

Frequently Asked Questions on the shadow European Strategy for Sustainable Textile, Garments, Leather and Footwear (TGLF)

What is the objective of this Shadow Strategy?

The civil society coalition behind this Shadow Strategy wishes to promote and support the development of a strong circular Textiles, Garments, Leather and Footwear industry that respects human rights, creates decent jobs and adheres to high environmental and responsible governance standards throughout its value chain in the EU and beyond.

We call on the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament, EU Member States and other stakeholders to work towards such a strategy for fair and sustainable Textiles, Garments, Leather and Footwear.

Who contributed to this Shadow strategy?

This strategy is the collaborative product of a broad coalition of civil society organizations across Europe¹. These organisations came together to develop an ambitious Strategy that will look in a comprehensive manner at the different actions necessary to build a fair and sustainable Textiles, Garments, Leather and Footwear sector.

This is why this shadow Strategy is wide-reaching, looks at the social, environmental, governance implications of the sectors and includes a diverse set of policy recommendations on Due diligence, product policy framework, waste, unfair trading practices, international trade, support to producing countries or business models.

What is the scope of this Shadow Strategy?

This Strategy focuses on textile, garments, leather and footwear value-chains. These different products hold many similarities over the way they are manufactured and their related challenges.

¹ The Civil Society Shadow European Strategy for Sustainable Textile, Garments, Leather and Footwear is a joint initiative of Abiti Puliti, achACT, Association 4D, Circular Economy - VšĮ "Žiedinė ekonomika, Clean Clothes Campaign Europe, Clean Clothes Campaign international, World Fair Trade Organization- Europe, Confederação Portuguesa das Associações de Defesa do Ambiente (CPADA), ECOS, EEB, Emmaus- Europe, ENS, Europe and We, FAIR, Fairtrade Germany, Fairtrade International, Fairtrade Max Havelaar France, Fairtrade Foundation, Fairtrade Polska, Fashion Revolution, FEMNET e.V., FOCSIV, Forum Fairer Handel, France Nature Environnement, Frauenwerk der Nordkirche, Friends of the Earth Europe, FTAO, Gender Alliance for Development Centre (GADC), INKOTA-Netzwerk, Institute for Sustainable Development Foundation, Institute of Circular Economy, Irish Environmental Network, Lithuanian NGDO Platform, Netwerk Bewust Varbruikein, ÖKOBÜRO, OXFAM Intermón, Oxfam Mdm, Plastic Soup Foundation, Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD, Polish Zero Waste Association, Pravica-Trgovina, Rreuse, SDG Watch Austria, Sredina – Association of Citizens, The Circle, Traidcraft Exchange, Transparency Germany, Transparency International Deutschland, Umweltdachverband, VerbraucherService Bundesverband, Voice Ireland, Weltladen-Dachverband, Women Engage for a Common Future, Women Engaged for a Common Future France, Wontanara o.p.s., World Vision Ireland, World Vision Romania, Zaļā brīvība (Green Liberty), Zero Waste Europe, Zero Waste France, World Fair Trade Organization, and others.

However, some sections of the Strategy will focus more specifically on a particular item, i.e garments, and be less relevant to the other sectors.

What is the link between this Shadow Strategy and the EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy?

The European Commission published its Action Plan for the Circular Economy² in March 2020 and identified “Textiles” as one of the key product value chains that requires urgent, comprehensive and coordinated actions. This is why the European Commission committed to propose a comprehensive EU Strategy for Textiles in 2021. Such Strategy will look at measures to apply the new sustainable product framework to textiles, improve the business and regulatory environment for sustainable and circular textiles or support the sorting, re-use and recycling of textiles.

The civil society Shadow Strategy presented here aims to contribute to the future EU Strategy for Textile by providing clear and detailed recommendations on what such official Strategy should include to be integrated and ambitious.

What is the role of the European Parliament and of Member States?

The European Commission is now awaiting the reaction on its Communication on the Circular Economy Action Plan by the European Parliament, the Council of the EU as well as the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee.

In view of the importance of the Textile sector in the EU and globally, it is crucial that these institutions support the prompt development of an ambitious Textiles Strategy which covers the multiple challenges referred to in the Civil Society Shadow Strategy.

How does the current health and economic crisis of COVID-19 impact the textile, garments, leather and footwear sector and any Strategy for actions?

The textile, garments, leather and footwear supply-chain is one of the hardest hit. Major production hubs were affected by the virus and a collapse of demand led to brands and retailers breaking contracts and canceling orders. These unfair practices have devastating consequences for workers worldwide who are living hand to mouth and find their employers unable to pay them adequately. The COVID-19 crisis is also impacting the used textile ability of re-use operators to run their activities. While some modified their activities to help with the relief response, the next few months will still be decisive for their survival.

The way forward requires maintaining the EU Green Deal and Circular Economy Action Plan as political priority and making a comprehensive change in TGLF value-chains. Such a comprehensive approach, combining both legislative, regulatory and other non-legislative action will mitigate the risk of abuses of power by some actors in the value chain. Building strong and resilient partnerships with the manufacturing and raw material producing countries, both within and outside the EU, also needs to be part of the EU global response.

The Civil Society proposal for a European Strategy for Sustainable Textile, Garments, Leather and Footwear has the ambition to deliver a guidance to the EU, not only to overcome this crisis, but also to establish the basis for a fairer, more sustainable and more resilient sector, capable of overcoming this and future global crises.

² https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new_circular_economy_action_plan.pdf