



# CBI Product Fact Sheet Niche Sportswear in Europe

## 'Practical Market Insights for Your Product'

This product fact sheet provides information for developing country exporters planning to enter the European Niche Sportswear market. Sportswear continues to grow, driven largely by rising consumer inclination towards a healthier life style and the crossover between sportswear and leisure wear. DC exporters are encouraged to keep up with the latest in fabric and fibre innovations and target niche sports in which there is crossover participation.

### Product Definition

Sportswear has traditionally been defined as clothing worn for sport or physical exercise. However, increasingly, sportswear is worn for casual and leisure activity. Niche sportswear refers to sport-specific clothing. Examples of some activities for which garments have been specifically designed include:

- Yoga
- Running
- Cycling
- Golfing
- Hiking
- Snowboarding
- Skiing
- Surfing
- Tennis
- Sailing
- Climbing
- Horseback Riding

The Sportswear category consists of the following product groups and products:

**Table 1: Sportswear Product Group Definitions**

Product groups	Products	HS Codes
<b>1. Anoraks and ski-jackets</b>	Anoraks, ski-jackets, windcheaters, and similar articles	61011090-61019080, 61021090-61029090, 62019100-62019900, 62029100-62029900
<b>2. Track suits and ski suits</b>	Tracksuits/fleeces, track suit tops, jogging suits, ski suits, recreational wear	61121100-61121900, 62113100-62114900 61122000, 6212000
<b>3. Swimwear</b>	Swimming trunks, Bermuda shorts, bikinis, one-piece bathing costumes	61123110-61123990, 61124110-61124990 62111100, 62111200
<b>4. Special Sports Garments</b>	Shorts, dresses, T-shirts, leggings, fitness/aerobic garments, bodysuits, other clothing for specific sports	61141000, 61142000, 61143000, 61149000

Niche sportswear crosses most product groups, but mainly falls within the special sports garments category.

## Images



## Product specifications

### Quality:

Factors contributing to the quality of sportswear include:

- Quality of fabric:
  - Resilient - allows freedom of movement and has good shape retention
  - Comfortable – breathable, dry and soft, does not cause friction or irritation with rapid and repetitive motion
  - Durable – elastic and strong; can withstand rigorous workouts and/or frequent washing
  - Content is appropriate for environment and chosen activity
- Overall garment construction
  - Seams are strong and neat, and flat or invisible to prevent chafing

### Labeling:

The following information will generally be found on the label in clothes:

- Care symbols
- Composition (fibre content by percentage)
- Size
- Country of origin (Made in)
- Further information, such as eco-labels, labels for sustainable cotton, if applicable

### Materials:

The functional requirements of fabric for sportswear depend upon the type of sport, the environment, and the level of activity. Key considerations include:

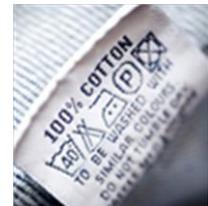
- Protection from adverse weather (wind, rain, snow, sun etc.)
- Comfort (body temperature, fabric sensation, freedom of movement)
- Performance – enhances the wearer’s athletic performance and allows him/her to perform for longer periods of time

Fabrics with the following properties are commonly expected for sportswear:

- Moisture transport - sweat-wicking properties that keep the body dry by drawing moisture away from body surface
- Heat transport – breathable or insulating; helps the wearer feel cooler in hot weather and warmer in cold weather
- Antimicrobial - reduces body odour and textile discolouration
- Ultraviolet protection – blocking UV-A and UV-B rays
- Easy care, anti-static, lightweight, durable, elastic and strong

Synthetic fabrics such as polyester and nylon are most commonly used in sportswear as they can provide a good combination of moisture management, softness, lightness and durability. Cotton is not recommended for active sportswear because of its tendency to absorb and retain moisture. Knitted fabrics are preferred as they have greater elasticity for freedom of movement and transmission of body vapour to the next textile layer in the clothing system.

Photo example: Labelling



**Considerations for action:** Consider targeting a few sports that are similar in functional requirements or may have crossover participation (e.g. yoga, cycling, and running; snowboarding and skiing; tennis and golf; sailing and climbing).

DC exporters are encouraged to monitor important developments in fibrous materials and textile technology, such as: layered fabrics, finishing technologies, microfibres and other modifications, such as hollow or porous fibres.

### Colours and Design:

Aesthetic appeal is an important factor in sportswear; as more fashion retailers enter the sportswear market, stylish and fashionable clothing options will have a competitive edge. Gender, environment and activity type will influence design and colour decisions. Other key considerations include:

- **Comfort.** Temperature control can be aided by design; for example, strategically placed panels can help ventilate sweat-prone areas or thumbholes in sleeves can help keep hands warm.
- **Cut and drape.** A slim silhouette is preferable, but garments that are too loose or too tight in certain areas may cause chafing and irritation. Further, consider what is flattering for an imperfect body. Tops that hit at mid-hip, and pants that have wide, smooth, elastic waistbands are common design features in sportswear garments for women.
- **Coverage and support.** Features for keeping garments in place during rigorous workouts and/or a range of body positions include interior drawcords and elastic waistbands. Built-in bra support is common in women's tops; increasingly, sportswear is incorporating body-forming features commonly found in shapewear garments.
- **Storage.** Strategically placed pockets for devices and earphone holes are common in jackets. Quick-access, small, zippered pockets hidden in the back of pant waistbands that can fit keys, money, passes or cards are common in sportswear.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** DC exporters should consider the typical and innovative design features for targeted activities and monitor European style trends in colour and design.

### Packaging:

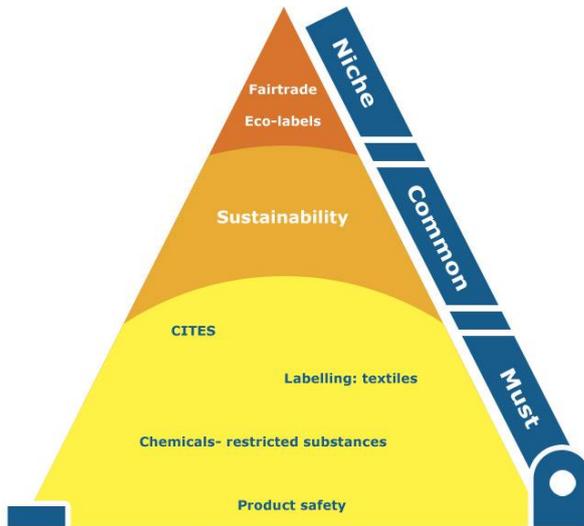
Packaging needs to meet all EU requirements. These requirements aim to prevent packaging waste, to promote the reuse of packaging, and as such reduce the final disposal of such waste. Retailers are primarily responsible for the way products are packed for sale in shops and can ask suppliers to do this for them. Each individual garment is wrapped with plastic with a sticker providing information on brand, size, and kind of garment. Similar items could be packed in boxes.

### Buyer requirements

Buyer requirements can be divided into (1) *musts*, requirements you must meet in order to enter the market, such as legal requirements, (2) *common* requirements, which are those most of your competitors have already implemented, in other words, the ones you need to comply with in order to keep up with the market, and (3) *niche* market requirements for specific segments.

The buyer requirements listed below are relevant for the sportswear market. For more information on the buyer requirements for the Apparel sector, refer to the [Apparel Sector Buyer Requirements](#) section on the Market Intelligence Platform.

**Figure 1: Buyer Requirements**



**Legal requirements are a must – product safety, health and informing consumer correctly crucial**

Here you can find requirements you must meet when marketing your products in the EU. Pay attention to the indications of which materials are concerned per requirement described. The following ‘musts’ apply to the products and uses listed here:

- **Product safety** – applicable to all products
- **Chemicals** – specific for textiles, leather and accessories
- **Labelling** – specific rules for textiles
- **CITES** – applicable to products made from wild plants and animals

**Product safety**

The General Product Safety Directive basically states that all products marketed in the EU must be safe to use and forms a framework for all specific legislation established for specific products and issues. If no specific legal requirements have been established for your product and its uses, the General Product Safety Directive still applies. If there are specific requirements applicable to you, the General Product Safety Directive applies in addition, covering all other safety aspects which may not have been described specifically.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Study the specific legal requirements listed here, and use your common sense to ensure the product does not tear, catch fire or cause any other danger in its normal use as this may not be outlined in specific legislation, but is covered in the General Product Safety Directive. You can read more about the [General Product Safety Directive in the EU Export Helpdesk](#).

**Chemicals – restricted substances**

The EU has restricted a great number of chemicals in products that are marketed in the EU. These are listed in the so called REACH regulation (Regulation (EC) 1907/2006). Which chemicals are of relevance for you will depend on your specific product and material used. Chemicals relevant to the manufacture of sportswear include:

### Textiles

- Azo dyes: if you dye your textile make sure you do not use any of the [azo dyes](#) that release any of the 22 aromatic amines which are prohibited. The EU legislation lists the aromatic amines, not the azo dyes which release them. The vast majority of azo dyes are therefore legally acceptable. Moreover, most reputable dye manufacturers only produce legally accepted dyes. However, border rejections and market withdrawals do show that azo dyes still is an issue that causes problems on the EU market.
- Flame retardants: in textile products that come into contact with the skin flame retardants are restricted. Often used flame retardants are [Tris \(2,3 dibromopropyl\) phosphate \(TRIS\)](#), [Tris\(aziridinyl\)phosphineoxide](#) (TEPA) and [Polybromobiphenyles \(PBB\)](#).
- Organotin compounds: if you use PVC in your products, know that [organotin compounds](#) are also restricted. Organotin compounds Dioctyltin (DOT) compounds and Dibutyltin (DBT) compounds can be used in textiles products (e.g. print on t-shirts and other garments). Their use is restricted as they can pose a risk to human health (i.e. suppress the immune system, are toxic to reproduction).

### Metal

- Metal parts and accessories (e.g. clasps, zippers, jewellery, buttons) coming into direct and prolonged contact with the skin should not release more 0.5 µg/cm<sup>2</sup> [nickel](#) per week.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Familiarize yourself with the full list of restricted substances in products marketed in the EU by checking out [restricted chemicals in textile products in the EU Export Helpdesk](#).

In case of dyeing: Make sure your products do not contain any of the azo dyes which release the forbidden aromatic amines. This includes checking your suppliers. To test your products, use the official tests. You can find the tests on the [CEN website](#):

- CEN Textiles – Methods for the determination of certain aromatic amines derived from azo-colourants – Part 1: Detection of the use of certain azo-colourants accessible without extraction. Reference: EN 14362:2003 / EN 14362-1:2012.

Follow new developments in the field of flame retardants, as new alternatives are being developed. You can do so for instance through the [European Flame Retardants Association \(EFRA\)](#).

Some EU countries have additional or stricter national restrictions on chemicals substances used in apparel. For example, formaldehyde in textiles (Austria, Germany, Finland and the Netherlands) and PCP (Austria, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands) and disperse dyes in textiles (Germany). To find out more contact the [helpdesk](#) of the Europeans Chemicals Agency (ECHA) or of European national agencies.

**Labelling:** Textile products must be labelled with the fibre composition and using the fibre names in accordance with EU rules. The aim of this common set of labeling rules is to ensure that the consumer knows what he is buying.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Know your own product and study the EU labelling rules to find out how it should be labelled. Find out more about [textile labeling rules in the EU Export Helpdesk](#).

### CITES- products from wild plants and animals

If you produce products (partially) made from wild plants or animals, you need to make sure that these do not fall under the restrictions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** You can read more about the legislation in [CITES in the EU Export Helpdesk](#) and check out the links to find out whether or not CITES is relevant to you.

### Full overview of requirements for apparel

For an overview of all legal requirements set for your product, see the [EU Export Helpdesk](#) where you can identify your product code to get a list of requirements applicable.

### Common requirements: care labelling, sizing standards, and good sustainability performance commonly asked

**Care labelling:** The GINETEX care labelling system is widely used in all EU Member States. GINETEX uses highly recognizable symbols to recommend garment care. According to GINETEX standards, labels should include:

- general care and warnings
- washing
- drying
- ironing
- professional textile care (dry-cleaning)

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** It is important to note that the symbols are protected as trademarks in many countries and using them is only permitted by GINETEX under contract. For more information on GINETEX labels, see the [GINETEX website](#).

**Sizing standards.** The sizing of clothes sold on the EU market tends to vary from country to country and even from store to store. The textile industry is urging the EU to implement legislation on standard sizing but there is no agreement on a standard as of yet.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** As long there is no EU-wide legislation on sizing, it is recommended to use a recognised standard on clothes sizing.

### Sustainability performance

Sustainability is one of the ways for companies to differentiate themselves, and the means of offering sustainable products are numerous, ranging from labour issues to choice of sustainable materials to certification and use of labels (see 'Niche'). In particular, social aspects like basic labour rights are major issues in the garments industry. Several initiatives have gained quite some ground in (particularly) western European countries. The [Ethical Trading Initiative, ETI](#) is used by large buyers in the UK. Retailers/importers and producers also participate in the [Business Social Compliance Initiative \(BSCI\)](#) and the [Fair Wear Foundation](#) which have a strong presence in the other European markets.

Implementing a management system such as [ISO14000](#) (environmental aspects), OHSAS 18001 (occupational health and safety) or [SA 8000](#) (social conditions) is a way to address sustainability and possibly gain a competitive advantage. Research or discuss with your buyer to determine whether this is of interest.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Look into the possibilities of improving your sustainability performance. This may not always include immediate certification or application of a label (read the information in 'Niche'), but it is important to familiarize yourself with issues. In case you are targeting the UK market familiarise yourself with the [ETI base code](#) to check what [ETI members](#) require from their suppliers. See [CBI's tailored intelligence](#) on the market for sustainable apparel in the UK. When targeting other EU markets it might be interesting to assess your company's current performance by doing a self-assessment, which you can find on the [BSCI website](#). Be aware that many of the environmental and social sustainability issues take place at upstream in your supply chain (factory, collector, farm). Think about a way to assure responsible business at the premises of your suppliers. For more information about SA8000 and other standards please turn to the [ITC's Standards Map](#) where you can search "textiles"

**Niche requirements: certified sustainable products**

While sustainability is gaining ground, the actual use of certification is still a niche in this sector.

**Fairtrade products (textiles)**

Among the niche initiatives, [Fair Trade](#) is the best known with a relatively large market presence (including several sectors) and available for textiles products.

**Eco-labelled apparels**

There are several different eco-labels used for apparel and as this is a means of showing sustainability, there is an interest from buyers. [The Global Organic Textile Standard \(GOTS\)](#) and [Naturland](#) (Germany) are examples of textile processing standard for organic fibres; [OEKO-TEX](#) and [Bluesign](#) stand for no use of hazardous chemicals in textiles; the [EU Ecolabel](#) and also look to chemicals environmentally-friendly options. When doing business in Germany the [Blauer Engel](#) is important eco-label. When targeting north European countries look into the [Nordic Swan](#).

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Check the Fair Trade Standards for [small fibre crop producer organisations](#) and consult ITC’s [Standards Map](#) for more information on the Fair Trade label. If you are looking to focus on the ethical niche market, you need to find business partners. This could range from large companies with sustainable product lines as well as specialized apparel buyers. Familiarizing yourself with the initiatives and how they work is an initial step in finding out whether or not your company would be a good match. For more alternatives, see [ITC’s Standards Map](#).

**Trade and Macro-Economic Statistics**

**Figure 2: EU28 key economic indicators and forecasts in %**

	2013	Forecast 2014	Forecast 2015	
<b>GDP Growth</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2.0</b>	
<b>Inflation</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.5</b>	
<b>Unemployment</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>10.1</b>	

Source: European Commission, 2014

**Economic recovery is spreading.** After a lengthy, double-dip recession, there are finally signs that a more lasting recovery is now taking place and spreading across the EU. Growth has turned positive in a large majority of Member States over the course of last year and the outlook has improved even in the more vulnerable ones. Growth will be modest in 2014 but gather momentum in 2015. The strongest growth is expected in two small Baltic states: Latvia will grow by 3.8% in 2014 and 4.1% in 2015, and Lithuania, which is expected to join the euro area next year, will grow by 3.3% in 2014 and 3.7% in 2015. As the dominant contributor to output in the euro zone, Germany will be a key driver of economic recovery this year. The upturn in 2015 will be supported by the UK, which is experiencing a robust recovery, as well as by France, Italy and Spain, where there will be more growth than in recent years.

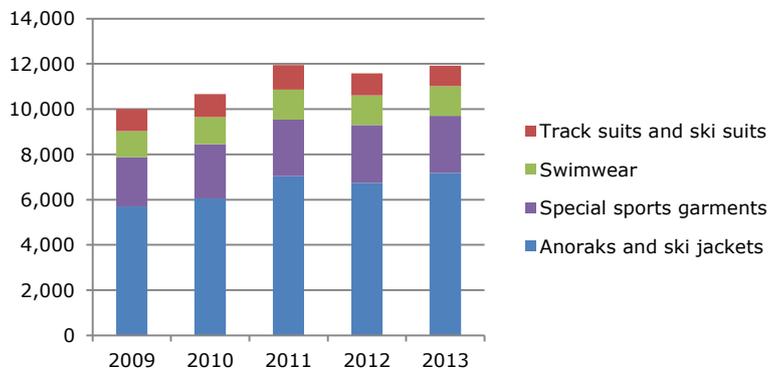
The five largest euro zone economies (The Netherlands, Spain, Italy, France and Germany) all saw an increase in economic sentiment, mostly fuelled by buoyant consumer confidence. The improvement in sentiment over recent months suggests that consumers are set to spend more freely. Consumer and business confidence is currently at a 5-year high; household consumption should be more visible in 2015 as confidence improves and disposable incomes rise as a result of labour market improvements and low inflation.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Many Western European apparel markets tend to grow broadly in line with GDP; as such, improving macro trends in Europe may signal opportunities for DC exporters of apparel or products in apparel subsectors, such as sportswear. With recovery gaining momentum,

Europe is improving as a primary market for DC exporters. The strongest large economies, Germany and the UK represent the best opportunity for DC exporters. With its growing economies, the Baltic region is also a key market to target.

Although sportswear is promising for all consumer segments (especially as it crosses into casual wear), consider targeting mid-to high range consumer segments for niche sportswear as these are the segments that have the disposable income to participate in niche sports. Yoga and skiing can be expensive hobbies, for example; in addition, there are more luxury niche sports such as golf, climbing and sailing.

**Figure 3: Total imports of Sportswear in € million, 2009-2013**



Source: Eurostat, 2014

**Top 10 EU28 Importers**

Rank	Country
1	Germany
2	Italy
3	France
4	United Kingdom
5	Spain
6	Netherlands
7	Belgium
8	Austria
9	Denmark
10	Poland

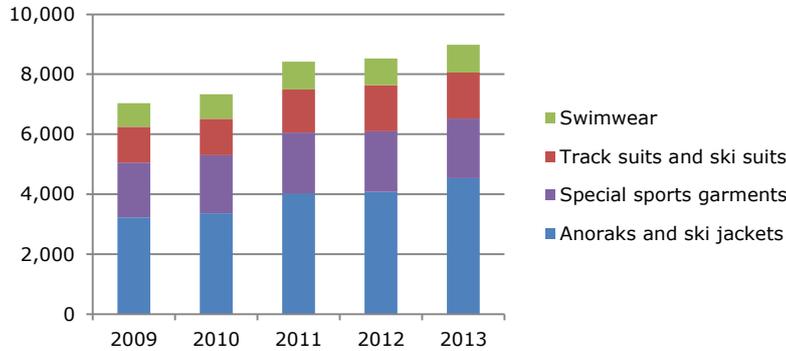
**Top 10 DC Sportswear Suppliers**

Rank	Country	2013 Value €	Share	CAGR 2009-2013
1	China	3,957,805,960	65.3%	2.3%
2	Vietnam	374,019,902	6.2%	7.8%
3	Bangladesh	351,659,325	5.8%	27.5%
4	Turkey	229,571,563	3.8%	3.0%
5	Indonesia	188,757,053	3.1%	0.0%
6	India	170,412,312	2.8%	3.9%
7	Cambodia	158,044,244	2.6%	37.7%
8	Tunisia	157,031,221	2.6%	2.8%
9	Morocco	91,747,146	1.5%	7.5%
10	Pakistan	78,587,583	1.3%	15.8%

Source: Eurostat, 2014

Overall, imports of sportswear are increasing; this is a strong indication of opportunity for exporters of sportswear from developing countries. Imports of sportswear increased to 2011, dipped in 2012, and rose only again in 2013. Germany was responsible for €2.8 billion, or 20.3% of the EU28 sportswear imports in 2013. Italy accounted for 15.4%, and France 11.0%. However, the United Kingdom showed the greatest growth in intimate apparel imports; CAGR 2009-2013 was 7.1%. The top DC partner for intimate apparel imports in 2013 was China, by far, with a 65.3% share of imports. However, Imports from Bangladesh and Cambodia have grown significantly; CAGR 2009-2013 was 27.5 % and 37.7%, respectively.

**Figure 4: Total exports of Sportswear in € million, 2009-2013**



Source: Eurostat, 2014

**Top 10 EU28 Exporters**

Rank	Country
1	Italy
2	France
3	Germany
4	Netherlands
5	Belgium
6	Spain
7	United Kingdom
8	Denmark
9	Poland
10	Austria

**Top 5 Non-European Export Partners**

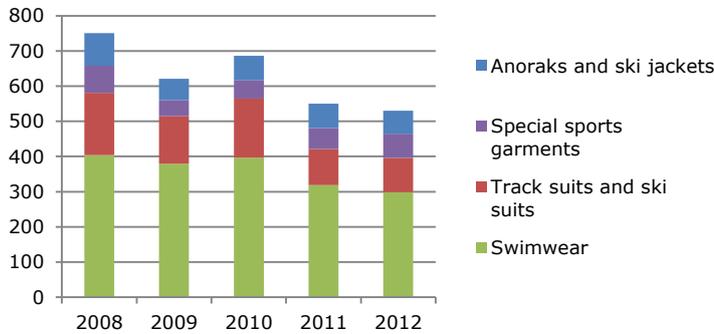
Rank	Country	2013 Value	Share	CAGR 2009-2013
1	Russia	408,811,025	4.5%	1.5%
2	United States	309,076,809	3.4%	15.6%
3	Japan	304,374,473	3.4%	9.2%
4	Hong Kong	299,471,475	3.3%	25.2%
5	China	197,509,243	2.2%	35.3%

Source: Eurostat, 2014

Exports of sportswear continue to rise; this indicates strong opportunities for sportswear exporters from developing countries for re-export. Italy is the biggest exporter of Sportswear. In 2013, Italy exported €1.9 billion worth of products, which amounted to 21.5% of the EU28 total. Italy was followed closely by France and Germany which exported 15.7% and 15.5% of the total, respectively. However, Spain and the United Kingdom had the greatest CAGR 2009-2013 of sportswear imports: 12.4% and 16.7% respectively. Top non-European export partners in 2013 were: Russia, the United States, Japan, Hong Kong and China. Growth in sportswear exports was strongest in Hong Kong and China; CAGR 2009-2013 was 25.2% and 35.3%, respectively. Overall, the upward trend of both imports and exports indicates that in addition to domestic opportunities in Europe there are also may be re-export opportunities for DC exporter,, a potential expansion of the sportswear market that can be reached.

**Considerations for action:** Italy and France are important trading hubs, as well as creative centres for sportswear and brands remain very attractive to traditional and new consumer countries (such as BRIC). Germany, the Netherlands and the UK are important destination markets because they have broad market reach both inside and outside Europe.

**Figure 5: Total production of Sportswear in € million, 2008-2012**



Source: Eurostat, 2014

NOTE: Limited production data was available for some segments and countries

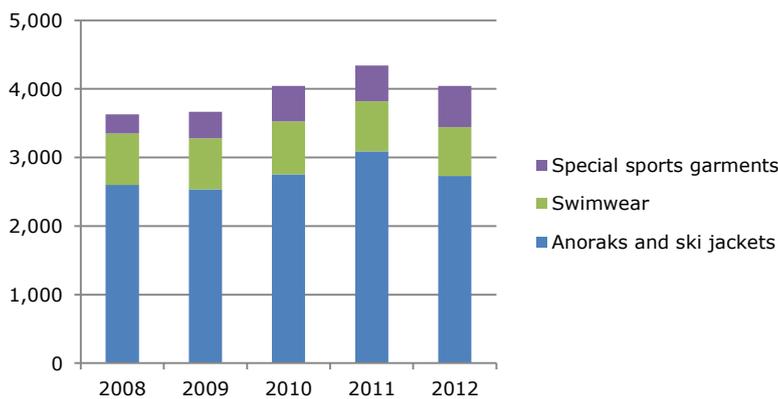
**Top 10 EU28 Producers**

Rank	Country
1	Italy
2	Spain
3	France
4	Romania
5	Portugal
6	Poland
7	Germany
8	Croatia
9	Bulgaria
10	Denmark

Production of sportswear has declined in Europe since 2008. Production declines over the 2008-2012 period were most significant in Portugal (-12.5%), Italy (-10.3%) and Spain (-9.9%). However, production growth was significant in Romania (14.5%) and Bulgaria (17.7%). Italy remains the largest producer of sports apparel. In 2012, the country produced 30.7% of all sportswear in the EU27, a value of €163 million. Spain contributed 19.7% of the total. Overall, Europe consumes roughly 75% of the sportswear it produces; the remainder is supplied by imports. Declining sportswear production in Europe represents an opportunity for DC exporters, who can supply the growing demand

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Eastern European countries Romania and Bulgaria are important centres for sport apparel manufacture, providing short delivery times, a qualified labour force, a developed infrastructure and relatively high CSR standards. Connecting with Eastern European producers might help reduce some barriers and create a preferential route for DC exporters willing to reach the European market.

**Figure 6: Total apparent consumption of Sportswear in € million, 2008-2012**



Source: Eurostat, 2014

NOTE: Apparent Consumption data for Track suits and Ski suits not available due to limited production data

**Top 10 EU28 Consumers**

Rank	Country
1	Germany
2	United Kingdom
3	Spain
4	Austria
5	Italy
6	Finland
7	Greece
8	Ireland
9	Poland
10	Portugal

Overall, consumption of sportswear is growing. Apparent consumption of sportswear rose from 2008 to 2011, but dipped in 2012. Germany had the greatest apparent consumption of sportswear in 2012 with €1.3 billion, 37.7% of the EU total. The United Kingdom accounted for 18.0% of the total, and Spain accounted for 13.4%. However, the highest growth was seen in the Austria and Italy: CAGR 2008-2012 was 10.2% and 5.7%, respectively. The

greatest declines in consumption over the same period were in Portugal (-16.7%) and Spain (-10.6%).

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Despite a decline in domestic consumption of sportswear in 2012, Europe still represents an attractive destination market for DC exporters' products as many countries in Europe remain key export hubs and can easily find new markets for apparel products where consumption is still growing. DC exporters can either try to address these markets directly, or address buyers from traditional manufacturing countries exporting to potential countries.

## Trends

Key drivers for sportswear market development:

- **Greater emphasis on healthy living** continues to drive consumer interest in athletics and fitness, along with the emergence of new sports and the spread of niche sports to new regions or segments. Strong growth is projected for sports apparel: globally, the market is forecast to grow 4% through 2019 to reach a total value of €99.2 billion, led by North America and Asia Pacific. Germany, France, the UK, and Italy are among the top 10 largest global markets for sportswear. Other attractive European markets are those that have the highest sports participation rates. According to the most recent Eurobarometer survey, citizens in the Northern part of the EU are the most physically active. The proportion of the population that exercises or plays sport at least once a week is 70% in Sweden, 68% in Denmark, 66% in Finland, and 58% in the Netherlands. The lowest levels of participation are clustered in the Southern EU Member States. Most respondents who never exercise or play sport can be found in Bulgaria (78%), Malta (75%), and Portugal (64%).

**Considerations for action:** DC exporters can consider targeting the largest European sportswear markets (Germany, France, the UK, and Italy) as well as those with the highest sports participation rates (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and the Netherlands).

- **The fusion of fashion and sports.** Sports-influenced fashion has infiltrated European runways. There has been a marked increase in the number of high-end designers collaborating with athletic brands to launch special collections. Adidas has led the traditional sportswear industry in this regard, often collaborating creatively with outside sources to renew its style and cultural identity. For example, the company has collaborated with designers Stella McCartney and Jeremy Scott for many years. Adidas also partners with creative artists such as Pharrell Williams and Kanye West. Other sportswear companies such as Nike are expanding into fashion-orientated, yet innovative apparel lines and moving towards becoming true lifestyle brands. Puma has launched both a yoga line and a loungewear line.

## Images

### Examples of fashion + sports fusion



Images from: Bogner, Nike, Gaastra, Stella McCartney and Brunotti

- The rise of "Athleisure".** Sportswear that can be worn outside the gym has dramatically grown in popularity and gaining mainstream acceptance as casual wear. Consumers are increasingly choosing athletic apparel over traditional apparel because it offers comfort and versatility. In fact, sportswear continues to outpace traditional apparel; in 2013, sportswear sales grew an estimated 3.4%, while apparel rose by just 0.9%. As a result, the growing sportswear sector is attracting traditional apparel retailers such as H&M, the Gap, Esprit, Uniqlo, Victoria's Secret and Urban Outfitters. Celebrities are capitalizing on the trend; actress Kate Hudson recently launched an online collection of clothes intended to be worn both as workout and casual wear; David Beckham is reportedly launching a casual sportswear and lifestyle brand. Global companies that have had significant success in niche sportswear and 'athleisure' are showing interest in the European market. Canadian brand Lululemon recently opened its first retail location in the UK; Australian brand Lorna Jane plans to open locations in the UK, France and Sweden.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Monitor the crossover between fashion and sportswear in Europe by consulting the recently-launched sportswear lines of traditional apparel retailers such as [H&M](#), [Only](#), [Esprit](#), and [Primark](#). Research niche sportswear companies and lifestyle brands such as [Lululemon](#), [Lorna Jane](#), [Brunotti](#), [O'Neill](#), [Tom Tailor](#), [Sportalm](#), [Bogner](#), [J. Lindberg](#), [Burton](#), [Gaastra](#) and [Protest](#) as well as the fashion-oriented product lines of traditional sportswear and lifestyle brands such as [Nike](#), [Adidas](#) (Y3 with Yamamoto, and [Stella McCartney](#) collections, for example) and [Puma](#). Leverage resources by targeting a group of sports in which there is crossover participation, such as tennis and golf; or yoga, aerobics, running, and cycling; or skiing, snowboarding, surfing and skateboarding. Monitor the popularity of new sports such as parcourse, free running, stunt biking and the fashion-influenced sportswear catering to these niche sport consumer segments such as [Munkimotion](#).

- Innovations in Fabric and Fibre Technology.** There has been strong growth in the development and use of highly functional materials in sportswear. Moisture management and anti-microbial treatments are now commonplace in performance fabrics. Thermo-regulating fabrics continue to be a key area of research and development; for example, cooling technologies, such as finishes that reflect the sun's heat are now commercially available. There are also textiles that contain additives to repel insects, moisturize and firm the skin, or fight cellulite. Energy-related fabric development is another area of recent innovation; this new class of materials focuses on circulation, muscle recovery and blood flow to enhance energy and wellness. Key areas of emerging innovations include:
  - Intelligent Textiles** - materials that interact with human or environmental conditions and create changes in the material properties e.g. produce thermoregulatory control by affecting the microclimate between the clothing and skin.
  - Biometrics.** Clothing made with fabric with embedded sensors that gather data such as heart rate, breathing rate, breathing volume, movement (including steps and cadence), movement intensity, heart rate variability and calories burned. The data can be uploaded to user's smartphone or tablet for analysis.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Consumers demanding greater variety in fitness apparel and niche sportswear categories may be underserved in terms of product innovation. DC exporters should keep up with the very latest technical fabrics and technology used in sportswear in order to create innovative, functional and comfortable garments. Monitor sports publications, products on the market, and textiles publications, such as textiles intelligence (<http://www.textilesintelligence.com>).

- Online commerce, crowdsourcing, and community.** Niche sportswear companies are increasingly using their online presence to support the growth of their community. Lululemon, for example, has as an interactive blog on their website that features fitness tips, recipes, and information on retreats. In addition, the company offers a yoga class-locating mobile app. Lululemon's online sales grew 33% in 2013 and the company continues to expand. In the UK, Tribesports is focused on the running community. Calling itself, "community-powered sportswear", the design and technical specifications of each product is based on training behaviours and direct feedback from the community.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Consider how both global sportswear leaders and startups are using the concept of community to market and build their brands. Visit the Tribesports website (<http://www.tribesports.com>) to see an example of how the company is not only tapping into their user base for product development, and seeking to motivate and connect athletes with fitness challenges, training apps, and through the celebration of successes.

### Market Channels and Segments

Apparel Sector Market Channels and Segments are also applicable to Sportswear.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Develop clear market positioning before setting up distribution channels for the market. Some retailers are more appealing to younger consumers and some target older demographics. For high-end segments, product quality must be in line with customer expectations. Minimum delivery volumes and terms of payment vary greatly and will need to be requested on an individual basis. For more information, see [CBI Market Channels and Segments for Apparel](#).

### Price

Typically, for apparel, retail price = 4.5 to 6 times the FOB price.

**Figure 7: Stages in the trade channel in which a margin is applied**



### Field of Competition

The sportswear market field of competition is comparable to that of the overall apparel market. The apparel market is fairly fragmented; this, combined with a weak retail landscape in recent years, has increased rivalry. The sportswear segment is increasingly competitive as more fashion retailers are offering sportswear collections.

For more information on the field of competition, please refer to the [Apparel Sector Field of Competition document](#) on the CBI website.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION:** Bringing innovative goods to the market that enhance value perception will be key to succeeding in the sportswear market. To increase the competitive advantage of your product offering, differentiate products with style and design. With moderate market-entry barriers, importers and wholesalers are the best way for small-to medium-size enterprises to bring products into the target country; contact them directly via the representative and terms will be negotiated. For more information, see [CBI Field of Competition for Apparel](#).

## Useful sources

### Organizations

- World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry <http://www.wfsgi.org/>

### Trade Shows

- ISPO, Munich <http://munich.ispo.com/en/>
- FIBO, Cologne, <http://www.fibo.de/?sprache=englisch>
- Salon Mondial Body Fitness, Paris <http://www.vivelaforme.com/LE-SALON.htm>
- SPORTEX, Denmark <http://www.nordfair.dk/?id=46>
- Eurobike, Friedrichshafen, Germany <http://www.eurobike-show.de/>
- Outdoor show, Friedrichshafen, Germany <http://www.outdoor-show.com/>
- Mode City Paris (Eurovet), <http://www.lingerie-swimwear-paris.com/en/>
- Interfilière, Paris (Eurovet) <http://www.interfiliere.com/juillet/>

#### More information

CBI market information: Promising EU export markets.

EU Expanding Exports Helpdesk - <http://exporthelp.europa.eu> - go to 'trade statistics'.

Eurostat - <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/newxtweb> - statistical database of the EU.

Several queries are possible. For trade, choose 'EU27 Trade Since 1995 By CN8'. Use the guide 'Understanding Eurostat: Quick guide to easy comext'

([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/newxtweb/assets/User\\_guide\\_Easy\\_Comext\\_20090513.pdf](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/newxtweb/assets/User_guide_Easy_Comext_20090513.pdf)) for instructions.

International Trade Statistics - <http://www.trademap.org> - you have to register

This survey was compiled for CBI by Global Intelligence Alliance  
in collaboration with CBI sector expert Dhyana van der Pols

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