

WELL DRESSED IN A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Status of six projects initiated under the Nordic action plan for sustainable fashion and textiles



INTRODUCTION

In April 2015, under the Danish Presidency, the Nordic Council of Ministers for the Environment launched the action plan for sustainable fashion and textiles - *Well dressed in a clean environment*.

The action plan includes six initiatives that seed and inspire action to reduce the environmental impacts of Nordic design supply and consumption of fashion and textiles.

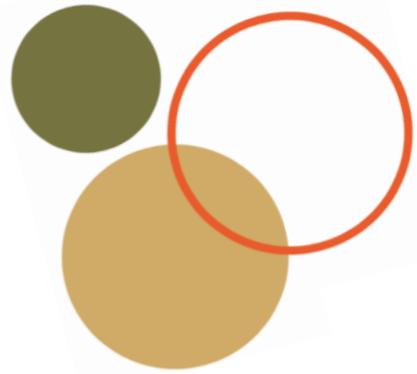
All of these initiatives have been translated into concrete projects initiated with funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers. These cover a wide spectrum of themes from encouraging greener procurement of textiles in the healthcare sector, to assisting design schools in the development and promotion of sustainable fashion design courses.

One thing that the six projects have in common is that they all initiate processes, platforms or networks that it is hoped will continue after the project itself is over.

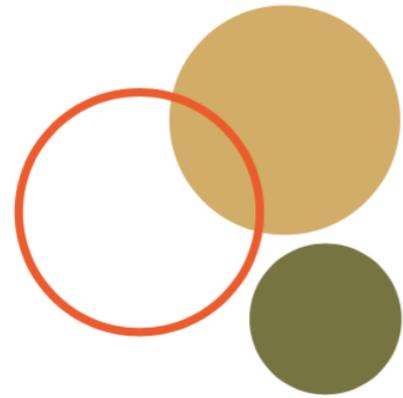
In this document we present short summaries of the current status and future activities of the six projects.

The projects are:

1. Green procurement of textiles in the health-care sector
2. Greater Nordic influence in the EU on harmful chemicals
3. Promoting the supply of ecolabelled products
4. Promotion of sustainable Nordic design through education
5. Stimulating the Demand for Recycled and Recyclable Textiles
6. Supplier requirements for sustainable textiles production



GREEN PROCUREMENT OF TEXTILES IN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR



Background and aims

The healthcare sector consumes large amounts of textiles: staff uniforms, bed linen, patient clothing and operation room gowns. Placing green criteria in procurement contracts can increase the demand for greener textiles and textile services. This in turn should stimulate green innovation in supply.

Not all healthcare procurers have resources or knowledge available to apply green criteria in an optimal way. This project aims to provide assistance to these procurers.

Outputs

- **A Nordic Guide on Green Procurement of Healthcare Textiles** equipping healthcare procurers with information, resources and practical examples.
- **A Nordic Network for Greening of Healthcare Procurement** which will continue after the project end. The network is expected to continue under the umbrella of Nordic Center for Sustainable Healthcare (NCSH) focusing on additional groups of products and services procured in the healthcare sector.

Who's involved?

The project is being carried out by PlanMiljø (DK) in partnership with TEM at Lund University (SE) who runs the NCSH.

The project target group is procurers in the healthcare sector. This includes regions, municipalities or individual hospitals and health centres depending on the country. Procurers are involved via a Nordic network.

Overview of activities

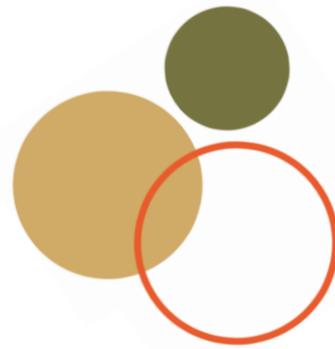
The first task was to find out how textiles are procured in Nordic countries. The team carried out an online questionnaire survey of procurers and produced fact sheets for each country summarising the findings.

A network of procurers was established and invited to two network meetings. The aim of the first meeting was to further investigate needs, and to examine what green procurement means in healthcare textiles. The project team developed a first guide for procurers, based on inputs from the network and literature studies. The guide was presented to the second network meeting to which suppliers were also invited and gave valuable inputs.

The project will end with a seminar in Stockholm where the final guide will be presented and opportunities for continuing the activities of the Network will be discussed.



GREATER NORDIC INFLUENCE IN THE EU ON HARMFUL CHEMICALS



Background and aims

A wide range of chemicals are used in textile manufacturing some of which can cause environmental or health impacts in different phases of the life cycle. It is difficult for actors along the supply chain including the final consumer to gain an overview of the potential harmful content of textile products since the supply chain is long, complex and global.

The project aims to give the Nordic countries a common basis for declarations/labelling of chemical content in textile products. In addition, the project aims to assist the Nordic region in contributing to the EU Strategy for a Non-toxic Environment as called for by the 7th Environment Action Programme, in the area of chemicals in textiles.

Outputs

- An **analysis on the needs for, and barriers to, a legal requirement** on declaration and/or labelling of chemicals in textiles.
- A first proposal for a **joint Nordic strategy for establishing a system of declaration and/or labelling** within the EU.
- **Nordic input to the EU** on a future strategy for toxic-free trade in textiles.

Who's involved?

The project is being carried out by Swerea IVF (SE) with the informal *Nordic Group for Chemicals* as a reference group. The immediate target group for the project is the Nordic Authorities, but the long-term beneficiaries would be companies in the fashion and textile industry and associated trade organisations.

Overview of activities

The project began at the end of 2015 with the first main project task which was to develop an analysis of the needs and barriers for legal requirements for declarations on chemical content and chemicals used in production processes.

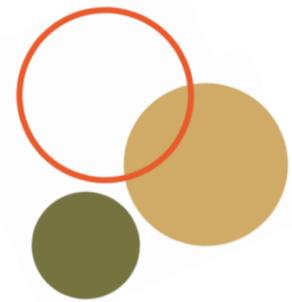
The task began with three parallel activities: mapping of initiatives in this area in Europe and further afield; an investigation of consumer needs and expectations with respect to declarations and labels; and a mapping and characterisation of chemicals used in the sector. The team then carried out an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of declarations/ labelling of chemicals in textiles and obstacles to its implementation.

The analysis will be published in early 2017. The final report will also include proposals for two main options for legal frameworks for a declaration and/or labelling requirement, plus a first proposal on relevant chemicals to be covered by a declaration.

The second project task - providing input to the EU's coming strategy for toxic-free textiles - has centred around a workshop that was held in Reykjavik on September 1st 2016. In December 2016 the Nordic countries sent a letter to the European Commission with proposals to address textiles when developing the Strategy for a Non-toxic Environment.



PROMOTING THE SUPPLY OF ECO-LABELLED PRODUCTS



Who's involved?

The project is being carried out by Nordic Ecolabelling with a subgroup of the *Nordic Sustainable Consumption and Production group* (HKP) as steering group. The target groups for the project are Nordic textile producers and brands and their suppliers, and eventually Nordic consumers.

Background and aims

Ecolabels such as the Nordic Swan and EU Ecolabel can play an important role in reducing the environmental impact of textiles purchased in Nordic countries. Both the demand for, and supply of, textiles with such labels remain low in Nordic countries, mostly restricted to niche markets such as baby clothes and workwear.

This project aims to examine and propose means for promoting ecolabelled textiles among Nordic producers and consumers, to increase their share of the market. The project will also take a global perspective linking to production clusters in, for example, Tiripur in India and how producers there can be encouraged to engage in ecolabelling initiatives.

Outputs

- A **market analysis on the supply of, and demand for ecolabelled textiles** including identification of barriers and challenges in applications for labels.
- A **proposal for measures to increase the market share** of ecolabelled textiles in Nordic countries.

Overview of activities

The project began in early 2016 with a market analysis of ecolabelled textiles with focus on the Nordic Swan and the EU Ecolabel. The project team interviewed brands and producers with labelled textile products, and case officers in national Nordic Ecolabelling offices.

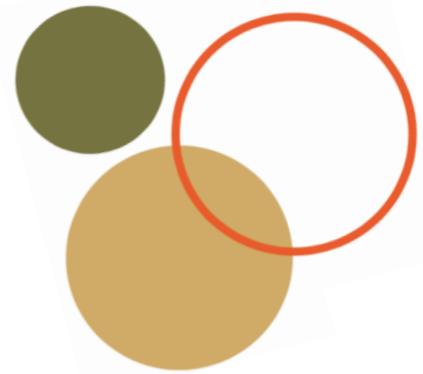
The objective was to identify what motivates companies to apply for ecolabel licenses for various kinds of products and what challenges they found during the process. These could, for example, include challenges with managing global production chains, establishing procedures, and obtaining the necessary documentation. A draft report of the market survey will be published during the first half of 2017.

The findings of the market analysis will be used as the basis for developing recommendations to increase the market share of ecolabelled textiles. This may include, proposals for adjustments of the ecolabel criteria, application processes and documentation needs, to facilitate applicants better in the application process. Measures for increasing the demand for ecolabelled textiles in households and organisations will also be identified.

The proposals will be finalised during the summer of 2017. The suggestions for revised ecolabel criteria will provide input to a coming revision of the criteria for the Nordic Swan label for Textiles, Hides/skin and Leather and can provide input to the EU Commission's review of the EU Ecolabel criteria for textiles that is due to take place 2017/18.



PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE NORDIC DESIGN THROUGH EDUCATION



Background and aims

Designers have a major role to play in shifting the fashion industry towards greater sustainability. A prerequisite is that designers have an understanding of how to design for sustainability across the lifecycle of a textile product. While Nordic resources and teaching materials on sustainable design exist these are fragmented. There is a need for stronger cooperation and coordination between Nordic actors to build up, share and streamline efforts in training and teaching current and future designers in sustainable design.

This project will facilitate this through establishing a user panel of educators and designers and by establishing a digital platform via which students, schools, and designers can share and access information. The platform will brand Nordic education in sustainable design in the Nordic countries and internationally

Outputs

- A **digital platform for schools and existing and future designers**. The platform will give an overview of courses on sustainable textile design and other useful resources.
- A **seminar to launch the platform** and further raise awareness of education and training in sustainable design of fashion and textiles.
- Establishment of a **Nordic network of educators and designers** to cooperate on the development of a common Nordic educational package for sustainable design and other issues in the future.

Who's involved?

The project is being carried out by a Danish partnership of creative design studio Ironflag and digital bureau Strøm Works in close cooperation with Danish Fashion Institute (DAFI) and fashionforum.dk. The target group for the project will be design educators and current and future designers, product developers and purchasers with an interest in sustainable fashion design.

Overview of activities

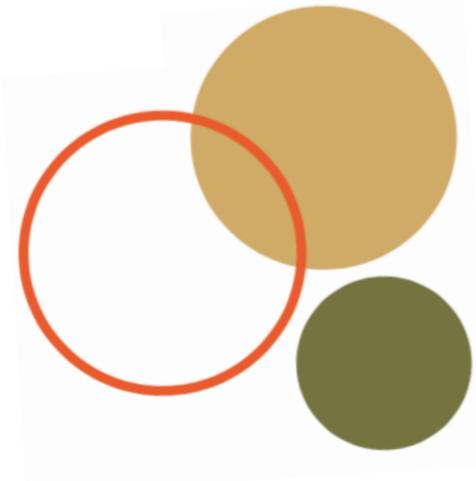
The project was commissioned in October 2016. The project began with outlining the scope and format of the digital platform for educators and designers. At its basic level the platform will include information about available education and training opportunities for sustainable design of fashion and textiles in Nordic countries but it will also include other resources.

A user panel of educators and designers is currently being assembled. The panel will provide a sounding board for proposals on framing what kinds of resources could be hosted by the platform to add most value to support collaboration between schools, and how this would best be accessed. The first user panel discussions will take place in February 2017.

The digital platform will be launched at a seminar during Spring 2017 most likely in connection with the 2017 Copenhagen Fashion Summit, the world's largest sustainable fashion forum. The project will end with a seminar where opportunities for the establishment of a network to develop common educational material for sustainable design will be discussed.



STIMULATING THE DEMAND FOR RECYCLED AND RECYCLABLE TEXTILES



Background and aims

Recycling of worn-out clothing back into new textile products is a long-term sustainability goal for many in the textile industry. It would close material loops and reduce demands on virgin resources. However, there are a number of technical obstacles to textile-to-textile recycling and the demand for, and the supply of, sufficient quality recycled fibres remains limited.

This project aims to increase knowledge among stakeholders of the opportunities for recycling and how these can be implemented. It will focus at both ends of the loop. On the **Push** - textile products that are designed for disassembly and fibre recovery - and on the **Pull** - demand for recycled fibres in new products.

Outputs

- **Case Wallet** - presentations of companies/initiatives that are engaging in design for recycling, in demand for recycled fibres and in full closed-loop initiatives.
- **Project Report** - deeper analysis of how recycled fibres can be matched with design needs, and how products can be designed for recycling.
- **Matchmaking seminar** - bringing designers, researchers and suppliers of recycled fibres together to discuss Nordic opportunities for closing fibre loops.

Who's involved?

The project is being carried out by a Nordic consortium led by PlanMiljø (DK), with the Swedish Environmental Research Institute (IVL), and the Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT). The target groups are clothing and textile brands and their designers, together with textile collectors and recyclers.

Overview of activities

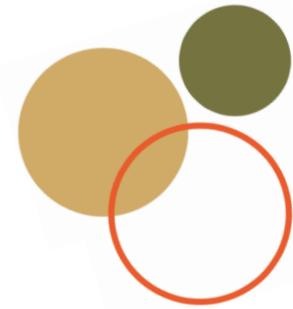
The project has just got underway. The team is contacting frontrunners across the Nordic region as potential subjects for case presentations: individual companies and consortia with initiatives aimed at closing the fibre loop.

The team will uncover what works and what doesn't and what obstacles were experienced on the way. They will also find out how designers and brands have communicated with upstream and downstream stakeholders. Critical will be to hear how well designers' needs for fibres can be matched by suppliers, and on the other side of the coin, to hear from recycling companies what designers can do to increase recyclability. This could be avoidance of certain dye types, avoiding fibre mixes, design for disassembly and so on.

A seminar will be held in September 2017 to disseminate key findings, spread case presentations and most importantly, to bring the stakeholders together to sow the seeds for new initiatives.



SUPPLIER REQUIREMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE TEXTILES PRODUCTION



Background and aims

Many impacts of textile products occur during production. However, long and complicated supply chains for garments can present a challenge to brands that want to engage in cleaner processes. It can be difficult for SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in particular to establish and monitor requirements on complex issues such as chemical use in production.

This project aims to assist Nordic textile companies in developing sustainability requirements for chemical use in their chains of suppliers. This can be the first stage in a wider transition towards common Nordic supplier requirements.

Outputs

- A **Step-by-step guide on control and management** of sustainability criteria for chemical use in textile supply chains.
- A proposal for inspiration and further discussions on **Minimum criteria on chemicals content** in textiles that Nordic textiles companies can demand from their suppliers.

Who's involved?

The project is being carried out by a Danish partnership of Compliance House and VIA University/VIA Design. The target group for the project are companies and particularly SMEs in the fashion and textile industry and associated trade organisations in Nordic countries.

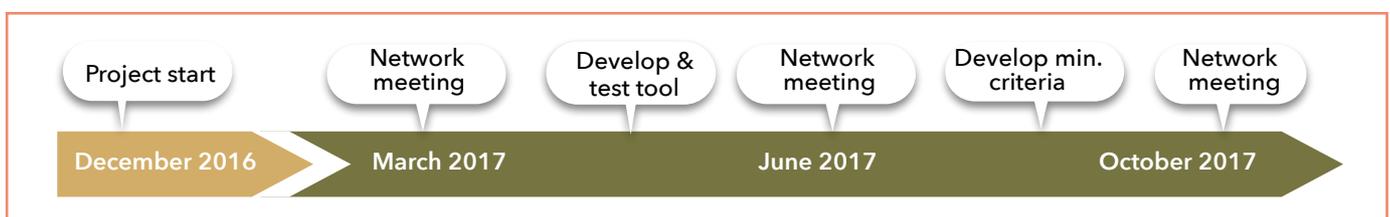
Overview of activities

The project has just been commissioned. The first task will be to establish a network of textile trade organisations and relevant companies across the region to support the activities in the project. Three network meetings will be held in March, June, and October 2017.

With the assistance of the Network the project team will map out and compare existing tools that assist companies in managing chemical use in their supply chains. The team will also carry out a survey of textile companies on their needs, use of existing tools and what works and doesn't work for them.

The team will develop a first tool on the basis of their findings. Rather than reinventing the wheel this will make use of, or link, to existing tools and guides as far as possible. The functionality of the tool will regularly be tested among companies during the development (June 2017). The team and Network will develop a dissemination plan for the tool to make sure it finds its way to the companies that most need it.

Finally, the team will develop a set of minimum criteria on chemical content in textiles for supply chains intended for inspiration and further discussion amongst Nordic textile companies.





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