CIBJO EU Committee starts lobbying European Commission in Brussels

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CIBJO EU Committee

CIBJO’s EU Committee was established last year in May at the CIBJO Congress in Tel Aviv, with the purpose of liaising with the European Union about policies concerning the jewellery industry. It represents the interests of the whole jewellery sector not only from Europe, but from every CIBJO member.

The new committee started its lobbying activities very quickly and successfully. Already in June a delegation of CIBJO members led by CIBJO President Gaetano Cavalieri, including representatives from France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, met with representatives of the EU Commission in Brussels. The EU team was led by Tung-Lai Margue, the head of the body’s service for foreign policy instruments.

The main topic discussed in Brussels was the supply chain initiative by the European Commission aimed at responsible sourcing of minerals originating in conflict-affected and high risk areas. The initiative builds on the OECD due diligence guidelines for responsible supply chains, which covers minerals such as tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold.

During the meeting the CIBJO EU Committee called on the EU Commission to acknowledge and accept the various voluntary initiatives and ethical
standards developed and led by the jewellery and precious metal sectors. The competitiveness of the jewellery sector must be protected, so that additional certification procedures without any expected benefit must be avoided. It was suggested that the EU Commission takes into consideration the unintended consequences of the Dodd-Frank Act in the United States, which have caused a “de facto embargo” of the Great Lakes region of Africa by the companies in the industry.

A comprehensive study of the German Industry Association, supported by the German Jewellery & Watches Association and presented to EU Commissioner for Trade Karel de Gucht in September 2013, also focused on a voluntary approach.

This massive lobbying had been fruitful. The first regulation proposal presented by the EU Commission in March 2014 avoids compulsory legislation.

The CIBJO EU Committee also raised the subject of the EU REACH regulations, in particular the proposed changes to the nickel standard EN 1811. The revision work aimed at avoiding the “no decision category” is in progress.

The CIBJO members called on the EU to regard
products already in the supply chain prior to March 31, 2013, and which conform to EN 1811:1998 as being compliant. Later in 2013, Gaetano Cavalieri and the President of CIBJO’s Precious Metal Commission, Michael Allchin, attended a CARACAL meeting (Competent Authorities for REACH and CLP) in Brussels to discuss the definition of "prolonged contact with the skin" in the context of nickel regulation.

Other topics discussed were CSR and the planned regulations concerning product safety and market surveillance.

It can be concluded that the voice of the entire jewellery sector is heard in Brussels for the first time. And the intense cooperation will continue. It had been decided that the parties will meet at least once a year.

INTENSIFYING EU LOBBYING

In Moscow the next steps concerning the EU lobbying have to be discussed. It is planned to meet the EU commission again in Brussels within the next months.

CIBJO should extend its network to key players in the newly elected European Parliament. One main concern is that the conflict minerals proposal of the EU commission based on a voluntary approach could be tightened in the forthcoming legislative procedure.

Other topics we should follow up with the EU commission are product safety and market surveillance, REACH and CSR.

APOLOGIES AND BEST WISHES

Due to a broken knee I will unfortunately be unable to attend the congress in Moscow. But I will be well represented by Gaetano Cavalieri, Karina Ratzlaff (President of the United Federation of the German Jewellery and Silverware Branches) and Michael Allchin.

I wish everybody a fruitful meeting at the congress in May.