



62nd Dornbirn GFC Global Fiber Congress

13 – 15 September 2023 / Dornbirn, Austria

Dornbirn Global Fiber Congress 2023 - Forecasting future developments -

Every year mid of September the world-wide textile and fiber research community is meeting up in Dornbirn, Austria to present and discuss the most important recent research results of the sector. This year, textile recycling and new bio-based raw material for fiber, textiles and textile chemicals have been in the centre of the conference already forecasting important future developments of the industry BIOTEXFUTURE is already addressing in various sub-projects.

Radical changes are currently taking place in the textile and apparel industry. After the years of Corona shutdowns and the war in Ukraine affecting the reliability of supply chains, we now observe the impacts of the EU Green Deal and the “EU Textile Strategy 2030” being translated from previous “paperwork” into reality. The ambitious plan of the EU is to transfer the former linear production and consumptions patterns of the textile sector into circularity within just seven years and to ban all kind of hazardous textile chemicals from the manufacturing process. Therefore, two main topics clearly dominated the discussions: Textile recycling and new bio-based raw-material for fiber and textile production.

As for textile recycling the sector is starting from the scratch as less than 1% fiber-to-fiber recycling is currently implemented according to the study [“A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion’s Future”](#), published by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation in 2017. This figure clearly reflects the tremendous challenges lying ahead of the textile sector, being even more complicated since all 27 EU member



states maintain different waste management, sorting and recycling systems not yet ready to process products such as textiles, apparel or footwear at all. Moreover, textile sorting is still a very labour-intensive manual process, since the current self-operation waste sorting technology is not yet able to detect, sort and classify textile material. Therefore, all currently existing so-called “textile recycling” is rather “down-cycling” e.g., turning textiles into isolation material for the construc-

tion and building industry. Therefore, on this year’s edition of the Global Fiber Congress many presentations addressed this issue showing promising results on new automated textile sorting solutions, mechanical, thermomechanical and chemical recycling approaches and even the first textile recycling plants, like the Swiss “Winterthur Demonstration Plant” of Worn Again Technologie UK, are being constructed. Hence, there is clearly a tiny light on the “textile recycling horizon”, but still a long and winding way to go, urgently requiring answers to unsolved questions such as recycling of fiber blends, multi-coloured products or elastane and stretch-fibers.

The second important issue dominating this year’s discussion have been new bio-based raw materials such as agricultural residues as biopolymer resources or as primary feedstock for textile chemistry. Suggesting at the same time new local sourcing options for primary textile resources. Some of these are currently being examined in projects like [INGRAIN](#), a new German innovation space on the potential interlinkages of the agriculture, textile and nutrition supply chains. Connected to this, hemp, a traditional European, but often neglected natural fiber, seems to slowly celebrate a comeback as research results of the Mönchengladbach University of Applied Sciences pointed out. Finally, a little “outside the pure textile box” the trend towards “vegan leather“, already discussed in the last years is clearly gaining momentum, potentially due to the trend of vegan lifestyle, as researchers of FILK (Freiberg Institute for Research, Material development and Testing) showed in their presentation on alternative to natural leather.



Dornbirn is every year the “place to be” to exchange and discuss all these novel ideas and trends as Robert van de Kerckhof, Chief Sustainability Officer of Lenzing AG and President of the Dornbirn GFC pointed out in his final statement: *“The challenges currently facing the fiber industry require fundamental changes in the value chains. We see new strategic partnerships being formed to take advantage of new*

opportunities around innovation, circular economy and new business models. The 62nd edition of the Dornbirn GFC shows once again that it is the perfect place for such new partnerships"

The next, 63rd edition of the Dornbirn Global Fiber Congress, will take place from 11 – 13 September 2024.

FINAL REPORT:

Please find the final report of the 62ed Dornbirn GFC via the following [link](#)

Website: [Home: Dornbirn GFC \(dornbirn-gfc.com\)](https://www.dornbirn-gfc.com)

GET IN TOUCH FOR THE 63RD Dornbirn GFC 2024:

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