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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 16 December 2025 Urgent need for action at European level concerning the environmental and economic effects of ultra-fast fashion - Information from Finland, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, supported by Belgium

This joint non-paper aims to draw the Commission's attention to the environmental and economic impact and the need to act against industrial and commercial practices promoted by ultra-fast fashion players.

The **European Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles**, published in 2022, warned about the significant impact of textile consumption at European level, ranking it as the fourth biggest contributor to environmental issues and climate change. The economic impact on employment and the competitiveness of our industrial fabric and businesses is equally massive.

These environmental and economic impacts are exacerbated by the phenomenon of ultra-fast fashion, which is characterised by the placing on the market, in many cases using digital platforms, of a very large number of low-priced products¹, renewed at an extreme frequency, that are not even part of collections.

As a result of these industrial and commercial practices, consumers are encouraged to consume more impulsively and have very lesser incentives to wear, store or repair these garments after buying them.

Recent studies show that the rate of errors and unnecessary purchases is almost twice as high in ultra-fast fashion than in first-generation fast fashion, with its consumers being twice as likely as others to admit that they keep their clothes for a shorter period of time.

Ultra-fast fashion products are predominantly imported from countries outside the European Union (EU), posing a threat to our economies and hindering efforts of a relocation of a circular textile industry to Europe. The economic and employment impact for our industrial fabric and businesses is severe– as evidenced by the announced closures of textile factories and many clothing chains. At the same time, **exports of textile waste from the EU to third countries have increased sharply, despite these countries lacking the capacity** to ensure proper management of waste, which often ends up in landfills or in nature. The rise of ultra-fast fashion continues to weaken the European textile and clothing sector, which is already facing significant challenges. These difficulties may directly influence employment and environment. Ultra-fast fashion which is mostly distributed via digital platforms may also affect the attractiveness of city centres: commercial vacancies of downtown shops are increasing and local shops are disappearing with the effect of commercial desertification of our cities.

¹ Kantar, Fashion and Circular Economy, 2022: the average price of an entry-level item is €8.2, which is three times cheaper than a mid-range item with an average price of €24.2 and almost 8 times cheaper than a high-end product with an average price of €62.

The **European co-legislators started to address some aspects of these issues**, on the one hand, through the adoption of the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, the framework being a unique opportunity to environmentally regulate products entering the European market and put in place environmental labelling on textiles, and, on the other hand, through the targeted revision of the Waste Framework Directive – aimed at reducing textile waste – which for the first time emphasises the harmful effects of ultra-fast fashion and introduces the possibility of modulation of eco-contributions based on the industrial and commercial practices of these producers.

However, **the rapid evolution of the industrial and environmental situation shows that work needs to be accelerated with an arsenal of measures dealing with the subject from several angles, and with appropriate means of control.**

These constraints require Member States to adopt national measures. A bill to reduce the environmental impact of the textile industry is under discussion in the French Parliament. This bill is a **strong signal that the triple threat posed by ultra-fast fashion needs to be tackled**: the push towards overconsumption, its adverse environmental effects and the unfair competitive practices from certain third countries that threaten our businesses.

However, given the global scale of the phenomenon and its effects on the internal market and on the application of the environmental acquis, it is at EU level that very firm and rapid action is needed.

As the body of EU norms currently only partially addresses these challenges, **we call for the immediate implementation at European level of concrete measures to target ultra-fast fashion.**

To this end, keeping in mind the necessity to avoid undue administrative burden, it is essential to: define this phenomenon, raise awareness and inform consumers about the effects of ultra-fast fashion, effectively regulate advertising and commercial practices of digital platforms and ensure that they meet EU environmental standards, apply the polluter pays principle by modulating eco-contributions on the basis of the industrial and commercial practices of ultra-fast fashion, a first characterisation of which was outlined in the recent amendment of the Waste Framework Directive and adopt ecodesign requirements for textile products as soon as possible.