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## CIRCULAR – BIO-BASED – DIGITAL: ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN TEXTILE TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM EXPLORES FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE INDUSTRY

### General Assembly elects Michael Kamm as new President of the Textile ETP

*More than 180 members of the European Textile Technology Platform (Textile ETP) and other stakeholders from 30 countries gathered on 24-25 April in Brussels to explore future technology, industry and policy directions for the European Textile and Clothing industry. The annual public event of the Textile ETP, this year co-organised with EURATEX, is the place to be to learn about the latest European textile research and the impact of EU policies and funding programmes.*

The textile and clothing industry is undergoing radical change in Europe and globally driven by end market, technology and regulatory forces that will make the sector more sustainable, responsible and consumer-driven.

The linear product life cycle of “produce – use – dispose” will have to be replaced by a much more **circular model**, which either recycles and re-uses materials in an industrial cycle or safely returns them into the biological cycle. The results of EU-project **RESYNTEX**, which explored the technological feasibility and economic viability of bio-chemical recycling of major textile fibre types, was presented in a full session. Major technological advances were achieved by the project, thorough business scenario and life cycle analysis was carried out and a pilot plant has been set up in Maribor, Slovenia. The way to large-scale industrial application however is still long and an expert panel discussion at the end of the RESYNTEX session concluded that significant further technology development work is needed and must be complemented by smart regulatory and economic incentives before major industry investments can be made.

The seemingly unstoppable market share growth of synthetic fossil-based textile fibres experienced over the last decades may also soon reverse, driven by political and market pressures aiming at slowing down fossil CO<sub>2</sub> release into the atmosphere and (micro)plastic pollution of land and seas. While the main natural fibres like cotton or wool are unlikely to fill the gap, man-made cellulosics and a wide range of other bio-polymer based fibres are expected to substantially grow their share in the coming decades. The final results of the EU project **Bio4Self** demonstrated that **bio-based textile fibres** can find uses well beyond clothing and interior textiles and make for interesting solutions for many technical textile and composite markets, provided they are processed in the correct way.

The **digital transformation** of manufacturing, industrial supply chains and distribution is another inevitable innovation trend for the textile and clothing industry. It doesn't only enable



to use of data to optimize and speed up processes, but also creates unprecedented levels of transparency in global value chains all the way to the end consumer. This in turn leads to the rise of new business models that expose and exploit unbalanced value capture in current global fashion supply chains and potentially eradicate the massive amounts of waste and overproduction in the conventional fast fashion system. EU projects such as **TCBL** or **FBD\_BMODEL** try to demonstrate that local and regional creative business labs connected to digital microfactories for efficient short run production can be the answer and reorient the fashion business from a cost-based to a value-based competitive model.

The fusion of digital technologies with textile and fashion products in the form of smart textiles or fashiontech is another major avenue for innovation and eventual business growth. The soon to start EU project **SmartX** will seed-fund 40 projects to accelerate manufacturing of smart technical textile products and the already running **DeFINE** project coaches fashiontech start-up's and small companies all across Europe.

The financial support of the European Commission for textile research and innovation through programmes such as HORIZON 2020 has the potential to pick up further in the coming years as many textile innovations cater to key themes in Europe's research and innovation policies such as sustainability, circular economy, bio-based materials, personalized health or the digitization of EU industry.

**Paolo Canonico**, the current ETP President stated in his opening words: *"Most professionals agree that the trends towards a more circular, bio-based, digital and smart textile and clothing industry is inevitable, but the technological, political and economical uncertainties in this process are high."* He therefore called upon continued support from EU policies and programmes to make this necessary transition successful especially for the many smaller companies of the sector.

Opening session keynote speaker **Janez Potocnik**, former EU Commissioner for Research and Environmental Policies stressed that "Current climate change policies in Europe and worldwide focus too one-sidedly on CO2 and the energy transition, while neglecting other crucial elements such as land, water and materials use and how to decouple the increase of global welfare from growth in the use of these resources. A sector like textiles and clothing must make its own contribution to a responsible management of these resources if it wants to call itself sustainable."

Closing session keynote speaker **Peter Dröll**, Director of Industrial Technologies at the European Commission's DG Research and Innovation encouraged the industry and its research community "to come with bold ideas for globally impactful textile innovations to be supported in the upcoming EU research and innovation framework programme HORIZON EUROPE" This programme is currently prepared for launch in early 2021.

### **New Strategy and Governing Board Leadership for the Textile ETP**

To prepare the European textile and clothing industry and research community for these new challenges the Textile ETP in its General Assembly adopted a new strategy for the coming years. The Platform will work more focussed on a few selected strategic textile innovation themes and try to involve all value chain actors in these technologies or markets, whether textile or textile-related. These themes will be selected later this year.



The General Assembly also endorsed the members of its Governing Board for the period of July 2019 to June 2020 and elected **Michael Kamm**, Germany as its **new President**. Out-going President Paolo Canonico, Italy will remain at the Board as Vice-President Treasurer, joined by Katarzyna Grabowska, AUTEX (Poland) and Braz Costa, Textranet (Portugal) as further Vice-Presidents.

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Textile ETP - the European Technology Platform for the Future of Textiles and Clothing is an experts network of all stakeholders involved in textile and clothing related research and innovation across Europe. Launched in 2004, the platform has grown into the largest European textile research and innovation network connecting some 200 member organisations and well over 500 individual experts across Europe.

More: [www.textile-platform.eu](http://www.textile-platform.eu)