



Brussels, 17th December 2014

**The Social Dialogue brings EU social partners
to assess the priorities of action in the European footwear sector**

Brussels – In the framework of the European project “Developing social dialogue in the European Footwear Sector”, the European Confederation of the Footwear Industry (CEC) and industriAll European Trade Union (industriAll Europe) held a fruitful workshop in Brussels, which resulted on concrete policy recommendations and new project ideas to reinforce the footwear sector in Europe.

National associations and trade unions, respective Members of CEC and industriAll Europe, accompanied by the European Commission, DG EMPL, met at a workshop in Brussels to discuss and identify the most urgent actions needed to support the growth and competitiveness of the European footwear sector.

Following the presentation of footwear statistics clearly illustrating the excellent achievements of European footwear exports to third countries, social partners analysed the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of European footwear.

Participants stressed the good reputation of European footwear in terms of high quality and distinctive products thanks to the technical knowledge and know-how of the workforce. However such expertise required continuous investment on skills development, and in this field the collaboration between companies and educational centres needed to be reinforced as well as between educational institutions in Europe, in order to reduce existing mismatches, and fulfil job vacancies, in particular at technical level.

In this relation, all presents agreed that the lack of attractiveness to work in the sector together with the lack of access to finance for SMEs remained the major threats for a sustainable development of the industry in Europe. There were clear opportunities for the sector's growth like an ageing population providing for new niche markets; the consumer requests for customised products, contributing to bring production back to Europe, and last but not least the e-commerce, a low cost retail channel reaching worldwide. The approval of the mandatory origin marking on consumer products, currently under discussion, would support the international recognition of the European footwear.

The social partners concluded with the decision of launching an immediate campaign with concrete joint actions like Open Days, orientation sessions, to attract your generations to the sector in collaboration with educational centres. Of particular relevance for the success would be the support from public authorities and from specialised media.

The workshop conclusions and recommendations will be part of a project report to be presented in the Project Final Conference to be held on Friday 27th March in Paris. All footwear stakeholders are invited to participate, and can already send their details for registration to info@cec-footwearindustry.eu .