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GreenLIFE a project to develop a more sustainable leather manufacturing process

GreenLIFE is the acronym of green Leather Industry for the Environment, a project funded by the European Union, as part of the Life+ programme. The project is sponsored by five Italian companies based in the Vicenza Tannery District, the Dani and Gruppo Mastrotto tanneries, the chemical company Ikem, Acque del Chiampo that manages a water purification plant, and Ilsa a biotechnology company specialising in plant-nutrition products.

During the kick off meeting of the steering committee, that took place last November 2014, partners focus on goals which include reduction in water consumption and use of chemicals, reduction of waste, its recycling and re-use, and the principal objective developing a more sustainable leather manufacturing process.

The project wants to develop new oxidative liming and bath reuse and new enzymatic liming and chrome-free tanning processes. In addition, it aims to develop the collection and reuse of leather by-products in the industrial, agricultural and energy sectors. GreenLIFE will evaluate the impact on waste water treatment and analyse the environmental and socio-economical impacts of the new technologies, through simulation at the Vicenza Tannery District level.

In particular, GreenLIFE's main goals are 20% reduction in water consumption in the beamhouse stage, 20% decrease in chemicals used in the beamhouse stage, 20% reduction in solid waste, a large reduction in sulfides in the hair-removal tannery stage, 15% recovery and re-use of by-products with industrial value, and a creation of a new knowledge hub to share ideas and technologies. It lasts 3 years, starting from 2014, and the investment required is 2,3 millions euro, with half the amount financed by the EU.

Partners want to prioritise communication of results and a well-framed public relations plan will facilitate engagement with a number of national and international stakeholders, by providing permanent updates to all its stakeholders.

GreenLIFE demonstrates innovation capability, openness and cohesiveness among the Vicenza Tannery District companies and their willingness to act as a group rather than individually. A first step towards a common direction for the entire district.

PR | Alessandra Plichero (IT) mob. +39 3394188807 (UK) mob. +44 07570021140

a.plichero@beatriceonline.eu | pr@greenlifeproject.eu