


EUROPEAN PRODUCERS SET FOR 20-FOLD INCREASE IN NONWOVEN FACE MASK OUTPUT BY NOVEMBER

- **EDANA calls on authorities for guarantees on role of EU producers in supply chain**
- **New sectoral group set up to ensure face masks supply chain**



EU production of face masks, essential for tackling the coronavirus crisis, is set to increase 20-fold by November this year compared to pre-crisis times. This means that EU-based producers will be able to make the equivalent of 1.5 billion three-layer masks a month, according to figures released today by EDANA, the leading global association serving the nonwovens and related industries.

Pierre Wiertz, EDANA's General Manager, said: *"These figures show how EDANA's members in the nonwovens sector have responded in record time to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic and the call by EU and national authorities to ramp up production of face masks to protect public health."*

Wiertz added: *"As soon as the European Commission and member states asked for an increase in the production of face masks, EDANA's members worked flat out to increase the production of meltblown nonwoven web, which is essential for face masks, in the EU and to overcome global supply shortages."*

Over the last three months, EDANA has been liaising with partner associations including MedTech Europe, ESF, and EURATEX to ensure sufficient supplies of essential public health equipment. EDANA has been recognized by the European Commission as the voice of industry on all issues relevant to the nonwoven-based face masks supply chain.

Wiertz said that following this response, the industry faced some uncertainties which needed clarification. *"The industry now needs clear official estimates of the current and future EU needs*

for medical-grade face masks and personal protective masks (FFP2/3) as well as guarantees that stockpiling and procurement procedures would favour EU players in the supply chain and enable their sustainable business development". This would reward their efforts to produce quality single-use products compliant with European Standards, he said.

Jacques Prigneaux, EDANA's Market Analysis and Economic Affairs Director, explained that at the start of the pandemic in March *"the main bottleneck in the global supply chain for face masks was a shortage of ultra-fine meltblown (MB) filament web, which is the indispensable high-tech filter layer used in all nonwoven masks. Once electro statically charged, this nonwoven fabric is able to stop very fine particles and droplets carrying bacteria and viruses."*

Prigneaux said that thanks to the efforts of EU-based producers there would be enough meltblown capacity in the EU by November to produce the equivalent of 1.5 billion three-layer surgical masks per month. He added that it normally took up to 12 months to install meltblown production lines but several contractors had managed to halve the time needed.

In contrast with the rest of the supply chain, where European players were no longer in a leadership position, the world's most sophisticated technology platforms producing meltblown nonwovens belong to European machinery companies, he said.

Last week EDANA convened a new sector group representing face mask converters, nonwoven suppliers, testing laboratories and equipment manufacturers to work together to develop an independent and self-sufficient supply chain for medical face masks and personal protective masks in the EU. The group will work to ensure adherence to applicable European Standards and to encourage responsible product stewardship throughout the life-cycle of face-masks from raw material sourcing to end-of-life solutions.