

European Social Dialogue Committee for Furniture

Brussels, 21 March 2018

JOINT STATEMENT Flame Retardants in furniture

The European Social Dialogue Committee for Furniture has decided to include the issue of flame retardants in furniture in its work and action programme since 2017.

EFIC and EFBWW are part of a broader coalition of industries, trade unions, environmental NGOs and health organisations advocating for the Case for Flame Retardants Free Furniture. The coalition has published a policy paper in September 2016. Among other activities, the alliance publishes a regular newsletter with the most recent scientific and policy updates.

With this joint statement, Social Partners would like to stress their common concerns about the worrisome implications due to the use of harmful flame retardants chemicals (FRs) in consumers' products such as furniture. The scientific community has been increasingly ringing the alarm bell about the health and environmental risks related to the use of such toxic chemicals.

Chemical flame retardants can cause a range of dangers to our health, including cancer, hormonal disruption, decreased fertility, neurological impairments, lower birth weight and increased chance of autism and reduced IQ in children. They migrate out of products and accumulate in the environment.

Domestic and working environments are the main source of long-term exposure to these chemicals. Flame retardants are released through normal use of products, they settle into dust and are inhaled when assembling products containing them.

Flame retardants in furniture are used to comply with certain fire safety standards in countries requesting open-flame tests. But, today, clear evidence of fire safety improvement from such tests is lacking. Instead, flame retardants can increase smoke toxicity of fires making them more dangerous for those being rescued and the firefighters.

Social partners call on the EU to take concrete steps to start a process to eliminate hazardous flame retardants through REACH and other regulatory approaches at the EU level.