

At the EURATEX General Assembly, international experts present the challenges and possible solutions to tackle the issue of attracting young and skilled workforce in the textile and clothing sector

Brussels, 14 June 2019 - Over 120 participants attended the annual EURATEX General Assembly in Brussels on 13 June. The event was a unique opportunity to hear testimonials from different countries and contexts, with speakers offering insights in dealing with the problem of attracting talent and encouraging skills development.

Although the industry is witnessing a period of positive evolution – since 2012 turnover has grown by 10% to € 178 billion, extra-EU exports are up by 23% and have reached 50 billion Euros for the first time, and labour productivity has grown an impressive 22% - it still faces significant challenges, the biggest one being the difficulty of recruiting and retaining skilled workforce.



In the opening session of the event, newly-elected EURATEX President Alberto Paccanelli stressed that *“companies hiring today not only look for young people with the same skill sets as the retiring workforce, but also new talent with creative, highly technical and digital skills for high added value jobs in design, product development, technical textile production, digitalization, sustainability and circular economy.”*

The Director for Skills of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Manuela Geleng, gave an overview of the policies and programmes being developed by the EU to support upskilling and training of workforce. She reminded the audience that EU countries on average spend 4.6% of GDP on initial education, but only 0.1% on continuous life-long learning, which is very ill adapted to today’s fast changing work environments and skill needs.

International speakers from the industry, national and regional initiatives and vocational education and training institutions presented their success stories, offering a look at the situation in different countries.

Common issues emerged, as well as clear solutions: a need for a new approach and changes in company culture are necessary to attract the new generation. Close collaboration between industry and training institutions is the key to the development of skilled professionals and the growth of the sector.

EURATEX appealed to policy makers at EU, national and regional level to accompany and support the sectoral stakeholders in their efforts to provide world-class textile and clothing education and training across Europe.

As the voice of the European textile and clothing industry, EURATEX works to achieve a favourable environment within the European Union for design, development, manufacture and marketing of textile and clothing products. The EU textile and clothing industry, with around 171,000 companies employing 1.7 million workers, is an essential pillar of the local economy across many EU regions. With over € 50 billion of exports, the industry is a global player successfully commercializing high added value products on growing markets around the world. Working together with EU institutions and other European and international stakeholders, EURATEX focuses on clear priorities: an ambitious industrial policy, effective research, innovation and skills development, free and fair trade, and sustainable supply chains.

Learn more about EURATEX at www.euratex.eu and follow EURATEX on Twitter [@euratex_eu](https://twitter.com/euratex_eu)

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