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# Archaeological Textiles Review

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Marie Louise Nosch, Agata Ulanowska & Elsa Yvanez

# EuroWeb: a new European network and COST Action 2020-24



EuroWeb is a new pan-European network of scholars and stakeholders from academia, museums, conservation, and the cultural and creative industries. Participants from multiple disciplines join forces to bridge current cultural, political and geographical gaps and facilitate interdisciplinary research leading to inspirational material for experts in the allied and applied disciplines of fashion, art and design. The overall aims are:

- To formulate a new vision of European history based on textiles;
- To uncover the underlying structures connected to textiles in languages, technologies and identities;
- To bridge different theoretical and methodological approaches grounded in European scholarship, and to test and disseminate new analytical and multi-disciplinary methods;
- To dissolve the traditional and often obsolete and obstructive dichotomies of practice and theory through a more integrated approach of disciplines and cultural institutions; and
- To forge new notions of inclusive European identity based on a shared heritage and experience of textiles - as identity, a sense of belonging and social cohesion.

This new European network has received funding from the EU for 2020 to 2024 and, so far, 30 countries have signed up with near to 260 participants comprising dress scholars, textile experts, craftspeople and designers. The network is funded by the COST Action as CA 19131, *EuroWeb. Europe Through Textiles: Network for an Integrated and Interdisciplinary Humanities*.

The project was originally conceived at the Centre for Textile Research in Copenhagen (CTR) but at the first management committee meeting 13 to 14 October 2020, it was transferred to the Faculty of Archaeology, University of Warsaw in order to enhance the

participation of early career academics and Polish scholars. Agata Ulanowska (PL) was elected chair of the COST Action and Karina Grömer (AT) vice-chair. The scholarly vision of EuroWeb is to rewrite European history based on its massive production, trade, consumption and reuse of textiles and dress. This will be undertaken in scholarly ventures such as conferences, workshops, papers. It will also produce a final EuroWeb anthology and the textile history of Europe will also be presented diachronically as a “digital atlas”.

In the longer term, the goal is to identify expertise in sustainable textile practices across time that can be used in European textile and fashion businesses.

## Participants

The COST Action particularly targets the interaction of new scholars such as Early Career Investigators (ECI) who are up to eight years past the award of their doctorates. Special funds are allocated for their travel, research stays, and conference participation.

The COST Action also promotes the integration of eastern European countries as well as other European states that have so far not benefited much from EU research funding. These are termed Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC). In EuroWeb’s collaborators come from 16 ITC nations: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Republic of North Macedonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Turkey. In addition, 13 other nations have joined the action: Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

COST Actions are based on member states but all textile and dress scholars are welcome in the project’s activities. If you wish to join the EuroWeb COST Action, please make contact by using the email below.



## EuroWeb activities

EuroWeb offers theoretical and practical training schools, mentoring, targeted career development masterclasses for early career scholars and hosts international textile and dress conferences, especially in eastern Europe to highlight their collections, capacities and scholarships.

The scholarly work is organised into four working groups (WGs), and each WG is headed by a WG leader and two WG vice leaders. The goal for the project's

leadership is diversity in skills and training. All the working groups welcome scholars who wish to be affiliated to the group and who aim to work towards delivering on the goals set for each.

**WG 1: Textile technologies. Leader: Christina Margariti (GR)**

**Objectives:** to explore the origins and long-term development of textile technologies by examining tools and textiles and testing techniques using experimental

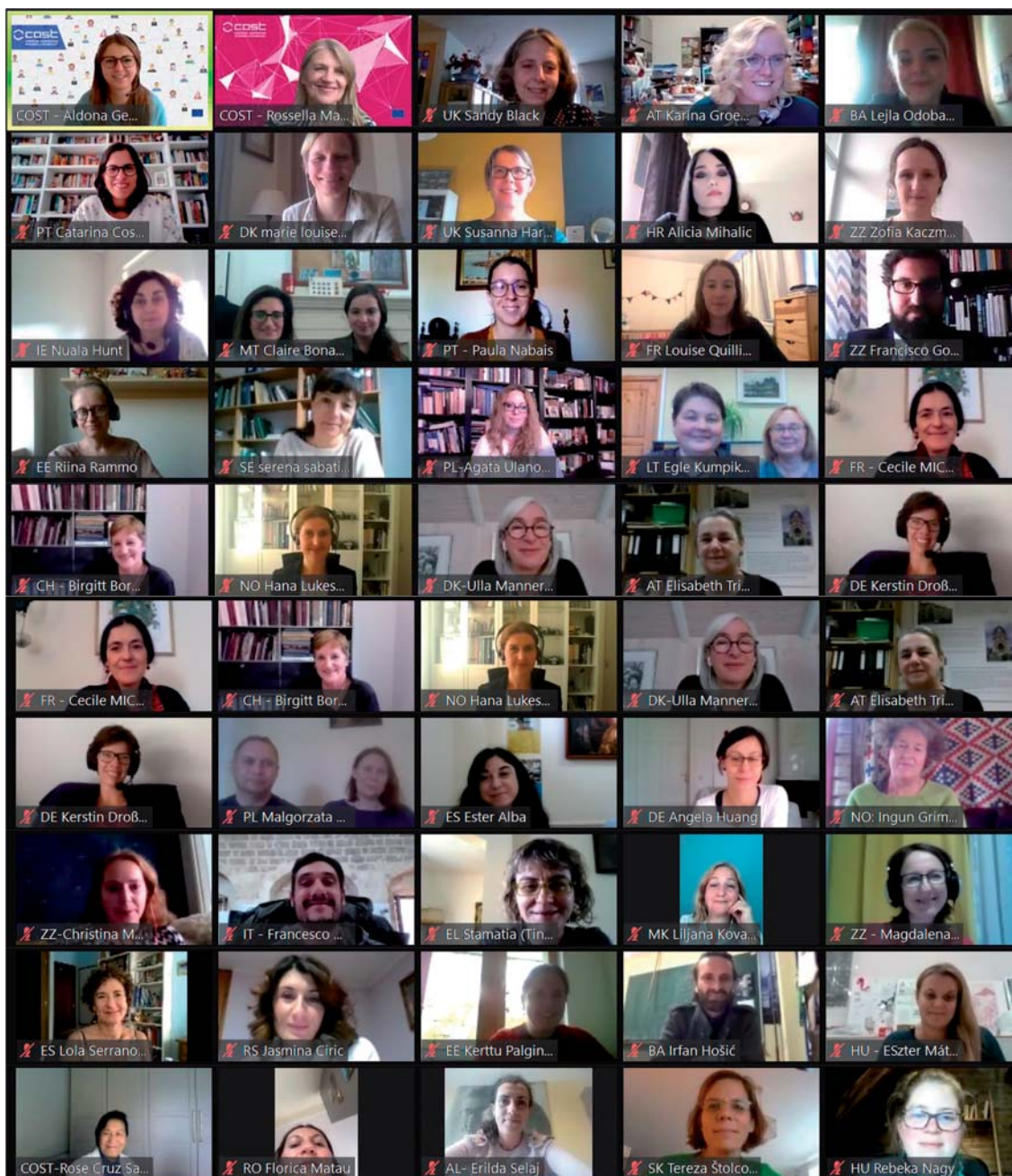


Fig. 1: EuroWeb Management Committee members at the 1st online meeting on 13th October 2020 (Image: Agata Ulanowska)

archaeology, and learning from craftspeople and textile engineers; to investigate how textile techniques influenced and were influenced by other fields of knowledge and cross-craft phenomena; to highlight the roles of skill and creativity, and the mechanisms for the diffusion of techniques, innovations, patterns and fashions, and how it has influenced other technologies and inventions.

**Methodologies:** textile analysis, textile tool analyses, experimental archaeology, conventional and new analytical methods stemming from the natural sciences. Digital motion capture will track bodily movements when weaving, spinning, knitting etc.

**Research questions** Q1: How to identify technological traditions and innovations? Q2: How is textile knowledge/skill transmitted? Q3: How can the production of textiles inform us of the relationship between gender, age, status, labour, economy and family income? Q3: What is the cross-craft interaction with other technologies of the past?

**Deliverables:** A course on textile archaeology; training in experimental textile archaeology; films of textile techniques; scholarly papers on textile techniques; presentations at conferences; digital corpus of motion capture of bodily movements when making textiles; training in archaeological fieldwork; and new textile analyses.

## **WG 2: Clothing identities - gender, age and status.**

**Leader: Magdalena Woźniak (PL)**

**Objectives:** to explore the meaning of clothing through the ages, areas and cultures; to use clothing as a key to explain values in society; to use clothing as a key to understand individuals, self-representation and groups.

**Methodologies:** Clothing identity and status are explored in visual analyses of statues and images, as well as in archaeological textiles and museum collections of dress, by creating typologies of dress and employing the methodology of wardrobe studies. Clothing as a gender marker is explored in texts and images, using gender theory. This is compared with the terminological analyses in WG3 to identify garment types and link them to, for example, professional and gender identities. Chemical analysis (HPLC) reveals dyes and potential colour symbolism. Motion capture enables the testing and tracking of bodily movements when wearing certain garments. Legal and religious documents detail prohibitions of clothing, drawing on law, anthropology, and social psychology.

**Research questions** Q1: How do gender and age specific clothing express one's place in the economic, social, and productive spheres in society? Q2: How far

did sumptuary laws and prohibition shape European clothing? Q3: How can we rethink and remake dress exhibitions in a more inclusive way, and discuss their colonial, ethnic, nationalistic and religious markers and symbolism? Q4: How can museum dress collections contribute to the rewriting of European history?

**Deliverables:** Editing and publication of the EuroWeb anthology; scholarly papers; and presentations at conferences.

## **WG 3: Textile and clothing terminologies. Leader: Louise Quillien (FR)**

**Objectives:** to explore specialised language and garment terms in European languages, and Semitic loan words; to trace and map textile and garment loanwords between languages; to determine how textile terminologies influence other fields of knowledge, such as the sciences and expressions for the body; and clothing as metaphor and literary device in literature.

**Methodologies:** comparative, synchronic and diachronic analyses of textile lexemes and terminology. Methods from philology and linguistics, as well as literary analyses of textile and garment metaphors. Outlining the delimitation of semantic fields through comprehensive bodies of data. Comparative studies include Semitic and Indo-European textile and garment terms, and in medieval texts the relationship between Slavo-Balto and Germanic textile and garment terms. In Early Modern trade and commercial and legal texts, the new textile and garment terms generated through trade and contacts outside Europe will be explored. Data from art history and evidence from texts in/on textiles will also be used.

**Research questions** Q1: How to understand toponyms in textile terminology? Q2: How can loan words in textile terminology inform us about the economic and technical contexts? Q3: How does a textile or clothing term (text) refer and relate to the object (textile)?

**Deliverables:** Papers in high-ranking journals; presentations at international conferences on terminologies and language; workshop on textiles and toponyms; co-create and compile a corpus of textiles with in-woven or embroidered texts; comparative study of textile and garment terms in European languages 1000 CE to 1500 CE; and workshop on in-woven/embroidered texts.

## **WG 4: The fabric of society. Leader: Francesco Meo (IT)**

**Objectives:** To explore the economic and agricultural impact of textile production and use. To explore the economic and agricultural basis for textile crops and



textile trade by tracing textile trade patterns and paths through Europe and through time. To map textile resource areas (water, dyestuffs, cultivation, pasture, cheap but skilled labour) and how they have shifted through time, as well as emerging textile technology regions, which branded their products and created specialised and standardised textile products.

**Research questions** Q1: What is the interaction between agriculture, herding and textile production in different periods and places? Q2: How can textile consumption of a population be quantified and qualified, and how can textile production and trade in past economies be quantified and qualified? Q3: How was (Early) Modern Europe shaped by textile production? Q4: How did Europe affect the rest of the world through textile trade and colonies, and vice versa?

**Methodologies:** reading historical texts (legal documents, private account books, city registries and probate accounts), which are mapped geographically and tagged chronologically to establish textile trade patterns across Europe and through time using historical archaeology, historical geography, toponymy and geographic information systems (GIS) to map textile resource areas (water access, ponds, dye plants, flax cultivation and pastures) and how they have shifted through time. A comparative approach to technology and context can be used between eastern and western Europe, northern and southern Europe, and between Europe and the Near East. However, a less schematic comparative approach must be elaborated, with a view on European peripheries.

**Deliverables:** Scholarly papers; lectures at international conferences; co-creation of the EuroWeb Digital Atlas visualising trade routes, areas of resources, path of innovations, terminological exchanges, fashion trends, across time.

## Opportunities

EuroWeb first and foremost offers an open network for all scholars and practitioners working with textiles, dress and fashion. It is a place to search for collaborations, offer online resources, and to share findings and papers. Collaborative workshops, seminars, and research articles are encouraged to develop the themes proposed in the working groups. EuroWeb is also a platform for research training, and in 2020-2021 this will mainly take place online. Later training schools and courses in the host countries are planned.

For the special target groups, ECIs and ITCs, EuroWeb offers mentorship, funding for conference participation, and funding for research stays abroad.

Conferences, workshops with training and meetings scheduled for the first grant period (November 2020 – April 2021) are planned as online or hybrid events. These are:

- 10 November 2020, Copenhagen/on-line: **Training in recording and editing podcasts about your favourite piece of clothing**. Organisers: Marie-Louise Nosch and Gülzar Demir.
- 21-22 November 2020, Copenhagen/on-line: **EuroWeb Digital Atlas Training Initiative (including a career development training)**. Organisers: Angela Huang, Mikkel Nørtoft, Eva Andersson Strand and Piotr Kasprzyk.
- January 2021, Thessaloniki, **International Workshop on Interdisciplinary Textile Studies: Byzantine, Post-Byzantine and Related Productions**. Organisers: Paschalis Androudis and Elena Papastavrou.
- 22-23 March 2021, Warsaw: **Textiles and Seals. Relationships between textile production and seals and sealing practices in the Bronze to Iron Age Mediterranean and the Near East**, workshop. Organiser: Agata Ulanowska.
- 23 March 2021, Warsaw: **Second Management Committee Meeting**. Organiser: Agata Ulanowska and Faculty of Archaeology, University of Warsaw.
- March/April (2 days) 2021, Warsaw: **Funerary Textiles. Towards a better method for *in situ* study, retrieval and conservation**, conference workshop. Organisers: Elsa Yvanez and Magdalena Woźniak.

## Results

There are two major deliverables: the EuroWeb anthology to draft a new vision of European history based on textiles and dress, and the EuroWeb digital atlas mapping textile and dress production, circulation and consumption. If you wish to contribute to the Atlas, please contact the atlas manager: Angela Huang (DE).

## Communication

Read more about EuroWeb here: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA19131/#tabs|Name:overview>  
**Follow us on Twitter @EuroWeb4** to discover the project's participants and get news on ongoing activities and events.

**Contact:** [euroweb.cost@uw.edu.pl](mailto:euroweb.cost@uw.edu.pl)

