

A group of established firms from Cyprus is exhibiting at Interiors Birmingham to put the country's furniture sector in the export frame

Quality exports



Ekma makes bespoke items, focusing on new materials and trends



Most furniture arriving into the UK from overseas uses price as the peg on which to hang its hat. So the Cypriot collective that will display its wares at Interiors Birmingham in January, should be applauded for promoting quality as the defining characteristic of its furniture offer.

The four firms showing at the NEC hope to ride the crest of a new wave that will see Cypriot furniture penetrate deeper into the British furniture retail sector.

Cabinet Maker travelled to Cyprus to gauge the mood ahead of the show.

EKMA FURNISHINGS

Ekma Furnishings, one of the leading modern furniture manufacturers in Cyprus, has earned a reputation for supplying quality products and interior design services to a sophisticated clientele. Established in 1980, the family-run company designs and manufactures a wide range of furniture and is a prominent figure in the industry.

The company focuses on consumers looking for individuality, quality and products reflecting

current design trends. Ekma's designs have evolved over the years in response to changing attitudes and lifestyles. Every item is made and designed in Cyprus. The furniture is manufactured in its Cypriot factory to strict quality controls.

The company uses efficient management and marketing to place itself in a good position to compete in the global market. Its network of regional agents is growing, and it exports to Europe, the US, and the Middle East.

Every month it sends containers to France, Germany, the US, Dubai and Lebanon. One of its exports is an exclusive range featured in all Roche Bobois stores. As well as exports, Ekma has a booming trade in Cyprus, with two Nicosia-based retail stores called Ambience and Co.

The two showrooms, one of 400sqm spread over three levels, and another of 350sqm, show how a modern brand and concept can be promoted. The showrooms pull in the young and wealthy from all over Cyprus. These are customers who want their homes to reflect their status.

Emilia Hadjicosti, director, says: 'We are

successful in Cyprus because we are trying hard to introduce new materials and trends, and to give something fresh and good quality.'

Ekma collaborates with interior designers who plan hotels, shops and homes to individuals' specifications.

'We do not sell huge quantities, and export only a small percentage. We look for people who are sophisticated and want high quality, bespoke items,' adds Hadjicosti.

Ekma will be showing a range of dining tables, consoles, mirrors and sideboards in Hall 7, stand C54.

D.A. STROMAN

D.A. Stroman makes and supplies mattresses, divans and a range of bedding that includes pillow cases. The company is striving to become one of the most environmentally friendly manufacturers in Cyprus.



Far left: Stroman beds
Above: Melissa Rattan from N&S Leonida Co
Left: Kounoupis

Yiota Makriyianni, spokeswoman for Stroman, says: 'All of our mattresses are produced with white materials. Unfortunately, there is no facility in our country to recycle the discarded mattresses. Our mattresses are accredited by FIRA and meet all required standards.'

'To ensure the quality of our products, we use some of the biggest suppliers in Europe such as Fortunato, Artilat and Agro, known for their quality materials. All of our suppliers provide us with the relevant quality and eco-standards certificates.'

The firm is in the process of adopting standards to guarantee its products are of consistent quality and environmentally friendly – the ISO 9001 quality assurance standard and the eco-label, respectively.

Stroman's range includes mattresses featuring advanced pocket technology – pocket and micro-pocket springs – and box-spring beds.

The proportion of its total production that it exports has risen – this year it exported around 22% while last year the figure was 18%. Exports are transported in containers to Estonia, Latvia, Greece and Kuwait.

The firm has a 2,500sqm factory, employs 42 people, and uses mostly semi-automatic machines that have been adapted to meet the country's market needs. It continuously upgrades all the machinery to ensure efficient energy use in line with its environmental strategy.

Stroman's main goal for Interiors Birmingham is to make contacts with British importers in both the domestic and contract sectors – wholesalers, retailers and hotel chains.

The company will be exhibiting its range of mattresses and divan beds in Hall 7, stand C54.

A KOUNOUPIS & SONS

This family business, founded in 1958 by Andreas Kounoupis, is now run by three brothers who took

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over in 1986 and gave the company its current name.

For more than 40 years the furniture and woodwork company has offered modern quality furniture, for which it has gained respect in the Cypriot market. But it has specialised in master bedroom and children's bedroom furniture. The brothers have tackled projects that range from making one-off bespoke baby cots to furnishing hotels around Cyprus and fitting acoustic wood in university lecture theatres.

It has offices in the Dali Industrial area, 10km south east of Nicosia, the capital, and supplies most major Cypriot furniture retailers. It works in partnership with other manufacturers in Cyprus, including Stroman, which produces its mattress bases.

The business had a turnover of around £830,000 last year. About 25% of its production is for export, mainly to Finland and Estonia. Two agents in the UK and Ireland also ensure at least three containers of furniture a year are shipped to the UK. The firm hopes to increase this to five containers a year.

Kyriakos Kounoupis, director, says: 'All the workers

at the factory have been here for at least 10 years. Everything is made from solid wood. The furniture is all assembled by hand according to EU standards. This shows what a quality product we create.'

A Kounoupis & Sons will be exhibiting its range for hotels including beds, headboards, tables, desks, and chairs, all in dark wood, in Hall 7, stand C54.

N&S LEONIDA CO

N&S Leonida Co, founded in 1992 and located in Limassol, produces high quality rattan and wicker furniture.

Under the brand name of Melissa Rattan, it promotes furniture both for indoor and outdoor use – armchairs, dining chairs, living sets, sofas, garden furniture, dining tables, coffee tables, rattan furniture and more. Rattan is a versatile and durable material, and these properties allow it to be used in custom-made designs and challenging contracts. New products include resin waterproof sofas and dining chairs.

The company's 216sqm factory in Limassol's industrial area has a turnover of £1m. It originally made products to meet local needs, but has now slightly modified them for export to meet the taste of international buyers. The company is always looking to exploit the potential uses of its plant.

All products are produced to a high quality, and are aimed at the high end markets. The company exports to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, its most popular products being sofas, armchairs and leather wicker dining chairs.

The company will show rattan, wicker and resin-finish sofas, sofa beds, armchairs and dining chairs, and a new ceramic-topped table. It intends to use the show to target the contract and retail markets in the UK and Europe.

N&S Leonida Co furniture will be exhibited at the NEC in Hall 1, stand B20.