



Editorial

Dear
colleagues,

Our EU
TCL Sector
Skills Council,
officially
launched on
December
6th 2011, is
preparing
for
celebrating
its first year

of activities. Next 11 and 12 of December our members, network partners and stakeholders will come together again to review our results, and I anticipate a great success! Save the dates, you will receive in due course your personal invitation.

Responding to the needs of both sides of the Textile, Clothing and Leather industry, we have not spared efforts for developing jointly an instrument for good governance in the sectors' education, training and labour market. And I must say, it was not an easy task, as we had no precedent or model to follow. We are the model, and seeing the uptake of our methodology in other sectors, a pretty good one!

Our efforts would not have been so fruitful would we not have benefited the financial support of the European Commission and the active involvement of the existing National "Industry Skills Partnerships" (ISPs). An ISP is a bipartite or tripartite sector specific organization, active in the fields of education, training and employment in a defined geographical area. Their expertise in assisting

day-to-day companies and workers in their education and skills needs is indeed essential. Thank you!

During our first year of activities our EU TCL SSC can proudly announce that:

- The most important National ISPs joined to become part of the Council
- A network structure has been created, involving more than 260 sectorial stakeholders across Europe
- An advanced web portal of the Council has been created
- 3+1 Reports have been produced* on sector relevant issues regarding skills and jobs in Europe's labour market

All this will be presented and debated in detail in our December Conference. Don't miss this opportunity to shape the education & training landscape our industries need for more and better jobs in a competitive EU TCL Sector!

I look forward to seeing you there.

Gustavo Gonzalez-Quijano

COTANCE Secretary General and Board member of the EU TCL SSC

***Research topic n° 1:** the evolution of the supply, employment and skills needs including foresight and forecast analyses for the sector

Research topic n° 2: good practices bringing the worlds of education and work closer and reducing the persistent skills mismatch at sectoral level, as well as on the mechanisms existing at national or regional level between anticipation bodies and education and training providers

Research topic n° 3: innovative tools, national and/or regional strategies, local initiatives, methods put in place for peer learning purposes

Research topic n° 4: Recommendations to private and public stakeholders



11&12 December 2012
EU TCL Skills Council Annual
Conference

One year tailoring the future!



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“ISPs exist in different countries of Europe. Recently, they work together.

That should sooner or later be a good thing for anyone in the TCL industries.” Rob Senden, Director IVOC

Looking back to one year of cooperation between the various TCL Sector’s ISPs of Belgium, France, United Kingdom and Italy, IVOC Director Rob Senden shares with us a number of recommendations for improving the work of the EU TCL SSC. These and other views will be debated in the “TCL Skills Conference” later in December 2012.

- **Recommendations to the ISPs**

If we look at the audience of companies and workers from the TCL industries in different EU Member States, we note that their needs are indeed very similar.

Learning from each other, complementing each other’s capabilities, improving our services, avoiding duplication of efforts and therefore costs, can bring substantial benefits to ISPs. In the framework of the EU TCL SSC, new possibilities of cooperation have arisen and ISPs must learn how to concretise them. There are also several examples of (bilateral) cooperation, both currently and in the recent past, which demonstrate that cooperation actually is profitable.

- **Recommendations to the social partners**

The EU TCL SSC is operational over a year. The various partner ISPs have had the chance of knowing each other better. A first joint task, namely the delivery of a series of reports regarding our audience, our organizations and output, was brought to a successful conclusion. ISPs are aware of the fact that closer cooperation should be deepened in the near future. On the field, the possibilities are numerous. It now depends on the Social Partners in the

various countries to steer the momentum with clear objectives.

- **Recommendations to the employers**

Numerous companies in the TCL play a pioneering role in the management of Human Resources. Look at the policies in large, often multinational companies. But there are numerous SMEs that don’t have the necessary structure or resources to do the same. It is essential for those SMEs to get access to ISP services, but it depends also on the employers to keep themselves informed about the opportunities that the ISPs offer.

Employers should know that the services of ISPs on the field can be tailored to the needs of any company in the sector.

- **Recommendations to the workers**

Usually, employees learn by doing. Training at the workplace was and still is the most important form of learning in our sector. This is often accompanied by the coaching of an experienced colleague. Increasingly also external training suppliers are involved, such as trainers from outside the company.



- **Recommendations to schools & education**

There was a time when schools all over Europe were responsible for the professional training of workers in the TCL industry. But the role of education has changed. The industry has had to take up its own responsibilities for the integration of new employees. But it is in the schools that talents can be discovered and eventually brought to the TCL industry. A basic training can usually be sufficient in order to start a business-oriented professional training of full value. We can train them together, at school

(expertise in education) and in the industry (large investments in machinery, technology).

- **Recommendations to future workers**

We find that many young people sometimes have a wrong and naive picture of the work in the fashion world. There are undoubtedly career opportunities for creative talents, but the most important demand is for technical talent, or at least for people who can link creativity in an appropriate way to technical or commercial skills.

It is part of the role of the ISP to integrate this message in a professional manner and in cooperation with all actors in education and

guidance, into the guidance and training of all candidates looking for work in our sectors.

- **Recommendations to European institutional support**

With the establishment of a network of ISP in the EU TCL SSC, the ISP do their entrance in European institutional structures. The main added value of ISP for policymaking in this regard may be made clear: in their field the ISP have direct contacts with companies and workers, so with the actual target group the policymakers wish to reach and where structural changes should be initiated. In other words, the ISP fills in the line from the policy forum to the working field.

An interview with :



Aura Mihai, Ph. D., Assoc. Prof.
Leather & Footwear
Universitatea Tehnică "Gheorghe Asachi" din Iasi



Q: What is your current position in the Romanian Leather & Footwear educational landscape?

I am Associate Professor at Faculty of Textile, Leather and Industrial Management, within "Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iasi, Romania. I am teaching Footwear Fashion Design and Footwear Pattern Making for both our undergraduate and graduate programs. Also, I have managed several research and educational projects, at national and international level. Starting with this year, I am the vice-dean of the faculty for research and international relationships.

Q: What makes Romania an attractive location for investments in the leather sector?

In the Romanian Leather sector, including tanning and manufacturing of footwear and leather goods, the latest Eurostat available statistics (for 2008) indicate 59700 employed persons, in 1800 enterprises. Romania is an area of the European Union with a low cost labour

force. For more than 20 years the footwear and leather goods industry has been mainly oriented to subcontracting production. Thus, Romania remains as a pillar of footwear manufacturing in Europe. Even if salaries in this sector have increased for the last 10 years, they are still comparatively low. Because of these low salaries, many companies have difficulties in recruiting and maintaining staff. But Romania hosts footwear and leather goods producers, especially because of the quality of products which are manufactured here.

Q: What is the sector's industrial strategy?

For Romanian footwear producers, the subcontracting production is only a stage, and they know this. Romanian footwear and leather goods producers must orient to developing own brand both for internal and new external markets. So, from this point of view I am optimistic about the future of this industry in our country. Of course, this industry is sensitive to the changes

which are expecting to come for the entire European footwear industry. There are European strategies and reports which are giving some directions for developing this industry for the next years. If the footwear producers will be able to respond at some urgent demands regarding new high tech products, this industry has a future, in Europe, and in our country also. The key words for this process are styling and design, branding, customization, added value, high technology and quality. Moreover, both motivating young generation and creating a highly-skilled workforce are crucial to maintaining leather and footwear industry's attractiveness and to boosting its competitiveness.

Q. Tell us about the education system in Romania.

Regarding higher education in textile and leather, the main actor is our university. The Faculty of Textile, Leather and Industrial Management has been involved in higher education for at least 75 years. It has around 1300

students, 98 teaching staff, seven undergraduate study programs, eight master programs, one doctoral school and six departments which are covering all areas of the textile, clothing and leather industry. For Footwear Technology and Design specialization we have 20-25 students per year for undergraduate program and around 20-22 students per year for master program.

For several years we are keeping these numbers, and we have a very high rate for employment of our graduates into industry.

As for our membership and relationships with other institutions, I can say that we are part of the European academic and research community in leather and textile field, and we have agreements and partnerships with many research and higher education institutions. Also, our faculty is member of the EU Textile-Clothing-Leather Sector Skills Council, the Autex-Association of Universities for Textiles, Euratex Platform and Footwear European Technology Platform.

Projects :

Online Tool launched for Risk Assessment in the Leather and Tanning Industry

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are the largest cause of injury in both the leather and footwear industries. But also employees have to responsibility to look after health and safety at work. How to prevent this and other work risks?

IndustriAll European Trade Union and COTANCE have developed an "Online Risk Assessment Tool" for small and medium-sized tanneries to provide assistance with Safety and Health at Work

<http://osha.europa.eu/>



References - Health and safety at work:

- Cotance: <http://www.euroleather.com/index.php/socialissues/social-projects/144-new-risk-assessment-on-line-tool.html>
- IndustriAll – European trade union: <http://www.industriall-europe.eu/news/list2.asp?stid=40>
- European agency for safety & health at work: <http://osha.europa.eu/en>
- International labour organization - Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/WCMS_113329/lang-en/index.htm

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