

National Research Report

THE 'AS IS' SITUATION IN ROMANIA

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*Stimulating gender-based innovative training methods to promote
CLOTHING REcycling through Augmented Reality*

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1. Introduction

1.1 Scope of the project

Research has depicted the linkage between environment-oriented activities and gender disparities. In fact, gender equality matters to environmental sustainability with women performing two thirds of global working hours and being more dependent on natural resources in comparison with men (Irish Aid, 2013). However, the agenda promoting the importance of gender equality for the ecosystem still remains unfinished despite all the initiatives taken towards the establishment of eco-friendly activities (UN women, 2014). Therefore, while there is still a high level of gender inequality, women act as half of the world's resource managers, making their role crucial towards safeguarding the environment (Global Environment Facility, 2018). With clothing upcycling being the new trend for green fashion, there has been no concrete initiative promoting women's active participation in upcycling practices, despite EU's endeavor towards environmental sustainability. Therefore, the need for VET trainers and textile professionals (manufacturers, designers, colorists, etc.) to engage in an open dialogue in order to support gender-based training towards buckling down environmental challenges through clothing upcycling activities constitutes a brand new initiative in alignment with EU goals for resource efficiency (Europe 2020 Strategy).

1.2 Purpose of the document

This document aims to provide useful insights of the current needs with regards to the level of awareness among textile professionals about men and women's role and participation in environmental activities towards sustainable development of the industry.

The insights will derive from the thorough research conducted at national level, while the findings will be used in a comparison analysis scrutinizing the best practices applied in other European countries in order to identify the gap between the 'as-is' situation and the 'to-be' situation.

The research focuses on the training needs of textile experts for environmental consciousness in order to identify the main pillars of the training materials to be developed for the purpose of the 'ReClothing Training Guide'.

1.3 Project target groups

The target groups addressed and affected by this research are:

- Directly:
 - Textile professionals (manufacturers, designers, colorists, stylists, converters, etc.) interested in or already taking initiatives towards environmental sustainability
 - VET & Textile experts willing to actively participate in an open dialogue about green methods that establish the importance of gender equality for the ecosystem
 - HEI with Textile departments



- Indirectly:
 - VET training organizations
 - Public bodies
 - NGOs or other organizations/authorities taking initiatives towards renewable resources and energy efficiency
 - AR developers or developers/organizations willing to embrace innovative digital solutions for sustainable training purposes and enhanced learning experiences
 - Policy makers

2. Methodology

In order to efficiently identify the current practices, each partner organization will opt for different case studies applied in the country as indicative examples of the state of the art.

The desk research focuses on the following pillars:

1. Eco-sustainable practices initiated or implemented by women
2. Green practices for safeguarding the environment
3. Initiatives for clothing upcycling awareness
4. Practices related to gender-based training
5. Existing dialogues for the role of gender in environmental sustainability
6. Technologies used as innovative sustainable practices

Therefore, the project consortium will cast about for any practices – or the lack of them – among the partner countries with a view to formulate a training solution tailored to the needs of the target group. The findings of the current research document will be validated directly by the project target group so as to ensure their active involvement in the project activities throughout its implementation. To that end, partners (except ATERMON as an IT company and UNICERT as an accreditation body) will contact at least 25 participants demonstrating the results of this report and involving them in a needs verification survey.

3. National Practices

The textile, clothing, leather and footwear (TCLF) industry has a long tradition in Romania. Some companies have been operating for several decades, with 80% of production being export-oriented (<https://api.fairwear.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021-CS-Romania.pdf>). The TCLF industry accounts for 4.15% of the total number of employees in Romania. In 2019, it employed 214,577 workers in 8,190 companies (<https://api.fairwear.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021-CS-Romania.pdf>).

In 2019, TCLF employees were distributed as follows: Textiles (18.63%), Clothing (54.9%) and Leather goods and footwear (26.47%).



In 2019, several factories and brands closed and/or relocated their production capacity to countries considered cheaper. The industry lost around €145 million in revenue due to the relocation. (<https://api.fairwear.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021-CS-Romania.pdf>).

The pandemic COVID -19 had a significant impact on the TCLF industry, which was particularly affected by delays in the supply of raw materials since the pandemic began in China. After the factories in China were closed, many brands and retailers moved their production to Turkey. During the state of emergency (16 March 2020 - 14 May 2020), production stagnated and the export capacity of factories dropped by 30%. Since the beginning of the pandemic, there has been a decrease in orders of more than 40% compared to the previous year, and at the same time there was a decrease in production capacity due to layoffs in about 30% of the factories. The immediate negative impact of the pandemic is the rise in the unemployment rate to 5.1% in November, compared to the January 2020 rate of 3.7%. Almost 20% of businesses in Romania were forced to either reduce or cease operations during the pandemic COVID -19. Only 19% of businesses in Romania did not cease operations and had money to pay salaries. At the end of 2019, the structure of the labour force in the TCLF sectors was: 20.48% men (43,948 workers) and 79.52% women (170,629 workers). The workers in the garment industry are, on average, between 25 and 55 years old. At the same time, the workforce is ageing and young people are less interested in working in the industry.

(<https://api.fairwear.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021-CS-Romania.pdf>).

The Romanian textile and clothing industry needs to make important changes. First and foremost, the industry is under increasing pressure worldwide to comply with stricter environmental regulations because of its great environmental credibility. Reducing resource consumption and increasing the circularity of production processes will be critical to the industry's upcoming transition to environmentally friendly technologies. The industry is also facing labour shortages due to mass emigration and ageing populations in both countries. Digitalisation of business processes and retraining and upskilling of the workforce are necessary to meet this challenge. Finally, it is less and less possible to compete with the production of simple products. Investments in the development of new materials and product innovations as well as higher value creation are a must in order to remain competitive on the international market.

3.1 Eco-sustainable practices initiated or implemented by women

We provide an example for eco-sustainable practices initiated by woman- **Monica Boța Moisin**, Fashion Law & Cultural Sustainability in Fashion| IPR & Sustainability| EU Trademark Registration & Strategy | Geographical Indications | Artisan-Designer Collaborations| One Young World Ambassador

Name of the organization:	WhyWeCraft
Name of the action:	Cultural Sustainability in Fashion (Romania)
Year of implementation:	2018
Objectives of the action:	The project is empowering those who are maintaining traditional practices, by opening up access to otherwise complicated legal concepts.





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	It won the contest "Reimagine Fashion" of European Social Innovation Competition 2020.
Description of methodology:	Designed under the umbrella of the Cultural Intellectual Property Rights Initiative® (CIPRI), WhyWeCraft enables environmental, social, economic, and cultural sustainability of the European textile and fashion market through a unique co-creation framework meant to stimulate artisan-designer collaborations by merging contemporary design thinking with traditional textile knowledge and techniques.
Impact:	WhyWeCraft is a strategy for a Green and Equitable Future, and to discover a holistic approach to REIMAGINE fashion.
Website:	https://whywecraft.eu/
Skills required to implement such an action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A new way of thinking. ▪ A search for meaning in the way we interact with garments. ▪ Crafting an emotional connection between people and garments. ▪ Guide through an ethical and sustainable way of crafting garments.
Potential challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of general awareness ▪ Difficulty in reaching out interested parties

3.2 Green practices for safeguarding the environment

Two examples: Green practices- a private company, MINET SA, Râmnicu Vâlcea- Romania
Sustainable initiatives: Patzaikin, the hemp initiative.

Name of the organization:	MINET Nonwovens
Name of the action:	REGENERATED TEXTILE WASTE
Year of implementation:	Ongoing
Objectives of the action:	MINET has manufacturing capabilities to process textile waste as raw materials. In this way, we will significantly reduce the quantity of textile waste currently incinerated or dumped on landfills, contributing to the overall sustainable development goals.



Description of methodology:	Company uses advanced technologies and the best materials to develop reliable products and customized solutions for the customers. It works in a sustainable and innovative way, with a strong commitment to protect the environment, using recyclable, reusable and environmentally sound materials.
Impact:	A positive environmental impact, a “greener” technology.
Website:	https://www.minet.ro/company/recycling/
Skills required to implement such an action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proper technology to process textile waste
Potential challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ European competition ▪ Continuous investments in technology

Name of the organization:	Patzaikin, the hemp initiative
Name of the action:	Sustainable food and fashion in the region of Danube Delta
Year of implementation:	2011- present (ongoing)
Objectives of the action:	To use authentic Romanian materials-hemp. In the past, Romania was the biggest exporter of hemp.
Description of methodology:	Patzaikin’s collection is based on hemp, a highly durable material, a style called ‘future vintage’.
Impact:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The use of natural materials, with less impact on the environment; ▪ Vintage design; ▪ User friendly models with the wearer.
Website:	https://www.facebook.com/PATZAIKIN/
Skills required to implement such an action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creativity and innovation ▪ Teamworking ▪ Communication
Potential challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of general awareness, confidence and education ▪ Romanian fashion market is not mature enough to sustain this initiative; ▪ Lack of support by bigger stakeholder

3.3 Initiatives for clothing upcycling awareness

We present two initiatives regarding clothing upcycling.

Name of the organization:	„Mai Bine” Association, an NGO
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Name of the action:	Recycling/Reusing textiles
Year of implementation:	2015- present (ongoing) The project was supported in 2015-2016 from the Norwegian Grants 2009-2014, within the scope of the Green Innovation Funding in the Romanian Industry.
Objectives of the action:	To transform waste into resources in a creative and educational way.
Description of methodology:	The enterprise integrates in its mission the 3 dimensions of sustainable development: the environment, society and the economy, proving that the relationships between them can be harmonized and governed by solid principles, so that they can contribute to creating a community that is environmentally sustainable, socially fair and facilitates ethical traditions.
Impact:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3207 kg of pre-consumer and post-consumer textile waste have been collected (87% post-consumer waste and 13% pre-consumer waste); ▪ Apart from the 2730 kg donated, 244 kg were reconditioned and recycled into products with a new life and 99 kg were used as raw material for new redesigned and upcycled products; ▪ Out of the 3 tons of materials collected through the 10 collection centers in Iasi, 1000 new articles were produced and more than 500 customers have been counted. ▪ About 900 people and 90 vulnerable people (mostly homeless or persons under the poverty line) benefitted by donations of over 2 tons collected products. Donations consisted in clothes, accessories, blankets and other useful things. ▪ As a result of project activities, 4 categories of green products have been created in the workshop and are advertised under the online shop at www.redu.org.ro:
Website:	http://www.maibine.eu/
Skills required to implement such an action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teamwork ▪ Communication ▪ Decision making ▪ Determination ▪ Implication ▪ Creativity
Potential challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of general awareness, confidence and education ▪ Difficulty in reaching out interested parties ▪ Lack of support by bigger stakeholder
Name of the organization:	Gnana Studio
Name of the action:	Making new with old
Year of implementation:	2011- present (ongoing)



Objectives of the action:	To transform waste into resources in a creative and educational way.
Description of methodology:	Products are made with eco-friendly and recycled materials and locally woven textiles. Cotton and bamboo used in the collections come from antique shops or specialised warehouses and brought back to life via a transparent production process.
Impact:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Saving huge amounts of water and the carbon footprint; ▪ Versatile design; ▪ Luxury upcycled fabrics.
Website:	www.gnanastudio.com
Skills required to implement such an action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creativity and innovation ▪ Decision making ▪ Determination ▪ Teamworking ▪ Communication
Potential challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of general awareness, confidence and education ▪ Romanian fashion market is not mature enough to sustain this initiative; ▪ Lack of support by bigger stakeholder

3.4 Practices related to gender-based training

We do not have such examples.

Name of the organization:	
Name of the action/training:	
Year of implementation:	
Objectives of the action/training:	
Description of methodology:	
Impact:	



Website:	
Skills required to implement such an action/training	▪
Potential challenges	▪

3.5 Existing dialogues for the role of gender in environmental sustainability

We do not have such examples.

Name of the association/synergy:	
Year of implementation:	
Objectives of the action:	
Description of methodology:	
Impact:	
Website:	
Skills required to implement such an action	▪
Potential challenges	▪

3.6 Technologies used as innovative sustainable practices

We provide an example of sustainable practice on this issue.

Name of the organization:	Katty Fashion- Romanian Clothing Company
Name of the tool/technology	NeoCel -Sustainable Textile Fibres
Year of implementation:	2016-2019
Objectives of the action:	In this European project it was developed an innovative and techno-economically feasible alkaline processes for



	sustainable production of high-quality textile fibres from reactive high cellulose pulps in connection to pulp mills.
Description of methodology:	The NeoCel project developed an advanced cold alkali based textile fibre production process. A new cellulose dissolution/regeneration process, combined with extensive pulp mill integration was the key for better environmental and economic performance of textile fibre production.
Impact:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Produce competitive textile fibres; ▪ Reduce the environmental impact and costs; ▪ Business opportunities for pulp mills and a revival of pulp and paper industry in Europe; ▪ Increased energy efficiency and recovery/ regeneration of the chemicals used for the dissolution and regeneration of cellulose.
Website:	http://neocel.eu/
Skills required to use the tool:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integration system of the pulp mill; ▪ The use of cold alkali without CS₂ – the risks of CS₂ are removed; ▪ Renewable raw materials to satisfy future global demand.
Potential challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New capacities for fibers production; ▪ New chemistry and energy principles; ▪ Necessity to maximize the concentration of cellulose; ▪ The use of a wet-spinning technique in which the dope is pumped through spinneret holes in acidic bath.

4. Conclusions

In Romania, the policy of equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men was first enshrined in law in 2002, while the main governmental body for equal opportunities was established as a national agency in 2005. (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/countries/romania>). Since then, both the legislation and the institutional structure of government agencies have changed several times. In 2002, Parliament passed Act 202/2002 on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which specifically addresses gender equality (the Gender Equality Act). Among other measures, the Act provides for positive action measures to promote gender equality as 'special measures taken temporarily to accelerate the achievement of equal opportunities for women and men in practise' (Article 4(e)). However, these measures are only permissible if they are 'aimed at the protection of certain categories of women or men and not at the protection of women as a group in comparison with men' (Article 6(5)(b)). The Gender Equality Act thus regulates not only equal access to employment, but also to services and goods. Its Article 4(k) was further amended to include a provision on gender budgeting, defined in Law 229/2015.

Recently, the National Strategy 2018-2021 for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment of Women and Men was approved by a government decision. The strategy has three general objectives (promoting universal access to sexual and reproductive health for girls and women; reconciling professional, family and private life; promoting women's participation in decision-making)



and five areas of intervention: Education, Health, Labour Market, Equitable Participation in Decision-making and Gender Mainstreaming.

There is no obligation to provide gender equality training for government employees. EU-funded projects usually include training, but this is not systematically provided as part of a consistent approach. Training is open to all staff and participation is generally voluntary. There are no specific procedures for organising or monitoring training outcomes or participation. There is no information on gender awareness initiatives within government agencies.

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