



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

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**CEC President Sagripanti meets EP President Tajani to  
urge for access to strategic markets and support to footwear SMEs**

*The President of the European Confederation of the Footwear Industry (CEC) recently met with European Parliament President Antonio Tajani to exchange views on the European footwear sector's trade and policy priorities. The discussions focused on a reindustrialisation strategy for the sector and the need to push for the successful adoption of free trade agreements with strategic trade partners for European footwear following the impasse of the TTIP.*

During a meeting in Brussels on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2019 with European Parliament President Antonio Tajani, CEC's president Cleto Sagripanti took the opportunity to convey the most pressing needs for European footwear SMEs in order to enhance their global competitiveness. Sagripanti emphasised the need for a stronger European Union Industrial Strategy to help the manufacturing sectors increase their share of the total EU output and preserve and promote jobs, and requested his support to help the European Commission reach this goal. President Tajani has long been a strong supporter of industrial competitiveness and has called for the reindustrialisation and modernisation of the European economy to reach the 20% target of industry's share in Europe's GDP by 2020, which is in line with the CEC's continuous activities to boost the footwear manufacturing sector in Europe to promote high-quality products meeting high European standards.

Equally important for European footwear businesses is the timely conclusion of ongoing free trade agreements with Japan and Mercosur. Japan is the EU's second biggest trading partner in Asia, whilst the EU is Mercosur's first trading partner. Considering the high tariffs on footwear imports into these strategic markets, European footwear companies will have the potential to boost their export performance once the agreements enter into force. In this relation, Sagripanti requested the EU Parliament's support in reaching a satisfactory conclusion of the FTA with Japan with immediate or at least fast liberalisation of tariffs for footwear and leather goods from day one of the entry into force of the agreement. CEC's President also underlined the urgency of accelerating negotiations with Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay), a market with a potential of 284 million fashionable consumers.

Overall, European footwear has experienced a steady growth in its exports to non-EU countries with an increase of 40% in quantity and 90% in value from 2009 to 2016, which is a testament to the quality and popularity of European shoes, but the sector needs a robust EU strategy to maintain its relevance and strong performance in the face of market and economic changes. The CEC welcomes President Tajani's support and calls on the EU to deliver on its policy objectives for the creative and manufacturing industries.