

ESPR Delegate Act for Apparel Products

General key messages

- We stress the importance of having a **stepwise and harmonised EU approach** to the development of ecodesign requirements for apparel products to improve their environmental performance and **become the norm in the Union market**.
- The delegated act should build on **existing industry knowledge** to drive change in a feasible way and ensure competitiveness.
- **Striking a balance** between known **trade-offs** among ecodesign requirements will be key to the success of these market access measures in improving the environmental performance of apparel products while ensuring feasibility.
- **Scalability** in the context of **verification** of ecodesign measures is **paramount**.
- It will be critical to **bring actors across our global value chains along on the journey** of adapting to new legislation, especially suppliers who have highly diverging starting points in terms of access to recycled feedstock.

Performance requirements

The first ecodesign performance requirements should focus on **physical durability**, based on apparel products' **most common failure modes**, and **recycled content at portfolio level**.

Durability

- Ecodesign requirements on physical durability should address the parameters with the highest potential of improvement, that are the ones based on the **most common causes of failure**.
- It is paramount defining not only the **parameters and tests** but also the **test conditions**, to ensure harmonised application. Equally important is that ecodesign requirements are based on ISO standards.
- **Scalability and uptake by industry is crucial**. Ecodesign requirements must be affordable and scalable for all types of companies, especially SMEs.

Durability requirements based on most common causes of failure

- *Mandatory durability performance requirements should be based on the main causes of failure: **appearance after wash, shrinkage, pilling & fabric bursting** for knitted products, and **fabric tensile strength** for woven products. This core list of tests can be*

applied holistically to a wide range of products, while also *raising the bar for the lifespan* of products currently on the market.

To maximise the effectiveness of this important requirement—not only in improving apparel performance but also in ensuring that the increase in product quality is clearly apparent to consumers—performance requirements should focus on addressing the **parameters with the highest potential for improvement, based on the main failure modes of garments**.

These mandatory performance requirements should be **grounded in industry knowledge** on durability testing, including insights gained through the PEFCR 2.0 and thorough research such as the one performed by Tim Cooper and Stella Claxton from the Nottingham Trent University on the ‘Garment failure causes and solutions: Slowing the cycles for circular fashion’¹.

Over the last 5 years, as part of the PEF Pilot for Apparel and Footwear, the members of the Technical Secretariat have worked together to develop a framework to validate product Duration of Service (DoS) and prevent associated product failure risks. The Technical Secretariat is made up of representatives of various stakeholders including brands (about 50% of the European market) from the fibre and textile sectors, NGOs, scientific experts, and governments to ensure different considerations in the decision-making process. As such, **PEF represents a consensus work, promoted by the European Commission**, among various stakeholders who have contributed.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the PEF intrinsic quality requirements have been developed in a voluntary context. Therefore, to improve apparel durability while ensuring a feasible and scalable ecodesign framework, **a selection of durability requirements should be based on the most common causes of apparel failure. This approach will maximise the impact of the ecodesign requirement on improving apparel durability while enabling a feasible and stepwise implementation framework.**

Based on the above and on EuroCommerce members’ technical expertise, the **following durability parameters correspond to the main apparel failure causes**:

Failure category	Failure modes	Description	Applicable Products
Domestic treatment behaviour	Appearance after wash	Only the parameters related to durability (e.g. visual degradation after repeated washes)	All products
	Shrinkage (dimensional stability)	Measures dimensional change of fabrics or garments after specified washing & drying processes	All products
Using behaviour	Pilling	Measures resistance to surface fuzzing and pilling – specific test due to its relevance	Knitted products
Structural behaviour	Fabric bursting	Measures resistance & distention of fabric under localised force	Knitted products
	Tensile strength	Determines maximum force & elongation at maximum force using a grab method	Woven products

It is important to note that **natural** (like cotton, wool, and linen) and **manmade cellulosic fibres** (like viscose and acetate) have **lower resistance for the parameters listed above than continuous filaments (synthetic fibres)**. Although synthetic staple fibres have also lower

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S09599652622010186>

resistance compared to filaments. A procedure with very high thresholds or testing conditions might foster the use of synthetic fibres over the natural ones. Furthermore, specific thresholds with lower requirements could be implemented for certain fibres without excessively complicating the procedure.

Testing conditions and scalability

- *Durability performance requirements must ensure **scalability and facilitate industry adoption** by defining **cost-efficient testing procedures**, in accordance with **ISO standard** and **harmonised testing conditions***

Ecodesign requirements must be affordable and scalable for all types of companies, especially for SMEs. Implementing a durability framework that demands a high number of performance tests could introduce economic constraints, as each test incurs costs and requires the destruction of products for testing purposes. Besides, as previously mentioned, focusing on parameters related to the most common failure modes will maximise the impact on improving apparel durability while maintaining a feasible and stepwise implementation approach.

A critical aspect is the **definition of testing procedures** and the **conditions** under which tests are performed. Testing procedures must be defined in a **cost-efficient manner and following ISO standards**, while testing **conditions** must be **harmonised**. This (standardisation) is necessary not only to ensure comparability, but also to support operational feasibility and scalability across the sector. This is particularly relevant for standards involving cleaning cycle regimes, which assess product performance post-laundrying.

Mandating a high volume of tests in combination with extended cleaning cycle protocols could significantly increase lead times and resource use, resulting in elevated energy and water consumption and thereby undermining the overall environmental benefit of the ecodesign framework.

Therefore, it is **essential that test conditions are aligned with typical consumer use patterns** to accurately reflect real-world failure risks. In this context, tests involving cleaning cycles should be limited to **five cycles, with results assessed in accordance with care label instructions** (including ironing where applicable). This approach ensures that durability performance reflects **real-life usage scenarios while maintaining economic and environmental viability**.

Proposal for test standards & conditions for most common failure modes

TABLE 1 - PROPOSAL FOR THE TEST STANDARDS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE MOST COMMON FAILURE MODES

Failure modes	Test standard & conditions	Applicable product
Appearance after wash	<p>ISO 15487 for assessing appearance of apparel and other textile end products after domestic washing and drying. Only the parameters related to durability.</p> <p>Test condition: test conducted by subjecting the garments to 5 wash cycles & analysing the results after ironing (considering the care label instructions to ensure that durability is not compromised under real-life conditions).</p>	All apparel products

Shrinkage (dimensional stability)	<p>ISO 5077 for the determination of dimensional change after washing and drying.</p> <p>ISO 6330 for domestic washing and drying procedures for textile testing.</p> <p>Test conditions: The test should be conducted by subjecting the garments to 5 wash cycles and analysing the results after ironing according to the care label.</p>	All apparel products
Pilling	<p>ISO 12945-1 for the determination of fabric propensity to surface pilling, fuzzing, or matting. Part 1: Pilling box method.</p> <p>Test condition: This test must be conducted by subjecting the garments to 10,800 cycles (180 min).</p>	Knitted products
Fabric bursting	<p>ISO 13938-2²</p> <p>Test conditions: The test must be carried out using a test area of 7.3 cm² (30.5 mm diameter).</p>	Knitted products
Fabric tensile strength	ISO 13934-2	Woven products

Extra consideration should be given to test standard ‘Appearance after wash’ (ISO 15487). This is because apparel washable in a washing machine (according to care instruction) will be laundered at home by the customer. Therefore, when setting durability standards, it is critical to ensure that garments can withstand laundering. It is critical that the product keeps its appearance, colour and function over time since it affects a product’s end of life, and the appearance after wash test could indicate these parameters. In addition, this test generally can be applied to all product categories.

Compliance and testing

- *To promote scalability, affordability, and administrative efficiency, a self-assessment mechanism based on a **risk-based approach** should be adopted to demonstrate **compliance** with ecodesign requirements.*

We propose the adoption of a **self-assessment procedure based on a risk-based approach to demonstrate compliance** with ecodesign requirements as applied under the REACH Regulation or the General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR). It is important to recognise that it is neither commercially viable nor operationally feasible to test every individual product placed on the European market.

In line with Article 9 of the GPSR, manufacturers are responsible for ensuring that products placed on the market are designed and manufactured in accordance with general safety requirements. This responsibility includes the development (by manufacturers) of **internal compliance systems**, involving testing programmes targeting product categories with the highest likelihood

² For the ISO 13938-2, the default procedure is to use a textile sample of 50cm² to perform the test. However, the fabric bursting failure mostly appear on small areas (like the elbow or the heel). So, using a textile sample of 7.3 cm² will be more accurate (this sample option is included in the ISO 13938-2 and it is also the preference sample on the similar test ASTM D3786).

of non-compliance, drawing on the manufacturer's technical expertise and sector-specific knowledge.

Accordingly, we strongly recommend that **compliance documentation should not be mandated at the individual product level**. Instead, as is common under both chemical and general product safety regulations, **market surveillance authorities should conduct aleatory checks** to verify compliance.

Recycled content

- The high complexity of apparel products creates technical limitations, deeming it necessary to establish **mandatory recycled content performance requirements at portfolio level**, coupled with **product level information requirements to foster sustainable consumption**.
- **Post-industrial waste, pre-consumer waste** and **post-consumer waste** should be **allowed as feedstock for recycled content**; otherwise, legislation will disregard sector realities and hinder the scaling up of recycled content in the textile industry.
- Currently, there is a **lack of textile recycling infrastructure** to support an effective **secondary raw materials market**. The **Commission** has a **critical role** to play in **developing a supply-demand policy approach and a comprehensive “recycled content” definition** to enable the sector's circular transition.
- **Known trade-offs in apparel characteristics** need to be considered when setting recycled content requirements.

Performance requirements at portfolio level

- *To address the high complexity of apparel products, **mandatory recycled content requirements at portfolio level** should be established, **complemented by product-level information requirements**.*

The high complexity of apparel products presents significant technical limitations that hinder the establishment of recycled content requirements at product level. The ability of an individual product to incorporate recycled content varies widely, **depending on their intended application, required technical characteristics, and the specific type of fibres, yarn and fabrics used**.

Considering the broad variability of fibre properties, current state of recycling technologies, and the lack of enough recycling infrastructure, defining mandatory recycled content at product level would be highly complex and impractical. In light of these challenges, EuroCommerce cannot recommend a mandatory recycled content at product level that could be universally applied across textile categories in a way that drives both meaningful environmental impact and behavioural change among consumers and industry stakeholders.

To address these high complexities and enable progress, the delegated act should take a flexible approach that empowers the sector to determine feasible levels of recycled content based on product-specific constraints. EuroCommerce strongly supports introducing **portfolio-level requirements, complemented by product-level information obligations**. This approach would optimise the allocation of recycled fibres across product lines, **in line with technical specifications**, while **reflecting the practical realities of production**. Moreover, it would help stimulate consumer demand, incentivise innovation and support scaling up of recycled fibre markets.

Lastly, it is worth pointing out that setting a product-level target would necessitate multiple exemptions, as recycled alternatives are not yet available for several materials, such as cotton jersey and woven fabrics, silk, acrylic, and polyamide.

Importance of a thorough definition of “recycled content”

- *Post-industrial, pre-consumer and post-consumer waste must be **allowed feedstock** for recycled content. Until the textile recycling ecosystem is in place, **flexibility in feedstock sources will be essential** to advancing circularity in textiles.*

There is a clear economic incentive for the sector to maximise material efficiency and optimise product processes, thereby minimising post-industrial cutting waste. The efficiency of processes, such as cutting patterns or other procedures, will remain unchanged even if post-industrial waste is used to produce recycled fibres. This is largely due to cost considerations: the original fabric represents a financial investment, and reprocessing post-industrial waste into recycled fibres would mean incurring this cost twice. As a result, the **industry is naturally incentivised to maintain efficiency and avoid such practices, regardless of whether waste is recycled.**

Furthermore, post-industrial waste is a finite resource, and it cannot serve as the sole basis for meeting long-term recycled content targets.

Promoting the recycling of post-consumer textiles is essential to reducing the sector’s environmental impact, but this **must not come at the expense of post-industrial recycling.** Both streams are complementary and necessary. The limited use of post-consumer waste today is not due to competition with post-industrial waste, but rather the **lack of a robust infrastructure** to support an effective secondary raw materials market from post-consumer waste (see section *below*).

In light of the above, **post-industrial waste, pre-consumer waste and post-consumer waste must be allowed as feedstock** for recycled content. Excluding any of these streams would disregard the current realities of the textile sector and significantly hinder efforts to scale up of recycled content.

Furthermore, **post-consumer waste from other industries when textile-to-textile is not technically feasible should be allowed.** While the sector is strongly committed to scaling textile recycling, the lack of a fully developed recycling ecosystem remains a significant barrier. Until the ecosystem is in place, **flexibility in feedstock sources will be essential to advancing circularity in textiles.**

Support textile recycling infrastructure with supply-demand policy approach

- *The lack of **textile recycling infrastructure** to support an effective secondary raw materials markets **needs of a supply-demand policy approach**; requirements at **portfolio level and a comprehensive “recycled content” definition can strategically contribute to this goal***

Retailers are committed to increasing the use of recycled fibres in their apparel product ranges. Furthermore, the textile sector is highly committed to scaling up textile recycling. However, there are challenges that need to be acknowledged. Today, the sector lacks a robust recycling textile infrastructure to support an effective secondary raw materials market. This leads to limited availability of high-quality recycled fibres from post-consumer waste.

This issue cannot be solved by demand-side policy measures alone. A comprehensive supply and demand approach is needed to scale up textile recycling and the use of post-consumer waste, thus developing a robust secondary raw materials market.

On the supply side, **the EU must address key enablers to develop an efficient infrastructure and promote greater uptake of post-consumer recycled content.** Some enablers include:

- Coordinate, harmonised extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes
- Complementing the financial contributions of EPR schemes with public and private funding to develop recycling infrastructure (creating recycling “hubs”)
- Develop EU end-of-waste (EoW) criteria for recycling that recognises EoW status after sorting and preparation for recycling

On the demand side, **ecodesign requirements should strategically promote the use of recycled content with a portfolio level approach and a comprehensive “recycled content” definition.** This allows flexibility for retailers to gradually increase recycled fibre use across their assortments, encourage strategic investment in circular design without penalising products with current limitations, and creates an aggregated demand signal to stimulate recycling markets and innovation.

The **European Commission must take leadership in enacting legislation that not only sets ambitious targets but also address practical enablers across the value chain**, including strategic investments. A **supply-demand approach**, thus establishing portfolio level requirements, is essential to accelerate the uptake of recycled fibres and build a resilient secondary raw materials market in Europe.

Consider trade-offs in apparel characteristics

- **Known trade-offs** in apparel characteristics will **shape performance requirements**

When establishing recycled content requirements, it is essential to **consider trade-offs in apparel characteristics** and the need for certain **exemptions**. For instance, products made from natural fibres such as cotton or wool may face greater challenges in achieving high levels of recycled content while maintaining the same level of durability as would be obtained using virgin materials. This is particularly relevant due to the mechanical recycling process, which can reduce fibre length and strength. In such cases, the use of virgin materials may be necessary to preserve product performance and ensure durability.

Information requirements

The first ecodesign information requirements should focus on **substances of concern, fibre attributes content**, and **maintenance information**.

Substances of concern

- The forthcoming delegated act should establish a **pragmatic stepwise approach** for enacting substances of concern information requirements over time. Requirements should follow **AFIRM’s pragmatic proposal**.
- **The textile sector is downstream user of the chemical industry**; therefore, requirements to track substances of concern should be coupled with a framework where the **chemical industry**—both in and outside the EU—is **compelled to provide the**

information about the presence of SoC in the chemical products **through the Safety Data Sheets**.

- A **clear definition of substances of concern is essential**—one that supports, rather than hinders, the uptake of recycled content.
- **Alignment with Union chemical legislation, notably REACH, is imperative**. While the ESPR provisions on substances of concern primarily aim to support product longevity, repairability, and recyclability, there is a significant risk of overlap with existing REACH and CLP disclosure and restriction processes. Therefore, the delegated act **should limit its scope to addressing substances of concern in the context of recyclability and recycled content**, and refrain from addressing chemical safety aspects, which should remain within the remit of REACH.

A pragmatic stepwise approach as proposed by AFIRM

- *Information requirements on substances of concern must **build upon existing knowledge, progressively increasing their ambition in a stepwise and feasible manner***

The volume of substances of concern (SoC) information planned for disclosure under ESPR **exceed all existing chemical disclosure obligations globally**, posing substantial logistical and economic challenges for supply chain actors, as well as for the Commission and Member States in terms of **effective management and enforcement**. To meet the ESPR objectives, reduce enforcement burden on authorities and safeguard competitiveness, **a stepwise approach is essential**.

In this regard, **EuroCommerce supports and refers to the pragmatic stepwise approach as proposed by the Apparel and Footwear International RSL Management (AFIRM) Group**, an organisation composed of experienced chemicals management and testing experts from leading apparel and footwear companies.

The textile industry is a downstream user of the chemical industry

- *Information requirements on substances of concern should **ensure that the chemical industry provides the relevant data on the presence of substances of concern in the chemical products through Safety Data Sheet***

The assumption that responsible retail companies can accurately collect chemical information from chemical manufacturers and disclose it, including precise concentrations, often overlooks the realities of the supply chain. It is important to emphasise that the textile industry operates as a downstream user of chemicals supplied by the chemical industry. Consequently, **retailers are only able to identify SoC to the extent that this information is disclosed by chemical manufacturers to our suppliers**—primarily through the current standard information vehicle for chemical products, the **Safety Data Sheet (SDS)**.

Therefore, it is crucial that any **SoC information requirements are coupled with a framework where the chemical industry is compelled to provide information on the identity and presence of SoC in their products, through SDS**.

It is important to acknowledge that the information contained in SDS are of varying level of detail and quality due to several factors, including:

- The European chemical regulation (REACH), only mandates to disclose hazardous chemicals when they are in concentrations equal or above of 0.1% (w/w) and 0.01% (w/w) in the case of CMRs (carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic). This means SDS do not

provide downstream users with a full picture of the chemicals used in our supply chain and the exact concentrations in which they may be present

- The textile industry is global and thus also reliant on chemical disclosure obligations applicable in third countries. Although several textile production countries have adopted GHS into national frameworks, the SoC definition includes hazard classes that do not yet exist under GHS, and only since very recently, exist in CLP.
- Lack of International alignment on new hazards classifications (GHS) and information requirements through SDS undermines the access to SoC information of chemicals products supplied by non-European actors.
- Both CLP and GHS allow for provisions to safeguard confidential business information (CBI), meaning that also information about substances classified as hazardous can be withheld from downstream users.

In the **absence of adequate information from chemical suppliers, retailers would fully rely on material and product testing** to determine the presence of SoC in textile products. However, given the broad range of potential substances and the high cost associated with testing—each substance typically requiring a separate analytical method—such an approach would be unfeasible. Product-level testing is technically impossible. Moreover, for many substances currently classified as SoC, no validated analytical test methods exist for use on textile materials. As a result, **determining the presence of a wide range of chemical substances—i.e., substances of concern—in products through analytical testing alone is neither technically nor economically viable.**

Based on this, and to be able to track the presence of SoC in textile products, **EuroCommerce supports and refers to the pragmatic stepwise approach as proposed by AFIRM.**

Fibre attributes content information

- We support the establishment of **information requirements on the use of sustainable fibres in apparel product.**
- Information about fibres attributes should be allowed when **intermediate traceability checks are available.**
- **Relying on credible standards** for the certification of materials with sustainability attributes is **essential.**

Proposal for a pre-defined list of fibres based on their sustainable attributes

- *We support the establishment of **information requirements on the use of sustainable fibres in apparel products***

To provide companies with safe avenues and legal certainty to communicate on fibres with certain sustainability attributes, we recommend establishing **information requirements based on a pre-defined list of eligible fibres, categorised by attributes**, to be communicated via the digital product passport (DPP). This precise list should be developed in close collaboration with industry stakeholders and be grounded in transparent, verifiable criteria. Importantly, information provisions must be aligned with the future revision of the Textile Labelling Regulation (TLR).

The list should include only **fibres that meet the following conditions:**

- The fibre is certified under an industry-wide standard recognized as reflecting best environmental practices;

- The standard includes a system to verify the fibre content in the final product;
- The standard aligns with the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice.

Based on this, we propose to define, at least, the following attributes and their corresponding fibres/standards to be included as communicable fibre under the DPP.

TABLE 2 - PROPOSAL FOR FIBRE ATTRIBUTES AND CORRESPONDING FIBRE/STANDARD

Fibre attribute	Eligible fibre/standards
Recycled fibres	Global Recycled Standard (GRS), Recycled Content Standard (RCS), International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC) ³
Organic fibres	Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), Organic Content Standard (OCS)
Responsibly grown fibres	Responsible Wool Standard (RWS), Responsible Down Standard (RDS)
Preferred cellulosic fibres	EU Best Available Techniques (EU BAT), The Canopy Hot Button
European flax	European Flax

Enabling timely communication based on intermediate traceability

- *Information about fibres attributes should be allowed when **intermediate traceability checks are available**.*

The verification procedures under fibre standards often require significant time for the issuance of final product traceability checks (TCs). As a result, **companies are frequently unable to communicate sustainability attributes at the time a product is placed on the market**, thereby limiting consumer awareness and informed decision-making.

As previously noted, fibre standards should be grounded in clear and precise criteria for calculating and verifying fibre content in the final product. However, under current widely adopted industry standards based on **Chain of Custody systems, delays in the final product traceability certification are common**—hindering timely communication of sustainability claims.

Given the limitations of the Chain of Custody model and the need to balance reasonable compliance with enabling consumer access to sustainability information, **we propose that communication on fibre attributes be allowed once intermediate TCs are available**.

To ensure reliable, scalable, and operational traceability throughout the supply chain, it is critical to recognize both standard-defined traceability systems and their integration with retailers' own traceability procedures and tools. This integrated approach will ensure fibre traceability from source to finished product.

Standards are crucial to lead sustainability in the textile sector

- ***Relying on credible standards for the certification of materials with sustainability attributes is essential** to support meaningful and verifiable information requirements*

³ ISCC eligibility limited to scalable innovation fibres with recycled content.

Advancing sustainability in the textile sector should be based on a combination of privately held standards and effective public policy. However, significant variations remain in both the quality and scope of existing standards and certifications. Even the most robust systems are not foolproof in preventing negative impacts on people and nature.

We therefore underscore the importance of **relying on credible standards for the certification of materials with certain sustainability attributes linked to potential information requirements** under ESPR.

In this context, we recommend, for instance, relying on standards that meet the International Social and Environmental Accreditation Labelling Alliance (ISEAL) Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems⁴. This Code outlines how standards should be developed, structured, governed and improved over time. It includes key principles such as independent verification, multi-stakeholder consultation and decision-making, and ensuring standards contain clear requirements that can be measured and assessed.

Maintenance information

- Consumer behaviour during use and care of apparel products significantly influences their lifespan. **Complementary maintenance information—to care labels under TLR—should be provided through the DPP.**

Maintenance of apparel products is interlinked with durability, as acknowledged in the durability definition⁵ included in the ESPR. **Consumer behaviour during the use and care of products significantly influences their lifespan.** Consumers have an active role to play in a more circular economy—not only through purchasing decisions, but also when it comes to the use, maintenance, repair and reuse of products.

Clear information at the product level is key. **Care instructions** to help consumers maintain their apparel should be displayed **in the form of easily understandable harmonised graphic symbols on the physical care labels** as per the revision of the TLR. However, to ensure meaningful change in consumer behaviour, harmonisation is needed to facilitate sector compliance and reduce the administrative burden, particularly for those with a global presence.

Therefore, we propose that **complementary maintenance information be provided through the DPP**. This would serve as a central, digital source of extended care guidance for consumers.

Expanded digital information—such as links to company websites—should **complement**, not replace, the care symbols on physical labels. This information could take the form of **guidelines, visual snapshots, videos**, or a **legend explaining the graphic symbols**, helping consumers better understand and apply recommended care practices.

⁴ For more information, please see: <https://www.isealliance.org/defining-credible-practice/iseal-code-good-practice>

⁵ Durability means the ability of a product to maintain over time its function and performance under specified conditions of use, maintenance and repair.