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**PRESS PACK FURNITURE FAIR 2019**

*Just like in previous years, the Brussels Furniture Fair is pleasingly full for 2019: there are 6 more exhibitors on the list than last year. More stands are always great, but for us quality always takes precedence. In that respect, we are confident that visitors will be satisfied this year. There are a number of great new names on the list and as ever, we can count on many loyal exhibitors. In terms of leased surface area, we are also seeing a slight increase this year. However, we are keeping our expectations realistic for this 82nd edition of the Brussels Furniture Fair. Sales in the furniture trade in Belgium – still our largest visitor group – were not terrific in 2019 and neither are the echoes coming from France and Germany entirely positive. The Netherlands is doing well, however. So for now, we need to wait and see. In any case, our exhibitors are ready to go and will be putting their best foot forward with beautiful stands and new models, ready for international buyers.*

**A few statistics**

For this edition, the Brussels Furniture Fair will be welcoming 274 exhibitors from 18 different countries. That’s 6 more stands than in 2018, or the same number as in 2017. With a single exception, all of them come from Europe. The leased surface area has also increased somewhat. After a decline last year, there are 10 more Belgian exhibitors this year, bringing the total to 109, which represents just under 40% of the exhibitors’ list. What’s more, we are delighted to have several new exhibitors on board that are making their Brussels debut this year. The number of Dutch exhibitors has fallen slightly, following an increase in 2018, from 75 to 70. This is still a pleasing number and represents a quarter of the stands. Italy is still the third most important country of origin, with 21 stands or 2 extra Italian exhibitors. Germany is fourth with 18 stands, an increase of 4 as compared to 2018. As these stands are immediately taking up a relatively large surface area, Germany is leapfrogging Italy in terms of square metres. More on that later. France completes the top 5 with 11 stands: 3 fewer than the previous edition. Finally, there are two exhibitors fewer from other countries, making a total of 45.

In terms of surface area, there is a small difference in the ranking. As mentioned above, Germany has leapfrogged Italy. The Belgian share is roughly the same, with 45.8% of the surface area. The Netherlands is taking up over 20%, Germany 8.8% and Italy 8.7%. So it’s a photo finish between the two countries. France is taking up just under 3%. Although there are two stands fewer from the remaining countries, their importance in terms of surface area has actually increased, to 13.6%.

69 exhibitors have chosen to stay away this year. Their places are being filled by 19 exhibitors who are returning after an absence of at least one year, plus 63 entirely new exhibitors. So many new exhibitors mean plenty of innovation in the offering!

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|   | **number** | **% amount** | **% surface area** |
| **Belgium** | 109 | 39.78 | 45.78 |
| **The Netherlands** | 70 | 25.55 | 20.42 |
| **Italy** | 21 | 7.66 | 8.65 |
| **Germany** | 18 | 6.57 | 8.82 |
| **France** | 11 | 4.01 | 2.74 |
| **Other** | 45 | 16.42 | 13.59 |
| **TOTAL** | **274** | **100** | **100** |

**Figures do not paint the full picture**

Tables of figures are interesting, but do not tell the whole story. Who is new, who stayed away, and who is coming back? This sometimes says far more than numbers ever can. So let's take a look behind the figures.

The key absentees in Hall 3 are the Italian firms Bardi, Delta Salotti and Munari, all three of which have been exhibiting in Brussels for some time. In Hall 4, Calligaris’ absence means that we have lost a loyal Italian exhibitor. Internal restructuring has played a role for each of these, as it has with the French firm Gami. Demeyere is not returning this year either. Hall 5 will feature largely the same names, although there are a few shifts. Sadly, the D&D story came to an end this year. In Hall 6, a number of smaller players are staying away, partly because we have not reached out to them again. Indeed, specifically for Brussels for Night we have decided to focus on quality. To that end, it is a shame that the natural sleeping products from the Greek firm Candia will not be on display in Brussels.

Fusion in Hall 8 is the hall with the greatest turnover. This is generally accounted for by small or very small stands from exhibitors who only attended a single time. The four names whose absence will be most keenly felt are the Dutch firms By Boo/Eleonora and Light&Living, Kasaïs from Belgium and Tetrad from Great Britain – which will at least have a minimal presence on the Baker Furniture stand. In the Patio, BKS Meubelen and Jess Design are staying away. The former has invested significantly in drawing software this year, which represents a big investment for a small firm. Finally, in Hall 9, we have been informed of the bankruptcy of the KT Group, which was scheduled to attend.

But who are the new names? Who will be providing the innovation in the offering? In many cases, attracting new exhibitors is a process that takes years. The majority of new names do not simply fall from the sky. What’s more, we always try to replace those exhibitors that stay away – which happens every year – with manufacturers of at least an equivalent level or better. In this way, we move forward as a trade fair, both in terms of offering and in terms of presentation. One striking point is that there are now a considerable number of new cabinet manufacturers, an area in which there has been something of a deficiency in recent years.

Let us begin again in Hall 3. We have lost a number of Italian firms there, but will also be welcoming several new ones. Aerre Italia exhibited once in Brussels in 2015, but realised at the time that they were not entirely ready for it. But now they are, and they are staging a return! Kermes Divani on the other hand is entirely new. In fact, that’s not strictly the case: their new export manager is well known to us and is aware of the strength of the Brussels Furniture Fair. ES Brand is new too, but again not really. It is in fact Ewald Schillig, which was acquired by Easysofa. From Belgium there are a number of truly brand-new names. YAC is a totally new brand which will be making its first outing here with living room furniture. Armaro is the Belgian branch of the German firm Raumplus and will be showcasing built-in wardrobe solutions. Cabinet manufacturer Saunaco will also be attending for the first time and is particularly focused on our foreign visitors, as their dealer network in Belgium is almost full. Fusiontables, also from Belgium, will be exhibiting dining tables that are also pool tables. Furthermore, Steele and The Wool Studio are back, and Kooduu, Möbelimport Sweden and Senzadelli are new.

We are also seeing the return of several well-known names in Hall 4. We are absolutely delighted that Nolte has once again chosen Brussels. Our cabinet manufacturers Cacio from Portugal and Orme from Italy, as well as the Belgian carpet manufacturer Acsento have exhibited previously in Brussels. Adatto is new, but not so new. The collection comes from Neococoon, which ceased trading last year. The collection was acquired by Bijnen Meubelgroep, which is also present on the stand next door. The German manufacturers Femira and Loddenkemper were recently acquired by Wiemann, which is also bringing its new acquisitions to Brussels. Entirely new are Actona Company from Denmark, with its wide range of living room furniture; Sits, a well-known seating manufacturer from Poland, Germania Werk Krome with cabinets from Germany, Tablacasa with tables and chairs from France, and Pure Designs from Spain.

In Hall 5 we see many well-known names, but not necessarily in their usual places. Meubar is transferring from Hall 3. Infiniti with chairs from Italy, and Spin with seating from Poland have exhibited previously. Qriosa and Pezzani are two new Italian firms, the former offering sofa beds, and the latter occasional pieces.

As mentioned above, the focus of Brussels by Night is on quality. We have not expanded the hall any further; the surface area is roughly the same as last year. We have decided not to invite Mon-tec with its machine for producing mattress ticking again. Moreover, a number of firms from the lower end of the market have moved to Hall 9, which is more in line with the audience there. We have managed to convince several manufacturers to return: Kreamat, Equilli, Elsach and Molti from Belgium; and Boxspring Design from the Netherlands. Norma will also be staging a return. In addition, there are also a number of new names: Purest is a collaboration between Veldeman Bedding, Recor Bedding and Van Landschoot. Healthcare Europe, known for the brand MLily as a sponsor of Manchester United, comes from Serbia. Intres XP is a new Belgian exhibitor, but also distributes a number of foreign brands. Dico Möbel from Germany has reserved a stand in Brussels for the first time. King of Cotton is a new bedding provider

As mentioned previously, Hall 8 has seen the biggest turnover. This is partly down to the decoration sector. We have noticed that firms offering seasonal articles are less successful that exhibitors who come with a less seasonally-linked offering. This year, there are a number of additional firms that fall into the latter category. We have also been able to attract some exhibitors who were scheduled to attend Intirio in Ghent, which was unfortunately cancelled. A number of exhibitors have previously been in Brussels. These are Countryside Collection from Belgium, Label51 and Dopmeijer from the Netherlands, Flam&Luce from Portugal and Sompex from Germany. The latter will be predominately presenting a collection of lighting by Villeroy&Boch. Fusion will see the largest number of new exhibitors. There will be furniture from the Spanish firm PLM Design, Black Label and Z&M Meubelen from the Netherlands, Derry’s from Ireland, B-Etnika from Belgium, Antika from Portugal, By Rydens from Sweden, Meble Doktor and Stoltap from Poland, Quadra Invest from Romania and Cosyfab from France. Home accessories can be found at Tiseco, Private Collection, Alba, Cosstra, Oase and Menza from Belgium, Decostar, Moods Collection, Lighttrend and Xaralyn from the Netherlands, dMantra from Germany and JP2B and Merveilles d’Orient from France. Finally, we are also making room for FLEGT – Timber Trade Federation from Great Britain, who want to focus attention on the responsible use of tropical hardwood

Holland à la Carte has a very loyal field of participants. As a result, there was little room for new exhibitors. W&W and Dat Zit! were nevertheless able to secure a stand.

The new names for Hall 9 are Sit On It, Vaco Home, Bambi, Ucan Home and ArtXLight from Belgium, Beta Line from Poland, Great Home from the Netherlands, Casitalia from Italy, Zen Home and Yoko from France, and Grafu Baldai from Lithuania. Two stands represent a region of furniture manufacturers: Capital do Movel from Portugal and Lodzkie Region from Poland.

**Many familiar faces**

Although there are plenty of new exhibitors, the Brussels Furniture Fair would not be the same without its many loyal exhibitors. They too will be presenting innovative new products. As they have a good idea of the type of buyers that come to Brussels, they tailor the collections that they exhibit to them as far as possible. And of course, they want to see new models! They will find value for money with these familiar faces.

It all began 82 years ago as an export platform for the Belgian furniture industry. Although a great deal has changed since then, the Belgians still lie at the heart of Brussels’ success. Hall 5 is the central hall, and traditionally the most important Belgian manufacturers are found here: Passe Partout, Neyt, Theuns, the Mecam Group with Neo-Style, Moome, Otium Care and Ligna, Gerlin, Perfecta, De Eiken Zetel, Confortluxe and Lievens are all in their usual places, as is the Recor Group, which is celebrating its 70th birthday, with Recor Originals and Sofa-bed. A number of exhibitors have been given a different position: Varam will be sited right next to the entrance and Up2date-Medalounger will be in the passageway to Hall 4, and as previously mentioned Meubar will be coming over from Hall 3. Mintjens Furniture will be building a real wooden house with an upper storey, and Rom will be expanding its stand on the opposite side with a surface area of more than 200m².

With 109 stands from Belgium, Hall 5 is of course far too small to house them all. So let’s take a look at the other halls. In Hall 3, Joli has been given a more central position. They will also be bringing along their sister brand Per/Use. WR Inspired will be there too, as will Lee&Lewis, which was exhibiting in Hall 5 last year. In Square there will also be a number of higher education colleges. In Hall 4 we will again find Mobitec, Olta and Toon De Somer. Unic Design will be taking Calligaris’ spot, whilst Vipack will be taking Gami’s position. In Brussels by Night, almost all the important Belgian sleeping comfort manufacturers will be attending: Veldeman Bedding, Revor Group with Styldecor and Jaritex, LS Bedding with Magnitude and Ergosleep, Van Landschoot, Polypreen and Nill Spring. Recor Bedding’s offering will include natural sleeping. Mathy by Bols will be presenting its original child and teen bedrooms and you will find bed linen at De Witte Lietaer and Soraya.

In Fusion in Hall 8, we will again find Micheldenolf, Leda, Demtre, Demuynck, Castle Line, Dekorattex, PR-Living and G&S with furniture, seating, tables and chairs in line with the industrial trend or in solid wood. Daatti Home Collections and DV D’Sign will be showcasing carpets and home decoration respectively. In Mozaïek in Hall 9, Alcos/Divaco, Bauwens, Hima, Idea, Young Line, Zons, Decru Kleinmeubelen, Lama D’Or, Thermobrass, Dullaert, De Ronde&Drubbel, Rousseau, Poldimar, AL Kids, Sitwell, Livorno Salotti and TFA will once again be exhibiting.

The second largest group are the Dutch. Many of them have been coming to the Benelux’ most important trade fair for many years. Not only do they come for the many Dutch visitors, but of course also for the Belgian and foreign visitors. In Hall 3 there is Easysofa with a stand that is always wonderfully atmospheric, and Coesel Collection with sleek cabinets, which is already attending for the 10th time in a row. In Hall 4, we find more of our northern neighbours: Het Anker, De Toekomst, IMS Benelux, DS Meubel and Releazz with seating and reclining armchairs, Bijnen Meubelgroep and No Limits by Brinker with cabinets, tables and chairs and Sticky Lock with augmented reality solutions for furniture stores. In Brussels by Night in Hall 6, Mahoton and Cartel Bedding will once again be showcasing their wares. The Netherlands is well known for lifestyle furniture. So in Hall 8 there are a considerable number of Dutch exhibitors, including Richmond, which is also exhibiting a number of stylish beds this year, DTP Interiors, Livingfurn, Brix, PTMD Collection, Nijwie, Le Chair, Maxfurn, Mondiart, Carpet Creations, Ons Hus, Ronald Verdult Design, Pole to Pole and Henk Schram. The cherry on the Dutch cake is of course the Holland à la Carte section, which is entirely devoted to our largest group of foreign exhibitors. There we will once again find Kluskens, Sumisura, Expo Trading Holland, Van Buren Bolsward, Gealux, Nix Design by PMP, Cartel Living, Ojee, Ztahl by Dijkos, Nouvion, Chita and Urban Cotton. HE Design will be almost doubling its surface area, as will Claudi, which in addition to its beautiful cushions will also now be presenting a range in bed textile. Finally, Sit Design will be coming over from Hall 4. In Hall 9, Zijlstra is one of the largest stands. The two other Dutch exhibitors here are Gave Specials with paintings and Oranje with maintenance products.

Italy is strongly represented once again in Hall 3, with the large seating manufacturers Maxdivani, Egoitaliano, Altoni, Franco Ferri, Corium, Calia, New Trend Concepts, Glamour Sofa and Dienne Salotti. We find Albea Mobili in Hall 4 again, whilst Bonino Expo in Hall 9 will be showcasing its seating collection.

The loyal exhibitors from Germany are cabinet manufacturers Rauch, Wiemann, Wimex and Païdi in Hall 4. Himolla, K+W, Polipol and Hukla will be presenting sofas and reclining armchairs, also in Hall 4. In Brussels by Night, we will again find Brinkhaus in its familiar position beside the bar, and in Hall 9, Hela Tische will be showcasing its tables.

From France we have been welcoming Akante for several years now with dining room and side tables in Hall 3, Alsapan with cabinets in Hall 4, Inditime with an industrial collection in Hall 8, and Girardeau and Cadr’aven with living room furniture and frames respectively in Hall 9.

There are also a significant number of loyal core exhibitors from other countries. From Spain, Mobliberica will again be coming to Hall 5 with its brands Dressy and Musola, and Gorbe to Hall 4 with teen bedrooms and desks. From Poland there are Poldem, Primavera, Notto, Redcorner Q-Box and Helvetia Meble. From Great Britain, Baker Furniture will once again be attending. From Singapore there is the large stand from HTL, deliberately our only Asian manufacturer, because their marketing and modelling are entirely tailored to the West European market. Those in search of cheap furniture will no doubt head for the trade fairs over there. From Denmark comes Hjort Knudsen, from Portugal Zagas/AEF Meubles and M.A. Salgueiro, from Lithuania Vilmers, Erelita, Kauno Baldai and Softlines, from Slovenia Leticia, from Turkey Ladin Mobilya and from Romania the tables of Mark Oliver.

**A few trends**

A trade fair is the ideal place to discover new trends. Each year, we present style trends in the inspiring trend boxes in between the halls. But there are also social and economic trends to which manufacturers respond. We try to illustrate a few of them.

A first trend revolves around climate change. More and more consumers are concerned about the environment and their influence on it. They are prepared to change their behaviour – although they prefer this not to impact upon their budget. Last year, we already saw the circular bed from Veldeman Bedding. At the end of its lifespan, the entire bed including the mattress can simply be dismantled and the component parts can be separately recycled. The firm was awarded the cradle to cradle certificate for this product. Other manufacturers are also taking responsibility, and are experimenting with leasing formulas, for example. In the bedding sector, we have again noticed this year that a number of traditional manufacturers are looking at natural sleeping. For example, both Recor Bedding and Polypreen are offering an entirely organic mattress that is being sold both in the traditional furniture trade and in organic shops. In Hall 8, the British FLEGT is encouraging manufacturers and the furniture trade to use tropical hardwood responsibly.

Manufacturers are looking for new market outlets. One way to do this is to export, but another way is for them to broaden their own range by offering a different kind of product to the customer. For example, this year Richmond is offering beds for the first time, fully in line with their own characteristic style. Cushion manufacturer Claudi will be launching a separate bedlinen line in Brussels. Both have reserved some extra stand space for this. A few years ago, Mecam launched Otium Care to be able to serve the growing elderly care market. Both for domestic use and for care homes and hospitals. The Spanish firm Gorbe, known for its desks, is now also exhibiting teen bedrooms.

In addition, there is also an increasing focus on the contract market. More and more exhibitors come to Brussels with products for furnishing restaurants, hotels, care homes, offices, and so on. This is undoubtedly in response to the growing number of visitors from this sector who attended the previous editions, which in turn is related to the broader offering for this very specific and demanding target group.

The third trend is increasing individualisation, and people’s awareness of their home interiors. The era of matching furniture sets is firmly in the past. No one wants a ready-made dining room combination any more. Today’s consumers want to mix and match themselves. A table in one style, and chairs in another. In the bedroom, the consumer has for some time now been accustomed to combining a wardrobe with a box spring, instead of with a matching bedstead. Trendy side tables are replacing bedside tables.

Consumers are shaping their own interiors room by room. It is therefore important that manufacturers and the trade adopt a flexible approach. Store layouts need to change. The furniture trade is expected to inspire the customer and guide them in their choice, rather than suggesting an existing solution. Stories about a piece’s provenance or the materials used can help with this. It is then up to the manufacturer – and why not, via or together with the trade press – to pass on those stories to the furniture trade. And if they can then give that final nudge to the customer to proudly share their very own interior on social media, then both garner strong publicity without it costing a penny!

**An established fixture for the West European furniture sector**

In recent years, the Brussels Furniture Fair has become an established fixture in the West European furniture sector calendar. Our exhibitors come from 18 different countries and in 2018, we received visitors of some 40 different nationalities. This proves the relevance of a trade fair in today’s world. Our core business is bringing manufacturers and the trade together. Our strengths are human contact and the efficiency of being able to see a highly innovative offering in a short space of time. But it’s not just about seeing; at a trade fair you can also touch a piece of furniture! And ask the manufacturer direct questions. This is an important point for both exhibitors and visitors. That’s why they come to the Brussels Furniture Fair. It is then down to us to ensure that these encounters take place in as convivial a sphere as possible. And judging from the reactions we’ve had, we think we’re pretty good at that.

Lieven Van den Heede

Brussels Furniture Fair

We look forward to welcoming you again next year!

**Furniture Fair 2020: 8-11 November**

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