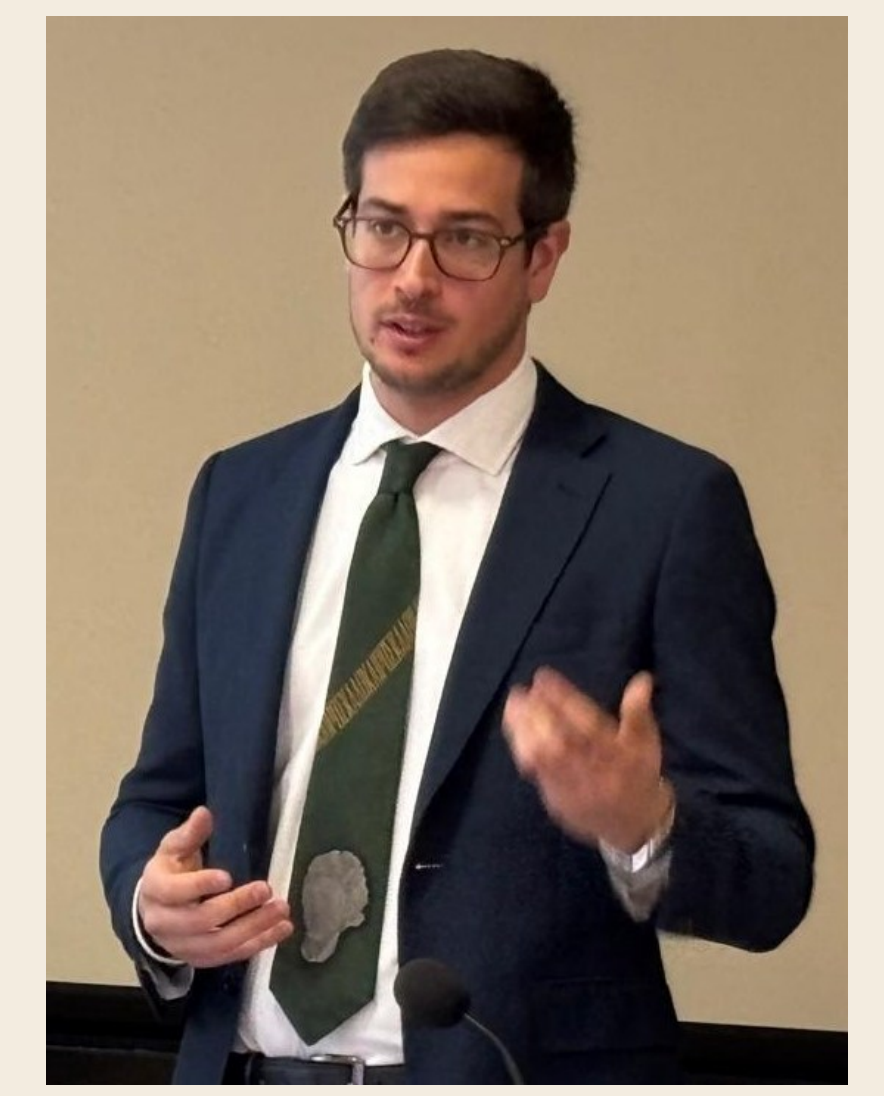


European Textile and Fashion Associations

Potential to Boost Sustainability in the Fashion Sector



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01 INTRODUCTION

The European fashion and textile industry is undergoing profound transformation driven by sustainability challenges, regulatory pressures, and increasing demands for transparency and accountability.

While research has extensively examined the roles of brands, retailers, and consumers in this transition, less attention has been paid to sectoral associations that coordinate collective action and shape industry priorities.

This study investigates how organisations affiliated with the European Apparel and Textile Confederation (EURATEX) and the European Fashion Alliance (EFA) frame competitiveness, sustainability, consumer-related responsibility, and sectoral representation through their mission, vision, and strategic goal statements.

By analysing these strategic narratives, the study explores how associations contribute to the governance of sustainability transitions within the European fashion and textile sector.

02 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that organisations affiliated with both EURATEX and the European Fashion Alliance (EFA) prioritise four common themes: member value creation, competitiveness, sustainability transition, and sectoral representation. However, these priorities are communicated through two distinct strategic logics that reflect the dual nature of the European fashion and textile sector.

EFA organisations adopt a creative-economy logic centred on fashion-system development, cultural positioning, talent promotion, and international visibility. Their strategic narratives portray competitiveness as emerging from creativity, reputation, collaboration, and ecosystem development. Sustainability is frequently presented as a defining characteristic of the future fashion system, with strong emphasis on circularity, eco-design, awareness-building, and long-term transformation.

In contrast, EURATEX organisations employ an industrial-governance logic focused on manufacturing performance, business-environment improvement, regulatory preparedness, and value-chain coordination. Competitiveness is linked to industrial resilience, innovation, standards alignment, and the capacity of firms to adapt to evolving European regulations. Sustainability is framed primarily as an operational and governance challenge requiring responsible production, transparency, and transition readiness.

Across both networks, associations position themselves as strategic intermediaries rather than simple representative bodies. They create value by supporting members through advocacy, knowledge sharing, capability development, and collective action. In this sense, associations help firms navigate increasingly complex sustainability and regulatory requirements while strengthening sector-wide competitiveness.

Consumer-oriented themes are comparatively less prominent. References to transparency, traceability, responsibility, and trust appear across the corpus, particularly within EURATEX narratives, but consumers are rarely addressed as direct strategic stakeholders. Similarly, education is interpreted differently across the two networks. EFA emphasises awareness-raising and sustainability engagement, whereas EURATEX focuses on professional training and industry capability building.

Overall, the results suggest that both networks contribute to sustainability transition by shaping strategic priorities, coordinating collective responses, and translating European policy ambitions into sector-level action. While EFA advances a creative and cultural vision of transformation, EURATEX promotes an industrial and governance-oriented pathway, illustrating two complementary approaches to managing change in the European fashion and textile sector.

03 CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that European fashion and textile associations play a significant role in shaping sustainability transitions. Rather than functioning solely as lobbying or representative bodies, they actively influence how the sector understands competitiveness, responsibility, transparency, and future development.

Two complementary forms of sectoral intermediation were identified: a creative-economy logic represented by EFA and an industrial-governance logic represented by EURATEX. While sustainability is firmly embedded within both networks' strategic narratives, consumer-oriented concerns remain largely indirect and governance-mediated.

The findings highlight the importance of sectoral associations as meso-level actors that support industry transformation by building capabilities, coordinating stakeholders, and translating policy ambitions into sector-wide strategic agendas.