Responsible companies, trade unions, actors from civil society and German development policy are engaged in a wide range of activities to improve social and environmental conditions in the global textile industry. However, much work still needs to be done: building safety is often being neglected and key ILO labour standards are disregarded, incomes and wages are insufficient to live on, and the environment is being polluted due to the use of toxic chemicals and improper methods of sewage and waste disposal. These challenges cannot be overcome by one stakeholder on its own.

This is why German Development Minister Dr Gerd Müller set up the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles in late 2014. Almost 190 partners from business, government and civil society are currently involved in this initiative. Member companies account for 55 per cent of retail revenue in the German textile sector.

**What are the overarching objectives of the Textile Partnership?**

The Textile Partnership pools the strength and expertise of its members in order to bring about social, environmental and economic improvements all along the textile supply chain. The following four strategic elements that are laid out in the Textile Partnership’s Plan of Action support the achievement of this objective:

- Joint definition of Partnership goals, implementation requirements and indicators for continuous improvement, such as living wages and the avoidance of toxic chemicals.
• Improvement of framework conditions in the producer countries and recommendations for a coordinated policy in Germany and the EU.

• Transparent communication of the Partnership’s progress and that of its members in order to provide orientation to consumers.

• A Partnership platform to review and support progress and the feasibility of implementation, share experience and learn from each other.

How will the Partnership achieve its objectives?

Over the last two years, almost 200 experts have jointly developed implementation requirements for the members. These contain specific measures for achieving the Partnership goals in the three areas of chemicals and environmental management, natural fibres, and social standards and living wages.

Each Partnership member commits to prepare a roadmap with specific goals each year and to report on its implementation. The contribution to achieving the Partnership goals can vary among the members. It may include the promotion of development policy dialogue at government level, engaging in international trade union work, or running global information campaigns as a non-governmental organisation. Independent experts review the progress made by the Partnership members to enable each member and the Partnership as a whole to trace the results achieved.

From 2017, all partnership members should, from 2018 they must publish their annual roadmaps. Failure to do so will lead to sanctions which, in the worst case, may include exclusion from the Partnership.

In addition, the Textile Partnership is launching Partnership initiatives. Run jointly by members, these broad-based projects will improve framework conditions in producer countries. In order to increase its impact, the Partnership also networks with initiatives and partners in Europe and all around the world.

What is the contribution of the German Government?

The German Government is a member of the Textile Partnership, represented by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS), and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB). BMZ is financing the work of the Partnership Secretariat until 2018, working as part of the Steering Committee to help shape the strategy for achieving ambitious Partnership goals, and facilitating negotiations between the different stakeholders.

In cooperation with its partners in Europe and other countries around the world (governments, the G7/G20 and international organisations such as ILO), the German Government aims to mainstream the Partnership’s objectives globally and to create a level playing field for all market players.

In addition, it is increasingly raising the issue of sustainability as part of its development policy dialogue with producer countries. German development cooperation actors are also implementing numerous bilateral and regional projects in the textile sector to encourage compliance with environmental and social standards in countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia and Ethiopia. With assistance from the developpp.de programme, BMZ is co-financing joint projects with companies in producer countries. BMZ has a division dedicated to sustainability standards, including issues related to textiles, contact: RL115@bmz.bund.de.