



25th November 2019, Iași (Romania)

All together to revitalise skills and jobs in Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear sectors

"The university is traditionally the place to educate students and develop knowledge, but today it serves as a hub for connecting people: students with companies, teachers with public authorities, a place where all sectoral stakeholders come together." This was the opening message of IDBM dean Mariana Ursache at the second Public event of the Skills4Smart TCLF 2030 project (S4TCLF) held at the Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iași (Romania) on 15th November 2019. This event, focusing on "Digitalisation & Sustainability - A Blueprint to revitalise skills and jobs in Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear industries" gathered around 100 participants: current students and faculty members from the host university, companies and public authorities of the North-East region of Romania and S4TCLF project partners.

After the inspiring welcoming words of TUIASI staff, the representatives of S4TCLF consortium, Carmen Arias (CEC Secretary General), Rob Senden (IVOC Director) and Lutz Walter (Director of Innovation & Skills at EURATEX) presented various aspects of the S4TCLF project. It has been said that "the core idea of this project is to work on solutions", and indeed the development of new training content, the creation of networks among regions and among vocational education and training (VET) centres across Europe, will help answering to the current challenges that these industries are facing. At the same time, it will also help making them more digitalised and sustainable.

"In the past, the first priority of the companies was to fulfil the requests of their customers, whereas today, the biggest concern for TCLF companies across Europe is the difficulty to attract and retain talented people with the right skills to work in their businesses and make them grow" emphasised L. Walter. According to the S4TCLF estimates, companies in the 4 sectors may have to hire more than new 600,000 employees from now until 2030 in order to fill the replacement demand from retirement or sector exits for other reasons, as well as to address new skill needs. Due to regional peculiarities and sectoral specificities of the 4 branches, there is no appropriate one-size-fits-all Skill Strategy, hence five different future scenarios have been developed within the project, from which companies, VET providers and public authorities can draw conclusions and use for adopting their own strategies: A Brave New World, Selective Leadership, Renaissance of the Craft, Walled Gardens and Industrial Sunset (more info about the 5 scenarios – <https://bit.ly/37HeLQw>)

By way of example, Irina Mihai has been invited to present a project of the Romanian Sectorial Committee Association from the Textile and Garments Branch (COMITEX) which aims at developing an alternative public policy in the field of training and qualification for the Romanian textile sector thanks to the involvement of all relevant actors in the sector. She explained that this would be possible only through a strengthened cooperation among all industry stakeholders, a re-branding of the sector and its qualifications, and involvement of the companies in vocational training activities.

The public event carried on with a roundtable moderated by Aura Mihai (TUIASI) together with Gustavo Gonzalez-Quijano (General Secretary of COTANCE) focusing more on companies' experiences in terms of digitalisation and sustainability. A former graduate of TUIASI, Caterina

Ailiesei explained how her company KATTY FASHION, a leading-edge company which produces beautiful garments with minimal environmental impact in the Iasi area, gained leadership on the market. Respect, excellency, honesty and unity were the founding values. "Only through the cooperation of all stakeholders of the sectors, it will be possible to launch new projects in zero waste and digitalisation to boost our industry and our region".

REDU, represented by S.E. S. Prisecaru, transforms factories' residual process materials of textile and clothing into creative fashion items. "Although a relatively small part of consumers has been already educated to not throw clothes in the garbage, there is still a long way to go all over Europe and all over the world".

"The bond between university and companies is strong nowadays" explained Janina Zarojanu, from GEMINI CAD SYSTEMS, a 15-year old Iasi-based company worldwide known for developing hardware and software solutions for the textile, leather, clothing and other manufacturing sectors. Their efforts in research and innovation have translated into success on the market, but there is more. GEMINI CAD SYSTEMS has entered into a win-win partnership with TUIASI offering state of the art equipment for free to the University, which allows learners to get the necessary skills for a top future in the industry: "Academics train the future specialists of the digital area and we at GEMINI CAD support them by offering licences and support of our software tools to all students free of charge. Nevertheless, in order to fully welcome all the benefits deriving from the digitalisation a change of mindset is necessary for more traditional companies".

The event finished with the presentation of TUIASI's activities in attracting youngsters for careers in the TCLF sectors, considered in Europe as today's main challenge. Not only traditional events such as study visits, open doors and summer schools are organised, but also Fashion contests with more than 40 high schools from across Romania involved and a real Fashion Night with a catwalk organised together with the municipality of Iași.

Thus, the general message agreed by all panellists at this second Public event within the S4TCLF project is that *"Building a supportive ecosystem of collaboration-driven universities and VET providers, innovation-driven businesses together with like-minded public authorities is fundamental to improve employability by attracting and retaining new workforce, to encourage growth and strengthen regions"*. As the S4TCLF project progresses, it will capture best practices such as these from Iași and integrate them in the sector skills strategy in the form of a Sustainability Roadmap – for future exploitation of the project's outcomes and as a guiding light for the TCLF industries up to 2030.

Project Details:

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Project duration:

01st January 2018 – 31st December 2021

Project Partners:

1. EURATEX - European Apparel and Textile Confederation Belgium, Project coordinator
2. CEC – European Footwear Confederation, Belgium
3. COTANCE - European Leather Association, Belgium
4. CIAPE- Centro Italiano per l'Apprendimento Permanente, Italy
5. CITEVE- Centro Tecnológico das Indústrias Têxtil e do Vestuário de Portugal, Portugal
6. CNDIPT- Centrul National de Dezvoltare a Invatamantului Profesional si Tehnic, Romania
7. COBOT, Belgium

8. CTCP, Centro Tecnológico do Calçado de Portugal, Portugal
9. HMA - Hellenic Management Association, Greece
10. FUNDAE - Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo, Spain
11. IVOC, Belgium
12. INESCOP- Instituto Tecnológico del Calzado y Conexas, Spain
13. OPCALIA, France
14. PIN - Soc. Cons. A r.l. – Servizi didattici e scientifici per l'Università di Firenze, Italy
15. Politecnico Calzaturiero, Italy
16. SPIN360, Italy
17. TUIASI- Universitatea Tehnica Gheorghe Asachi din Iasi, Romania
18. Lodz University of Technology, Poland
19. UPC- Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Spain
20. PIRIN-TEX EOOD, Bulgaria
21. UdL - Universitat de Lleida, Spain
22. Virtual Campus, Portugal

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