



2022/2171(INI)

29.3.2023

OPINION

of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

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

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

Rapporteur for opinion (*): Christian Ehler

(*) Associated committee – Rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy 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:

1. Highlights the importance of the textiles ecosystem for jobs, growth and the preservation of know-how and cultural heritage in Europe; underlines that the European textile sector had an annual turnover of EUR 147 billion in 2022, with EUR 58 billion in exports and EUR 106 billion in imports, employs 1.3 million European citizens, and that women hold fewer than 25 % of leadership positions in top fashion companies while representing more than 70 % of all employees in the textile industry; recalls that more than 99 % of the EU textiles ecosystem consists of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that in general have low profit margins; underlines that EU textiles companies face intense competition from Asia, mainly China¹, to where some EU companies have been outsourcing their production and where environmental and social regulations are less strict or non-existent;
2. Notes with concern that global textiles production, in particular the production of unrecyclable low-quality apparel, has significantly increased due to the development of fast fashion in the clothing industry, which has a negative impact on natural resources; stresses the importance of supporting the EU textile industry in moving away from fast fashion and towards the promotion of a sustainable manufacturing model that combines creative capacity and production systems based on the quality of processes, materials and details, which would significantly reduce EU material waste in the textile industry and strengthen the strategic value of the supply chain in the EU; stresses, further, the importance of developing and implementing awareness-raising programmes for consumers on the environmental and climate impacts of the textile and clothing industry and empowering consumers to make sustainable and smart choices;
3. Acknowledges the threat to European industry and sustainability posed by imports of counterfeit or unsafe products or products that are not compliant with EU legislation on textiles; urges the Commission and the Member States to provide a more coordinated monitoring and market surveillance system and increase resources and facilities to ensure compliance with EU legislation, including the REACH Regulation², in order to ensure a level playing field for European businesses; notes the potential for establishing new mutually beneficial trade agreements and strengthening current trade relationships, which can safeguard the conformity of textile products with EU legislation and, further, support the creation of jobs and boost economic growth both in the EU and among trade

¹ Study – ‘Data on the EU Textile Ecosystem and its Competitiveness: final report’, European Commission, Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, 17 December 2021.

² Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency, amending Directive 1999/45/EC and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 793/93 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1488/94 as well as Council Directive 76/769/EEC and Commission Directives 91/155/EEC, 93/67/EEC, 93/105/EC and 2000/21/EC (OJ L 396, 30.12.2006, p. 1).

partners; calls on digital and analogue marketplaces to ensure that the textile products they sell comply with EU law; considers greenwashing to be unfair competition for SMEs truly committed to greener manufacturing processes and particularly misleading for consumers;

4. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to analyse the possibility of providing relevant and cost-effective support to non-EU countries to decarbonise textile supply chains, which will have a positive influence on European businesses;
5. Takes note that the regulatory burden, which directly and indirectly affects the EU textile industry, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the rise in energy prices and the consequences of inflation on industry, is threatening the competitiveness of EU businesses; welcomes and encourages, in that regard, national and EU efforts to bring down energy prices to an internationally competitive level; recalls that the EU textiles ecosystem is a front-runner in the uptake of sustainability practices; calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement regulation that avoids unnecessary burden, facilitates sustainable business models and improves the competitiveness of the sector, as a high number of obligations drastically increases costs and red tape, especially for SMEs;
6. Stresses the need to support SMEs within the textiles ecosystem in moving away from linear business models and unsustainable practices; calls, therefore, for the creation of a network of regional and national sustainability and innovation textiles hubs to assist companies, in particular SMEs, in the twin digital and green transition; notes the opportunity which the Enterprise Europe Network and the European Digital Innovation Hubs may offer in this regard; calls for easy guidelines on accessing funding and the simplification of administrative processes that would enable SMEs to transform their industries, with dedicated incentives, timing, availability of dedicated training and an SME toolbox to reduce complexity;
7. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure coherence among the policy measures identified in the EU textiles strategy and the transition pathway in order to create a predictable and harmonised legal framework in line with EU legislation and the EU Green Deal objectives, in particular regarding the ecodesign requirements for textiles and with a sufficient transition period for businesses; urges, further, the Commission and the Member States to safeguard the harmonisation of national policies at EU level in order to ensure legal certainty and predictability and avoid a fragmented EU single market and bureaucratic burdens for business operators, especially SMEs; stresses that policy measures should be duly justified by examples of positive environmental impacts;
8. Recalls the need for facilitating sector-specific dialogues to increase the sectoral engagement of the textile industry in the transition to a circular and climate-neutral economy, and recognises the transition pathway as an important building block to transform the textiles ecosystem in Europe accordingly; regrets the fact that the Commission has taken almost two years since the update of the EU's industrial strategy to launch the textiles ecosystem's transition pathway; stresses that the quick finalisation and implementation of the support actions for businesses is of utmost importance for enabling a sustainable transition and adapting to the legislative requirements while

reducing the environmental footprint with feasible and predictable targets; stresses that actions taken in accordance with the transition pathway should be fully aligned with the EU industrial strategy, the legislative activities envisaged in the EU textiles strategy, the goals of open strategic autonomy and the objectives of the European Green Deal;

9. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and industry stakeholders to follow the New European Bauhaus initiative's guiding principles of sustainability, inclusiveness and aesthetics for the transition of the textiles ecosystem, as a connection between creativity, arts and science can help to create a positive impact; highlights the strengths of the European creative sector, which can influence consumers' preferences and habits and thus facilitate a sustainable transition of the textile industry in Europe and in the world;
10. Recalls that the transition of the textiles ecosystem to a circular economy also presents a significant potential for creating new green jobs; urges the Commission and the Member States to facilitate access to innovative educational curricula for the development of relevant skills and for the upskilling and reskilling of the current labour force, including for the necessary digital transition of the textile industry, in particular for SMEs which often lack skilled employees; highlights the need to increase the attractiveness and perspectives of employment for young professionals in the textiles ecosystem; calls, further, on the Commission and the Member States to direct close attention to merging artistic and technological training for workers in the textiles ecosystem, thereby harnessing synergies between creative and technological skills, in order to continuously promote the mobility of skilled labour across Europe and to preserve European know-how and the cultural heritage of textile crafting skills; calls on employers in the textile industry to take steps to ensure female representation at managerial and leadership level and in mid-level positions;
11. Acknowledges the need for and challenges to achieving a fully circular business model for textile companies, in particular given the current technological and physical constraints on production, recycling, sorting and collecting, the use of chemicals, the lack of circular design, digitalisation gaps and the workforce's upskilling and reskilling needs; notes that specific funding, sound metrics and economic and legal incentives are needed to transform the sector into a truly sustainable and resilient sector and to safeguard the textile industry and its jobs in Europe;
12. Welcomes the extension of the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation³ to cover goods beyond those related to energy, including textiles; underlines the fact that great potential for more circular and sustainable textiles lies in the design phase of textile products; urges the Commission to consult with research institutions and relevant stakeholders before setting clear, feasible and predictable targets and metrics in the ecodesign delegated acts for different textile product categories following a risk-based and life-cycle approach, taking into account the laws of physics; stresses the need to start implementing the ecodesign regulation in respect of those textiles with the highest environmental impact and for which the regulation is the easiest to implement, and to take into account the many differences within the textile industry, where several sectors

³ 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).

have already developed products that are designed to be more durable and repairable; calls, further, for a transition period to enable the ecosystem to comply with new product-based ecodesign requirements;

13. Recognises the considerable amount of investment needed for the digitalisation of the textiles ecosystem and therefore calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to increase their funding efforts in this regard; recognises that accessing, sharing and processing data relating to the textiles ecosystem is essential for its digital transition; welcomes the Digital Product Passport (DPP) as a decisive tool for circularity and the role which the DPP can play in enabling new sustainable business models for textiles by making data more accessible and transparent along the supply chain; is convinced of the potential business opportunities for commercialisation and consumer empowerment to facilitate sustainable and circular choices, which the DPP can enable due to the benefits it brings in terms of transparency, understanding consumer behaviour, supply chain and environmental and social information requirements, traceability, waste reduction and the correct treatment of textiles for recycling, reuse and repair, taking into account that access rights should be differentiated for the various categories of data users; underlines that information and, in particular, performance requirements for each product should rely on a harmonised and standardised methodology and be carefully fine-tuned to ensure technical and economic feasibility, including on aspects such as functionality, scalability and competitiveness of European businesses, as well as affordability for consumers; calls, therefore, for the immediate creation of a pilot project, funded by Horizon Europe, laying down the fundamental criteria and infrastructure needs for the DPP;
14. Points out that the information provided by the DPP needs to be relevant, accurate and up-to-date, and that the information must be easily accessible and usable by authorities, consumers and stakeholders along the supply chains; highlights the importance of aligning coherent information requirements for textile products with the functionalities and responsibilities of the DPP, in line with data protection obligations, trade secrets and intellectual property rights; recommends that products should hold essential information in digital format, which is accessible, for example, via a QR code, and simultaneously in analogue format for consumers to make well-informed choices and for industrial usage; calls on the Commission to use the DPP pilot project for its gradual phase-in and to set an implementation period for SMEs, and especially micro-enterprises, based on lessons learnt from the pilot project and taking account of their capacities, and to support them in ensuring full compliance with the regulation; further calls on the Commission to base the DPP's implementation on current databases, data infrastructures, data standards and data-sharing best practices in order to avoid duplication and an unnecessary administrative burden; recalls that questions regarding data reliability and verifiability, legal liability for data published and access to data by companies along the whole supply chain remain unanswered to date and need to be duly addressed by the Commission and the Member States prior to the DPP's implementation;
15. Welcomes the planned revision of the Textiles Labelling Regulation⁴ and the Eco-Label

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1007/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 September 2011 on textile fibre names and related labelling and marking of the fibre composition of textile products and repealing Council Directive 73/44/EEC and Directives 96/73/EC and 2008/121/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council

Regulation⁵ as an opportunity to avoid greenwashing practices through labelling and to harmonise the criterion for the mandatory labelling of textile products across the EU; recognises the untapped potential of public procurement in supporting circular models and companies with sustainable manufacturing processes as part of a possible revision of the ‘Made in Europe’ label; highlights the fact that all rules on labelling textile products, using both physical and digital labels and on all labelling domains, including for sustainability and circularity, are introduced with a view to ensuring legal clarity, lower compliance costs for companies, in particular SMEs, and that information is easily accessible, readable and comparable by consumers and relevant businesses and is developed using an evidence-based approach, in order to ensure measurable positive impacts; notes that digital labels could take advantage of the technical solutions provided in the DPP; calls on the Commission to further clarify and simplify the classification process for applying for new fibre composition names for novel and distinctive materials;

16. Underlines the need to reduce the carbon footprint of the sector, largely by investments into greenhouse gas reduction technologies and research thereon; strongly believes that the question of worldwide water usage in the production of textiles has to be addressed immediately; calls on the Commission to set targets to reduce the water footprint of the textile industry, incentivise the development of processes which are less energy and water intensive and avoid the use and release of harmful substances; stresses the importance of research and innovation, in particular relating to new forms of recyclable fibres that require less water, as well as to developing alternatives to the conventional use of chemicals, water reuse through the development of wastewater treatment technologies, and reducing energy and water consumption in the production process;
17. Welcomes the Commission’s intention to achieve the target of textile products being free of the most hazardous chemicals by 2030 and its commitment to address the presence of hazardous substances used in textile products and in production processes; regrets the fact that the presence of dangerous chemicals in textiles often hampers their reusability and recyclability⁶; supports, therefore, the introduction of technically feasible targets for reducing dangerous chemicals in textiles and their waste, as well as the full traceability and disclosure of chemicals used in manufacturing processes, making use of the benefits of the DPP, in order to ensure clean textile recycling from the outset; stresses the need to continuously support research into and funding for preventing microplastic pollution from synthetic textiles and microfibre shedding; calls on the Commission to address this issue in its planned proposal on measures to reduce the release of microplastics into the environment; calls for innovation to prevent the release into the environment of microfibres and microplastics at each stage of a product’s life cycle through adequate technical solutions;
18. Underlines the business opportunities and alternative business models for reuse and repair and their contribution to a more sustainable and circular textiles ecosystem, as well as the potential for job creation through the development of reuse and recyclability sectors in the EU; calls, in this regard, for the establishment of incentives to support the

(OJ L 272, 18.10.2021, p. 1).

⁵ Regulation (EC) No 66/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2009 on the EU Ecolabel (OJ L 27, 30.1.2010, p.1).

⁶ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/739a1cca-6145-11ec-9c6c-01aa75ed71a1>.

reuse and rentals sectors, as well as businesses focused on extending the life of garments; underlines the importance of recycling for circularity and the reduction of waste and as a source of raw materials for textile production in Europe; takes note, in this regard, of the fact that achieving 100 % recyclability and circularity of currently existing fibres is limited by the laws of physics; underlines the fact that the purity of the input for fabrics also affects the efficiency and economic viability of the recycling process and that reduced mixed-material composition would bolster recyclability in Europe; highlights the need to create strong incentives for recycling in both production and demand and to create a stable and open market for recyclers and recycled products; encourages the use of recycled raw materials and underlines the need for a competitive European secondary market for raw materials that allows producers to move towards higher rates of recycled materials in their products; recalls that in order to create a European recycling industry, collection, sorting, waste treatment and shipment requirements across the whole value chain require the necessary investments; calls for the Member States to increase their investments in recycling technologies, including the scaling up of existing recycling plants, and in particular investments in mechanical and chemical recycling technologies; calls, therefore, for European funding to be directed towards the development of market-ready technologies for recycling;

19. Underlines the importance of harmonised end-of-waste criteria and waste definition for textiles in order to ensure a move towards higher rates of recycled materials in textile products; calls for the elimination of possible barriers to the recovery of waste material that can no longer be used in the textile sector and for innovation in its possible uses in other sectors; calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider textile waste as raw material, in order to transform waste into value after it has undergone a sufficient recovery process, for the production of textiles; recalls the obligation for Member States to have separate collection infrastructure for textiles as of 1 January 2025; underlines the urgent need to direct funds at both EU and national level into research, innovation and the scaling up of infrastructure for the high-quality manual and automatic composition sorting of textiles in order for the industry to be ready to make use of collected waste by means of recycling, reusing or repairing and to ensure the environmentally sound management of the collected textiles; calls, given the low collection rates, for the development of consumer incentives to achieve higher textile collection rates, including for reuse for social purposes; encourages the Commission to monitor the Member States that have implemented separate collection before 1 January 2025 in order to gather best practices and identify possible issues related to the harmonisation of sorting and collection practices at EU level;
20. Underlines the fact that actions taken under the EU textiles strategy should primarily focus on digital innovations, phasing out non-recyclable fibres and developing new types of fibres with a lower environmental impact; calls on the Commission, alongside the Member States, industry and research institutions, to encourage and fund research into making textile products free of hazardous substances and into the trade-offs between fibres that are more durable, reusable, recyclable and repairable; stresses the need to look beyond the currently existing fibres and textiles in order to increase research and innovation related to inventing new raw materials in order to diminish the carbon footprint of textile production and to reduce the dependency on land, water and oil for the textiles ecosystem; notes that new types of fibres and textiles combined with digital solutions will be able to improve citizens' lives, for example, by providing health

information to product users, in line with privacy considerations; highlights the fact that artificial fibres are still essential in the manufacturing of technical textiles alongside many other textile categories; highlights the need for research and innovation related to artificial fibres, both bio-based and synthetic, such as the recycling of waste-to-fibre, fibre-to-fibre and the upcycling of plastics from resources to create new textiles;

21. Underlines that research and innovation is key to strengthening the competitiveness of the EU textile industry's leading position in innovation, especially in sustainable manufacturing processes, biodegradable and sustainable fibres such as bio-based fibres, bio-solutions to be used throughout the textile value chain, inventing and scaling up circular and safe production, high-quality automatic composition sorting technologies and recycling technologies, and harnessing the opportunities offered by digitalisation, for example related to smart textiles and an interoperable and standardised SME-friendly DPP; encourages the Member States, regions and managing authorities to make use of the European Structural Funds as well as the Recovery and Resilience Facility to unlock the potential of the European textile industry for innovative solutions to further digitalise and decarbonise the sector, support SMEs and support upskilling and reskilling initiatives; calls, therefore, for the development of European textile hubs that connect innovative research centres with collection, sorting, recycling and disposal plants, turning waste into value and creating new jobs in textile manufacturing hubs; calls on the Commission to launch a dedicated EU industrial alliance;
22. Recalls that several EU funding opportunities exist, such as under Cluster 2 of Horizon Europe or through the European Innovation Council (EIC); calls for the creation of an EU research and innovation agenda aligned with the transition pathway for the textiles ecosystem; emphasises that the EU research and innovation agenda has to address the whole value chain of circularity in the textiles ecosystem; calls, in this regard, for a dedicated co-programmed partnership at EU level for increasing the European Union's competitiveness in innovative and sustainable textiles; stresses that such a partnership should pool and accelerate research, innovation, pilot testing, demonstration and education activities in four strategic domains, namely the circular, responsible and bio-based economy, digital manufacturing and supply chains, smart and high-performance materials and products, and advanced digital and greener skills; stresses that the upcoming Horizon Europe work programmes should reflect the goals of circularity and sustainability as set out in the EU textiles strategy and in the corresponding EU research and innovation agenda for textiles; points out, furthermore, that related calls should be based on the structural engagement of stakeholders in the whole ecosystem while encouraging the textile and digital technology sectors to develop the full digital potential of the textile industry; underlines the leading role which the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and Knowledge and Innovation Communities (Culture & Creativity⁷ and Manufacturing⁸) should play in this process; considers that the innovative and entrepreneurial potential of the textiles ecosystem is not yet fairly recognised within the innovation community and calls on the Commission to appoint an EIC programme manager for innovative, smart and sustainable textiles and to run dedicated EIC accelerator challenges.

⁷ <https://eit.europa.eu/eit-community/eit-culture-creativity>.

⁸ <https://www.eitmanufacturing.eu/>.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	28.3.2023
Result of final vote	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> +: 64 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> –: 2 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> 0: 0 </div>
Members present for the final vote	<p>Matteo Adinolfi, Nicola Beer, François-Xavier Bellamy, Hildegard Bentele, Tom Berendsen, Vasile Blaga, Paolo Borchia, Marc Botenga, Markus Buchheit, Martin Buschmann, Cristian-Silviu Buşoi, Jerzy Buzek, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Ignazio Corrao, Beatrice Covassi, Ciarán Cuffe, Josianne Cutajar, Nicola Danti, Martina Dlabajová, Christian Ehler, Valter Flego, Niels Fuglsang, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Jens Geier, Nicolás González Casares, Bart Groothuis, Christophe Grudler, Robert Hajšel, Romana Jerković, Seán Kelly, Izabela-Helena Kloc, Łukasz Kohut, Andrius Kubilius, Marisa Matias, Dan Nica, Angelika Niebler, Niklas Nienä, Johan Nissinen, Mauri Pekkarinen, Morten Petersen, Markus Pieper, Maria Spyra, Beata Szydło, Riho Terras, Patrizia Toia, Marie Toussaint, Isabella Tovaglieri, Henna Virkkunen, Pernille Weiss, Carlos Zorrinho</p>
Substitutes present for the final vote	<p>Alex Agius Saliba, Rasmus Andresen, Tiziana Beghin, Franc Bogovič, Jakop G. Dalunde, Pietro Fiocchi, Klemen Grošelj, Martin Hojsík, Marina Kaljurand, Dace Melbārde, Rob Rooken, Bronis Ropė, Ernő Schaller-Baross, Jordi Solé, Susana Solís Pérez</p>
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Sven Simon

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

64	+
ECR	Pietro Fiocchi, Izabela-Helena Kloc, Beata Szydło
ID	Matteo Adinolfi, Paolo Borchia, Markus Buchheit, Isabella Tovaglieri
NI	Tiziana Beghin, Martin Buschmann, Ernő Schaller-Baross
PPE	François-Xavier Bellamy, Hildegard Bentele, Tom Berendsen, Vasile Blaga, Franc Bogovič, Cristian-Silviu Buşoi, Jerzy Buzek, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Christian Ehler, Seán Kelly, Andrius Kubilius, Dace Melbārde, Angelika Niebler, Markus Pieper, Sven Simon, Maria Spyraiki, Riho Terras, Henna Virkkunen, Pernille Weiss
Renew	Nicola Beer, Nicola Danti, Martina Dlabajová, Valter Flego, Bart Groothuis, Klemen Grošelj, Christophe Grudler, Martin Hojsik, Mauri Pekkarinen, Morten Petersen, Susana Solís Pérez
S&D	Alex Agius Saliba, Beatrice Covassi, Josianne Cutajar, Niels Fuglsang, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Jens Geier, Nicolás González Casares, Robert Hajšel, Romana Jerković, Marina Kaljurand, Łukasz Kohut, Dan Nica, Patrizia Toia, Carlos Zorrinho
The Left	Marc Botenga, Marisa Matias
Verts/ALE	Rasmus Andresen, Ignazio Corrao, Ciarán Cuffe, Jakop G. Dalunde, Niklas Nienaa, Bronis Ropé, Jordi Solé, Marie Toussaint

2	-
ECR	Johan Nissinen, Rob Rooken

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention