



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue
Social dialogue

**JOINT PLENARY MEETING OF THE
SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEES
FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY and TANNING AND LEATHER**

**15 December 2015
MINUTES**

Chair: Commission

1. Welcome

- **Approval of the minutes of the previous meetings of the 2 committees (i.e. 16 December 2014 for Footwear and 5 May 2015 for Tanning and Leather)**
- **Adoption of the agenda**

The minutes and the agenda were adopted.

2. Update on EU Social Dialogue (European Commission – DG EMPL)

Ms Sigried Caspar (DG EMPL) presented the main actions that the Commission has undertaken since the "New start for social dialogue" conference (5 March 2015), focusing on the work of the two thematic groups, the first on economic governance and capacity building and the second on policy making and law making. She also briefed social partners on the developments of the ongoing consultation on life-work balance and the upcoming dedicated hearing on the New Skills Agenda on 18 January 2016.

Mr Luc Triangle (industriAll) underlined the importance of social dialogue and collective bargaining at national level in order to have a well-functioning European social dialogue. The Commission should do more to adequately support social dialogue in some Member States (e.g. ES, RO, EL, HU). At European level, the cross-industry social dialogue involves mainly BusinessEurope and ETUC to the detriment of sectoral social partners. He also expressed his appreciation for the joint plenary meeting, wishing the two committees to have the occasion to work again together in future, but not to merge in a single committee. Mr Gustavo Gonzalez Quijano (COTANCE) welcomed the joint meeting and said that the two committees should collaborate on specific topics. Nevertheless it is not clear how the Commission intends to complement European social dialogue initiatives with legislative activity. The Commission's support to social dialogue at national level is not sufficient: in many countries both employers' and workers' organisations lack of capacity. Ms Carmen Arias Castellano (CEC) also evaluated positively the joint meeting of the two committees taking into account that both sectors wanted to address the same topic.

3. "Change your Shoes" campaign¹

DG DEVCO had been invited as a speaker in the Plenary Meeting in order to explain the objective and sense of this campaign that the Commission financed under the 2015 Year of Development. However, they did not participate. Therefore, DG EMPL proposed to set up in January 2016 a trilateral meeting with EMPL and DEVCO services as well as representatives of trade unions and employers' organisations in order to better discuss the issue. Furthermore, if possible, a representative of the project consortium will be invited at the next Footwear SSDC meeting.

Ms Arias Castellano claimed that the electronic message with an illustrative video sent out to consumers in Europe by the members of the project consortium was particularly misleading on manufacturing processes and environmental conditions in , without distinction between differentiating the social and environmental standards respected by the European footwear industry from those in certain non-EU countries. Mr Gonzalez Quijano pointed out that the campaign contains imprecise information on the way chromium is used in the productive chain by operators in the sector, especially in Europe.

Ms Arias Castellano stressed the discontent of social partners with DG DEVCO. It was unacceptable that no footwear stakeholder at national or European level had been contacted/ consulted in the project elaboration. Furthermore, IndustriAll Europe and the CEC were still awaiting a response to a joint letter sent to DG DEVCO on the 21st December. Social partners were disappointed that nobody in DG DEVCO had joined the Plenary Meeting today despite of their request. Ms Arias stressed the urgency to organise the meeting with DG DEVCO as soon as possible and preferably in January 2016. The image presented by the Changes your Shoes campaign was considerably damaging the image of the European footwear industry vis a vis consumers and future workforce, and something urgent needed to be done to stop or redefine the content of the campaign.

4. The Garment Flagship Initiative: what shall SMEs expect?

5. Other Corporate Social Initiatives in the supply chain

- **Including the OECD Due Diligence in the Garment and Footwear Sector**

The two items were discussed jointly. Mr Pedro Ortun (DG GROW) said that consultations with different stakeholders took place during 2015 in the framework of the EU Garment Initiative. The objectives of this initiative – to improve responsible management in the whole supply chain – are also reflected in the new communication by the Commission "Trade for all. Towards a more responsible trade and investment policy". The leading Commission service on this initiative, DG DEVCO, will release the final version of the study on the responsible management in the supply chain by March 2016. Moreover, DEVCO foresees meeting social partners later in 2016. On this issue, the Dutch presidency has shown strong willingness to be committed during the upcoming semester. On 10-12 May, in Copenhagen, there will be the presentation of the EU Garment Flagship Initiative. OECD is preparing a new draft of the Due Diligence by January 2016 and some roundtables have been organised to increase the due diligence system outside the EU, with methods different from the normal audit.

¹ The website of the campaign: <http://changeyourshoes-bg.org/>.

Social partners argued how difficult can be to monitor the entire supply chain. In this sense, it is necessary to establish European standards in order to have a good quality social and ethical audit system. For example, the proposal of adopting a web management tool based on ISO 26000 to implement corporate social responsibility in the textile sector (developed under a social dialogue project between IndustriAll and Euratex) should be taken seriously in consideration, and adapted to other creative industries like the footwear. Concerning the OECD Due Diligence, standards audit are clearly stricter when a company produces outside the EU – e.g. the "Bangladesh Accord", which is focused on specific health and safety issues, such as buildings safety, fire alarm and electric systems, has demonstrated to be effective.² Social partners agreed on meeting among them and with the Commission services to better define safety and social standards and they also decided to submit a joint project on CSR.

6. Further activities

- **Leather projects and discussion of draft ideas for a manifesto**

"**Leather is my Job! II**" is a project aimed at making the sector more appealing for young people, proposing open-door days in tanneries, school visits, going to job fairs, and keeping contact with employment agencies. This is the second phase of the campaign: the first phase where the jobs and careers in the tanning industry were promoted was a big success that was warmly welcomed by both sides of the industry.

"**A Future for European leather!**" is a project that aims at providing a clear picture of the sector in the fields of industry, social affairs, environment and trade, so that stakeholders may adopt the most appropriate strategies towards the year 2025. On 2nd February 2016 the final conference at European Economic and Social Committee will conclude the project.

7. Discussion and approval of 2016 Work Programme

- **Tanning and Leather 2016-2017**
- **Footwear 2016**

In the Tanning and Leather WP 2016-2017 was added one reference to corporate social responsibility in the chapter of social dialogue and another reference to the attribution of the "market economy status" to China in the chapter dedicated to trade. The programmes were adopted with the agreed amendments.

No comments were added to the 2016 Footwear programme.

Both working programmes were adopted with the agreed amendments in the Tanning and Leather programme.

8. Dates for 2016 meetings

The foreseen dates are:

Leather and Tanning

WG: 14/04/2016 (Thursday)

PL: 23/11/2016 (Wednesday)

² The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (the Accord), signed on 15th May 2013: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/>.

Footwear

WG 19/04/2016 (Tuesday)

PL: 15/12/2016 (Thursday)

Footwear partners had already indicated the impossibility of meeting on the 15/12/2016, and the Commission promised to find other alternatives to propose.

Alternatives:

2/12 (Friday) or 8/12 (Thursday) or 9/12 (Friday) or 16/12 (Friday)

(preference: 14/12 - Wednesday)

9. AOB

N/A