



Press Release

**EFIC high-level conference on “Circular Economy and the Furniture Sector”:
preparing an ambitious and concrete path towards circularity in the furniture sector.**

EFIC – the European Furniture Industries Confederation – organised the conference on 27 June 2017 with the scope to draw the attention to specific challenges and opportunities seen by the European furniture industries in the implementation of the Circular Economy.



The Audience - Photo by Jon Thys/TT

The Conference saw a big public participation and EFIC is glad to have celebrated its 10th Anniversary with a large audience of furniture manufacturers, industries' representatives, NGOs, European Institutions' representatives and other experts in environmental issues. The event gave them the opportunity to discuss and share views, experiences and best practices on Circular Economy and the Furniture Sector in what has been recognised as a very successful event.

The event also showed the strength and close cooperation between EU institutions and stakeholders active in Brussels. Especially when it comes to strategic policy areas, this event give a fundamental chance to directly engage with policy makers and EFIC has successfully reach its main objective.

We believe that a real circular economy should be achieved by engaging the main actors of a possible change: industries. The EU is already making a great effort but we think that additional steps must be made and today is a great occasion to directly discuss with policy maker how to lay a leading role in driving a circular change.



EFIC President, **Mr. Markus Wiesner**, clearly stated how furniture producers are committed to implement circular economy principles, but at the same time listed a number of preconditions needed in order to move from theory to practice. The same vision was shared by **Mr. Paolo Fantoni**, EPF President, who stressed on the need of having shared responsibilities in the implementation process:

EFIC President - Mr. Markus Wiesner

For our companies, the circular economy is already a reality but we need to do more and the panel industry is already investing in new manufacturing technologies. On the other hand, a transition to circularity is not realistic without a joint effort of consumers, local and National authorities and the European Community as a whole.

During the conference the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) presented some results of an ongoing study on circular economy in the furniture sector, which will be published in the upcoming weeks. **Mr. Carsten Wachholz** argued that appropriate policy levers can counter current constraints with increased repair, remanufacture and recycling, allowing gross value added for business, reduced impacts to the environment and job creation in Europe:

There are market failures to be addressed both on the supply and the demand side. Our study identified key interventions and explored potential policy options that would help the EU furniture market move towards greater circularity.

For Zero Waste Europe, **Mr. Joan Marc Simon** stressed on some general consideration with regard to the waste management, which is a core matter for the Circular Economy Strategy. He also said that a system to manage furniture for their reuse is currently missing:

We need to re-inject furniture into the market based on toxic-free products and traceability. This goal can only be reached by a thorough rethinking of businesses model.

This is crucial for the furniture sector because transforming waste into new resources is both a sustainable and innovative business solution.

Many companies from different European countries were present to talk about their success stories in implementing circular economy strategies in their businesses. **OFFECCT**, **Kvist** and **Kubedesign** presented their “best practices” and showed their way to produce circular furniture from different perspectives: choosing suitable materials, setting the right design of their products, providing after-sales services and components.

In the panel discussion on challenges and existing obstacles, **Mr. Robin Ljungar** made clear which elements can make a circular business model convenient and, at the same time, he listed some obstacles for furniture producers implementing circularity.

The concept of upgrading may be a challenge or may be a possible opportunity.

How can we change, repair or modify the pieces of furniture? In the future, we should probably start thinking about new business models, like circular flow of components rather than circular flow of furniture.



EFIC Board member Mr. Egil Sundet presenting the Case for Flame Retardant Free Furniture



EFIC President Mr. Markus Wiesner together with EFIC Secretariat: Ms. Roberta Dessi and Mr. Manfredi Marchese



Mr. Ado Lõhmus representing the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU

Additionally, EFIC Board member, **Mr. Egil Sundet**, presented “The Case for Flame Retardant Free Furniture”: a clear case of obstacle to circular economy shared by a broad and unique alliance of industries, NGOs, trade unions and firefighters’ representatives.

Regarding the European Institutions’ perspective, both the European Commission representatives, **Ms. Karolina D’Cunha** and **Mr. Mattia Pellegrini**, and the upcoming Estonian Presidency, represented by **Mr. Ado Lõhmus**, showed a strong commitment to the cause of circular economy as well as a great interest in listening to the furniture producers’ point of view. The European Commission – and in particular DG ENV and DG GROW – has been continuously encouraging an ambitious implementation of the circular economy and their presence at the EFIC conference was a strong proof of their commitment.

In the closing session, **Mr. Ado Lõhmus** briefly explained how he will be leading the work of the Council on Circular Economy and Environmental issues starting on 1st July and he also highlighted some of the Estonian Presidency’s priorities related to the circular economy implementation. He also stressed on the need to engage stakeholders in the current political and technical discussion in order to draft:

“...concrete ideas and make the solutions happen. Policy decisions must take into account stakeholders’ views and practical knowledge. We need a strong support from the industry and we need to work together to tackle problems trying to find the best way to promote sustainable business opportunities”.

A final report from the conference will be published by EFIC Secretariat in the upcoming weeks. Please, contact info@efic.eu if you are interested in having more information.

About EFIC

EFIC – the European Furniture Industries Confederation - is the voice of the jointly united European Furniture Industries.

EFIC was founded in 2006 by seven national federations representing the furniture industries in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and Turkey and it was later joined by Portugal, Sweden, Austria, Russia and Norway. Furthermore, Hungary, the Netherlands and France joined EFIC in 2015.

EFIC now represents more than the 70% of the total turnover of the furniture industries in Europe.

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