

Summary minutes
Meeting of the Commission Expert Group on Textile Names and Labelling
Brussels, 14 May 2014

(Chairman: Jean-François Aguinaga - Participants: see list)

1. Opening, adoption of the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting

The chairman welcomed the participants and presented the agenda. The session open to Member States' experts included: Article 23 report on the application of the Textile Regulation; national approaches on labelling and international negotiations on regulatory issues (e.g. TTIP); applications for new fibre names, procedures and criteria for amending Annex I to the Regulation; and market surveillance joint activities¹. The session open also to the participation of observers from industry and other stakeholders, the morning session included two presentations, one on the polyacrylate fibre and the other on the WORTH pilot project. In addition, this session focused on the standardisation request on methods of textile fibres' analysis; on good practices of corporate social responsibility (CSR) labelling; and the state-of-play on authenticity leather labelling impact assessment. Under any other business (AoB), the Commission proposed to include: an overview of the stakeholders' replies to the questionnaire on the application of the textile Regulation; an update on the guidelines for textile laboratories; and an informal exchange on textile labelling and e-commerce. The chairman asked whether the participants wished to add other items under the AoB. Replying to a question about the Greek linguistic corrections to Annex I, he informed that the administrative procedure was underway but would probably be completed only by the new elected Parliament. The agenda was adopted. Then, the chairman asked whether the participants would agree with the draft minutes of the meeting of 2 October 2013. The minutes were adopted.

2. Report on the application of the Regulation

The chairman reminded that the Commission is requested to submit a report to the EP and to the Council on the application of the Regulation according to Article 23, by 8 November 2014. A summary overview was presented, based on the information collected via the questionnaires completed by public authorities and stakeholders. He informed that a consolidate document with the replies to the questionnaires will be published in the Europa web site. Articles 12 and 16 are those that originated most practical implementation-related difficulties. Together with Article 14, they have been identified as generating cost increases, notably for businesses. During the discussion that followed, one Member State (MS) asked to discuss the labelling of the chemical content in textiles, and suggested a presentation of the report by the Swedish Chemical Agency – KEMI on allergenic substances. The chairman reminded that the report on labelling (Article 24) and on allergenic substances (Article 25) has been adopted and that the main focus of the report (Article 23) currently under preparation was the application of the Regulation. Another MS called for looking for innovative ways of labelling, with a view to remove potential barriers to the uptake of e-commerce notably related to Article 16.3. The chairman proposed to include allergenic substances in the agenda of the next meeting and to include an informal discussion about electronic labelling, under the AoB agenda point of today's meeting.

¹ Due to time constraints, this agenda point was postponed to the next meeting of 26 September 2014

3. National approaches on labelling and international negotiations

Labelling requirements, other than fibre composition, are not compulsory at EU level. However, several MS have developed additional labelling requirements, notably on care labelling, which are voluntary in certain MS and compulsory in others. This topic was discussed in the context of TTIP negotiations. In addition, opportunities exist for EU-US cooperation regarding new generic fibre names: when a new application is submitted to either EU or US, the other party would be informed and involved in the recognition process, with a view to consider the possibility to reach consensus on common fibre names. Translation of textile fibre names has not been identified as an issue, but the use of specific standards is seen as a potential obstacle to common solutions e.g. on care and size labelling. Several MS informed about their current approaches to care, size and origin labelling. The chairman reminded that a document containing a table summarising the current situation at MS was sent to the members of the expert group and asked for written comments, if any, by 16 May.

4. Applications for new fibre names, procedures and criteria

An overview of the technical work carried out by DG JRC following the application for the generic name of triexta, was presented. The in-depth analysis of the triexta fibre characteristics, which included the development of a new quantitative DSC method that was validated in a 'ring trial' with the participation of several EU textile laboratories, concluded that: triexta fibre is a type of polyester (PTT); it has solubility properties similar to those of other polyester types (e.g. PET and PBT); it can be quantified using the methods of Annex VIII, when in mixtures with other fibres, and with the new DSC method, when in mixtures with PET; it cannot be considered an elastic fibre. The chairman concluded that although important for professionals, the added-value to consumers of distinguishing different types of polyester was uncertain. He informed that the EU Textile Regulation is flexible enough to enable labelling practices to inform consumers of the different types of polyester. The applicant has been informed of the results of the technical work and will soon be notified of the outcome of the overall assessment of the application. The impact assessment carried out in the context of adopting the Textile Regulation, suggested that a reduction of time to analyse submissions for and the adoption of new generic names would be possible. In practice, however, this has proved to be a challenge. Participants were invited to express their views on whether there is room for streamlining and further improving the current procedure and whether the working criteria were still relevant. From the discussion that followed, the chairman concluded that, even though there is room for improvement, both procedure and criteria are considered appropriate.

5. New application for the generic fibre name Polyacrylate

The chairman informed that technical file regarding the application for a new fibre name of polyacrylate was circulated among the members of the expert group. As in previous cases, he invited the representatives of the applicant (Toyobo, of Japan) to present the characteristics of the novel fibre and further inform about the added-value that such a new generic name could provide to consumers. Toyobo representatives informed that polyacrylate belongs to the category of functional fibres, with high moisture absorption and heat generating capability; and that the fibre is insoluble and can be found in mixtures with polyester and acrylic. Samples of the polyacrylate fibre were distributed to the participants. During the discussion that followed the presentation, the representatives of the applicant informed that the fibre is commercially available under the name of acrylate, in Japan and other Asian countries; two different types of the fibre, which have almost the same chemical structure, can be produced

depending on type of salt used. The chairman invited the participants to send written questions, if any, by the end of May. He asked the applicant to provide confirmation, by a certified third party laboratory, of the fibre's parameters, notably agreed allowance, and performance ahead of the expert group meeting of 26 September 2014. This additional information will be taken into consideration before launching further analytical work that might be deemed necessary.

6. WORTH pilot project

The WORTH pilot project is testing, at EU level, ways to promote design leadership and creative thinking as well as new business models, integrating (fashion/aesthetic) competencies and skills in consumer goods manufacturing SMEs, by way of partnership arrangements with designers and other experts. Representatives of the European consortium entrusted to implement the pilot project presented its objectives and methodology, steering board, different categories of eligible partnerships and eligibility criteria. The WORTH pilot project will initiate trans-national partnerships between a designer and a manufacturing SME, e.g. manufacturers, retailers, craftsmen, technology companies, in fashion, textiles, jewellery, footwear, eyewear, furniture, fur and leather industries, from different EU member states (and other CIP participating countries). Each partnership is expected to create innovative new products or services. There are three rounds of applications for such partnerships: in May and September 2014 and January 2015. The chairman informed that the evaluation of the results of the WORTH pilot project will help shaping follow-up action from 2016 onwards.

7. Request for standardisation work on quantification methods

With the adoption of the Standardisation Regulation (EU) 1025/2012, a Commission Implementing Decision is required whenever standardisation work is requested to the European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs). For that purpose, Member States and stakeholders (including ESOs) must be consulted. The development of harmonised standards in the context of the Textile Regulation and its Annex VIII (methods for the quantitative analysis of textile fibre mixtures) was already discussed at previous meetings. A copy of the draft standardisation request has been provided to the members of the Textile Expert Group ahead of this meeting; comments and drafting suggestions received from the expert group and stakeholders have been taken into account for preparing the draft Commission Implementing Decision. The discussion that followed highlighted the importance of involving the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) in the process; finding areas of convergence with the US; and cooperating with relevant US entities, e.g. ASTM. With a view to complete the procedure for the adoption of a Commission's Decision prior to sending the request to the relevant ESOs, the members of the Expert Group and the observers representing different stakeholders at the meeting, were invited to support the standardisation request. The chairman noted the unanimous support at this was the case and informed that the request will be submitted to the Standardisation Committee in the coming weeks. The procedure is expected to be finalised after the summer break and the request sent to CEN by the end of the year.

8. Update on the impact assessment on leather labelling

The Commission presented the preliminary results and findings of the public consultation that was launched in the context of the impact assessment (IA) on possible labelling requirements of authenticity leather products. The representative of the European leather tanning industry association welcomed the results of the consultation and informed that synthetic materials are increasingly being used in footwear. He also mentioned that any likely EU labelling system

could take inspiration from the Member States where relevant legislation already applies (e.g. France, Italy and Spain). He also expressed concerns about the risk of market fragmentation and increased labelling costs, in the absence of such a European labelling of leather authenticity. The chairman informed that around 60% of leather uses are not covered by UE legislation, nowadays; that the draft final report of the IA study is expected in June, and that a workshop with stakeholders is planned for the 24th of June; the final report is due end of July.

9. Good practices of social and working conditions (CSR) labelling

The industriAll Europe representative presented the Fair Wear Foundation (FWF) initiative on improving the working conditions in apparel factories. The FWF provides reliable information to consumers regarding the application of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention on social and working conditions by brand owners and by their industrial suppliers in 15 producing countries in the global South, along 8 criteria. FWF does not certify products, factories or brands, but carries out independent on-site inspections and off-site interviews with workers in the local language, operates a local-language hot line available to workers, and looks how well brand owners manage their Corporate Social Responsibility process and their monitoring of industrial suppliers. FWF publishes an annual report containing, for each brand being member of the scheme, the results of this independent information gathering on the working conditions at their suppliers' sites, which is publicly available at the FWF web site. FWF verifies the working conditions of the industrial suppliers of more than eighty five brands based in nine countries (mainly in Europe). The fact for a brand to be a member of the FWF scheme for gathering information on working conditions implies commitment to the FWF code of labour practices, and to exert pressure and perform inspections so as to regularly improve the working conditions at the industrial suppliers' sites. During the discussion that followed, it was mentioned that the ILO convention on social conditions of work is a de facto standard that covers, in particular human rights and labour law, health and safety aspects. Training to inspectors and other experts is provided by the FWF.

10. Any other business and close of the meeting

Twenty nine replies to the questionnaire on the implementation of the Textile Regulation were received from different stakeholders in fifteen Member States and Switzerland. Preliminary analysis of the replies indicates: that knowledge about the Regulation is not widespread notably among SMEs; that Articles 12, 14 and 16 are identified as the source of costs and implementation difficulties; and that economic operators have limited knowledge about penalties. Main suggestions for improvement include: mandatory labelling in English and voluntary labelling in other languages; withdrawal of Article 12 while seeking and testing practical implementation solutions; present future FAQ at the expert group meetings before publication in the Europa web site; provide guidance on certain aspects of the Regulation.

The UK member of the textile expert group informed about a business-led discussion on barriers to on-line trade and e-commerce; a report with conclusions was delivered to the UK government. The report identifies certain requirements of the Textile Regulation, notably those that concern language translation and physical labelling, as a burden and a source of additional costs, which would hamper the presence of retailers on-line. The report recommended using electronic (virtual) labelling for e-commerce. From the discussion that followed it was mentioned that the Textile Regulation obligations apply to both on-line (internet) and on-site (shop floor) sales and removing the physical label from products sold on-line requires changing certain provisions of the Textile Regulation. Moreover, removing

physical labelling from products would constitute a challenge for the market surveillance authorities. The Commission has launched a study on on-line market surveillance practices; the results are expected in October 2014. The chairman mentioned that differentiating between sales and delivery channels risk creating unfair competition.

The chairman reminded the deadlines for feedback on national approaches to care labelling (16 May) and further information or comments on the preliminary findings of the questionnaires on the application of the Regulation (end of May). He reminded about the date of the next meeting 26 September, thanked the participants and closed the meeting.

Annex – List of participants

Members	Observers	European Commission
Member States	Organisations/Others	Directorate General
Austria	AEDT	DG ENTR
Belgium	ANEC	DG JRC - ISPRA
Bulgaria	CEN	
Czech Republic	CIRFS	
Denmark	COTANCE	
Estonia	EBCA	
Finland	EURATEX	
France	GINETEX	
Germany	GOTS	
Greece	FESI	
Ireland	IFM	
Italy	IFTF	
Lithuania	industriAll Europe	
Poland	London College of Fashion	
Portugal	Toyobo	
Romania	Norway	
Slovakia		
Slovenia		
Spain		
Sweden		
United Kingdom		