

Civil Society European Strategy for Sustainable Textiles, Garments, Leather & Footwear

A broad coalition of social and environmental NGOs has developed a Civil Society European Strategy for Sustainable Textiles, Garments, Leather and Footwear looking at the social, environmental and governance implications of the textile sector in one forward-looking document ahead of the comprehensive EU Strategy for Textiles, expected in 2021.

We call on the EU to promote and support the development of a strong circular Textiles, Garments, Leather and Footwear industry that respects human rights, creates decent jobs and adheres to high environmental and responsible governance standards throughout its value chain, in the EU and beyond.

More specifically, it aims to contribute to the upcoming “comprehensive EU Strategy for Textiles”, by providing recommendations on what such Strategy should encompass in order to maintain a high level of ambition. It includes forward-looking proposals on due diligence, product policy framework, waste, unfair trading practices, international trade, support to producing countries, alternative business models and a multi-stakeholder platform.

Due diligence legislation

- EU to put in place horizontal due diligence legislation applying across sectors. Such legislation could have specific requirements for certain high-risks sectors, including TGLF.
- Due diligence obligation consists of companies’ own activities and their suppliers across the value-chain, and should apply to all companies operating in the EU with tailored support mechanisms for companies.
- Enforcement and access to justice: competent authorities at national levels should have the necessary resources and mandate to monitor and enforce compliance; access to justice and grievance mechanisms for the victims should be a core component of any legislation.

Tackling Unfair Trading Practices

- Purchasing Practices of Brands and Retailers can provoke labour abuses and environmental damage from their suppliers.
- Because of the power asymmetry, brands and retailers often do not honour contractually agreed terms and apply post-hoc discounts.
- There is a need to protect the weaker contractual party against Unfair Trading Practices, and provide for an option to file complaints without “fear for retaliation”

Support to producing countries

- Governance reforms and better law enforcement in producing countries is part of the solution to sustainability and social issues faced in the TGLF value chains.
- A Sustainable TGLF industry shall be a development cooperation priority, with the 2021-27 budget to reflect such prioritization. Political dialogue with producing countries and budget support with TGLF-related targets. Staff in HQ and EU Delegations to be capacitated to design and implement effective support for sustainable value chains development.

Trade Policy

- EU market power should be leveraged to encourage sustainable production practices in the TGLF industry.
- Free Trade Agreements are to be used to strengthen Trade and Sustainable Development chapters to ensure responsible business conduct, with increased monitoring of human rights and environmental clauses, as well as a systematic use of ex-ante and ex-post trade sustainability impact assessments and increased participation of stakeholders.
- Generalised Scheme of Preferences are to be used to ensure they are effectively implemented and monitored in a public and participative manner, strengthen the social and environmental sustainability of the scheme and develop a complaint mechanism for abuses.

Sustainable Product Policy

- An integrated product policy to reform the textile sector is needed. The objective of a truly circular economy: reduce the absolute quantity of natural resources that enter our economy and reduce the quantity of waste that comes out thanks to durable, reusable, repairable and recyclable products.
- A Comprehensive EU Strategy for Textiles is needed to address environmental aspects throughout the textile product lifecycle and value chains.

Minimum requirements & Extended Producer Responsibility

- EU legislation to stimulate circular design and material efficiency (durability, repairability, reusability, recyclability and recycled content); prevention and traceability of hazardous chemicals.
- Ecodesign-style requirements for textiles and market surveillance are part of the solution.
- EPR schemes to be democratically governed and reflect the waste hierarchy, the polluter pays principle, and include targets for absolute resource-use minimisation & designing waste out of the system.
- An EPR for garments, textiles and footwear, and potentially for carpets, mattresses, and other textiles can be part of the solution.
- EPR should fund both ‘end-of-life’ management and strengthen producer responsibility for use phase.
- Transparency & Traceability: EU to support robust, credible and comparable disclosure, promoting practical tools to improve transparency in the textile chain, from production (B2B) to consumers (B2C), potentially with an electronic product passport.

Public Procurement, Waste policies, and new business models

- EU to select TGLF sector for a pilot scheme on mandatory green criteria and expand to include social criteria such as human rights and decent working conditions..
- EU to establish a quantitative target for the total reduction of textile waste in the EU.
- Support social circular business models and expand the re-use of textiles by supporting social enterprises and re-use operators, textile donations and the second-hand market overall.

EU multi-stakeholders Platform

- An EU multi-stakeholder partnership to bring together businesses & business associations, trade unions and civil society organisations.
- Forum to share knowledge, tools and facilitate collaboration.
- Platform for stakeholder dialogue.
- Build on national-level Partnership.

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The Civil Society European Strategy for Sustainable Textiles, Garments, Leather and Footwear is a collaborative effort of a coalition of a diverse set of civil society organisations throughout Europe ahead of the comprehensive EU Strategy for Textiles, expected in 2021.

We are calling on the EU to promote a strong circular textiles, garments, leather and footwear industry that respects human rights, creates decent jobs and adheres to high social, environmental and responsible governance standards throughout its value chain, in the EU and beyond. The EU plays a key role as producer, investor, buyer/importer, retailer and consumer in TGLF value chains and therefore has considerable leverage to address these challenges.

