



Confédération Européenne de l'Industrie de la Chaussure
European Confederation of the Footwear Industry

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**Commissioner Biénkowska meets representatives
of the Fashion and Creative Industries**

Brussels – On the 16th June, Commissioner Biénkowska hosted the first Forum on Fashion and High-End industries accompanied by representatives of European Fashion Industries Associations and companies from the luxury segment. The objective was to assess the initiatives developed to support these industries since the fAction Plan was launched in February 2013, and to identify future joint actions.

The new Commissioner responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROWTH) received the Presidents of European Fashion and Creative Industries Associations (CEC – Footwear; COTANCE – Leather; ECCIA – Cultural and Creative Industries; EURATEX -Textile and Clothing; and Fur Europe) for the first time in Brussels. The Forum is the result of what was agreed under the Action Plan for Fashion and High-End Industries was elaborated by the Commission and the industries in 2013. Commissioner Biénkowska demonstrated a clear interest on the activities and success stories undertaken by the stakeholders since then, as well as on joint initiatives that should next be prioritised in order to tackle the challenges and opportunities of these sectors.

Biénkowska emphasized the full Commission's support to the participants: "You are a strategic sector and represent what Europe does best: quality and creativity with high value. Many small companies are leaders in their niche markets in Europe and globally." The same message was transmitted by the Member of the European Parliament, Dr Christian Ehler, co-chairman of the new Intergroup on cultural and creative industries in the Parliament

The Commissioner recognised that companies were not growing as fast as the Americans, and therefore urgent joint action was needed to boost their growth and jobs creation in Europe. In this relation, the president of the CEC, Cleto Sagripanti, showed his satisfaction with the Commission's decision to include CEC's proposals for urgent action in the updated Action Plan for the Fashion and High-End Industries to be implemented in the coming year: "Indeed it is essential that not only the Commission, but also national administrations support the reshoring of footwear manufacturing to Europe. We need to bring back production. Our European products are appreciated worldwide as show the export statistics to third countries."

In his intervention, Sagripanti also underlined the daily research that footwear companies accomplished in order to create innovative products and remain competitive. He urged the Commission to support them with adequate funding schemes that effectively reached the SMEs, and called for a joint action to attract new generations with the necessary skills to the industry.

Other subjects discussed by the participants included the need to continue fighting counterfeiting and copies of models, the opening of strategic third markets while ensuring that



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a level playing field is respected, and the establishment of a well-functioning Digital Single Market to boost secure and easy cross border online sales.

The Forum concluded with the Commission announcing that concrete initiatives will be presented in the coming months in accordance to what the participants had agreed as a priority under the Action Plan for Fashion and High-End Industries.

