

Van Heurck

Social report 2023

Reporting period: February 2023 – January 2024



www.vanheurck.com

FAIR WEAR MEMBER SINCE:

JUNE 2019

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Introduction

Dear reader,

Van Heurck [VH], established in 1920, has evolved from selling handmade pajamas and aprons into a workwear specialist with around twenty employees in Belgium and 700 in Tunisia. As a workwear specialist, we provide tailored solutions to meet diverse needs. We translate the desires of our customers into professional clothing with unique added values not found elsewhere. VH is more than a supplier; it's a partner.

We have been a member of the Fair Wear Foundation (FWF) since June 2019. VH has its own production locations, and we have always ensured that our employees work in good and fair conditions, as they are our greatest asset in offering quality clothing. However, it is also important for us to continuously improve and seek advice from independent parties. Our goal is to be a best practice example in the industry.

Ticking all the boxes is not enough for us. This year, we are determined to go beyond our previous commitments. We are incorporating a gender lens into our policies, focusing on empowering women through targeted training programs and improving their lives while preventing any harm. We believe in not just a top-down approach but also a bottom-up approach, involving our workers in improving conditions. The voice of the worker is extremely important to us, and we continuously seek their input and feedback.

We take it further by diving deeper into complex issues in the textile supply chain. We are implementing True Price calculations for our products, an economic concept that reflects the real costs of a product by incorporating all hidden environmental and social costs.

We are happy that our efforts are recognized, and in our last brand performance check, we were once again recognized as a Fair Wear Leader. This achievement, made by the team, was celebrated in Tunisia and Belgium, as you can see in the picture below.



Kind regards,
Dries van Heurck, CEO VH

Code of Labour Practices Fair Wear

The Fair Wear Foundation's Code of Labour Practices comprises guidelines and standards aimed at enhancing working conditions in the clothing industry. This code, rooted in eight internationally recognized labor standards, serves as the cornerstone of Fair Wear's initiatives. Aligned with the conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Code of Labour Practices underscores Fair Wear members' commitment to upholding and enforcing these standards.

To ensure compliance with the Code of Labour Practices, Fair Wear conducts audits in factories and provides support and guidance to members in implementing improvements and preventing harm. Additionally, Fair Wear offers a complaint mechanism where employees can report any violations of the code, enabling appropriate action to be taken.

By adhering to the Code of Labour Practices of Fair Wear, members strive to promote fair and ethical clothing production, where the rights and dignity of workers are respected and protected. VH has been a member of FWF since 2019. Our production locations have also signed the FWF Code of Labour Practices (CoLP), thereby agreeing to endorse decent labour standards and are willing to be audited at any time. VH has its own production locations, however it is also important for us that we continuously improve and get advice from an independent party in doing so.



Where is your VH product made?

“VH has its own production locations, and we have always ensured that our employees work in good and fair conditions, as they are our greatest asset in offering quality clothing. However, it is also important for us to continuously improve and seek advice from independent parties. Our goal is to be a best practice example in the industry.” Dries Van Heurck, CEO VH



VH was founded in 1920 when a small store was opened in Antwerp to produce hand-tailored pyjamas, bed sheets, and aprons. In 1980, we acquired Detis, a company in Turnhout specializing in the production of protective workwear. (If you are interested in what happened between 1920 and 1980, our history is described [here](#)). Subsequently, in 1987, VH explored production opportunities in Tunisia and started with Drees in this new region. Later, Detis also moved to Tunisia. The third production location, Tric, was launched in 2016. Today, A@W employs around 700 staff. The three facilities have different focuses at the product level: A@W Detis (protective wear), A@W Drees (workwear and Gore-tex), and A@W Tric (knitwear).

Four percent of our total production is handled by subcontractors. A@W works with four subcontractors for embroidery and prints, and two subcontractors for cut, make, and trim. A@W has a long-term relationship with these subcontractors, including one subcontractor for embroidery with whom we have been working since 1997. The names of the subcontractors are Sobref Plus, SOMOBROD, SBR, Mc Fabrication, CITGI, and Libertex. In addition to being transparent about our partners in this report, we have added these subcontractors to the Fair Wear system to ensure complete supply chain data and transparency.

All subcontractors are located near A@W and are regularly visited by our Tunisian staff. Our A@W Quality Manager and CSR Coordinator have visited all subcontractors to introduce them to the FWF Code of Labour Practices and complaint mechanism. They supported them in filling out the FWF questionnaire, signing the consent letter, and displaying the Worker Information Sheet in their factories. In the chapter ‘The voice of the worker’ more can be read about why the Worker Information Sheet important is.

Since VH owns its production facilities, we can ensure no unauthorized subcontracting takes place. For our verified subcontractors, the factory management in Tunisia maintains close contact with them. The factory management has personally visited all subcontractor facilities to explain the FWF principles and Code of Labour Practices, assist in completing the questionnaire and consent letter, and ensure the Worker Information Sheet is displayed. This support helps guide subcontractors in their initial steps toward complying with FWF principles.

Fair practices embedded in our team

At VH, it all begins with our commitment to understanding the principles of the Code of Labour Practices (CoLP). Sustainability is ingrained in our onboarding process for new employees, with a focus on incorporating Fair Wear principles. Those who share our stories receive regular sustainability training, including our sales team, where Fair Wear is a key topic of discussion. Also other staff gets involved in updates regarding to sustainability, for example, the yearly Environmental, Social and Governance [ESG] report is presented to the whole team, so that everyone understands what we are doing and why.

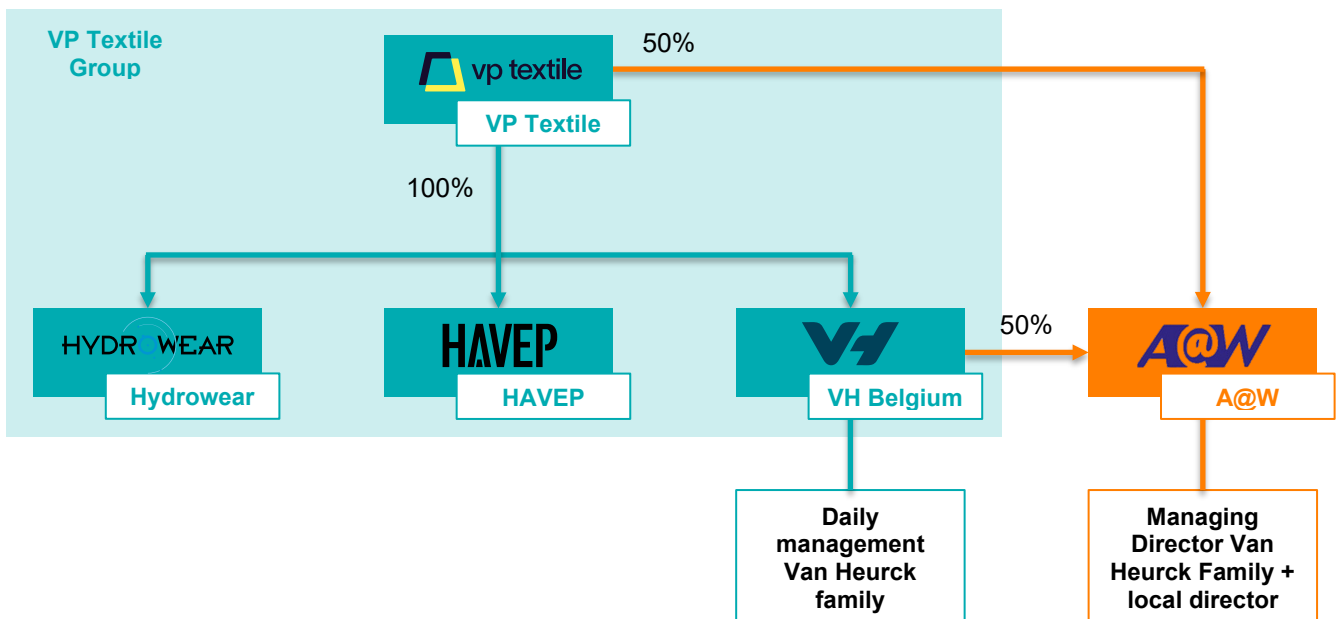
Since the beginning of 2022 VH became a member of VP Textile, the textile division of VP Capital. VP Capital is the investment company of the Van Puijenbroek family. This is an investment family with an eye for tradition and a drive to make a positive impact with the mission: Strong heritage - Sustainable progress.

VH is one of the portfolio companies of VP Capital since 2022 and collaborates with the VP Textile group, also part of VP Capital. VP Capital invests its capital and engages its network towards sustainable progress for generations to come. Their family office contributes to solutions for planetary and societal challenges. They see the need, want to take responsibility and believe it's future-proof thinking, just as we do.

Six generations ago the first generation of the Van Puijenbroek family started the company HAVEP workwear in Goirle, the Netherlands. Today it has grown into an investment company with about 50 investments, both directly and through funds, in small and big companies mainly in Belgium and the Netherlands. VP Capital has activity in 8 different investment domains: Energy, Agrifood, Media, Smart industry, Real estate, Health, Water and Textile.

VP Textile, as a subsidiary of VP Capital, has direct and indirect investments in the development of workwear and protective wear, the development of 3D virtual product models and sustainable yarns and fabrics. Due to the negative ecological and social effects, especially in terms of CO2 emissions, water consumption, chemical use and poor living conditions, mainly caused by a globally growing textile sector, VP Textile has the ambition and goal to also invest in sustainable solutions to reduce input of resources, safeguard and improve working conditions of its labour force, address the challenge of overconsumption and ensure significant reduction of water use.





The companies in the current portfolio of VP Textile are HAVEP, Hydrowear and of course, since the beginning of 2022, VH. Please find the ownership structure of VH and Apparel@Work (A@W) below.



Responsible business conduct policy

Our Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) policy is designed to ensure that our operations are ethical, socially responsible, and environmentally sustainable. This policy guides our efforts to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive contributions to society and the environment. Through our RBC policy, we strive to be a leader in ethical and sustainable business practices, ensuring a positive impact on the environment and society while maintaining strong, transparent, and fair partnerships.

We believe that true collaboration means treating each other as equals and understanding the unique challenges and opportunities within local contexts. By respecting our partners' expertise, we co-create solutions that benefit everyone involved. Our journey begins with an intrinsic motivation to do good, and that is also where it starts for us with our partners VH operates with Partnership Principles for its suppliers, factories, manufacturers, production sites, contractors, subcontractors, and other workplaces. These VH Partnership Principles represent our Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) policy and our Human Rights & Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) policy. This policy is based on several international guidelines:

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP, 2011); ■ Human rights from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and their elaboration in binding treaties relevant to labour and business; |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (2011), the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct (2018), and the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector (2017); |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The fundamental labour standards as established in the conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), concerning the abolition of forced labour and slavery (29, 105), the abolition of child labour (138, 182), the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation (100, 111), and the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining (87, 98); ■ Labor standards as set out in ILO conventions concerning working hours (1) and workplace safety and health (155); |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The concept of a living wage, defined as the income of self-employed individuals and employees. |

Each year, we conduct Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting. This comprehensive assessment involves evaluating risks associated with our business activities, ranging from environmental impacts to social and governance issues. Through this rigorous reporting process, we identify and mitigate potential negative impacts on the environment and society, ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards, hold ourselves accountable to our stakeholders and the broader community, and set measurable goals for continuous improvement in our sustainability practices.

A new exciting development at VH is that we are utilizing the True Price concept to redefine product costs, with a focus on sustainability and transparency. True Prices are an economic concept that reflects the real cost of a product or service by incorporating all hidden costs, such as environmental impact and social inequality. In addition to regular production costs, external costs, including environmental damage and unpaid social costs, are factored into the price. The aim of True Price is to create transparency, Environmental Social enable consumers to make better-informed choices and encourages producers to operate more sustainably.

VH is not only actively engaging with the True Price concept but has also developed and implemented a prototype for calculations (with primary and secondary data), which already includes the use phase and first steps in social cost throughout the value chain.

Plans for the future involve further deepening this analysis to incorporate detailed scrutiny of social costs and recycling options, marking a progression from the current practice to a more comprehensive and nuanced application of the True Price concept.

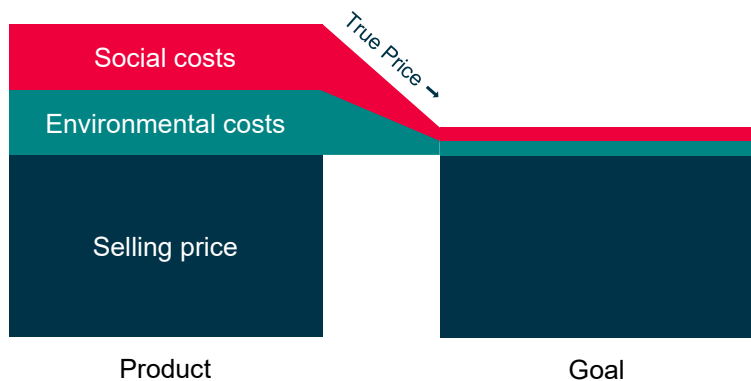
True Price Calculation

True Price is an economic concept that reflects the real cost of a product or service by incorporating all hidden costs, such as environmental impact and social inequality.



Impact on climate change, soil pollution, energy use, use of scarce materials, land use and -transformation, air pollution, water usage, water pollution

Forced labour, gender inequality, health & safety incidents, underpayment, lack of social security, lack of fair wage, excessive overtime, intimidation, lack of freedom of association



Human Rights Due Diligence

Human Rights Due Diligence is part of the Responsible Business Conduct Policy. In this chapter and the next, we will explain how VH is handling this for Tier 1; how we monitor the working conditions in the factories where our products are manufactured.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a continuous process. To make sure that the policy, goals and relevant measures stay up to date in mitigating optional negative impact, VH uses a yearly due diligence cycle. The HRDD process consists of six steps, including:

1. Embedding the Responsible Business Conduct (RBC)
2. Identify actual and potential harm
3. Cease, prevent or mitigate harm
4. Track progress
5. Communication
6. Remediation

For the assessment of potential human rights risks in the factories where our products are made, we use both primary and secondary data. We do this to obtain the most comprehensive picture of the situation, enabling us to take effective action. Ultimately, the goal is to check risks related to the Code of Labour Practices, analyze where the greatest risks lie, and prioritize actions to make an impact on workers. This contributes to the quality of work and, consequently, the quality of life for individuals.

A primary source is information directly observed at a factory, focusing on a particular context. Secondary data, on the other hand, refers to sources that do not specifically delve into the respective factory but rather focus on the region (e.g., country studies) or on a similar situation in the region (e.g., another factory in the same area).

We first examine the secondary data and then verify its alignment with the primary data. In this context, primary data takes precedence. Subsequently, we determine the level of risk for each CoLP topic for each factory. Secondary data will be updated annually, while primary data is continuously collected, resulting in overlapping information flows in practice.

Weight is assigned to identified risks, giving priority to primary data over secondary data. Additionally, data from independent sources (i.e., not from our own colleagues) carries greater weight. Ultimately, a total risk score is assigned, ensuring an inclusive and systematic approach to risk assessment. Below is more information about the information flows.

| Primary data | Secondary data |
|--|---|
| FWF Audits: Audit findings are translated into potential risks. In high-risk countries, audits may be conducted more frequently (once every two years). | Literature: FWF country studies, CSR Risk Check, Transparency International, Global Slavery Index, Freedom House, OECD Due Diligence Checker, UN sources, and ILO sources. We aim to incorporate more local literature to provide insights specific to the region. |
| FWF Complaint System: Complaints are resolved and documented to prevent recurrence. | Webinars by FWF or other labour right organizations |
| Regular meetings with local Tunisia team | NGO Consultations: Engaging with NGOs specialized in working conditions in the textile sector |

| | |
|--|--|
| FWF health & safety Questionnaires , conducted during visits from quality department | Brand Collaborations: insights from brands with an FWF status or other fair trade status producing textiles in the same regions |
| Training Sessions: Input from these sessions is transformed into potential risks. | |
| Conducting in-depth research and root cause analyses on high risks through interviews with management, union representatives, workers, and regional stakeholders. | |

Based on the risk analysis we can define the highest risks and prioritize the cease, prevention or mitigation of the harms. To track the progress of remediation we have continuous contact with our production locations and ask for evidence that show the progress has been made and remediation can be concluded. Our communication towards stakeholders will be done through the FWF social report that we publish on our website.

There are three important elements to prevent harm and drive positive social impact: responsible purchasing practices, the voice of the worker, and preventive and corrective actions with the factories. The following chapters will explain how we address these elements.

Responsible Purchasing practices

Since we are a company active in work and protective wear, we do not work with seasonal collections. Instead, we offer our collections for extended periods, not bound to a single season, with summer and winter options combined. Most of our styles and products are produced continuously over longer periods. This reduces the risks of excessive overtime and stress.

Our Tunisian production facilities are open from Monday until Friday from 07:00 to 16:00 and Saturday from 07:00 to 12:30. The factories are closed on Sunday and public holidays. All hours in excess of 48 hours a week are paid at the standard hourly rate plus 75%. However, we aim to respect reasonable working hours and limit overtime to maintain a healthy work-life balance. We take several actions to achieve this:

- The production planning is made jointly by our staff in Belgium and Tunisia and can be discussed on a daily basis.
- VH is committed to providing a yearly or seasonal planning and forecasting, and to delivering clear information on requests, design, and development (including technical and production details).
- We aim to avoid last minute changes to requests and designs, and to minimize dropouts.
- Additionally, we focus on adequate sourcing and on-time order placement to allow for realistic production and transport lead times.
- VH also ensures that suppliers are paid on time and at the price agreed in the original purchase order or contract, working towards a win-win sustainable partnership.

Pricing is based on a “Bill of Materials” on which all items (raw materials, haberdasheries, etc.) of the article are identified, including volumes and minutes of production time. As of 2021, A@W implemented a bonus system that rewards workers for meeting production and quality targets, as well as for attendance and mastery of machine operation. In this way, A@W strives to gradually close the gap with the living standard, as defined by local stakeholders and confirmed by FWF.

As VH grows, so does A@W. We aim to make a greater positive impact with our products in Europe and our production in Tunisia. Due to VH's growth and the strong collaboration between us, A@W has also expanded, increasing its number of employees by 41% over the past six years.

The voice of the worker

At VH, we believe that ethical business practices are achieved not only through top-down policies but also by empowering the voices of the workers on the ground. A bottom-up approach ensures that the needs and insights of workers are heard and addressed, fostering a more inclusive and effective work environment. We are committed to creating a more participatory environment where workers can voice their opinions and contribute to decision-making processes. This includes regular meetings with workers' representatives, facilitating open dialogues, and encouraging feedback from all levels of the organization.

Worker Rights and Training

Educating workers about their rights is crucial. In 2022 all A@W facilities received a training on the Code of Labour Practices, we organized this through Fair Wear. The Workplace Education Program is designed to empower workers with the knowledge they need to advocate for their rights and improve their working conditions. In 2024, we will evaluate the benefits of repeating the training and determine the optimal timing to maximize its value for the workers.

Workers are also informed about the Code of Labour Practices through posters, you can see the poster in local language in the aside pictures. This poster is displayed in all A@W locations and the subcontractors we work with. Since 2022 there are also TV screens that show the Code of Labour Practices and additional information regarding FWF live in the A@W factories.

On December 2, 2023, as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, there was a pre-session focused on empowering women through resilience, presented by Mme Sherifa. More details can be found in the chapter titled "Corrective and Preventive Actions.



Complaints handling

One the same posters which are visually describing the Code of Labour Practices, are also having a contact numbers for complaints. Since the start of our membership in June 2019, VH has not been informed of meaningful complaints at any of its production units. Complaints, if any, will be immediately handled by VH in combination with the local management following the FWF guidelines. In 2023, further actions are taken A@W to make it more accessible for workers to raise a concern. There was a update on the complaint procedure and a new suggestion box for workplace improvements was installed and implemented.

Workers representatives

Workers' committees in textile factories play a crucial role in promoting workers' rights and improving working conditions. These committees act as a bridge between the workforce and factory management, addressing workers' concerns, facilitating dialogue, and negotiating terms related to wages, working hours, and workplace safety. The election process typically involves a nomination phase where workers can either self-nominate or be nominated by their peers. Elections are conducted through a secret ballot to ensure fairness, and committee members are elected for terms usually lasting one to two years. In 2024, the goal is to conduct further research on how these committees can be better supported, with a particular focus on involving workers in health and safety concerns and preventive actions related to gender.

Worker survey

There are three production sites in Tunisia, and each year we conduct the survey at a different site, rotating annually. However, in 2024, we plan to consider conducting the survey annually at each location. The aim of the survey is twofold: firstly, to periodically survey employees regarding their satisfaction with working conditions, treatment by management, compensation, social dialogue, etc. Secondly, it provides an opportunity to assess employee engagement and gather their feedback and suggestions.



Corrective and Preventive actions

Given the limited size of our supply chain and the ownership structure of the company, we have a lot of influence on working conditions. All production facilities are visited regularly, at least once every month by either a representative of the management of VH, a member of staff of VH or by a combination of both. Next to physical visits, daily meetings via Skype or Teams and calls with the local management are standard procedure. When visiting the production units, the various items that are being discussed include production planning, Code of Labour Practices, local issues, investment plans, upcoming audits, results of past audits and follow-up, and preventive actions to improve the conditions for the workers and their environment. Our multiple daily contacts in combination with regular site visits give us ample opportunity to monitor and remediate when needed.

Since our cooperation with the VP Textile Group, we have set-up a standardized remediation system to keep track of the risks, Corrective Action Plans follow-ups and preventive actions in the factories. This system ensures verified steps towards prioritization, remediation and/or prevention.

Fair wear assessment findings

As a Fair Wear brand, we want to ensure that production location action plans are effective in preventing or mitigating human rights risks. For this reason we are conducting Fair Wear Assessments. This involves an onsite factory visit, which takes between one to one and a half days. Additionally, offsite worker interviews are conducted prior to the assessment. These interviews allow information to be collected directly from the workers and form a crucial part of the assessment. The interviewer, who spends time around the factory, begins forming an impression of the working conditions even before the onsite visit. The worker interviews will indicate areas for further inspection and reveal possible discrepancies during the onsite factory visit.

Every three years, a Fair Wear assessment is conducted. Whenever circumstances change and higher risks appear, we may decide to perform assessments more frequently. Below are the dates of the most recent and planned assessments at our A@W locations:

- Detis: In 2022, a verification assessment was conducted. The next assessment is planned for 2025.
- Droes: In 2020, a verification assessment was conducted. In November 2023, we reported on both assessments because corrective actions from the 2020 assessment were also completed in 2023. The next assessment is planned for 2026.
- Tric: In 2021, a verification audit was conducted. The next assessment is planned for 2024.

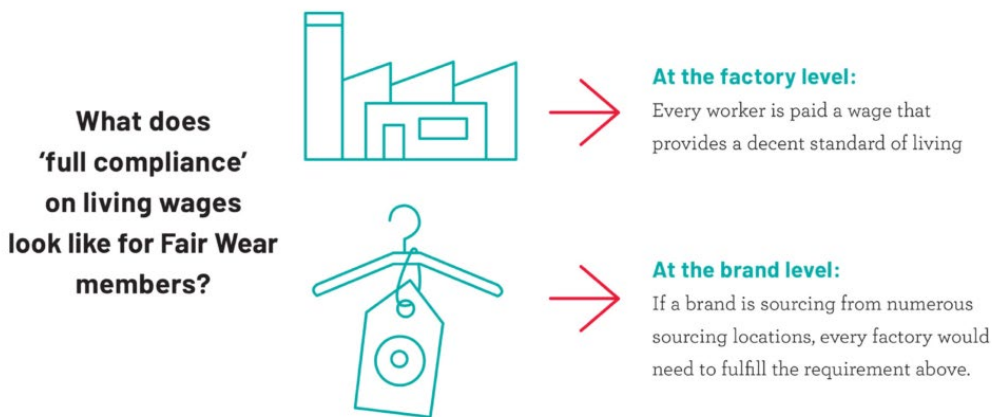
A@W is a single company with three locations, so most of the policies and implementations regarding the Code of Labour Practices are the same. The factories Detis, Droes, and Tric are also located near each other, which is why they face similar risks. As a result, the factories tend to score almost the same when assessed by Fair Wear. All the factories are compliant with six out of the eight elements. Please see the table below. Advice on payment of a living wage and safe and healthy working conditions has been provided for further development, which will be explained in the following sections.

| Employment is freely chosen | Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining | There is no discrimination in employment |
|--|---|--|
| Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| Workers are free to leave the factory and employment is freely chosen. | 100% of employees are covered by CBA. Presence of an elected CE (Comité Consultative d'Entreprise) connecting direction and workers. The freedom of association procedure was only available in French. In 2022, it is translated in Arabic language and informed our workers. It is also displayed in the factory | Our non-discrimination procedure was only available in French. We have translated this in Arabic language and informed our workers. It is also displayed in the factory. |

| No exploitation of child labour | Reasonable hours of work | Legally binding employment relationship |
|--|--|---|
| Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| The factory has a written policy against child labour and no child labour was identified during Fair Wear assessments. | Working hours are not excessive and within legal limits. | >50% of workers are permanent workers. <45% of workers linked with renewable short-term contracts (mostly 6 months contract). At the end of 4 years contract, worker status changes and becomes permanent. |

Living wage

Through the work of VH and A@W, we aim to make a positive impact on the lives of the workers. A crucial element of this is their salary. We want to ensure that the salary is not just sufficient for survival, but also enables workers to build a better life. This is why we are committed to paying a living wage. [Fair Wear's defines living wage](#) as “a wage paid for a standard working week that meets the basic needs of workers and their families and provides some discretionary income. ‘Basic needs’ includes costs like housing (with basic facilities like electricity), nutrition, clothing, healthcare, education, drinking water, childcare, transport, and savings.”



We first and foremost believe it is important that the workers themselves have the opportunity to negotiate their salaries. There is a collective bargaining agreement in the garment factories, and we always adhere to this agreement. To give an idea, the CBA wage is approximately 34% higher than the minimum wage in Tunisia (2023). While one might expect all organizations to follow suit, this is unfortunately questionable in Tunisia. [Previous research](#) has found that CBA coverage applies to only twenty percent of the workers. We do not know if it is really that low; however, we wish more organizations would follow it and hope that we can be an inspiration to others as well.

The living wage estimate from Fair Wear is higher than the wages specified in the CBA. We are working towards bridging the gap between the current CBA wages and the living wage. In 2021, A@W implemented a bonus system that rewards workers for meeting production and quality targets, as well as for attendance and mastery of machine operation. This approach aims to gradually close the gap between current wages and the living wage standard. The Fair Wear assessment confirmed that the wages paid to our workers are higher than those in other factories due to the bonuses and benefits provided by management.

The living wage estimate from Fair Wear is based on the cost of living for a household of four. However, different sources may offer varying estimates of what constitutes a living wage. This variation is due to regional differences in costs and, more importantly, the challenge of finding a country where a single earner can adequately support a family. Fortunately, most of our workers have dual-income households, which alleviates some of these challenges. Currently, the wage gap between the lowest actual wage (including bonuses) and Fair Wear's living wage is twenty percent. While we consider this gap to be reasonable, we are committed to taking further steps to improve. To this end, we have conducted a survey to better understand what constitutes a living wage for our workers. This anonymous survey collected data on monthly family income and expenses. We are analyzing the results and developing a strategy to provide our workers with a better future perspective through fair wages.

In addition to determining what constitutes a fair wage and developing a strategy to achieve it, it is important for us to involve the workers in the process. In cooperation with the CE committee, workers have been informed about how wage calculations are made. This information is also displayed in the factory.

Safe & healthy working conditions

There were several recommendations regarding health & safety in the factory. We have followed-up on these recommendations and already improved most of the findings. Below the corrective actions which were taken per factory location.

| DETIS | DROES | TRIC |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Anti-fatigue mats provided for all standing workers, In a textile factory, anti-fatigue mats are used to provide relief to workers who stand for extended periods on hard floors. These mats help reduce physical strain and improve comfort, thereby enhancing worker productivity and well-being.</p> | <p>Anti-fatigue mats provided for all standing workers, In a textile factory, anti-fatigue mats are used to provide relief to workers who stand for extended periods on hard floors. These mats help reduce physical strain and improve comfort, thereby enhancing worker productivity and well-being.</p> | <p>Anti-fatigue mats provided for all standing workers, In a textile factory, anti-fatigue mats are used to provide relief to workers who stand for extended periods on hard floors. These mats help reduce physical strain and improve comfort, thereby enhancing worker productivity and well-being.</p> |
| <p>The toilets and canteen should be hygienic. Awareness posters have been posted to motivate workers to keep the lunchroom and toilets clean. Worker representatives are involved in developing this action.</p> | <p>The toilets and canteen should be hygienic. Awareness posters have been posted to motivate workers to keep the lunchroom and toilets clean. Worker representatives are involved in developing this action.</p> | <p>The toilets and canteen should be hygienic. Awareness posters have been posted to motivate workers to keep the lunchroom and toilets clean. Worker representatives are involved in developing this action.</p> |
| <p>Fire safety training</p> | <p>Fire safety training</p> | <p>Fire safety training</p> |
| <p>Electric cupboards enhance safety in textile factories by providing secure, controlled storage for electrical components and equipment, reducing the risk of electrical hazards.</p> | <p>A new canteen is developed</p> | |
| <p>Button-machines are equipped with eye protection, they are used to consider it as perturbing element while working on machine. There further efforts will be taken on educating the workers on the importance of wearing it.</p> | | |

The factories have a Health and Safety Committee. In the Fair Wear assessment, recommendations were made to further train the committees and raise workers' awareness about the committee and its functions. In addition we want to take further action on preventive measures. Therefore there are six trainings planned in 2024, from 08-01-2024 up to 25-03-2024. Which are developed and will be conducted by Dr. Ibtissem Daieb. The themes for the sessions are as follows:

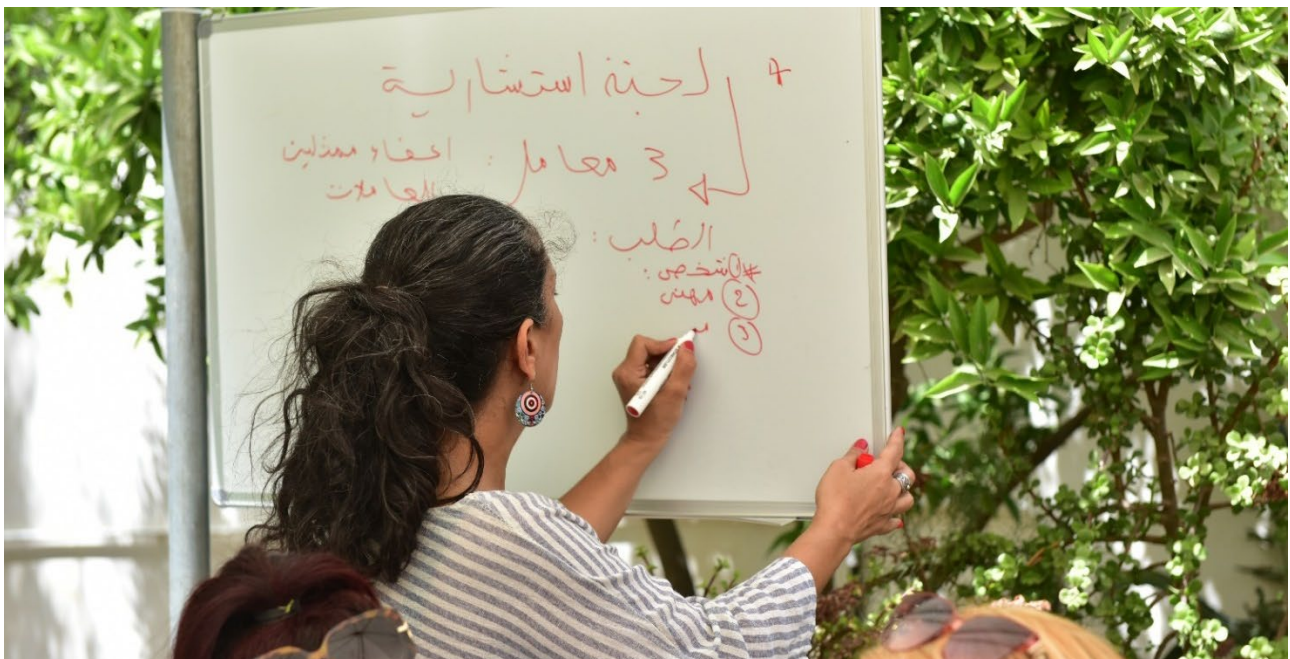
- Mental Load at Work, how to measure and how to Reduce
- Gynecology in the 2nd and 3rd Age, Pregnancy and Breastfeeding
- Physical Activity and Age-Appropriate Nutrition
- Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs), symptoms and risks factors
- Prevention of Chronic Diseases, Hypertension and Diabetes
- Hand Hygiene, types of washing and washing steps

Additionally, we carried out an awareness campaign on colon cancer prevention for workers at DROES in partnership with the regional hospital of Teboulba, which provided us with rapid diagnostic tests for up to 100 workers (over 45 years old). We have also agreed to conduct another awareness campaign in October 2024 to inform workers about breast cancer. In this way, we aim to prevent health risks for our workers, focusing not only on workplace improvements but also on addressing high risks in their region—all with the mission to craft a better future.

Empowering women through resilience

Even if we would meet all the criteria during the Fair Wear assessment, it is not enough for us. As a Fair Wear Leader, we aim to go beyond standard practices. We delve deeper into the complex issues within the textile supply chain. Since 2023, we have integrated a gender perspective into all our Code of Labour Practices.

In country studies from Tunisia, it has emerged that violence against women and girls is a significant issue. The majority of these cases occur in the private sphere, and evidence suggests that women often face sexual harassment in the workplace. Despite our internal inspections, worker dialogues, and other assessments, no cases of this nature have been reported. However, we recognize that societal challenges such as these require proactive measures from us to prevent such issues. To address this, we sought training programs that could enhance our efforts. After engaging with several potential partners, we found Sheriffa Tlili, a feminist and psychologist, who could effectively understand and address the need for preventive actions.



Since no existing training program was available, we supported the development of a new one. Our goal is for this training to serve as a best practice model for other factories in the region. A preliminary session was held in 2023 to identify the key topics that should be included in the training, ensuring worker input was incorporated into its development. The training consists of four sessions spread from February to August each year.

This program will enhance understanding of the causes and effects of psychological harassment and develop strategies to prevent it. By the end of the training, participants will be able to identify a situation of harassment and respond appropriately, distinguish between psychological harassment and other issues, recognize methods and types of harassment, analyze the causes of harassment, understand the consequences of harassment for individuals and organizations, and formulate effective prevention strategies.

The training utilizes various teaching methods, including brief presentations to explain concepts, application exercises, case analyses, group discussions, and role-playing to concretely apply the concepts. At the end of the training, a follow-up plan will be developed to strengthen the existing committee (workers' representatives) and provide it with training and tools to prevent violence and harassment.

Sustainability in the rest of the product cycle

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is one of VH's core values. As a specialist manufacturer of workwear we fully invest in CSR, focusing on 5 pillars:

1. Raw Materials
2. Production
3. Maintenance
4. End of Life
5. CO2-neutrality

In this report we have focused a lot on the production site, at least the social compliance. In this chapter we will explain you briefly what we do in the rest of the life cycle of our products, ending by explaining more about the True Price concept. A measurement method what will help us and stakeholders to create a better sustainability strategy.



Raw Materials

When developing new articles, it is an opportunity to make a positive impact or reduce negative impacts. We continuously search for more sustainable materials while also enhancing the protection of the wearer. In 2023, the Nomad Line was proudly launched, inspired by the moon's ability to shine brightly by reflecting the sun's light. To maintain our long-lasting fascination with the moon, we use more sustainable raw materials, such as PurFi and Tencel.

Discarded materials from workshops, clothing abandoned due to manufacturing errors, and well-worn garments all find a new purpose through PurFi, as they are transformed into fresh yarn for the creation of new apparel. PurFi, a technological pioneer, extracts pristine quality from Earth's most overlooked resource: waste. Tencel is derived from 100% natural material, namely the pulp of eucalyptus trees from forests certified by the FSC. The production of Tencel operates in a closed-loop system. Over 99% of the water and solvents used in the process are captured and recycled, and the bleaching of the fibers is entirely chlorine-free.

In total, 22% of all our production in 2023 was made with more sustainable materials. As a workwear specialist, we continuously seek more sustainable solutions. However, we also face the challenge that it is not always possible to replace a conventional material with a more sustainable fiber due to the protective qualities required by the product. It is always a quest to find the right balance between our societal responsibility that gives our company its reason for existence, making protective wear, and being a sustainable brand.

Production

This report extensively explains our efforts in social compliance, but we also prioritize the quality of our entire management system. ISO 9001:2015 is an internationally recognized standard for quality management. It serves as a benchmark for transparency and reliability, ensuring that our products meet the stringent requirements for our workwear. Quality management is integrated into every part of our organizational processes.

Maintenance

VH is also a member of the FBT, the Federation of Belgian Textile Care, who set up the initiative Care4Safe, together with Febelsafe, the Belgian Federation of suppliers and service providers for safety and well-being at work. The initiative promotes liquid CO2 cleaning to expand the lifespan and protection of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in a more sustainable way.

End of Life

VH offers all its partners the Collect & Recycle service. Through this service, end customers can return their clothing that have reached the end of their lifecycle to us. Together with our partner CVB Ecologistics in Tilburg, we ensure that the products receive the highest possible quality second life. Within our Collect & Recycle program, we use the R ladder strategy to recycle all products at the end of their lifecycle as efficiently as possible. Customers receive a comprehensive report on the destination of the collected textiles, as well as the environmental cost savings achieved. Read more about this initiative on the following [page](#).

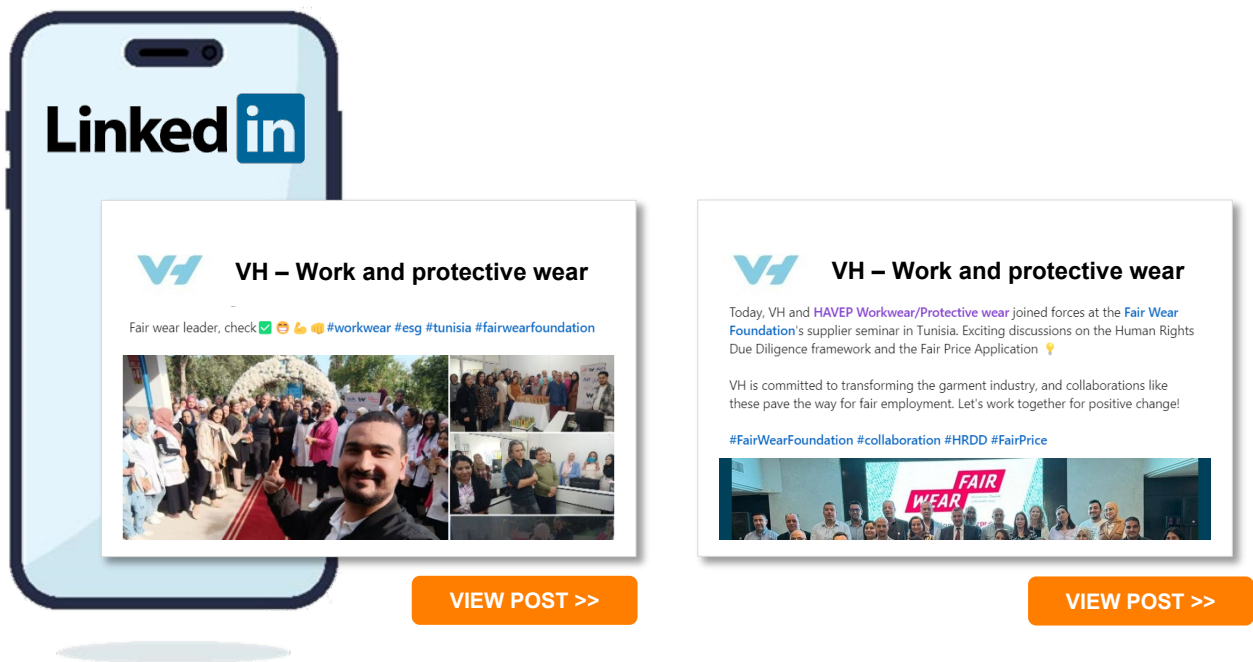
CO2 neutrality

In regards of CO2 emissions, since the end of 2021 VH is also certified by CO2logic and we have received the CO2-NEUTRAL label. The CO2-NEUTRAL label is in line with the PAS 2060, the international norm for CO2-neutrality and is therefore- a guarantee for credible climate action. This means we are conscious of our CO2 emissions and supporting certified climate projects.

Spread the voice

VH wants to be a frontrunner in terms of sustainability, both on environmental and social aspects. The textile industry itself is far from being a frontrunner in our opinion. Therefore, we need to set an example and share the story that the negative impact of the industry has lasted far too long and that now is the time to bring about change. Fortunately, we are not alone, as more and more textile companies are taking on this role, such as a large portion of the Fair Wear members. We also want to inspire others, which is why we find spreading the word very important. We regularly communicate about how and why we do this.

We also do this in the area of Fair Wear. Our FWF social report and Brand Performance check are published on our website as we are proud to show our commitments and progress on this important topic. Reference to FWF is made in all internal and external communication, on our website, and in our corporate brochures. Furthermore, we refer to our FWF membership and the Code of Labour Practices in all our communication with any public or private institution and NGO. Additionally, on social media, you can see how we share interesting content on our LinkedIn page, see here:



Final word

Good due diligence can only be done while also consulting stakeholders in the process. As we have a very small team in Lier, all VH employees / colleagues have a stakeholder's role in the development and realization of our sustainable goals. We also have a CSR Coordinator in Tunisia who is supporting us locally to achieve our goals. They are the ones working within the operation and their input based on this practical side is of great value.

Our shareholder, VP Capital, is also an important internal stakeholder. Since the beginning of 2022 VH became a member of VP Textile, the textile division of VP Capital. Together with the other workwear companies within the group, HAVEP and Hydrowear, we exchange knowledge and experiences too and work together on the same approach.

VH also consults with external stakeholders for the ongoing development of the Corporate Social Responsibility strategy, making the risk analysis, monitoring the progress and for external communication. An important external stakeholder is the Fair Wear Foundation. We use the available knowledge within FWF for social related topics and we follow webinars and workshops to expand our knowledge as well.

Furthermore, we always keep track of important updates in the field of corporate social responsibility and sustainability. We do this by following webinars, research and stakeholder panels to learn about the experiences and approach of other organizations or brands. The OECD forum on due diligence in the garment and footwear sector is a great example for this.

Our customers are also a valuable stakeholder to us. We consult with customers regularly and discuss the sustainable progress of our products while trying to be as transparent as possible.

VH wants to thank all the stakeholders in this process:



Sheriffa Tlili, Women Empowerment Trainer

Dr. Ibtissem Daieb, health trainer

VH is committed to transforming the garment industry, and collaborations like these pave the way for fair employment. Do you also want to work with us for positive change or to discuss further in terms of creating impact? Please reach out to us!

Interested in more sustainability information? If you would like more information on the way we work, please also reach out to us! The following reports and documents are available upon request:

