

The furniture sector: improving conditions for workers



WEBINAR

10 December 2025 | 11:00-12:30 CET / 10:00-11:30 GMT

This is the final webinar of Electronics Watch's 2025 Knowledge Building Series for public buyers. It is part of an Innovation Pilot to strengthen and expand our impact model via webinars and online workshops that will help you understand risks in your supply chains.

Why the furniture sector?

The global furniture market revenue is projected to reach approximately US\$730 billion in 2025, with the United States and China being the largest markets. In the education sector alone - covering schools, colleges and universities - the global spend on furniture was estimated at approximately \$10.7 billion USD in 2023. In the UK, expenditure on furniture in schools is estimated to be up to £973 million annually.

Labour exploitation is rife in this sector. There is evidence of forced labour (including state-sponsored forced labour in some areas). Excessive working hours, unpaid or underpaid wages, and illegal piece-rate systems are prevalent. There are major health and safety risks, causing serious injuries using dangerous machinery, and poor safety protection involving toxic chemicals and other hazards in furniture plants. Studies have found child labour in upstream or informal parts of the supply chain. As in other manufacturing sectors, there are also restrictions on freedom of association and cases of union busting and intimidation: audits and NGO reports have repeatedly found obstacles to collective bargaining and worker voice in factories. Furniture is listed as one of the high-risk goods in global estimates of forced labour and modern slavery.



Labour rights organisations and suppliers to the public sector will share their expertise on labour and human rights issues in the industry, and strategies to address this. They will highlight examples of good practices to tackle and prevent worker rights violations and provide practical advice you can use in your procurement processes.

The webinar will be interactive. It will combine insights from the expert panellists with discussions among participants.

About the webinar

The webinar will address:

- The key labour rights risks and violations experienced by workers in key production countries
- Recommendations on what you can do to manage these issues in your tenders and contracts.

Speakers will share advice on standards that public buyers should expect, and share sources of expertise for further information and advice.

The agenda will include

- **Labour rights organisations**, sharing insights from China and Turkey, key production countries
- **Furniture suppliers to the UK public sector**, discussing their due diligence approaches and how they manage labour rights risks in their supply chains
- **Good practice example of furniture remanufacture in the UK**, promoting decent work and reducing environmental footprint.

For further information, please contact :

- Cindy Berman, cberman@electronicswatch.org
- Haëndila Varela hvarela@electronicswatch.org