



Delight at Turkish Initiative: International Leather Forum

It was a highly successful International Congress that our Turkish friends organised in Istanbul in May 2006. Under the IULTCS banner (International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists' Societies) this second European Congress welcomed 180 attendees and, based on the quality of the organisation and the lectures it was a wonderful event.

While preparing for the Executive Committee meeting and the round table on the role of Europe on the future of the leather industry, I was able to realise a concept I'd first had years ago: free and open discussion. There was general agreement that developed countries have lost their volume markets as a consequence of the double pressure of social and ecological dumping. As a result, the future for these countries depends on the luxury and high-end markets as well as niche products.

Good ideas have lacked appropriate actions

Creativity, innovation and training are the basis of a strategy of differentiation in order to fight against the major competitors. Yet, while this has been openly discussed and agreed, actions have not yet reached the level required to meet these objectives. Using the classical tools of strategic analysis, and analysing the roles of professional organisations, associations, universities, research centres, suppliers, etc., I prepared a proposal.

The IULTCS "Learned Society" has a richness that comes from the quality of its members and, with its duty to remain politically and commercially neutral, it appeared to me that it was the right means through which to set up an initiative, which at the same time would be able to make proposals and act as a catalyst.

As a result, the Executive Committee of the Union unanimously adopted my proposal to initiate the International Leather Forum.

This is both a concept and a tool for exchanging ideas and provides a forum in which all the players in the leather world are invited to debate. How the different bodies inter-relate is shown in the schematic diagram. The goal is to start a common strategic reflection on the future of the industry, focusing on four main items:

- Research co-ordination and co-operation
- Training co-ordination and co-operation
- Positive communication on material, jobs and products
- Preparation of crisis communication (in case of problems such as BSE, etc.)

To be ready to make proposals, IULTCS has to work to transmit its structured ideas to its partners. As a result of this, we made the decision to create two new commissions within the



"We are all involved in big and constant competition. As a world citizen I am also deeply confident in the potential of humanity and convinced that there are times and places to compete and times and places to co-operate." Marc Folachier, speaking at the Euro-Congress, Istanbul.

union, one for Research, 'IUR', and the other one for Training, 'IUT'.

These two commissions will meet for the first time after the next EC meeting on September 19, 2006, during the leather fair "Le Cuir à Paris".

To pay tribute to the work done by our Turkish hosts in organising the European Congress and considering the place where the decision was made, we decided to call it the "Istanbul Initiative".

The International Leather Forum



The circle in the diagram includes all of the partners to be invited to join the initiative, including brands as we have to start from the retail market and move up.

The ellipse represents IULTCS and its members through national societies.

Outside the circle are the factors that will influence the future of the leather industry (unlimited list).

Sustainable development is the proposed framework of the reflection.

Marc Folachier, MBA, MSc
President, IULTCS