



Social Dialogue Committee – Footwear Work Programme 2015

The footwear sector is represented by approximately 21,000 companies in Europe (including components) with approximately 272,000 direct employees in 2012. It is considered as a high-end industry, and has difficulties in obtaining and retaining the necessary highly-skilled workers. This situation will worsen in the very near future because of the large ageing workforce, difficulties to attract young generations, despite the available job opportunities thanks to the slow but progressive relocation of footwear production to Europe.

The Social Dialogue Committee in the European Footwear sector was re-launched at European level at the end of 2013. The first year of activities has been satisfactorily completed. For the year 2015, the following action points are proposed:

1. Continue developing the European Social Dialogue

During 2014, industriAll Europe and CEC implemented the first joint Social Dialogue project financed by the European Commission, which has allowed to analyse and map out the existing national Social Dialogue structures and practices, in particular in France, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Spain. The social partners have now a better understanding of the different regulatory frameworks and identify the main players, and will present the results of the study in the project final conference in Paris in March 2015.

In the meantime, social partners will continue working to identify initiatives to promote the growth of the sector. A first joint workshop focusing on a SWOT analysis of the sector will take place on 17th December under this current project, and will identify the first joint initiatives that partners could undertake.

2. Skills and qualifications

In 2014 the Social Partners of the Footwear sector were integrated in the Sector Skills Council on Textile, Leather and Clothing, in order to incorporate the specific skills and occupations of the Footwear industry, and to identify and develop the skills which are necessary for the further development of the sector. Strong efforts have been done during the year by the European sector associations and the ISPs, where both employers and employees are members.

The footwear project developed under the Social Dialogue programme, mentioned in the first point, made possible to identify and establish good relations with two potential new ISPs. Thanks to this



project, the Sector Skills Council TCLF will include two new countries: Portugal since the beginning of 2015, and Romania as soon as the necessary structure is put in place. In view of these positive results, not only in content results, but also in the number of countries contributing to and benefiting from exchange of knowledge and good practices, social partners trust that the Commission will continue supporting this consolidated network and their activities in 2015.

3. Planning ahead for restructuring in the Footwear sector

The Footwear sector has undergone thorough restructuring over the last few decades, and this trend has not reversed despite the success of the high-end segment of the market. Special attention will be given to internal and external factors influencing the sector in order to assess and forecast the quantitative and qualitative evolution of skills needs in different countries/ areas of Europe. Work under this chapter will be reinforced by the work carried out under the TCLF Skills Council.

4. Attracting young generations to the footwear sector

The sector suffers from an ageing workforce, which is not being replaced because of lack of attractiveness of the sector to the new generations. There is a big risk of losing the current skills and savoir faire of the profession. Social partners agree that such issue requires immediate action, and wish to submit a project proposal that includes the elaboration of promotional material to be distributed among educational institutions (schools, VET providers and universities), the organisation of "Open Days" to present the different educational offers in Europe as well as to create a website that promotes the image of the sector.

5. Trade

Social partners will continue following evolution of Free Trade Agreements currently under discussion between the European Union and third countries (specifically Japan, India, Malaysia, Vietnam, the United States of America and Mercosur), and assess their impact on the European Footwear industry. The functioning of the EuroMed Partnership and its impact on the Footwear industry will also be assessed.

5. Action plan for fashion and high-end industries

A significant segment of the European Footwear sector produces high-end and fashion products. This segment is highly creative. It generates trade surpluses and above-average wages and working conditions. The Footwear sector will be involved in the design and implementation of this action plan in coordination with the other fashion and high-end sectors and the relevant Commission services.



6. EU Flagship initiative on responsible management of the supply chain of the garment sector

Follow-up the EU Flagship initiative on responsible management of the supply chain of the garment sector launched by different EC services and the EEAS on the occasion of the European Year for Development in 2015, in view to extend the initiative to the footwear sector. The objectives of such initiative are:

- Raise awareness among European consumers;
- Improve communication on relevant EU actions;
- Improve coordination: a multi-stakeholder initiative (Commission and EEAS, Member States, EP, partner country governments, private sector, local authorities, trade unions, international organisations, etc.);
- Launch an inclusive and participatory consultation process;
- Develop a response at EU level, promoting notably an effective implementation of existing international guidelines, standards and initiatives in the garment sector.
