

Addressing the skills challenge of the European Textile and Clothing sector

EURATEX invites experts in Brussels for the final conference of the Erasmus+ Project TEXAPP

BRUSSELS, 27 SEPTEMBER 2018 - The final conference of the Erasmus+ TEXAPP project was hosted by EURATEX on 25 September. The event, held to showcase the results of the project, was also an opportunity for insightful conversations on one of the pressing issues in the textile and clothing industry today: the lack of skilled workforce.

As one of the keynote speakers, **João Santos** (Deputy Head of Unit of the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion at the European Commission) presented a detailed overview of opportunities for Vocational Education and Training in the European Union. Stressing how programmes with focus on skills are among the Commission's priorities for the upcoming years, Santos introduced an upcoming **Erasmus+** initiative aimed at building an international excellence network of vocational training centres.

Industry testimonials from different companies across Europe illustrated a first-hand, diversified view of the challenges faced by the sector in the context of skills and qualifications: from specific regional difficulties (social, political, economic) affecting different countries, to common struggles.



"If you want to be at the forefront of technology, you must invest in skills" said **Paul Johnson** of W.T. Johnson & Sons, a historic UK textile finishers company that has been implementing personnel training, apprenticeship programmes, and flexibility for its retiring workforce to encourage exchange of knowledge between older and younger generations.

The high demand for qualifications also emerged in the review of the **TEXAPP project results** by partner countries. Indeed, 68% of the companies participating in a project survey revealed they have problems in recruiting staff.

EURATEX PRESS CONTACT

Margareta von Heland
 Communications Officer
margareta.vonheland@euratex.eu

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Following the objective to foster and strengthen the supply of apprenticeships for SMEs and micro enterprises, during the two years of project activity TEXAPP partners implemented tools and methods to support SMEs, namely:

- a **TEXAPP Standard** that describes the capacities and competences required for an SME to successfully manage and deliver an apprenticeship programme
- a Competence Center of Apprenticeships (the **TEXAPP Hub**): a digital, free, and user-friendly platform on which to find information on European apprenticeships programmes, funding opportunities, and examples of good practice.

The event also included a spotlight on European skills policies and other EU funded projects on skills development in the textile, clothing, leather and footwear sectors. **Rob Senden** from IVOC/IREC (Belgium) highlighted the need for companies to invest in upscaling new and current employees via training and apprenticeships, to face the shortage of qualified experts in the sector.

As underlined by the discussions and debates of the day, **the textile and clothing sector welcomes the support of public institutions and calls for collaboration between stakeholders** to improve its image, develop concrete tools for training, and attract and retain the younger generation.

[Learn more](#) about EURATEX projects.

EURATEX is representing interests of the European textile and clothing industry at the level of the EU institutions. As the voice of the European textile and clothing industry, EURATEX aims to create a favourable environment within the European Union for the manufacture of textile and clothing products.

The EU textile and clothing industry, including manmade fibres, remains an essential pillar of the local economy across the EU regions, at the same time it is intensively competing within the international market striving for a level playing field with the rest of the world.

According to the latest EURATEX data, 176,400 EU textile and clothing companies realised in 2017 a turnover of €181 billion and employed 1.7 million workers. In 2017, the extra-EU exports reached €48 billion representing a 26 % share of total turnover.