



TexUnite

Project: 2024-1-DE01-KA220-HED-000253935 – TexUnite - Service Learning on Sustainability in Textile and Fashion Education

SL Project Title: Expansion of an Inclusive Production of Jerseys

Partner University: Albstadt-Sigmaringen University, Faculty of Engineering, Textile and Clothing Technology, Albstadt, Germany

Name of the Stakeholder: WASNI gGmbH, Esslingen, Germany

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Executive Summary

As part of the Erasmus+ TexUnite project, fifteen third-year (6th and 7th semester, Bachelor's degree) Textile and Clothing Technology students participated in a service-learning initiative that integrated sustainability education. The project, conducted in collaboration with the inclusive hoodie manufacturer WASNI, involved expanding their garment range, upcycling of leftover materials, developing additional repair solutions, and providing marketing support. The students also engaged in a virtual exchange (VE) with peers from EGE University in Izmir, Turkey, as both projects focused on working with people with special needs. A video documenting the students' work will be shared as an open educational resource (OER). Pre- and post-project assessments indicated an improvement in students' sustainability awareness.

Background and Context

The textile industry faces significant environmental and social challenges, making sustainability literacy and awareness of EU regulations essential in textile education. This project introduced students to a social company, highlighting the inclusion of people with special needs in the labour market and their contributions to society. It linked academic learning with real-world experiences, thereby engaging students with inclusive companies and promoting socially and ecologically sustainable practices within the community. The project also demonstrates the tangible positive impact each student can have on society.

Objectives

- ❖ Learn about advanced clothing technologies to support socially and ecologically sustainable production.
- ❖ Explore an inclusive clothing production.
- ❖ Use multiple previously learned practices and combine them into a suitable package for a real company.
- ❖ Support the partner company, allowing students to directly experience their self-efficacy.

Methodology

In this complex project, students explored the practices and challenges of an inclusive company, with a focus on the social, ecological, and economic aspects of clothing production. Working in groups, they completed various tasks that drew on their technical skills in clothing production, while also applying creativity to develop new and upcycled products, as well as scenarios for repair cases. Students designed marketing activities to promote both the products and the company. In cooperation with WASNI, they created concrete plans, considering that people with special needs must follow certain work routines or considering the company's positioning. The company's 10th anniversary in September 2025 provided an opportunity

for special initiatives that students were able to develop. The project started with a company visit and concluded with a public presentation of all outputs. At the start and end of the semester, students evaluated the seminar, providing insights into their attitudes towards sustainability, the project's implementation, and their VE experience.

Implementation Details

The project was carried out as part of the industrial project component of the Bachelor's programme in Textile and Clothing Technology. This pilot initiative, led by Prof. Manuela Bräuning, involved 15 third-year Textile and Clothing Technology students. It took place during the summer semester of 2025 and comprised 120 hours of seminar and practical work.

- ❖ **Theoretical Part:** Students expanded their knowledge of EU sustainability regulations, ecological and social challenges in the textile industry, and the circular economy. They also gained an understanding of Service-Learning (SL) principles.
- ❖ **Practical Part:** Students contributed to the further development of WASNI's business and product concept. This included engaging with company representatives, working on product development and upcycling, enhancing the repair workshop, and supporting marketing activities. It included pattern making, cutting and sewing, as well as computer-based project work related to marketing, such as collaboration with influencers. At the end of the project, students submitted detailed workplans and presented their results in a public presentation.

Results and Impact

- ❖ Students strengthened their awareness of sustainability in the textile and clothing sector. In particular, they gained insight into their own potential to drive change and the impact they can have on society.
- ❖ WASNI was able to expand its product range and explore new ideas. While not all concepts will be implemented, several new initiatives will be introduced gradually in the near future.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Having different lecturers for various parts of the project created some confusion, as the structure for students was not always clear. Assigning a single lecturer to oversee the project would improve clarity and consistency. Additionally, students expressed disappointment following the VE, probably due to a combination of language barriers and the difference in knowledge levels between them as 3rd-year students and their exchange partners being 1st-year students.

Reflection and Feedback

Students and the industrial project partner were both happy with the projects' results. Especially the students felt their self-efficacy, which will have a positive impact on their future. This shows that SL projects are an important part in higher education.

Future Directions

The OER materials will be finalised and uploaded to the ZOERR and EPALE repositories for open access.