

JUST FASHION: Driving a JUST Transformation of the European FASHION Industry

The European fashion industry represents a major economic sector with over 160,000 companies and 1.5 million jobs in the EU region¹. It also generates significant environmental pressure, with 5 to 6 million of tonnes of textiles discarded each year (average 12 kg per person/year)² and high levels of CO₂ emissions linked to overproduction and unsustainable consumption. Only in 2022, textile purchases in the EU generated about 355 kg of CO₂ emissions per person, which is the equivalent of 1,800 km of travel by a standard petrol car³.

Within this context, the Just Fashion project (<https://justfashionproject.eu/>) was launched as a Horizon Europe Innovation Action led by Prof. Dr. Annick Schramme – full professor and expert in Cultural and Fashion Management at the University of Antwerp. Bringing together 20 partners from 8 European countries (Belgium, United Kingdom, Lithuania, Italy, Spain, Germany, North Macedonia, and Portugal), the project aims to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises ((M)SMEs), who are the majority of the fashion sector in their transition towards more sustainable business models that integrate circular, economic, social and cultural sustainability goals.

Project vision and objectives

Just Fashion is envisioned to accelerate the climate transition in the European fashion industry, following the principles of the just transition, by equipping Fashion (M)SMEs with the knowledge, strategies, tools, and frameworks needed to adapt to evolving environmental, economic, social, and regulatory demands, following the European Green Deal (2019). The project focuses on three core objectives:

1. Mapping the current state of sustainability practices in the European fashion ecosystem.
2. Evaluating and optimizing existing tools and developing new tools and circular business model solutions.
3. Developing and implementing targeted support measures and strategies that enable (MSMEs to adopt sustainable and circular practices and meet emerging EU regulatory requirements.

A key ambition of the project is to bridge research and innovation, policy, and practice by co-creating strategies and practical solutions with Fashion industry stakeholders. These include a new sustainability index (FISI – Fashion Industry Sustainability Index), digital instruments, such

¹ Euratex Key facts & Figures 2022: <https://euratex.eu/wp-content/uploads/EURATEX-Facts-Key-Figures-2020-LQ.pdf>

² EC Sustainable and Circular Textiles Strategy: [Textiles Strategy - Environment - European Commission](#)

³ Textiles and the environment: the role of design in Europe's circular economy, European Environment Agency: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/textiles-and-the-environment-the-role-of-design-in-europes-circular-economy-1>

as an AI-Supported policy tool, and pilot experiments that test circular value chains, business model innovation and support sustainable decision making.

Motivation to coordinate the project

As coordinator, the University of Antwerp (<https://www.uantwerpen.be/>) plays a central role in ensuring scientific excellence, strategic alignment, and effective collaboration across a large multidisciplinary and intersectoral consortium. Prof. Dr. Annick Schramme's and her team's commitment to coordinating Just Fashion stems from the conviction that the transition to a sustainable and circular fashion industry requires not only technological innovation but also coordinated governance and cross-sector collaboration at European level and beyond.

With extensive experience in EU Framework Programmes and strong industry collaboration, the University of Antwerp is well positioned to lead large interdisciplinary consortia. In Just Fashion, the University of Antwerp ensures coherence and synergies across work packages and guides the development of key outputs. Beyond coordination, it is crucial to foster interdisciplinary collaboration between research disciplines (management, entrepreneurship, Creative Industries, environmental sciences) and fashion companies (6 pilot cases) as well as with other stakeholders, as support agencies, European networks, and policy actors to ensure that project outcomes are both academically robust, innovative and relevant, and practically feasible for the industry.

The role of other Flemish stakeholders

A key strength of Just Fashion lies in the active involvement of Flemish partners, whose expertise ensures strong regional positioning, international leadership, and practical relevance. Two pilot cases are based in Belgium:

REAntwerp (<https://www.reantwerp.be/>), within Just Fashion, REAntwerp is a sustainable born fashion collective, engaged in a pilot case testing the use of deadstock materials in socially embedded production, involving refugees and newcomers. The pilot explores the use of digital traceability approaches and the implementation of the Digital Product Passport (DPP) to improve transparency and scalability. REAntwerp is an outstanding example of a fashion (M)SME actively working to address social sustainability in the fashion industry.

Xandres (<https://www.xandres.com/>) is a traditional Belgian fashion SME and part of the Damartex Group, with over 55 years of experience in womenswear design and production. Within Just Fashion, Xandres is the core partner in a pilot experiment testing digital and circular business models, including the Digital Product Passport (DPP), and a resale business model. Xandres represents fashion brands that have proactively anticipated the evolving EU sustainability landscape, with a long-standing commitment to embedding sustainability into their mission and core values.

Flanders District of Creativity, FDC (<https://www.flandersdistrictofcreativity.be/>) plays a pivotal role in connecting the project to the creative and entrepreneurial ecosystem in Flanders. Furthermore, FDC brings valuable experience from previous EU projects and

contributes to innovation processes such as the “Close The Loop” instrument to help fashion entrepreneurs adopt circular business models. FDC represents the wider creative and entrepreneurial ecosystem in Flanders, supporting innovation and circular business transformation in the fashion sector.

waanzen.in (<https://waanzen.in/>), the project’s technological partner, is responsible for developing the digital Just Fashion platform that will integrate research outputs, tools, and project results into a user-friendly and accessible environment, ensuring that the platform is not only functional but also engaging and inclusive. The team is committed to several development phases across the project lifetime and underscores the essential role of technology partners in enabling fashion SMEs to move towards circular business models.

A collaborative European effort

Just Fashion is ultimately a collective European effort aimed at transforming the fashion sector into a more sustainable and circular, resilient, fair and inclusive industry. Through six pilot cases in different European countries (Spain (Boboli), Italy (Staff Jersey), Belgium (Xandres and REantwerp), Germany (Luisa Cerano), and North Macedonia (Bastet Noir)), support agencies, policy engagement, and the development of innovative tools, strategies and sustainable business models, the project supports (M)SMEs in navigating both environmental challenges and regulatory change.

By combining academic excellence, interdisciplinary collaboration, industry expertise, policy implementation and evaluation, and technological innovation, the consortium works closely together to deliver and find practical and tailor-made solutions, that are also relevant for the broader fashion industry. Just Fashion’s long-term goal is not only to support compliance with EU sustainability frameworks, but to actively reshape the way fashion is designed, produced, distributed and consumed.



Launch Meeting, University of Antwerp, 6 February 2025 | [Just Fashion logo download](#) | [EU emblem download](#)

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