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Survey Results Reveal Skills Needed in Comfortable Footwear Manufacturing

The results of a survey recently conducted under the European project Fit2Com have revealed the skills which companies most need to create comfortable and healthy footwear. In addition, the results show that companies see comfort as an important feature of shoes for consumers. The results of this survey will be used by the project partners to develop a new qualification profile which will provide the necessary skills and know-how to design quality healthy and comfortable footwear.

The European project Fit2Com, funded under Erasmus +, was conceived by the European Confederation of the Footwear Industry (CEC) and its project partners to identify and address the skills and competences gap in comfort and healthy footwear by developing a professional qualification profile and corresponding ICT and work-based training. The idea behind this project is that comfort and health should not be compromised by fashion and style and that it is possible to combine the two with the right mix of creative skills and innovative engineering.

As a first step to creating the new qualification programme, the project partners set out to identify the training needs of footwear companies by creating a survey which was taken by 66 footwear companies from Portugal, Spain, Romania, Germany, Sweden, and Italy.

A preliminary reading of the results shows that the most cited problematic trend for 2020 perceived by footwear companies was a shortage of skilled workers, which confirms the need to update and modernise the set of skills required by footwear companies to remain innovative and competitive. Other noteworthy issues for footwear companies were consumer demand for customisation, an ageing population, and customer demand for comfort, further suggesting that there is a place in the market for comfortable shoes in fashion.

The footwear companies surveyed believed that the aspects of footwear which consumers most value are high levels of comfort and wear resistance. Regarding the design of the shoe, companies thought that the most important features to consumers are the way shoes fit and how easy it is to walk in the shoes, both features which are crucial in the manufacture of comfortable shoes.

Most importantly, the results showed that the highly important skills which are most lacking in footwear manufacturing are skills in sales arguments on comfort, comfort and healthy footwear, and comfort assessment of finished footwear. This finding indicates which skills the project partners will need to focus on in the development of the new training and qualification programme.

Bringing comfort to fashion can give the European footwear sector a boost and contribute to the success of European shoes, whilst satisfying the need for comfort in the footwear market. With the help of Fit2Com, consumers of shoes will no longer have to suffer for fashion!