

ESPRIT

Brands: Esprit, Esprit Casual,
Esprit Collection, Esprit Sports, Edc



COMPANY POSITION ON THE LIVING WAGE:

“We implement the BSCI [Business Social Compliance Initiative] Code of Conduct in our international supply chain. This Code prescribes the payment of the legal minimum wage. This legal minimum wage should be at a level that covers workers basic needs as well as provide some discretionary income.”

“We believe it is essential to emphasize the importance of a holistic approach towards the issue of fair remuneration for workers. In this context, it is important to address the qualitative aspects of wages as well as quantitative aspects ... such as the way of payment, timely and formal payment of wages, reflecting skills and education of workers in the level of wages, and equal treatment of full-time employees, part-time, and piece-rates workers.”

WHAT WE SAY:

Sound familiar? Like Lidl, Aldi, WE and others, Esprit has simply repeated back to us the answers provided by the BSCI, without engaging in the issues. Very little evidence was given of any work to address the problem of low pay. Nothing in the answers provided indicated to us a serious engagement with the need to increase pay to a living-wage level.

IN MORE DETAIL:

Has living-wage benchmarks?

No.



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Worker empowerment:

Esprit says: “Communicating information about the rights and freedoms of workers, including freedom of association, is a requirement of the BSCI Code of Conduct. As stated in the terms of implementation, the Code must be translated into the local language(s) and displayed prominently in a factory in order to be BSCI-compliant.”

Esprit gave information about its direct involvement in ensuring collective bargaining rights on two occasions in 2013 where suppliers had refused to engage with worker representatives.

It says: “Esprit has a team of 11 people based in China, Hong Kong, Bangladesh, India and Turkey that perform Esprit internal audits, and develop corrective action plans for our supplier factories.”

Commitment and practices:

On living-wage benchmarks, Esprit says: “The calculation of the local living wage forms part of the BSCI audit and is calculated according to the SA8000 methodology. They are used for the gap analysis and in the Corrective Action Plans that are issued to factories after each BSCI audit, indicating steps to be taken in order to arrive at the level of a living wage.”

Collaborative approach:

Little information was given of collaborative projects or work with unions or NGO groups, aside from Esprit's attendance at the European Conference on Living Wages in Berlin.

Strategy:

There was no information given on a strategy towards wage and working-condition improvements beyond the BSCI reports referenced above.

Production overview:

Number of suppliers: 455 first-tier suppliers

Main production countries listed as: China (54%), rest of Asia (9%), Bangladesh (8%), Turkey (8%), Vietnam (6%), Other (15%)

Esprit does not publish a full public list of the names and addresses of its supplier factories.

COMMENTS:

Another giant in the global market, Esprit has over 1,000 shops worldwide, employing more than 10,000 people directly, and a turnover exceeding €2.3 billion annually – yet it has little oversight of its supply chain and has developed no strategy for improving wage or working conditions in its supplier factories. Instead it references work being carried out by the BSCI and relies on an outdated auditing model. This ‘tick box’ approach to dealing with company responsibility for labour rights will not bring about the change that is vitally needed.

Our take on the BSCI focus on addressing “the qualitative as well as quantitative aspects” of wage payment is that this is somehow sidestepping the main point. It is important, yes, to pay workers on time and ensure wages reflect how skilled workers are, but the main issue for most factory workers is that they cannot afford to feed their children. We are not saying that the qualitative issues are not important and should not be addressed, just that the quantitative issues are immeasurably more important. The repeated protests that take place around the world in garment-producing countries all call for a significant quantitative wage increase. The focus on other aspects of wage payment must not become a distraction from the pressing and urgent issue of poverty. Given a list of 12 things to do, one of which is ‘pay more’, every supplier will do the other 11 first.

Esprit has a small CSR team, aside from its work with the BSCI, but no evidence was given on how this team is working to improve wages.

Esprit needs to take personal responsibility for its global supply chain and invest in ensuring that the rights of all workers within that supply chain are respected.