

## **Textile Industry's Statement on the Proposed Directive on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition through better protection against unfair practices and better information**

Amsterdam | 27th of May 2022

The Policy Hub – Circularity for Apparel and Footwear, uniting more than 700 brands, retailers, manufacturers, and other stakeholders within the industry, and representing more than 50% of the apparel and footwear sector, welcomes the European Union's authorities' efforts to protect consumers from unfair commercial practices of greenwashing, early obsolescence, and unreliable and non-transparent information tools. As an industry, we are supportive of the EU Commission's efforts to introduce measures to provide consumers with trustworthy information and to tackle the proliferation of sustainability labels. We share the EU Commission's ambitions to steer purchasing decisions in a sustainable direction, enabling consumers to play a more active role in the green transition.

We specifically welcome the below-outlined measures:

- **Avoiding misleading environmental claims:** The strengthened requirements set by the EU Commission for companies to communicate the environmental impact of products will enable consumers to access trustworthy and reliable information to facilitate more sustainable consumer behaviour.
- **Minimum communication standards:** Providing guidance on what types of environmental claims can be made and how these should be communicated to consumers.
- **Prohibiting claims on mandatory legal requirements:** Claims that solely address compliance with legal requirements can no longer be advertised as benefits to consumers. This will be important in protecting consumers from misleading information.

As we are still reviewing the amending Directive in-depth, we would like to highlight some of the key points for further clarification.

### **1. Policy Coherence between different EU Legislation**

We urge the EU Commission, Members of the European Parliament, and the Council to ensure policy coherency (no conflict or duplication) between the Empowering Consumers requirements and other initiatives and legislation that address product-related information requirements (e.g., Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), the Digital Product Passport, Substantiating Green Claims, Ecolabelling for Textile products and Textile Labeling Regulation).

### **2. Trustworthy and Credible Sustainability Labels**

Over the past decade, the industry has continuously worked and invested in defining tools, methodologies, and verification processes to communicate sustainability information to consumers. Hence, we welcome that the Commission has provided guidance on how environmental claims should be made and communicated. We expect that the proposed guidance on how to communicate environmental claims will help to differentiate between evidence-based claims and misleading ones. The proposed amending Directive should however clarify specifically what criteria a sustainability label/certification scheme must fulfill to meet the standards set by the Empowering Consumers Initiative. This will be key to better understanding the impact on some of the recognised sustainability labels and certification schemes widely in use in the apparel and footwear sector (e.g., Global Recycle Standard

(GRS), GOTS, Fairtrade, Better Cotton, etc.). We also encourage policymakers to focus on EU-level harmonisation (EU Ecolabel) rather than allowing for national labels (such as the Nordic Swan and the Blue Angel), which would cause fragmentation in the single market and an uneven playing field for businesses.

### **3. Repairability and Durability Requirements**

The information requirements on the durability and repairability of a product, notably commercial guarantees of durability and repairability scores, should be clarified. While we understand that the Empowering Consumers Legislation will apply horizontally, it is unclear how these requirements would apply to our sector and, if so, how this would work in practice for textiles products. In line with other legislation, as the ESPR, we call for a sector-specific set of requirements and applicability.

### **4. Comparative Claims**

We welcome the EU Commission's efforts to avoid comparative claims unless detailed information on the sustainability benefits of products is provided to consumers. However, it is not clear in the proposed Directive what the basis for this comparison is.

The Policy Hub, its partner organisations (Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), Global Fashion Agenda (GFA), the Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry (FESI), Textile Exchange, and the ZDHC Foundation) as well as their members stand ready to support the development of the intended requirements for the apparel and footwear. We look forward to engaging with EU policymakers and other relevant stakeholders on this topic.

#### **ABOUT THE POLICY HUB – CIRCULARITY FOR APPAREL & FOOTWEAR**

The Policy Hub unites the apparel and footwear industry to speak in one voice and propose policies that accelerate circular practices. Launched in 2019, the Policy Hub has five partner organisations: Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), Global Fashion Agenda (GFA), Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry (FESI), Textiles Exchange, and ZDHC Foundation. In total, these organisations represent more than 700 apparel & footwear stakeholders, including brands, retailers, manufacturers, and NGOs.