

# EU STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE AND CIRCULAR TEXTILES

Elaine Campling explores the potential impact of a new package of proposals from the European Commission aimed at making sustainable products the norm in the EU



Elaine Campling is Chair of ESMA's Health, Safety & Environmental Protection Committee

The core principles of the European Green Deal are to transform the European Union (EU) into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, ensuring no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050.

The drive from the Commission is to make almost all physical goods on the EU market more sustainable, from design to everyday use and reuse, moving from a 'take-make-replace' economic model to a circular model that is resource-efficient.

According to the Commission, the current economic model depletes resources is environmentally polluting, damages biodiversity and drives climate change. Goods produced according to the new circular economy model should have built-in durability, reliability and resource efficiency.

## REPAIR, REUSE, RECYCLE

As part of the new set of measures, a new strategy to tackle 'fast fashion' has been announced to increase the life of textiles by ensuring they are repairable, reusable and recyclable.

Global textile production is reported to have almost doubled between 2000 and 2015; the consumption of clothing and

footwear alone is expected to increase by 63% by 2030 from 62 million tonnes in 2022 to 102 million tonnes.

The Commission reports that the consumption of textiles has the fourth highest impact on the environment and

*"The increased demand for textiles is fuelling the use of non-renewable resources"*

climate change, after food, housing and mobility, and is the third highest industry for water consumption and land use. Textile production also represents the fifth highest use of primary raw materials. The increased demand for textiles is fuelling the use of non-renewable resources, including the production of synthetic fibres from fossil fuels.

## TEXTILE WASTE

Around 5.8 million tonnes of textiles are discarded every year in the EU, approximately 11kg per person and every second, somewhere in the world, a truck load of textiles is landfilled or incinerated. The fast fashion trend has led to unsustainable overproduction and overconsumption. Consumers are enticed to buy clothes that are often of inferior quality at lower prices that are quickly produced to keep pace with trends.

*"The fast fashion trend has led to unsustainable overproduction and overconsumption"*

The EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles sets out a vision that by 2030 all textile products placed on the EU market will be made of recycled fibres, be free of hazardous substances and produce long lasting and recyclable products. Fast fashion should be out of fashion.

## GREENWASHING

The proposals from the Commission also include measures to empower consumers 'in the green transition' so that they are better informed about the environmental sustainability of products and protected against 'greenwashing'.

Greenwashing is an advertising spin in which green marketing is deceptively used to

persuade consumers that the products, aims and policies of an organisation are sustainable and/or environmentally friendly.

In 2021, the European Commission and national consumer authorities reported the results of a screening exercise of websites. The 'sweep' is taken annually to identify breaches of EU consumer law in online markets. The focus of the 2020 sweep was centred on greenwashing and exaggerated claims that companies are doing more for the environment than they actually are.

The greenwashing sweep analysed online claims from various business sectors including garment, cosmetics and household equipment

*"In 42% of cases claims were exaggerated, false or deceptive"*

producers. From the analysis, national consumer protection authorities had reason to believe that in 42% of cases the claims were exaggerated, false or deceptive and could potentially qualify as unfair commercial practices under EU rules.

## BREACHES OF CONSUMER LAW

Tactics that are considered misleading include:

- Vague claims and unclear language, such as 'eco' or 'sustainable' or reference to 'natural products' without adequate explanation or evidence
- Own-brand eco logos and labels not associated with an accredited organisation
- Hiding or not declaring relevant information to appear more eco-friendly

The greenwashing sweep was a global effort under the umbrella of the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN), which reported similar results.

A proposed regulation on co-design for sustainable products is set to establish new requirements to ensure products comply with the aims of the Commission.

## NEW CRITERIA FOR LEGISLATION

A new Digital Product Passport is one of the tools planned to improve traceability. According to the Commission, Digital Product Passports will facilitate tracking of

substances of concern within supply chains and improve resource efficiency.

The Commission states that incentives for green public procurement and sustainable products will be expanded. Criteria will be

### *“Fast fashion should be out of fashion”*

set for energy efficiency, circularity and an overall reduction of the environmental and climate footprint of products, establishing resource independency.

The printing industry is responding to these challenges. ESMA has set up a textile

division and has launched a Textile and Sustainability of Print Conference, taking place for the first time this September. The event seeks to promote best practices, discuss new application fields and explain the benefits and challenges of individual technology choices. ■

#### Further reading:

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_22\\_2013](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_2013)  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)  
<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/textiles-and-the-environment-the>

[https://europa.eu/climate-pact/news/greenwashing-your-guide-telling-fact-fiction-when-it-comes-corporate-claims-2022-06-30\\_en](https://europa.eu/climate-pact/news/greenwashing-your-guide-telling-fact-fiction-when-it-comes-corporate-claims-2022-06-30_en)  
[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_21\\_269](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_269)

**Elaine Campling is Director of Chemical Compliance Advisory Services and Chair of ESMA's Health, Safety and Environmental Protection Committee**

#### Further information:

email: [info@chemadvisory.com](mailto:info@chemadvisory.com)  
 web: [www.chemadvisory.com](http://www.chemadvisory.com) / [www.esma.com](http://www.esma.com)

## The TECHNIGRAF World of UV-Light



**UV Measurement**



**UV Curing Systems**



**Exposure Units**

*since 1965 - more than 55 years experience in UV*



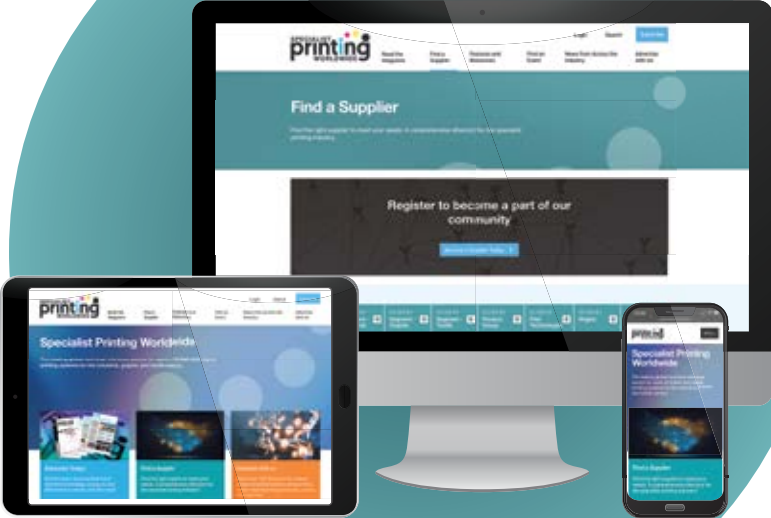
### TECHNIGRAF GmbH

Auf der Struth 4 D-61279 Grävenwiesbach - Germany

☎ +49 / 6086 9626-0 ☎ +49 / 6086 9626-28

✉ [info@technigraf.de](mailto:info@technigraf.de) 🌐 [www.technigraf.de](http://www.technigraf.de)





## SPECIALIST printing WORLDWIDE

### Supplier Directory

A comprehensive directory for the specialist printing industry. Search filters include -

- Market Segment
- Product Groups
- Print Technologies
- Region & Country

Find the right supplier to meet your needs. Visit [specialistprinting.com](http://specialistprinting.com)