



ERICA

Leather: **E**uropean **R**epository
of the **I**ndustry's **C**ollective **A**greements



A Repository of Collective Agreements

Between February 2021 and April 2022, the EU Social Partners of the leather industry, COTANCE and industriAll-Europe, and 7 national leather trade associations, produced an on-line Repository of the sector's Collective Agreements.

 14 months
  7 countries
  30.000 words
  26 searchable topics

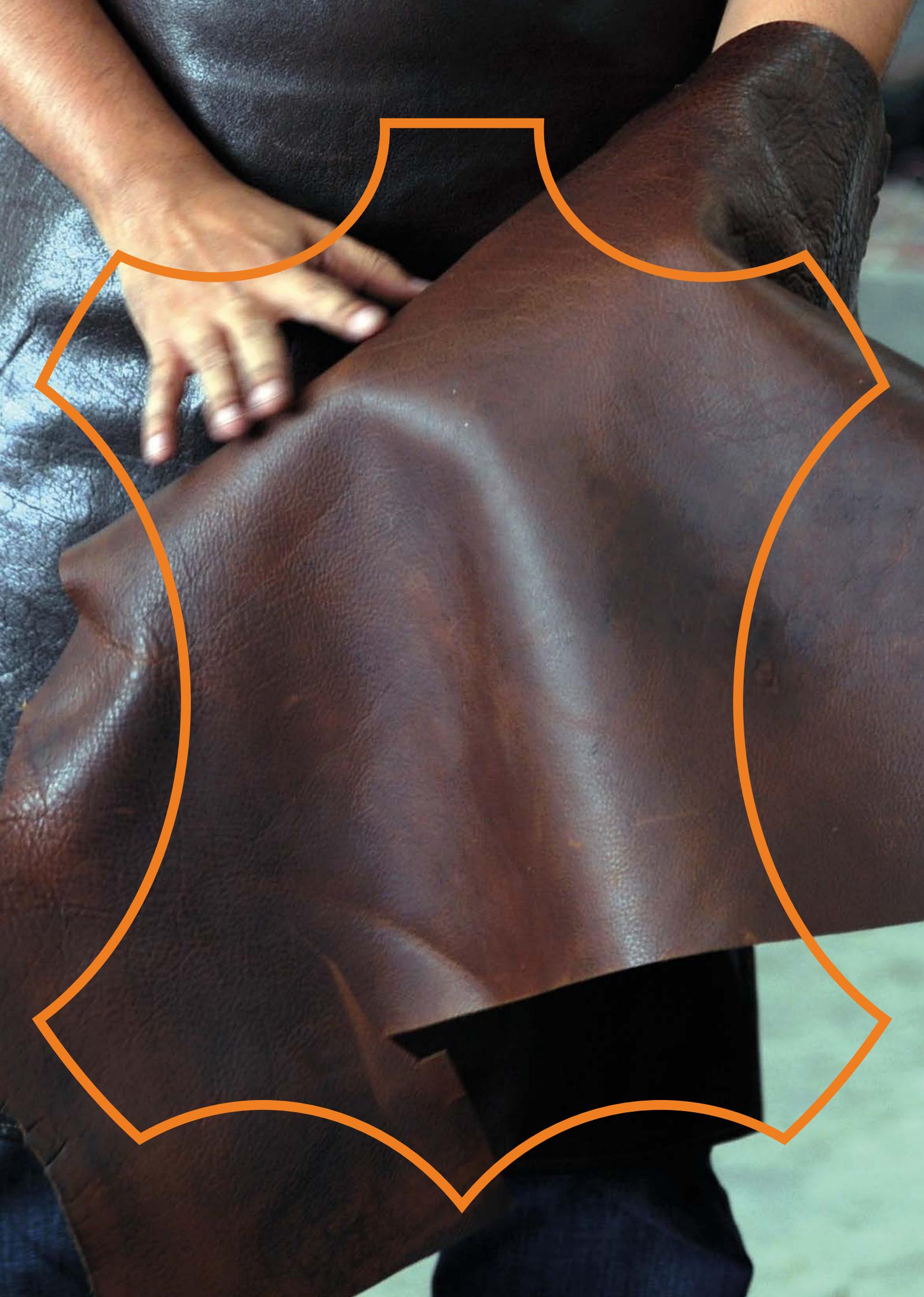


The **public area**, accessible to everybody without restrictions, provides general information related to the various Collective Agreements, both in their original language and in English, as well as other useful Social Dialogue intelligence.

A **private area**, accessible only to the project partners, hosts a searchable database allowing comparative analysis and providing elements of discussion that will be more widely disseminated via the news section.

The ERICA tool is open for new countries to join. For this, Social Partners of the national leather industry have to apply jointly and commit to the respect of the corresponding Terms of Reference.





Leather is beautiful

Beautiful

Few materials evoke emotions like leather. People can become passionate about leather, those who produce or work with it more than anyone! They serve beauty, and although tanning is hard work, it is ultimately fulfilling.

Circular

Leather making avoids the natural decay of hides and skins of animals slaughtered for meat for human consumption and transforms them into a material with a myriad of uses in fashion, sports and technical applications.

Durable

Leather is a long-lasting material and when used, develops a patina that increases its beauty ! People enjoy leather articles for life and often pass them on to the next generation. Furthermore, leather goods can be repaired instead of thrown away.

Green

The environmental advantage of leather is that its footprint decreases with its use. Synthetic alternatives may have a lower environmental footprint in the shop, but as they often fail or very quickly lose their lustre, they end up in landfills or, worse, may degrade producing microplastics which pollute our oceans and kill marine life. No-one has ever heard about leather islands in the ocean! At the end of its service life, leather is biodegradable.

Ethical

Some people accuse leather of ethical damage such as deforestation or animal suffering. That is nonsense! Demand for leather doesn't drive livestock breeding or slaughter. Cattle, sheep, goats, rabbits, pigs, ostrich or salmon are kept and killed for food, never for their skins!

Culture

Man has recycled the hides and skins of animals since the eve of time. It is our heritage. We have transformed leather into musical instruments, totems and amulets, clothing and fashion as well as wallpapers and interior decoration enriching life. The rich vocabulary of leather is a clear expression of culture with terms such as suede, nubuck, cordovan, etc.

Technology

You need skills and technology to produce leather. And leather pays you back with extraordinary properties. It is difficult to think of another material that can replicate all the functional performances of leather !



Erlogia Socialis

Tannery workers and employers work hand in hand

A well-functioning Social Dialogue is a common feature of the European Leather industry. The leather sector's Social Partners in each country have their own traditions and mechanisms, but all understand that the best way to improve work and working relations is through negotiation, consultation or exchanging information among themselves.

Representatives of employers and workers address all issues of common interest relating both to economic and social aspects, thereby improving not only working conditions but also the company's competitiveness on the market as both aspects are interrelated.

As part of the ERICA project, the partners organised national workshops in Social Dialogue where both sides of the leather industry discussed key topics addressed in their respective national collective agreements, constructively looking at what could be done better or more efficiently. Exchanging their experiences at European level fosters a sense of community and spreads best practice.

Europe's leather industry offers about 30.000 direct jobs in the tanning sector and an estimated 2 million in downstream economic activities using leather, which includes worldwide famous brands in the luxury and high-end fashion sector and the automotive and interior decoration sectors. Every euro generated in Europe's tanning industry produces about 18 euros further down the value chain. Both sides of the European leather industry agree that this sector is a key asset for the European economy.

Social Sectoral Dialogue is the driving force behind the sustainable development of the leather industry in Europe and an important model for the rest of the world. Europe's tanneries have made a big leap towards sustainability. In 2020, through Social Dialogue, European tanners produced their second European Social and Environmental Report where data on social accountability and environmental performance of tanneries was collected in order to evaluate and report on their achievements.



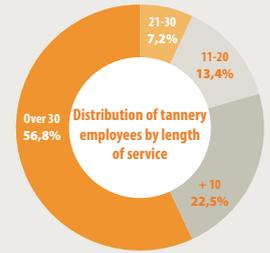
Collective Bargaining & Collective Agreements

Good contractual and working conditions lead to increased staff loyalty

Social Dialogue is at its best when both sides come together for negotiating salaries, working times and other working conditions. In Europe's leather sector this is a regular process whereby the Collective Agreement between employers and workers is adjusted to evolving conditions and circumstances.

In Europe, collective bargaining remains a national competence and prerogative, as the economic framework conditions differ between the various countries.

The EU tanning industry has a great record for retaining workers. About half of the workforce has been employed in the same company for more than 10 years, with a quarter of them having been employed for 10 to 20 years and another quarter between 20 and 30 years. That is quite an accomplishment that speaks for rewarding and safe contractual and working conditions!



FRANCE

Organisations linked by an industry agreement or, failing that, by professional agreements, meet at least once a year to negotiate salaries. These negotiations take into account the goal of professional equality between men and women and the measures that seek to achieve this.

HUNGARY

The employer and the works council or the trade union may set up a conciliation committee to resolve their disputes. The works agreement or the collective agreement may contain provisions for a standing committee as well.

SPAIN - FLEXIBILITY

When a company needs to modify the work schedule for production-related reasons, it must give 5-days notice as well as a reason for the changes, and the union representation can request supporting documentation which must be delivered by the company within a maximum of 72 hours.

The flexible work schedule may not be applied to personnel whose time at work is limited for reasons of workplace safety, health, childcare, pregnancy or breastfeeding periods.



Europe's tanneries respect ILO's core labour standard

In 2000, COTANCE and ETUF:TCL (now IndustriAll-Europe), Social Partners of the Leather/Tanning Industry at European level, signed an ambitious Social Code of Conduct covering ILO's core labour standards and beyond. The leather industry Code of Conduct has become a reference for labour rights for the global leather industry.

<https://www.euroleather.com/leather/code-of-conduct>

SWEDEN / ITALY

Codes of conduct are drawn up in Sweden's companies in cooperation with the trade unions. In Italy, a «Code of Conduct and Social Responsibility», inspired by the COTANCE Code of Conduct, has been drafted and attached to the Collective Agreement (CCNL).

GENDER EQUALITY

A Gender Equality / No Discrimination scheme exists in all countries included in the ERICA database. While traditionally, the workforce in tanneries was predominantly male, the modernisation and diversification of the industry has given rise to welcome increase in opportunities for women.



Health & Safety

Europe's tanneries are leaders in health & safety

Tanneries in Europe are modern and responsible enterprises. European tanners put people at the centre of their attention, whether they are workers, customers or suppliers. European tanners care about their staff! Furthermore, EU health & safety standards and regulations are among the highest and most comprehensive in the world.

Both sides of the tanning industry in Europe have contributed to the continuous improvement of health & safety in the sector. Their collaboration at EU level, funded by the European Commission, includes the development in 2013 and subsequent review in 2018 of the **Online Interactive Risk Assessment (OIRA)** tool for tanneries as well as the implementation of the initiative, "**Due Diligence for Healthy Workplaces in the Leather Industry**". With these projects they promoted best practice in occupational safety at tannery workplaces as a competitive advantage. European tanners and workers' representatives are striving to make compliance with high workplace safety standards a global priority.

PORTUGAL – SAFETY AT WORK

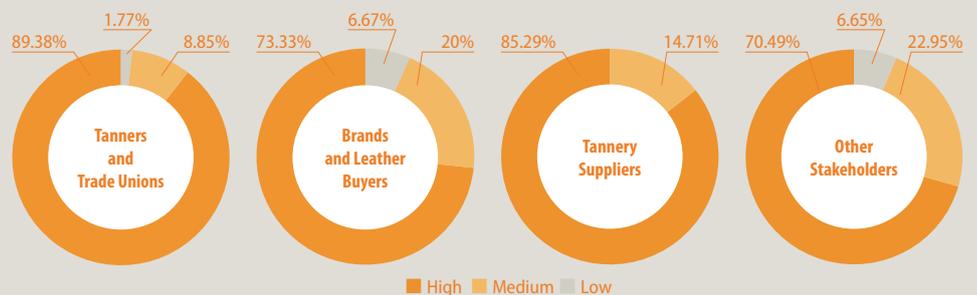
It is the employer's responsibility to provide the employee with good working conditions from a physical and moral point of view, by continuously and permanently ensuring that the activity is carried out in safe and hygienic conditions, by preventing occupational risks and illnesses and by providing the employee with adequate training and information to prevent the risk of accident or illness.

The employee must in turn, comply with the employer's instructions concerning the performance or discipline of work, as well as the rules that protect safety and health in the company.

HEALTH INSURANCE

In France, Germany and Italy, the Collective Agreements provide for a supplementary health insurance where companies are required to cover at least 50% of the contribution for the employee and may include coverage for the family and health care in private centres (example: SANIMODA in Italy).

Due Diligence Report - Ranking of Health & Safety as a priority



Teaming up for skills

With an ageing population, it is important to ensure the renewal of the workforce and the transmission of knowledge as well as the provision of new skills. Social Sectoral Dialogue is one of the driving forces behind education & training initiatives for the leather industry in Europe.

In order to protect the knowledge and experience of their workers, tanning companies prioritise their continuous development. This is an investment in their employees for the long term and guarantees the maintenance of the skills required in the tannery.

Training programmes or opportunities for employees are provided for in most countries represented in the ERICA database, with up to 40 hours or 5 days per year. In some cases, employees have a personal training account.

Education & training is one of the priorities of the leather sector's EU Social Partners work programme. They started addressing the skills deficit in joint conferences and dedicated meetings before teaming up with likeminded fashion sectors in the textile & clothing (Euratex) or footwear industries (CEC). Together in 2012, with the support of the European Commission, they built up the 1st **EU TCLF sector skills Council**. Critical mass was also necessary for working in an ERASMUS+ project for Digital Skills in 2017, which was followed in 2018 by the **Blueprint for Skills in the TCLF industries**.

However, COTANCE and IndustriAll-Europe also continued their bilateral cooperation in their efforts to attract young people to the tanning sector. The EU-sponsored "Leather is my Job!" projects presented testimonies of leather workers with the aim of breaking down the preconceptions and prejudices that affect the industry and inspire a new generation of leather workers. In the second edition, they disseminated the message in schools, job fairs, during tannery visits and various communications.

Europe's tanneries offer excellent opportunities, where young people can realise their potential in an industry that knows no borders and that is as necessary as it has always been.

This is a challenging career but a worthy and rewarding one.

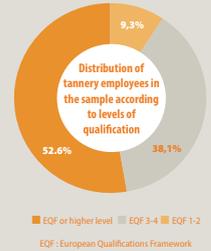


Pact for Skills

Not a job you learn only in books!

The Social and Environmental Report 2020 indicates that the EU tanning industry's workforce is increasingly educated. Market trends including new regulatory factors, greater awareness in both business customers and consumers, new technologies and a different production culture focussing on process efficiency, have led to a new framework for the tanning sector, requiring an increase in the skill levels of staff.

However, all sectors of the European fashion industry are confronted with the problem of falling birth rates in Europe and a rapidly ageing workforce. This has led the various industry sector organisations of Europe's textile and leather value chains, including COTANCE and industriAll-Europe, to pool resources and coordinate efforts to make the image of their industries as employers more appealing and to secure the provision of sectoral education & training services. In December 2021, they launched the **TCLF Pact for Skills** in the framework of an initiative promoted by the European Commission in 14 strategic ecosystems.



Well over 100 signatories (industry, employers, social partners, national and regional authorities, education and training providers) acknowledge the skills challenge in the textiles-leather ecosystem, and commit to invest in reskilling and upskilling workers, integrating green and digital skills and improving the attractiveness of the sector. Signatories of the Pact will benefit from networking, guidance and resources offered by the EC to implement the targets which are proposed in the Pact.



Transparency & Authenticity

Only leather is leather!

Key priorities for the leather sector's Social Partners at all levels of governance, are Transparency and Authenticity, as the term 'leather' is increasingly hijacked for describing synthetic materials.

Applying terms such as 'Apple leather' or 'Cactus leather' or even 'Vegan or Vegetarian leather' to matrixes that combine plastic to a small fraction of an organic resource is a deceptive practice that confuses consumers and harms the competitiveness of the genuine product on the market.

COTANCE and industriAll-Europe call on public authorities to follow the example of 5 EU Member States (Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain) which have adopted mandatory leather authenticity rules that prohibit such oxymorons and sanction them with fines and criminal prosecution. But only an EU Regulation can protect consumers and producers comprehensively.

Transparency is about disclosing information about products. When products are described with a term that doesn't correspond to their nature or composition, there is a deceptive practice and no transparency!

But transparency is also about traceability and knowing where a product comes from. Here also, the EU Social Partners of the leather industry have dedicated many efforts, as tanners do not systematically receive information from their suppliers on the origin of the hides and skins they buy. In their joint project "**Transparency and Traceability**", they discuss the challenges and opportunities of this important issue, putting pressure on public and private stakeholders for redressing this market and regulatory failure.



Partnership



Affiliates

COTANCE Affiliates



IndustriAll - Europe Affiliates



Disclaimer

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euroleather.com/erica-project

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