

Interviews

IHKIB president: Türkiye in dialogue with US, eyes UK growth

Istanbul Textile and Apparel Exporter Association (IHKIB) president tells Just Style Türkiye is keen to enhance its preferential access to the US market and hopes to become a top two fashion supplier to the UK in future.

Laura Husband | May 1, 2025

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Türkiye has not been directly affected by the same level of US tariffs imposed on other countries, but it is closely monitoring the situation. Credit: Shutterstock.

Mustafa Gültepe, who is also the current president of the Turkish Exporters Assembly tells Just Style that Türkiye has not been directly affected by the same level of US tariffs imposed on other countries, but he adds: “We are closely monitoring the situation and taking proactive steps to

minimise any potential negative impacts on our apparel exports to the United States”.

When asked whether Türkiye is in conversations with Trump about a trade deal and ways to reduce tariffs in future, he shares: “At this stage, the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye is maintaining active dialogue and strong communication with its counterparts in the United States through diplomatic channels.”

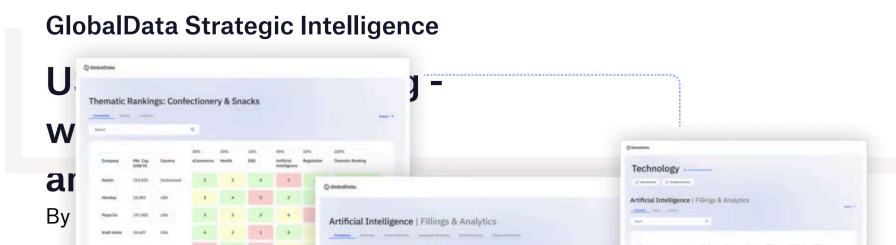
Gültepe is quick to add that his goal is to advocate for fair trade practices and explore ways to enhance Türkiye's preferential access to the US market, stating: "We are ready to engage in these processes should trade negotiations be initiated in the new period."

Türkiye sets sights on becoming top two fashion supplier to UK

Gültepe is in London, UK for a Türkiye fashion supplier-UK fashion buyer matchmaking event and he's keen to share that he sees it as a "valuable opportunity" to further strengthen the commercial ties between Türkiye and the UK in the apparel sector.

His goal is to build new partnerships, expand existing networks, and showcase Türkiye's strong capabilities in sustainable, innovative, and high-quality garment production.

Plus, he says: “Our objective is to position Türkiye even more firmly as a reliable and strategic sourcing partner for UK buyers.”





Türkiye is currently the leading supplier of garments and Gültepe reveals that he “strongly believes Türkiye has the potential to move into the top two suppliers to the UK in the future.”

To achieve this, IHKIB is investing heavily in sustainability, digitalisation, and innovation across the apparel sector.

“We are also strengthening our design capabilities, focusing on value-added production, and launching targeted marketing and promotional campaigns specifically for the UK market. Speed, quality, and ethical production standards are our biggest advantages, and we are committed to leveraging them further,” he shares.

Gültepe does admit that Türkiye saw a drop in apparel exports to the UK between 2023 and 2024 of -10.8%, but he explains the decline “was mainly driven by a combination of external and internal factors”.

Externally, he says the global economic slowdown created inflationary pressures across Europe and shifts in consumer purchasing behaviour. Plus, there were post-Brexit logistical challenges, and structural changes in the UK retail sector that significantly impacted demand.

Internally, he explains rising labour and production costs in Türkiye played a part, particularly due to high inflation and currency fluctuations, which also contributed to the decline.

But, he adds: “Despite these temporary challenges, we have taken strategic steps to restore competitiveness

and are already seeing encouraging signs of recovery in our trade with the UK.”

Türkiye keeps focus on wider Europe and the US

The UK is just one of Gültepe’s focuses for 2025 as he tells Just Style that his primary target for increasing apparel exports, as always, is all European Union countries and the European Region.

“Europe has consistently been our most strategic and traditional market, and it remains our main focus for sustainable growth. At the same time, we are placing greater emphasis on the United States market.

“In the latest reciprocal tariff adjustments, Türkiye is among the countries subject to lower tariffs. However, in order to turn this into an opportunity, we must first regain our competitiveness.”

He notes that Türkiye’s sustainable transformation, digitalisation, and increasing the global competitiveness of Türkiye’s apparel industry all remain high up on his agenda.

He says: “We are working to align closely with global standards in sustainability (such as carbon footprint reduction, circular economy practices, and ethical sourcing) while also investing in innovation and smart manufacturing technologies.”

Biggest challenges facing Türkiye’s fashion supplier market in 2025

But, there are a number of key challenges for Türkiye’s fashion supplier market in 2025. This includes global economic uncertainties, increased competition from low-cost manufacturing countries, evolving sustainability regulations in export markets, and supply chain disruptions.

At the same time, he says adapting quickly to changing consumer expectations around traceability, transparency, and environmental responsibility remains critical.

Some of today's biggest challenges can also create opportunities with Gültepe noting that Türkiye's strategic location for nearshoring, strong logistics infrastructure, and flexible production capabilities make it "an increasingly attractive alternative to more distant sourcing regions".

He adds: "Shorter lead times, nearshoring trends, and buyers' growing preference for diversified supply chains create significant potential for Türkiye to capture additional market share."

What does Türkiye's fashion sector hope to achieve in 2026?

This year, IHKIB hopes to stabilise and regain growth in Türkiye's apparel exports with Gültepe targeting a year-end recovery that surpasses the previous year's figures.

Looking ahead to 2026, he reveals the "forecast is for a robust increase in exports, driven by strategic market expansion, sustainable innovation, and strengthened partnerships with key global buyers. Our ambition is to position Türkiye among the top global apparel sourcing destinations."

He is keen to share that Türkiye remains deeply committed to maintaining its role as a trusted and innovative sourcing partner for global brands and retailers.


He states: "We are investing heavily in future-proofing our apparel industry through sustainability,

technology, and human capital development. Despite global challenges, we remain optimistic and determined to contribute to a more resilient and responsible global fashion supply chain.”

[In February, the vice chairman of Istanbul Apparel Exporters’ Association \(IHKIB\) Mustafa Paşahan told Just Style about the impact of inflation on Türkiye’s fashion sector.](#)

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