



# Making textiles & fashion last longer

## Summary of Outcomes – Feedback from European stakeholders

This document is a compilation of stakeholder views collected as part of the ECESP's annual conference within a workshop on Making textiles and fashion last longer on 4th November 2020. The workshop was conducted under Chatham House Rules attended by approximately 90 stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds including policymakers, industry representatives, civil society and concerned citizens.

The summary of ideas, listed in no order of priority, should be seen as a snapshot of ideas inspired as a result of breakout discussions around two questions listed in the workshop programme below. They will be taken into account as part of the ECESP Leadership Group on Textiles.

## WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

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**Introduction:** Matthias Neitsch, RREUSE President, RepaNet, Austria

### Breakout sessions on key questions

- What are the most effective policy instrument(s) to ensure design for re-use so that more durable and long lasting textiles are placed on the EU market?
- What is the most effective incentive that can push the market towards long-lasting and durable clothing that effectively reduces consumption levels (post-Covid19)?

### Plenary session & Concluding remarks

Feedback session from [ECESP Coordination Group leaders](#)

[Link to the Annual Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference, 3 - 4 November 2020](#)

[Link to the Workshop](#)

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## 1. General stakeholder statements on Policy Frameworks

- **Definitions:** Guidelines are important to concentrate the different views on what Circular Economy really is. Need for **agreed definitions** and understandings of what "circularity", "lifespan", "durability" and other notions mean in practice, and by which parameters they will be measured and verified. In drafting these definitions, we need to look at the use phase of specific products, at impacts during the use phase such as microfibre release, as well as where the product may eventually end up after use.
- Important to define **what kind of textiles are we talking about** – clothing, textiles for furniture etc.
- **There won't be a one size fits all approach when we talk about policies and incentives for circular textiles** given the complexity of textiles products and value chains. There is not one policy instrument that will enhance circular design - we need many instruments and for them to be coherent.
- The **social and environmental cost of the garment** must be taken into consideration in policy-making
- **Tension between new chemicals rules and reusing older materials:** As more toxic chemicals get regulated, what are the implications for reuse and recycling of textiles that will not comply with newer legislation? Acknowledging the interaction between chemicals and waste is vital.
- **Waste Framework Directive / 2025 collection target:** By 2025 much more textile mass will be due for treatment; eco-design could be a way, mandatory re-use & recycling quotas for generating circularity in textile chain. Need for appropriate facilities to ensure that the textiles collected and sorted are recycled properly and preferably locally.
- **Waste shipments:** EU waste shipment rules are being revised. This has implications for textiles when it comes to which materials can be transferred across borders. Currently it is difficult to bring things back to recycling facilities in other regions.

## 2. What are the most effective policy instrument(s) to ensure design for re-use?

### 2.1. EPR

- Countries are looking for EPR schemes, yet do not know exactly how to implement them.
- Need for a harmonised EPR that works in the same way across the EU (calculation of fees, reporting, transparency, etc.). This EPR needs to be eco-modulated, in line with the above-mentioned agreed definitions. It needs to be integrated and aligned with a ban on the destruction of unsold goods and with requirements to disclose product information. Importantly, the EPR will be a key instrument to develop solutions to divert textiles from incineration. It needs to be as broad as possible in scope.
- Need to understand existing financial incentives and currently implemented EPR models / systems, e. g. as in France, for a whole range of different products. We need to look at how it is made up in detail, also in technical details. How can we implement eco modulation?
- In establishing the responsibility in EPR schemes, the role of charity shops and re-use sector needs to be maintained, because of their know-how, social impact and have strong links with citizens. E.g. EPR scheme could provide credits for clothes going to these shops.

### 2.2. Ecodesign

- Guidelines for eco-design are essential; industry needs to know what is being expected of them.
- Needed to promote sustainable and more circular design of textile products. Collaboration among all the actors operating along the value chain is fundamental to promote the adoption of tools such as the product-environmental footprint/LCA which can provide the knowledge to move towards more circular production and consumption system.

- Tackle plastics in textiles: it needs a commitment from the sector regarding reducing micro-plastics in textiles: EC initiative could be set in place (similar to identify special substances in final products, carried out by Chemical Agency). In order to be sure about substances in re-use-products, the last one in the chain needs to have the information (e.g. in a “product passport”)
- 60 % of new clothes are from synthetic materials – propose higher fees on virgin plastic so we need to make an incentive not to use plastic – make guidelines for more environmentally friendly clothes – must avoid electronics in clothing
- Mandatory requirements through eco-design regulation. Can this be done through the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) and consumer should have better information about their clothes.
- But we need not reinvent the wheel with new criteria – look at the military – we know how to make durable clothes. The question is how do we bring these criteria for consumer goods.
- Mandatory requirements in eco-design in relation to criteria related to test for durability i.e. how we design the fibres / how compact are the fibres / resistance to cleaning products etc.
- Look at the fibres, especially natural ones (length of yarns used etc.) – resistance to washing is very important (e.g. wool and hemp last long).
- Do we have restrictions on number and types of fabrics used in textiles? How do we control what is coming in from the outside of the EU? We need to have a look at the products that come to the single market here. What about market surveillance to ensure compliance?
- Longevity and durability are important, but also the shedding aspect with respect to debris during washing, etc.
- How high up the chain do we want to recycle material? How long can a garment made from recycled material last?

### 2.3. Quality Standards

- Industry does not know how to set quality standards for clothing. Stipulating standards and guidelines are needed for providing both the industry and waste management systems with the data necessary for effective design and system planning. Besides longevity and durability, recyclability, abrasion resistance, shedding aspects and in connection to that biodegradability issues are important indicators. Which materials or material combinations are long lasting, and eventually enable recycling.
- Durability standards/ parameters proposed by ECLA should be considered.

### 2.4. Labels

- Ecolabel can guarantee quality – fast fashion cannot be ecolabelled because it does not meet the criteria – design a product that meets the ecolabel criteria is not easy/it is not easy to obtain the ecolabel – ecolabel is also an important instrument to inform the consumer, create awareness, not only on consuming better, but also on consuming less. For info: Nordic Swan Ecolabel will be revised, revision will be finished early 2021.
- Washing is a major impact overall - clear labelling is important here (Marks & Spencer did focus on this).
- There is a difference between labels that help people care for clothes and those that tell them how good or bad an item is. WRAP did a consumer attitude survey and found that the latter is a low driver for behavioural change
- Big problem is there is too much information and it is not harmonised. What should a label tell you?
- Greenwashing is a massive issue and there should be a huge clampdown on this which feeds into ecolabels. We should be careful about ecolabels because there is so much confusion both from the manufacturers and consumer side as to what they actually mean. One credible global ecolabel would be useful for clarity.
- We have criteria for EU ecolabel which could be revised.

## 2.5. Taxation / VAT / Economic

- Fiscal and VAT incentives encouraging better design.
- Lower VAT for second hand market.
- Reduction of VAT when an item is repaired.
- Financial incentives such as taxes and subsidies: tax shift from labour to resources (major driver of change); lower VAT on more sustainable products.
- Discussion on taxation at different levels of the value chain. Ultimately more taxation penalises the consumer because the cost is often passed on – but this can be a good thing to disincentivise purchase of poor performing products.
- Clothes are too cheap – put a minimum fee for putting products on the market in order to internalize their environmental cost
- Price point of circular products: Products including high recycled content may be more expensive than from virgin fibre. Will these eco-products be available and accessible price-wise to the masses?

## 2.6. Product Passport

- Creating digital product information embedded in the product (product passports) and ensuring there is a framework in place that is widely used and co-created by stakeholders.
- Product Passports / labels to see circularity in products / share information along value chain: Use the existing global GS1 barcode system (which exchanges information B2B; open standards <https://www.gs1.eu/news/a-standards-based-knowledge-system-for-the-circular-economy>) on every product to share information for the circular economy model. A place to start could be to put some green attributes behind a data model in a barcode – e.g. environmental footprint; with a common global language.



### 3. What is the most effective incentive that can push the market towards long-lasting and durable clothing?

#### 3.1. EPR

- Producer responsibility setting a fixed amount per garment (€5?) would help raise funds to invest in recycling infrastructure and innovation. There was emphasis that producer responsibility must be a fixed amount rather than a percentage otherwise the incentive would penalise clothing of a higher quality.
- Incorporating a deposit refund model, may enable separate collection.
- Minimum quality criteria within EPR schemes would influence what garments can actually be placed on a given market could restrict poorly performing products entering that market in the first place.
- EPR scheme at EU level rather than MS level – would help consumers invest in clothing that lasts longer.
- Develop a sort of “true cost” model which reflects the real, accurate price of textiles – help consumers ditch fast fashion ideas and keep clothing for longer (through various seasons).
- Design can be implemented / incentivised with a bonus / malus system within EPR (pricing).

#### 3.2. Labels / Traceability

- Labelling if done correctly could improve consumer awareness, labelling should emphasise the “lasting” nature of clothing.
- Cradle-to-cradle labelling was recognised that this covered many different aspects.

- Mark the clothes with the year of production and include an 'expected lifetime label' – important to mark the clothes with the content and make sure that chemicals are there.
- Mark how many washing machine turns the clothing will be able to endure.
- In Spain one company is manufacturing QR codes hidden in the label – once it is washed too many times the QR code is uncovered and you should recycle the garment because it starts to release more microplastics - <https://zyosh.com/en/>.
- Norway big push for an openness law – names of factories that produce the textiles– Transparency of where our textiles comes from and what is in them is very important.
- For carpets, a label can be scanned and give information to the consumer as to materials used, how to repair it, recycle it etc. Would be convenient for reuse: How old is it? Where does it come from? What is composed of? What is the quality?
- Challenges: consumers cut off labels on clothing / coordination between many different actors / willingness to share such information
- Labelling of clothes with detailed composition, expected lifespan and indication of how many times a garment can be washed; QR (quick response) codes which can be read quickly by a mobile phone could be used.

### 3.3. Taxation / VAT / Economic

- Taxes to guarantee fairer prices reflecting environmental and social costs of production. This way the prices of all products will be higher and local products will become again more sustainable on the market. Especially, imported textiles should be taxed if they do not comply with EU environmental and social standards.
- Fiscal Reform through regulations and economic incentives the ways in which companies operate thus promoting sustainable/circular business models.

### 3.4. Public Procurement

- Mandatory procurement that directly refers to EU Ecolabel or similar labels regarding the durability of clothing that should be procured by public administrations. Similar incentives exist in the Energy Efficiency Regulations which reference public purchases of electronic goods to directly follow EU Energy Efficiency Label.
- Participants were wary of public procurement being overly prescriptive, and should be material neutral but quality prescriptive. Being too prescriptive on types of recycled content may create perverse incentives and create a wider discussion on what is and isn't recycled fibre.

### 3.5. Consumer information / behaviour change incentives

- Raising consumer awareness in terms of traceability and composition of the textiles to incentivize behaviour change towards more sustainable purchasing options. An example is the EUROTEx initiative focusing on the setting up recycling hubs around Europe which aims to promote behaviour shifts from companies and consumers by increasing recycling rates and the use of secondary raw materials concurrently promoting more sustainable behaviours,
- Use of technologies, such as block-chain and or specific apps, textile passports, to better inform consumers about the environmental impacts of specific products and thus influencing their purchasing behaviours.
- Pass the message that used/recycled/sustainable clothes are cool = sustainable clothing as cool/fashionable clothes.
- Increasing consumer awareness about the social and environmental impacts of the textile sector. Consumers need to be better informed about the durability and possibility to recycle textiles: e.g. eco-labels can be a good tool that can support consumers' awareness.
- Personalisation of clothes – draw more of a connection between the consumer and the garment, leading to longer life.

- Communication Campaigns at all level to influence behavioural change. Look at successful food waste campaigns for inspiration as a way to incentivise behaviour change.
- Incentivising re-use: While second-hand is a trend, it is not the same everywhere. Some cultures are more resistant to buying second-hand than others. But we should ride the wave of sewing / repurposing/upcycling and looking at bringing on board 'influencers' to have big impact.
- The limitations of communication and consumer education initiatives to change consumption habits are clear. We need taxes and VAT interventions at the different stages of product lifecycles.
- Education and awareness-raising from young ages at schools, trainings etc – behaviours really need to change so we need to inform the end consumers.
- It is not just a discussion about materials, it is also about human resources so we need opportunities for people to upgrade skills. There is a clear role for universities. We need clear tools and statements for designers on how they can make Ecodesign and circular design a reality. Many companies would like to be more sustainable but they don't know how to do that so we need to teach companies how to do it - there is currently a lack of knowledge in the textile industry. More research is needed.
- Inspire consumers (e.g. via influencers) to enjoy their textiles, inspire each other, make most what is already in their wardrobe.
- New culture: educate consumers in how to treat their clothes (fold/store properly and in good environment, know how to mend them, ...) so that they last longer. Need to support the public's ability to repair - reskilling initiatives ... or look to cunning technology and innovation so people don't need skills.
- Though we need to focus on the use phase and life extension through reuse and repair, this is highly individual and not easy to tackle e.g. repair is often a high barrier.
- Brands recognise there are subjective and emotive responses to buying clothes and are increasingly shouting about impact / reducing impact.

- Raising consumer awareness means more transparency and traceability and a better understanding of the whole value change.

### 3.6. Business models

- Development of other business models e.g. sharing (e.g. library for shared clothes in Finland), renting needs to be enforced: make it widely available. We also need a policy incentive to go along with market incentives, e.g. a “right to rent” even for textiles (equal to a “right to repair”).
- More lending / sharing schemes → prevents that we all become owners but rather, simply users. It’s not necessarily negative that we use items a lot but we can do it differently.
- Rental models could be interesting but it’s important that companies doing this are really re-using them and not just throwing them away.
- Clothing as a service could be an addition to the existing business model, but many challenges with logistics (ship back/bring back to store)
- The need for new business models for longer-lasting, sustainable clothes. We know how to make long-lasting clothes (military and work uniforms); "fast fashion" is the biggest challenge.
- Take-back schemes: how to incentivise both consumers and companies. There are two levels to consider when we think about reuse and take-back: the consumer level and the company level. Incentivising the return of used clothing and shoes can encourage more consumption. We need to ensure that textiles are brought to the right channels to either be reused or recycled. We need to motivate people to give them the impression that what they do is useful as a challenge is that people have the feeling it is not possible to reuse textiles as they end up as rubbish anyway and don’t get recycled.

### 3.7. Industry & Trade

- Commitment of companies in the sector to go circular is important – e.g. IKEA announced that all products will be circular by 2030; we need similar commitment in textile sector, from companies, for all their products.
- Trade / monitoring: How do we tackle all the textiles / clothing coming from Asia – 80% are produced in Asia and how can we enforce the border control of these clothes (monitoring) International trade: importing cheap clothes of unknown quality from overseas – African countries are doing this now too. In the Circular economy action plan – design is 80% of performance – incentive scheme is crucial.

### 3.8. Overstock destruction ban

- Ban on destruction of unsold goods: could be important instrument, but then challenges of infrastructure need to be solved (it needs to be possible to collect, give to charity, ...).
- How to handle overproduction needs to be addressed. A ban on burning textiles as it already exists in several countries needs a global commitment and a global policy framework; otherwise companies will just go there where it is still allowed. Overproduction needs to be made visible for consumers also (raise consumer awareness).

### 3.9. Local / municipal level

- Strategies for the cities, trying to implement textile treatment schemes, opportunities and programs in small cities.
- Mayors of cities, villages, and companies, especially in Eastern Europe, do not have enough clue of what they can do, actually.
- People want to do the right thing in terms of proper handling of end-of-life textiles, but do not know how to do so reliably.
- Collection and treatment options on municipal level - frequently cities / villages, municipality officials, SME's, etc. in some regions of the EU do not have enough knowledge on how to set up programs and incentives for re-use or proper re-use and recycling.

- Role of Local communities should join the global value chains. Maybe there are opportunities among circular cities and circular value chains to intervene.

### 3.10 Sharing of good practices

- Platform for good practices should be implemented.
- We need a guideline, especially for smaller communities that are less experienced in setting up recycling schemes, stipulating how to do things.

#### 4. Web-Links to Position Papers / Stakeholder Documents:

- <https://www.rreuse.org/vision-for-a-new-fashion-season-social-and-circular/>
- <https://euratex.eu/wp-content/uploads/EURATEX-Prospering-in-the-Circular-Economy-2020.pdf>
- [https://ecostandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Ec2007\\_03a-Factsheet-Textiles.pdf](https://ecostandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Ec2007_03a-Factsheet-Textiles.pdf)
- <https://euratex.eu/wp-content/uploads/EPR-position-paper-FIN.pdf>
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- [https://ecopreneur.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Feedback\\_on\\_EU\\_Textiles\\_Strategy\\_Ecopreneur.eu\\_2021-02-01.pdf](https://ecopreneur.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Feedback_on_EU_Textiles_Strategy_Ecopreneur.eu_2021-02-01.pdf)
- <https://eeb.org/library/european-civil-society-strategy-for-sustainable-textile-garments-leather-and-footwear/>