

EU flagship initiative on the garment sector

After the 2013 Rana Plaza garment factory tragedy in Bangladesh, the European Commission pledged to table an EU-wide flagship initiative to boost responsible management of the garment industry. To date, this initiative has yet to be launched. A motion for a Parliament resolution, due to be voted at the April II part-session, calls on the Commission to put forward a legislative proposal and focuses, among other things, on introducing mandatory due diligence for the supply chains in the industry.

Background

It is estimated that the global garment industry employs up to [75 million](#) people, most of them women. Garment-related trade amounts to over [€2.86 trillion](#) globally. More than [70 %](#) of the textiles and clothing imported into the EU originates from Asia, with China and Bangladesh ranking among the largest producers.

Following the Rana Plaza tragedy, public and private initiatives have been launched worldwide in an attempt to introduce responsible management and enhance sustainability in the garment industry.

Initiatives at Member State and EU level

Several Member State initiatives, such as the UK's [Modern Slavery Act](#) and the German [Partnership for sustainable textiles](#), have been taken to promote responsible supply chains. Similarly, the EU has [acted](#) to ensure responsible management in the sector, for instance by building trade and sustainable development provisions into trade agreements and sector-specific initiatives, such as the [Bangladesh Sustainability Compact](#).

The EU garment initiative

[Informal consultations](#) with Member States on such an initiative started in 2014; since then, the Commission has promised on several occasions to table it, but has not yet done so. According to Commission representatives attending various European Parliament committee meetings in 2017, a staff working document on the initiative is currently being prepared. It will address, among other things, issues such as delivery of financial assistance to partner countries, identification of best practices on social and environmental standards, cooperation with stakeholders, and promotion of responsible consumption. The document will also deal with thematic areas such as gender equality and decent living wages. However, the Commission does not currently consider mandatory due diligence in the garment sector to be an option. The findings of an external [study](#) on responsible management of the garment supply chain, conducted for the Commission and finalised in December 2016, will feed into the preparation of the initiative.

European Parliament's position

The Parliament has already adopted a number of related resolutions, among them a 2015 [resolution](#) on the second anniversary of the Rana Plaza tragedy and the state of play of the Bangladesh Sustainability Compact. In November 2016, the Committee on International Trade (INTA) organised a [fact-finding mission](#) to Bangladesh, to assess the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainability Compact.

On 21 March 2017, Parliament's Committee on Development (DEVE) adopted a [motion](#) for a resolution on the EU flagship initiative on the garment sector, calling for mandatory due diligence based on OECD guidelines for the garment supply chains in their entirety, enforcement of labour standards and human rights, supply chain transparency and traceability, as well as promotion of gender equality. Parliament is due to debate and vote on the motion in its April 2017 part-session.

Own-initiative report: [2016/2140\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: DEVE; Rapporteur: Lola Sánchez Caldentey, (GUE/NGL, Spain).

