

THE EUROPEAN CIRCULAR TEXTILE COALITION

Manifesto for a European Circular Textile Economy

Introduction – Why?

We are an informal coalition uniting companies concerned with the unsustainable growth of textile waste in Europe. We come from across the entire textile value chain, representing the upstream and downstream segments. We believe a united front is needed to shape bold policies for a genuinely circular textile economy, where textiles never become waste in the first place. We believe that it is critical to claim a seat at the table in EU policy debates.

This transition is not only an environmental imperative, but also a **strategic opportunity to strengthen the European economy and support reindustrialisation**. A circular textile system can drive green investment, create quality jobs and boost Europe's industrial competitiveness: particularly through innovation in recycling, materials regeneration, and sustainable manufacturing. Europe can capitalize on its proximity to post-consumer textile waste to turn it into a true competitive advantage.

Europe's current linear textile model is unsustainable. An average EU citizen purchases **19 kg** of textiles (clothes, shoes, household fabrics) each year – representing the content of a large suitcase¹. Europe generates approximately **12.6 million tonnes of textile waste** annually². Most of end-of-life textiles are landfilled, incinerated or exported, and a mere **1%** of material in clothing is recycled back into new garments³. This wasteful system harms the environment and squanders economic value. We formed our coalition because we know Europe **can do better** by closing the loop in textiles. We aim to help transform EU policy so that the industry shifts from a throw-away paradigm to a circular one, in line with the EU's 2022 **Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles** which envisions that by 2030 all textiles on the EU market are durable, repairable and **to a great extent made of recycled fibres**.

Our Vision – Driving a world without waste

We are committed to advancing policies and business practices that make textiles a **fully circular industry** – starting with textile waste recovery to reincorporation of textile recycled materials in sustainable products – thereby protecting our planet while fostering European innovation and European jobs.

When a world without waste is possible.

We operate under a simple but powerful premise: in a world without waste, every textile is designed for longevity and recyclability and materials are perpetually regenerated. This vision guides us. We refuse to accept textile waste as an inevitability, instead, we see it as a solvable challenge for our generation.

Our coalition carries a hopeful message: Europe can lead the way to a future in which consumers benefit from high-quality and long-lasting textiles. We echo the EU's 2030 vision that producers must take responsibility for their products along the entire value chain, ensuring "*sufficient capacities for recycling*" and virtually no textiles ending up in incinerators or landfills. To achieve this, the ambition of EU Ecodesign Regulation must be matched by investment in infrastructure and systems that make circularity technically and economically feasible, especially for sustainable textiles. Without system readiness, even the most forward-looking regulations risk falling short. We are here to help bridge that gap.

Our Goal – Making textile-to-textile recycling the *new normal*

Our goal is to establish a **truly closed-loop textile system** in Europe, where textile waste becomes a valuable resource, not a liability. In practice, we need to scale up innovative recycling technologies and systems so that used fibres are regenerated into new textiles at an industrial scale. By investing in advanced sorting, preparation, chemical and mechanical recycling, as well as spinning, fabric manufacturing and the nearshoring of apparels production, Europe can

¹ European Environment Agency, Consumption of clothing, footwear, other textiles in the EU reaches new record high. 2025. Available [here](#).

² Joint Research Centre, "Techno-scientific assessment of the management options for used and waste textiles - Preparatory study for the possible setting of preparation for re-use and recycling targets", (2023), page 25.

³ Textile Exchange, Materials Market Report 2024. 2024. Available [here](#).

replace waste with value. **Achieving this goal will close the material loop:** instead of viewing a used garment as a problem, we treat it as feedstock for the next product cycle. Textile waste will become the input for manufacturing, reducing reliance on primary raw materials, minimising strategic dependencies and lowering emissions. We are already proving it can be done: our members are operating and are building facilities that recover, sort and recycle textile waste, regenerating it into high value textile products. Our vision is that in Europe-wide textile-to-textile recycling becomes the **new normal**.

From Problem to Opportunity

For too long, textile waste has been seen as only an environmental problem. We are reframing it as an economic opportunity. Europe's textile waste can be the feedstock for a circular textile economy.

This narrative shift has real business implications: rather than costly waste management burdens, textile waste streams can become inputs for profitable enterprises. If we succeed, Europe will create new markets and jobs and reduce dependency on imported raw materials. For every 1,000 tons collected, approximately 100 jobs are created in the sectors of sorting, recycling, spinning, weaving, knitting and finishing. In the textile value chain, the most labour-intensive stage is manufacturing, which drives outsourcing. Conversely, the upstream phases are less labour-intensive and can therefore be more easily relocated, thanks to the emergence of the European circular economy.

Three pillars for EU Textile Policy

To achieve a truly circular textile economy, we urge EU policymakers to adopt **three core principles** in upcoming policies and regulations. These principles will guide Europe's transition and ensure that both industry and the environment win.

1. Ensure a competitive European textile chain: We champion a revival of textile manufacturing and recycling in Europe, built on circular principles. Currently, **about 73% of apparel consumed in the EU are imported** from outside Europe⁴. Meanwhile, much of Europe's used clothing is exported away, too often ending up discarded in a landfill. This globalized model externalises pollution and undermines accountability – and it leaves Europe's industry less competitive. Our aim is to bring production back to European shores. **This will ensure that environmental and labour standards are upheld at every step**, aligning with Europe's values of social and environmental responsibility. **It will shorten the supply chain and reduce the carbon footprint resulting from waste and transport. It will boost Europe's industrial resilience and innovation:** investing in modern recycling plants and circular factories will create European green jobs and know-how in EU regions.

2. Prioritise high-quality textile-to-textile recycling: Not all recycled content is equal, the source matters. We urge policymakers to ensure that the recycled fibres counted toward textile content targets originate from textile waste, not from other sectors' waste. **Post-consumer and post-industrial textile waste originated from European textile waste should become the primary feedstock for new textiles.** Future EU rules should incentivise fibre-to-fibre recycling and discourage simply replacing textiles' virgin inputs with recycled plastics from unrelated streams. We need policies (e.g., ESPR requirements, targeted extended producer responsibility incentives that help address Europe's textile waste problem) that explicitly favour recycling of textile-derived materials. This will ensure that we **truly solve Europe's textile waste problem** – viewing used textiles as the goldmine for new textiles. Our coalition stands ready to help define technical standards so that “recycled content” in textiles genuinely reflects circularity in the textile sector itself.

3. Set mandatory recycled content in textiles: All new textile products should contain a minimum percentage of recycled fibre, with realistic yet ambitious targets phased in over time. Voluntary efforts have proven grossly insufficient – we need binding standards to drive demand for recycled materials. The European Commission itself has recognised this: under the new Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), the EU is preparing to set **requirements on minimum recycled content** for textiles. We call for swift implementation of such mandates. At the same time, it is essential that **recycled content requirements go hand in hand with high standards of quality and longevity**. Incorporating recycled fibres must not lead to lower product durability or performance. On the contrary, mandatory recycled content should **support the creation of high-quality, long-lasting products**, fully aligned with EU Textile Strategy's 2030 vision that textiles be “to a great extent” made of recycled fibres. In short, mandatory recycled content is the policy lever that creates a stable demand for textile waste-based fibres, making large-scale recycling economically viable.

⁴ European Commission, Questions and Answers on EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles. 2022. Available [here](#).

In conclusion

We call on like-minded companies from across the textile value chain — from collectors to brands—to join us in shaping a truly circular textile economy in Europe. By uniting our voices, we can help steer EU policies toward competitiveness, mandatory recycled content, harmonised EPR schemes and investments in European textile-to-textile recycling. Our coalition is launching an advocacy tour to speak with policymakers and offer concrete expertise—we are ready to do our part. We call on the European institutions to provide the framework that will build circular business models. If it does not, the EU will miss its targets. Textile waste will continue to grow inexorably and there is a risk that the collected valuable raw materials will be sent outside the EU.

Now is the time to act—because when a world without waste is possible, we cannot afford to wait!

European Circular Textile Coalition

European Circular Textile Coalition – Members

Together, we will launch an advocacy campaign to call on the European institutions to provide the framework that will build circular business models.

