



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Transition Pathway for Textiles: For sustainable and circular value chains

Summary



EU Clusters Talks
17 May 2023, 8:30 – 10:00 CET

An initiative of the European Union





Transition Pathway for Textiles: For sustainable and circular value chains

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform organised this EU Clusters Talk on 17 May 2023, 8:30 – 10:00 CET, to discuss the upcoming Transition Pathway, initiatives for sustainability, the critical challenges for the twin transition in the textile ecosystem, and the role of clusters to support the transition.

Agenda of the meeting

Moderation: Zivile Kropaite

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
Nina Hoppmann, team member, European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. Updates on the Transition Pathway for Textiles
Cecilia Nilsson-Bottka, Policy Officer, DG COMP, European Commission
3. Textile Labelling Regulation
Antonio de Sousa Maia, Legal Officer, DG GROW, European Commission
4. Panel debate
Clara Mallart, Senior Specialist for Sustainability, MODACC
Dirk Vantuyghem, Director General, EURATEX
Enrico Venturini, Senior Researcher, NEXT TECHNOLOGY TECNOTESSILE
5. Funding opportunities
Martina Fumagalli, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Key messages

- Taking into account the SMEs' competitiveness when implementing the Textile Strategy and Transition Pathway as well as maintaining the global level playing field in the textile sector is key to avoid higher costs and investments for the companies.
- We need to increase the demand for sustainably produced textile products and find the balance between the design of the products and the recycling procedures.
- New technologies to process and separate the fabrics are needed to improve the recycling process.
- The concepts of recycling and durability of textile items are still conflicting, as recycling processes don't ensure a high quality of products.
- The digital passport is welcomed, but SMEs need to be equipped with the right tools and information needs to be standardised. One EU ecolabel could help improve transparency and comparability.
- Main concerns for SMEs are achieving the goals and indicators for recycled materials, the digital product passport, and the extended producer responsibility.



1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Nina Hoppmann, team member, European Cluster Collaboration Platform

After the introduction by moderator Zivile Kropaite, the following news item were presented:

1. Application is open for the second [Cluster Booster Academy](#), which take place from 6-7 June 2023 (online) and 21-22 September 2023 (in person).
2. Registration is open for the [Clusters meet Regions workshop in Malmö, Sweden](#), on 15-16 June 2023.
3. [Trend Universe](#): A new feature for Pro Users to better understand future trends and build the cluster strategy
4. Save the date for [Food & Bio Global Summit](#) in Denmark on 26-27 September 2023
5. Give feedback on the effects of the e-Invoicing Directive 2014/55/EU on e-Invoicing in public procurement and the single market by [filling in this survey](#) until end of June 2023

2. Updates on the Transition Pathway for Textiles

Cecilia Nilsson-Bottka, Policy Officer, DG COMP, European Commission

Cecilia Nilsson-Bottka explained the development stage of the Transition Pathway for Textiles, which has been collaboratively elaborated with stakeholders to accelerate the green and digital transition while enhancing resilience. The Commission is currently finalising a policy report. It will be followed by a call for commitments to engage stakeholders in taking concrete actions. The Transition Pathway is made of eight building blocks: sustainable competitiveness, regulation and public governance, social dimension, research and innovation, techniques and technological solutions, infrastructure, skills, and investments and funding, and the ecosystem's readiness to support defence efforts.

Cecilia Nilsson-Bottka highlighted the main challenges for the ecosystem and how they could be approached. In terms of competitiveness and resilience, the strategy aims to create market opportunities in high-end fashion products, innovation, and sustainable goods. The right use of trade policies and closing the skills gap are two important actions. Looking at sustainability, the focus is on fostering a circular textiles ecosystem. She emphasised the need to onboard the consumers and launch awareness campaigns. Regarding digitalisation, tools that are available to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of textile manufacturing should be widely implemented.

3. Textile Labelling Regulation

Antonio de Sousa Maia, Legal Officer, DG GROW, European Commission

Antonio de Sousa Maia presented the Textile Labelling Regulation, key actions outlined in the Textiles Strategy, and how they connect to other regulations. The strategy outlines a new vision for the fourth polluting industrial source in the world. He announced a “regulatory shock” for the sector due to the new regulations.



These new initiatives include new eco-design requirements with clearer information and performance requirements and a “digital passport”, an information and traceability tool. It will provide consumers with more reliable information and verify green claims. In addition, there will be an Extended Producer Responsibility and new due diligence obligations to address human rights and climate impact.

The Textile Labelling Regulation is at the cross-roads of the consumer legislation and product legislation. Antonio de Sousa Maia explained that the main drivers for the revision of the Textile Labelling Regulation are a consumer information deficit, the growing environmental impact, disparate requirements on labelling in Member States, and a disintegration of the Single Market. Therefore, the revision aims to provide accurate, comprehensive, intelligible, and comparable information to consumers on textile (and closely related) products, reduce compliance costs, and ensure regulatory clarity and consistency for companies. The plan is to adopt this proposal by December 2023.

4. Panel debate

The discussion among the panellists focused on the Transition Pathway’s impact on SME competitiveness, the demand for sustainably produced garments, the recycling process, the digital passport, and cluster support for companies.

Dirk Vantghem welcomed the effort to develop the Textiles Strategy and the Transition Pathway, as they give a workplan and vision for the difficult challenges ahead. However, the speakers emphasise that the textiles industry is going through difficult times because of high energy prices, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a slowdown in consumer confidence. Therefore, we should closely look at the **impact of these measures on the competitiveness** of the companies, especially of SMEs. Textiles is the second most globalised sector of the European economy, which is why we need to maintain the **global level playing field** as the new measures imply higher costs and investments for the companies. Regarding a question on textiles coming from outside the EU, Antonio de Sousa Maia confirmed the importance of the competitiveness of European SMEs. The eco-design approach needs to be taken step by step, keeping the reform **proportionate and technologically and economically feasible**.

Talking about the **demand for sustainably produced garments**, the speakers agree that nowadays the consumer is not willing to pay more for a sustainable textile product. Enrico Venturini explained that mass consumption is based on fast fashion, which is against the philosophy of recycling. Therefore, we need to find the **balance between the design of the products and the recycling procedures**. While he notices a growing demand for recycling-based materials, the production costs and selling price are not balanced. Initiatives targeting consumption behaviour should start at consumer confidence, procurement practices and label transparency.

Enrico Venturini and Clara Mallart highlighted the current challenges in the recycling processes. Recycling is based on the composition of the garments, which in many items is very complex. This complexity affects an effective recycling. Their cluster works on new technologies for the classification of textile waste. There are many blended fibres in the fashion garments, so we need **technologies to process and separate the fabrics to better recycle**. Furthermore, Clara Mallart explained that there is a **gap between the concepts of recyclability and durability of garments**. The current technologies in



the recycling processes don't ensure the high quality of textiles that we need for durability, which is a big challenge for the companies.

The **digital passport** could help with the traceability of the materials to improve recyclability, as it will contain information on the composition of the garments. Clara Mallart shared that SMEs ask about the **tools** that will be provided by the European Union for the digital passport and how the process will unfold. Enrico Venturini stressed that we need to look at the **level of digitalisation** in many SMEs in general. They might be reluctant to implement digital solutions if they don't recognise the benefits. Furthermore, the customers should see the benefits of the digital passport. We need to **standardise information** so that customers can compare. In addition, it would be helpful to reform the EU eco label and criteria and seek alignment with the criteria with eco-design. The recommendation is to only have **one eco label**.

Dirk Vantuyghem said that we need a **close collaboration between the legislator and the industry** to make sure that the policy framework makes sense for the industry. Clara Mallart gave the example of the Regional Circular Fashion Pact in Catalonia, which was initiated by the regional government, on a voluntary basis, for the whole value chain. They are working to achieve circular models inside the region together with municipalities, consumers, brands, and waste management. The aim is to grow the demand for recycled components.

The speakers agreed that **clusters can and should help SMEs with the transition**, for example with coaching and technologies. Enrico Venturini presented the Eurocluster EuroBoosTex as a best practice. The Eurocluster provides financial support for new products and services, adoption of processes and technologies, and internationalisation with an exploratory mission to Australia. In addition, the Eurocluster offers workshops for capacity building for the green transition.

As the coming legislations will have a big impact on the companies, the SMEs need to get ready. Enrico Venturini said that the companies' main concerns are achieving the **goals and indicators for recycled materials, the digital product passport, and the extended producer responsibility**. Clusters can support with giving practical information and study the waste value chains and recyclability. Mechanical and chemical recycling need new solutions.

5. Funding opportunities

Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Closing the EU Clusters Talk, Nina Hoppmann shared the following examples of funding opportunities:

1. [Circular solutions for textile value chains based on extended producer responsibility; Opening period: 17 October 2023 – 22 February 2024](#)
2. [Circular solutions for textile value chains through innovative sorting, recycling, and design for recycling; Opening period: 17 October 2023 – 22 February 2024 \(two-stage deadline model\)](#)
3. [EuroBoosTEX: Call for innovation services; Deadline: 7 June 2023](#)
4. Opportunities for SMEs: Calls from Euroclusters; published on [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#)