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## **GLOBAL: Union calls for sandblasting ban**

The global union representing garment workers has called for a ban on the practice of sandblasting jeans, arguing that it can cause silicosis and even death.

According to Patrick Itschert, general secretary of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF), 550 former sandblasting workers in Turkey have been diagnosed with silicosis since 2005, including 46 deaths.

He added that Turkey, the world's third largest exporter of jeans, was the only country so far where the impact of sandblasting on worker health has been assessed.

"These officially documented cases are just the tip of the iceberg both in Turkey and globally," said Itschert.

Now the ITGLWF is convening a meeting of jeans brands and retailers in Brussels tomorrow (20 January) in a bid to raise awareness of the issue.

Sandblasting is a technique used to give jeans a fashionably faded or aged appearance.

The meeting will include expert contributions examining best practices, allow for an exchange of views and will discuss further steps for action.

But Itschert believes a ban is the only way forward: "Even if brands and retailers adopt rigorous standards regarding sandblasting, there will always be suppliers that do not enforce these standards, thus putting unsuspecting workers at risk," he said.

"Therefore the best policy is to ban sandblasting altogether in the garment industry. Several leading brands have already done so and we believe others should now do the same."