



# AGAINST THE GRAIN

**The 82nd Brussels Furniture Fair, which took place over four days last month, recorded visitor growth from every territory apart from Great Britain and Ireland, reports general manager, Lieven Van den Heede.**

[www.furniturefairbrussels.be](http://www.furniturefairbrussels.be)

Following last year's decline and unfavourable market conditions, visitor numbers increased by +3.57% this year, and the international component climbed to more than 65%, comprising visitors from some 52 countries – 18 of them outside Europe.

"This is a highly encouraging result, given that sales in the furniture trade in Belgium and in the majority of our neighbouring countries were pretty disappointing this year," says Lieven.

"It was only from Great Britain and Ireland that there were 30 fewer visitors [-5.64% YoY]. The protracted regulatory questions around Brexit are just part of the explanation – we also know that two flights on which a number of buyers

were due to travel were cancelled." At the same time, there was a marked uptick in interest from Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

The show presented 274 exhibitors from 18 nations, and went to great lengths to ensure an even better look and feel than that of previous editions. "Year upon year, the upgrade of the fair is clearly visible, and the same was true this year," continues Lieven. "Once again, our ongoing efforts to constantly lift up the fair a step higher have resonated with exhibitors, who spared no expense to bring their own stands up to the same high level."

Lieven says that the vast majority of exhibitors were pleased with the show's performance.

Meanwhile, the event's Balthazars awards programme aims to stimulate innovation, and this year's winners – announced at the show by former Miss Belgium, Virginie Claes – rose to the challenge. They were: Mintjens Sleepline, for Rialto (Best of Belgium); Himolla, for Signa (Best International); Rom, for Vegas (Love at First Sight); and Otium Care, for Multi (Innovation).

Next year's show will take place from 8-11th November ■

