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**PRESS KIT FURNITURE FAIR 2018**

*2018 was a difficult year for the furniture trade, both in the Belgian industry and beyond. And although this has had some impact on this edition of the Brussels Furniture Fair, the trade fair is more or less fully booked. The number of exhibitors has actually gone up, although as a whole they are taking up a somewhat smaller surface area. Overall the result is a sight to behold: once again, exhibitors are going to great lengths to create beautiful stands and – even more importantly – to come up with attractive and innovative collections. This illustrates the important role that Brussels plays in the European trade fair landscape.*

**European trade fair**

The Brussels Furniture Fair is a European trade fair. In terms of both exhibitors and visitors, we are primarily focused on Europe, with first and foremost Belgium and our neighbouring countries. And yet in 2017, our visitors came from no fewer than 38 different countries.

In recent years, the trade fair has attracted around 20,000 visitors. In addition to Belgium, these chiefly come from the Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, Germany and Great Britain. But the Furniture Fair also holds appeal for other European countries. Many of our visitors hail from Switzerland and Scandinavia, for example. This interest from abroad is primarily due to the broad and high-quality offering on display at the fair, with exhibitors from 24 countries. In Belgium, the cultures from Northern and Southern Europe come together. This sometimes leads to inter-community friction, but it is also a strength. The manufacturers here speak the language of a wide audience of buyers, and this also translates into the collections that are showcased at the Furniture Fair. Moreover, Belgian manufacturers are traditionally very export-oriented. Indeed, the Belgian market alone is too small for them to be able to operate profitably. As a small country, Belgium boasts a significant furniture industry.

This year we play host to 99 Belgian exhibitors. That is 6 fewer than in 2017. In some cases, this is a direct consequence of the difficult internal market in 2018, which led to several manufacturers having to close their doors. Attendance from the Netherlands is on the rise. This year there are 8 more Dutch stands than last year, bringing the total to 75. This makes them far and away the most important foreign delegation. Italy is also well represented, with 19 exhibitors – 1 more than the previous edition. There are 6 fewer exhibitors from Germany this year, bringing the total to 14. France is gaining importance and with 3 extra stands this year, now equals Germany’s total. Finally, there are 10 more stands from other countries, 7 of which are coming from outside Europe. Overall there are 10 more names on the exhibitors’ list than in 2017.

If we look at the rented surface area, then the order remains the same. The Belgians are taking up almost 46% of the surface area. They are followed by the Netherlands with 23.5%, and Italy with 8.5%. Germany and France have the same number of stands, but in terms of surface area Germany is double the size. The two countries represent 6 and 3% of the total respectively. The remaining countries are taking up 13% of the surface area. A total of just under 10% less surface area has been rented than last year. This can chiefly be felt in Hall 6. Overall, the surface area is roughly the same as in 2016.

This year there are 76 new exhibitors, as opposed to 71 who are staying away. These represent almost 30% of the total number, which means that there will be a lot of new things to see at this edition!

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|  | **Number** | **% Total** | **% Surface Area** |
| **Belgium** | 99 | 43.04 | 45.90 |
| **The Netherlands** | 75 | 32.61 | 23.45 |
| **Italy** | 19 | 8.26 | 8.46 |
| **Germany** | 14 | 6.09 | 6.13 |
| **France** | 14 | 6.09 | 3.09 |
| **Other** | 47 | 3.91 | 12.98 |
| **TOTAL** | **268** |  |  |

**A peak behind the figures**

Tables of figures illustrate broad trends, but hide the underlying details that are sometimes more interesting. Such as which manufacturers are not attending and which are new, for example. In Hall 3, Natuzzi, Willi Schillig and Neococoon are the most significant absentees. The first two of these do not come to Brussels every year, but Neococoon had been a loyal exhibitor at the fair for years. Sadly, it ceased trading shortly after the summer period. In Hall 4, Nolte, Express Möbel and Dekimpe are absent this year, as are Furninova, which only comes every other year, and a number of smaller stands. Confortuxe is moving from Hall 9 to Hall 5, and is bringing the furniture factory Lievens with it. We have also created a little more room at the entrance to the fair in order to be able to bid visitors a warmer welcome. We have therefore asked Moome to integrate their stand into the Mecam Group’s large stand. Brussels by Night in Hall 6 has not had an easy time this year. Many manufacturers are not attending this time round, including Boone, Van Houdt, Kreamat, Avek, M-Line, Serta, Perzona and Norma. Some of it has to do with the difficulties some important manufacturers are undergoing. In order to maintain the quality, we have opted to make the hall a little bit smaller rather than to fill it up with cheap imports. Here we have also integrated the modest Hospitality World, a platform aimed at furnishing hotels, restaurants B&Bs and (holiday) apartments. This places an additional spotlight on contract furnishings at the fair.

In Hall 8, the key absentees are Pro Arte, which is going through a relaunch, KDB Furn, which has ceased trading, and Bodilson. Together with a number of smaller stands that are staying away, and other exhibitors that are renting a smaller surface area, a considerable surface area became free here. This allowed us to redesign the hall with somewhat smaller stands and thus to concentrate the decoration offering in this hall in Boutique. In the Patio, Bert Plantagie and Adelmund are staying away. Finally, in Hall 9, Kretschmar, Motard, Kolorado and Bellus will be absent this year.

As previously mentioned, we will of course be welcoming new exhibitors too. In Hall 3, these are the sitting room manufacturers Altoni and New Trend Concept, and the cupboard manufacturer Mobilgam from Italy. WR Inspired will be exhibiting original furniture from Belgium, and Tommy M will be presenting sofas from Germany. Burov Leleu from France manufactures sofas and armchairs, Mark Oliver from Romania is particularly known for its tables, and Dizzconcept from Croatia will be coming with a comprehensive solution for small spaces. In addition, students from three colleges will also be presenting their graduation projects.

Many new names can be found in Hall 4. For example, there is Gyllos with chairs, and Kitwood, Laïc and Sarris with furniture from Greece. From the Netherlands, Bijnen, DS Meubel, Releazz, Hartman Indoor, No Limits Furniture, JR Furniture and Zitzz will be enhancing the offering in the hall. Italy has two new exhibitors in Hall 4: Albea and Terraneo. Gorbe is coming from Spain, Vilmers from Latvia, and Steinpol will be coming from Poland to Brussels for the first time.

In Brussels by Night in Hall 6, we will also find some exciting newcomers, including mattress manufacturer Duvatex, beautiful bed linen from Belgian firms De Witte Lietaer and Mia Zia, ecological sleeping from Canada and box springs and a collection of sofas by Martell from Greece, Redcorner Beds from Poland, Axbro with feet for box springs from Romania, and Viatrio with a measuring system from Austria. In Hospitality World, Design Studio Zürich from Switzerland and Serenité from Monaco are new.

With the new exhibitors in Hall 8, our aim with Boutique is partly to appeal to new potential visitors, namely those from interior design shops. In addition, there are also a number of interesting names offering furniture. These include several new Belgian exhibitors. Credendo+ will be presenting garden furniture, Kasaïs and The Rug Republic will exhibit country and industrial style furniture and rugs, behind The Reborn Home is one of the brothers from the Belgian lifestyle brand Flamant, and Willems will be coming with a collection of furniture and seating. Afrodisia, Big Panda, Karena and Rasteli will be exhibiting decorative items. From Great Britain, Yaskworks will be presenting its spectacular long tables, one of which will also be on display in the coffee lounge. Contrary to what its name suggests, Sit Möbel from Germany will not only be showcasing seating, but also cupboards, occasional tables, and other smaller items of furniture. Industryal from France will be offering pieces fashioned from a combination of steel and reclaimed timber from boats. Tora Brazil and Artesano are two Brazilian manufacturers who are sharing a stand. The Netherlands will be supplying the most new names in Hall 8. Brix, Livingfurn, House of Sakk and Light&Living will be presenting a combination of furniture, lighting and decoration. In Boutique we will find #31, Be Uniq, Bertz, Carpet Creations, Kellinger, Lilla Syster, Original Home, Onshus and Still/Living Details with home accessories that range from speakers, vases, carpets and skins to unique, mostly ethnic pieces. Finally, the Dutch publication Interior Business Magazine will also have a stand in Hall 8.

In Holland à la Carte in the Patio, the majority of names are the same as last year. Nix Design will be coming over from Hall 8. The new names are Koopmans, Sticky Lock, and the magazine Meubel+, which was only launched in October as a successor to Vakblad Meubel, Vakblad Slapen and Home&Living, and which is making its first public appearance in Brussels.

In Hall 9, I-Catchers is a new Dutch exhibitor, as is Gave Specials, which took over the collection of paintings from Van Bellegem. Hygge Design and Notto will be coming from Poland. France boasts three new names: Flexmob, Exelium and Cadr’aven. M.A. Salgueiro is coming with carpets from Portugal. From Belgium we have Soft Naert, with software aimed at the furniture trade. And finally we have two new exhibitors from Tunisia – or in fact more than two: one is Nova Casa, whilst the other is the export stand Meubles de Tunisie which represents some 15 manufacturers.

**Loyal stable core**

30% new exhibitors… Of course, this also means that 70% of those that we will be welcoming will be familiar faces. First and foremost are of course the Belgians. These make up the stable core of the Brussels Furniture Fair. Names such as Rom, De Eiken Zetel, Recor Group, Mintjens with Sitino and Probilex, D&D, Perfecta, Gerlin, Mecam Group, Medal with up2date and Wolmat, Lee&Lewis, Passe Partout, Neyt, Unic Design, Theuns and Varam will again be in their familiar spots in Hall 5. Positioned in Hall 3 will be Meubar and Evan’s big stand, and on the other side of the hall we will find Joli. In Hall 4, Mobitec will be showcasing its tables and chairs, Sympa will be exhibiting the seating collections Olta and Gorini, Vipack will be presenting children’s and youth furniture, and Chairz will be showing contract furnishings, predominately for the office market. In Brussels by Night, the big Belgian names are also present: Veldeman Bedding, Recor Bedding, Revor Group, LS Bedding with Ergosleep, Magnitude and Nox, Van Landschoot, Polypreen, Nill Spring, the original children’s beds from Mathy by Bols and textiles from Carlina, Soraya and Europlaid.

Fusion In Hall 8 promises to be a pleasant reunion with Vande Casteele/Castle Line, Micheldenolf, Leda, Rogiers/PR Living, Demuyck, Demtre, Dekorattex with XO Interiors, G&S, Daatti Home Collection and DV D’Sign all attending. In Mozaïek in Hall 9, Alcos/Divaco, Bauwens, Hima, Idea, Young Line, Decru, Lama D’Or, Thermobrass, Dullaert, De Ronde&Drubbel, Rousseau, Poldimar, AL Kids, Sitwell, Livorno Salotti and TFA will once again be present.

At what is the largest trade fair in the Benelux region, the Dutch are also loyal attendees. In Hall 3 with the atmospheric stands of Easysofa and the sleek cupboards from Coesel, in Hall 4 with seating manufacturers Het Anker, De Toekomst, IMS Benelux and Sit Design. In the sleep hall, some Dutch firms will be absent. This is partly due to the bankruptcy of Norma, and to the various small, specialist sleep events in the Netherlands. However Mahoton, Cartel Bedding and Luxury Beds will be attending. The Netherlands is strong on lifestyle, and this is also evident in Hall 8, with stands from Richmond Interiors, DTP Import, By Boo, Eleonora, Sevn, Mattz, Ronald Verdult Design, PTMD Collection, Mondiart, European Furniture, Nijwie/Le Chair, Maxfurn, Pole to Pole and Henk Schram. The Patio is an entirely Dutch hall, with a number of loyal exhibitors: Cartel Living, Ojee, Kluskens, Ztahl by Dijkos, Chita, Gealux, BKS, Expo Trading Holland, Jess Design, Nouvion, Claudi, Torna, Sumisura, HE Design, Van Buren and Urban Cotton. Finally, in Hall 9, we will find Zijlstra, Karintrad, Oranje and Vince Design.

The majority of Italy’s presence can be found in City, in Halls 3 and 4, predominately featuring sofas. Loyal returnees include Maxdivani, Franco Ferri, Calia, Egoitaliano, Bardi, Corium Italia, Glamour Sofa, Delta Salotti, Dienne with sofa beds, Munari with TV cabinets, and Calligaris with mainly tables and chairs but also living room pieces. In Hall 9, there will be Bonino Expo and LM Mobilificio.

A number of German firms return year on year, particularly manufacturers with cupboards, such as Rauch, Wiemann, Wimex, Païdi and FMD Möbel in Hall 4. Himolla, K+W, Polipol and Hukla will be presenting sofas and reclining armchairs. In Brussels by Night, Brinkhaus has been taking the same stand for several years now.

France also has an annual presence, with coffee and occasional tables by Akante in Hall 3, furniture by Gami, Demeyere Group and Alsapan in Hall 4, by Inditime in Hall 8, and by Girardeau in Hall 9, and textiles by Brun de Vian Tiran and the machine producer for the mattress industry Mon-Tec in Hall 6.

We can also count on a loyal group of exhibitors from other countries. Regular visitors from Poland include Poldem, Primavera, Restyl and Helvetia Meble. From Great Britain we have had stands from Tetrad and Baker Furniture for some years now. From Singapore there is the large stand from HTL. Coming from Denmark are Hjort Knudsen and KT Group, from Portugal Zagas/AEF Meubles and OPR Moveis, from Latvia Erelita, Kauno Baldai, Softlines and Padvaiskas, from Slovenia Leticia, and from Croatia the Era Group has been coming to Brussels for a number of years now.

**Striking evolutions**

It is entirely normal that the market should be responding to changing times. Generally this is not so visible, as these changes happen very gradually. We will try to pinpoint a few of these.

One trend that has been in evidence for some years and whose end is nowhere near in sight is small living. In our Be Magazine, we are devoting an in-depth article to this phenomenon. You cannot simply cram the same pieces of furniture into a small home as into a large villa. The available space then looks even smaller. With smart designs and material usage, you can conjure up a feeling of spaciousness. Hence the use of slim metal constructions in shelving, sofas, cupboards, side tables, etc. Sometimes in combination with wood, like a metal shelf above a cupboard. Another consequence of smaller homes is bespoke pieces. Formerly the exclusive terrain of the local carpenter, but today furniture manufacturers also offer solutions that optimally utilise every corner of the living space. There is no space for a separate office space. As a replacement we see small secretaries used as a workspace in the living room, which moreover also responds to the social trend where the boundary between work and private life is becoming blurred, partly due to working from home. And finally, you can always find room for stand-alone armchairs.

The trend for accessible luxury is also making a comeback. We are seeing (faux) marble in dining tables, occasional tables, and even as shelving inside or as fronts of cupboards. Unlike the previous trend, this trend sometimes takes a lavish approach to the available space. The bed stands free in the bedroom and is therefore beautifully finished on all sides. Sometimes it has even been especially designed as a freestanding piece. Sofas with reclining functions also boast a perfectly finished back in all positions. Velours has also been a thing for several years now. Sometimes it is given a special texture or an animal skin pattern. Moreover, it is now also available for outdoor use, complete with the same look & feel as indoor velours.

In this era of climate change, the furniture sector cannot afford to simply look the other way. More and more manufacturers are coming up with solutions for using the available raw materials in a responsible way, and ensuring that their pieces can easily be recycled at the end of their lifespans. The mattress sector is preparing itself for the take-back obligation that is certain to come, and is recycling mattress cores into judo mats, for example. Or why not simply dismantle the bed entirely so that separate materials can be straightforwardly processed? Certified wood has become self-evident for many manufacturers, as have water-based paints and varnishes.

A fourth trend is less to do with the furniture itself, and more with its sale. The time that a manufacturer could design and produce a few models has passed. Moreover, a simple catalogue is no longer sufficient to sell furniture. For the consumer, preparations are being made for the buying process at home on the internet, so for manufacturers this is a case of being easy to find, with a user-friendly website that easily links through to the dealer, or of being on social media like Facebook and Instagram. For sales on the shop floor, apps are being developed that help customers to choose the right model, and even enable them to visualise how it will look at home.

The final trend that we would like to highlight is the importance of the contract market. Where these were previously two separate worlds, manufacturers of residential furniture now increasingly also produce pieces for the contract market. This enables them to diversify and spread their risks. We also notice this in the growing offering coming from our exhibitors. For a few years now, those manufacturers who work professionally on the contract market have been indicated with a special logo on the trade fair plan and on name boards, making it easy for architects and project designers to find the right partners. This approach seems to be working, because every year we see a small increase in the number of visitors from this sector.

**Boosting the furniture sector!**

Changing times ask for new solutions. And our 268 exhibitors are well aware of that. The result can be seen at the show, with a beautiful actual offer for the European furniture trade. As a fair too, we take the changing times in account. We try to surprise the visitors with an inspiring décor and create a pleasant environment were doing business is enjoyable. That is why the catering points from the Brussels Furniture fair are for free. They offer a welcome moment of relaxation in between the stands. The renewed trend passages with their compact boxes stimulate the sharing of beautiful images on Instagram. A fresh campaign image recalls the spring at the fair. It stimulated many exhibitors in using plants on their stands! It also brings an optimistic note when the days are shortening and it’s getting colder. Thus, the Brussels Furniture Fair is boosting the sector!

Lieven Van den Heede

Brussels Furniture Fair

**Furniture Fair 2019: 3-6 November**

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