

Digital Product Passport (DPP)

The EU's Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), established in July 2024, introduces the mandatory Digital Product Passport (DPP) for textiles. While the detailed regulatory requirements (Delegated Acts) are anticipated in late 2026 to early 2027, the foundational framework is already set. Brands are advised to begin their preparation now.

Product data must be digitally accessible, typically through a QR code or similar data carrier, unless integrated within another recognized system.

Key data elements will include:

- Product identity
SKU, brand, category, and production batch.
- Material composition
Percentage of fibre type (e.g., cotton, polyester, elastane) and component weights.
- Sustainability attributes & scores
Metrics such as CO₂ footprint and durability score.
- Substances of concern
Declaration of restricted substances (e.g. REACH/Candidate List).
- Recyclability
Percentage of recycled material and recovery materials; recyclability score.
- Repairability & end-of-life handling
Availability of spare parts (e.g., buttons, zippers), repair guides and recycling instructions.

Key implementation timeline

- Preparation phase 2025/2026: A critical period for brands to build internal systems and processes ahead of the finalised rules.
- Rule finalisation late 2026/early 2027: The specific DPP requirements for textiles are expected to be formally adopted.
- Compliance and rollout: An 18-month period to achieve compliance is expected, leading to full sector implementation through 2030.

Proactive steps to take now

Although the granular details are pending, the core 16 data requirements for a DPP are known. Brands can immediately begin aligning their data management, supply chain communication, and product labeling strategies with these anticipated elements.

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Digital Product Passport (DPP) - continued

Consumers are increasingly prioritising sustainability as part of their purchasing decision. As such, the Digital Product Passport (DPP) will become a vital tool in the fashion industry. But what exactly is it, and why should your brand pay attention?

What is the Digital Product Passport (DPP)?

The DPP is an innovative concept designed to provide transparent and detailed information about a product's lifecycle. Think of it as a digital identity for your fashion items—one that goes beyond labelling. The DPP includes essential details about the materials used, production processes, supply chain transparency, and even recycling options. This passport empowers consumers to make informed decisions, enabling them to support brands that align with their values.

Why does it matter?

- Enhanced transparency: Today's consumers crave transparency. The DPP allows brands to share their sustainability efforts, building trust and credibility. When customers understand where their products come from and how they're made, they're more likely to invest in them.
- Regulatory compliance: With regulations on sustainability tightening globally, the DPP positions your brand to stay ahead of the curve. By adopting this standard, you can ensure compliance with emerging laws that are focused on circularity and responsible production.
- Brand differentiation: In a crowded marketplace, standing out is crucial. The DPP can be a unique selling point that showcases your commitment to sustainability, appealing to eco-conscious consumers and setting you apart from competitors.
- Lifecycle management: The DPP facilitates better product management throughout its lifecycle. From tracking materials to encouraging responsible disposal, this tool helps brands minimize waste and promote recycling initiatives.

How to Implement the DPP

Implementing the DPP may seem daunting, but it can be broken down into manageable steps:

- Leverage technology: Utilize QR codes, RFID tags, or blockchain technology to store and share product information. These tools can make accessing the DPP quick and easy for consumers.
- Collaborate with suppliers: Engage with your supply chain to gather accurate data about materials, production processes, and sustainability practices. This collaboration is crucial for creating a comprehensive DPP.
- Educate consumers: A DPP is only effective if consumers know how to use it. Invest in marketing efforts that educate your audience about the DPP and its benefits. This will encourage them to seek out and appreciate the transparency you're providing.

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Data Collection Requirements

When diving into the world of Digital Product Passports, there are diverse categories of data that can be collected and shared across ecosystems and value chains. Here's a closer look at what these data categories encompass:

- General information: This foundational layer includes key product details that establish its provenance—think product IDs, batch numbers, weight or volume, manufacturing location and dates, and manufacturer operator IDs. This information is vital for consumers who want to authenticate products and steer clear of counterfeits.
- Source data: Understanding where your materials come from is crucial. Source data covers the types and origins of raw materials and components used in production, detailing everything from chemicals and plastics to ingredients and recycled materials. It also highlights sustainability practices in manufacturing, allowing consumers to validate a company's green claims.
- Environmental impact: Data on a product's environmental footprint is becoming increasingly important. This includes insights into carbon emissions, waste generation, and energy consumption throughout the product lifecycle. By examining this information, consumers can better understand the recyclability of materials and the overall environmental impact.
- Ownership history: Tracking a product's journey through ownership can add significant value. Ownership history data captures past and current owners, duration of ownership, and event audit trails. This is particularly useful for sectors like resale markets for clothing and luxury goods, where tracking ownership transfers is essential.
- Maintenance records: For any product, repairability is key. Maintenance records detail repair events, including locations, costs, and context. For example, a luxury watch owner could easily track repairs following accidental damage, ensuring transparency and trust in the product's history.
- Documentation: Digital passports serve as a repository for important documents, such as warranties, service agreements, and insurance policies. These documents are accessible to relevant parties and include expiration dates and repurchase information, making it easier for users to validate claims. For instance, a vehicle owner can confirm eligibility for a service package they purchased earlier.
- Operational instructions: A digital passport includes practical guidance for disassembly, recycling, end-of-life disposal, and repair or refurbishment processes. This information is invaluable for stakeholders looking to transition products into remanufacturing, thereby supporting circular economy initiatives.

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Challenges to consider

While the DPP offers numerous advantages, it's not without its challenges. Gathering accurate and up-to-date information can be resource-intensive, and ensuring consumer awareness about the DPP requires strategic communication efforts.

Looking ahead

As sustainability becomes a focal point for the fashion industry, the DPP will likely gain traction and may even become a standard practice. By embracing the DPP now, your brand can position itself as a leader in sustainable fashion and contribute positively to the environment.

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