

Press release: Committed circular design paves the way for circular economy - the Furniture Industries' perspective

Brussels, 20 November 2020 – On 18 November 2020, close to 200 participants gathered in a webinar hosted by EFIC on ‘Circular Design for Furniture’, an initiative aimed at bringing policymakers, industry representatives and other actors together to discuss the potential of circular design in the transition of the furniture industries towards a more circular economy.

The webinar was launched by the remarks of Markus Wiesner, EFIC President. *‘We are fully aligned with the European Commission’s goals on circular economy and we encourage furniture companies to look at circular economy as an opportunity’*, he said. He also stressed the importance of taking a holistic approach, ensuring a level playing field and harmonisation of rules at EU level.

Paola Migliorini, Deputy Head of Unit in the Sustainable Production, Products and Consumption Unit of DG Environment in the European Commission, recalled that furniture was identified as a priority product group in the Circular Economy Action Plan and gave an overview of the legislative proposals that are expected, including the upcoming sustainable products initiative expected at the end of 2021.

The webinar continued with an exciting panel discussion between Omar Degoli and Robin Ljungar, chair and co-chair of the EFIC Circular Economy Working Group. *‘Furniture is well suited for circular economy and our sector is in the position to contribute to the European Green Deal and the UN Sustainable Development Goals via circular economy’*, said Robin Ljungar. Optimising the use of resources and creating customer value are crucial contributions that the furniture industries can make. Different business models based on reuse, repair and refurbishment services show that circular economy is an opportunity for the furniture Industries. *‘We are on the right track in adapting to circularity and we already see a shift in companies’ mindsets’*, said Omar Degoli.

The webinar was animated by the audience’s engagement in open questions, such as on main drivers to circularity in the furniture sector. Attendees stressed that demand from customers for more circular products and services, followed by specific regulatory drivers such as Green Public Procurement and Ecodesign rules are some of the most important elements to boost circularity in the furniture sector.

Concerning challenges in the path to circularity, the linearity of regulations, the conflict between resource efficiency and legislation on toxic free environment and limitations in the waste legislation were mentioned. Finally the following elements were stressed: the importance of developing a solid common platform for GPP, a flexible framework with clear goals, harmonised and aligned initiatives at EU level, a structured dialogue with the industry, a level playing field, solid market surveillance and a holistic approach across different legislations.

Industry representatives Christian Lodgaard (Flokk), Malin Nordin (Inter IKEA), Holger Hanhardt (Hartmann Möbelwerke GmbH) and Maria Porro (Porro S.P.A) debated the role of circular design in a second panel discussion and brought in their companies’ experiences. When panelists were asked to share their views on what businesses need to flourish in a circular economy, they stressed innovation, thinking out of the box, collaboration with different partners, creating a framework where companies can compete on sustainability performance on an equal footing and the need of promoting the circular logic and harmonisation.

Gabriella Kemendi, EFIC Secretary General, closed the webinar by presenting the main take-away messages from the discussion, encouraging companies to embrace circularity and use it to their advantage, calling for collaboration and harmonised circular economy rules at EU level and on policymakers to rely on industry expertise in the process of creating legislation. She wrapped-up by thanking all panelists and participants for the insightful webinar.

The recording of the webinar is now available on the [EFIC website](https://www.efic.eu/).

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