



The furniture sector needs to implement some changes due to the future challenges. It is necessary to define a professional profile with competences that allow companies to implement and promote the changes, capability to help managing the companies in the different actions and changes, like "the innovation advisor".

EQ-WOOD (European Qualifications for the WOOD and furniture industry) is an Erasmus + Sector Skills Alliance project aimed to tackle innovation capacity and competitiveness of the European wood and furniture industry, by designing and delivering the novel curriculum of an [Innovation Advisor](#) in the Wood and Furniture Industry. He/She helps managing innovation by merging green, digital and marketing skills.

To make this curriculum, it was necessary to have an idea about the situation and the different needs in each country participating in the project.



During the partner meeting held in Valencia on 11-12 September, the partners discussed the main characteristics of the new company figure that is developing the project: Innovation Advisor. Each participant has thus brought attention to the situation in the wood furniture sector in different countries and their needs.



Here are some results of the first phase of the project:

Why the EU furniture industry is important



Employment - the sector employs around 1 million workers in 130 thousand companies generating an annual turnover of around EUR 96 billion;



Trend setting - EU furniture manufacturers set global trends. About 12% of designs registered in the European Union Intellectual Property Office relate to this sector;



High-end segment - the EU is a world leader in the high-end segment of the furniture market. Nearly two out of every three high-end furniture products sold in the world are produced in the EU.



Challenges faced by the furniture sector

Competition - the EU furniture sector faces enormous competition from countries having Low production costs.



Innovation - the reliance on innovation and digitalisation makes the sector more vulnerable to weak protection of intellectual property rights.



Structural problems - the ageing workforce combined with difficulties in attracting young workers may lead to disruptions in maintaining skilled workers and craftsmanship.



Trade - protectionist measures on international markets create market distortions and decrease the sector's competitiveness.

Opportunities for the furniture sector



Investment - continuing investment in skills, design, creativity, research, innovation, and new technologies can result in new products which are in line with the changing population structure, lifestyles and trends.



Research - creation of high technology and knowledge intensive jobs, which would give the sector the attractiveness it needs to attract employees from younger generations.

Accesses to new markets - EU furniture manufacturers are recognised worldwide for their quality and design. This creates opportunities for the sector to further seize other markets, in particular in high-end segments and emerging economies



Synergies - with construction and tourism could also be exploited, building on the sector's excellent track record in sustainability. Specifically, the reliance on raw materials from sustainable sources used in the furniture production could have a positive impact on sales among environmentally concerned end-users.

EQ-WOOD project

Quality Qualifications for the European Woodworking and Furniture Industry
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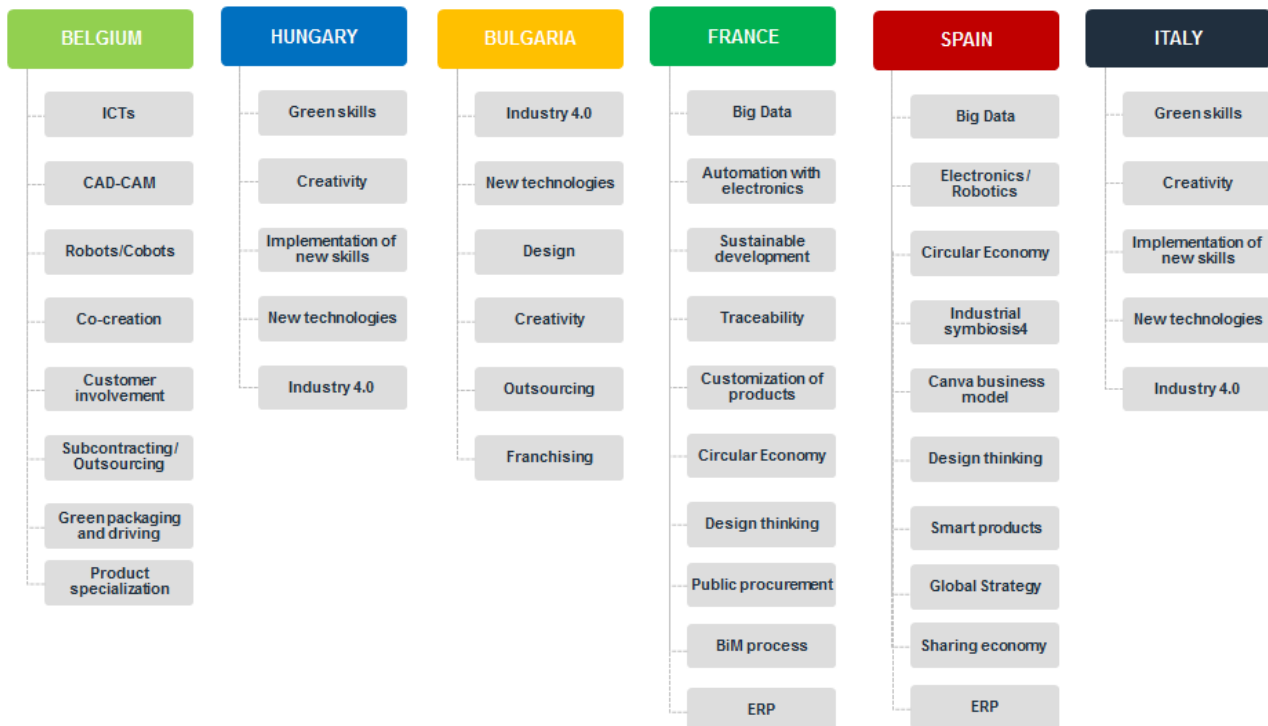
The challenges that the Wood Furniture sector in Europe will have to face have been so identified and summarized.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES:

ICT tools and industry 4.0

Circular economy

Consumers



Countries' main trends



Afterward, the project identified and collected the various needs required by companies related to professional figures in the near future within the wood furniture sector. These are the results of the analysis:

<i>Professional profile</i>	<i>Knowledge and demanded skills</i>
Sales expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking foreigner languages • Market analyses and strategic decisions capability • Competences to participate in the decision of the definition of Brand of the Company • Knowledge to analyse the consumer needs to translate this information to the companies and the designers.
Designers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and skills to use the information provide for the sales expert and other information to adapt the products designed to the consumer needs and the market evolution in aspect of new materials, intelligent furniture with electronic aspects contributing to a more versatility to the product with different utilities of the initial aim to this furniture has been designed • Ability to interact with the multimedia world and knowledge about the TIC • Design software • Apply the eco-design concepts, to reduce the environmental impact of the product designed for a company working in an circular economy • Knowledges on new materials in the market to use them in the innovative and creative design
Middle management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizontals ability to manage people and the production area • Flexibility • Strategic vision • Work team • Problems solving • Knowledge about the technological evolution • User of ICT tools in all aspects of the management • Knowledge about the techniques and technological innovations issues both to introduce both of them in the Company to go to the Industry 4.0 and Circular economy • Capability to innovate, working in permanent contact with the designers and the sales expert
Qualified worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and abilities to use the traditional equipment like cabinetmakers, joiners, upholders, etc. • Skills to use ICT tools • Knowledge to use advanced machines • Knowledge to use and implement the new materials



The new profile must have different skills regarding different aspects of corporate life, playing a horizontal role with respect to the organizational structure.

From the analysis of each country, a common definition of Innovation Advisor was adopted:

INNOVATION ADVISOR

The person who defines and implements the innovative strategy in the furniture companies in order to face future challenges working in a team with the specialist experts in the different areas of a company, such as designers, production managers, marketing staff, general manager.

Starting from the work produced by this phase of analysis, the next phase of the project aims to define the curriculum of the innovation advisor, explaining the skills, knowledge and activities that this figure will have to acquire during the training process developed by the project. This phase will also see the development of the training activities useful and necessary to achieve this knowledge.

To get more information about the project and keep you up to date, we invite you in our web site www.eqwood.org

Best Regards,
EQ-WOOD Partners