



## **Leather: European Social and Environmental Report – 2020**

VS/2019/0009

Final Meeting  
On-line, 10 December 2020

### *Minutes*

#### **Participants**

COTANCE	Gustavo Gonzalez-Quijano
COTANCE	Catherine Vercheval
IndustriAll-European Trade Union	Patrizia Pitronaci

#### **1. Review of the entire initiative and its dissemination**

Globally, the partners expressed their satisfaction with the project, how it was coordinated and the results it provided. They acknowledged in particular Mrs Catherine Vercheval's work and her continued care for all activities and elements of the joint project.

During the first year, the main focus was on obtaining a sufficient number of replies from tanneries. The partners were concerned that there could be hesitation to respond by tanneries due to the quite extensive survey. The partners used all their persuasion, prepared translations of the questionnaires and guidance notes. Telephone follow-ups to incomplete questionnaires and on-site visits completed the efforts spent by the project partners, and in the end 79 good quality responses were collected, enough to provide sound data to all the standard indicators that the EU Social Partners set, back in 2012.

The second year was - of course - made difficult by the Covid pandemic. Three activities were in particular impacted: (1) the drafting of the SER allocated to the Italian partner who, as the most important tanning sector in the EU, was proportionally busier in the attention to affiliated tanneries hit by the crisis, which became acute precisely during the finalisation of the report, (2) the German workshop scheduled in March which was fully arranged and prepared with a good turnout in registered participants, but which had to be cancelled for safety reasons, and (3) the final conference that was due to take place in Vienna in June. Thanks to the six-month extension, however, time was sufficient to complete the SER and organise a successful conference even though it eventually had to be completely held on-line. The German workshop was however cancelled as sanitary circumstances didn't allow to reorganise it satisfactorily.

The cooperation between partners was considered excellent, with a continuously good attendance at project meetings and active feedback during the project.

- Administrative and financial aspects

No particular administrative issues were identified.

Mr Gonzalez-Quijano reported on the approach to the European Commission in querying the possibility to divert unspent financial resources (*Travel expenses* were much lower mostly due to the cancellation of the physical final event) for a press campaign to further disseminate the project results across Europe. He conveyed the response received from the Commission. The proposal could not be accepted for it would have entailed a too big deviation to the work programme too close to the project end. About 70.000 Euro of travel & accommodation moneys will need to go back unspent to the public hand.

On the other budget headings, they acknowledged that the budget has been respected. Despite the fact that the conference was virtual and the organisation implied different services and costs, expenses in *Administration, translations* and *services* have been kept broadly in line with expectations.

On financial aspects, Ms Pitronaci agreed to provide the timesheets and staff costs before the end of January 2021.

- Quality of the SER data

The Project Partners came back to the number of returned questionnaires. Although the 79 responses received secured a representative picture of the European tanning industry. The low relative number compared to the total tanneries in Europe is not the most successful aspect of the project. Partners could attribute this turnout to tanners' "fatigue" of questionnaires and surveys but thought also to revisit the questionnaire so as to examine whether it could not be simplified for securing higher numbers of filled in questionnaires and more homogeneous responses.

The project partners agreed to consider the submission of a follow up Social Dialogue project on this basis.

- Workshops

Partner	Date/Place	Themes
Leather UK (UK)	19 September, Northampton	Training and skills potential
UNIC (Italy)	2 October, Milano	Animal welfare
AHLI (Hungary)	3 December, Budapest	Sustainability
APPBR (Romania)	5 December, Bucharest	Circular economy and leather industry
ACEXPIEL (Spain)	23 January, Igualada	Social responsibility and sustainability, labour and training.
APIC (Portugal)	30 January, Alcanena	Leather Authenticity

The Social Partners understood that the topics broadly covered the topics dealt with in the Final Event/Panel.

- Videos

The Social Partners expressed their satisfaction for the animations and agreed on their posting on Social Media and further exploitation in dissemination activities.

- Final conference

The final conference was perceived by all sides as very successful.

One caveat was pointed out in relation to the panel which was felt too dense to allow all guests to speak as long as they might have wanted to and to trigger a multilateral debate. This is a lesson learned for future event, in particular when held on-line.

They noted that the attendance was balanced in terms of categories of stakeholders and countries.

<b>Participation by country</b>	<b>Total: 128</b>
Italy	19
Spain	20
UK	15
EU (includes EU sectoral associations)	14
Germany	11
France	8
Portugal	7
Netherlands	6
Hungary	4
Austria	3
USA	2
Others or unknown	19

<b>Participation by category of stakeholder</b>	<b>Total 128</b>
Employers (including COTANCE project partners)	30
Suppliers	16
Workforce	13
Education and training	11
Customers	12
R&D	10
Press	5
NGO	5
Public authorities	4
Other	20
Unknown	2

Finally they looked over the preliminary analytical data in the social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube) and expressed satisfaction on the results and outreach.

## **2. Drawing conclusions related to the main project activities**

They concluded that the project was overall a success.

They understand that this is an initiative that should be continued in a not too distant future. The Social Partners should not wait another 7 years for the 3<sup>rd</sup> SER. They considered to prepare the road to the next SER exercise to be held possibly in 2024-2025, by engaging in a preparatory SER project where they could:

- Develop a Press Campaign across Europe for communicating the fruits of the European Sectoral Dialogue (in particular OiRA, Due Diligence, Authenticity, Manifesto, SER)
- Produce the corresponding printed and video communication material
- Revisit the questionnaire for improving the quality and quantity of responses
- Engage in a series of Public Workshops organised by the Social Partners in different Member States (possibly allowing LeatherUK to adhere, albeit at their own expenses) for promoting the SER exercise and engaging with the public

## **3. Adoption of a Press Release.**

The EU Partners discussed and eventually approved the draft proposal to be issued to the press and for the SER to be published on-line on both their sites.