD TRADE	25% OF WORLD FURNITURE CONSUMPTION

FOREWORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Mr Markus Wiesner (Wiesner-Hager)



Dear EFIC members,

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for the excellent collaboration over the year 2019. EFIC is a strong organisation in the Brussels arena and this is due to your commitment to the confederation, enthusiasm and excellent teamwork.

This year we have welcomed two new members in EFIC, the Latvian Association for Furniture Producers and the Irish Furniture and Wood Manufacturing Network, which will strengthen our confederation through a wider representation of the European furniture industries.

2019 has been an active and productive year for EFIC. We closely monitored the European Parliament elections and the nomination of the new European Commission and took the opportunity to ask for an interlocutor dedicated to the furniture and woodworking industries to be appointed in the Cabinet of Mr Thierry Breton, Commissioner for the Internal Market. EFIC also actively contributed to the creation of the Forest-Based Industries Vision for 2050, aiming at providing net zero carbon solutions by 2050.

Our Working Groups have made great progress as well. The Circular Economy WG has paved the way for a new EFIC Circular

Economy strategy 2.0, which will be finalised in 2020, has contributed to EU initiatives such as those on product policy and has strengthened collaboration with organisations representing suppliers.

The Technical WG has not rested either. Members were active on standardisation activities under the Machinery Directive and at international level, on the restriction dossier on formaldehyde and formaldehyde releasers, new Ecodesign and Labelling rules for light sources, TRIS notifications and market access cases.

Under the Social Dialogue umbrella, joint statements have been developed, new H&S initiatives have been followed and joint outreach to MEPs has been coordinated.

The Alliance of Flame Retardants Free Furniture has also been active in advocating for the removal of toxic flame retardants from furniture and for a harmonisation of flammability standards.

In 2020, we aim at building close relationships with newly elected MEPs and work tightly with the European Commission on new initiatives, including those under the Green Deal, to ensure that the furniture industry remains competitive and that companies operate under favourable conditions. I look forward to our fruitful cooperation over the next year.

EFIC MANIFESTO 2019-2024

2019 has been a year of many political changes in the European Union. EU citizens elected a new EU Parliament for the term 2019-2024 and a new European Commission was established. The EFIC Manifesto 2019-2024 outlines the main demands of the European furniture industries for the new term with the aim to boost the competitiveness of furniture producers. The Manifesto was widely distributed among EU contacts.

EUROPEAN FURNITURE INDUSTRIES MANIFESTO EU TERM 2019-2024

1.

HARMONISATION AND A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD IN THE EU INTERNAL MARKET

EFIC believes that untapped potential exists for European SMEs and that clear and easy legal requirements are essential. Companies operating in the furniture sector are faced with a number of obstacles within the EU internal market, which hinders them from focusing their power on exports.

2.

HARMONISED STANDARDS AND CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT AT EU & INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The furniture industry should be regarded as a key player in the development of standards affecting the sector. In addition to harmonised EU standards, EFIC highlights the need for standards and conformity assessment at European & international level to be harmonised as well.

3.

FAIR AND FREE INTERNATIONAL TRADE

EFIC highlights that rules-based trade and cooperation are key. Removing obstacles to trade not only within the EU internal market but also towards third countries, as well as avoiding new trade barriers is of outmost importance to boost the involvement of our smart and agile SMEs in the international market.

4.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND NON-TOXIC ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

EFIC calls on the EU to advance the Circular Economy agenda and to establish harmonious, smart and simple, but at the same time effective regulations to implement a circular economy.

5.

SKILLED WORK FORCE

EFIC highlights that shortage of skilled labour force is a challenge for the furniture sector and believes that education programmes and digitalization are important drivers to help tackling the matter.

6.

ENHANCING DEVELOPMENT OF FURNITURE INDUSTRY

Furniture production is driven by innovation and R&D, design and digitalization. As such, EFIC would welcome concrete proposals in these areas, as well as financial support, especially for SMEs, for innovative design and product development.

EFIC WORKING GROUPS

Circular Economy WG

The circularity of the EU economy needs to be increased to preserve the environment and to achieve a climate-neutral continent, by stimulating markets for circular products and services. To this end, the use of resources needs to be optimized, to reduce the environmental footprint of the EU economy and the generation of waste.

The European furniture industry welcomes EU initiatives on Circular Economy, focusing on the entire lifecycle of products, sustainable product policies, measures to empower consumers, to reduce waste generation, to foster an integrated internal market for secondary raw materials, to tackle the skills needs for the transition to a circular economy and to support companies and SMEs via innovation and investment opportunities. The European furniture industry strongly supports the transition to a circular economy and is ready to be involved in making it a reality.



The EFIC Circular Economy WG established 3 main priorities: raising awareness among companies on the opportunities that the transition to circularity brings and collecting best practices; collaborating with organisations representing suppliers, such as wood, textile or foam producers, to understand their challenges related to circularity; and actively contributing to initiatives of the European Commission, such as those on product policy and the interface between chemical product and waste legislation. The WG also paved the way for a brand new EFIC Circular Economy strategy 2.0 which will be finalised in 2020.

Many challenges and opportunities are ahead of us. The European Green Deal and the new Circular Economy Action Plan expected in 2020 will be a good framework to tackle these. Harmonisation of circular economy rules is key, together with a value chain approach, clear definitions and a common language for all players, a realistic transition and dialogue with other stakeholders. In 2020 EFIC will work closely with the European Commission to address the above.

EFIC WORKING GROUPS

Technical WG



In 2019, EFIC followed closely the developments on the Machinery Directive, contributed to the public consultation on its revision and provided comments to the Guide on the application of the Directive, contributing successfully to amending the Guide. EFIC was also actively involved in the development of an IEC standard on electrically motorized furniture through the involvement of an external expert financed by the confederation. EFIC also proposed to the European Commission to mandate CEN with the creation of a harmonised standard for electrically motorised furniture under the Machinery Directive. The development of such European standard is ongoing and EFIC has again financed a technical external expert to work on the project in order to bring in the expertise of the furniture sector.

EFIC followed closely the restriction proposal of ECHA for formaldehyde and formaldehyde releasers in mixtures and articles for consumer uses and contributed to the public consultations, calling for a need for harmonised emission limits in the EU.

EFIC participates on a regular basis in the Market Access Advisory Committee (MAAC) hosted by DG TRADE. Throughout 2019 (and the years before) concerns were raised, as an example, on TBT China 1094-1095-1096, three standards on wood-based furniture, sofas and mattresses, notified by China to the WTO in 2015, posing a restriction to trade. EFIC, together with IKEA of Sweden and the European Commission, have been able to influence the process and the standards will be revised.

Other countries that EFIC monitored throughout 2019 for potential market access barriers are the United States, Lebanon, India, Russia, among others. EFIC has also monitored the negotiations of free trade agreements with Australia, New Zealand and Vietnam, to name a few.

Other files the WG worked on included a notification by Greece on legislation for children furniture, the implementation of the WEEE2 Directive in the EU Member States and the new Ecodesign and Labelling requirements on light sources from December 2019.

EFIC WORKING GROUPS

Social Dialogue



EFIC participates in the EU Social Dialogue together with the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) and the European Confederation of Woodworking Industries (CEI-Bois). Social Partners meet regularly across the year to discuss priorities in the wood and furniture sectors, from both the employers' and employees' perspective. Three Social Dialogue meetings were held in 2019: in March, May and October.

A new work programme was adopted for the term 2020-2024, focusing on the main priorities of Social Partners, including Industry Policy, Circular Economy and a non-toxic environment strategy, improving the functioning of the labour market, particularly through better training and education programs, Health and Safety initiatives and fostering better Industrial Relations.

Other initiatives included a joint statement on flame retardants (ECHA proposal to restrict TCEP, TCP and TDCP), the Wood Dust Conference organised in May 2019 aimed at discussing how to implement new OELs for wood dust, the third revision of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive, setting new OELs for formaldehyde, a joint paper on digitalisation and a request to the European Social and Economic Committee to prepare a report on the competitiveness of the furniture sector, among others.

EFIC is a partner in the Sawyer project, led by CENFIM, which looks at how circularity will affect the furniture sector and related skills needs by 2030.

In 2020, Social Partners will be busy with actions under the Green Deal, new OSH initiatives, the Skills Agenda, flame retardants and joint outreach to the European Parliament, to name a few.



The Alliance for Flame Retardant Free Furniture

‘A safe fire safety is possible’



This is the slogan of the Alliance for Flame Retardant Free Furniture, created by EFIC in 2016 and gathering stakeholders such as environmental and health NGOs, industry, cancer organisations, fire fighters and labour unions.

The Alliance shares and stresses a common concern about the implications deriving from the presence of toxic flame retardant chemicals in furniture. The Alliance advocates for the elimination of toxic flame retardants in furniture products and calls for harmonised testing methods in Europe, at a level where flame retardants are not required.

The United Kingdom and Ireland have the most stringent regulations in place for domestic furniture and flame retardants are needed in order to comply with the flammability tests. For the contract market, standards are not harmonised either.

Throughout 2019, the Alliance monitored closely the developments in the UK, namely the new approach of the authorities on the applicable Regulations and the report by the UK Parliamentary EAC urging the Government to not further stall on taking action and on the revision of the Furniture Fire Safety Regulations.

A new Alliance policy paper was issued in November 2019, reminding EU authorities and stakeholders of the negative impacts of toxic flame retardants in furniture. Alternatives exist and many flame retardants have been documented to be toxic for human health, increasing fire toxicity, but also for the environment, hampering therefore a real circular economy.

EFIC releases on a quarterly basis a newsletter with main new studies and findings concerning the negative effects of the use of flame retardants.

IS YOUR SOFA TREATED WITH TOXIC CHEMICALS?

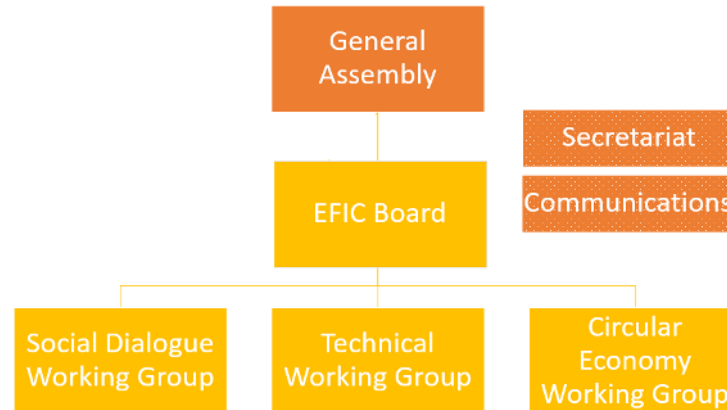
Today, toxic flame retardants are found all around the planet – from arctic and marine ecosystems to your very own home and office. They build up in our bodies, and are linked to cancer, hormonal disruption, decreased fertility, neurological impairments, lower birth weight and a range of other health and developmental problems. Many scientific studies show that flame retardant chemicals pollute the environment and contaminate the food chain. Evidence of any meaningful improvement in fire safety from the use of flame retardants in furniture is lacking, while they can increase smoke toxicity.

Is the risk worth it?

Get the facts ▾

More about EFIC

EFIC structure



EFIC is:

- ❖ Member of European Commission Forest-based Industries Expert Group
 - ❖ Member of European Commission Machinery Working Group
- ❖ Participant in the European Commission Market Access Advisory Committee
 - ❖ Social Partner in the European Social Dialogue for Wood and Furniture
 - ❖ Observer in the European Commission Ecolabelling Board
 - ❖ Registered stakeholder with the European Chemical Agency

EFIC members





EFIC

European Furniture Industries Confederation



Creativity



Innovation



Design

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