



European Furniture Industries Confederation

Commissioner Thierry Breton
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Brussels, 20 May 2020

Dear Commissioner Breton,

The COVID-19 economic crisis is affecting the furniture sector in a more than significant way.

The picture of uncertainty linked to the pandemic and the contextual measures of restriction on mobility have forced our member associations to postpone international fairs, an essential tool for supporting exports.

To take one example, the cancellation of the Salone del Mobile.Milano for the first time in sixty years since its establishment, is a serious blow for the entire furniture and design sector. The fair attracts over 380 000 people every year: architects, designers and visitors from over 170 countries from all over the world carrying business opportunities for Italian and European companies. Due to its importance, our Italian member FederlegnoArredo have already scheduled the 2021 edition of the Salone, which will coincide with the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Salone del Mobile.Milano. Together with other important furniture fairs like the immcologne in Germany or events in France and Sweden, e.g., these trade fairs are vital for the sector and will have a big impact on the business of the furniture industry in Europe.

SMEs see trade fairs as a strategic lever for accessing international markets. In the face of a necessary reduction of travels of buyers and international operators, fairs remain a unique opportunity to balance demand and offer.

For this reason, we believe that the European Commission's strong commitment to supporting European businesses is essential, starting with the definition of specific financial instruments to support SMEs participating in international fairs. Specifically, I would like to encourage the Commission to repeat, with a specific financial line, the "call for tender" dedicated to the participation of SMEs in international trade fairs already included in the COSME Work Program of the year 2016¹. This pilot project, even if some improvements are still required, could represent a first and very effective response to the needs of companies.

We remain at your disposal for any further information.

With my best regards,
Markus Wiesner, EFIC President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Markus Wiesner', is placed to the right of the typed name.

¹ EASME/COSME/2016/003
<https://etendering.ted.europa.eu/cft/cft-display.html?cftId=1404>