

“Ensuring a sustainable future for the Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Footwear Industries in Southeast Europe” – SEE the Future of TCLF

BUCHAREST DECLARATION

Adopted at an International Conference on 29 March 2023

Textiles, clothing, leather and footwear (TCLF) industries employ more than 400,000 workers in Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia. There are further growth opportunities, as brands are reviewing the security of their supply chains. Nearshoring offers possibilities for Southeast European countries close to major European markets, providing a sourcing option with a smaller ecological footprint.

At the same time, the European TCLF industries are set for a major transformation which will affect both industry and workers. The EU’s Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles aims to ensure that by 2030, TCLF products placed on the EU market are long-lived reusable, repairable and/or recyclable with the industry moving from a linear to a circular business model. The strategy covers the green and digital transitions while stressing the need to ensure competitiveness in the global context.

This project “Ensuring a sustainable future for the Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Footwear Industries in Southeast Europe” is a start for a long-term cooperation, where attention has been paid to putting together strategies for industrial development and social progress, enhancing the representativeness of employer associations and trade unions, developing their skills and capacity, and opening the path towards improved social dialogue and collective agreements, including industry-level bargaining.

At this International Conference on 28-29 March 2023 in Bucharest, the participating national industry/employer associations and trade unions from Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, in cooperation with the European social partners, have agreed on the following:

- The social partners are committed to working together to ensure a successful green and digital transformation of the industry, making use of growth opportunities, and ensuring a socially just transition that creates decent work for all.
- We call on the governments in our countries to involve the TCLF social partners in talks to upgrade policies on industrial strategies for the entire ecosystem and support innovation and digitalisation, as part of the new European transition pathway.
- Industrial transformation will require a major skills upgrade. We offer to work with the authorities and educational institutes to provide the necessary means to attract, train and/or reskill workers including through concrete support from the EU TCLF Pact for Skills.
- Brands and retailers sourcing from Southeast Europe should contribute to a positive transformation through responsible business practices, due diligence and support for social dialogue and living wages.
- Social dialogue is more vital than ever to ensure a sustainable transformation. The mechanisms for social dialogue and collective bargaining need to be strengthened, also taking into account the reference to collective bargaining coverage in the new EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages.

- We call on the European Union to provide funding for the upcoming TCLF industries' transformation, technology and skills upgrades, regional development, and just transition. European-level social dialogue can support a successful change process.

The national social partners will approach their governments in Southeast Europe and the European Union with their proposals on how to work together to ensure a sustainable and resilient future for the TCLF industries and their workers. The European social partners will continue to support these important and positive processes.

Bulgaria

Bulgarian Association for Textile, Apparel and Leather (BATOK)
Federation of Light Industry Workers (FOSIL-CITUB / FNSOLP-KNSB)
Federation of Light Industry (FLI-PODKREPA / FLP)

Croatia

Croatian Chamber of Commerce (HGK)
Croatian Employers' Association (HUP)
Trade Union of Textile, Footwear, Leather, Rubber of Croatia (TOKG)

North Macedonia

Organisation of Employers of Macedonia (ORM) / Textile Association)
Trade Union of Textile, Leather and Shoe Making Industry (STKC)

Romania

Employers' Federation of Textile, Garments and Leather (FEPAIUS)
Astrico Nord-Est Association
Romanian Leather Manufacturers' Organisation (Sfera Factor)
Association of Leather and Fur Producers of Romania (ABBPR)
National Federation of Trade Unions in Light Industry (FNSIU UNICONF)
Federation of Light Industry Workers (CONFPELTEX)
IndustriAll-BNS trade union

Serbia

Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (PKS)
Serbian Association of Employers (UPS)
Autonomous Trade Union of Textile, Leather and Footwear Workers (Sindtkos-CATUS)
Trade Union of Agriculture and Process Industry (GS PPI Nezavisnost)
Trade Union of Metalworkers (GS Metal Nezavisnost)
Industrial Union of Serbia (ISS)

Europe

European Apparel and Textile Confederation (EURATEX)
European Footwear Confederation (CEC)
European Association of Tanners and Dressers (COTANCE)
industriAll European Trade Union



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