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THE EESC AND THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

The right to dignity is a fundamental human right (Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union), yet today one in five Europeans and one in four children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), in the exploratory Opinion requested by the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU – SOC/875 on the "European Union Strategy against Poverty", adopted during the October Plenary Session – reiterates that the strategy against poverty must adopt a rights-based approach, recognising poverty as a violation of human dignity and a systemic injustice. The goal of eradicating poverty, however, is not merely a moral imperative but also an economic necessity, as poverty also undermines potential productivity growth due to the underutilisation of human capital. A wide-ranging, well-planned and adequately funded implementation strategy is therefore required. «The best protection against poverty - said Councillor Ulgiati - is a quality job that promotes decent work, as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Given the scale of its impact, in fact, in-work poverty deserves constant and targeted attention - continued the EESC representative - and in this regard, the proposed legislative act on quality jobs offers an opportunity to establish a framework aimed at eliminating precariousness, whilst preserving flexibility». Furthermore, «the fight against intergenerational poverty requires constant strategic intervention from childhood through adolescence to early adulthood, because equitable access to high-quality education is the most effective means of levelling the playing field, alongside complementary labour market policies, affordable housing and adequate public services, including accessible, high-quality childcare. To overcome poverty - Ulgiati concluded - we must ensure social protection in old age too, by guaranteeing adequate pensions that enable a dignified life for all».





EUROSTAT: ITALY LEADS THE WAY IN TEXTILE WASTE RECYCLING

Italy is the European Union Country that produces the most textile waste. In 2024, 441,736 tonnes were generated, ahead of France (339,965 tonnes) and Germany (212,107 tonnes). This is according to data recently published (12nd of November) by Eurostat, the EU's statistical Office, on textile waste management across the 27 Member States. The analysis provides a telling snapshot of the challenges facing the fashion sector and the circular economy. Italy's leading position is also confirmed when looking at the quantities processed. In Italy, 280,680 tonnes were processed, compared with 258,129 in France and 207,156 in Germany. This record highlights the importance of the Italian textile industry within the European circular economy, but also the difficulties faced by a sector called upon to reduce waste generated by industry and consumption and to promote the recovery of materials. In total, again in 2024, 2.3 million tonnes of textile waste were generated across Europe, with over half of this amount coming from domestic disposal, that is, from households: a figure that highlights just how much purchasing and consumption habits influence the quantity of materials destined to become waste. In 2024, the European Union processed a total of 1.4 million tonnes of textile waste, accounting for 63 per cent of the waste generated during the same period. As regards waste management methods, 91 per cent of the textile waste treated in the EU underwent recovery operations: recycling accounted for 78 per cent of the total waste treated and incineration with energy recovery for 13 per cent; a further 8 per cent was disposed of in landfill, whilst incineration without energy recovery accounted for just 1 per cent. It is worth noting that these Eurostat figures come on the eve of a significant shift in the management of textile waste: by 2028, in fact, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) will become mandatory in Europe. This is an environmental policy principle under which anyone placing a product on the market is held responsible for the entire life cycle of that product, including its management once it becomes waste.