Interreg Danube Region

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TEX-DAN

Rules of operation of the TEX-DAN Made in Danube trademark

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1. Concept 2
2. Scope and definitions 3
3. Governance and ownership 5
4. Eligibility rules 6
5. Sustainability Assessment criteria 6
6. Application and selection procedure 8
7. Validity, Re-certification and Withdrawal 10
8. Rights and obligations of certificate holders 12
9. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Scheme 13
10. Final provisions 14
11. Annex 1. - Evaluation methodology 15

1. Concept

The TEX-DAN Made in Danube initiative establishes a certification scheme aimed at promoting circular textile and fashion value chains in the Danube Region. The scheme recognises micro-, small- and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) - including social enterprises, micro-enterprises, start-ups and private entrepreneurs - that demonstrate concrete achievements in implementing circular practices and reducing environmental impacts through more localised and resource-efficient production and service models that contribute to reduced transport intensity across the textile value chain.

By emphasising shorter transport distances across the textile value chain, the initiative supports the strengthening of regional cooperation, transparency and resilience in textile production. It contributes to improving the competitiveness and innovation capacity of SMEs while responding to growing market and policy expectations regarding sustainability, traceability and responsible production.

The certification is aligned with the objectives of the TEX-DAN Strategy, which identifies the development of standards, certification approaches and sustainable branding initiatives as key measures for accelerating circular transition and increasing consumer trust in sustainable textile products.

The scheme is targeted at SMEs operating in textile and fashion value chains within the Danube Region, including manufacturers, designers and service providers. It recognises already implemented circular solutions and measurable performance improvements rather than planned activities.

The certification is awarded through an annual open call procedure organised by the TEX-DAN partnership. Successful applicants receive the right to use the TEX-DAN Made in Danube label in their communication and marketing activities, demonstrating compliance with the sustainability criteria defined under the scheme. The certificate confirming this status is valid for a period of three years, after which certificate holders may reapply.

Through this mechanism, the initiative aims to increase the visibility of circular textile solutions, encourage peer learning and replication of good practices, and contribute to the gradual development of more integrated and sustainable regional textile value chains across the Danube Region.

2. Scope and definitions

Danube Region

For the purpose of this scheme, the Danube Region refers to the geographical area covered by the Interreg Danube Region Programme. Eligible applicants must be legally established and carry out relevant business activities in a country participating in the Interreg Danube Region Programme.

SME and eligible applicants

Eligible applicants are micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including social enterprises, private entrepreneurs and start-ups. Applicants may operate in any segment of the textile and fashion value chain, including but not limited to:

- fibre and material production
- textile, leather and accessories manufacturing and processing
- garment design and production
- repair, reuse and remanufacturing services
- circular logistics or support services
- innovative textile-related service models

Public authorities, large enterprises and purely research-focused organisations are not eligible to apply as certificate holders.

Textile and fashion value chain actors

Textile and fashion value chain actors refer to organisations whose core activities contribute to the design, production, distribution, use, maintenance or recovery of textile and leather products or textile-, leather-based services.

This includes both product-oriented and service-oriented business models that influence material flows, product lifecycles or sustainability performance within the sector.

Reduced transport intensity

Reduced transport intensity refers to organisational, sourcing or production decisions that contribute to shortening transport distances across the textile value chain or to reducing the environmental impacts associated with logistics. This may include localisation of production stages, regional sourcing strategies, proximity-based service provision or other solutions that strengthen territorial value chains and decrease dependency on long-distance transport.

Applicants may operate value chain activities outside the Danube Region. However, they are expected to demonstrate efforts to strengthe[illegible] value chains and reduce transport

intensity through organisational, sourcing or service-related decisions implemented within the Programme area.

Assessment under this concept is indicative and based on the overall credibility of the applicant's value chain configuration rather than on strict quantitative thresholds.

Circular solutions

Circular solutions refer to practices, technologies or business models that contribute to extending product lifecycles, reducing material consumption, improving resource efficiency or enabling reuse, repair, remanufacturing or recycling within textile systems. Both technological and organisational innovations may be considered relevant where they demonstrate tangible environmental benefits.

Certification and certificate holder

The TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification is a recognition instrument granting successful applicants the right to use the scheme label in their communication and marketing activities.

A certificate holder is an applicant that has successfully demonstrated compliance with the sustainability criteria and has been awarded the certification for a defined validity period.

Scheme Management Body

During the implementation period of the TEX-DAN project, the certification scheme is managed collectively by the project partnership. Following the project closure, management responsibilities are transferred to the organisation designated by the Danube Circular Textile Cluster cooperation agreement. This role is expected to be performed by the South-Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency Nonprofit Ltd (STRIA).

3. Governance and ownership

The TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification scheme is implemented through a collaborative governance structure ensuring transparency, continuity and effective operational management.

3.1 Scheme Management Body

The operational management of the certification scheme is ensured by the designated Scheme Management Body. During the implementation period of the TEX-DAN project, management responsibilities are carried out collectively by the project partnership. Following the closure of the project, thes[illegible]ibilities are transferred to the

organisation designated under the cooperation framework of the Danube Circular Textile Cluster.

The Scheme Management Body is responsible for:

- organising open calls
- coordinating the application and evaluation process
- issuing certification decisions and certificates
- maintaining communication materials and label usage guidelines
- monitoring certification validity and handling withdrawal procedures
- supporting visibility and development of the scheme

3.2 Evaluation Board

An Evaluation Board is established to support the evaluation of applications and ensure the credibility and consistency of certification decisions. The Evaluation Board may include representatives of project partners, cluster organisations, sector experts, sustainability specialists or other relevant stakeholders. Its role includes:

- reviewing eligible applications
- providing recommendations on certification awards
- contributing to the identification of outstanding cases and excellence recognitions
- advising on the further development of the scheme

The composition and operational modalities of the Evaluation Board may evolve over time in line with the needs of the scheme.

3.3 Role of project partners and cluster members

Project partners and, after project closure, members of the Danube Circular Textile Cluster may contribute to the implementation and promotion of the certification scheme. Their contributions may include dissemination of open calls, support to applicants, participation in evaluation processes, organisation of communication activities and facilitation of knowledge exchange among certified actors.

4. Sustainability Assessment Criteria

The TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification is awarded on the basis of demonstrated sustainability achievements across four complementary criteria reflecting the key dimensions of circular transition and strengthened regional textile value chains.

In order to qualify for certification, applicants are expected to demonstrate relevant achievements under each of the four criteria. While the level and nature of performance may vary depending on company size, business model and position in the value chain, minimum progress in all areas is required. This ensures that the certification reflects a balanced contribution to circularity, regionalisation, responsible production and ecosystem engagement.

Applicants are invited to describe concrete measures, practices and results already implemented in their operations. The assessment is based on the relevance, credibility and overall contribution of these measures to the objectives of circularity, reduced transport intensity and responsible textile production.

Each criterion represents a distinct dimension of performance. Applicants are encouraged to highlight the achievements most relevant to their activities and business models.

4.1 Regionalisation and reduced transport intensity

This criterion considers how applicants contribute to strengthening regional textile value chains and reducing the environmental impacts associated with long transport distances.

Relevant achievements may include localisation of sourcing, production or service activities within the Danube Region, cooperation with nearby suppliers or partners, or organisational solutions that minimise unnecessary logistics and improve territorial value creation.

Applicants may describe how their value chain structure has evolved towards more regional integration, how transport needs have been reduced, or how proximity between production, service provision and customers contributes to environmental and economic resilience.

4.2 Circular product and service performance

This criterion focuses on the implementation of circular approaches that extend product lifecycles, reduce material waste and improve overall resource efficiency.

Applicants may demonstrate the introduction of circular design principles, the use of recycled or low-impact materials, repair or refurbishment services, take-back solutions, reuse or remanufacturing initiatives, waste management practices, management of unsold goods or service-based business models such as rental or leasing.

The assessment considers how these practices are integrated into the core business model and how they contribute to measurable improvements in durability, material utilisation or waste reduction.

4.3. Responsible and fair production and social sustainability

This criterion reflects the importance of fair, safe and responsible operational practices within textile production and service activities.

Applicants may describe how they ensure compliance with labour and environmental regulations, support safe working conditions, invest in workforce skills and training, or contribute to the stability and development of local SME ecosystems. Consideration is also given to responsible supplier relationships and organisational practices that support long-term sustainability of operations.

4.4 Transparency and collaboration in the value chain

This criterion recognises efforts to strengthen transparency, cooperation and knowledge exchange in support of circular transition in the textile sector.

Applicants may demonstrate how they communicate sustainability aspects of their products or services, participate in cluster initiatives or collaborative projects, share experiences and good practices, or engage customers and stakeholders in awareness-raising activities.

Initiatives that improve supply chain traceability, foster partnerships or contribute to collective learning processes within the regional textile ecosystem are particularly relevant.

The TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification follows a recognition-based approach. All applicants demonstrating sufficient performance across the defined criteria may be awarded the certification. In addition, the evaluation process may identify outstanding cases that represent particularly innovative or impactful circular solutions. These may be recognised through additional distinction mechanisms defined under the scheme.

5. Application and selection procedure

The TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification is awarded through an open call procedure organised on an annual basis by the TEX-DAN partnership.

The application process is designed to be accessible and proportionate, enabling micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises to present their circular achievements in a concise and structured manner.

5.1 Publication of the open call

The open call for applications is published on the TEX-DAN project website and promoted through the communication channels of project partners, including partner websites, cluster platforms, social media and relevant stakeholder networks.

Project partners are strongly encouraged to disseminate the call in their national languages in order to maximise outreach among eligible SMEs across the Danube Region.

5.2 Application format and submission

Applications are submitted through a simple online application form available in English or in national language versions prepared by project partners.

Applicants are invited to provide concise textual descriptions of their implemented circular practices, sustainability achievements and value chain configurations relevant to the defined certification criteria.

Supporting documents such as certificates, visual materials or short references to measurable results may be provided where available, but extensive technical documentation is not required.

Applications must be submitted within the deadline specified in the open call.

5.3 Eligibility and completeness check

Following submission, applications are reviewed by the responsible project partners to verify:

- eligibility of the applicant

- completeness of the application
- relevance to the textile and fashion value chain

Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements or lack essential information may be excluded from further evaluation.

5.4 Content assessment

Eligible applications are assessed against the sustainability criteria defined under the TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification scheme.

The assessment focuses on the credibility, relevance and demonstrated impact of the described measures. Applicants are expected to demonstrate relevant achievements under each of the four criteria.

The evaluation is supported by a scoring framework designed to ensure consistency and transparency of the assessment process.

5.5 Certification decision

Applicants demonstrating sufficient performance across the defined criteria are awarded the TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification. Certification decisions are taken based on the evaluation results and jury recommendations, where applicable.

Successful applicants receive a certificate confirming their status as certificate holders and obtain the right to use the scheme label in their communication and marketing activities for the defined validity period.

5.6 Recognition of outstanding cases

In addition to the certification award, the evaluation process may identify particularly innovative or impactful circular solutions.

Such cases may be recognised through additional distinction mechanisms, including the selection of a Grand Prize or thematic excellence recognitions, as defined in the respective open call.

6. Validity, Re-certification and Withdrawal

Certification under the TEX-DAN Made in Danube scheme is granted for a defined validity period in order to ensure that recognised practices remain relevant and continue to contribute to circular transition and strengthened regional value chains.

Following the closure of the TEX-DAN project, the certification scheme is intended to be continued under the coordination of the Danube Circular Textile Cluster. Operational management responsibilities are ensured by the designated Scheme Management Body.

6.1 Validity period

The TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification is awarded for a period of three years from the date of the certification decision.

During this period, certificate holders are entitled to use the TEX-DAN Made in Danube label in their communication and marketing activities in accordance with the rules of the scheme.

6.2 Re-certification

After the expiry of the validity period, certificate holders may reapply through a subsequent open call in order to maintain their certification status. Re-certification enables applicants to demonstrate continued compliance with the sustainability criteria and to present further progress in circular performance, regionalisation and responsible production practices. There is no automatic renewal of certification. Each application is assessed independently based on the performance demonstrated at the time of submission.

6.3 Changes in business operations

Certificate holders are expected to inform the Scheme Management Body if significant changes occur in their business operations that may affect their compliance with the sustainability criteria.

Such changes may include major relocation of production activities, discontinuation of circular solutions previously presented in the application, or substantial restructuring of the value chain.

6.4 Withdrawal of certification

The Scheme Management Body reserves the right to withdraw certification before the end of the validity period in justified cases. Withdrawal may occur where:

- information provided in the application is found to be significantly misleading or incorrect
- the certificate holder misuses the TEX-DAN Made in Danube label
- the certificate holder ceases relevant business activities within the textile value chain
- substantial evidence emerges that the recognised practices are no longer implemented.

Certification withdrawal decisions may take into account the opinion of the Evaluation Board where appropriate. Where possible, certificate holders will be informed and given the opportunity to clarify the situation before a final decision is taken.

7. Rights and obligations of certificate holders

Certificate holders under the TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification scheme are granted specific communication rights and are expected to respect the integrity and credibility of the certification.

7.1 Right to use the certification label

Certificate holders are entitled to use the TEX-DAN Made in Danube label in their communication and marketing activities for the duration of the certification validity period.

The label may be used in relation to products, services, corporate communication materials, digital platforms and promotional activities that are relevant to the sustainability achievements recognised under the scheme. Use of the label shall be consistent with the visual identity and communication guidelines defined by the Scheme Management Body.

7.2 Responsible communication

Certificate holders are expected to communicate their certification status in a truthful and proportionate manner. The certification shall not be presented in a way that could

mislead customers or stakeholders regarding the overall environmental or social performance of the company or of products not covered by the recognised practices.

Where appropriate, certificate holders should be able to explain the sustainability measures that formed the basis of their certification.

7.3 Cooperation and visibility

Certificate holders are encouraged to contribute to the visibility and development of the TEX-DAN Made in Danube initiative.

This may include participation in communication activities, sharing of experiences and good practices, or engagement in events and knowledge exchange initiatives organised by the TEX-DAN partnership or the Danube Circular Textile Cluster.

7.4 Use after expiry or withdrawal

The right to use the TEX-DAN Made in Danube label ends upon expiry or withdrawal of the certification. Certificate holders are expected to discontinue use of the label within a reasonable period following the end of their certification validity.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Scheme

The TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification scheme is subject to periodic monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure its relevance, credibility and contribution to circular transition in the textile and fashion sector. Monitoring activities focus on the overall performance and development of the scheme rather than on continuous verification of individual certificate holders.

8.1 Monitoring of certification uptake and visibility

The Scheme Management Body may collect information on the implementation and visibility of the certification scheme. Relevant aspects may include:

- number and profile of applicants
- number of certified actors
- geographical distribution of certificate holders
- communication reach and stakeholder engagement

- participation of certificate holders in cluster or knowledge exchange activities

Such information may be used to assess the attractiveness and outreach of the scheme.

8.2 Evaluation of sustainability impact

The Scheme Management Body may periodically review how the certification contributes to promoting circular practices, strengthening regional value chains and increasing awareness of sustainable textile solutions.

This evaluation may consider qualitative feedback from certificate holders, cluster members, stakeholders and consumers, as well as examples of good practices emerging from certified cases.

8.3 Continuous improvement of the scheme

Based on monitoring and evaluation results, the Scheme Management Body may propose adjustments to the certification criteria, application procedures or communication approaches in order to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the scheme.

Where appropriate, the Evaluation Board and cluster members may be consulted in this process.

9. Final provisions

These Rules of Operation define the framework for the implementation of the TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification scheme.

The Rules of Operation enter into force upon their approval by the TEX-DAN project partnership and apply to certification procedures launched during the project implementation period and thereafter.

Following the closure of the TEX-DAN project, the certification scheme is intended to continue under the coordination framework of the Danube Circular Textile Cluster. The

designated Scheme Management Body is responsible for ensuring the continued implementation and development of the scheme.

The Scheme Management Body may propose amendments to these Rules of Operation in order to reflect operational experience, changes in governance arrangements or evolving needs of the textile sector. Where appropriate, such amendments may be developed in consultation with the Evaluation Board and relevant cluster stakeholders.

The most recent version of the Rules of Operation shall be made publicly available through the official communication channels of the certification scheme.

10. Annex 1. - Evaluation methodology

1. Purpose

This evaluation framework supports the consistent and transparent assessment of applications submitted under the TEX-DAN Made in Danube certification scheme.

The framework is intended as a guidance tool for evaluators and the Evaluation Board. It does not replace qualitative judgement regarding the relevance and credibility of applicants' sustainability achievements.

2. Scoring structure

Applications are assessed across the four sustainability criteria defined in the Rules of Operation. Each criterion is evaluated using a simple point scale reflecting the overall strength and relevance of the applicant's demonstrated achievements.

Criterion	Maximum points
Regionalisation and reduced transport intensity	5
Circular product and service performance	5
Responsible production and social sustainability	3
Transparency and ecosystem engagement	2

Maximum total score: 15 points

3. Minimum performance requirement

In order to qualify for certification, applicants must:

- demonstrate relevant achievements under each of the four criteria
- achieve a minimum overall score defined in the respective open call or defined by the Evaluation Board during the evaluation process

As indicative guidance, a total score of approximately half of the maximum points may be considered sufficient for certification, provided that no criterion is assessed at a negligible level.

4. Interpretation of score levels

The scoring reflects qualitative evaluation of the maturity, credibility and impact of the described measures.

Indicative interpretation:

- 0 points – No relevant information or achievement demonstrated
- 1 point – Initial or limited measures with unclear impact
- 2–3 points – Meaningful practices implemented with visible benefits
- 4–5 points – Strong and integrated solutions with clear contribution to circular transition and regional value chains

For criteria with lower maximum scores, the same logic applies proportionally.

5. Recognition of outstanding cases

Applications achieving particularly high scores or demonstrating innovative and transferable circular solutions may be considered for additional recognition.

The Evaluation Board may recommend the selection of a Grand Prize winner or thematic excellence recognitions based on:

- innovation potential
- measurable sustainability impact
- contribution to regional cooperation
- inspiration value for other SMEs

6. Flexibility of the framework

The evaluation framework may be adjusted in future open calls based on operational experience, number and profile of applicants, or strategic priorities of the Scheme Management Body and the Danube Circular Textile Cluster.