



Leather: European Social and Environmental Report – 2020

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PRESS RELEASE

Ethics defines the work developed by the European Leather Industry Social Partners

The Social Partners of the European Leather industry met on 10 December 2020 to review the overall results of their joint EU-sponsored project ***Leather: Social and Environmental Report 2020 (SER 2020)***. The public on-line Conference that took place December 1st, closing the initiative, was still fresh in their minds. They had no difficulty in agreeing that it was a total success deserving attention not only from the leather sector's stakeholders but also from Social Partners of other sectors, who could learn from the example of an industry where workers and business representatives tirelessly work towards improvement in every possible aspect.

Despite the difficult context of the Covid pandemic, which obliged the initiative to change plans from a physical conference in June in Vienna (Austria) to an on-line event, it was extraordinarily successful. Indeed, the event, broadcasted from Brussels on 1st December 2020, brought together over 120 stakeholders of the leather value chain, including tanners, workers' representatives, brands and retail chains, sector associations, experts, as well as international organisations, the press and NGOs. Time-zones were no obstacles as there were attendants from the US, Brazil and Mexico or Indonesia and Singapore, in addition, of course, to almost all European countries.

A few days after posting the reports on the project website (<https://www.euroleather.com/news/projects/european-social-environmental-report>), over a hundred of downloads can be observed while the COTANCE YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClrf-cd5f5l6BzV7raRAOcA/videos>) is constantly recording new visitors to view the conference recordings and the video animations produced to convey key messages derived from the SER 2020 exercise.

All this shows that despite its size, our sector can have a global impact when the message is right!

And the message is indeed, right! The SER Conference opened by COTANCE President Andreas Kindermann (Wollsdorf Leather, Austria) and Judith Kirton-Darling, Deputy

Secretary General of industriAll-Europe welcomed six excellent panellists to discuss the results of the SER project and EU policies. Commission Head of Unit in DG Grow, Anna Athanasopoulou, addressed the EU Green Deal and ancillary Action Plans, and Euratex Director Dirk Vantyghem, CEC Secretary General Carmen Arias, Group Director of ESG at Stahl Mike Costello, ICT Secretary Dr Kerry Senior and Pro-GE representative Gerald Kreuzer analysed the implications on the TCLF industry and the expectations of businesses and workers.

If one word could summarise the whole SER exercise, it would be “Ethics”, as it is more ethics that the Social Partners pursue for the leather value chain; in the relations between employers and workers at global level, in the respect for the material leather by alternative competitive materials or by aggressive anti-animal activist organisations, in lightening the sector’s environmental footprint and in the commercial relations between the various links in the leather value chain.

The Social Partners expressed their interest to engage in a repeat SER exercise in due time.