



Subject: Upcoming EU Strategy for sustainable textiles: the need for a parliamentary own-initiative report

Brussels, 19th of November 2021

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

The European Commission is currently working on an *EU Strategy for Sustainable Textiles* (hereafter *Strategy*).¹ First announced in its Communication on the Circular Economy Action Plan (COM/2020/98), the Strategy aims to help the EU shift to a climate-neutral sustainable and circular economy and ensure that the textile industry recovers from the COVID-19 crisis in a sustainable way.

We, the signatories of this letter, support this new direction for the EU garment and textile industry, and we consider that the Strategy should be based on responsible business conduct principles, and incorporate strong human and labour rights requirements as well as environmental standards. In addition, we would like to stress that the garment and textile industry is heavily reliant on women workers; gender should be a recurrent theme in all dimensions of the strategy. The signatories of this letter call on you to support this ambition.

The public consultation on the Strategy showed that the Commission was interested in three specific dimensions:

- Support to the recovery, resilience, sustainability, and competitiveness of the sector
- Opportunities and challenges for increased circularity along the value chain

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12822-EU-strategy-for-sustainable-textiles_en

- International dimension of the strategy, due diligence and transparency

This Strategy represents an opportunity for the EU to tackle many of the issues long-plaguing the textile and fashion industry and that were further brought to light by the COVID-19 crisis. Human rights abuses, environmental and climate impact, unfair purchasing practices; the industry's business model is broken and the EU has a responsibility to help kick-start its global redesign.

The European Parliament, in its resolutions on the EU flagship initiative on the garment sector (2016/2140/(INI)), on a longer lifetime for products (2016/2272 (INI)) and on a sustainable single market for business and consumers (2020/2021(INI)) highlighted the need to design and implement ambitious measures to ensure more sustainable products are put on the EU market and address the various challenges of global textile, garments, leather and footwear value chains. This year, the European Parliament also stressed the importance of the textile sector as a central and high-risk sector in several resolutions dealing with human rights and environmental issues, including the resolution of 10 March 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on corporate due diligence and corporate accountability (2020/2129 (INL)), as well as the resolution of 10 February 2021 on the New Circular Economy Action Plan (2020/2077(INI)).

Once the EU Strategy for Sustainable Textiles is released, a continuous engagement from the European Parliament to follow up on the Strategy's action points will be much needed.

We call on you to contribute to it by committing to prepare an own-initiative report on the Strategy so you can formally bring the views of the European Parliament into this critical dossier and ensure the EU's ambitions are up to the challenges and tasks.

Many of the undersigned organisations endorsed the Civil Society *Shadow European Strategy for Sustainable Textile, Garments, Leather and Footwear* (April 2020).² The shadow Strategy sets out a proposal for a set of legislative and non-legislative actions that the EU can undertake to contribute to fairer and more sustainable textile, garments, leather and footwear value chains. We hope that you will find this document valuable for your own debates and we stand ready to respond to any requests for additional information.

Yours sincerely,

Clean Clothes Campaign – International Office

ECOS

European Environmental Bureau

Fair Trade Advocacy Office

Fair Wear Foundation

Fashion Revolution

Human Rights Watch

IndustriALL European Trade Union

RREUSE

Solidaridad

The Circle

Traidcraft Exchange

Transparency International Germany e.V

² <https://fairtrade-advocacy.org/our-work/eu-policies/textile/>