**PRESS KIT BRUSSELS FURNITURE FAIR 2021**



*After the many cancellations of trade fairs in the past two years, it had almost become a question of “first see, then believe”. But after a year with no trade fair, we are finally back again. As is evident from the floorplan, the fair is not completely full this year, and without a doubt this is largely due to Coronavirus. But part of the explanation is simply free will. The temporary unemployment of our team and a lack of prospects for the furniture manufacturers meant that we were only able to get fully out of the starting blocks much later than usual. Of course you can never make up for this lost time.*

*Nevertheless we expect this edition to deliver a welcome sales boost. The trade and the manufacturers can’t wait to meet one another in the flesh again, and many purchases have already been postponed for a while. Brussels is the place where things must fall into place! Of course, it remains to be seen exactly how many visitors there will be, although there are already positive indications on this front. It looks as though there will be good attendance from Belgium and the neighbouring countries, and somewhat fewer attendees from outside Europe. The latter are also less our core business, representing just a small proportion of our visitor numbers.*

**Some statistics**

This year there are 161 names from 11 different countries on the exhibitor list. This is 107 fewer than in 2019, or almost 40% less in total. Part of the explanation for this is that some manufacturers are presenting fewer brands in the same surface area. In addition, we have also made a conscious decision not to simply fill up the fair come what may. No one wins from spraying special discounts around, apart from that one individual exhibitor. If you go down that road, you give the other exhibitors the wrong signal that they actually shouldn’t sign up too early, which then has an adverse impact on the smooth organisation of the fair. In terms of surface area, the overall picture is better. We are pretty happy with an occupancy rate of 76.1% on the same number of halls as in 2019, particularly if you compare this to other international trade fairs that have already taken place this year.

With three exceptions, all our exhibitors are from the European Union. This has been the case for years. The role of the Brussels Furniture Fair is not to bring manufacturers from the Far East to Europe. There are other fairs for that. Our main aim is to focus on a European offering for a West European market. As a result of the pandemic, this role chimes perfectly with the current mood. Disrupted supply routes, high transportation costs and rising wages in China are causing these manufacturers to realise that it is perhaps time for them to bring their production back to Europe again.

The Belgian furniture industry is still important for the Brussels Furniture Fair. For them, this is also a home game, at which they like to invest in highly attractive stands. For this edition there are 60 Belgian exhibitors, representing 37% of total exhibitors. As always, the Netherlands is in second place. With 48 names on the list, it represents 30% of the stands. Germany is third, with 16 stands and 10% of the total. This is followed by Poland with 11 stands representing 7% of the total participants. Italy is represented by 10 stands and accounts for 6% of participants. There are 5 French stands, meaning that our southern neighbours represent 3% of total participants. There are a further 11 stands from other countries, which together amount to 7% of the total.

In terms of surface area, the order is somewhat different. Belgium’s share is roughly the same, with 39.5% of the surface area. The Netherlands takes up almost 17%, Germany 7% and Italy 6%. In terms of surface area, Poland is overtaken by Italy, with 4%. France makes up just over 1%. The other countries together represent around a quarter of the surface area.

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|   | **total** | **% total** | **% surface area** |
| **Belgium** | 60 | 37.27 | 39.41 |
| **The Netherlands** | 48 | 29.81 | 16.92 |
| **Germany** | 16 | 9.94 | 7.35 |
| **Poland** | 11 | 6.83 | 4.45 |
| **Italy** | 10 | 6.21 | 6.37 |
| **France** | 5 | 3.11 | 1.34 |
| **Other** | 11 | 6.83 | 24.16 |
| **TOTAL** | **161** | **100** | **100** |

**Leaving the figures aside for a moment.**

What exactly is the story behind the figures? Who is new, who will no longer be joining us? That too is interesting. We’ll be taking a look at this in the coming paragraphs.

Two striking absentees in hall 3 are Joli and Coesel. Both had been exhibitors at the Furniture Fair for years. Joli saw some internal changes, including an important investment in marketing, and Coesel currently has an over-full order book coupled with high raw material prices.

In hall 4 this year we must do without names such as Himolla, Unic Design and IMS Benelux. They too had been coming to Brussels for a long time. Uncertainty due to coronavirus and a too-long delivery time both played their part here. In hall 5, Mintjens will of course be absent. They have decided to deliver direct to the consumer, so attending a B2B fair is no longer relevant for them. In addition, Mobliberica will also not be attending this year.

A few large stands that will be missing from Brussels by Night in hall 6 are Kreamat, Mathy by Bols, Norma and Intres/Technogel. The reasons for this are varied, but generally relate to the market situation.

The key absentees in hall 8 are the Belgian firms Demuynck and Demtre, and the Dutch firm DTP. In addition, there are a considerable number of small stands that will not be represented at this edition. This is a hall that sees the most coming and going nearly every year.

In the Patio none of the key firms are staying away. Unless we count Nouvion and W&W, who this year have taken larger stands in hall 8.

Finally in hall 9, Young Line, Bonino and Poldimar are the most important absentees.

Fortunately there are also some new names. Sometimes these are familiar faces, who have exhibited at Brussels previously but have stayed away for a few years. Sometimes they are total newcomers to our fair. The majority of new names can be found in hall 9, followed by halls 6 and 3. Let us once again start with this hall.

The Danish firm Bodahl has come to Brussels before. The last time they exhibited was back in 2013. But now they are back. Crest from Belgium has taken over some of the models from the defunct Heldense/Karat and is presenting itself at the Furniture Fair for the first time since 2005. Nicoletti from Italy has also appeared here before. Completely new names are Dion, with high-quality living room furniture from Poland, the coolest design collection from the French firm Stooly, tables and chairs from Design by Ricardo from the Netherlands, and sofas from the Italian firm Vis Comoda.

In hall 4 in addition to Topstar, which last exhibited in Brussels in 2017, there are three new names that have never appeared at the Furniture Fair before. Odyssee Design is the premiere of a new Belgian brand offering epoxy tables. Each piece is unique. Wimmer from Germany will be presenting solid wood living room furniture and Neology is a new exhibitor with sofas from France.

In hall 5 there are not really new names, but two exhibitors do have a new brand to showcase to the world. De Eiken Zetel, known for its recliners and living room pieces, presents the living concepts brand &dez. In the past, this could only be seen in avant-première at their in-house show. And Medalounger is coming with a whole new series of recliners under the name Modulax.

Fresh impetus in Brussels by Night in hall 6 comes from the Dutch firm Steel&Stockings, who exhibited here in 2017 with their idiosyncratic collection of beds and accessories, the Belgian firm Snoooze, Van Janssen and the measuring system from Ergomat, the Polish Senactive and two Lithuanian manufacturers - Gemega and Trivilita.

The new names in hall 8 are all from the Netherlands. After the entirely Dutch Holland à la Carte in the Patio, this is the hall in which our northern neighbours are best represented. All apart from Stylerz have exhibited at the Furniture Fair before. The other names are De Eekhoorn Woodworkings, which was last in Brussels in 2015, Eleonora, By Boo and Sevn who had another large stand in 2018 and Lyb with a few strikingly sculptural objects. In the Patio, Beside Rugs is the only newcomer.

However the majority of new names can be found in hall 9. This year the Belgian sofa manufacturer Europe has resolutely opted for Brussels, in the wake of the success of sister companies Confortluxe and Lievens. The Polish Plastiko had already exhibited with us four times, most recently in 2016. There are also Bega Gruppe and Teppiche Lalee from Germany, the Dutch firms Doga Bedding and TAF Boxsprings, the Polish manufacturers S-Group and Atreve, and the Turkish Alperonker Dizayn.

**Familiar faces**

As a result of coronavirus, this year’s fair will be smaller by about a quarter of its usual surface area. Fortunately we can count on a whole host of loyal exhibitors from both at home and abroad. And they haven’t been standing still for the past two years, on the contrary! After two years spent staring at their showrooms, furniture dealers can expect all manner of new collections and products. Also, and perhaps above all, from the familiar faces. These are the largest stands, and so they can also showcase a great many new things.

First and foremost, the Furniture Fair owes its success to the Belgian furniture industry. Over the years many Belgian manufacturers have disappeared, but nevertheless the Belgians still occupy an important position. This could also be seen from the figures. And of course in the imposing hall 5. That is where the large Belgian manufacturers can be found. In alphabetical order they are: Confortluxe, De Eiken Zetel with &dez, Gerlin, Lee&Lewis, Lievens, the Mecam group with Ligna, Moome, Neo-Style and Otium Care, Medalounger with Modulax and up2date, Meubar with Evan, Neyt, Passe Partout, Perfecta, Recor, Rom, which this year celebrates its 60th anniversary, Sofa-Bed, Theuns with Thothem and finally Varam. In terms of layout, little will change. As Minjtens is no longer exhibiting, there is finally more space to focus on welcoming visitors. So actually this is a blessing in disguise.

Of course, not all Belgian manufacturers who regularly exhibit are in hall 5. In hall 4, Mobitec, Vipack, YAC and Saunaco and Toon de Somer will once again be present. Hall 6 also features many Belgian names. With LS Bedding, Veldeman Bedding, Revor Group, Van Landschoot, Polypreen, Equilli and Nill Spring, the majority of major players in the Belgian bedding industry are present. Carlina and Anemoon Trading augment the range with bed linen, duvets and pillows

In Fusion in hall 8 we once again find Micheldenolf, Leda, Castle Line, Dekorattex, WR Inspired and G&S with furniture, seating, tables and chairs in the industrial trend or in solid wood. Daatti Home Collections, DV D’Sign and Marckdael will be showcasing carpets, home decoration and lighting respectively. Once again present at Mozaïek in hall 9 will be Alcos/Divaco, Bauwens, Hima, Idea, Decru Kleinmeubelen, Dullaert, De Ronde&Drubbel, Rousseau and Livorno Salotti. Confortluxe had insufficient space in hall 5 and has expanded slightly here.

The Netherlands is the second most important exhibitor group at the Brussels Furniture Fair. The majority of Dutch exhibitors are loyal fans and for many years have known the importance of the key trade fair in the Benelux region. Their target audience is not only the Dutch, who at around 25% also represent the largest visitor group, but also the Belgians and other foreign visitors. In hall 3 the Netherlands is regularly represented by Easysofa. De Toekomst and Het Anker are two familiar faces in hall 4, with reclining armchairs and seating. In Brussels by Night in hall 6, our loyal exhibitor Mahoton will once again be joining us. The Netherlands is highly influential when it comes to lifestyle. Amongst others, the industrial style originated there. It is therefore no surprise that we can see a whole series of well-known Dutch names in hall 8. These include Richmond, Livingfurn, Brix, Nijwie, Le Chair, Maxfurn, Mondiart, Carpet Creations, Ronald Verdult Design, Label51, Nouvion, W&W Furniture and Pole to Pole. Many of them have expanded their stands this year in order to showcase more of their products.

The fact that the Brussels Furniture Fair is important for the Dutch market – and vice-versa – is most clearly apparent in Holland à la Carte, which is entirely dedicated to Dutch manufacturers. There we once again find Kluskens, Sumisura, Expo Trading Holland, Van Buren Bolsward, Gealux, Nix Design by PMP, Cartel Living, Sit Design Ztahl by Dijkos, Chita, HE Design, Claudi and Urban Cotton. In hall 9, Zijlstra is one of the largest stands. The other two Dutch firms returning here this year are Gave Specials with paintings and Oranje with cleaning products.

Italy is taking up an important part of hall 3, with the large seating manufacturers Maxdivani, Egoitaliano, Altoni, Franco Ferri, Corium, Calia Italia, Glam-More and Dienne Salotti.

From Germany, we have for years now been able to count on the presence of cabinet manufactures Rauch, Wiemann, Wimex and more recently also Loddenkemper. Polipol and Hukla will be presenting sofas and reclining armchairs. In hall 3, Tommy M and ES Brand will once again be present. In Brussels by Night we will once again find Brinkhaus in its familiar spot next to the bar.

The French manufacturers who return every year are Akante with dining room and side tables in hall 3, Inditime with an industrial collection in hall 8, and Girardeau and Cadr’aven with dining room furniture and frames respectively in hall 9.

As an important furniture exporter, Poland also has a number of loyal names on the exhibitor list: Poldem and Primavera Furniture in hall 3, M&K Foam in hall 6, Stoltap in hall 8, and Notto and Helvetia Meble in hall 9.

HTL from Singapore in hall 3 on its own represents a third of the surface area taken up by “other countries”. The models that they exhibit are entirely targeted at the European market. From Denmark, Hjort Knudsen is staging a return, from Portugal Zagas/AEF Meubles and M.A. Salgueiro, from Lithuania Softlines and Grafu Baldai, and from Turkey, Cassemu will once again be exhibiting with us.

**Trends, but over the long term**

Normally we publish a trend folder each year in June. But this year there wasn’t one. The primary reason for this was that there were no spring trade fairs from which to pick up trends, which complicated matters. The second reason goes deeper. We have been questioning the trends concept for a few years now. The word itself is far too focused on the short term. The pandemic has served as a stark reminder to us that we must take care of our planet and its inhabitants. Everyone will need to do their bit to call a halt to climate change, including the furniture industry. We are already seeing some great initiatives, but everyone needs to climb on board. Otherwise over time you will become irrelevant. The transition will be difficult, but is absolutely essential. Many – above all young – consumers are already firmly on board. Newspapers are full of articles about the climate and sustainability, about leaving behind a better world for our children and grandchildren. Only the price remains problematic, but this is falling thanks to mass production. The same is true of electric cars. Policy is also playing catch-up. At the moment, changes tend to come from the bottom up. Consumers are urging companies to manufacture in a more sustainable way, investors are demanding green investments from banks. In the furniture world at the moment, you can chiefly see the changes with designers, who are collaborating with scientists. Whilst ten years ago this tended to be about unique pieces, their firm intention now is to scale up production. Alongside this, there are also pioneering firms engaged in major shifts. As are some of our exhibitors. Furniture manufacturers have been working with certified wood for some time now, and are shaking up their production so that once a piece of furniture reaches the end of its life, it can easily be dismantled and recycled, there is a take-back obligation for mattresses, and so on. Research by designers and scientists is slowly filtering through into mass production. So this is the lens through which the trends are being viewed this year.

The first trend is **Nature**. The images and selected pieces speak for themselves. This trend is about natural materials and colours. A range of (certified!) wood varieties, natural stone, terra cotta, rattan and cane, wool, linen, natural leather, … The colours are also derived from nature, with various shades of green, soft red and sky blue, the natural colours of the materials used. Shapes are inspired by natural forms such as boulders.

The second trend **Pure** is linked to this, but is more minimalistic. After the pandemic, these people want to start with a clean slate. This can sometimes be extremely literal: lockdown was used to have a big clear out. This is a caring trend. The idea is to derive greater enjoyment from life, but with fewer things, to live sustainably with less. This philosophy is reflected in simple, soft shapes, and in a restrained and restful colour palette. Fewer colours bring tranquillity into the home and make it a safe haven. Due to the high number of burnouts after the lockdown, there is a focus on fewer stimulants. The sheep used to help to illustrate this trend in the trend windows symbolise this tranquillity.

Finally there is more exuberant **Deco**. After the lockdown, anything goes. The inspiration comes from Art Deco and the roaring twenties. The colours are warm and saturated, with deep blue, burgundy, gold, and black. Cosiness takes precedence in the home, offering a protective cocoon against the dangers of the outside world. People are travelling less, so can spend more on their interiors. The materials are tactile, soft and luxurious, for example velvets and suede and polished natural stone. Shapes are geometric: lines, squares, circles, cubes and spheres.

**So trade fairs are emphatically here to stay!**

If the various lockdowns have taught us one thing as a trade fair organiser, it is that the legitimacy of trade fairs is no longer in question. The digital realm can be a great addition for those unable to travel, but a physical trade fair is still the real thing. A digital fair fails to enthuse visitors: ultimately you’re just sitting alone at your computer. At a trade fair you are meeting people, and discovering new products in the flesh is far less tiring than sitting behind a screen. Your legs might get tired during a trade fair visit, but it also fills you with energy. It encourages you to question your own activity too. For some time now, a trade fair has been about more than simply selling. It is an ideal instrument for fostering relationships with your clientele, sitting together for a while to discuss things, and in the meantime placing an order. As a visitor, you have seen the new collection in any case, and you know what you can order later on in the year.

So is it true to say that nothing has changed? No, of course not. In the absence of a trade fair, some manufacturers organised their own in-house show and this is continuing this year. Or they found other ways to reach their customers. Everything was called into question, including whether or not to participate in a trade fair. Of course as an exhibitor it’s not always easy to decide whether you’re going to take the gamble. Will the fair actually be able to go ahead? And what do you do if it’s cancelled? Or what are the Coronavirus measures if the fair does go ahead? These are all new questions that we try to answer as clearly as possible. In any case, no one has asked us if we’re planning to organise a digital fair this year. People have been looking forward to this real-life edition far too much for that.

Lieven Van den Heede

Brussels Furniture Fair

**We look forward to seeing you again next year!**

**Furniture Fair 2022: 6-9 November**

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