



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

Rue de la Science n°14b- 1040 Bruxelles
Tel. +32.2.808.44.52- www.cec-footwearindustry.eu

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Brussels – *To remain competitive in global markets, European footwear needs to focus on increasing its added value. How can this be achieved? “Knowledge4Foot”, a new Erasmus + project, aims to contribute to the added value of European footwear by enhancing the research and development skills of footwear sector employees, which will boost innovation in the European footwear sector.*

“Knowledge4Foot: Knowledge Platform for Transferring Research and Innovation in Footwear Manufacturing”, which was launched at its kick-off meeting in Romania on 19-20 January 2016, aims to create a curriculum and knowledge platform for internships and project-based learning. As many European footwear companies currently lack employees with the right set of skills to unleash the companies’ innovative potential, the curriculum will be designed to foster excellence in product design and development, engineering, and management. Moreover, the curriculum and correspondent training will be optimised to meet European footwear companies’ innovation needs and make the most of the solutions and results already provided by research by reinforcing the “knowledge triangle”, which consists of business, research, and education. With the right set of skills, employees will be able to transfer technological knowledge and research results to leather and footwear companies all over the Europe.

The project is managed by a consortium of education and research organisations, enterprises, and other footwear and education stakeholders based in six different European countries, namely Romania, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Croatia, led by Romanian university Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iași. Training materials, books, reports and guides will be made available in English as well as the project partners’ languages to ensure wide distribution across Europe.

The CEC – European Confederation of the Footwear Industry is the project leader for the first project output, which is a study on labour market needs for highly qualified professionals in footwear manufacturing. In addition to providing an overview of labor market needs, the study aims to identify the mix of transversal and professional skills that can improve the transfer of research and innovation results into product, processes, and services in order to increase the added value of the final product. The results of this research study will provide the first elements to design a curriculum which will link research and innovation to business through Higher Education learning.

Many European footwear companies have been badly hit by the economic crisis and are facing increased competition due to the pressures of globalisation, yet Europe has a long-standing tradition in footwear manufacturing and is still widely recognised for its high quality products. Knowledge4Foot aims to contribute to maintaining Europe’s image and position as a leader in high added value footwear manufacturing through the development of its training-based model and by encouraging its widespread adoption by HE entities across Europe. Connecting the “knowledge triangle” will enhance the contribution of higher education to jobs and growth in EU footwear sector and can become an exemplary model for fostering excellence in education in the European Union.