

## Promoting Innovation Within the Fashion-tech Sector. The Role of Pan-European Projects

**Chiara Di Lodovico**

Politecnico di Milano, Italy

**Chiara Colombi**

Politecnico di Milano, Italy

**Ana Roncha**

University of the Arts London, UK

### Abstract

**Purpose:** Fashion-tech is an emerging, pervasive, cross-sectoral, and transdisciplinary sector whose innovation potential can be activated by collaborative innovation practices. The paper aims to assess drivers and challenges of the European Fashion-tech entrepreneurial ecosystem and to advance the understanding of the role of pan-European projects in boosting European competitiveness and innovation potential, through the lenses of the EU project “DeFINE – Developing a Fashion-tech Network for Europe”.

**Methodology:** The research adopts a participatory process to capture the data through surveys (21x), polls (14x), semi-structured interviews (30x), snapshot interviews, observation and case studies (10x). Data are captured from the participants and stakeholders on the relevance of the mentoring activities delivered by DeFINE, and to identify best practice in support models and any unmet needs and barriers to obtaining or accessing support for Fashion-technology start-ups. All data are analysed through a multi-stage coding process and integrated in the broader themes emerging from the other set of data collection tools mentioned above.

**Findings:** The research investigates the perceived impact of the mentoring programme on the start-ups and SMEs’ evolution and recommendations to improve the support. The perceived impact has been on dual-level – both soft and hard skills. One-to-one mentoring support is considered a key value, as well as the involvement of cross-sectoral players from the European public and private sector. The findings revealed insights towards how these networks and ecosystems encouraging cross-fertilization and collaboration can be improved in the future so as to more efficiently support Fashion-tech start-ups and SMEs.

**Keywords:** fashion-tech, entrepreneurship, pan-european project, support innovation network, collaboration, knowledge Exchange

**ISBN:** 978-989-54263-2-4

---

**Corresponding author's email:**

[chiara.dilodovico@polimi.it](mailto:chiara.dilodovico@polimi.it)