

Specifying Furniture Guide



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Introduction

This guide assists specifiers in the tender process when acquiring contract or domestic furniture. It also acts as a guide for manufacturers and suppliers looking to satisfy a specifier's requirements.

Furniture is a deceptively complex product to purchase. There are many factors that need to be considered when specifying furniture; from the suitability of the supplier to the performance of the product. Some of these factors include the consideration of ergonomics, fire safety, frequency and length of product use, product whole life cost, use of the product and sustainable manufacturing.

To ensure that products are suitable for the intended use, it is important that the correct factors are considered at the tendering stage, and that appropriate specifications are transmitted to potential suppliers.

This guide is intended to provide comprehensive and current information for the specifiers of contract and non-domestic furniture for use in producing a tender document.

The guide will assist in a number of ways, including the following:

- Giving persons new to the tendering process reliable guidance
- Making the process of producing a tender document as simple as possible for seasoned specifiers and tenderers
- Assisting in the evaluation process by providing up to date and current advice
- Offering a consistent approach, simplifying the process for the complete supply chain and thereby reducing the amount of cost and questions generated
- Reducing the cost of the tender process for all parties
- Reducing the amount of challenges on completion of the tender by ensuring consistency across specifiers and suppliers alike

The guide is particularly useful for:

- Central government departments
- Local government departments
- Architects
Interior designers
- Purchasing & Buying departments
- Facilities managers
- Occupational health advisors
- Housing associations
- Construction companies and builders

- Specifications for furniture used in the following typical environments would benefit from reference to the guide Offices & the workplace
- Schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutes
- Hospitality (e.g. hotels, cafes, restaurants, bars, clubs)
- Waiting areas (e.g. hospital waiting rooms, public transport, doctors)
- Living accommodation (e.g. care homes, student accommodation, barracks)
- Housing Association facilities
- Outdoor contract areas (e.g. pub gardens and recreational areas)
- Retail showrooms
- Renting of furniture

Preparing and reviewing tender documentation

Preparing tender documentation

Accurate tendering is a highly efficient method for specifiers to reach suppliers and obtain best value. In the Public Sector the scale of contracts let through tenders is vast. To ensure fair, open and transparent competition there are a number of key legal considerations that aim to guide both the specifier and the supplier. What is best practice for the public sector provides a useful point of reference for all other specifiers and suppliers in the private and commercial sector.

Public Sector Organisations (PSO) must comply with EU public procurement law. This law regulates the purchasing of goods, works or services by public sector bodies and certain utility sector bodies. The EU public procurement law was designed to:

- Open up the EU's public procurement market to competition
- To prevent "buy national" policies
- To promote the free movement of goods and services

Tenders can take various forms; they can go through Open Procedures, Restricted Procedures and Negotiated Procedures. Open Procedures are the shortest procedure that allow an unlimited number of suppliers to respond to the tender.

When supplying furniture to central government and their related organisations, there is also an obligation to meet the Government Buying Standard for furniture. Please visit www.gov.uk.

To ensure that furniture purchased is the best match for an intended purpose, as much information should be transmitted to the suppliers at the start of the tender process. This should include as a minimum:

- The type of furniture required
- The intended location for the furniture
- Information regarding the intended users of the furniture (especially important if there are any vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, the infirm, the disabled or larger users)
- Information regarding the usage of the furniture (e.g. is it an office used for 8 or 24 hours a day, is it for use by the public as well as employees?)
- Information regarding any work patterns that need to be addressed (i.e. is the furniture dedicated for one user, or is it a hot desk environment, is it a call centre etc.)
- The anticipated fire rating of any upholstered furniture
- Any other factors that may affect the furniture and the way it is used

Reviewing tender documentation

Management systems and product certification

When a supplier submits evidence of having such certifications their certificate will have a unique number which can be checked to ascertain authenticity. Typical examples of such documentation include:

- ISO 9001 – Quality Management - check with certification body
- ISO 14001 – Environmental Management - check with certification body
- ISO 45001 – Occupational Health and Safety Management - check with certification body
- FSC Chain of custody - check with the FSC
- FISP certification – check with FIRA
- FIRA Gold certification - check with FIRA
- FIRA Ergonomics Excellence - check with FIRA

Test documentation

Similarly to certification documents, as part of the submitted tender documentation, you are advised to ascertain specific evidence of current relevant test reports for submitted product(s). These will determine the suitability of the required product in service.

Any test documentation should ideally have been issued by a test laboratory accredited to **BS EN ISO/IEC 17025:2017 General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories**, such as FIRA. In each country around the world different bodies are appointed to accredit testing bodies. In the UK this is the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). Comparable international accreditors can be verified via the UKAS web site.

If there are any doubts about the validity of any test reports contact the report issuer.

Fire Safety

Upholstered furniture

When supplying upholstered furniture into the domestic sector there is a legal responsibility for the manufacturer to supply furniture that is fire safe, according to the Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations. This documentation has been amended on a number of occasions since its initial publication in 1988 and specifiers should ensure that the latest version is understood and referenced. A FIRA guide for Domestic Furniture is available at <https://www.fira.co.uk/images/FIRA-Flammability-Guide.pdf>

For the contract and non-domestic furniture sector, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (2005 version is in force at the time of writing this guide) places the responsibility of fire safety on the owner/user of the building in which the furniture will be used. In line with this, the owner/user has a legal obligation to carry out a fire risk assessment on the building, covering all areas such as the provision of fire escapes, fire doors, fire extinguishers/sprinkler systems, but also the contents - of which furniture is one.

There are different hazard categories for different industries in the non-domestic furniture sector. The table below is a good general example of the hazard categories:

Low Hazard	Medium Hazard	High Hazard	Very High Hazard
Colleges	Casinos	Offshore installations	Locked psychiatric accommodation
Day Centres	Hospitals	Sleeping accommodation in certain hospital wards and in certain hostels	Prison cells
Exhibitions	Hostels/Messes		
Museums	Hotel bedrooms		
Offices	Places of entertainment		
Schools	Public buildings		
Universities	Public halls		
	Pubs/bars		
	Restaurants		

When specifying for non-domestic furniture, it is advised to ensure the products meet the basic requirements of fire safety. For information regarding relevant standards, please contact FIRA Testing Department. A FIRA guide is available at

<https://www.fira.co.uk/images/FIRA-Contract-Flammability-Guide-2011.pdf>

Non-upholstered furniture

There are no British Standards that cover the fire safety of non-upholstered furniture such as wooden or plastic seating, desking or storage items.

In general FIRA does not recommend that specific requirements are used for specifying the fire safety of desking and storage items, as in general these pose very little fire risk in themselves. However, some items, such as plastic furniture, can pose higher safety risks due to the rate and way they burn when exposed to fire. In these cases, and in applications for other furniture where fire resistance is required, it is recommended that FIRA's Testing department be contacted for further information.

Mattresses

Mattress fire resistance is dealt with in a very similar manner to upholstered furniture. The British Standard for fire resistance requirements covers mattresses, mattress pads, divans and bed bases. The standard requires that the fillings used in mattresses are suitably fire retardant, and then has fire resistance requirements for the final mattress based on hazard requirements.

It is advisable that similarly, as to the requirements for upholstered furniture, all foam should be combustion modified as defined in the Furniture and Furnishing (Fire) (Safety) Regulations, however, in a contract furniture environment, it is the building and contents manager's responsibility to ensure the product is fit for purpose. Furniture manufactured for non-domestic use only, can be sold without any formal test report or requirement, therefore, the buildings responsible person must ensure safety. The table below shows the hazard categories for mattresses:

Low Hazard	Medium Hazard	High Hazard	Very High Hazard
Domestic dwellings (including non-motorised caravans)	Boarding schools / Residential schools	Certain hospital wards	Locked psychiatric accommodation
	Day centres	Hostels	Prison cells
	Halls of residence at universities and colleges	Hotels	
	Holiday camp chalets	Offshore installations	
	Hospitals	Old peoples' homes	
	Hostels/Messes		
	Hotels		
	Old peoples' homes		

For further assistance regarding ignition sources, hazard levels and product specifics, please contact FIRA International's testing department.

Safety and performance

Product performance requirements relate to how you expect a product to perform in use. This can vary considerably depending on the environment and the intended use of a product. Product performance is normally assessed by looking for conformance of the final product to recognised British, European and International Standards.

In addition, it should be noted that there are performance standards for nearly every component of furniture. In this respect, there are test standards for timber based boards (e.g. plywood, MDF, chipboard), for components (e.g. drawer runners, hinges), for screws, bolts, metal strength etc.

It is easy to fall into the trap of over-specifying and listing all the standards for the individual components as well as those for the final product. This is not recommended as it can cause a number of unintended pitfalls. It is better to stick to specifying the performance of the final product.

Structural performance

Structural performance normally relates to the physical safety, stability, strength and durability of a product. Structural standards exist to assess:

- **Safety.** The product should be stable, have a basic strength, and should not have sharp edges or scissor type entrapment points
- **Strength and durability.** The product should offer a reasonable level of service, typically product performance standards are written with a 5 year product life span in mind
- **Foreseeable misuse.** Standards are written with the assumption that occasionally products will be used for things other than their intended use, for example it is highly likely that a table or chair will be stood on to change a light bulb.

It is essential that the standards selected for the tender should reflect the type of use that the product will be expected to endure. For example, for seating there are many applicable standards, reflecting different uses:

- Office task chairs designed for 8 hour use
- Office task chairs designed for 24 hour/heavy duty use
- Office visitor/side chairs
- General non-domestic chairs (with three different levels for light, general or severe use - covering everything from church halls to airports)
- Chairs for outdoor use
- Auditorium seating (with four different levels for light, general, heavy and severe use again covering everything from church halls, to cinemas and sports stadia)

To ensure best value it is important not to under or over-specify. Under specifying can result in premature failures of a product, resulting in extra cost as more product has to be purchased. Over-specifying can result in extra expense as product is more robust than it needs to be.

Upholstery performance

Textiles

As well as its structural performance, it is important that fabric used on upholstered furniture is also suitable for its intended use. Unsuitable fabrics can fade, wear out, tear or discolour when in contact with water, sweat or cleaning agents.

The most common route to specifying all fabrics used in upholstered furniture is to state that it must meet the appropriate classifications. This is a catch all standard and has requirements for all physical properties of a fabric.

In some instances even this may be over-specifying, as some applications may not allow a fabric to be washed, for example, and thus requiring a fabric to be resistant to discolouring during a wash cycle wouldn't be necessary. However knowing what individual tests are required for each application requires specialise knowledge and where an individual specification is required it is recommended that a specialist, such as FIRA, is contacted.

Leather

Real leather is a natural product and, similar to wood, no two pieces of leather are exactly the same. The appearance and qualities of leather also vary according to the animal from which it came and the surface treatment applied during its manufacture.

There may be some irregularities associated with real leather, these are not defects and are entirely natural. Some of these irregularities might be:

- Healed scratches and gashes from branches, thorns or barbed wire. If the wound is fully healed, the strength of the leather is not impaired
- Wrinkles which may differ from animal to animal. These wrinkles are slightly noticeable in the leather and help to accentuate the fact that it is a natural product
- There can be other marks in leather arising from the natural lifestyle of the animal and the conditions in which it was raised. These enhance the unique appeal of the furniture

It is important to be clear about what you are looking for and, together with the supplier, find the leather which suits your requirements and budget. In this respect, there are different varieties of leathers that can be considered.

- Leathers with surface finish/protection
- Leathers with some surface protection
- Leathers without surface protection
- Split Suede
- Bi -cast Leather

Foam

To ensure that the foams used in upholstery do not break down in use it is advised that they conform to the relevant rating. The following table shows recommended ratings for different end uses. The selected rating is independent of hardness, as the type of seat and application will dictate how hard or soft a foam will be (i.e. an office chair will tend to use a hard foam, whilst a soft sofa in a bar may use a soft foam).

Recommended ratings for foam

Class	L (LIGHT)	A (AVERAGE)	S (SEVERE)	V (VERY SEVERE)	X (EXTREMELY SEVERE)
Example of use	Padding Scatter cushions Pillows	Domestic furniture backs and arms Component layers for domestic mattresses	Domestic furniture seats Contract furniture backs and armrests Domestic foam mattress cores	Contract furniture seats	Heavy duty contract seats

Components

Earlier in the guide it was suggested that the specification of individual components might lead to confusion and miss-specification. However, certain components that are critical to performance and safety warrant further consideration. Specifically, the performance of surface finishes (of particular relevance in relation to the staining and degradation of kitchen surfaces) and of glass (safety being of primary concern).

Surface finishes for kitchens:

Kitchen cabinets and frontals can be manufactured from a number of materials, paint, lacquer, thermoplastic foil (PVC), paper foil, plastics laminate, solid wood and veneer. The recommended standard specifies the requirements and tests simulating normal use and minor accidents though it excludes ceramic tiles, natural or synthetic marble or similar materials.

Note - this standard only applies to fitted kitchen units in apartment style accommodation but excludes professional kitchens (e.g. restaurants and cafes).

Surface finishes for other contract furniture:

For non-kitchen applications a range of comprehensive test methods have been developed to assess the durability of surface finishes on furniture. There are, however, no Pass/Fail ratings specified in such standards.

The tests are designed to assess the durability of a surface finish against the hazards associated with the use, and abuse, of various types of furniture. Depending on the application, finishes are expected to withstand knocks and abrasion, accidental spillage of various liquids and often contact with hot objects.

The finish is tested on the substrate on which it will be used in practice as the tests are intended to assess the durability of the finish/substrate combination rather than the finish in isolation.

Glass in furniture:

Wherever possible glass shall be toughened or tempered, and shall meet the requirements of the fragmentation test. This requirement ensures that if a piece of glass was to break in service it would shatter into a large number of small fragments, rather than a few large shards, and therefore less likely to cause injury.

Note - it is extremely difficult to source bent toughened glass and toughened mirrors. Where mirrors are used they should either incorporate a safety film backing, or appropriately bonded to a backing substrate.

Ergonomics

Introduction

Ergonomics is the study of the fit between people, the things they do, the objects they use and the environments they work, travel and play in. Ergonomics deals with the interaction of technological and work situations with the human being and for this reason, is often called 'Human Factors'.

The application of ergonomics in the design of furniture products is important. Good ergonomics is an important factor in overall health, safety and well-being of individuals. For example, the benefits of an ergonomically designed workplace may include increased productivity, increased morale of staff and reduced absenteeism. Good, ergonomically designed furniture is designed with both the intended user(s) and the intended use in mind.

In the office sector, some ergonomic aspects are effectively enshrined in law via the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002). To reduce any health and safety issues such as musculoskeletal disorders, it is important that all equipment at work at a VDU workstation (including tables, desks, chairs and screens) complies with the relevant standards.

In other contract sectors there are fewer standards, however good ergonomic design will have many benefits, from improved comfort to increased efficiency.

Note: Regulation dates in this guide are current at the time of writing and the specifier needs to check that these are still current when specifying.

Task Analysis

Task analysis is an essential pre-requisite for furniture specification. FIRA recommends that before considering choices from a wide range of products in the market, the type of work to be undertaken should be assessed in relation to the furniture to be specified. This can only be done properly on the basis of a task analysis, which is a systematic breakdown of a job's elements to identify the operational sequence of work and the way in which a worker will use the equipment provided.

This process is important for identifying specific features of job roles which can differ in content. Even jobs which have the same title can vary significantly in the way that work is carried out. This is especially true of a modern office environment.

FIRA's Ergonomics team has specialist knowledge in task analysis for a wide range of work environments and its expertise should be sought where needed, but particularly for significant projects.

Identification & characteristics of intended users

People vary significantly in size and shape. Moreover they vary in quite complex ways, e.g. two people of the same height may have a quite marked difference in leg length. The sexes differ in body size, with females generally being smaller than males. Similarly there are racial differences in body dimensions.

In order to ensure that there is adequate consideration of size variations, it is necessary first to know the general nature of the population involved, e.g. is it predominantly male or female or is a mixture of both sexes involved?. Additionally, are there significant numbers of people with special needs using the furniture (e.g. the elderly, children, and larger individuals). This information will enable the specifier to interrogate suppliers more effectively, thus ensuring all users are adequately catered for.

Special considerations for educational furniture

One of the most important issues to consider when specifying educational furniture is the fact that children grow continuously; not at a constant speed but in growth spurts. This means that a single size of furniture simply cannot accommodate all children, especially in secondary schools. There is no easy answer to this problem, so furniture should be carefully considered to give the best support to the majority of the children.

Other considerations when specifying educational furniture are that it must be durable and easy to clean and repair. It is also important to note that the specification of inappropriate furniture often results in a lack of ownership by the pupil; encouraging graffiti and vandalism and thus shortening the life span of the item.

An important factor to consider when specifying educational furniture based on size-marks is ensuring that the size-marks correctly match the ages and sizes of the children. Another important factor in the specification of school furniture is that both tables and chairs must be the same size-mark. A mismatch can result in adverse effects on a child's posture and may lead to musculoskeletal disorder.

Note: FIRA have produced studies and projects regarding educational furniture. To find out more about projects like FIRA's safe seats of learning or specific size marks, please contact our Ergonomics team to discuss your needs further.

Product certification and award schemes

Developing and maintaining technical specifications for furniture can be deceptively complex. As an alternative to developing large technical specifications, specifiers can opt to use product certification schemes as a means of supporting their tender documentation

The FIRA International Gold Certification - Product

FIRA International Gold Product Certification is the UK's only independent third party product certification scheme for the furniture industry.

It demonstrates that a product has gone through rigorous assessment and testing using all applicable standards. The production facility is also audited on a regular basis and re-testing of product performance is a key element of certification.

Rather than listing a full technical specification specifiers can simply use the one line requirement for products to be FIRA Gold certified, safe in the knowledge that this should tick all boxes in terms of performance and product quality.



The FIRA International Gold Certification - Installation

FIRA International Gold installation certification provides reassurance that an installation team, whether employees or sub-contract labour, all carry out a high quality of work in line with defined standards.

A programme of regular auditing of installation teams is designed to ensure that these standards are maintained.

The FIRA Ergonomics Excellence award

The Ergonomics Excellence Award recognises companies who design and manufacture ergonomically outstanding products, especially those that meet and generally exceed the requirements of British and European standards. Ergonomically excellent products are likely to improve efficiency and productivity as well as eliminating or minimising the ill effects of twenty first century offices and work practices.



Other certifications and awards

There are a number of other certifications and awards for furniture manufacturers. For example international manufacturers exporting to the UK may have their own independent schemes. These are too numerous to include within this guide, but it is recommended that documentation appertaining to such schemes are independently verified.

Within the UK, a number of organisations undertake independent evaluations of associated companies, all of which are designed to demonstrate that these companies achieve set levels of competence and performance. Examples include:

- FIRA compliance scheme for the Fire performance of Upholstered Furniture
- Leisure and Outdoor Furniture Association scheme
- National Bed Federation scheme
- Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers Guild Marks (e.g. Manufacturing Guild Mark)

Specific details of the nature and applicability of these schemes should be sought from the organisations concerned.

Sustainability and the environment

Introduction

The importance of sustainable manufacturing is emphasised by schemes such as Green Public Procurement (GPP) and the Government Buying Standards. When supplying furniture to central government and their related organisations, there is an obligation to meet the Government Buying Standard for furniture. This scheme is based on the European Green Procurement Plan (GPP). GPP is the process for public authorities to seek to procure goods, services and works with reduced environmental impacts throughout their life cycles.

The core criteria include:

- Procurement of timber from sustainably managed and legal forests
- Limiting the organic solvent content and Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions in products, adhesives and surface treatment substances
- Use of materials made partly or totally from recycled materials and/or renewable materials
- Avoiding certain hazardous substances in materials production and surface treatment
- Ensuring the recyclability and separability of packaging materials and furniture parts and the use of packaging materials based on renewable raw materials
- Procurement of durable, fit for use, ergonomic, easy to disassemble, repairable and recyclable furniture

Whilst this is currently only mandatory for central government it is expected that this will become more prevalent in local government and private contracts.

Further information on GPP can be found at the DEFRA website via the following link <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sustainable-procurement-tools>

Furniture Industry Sustainability Programme (FISP) scheme

One of the current difficulties with the incorporation of sustainability criteria within specification and tender documentation is that the subject can be complex and the interpretation of performance is difficult to assess, particularly when benchmarking the different capabilities of competing suppliers.



The Furniture Industry Sustainability Programme (FISP) was launched in 2006 and has been specifically designed to address this disconnect.

Two levels of membership are available depending on how advanced a company's sustainability programme is at the time of membership.

All members receive a sector specific workbook providing comprehensive advice, examples and checklists on all relevant sustainability issues.

Associate membership:

Associate membership is for companies who feel they cannot achieve full membership immediately and require time to implement systems to improve their sustainability. All Associate members are expected to achieve Full membership status within 2 years of initially joining the scheme.

Full membership:

All full members are subjected to regular comprehensive audits are assessed against the criteria and corresponding scoring system outlined below. The FISP audit criteria are structured as follows:

Section 1: Core Criteria

Candidates are required to satisfy three compulsory core commitments:

- Environmental Policy
- Legal Compliance
- Revenue Statement

As mandatory criteria, these elements are evaluated on a pass/fail basis.

Section 2: Environmental Criteria

The environmental commitments available to candidates, are:

- **Environment Management Systems (mandatory)**
- **Energy Management and Efficiency (mandatory)**
- **Waste Management (mandatory)**
- Packaging Management

- Transport Management
- Procurement
- **Sustainable Timber (mandatory if timber products fabricated)**
- Air and Water Management
- 'Eco-design' and End of Life Provision

As a minimum, candidates are required to complete *six environmental aspects*.

Section 3: Economic and Social Criteria

The corporate economic and social commitments available to candidates, are:

- Nuisance Management
- Community Relations and Charity Work
- **Healthy work environments and personal wellbeing (mandatory)**
- Workforce Development and Training
- Employment
- Competitiveness
- Corporate Reporting and Awards

As a minimum, candidates are required to complete *four economic and social aspects*.

Further information on the FISP Standard, as well as the auditing and verification process, is detailed in the FISP Standard Overview available here: <http://www.fispfurniture.com/>.

FIRA's Club Green

Environmental legislation in the UK and Europe is becoming increasingly stringent and its complexity presents businesses with a significant challenge. FIRA's Club Green sets out current and forthcoming environmental legislation, including how to dispose of waste, minimise energy and handle hazardous substances. Unlike other schemes, Club Green is specifically designed to support the furniture supply chain.



Legal timber sourcing

Illegal logging can have a devastating effect on both humans and the natural world. Not only does illegal harvesting contribute to environmental issues such as deforestation and species extinction. The new EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) that came into effect in March 2013, aim to combat the problems caused by illegal logging by preventing the sale of illegally harvested timber and timber products in the European Union. The Regulation establishes the requirements for the following:

- Operators who 'first place' timber and timber products on to the European market
- Traders who deal with purchases within the EU

Those who 'first place' timber and timber products onto the EU markets, defined as Operators, are required to exercise due diligence in order to manage and mitigate the risk of these products being sourced from illegal operations.

Traders (those dealing with purchases from within the EU) are not required to conduct due diligence; however, they must keep records of transactions with other organisations.

A FIRA recorded webinar is available at <https://www.fira.co.uk/technical-information/recorded-training-sessions/introduction-to-european-timber-regulation-training>

Sustainable timber sourcing is a topic attracting a lot of attention. Not-for-profit organisations providing certification to products with diligence systems in place, proving that the products are traceable to a registered forest. Such organisations include:

FSC – Forest Stewardship Council

FSC runs global forest certification systems - Forest Management and Chain of Custody certification. These systems allows consumers to identify, purchase and use wood, paper and other forest products produced from well-managed forests and/or recycled materials. FSC's "tick tree" logo is used to indicate that products are certified under the FSC system. When you see the FSC logo on a label, you can buy forest products with confidence that you are helping to ensure our forests are alive for generations to come (FSC website).

For more information please visit <http://www.fsc-uk.org/en-uk>

PEFC - Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification

PEFC works throughout the entire forest supply chain to promote good practice in the forest and to ensure that timber and non-timber forest products are produced with respect for the highest ecological, social and ethical standards. Thanks to its eco-label, customers and consumers are able to identify products from sustainably managed forests.

PEFC is an umbrella organization. It works by endorsing national forest certification systems developed through multi-stakeholder processes and tailored to local priorities and conditions (PEFC website).

For more information, please visit <http://www.pefc.org/>

REACH

REACH is the European Union Regulation on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals. A number of chemicals used by furniture manufacturers fall under REACH, especially for any substances used that are carcinogenic, mutagenic or reproductive toxins or are very persistent in the environment.

In general, REACH requires that companies have a detailed knowledge of the materials used in their products, the specifications of the materials and the amounts used. This is to make parties who place chemicals on the market (e.g. manufacturers) responsible for understanding and managing the risks of their use. Therefore specifiers should be aware of REACH and are advised to ensure that any potential suppliers are compliant.

Further guidance on industry specifics regarding REACH Regulations can be accessed at <https://www.fira.co.uk/technical-information/reports-and-guides/reach-guide-2020>

Waste management and end of life

Generally, if tested in accordance with appropriate performance standards, used as intended and manufactured correctly, contract furniture would be expected to have an average service life of between 5 and 10 years. Often furniture will be replaced for aesthetic purposes rather than due to a loss of functionality, and is all too frequently disposed of directly in landfill.

This position is improving and businesses are increasingly aware of the impact of waste on their activities. Some drivers for this would be the increasing demand for raw materials, growing scarcity of landfill space, environmental risks of landfill practices and lost economic opportunities when disposing of raw materials that may otherwise be reused or recycled.

Specifiers are encouraged to question a company's approach to end of life and waste management as part of their tender documentation

For guidance, the EU Waste Framework Directive prioritises the five steps of the waste hierarchy as:

- **Prevention** This involves using less material in design and manufacture of products, keeping products for longer and using less hazardous materials
- **Reuse** This involves checking, cleaning, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing whole items of products or their spare parts
- **Recycle** This involves turning waste into a new substance or product
- **Other Recovery** This includes energy recovery disposal activities such as anaerobic digestion, incineration with energy recovery, gasification and pyrolysis which produce energy (fuels, heat and power) and materials from waste
- **Disposal** This involves landfill and incineration without energy recovery



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