



EU CITIES FOR FAIR AND ETHICAL TRADE AWARD
Application City of Ghent - Belgium



Descriptive Summary

The City of Ghent has a long fair trade tradition and goes beyond raising awareness. We do not only set the example through our procurement policy but also create a climate in which entrepreneurs, knowledge institutions and civil society organisations invest in fair trade.

In 2005, Ghent became the **first Belgian 'Fair Trade Town'**, and has put increasing emphasis on fair trade ever since.

In 2014, '**Ghent Fair Trade**' was launched in cooperation with Oxfam Fair Trade Shops. The project started a multi-stakeholder approach that has triggered an impressive multiplier effect, resulting in specific commitments from the public, civil society and the private sector. Ghent has a textile history that makes the impact of trade and non-compliance with labour rights visible up to now. This resulted in a broad movement of entrepreneurs, volunteers, fashionistas and organisations that passionately promote fair trade. 'Ghent Fair Trade' has put textile centre stage, but leaves scope for other sectors. With remarkable results. A number of activities increased awareness among consumers, gaining considerable attention. Ghent's 'Fair Fashion Fest' attracts 4.000+ visitors. The support for entrepreneurs has resulted in a strong, wider range of fair trade products. A map leads thousands of consumers to the growing fair trade offer.

Fair food was an evident procurement choice the past 20 years. But there is more. The master project sustainable procurement has allowed us to take the next step. As a textiles city, Ghent broke a lance for fair work clothing. A pioneering EU-funded pilot programme resulted in a multilingual toolbox for socially responsible work wear as a set of guidelines for purchasers. This allows us to share our experiences beyond our city borders. We plan to explore other strategic sectors with high social risks, such as ICT hardware and furniture.

Watch this summary [video](#) about Ghent.

www.stad.gent/ghent4trade

Basic Characteristics - Descriptive City Overview

With a surface area of 156.2 km² and 260.000 inhabitants, Ghent is the second largest city in Flanders (Belgium). This '**pocket-sized metropolis**' (Charles Landry) offers a rare combination of the intimacy of a small city and the openness of a metropolis. Demographically, Ghent is becoming increasingly young and diverse, in contrast to the ageing population outside the city.

With numerous museums, cultural centres, festivals, monuments and the title of 'UNESCO Creative City of Music', it is a genuine **city of culture**. Over 72.000 students make Ghent the largest **student city** in Flanders, with Ghent University ranking 69th in the '2017 Academic Ranking of World Universities'.

The young heart of the city boosts innovation and creativity, which is reflected in Ghent's economy.

Ghent aims to be open, sustainable, smart and child-friendly. It is a '**city of people**', where smart inhabitants participate, co-create and showcase their creativity day in, day out.

Basic Characteristics - Economic structure

Ghent counts about 23.400 companies and approximately 2.700 new businesses open their doors every year. 149 of the country's 380 annual start-ups are based in Ghent, which makes our city the start-up and scale-up capital of Belgium.

Over 184.000 people are employed in Ghent (agricultural sector: 0.5%, industry: 18.5%, commercial services: 42% and non-commercial services: 39%).

Ghent is a city of shops and hospitality. The city has the largest pedestrianised shopping area in Flanders (36 ha) and is a real paradise for foodies (4 Michelin-star restaurants) and shopaholics. The centre is divided into 8 quarters, each with its own atmosphere and identity. In 2015, the retail and hospitality sectors created over 11.000 jobs (7000 in retail and 4000 in hospitality); Ghent had 5100 self-employed people, 3400 shops and 1500 retailers.

The 'Gent en garde' food strategy and growing transition movement also help [urban farming](#) thrive.

Basic Characteristics - Trade structure

Ghent is a **creative hotspot**: 20% of the added value of the creative economy in Flemish regional capitals is generated in Ghent. We also focus strongly on health, IT, biotech, cleantech, new materials.

Ghent is a knowledge hub. The university and several university colleges guarantee a constant influx of national and, increasingly, international **talent**. We are proud to host **world-class research** centres, including VIB and iMinds, as well as departments of VITA, Flanders Make and imec. Development of the Tech Lane Science Park, which employs over 3000 researchers (focusing on IT, life sciences and materials), is in full swing.

Jens Holtinger (Sweden), General Manager of Volvo Europe Truck, summarises Ghent's assets as follows: *"The highly educated and professional workforce combined with the local authorities that are flexible in their support for local companies make Ghent the ideal base for businesses."*

Basic Characteristics – Infrastructure

Ghent wouldn't be Ghent without its **port**. It has always been the driving force behind the Ghent economy. The port has grown into one of the principal maritime zones in Europe. Several sectors are represented: the world's largest newspaper manufacturing machine, integrated steelworks and fruit juice terminals (both the largest in Europe), the bioenergy cluster Ghent Bio-Economy Valley and the automotive industry. The future looks promising. In 2021, the new sea lock will allow even larger ships to dock in Ghent. (In figures: 45.200 ships every year, 96.750 jobs, 9.300 hectares, 13.3 billion euros of added value).

Ghent is a very **accessible city**. It has two railway stations and is less than an hour from Brussels Airport. Moreover, it lies at the intersection of the E17 and E40 motorways. The city is developing an [innovative traffic centre](#) and invests in cycling highways that provide safe connections with nearby cities.

Basic Characteristics - Regional Context

Ghent is **strategically situated** within Europe, at the crossroads of economically strong areas such as Randstad Holland to the north, the Ruhr district to the east, London to the west and the big French cities Paris and Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing to the south.

Ghent is located in the heart of Flanders, the economic heart of the European Pentagon (Milan-Paris-London-Hamburg-Munich) where about **50% of the European GDP** is produced by 40% of the population on 20% of the surface area.

The **port** is linked to the Westerscheldt and the North Sea via the Ghent-Terneuzen canal. With the fusion between the Port of Ghent and Sealand Seaports, 'North Sea Port' became a fact. The **cross-border port area** (60 km long) stretches from Vlissingen in the Netherlands to Ghent.

In the next two years, ESF financing will further strengthen regional development. 28 municipalities are planning initiatives on employment, mobility and strengthening of the core areas.

Basic Characteristics - Frameworks on sustainable development

The City of Ghent is subject to Flemish and Belgian laws.

[Flemish procurement policy](#) focuses on "commitment to sustainable and innovative public contracts". This includes both environmental aspects and socially and ethically responsible procurement. The City of Ghent has actively contributed to the Flemish strategy for more effective checks of human rights compliance in public contracts in sensitive sectors.

The Belgian government has also adopted a [framework on public contracts](#), in which sustainable procurement plays a key role.

Both strategies have a broad scope. Therefore the City of Ghent sets the bar high, using the local context as the basis for further action. In 2017, as an SDG Voice, it also included SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) in its local strategic vision.

Overview: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/pdf/national_gpp_strategies_en.pdf.

Basic Characteristics - City Networks Membership

Ghent invests in **international networks and cooperation** to strengthen the city and support other cities. Ghent is actively involved in EUROCITIES (President), Climate Alliance (President), ICLEI, RUAF, EUniverCITIES, Procura+ and the Urban Partnership Jobs & Skills (Public Procurement). At regional level, Ghent spreads and shares expertise through the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) and the Flemish Cities Knowledge Centre, which it co-founded. Ghent is a **'Fair Trade Town'**.

The City of Ghent has won many [awards](#). A few examples: In 2017, it was named one of eight 'SDG Voices', ambassadors appointed by the Federal Government to put SDGs on the map. Ghent challenged other Belgian cities to announce SDGs through accessible initiatives and, in 2018, this campaign was awarded with the **UN SDG Action Award**. In 2017, Ghent was a finalist in the **European Green Capital Awards** (EGCA) and is shortlisted again in 2018.

Basic Characteristics - Additional information

The DNA of Ghent's citizens can be summarised as rebellious, experimental, creative, innovative and open-minded. Every day, they show how creative they are. Therefore, the city council invests in its 'smart citizens', encouraging them to show their commitment. A range of innovative participation and co-creation initiatives have led to a **broad coalition** of residents, industry, the academic world and the city council.

A Flemish survey of the regional cities shows that Ghent is perceived as the city of greatest solidarity in Flanders. Moreover, no less than 80% of the city's inhabitants are proud of their city, far above Flanders' average score of 69% (Municipality/City Monitor Survey, Statistics Flanders/ABB). The progressive policies and large student population undoubtedly contribute to this open view on the world (<https://solidair.stad.gent/>). A climate in which fair and ethical trade increasingly gained ground: <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/1083369.fair-trade-fair-trade-liegt-in-unserer-dna.html?sstr=gent>.

LEADERSHIP, VISION, STRATEGY

Question 1:

What is the vision behind your city becoming a City for Fair and Ethical Trade? Why should your city be recognised as such?

Our commitment to fair trade is intrinsic to our **mission and vision**. Key values include openness, solidarity, ecology, well-being, and aiming for ‘a community of responsible citizens’. This mission was transposed into an ambitious goal in the city’s **multi-annual plan**: “Turning Ghent into an example and recognised centre of excellence for knowledge of and innovation in fair trade.” We have already made great progress: the city council has tried to set the standard for fair trade in Belgium. We aim to share our insights at European level too. The **Sustainable Development Goals** are the international guiding principles for our own policies. We signed the federal government’s SDG Charter as well as the VVSG Charter ‘Global Goals, Local Focus’. In 2016, Ghent further strengthened the link between the SDGs and its strategic multi-annual plan.

The City’s mission and SDG framework allow us to adopt a **thoroughly sustainable procurement policy** which exceeds the legal obligations and has a strategic and creative perspective. The procurement policy has seven pillars, with a focus on sustainable innovations and sustainable entrepreneurship. The most important is the fifth key goal: “Integrating and assuring international labor standards and consistently incorporating principles of fair trade throughout the supply chain.”

The structural integration of fair trade into the city’s procurement policy is deeply rooted. In 2008, a key step was taken with the **master project sustainable procurement**. The procurement policy was raised to a strategic level and from then onwards, purchasing power contributed to the achievement of the strategic goals. A **sustainable procurement steering committee** took charge of the process and developed a set of **guidelines for sustainable procurement** and a **strategic roadmap** for sustainable procurement. The guidelines boost sustainable procurement and share experiences in sustainability with central purchasers within the organisation. The strategic roadmap gives an overview of all the tenders planned for the year ahead. It also allows for sustainability criteria to be implemented across various departments. The roadmap shows the efforts that have been made and pinpoints areas for development based on a baseline measurement. For each tender, a score from 0 to 10 indicates the current state of affairs and future goals. When developing its policies, Ghent sought inspiration internationally. The City also shared its own experiences through numerous networks. During ‘Ecoprocura 2014’, a debate was held about fair trade and labour rights in the framework of sustainable procurement. Entrepreneurs were given concrete input about the city’s ambitions and strategy during a ‘Meet Your Buyers’ event. As such, the City of Ghent is helping the market prepare for the future.

Needless to say, these tools are not foolproof. In 2015, for example, it was revealed that Indian natural stone from a region where labour rights are violated on a massive scale had been used to repave a square in the city centre. All the political parties in the city council called for action to be taken. The City anticipated this with a new framework that has since been applied in two cases.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Question 2:

Which systems does the city have in place to promote awareness of fair and ethical trade? Does the city take any action to create an enabling environment in the city for other initiatives to emerge and thrive?

'**Ghent Fair Trade**' was launched in 2014 through a partnership between the City of Ghent and civil society organisations promoting fair trade. It is the driving force behind the city's fair trade initiatives. The project aims to raise awareness among citizens, support entrepreneurs and bring local stakeholders together. The recruitment of a full-time 'Ghent Fair Trade' staff member and the allocation of a dedicated operational budget have booked excellent results: fair trade, all year round.

Concrete **activities for the general public** boost the demand for fair trade products and highlight what is on offer. The programme includes major events (Fair Fashion Fest and Fair Food Fest), information sharing (lecture by Safia Minney, 'Make IT Fair' debate, masterclass chefs restaurants,...) and activities based on (inter)national campaigns (Fair Trade Week, Fashion Revolution Day,...). Major events, such as the **Fair Fashion Fest**, showcase fair textiles to an ever-growing audience through a fashion show, fair fashion market, lectures and workshops. The first edition welcomed 2.800 visitors, the second 4.000. Smaller activities also play an important role, such as the **Fair Fashion/Food Walks** (map of Ghent), the **inspirational fair fashion guide** (listing fair clothes stores) and the **fair trade day** (with participating outlets treating customers to fair trade goodies). They help local consumers in their search for alternatives. Connecting the topic with local campaigns garner more city-wide support and result in new partnerships. In 2017, **Belmundo**, a solidarity festival, was entirely dedicated to 'an alternative economy'. The result? 46 activities for 3.000 participants organised by more than 60 organisations in one month.

An **innovative textiles platform for entrepreneurs** boosts capacity building and supports fair trade pioneers. The aim is to extend the range of fair trade clothing in Ghent. During the 'Fair Fashion Labs', entrepreneurs, researchers and civil society organisations meet up, share experiences and focus on one specific topic. Ghent-based entrepreneurs interested in scrutinising their supply chain may join this platform. The publication '**Eerlijk textiel onder de loep**' (Fair textiles under the microscope) aims to help entrepreneurs develop their own vision. Several businesses in Ghent, such as Bombyx and Yak&Yeti, are pioneers in this field and play an exemplary role. Their supply chain is fully transparent, they guarantee fair labour conditions and a living wage, and they implement support programmes for employees. As such, they already have a tangible impact in the global South.

Under the auspices of the 'Milan Food Policy Pact' and with a boost from 'Ghent Fair Trade', the local food strategy 'Gent en garde' combined local and international sustainability. The European project '**Food Smart Cities for Development**' (2015-2016) aimed to give cities a more active role in changing the food production and consumption paradigm. Some concrete results of this initiative were a travelling fair food exhibition and a fair food festival. This project was further extended in

collaboration with the international NGO Rikolto/VECO. 'Food Smart Cities' gives local municipalities the opportunity to take charge of their own food production and stimulates trade where necessary.

SPECIFIC INITIATIVES, INSTRUMENTS or PROJECTS

Question 3:

Apart from creation of the enabling environment for multi-stakeholder initiatives, does the city implement any specific projects, instruments and initiatives in the area of fair and ethical trade?

Sustainability is one of Ghent's key values, with countless awareness-raising campaigns, the local food strategy and, in particular, the procurement policy. Where possible, the focus is on fair trade or a supply chain that is as short as possible. Fair trade labels offer an indication. In addition, Ghent integrates fixed clauses in tenders. These become more ambitious as the maturity of the market increases.

But there is more: Ghent also aims to **positively influence the offer on the market**. The purchasing power of public buyers provides strong leverage here. In 2015, Ghent joined forces with VVSG to set up an EU-funded programme to boost the sustainability of work wear contracts. The priority was on ethical standards and the principles of fair trade in the production of raw materials and the manufacturing phase. An inventory was prepared of how Flemish governments integrate ethical principles. The suppliers of workwear were presented with a detailed survey and a learning network was set up for government purchasers. The final step was a pilot purchase by the City of Ghent (the supplier signed a legally binding contract in which they committed to working transparently and continuously improving compliance with labour rights, human rights and the payment of a living wage). The multilingual **toolbox for socially responsible workwear** shares lessons learned and gives public purchasers across Europe a concrete tool to apply these principles. This was a custom step-by-step plan for the 'workwear' group, but the principle of supplier commitment can be applied to other product groups too. Partnerships with VVSG and Platforma allow us to share this information at regional and European level.

In the future Ghent will be exploring other product groups with a global supply chain and high social risks, namely **ICT and furniture**. ICT products show similarities to textiles. The City of Ghent's ICT hardware is managed by an external partner, Digipolis, which is committed to considering sustainable alternatives. We are looking into the possibility of a partnership with Electronics Watch and participation in the European project 'Make IT Fair'. As such, we are once again focusing on collaboration, dialogue and encouraging suppliers to commit to an improvement process. As a result, the focus shifts from naked purchasing figures, to a process striving for alternatives on the market. Structural change in key segments, that is essential for us.

We also want to contribute to a shift as an actor in **development cooperation**. The main focus is on capacity building for local governments in the Global South. The city link between Ghent and Mangaung (South Africa) resulted in several projects (question 6). However, the City is now exploring a new model for decentralised development cooperation, in which the bilateral relationship makes way for a thematic networking model for local governments, private partners, NGOs and other stakeholders, resulting in cross-pollination between North and South. ‘Food Smart Cities’ (question 2) illustrates the way forward.

Question 4:

How could the general environment concerning fair and ethical trade in the city be described?

When it comes to fair and ethical trade, Ghent boasts a **beneficial national and regional context**. The active awareness-raising policy of Belgian cities has resulted in 92% of residents having heard of fair trade. Half of all Belgians have a positive or very positive attitude towards fair trade and 43% regularly buy fair trade products (<http://www.befair.be/nl/content/opiniepeiling-2016-over-belgen-en-fair-trade-0>). In Belgian public tenders, ethical trade is the second most common sustainable criterion, after environmental criteria (<https://www.duurzameontwikkeling.be/nl/news/koopt-de-belgische-overheid-echt-duurzaam>). 60% of Flemish cities have been named ‘Fair Trade Towns’ and 71% of Flemish people actually live in one of those cities, ranking the region second worldwide. The City of Ghent’s bold choices ensured the topic was highlighted even further, honouring the city’s leading role on a daily basis.

Civil society organisations in Ghent are numerous. Every day, they contribute to international justice and fair trade in Ghent and the Global South. Besides providing financial and theoretical support, the City of Ghent also promotes participation in policy-making through an official advisory board. Seven Ghent-based Oxfam fairtrade shops generate an impressive yearly turnover of 1 million euro, ranking them at the top at national level (in the list of 197 Belgian shops, 2 shops respectively earned a second and eighth spot). Moreover, they constantly try to approach new target groups through a wide range of activities for the public and educational initiatives and have joined forces with the Manduvira cooperative for the direct purchase of sugar. The non-profit organisation Catapa focuses on mining and, together with 10 European partners in the framework of ‘Make IT Fair’, it specialises in raising awareness, research and lobbying on the topic. The NGO Rikolto joins forces with experts, youth, businesses and governments to seek a sustainable way to feed the world. Wereldsolidariteit promotes ‘clean clothes’ in countless campaigns... the list is a long one.

Ghent University is not lagging behind. In 2015, it was the first Belgian university to receive the fairtrade@campus Award. The motto ‘Viva Fair Trade’ aims to raise awareness on the topic both among students and staff, and to promote fair purchases. The labs don’t only produce their own fairtrade chocolate, recently scientists started dreaming of fair lab coats (inspired by the City of Ghent).

The **local economy** has also gone fair and sustainable. An impressive number of local hospitality businesses, as well as shops, sell [fair trade products](#). The Port of Ghent – which was renamed North Sea Port following the merger with Sealand Seaports – facilitates optimum sustainability on its territory, invests in the circular economy and has joined the recently launched ‘World Ports Sustainability Programme’ through the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO).

Ghent **schools** are committed to educating the fair trade consumers of tomorrow. The City of Ghent offers a free educational programme on global citizenship, which attracts yearly an average of 13.000 participants. Worth mentioning are the screenings of ‘The True Cost’ and the accompanying [educational materials](#). The figures are growing exponentially thanks to efforts of local educational NGO’s.

Question 5:

What can be considered, thus far, to be key observable effects derived from fair and ethical trade?

The combination of a well-thought-out local public policy and strong grassroots movements ensured that when the ‘Fair Trade Towns’ campaign was launched, Ghent had already ticked all the boxes: the City purchased fair trade products and encouraged its staff to do the same, it had a lobbying group to attract media attention and fair trade products in shops, the hospitality industry, businesses and organisations. After being awarded the title of ‘Fair Trade Town’ in 2005, the City felt it was time to aim higher and wider.

The **sustainable procurement policy** was structurally integrated (question 1), with concrete results. The measurement tool included in the strategic roadmap gives a score from 0 to 10, which allows for progress to be assessed and a growth path to be defined. Products like coffee, sugar, wine and fruit juice with a fair trade label have already earned the maximum score. Work wear went from 4 to 6 thanks to the intense efforts made in collaboration with partners (and potential suppliers). Moreover, the current framework includes an improvement process within the contract signed. The uniforms of all the reception staff at the Town Hall are now completely fair. The Declaration of Human Rights can be found on the inside.

The creation of ‘Groep Gent’ (‘Ghent Group’) will result in a potential **scale-up** in the medium to long term. ‘Groep Gent’ is a group of public and private organisations active within Ghent, whose goals and activities are fully or mainly based on the strategic multi-annual plan approved by the democratically elected city bodies. The group includes 26 different organisations, each of which contributes to the goals of the City of Ghent, playing a key role in fair and ethical trade. The City of Ghent still has a way to go, but we believe this coalition will contribute to a further increase of fair purchases. The local Public Centres for Social Welfare are already buying fair trade products, as are Digipolis and North Sea Port, as previously mentioned.

Consumer awareness is on the rise and the demand for fair and ethical products is therefore also growing. This is evident from the high turnout at events and activities, the significant reach of the

social-media channels and the launch of bottom-up activities. Ghent is doing its utmost to showcase its fair trade efforts through product overviews (online and printed), walking tours around fair trade businesses, fair trade days, media attention and innovative events for a wide audience. Moreover, publications such as ‘Duurzaam en (h)eerlijk feesten’ (‘Sustainable and delicious fair trade celebrations’) aim to encourage residents to look critically at their own consumption patterns.

That said, merely publicising the products available is not enough. ‘Fair Fashion Talks’ is a concrete initiative launched by the City of Ghent, **a platform for entrepreneurs** and purchasers looking to become pioneers in fair textiles. Five meetings have been held so far, the [last session](#) welcoming 70 participants.

Question 6:

How would winning the Award support your city’s efforts in promoting fair and ethical trade?

Ghent’s political and social climate has allowed fair and ethical trade to grow quickly and thrive. But Ghent likes to dream big. Our work never ends. To be awarded with the title of first ‘EU City for fair and Ethical Trade’ - just ahead of the city council elections - would **encourage** the newly elected council **to raise the bar even further and continue to build on the long-term vision integrated into local public policy**. Ghent’s civil society organisations that promote international justice and advise policymakers through participatory bodies formulated the goal for the six years ahead as follows: “In 2024, the City of Ghent will only buy fair trade products where possible. If they are unavailable, the City of Ghent will seek sustainable alternatives.”

Ghent is eager to learn. Its solid international policies and focus on knowledge-sharing and partnerships perfectly illustrate this approach. Exchanges with other European cities through a ‘**Sustainable Cities Network**’ are valuable for a city like Ghent in its quest for even better results. Our procurement policy and the ‘Ghent Fair Trade’ project have allowed us to gain the necessary expertise to contribute to knowledge-sharing at pan-European level and beyond. We aim not only to share our practices, but also to seek inspiration. Specifically, in the years ahead, Ghent wants to explore new product segments in its purchasing strategy, roll out the expertise it has developed among a wider range of stakeholders (both businesses and organisations) and broaden the target group.

Putting fair trade on the map also translates in a well-thought-out **communication strategy**. In recent years, the City of Ghent has raised awareness among consumers and showcased what is on offer through a range of publications, press interventions, online and offline communication channels. A European framework takes these efforts to a higher level and gives the many players building an alternative trade model a helping hand. Promoting their pioneering work at European level is definitely a positive means of encouragement to continue their daily fight.

Ghent’s efforts in the field of fair trade are not limited to the city itself. Ghent also invests in capacity building for local governments in the Global South. We have long contributed to **development**

cooperation, for example through twinning with the municipality of Mangaung (South Africa). This initiative has resulted in several concrete projects in various policy fields (2003-2017). Since 2010, we have been fighting youth unemployment. The pilot project 'Etsose Bathja' trained 25 youngsters in furniture manufacturing, using Ghent's social economy principles as a basis. In 2008 Mangaung (along with the Province of Vrijstaat) took centre stage at the yearly 'Accenta' trade fair. Entrepreneurs from our partner city were invited to discuss investment opportunities and showcase local products, cultural heritage and tourism. A side programme focussed on sustainable local economic development. Support from the ITC and the European Commission in the development of a new textiles initiative (question 7), which puts producers from the Global South centre stage, would give the project a significant boost.

Question 7:

If you were to win the Award, what project/initiative would you consider undertaking? Why? How would you implement it?

In the debate about fair trade textiles, the authorities in major textile-producing countries have their backs against the wall. Companies opt for low-cost economies and can move their production abroad at any time. Both manufacturers and governments are well aware of this and are not generally inclined to risk valuable jobs. Apart from the large (and powerful) players, there are countless small companies and micro-businesses that also contribute to the city's economic fabric. Their lack of commercial clout often results in limited market access. That is where the local authorities come in. They have the leverage to **breathe new life into these businesses and boost their growth potential**.

Besides helping local players boost fair textiles in Ghent, we would like to reach out to **entrepreneurs in the South**. The aim is to start a search for a fair trade model in the current global economy through the development of a socially equitable framework (with a focus on a living wage and compliance with labour and human rights) and, where possible, by shortening the production chain.

In the pilot phase, several small textile workshops in a selected partner city would have the opportunity to sign up for a **coaching programme** with the local council acting as an incubator. Capacity building to facilitate access to the (international) market for the most vulnerable groups and the creation of an end product that respects both humanity and the environment take centre stage. In exchange for the support offered, the participating entrepreneurs actively work towards social justice in their companies. The trajectory would be approached as a project and aims to create a concept (based on lessons learned) that can be shared and rolled out at regional, national and international level.

Ghent chooses consciously to focus on confection because we believe the **local government** can have the biggest impact in this phase of the production chain. As for the region, Southeast Asia seems the most obvious choice to initiate this concept, but up-and-coming textile producers such as Ethiopia are also considered an option.

Inspired by the one-stop info point for entrepreneurs in Ghent and the Startersfabriek (coaching, training and affordable spaces for budding businesses), an information point will be launched where

all local entrepreneurs can benefit from custom advice on fair trade and environmentally-friendly production (labels, international standards,...).

At regional level, we would like to set up a **digital platform** for fair trade textiles, which would be developed in collaboration with all the relevant textile partners. This gives the project a strong basis at a level beyond the local, as well as making the end result accessible to European buyers.

Cross-pollination, access to information, sharing of experiences and inspiration are the key concepts in this textiles story. At two international conferences, we will give entrepreneurs, producers and civil society organisations the opportunity to gain insight into the whole story, sign contracts and share insights. In the South the focus is on textile production and challenges for small businesses. In Ghent, it's all about slow fashion.