

STAND Up! Project

Sustainable Textile Action for Networking and Development of circular economy business ventures in the Mediterranean

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The need for the **Mediterranean textile sector** to make a **social and economic transition** and to create a more responsible circular model has become increasingly evident in recent years. Its cross-border nature makes it one of the key industries in the basin and highlights the necessity to improve the social and environmental conditions of the entire field as well as create new job opportunities.

The solution to this changeover has been found in innovative entrepreneurship which, through pioneering methods and ideas, shall provoke both employment development and environmental benefits in all involved regions.

Supporting textile entrepreneurs and eco-innovative ventures in seizing the business opportunities that the green evolution can generate has therefore become the main underlying concept behind the [STAND Up! Project](#), funded by the European Union under the [ENI CBC Med Programme](#), which, in order to make the start-ups in the textile sector more competitive, but also to strengthen the value chain and to establish profitable cross-border linkages in the Mediterranean, undertakes a wide range of actions within training, financial grants, market stimulation, technology transfer, IPR protection and more.

The STAND Up! Project

STAND Up!, “Sustainable Textile Action for Networking and Development of circular economy business ventures in the Mediterranean”, is an European project aiming at supporting the transition towards a more circular and responsible model of the textile sector in the mediterranean basin, both socially and environmentally.

The project sees the inclusion of five different Countries in the Mediterranean area: Italy, Spain, Lebanon, Tunisia and Egypt, and seeks not only to spark the creation and growth of companies but also to provide decent employment opportunities in the textile field, all while reducing the environmental footprint of the very sector in the basin. The accomplishment of these goals is reached through the stimulation and implementation of innovative entrepreneurship as this, if properly triggered, can lead to environmental benefits and increased employment in all interested regions.

STAND Up! therefore advocates the importance and key role that the implementation of a more circular and sustainable economy can play for the future of not only the Mediterranean but the world at large and does so via both ground-breaking eco-innovation initiatives and the endorsement of textile entrepreneurs within the participating countries, which result in the implementation of a series of exhaustive work packages (WPs).

Overall background

STAND Up! is one of the 23 different projects funded by the ENI CBC Med Programme, which aims at implementing both instruments and cooperation among the cross-border European neighbourhood focusing on two main objectives: promoting economic and social development through the creation of new jobs and finding common solutions to the typical environmental challenges facing the Mediterranean.

These goals have been divided into several thematic objectives in order to properly be implemented, and the STAND Up! project falls under the A.1 thematic goal, which specifically aims at entrepreneurship development, with priority for start-ups and recently established companies.

The reason behind the birth of the project has to be found in the venture and job creation opportunities that the development of eco-entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean area can generate. In fact, over the last 3 decades a valuable number of Mediterranean Countries have emerged as textile producers and exporters actively encouraging direct involvement of foreign textile multinationals in their domestic industry.

Despite the central role of the textile and clothing industry in the process of economic development, some serious concerns have anyway emerged in terms of both social and environmental side effects, particularly since this industry is one of the planet’s biggest



polluters. The current system in fact generates greenhouse gas emissions of 1.2 billion tonnes a year – more than international flights and maritime shipping combined (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, A new textiles economy: Redesigning fashion's future, 2017) - and the problem is set to get worse, considering that global clothing production has doubled in the past 15 years and, according to current forecasts, it will keep increasing of another 63% by 2030.

Main issues addressed by the project

The STAND Up! project aims to successfully address the multiple innovative problems of the Mediterranean textile sector, both in terms of process and product, so as to create a truly sustainable and circular economy for those involved and thus also contribute to the creation of further employment. In fact, regardless of the priority given to sustainable consumption and production (SCP) in the policy agenda of the Mediterranean, various market and social challenges continue to hinder the shift towards more sustainable market patterns, which in turn limits the ability to create employment.

Innovative start-ups and recently established enterprises have a pivotal role in the sector's transition to sustainable consumption and production. Their ability to affect real sector changes and provide increased employment opportunities are anyhow constrained by some innovative issues, which are multifaceted and all related to the inherent limitations of the mediterranean textile sector itself. The main ones, which the STAND Up! project strives to improve, are:

- **the fragmentation and non-specificity of business support services** (almost completely absent and poorly organised);
- **the disaggregation of the market** (it makes opportunities for technological innovation - necessary to adequately compete in the market - inaccessible);
- **the limitation to access global markets;**
- **the absence of adequate financing mechanisms** (it is increasingly difficult to raise the start-up's seed capital);
- **the lack of appropriate support from the industry and political landscape.**

Added to this, young entrepreneurs face further barriers affecting their chance of starting or leading businesses in the regions, such as skills mismatches and the crowding of graduates around limited, often public sector opportunities. Women are even further marginalised as complex social factors affect their inclusion in the formal workforce and their ability to progress in stable careers.

STAND Up! intends to address all these challenges by facilitating eco-entrepreneurship so as to shift the sector and to create decent, inclusive employment but, being the issues not only very complex and multifaceted but also related to the inherent limitations of the Mediterranean textile sector itself, in order to correctly respond to them, it has been necessary to break the project down into a detailed series of work packages, i.e., eco-



design actions and processes specifically aimed at achieving the two types of innovation needed:

- **Process innovations** (making the production processes of the companies involved cleaner and more efficient and giving existing resources a new capacity to create value);
- **Product innovations** (radically changing both the concept behind textile products and services and their very characteristics).

The Project work packages

Work Package (WP) identifies a series of eco-design actions and processes that the STAND Up! project established in order to create a more circular and sustainable economy in the Mediterranean textile industry.

Specifically, the programme involves the creation of 4 different packages, and to better navigate the process, each of these has been structured to address one or more specific problems in the Mediterranean textile sector and has also been broken down into a to-be-implemented exhaustive list of specific activities.

The aforementioned action packages are WP3, WP4, WP5 and WP6 and are fully explained below.

WP3 - Training and support services to eco-innovative textile and clothing entrepreneurs

WP3 represents the first level of the multiple activity packages implemented within the STAND-Up! Project. It concerns the training and support services offered to eco-innovative textile and clothing entrepreneurs active within the involved territories and finds its own implementation in the development of 4 different steps:

- a first phase of advanced training, the Green Business Model (GBM) training, to help startups gaining the specific tools and skills needed to move from their business idea to a sustainable and validated business model;
- a second stage of mentorship, the Early-stage and Growth Incubation path, to give startups the chance to participate in a shadowing period, with qualified tutors, that will enable them to implement their Green Business Model into a real Green Business Plan (GBP)
- the Access to Finance chapter, through which startups understand and get familiar with the investment landscape by acquiring those specific business skills and techniques required to both meet the financial market needs and to make their business models financially attractive;
- the Soft Landing Vouchers Scheme stage, thanks to which startups get access to international markets.



WP4 - Innovation and market support for eco-innovative textile and clothing ventures

WP4 has been designed to stimulate the textile market by connecting value-chain stakeholders and therefore works at helping eco-innovative textile and clothing companies by fostering innovation and market support services in the very sector. The Open Eco-Innovation Platform (OI), a technological platform which also generates a Transfer of Technology marketplace (ToT), has thus been built to accomplish such a goal, as well as a detailed vouchers scheme has been designed, organised and delivered to support ventures to capitalise on opportunities.

The WP4 as well has been split in three different steps, so as to make the process easier. The aforementioned moves are as following:

- Capitalise the open innovation platform (OI), in order to gather real challenges and opportunities and crowdsource profitable solutions;
- Operate a vouchers scheme to help ventures taking advantage of the opportunities created by the OI platform and ToT marketplace;
- Promote a technology transfer marketplace, through which connect both SMEs, academic and research institutions in need of eco-innovative solutions with start-ups and eco-innovators.

WP5 - Policy influence and eco-system stimulation to support eco-innovative textile and clothing ventures

WP5 aims at supporting eco-innovative textile and apparel firms within the Mediterranean region by working at the eco-system level and stimulating the sector and its governance to be more conducive to eco-innovation within the very field.

To guide and influence policy and sector governance changes and so to support entrepreneurs to affect environmental and social shifts in the sector, this work package works strives the development of:

- 3 different national policy documents, in order to set textile and clothing recommendations and sustainable national roadmaps for all involved countries;
- a specific prize for solutions to the textile manufacturing and clothing industry in the framework of the Mediterranean Regional Business Award for Eco-Innovation (MSSD), in order to highlight and mainstream eco-innovation in the wider sector.

WP6 - Policy influence and eco-system stimulation to support improved IPR

WP6 has the ultimate goal to protect eco-innovation and the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) within the clothing and textile industry and therefore strives at stimulating the ecosystem and influencing politics by working both at the sector and policy level and directly with ventures.

The main actions through which this specific activity package works in order to foster a cross-border best practice approach to IPR within the clothing and textiles sector are:

- the analysis of each country's IP due diligence, the current state of play regarding systems and governance, and the conduction of a policy gap analysis that results in a National Report of Intellectual Properties (IP);
- the creation of virtual community, not only to link stakeholders but also to stimulate learning, exchange and best practice sharing;
- the institution and offer to entrepreneurs of both a trademark and patenting voucher scheme and related support service, in order to facilitate improved IPR at the individual venture level.

Project expected achievements

STAND-Up! seeks multiple accomplishments, such as:

- 400 ideation stage entrepreneurs trained (at least 50% women and young people);
- Soft-landing voucher scheme of up to 5.000€ granted to 50 early and growth stage entrepreneurs;
- 1 Online Open Eco-Innovation Platform developed;
- Eco-innovation Voucher Scheme granted to 20 entrepreneurs to fund technology, product and service innovations;
- 3 national policy papers on sustainable textile and clothing national roadmaps drafted;
- Prizes amounting 50.000€ awarded for solutions to textile manufacturing and clothing industry;
- 70 practitioners and policy-makers engaged in a Virtual Community of Practice for Intellectual Property;
- Trade-mark and patenting voucher scheme granted to 40 ventures.

STAND-Up! Technical info

Partnership

- [MedWaves](#) (Lead partner, ES)
- [TEXFOR, Textile Industry Confederation](#) (ES)
- [Berytech Foundation](#) (LE)
- [SEKEM Development Foundation](#) (EG)
- [CETTEX - Textile Technical Centre](#) (TU)
- [Prato Textile Museum Foundation](#) (IT)
- [CITET - Tunis International Center for Environmental Technologies](#) (TU)

Budget

- **Total Budget** : 3.6M€
- **Contribution EU**: 90% of total budget

Project Duration: 30 months

- Start date 01 July 2020
- End date 30 September 2023
- Extension granted 30 September 2023

Project website

<https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/stand-up>