

CirCLER – Circular Economy Transition Manager: guiding companies of the furniture value chain to deploy their transition strategy for a more circular economy



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The Green Skills Gap in the Furniture Sector: Data, Challenges, and the CirCLER Response

Europe's furniture sector is facing a growing mismatch between the green skills its companies urgently need and the supply of professionals equipped to deliver them. According to the LinkedIn Global Green Skills Report 2022, open roles across EU industries requiring green skills have grown at approximately 8% per year since 2015, while the pool of workers with relevant competences has expanded at only around 6% annually. This gap is particularly acute in traditional manufacturing sectors such as furniture, where the twin pressures of circular economy regulation and digital transformation are intensifying the demand for new professional profiles.

The research of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training — including its Skills for Green Jobs report and the Digital, Greener and More Resilient skills forecast — has consistently highlighted the need to anticipate green skills requirements in a horizontal and integrated way, rather than treating them as sector-specific add-ons. For the furniture industry, this means developing professionals who can understand the full implications of circular economy transition across the entire value chain: from product design and raw material selection to manufacturing, logistics, and end-of-life management.

It is precisely to address this gap that CirCLER is designed. CirCLER is building a new occupational profile and training programme for the Circular Economy Transition Manager (CETM), a professional with the strategic vision and technical knowledge to guide furniture companies through their circular transition. The project's skills needs analysis, conducted in close collaboration with sector stakeholders across several EU countries, confirmed that currently available training provision does not adequately cover the integrated knowledge and competences required by this profile. Existing roles in the sector — primarily focused on waste management, energy, or isolated design criteria — fall short of providing the overarching, cross-functional perspective needed to implement a comprehensive circular transition strategy at company level.

CirCLER addresses this challenge by developing a modular training toolkit, available in seven EU languages and adaptable to different EQF levels (4, 5, and 6). The toolkit is being tested through a pilot course involving learners across partner institutions and companies, generating evidence on its effectiveness and feeding into a continuous process of validation and improvement.

By building the capacity of VET providers and higher education institutions to offer CETM training, CirCLER contributes to a more responsive European skills ecosystem — one capable of keeping pace with the accelerating demands of the green transition in the furniture sector and beyond.

More information about the CirCLER project and its training resources:

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