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Code of Conduct in the Leather and Tanning sector

Foreword

COTANCE (European Confederation the Leather Industry) and the ETUF:TCL (European Trade Union Federation of Textiles, Clothing and Leather) convened within the Social Sectoral Dialogue at European level, re-affirm their earnest allegiance to the respect of human rights at the workplace.

The European signatories of the present Code are thus favourable to fair and open world-wide trade, based upon the respect of the ILO conventions as well as on the international principles regarding Human Rights and human dignity.

The Social Partners agree to work towards a European Leather and Tanning sector that is productive, internationally competitive, but also based on the respect of human rights.

They recognise their responsibility towards the workers, having regard to the conditions in which they produce or provide their services or these are distributed by the affiliated enterprises of their respective organisations.

Article 1 - Content of the Code of Conduct

COTANCE and ETUF:TCL call on their members to actively encourage companies and workers of the European leather and tanning sector to respect and to include, directly or indirectly (including sub-contracting) in their possible codes of conduct in all countries, world-wide, in which they operate the following ILO conventions:

1.1 Ban on Forced Labour (Convention 29 & 105)

Forced Labour, slave labour or obligatory labour are banned. The workers will not have to give their employers a financial guarantee or their identity papers.

1.2 Ban on Child Labour (Convention 138 & 182)

Child labour is forbidden. Only workers aged 15 or more or older than the compulsory school age in the countries concerned are permitted to work. It should be guaranteed to provide measures with a view to help the concerned children by offering schooling possibilities and transitional financial help.

1.3 Freedom of association & right to collective bargaining (Conventions 87 & 98)

Workers and employees have the right to form or join a trade union of their choosing. Workers' rights to form trade unions, to join them and to negotiate collectively is recognised. Workers' representatives will not be subject to discrimination and will have access to all work places if such access is necessary for allowing them to perform their functions of representation (Convention 135 & Recommendation 143 of ILO).

1.4 Non-discrimination of employment (Convention 100 & 111)

The equality of opportunities and treatment will be applied to workers whatever their race, their colour, their sex, their religion, their political opinion, their nationality, their social origin or any other distinctive characteristic.

The signatories of the present code call on their members to also respect and include in their possible codes of conduct, the following clauses.

1.5 Reasonable working hours

The number of working hours must be in conformity with the legislation and the rules in force in the industry. Workers can not be asked to work regularly over 48 hours per week and they will be entitled to one day of leave every 7 days at least. Overtime hours will be provided voluntarily provided that they do not exceed 12 hours per week, that they will not be requested regularly and that they always be compensated.

1.6 Decent working conditions

The workers will benefit from a safe and clean working environment and the best professional practices will be applied with regard to health and safety, having regard to the operating knowledge in the industry and to all specified risks. Any type of physical abuse is strictly forbidden, as well as threat, punitive practice or exceptional disciplinary practice, sexual or other harassment as well as any act of intimidation from the employer.

1.7 Payment of a decent remuneration

Salaries and allocations paid have to be in conformity with the minimum legal rules and with the minimum rules in the industry and should allow workers to face their basic needs and ensure them a living wage. Deductions on salaries in the context of disciplinary measures are forbidden.

Article 2 – Circulation, promotion and implementation

The implementation refers to the activities necessary to the application of the Code at all levels.

2.1 COTANCE and the ETUF:TCL commit themselves to promote and to circulate the code in the relevant languages at all levels, by 31 December 2000, at the latest.

2.2 COTANCE and the ETUF:TCL call on their respective members (lists in annex) to adopt this code and to encourage its progressive implementation at company level.

2.3 COTANCE and the ETUF:TCL will set in place, when needed, training and awareness programmes.

2.4 COTANCE and the ETUF:TCL will call on their member organisations to integrate the code as a pre-requisite in all contracts with their sub-contractors and their suppliers. COTANCE and the ETUF:TCL will thus encourage the companies to make sure that the code is understood by their sub-contractors/suppliers and their respective workers.

Article 3 – Follow-up, assessment and redress mechanisms

3.1 COTANCE and the ETUF:TCL agree to follow-up, in the framework of the Social Sectoral Dialogue at European level, the progressive accomplishment of the implementation of the present code of conduct.

3.2 To that effect, COTANCE and the ETUF:TCL will conduct at least a yearly evaluation of the implementation of the present code, the first taking place no later than 30.06.2001. They could ask, among others, the Commission or Member States to supply the necessary assistance in this respect.

3.3 COTANCE and the ETUF:TCL agree that the implementation of the results of the code have to be controlled in an independent fashion, guaranteeing the credibility of the control to all interested parties.

3.4 COTANCE and the ETUF:TCL may, in the framework of the European Social Sectoral Dialogue, decide jointly and freely to start any other initiative in the pursuit of the implementation of the present code.

Article 4 – Most favourable clause

COTANCE members or the affiliated companies can introduce more favourable clauses in their respective possible code of conduct. The implementation of the present code can in no circumstance constitute an argument for reducing the more advantageous clauses already in place.

Annex: list of members
Brussels, 10 July 2000.
For COTANCE:
For ETUF:TCL: