VP Tajani: Fashion industry deserves our full support

The European fashion and high-end industries are global leaders accounting for 10% of European exports. European Commission Vice President Antonio Tajani will meet in Brussels today with high-level representatives of some of the Europe's main fashion companies to discuss concrete actions for the European fashion industry.

The Commission intends to reinforce the growth and competitiveness of the European fashion industries with a number of short-term actions. To this end, Vice-President Tajani will discuss key issues and ask for the views of CEOs of fashion and high-end industries on the following actions to:

- Ensure that education and training institutes provide students with required skills through better use of existing alliances, councils and working groups as well as more interaction between industry and institutes;
- Foster creativity, e.g. through match-making between new designers and small producers (WORTH pilot project);
- Foster innovation, e.g. through interoperable e-commerce tools (eBiz project);
- Ensure the protection of intellectual property, e.g. through raising awareness about fake goods;
- Seize opportunities for international trade, e.g. through participation in Missions for Growth;
- Form a regulatory framework to sustain growth, including for example the labelling of authentic leather.

Vice President Tajani will also discuss with participants how to better combat counterfeiting which has become a real danger to the industry's growth and employment.

Background

The European fashion industry is significant both in terms of reputation...

Amongst the participants of the informal high-level group are the CEOs and directors of renowned European companies, such as Chanel, Falke, Harrods, IC Company's-Peak Performance, Imax-Max Mara, LVMH, Moser, Emilio Pucci, Ricosta, Zegna as well as Bernardaud.

... as well as economically...

Supporting almost 850,000 companies and 5 million jobs, the fashion industry is a significant part of the creative economy. Accounting for 3% of the EU's GDP, it significantly contributes to the European economy and growth.
... by being simultaneously traditional and avant-garde.

European fashion is recognised world-wide as it links creative efforts with tradition and heritage as well as with technology and innovation, creating high value-added quality products. As part of our cultural and creative industries, fashion is one of the important drivers of economic and social innovation in the EU.

**Europe's fashion industry still faces specific challenges**

First, the availability of skilled workforce is of strategic value for the European fashion industries. One of the issues is the mismatch between education systems and the industry's quickly evolving needs. Similarly, creativity and innovation are tandem drivers for the fashion industry. The industry can only thrive if designers, technology centres and e-commerce tools work hand in hand.

A second major concern of the industry is how to protect their intellectual property rights (IPR) and fight against counterfeiting including copying of textile products. Fashion goods account for the largest share of all IPR-infringing goods: they were responsible for over 50% of the value of all cases registered by European customs in 2011.

Third, new export markets, in particular in emerging economies, are opening up for European fashion goods. Internationalisation beyond the external border of the EU is the step that SMEs need to take to seize these opportunities.

Fourth, the regulatory framework should be conducive to growth and jobs.


**Match-making platform for creating partnerships between small producers and designers**

In 2013 the European Commission will launch a call for tender for a "matching" platform to benefit of SMEs in the fashion sector. Like a dating agency, the platform will identify and support partnerships between designers and small producers - small manufacturers or craftsmen. The objective is to reduce the gap and create better cooperation between small producers and designers. The matching will result in new products with design content and higher added value, which can then be presented their product at fairs or industrial conferences. Participating SMEs and craftsmen can come from EU member states, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Albania, Croatia, FYROM, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Israel. This so-called WORTH pilot project will run two years with a budget of € 1m.