

CIRCULAR FURNITURE

IN THE EMR REGION

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Introduction

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This publication is part of an Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine project. Under the name Wanderful.stream (2020 - 2023), eight organizations in the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion are pooling their knowledge, strengths and resources to help small and medium-sized businesses with their transition to the circular economy.

Wanderful.stream provides free advice and support to businesses in the recovery of waste and residual flows. In addition, the project initiates and facilitates the co-creation of circular prototypes, in collaboration with experts in technology, design and business development.

This publication, which is part of a series of thematic publications on the various waste streams of SMEs in the Meuse-Rhine region, is intended to provide an overview of the current

situation (problems, needs and opportunities) within the furniture sector when it comes to implementing circular economy.

The intention is not to provide an exhaustive overview, but rather to serve as a source of inspiration for all SMEs, designers, technology specialists and users with an interest in the furniture sector.

The content of this publication is a summary of the various talks given by industry experts at a conference organized by Wallonie Design and Fedustria in partnership with Eklo, Wood.be and Mobitec in October 2022.

HOW TO USE



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Context

Climate change and socio-economic inequalities confirm that our economic system and disposable culture can no longer function. Yet **most products are still designed according to a linear model** : after a short period of use, products (sometimes even still functional) end up in landfill or incineration. Unfortunately, the furniture sector is no exception.

In 2017, 10 million tonnes of furniture were discarded by businesses and consumers in EU member states every year, the majority destined for landfill or incineration.



The European furniture industry is also facing a variety of economic (increased demand for low-priced items, rising raw material and labor costs, competition from emerging markets) and regulatory challenges that are putting further pressure on companies in the sector.

Circular economy strategies have the potential to help these companies counter these challenges and move towards more sustainable modes of production. Repair, refurbishment and remanufacturing enable value recovery, economic growth and job creation, while saving resources and the environment.

However, **the transition from a linear to a circular approach implies major changes at both micro and macro levels, from the development of processes limiting the value loss of products, to the implementation of business model innovations.** And last but not least, the transition to circularity above all involves **working at the level of the company's value chain** (and not just on products). In other words, we need to consider the opportunities offered by the circular economy in terms of sourcing, raw material processing, production, storage and transport, right through to the end of the product's life.

These challenges are highly complex, and require the cooperation of a wide range of expertise, including business, design and technical/technological skills.

New regulations to support the circular transition

1. EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

In France, Extended Producer Responsibility is based on **the "polluter pays" principle**: companies are responsible for the entire life cycle of their products, from design to end-of-life. Today, the aim of the EPR system is no longer simply to treat the waste generated, but also **to prevent** it, in particular by promoting eco-design and extending the lifespan of these products, as well as supporting repair and re-use. In Belgium, for certain waste streams, the law obliges the producer or importer to take back waste from the products it has placed on the market, with a view to ensuring efficient management and achieving reuse and recovery targets. To date, the only products relevant to the furniture sector are used mattresses.

3. THE DIGITAL PASSPORT

The new "digital product passport" will provide **information on the environmental sustainability of products**. It should help consumers and companies to make informed choices when purchasing products, facilitate repairs and recycling, and improve the transparency of product life-cycle impacts on the environment. The product passport should also help public authorities to carry out checks and controls more effectively.

2. THE ECO-DESIGN DIRECTIVE

The proposal for a new regulation on the eco-design of sustainable products, published in March 2022, aims to go beyond the energy consumption of products and include eco-design requirements to improve their circularity, energy performance (possibility of reuse, improvement and repair of products; presence of substances that hinder circularity; carbon footprint, information requirements, including a digital product passport).

Resources

TALKS

"THE FURNITURE SECTOR FACES THE CHALLENGE OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY"

On October 4, 2022 a conference was held on the theme of circular economy in the furniture sector.

Experts: **Dominique Amodei** (Mobitec), **Geneviève Le Clercq** (Kewlox), **Frederik Delbart** (Frederik

Delbart Design Studio), **Thomas Lommée** (OpenStructures) and **Sara Boxus** (Wallonie Design).



LITERATURE

- **EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU** : Circular Economy opportunities in the furniture sector
<https://eeb.org/library/circular-economy-opportunities-in-the-furniture-sector/>
- **EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE** : The European Furniture Industry – Its Recovery towards an Innovative, Green and Circular Economy
<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/european-furniture-industry-its-recovery-towards-innovative-green-and-circular-economy>
- **FURN 360** : Circular Economy in the Furniture Industry : Overview of Current Challenges and Competences Needs
<https://www.furn360.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Circular-economy-in-the-furniture-industry-11092018.pdf>
- **FEDUSTRIA**, L'économie circulaire vue par Fedustria
<https://www.fedustria.be/fr/projecten/visie-fedustria-aangaande-circulaire-economie>
- **Design Wanted** : 6 circular design strategies to follow when designing furniture
<https://designwanted.com/circular-design-strategies-furniture/>
- **WALLONIE DESIGN** : Vers une industrie du meuble plus durable ?
<https://walloniedesign.be/nos-actions/ameublement-durabilite/>

ONLINE TRAINING

- **FURN 360** : L'économie circulaire appliquée à l'ameublement
<https://www.ecores.eu/2020/10/22/leconomie-circulaire-appliquee-a-lameublement/>



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URL LINKS

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DISCLAIMER

This overview was drawn up by a team from the Sustainable Resources Expertise Centre, which took full responsibility for the content and conclusions of the overview. The expertise centre is part from the University College of Leuven-Limburg (UCLL), headquartered at at Agoralaan, building B, bus 1, 3590 Diepenbeek, Belgium.

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