Country (Insert country of origin of your company / organization or its headquarters' location)

United Kingdom

Submitting Organization/Company

Manchester Fashion Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University

If Organization or Company, please indicate the approximate number of employees

250 or more

Please indicate the number of employees

4500

Title of the action

Developing a Roadmap to Supply Chain Transparency for Micro, Small and Medium Fashion Enterprises in the UK Regional Northwest through Knowledge Exchange

Upload your logo or an image

Relevant Website

https://fashioninstitute.mmu.ac.uk/events/textile-transparency-toolbox/

Main Partners

English Fine Cottons, PaperTale, Swedish School of Textiles, University of Borås, PaperTale and the LifeStyle Tech Competency Centre, Switzerland (LTCC)

Type of initiative

Public

Description of action

Fashion supply chains are inherently complex, with goods traversing several continents, and mostly outsourced production involving many suppliers. This means that validated ESG performance data that covers full product portfolios is difficult to achieve. As most data is currently collected manually, it is often scattered, inconsistent, low quality, and gathered several months or more after the production

took place.

This project aims to accelerate sustainable supply chain digitalisation and adoption for SMEs by developing a research informed online roadmap which guides the adoption of traceability technologies, and technology interventions through knowledge exchange, community building, education and training in the regional Northwest. This scheme, if successful should act as a blueprint for wider dissemination nationally and collaboration, internationally.

Type of action

Traceability & Transparency

Please select the specific area/s of the action

Norms and standards

Research and Development of Innovative Solutions

Awareness and Education   Collaborative Initiatives

Business Management Systems or Instruments

Scope of the action, including a description of the value chain processes that are covered

Objective (max 200 words): ● Creating a UK Northwest region Index of micro, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) - identifying, mapping and analysing the digitalisation of supply chain transparency. ● Producing the "Roadmap to digitalised supply chain transparency for small scale fashion firms" and publish in an online knowledge exchange platform developed for this purpose – the resource is interactive and can be accessed by companies and industry associations, institutions, and other key stakeholders ● Establishing a UK regional Northwest community of stakeholders and contributors to the knowledge exchange platform - for streamlined technology adoption.

Commitments (max 200 words): Enhancing traceability and transparency for circularity, through the development of accurately defined sustainability parameters that align with legislation globally ● Using data obtained and analysis developed from use cases and pilot studies to share with and inform government policy to encourage the support of digitalised supply chain transparency initiatives ● Influencing the fashion industry, government and consumers through values which lead all stakeholders towards sustainability, transparency and circularity

Value Chain Scope: Raw materials to consumers.

Timeframe and/or milestones for the action

• Gauge interest in project among local stakeholders through an industry outreach event March 2022 Complete
• Collate database of local stakeholders Dec 2022 Underway
• Gather empirical data on local trends and dynamics through interviews March 2023 Underway
• Submit funding bids to support the project objectives; several bids have been submitted. 2/5 successful Underway

• Develop research informed content and guidelines for the roadmap, community and knowledge exchange platform. Funding bid to develop this project is underway. Jan 2023
• Disseminate research findings through conference presentations, academic and media article publication. Underway. Ongoing March 2023 – August 2023
• Test the uptake of the roadmap through surveys; analyse user engagement on the platform; interview stakeholders to evaluate the utility of the platform in their digital transformation; gauge consumer satisfaction in disclosure of information by the brand. Underway. May 2023

Reference instruments and sources used

The project refers to the UNECE Transparency Toolbox as an underpinning guideline. It unpacks the recommendations within the Toolbox and applies these to local SMEs. The resulting roadmap to implementation will be laid out in the online platform that will be uniquely designed for this project.

Following the methodology of Fashion Revolution's Fashion Transparency Index which maps only large scale firms globally, this proposed Index of SMEs in the UK Northwest region will review 250 regional micro, small and medium enterprises including fashion brands and retailers. The businesses will be ranked according to how, and what they disclose about their social and environmental policies, practices and impact, in their operations and supply chains. Businesses are selected by size – that is, number of employees:

Micro business   0 - 10   employees
Small business   10 – 50   employees
Medium business   50 – 249   employees

The businesses represent a spread of market segments including high street, luxury, sportswear, accessories, footwear and denim from the UK regional Northwest as defined in the recent PEC study. As the smallest and most under resourced businesses in the apparel industry, the businesses reviewed in this study are agile and values based. Yet as part of the fashion industry their operations can have significant human rights and environmental impacts. Therefore, responsibility to mitigate these impacts rests as much with SMEs as with large scale firms.

The SME Index will benchmark brands' public disclosure on the key areas that will be required for the Digital Product Passport (by the final phase of its introduction in 2024). Examples of information requirements that might be included in the DPP are: master data, like product, manufacturer, composition, substances of concern, toxicity, sourcing; Labour practices; new data, like use, modification, maintenance, disassembly possibilities; and voluntary product information, like recycled content, Waste and circularity and product or GHG emissions.

The UK Northwest region selection of firms for the SME Index is determined by the geographic spread determined in the PEC and similar studies by the Textiles & Technology: Mapping the UK Fashion, Textiles and Technology Ecosystem, 2021.

Expected benefits and impact for the stakeholders involved

Enhanced visibility of compliance with sustainability requirements by industry actors/partners along the entire value chain

Enhanced traceability of the social/environmental/ethical attributes of product(s)/materials along the value chain; for example, for origin, quality, sustainability performance, and compliance with health and safety requirements for consumers and workers

A measurable impact on sustainability in value chains over time, eventually verified through life-cycle assessments and/or sustainability certifications

Enhanced environmental and socially responsible consumption and production, and circularity of the value chain, that may be relevant to and inspire other countries and industry actors/partners

Special attention to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), small producers, farmers, and other groups including women, young workers, home-based and migrant workers who are often affected by unfair practices in this sector (companies should carry out due diligence on human and social rights to identify key target groups)

Stakeholders involved

Business and industry associations

Consumers and consumer associations

Intergovernmental organizations   Local authorities

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Scientific and technological community

Researcers and academia

Key performance indicators for the action

1. Education & Training in Textiles Transparency.
These KPIs are related to the UNECE measure
"Awareness and education", which highlights the importance of providing education in order to:
"Allow consumers to make informed choices and create awareness of the shared responsibility of all stakeholders, including both business and consumers, to take an active role in preserving our planet; Increase the demand for materials, products and processes that are more responsible and sustainable" (UNECE, 2022).
• We have presented and continue to present at local and international forums discussing the challenges and opportunities of supply chain transparency on a bi-monthly rotation.
• We have held and continue to host industry round tables – connecting industry partners half yearly – in this way maintaining momentum and monitoring progress within firms.
• We publish academic papers on our findings in digitalising supply chain transparency – 4 x 6000-word publications per year.
• We will introduce students to transparency technology platforms so that they are industry ready when they graduate, which can be pivotal for firms in their digital transformation. We will begin with a cohort of 30 students – increasing this by 30 students each year.
• We plan to dedicate 30 hours per firm per year - training and advising suppliers on transparency and traceability.
• We plan to train 10 SMEs with the UNECE toolkit and other transparency measures to promote transparency and traceability.

2. Partnerships development in Textiles Transparency.
These are the KPIs related to the UNECE measure "Stimulate and support multi-stakeholder, collaborative initiatives that seek to achieve industry-wide change and create shared value for all industry actors". Our Roadmap initiative includes: (i) A global, open-source knowledge platform to make guidance available and ensure that industry actors receive appropriate training and information; (ii) Multi-stakeholder policy dialogues for the sharing of good practices and lessons learned at the international, regional and national levels; (iii) Pilot projects to experiment with innovative approaches and advanced technologies in traceability, including blockchain technology, artificial intelligence (AI), the internet of things (IoT), and biotechnology markers to ensure an effective connection between digital and physical assets." (UNECE, 2022).
• We hope to gain the support of 100+ SMEs and partners in different tiers of the supply chain through

free registration and membership on the platform - to support transparency of environmental performance in different sectors and value chains in the first year.
•   We will facilitate the participation of 10-30 firms in working groups for harmonisation and standardisation of traceability and transparency tools and standards in a year.
•   We aim at 10 pilots which focus on the traceability of value chains in a year.
•   We will not develop the digital tools as such, but already know that around 80 tools and related technologies currently exist that focus on product traceability. We plan to deploy a diagnostic tool on our knowledge exchange platform that will help to demystify the utility of the tools and in this way help firms make decisions as to whether or not to adopt. We aim to have 50 SMEs try the diagnostic tool on the platform in the first year.
•   We are aiming at 20 partnerships with international stakeholders, technology providers, universities, institutions and trade associations focusing on traceability and transparency.
•   We are dedicating 20 hours of combined working hours per week to the project.

Good practices

With our Sustainability Pledge, we aim to further drive awareness and education on the topic of traceability and aid the UNECE in emphasising the importance of accelerating the work towards a more transparent textile and fashion industry. There is no sustainability without traceability, and the data provided must be granular, validated, and trustworthy.

How has this UNECE-UN/CEFACT Call to Action contributed to strategic engagement and/or public awareness in support of your commitment?

By presenting findings to local and regional government policy drivers as well as industry bodies such as the British Fashion Council, the UKFT and federal government this UNECE-UN/CEFACT Call to Action will have contributed to strategic engagement and/or public awareness in support of our commitment. We would gauge the impact on policy, awareness and support of new initiatives such as subsidising tech start-ups, consultancies and transformation in small scale firms.

Link to relevant goal(s) and specific target(s) of the United Nations