



Confédération Européenne de la Chaussure European Footwear Confederation

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

The Network of European TCLF VET providers promoting Excellence takes off!

*On the 14th April, 2021, the 22 members of the **European Network of TCLF VET providers promoting Excellence** met virtually for the first time to exchange ideas and priorities for joint action. This initiative, conducted within the framework of the **Erasmus+ Skills4Smart TCLF industries 2030 Blueprint (S4TCLF)**, brings together European Vocational and Training (VET) institutions to further strengthen Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (TCLF) skills provision in Europe through the implementation of ambitious joint actions. In such a moment of crisis and global economic downturn, many TCLF SMEs find it increasingly difficult to remain afloat, while unemployment rates are staggering, putting the economic stability of many European regions at risk. Robust and agile TCLF VET systems can more than ever make a difference on companies' completeness and bolster the economic recovery from COVID-19 in many European industrial regions.*

Decisions made today will shape the economic recovery

The TCLF industries have been hard-hit by the coronavirus crisis. Mobility restrictions and lockdowns, and the consequent drastic decrease in consumption, have created a toll on European TCLF SMEs. In addition to hampered growth, the crisis and the associated digital transformation and societal changes will result in long-lasting changes in consumer demand and businesses models. These new patterns require TCLF companies to grasp new opportunities, adjust and be prepared to remain competitive. Sound digital and technological solutions for the design and production of more sustainable TCLF products accompanied by the enhancement of craftsmanship will certainly help attract new consumers and expand operations. Companies' investments in the technical, digital and sustainability skills of their workers are therefore crucial to turn challenges into opportunities. Because VET directly addresses the urgent need to reskill and upskill, and because of its unique position as a bridge between education and work, robust and agile TCLF VET systems will make a difference in current and future TCLF workforce.

The key role of VET to bolster European regions' economic recovery

VET is a catalyzer of innovation and applied research. It plays a decisive role in addressing demographic, labour and technological changes. Robust and agile VET systems will make regional economic structures more responsive to disruptions and uncertainty, boost TCLF companies' growth and attract better-qualified young talents. This is particularly the case in the TCLF sectors where geographical concentration is high and where many companies operate in regional clusters. The members of the **Network of European TCLF VET providers promoting Excellence** will work to make their respective VET systems and institutions better prepared to respond to the latest companies and workers' needs by implementing concrete and targeted collaborative actions and engaging in dialogue with regional authorities to fully integrate their voice into regional development strategies. For this objective to be successfully achieved, the S4TCLF project partners are also working on engaging relevant public and private stakeholders and act in a concerted and strategic way. Only a common and coordinated approach to upskilling and reskilling that has all players on board will strengthen VET's pivotal role in economic competitiveness and crisis recovery.



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With members from Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Spain and Romania, the **Network of European TCLF VET providers promoting Excellence** will foster collaboration between VET providers across Europe, implement concrete actions to strengthen VET, and reach out to public authorities to make sure that the necessary investments are directed toward VET modernisation. The role of VET in the economic recovery from the coronavirus crisis is decisive and making the right decisions and investments today will ensure that TCLF companies remain drivers of growth and development in European regions. Carmen Arias, Secretary General of the **European Footwear Confederation (CEC)** concluded the meeting by stressing that *“this was a great first step towards greater collaboration and connectivity between our European TCLF VET community, and promoting excellence in vocational training is critical for our industries’ productivity and innovation”*, and that CEC and the S4TCLF Blueprint consortium *“will support all the participant’s aspirations to continuously improve VET systems to better respond to TCLF industries”*.

More information can be found on our [S4TCLF project website](#) and on our [S4TCLF Twitter page](#)



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