

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2016/2140(INI)	Procedure completed
EU flagship initiative on the garment sector		
Subject		
3.40.10 Textile and clothing industry, leathers		
6.20.05 Multilateral and plurilateral economic and trade agreements and relations		
6.30 Development cooperation		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Development	Shadow rapporteur	
		 SZEJNFELD Adam	
		 LIETZ Arne	
		 ZAHRADIL Jan	
		 BECERRA BASTERRECHEA Beatriz	
		 SARGENTINI Judith	
		 CORRAO Ignazio	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 International Trade		31/08/2016
		 KARIM Sajjad	
	 Employment and Social Affairs		28/09/2016
		 LAMBERT Jean	
European Commission	Commission DG International Cooperation and Development	Commissioner MIMICA Neven	

Key events			
15/09/2016	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
15/09/2016	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
21/03/2017	Vote in committee		
28/03/2017	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0080/2017	Summary
26/04/2017	Debate in Parliament		

			
27/04/2017	Results of vote in Parliament		
27/04/2017	Decision by Parliament	T8-0196/2017	Summary
27/04/2017	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2016/2140(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	DEVE/8/07092

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE595.670	12/01/2017	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE599.614	06/02/2017	EP	
Committee opinion	EMPL	PE593.891	10/02/2017	EP	
Committee opinion	INTA	PE592.396	28/02/2017	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0080/2017	28/03/2017	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0196/2017	27/04/2017	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2017)472	07/09/2017	EC	

EU flagship initiative on the garment sector

The Committee on Development adopted an own-initiative report by Lola SÁNCHEZ CALDENTEY (GUE/NGL, ES) on the EU flagship initiative on the garment sector.

Members recalled that 60 million people worldwide work in the textile and clothing sector, which creates many jobs, particularly in developing countries. However, textile manufacturers in developing countries are constantly exposed to aggressive purchasing practices by the international wholesale and retail trade, which is also due to fierce global competition. This state of affairs has led to widespread labour rights violations, including: poverty wages, forced labour and child labour, arbitrary dismissals, unsafe workplaces, violence against women, etc.

Most human rights violations in the garment sector concern various aspects of labour rights, such as the denial of workers fundamental right to join or form a union of their choosing and bargain collectively in good faith.

Members noted that voluntary initiatives led by the private sector over the last 20 years have not proven to be effective enough in bringing about a real improvement in workers rights. Multi-stakeholder initiatives like the German partnership for sustainable textiles or the Dutch agreement on sustainable garment and textile have still to produce concrete results. The efforts of corporations to promote workplace compliance can support, but not replace, the effectiveness and efficiency of public governance systems.

Members welcomed the increasing attention given to the promotion of decent working conditions through global supply chains following the Rana Plaza factory collapse and acknowledged the Commissions commitment towards responsible management of supply chains, including in the garment sector, as outlined in the Communication entitled Trade for All.

Members noted, however, that existing voluntary initiatives not only recurrently overlap and fail to cover the whole supply chains loopholes, but also fall short of effectively addressing human rights issues.

Consequently, a legally binding institutional framework is urgently needed.

The Commission, aligned with the principle of Policy Coherence for Development reflected in Art. 208 TFEU, must develop a legislative

proposal for binding supply chain due diligence obligations in the garment sector, aligned with OECD Guidelines and the highest internationally agreed standards on human rights and social and environmental standards.

This proposal must be human rights centred and must focus the spotlight on the core problems garment workers face (occupational health and safety, a living wage, freedom of association, sexual harassment and violence in the workplace and the elimination of forced and child labour). The following matters must also be addressed: (i) key criteria for sustainable production, (ii) transparency and traceability, including the transparent collection of data and tools for consumer information, (iii) due diligence checks and auditing, (iv) access to remedy, (v) gender equality, (vi) supply-chain due diligence reporting, (viii) the responsibility of companies in the event of man-made disasters and awareness raising in the European Union.

Members called for consumers to be provided with clear, trustworthy information about sustainability in the garment sector, where products originate from and the extent to which workers rights have been respected. They proposed, to this end, the development of EU-wide labelling standards for fair clothing, accessible to both multinational companies and SMEs, to assist customers in their purchasing decisions.

Members called for an effective and compulsory reporting system and due diligence for garment products entering the EU market to ensure increased access to information on the conduct of enterprise. It encouraged the EU to work with all relevant stakeholders to promote a successful social partnership and to support stakeholders in the development and implementation of wage-setting mechanisms in accordance with relevant International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions, especially in countries where there is a lack of adequate legislation.

They recommended further research on ways of improving audits and inspections in the clothing and footwear supply chain. They emphasised the importance of independent labour inspections in early warning and prevention, as well as in enforcement of national rules and regulations on health and safety at the workplace.

The Commission is called upon to: (i) continue to include the ratification of core ILO standards, health and safety inspection, and freedom of association in discussions on continued preferential trade with countries linked to the global supply chain for the garment sector, and; (ii) strengthen human rights, labour and environmental conventions under the Generalised System of Preferences.

EU flagship initiative on the garment sector

The European Parliament adopted by 505 votes to 49, with 57 abstentions, a resolution on the EU flagship initiative on the garment sector.

Members recalled that 60 million people worldwide work in the textile and clothing sector, which creates many jobs, particularly in developing countries. However, textile manufacturers in developing countries are constantly exposed to aggressive purchasing practices by the international wholesale and retail trade, which is also due to fierce global competition. This state of affairs has led to widespread labour rights violations, including: poverty wages, forced labour and child labour, arbitrary dismissals, unsafe workplaces, violence against women, etc.

These practices are also detrimental to the European industry as they lead to social dumping.

In order to follow up on the flagship initiative which seeks to avoid disasters such as the Rana Plaza building collapse in 2013 in Bangladesh, Parliament presented a series of recommendations.

Due diligence obligations: Members noted with concern how the existing voluntary initiatives for the sustainability of the garment sectors global supply chain have fallen short of effectively addressing human rights and labour rights-related issues in the sector.

Therefore, the Commission is called upon to propose binding legislation on due diligence obligations for supply chains in the garment sector. This legislative proposal must be aligned with the new OECD due diligence guidance for responsible supply chains in the garment and footwear sector in line with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises which are importing into the European Union, the ILO resolution on decent work in supply chains and internationally agreed human rights, social and environmental standards.

This legislative proposal should include core standards, such as: (i) occupational health and safety, (ii) health standards, (iii) a living wage, (iv) freedom of association and collective bargaining, (v) the prevention of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, (vi) the elimination of forced and child labour.

Members called for an effective and compulsory reporting system and due diligence for garment products entering the EU market with a view to ensure increased access to information on the conduct of enterprises.

The also recommended that further action be taken to improve inspections and social audits in the clothing and footwear supply chain.

Consumer information: Parliament called for consumers to be provided with clear, trustworthy information about sustainability in the garment sector, where products originate from and the extent to which workers rights have been respected. It proposed, to this end, the development of EU-wide labelling standards for fair clothing, accessible to both multinational companies and SMEs, to assist customers in their purchasing decisions.

Trade preferences and sustainability: Members considered that sustainable development chapters of EU trade agreements should be mandatory and enforceable. They called on the Commission to introduce tariff preferences for demonstrably proven sustainably produced textiles in the forthcoming reform of the GSP / GSP + rules and to promote the production of Fair Trade products through this instrument of tariff preferences.

The Commission is called upon to: (i) continue to include the ratification of core ILO standards, health and safety inspection, and freedom of association in discussions on continued preferential trade with countries linked to the global supply chain for the garment sector, and; (ii) strengthen human rights, labour and environmental conventions under the Generalised System of Preferences.