

Press Release

Conference of the European Sector Council on Education Training & Employment in the Textile Clothing and Leather industries: Towards a post-2012 development strategy

- Stakeholders in the Textile, Clothing and Leather sectors gather to review the outcomes of one year's coordination effort at European level to address skills development in this vital industry of the European economy.
- A series of seven recommendations, based on three analytical reports, have been shared among stakeholders, highlighting the continued need for cooperation in the field, and pledging an enlarged participation to other European countries.

The Conference of the European Skills Council on Textile, Clothing and Leather (ESC-TCL) took place on 12th December 2012. Representatives from the European Commission (DG Employment and Social Affairs), the social partners, national Industry Skills Partnerships (ISPs), stakeholders from the three sectors and European press have gathered in Elewijt, Belgium, to discuss the outcomes of the first year of operation of the Council. This summit constitutes the main event of the Commission supported initiative of the TCL Social Partners in the framework of the EU Skills Agenda.

The conference was the occasion to present four reports produced over the past months. Three reports are analytical as they: [a] look at the current state and prospective evolution of the skills needs in the sectors; [b] present national good practices bringing the world of education and work closer together in order to narrow the skills mismatch, and [c] review innovative tools, strategies, initiatives and methods put in place for peer learning purposes. The fourth report takes stock of this analysis and puts forward seven key recommendations directed at institutional, social and industry stakeholders at both European and national levels. These recommendations favour a coordinated approach to address the skills mismatch issue and a continuous valuable cooperative work carried out by the European partners.

“Our European Sector Skills Council is celebrating its first anniversary today and we should be proud of the work done so far” – declare the European Social Partners. “We took the right decision to start our Skills Council, as human resources and thus education and training is at the heart of TCL companies’ preoccupations. Our production models are in constant development and greater integration of innovations and technologies in our processes will occur and will be needed. Hence the crucial importance of adapting the offer to demand in terms of Vocational Education and Training (VET) for our competitiveness and the strengthening of the TCL sectors. The ESC-TCL has a key role to play through the mobilisation of knowledge and best practices to be replicated through the network to maximize our impact.”

One of the first very concrete effects of the existence of the ESC-TCL is the recent creation of the *Osservatorio Nazionale Concia*, Italy’s National Tanning Observatory, which will act as the national ISP for this country, and is already participating in the joint effort at European level. *“Participation in the ESC-TCL*

is a fantastic opportunity” – declared Silvia Pedrana (ONC, Italy) – “The fact that the largest leather producer in Europe, in terms of employees and output, saw the interest of establishing a national ISP as a consequence of the creation of the TCL Skills Council proves how valid this approach is to address the delicate and crucial challenges we are facing.”

Mr Rob Senden (IVOC/IREC, Belgium), noted that “there are a series of factors that we can observe in the trends of the TCL sectors in Europe, that show – notwithstanding obvious differences – that this traditional industry is very much alive and already recovering after a period of decline: offering the right skills both in schools and on the job is vital to sustain this growth, keep the knowledge and know-how in the businesses and high-value added activities in Europe”.

“Our analysis of best practices has resulted in a kind of ‘handbook’ for the creation and implementation of a national ISP” – suggests Ms. Annie Warburton (CREATIVE SKILLSET, United Kingdom) – “it shows the many common approaches that exist in our diverse countries. We hope it will make a persuasive case to existing ISPs to join our effort and be a trigger for the creation of further national or transnational ISPs for these exciting, creative industries”.

“In our exchanges with the other ISPs, we have reviewed a vast array of instruments already implemented by the ESC-TCL partners” – says Ms Charlotte Lefebvre (OPCALIA – TEXTILES MODE CUIRS, France) – “they offer an incredible opportunity for the transfer of validated solutions among national organisations, which increase the effectiveness of our action as ISP to satisfy the skills needs of the sectors”.

“The seven recommendations emerging from our analysis are reflected in the proposal for future work, our follow-up project currently under evaluation by the Commission” – stated Mr. Gustavo Gonzalez-Quijano (Cotance), Mr. Francesco Marchi (Euratex) and Mr Luc Triangle (industriAll – TCL) “As social partners, we are ready to keep investing in this approach and we are pleased to see that the current ISP members are also keen on pursuing their efforts in this realm. There are other key countries that we look forward to welcome in the partnership: we feel that the excellent results we have presented will help us in convincing them to team up”.

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About the EUROPEAN SKILLS COUNCIL - TCL

The ESC- TCL (<http://europeanskillscouncil.t-c-l.eu/eng/default.aspx>) is an initiative of the European Social partners industriAll-European Trade Union (The European Trade Union for Textile Clothing Leather and Footwear), EURATEX (The European Apparel and Textile Confederation) and COTANCE (The European Leather industry organisation), with the financial support of the European Commission- Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs.

Practically, The ESC-TCL aims to identify and monitor training needs, communicate on those needs to Education and Training entities, promote activities that match identified training needs with the market offer, and elaborate and support specific projects and initiatives at EU and national levels.

Based on a networking of several existing national Industry Skills Partnerships dedicated to Education Training and Employment (*Opcalia – Textile Mode Cuir (FR)*, *COBOT (BE)*, *IVOC (BE)*, *Creative Skillset (UK)*), and newly created *Osservatorio Nazionale Concia (IT)*) and other key players from these Industries (National sectoral Organisations, Universities, Research centres, companies, Public authorities, Trade Unions, Technical institutes...etc.) the ESC-TCL aims at improving the quality of the European labour force in TCL Industries, and to assist enterprises and workers / students and job seekers to be better prepared in meeting changing competitive demands.