

SPOTLIGHT ON TEXTILES

THE PROBLEM WITH TEXTILES

We all need clothes. The way we produce and use them, however, needs to change – urgently. Today’s textile industry is far from sustainable, with enormous environmental and social impacts. It must move away from the “buy – use – throw away” pattern and adopt a real circular model.

Textiles impact the environment in a number of ways, due to the unsustainable use of natural resources such as land, water or energy, hazardous chemicals, as well as the vast amounts of waste and microplastics pollution they generate. In the first fifteen years of this century clothing production doubled worldwide, with no sign of slowing down: an average of 1.3 tonnes of primary raw materials and 104 m³ of water are used per person per year in the European Union.

To help solve this, the EU should introduce minimum requirements to ensure sustainable production and performance of textiles, and Extended Producer Responsibility schemes in all EU countries. In addition, standardised labelling and claims on sustainable and circular textiles must be introduced to ensure environmental claims are relevant, transparent and reliable.

The EU has the possibility to take significant steps towards making textiles truly circular and inspire the rest of the world. The design phase is the right place to start, as it determines the environmental performance and impacts of a product throughout its entire life cycle, even more so for clothes, where wear and tear account for half of discards. Design for durability, reuse and repairability should be a priority, and recycling should be encouraged. At the same time, the existing repair, reuse, sharing and remanufacturing business models should be promoted to become the new normal.



Textiles are Europe’s fourth largest cause of environmental pressure. 20% of freshwater pollution is linked to textile processing and dyeing. The industry is responsible for 92 million tonnes of waste each year, with less than 1% of textile fibres recycled into new clothes.

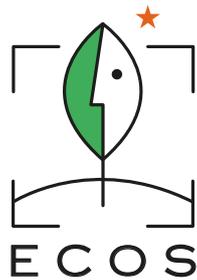
ECOS WORKS TO...

- Push for an integrated textiles strategy covering all environmental aspects throughout the entire value chain, including the introduction of minimum requirements, mandatory Extended Producer Responsibility for manufacturers and a standardised and reliable environmental labelling scheme for consumers.
- Support the development of standards for circularity in textiles, covering material efficiency aspects (durability, repairability, reuse, recyclability), methods to determine recycled content, absence of hazardous substances, high-quality textile-to-textile recycling, minimal microfiber release and labelling on durability and recyclability.

IN AN IDEAL WORLD...

Textiles on the market are circular, durable and produced in a fair and sustainable way, without hazardous chemicals. Resource scarcity and the wish to live within planetary boundaries trigger a shift in business models and supply chains. The textile industry is held accountable for the environmental and social impacts it generates, respecting human rights, promoting good jobs and protecting the environment throughout the value chain. This way the textile industry can also be a driver for stimulating our economy.





ECOS is the only environmental organisation worldwide specialised in standardisation.

We are an international network of members sharing a vision of a clean and healthy environment where people live in respect of the planet and its natural resources, preserving them for future generations. ECOS aims to influence the development of ambitious standardisation, legislation and political strategies to promote the transition to a clean and circular economy that respects planetary boundaries.

ECOS promotes and defends environmental interests in the development of standards at European and international level, as well as in the development of technical environmental product policies. Thanks to nearly 20 years of experience and a strong network of members and experts, our role in these processes is highly valued and widely recognised.

The green line to standards



Where to find us?

ECOS
Mundo-B, rue d'Edimbourg 26
1050 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 894 46 68
info@ecostandard.org
www.ecostandard.org

 @ECOS_Standard
 ECOS-EU



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