

Istanbul Declaration

Adopted at the Turkish National Seminar on 9 April 2025

Promoting Social Partnerships in the European and Turkish Textiles and Clothing Industry
Addressing Skills Gaps in the Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Footwear Industries,
emphasising equality, sustainability and competitiveness.

Türkiye has a long tradition and *savoir-faire* in textiles and clothing manufacturing. It produces today large volumes of textiles and clothing destined largely for European and global markets, providing essential volume production that supports extensive commercial activities. Due to its strategic geographic position, Türkiye is a major export hub, linking the European and Asian markets. There are around **1 million workers** in the textile sector, with around **55,000 companies** of which the vast majority are SMEs.

However, the sector is struggling due to tough competition on a global market and price pressures linked to issues such as currency fluctuation and inflation as well as the global shrinkage of textile and fashion industry as a whole, which is likely affecting all the supplier countries. On top of this, the European textiles and clothing industry is set for a major transformation, due to the recent **EU's Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles**, which will affect both industry and workers, including in Türkiye. It aims to ensure that by 2030, textile and clothing products placed on the EU market are long-lived, reusable, repairable and/or recyclable, with the industry moving from a linear to a **circular business model**.

The EU-funded project “*Stitch Together*” is another step of a **long-term cooperation** between social partners, where attention has been paid to putting together strategies for industrial development and social progress, enhancing the representativeness of employer associations and trade unions, developing skills and capacity, and opening the path towards improved social dialogue and collective agreements.

In this context, the textile and clothing social partners are united in the effort to safeguard the sector and ensure a successful transition of the Turkish textiles and clothing sector to a more sustainable sector, while ensuring that the sector remains competitive and resilient, with decent jobs for all.

At the **Turkish national seminar** on 8-9 April 2025 in Istanbul, the participating social partners agreed on the following:

- To fully engage in social dialogue, which is more vital than ever to ensure a sustainable transformation of the textile sector, and to strengthen the **mechanisms for social dialogue and collective bargaining** in full respect of ILO fundamental principles such as freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.
- To commit to work together to ensure a **successful green and digital transformation** of the industry based on **circularity**, and ensuring a **socially just transition** that creates **decent work**

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for all, upholds ILO core labour standard, improves occupational health and safety, prevents informalisation and secures working conditions.

- To jointly call on the **Turkish government to involve the textile and clothing social partners in talks to upgrade policies on industrial strategies** for the sector, and support innovation and digitalisation.
- To work with the **authorities and educational institutes to provide the necessary means to attract, train and/or reskill textile workers**, in particular for young and female workers.
- To call upon **brands and retailers sourcing from Türkiye** to contribute to a positive transformation through responsible business practices, including due diligence and support for social dialogue, fair pricing and avoidance of unfair competition through long term purchasing contracts.
- To jointly call on the **Turkish government and the European Union to provide funding** for the upcoming textiles and clothing industry transformation, technology and skills upgrades, regional development, and Just Transition.
- To commit to **advancing gender equality**, including promoting women's participation in leaderships, addressing the gender pay gap, and preventing violence and harassment in the workplace.
- To **continue working with European partners** and the **exchange of best practice** in social dialogue.

The national social partners will cooperate on proposals to the Turkish government and will work with European social partners on how to work together to ensure a sustainable and strong future for the Turkish textiles and clothing industries and their workers.

Signed by

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