

Position Paper on Fur, Fashion and Creative Industries

Currently, two thirds of all the collections at the four major fashion weeks feature fur and basically all leading fashion houses use fur in their collections. Fur is unquestionably a material favoured by designers for its unique creative possibilities.

According to the EU Industrial Structure Report 2013 dealing with the development and after-crisis recovery of industries in Europe, the clothing industry is one of the least successful industries in terms of recent growth, recovery and job creation. At the same time, the fur sector has lately been experiencing an unprecedented growth. This suggests that fur is a unique material in demand and able to generate income also in times when the rest of clothing sector is not doing well. As an integral part of the fashion industry, fur plays a significant role in the creative economy. This way the fur industry not only creates skilled jobs for young people but also, as a high-end industry, represents European cultural heritage and know-how. Moreover, the fur sector is very innovative and actively tries to spread beyond the clothing industry into industries manufacturing accessories, furniture, interior, decorations etc.

In 2012 the Commission launched a Communication on 'Promoting cultural and creative sectors for growth and jobs in the EU' and two staff documents 'Competitiveness of the European high-end industries' and 'Policy options for the competitiveness of the European fashion industries – where manufacturing meets creativity'. Fur Europe was involved in the process of promoting the strategies aimed at growth, jobs, skills and trade in the working group. According to the issued documents, the fashion sector employs more than 5 million people in the EU. Having the share of 3% on total EU GDP, the Commission acknowledges that fashion, including the fur sector, is important to the EU and contributes significantly to the economy of the Union.

However, the fur industry faces several grave problems. For example, most of the companies in the sector are small, often family-run companies falling under the definition of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The EU recognizes the importance of this type of enterprises, as they constitute the backbone of a successful modern European economy. Nevertheless, SMEs often lack the funding and skills to implement and use new technologies.

Another issue is that it is difficult to get new furriers involved – we lack young people with interest in developing the necessary furrier skills. We therefore welcome the initiatives taken by the DG Enterprise and Industry to do image campaigns to keep the crafts in Europe. The fur industry expects from the EU to facilitate better knowledge sharing and exchange of practices between industries and design schools. This should be done in order to secure that the furrier craftsmanship will still maintain part of the economy in Europe in future years.

In order to re-think the use of fur, develop new techniques and share ideas and knowledge, our two fur innovation centres Saga Design Centre and Copenhagen Studio every year invite 50-60 designers inside to learn about the latest fur techniques and become inspired to use fur in their collections. Also, design competitions arranged by the sector are held every year in order to encourage young people to become involved in fur design.

The fur sector will therefore strive to cooperate with the EU in order to support the competitiveness of SMEs and to preserve the skills forming a unique heritage of European culture.