



PRESS RELEASE: THE FIRST PROJECT IS ALMOST COMPLETELY IMPLEMENTED

Within the “FIRST - Furniture Industry in Restructuring: Solutions & Tools” project, under the realm of Article 6 of the European Social Fund, the partners worked to develop and offer to furniture manufacturers a methodology that can be implemented through various tools that can allow them to easily enhance their capacities to restructure their activities maintaining or generating profitability and avoiding social losses in a fast changing world.

As such the tasks that the FIRST consortium undertook during the two years of the project were primarily to use the knowledge and expertise that the partners have in the field of management to develop, based on existing management theories, a set of new tools and approaches for the SME's of the furniture industry that can support them to potentially anticipate or face restructuring by furniture manufacturers and employees.

In particular, due to the fact that almost all of the companies in the furniture industry are small/medium enterprises that typically do not have the necessary skill set, capacities and/or competencies to understand management theories that can support them to anticipate and manage change and restructuring, one of the main objectives of the tools and approaches to be developed was to make them as simple and easy to use as possible: a difficult task considering the managerial baseline of the typical company operating in the furniture industry in Europe. As such, it was important to not only use researchers in the development of these tools and methods, but to more importantly use the knowledge and expertise that researchers have in translating management theory in a language easily understandable by the layperson of the furniture industry (a task that is very difficult to accomplish due to the complexity in general of the rapidly changing business context that companies must get use to).

Consequently, given the objectives of the project and the overall emphasis in making the tools as simple and easy to use as possible, the partners identified, studied and analyzed the furniture industry to then develop an approach to management that could be easily understandable.

In general terms, the activities of the overall FIRST project were arranged in a manner that could allow the FIRST consortium to first of all gain the necessary knowledge of the furniture industry (Phase 1) that could then be used to generate and develop a set of tools that could potentially guide SMEs in the furniture industry gain the necessary knowledge and skills to help them restructure various aspects of their business (Phase 2). Within the FIRST project, a set of 8 guidelines and tools were then disseminated (Phase 3) in different venues and events that took place in these 2 years, which saw the experts of the partners involved in teaching companies identified and contacted within the UEA and EIAS network of the basics of the methods and tools developed. Conference to present and explain the tools were organized in 11 cities (Porto, London, Milan, Thessaloniki, Brussels, Nantes, Francfort, Paris, Vienna, Valencia and Arnhem) in 10 countries. More than 1000 manufacturers were informed about the FIRST project.

SEE <http://www.ueanet.com/first/default.htm>

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