



Press Release – CEC reaction to the Report on an EU Textiles Strategy

On 1st June 2023, the European Parliament adopted the Report on an EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles (EU Textiles Strategy). The European Footwear Confederation (CEC) welcomes such initiative aiming at a more sustainable industry in full compliance with international human, labour and environmental standards all around the globe. European footwear companies are committed and working in this direction; however, it is also essential that such parameters are respected by non-EU partners, and for that the European Commission needs to ensure the necessary measures in cooperation and trade agreements with third countries.

First of all, we wish to point out that since the establishment of the textiles ecosystem in March 2020 within the “New Industrial Strategy for Europe”, the term “textiles” has generated confusion and misinterpretation of the specific sectors covered by this term, namely textile, clothing, leather and footwear (TCLF) sectors, and to the tendency to look for “one-fits-all” solutions. When it comes to footwear, the product is often excluded or assimilated to textile and apparel, and consequently subject to the exclusion or inclusion in the scope of several initiatives, without a proper assessment of the feasibility.

The Report voted yesterday is an example of the ongoing legislative trend. On a technical basis, the document does not consider the peculiarities in health and safety standards, number of materials, production processes and waste management between the different products within the scope of the Strategy and, consequently, intends to provide common, but unfeasible, solutions. Moreover, it also lacks in solutions for a strengthened resilience and competitiveness, threatening the recovery of the EU industry.

For what concerns the EU footwear industry, some elements of the text should be reevaluated in order to ensure concrete and feasible results during this green transition, not leaving anyone behind. For this reason, the CEC would like:

- To underline, as already expressed in several other occasions, that footwear is a complex product composed by a multitude of materials and components, assembled with different techniques, subject to specific health and safety standards and requiring specific recycling and circularity models. Therefore, the aggregation of footwear and textiles, and the definition of horizontal requirements, are neither feasible nor appropriate from both the ecodesign and circularity perspectives.
- To remind, as correctly mentioned in the Report, that the EU footwear industry consists almost exclusively by SMEs who need support and realistic practices to achieve the objectives of the EU Green Deal. In this regard, the CEC welcomes the incentive to research and innovation envisaged by the EP;
- To review the EP expectations on “the considerable economic leverage” of the sector (provided that the text refers to the entire textiles ecosystem), being the latter too optimistic. The EU footwear industry is mainly focused on high added-value products not sharing the same market share of fast-fashion products, the majority of which is imported from third countries, mainly in Asia. In this regard, 89% of footwear made available on the EU market in 2022 was imported, meaning that the leverage power attributed to the EU industry is overrated;



- To invite the legislators to consider the competitiveness of EU companies and to ensure a level playing field, that includes transparency and international standards, when negotiating Free Trade agreements or granting EU GSP status. Alongside the tremendous consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing geopolitical scenario, EU footwear is experiencing a gradual and constant regression in both production and trade vis-à-vis its direct competitors from third countries;
- To reject the assumption that cattle are raised and slaughtered for fashion purposes. Leather is a by-product of the footwear industry obtained by the recovery of hides and skins that would otherwise be disposed. In addition, the CEC calls for the end of the market demonisation of leather;
- Last but not least, to encourage the legislators to pay more attention to the use of term “textile(s)” and to better identify which pieces of legislation are relevant for the different products covered by the EU Textiles strategy;

The CEC remains at the disposal of the legislators for further cooperation in the upcoming legislative actions.