ADVANCING EUROPE'S MACHINERY INDUSTRY

Presseinformation
Textile Care, Fabric and Leather Technologies

Contact Elgar Straub
Phone +49 89 278287-20
E-Mail Elgar.straub@vdma.eu
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Automation, digitalization and sustainability are shaping the future of textile processing

- **New VDMA Textile Care, Fabric and Leather Technologies study shows structural changes through 2035**
- **Study: Integrated, digitally networked production systems become the key to competitiveness**

Frankfurt, 21 April 2026 – Global textile processing is facing profound structural change. Automation, digital connectivity and rising sustainability requirements are permanently reshaping production structures, value chains and competitive conditions. This is the conclusion of the new market study "Threads of the Future – How Automation and Digitalization Will Reinvent Textile Processing by 2035", which the VDMA Textile Care, Fabric and Leather Technologies Association (VDMA TFL) presented today at a press conference during Texprocess in Frankfurt am Main. "Future competitiveness will no longer be decided at the level of individual machines, but in integrated, digitally networked production systems," emphasized Elgar Straub, Managing Director of VDMA TFL.

Key fields of action and the shift toward networked production systems

The study, prepared by Gherzi on behalf of VDMA, identifies four strategic priorities for machinery and plant manufacturers in textile processing and related fields. A key focus is strengthening technological sovereignty: European providers must master key technologies, interfaces and data standards—particularly for automation architectures, interoperability and cybersecurity. At the same time, sustainability is becoming a competitive factor: regulatory requirements such as the European Green Deal are shifting the focus from mere compliance toward measurable performance, for example in energy, water and material efficiency. The study also recommends building resilient production networks: a comprehensive reshoring of

the apparel industry to Europe is considered unlikely; instead, regionally differentiated, more highly automated production clusters are emerging, particularly in neighboring European regions. Finally, the intelligent combination of people and machines remains central, as full automation is technically and economically limited in many applications; productivity gains arise above all from the interplay of skilled workers, AI and digital assistance systems. One of the study's key findings: machines are increasingly evolving from isolated products into components of networked production systems. In the future, success will hinge on digital platforms and Industry 4.0-based integration, new service- and data-driven business models, and key technologies such as robotics, AI-supported quality control and resource-efficient processes. Companies that combine mechanical engineering expertise with software, data and systems capabilities will set the benchmarks going forward.

Policy framework conditions as a location factor

In addition to technological development paths, the study also examines industrial policy framework conditions. Competitive energy prices, reliable regulation, access to capital and the qualification of skilled workers are increasingly becoming decisive location factors for investments in automated and sustainable textile processing.

Presentation of the study results at Texprocess

The key findings of the study were presented at a press conference as part of Texprocess 2026. Anton Schumann (Gherzi) presented the analysis and put the global developments into context. VDMA TFL complemented this with current market data. The member companies ASSYST and Morgan Tecnica provided practical insights into specific technological solutions. Using ASSYST as an example, it became clear how digital workflows, AI-enabled applications and connected process chains make apparel production more efficient, flexible and transparent. Morgan Tecnica showed how the shift from forecast-driven mass production to demand-oriented, highly automated production concepts is creating new requirements for speed, flexibility and sustainability in cutting technology.

Current VDMA TFL economic data

The latest VDMA TFL economic data underscore the tense, yet heterogeneous market situation: in the period from March 2025 to February 2026, order intake in the Textile Care, Fabric and Leather Technologies segment rose by 8.8 percent year-on-year in real terms, while sales revenues declined by 5.3 percent in real terms over the same period. In the three-month comparison (December 2025 to February 2026), order intake was 6.5 percent below the year-earlier period in real terms, while sales revenues were 13 percent above it.

VDMA Textile Care, Fabric and Leather Technologies is the conceptual partner of Texprocess

Texprocess is the leading international trade fair for the processing of textiles and flexible materials. It showcases innovative technologies, solutions and services for cutting, garment manufacturing and textile manufacturing processes. Texprocess takes place from 21 to 24 April 2026 in Frankfurt am Main, in parallel with Techtextil.

A photo of VDMA TFL Managing Director Elgar Straub can be found here.

Do you have any questions? Elgar Straub, Managing Director of the VDMA Textile Care, Fabric and Leather Technologies, will be happy to help: telephone +49 (0)89 278287 20, elgar.straub@vdma.org.