

Sustainable Apparel and Textiles Conference

Redesigning the business case:

Where sustainability creates value, function by function and tier by tier

April 21-22 2027 | Amsterdam

The Sustainable Apparel and Textiles Conference brings together brand leaders, manufacturers, investors, policymakers and innovators for two days of practical debate and workshops.

Held behind closed doors, the agenda is designed to unpack the how and, crucially, the how not to, as the industry works toward the transformation it needs.

Overview:

The 2027 programme is structured around six pillars:

- circular systems and products
- climate action
- transparency and consumer trust
- governance and finance
- people and worker resilience
- supply chain security

Day 0 – Tuesday, 20th April

Afternoon: **Half-day hackathon** ●●●●●●

The afternoon offers a hackathon-style session for 40 participants: deep thinking on one topic per table, paired with the chance to rotate through groups and get a broad view across a full value chain.

Held strictly under Chatham House rule with a follow-up briefing shared to all participants.

17.30-18.30: **Early-registration networking drinks**

Day 1 | Wednesday, 21st April | The next 12 months

8.00-9.00 **Arrival, light breakfast and matchmaking**

9.00-9.25 **Equitable leadership: Building sustainability strategy with the women who make apparel**



Apparel is overwhelmingly dependent on women. Over 80% of garment workers are women ([ILO](#)), yet women remain underrepresented on the boards that profit from their work.

Europe's record 2026 heatwaves gave a taste of what garment workers in the Global South already live with. [UNEP](#) now expects warming to cross 1.5°C within the next few years, and names inclusive governance as a condition for keeping that overshoot small and short. Without women in those decisions, the gap between who profits and who pays will widen.

This opening fireside chat brings climate leadership and collective bargaining front and centre. Speakers will share where women's leadership is shifting decisions, and the role for everyone in making shared leadership standard.

9.25-10.10 **Pricing the cost of inaction: The metrics and arguments that make supply chain resilience urgent** • •

Resilience has become the boardroom's word of choice. S&P 500 companies mentioned it around 600 times on earnings calls in a single quarter of 2026, up from under 100 a decade ago ([Bloomberg](#)). As the term stretches, it risks becoming another empty signifier, a criticism already levelled at ESG and circularity.

Made specific and quantified, resilience earns its place. Tariffs and energy price shocks have exposed the cost of fragile supply chains, while resale growth and greenwashing enforcement show where targeted investment can open revenue and reduce risk.

Yet 62% of chief sustainability officers cite uncertain cost-benefit assessments as a key constraint ([WEF, 2026](#)). Sustainability leaders have made the value case for a decade, yet businesses still price the cost of action more readily than the cost of inaction.

This session brings together C-suite voices to price what supply chain fragility actually costs, and set out the metrics that turn resilience from boardroom language into investment decisions.

10.10-10.45 **"How cheap can you make this?" Reprioritising the supplier scorecard** • •

Clothing prices have defied inflation, staying cheap while almost everything else has got more expensive. A 2026 report by [Public Eye and Clean Clothes Campaign](#) found many buyers still source a standard cotton T-shirt for around USD 2-3, leaving suppliers to absorb rising operating costs.

Brands and suppliers are commercial partners, each with its own targets to meet, and those priorities will sometimes conflict. That doesn't mean brands should shift risk onto suppliers, or that suppliers should pass the squeeze onto workers.

Supplier scorecards can offer objective performance indicators but how do we choose the right metrics? This session looks at how scorecards can reward sustainability in buying decisions and support longer-term partnerships.

- Weighting: How much should sustainability performance count against price and service levels? What happens to sourcing decisions when it does?
- Incentives: How order volumes, contract length and better payment terms can give suppliers a commercial reason to invest in sustainability.
- Futureproofing: Should a minimum threshold exist that excludes suppliers performing poorly on climate?
- A buyer scorecard: What channels exist so suppliers can give honest feedback to buyers without fear of losing orders?

10.45–11.30 **Break and speed networking**

11.30–12.15 **Live Q&A with the European Commission: What the ESPR textiles delegated act will ask of brands and suppliers** ●●

Compliance has been described as both an anchor and handcuffs for sustainability teams. At Innovation Forum's last Q&A with the European Commission, the room split almost evenly on whether EU regulation made their work significantly easier or significantly harder.

With clear guidance and comparable disclosure, regulation can reset the business case. That clarity is still pending, particularly around ESPR and how emerging regulation aligns with other region's regulation. This live session sets out exactly what is known so far with the European Commission and puts your questions to the panel about how to prepare, with a focus on:

- Eco modulation: how do we connect Ecodesign requirements with eco modulation
- Enforcement: what non-compliance will look like, starting with the destruction ban
- Suppliers: what manufacturers outside the EU should prepare for on testing, data and cost
- Global alignment: how should global brands navigate varying and at times contradictory expectations in regions

12.15–12.35 **Collect once, use many times: How to build one product dataset to serve traceability demands** ●●●

Digital product passports, green claims under EmpCo and the EU Forced Labour Regulation all rely on verified data tied to individual products. This 20-minute session covers how to build one SKU-level dataset that serves across regulations, and what to have prepared now even before the delegated act for DPPs and other regulations are published.

12.35–12.45 **The elephants still in the room** ●●●●●●

Add the issues the morning hasn't yet covered to Slido. Two provocateurs respond to the most-voted topics, then you can discuss what you think is the biggest elephant in the room before the afternoon breakouts.

12.45–13.45 **Lunch + optional lunchtime exercise**

For more information or to get involved, please contact [Niamh Campbell](#).

13.45–14.35 **Breakout sessions**

* Join 'This house believes' for high-energy debates where participants are randomly assigned a side to argue. Limited to 15 participants per room for more intimate, engaging discussion.

1. *Worker accountability* – **The paradox of proof for the EU Forced Labour Regulation: How to ensure data counts as evidence** ● ●
2. *The investment case* – **Hard to abate or hard to fund? The financing models that can decarbonise smaller mills and dyehouses** ● ●
3. *Product footprint* – **Circular design as default: Making it the easiest option for design teams** ●
4. *Decision-grade data* – **Trusting the score: What PEFCR and France's eco-score can prove about a garment's impact** ● ●
5. *This house believes** – **Social audits do more harm than good** ● ●

14.35–15.25 **Breakout sessions**

6. *Worker accountability* – **Super El Niño: What's working against extreme weather on the factory floor, and who pays for it?** ● ●
7. *The investment case* – **Can takeback pay? The economics of collection and sorting** ● ●
8. *Product footprint* – **PFAS-free vs performance: The trade-offs of safer chemistry** ●
9. *Decision-grade data* – **Seven months into EmpCo: The claims and labels brands can still rely on** ●
10. *This house believes** – **On-demand manufacturing just moves the stock risk onto suppliers** ● ●

15.25–16.10 **Networking break**

16.10–17.00 **Breakout sessions**

11. *Worker accountability* – **Preventing accidents, paying when they happen: what binding brand commitments on worker safety should cover** ● ●
12. *The investment case* – **Are the bottlenecks in textile-to-textile infrastructure a capital or a coordination challenge?** ● ●
13. *Product footprint* – **Biodiversity calculations: how do we expand product impact beyond just carbon?** ● ●
14. *Decision-grade data* – **Trace forward from the fibre or back from Tier 1? Proving cotton origin** ● ●
15. *This house believes** – **A more sustainable industry isn't possible under the current rules of competition** ●

17.00– **Networking drinks**

For more information or to get involved, please contact [Niamh Campbell](#).

Day 2 | Thursday, 22nd April | The next decade

8.00-9.00 **Arrival and light breakfast**

9.00-10.15 **Morning round one**

Discussion panels	Fishbowl formats	Learning groups
9.00-9:30 AI won't be stopped, but can it be steered? Where AI could cut apparel's emissions and where it adds to them ●●	9.00-10.15 Lessons from different industries: making circularity a genuine challenger to linear business models ●●	9.00-10.15 Cost per wear: Behavioural levers that make durable products the convenient choice ●●
9:30-10:15 How might a one-stop shop materialise for textiles EPR? ●●		

10.15-11.00 **Networking break**

11.00-12.15 **Morning round two**

Discussion panels	Fishbowl formats	Learning groups
11.00-11.45 Can we price out virgin polyester? What it would take for alternatives to compete ●●	11.00-12.15 Balancing the resale and traceability opportunities of the DPP against the data burden on suppliers ●●	11.00-12.15 Who's paying for Europe's clothes after they leave Europe? Building an equitable EPR model in the Global South ●●
11.45-12.15 Proving regenerative: Measuring outcomes when every farm is different ●●		

12.15-13.15 **Lunch**

13.15-13.45 **C-suite Q&A: How do we build a culture of sustainability into formal and informal governance channels?** ●

For more information or to get involved, please contact [Niamh Campbell](#).

13.45–15.15 **Scenario-based roundtables**

These scenarios are focused discussions for deeper engagement and collaborative problem-solving. Each table gets a real-world scenario and 40 minutes to work through it with peers and a facilitator. We'll run two rounds of each session for participants to join two different tables on a first-come, first-served basis.

1. **How would you fare as a supplier? A simulation of the cost squeeze** ● ●
 - Groups of three take roles at a supplier and make decisions under real capital and compliance pressure: a price cut, a certification deadline and a loan that needs refinancing.
2. **Your lead times are nine months, and a third of last season's range sold at markdown or didn't sell at all** ● ●
 - Markdowns are eroding gross margin, and surplus exported through second-hand channels ends up in Global South markets with reputational risk. Decide what you change first in how you plan and order, and how you'll show the board the margin it recovers.
3. **Your company is about to come into CSRD scope for the first time** ● ●
 - The board sees a compliance cost. Finance, sourcing and risk already hold much of the data, each in a different format. Agree what you want the reporting to achieve for the business beyond compliance. Then decide which existing workflows, such as supplier onboarding or annual budgeting, could collect the data so it doesn't become a separate exercise.
4. **Your government is initiating a reduced VAT rate for circular products and services, and you've been invited onto the working group** ● ●
 - The finance ministry is worried about lost revenue and fraud, while retailers want the rate to cover as much as possible. Agree what qualifies, Imagining the right kind of policy to shift towards demand and market creation
5. **A union report shows your top supplier pays 60% of a living wage. Close the gap by 2030.** ● ●
 - You buy 20% of the factory's output, and closing your share of the gap would add roughly €0.40 per garment. Buying says prices can't rise this season. Build a plan the supplier, the union and your buying team would all sign.
6. **Your key dyeing and finishing cluster faces water rationing within two years. What do you do?** ● ●
 - Groundwater in the region is falling every year. Your largest wet-processing supplier handles 40% of your dyed and finished volume and warns that the local authority is preparing to cap industrial withdrawals.

For more information or to get involved, please contact [Niamh Campbell](#).

7. A worker at a Tier 2 mill has posted online about unpaid overtime, and your grievance channel has never heard from that site ●●

- *Three other brands source from the mill, and the owner denies the claims. Decide how you verify the complaint and protect the workers who raised it. Then redesign your mechanism so the next complaint reaches you first.*

8. 150°C steam heat pumps are now commercially proven. Your key wet-processing hub has the technology but not the financing or the clean power to run it. Unlock it. ●●

- *Your five largest dyehouses share one industrial zone, the grid runs mainly on coal and no local utility offers renewable PPAs. Four other brands buy from the same zone. Build a plan for joint financing and clean power that the mills, the other buyers and the utility would sign.*

9. It's 2037, and this roundtable is meeting again ●

- *Imagine it's 10 years on and you're reflecting on the shared projects the industry called impossible in 2027. Discuss which projects succeeded, what changed to make them possible, whether in policy, finance, leadership or the terms of collaboration between competitors. Agree which of those changes could start this year.*

15.15-15.45 Key takeaways and the elephants to take back to the office