



Almaty, 5 April 2016

European Trade Mission to Almaty Kazakhstan 4-5 April 2016

European Footwear: More than Fashion is the slogan of the internationalization campaign recently launched by the European Confederation of the Footwear Industry (CEC) to promote European footwear in countries outside Europe. The first destination chosen has been Kazakhstan, and the CEC together with European Profiles, a consultancy company with expertise in Eurasian markets, have organized a Trade Mission with 36 European brands to Almaty on the 4-5 April 2016.

The CEC is the umbrella organization representing the interests of European footwear companies. Through their Members, the national footwear associations and federations of the European Union, the Confederation promotes the growth and competitiveness of European businesses by engaging in different initiatives on various topics, including on access to new markets like this trade mission concluding today in Almaty.

The initiative, co-funded by the European Commission, has brought 36 European brands from Austria, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands together to display their latest shoe collections today at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Almaty. Major fashion retailers and distributors in Kazakhstan attended the exhibition and showed enthusiasm for the great variety of high quality luxury, high-end and premium footwear displayed by the 36 European exhibitors at the Ritz Carlton Hotel. The journey resulted in various b2b meetings for preliminary contacts, but also on the establishment of various business partnerships, which will soon bring more European shoes at our stores.

In the framework of the project, the consortium, composed of CEC and European Profiles, had previously conducted a market study to assess the consumers' preferences in Kazakhstan. The document underlines the increasing preference of Kazakh consumers for fashion and stylish looks, often leaning toward European style and appearance; the growing brand addiction despite the price; and the maturing habit of having a wide range and variety of choice in the market. As a result, the demand for footwear has substantially increased over the last 7 years while only 2% of the total turnover is produced by local manufacturers, and the rest corresponds to imports, which have grown by a factor of over 10 from 2011 to 2014.

According to Cleto Sagripanti, President of the CEC, "Kazakhstan offers a great investment opportunity for European companies, and with this trade mission we want to reinforce Europe's position as a global supplier of added-value footwear. Consumers around the world admire and request European shoes, and statistics represent the best marketing tool for European brands: footwear exports outside Europe have increased from 2009 to 2014 by 46% in quantity, and 78% in value, reaching 7, 7 billion Euros."

With the support of the European Commission



Co-funded by the COSME programme
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Statistics also show that European footwear exports to Kazakhstan almost quadrupled from 2010 to 2014, but they still only represented 11,5% of the total imports into Kazakhstan in 2014. Furthermore, Kazakh's middle-high class has considerably increased in the last 10 years and it is expected to continue this trend. This is a target group, which is more fashion-conscious and appreciates wearing trendy and good quality apparel, including shoes. They see and buy shoes when travelling abroad, as well as on the internet, but they would prefer to have direct access to this offer in Kazakhstan.

Each of the 36 brands, which are exhibiting today, manufactures their footwear in one of the 28 countries in Europe. Sagripanti explained, "They are bringing their culture, the excellence in European footwear manufacturing, which is based on creative designs, innovative materials and quality finishing while respecting high safety, social and environmental standards. We definitely believe that Kazakh consumers will be delighted with the wide variety of European shoes that soon will be available in the main shopping stores and malls in Kazakhstan. The positive response from Kazakh retailers and distributors today at the trade exhibition represents a **win-win situation for all parties involved**: European footwear brands, Kazakh distributors and retailers, and Kazakh consumers."

