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# **DRAFT REPORT**

on an EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles  
(2022/2171(INI))

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Rapporteur: Delara Burkhardt

Rapporteur for the opinion of the associated committee pursuant to Rule 57 of  
the Rules of Procedure  
Christian Ehler, Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on an EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles (2022/2171(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 March 2020 entitled ‘A new Circular Economy Action Plan – For a cleaner and more competitive Europe’ (COM(2020)0098) and to Parliament’s resolution of 10 February 2021 thereon<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled ‘EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 – Bringing nature back into lives’ (COM(2020)0380) and to Parliament’s resolution of 9 June 2021 thereon,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 March 2022 entitled ‘EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles’ (COM(2022)0141),
- having regard to the European Environment Agency (EEA) briefing of 19 November 2010 on textiles in Europe’s circular economy,
- having regard to the Joint Research Centre technical report of June 2021 entitled ‘Circular economy perspectives in the EU Textile sector’,
- having regard to the report of the Inclusive Labour Markets, Labour Relations and Working Conditions Branch of the International Labour Organization of 2017 entitled ‘Purchasing practices and low wages in global supply chains: Empirical cases from the garment industry’,
- having regard to the report of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation entitled ‘A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning fashion’s future’,
- having regard to the Textile Exchange report entitled ‘Preferred Fiber & Materials Market Report 2022’,
- having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the opinions of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, the Committee on Development, the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A9-0000/2023),

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 465, 17.11.2021, p. 11.

- A. whereas global textile production almost doubled between 2000 and 2015<sup>2</sup>; whereas less than 1 % of all textiles worldwide are recycled into new products<sup>3</sup>;
- B. whereas clothing comprises the largest share of EU textile consumption, with 81 %<sup>4</sup>; whereas the trend of using garments for ever shorter periods before throwing them away is the biggest contributor to unsustainable patterns of overproduction and overconsumption<sup>5</sup>;
- C. whereas synthetic and man-made fibres already account for more than two thirds (70 %) <sup>6</sup> of total global fibre production;

### ***Union strategy***

1. Welcomes the Commission communication on an EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles and the vision it presents for 2030; stresses that actions following the publication of the Strategy should be fully aligned with the Union's climate and environmental objectives, in particular that of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest and of halting and reversing biodiversity loss;
2. Acknowledges the urgency of ensuring that textile products placed on the EU market are long-lived, reusable and recyclable, and free of hazardous substances; expresses its concern that the measures identified in the EU Strategy might not be sufficient to fulfil the 2030 objective and calls on the Commission to ensure all necessary measures, including additional measures to those identified in the strategy, are taken to achieve the 2030 vision;
3. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to adopt measures to put an end to fast fashion; underlines the need to achieve a paradigm shift in the fashion industry to end overproduction and to make fast fashion go out of fashion;
4. Stresses the need to support consumers in moving away from fast fashion and the excessive consumption of clothing and in making responsible and sustainable textile consumption choices; calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop and implement awareness-raising programmes on sustainable consumption and the environmental and climate impacts of the textile and clothing industry, in collaboration with civil society;
5. Draws attention to the fact that imports of non-compliant products sold through online platforms and other digital services are widespread, and calls on those service providers to ensure that the textile products they sell comply with EU law;

### ***Environmental & climate impacts***

6. Expresses concern that from a consumption point of view, over their life cycle, textiles have on average the fourth highest negative impact on the climate and the environment,

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/a-new-textiles-economy>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/textiles-in-europes-circular-economy>

<sup>4</sup> <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC125110>

<sup>5</sup> [https://textileexchange.org/app/uploads/2022/10/Textile-Exchange\\_PFMR\\_2022.pdf](https://textileexchange.org/app/uploads/2022/10/Textile-Exchange_PFMR_2022.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://textileexchange.org/app/uploads/2022/10/Textile-Exchange\\_PFMR\\_2022.pdf](https://textileexchange.org/app/uploads/2022/10/Textile-Exchange_PFMR_2022.pdf)

after food, housing and mobility<sup>7</sup>; points out that in 2020, the textiles sector was responsible for the third highest impact on water and land use and the fifth highest impact on the use of raw materials and greenhouse gas emissions<sup>8</sup>;

7. Stresses that textiles are the fourth biggest contributor to climate change from an EU consumption perspective, and that the industry's emissions are only expected to increase<sup>9</sup>; calls for further legislation to fully decarbonise the industry, starting with more transparency on scope 3 emissions in textile supply chains; calls for ambitious science-based targets to be set by 2024 for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the textiles sector, covering their entire lifecycle, in line with the Paris Agreement goal of keeping global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures; recalls that around 70 % of the emissions related to the Union's textile consumption take place outside of the EU<sup>10</sup>; calls for more robust information and disclosure on the impacts on biodiversity;
8. Welcomes the fact that the strategy makes a link between fast fashion and the use of fossil fuel-based synthetic fibres, which in turn has major implications for microplastic pollution; points out that microplastics release climate pollutants such as methane and ethylene into the environment, contributing to climate change, and that microplastics undermine the resilience of the ocean and the environment in general;
9. Calls for the setting of clear targets and measures to prevent and minimise the release of microplastics into the environment, covering both unintentional and intentional releases; considers that ecodesign requirements should favour fabrics that are proven to release less microplastics; calls also for the setting of requirements to reduce the amount of microplastics released during industrial wet processing and washing and drying by industry and consumers;

### ***Circular by design***

10. Stresses the need to regulate all textile products under the Ecodesign Regulation, starting with garments and footwear as a priority;
11. Stresses that ecodesign requirements should address the textiles sector comprehensively across product parameters; notes that measures such as improved resource efficiency are not sufficient as that these do not address the issue of overproduction and overconsumption of textiles;
12. Calls for the ecodesign requirements for textiles to set horizontal requirements swiftly, targeting a comprehensive group of products starting with garments and footwear, and later, when needed, to focus on differentiated requirements between different textile product groups;
13. Considers that consumption of new textiles, such as clothes, depends largely on the availability of the products and their pricing, and not only on the need to replace a

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/textiles-and-the-environment-the>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/textiles-and-the-environment-the>

<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new\\_circular\\_economy\\_action\\_plan.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new_circular_economy_action_plan.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/textiles-in-europes-circular-economy>

product that is no longer functional; calls for the policy framework to take a holistic view of durability, including the emotional durability of textile products put on the market, which describes the garment design that takes into account long-term relevance and desirability to consumers;

### ***Textile waste and extended producer responsibility***

14. Welcomes the intention of the Commission to set out harmonised EU rules on extended producer responsibility for textiles, with eco-modulation of fees as part of the revision of the Waste Framework Directive, and in particular that a significant proportion of the contributions made to extended producer responsibility schemes will be used for waste prevention and preparation for re-use measures;
15. Recalls that separate collection of textiles will be mandatory from 1 January 2025; underlines that the revision of the Waste Framework Directive planned for 2024 should consider specific separate targets for textile waste prevention, textile reuse, preparation for reuse, and recycling;
16. Agrees with the Commission that the production of clothing from recycled bottles is not consistent with the circular model for PET bottles and calls for extended producer responsibility schemes and other measures for textiles to incentivise investment in fibre-to-fibre recycling solutions and investments in sorting for reuse, ideally local;

### ***Transparency and traceability***

17. Welcomes the initiative to empower consumers with regard to the green transition and the resulting EU rules that should ensure that consumers receive information at the point of sale on a commercial durability guarantee for textile products, as well as relevant information on their reparability;
18. Expresses its regret that the proposal on substantiating environmental claims using standard product and organisation environmental footprint methods has been delayed; calls on the Commission to publish the proposal without further delay;
19. Highlights the potential of the digital product passport to support full value chain coverage as part of a coherent framework with corporate due diligence legislation on sustainability; calls on the Commission to require companies to use the digital product passport to disclose and submit site information throughout their supply chains, as well as information on the use of materials and chemicals; calls for environmental information to be complemented by information on social aspects and labour and working conditions;
20. Underlines that an immediate ban on the destruction of unsold and returned textile goods should be enacted without delay under the Ecodesign Regulation; considers that full disclosure of the numbers of textile products placed on the market every year and of unsold textile products is necessary;

### ***Due diligence and social fairness***

21. Highlights that negative environmental impacts and social impacts in supplier countries

cannot be avoided through due diligence legislation alone; calls on the Commission to provide additional support for local actors in partner countries and to take additional legislative measures to address these impacts in countries outside the EU;

22. Regrets that the strategy does not envisage any action against the harmful purchasing practices of companies; points out that according to the International Labour Organization, the current power imbalance between garment buyers and their suppliers causes overproduction and exploitation of workers in the industry<sup>11</sup>; considers that unfair purchasing practices such as last minute changes in design or lead times, unilateral amendments to contracts and last minute cancellation of orders should be banned for companies active in the single market through a revision of existing legislation;
23. Underlines that the transition to a more sustainable and circular ecosystem within the textile industry offers the opportunity to improve the working conditions and remuneration of workers, who will play a central role in the transition; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the provision of sectoral training and education in the field of sustainable textiles to safeguard current jobs, improve worker satisfaction and ensure the availability of a skilled workforce;
24. Calls on the Commission to ensure a level playing field for products produced and consumed within the EU and those exported or imported; considers that the Union should ensure that trade agreements and preference programmes are used as levers to promote sustainable development, human rights, labour rights and fair and ethical trade around the world, and to improve the responsibility of value chains;
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25. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_561141.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_561141.pdf)

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The European Commission presented a new EU Sustainable and Circular Textiles Strategy<sup>12</sup> on 30 March 2022. The strategy sets out a series of actions and the Commission's 2030 vision for the sector, including: All textile products placed on the EU market are durable, repairable and recyclable, made largely from recycled fibres, free from hazardous substances and produced with respect for social rights and the environment; "Fast fashion" is out of fashion and consumers benefit longer from high quality, affordable textiles; profitable reuse and repair services are widespread; The textile sector is competitive, resilient and innovative, and manufacturers take responsibility for their products along the entire value chain with sufficient capacity for recycling and minimum incineration and landfilling.

Already today, European textile consumption has the fourth<sup>13</sup> largest impact on the environment and climate change, after food, housing and mobility. Textiles rank third<sup>14</sup> in terms of water consumption and land use, and fifth in terms of primary raw material consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The global textile and clothing industry is currently responsible for 92 million<sup>15</sup> tonnes of waste annually. An industry mainly driven by fossil fuels. In 2015, we consumed 98 million tonnes of oil just for the fashion industry. Mostly for the production of synthetic fibres, which account for a large proportion of the materials used. It is estimated that there are already 1.4 trillion<sup>16</sup> microfibers in the oceans. The washing of synthetic fibre clothing accounts for the largest share of all, 35%.<sup>17</sup> Every year, 552,000 tonnes of microfibers alone end up in the water.

We are producing more clothes and textiles than ever before. In the EU alone, demand has increased by 40%<sup>18</sup> in recent decades. We consume more and more often than ever before. At the same time, we only wear our clothes a few times on average. We forget how much work and resources are used. More collections than there are seasons, faster trends and before the new collection is in the shops and websites, yesterday's collection is disposed of. At the same time, only 1%<sup>19</sup> are recycled.

However, not only the environment pays its price, but also the people who produce our textiles along the entire supply chain.

The industry employs 60 million<sup>20</sup> people worldwide, most of them women. The wages of garment workers are often far away from living wages. Unpaid overtime, health hazards, no fixed contracts, psychological and physical abuse are just some of the problems in the industry. Regardless of whether it is in the cotton field or in the textile factory, precarious working conditions dominate. All over the world, women<sup>21</sup> are hit particularly hard by environmental

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<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12822-EU-strategy-for-sustainable-textiles\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12822-EU-strategy-for-sustainable-textiles_en)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/729405/EPRS\\_BRI\(2022\)729405\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/729405/EPRS_BRI(2022)729405_EN.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/729405/EPRS\\_BRI\(2022\)729405\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/729405/EPRS_BRI(2022)729405_EN.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/a-new-textiles-economy>

<sup>16</sup> <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/a-new-textiles-economy>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/textiles-in-europes-circular-economy>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/textiles-in-europes-circular-economy>

<sup>19</sup> <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/a-new-textiles-economy>

<sup>20</sup> <https://cleanclothes.org/news/2022/live-blog-on-how-the-coronavirus-influences-workers-in-supply-chains>

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_836396.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_836396.pdf)



disasters and climate extremes. We cannot cope with the worst crisis in the world without involving half of its population.

The constant downward pressure on social and environmental standards is leading to more and more social inequalities and environmental devastation. The circular economy must play a major part in managing the transition towards social, economic and environmental sustainability.

The rapporteur thinks that without a functioning circular economy, we cannot achieve climate neutrality and our environmental goals. We therefore need binding rules, which guarantee a responsible use of raw materials worldwide. We as the EU must lead by example and ensure that the textiles sold in our shops and information society services, such as online platforms, guarantee high environmental and human rights standards.

The responsibility for sustainable purchasing should no longer be shifted to consumers alone, but the existing linear model must be stopped - towards a circular and decent model that does not rely on volume.

For this, we need binding legislation, because so far the textile industry has been left relatively untouched by lawmakers.

Therefore the rapporteur calls for European legislation, which guarantees that fashion is not produced at the cost of environmental destruction and human lives. The new proposal on an Ecodesign Regulation can play a key role in this regard.

Furthermore, requirements should be set that prevent unsold clothes from being shredded or sent to landfill just because they are no longer in fashion or the warehouse is full. The rapporteur considers that only textiles that meet a minimum standard of sustainability requirements should be imported into the EU or produced within the EU. We need to design textiles that are reusable, repairable, recyclable and energy efficient. Therefore, the EU has to set binding targets for the reduction of the carbon footprint of textiles. One core problem is overconsumption and overproduction. A holistic strategy for sustainable textiles can only be genuine, if we reduce the absolute quantity of natural resources used and at the same time reduce the quantity of waste.