



Guide, tips and success stories on consumer engagement by T&C companies

Author(s): CARDOSO, Alexandra | ESPÍRITO-SANTO, Tânia
| RIBEIRO, Andreia

Organisation(s): CITEVE

Date: 30 June 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Success stories implemented by T&C companies	6
Ways to drive consumers choices toward sustainability	10
Summary of Sessions by Country	14
Conclusions	17

Introduction

The In4Sustain project aims to upskill the textile and clothing sector toward green transformation. To address the environmental impact, the EU aims to reduce textile waste, extend its life cycle and promote recycling. These objectives are an integral part of the plan to achieve a circular economy by 2050 (EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles). In4Sustain welcomes this strategy by promoting a systemic approach, based on active involvement and cooperation among all players in this environmental paradigm shift namely academia, industry and consumers.

In4Sustain has a relevant geographical coverage, as the project activities are being implemented in IT, ES, PT, DE and

SI, with the first 4 countries representing the main EU producers of T&C (Eurostat).

The textile and clothing sector plays a fundamental role in both the economy and everyday life. But it is also a sector with major environmental and social impacts. To address these challenges and identify opportunities for sustainable transformation, a series of Living Labs were held in five European countries: Portugal (CITEVE), Spain (GREMI TEXTIL DE TERRASA), Italy (CIAPE, Link Campus University and Materially), Slovenia and Germany (STEP institute and TITERA) and a collaborative workshop between the project partners.

These Living Labs brought together representatives of textile and clothing companies (some of which already have sustainable practices in place) and fashion consumers to explore how sustainability can be integrated into the business models, consumption habits and strategies of the entire sector.

The sessions aimed to set criteria (tips) and collect examples on sustainable practices and successful ways to drive consumers choices toward sustainability implemented by T&C companies, communication procedures with consumers, ways to promote responsible consumption and engage consumers and impact of sustainability on consumers preferences.

Therefore, as a result, this Guide was produced as the final product of activity 2.3. of WP2 - Stakeholder involvement and co-creation. It presents an integrated view of the Living Lab sessions conducted by all the project partners and the results of the collaborative workshop held in the second technical project meeting. It includes successful examples of companies that incorporate sustainability models in their services, practices and tips to measure consumers awareness about their environmental impact, actions and tips able to change consumers consumption preferences in a more sustainable way, ways of engaging consumers in sustainable choices and in the design of sustainable products.

Methodology

Between April and May 2025, a series of collaborative activities were carried out. The initiatives included a **Living Lab** and a **Collaborative Workshop**, conducted in a **hybrid format** (in person and online) and involving participants from five different countries.

STEP and TITERA had a joint session including the participants of Slovenia and Germany.



Italy

CIAPE, Link
Campus
University and
Materially

Portugal

CITEVE

Spain

GREMI TEXTIL
DE TERRASA

Slovenia

STEP institute
and TITERA

Germany

TITERA

Table 1 - participating countries in the sessions

In total, **38 people** actively participated in the **Living lab**, including:

- 21 representatives of sustainable textile & clothing companies
- 17 fashion consumers

The **Collaborative Workshop** was attended by **13 members** of the project partnership, responsible for reflecting on, synthesising and expanding the lessons learned in the Living Lab, contributing to the development of strategic recommendations and future paths.

Each session was adjusted to the local contexts and participants, allowing for a fruitful sharing of practices and insights.

The Living Labs sessions were structured as facilitated workshops that combined individual reflection, small group discussion and collective exchange. The methodology followed different moments:

- **Introductory** presentations to set out the context and objectives;
- **Role-based** reflection, in which participants answered **guided questions** based on their roles as consumers or professionals in the sector;
- **Interactive group work**, including exercises such as **self-assessment** of awareness of sustainability, analysing labels and surveying purchasing habits;

- **Debate and co-design**, centred on barriers to sustainability, circular economy strategies and communication with fashion consumers;
- Presentation of initiatives and planning of post-**activity collaboration**.



Figure 1 - Pedagogical activities and resources used in the sessions

Session Type	Activities/Tools
In person	Collaborative exercises such as: • Course mapping with post-its and digital tools • Brainstorming on sustainability knowledge gaps • Mapping collaborations • Student support exchanges • active learning methodologies discussions
Online	Interactive digital tools such as: • Miro • Kahoot • Quizzes • Mentimeter

Table 2 - Activities and tools used in face-to-face and online sessions

Success stories implemented by T&C companies

Sustainable practices

Textile and clothing companies participating in the five countries demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability, even though they face considerable obstacles. The good practices shared reveal a sector in transition, where innovation and environmental responsibility go hand in hand.

What is
already
happening?

Success stories show concrete progress:

- Adoption of **environmental certifications**, such as ISO 14001, and integration into agreements such as the 'Made in Green' label;
- Development of **products based on Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)**;
- **Selective waste management**, carbon footprint assessment, and increased use of recycled materials;
- Investments in processes to **reduce water consumption**;
- Ambitious commitments, such as achieving 100% **recycled yarns** and ensuring full recycling of waste with proper treatment by authorised managers.

Despite progress, challenges remain:

- **High costs of recycled materials** compromise the competitiveness of sustainable products;
- **Internal resistance persists** — from employee hesitation to difficulty in convincing leadership to invest in sustainability;
- The **proliferation of certifications** with unclear differences confuses both companies and consumers;
- And concepts such as LCA, although relevant, are not yet well understood by the consumer, which requires **better communication and marketing campaigns**.

The solution also involves **training** — for teams, suppliers and customers. Companies highlighted the importance of events, advice on future regulations, newsletters, B2B strategies and exploring new circular solutions



Figure 2 – Upcycling technologies

Summary of success stories of T&C companies:

Strategy	Tools Used	Key Insight
No blame placed on consumers. Focus shifted from sustainability to uniqueness and individuality of the garment.	Local onsite events, authentic storytelling	Consumers connect more with stories of identity than generic green claims.
Cradle-to-Cradle certified collections; long-term commitment to transparency and R&D.	Workshops with design students, certified product range	Engaging future professionals supports long-term cultural change.
Innovative upcycling processes to reuse textile waste.	B2B storytelling, case study promotion	Tech innovation is a valid entry point for engaging both businesses and consumers.
Take-back programme and ReCircle online second-hand store.	Reuse logistics, digital resale	Convenience boosts consumer participation.
Radical transparency through online price breakdowns.	Direct communication on website	Trust is built through clear and accessible information.
"Infinity Program" for repair and repurposing.	e-commerce and repair service promotion	Repair fosters emotional attachment and loyalty.
Lease model for jeans, integrated circularity.	Gamification, circular fashion community	Circular models can be fun and competitive.
Local consumption and education.	Community workshops, school programmes	Local identity strengthens engagement and repeats behaviors.
Regenerative fashion, textile certifications.	Events, certification-driven storytelling	Certifications can reinforce trust and elevate narrative credibility.

Table 3 - Success stories of T&C companies

The discussion emphasised the need for **systemic change**, **early education** and **empowerment of both consumers and producers** through **awareness and regulation**. Participants shared practical, real-world strategies to reduce environmental impact and boost sustainability practices such as the **use of deadstock yarn**, **on-demand production**, **purchase of second-hand garments**, **awareness raising** and **educational campaigns** and the **creation of consumer-focused sustainability content**.

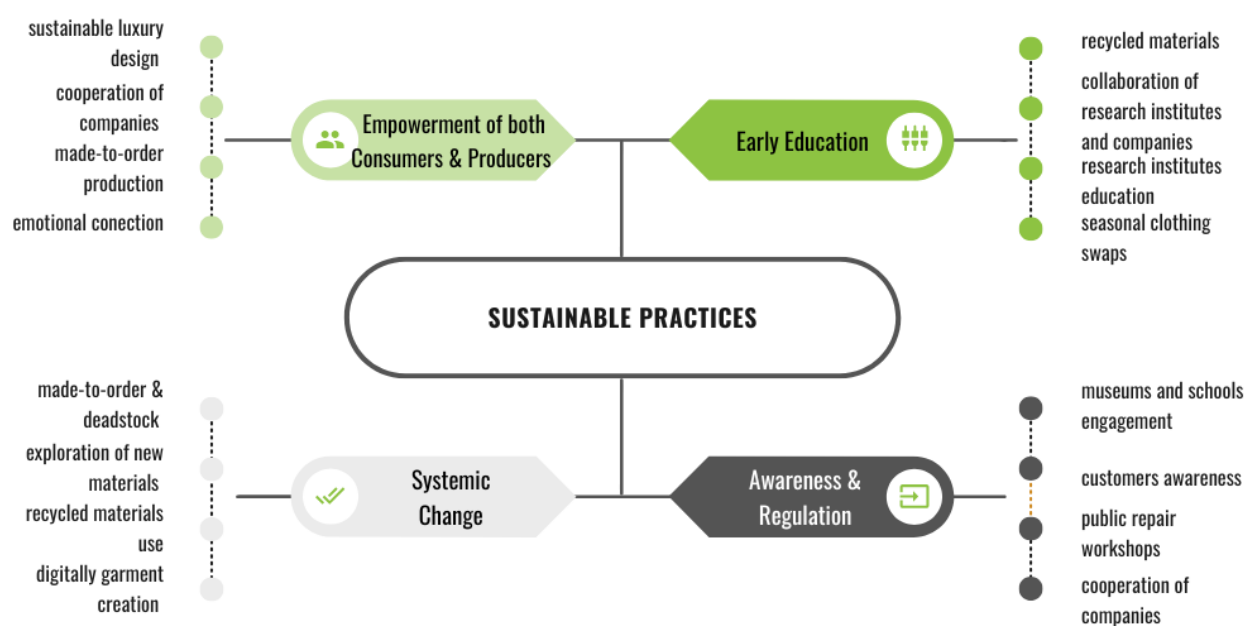


Diagram 1 – Sustainable practises

Ways to drive consumers choices toward sustainability

Fashion consumers identified several key areas for improvement and opportunity within the textile sector. A strong desire for more detailed information was expressed, particularly concerning product origin, material composition, recycling processes, and product lifespan. This information is seen as crucial for raising awareness and enabling consumers to prioritize locally sourced ("km0") products.

Participants highlighted a significant lack of marketing, publicity, and a clear roadmap within the textile sector. They believe increased promotional efforts and readily available information are necessary to shift consumer habits and boost awareness regarding sustainable choices.

The need for implementing a local selective collection system was also emphasized as essential for ensuring effective recycling processes. Consumers noted a generally low level of interest in these topics currently, suggesting that targeted information and publicity campaigns could drive a change in behaviour and awareness.

Already ON

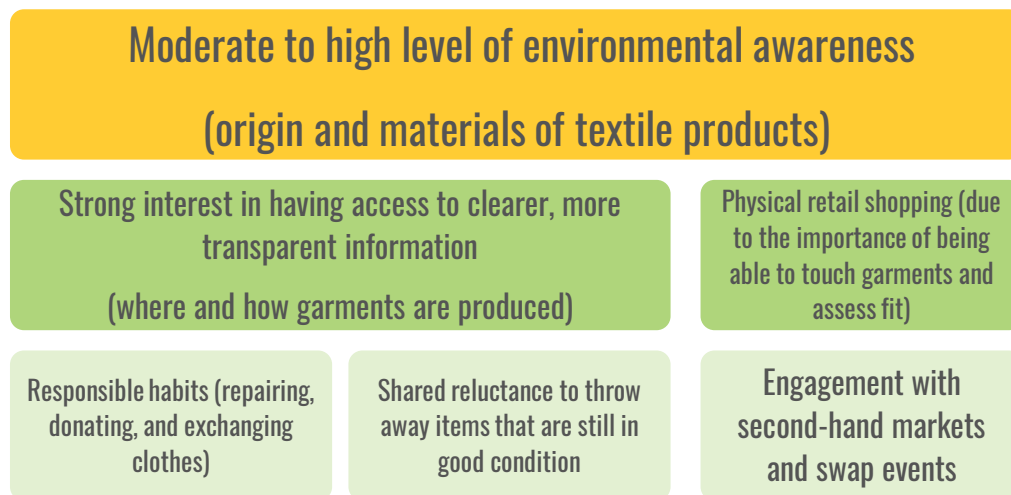


Diagram 2 - Strategies to reduce environmental impact and boost sustainability practices already in action

To consider

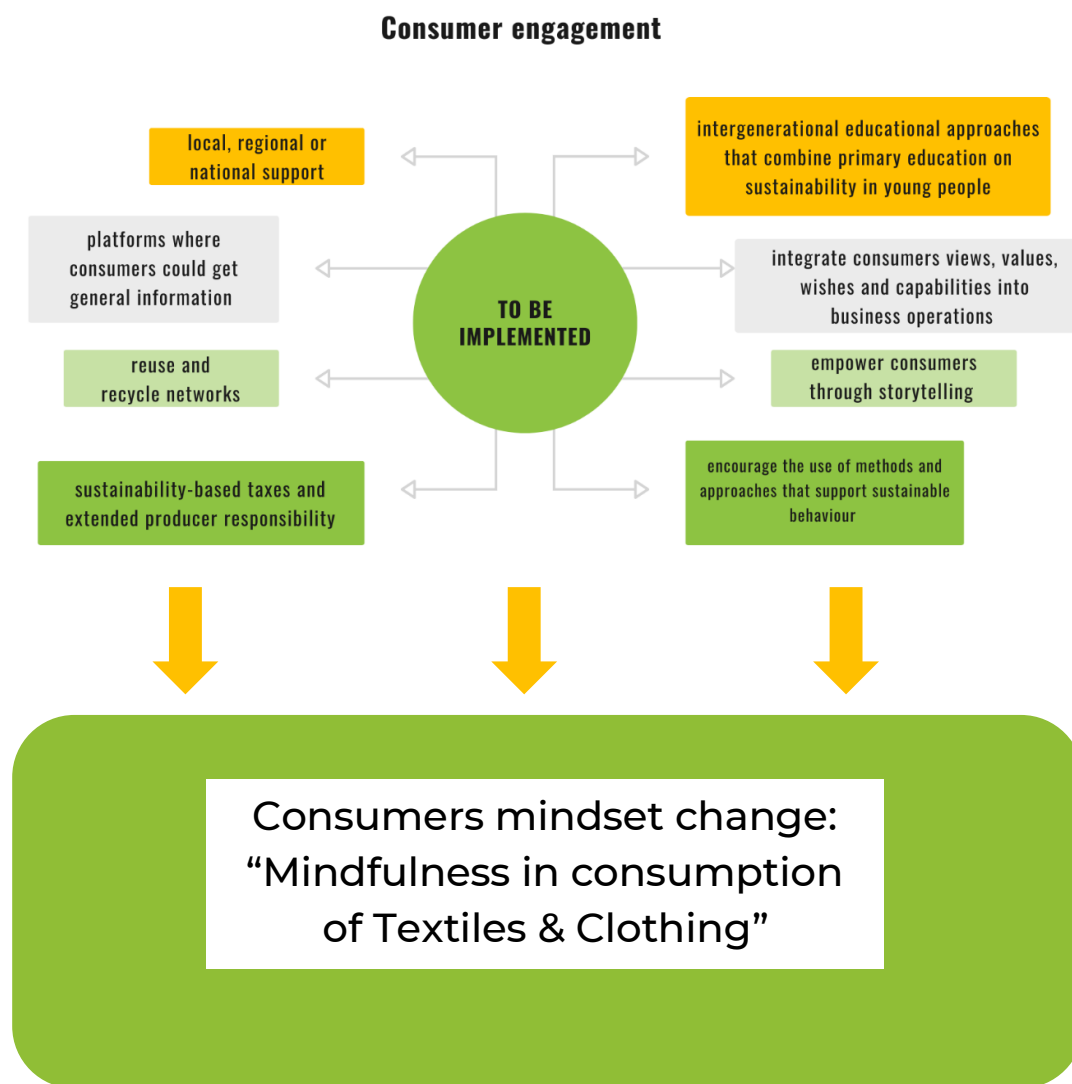


Diagram 3 - Strategies for boosting consumer engagement

- **Introducing and promoting role models** (among customers as well as companies) who can show in a positive way how to introduce, use and promote sustainable textile and clothing.
- **Support to other organisations** (e.g. NGOs, research institutes, competence centres) who promote sustainability and can create links between consumers and companies, as well as educational institutions.

- Answering the question “How can sustainable become the everyday normal, not just luxury?” and trying to implement practices that will enable this to become real.
- **Involving and empowering local public bodies** (closer and more accessible to the consumer) and T&C companies:
 - o provision of collection points for used fashion items
 - o municipal recycling firms
 - o practical workshops.
- **Partnerships** between training providers and T&C companies - matching the skills profile of the workforce undergoing training and the workforce already integrated into companies (e.g. designers).

Tools or channels

HOW?

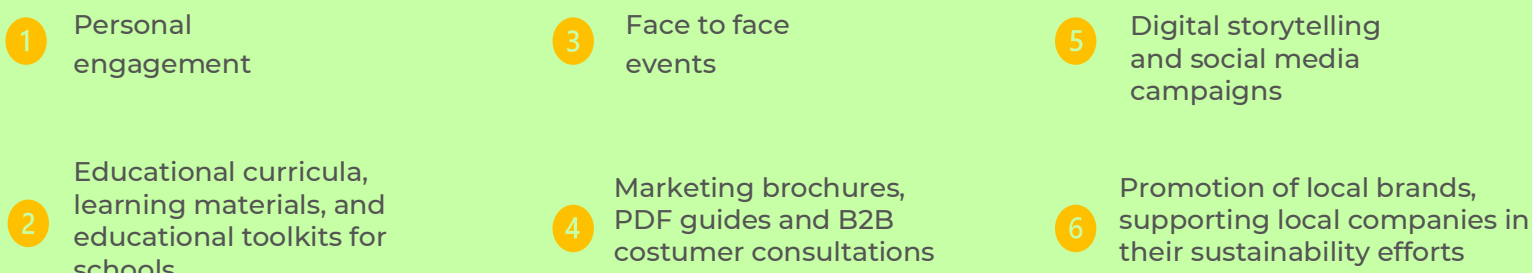


Figure 3 – Suggested examples of tools to support increased consumer involvement

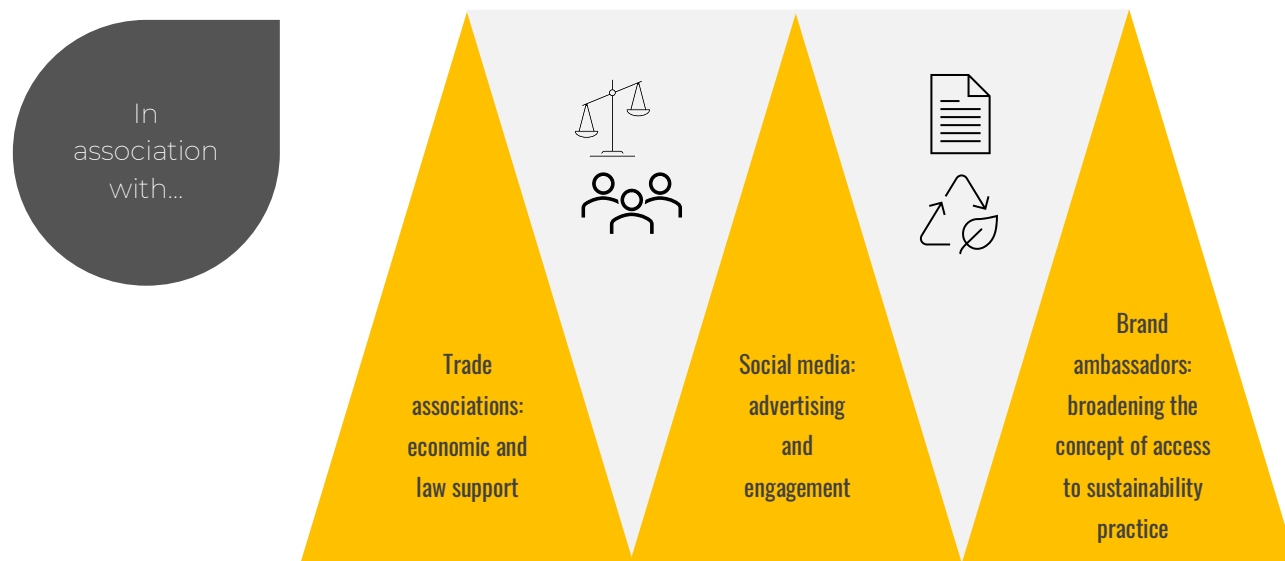


Figure 4 - Suggested examples of channels to support increased consumer involvement

We can consider five key factors to engage the Consumer toward sustainability

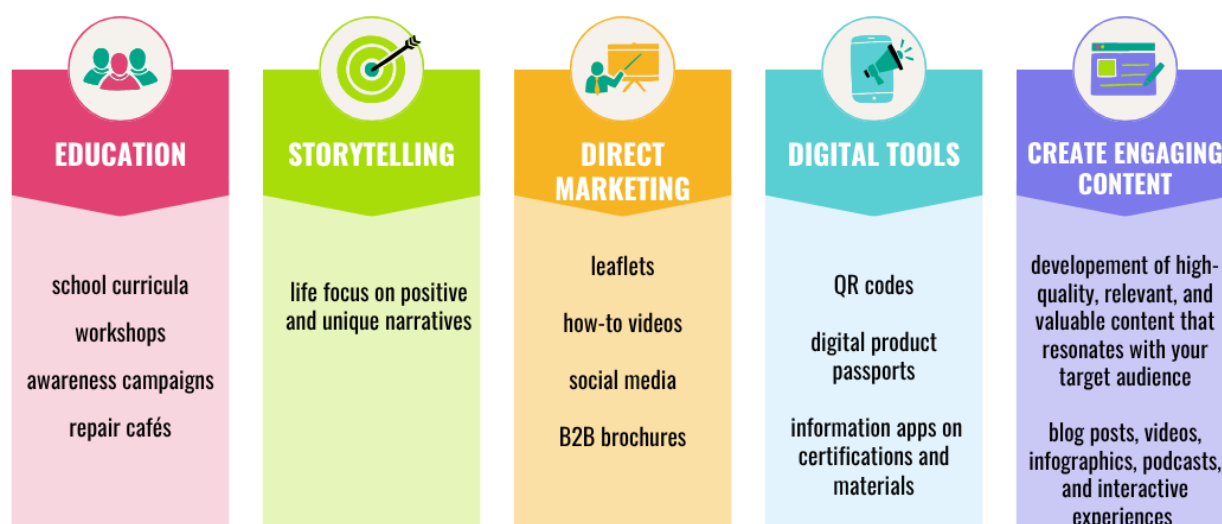


Diagram 4 - Key factors to target to boost consumer involvement in sustainability

Summary of Sessions by Country

ITALY



Consumers:

The living lab with end users revealed a moderate to high level of environmental awareness, particularly regarding the origin and materials of textile products. Participants expressed a strong interest in having access to clearer, more transparent information—especially about where and how garments are produced.

Companies:

The companies participating in the Living Lab embarked on their sustainability-journey based on very different motivations: Market demand; Entrepreneurial initiative; Inverted approach.

The Living Lab participants convey that a cultural shift is needed to reverse the current take-make-dispose consumerism model that shaped the global production and consumer behaviour over the last decades that is now revealing its downsides and direct and indirect impacts.

PORTUGAL



Consumers:

It was identified three main factors that condition and influence consumer preferences and habits: information and knowledge, economic availability and sustainability. Fashion consumers often face challenges related to information and knowledge, particularly when it comes to understanding clothing labels. Difficulties include interpreting the content, whether written or in image. On the other hand, some brands provide an excessive amount of information, which can also overwhelm consumers.

Companies:

It is worth mentioning that many companies in the sector already have various sustainability standards in place, as well as internal sustainability plans. The effort these companies make to keep abreast of regulatory requirements and comply with the demands imposed is notable. At the same time, they see these practices as factors that bring them closer to their customers, as well as a competitive advantage between markets or distinguishing between trademarks.

SPAIN

**Consumers:**

(...) the main input shared by the participants was on the personal efforts, the willingness and consciousness on recycling and being coherent, even though they are aware they do not always recycle properly.

The feeling was that the regulation pushes towards a greener life, that they feel informed, but they all agree on the fact that the capital rules and many good practices are not affordable for those with less resources or time.

(...) textile products are not that central to conscientiousness as it happens with other products such as the alimentary ones, which is more common to check their ingredients, properties and origin. Also, they are reluctant on that because they consider there might be marketing strategies in the given information (green washing).

Companies:

Financially, companies faced hurdles as recycled materials were often more expensive than raw materials, impacting the cost-competitiveness of sustainable products that needed to match market needs.

The proliferation of multiple, often only slightly different, sustainability certifications added another layer of complexity and expense for companies, suggesting a need for simplification and consolidation.

SLOVENIA

**Consumers:**

The discussion emphasised the need for systemic change, early education and empowerment of both consumers and producers through awareness and regulation.

Consumers who are more attentive and aware of the importance of sustainable life, recognise green-washing tactics and would prefer an open and honest approach.

Companies:

Try to understand the consumers by using different methods (also surveys, interviews) and to integrate their views, values, wishes and capabilities (also financial) into business operations at different levels.

Empower consumers through storytelling rather than technical lectures to avoid disengagement. Encourage the use of methods and approaches that support sustainable behaviour as something that brings personal advantages (e.g. avoiding poisonous materials, micro plastic) and is desired, positive, as well as practical on a personal level (so it is not just something theoretical).

GERMANY

**Consumers:**

Creating platforms where consumers could get general information about as well as detailed overview with options to compare 1) eco-certificates, 2) materials with options to compare (use, costs, duration, clothing physiology etc.), 3) recycling aspects of specific textile product/material and 4) textile processing techniques.

Working on changing the mindset of consumers in broader context – sustainability as a way of life (not partially only for clothing/textiles) and introducing the concept of the “mindfulness in textiles”.

Companies:

Advocate for policy changes (sustainability-based taxes and extended producer responsibility) to create a fairer market.

Cooperation of companies with trusted partners who promote and implement sustainable practices

Increased collaboration between consumers and industry via promotional materials and storytelling.

Conclusions

The activities carried out within the Living Lab and the Collaborative Workshop demonstrated that, despite local specificities and differences, **there are many similarities between the participating countries**, especially with regard to the challenges and ambitions of the textile and clothing sector. These convergences reflect a **shared commitment**: to create conditions for companies to engage consumers more closely and effectively, promoting increasingly sustainable consumption.

On the one hand, consumers are willing to adopt more conscious purchasing behaviours, as long as they have access to clear, accessible and reliable information. On the other hand, it is up to companies to **take an active role in building this trust**, becoming increasingly sustainable in their practices and, above all, **more transparent in how they communicate what they do** — from the raw materials used to the social and environmental impacts of their production chain.

This alignment reinforces the urgency of preparing professionals, companies and consumers for a new logic of production and consumption — one that is more conscious, circular and ethical. Sustainability, therefore, cannot be just a trend or a differentiator, but rather a **structuring competence** for the present and future of the sector.

In addition, the sessions showed the central role of consumers in the transformation process. More than just the end recipient of products, consumers today are **active agents**, informed and often co-creators of sustainable solutions. That is why their participation — through choices, feedback, demands and engagement with brands — is essential to accelerate change and make sustainability a real and integrated pillar of business practice.

The results presented here confirm that the transition to a sustainable market **requires continuous collaboration**, active listening between the different actors in the chain, and the strengthening of spaces for learning and innovation. This document is therefore an invitation to continue the dialogue and take concrete action towards a more just, transparent sector that is aligned with the challenges of our time.