

EFIC 2024 Furniture Days brings together members to address furniture industry priorities for the EU elections and beyond

Press release – Brussels 12 June 2024 - European Furniture industry representatives gathered on 11 & 12 in Antwerp for the EFIC Furniture Days 2024, the confederation’s annual gathering, to take stock of and discuss about the market situation in the furniture industry, key EU files such as the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, the outcome of the European Parliament elections and the opportunities of unlocking Artificial Intelligence in the furniture sector.

On 11 June, the EFIC Board discussed the priorities and recommendations set out in the [EFIC Manifesto 2024-2029 for a competitive European furniture industry](#), as well as outreach at European and national level.

Firstly, the EU must remain a competitive continent globally. For our industry to thrive, we need harmonised legislation, a holistic approach on circular economy to fully close the loop, a level playing field for all products and operators, free but rules-based international trade, as well as protecting design and addressing the skills gap and labour shortages. Providing support to SMEs is also key. EFIC looks forward to collaborating with policymakers and partners in this context.

In a session dedicated mainly to Circular Economy, the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) remained at the top of the agenda. Members heard about the steps taken by the dedicated Working Group to start preparing for the future delegated act on furniture, which could become applicable in the sector towards the end of 2028 if furniture is indeed among the very first product priorities for which product specific legislation will be developed via delegated acts.

EFIC is in close contact with the relevant units in the European Commission to anticipate the industry’s views and to inform of standardisation activities in CEN TC 207 accompanying the ESPR. To prepare furniture companies, EFIC created a guidance document with key questions and answers, with the intention to have the industry familiarised with the ESPR concepts well in time in view of the future sector-specific rules.

Other key topics touched upon were the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and the challenges for its implementation as the necessary tools are not ready, the need for harmonised Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes across the EU to ensure that valuable materials are not wasted, as well as the European Chemical Agency (ECHA) guidance document accompanying the Regulation on formaldehyde and formaldehyde releasers from articles and the EFIC involvement in the ECHA expert group with the aim to provide practical solutions from the furniture industry’s side.

Members also received an update on the outcome of the [FurnCircle project](#) massive survey on circularity, which aims to track the furniture industry’s progress on adopting circular practices. Last but not least, as the transition to a more circular economy will have an impact on skills needs, members were reminded of the recent [Social Partners joint statement on skills needs](#) with recommendations for all actors involved (EU and national social partners, Vocational Education and Training – VET providers, companies) to tackle this challenge.

After an overview of EFIC advocacy activities and coalition building over the past year on a number of EU policy files, members had the chance to first hear from Alessandra Tracogna of CSIL about the market evolution in the industry after Covid-19 and an outlook for the next years.



Doru Frantescu (EU Matrix) spoke about the outcome of the European Parliament elections, policy expectations for the next years and trends and implications for the Public Affairs community, as well as next steps after the elections.

Thierry Moubax (AI Compass) gave a keynote speech on how to unlock the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the industry and the impact of generative AI with specific uses in the furniture industry, touching about sustainability, design, skills needs and expected changes in tasks.

On 12 June, members were welcomed for a company visit at Van Hoescke, Belgian company distributing hinges, lift systems and drawer systems. Members heard about the efforts of Van Hoescke to adapt to sustainability trends and circular design and to anticipate future changes under for example the ESPR - including the product passport and insights on industry readiness for this tool, among others.

Edi Snaidero, EFIC President said:

'It is a crucial point in time for our industry considering that ecodesign requirements will be soon developed at EU level for our industry. We will continue working at EFIC level to provide first-hand sector expertise to policymakers, as well as to prepare the industry for the changes to come, in order to remain competitive. It is true that we are in times of uncertainty and the industry has experienced downturn due to external circumstances, however the circular economy can bring new business opportunities if the requirements are appropriate and feasible and companies are given enough time to adapt.'

EFIC is the European Furniture Industries Confederation, representing over 70% of the total turnover of the European Furniture Industries, a sector employing 1 million people in about 120.000 enterprises across the EU and generating a turnover of over 100 billion Euros. The EFIC membership is composed of 18 national associations, one individual company member and several clusters. Further information can be found on our website: <https://www.efic.eu/>

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