

Exporting bedspreads of natural fibres to Europe

The European market for bedspreads is fairly stable, with most of its imports originating from developing countries. The middle-high market segment offers you the most opportunities. Focus on design, craftsmanship and raw material quality to appeal to the consumers in this segment. Using sustainable fabrics can also give you a competitive advantage.

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1. Product description

A bedspread is a piece of fabric designed to cover the bed, from top to bottom and from side to side. Although bedspreads can be used for warmth, they are primarily used as a decorative article for the bed. Bedspreads can be put in the category of Bedlinen.

This study uses the following codes to indicate trade in bedspreads:

Table 1: Product codes

Harmonised System (HS)	Prodcom	Description
6304 11	13 92 16 40	Bedspreads, knitted or crocheted
6304 19		Bedspreads, other

Quality

Functionality

Bedspreads mainly serve as decorative articles for the bed, but can also be used as blankets to provide warmth to the user. They provide an easy way to change the decoration of the bedroom, of which the bed is the main focus.

Material

Bedspreads are available in a variety of fabrics. Natural fibre bedspreads are made of fabrics like cotton, linen and wool. Very high-end bedspreads can also be made of fibres like silk and cashmere. Blended yarns and mixed fabrics are often used for bedspreads.

Size

Bedspread sizes vary depending on bed dimensions. The most common sizes for bedspreads in Europe are:

- 140 x 200 cm

- 173 x 220 cm
- 200 x 280 cm
- 240 x 280 cm
- 210 x 270 cm
- 260 x 290 cm

Other sizes are also available, depending on the target country. Ask your European buyer which specific sizes they are looking for in the early stages of the collaboration.

Design

Bedspreads come in a wide variety of designs, styles and patterns. They can be colourful or plain and match every personal taste.

Labelling

External packaging labels for bedspreads should include the producer, consignee, composition, size, number of pieces, box identification, total number of boxes, and net and gross weight.

The most important information on the product or packing labels of bedspreads is composition, size, origin and care labelling. For more information, refer to the chapter on buyer requirements.

Packaging

You should pack bedspreads according to the importer's instructions. Packaging usually consists of plastic wrapping to protect the fabric from water, solar radiation and staining. It should be easily manageable in terms of size and weight, and ideally fit together on (Euro) pallets. When in doubt, check the dimensions with your buyer.

Bedspreads are usually displayed in stores without any packaging. However, especially in the high-end segment bedspreads come with gift packing. For the middle and low-end segments, consumer packaging can be simple in design, like a simple paper or plastic wrapping.

2. Which European markets offer opportunities for exporters of natural fibre bedspreads?

European imports of bedspreads are fairly stable. Developing countries are Europe's leading bedspread suppliers. Europe's main importers of bedspreads are Spain, the United Kingdom and Germany. Especially the United Kingdom and Germany are interesting focus countries, with a strong market for developing countries.

Note that no specific trade data are available for natural fibre bedspreads. The figures below cover bedspreads of all textile materials.

Where is consumer demand?

- European demand for bedspreads declined slightly between 2012 and 2016. With an average annual growth rate of -0.2%, it fell to €137 million in 2016.
- Demand is highest in the United Kingdom at €19 million. Spain and Italy follow at €16 million each.

What is the role of European production in supplying European demand?

- Europe's demand for bedspreads is considerably larger than its production. This drives imports, making Europe an interesting market for bedspreads.
- European bedspread production increased between 2012 and 2016. With an average annual growth rate of 4.3%, it reached €101 million in 2016.
- Portugal is responsible for 35% of Europe's bedspread production, followed by Estonia with 28%.

Which countries are most interesting in terms of imports from developing countries?

- European imports of bedspreads are fairly stable. They increased from €129 million in 2012 to €130 million in 2016. This resulted in an average annual growth rate of 0.2%.
- In the coming years, European imports are expected to stay stable.
- Developing countries are Europe's main source of bedspread imports, supplying around 60%. This amounted to €75 million in 2016. This share is also predicted to stay stable in the coming years.
- In reality, much of the bedspread imports from western European countries concerns re-exported products manufactured in developing countries.
- Spain overtook the United Kingdom as Europe's leading importer of bedspreads in 2016, with €22 million in imports. The United Kingdom and Germany followed with €20 million and €19 million respectively. Together, this was almost half of Europe's total imports.
- The United Kingdom and Germany dominate imports from developing countries, at €12 million each. For both countries, this is around two thirds of their total imports! These imports from were fairly stable between 2012 and 2016.
- Leading importer Spain mainly imports its bedspreads from neighbouring European country Portugal.
- India and China dominate European bedspread imports, with a combined supply of 47% in 2016. Other leading developing country suppliers are Turkey (3.7%), Pakistan (2.8%) and Bangladesh (1.4%).

Tips:

Study your options in the United Kingdom and Germany. Their large imports from developing countries make them especially interesting markets.

The upcoming [Brexit](#) (Great Britain leaving the European Union) has decreased the value of the British pound. As a result more British buyers have started importing directly from developing countries, rather than buying from European importers. However, as the situation is still fluid and insecure, you should keep a close watch on developments.

Compare your products and company to the strong competition from China and India, as well as from Turkey, Pakistan and Bangladesh. You can use [ITC Trademap](#) to find exporters per country. You can compare on market segment, price, quality and target countries.

What role does export play in supplying European demand?

- European bedspread exports consist mainly of trade within Europe and with developed countries.
- Portugal is Europe's leading bedspread exporter at €36 million. Spain and Germany follow with €10 million each.

What is the effect of real private consumption expenditure on European demand?

- Private consumption expenditure is an important indicator for the European home decoration market. The sector is closely linked to economic conditions. When money is tight, consumers postpone buying non-essential items until they have enough disposable income.
- Between 2017 and 2019, European private consumption expenditure is expected to increase, so

consumption of decorative products is likely to rise. Especially in emerging markets, consumers will have more money available to spend on decorating the home. Consumers in mature markets already spend a fair amount of money on decoration, so growth in their consumption will be moderate.

3. Which trends offer opportunities on the European market for natural fibre bedspreads?

Sustainable materials

European consumers and designers increasingly strive to avoid a negative environmental impact as a result of their consumption and production. They are shifting their preferences towards more sustainable choices. This is driving producers of bedspreads towards sustainable raw materials, like organic cotton, hemp and bamboo. If you use sustainable materials you can demand a higher price.

Tips:

Consider sourcing sustainably produced fabrics for your bedspreads, especially when you target the higher segments.

For more information, see our special study on [sustainability](#).

Natural look

The feeling of wanting to escape to nature, combined with a lack of time in busy city life, inspires designers to merge outdoor imagery with indoor decoration. Flowers or leaf patterns, green colours and print combinations that relate to natural habitats are becoming increasingly popular.

Tips:

Offer bedspreads with a natural look by using natural colours and patterns that resemble nature.

Consider using elegant materials and designs, especially when you target the high and middle-high end of the market.

Create your own niche

There is a growing demand for authentic products with a story, as opposed to mass-produced items. Capitalising on what makes your products and company unique allows you to add value and position yourself in a part of the market that competes on more than just price. You can do so by emphasising special materials, special techniques and the story behind your product and company.

Tip:

Consider creating your own niche by taking advantage of those aspects of your bedspreads that are different from other (more mainstream) products in the market.

Small range development

More and more buyers (especially in the middle-high segment) are selling concepts to their clients, rather than single products. They do this for marketing and positioning purposes and to push their sales. To benefit from this trend, cushion covers are ideal products to add to your range of bedspreads. These cushion covers could be close to the design of the bedspread, but you can also look at designs and materials that are complementary to the original design.

Tip:

Consider developing a small range of cushion covers in line with the design of your bedspreads.

For more information, see our study about [trends for Home Decoration & Home Textiles](#).

4. With which requirements must natural fibre bedspreads comply to be allowed on the European market?

With which legal and non-legal requirements must your product comply?

General product safety

The European Union's [General Product Safety Directive](#) applies to all consumer products, including bedspreads. It states that all products marketed in Europe must be safe to use.

Tips:

Read more about the [General Product Safety Directive](#).

Use your common sense to ensure normal use of your product does not cause any danger.

The [RAPEX database](#) lists products that the European Union has rejected at the border or withdrawn from the market. Check the database for similar products for an idea of what issues may arise.

Restricted chemicals: REACH

The [REACH](#) regulation lists restricted chemicals in products that are marketed in Europe. For example, REACH restricts the use of azo dyes and certain flame retardants in textile products.

Tips:

The European Chemical Agency provides useful information and tips on REACH. See for instance [REACH Annex XVII](#) for a list of all restricted chemicals. Also check out the [Information on REACH for companies established outside Europe](#) and the [Questions & Answers on REACH](#).

Follow new developments in the field of flame retardants, as new alternatives are being developed. You can do so for instance through the [European Flame Retardants Association](#) (EFRA).

Textile Regulation

According to the European Union's [Textile Regulation](#), textile products should be labelled or marked to indicate their fibre composition. These labels should be durable and tear-resistant, securely attached, easily legible, visible and accessible.

Tip:

For more information, see the [Frequently Asked Questions about the Textile Regulation](#).

Packaging legislation

Europe has specific [packaging and packaging waste legislation](#). It for instance restricts the use of certain heavy metals. Europe also has [requirements for wood packaging materials](#) (WPM) used for transport, such as packing cases, boxes, crates, drums, (box) pallets and dunnage.

Tip:

Read more in the [overview of EU rules on wood packaging material](#).

Which additional requirements do buyers often have?

Sustainability

Social and environmental sustainability make your products stand out on the European market. Consider sustainable raw materials and production processes. European buyers increasingly demand the following certification schemes:

- [Business Social Compliance Initiative \(BSCI\)](#): European retailers developed this initiative to improve social conditions in sourcing countries. They expect their suppliers to comply with the BSCI Code of Conduct. To prove compliance, the importer can request an audit of your production process. Once a company has been audited, it is included in a database for all BSCI participants.
- [Ethical Trading Initiative \(ETI\)](#): This initiative is an alliance of companies, trade unions and voluntary organisations. It aims to improve the working lives of people across the globe who make or grow consumer goods.

You can use standards such as [ISO 14001](#) and [SA 8000](#) to read up on sustainable options. However, only niche market buyers demand compliance with such standards.

Tips:

Optimise your sustainability performance. Reading up on the issues included in the initiatives will give you an idea of what to focus on.

Buyers appreciate a good story. If you can show that you value your company's environmental and/or social performance, this may be a competitive advantage. Consider a self-assessment like the [BSCI Self-Assessment for Producers](#), or a code of conduct such as the [BSCI Code of Conduct](#) or the [ETI base code](#).

For more information, see our special study on [Sustainability in the Home Sector](#).

What are the requirements for niche markets?

Fair trade

The concept of fair trade supports fair pricing and improved social conditions for producers and their communities. Especially when the production of your bedspreads is labour intensive, for example hand-knotting, fair-trade certification can give you a competitive advantage.

Common fair-trade certifications are from:

- [World Fair Trade Organisation](#) (WFTO)
- [Fairtrade International](#)
- [Fair For Life](#).

Tips:

Ask buyers what they are looking for. Especially in the fair-trade sector, you can use the story behind your product for marketing purposes.

Check the [ITC Standards map database](#) for more information on voluntary standards and their requirements, including fair production.

Sustainable textile certification

Across the home sector, sustainability is gaining ground. Although the actual use of certification is still not widespread in home textiles, there is increasing interest from buyers.

The [Global Organic Textile Standard](#) (GOTS) ensures environmental and social responsibility throughout the production chain. To qualify, textile products must contain over 70% organic fibres.

[OEKO-TEX](#) Standard 100 certification guarantees no hazardous chemicals were used in production.

The [EU Ecolabel](#) for textiles focus on minimising environmental impact at the manufacturing stage.

Tips:

Read more on [GOTS](#), [OEKO-TEX](#) and the [EU Ecolabel](#) in the ITC Standards Map.

Determine which certification programme would be the best fit for you and apply if possible.

Woolmark

[Woolmark](#) certification provides consumers with guaranteed wool fibre content and an assurance of quality. It contains specific standards for several product groups, including bedspreads.

Tip:

If you supply woollen products, study [how to become a Woolmark licensee](#) and consult the Woolmark specifications for [woven](#) and [knitted](#) bedspreads.

For more information, see our study about [buyer requirements for Home Decoration & Home Textiles](#).

5. What competition do you face on the European natural fibre bedspreads market?

The competition for bedspreads does not differ significantly from the sector in general. Refer to our [10 tips for doing business with European buyers](#).

6. Which channels can you use to put natural fibre bedspreads on the European market?

The market channels and segments for bedspreads do not differ significantly from the sector in general.

Market channels

Bedspreads can be found in a wide variety of shops, ranging from low-end discounters to high-end boutiques.

The channels through which bedspreads are put on the European market follow the traditional patterns: import via importers and/or wholesalers that supply retailers, and larger retail chains that import themselves. E-commerce is still gaining in importance, while more and more smaller retailers have started buying directly from the supplier.

Tip:

For more information about trading directly with smaller retailers, see our special study about [alternative distribution channels](#).

E-commerce

E-commerce in home decoration is increasing and can help you reach a broader range of customers. Retailers often combine online and offline channels. Consumers research and purchase products online, shopping around and comparing prices on home decoration items. To supply e-commerce retailers you must be able to work with individual packing and labelling, as well as limited minimum orders.

Tips:

See our special study about [E-commerce in Home Decoration & Home Textiles](#) for more information.

Target online business-to-consumer retailers if you can meet the additional requirements.

Trade associations and fairs

The following trade associations and fairs are useful sources for finding trading partners in Europe.

- [Ambiente](#), Frankfurt, February
- [EURATEX](#), European Apparel and Textile Confederation
- [Heimtextil](#), Frankfurt, January
- [Maison et Objet](#), Paris, January and September

Market segments

In the low segment, simple and inexpensive bedspreads are common. This segment is dominated by products made of man-made fibres, such as polyester and polyamide (nylon), or blends of these fibres, such as microfibre. Sometimes the man-made fibres are blended with cotton, but there are no bedspreads available made of 100% natural fibres in the low-end segment. Even in the middle-low segment there is relatively little choice.

In the middle segment, bedspreads are often manufactured with sustainable raw materials and are more fashionable than in the low-end segment. In the high segment, designer quality is common and private labels are the standard.

The middle-high segment offers you the most opportunities. To appeal to these consumers, you need to add value to your bedspreads through handmade craftsmanship.

7. What are the end market prices for bedspreads?

Table 2 gives an overview of the indicative prices of natural fibre bedspreads in the low, middle and high market segments. 'Indicative' is key here, since prices for bedspreads vary depending on composition, manufacturing technique, size, design, brand and other ways of value addition.

Table 2: Indicative consumer prices of natural fibre bedspreads

	Middle-low end	Middle-high end	High-end
Natural fibre bedspreads	€25–45	€45–150	€150 or more

The European consumer price of your bedspreads is around 4 to 6½ times your selling price. Shipping, import and handling add 15–20%. Wholesalers account for a further 50–90% markup. Retailers may add another 90–150% to the price. Finally, European VAT percentages range from 18% in Malta to 27% in Sweden.

Your original selling price depends heavily on the availability and cost of raw materials. For example, the average prices of cotton fluctuated considerably in recent years. Occasional increases in the price of raw materials are not directly passed on to the consumer, but do put pressure on exporters, importers and retailers' margins.


Tips:

The value perception of your product in the chosen segment determines its price. The quality and price of your bedspreads must match what is expected in your chosen target segment. To determine your price, study consumer prices in your target segment and adjust your cost accordingly.


Understand your segment. Offer a correct marketing mix to meet consumer expectations. Adapt your business model to your position in the market.

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