YOUTHFUL BEYOND YOUTH

Independent innovation and digital fabrication for active ageing in European fashion and textile sectors

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Abstract:

The report documents the outcomes of the FUSION project, a transnational initiative co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The project addresses the skills gap in the fashion and textile sector, specifically the disconnect between Higher Education Institution (HEI) curricula and the evolving needs of the industry regarding sustainability, digital fabrication, and ethical practices.

Objectives and Methodology: The primary goal of the project was to enhance the employability of fashion students and the competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by developing a flexible, modular training curriculum. The methodology followed three main Intellectual Outputs (IO):

- IO1 – Research: An extensive analysis of the training needs within the textile and fashion sectors across Portugal, Italy, and the UK, identifying a demand for skills that bridge traditional craftsmanship with digital innovation.

- IO2 – Curriculum Design: The development of a comprehensive course structured into three modules: *Digital Design & Manufacture*, *Co-Design & Craft*, and *Enterprise & Professional Development*.

- IO3 – Pilot Implementation: The delivery of a pilot training course involving students and master artisans to test the efficacy of the new educational materials and methodologies.

Key Outcomes: The project successfully delivered an Open Educational Resource (OER) aimed at upskilling learners in high-end product development. The pilot phase demonstrated that integrating traditional techniques (such as weaving and pattern making) with digital tools (laser cutting, 3D printing) significantly improves students' ability to design sustainable and socially impactful fashion products. The collaboration fostered a "dialogue" between generations—master craftsmen and young designers—promoting the preservation of intangible cultural heritage while innovating for the future market.