



Furniture Industry Research Association

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024



Supporting our members across
the furniture supply chain

Introduction



Welcome to the 2024 Annual Review from the Furniture Industry Research Association (FIRA). In my fourth year as Chair, I'm pleased to report that we welcomed 29 new members last year, many of whom cited gaining access to knowledge, guidance and insight as a core reason for joining.

The Association remains actively involved in representing members and the wider industry at key forums, including standards and regulatory committees that address a wide range of topics. A summary of our work with standards committees and key developments in furniture industry regulations can be found on page 3.

We are proud to be a prominent member of the British Furniture Confederation (BFC), where we advocate for our members' interests to promote a thriving furniture industry. We will also be working closely with the All-Party Parliamentary Furniture Group (APPFIG) once a new Chair has been appointed.

As in previous years, we delivered a wide range of projects in 2024, the first of which focused on 'Sustainability Challenges and Opportunities in the Furniture Industry', looking at various aspects of modern sustainability within the supply chain. We then released a further two parts of our 'Lean Manufacturing Training Toolkit' and the 'Statistics Digest for the Furniture Industry', which provides valuable insights into the industry's size, scope, and activity.

More recently we introduced two new General Product Safety Regulations guides to help our members understand the different requirements now applicable in Great Britain and the European Union. A summary of all our new resources released for members in 2024 is on page 2.

We also commissioned a research project, 'An Exploration of Educational Furniture Procurement'. This pilot study is the first phase of a larger research project which aims to understand the factors influencing the procurement process for educational furniture and raise awareness of the crucial role of furniture in promoting student health and engagement. More about this project, including a summary of the pilot study, can be found on page 5.

Experts at FIRA International, the service provider to the Research Association, have also been working on a number of resources to help members navigate both the new flammability regulations and updated standards relating to electrically operated furniture (FprEN 17684 and FprEN 60335-2-116). These resources will be released once the relevant standards are published.

We had planned to return to Westminster in May 2024 for our Annual Reception. However, we unfortunately had to cancel, following the Government's announcement of a General Election. Once the new APPFIG Chair is in place, we hope to reschedule for 2025 and welcome you to this popular event, which offers an excellent opportunity to connect with Parliamentarians and industry colleagues.

I would like to thank our members for their ongoing support. I also wish to thank the Council for their commitment to guiding and shaping the work of the Association. A special thanks is extended to Jessica Alexander and Paul Critchley for their years of valuable contribution. At the end of 2024 having both served for 15 years, they stepped down from the Council.

Please remember that we very much exist to support you, so it's important that you provide us with the key technical contacts in your organisation and notify us of any personnel changes, so we can keep everyone updated, and help you maximise the benefits of your membership.

Finally, if you have any comments, or would like us to look at knowledge in a particular area, do not hesitate to contact us via membership@fira.co.uk.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Ahern'.

Brian Ahern
Chair, Furniture Industry Research Association

2024 PROJECTS

In 2024 we delivered projects covering a wide range of topics to support our members across the industry.

Business templates and guides

- **Sustainability Challenges and Opportunities in the Furniture Industry** - providing an overview of modern sustainability thinking applicable to the furniture supply chain for product and organisational improvements
- **Lean Manufacturing Training Toolkit:**
 - Part 4: Standardised Work
 - Part 5: 7 Measures of Quality, Cost & Delivery
- **Statistics Digest for the Furniture Industry 2023** - analysis of the latest available industry data, including statistics on furniture manufacturing, consumer spend, furniture and furnishings retail and international trade
- **GB General Product Safety Regulations - Guide for the Furniture Industry** - to assist companies in understanding the GPSR requirements in Great Britain, including the types of furniture products covered, methods for assessing product safety, and their obligations to implement processes for tracing products in the market
- **EU General Product Safety Regulations - Guide for the Furniture Industry** - to help furniture manufacturers and retailers exporting products to the EU market (including NI) understand the EU General Product Safety Regulations (EU) 2023/988, effective December 13, 2024

Our experts have also created a number of resources to support members in complying with the new Flammability Regulations and Electrical Safety Regulations when they are published:



- Electrically Operated Adjustable Beds - Guide to the GB Regulations
- Electrically Operated Riser and Recliners - Guide to the GB Regulations
- Electrical Systems in Furniture Guide - Guide to the GB Regulations
- Electrically Operated Sit/Stand Desks - Guide to the GB Regulations
- Risk Assessment Template - Electrically Operated Beds
- Risk Assessment Template - Electrically Operated Rise & Recliners
- Risk Assessment Template - Electrically Operated Sit/Stand Desks
- FFFSR 2024: Guidance for New Upholstered Furniture - Technical File
- FFFSR 2024: Declaration of Conformity Template
- FFFSR 2024: Upholstered Product Permanent Label Template
- FFFSR 2024: Outdoor Furniture Permanent Label Template

STANDARDS AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE WORK

Key regulatory developments affecting the industry:

Draft Furniture and Furnishing (Fire) and (Safety) Regulations

In 2024, it was anticipated that the government and the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) would publish their response to the consultation regarding the draft Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) and (Safety) Regulations that took place in the summer of 2023. However, this has not yet happened. A change of government in July 2024 has no doubt contributed to the delay. It is understood the new government is still reviewing the results of the consultation before issuing their response.

This delay impacts the British Standards Institution (BSI) committee responsible for developing new standards, which may be necessary based on the final regulations. Nonetheless, the FW/6 committee assigned to this task has started revising existing test method standards in preparation for upcoming changes.

Looking ahead, the industry is expected to face challenges in reducing the use of fire-retardant chemicals in upholstered furniture whilst maintaining current levels of fire safety.

The new General Product Safety Regulations

On 13 December 2024, the European Union's General Product Safety Regulations went into effect, replacing the previous General Product Safety Directive. These new regulations will apply to products manufactured after that date and intended for sale in the EU and Northern Ireland. Manufacturers of goods sold on online marketplaces, as well as those producing or importing products through other methods, will face new obligations under these regulations.

The UK government has not adopted the new regulations; however, the Department for Business and Trade has issued new guidance regarding the implications of these regulations for placing goods on the market in Northern Ireland.

This marks the first significant EU Regulation that highlights the beginning of regulatory divergence between the EU and the UK.

Development of European Standards for Electrically Operated Furniture Showing Conformance to the Machinery Directive/Regulations

CEN and CENELEC have been developing standards for the electrically operated furniture to show conformance with the Machinery Directive. Draft CEN standard (FprEN 17684), which deals with mechanical hazards and stability, and the CENELEC version (FprEN 60335-2-116), which addresses the electrical safety aspects of furniture, are in the final stages of their development. It is expected that they will be published in the latter part of 2025.

ACCESSING OUR MEMBER-ONLY KNOWLEDGE

Our 'Knowledge Hub' is home to all the latest member resources and can be accessed via www.fira.co.uk/knowledge-hub. Here you will find technical reports, guides, business templates and recorded training sessions, as well as our standards database which provides an overview of all current furniture related standards.

Members who do not already have a login can request access via www.fira.co.uk/login, or by emailing the team at membership@fira.co.uk

Standards Development During 2024

FIRA continued to serve as the chair for three of the ten European standards committees for furniture (CEN TC 207) and had experts actively involved in all of these committees, as well as in the corresponding ISO committees.

Published standards in 2024

- EN 747-1:2024 - Furniture - Bunk beds and high beds. Safety, strength and durability requirements
- EN 747-2:2024 - Furniture - Bunk beds and high beds. Test methods
- EN 12520:2024 - Furniture - Strength, durability and safety requirements for domestic seating
- EN 17902:2024 - Furniture - Circularity - Evaluation method for dis/re-assembly capability
- EN 15186:2024 - Furniture - Assessment of the surface resistance to scratching
- EN 15187:2024 - Furniture - Assessment of the effect of light exposure
- EN 15388:2024 Hardware furniture - Strength and durability of extension elements and their components
- EN ISO 9221:2024 Furniture - Children's high chairs - Safety requirements and test methods
- ISO 16502-1:2024 - Furniture - Assessment of the ignitability of mattresses and upholstered bed bases - Ignition source: smouldering cigarette
- ISO 16502-2:2024 - Furniture - Assessment of the ignitability of mattresses and upholstered bed bases - Ignition source: match flame equivalent
- ISO 12808:2024 - Hardware for furniture - Strength and durability of extension elements and their components

Standards in the process of revision

- CEN TR 17202 Furniture - General safety requirements - Entrapment & shear and compression of fingers
- EN 16139 Furniture - Strength, durability and safety - Requirements for non-domestic seating
- EN 1129 Parts 1 and 2: Furniture - Foldaway beds - Safety requirements and test methods
- EN 1729-1 Furniture - Chairs and tables for educational institutions - Part 1: Functional dimensions
- EN 581-2 Outdoor furniture - Seating and tables for camping, domestic and contract use - Mechanical safety requirements and test methods for seating
- EN 581-3 Outdoor furniture - Chests and boxes for camping, domestic and contract use - Safety, strength, and durability requirements for chests and boxes
- ISO 7173 Furniture - Chairs and stools - Determination of strength and durability

New standards/Technical Specifications being created from scratch

- EN xxxx Furniture - Circularity - Evaluation method for remanufacturing
- EN xxxx Furniture - Circularity - Repair/refurbishment
- EN xxxx Furniture - Circularity - Product lifetime/durability
- EN xxxx Furniture - Suspended seating - Test methods for determination of strength, durability & stability
- EN xxxx Children's furniture - Learning towers - Safety requirements and test methods
- EN xxxx Children's furniture - Tables for children - Safety requirements and test methods
- TS xxxx Furniture - Seating - Guidance for increasing user weight
- TS xxxx Furniture and furniture components - Assessment of release of dangerous substances - Determination of emissions into indoor air
- TS/TR xxxx Furniture - Measurement uncertainty
- TS/TR xxxx Furniture - Alternative furniture in educational institution

RESEARCH INTO EDUCATIONAL FURNITURE PROCUREMENT

In 2024 we embarked on a multi-stage research project to investigate the procurement process for educational furniture. The project seeks to understand how the procurement process influences what furniture ends up in classrooms.

The research will include interviews with educational furniture manufacturers and suppliers to build an understanding of their design decisions and product selection processes, as well as their route to market. A survey of schools will also be conducted to discover how they typically make decisions about what furniture to buy and what challenges they face when buying classroom furniture.

The ultimate goal of the project is to uncover where the barriers lie in getting high quality ergonomic furniture into classrooms to better support the requirements of pupils and teachers, explore what impact the existing classroom furniture has on the end users wellbeing and ability to learn, and finally, what improvements can be made.

The pilot study, which was completed in 2024, revealed significant barriers in how UK schools procure classroom furniture, shedding light on the impact of budget constraints, outdated procurement processes, and lack of ergonomic awareness on student well-being and learning outcomes.

The FIRA ergonomics team will now embark on the next stage of the research, which involves further data collection and broader industry collaboration to validate the findings of this pilot study.



EVENTS

Throughout 2024, the Association took an active role in a variety of industry forums, exhibitions, and events demonstrating its commitment to leadership and engagement within the sector. These included:

- January Furniture Show
- Furniture Makers Forum Addressing the Sustainability Challenge
- Furniture Makers Flammability Regulations Update
- Furniture Components Expo 2024
- School Furniture Event

FIRA

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