

COMMENTS BY ÖZ-İPLİK-İŞ LABOR UNION

The necessity of preparing the Turkish textile industry for world competition environment is not only important for the future of textile industry, but also for the Turkish exports and by the same token for the future of the Turkish economy in general. *One of the major elements in keeping up with competition is to look ahead and to keep up with the future.* In this respect, it is essential to foresee and prepare for the future developments in textile and garment industry which has an important place in our country's economy.

We as Öz-İplik-İş Labor Union have been pleased to be a social partner in the Jo-In project. We believe that raising social standards is very important in respect of the accession negotiations to the European Union as well. Raising the social standards can only be achieved through dialog and cooperation among workers, employers, brands and public organizations.

The Jo-In Project has provided the means for Labor Unions to work together with other stakeholders and to discuss the issues on the same ground. With the project, we achieved to setup bridges instead of erecting walls. As it is indicated in the report, perhaps the most important output of the project is that the Social Dialog culture has, for the first time, developed among the Textile industry stakeholders with the Jo-In Project. The prejudices present at the beginning of the project gave its way to the culture of joint work towards the mid of the project. The fact that different stakeholders have worked together in the project is very important for Turkey and is a first example of its kind.

The website of the Project has become a resource for various national and international organizations. Our labor union Öz-İplik-İş has referenced the Jo-In experience and researches to a group of former scholars from Stockholm University to be used in their report.

The conclusions, the experience on the issues covered by the Common Code of Conduct provide important resources, but the concrete solutions are still to come.

Multi-stakeholder initiatives and the cooperation achieved among stakeholders are important outcomes, and that cooperation should be maintained in new projects in line with the conclusions of Jo-In project.

In the report, the name and functions of project participants should be publicly stated.

The report states that the awareness on freedom of association has been raising among managers, and that the managers have shown positive interest in encouraging trainings on FoA. However, neither concrete steps have been taken regarding that issue, and nor planned trainings have been conducted. Jo-In must follow-up the process for trainings on FoA, which was jointly determined by the labor unions and which is an absolute need, to ensure that the trainings are conducted with the participation of labor unions as observers.

The report states the increase in the interest shown towards trainings on FoA as the most important outcome of the project in the local context. The project has absolutely made a great achievement in reaching to the current stage in respect of FoA.

However, the most important output of Jo-In project should not be merely an increase in the interest towards such trainings, but the trainings themselves should be really conducted. Such that the reality of interest shown towards trainings which do not have a chance for realization is questionable in itself.

The guidelines on freedom of association mentioned among the outputs of the project must be published. The report must contain more concrete proposals regarding models of future cooperation. Things to be done hereafter should be stated more openly and clearly.

Various stakeholders have stated that purchasing policies and social responsibility departments for brands must work more in cooperation, and this was indicated in the report as well, follow-up on this issue must be provided. The project report has stated that brand's will be trained on the way their purchasing practices could support their suppliers' ability to pay a living wage. However, it is not clear how and when the decisions taken will be put into practice.

The project has enabled labor unions to have a clearer idea on the roles of the brands. It is true that the labor unions and the workers have found new allies in the efforts to improve the working conditions of the workers.

The report contains almost any kind of self-criticism, but it would be to the point if the report covers proposals for transforming these negative points into positive ones, and at least proposals for the future of the project.

The roles of government representatives in the project process, and the conclusions about the actions to be taken on the macro level in the long term should be expressed.

The brands who are members to multi-stakeholder initiatives should be continuously renewed for the project's sustainability in reaching to LWG's.

It is most appreciated that the 6 organizations participating in the project have been present during the remediation process and conclusion phase until the end of the project, and the identity of these companies should be publicly announced in the media, and they should be awarded for their participation in this process. FoA training should be provided to those participating suppliers, and the brands should support them by buying more goods from them. The factories participating in the pilot project can be introduced to international brands via multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Due to the fact that preparation phase of the project was too long, that project coordinator was changed 3 times, that the auditors were changed, that the mistakes in the project's systematic and timing could not be compensated for, that the time was run out, the remediation process ended without producing great outcomes. At this point, the Jo-In Project should continue, the decisions made and conclusions drawn on the remediation phase should be highlighted and a leap forward unprecedented in Turkey should be made. Very limited time is left to conduct the remediation activities on a satisfactory level and to achieve measurable results.

In the last paragraph of page 15 of the report, it is said that “Indeed, some stakeholders within the same apparent category (e.g. trade unions) were not in the habit of meeting with one another, let alone conducting an open discussion with employer groups.” This conclusion is true. On Social Dialog, there was a wide gap between the parties before the project, but because labor unions are indicated in parenthesis in the report, a general idea that labor unions have declined to such a meeting arises. However, according to us, as a labor union, the situation unfolded to the contrary, and we observed that brands and suppliers refused to meet in the same hall.

16. At page 16, the phrase “NGOs will need to help unions – who are currently weak on-the-ground in Turkey - with compliance training” is not open and clear. This phrase should be made clearer.

17. On page 17, the statement that “the Steering Committee circulated an advisory note to all stakeholders pointing out that the practice of constructing management-led worker committees did not meet ILO requirements for FoA any more than would a direct instruction from an employer to workers to join a trade union.” was softened with the use of the phrase “did not meet”. In fact, a management-led worker representation system is an explicit violation of ILO rules.

44. On page 44, Paxar has been written in parenthesis. Perhaps, instead of stating a single firm in parenthesis as an example, the usage of plural form would be better. On the issue of Ekoten, the fact that Jo-In stakeholders stated that they would support the organization process, the informing of the brand, the competitor supplier firms and all the stakeholders about the present violations have all strengthened the campaign, and this is a positive outcome of the project.