

A close-up photograph of a person's hand sprinkling a fine white powder onto a piece of animal skin, likely fur, which is laid out on a surface. The powder is captured mid-air, creating a soft, hazy effect. The background is blurred, showing other people and what appears to be a market or workshop setting.

Leather is my Job!

**FINAL
REPORT
2017**

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Surfing on the wave of its successful first edition, COTANCE and industriAll-Europe continued the Leather is my Job! initiative throughout 2016 and half 2017. Indeed, positive reactions in the sector as well as throughout the leather value chain encouraged the social partners to enlarge and deepen the EU-sponsored project, aimed at **improving the image of tannery work** and, in particular, encouraging young people to take an interest in the **varied job opportunities** the leather sector provides.

“One of the best promotional campaigns for leather in recent years has been the «Leather is my job» programme established by COTANCE. It succeeds on many levels. It is both scaleable and adaptable. Its target audience is young people mostly directly but also via their careers advisors, who in the West often overlook leather as a sunset industry.”

Mike Redwood,
in Arsutoria, January 2017

National leather associations and trade unions from France, Germany, Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal, the UK, Romania, Sweden, Italy, Austria, and Hungary joined their EU umbrella organisations COTANCE and industriAll-Europe in a second edition of their Social Dialogue initiative, to promote tannery jobs and create vocations, in particular amongst younger generations.

A **variety of promotional activities** were developed, reaching out to thousands of people across Europe and to millions through the Internet. At national level, partners organised open-days in tanneries, visits to schools, participation in job fairs and other work-promoting events. Leather is my Job! was partner of the **5th Freiberg Leather Days** (15/06/2016) and **Amici per la Pelle** (23/02/2017) in Milano. More workers were interviewed, their portraits uploaded on the project's Facebook account, and more brochures were published in different languages. A video was also co-financed in the UK.

At European level, besides the regular news posted on the project Facebook page, the interest for the initiative was successfully spurred by the **Photo Contest** organised in March 2017.

All these actions are illustrated in this report.

Held in the leather cluster of Igualada, Spain, the **Final Conference** gave the opportunity to the European and national social partners as well as many stakeholders of the sector to exchange on the campaign topics, the image of the sector and the challenges it faces.

COTANCE and industriAll-Europe hope that the project can continue and give rise to new initiatives in the interest of the whole value chain.

“The long term value of such campaigns will only be proven if we can talk confidently to our target audiences about real careers as opposed to a few years of employment. Careers that have been thought out for both men and women, with the flexibility to manage long and complex lifestyles and provide employees with a fruitful career and the opportunity to build a reasonable pension. In such a situation training and development will work for decades for both the employee and the Tanner.”

A programme well worth shouting about.

Mike Redwood,
in Arsutoria, January 2017

The understanding of what leather is, where it comes from, how it is produced and what qualifications and skills leather making requires has reached concerning levels in the general public and in particular among young people. This state of affairs is not irreversible, but changing the status quo demands **commitments from all stakeholders** of the leather industry to do something about it. **People must learn to appreciate the societal value of the tanning industry** before there can be vocations to join this economic sector and contribute to its renaissance.



RECOMMENDATIONS

In Europe, fewer and fewer people consider working in the industry sector and fewer still opt for tannery work. They are confused, with images and news circulating on the Internet that would shock anyone. They ignore that there can be a profitable, modern, environmentally sound and socially accountable alternative, such as it can be found in Europe. Europe's tanners can only win new followers if they achieve to transmit the pride of their trade to the public. People working in European tanneries will no longer hesitate to show they are proud of their jobs.

The shrinkage of the sector in Europe in terms of companies has unfortunately led to certain ostracism, and yet it is the interaction with the people and the territory that keeps the industry alive. This is a collective task for employers and workers alike, all along the leather value chain.

Creating solid bonds with communities at local level, opening up the doors of our factories and acting with perseverance to spread positive news about the product and the sector is the way forward.

Europe's leather sector has much to offer. It creates economic wealth with a residue of the meat industry, it serves culture and beauty with a product of unique properties, and it offers interesting job and career opportunities in the top end of an industry that strives for excellence.

Join us in the “Leather is my Job” network!

Gustavo Gonzalez-Quijano
COTANCE

Sylvain Lefebvre
industriAll-Europe

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VISITS TO SCHOOLS

Visits to schools represent a unique opportunity for tanners to awake the understanding and interest of young people to the world of leather. Children have no preconceptions and are eager to learn. Receiving a passionate account on the nature of leather, the benefits of this industry to society, the skills needed and the apprenticeships and job opportunities offered, plants the seeds for an open-minded younger generation and vocations to the sector. Visits to schools were coordinated by UKLF (UK) and APPBR (Romania).



Careers "Speed-dating" event at Gryphon School, Dorset

Delivered in conjunction with the *Institute for Creative Leather Technology* (ICLT), at the University of Northampton, the event provided an opportunity for 35 teenagers (16+), to meet with employers and discuss career opportunities, in particular with local leather manufacturer, *Pittards PLC*. **Four of the students followed up after the event**, with further discussion on the options available in the industry.



Visit to Buteni Gymnasium, Arad

Gheorghe Vesa, owner of A&A VESA company and Gheorghe Bostaca (APPBR) visited a class of 20 pupils in the final study year (8th grade) at the Buteni Gymnasium in Sebis (Arad county). After a presentation of leather and the tanning industry, the students were invited to visit the tannery (see page 6).

Presentation at the Gryffe High School, Bridge of Weir

ICLT Director Rachel Garwood was invited to address two groups of 53 students (13-14 years old) at *Gryffe School in Scotland*. This school is located very close to the tanneries of the Scottish Leather Group, the largest tanning group in the UK, which has its own highly successful apprenticeship academy, drawing apprentices from the local area. As such, this was a highly relevant cohort to address.



Visit to Petru Rares Technical College, Bucharest

APPBR delegate Gheorge Bostaca visited the 10th grade pupils class (6 young people aged 16-17 years) at the Petru Rares Technical College in Bucharest. They received a passionate account on how leather is produced and the different jobs opportunities offered by the tanning industry.



ICPI's experimental pilot plant and laboratories in Bucharest (28 March 2017)

The open-doors events at Pielorex and Taro concluded in a visit and open debate at the **Technical College Gheorghe Asachi** and the **Technical College Petru Rares** with the pupils, teachers, APPBR and ICPI representatives. Teachers and pupils envisage organising further orienting activities in tanneries with the Romanian leather technology centre.

Tanneries du Puy (22 March 2017)

29 scholars from 2 classes from the **Lycée Professionnel Desaix (St Eloy les Mines)** accepted the invitation to visit Tanneries du Puy. The formative bus trip, the guided tour through the factory ending in a convivial lunch, constitute important memories for these young people looking for career options.

Students can discover professions and crafts by integrating a 3rd "Prepa-Pro" at the Lycée Desaix, which has a Bac Pro in leather craft, with leather goods option, and a BTS in the areas of fashion shoes and leather goods (<http://www.lycee-desaix.fr/>).

OPEN DOORS

Ordinary people actually don't know what really happens in a modern tannery. Their main references are possibly the images conveyed through the Internet, which are often not the most charming, to say the least. Showing that this is not the reality in Europe is the duty of the industry. A good exercise of transparency is an eye-opener for the people and the best investment in the reputation of the industry. Tanneries opened their doors to students in France, Romania and Bulgaria.



A&A Vesa Tannery (16 November 2016)

Some 20 scholars from the **Buteni Gymnasium in Sebis (Arad county)** went to A&A Vesa Tannery in Sebis (Romania). Many people from this area emigrate in search for a future, while they could find employment and qualification opportunities right there. No wonder that the young visitors to A&A Vesa company were pleasantly surprised in learning about the possibilities offered to them in the leather sector at home. Many expressed interest in becoming trainees and eventually future workers or, why not, entrepreneurs in this promising sector.



Pielorex and Taro tanneries (Jilava) (28 March 2017)

Aged from 16 to 18, 29 students from the **Technical College Gheorghe Asachi and Technical College Petru Rares** were impressed by the technologies and processes, which transform a raw bovine hide into the leather they find in different articles of their daily life. Touching the material in the different process phases is often the first sign of wonderment and respect for leather as a material. Tanners asked in such encounters regarding the processes, working conditions and the equipment used.



Technomat Mercury in Gabrovo (23 June 2017)

On 23 June 2017, students from the first year at the Technical University of Gabrovo were invited to visit local leather company Technomat Mercury Ltd. The eleven students were welcomed by the director, then brought to the production site where safety and handling requirements were explained before an introduction to the types of leather and their processing stages. In a laboratory, they were able to touch hides, check measuring tools and even carry out a few tests. After that, factory workers told them personal stories about how leather production and different end products were displayed. All students showed great interest, with three of them wanting summer internships and others requesting another visit at a shoe factory.



JOB FAIRS...

Job Fairs help school students and job seekers explore the labour market and consider career opportunities. Employers in industry and services take advantage of such regional or national events. They show what they have to offer, and leather cannot afford to be absent. People discern what they see! Many students take on internships, an important step towards concluding a training contract in the tanning industry. Leather associations and tannery representatives of France, Germany and the UK took part in a number of job fairs.



"My Future" Career Event, South Somerset

UKLF, in conjunction with staff from ICLT at the University of Northampton and leather manufacturer, Pittards PLC, participated in the event that took place on the 15th of November at the Royal Fleet Air Arm Museum. The UK Leather Federation stand was set up under a Concorde airplane and welcomed 250 visitors.



Job Fair, Hameln

The Heller-Leder tannery took part in the local job fair in Hameln in September 2016. The stand was held by qualified workers and specialists in leather production and tanner technology, who were assisted by the promotion of young talent, were available. Twelve school-leavers applied for an internship.



Job Fair, Rehau

Südleder, a wet-blue and crust tannery, held a stand at the local job fair in Hof on 8 October 2016. Qualified workers and leather technicians and specialists welcomed visitors. The company was extremely satisfied with the students' interest and practical training was agreed with five of them. In addition, several applications were submitted for 2017 and the company received numerous inquiries regarding the profession and the training process.

Salon Européen de l'Education, "L'aventure des métiers", Paris and Salon Mondial des Métiers, Lyon

The French Conseil National du Cuir had a booth at the Fair and the FFTM delegate was able to meet students and, distribute the "Leather is my Job!" leaflet. Sixty professional fields are represented at the Salon Mondial des Métiers in Lyon, including leather and leathergoods trades.



Hochschule Ruhr West Karriere 2016

As a member of the SCHAUFSTALL Group, SCHAUCO took part in the "Karriere-event" of the University of Applied Sciences at the Hochschule Ruhr West (Mülheim).

Job Fair, Bucharest

On 21 April, Mr Bostaca participated on behalf of APPBR in the fair organised by the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity and the Municipal Agency for Employment (AMOFM), under the auspices of Romanian Government.



...AND MORE

Other types of events specifically target college graduates and learners beyond college. Visibility allows tanneries to explain possibilities for apprenticeships, training courses and/or employment. Information stands enjoy numerous and lively visits, as people are curious, notably to understand a material that they think they know. In addition, it has become clear how important press communication and image management are for tanneries.



ICLT day at the University of Northampton

UKLF organised a *Leather is my Job!*-stand at the ICLT industry engagement day at the University of Northampton on the 10th of November 2016. This was attended by students already in higher education, pupils from local schools, fashion students from the London College of Fashion, and a number of manufacturers including Pittards, Scottish Leather Group, Rolls Royce, Aston Martin, Stahl, Ecco, Church Shoes and Fairfax Saddlemakers.



Presentation at the Museum of Leathercraft open day in Northampton

The *Leather is my Job!*-project was represented at the open day to launch the new venue for the Museum of Leathercraft in Northampton. While not a careers' event, the opportunity was taken to present the leather industry as a vibrant employer, to a range of guests and visitors.

Presentation at a seminar during MODEXPO, Bucharest

Modexpo is an International exhibition of the textile/leather sector. During its 2016 edition, Mr Gheorghe Bostaca promoted the *Leather is my Job!*-project to some 30 children in the 10th & 11th grade at the Gh. Asachi Technical College invited to discover the world of fashion and the contribution of leather.



In order to motivate and develop young talent, German leather association VDL organised two events at the 5th Freiberg Leather Days on 14 June 2016

12 a) Best graduate award

In cooperation with the *Association of Tannery, Chemistry and Technology* (VGCT) VDL has created an award for the best graduate as specialist in leather production and tanning equipment.

The prize went to Michael Wolf who graduated with honour and works as a skilled worker at Sudleder tannery.

When asked what is the main motivation for his career decision, Michael says it was:
"To do something in which you have direct contact with the product and to have a job where you can see and feel what you've achieved."



EVENTS CLOSER TO SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

Creating a sense of belonging to a lively community of the people living for, from or with the leather sector yields benefits for both sides of the industry and for the territories concerned. When people can share interests, memories, experiences, they develop a spirit of solidarity. Such a value should not be underestimated, notably in times when there is so much indifference around or when under attack of aggressive campaigns spured by preconceptions and ignorance. Leather is more than just a material, it is culture!

b) New qualification

After completion of the first EU project *Leather is my job*, VDL decided to promote a new sector-recognized qualification as officially recognized leather technician.

The diploma requires:

- ★ three years' professional experience,
- ★ a successful master training in technical or scientific fields such as chemistry, industry, engineering or orthopedics and
- ★ the successful completion of a state-approved additional qualification in tanning and leather technology at FILK.

The first three students who obtained the new qualifications as officially recognized leather technicians are:

- ★ Achim Kolesch, representing the ninth generation in the family business at the Jürgen Kolesch Sämisch Leather tannery
- ★ Ayhan Yildirim, deputy head of section and process developer at Bader
- ★ Osman Yildirim, skilled worker in the dyeing department at Bader



AMICI PER LA PELLE



Already in its 6th edition, the contest "Amici per la Pelle" promoted by UNIC targets at teenagers from the 2nd and 3rd year of middle schools located in the tanning districts of Campania, Lombardy, Tuscany and Veneto. 12 institutes participated in this year's competition on the topic "*Toy Tan: toys and their historical and cultural evolution*". Leathers were kindly provided by tanneries in the various districts. Coached by their teachers, the children modelled up to 53 leather toys and games, drawing inspiration from existing ones or from their imagination. In such context, children are wonderfully creative and learn to love the material.

About 1,100 scholars, their teachers, tanners and local public authorities attended the award ceremony held on 23 February 2017

at the LINEAPELLE Fair in the Milanese fairgrounds. Their works of art were displayed during the 3 exhibition days. The contest got votes from a technical jury, from visitors and on-line, as well as on UNIC's social media, which have 120,000 contacts. The first prize was won by "La sfida dei regni" (Clash of kingdoms) - Leonardo da Vinci Institute (Castelfranco di Sotto - Pisa). All youngsters were also guided through the fair where they visited tanners and leather machine tool stands so as to get a glimpse of the profession.

Although not formally part of the *Leather is my Job!* initiative, the Social Dialogue project was given a prominent role and COTANCE was invited to address the audience.



LEATHER IS MY JOB! CONFERENCE

The Final Conference of the project took place in the auditorium of the leather Industry Museum in the Catalan leather cluster of Igualada (Spain) on 8 June 2017.

The programme included keynote speakers from the European Commission (apprenticeships), academia (thesis on the leather industry) and the EU sponsored *Worth-Project* (partnerships between industry and young designers). Participants also listened to the presentation of all project activities, to a panel on **the image of the leather industry and its appeal to young people** and to a panel on the challenges for the leather industry and its jobs of the Digital Economy, the Circular Economy, the Knowledge Society. The conference concluded with the presentation of the winners of the *Leather is my Job!* Photo Contest. Interpretation was provided in 8 languages.

Almost 100 European guests from the whole leather value chain attended the event. The **mayors from the leather clusters** of Igualada (Spain), Alcanena (Portugal), Arzignano, San Miniato, Castelfranco di Sotto and Fucecchio (Italy) addressed the audience, debating with the speakers from both sides of the industry as well as with the audience.

In addition, two French tannery owners gave their distinct testimonies on their experience respectively with recruiting young people and regarding the difficulties but also the good practices of an existing and recent cluster created in the Aveyron region.



A. Chacon, Municipality of Igualada



S. Bjorstad, European Commission



X. Badia, President of ACEXPIEL



From left to right: G. Gentilin, H. Santarem, A. Bacardit, C. Krug, J. Gallice, S. Bjorstad, G. Toti



From left to right: K. Weber, O. Raynaud, J. Ramos, G. Kreuzer, A. Spinelli, D. Navarro, V. Gabbanini



WORKERS PROFILES



Tannery workers have a lot in common. It is more evident in the sector's clusters, where personal contacts between people with similar jobs are easier. But we see that workers from distant locations are also quick to fraternize. Exchanges seldom remain limited to only professional aspects, as they discover common affinities, hobbies, friends, challenges and adversaries. By supporting the building up of a sense of community, the strength factor noticeable in clusters can be transposed at a much larger scale. Through interviews, *Leather is my Job!* tends to develop a sense of belonging to a select community, of pride of being a tanner, of solidarity against unjustified hostilities to leather.

More interviews were carried out in Germany, Italy, Romania, Hungary, Portugal and Bulgaria and posted on the project's on-line community and the Facebook page. <http://www.euroleather.com/index.php/leather-is-my-job>

Interviews show that young people who have successfully completed leather training rapidly move into leadership positions, thereby proving the good career opportunities in the leather industry. We also found that, as a rule, workers were at first not particularly attracted to the tanning sector, but that once they come to know it, they generally love it. The influence of family members or friends working in leather factories tends to raise their interest and curiosity. In some cases, the profession of tanner was chosen after completing an internship.

To become a tanner was the best tip my friend ever gave me. **Leather finishing is like make-up. That's just cool and inspiring, when I sit on "my" leather in my convertible! In this industry, you are a person rather than a number. I happen to find our leather in someone's living room or car interior. Art, tradition, culture and science are shared through leather.** When you see and touch the finished product, you feel proud. **I was born a tanner! I'm permanently learning.** Esteem and love of the work are very important for me. **My job constantly provides me with a professional challenge. I have regular opportunities to grow and evolve my skills. If you want to be a part of a great community and a successful team, I can only recommend my industry.** From A to Z, you can make the decision that works for you. You can learn and become anything you want. **In tanning we have to work together because nothing happens if we are not in line. I had to learn a lot, but I gained most of my current knowledge from experience on the shop floor. Another day is another opportunity to learn new things. My work is an adventure!**

PHOTO CONTEST

In March 2017, the *Leather is my Job!* team organised a European photo contest in the EU leather sector under the theme « Working in tanneries ». The announcement was published on Facebook and widely disseminated in the European leather press. 62 tannery employees from 19 companies and 6 countries took up the challenge and sent their personal artistic visions of their jobs. All photographs were published on the project Facebook page.

A *Leather is my Job!* jury made up of representatives of trade associations and trade unions elected the winner and the runner-up while a public prize was also granted to the picture harvesting the largest number of « likes » on Facebook. Overall a huge success!



Runner-Up:
Ginevra Ganu,
Newport, Italy:

"I am 19 and graduate in Finance & Marketing. Mine is an office job at Conceria Newport Srl but I was fascinated in seeing how a raw skin can become a high fashion product. I liked the idea of showing the importance of craftsmanship and the passing of experience to the younger generations by their peers."



Public Prize:
Andrei Vesa,
A&A Vesa S.R.L.,
Romania:

"I am now 26 and ever since I was a child I accompanied my father in the tannery, listening to what he was telling me. After my education I joined the family business. If you want to be at the heart of the production process, to work with a raw material with its own history, come and work in a tannery, if not, you may as well go into an industry where you will only press buttons or keys."



Winner:
Branca Fojo, Marsipel, Portugal:

"Working conditions have improved enormously since the first time I went into a tannery. Work is still demanding today, but now I fully realise what leather has given to me."

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Leather is my Job! started with one standard leaflet in a few languages a couple of years ago. Today we have a family of communication tools in 10 languages, adapted to the different national audiences. We encourage our affiliates to further develop such important instruments under the common *Leather is my Job!* banner. Brochures, leaflets, videos communicating on the pride of being a tanner, guiding people into the leather sector, its jobs and career paths are excellent promotional tools for both sides of the leather industry. Here we point in particular at:

Leder ist mein job

VDL developed a brochure to draw the attention to career opportunities in the German leather industry. It features, among other things, the interviewed tannery workers, information about sector qualifications and where to get them, the career opportunities in the leather industry, as well as economic information on the German leather industry and the specificities of its leather production. It was handed over at trade fairs and in workplaces. A English translation was also produced and made available as a PDF file.

Learn to Love Leather

UKLF produced a new brochure entitled *Love Leather* that was distributed at all events attended and will continue to be available, with the *Leather is my Job!* leaflet.

Leather is my Job! video

In cooperation with the University of Northampton, UKLF has commissioned a short promotional video, for use on company websites, Facebook and other social media. The video was shot in three UK tanneries and is intended to give an upbeat and exciting introduction to the working opportunities offered in the leather industry.

All Leather is my Job! leaflets are available for download on: <http://www.euroleather.com/index.php/leather-is-my-job>



COTANCE affiliates:

AUSTRIA: Fachverband der Textil-, Bekleidungs-, Schuh- und Lederindustrie / Berufsgruppe Ledererzeugende Industrie

BELGIUM: Union de la Tannerie et de la Mégisserie Belge

BULGARIA: Branch Union of Leather, Furriers, Footwear and Leathergoods Industries

DENMARK: Scan-Hide

FRANCE: Fédération Française de la Tannerie-Mégisserie

GERMANY: Verband der Deutschen Lederindustrie e.V.

HUNGARY: Association of Hungarian Light Industry

ITALY: Unione Nazionale Industria Conciaria

NETHERLANDS: Federatie van Nederlandse Lederfabrikanten

PORTUGAL: Associação Portuguesa dos Industriais de Curtumes

ROMANIA: Asociația Producătorilor de Piele și Blana din România

SPAIN: ACEXPIEL - Asociación Española del Curtido

SWEDEN: Svenska Garveriidkareforeningen

UK: UK Leather Federation



INDUSTRIALL-EUROPE affiliates:

AUSTRIA: Pro-Ge

BELGIUM: La Centrale Générale

BULGARIA: FOSIL ; PODKREPA

ESTONIA: The Association of Estonian Light Industry Workers Trade Union

FINLAND: PRO ; TEAM

FRANCE: Fédération des Services - CFDT ; CGT

Textile, Habillement, Cuir

GERMANY: IGBCE

HUNGARY: Trade Union of Mine-, Energy- and Industry Workers (BDSZ)

ITALY: FEMCA-CISL; FILCTEM-CGIL

LATVIA: Latvian Industrial Workers' Trade Union

LITHUANIA: Lithuanian TU "Solidarumas" of Industry Enterprises ; Lithuanian TU of Manufacturing Workers

MACEDONIA: Trade Union of Textile, Leather and Shoe Making

MONTENEGRO: Independent Trade Union of Textile, Leather, Footwear and Chemical Workers of Montenegro

NETHERLANDS: FNV Bondgenoten; CNV Vakmensen

POLAND: OPZZ Federacja NSZZ Przemysłu Lekkiego

PORTUGAL: FESETE - **ROMANIA:** Confeltext

SLOVAKIA: IOZ - **SLOVENIA:** STUPIS

SPAIN: UGT-FICA ; FITEQA-CC.OO - **SWEDEN:** If-Metall

TURKEY: DERIS - UK: Community

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Languages

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