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Comfort and health as the key to future footwear developments

Italy

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The results of the Erasmus+ project Fit2Com – Skills Alliance for comfort and healthy footwear, were presented during a workshop on “Skills and Competencies of the future” held at the Lineapelle fair in Milan on September 27.


The European Confederation of the Footwear Industry (CEC) said the project’s main outcome has been the development of a new profile, the “Expert in Comfort and Healthy Footwear Manufacturing”, and corresponding training programme to respond to consumers’ demand for more comfortable fashion shoes. Funded by the European Commission’s Erasmus+ programme, the three-year project Fit-to-Comfort aimed to support European SMEs to “introduce more comfort and healthy features in their fashionable products with a view to enhancing their competitiveness and added value.”

The importance of healthy and comfort features in footwear was underlined by a survey launched at the early stages of Fit2Com project to evaluate consumers’ needs; 96% of 681 respondents selected comfort as one of the four aspects they value most in shoes, ahead of quality (81%), price (69%) and design (68%). Further, 48% of the participants in the survey cited the lack of comfort as the main reason why they do not find suitable shoes. A second survey directed at footwear companies acknowledged the manufacturers’ willingness to incorporate comfort features in their product strategy but also revealed that 70% of them viewed a shortage of skilled workers as the biggest challenge they will face by 2020.

Based on the outcome of both surveys, the project partners developed a new profile, “Expert in Comfort and Healthy Footwear Manufacturing”, and a corresponding training programme. The contents, available online in English, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian, comprise 600 hours of training through ten units. The aim is to enable participants to develop the necessary skills and competences to introduce comfort and healthy features in fashion footwear.

The CEC says the next and final step would be to have the new qualification recognised by each of the competent national authorities of Germany, Portugal, Romania and Spain, and integrate it in the corresponding VET systems, contributing in this way to enhance the footwear sector qualifications’ framework.



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