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## **Textiles services: Call for measures to restart the Economy**

Professional textile service companies supply hospitals and nursing homes, hotels and restaurants, industries, trade and craft with hygienically clean textiles. Hospital and table linen as well as professional workwear and Personal protective equipment (PPE) have to be hygienically serviced and this not only since Covid-19. The professional supply of hygienically clean textiles is an essential contribution to successfully containing and combating the current pandemic.

With a current market size of circa € 11 bn, the European textile rental service industry has a significant economic importance and is a real contributor to value creation and employment in the European economy. The overall market grew in recent years in almost every segment and product type. With over 135,000 employees in Europe, the textile service is an industry that should not be underestimated.

Textile services are part of a solution for other businesses in coping with Covid-19 and post Covid-19. The companies are essential because they supply hygienically cleaned workwear, linen and other textiles to the rest of the economy.

We therefore call for the following measures to be implemented:

### **Recognize professional textile care as essential services**

The social and healthcare system as well as numerous other industries are dependent on hygienic textiles. Due to the significantly increased demands for hygiene during a pandemic, more hygienic textiles will be needed in many economic areas for reasons of occupational and civil protection. The textile service sector is an indispensable hygiene service provider. However, companies can only fulfil their task if they are recognised as essential services. Otherwise, supply of disinfectants, protective equipment and access to childcare for people working in textile services are not available as the recent crisis has shown. Any laundry interruption or supply shortage can provoke closure of hospitals, elderly care facilities, fire stations, emergency rescue services, food or pharmaceutical industry and other essential industries. Within a few days all those services could be unable to serve the public. Textile services are an integral part of those services and industries.

### **Restart economic activities**

The measures for the future economic orientation after the pandemic must be strengthened, supported and accelerated. Only through more economic activity and increased demand can

bankruptcies and other economic support measures by national governments be avoided. The procedure must be transnational. We commend the EU efforts towards the recovery with the EU recovery plan and its tools, the recovery fund and the EU's long-term budget. We strongly believe that a sustainable and circular recovery is possible. Textile services with their re-usable and repairable hygienic products are part of the solution for other businesses to coping with Covid-19 and to safely return to normal.

### **Safeguard local supply chains and jobs**

Unnecessarily packaged disposable products with supply chains all over the world are susceptible to supply interruptions in pandemic situations. The textile service sector on the other hand creates jobs in our communities and is less prone to restrictions compared to outside EU single-use manufacturers in times of pandemics. Textile service companies offer jobs on a regional level, have short transport routes and fewer packaging material - and ultimately security of supply is also guaranteed in the event of a crisis or pandemic.

### **Strengthen reusable solutions**

In terms of availability, environmental protection and hygiene, the textile service's circular economy model should become standard. Short delivery routes, durability, availability and sustainability characterise textile service providers. The current need for hygiene must not lead to disposables becoming fashionable again. The protection of the environment and the implementation of environmental policy objectives must not be neglected. The crisis shows there are hygienic and sustainable solutions available. The consistent use of reusable solutions can make a significant contribution to achieving the EU's climate policy goals.

Reusable textiles pollute far less than single-use materials and support the sustainable use of scarce resources. The disadvantages of single-use products are their cost-benefit ratio, the amount of waste and the worldwide transport routes. The textile service sector stands for a modern circular business model, resource conservation and effective energy management and recycling systems as well as resource-saving logistics.

### **Do not wash workwear at home**

Professional care of clothing and workwear is one of the most important measures to protect employees. Washing workwear from the health and social sectors is extremely delicate, because in addition to the coronavirus, these textiles can also contain other invisible hospital germs and viruses. Many facilities are not aware of this problem and allow employees to wash their workwear at home. In some countries, it is even legally forbidden.

The safe reprocessing of work clothes does not only affect health care facilities. Professional hygiene is also key when servicing workwear from industry, trade and hospitality etc. The responsibility lies clearly on the side of the companies - even if employees wear their private clothing.

If employees take potentially contaminated clothing home for washing, they take with them the germs of the work to their private environment. Studies have shown that most normal domestic washing machines do not inactivate viruses such as the coronavirus, influenza or noroviruses. During a pandemic this can cause wider spreading of viruses. Research also shows that workwear which has been washed at home has a significantly higher germ load after washing than clothing that has been processed in professional laundries. This also applies to flat linen - such as bed or table linen.

The national trade associations for the textile care services industry represent commercial laundry and textile rental businesses. Membership ranges from small family business to multi-national companies. We are part of the solution for other businesses in those recovery times. We are essential because our members supply hygienically cleaned workwear, linen and other textiles to the rest of the economy.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss the measures we are calling for.

