



2022/2171(INI)

29.3.2023

OPINION

of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

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

Rapporteur for opinion: Anne-Sophie Pelletier

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas textile production and consumption in Europe have a substantial environmental and climate impact, accounting for the fourth-biggest environmental footprint¹;
- B. whereas consumers are sensitive to price increases; whereas studies indicate that consumers agree that it is important for brands to share reliable information about the environmental impact of their products, and that many consumers are ready to change their purchasing patterns for sustainable options, provided that clear and reliable labels are at their disposal;
- C. whereas well-informed choices about sustainability and the origin of products can help drive demand towards high-quality clothes that are less damaging to the environment and the transition towards a supply chain that respects nature and workers;
- D. whereas Europe has a rich tradition and long-standing experience in the textile sector; whereas the sector includes over 160 000 producers, most of them SMEs, that are subject to extensive European and national legislation; whereas many producers from the textile industry have expressed their interest in developing more sustainable and durable textiles and production technologies to address the challenges presented by the European Green Deal;
- E. whereas textile production doubled between 2000 and 2015² and garments' use time lifespan decreased by 36 % in the same period³; whereas 'fast-fashion' models encourage the mass consumption of poor-quality clothes that are often unrecyclable, raising concerns about workers' social rights and greenwashing practices;
- F. whereas highly complex and fragmented supply chains in the garment sector at global level further complicate the work of market surveillance authorities, consumer associations and resellers, such as by sometimes hindering compliance with relevant Union law on the quality of products and manufacturing conditions, including with regard to forced labour; whereas the textile production sector, which is mostly composed of SMEs, was already under a lot of pressure from social dumping, as a result of very low production costs in non-EU countries; whereas this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a number of cases of abusive practices involving international brands and their suppliers and workers having come to light since the

¹ European Environment Information and Observation Network ETC/WMGE Report 6/2019 – 'Textiles and the environment in a circular economy', European Environment Agency, European Topic Centre on Waste and Materials in a Green Economy, 19 November 2019.

² Report – 'A new textiles economy: Redesigning fashion's future', Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 28 November 2017.

³ European Environment Information and Observation Network ETC/CE Report 2/2022 – 'Textiles and the Environment: the role of design in Europe's circular economy', European Environment Agency, European Topic Centre on Circular Economy and Resource Use, 10 February 2022.

pandemic's outbreak;

1. Recalls the paramount importance of protecting consumers by addressing misleading claims that do not comply with Union or national consumer protection law, as well as greenwashing practices and the over-reliance on plastic and use of harmful chemicals in garments, and by immediately taking all appropriate measures to deal with products that do not respect Union law; welcomes, in this regard, the Commission's proposal on empowering consumers for the green transition⁴, which would help to protect them from misleading advertising and greenwashing; welcomes, moreover, the initiatives announced to strengthen consumer information regarding the durability, reusability, reparability and recyclability of textile products; calls for an ambitious proposal on substantiating green claims, in order to empower consumers and businesses for the green transition and provide the methodology to inform consumers adequately about the sustainability of the products that they purchase; emphasises that producers should provide downstream operators, including retailers and online marketplaces, with information regarding ecodesign requirements, so that consumers can be duly informed;
2. Welcomes the introduction of the digital product passport in the proposal for a regulation on ecodesign requirements for sustainable products⁵, which, together with the proposed corporate sustainability due diligence directive⁶ and the forced labour proposal⁷, can provide a stepping stone for improving the understanding of supply chains and heightening their transparency, including with regard to labour rights; calls for this important tool to aim for increased transparency and reliable information for consumers, as well as intermediaries in the supply chain; believes that, in order to be relevant, this passport needs to be harmonised, easy to read and available on the product itself or, if that is not possible, on its accompanying packaging; favours open, easily accessible, regularly updated and trustworthy data that ensures traceability along the whole supply chain, down to factory level, including regarding the components and substances used in textile products, with particular attention being paid to harmful chemicals; welcomes the set of standards on the traceability and transparency of sustainable supply chains in the garment and footwear sector approved by the UN Economic Commission for Europe in 2021; encourages their uptake by EU-based companies; believes that enhanced supply chain traceability could encourage circular retail and consumption models such as the resale and reuse of textile products; believes, however, that supply chains are non-linear and comprise many intermediaries, including those involved in the bulk trading of raw materials on commodity stock exchanges, and that traceability requirements must therefore be applicable to such players as well as to producers, and support must be provided to help SMEs in this sector to adapt to the new rules; underlines, in that respect, that the digital product passport should be an instrument that enables companies, in particular SMEs and micro-enterprises, to better

⁴ Commission proposal of 30 March 2022 for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directives 2005/29/EC and 2011/83/EU as regards empowering consumers for the green transition through better protection against unfair practices and better information (COM(2022)0143).

⁵ Commission proposal of 30 March 2022 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for setting ecodesign requirements for sustainable products and repealing Directive 2009/125/EC (COM(2022)0142).

⁶ Commission proposal of 23 February 2022 for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence and amending Directive (EU) 2019/1937 (COM(2022)0071).

⁷ Commission proposal of 14 September 2022 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market (COM(2022)0453).

communicate about their sustainable practices, but must not become a costly and bureaucratic requirement;

3. Believes that the digital product passport goes hand in hand with the simplification of existing labels to allow consumers to receive coherent and reliable information on the environmental and social footprint of products, as well as on their origin and material and chemical content; stresses that this simplification of existing labels can be undertaken by building on existing certification schemes and standard methodologies covering sustainability aspects such as circularity performance, reparability and durability, while ensuring transparency and credibility through the accountability of labels and certification schemes; notes that certain multi-stakeholder initiatives and certification schemes, as well as private label schemes concerning sustainability, have shown shortcomings in the past; notes, moreover, that some retailers have recently been sanctioned for greenwashing practices in the context of such schemes; underlines the potential of e-labelling, which would provide consumers with detailed information about textiles, including care advice and repair and recycling options; underlines, however, that e-labels cannot replace physical labels, which should continue to provide basic information on care and composition;
4. Believes that consumer demand and purchasing power play a role in changing consumption patterns; encourages initiatives to help consumers switch to more sustainable and responsible consumption patterns by providing high-quality products at an appropriate price and reducing waste, including by incentivising the design and production of clothes that use only natural and ecological fibres and textile raw materials and thus last longer and are easier to recycle; underlines the importance of protecting consumers from price escalation caused by changes in legislation and the need to adapt production processes; underlines, furthermore, the importance of informing consumers about the positive impact that they can have on the environment by changing their habits, for example by recycling and reusing products or curbing their consumption; underlines, in this respect, the importance of consumer information campaigns or tutorials on how to reuse or recycle textiles; recalls the importance of creating a feasible and sustainable recycling ecosystem and framework that include SMEs and other economic actors, where textiles and textile fibres are reused and recycled in both classic and innovative manners; recalls that such ecosystems can be supported through financial incentives; underlines that increasing the durability of textiles has a significant impact on the environment, while at the same time creating cost-saving opportunities for customers; calls, in this respect, for measures to support research on sustainable textiles;
5. Believes that textile producers and brands should be drivers of sustainability by being transparent in their practices throughout their supply chains and respecting human rights and the environment; believes that the goal of respecting human rights and the environment could also be achieved by supporting producers and brands along the supply chain and favouring high-quality European products while ensuring a just transition; recalls, in this regard, the importance of facilitating research and innovation in the textile sector, including by providing more flexibility in registering new fibres and creating a clear and efficient legal framework for companies and consumers;
6. Notes that the business model of fast fashion in supply chains and consumption patterns

puts pressure on suppliers, which are often SMEs, and their workforce through unfair trading practices; highlights the power asymmetry between brands and their suppliers and the fact that this has resulted in certain harmful trading practices in the textile sector, such as delayed payments, short turnaround times for orders, late order cancellations and payments that are not enough to cover the production costs; considers that such practices have detrimental effects on suppliers and their workforce and must be prohibited; calls on the Commission to assess possible ways to tackle these unfair practices at European level, drawing inspiration from Directive 2019/633 on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain⁸; considers, in this regard, that the strategic value of the supply chain should be boosted by favouring to the greatest possible extent a sustainable production model, as opposed to the ‘throwaway’ model, combining innovation, creative capacity and production systems based on the quality of processes, materials and finishes, while encouraging the recycling of unsold products instead of the destruction of such products; welcomes the introduction in the ecodesign proposal of the possibility of the Commission banning the destruction of certain categories of unsold goods; welcomes the fact that the EU textile strategy presented by the Commission is in line with the European Green Deal and the circular economy action plan; underlines that the fast fashion sector leads to a low product lifespan and increases textile waste, which makes it essential to consider recycling targets while helping the industry with sufficient support to adopt the optional classification of textiles based on durability and sustainability; welcomes the efforts announced to promote circular business models, such as ‘take-back’ services, second-hand collections and clothes resale, rental, swapping and repair services; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to encourage the development of such solutions and innovative selling practices to boost repair and reuse, while promoting the relevant green and transferable skills and lifelong learning opportunities;

7. Considers that public authorities should drive the development of more sustainable textiles and circular business models and aim to reduce the environmental impact of textiles when making public purchases; calls for a broader and more effective application of socially responsible and sustainable public procurement criteria for textiles, in order to avoid market fragmentation; encourages the participation of social enterprises in public tenders;
8. Recalls the paramount importance of ensuring that market surveillance authorities are adequately resourced, including with regard to staff, who must be appropriately trained, and in terms of financial resources and tools; calls on the Member States to ensure stronger market surveillance, more frequent controls and dissuasive penalties for infringements, in order to ensure that all products placed on the EU market, including by online marketplaces from non-EU countries, meet minimum environmental standards, such as in relation to chemical substances limits in garments, as well as social standards; calls for better and more harmonised surveillance of the internal market, with stricter customs controls to prevent the import of counterfeit or unsafe textiles that do not conform to the expressly stated requirements, thereby protecting consumers and the

⁸ Directive (EU) 2019/633 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain. OJ L 111, 25.4.2019, p. 59.

environment; calls for surveillance to be stepped up in particular for repeat offenders, including traders; calls for more cooperation between market surveillance authorities and customs authorities, including by revising the Union Customs Code (Regulation (EU) No 952/2013⁹);

9. Recalls the need to support the EU textile sector, which actively contributes to the EU's competitiveness; encourages the Commission to create guidelines and provide support to ensure that the administrative requirements for textile products do not become too burdensome, especially for SMEs; stresses the importance of continuous dialogue with the sector and joined-up solutions; stresses that SMEs are often front runners in the use of innovative and durable technologies that promote sustainable consumer behaviours; stresses the need to create an environment that is conducive to such action; stresses, in addition, the need to ensure policy coherence and harmonisation at EU level, including with regard to data requirements and the methodologies of all the EU policy initiatives announced in the strategy.

⁹ Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 October 2013 laying down the Union Customs Code. OJ L 269, 10.10.2013, p. 1.

**ANNEX: LIST OF ENTITIES OR PERSONS
FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR FOR THE OPINION HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The following list is drawn up on a purely voluntary basis under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur. The rapporteur has received input from the following entities or persons in the preparation of the draft opinion:

Entity and/or person
BEUC
Clean Clothes Campaign
Fair Trade Advocacy Office
The Good Goods
RREUSE
Fashion Revolution
Zero Waste Europe

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	28.3.2023
Result of final vote	+: 41 -: 2 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Andrus Ansip, Pablo Arias Echeverría, Brando Benifei, Adam Bielan, Biljana Borzan, Markus Buchheit, Anna Cavazzini, Dita Charanzová, Lara Comi, David Cormand, Alexandra Geese, Sandro Gozi, Maria Grapini, Krzysztof Hetman, Virginie Joron, Eugen Jurzyca, Arba Kokalari, Kateřina Konečná, Andrey Kovatchev, Jean-Lin Lacapelle, Maria-Manuel Leitão-Marques, Antonius Manders, Beata Mazurek, Leszek Miller, Anne-Sophie Pelletier, Miroslav Radačovský, René Repasi, Christel Schaldemose, Andreas Schwab, Tomislav Sokol, Róža Thun und Hohenstein, Tom Vandenkendelaere, Kim Van Sparrentak, Marion Walsmann
Substitutes present for the final vote	Marc Angel, Vlad-Marius Botoș, Malte Gallée, Ivars Ijabs, Tsvetelina Penkova, Romana Tomc, Isabella Tovaglieri, Kosma Złotowski
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Miriam Lexmann, Jan-Christoph Oetjen

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

41	+
ECR	Adam Bielan, Beata Mazurek, Kosma Złotowski
ID	Virginie Joron, Jean-Lin Lacapelle
NI	Miroslav Radačovský
PPE	Pablo Arias Echeverría, Lara Comi, Krzysztof Hetman, Arba Kokalari, Andrey Kovatchev, Miriam Lexmann, Antonius Manders, Andreas Schwab, Tomislav Sokol, Romana Tomc, Tom Vandenkendelaere, Marion Walsmann
Renew	Andrus Ansip, Vlad-Marius Botoș, Dita Charanzová, Sandro Gozi, Ivars Ijabs, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Róza Thun und Hohenstein
S&D	Marc Angel, Brando Benifei, Biljana Borzan, Maria Grapini, Maria-Manuel Leitão-Marques, Leszek Miller, Tsvetelina Penkova, René Repasi, Christel Schaldemose
The Left	Kateřina Konečná, Anne-Sophie Pelletier
Verts/ALE	Anna Cavazzini, David Cormand, Malte Gallée, Alexandra Geese, Kim Van Sparrentak

2	-
ECR	Eugen Jurzyca
ID	Markus Buchheit

1	0
ID	Isabella Tovaglieri

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention