

Urgent break with fast fashion needed in upcoming EU textile laws

PRESS RELEASE – 16 June 2021

25 European NGOs rebuff voluntary agreements to clean up the fashion industry, calling for the EU's upcoming textile legislation to hold brands accountable for their contribution to global pollution.

Some of Europe's largest networks of green groups (1) are joining forces to demand an end to fast fashion in the textile industry, one of the world's largest industrial polluters. (2)

As part of the [Wardrobe Change campaign](#), NGOs are calling for new policies to stop runaway overproduction of textiles. Proposed measures include minimum standards for how long clothes should last, a ban on the destruction of unsold and returned goods, rules to verify and substantiate green claims, and ambitious targets for an absolute reduction in the amount of natural resources used across the supply chain.

The group is also calling for urgent rules on hazardous chemicals in fashion and for moves to combat environmental harm to include action to end labour rights' violations in supply chains.

[See the full list of demands here](#)

The call comes as clothing and textile production continues to soar (3; 4) despite an abundance of sustainability initiatives from major fashion brands and retailers.

The European Commission is currently [gathering feedback](#) from industry and civil society organisations, (5) with the aim of putting forward new measures by the end of the year.

Mathieu Rama, Senior Policy Officer at RREUSE insisted:

"The EU urgently needs to redesign the textile industry by tackling overproduction and overconsumption as well as unfair working conditions. To ensure longer-lasting and repairable products, priority must be given to waste prevention and preparing for re-use. In parallel, greater support and protection must be given to social economy enterprises active in the sector to help ensure an inclusive and fair textile value chain."

Emily Macintosh, Policy Officer for Textiles at the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), said:

"We can't ask people to do their part when it comes to sustainability if the multi-billion-dollar companies responsible for promoting such unsustainable consumption habits are not being held to account. EU laws should focus on reducing the amount of resources used across supply chains and on boosting the market for second-hand and repairable textiles. Fast fashion's linear and exploitative business model must become a thing of the past."

Valeria Botta, Programme Manager at ECOS - Environmental Coalition on Standards, added:

"The EU can transform the way textile products are designed, making them sustainable by default. Our clothes need to last longer, be easier to mend and reuse, and be made without harmful materials and substances. To make sure textiles and their production are truly circular, we need ambitious EU laws that set minimum requirements, push the market towards the best option, and include ambitious binding targets for material and consumption footprints. The EU should grasp this opportunity to finally regulate this industry and inspire others."

Demands

The NGOs' position paper has four key demands:

- **Make sustainable textile products the norm** through high minimum design standards, better production processes, traceability, transparency and information disclosure, and banning the destruction of unsold and returned goods.
- **Drive resource-sufficient textile consumption** with rules on what reliable green claims can be made on products, harmonised labelling, and better information on the expected lifetime and reparability of a product.
- **Leave the linear business model behind** by taxing virgin resource use and making producers responsible for the products they put on the market from cradle to grave.
- **Hold the EU textile industry accountable for its role in the world** through a trade reset and strong human rights and environmental due diligence rules.

Notes for editors

- Members of the [Wardrobe Change](#) coalition include the following groups and their membership: the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), ECOS, RREUSE, Plastic Soup Foundation, Zero, Future in Our Hands, Changing Markets Foundation, HEJ Support, Generation Climate Europe, and Green Liberty.
Also supporting this paper are: Fair Trade Advocacy Office (FTAO), Polish Zero Waste Association, Runder Tisch Reparatur, Zero Waste Europe, Umweltdachverband, FOCISV, Irish Environmental Network, WECF France, Institute Povod Slovenia, ISD Foundation Poland, Na Mysli, OKOBURO, WECF Netherlands, and Wontanara.
- 675 million tonnes of raw materials are being used annually to fuel EU consumption of clothing, footwear, and household textiles – an average of 1.3 tonnes per EU citizen. (source: [European Environmental Agency 2019](#))
- The total amount of clothes produced in the world doubled between 2000 and 2015; in 2017, EU households spent €527.9 billion on clothes and textile products (source: [European Environmental Agency 2019](#))
- The global fast fashion market is expected to grow from from \$25 billion in 2020 to \$40 billion in 2025 (source: [Research and Markets 2021](#))
- The consultation runs until 4 August and a legislative proposal for the strategy is expected by the end of 2021.



RREUSE is an NGO Network representing social enterprises active in the field of re-use, repair and recycling, with 30 members across 26 countries in Europe and the USA. Our main vision is for Europe to support the role of social enterprise in a circular economy, providing meaningful work opportunities to thousands of vulnerable members of our community through innovative economic, social and environmentally beneficial activities. RREUSE's primary mission is to help tackle poverty, social exclusion and a throwaway culture by promoting policies, best practices and partnerships that support the professionalism and development of social enterprises working in environmental services with high potential for local and inclusive job creation, notably re-use and repair.

[Click here](#) for more information on RREUSE

 [@RREUSE_Brussels](#)

Press contact

Kelly Piron, Communication and Advocacy Officer

kelly.piron@rreuse.org | +32 477 69 88 21

