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First Training Pilot on high-end footwear manufacturing

At Politecnico Calzaturiero in Padua, a group of 14 designers and footwear technicians from 5 European countries recently participated in a two-week training in luxury footwear-making techniques thanks to the European Erasmus+ funded project High End Shoe (HES), which aims to develop a new qualification and occupational profile and corresponding training programme in luxury footwear manufacturing. The training enabled students to practice a comprehensive set of skills, from patternmaking, trimming, and sewing to finishing techniques, and they each produced a pair of shoes. The testimony of the students revealed the success of the pilot exercise, which intensified their ambition to reach their dream of working in luxury footwear.

In early July 2017, a pilot training on high-end footwear manufacturing was held in Politecnico Calzaturiero in Padua. It represents a major step for the validation of the new training programme for the new occupational profile in luxury footwear manufacturing that is currently being finalised by an international consortium under the European Erasmus+ funded project High End Shoe, whose overall aim is to increase the luxury and high-end shoe's segment in Europe. The European Consortium is led by the Portuguese Footwear Technology Centre and includes, in addition to the European Confederation of the Footwear Industry, the Spanish Footwear Technology Centre INESCOP, the Italian Footwear Technology Centre Politecnico Calzaturiero, the French Lycée du Dauphiné, and the Czech Footwear Association.

The occupation and training programme is addressed to a wide range of target groups, such as teachers of vocational subjects, designers, modelers, graduates and students of vocational schools as well as young entrepreneurs. This pilot training focused on techniques for producing quality luxury men's shoes using a Goodyear design and was attended by 14 students from the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The feedback received on this mobility exercise was very positive, indicating that they found the course enriching, useful, and motivating. Their testimonies on social media revealed their enthusiasm and gratefulness for having been part of this unique training, with comments such as "Proud of this... Great experience, amazing people, new friends," and "It was the best decision of my life. In less than 2 weeks, we covered everything."

The pilot focused on the training units related to patternmaking, trimming leather parts, hand sewing exercises, and on finishing techniques such as sewing the frame and outsole on a Goodyear machine, dyeing, and polishing. In addition, the students had the unique opportunity of visiting the Ballin Factory, which produces samples for renowned luxury brands, providing them with an insight into the Italian footwear industry. By the end of the course, each student had produced a pair of quality high-end shoes of their own design using traditional Italian techniques.

Boosting Europe's luxury and high-end assets and potential is one of the European Confederation of the Footwear Industry's (CEC) main priorities, which it is actively promoting through the HES project.



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CEC is also working on identifying how to best connect with new generations to attract them to the footwear sector, and this international mobility pilot underlines the benefits for students and workers to participate in cross-border experiences, not only for themselves, but also for the companies they will or are working for as they can bring new knowledge, new practices and a more motivated workforce.

The Luxury Footwear Manufacturing Technician profile and corresponding training programme, the project's main outcomes, will be presented in the **project's final conference at the MICAM trade fair in Milan on Tuesday 19th September**. The outcomes will increase the employability of footwear workers as well as signal their highly specialised and wide-ranging set of skills to high-end and luxury footwear companies. With a more qualified and competent workforce, European footwear will maintain and reinforce its leading position in luxury worldwide. As consumers around the world are looking for unique experiences, high quality value, and unique objects of desire, It is an exciting time to choose a career in high-end luxury footwear in Europe and seize the opportunity to follow this training course.

For more information, please visit the project website at www.highendshoe.eu