Ministry of Infrastructure
and Water Management

Policy Programme for Circular Textile 2025-2030

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Content

1 Introduction 6

1.1 Vision for a circular textile chain by 2050 9

1.2 Circular objectives for textiles 11

2 European and international context 14

2.1 European developments 15

2.2 International developments 16

3 Measures for the reduction of raw materials 17

3.1 Reducing incentives that promote consumption 18

3.2 Helping consumers in making sustainable choices 19

3.3 Limiting the production and import of textiles 20

4 Measures for the substitution of raw materials 21

4.1 Sustainable and recycled materials 22

4.2 Microplastics 23

4.3 Chemicals 24

5 Measures for lifespan extension 25

5.1 Quality and design 26

5.2 Repair 26

5.3 Second-hand textiles 27

6 Measures for high-grade processing 28
6.1 Collection and sorting 29
6.2 Strengthening the extended producer responsibility 29
6.3 Export 30
6.4 National Waste Management Plan (LAP)/Circular Materials Plan (CMP) 31
6.5 Recycling 31
7 Additional policy 32
7.1 Green Public Procurement 33
7.2 International corporate social responsibility 33
7.3 Incentivizing through subsidies 34
8 Getting started with the policy programme 35

How to read this document

The Netherlands aspires to be fully circular by 2050. To this end, the government has been working towards a circular textile chain in its policies since 2020. These policies are set out in the Policy Programme for Circular Textile 2020-2025.[1] This is the second circular textile programme, which will run from 2025 to 2030. The run-up to the second policy programme included discussions and sessions to give the public, experts and parties from the Dutch textile sector the opportunity to express their ideas, needs and concerns. Involving the public and the private sector is an important part of the policy-making process. The draft of the policy programme was presented via an internet consultation, which generated 47 responses. The results of the participation process were incorporated in this policy programme. The policy programme sets out the vision, objectives and policies for the next five years.

The structure of the policy programme is based on the four circular strategies that are included in the NPCE (National Circular Economy Programme) as well. They are a simplified version of the R-strategies.[2] These are the four strategies:

1. **Reduction of raw materials:** using fewer (primary) raw materials by reducing textile consumption and production.
2. **Substitution of raw materials:** using fossil-free, sustainable, bio-based and/or recycled materials.
3. **Extension of product lifespan:** improving quality, promoting repair, and encouraging the use of second-hand clothes to extend the lifespan of textiles.
4. **High-grade processing:** textiles are collected separately from other waste and subjected to high-grade processing so they can be reused as raw materials.

The introduction outlines the current situation in the textile sector and the vision of the government for a circular textile sector by 2050. The chapter also discusses the policy objectives for the coming years. Chapter 2 focuses on developments in the textile sector in Europe and beyond. Chapters 3 to 6 describe the main actions and measures in terms of textile policy. Chapter 7 addresses overarching topics: Green Public Procurement, international corporate social responsibility, and subsidies.

Figure 1. Circular strategies and objectives of a circular economy

1 Parliamentary Papers II 2019/20, 32 852, no. 116

2 The R-strategies indicate the degree of circularity. As a rule of thumb, the higher a strategy (e.g. “refuse and rethink”) is on the R-Ladder, the more effective it is as a tool to prevent the use of raw materials.

Summary

The textile industry produces around 4 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, and it has a significant impact on land and water use. As such, the textile industry is a sector where substantial environmental improvements can be achieved. At the same time, textiles ranging from tea towels to T-shirts are an important part of our daily lives, and we are faced with an ever-increasing flow of discarded clothes and shoes. Structural sustainability in the textile chain will require systemic changes.

Background

In the National Circular Economy Programme[3] (NPCE), textiles are one of the product groups for which systemic policies, concrete targets and a behavioural strategy have been created. The Policy Programme for Circular Textile 2025-2030 is an important next step towards the end goal: a safe, transparent, responsible circular textile chain for humans, animals and the environment, where all textiles are made from fossil-free, sustainable, bio-based or recycled materials. The Dutch government is committed to an ambitious programme for the entire textile chain, which will require the authorities, the private sector and consumers to do their part.

The starting points for the development of this policy programme were both the progress we have made so far with regard to the goals from the previous policy programme for 2020-2025 and current developments in the textile market. For example, more textiles are being collected separately, and people are opting for second-hand clothing more often as well. At the same time there is still insufficient use of sustainable and recycled materials in new products. More and more textiles are sold by e-commerce suppliers outside of Europe. The business model of these parties is focused mainly on producing large quantities of low-quality materials at the lowest possible cost. People are continually tempted by the latest trends and low prices. All these factors add up to challenges in the textile collection, sorting and recycling sector in the Netherlands, where discarded textiles keep piling up.

For this reason, the Policy Programme for Circular Textile 2025-2030 uses an approach that is based on three key principles:

1. Changing our consumption together

In the current system, textile products are produced quickly, used for a short period and discarded quickly. Due to the low quality of these products, they are mostly unsuitable for longer use or recycling. The environment pays a high price for this growth model. This is why we are exploring measures to combat overproduction and overconsumption. The destruction of unsold textiles and shoes will be prohibited, and research is being done on reducing price incentives that encourage people to buy more than they need. The goal is to encourage more intentional behaviour with regard to buying textile products and to combat overproduction and overconsumption.

2. Preserving value rather than letting it go to waste

Our goal is for consumers to both use less textiles and use textiles of a higher quality that lasts longer. Clothes, shoes and other textile products should be designed to last. It should also be easier to repair products or buy them second-hand. New design requirements and product passports will be developed in Europe for textile products during the next few years. This will allow consumers to see how sustainable a garment is, where it was produced, how to take care of it, and where you can hand it in once you are done with it. Promoting the repair, reuse and resale of textiles will also create new local economic opportunities.

3. Sustainability and circularity will become the norm

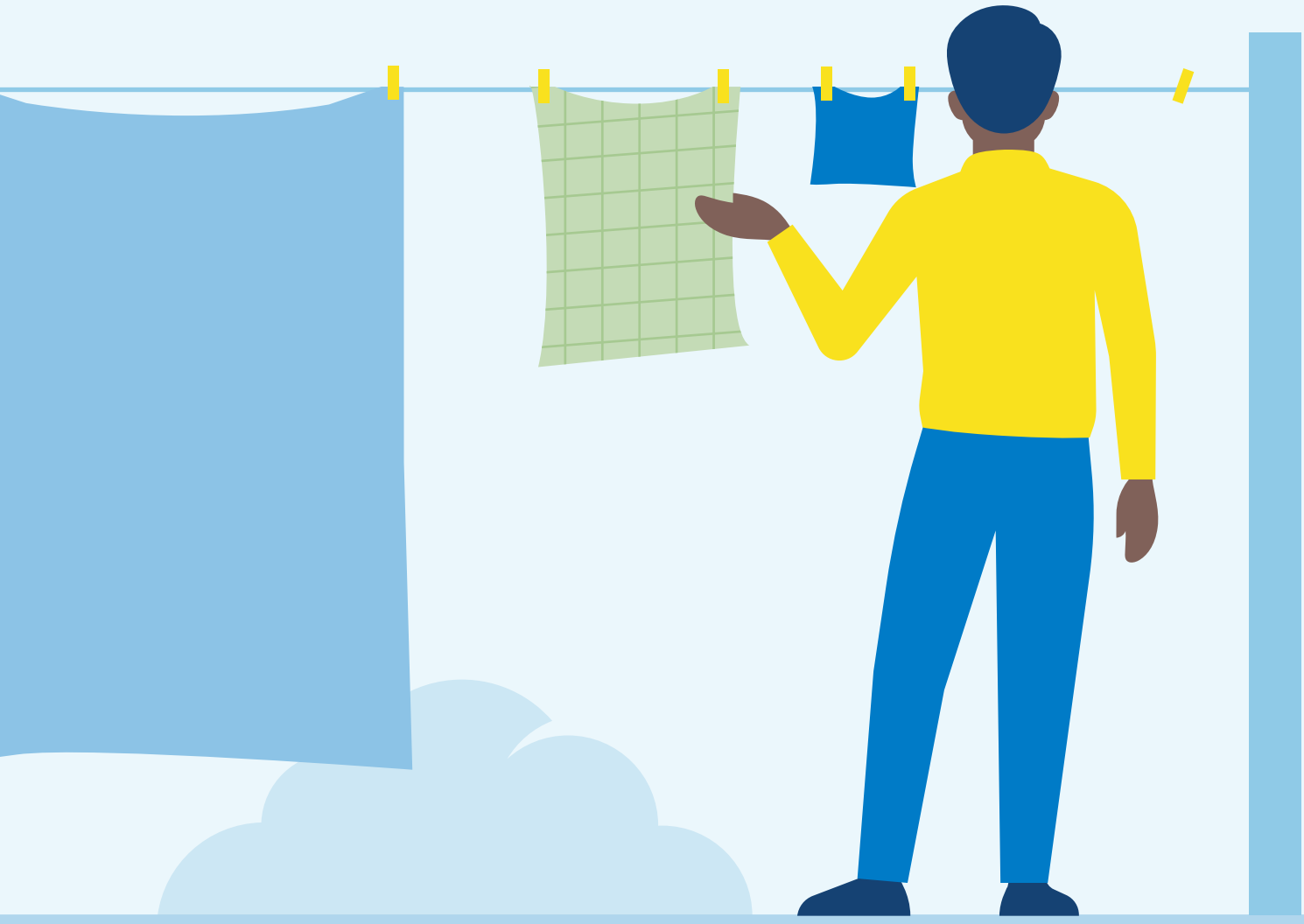
The implementation of new European regulation will transform the textile chain over the coming years. Sustainable, circular textile will become the norm. The introduction of the extended producer responsibility (EPR) will make textile producers that are active within the European market responsible for the products they bring to the market. This will reduce textile waste and increase demand for second-hand clothing and the use of recycled content by businesses, and promote circular choices from the design phase on. This will ensure optimal use of valuable raw materials and support the collection, sorting and recycling sector in the Netherlands.

Let's get to work

In order to make the necessary systemic changes in the textile chain a reality, the government is actively implementing the measures from the Policy Programme for Circular Textile 2025-2030. Cooperation with stakeholders in the value chain is extremely important in this context. This is why the progress and implementation of the policy are discussed with the sector four times a year at the Netwerkoverleg Circulair Textiel (Circular Textile Network Consultation) meetings. During these meetings, parties have the opportunity to bring up relevant developments and share their experiences. Progress towards the goals is monitored on an annual basis and reported to the Parliament.

3 Parliamentary papers II 2022/23, 32 852, no. 225

1 Introduction



Textiles[4] are an important part of our daily lives. The clothes and shoes you wear, the sheets on your bed, and tea towels to dry the dishes are just a few examples. Clothing is especially important to many people. Clothes are a way to express your individuality or your creativity. Every year we produce, buy and discard more clothes and shoes than the year before. Almost 1 billion garments and 70 to 100 million pairs of shoes are brought to the market every year in the Netherlands. The average person in the Netherlands buys about 50 items of clothing and 4 to 6 pairs of shoes a year.[5] [6] Fashion trends come and go at a rapid pace, resulting in ever larger numbers of clothes being produced at ever-increasing rates. This has a major impact on people and the environment. About 4 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions worldwide are produced by the clothing and shoe industry.[7] The production process also places a huge demand on land and water use, and the use of chemicals and the release of microplastics leads to soil and water pollution. On top of that, clothes and shoes are not designed with circularity in mind, so they do not last long and they are difficult to reuse or recycle. The textile industry employs millions of people all over the world to make our clothes and shoes and to sort and process them at the end of their life. Working conditions, both in production and at the end of the value chain, are often poor and wages are low.

There are some good examples of Dutch entrepreneurs who have demonstrated that circular textile is feasible. The transition to a circular textile industry offers many opportunities for circular business models, such as repair, second-hand textiles and renting. Unfortunately, circular revenue models are not the norm yet in this sector, because circular choices often cannot compete with poor-quality clothing that is cheap and does not last. It is cheaper to buy new materials than recycled materials, for example. The cost of the negative impact on people and the environment is not reflected in current prices. Time and again, people give in to the lure of new clothes. The enormous growth in e-commerce sales via suppliers outside of Europe is a major contributing factor. This trend also makes it difficult for Dutch (online) retailers to compete with this rapidly growing group of suppliers.

The current states of affairs in the textile sector

The Textile Mass Balance report provides insight into the collection and processing of discarded textiles in the Netherlands in 2022.[8] In 2022, Dutch households threw away 215 million kilos of textiles (including shoes). This is 30 percent less than they discarded in 2018. There are several possible explanations for this decrease, such as the Covid pandemic and the sale of clothes via second-hand channels like Vinted and Marktplaats.

Almost half of the textiles discarded in 2022 (106.5 million kilos) ended up in residual waste and was incinerated. 108.5 million kilos (50.5 percent) was collected separately. Of the separately collected textiles, 54.2 percent was suitable for reuse, 29.2 percent for recycling, 8.3 percent for further sorting for export and 8.3 percent was incinerated after sorting.

The Ministry of IenW has been monitoring progress in the textile policy on an annual basis.[9] Figure 2 shows the main trend for the period from 2018 to 2022. We note the following developments. Although the use of sustainable and recycled materials increased, they are still not used enough. It is becoming more common for consumers to buy second-hand clothing instead of new. The same cannot be said for the recycling of discarded textiles. Monitoring reveals that textile recycling has almost disappeared compared to 2022; only 2 percent of discarded textiles was recycled. This is consistent with reports from the sector that recycling companies are not doing well. Fibre-to-fibre recycling is still a rarity as well. The technology for fibre-to-fibre recycling is there, but it is not being scaled up because there is not enough demand for the recycled content. A large percentage of the collected textiles is exported instead of being reused or recycled in the Netherlands, and it eventually ends up in landfills in the destination countries.[10] The Covid years saw a decrease in the consumption of textiles and therefore in the environmental impact of the sector. In 2022, consumption returned to 2018 levels. Relatively fewer textile products end up in residual waste, more textiles are collected separately and more consumers buy and sell used clothes. Even so, almost half of all textiles and 75 percent of all shoes end up in residual waste.

4 In this policy programme, "textiles" is a collective term which refers to different types of clothing, shoes and household textiles. The definition of "textiles" includes the products described in Annex IVc of the Waste Framework Directive (WFD) and in Customs Codes 4303 (fur) and 4304 (imitation fur). The WFD covers: consumer clothing, work clothing, household textiles (such as sheets and towels) and shoes.

5 Factsheet milieu-impact kleding – schade door kledingproductie uitgeplozen [Fact sheet on the environmental impact of clothing – analysis of damage caused by clothing production], January 2022, Milieu Centraal, link

6 Verkenning Schoenenketen [Exploration of the Shoe Chain] – Rebel, August 2023 - link

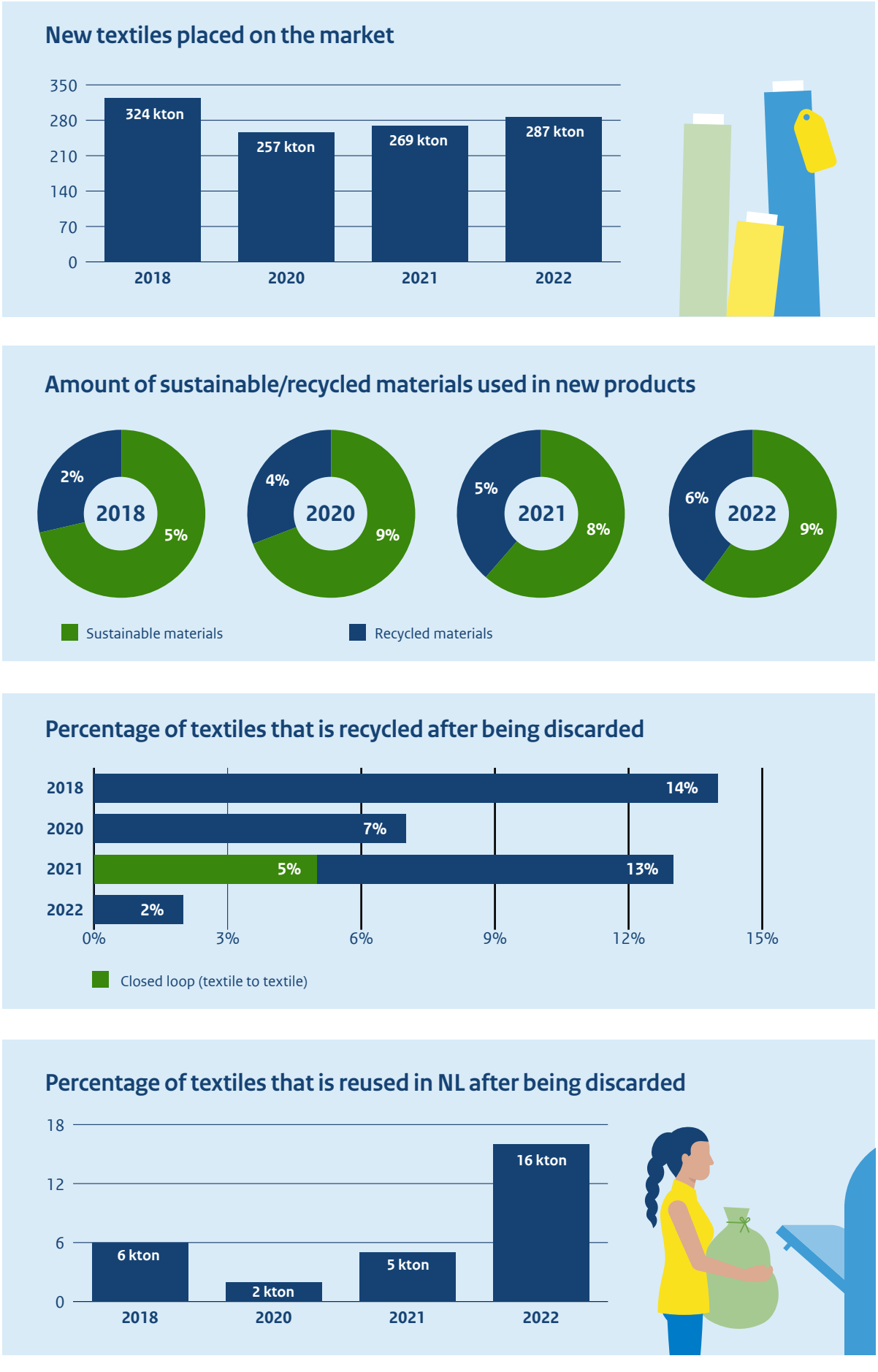
7 Fashion on climate – McKinsey & Company, 2020 - link

8 Research on the mass balance of textiles discarded in the Netherlands and the processing route and results – Ffact, October 2024

9 Parliamentary papers II 2023/24, 32 852, no. 314

10 Gebruikt textiel uit Nederland: bestemmingen, gebruik en risico's [Used textiles in the Netherlands: destinations, use and risks] - Circle Economy, 2023 - link

Figure 2. Trends from textile policy monitoring



1.1 Vision for a circular textile chain by 2050

What will a circular textile industry look like in 2050? Circular business models will be the norm, with sustainable textile production and high-grade processing for long-term use. Clothes and shoes will no longer be used as disposable products, but as valuable items that are taken care of, repaired when necessary and discarded only once they are truly worn or beyond repair. People will buy fewer clothes and use what they have as long as possible. This will be easy to do, because second-hand textiles, rental clothes, clothing libraries, thrift stores and repair shops will be common by that time. Textiles will be of good quality and made with circularity in mind so they last a long time and can be repaired and eventually recycled.

The repair sector will flourish because people will bring in their clothes for mending. Textiles in (online) stores will be made of sustainable materials that are free from hazardous substances. The materials will be fossil-free, sustainable, bio-based or recycled, and made with as few raw materials as possible. At the end of their lifespan, the textiles will be collected separately from other waste and the materials will be reused in new products, so there will hardly be any textile waste at all. People will be able to drop off their old textiles at various locations, such as (thrift) stores, local initiatives or textile collection bins on the street. Some of the collected textiles will be reused and recycled in the Netherlands and in Europe. Textiles that are sent to other countries are properly sorted first, and exported under strict conditions to places that actually have a need for second-hand or recycled textiles. Working conditions will be acceptable in every part of the entire textile chain, workers will earn a living wage, pollution during the production process is minimised, and businesses will be transparent about their production process and the impact of the textile product.

Opportunities and policies for the next few years

A circular textile industry will create a lot of opportunities for the Netherlands, such as increased employment, research and innovation, and less dependence on new raw materials. Textile repair, reuse and resale, in particular, are potential sources of new jobs.[11] Recycling companies are significant contributors to the reuse of textiles and the creation of job opportunities.[12] In addition, there are several textile regions in the Netherlands where they are working on projects and innovations to strengthen the local circular textile industry. The Dutch Circular Textile Valley (DCTV)[13] is responsible for interregional coordination to connect the right initiatives with each other and to facilitate the scaling up of innovations. We have made great strides in our textile policy over the past few years, and we're on our way to a circular textile industry. The European textile strategy has been adopted, the extended producer responsibility (EPR) has been implemented for textiles, the Denim Deal has been implemented and campaigns have been held to promote sustainable behaviours. Nevertheless, it is clear that more is needed.

The textile chain is an international chain which transcends national borders. The government continues to advocate for ambitious circular textile policies in Europe and it's placing circular textiles on the international agenda as well. During the next few years, European legislation will be implemented that will make a real difference, such as sustainable design requirements for textiles. The government is also focusing on accelerating the national transition to circular textiles. Circular textile must become a logical, fair choice for producers as well as consumers. This is why we are working to reduce (price) incentives that encourage overproduction and overconsumption. Other important points for attention are the promotion of lifespan extension through circular design, consumer behaviour, repair and reuse, and the promotion of sustainable materials such as recycled and bio-based materials. As one of the ten largest exporters of used clothes, the Netherlands plays an important part in preventing a situation where textiles that are discarded here end up in a landfill somewhere else. This is why the policy programme addresses the export of textiles as well.

11 Putting circular textiles to work: the employment potential of circular clothing in The Netherlands – Circle Economy, 2021 - link
12 Monitor Kringloop Nederland [Netherlands Circular Economy Monitor] 2023 – BKN, 2024 - link
13 Ketendoorbraakproject 4: Circulair textiel (versnellingshuisce.nl)

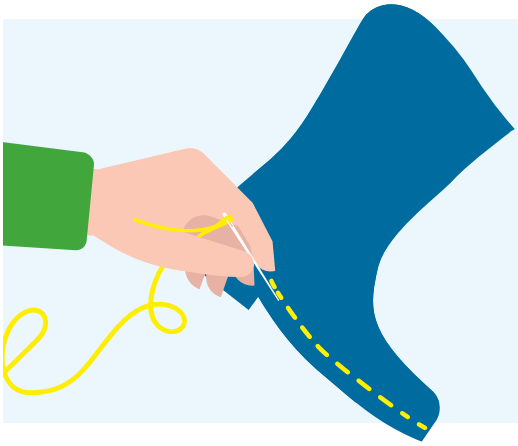
Figure 3. Circular behaviours

Reduction of raw materials

- Buying neither new nor second-hand clothing
- Not buying a lot of clothes (fewer than 5 new pieces of clothing per year)
- Postponing the purchase of a piece of clothing by making the current product last longer
- Borrowing clothes from other people
- Renting (out) clothes (for special occasions)

Substitution of raw materials

- Paying attention to recycled materials and/or sustainable materials when buying clothes

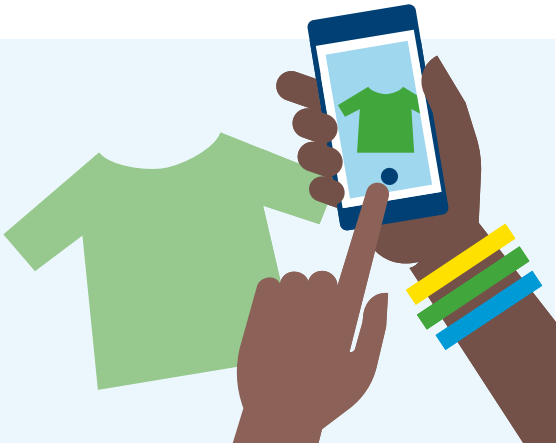


Lifespan extension

- Buying second-hand clothes instead of new
- Buying clothes that last longer
- Taking good care of clothes
- Washing clothing less often
- Washing clothes at colder temperatures, using less detergent
- Mending clothes yourself, altering or updating old clothes
- Taking clothes in to be repaired
- Using clothes for other purposes

High-grade processing

- Passing clothes on to friends/family or exchanging clothes with them
- Selling clothes
- Donating or selling clothes to a thrift store or second-hand clothing store
- Returning clothes to the retailer/seller/store
- Donating clothes to a municipal textile donation bin for reuse or recycling



Addressing consumer behaviour is essential

Behavioural and lifestyle changes on the part of the public could reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 40 to 70 percent.[14] About 5 percent of the climate impact of consumers in the Netherlands is caused by the use and discarding of clothes.[15] Figure 3 shows the concrete effects of circular behaviour. We see that the consumption behaviour of the public is influenced by the actions of the private sector and the government.[16] Structural sustainability in the textile chain will require systemic changes, and all parties will have to play their part. People are unwilling to embrace sustainability, but there are not given incentives to adopt sustainable behaviours.[17] This is why the government focuses not only on the role of the consumer in this policy programme, but also on the role of the private sector and the government in developing a circular textile chain.[18] This is in line with the Behavioural Strategy for Citizens and the Circular Economy of the NPCE.[19]

Companies determine the consumption environment of the public through the products they offer. Lack of transparency makes it difficult for people to make well-informed, sustainable choices. The companies themselves are also trapped in an extremely competitive international market where price is often the deciding factor.[20] Governments can promote circular behaviour on the part of the public through standardisation, stimulation and price regulation. This will promote sustainability in the sector. As a result, the physical, social and economic environment of the public will be set up to discourage less sustainable choices and to make circular options a more convenient and logical choice.[21]

Every objective in the Policy Programme for Circular Textile 2025-2030 is related to measures with a behavioural component. This is why the Ministry makes sure that behaviour is a standard component in any new textile policies.

1.2 Circular objectives for textiles

Our ambition is to have a circular textile chain by 2050. To that end we have set objectives for the coming years. These objectives were formulated on the basis of the vision outlined above and the most recent data from the annual monitor and other sources. The goals of the previous policy programme were refined and supplemented with objectives for the four circular strategies from the NPCE. [22] The objectives and progress of the policy programme will be monitored annually and presented in progress reports.[23] Data on repairs are requested as part of the monitoring as well, so we can set an objective for repairs in 2027 on the basis of 2025 data. The Parliament will be informed annually about the progress. The objectives express our ambitions on the basis of the four circular strategies.

The first circular strategy aims for **the reduction of the use of (primary) raw materials** by reducing the production and consumption of textiles. Purchasing less textiles will reduce the impact of fibre production, textile production processes and textile waste processing. Less textiles is the most effective strategy: textile that does not need to be produced yields one-on-one environmental gains. We currently buy an average of 50 garments per year in the Netherlands. The goal is to buy an average of 35 (higher-quality, longer-lasting) garments per person per year by 2030.

Substitution is about replacing non-sustainable materials with more sustainable materials with a lower environmental impact. Ultimately all materials have an impact on the environment, but there are differences in degree. Examples of sustainable materials are bio-based materials such as flax, hemp and fibre-to-fibre recycled content.

Extension of product lifespan is another effective strategy for reducing environmental impact. If people hold on to their clothes longer, buy second-hand or have their clothes mended, they are less likely to buy new textiles. Ultimately it's always better to buy fewer clothes. However, if you have to buy clothes, it's better to buy them second-hand. There are no concrete objectives for repair at this time, because we don't have

14 Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – IPCC, 2023 - link
15 Milieudruk consumptie domeinen wonen en vrije tijd [Consumption burden, housing and recreation domains] - Milieu Centraal, 2022 - link
16 Anders consumeren om klimaatdoelen te halen [Consuming differently to achieve climate objectives] – TNO, 2023 - link
17 Monitor Duurzaam Leven [Sustainable Living Monitor] 2023 – Milieu Centraal, 2023 – link
18 *Fast Fashion Onderzoek*: vermindering van de negatieve impact [Fast Fashion Research: reducing the negative impact] – *KplusV, 2020* - WW
19 Gedragsstrategie burgers en circulaire economie [Behavioural strategies for the public and a circular economy] – IenW, 2023 – link
20 *Fast Fashion Onderzoek*: vermindering van de negatieve impact – KplusV, 2020 - link
21 Gedragsstrategie burgers en circulaire economie – IenW, 2023 – link
22 See the policy programme for circular textile 2020-2025 (Parliamentary Papers II 2019/20, 32 852, no. 116) and progress report 2021 (Parliamentary Papers II 2020/21, 32 852, no.156) in which the objectives for reuse have been added.
23 The objectives of the previous policy programme for circular textile 2020-2025 will be monitored until at least 2027.

any useful data yet on the percentage of textiles that is repaired annually.

High-grade processing is the last (but very necessary) step towards circular textile, as every product will eventually reach the end of its lifespan. The materials can then be reused. Of all the textile recycling methods, fibre-to-fibre recycling, i.e. turning old textiles into new textiles, yields the most environmental gain.[24] The longer people keep wearing their clothes, and the more we reuse and recycle, the fewer primary raw materials are needed.[25]

Table 1. Policy objectives

2030	
Reduction of raw materials The average number of newly purchased garments per person per year will go down to 35.	**Lifespan extension** The percentage of second-hand textile products in relation to the number of newly purchased products will be at least 25 percent (including purchases on online platforms). The number of repaired textile products will go up.[27]
Substitution All textile products that are sold on the Dutch market will be made of at least 50 percent sustainable materials[26], of which at least 15 percent will be post-consumer fibre-to-fibre recycled content.	**High-grade processing** The amount of textile waste in kg/per person/per year will go down to 10 kilos.
2035	
Reduction of raw materials The average number of newly purchased garments per person per year will go down to 25.	**Lifespan extension** The percentage of second-hand textile products in relation to the number of newly purchased products will be at least 30 percent (including purchases on online platforms). The number of repaired textile products will go up.
Substitution All textile products that are sold on the Dutch market will be made of at least 70 percent sustainable materials, of which at least 20 percent will be post-consumer fibre-to-fibre recycled materials.[28]	**High-grade processing** The amount of textile waste in kg/per person/per year will go down to 8 kilos.
2050	
A completely circular economy: a safe, transparent and responsible circular textile chain for humans, animals and the environment. All textiles will be made of fossil-free, sustainable, bio-based and/or recycled materials.	

24 See for example: SGS Search Consultancy (2024), mLCA Verwerkingsalternatieven textiel [Processing Alternatives for Textile] - link

25 Tool "verkenning van duurzaamheidsbeleid voor de textielketen [Exploration of sustainability policies for the textile chain]" – CE Delft, 2024 – link

26 The definition of sustainable materials is continually subject to new insights, innovations and market developments. Sustainable materials have a lower environmental impact than standard materials and make it possible to create a circular economy. The focus in this context is on recycled, bio-based and other materials with a lower impact on the environment. This is based on the following indicators: climate, water, land, chemicals, microplastics and circularity. CE Delft used these indicators to develop a tool to learn more about the impact of the different materials and other segments of the textile chain. This tool helps the Ministry of IenW to make well-informed policy choices.

27 A specific objective may be added in 2027 on the basis of the monitoring in 2025. The Ministry keeps track of the number of repair providers as well as the revenue in the clothing and shoe sectors as part of this monitoring.

28 This objective concerns the use of fibre-to-fibre recycled content in new products. The EPR for textiles includes an objective for the recycling of discarded textiles. These are two different objectives, because one concerns the front end of the chain, while the other concerns the back end. They don't necessarily have to be the same, because discarded textiles do not necessarily weigh the same after they have been recycled. Furthermore, recycled materials from the Netherlands do not necessarily end up as recycled content used in new products on the Dutch market.

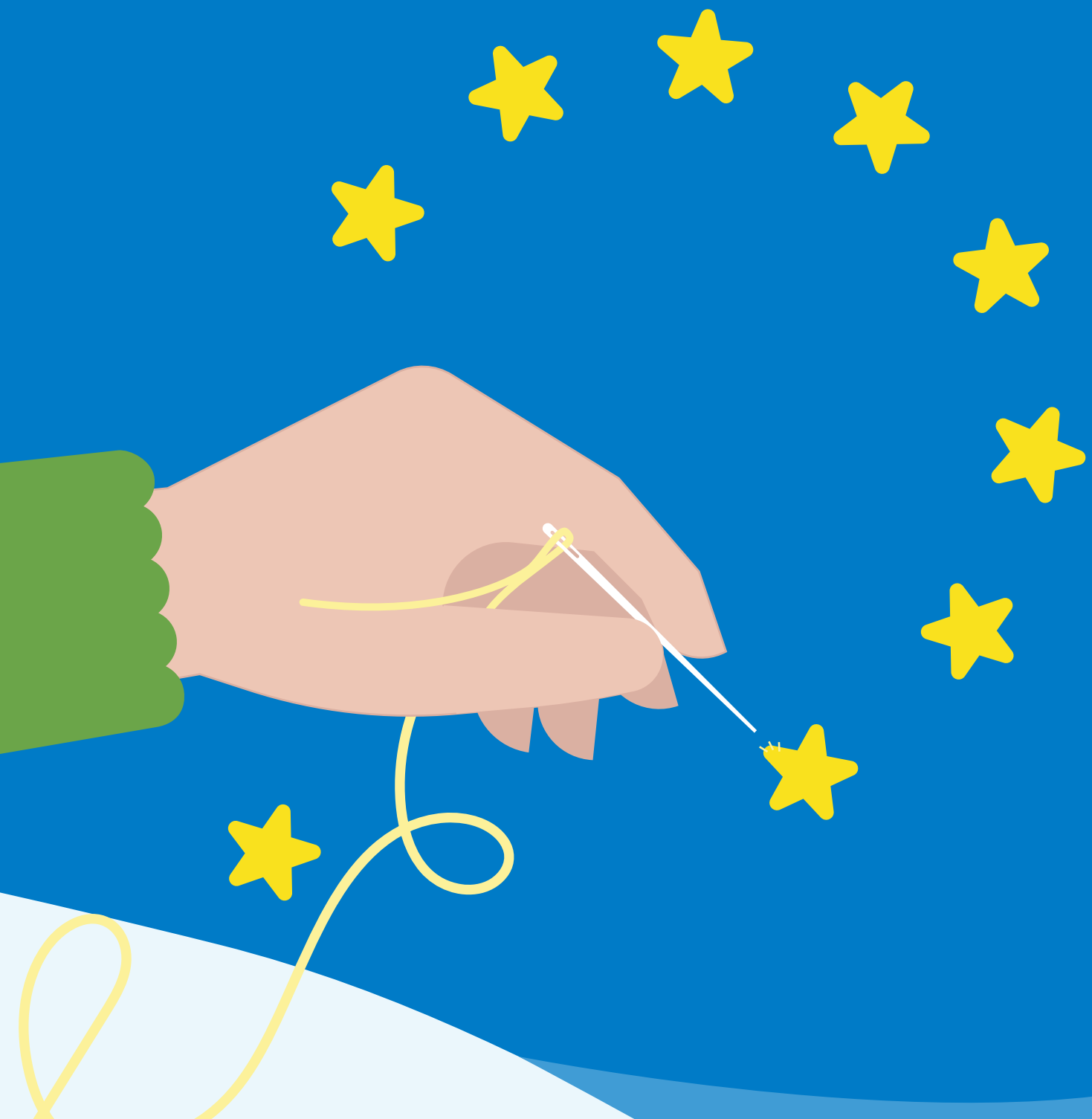
In addition to the policy programme objectives, Table 2 shows the objectives that fall under the extended producer responsibility (EPR) for textiles. This means that textile producers are responsible for meeting these statutory objectives. This is why they are listed separately from the general objectives of the policy programme. The EPR for textiles went into effect on 1 July 2023.[29] Starting in 2026, producers will have to report on the objectives.

Table 2. Objectives for collection, reuse and recycling (EPR)

2025	
	50 percent of textile products sold on the market will be prepared for reuse or recycled. At least 20 percent of textile products sold on the market will be prepared for reuse. At least 10 percent of textile products sold on the market will be destined for reuse in the Netherlands. 25 percent of the recycled products will be processed with fibre-to-fibre recycling.
2030	
	75 percent of textiles sold on the market will be prepared for reuse or recycled. At least 25 percent of textile products sold on the market will be prepared for reuse. At least 15 percent of textile products sold on the market will be destined for reuse in the Netherlands. 33 percent of the recycled products will be processed with fibre-to-fibre recycling.

29 Government Gazette 2023, 132 | Overheid.nl > Official announcements (officielebekendmakingen.nl)

2 European and international context



2.1 European developments

The textile chain is an international chain, so cooperation with other countries is essential. We are also affected by the European internal market. This means that a lot of the legislation has to be passed at the European level. Moreover, measures are more effective when they apply to the European market as a whole. The European Textile Strategy, which contains various textile measures, was published in March 2022.[30] Thanks in part to Dutch efforts, we have achieved some excellent results, such as a prohibition on the destruction of unsold textiles and shoes. During the next few years we will see legislation at the European level that will go a long way to making the textile sector more sustainable. Table 3 presents an overview of (upcoming) European textile regulations.

Table 3. Future European textile legislation

Legislation	Schedule
Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) – circular design requirements for textiles. Mandatory provision of information about circularity and other product characteristics by means of a mandatory digital product passport. Prohibition on the destruction of unsold and returned clothing and textiles. Possibility of imposing mandatory minimum purchase requirements.	The ESPR went into effect on 18 July 2024. The prohibition on the destruction of unsold clothing, clothing accessories and shoes will take effect on 18 July 2026. The European Commission will begin developing specific design requirements for textiles in 2025. The requirements will not take effect until 2028.
Directive on common rules promoting the repair of goods – to promote repairs during the warranty period and facilitate repairs outside the warranty period.	The Directive must be transposed into national legislation by 27 March 2026 at the latest. The requirements will take effect on 27 September 2026.
Green Claims Directive – to combat misleading and poorly substantiated environmental claims by imposing requirements on the substantiation and communication of such claims.	The expected effective date depends on the completion of the European negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council. The requirements will not take effect until mid-2026.
Revision of the EU regulation on labelling and fibre composition of textile products – the revision will look at possibilities for a digital label and the inclusion of information requirements regarding sustainability and circularity.	The revision has started in the end of 2024.
Revision of the Waste Framework Directive (WFD) – mandatory implementation of EPR for textiles, separate collection of textiles, and regulations governing the export of textiles.	Expected to take effect in 2025.
European Waste Shipment Regulation (WSR) – regulations and procedures for waste transport beyond national borders.	Went into effect on 20 may 2024. More stringent export regulations will take effect on 21 may 2027.
End of Waste Criteria – criteria that determine when (textile) waste is no longer considered waste and can be reused or recycled.	Criteria proposals are expected by early 2026.
Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) – requires large companies to report on the social impact and environmental risks associated with their activities.	Went into effect on 25 July 2024. The CSDDD will be transposed into Dutch law and will take effect incrementally starting on 26 July 2027.
Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules (PEFCR) – A generally accepted and validated way to determine the environmental impact of a textile product or organisation, which may be used to support (EU) policies, circular procurement and unambiguous communication for consumers.	The final version is expected in 2025.
Potential abolition of the threshold for exemption from customs duties – proposal to do away with the customs threshold of €150 for the sale of goods from outside the EU.	The European Commission published a proposal in May 2023. The final announcement by the European Commission on e-commerce was delayed in Q3 of 2024.

30 COM 2022 (141), BNC [Assessment of New Commission Proposals] record: Parliamentary Papers II 2021/22, 22 112, no. 3423

2.2 International developments

The purpose of international cooperation is 1) to aim for reduced, sustainable use of textiles and longer lifespans with minimal impact on humans and the environment, 2) to boost the international earnings potential of circular businesses and to give them access to international markets and platforms, and 3) to place circular textiles on the agenda of international institutes, platforms and financial institutions.

The earnings potential of circular businesses in the textile sector can be increased by connecting them with the right international parties such as other authorities or financiers. Here in the Netherlands we can involve other government authorities and the private sector in the textile industry to share knowledge and experience in the area of circular textile policy. Cooperation with government authorities and businesses in the international value chain is important if we are going to make the circular economy a reality. Various organisations at the international level are working on the sustainability of the textile chain. The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) has started the One UNEP Fashion Textile Initiative. Parties within the textile sector are working together on a fair, sustainable textile chain transition through different projects and studies. The World Economic Forum (WEF) is working on the concept of "circular apparel", and circular textiles have been a high-priority item on the agenda of the annual World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) in recent years. The Netherlands involves itself in textile-related international initiatives on a regular basis, for example by contributing to studies, attending international meetings, placing items on the agenda that are important to the Netherlands and getting buy-in from other countries.

3 Measures for the reduction of raw materials

This chapter discusses measures that are designed to reduce the use of raw materials. The measures pertain to three aspects: reducing incentives that encourage people to keep buying clothes; promoting sustainable choices on the part of consumers, and limiting the production and import of textiles. Since measures aimed at reducing textile production are still a relatively new phenomenon, research is needed before these measures can be developed further.

Table 4. Overview of measures for the reduction of raw materials

Measure	Standard-setting	Pricing	Stimulus	Year
Development of promising price incentives for circular textiles		✓		2025
Research on the behavioural effects of measures designed to reduce purchase incentives	✓			2025
Research on measures to reduce returns	✓	✓		2025
Consumer behaviour campaign (by Milieu Centraal)			✓	2025
Development of European textile product passport (within the framework of the ESPR)	✓			2025/26
Development of a European sustainability label for textiles within the framework of the ESPR and the Textile Labelling Regulation	✓		✓	2025
Follow-up on research on possible production and import quotas	✓			2025

Even if every single garment is collected, reused and recycled, the footprint of the clothing sector will continue to grow, requiring more and more raw materials to produce ever more clothes. Research shows that if we do not perform other actions, like better clothing maintenance or buying second-hand clothes, we will only be able to buy a maximum of five new articles of clothing per person per year to remain below 1.5 degrees of global warming.[31] The reduction of raw material usage is therefore essential for the creation of a circular textile chain, but this is not an easy task: producers as well as consumers must change their behaviour. It's a complicated issue. Buying less may feel like an imposition to people, a loss of their freedom to buy nice new clothes.[32] At the same time, research shows that 66 percent of the Dutch population is open to buying fewer clothes and that 43 percent would consider it a (very) positive development if the government took measures to achieve this goal.[33] Producing less interferes with the revenue model of (linear) companies, but it could also be an opportunity to switch to new revenue models. Moreover, reduced consumption of imported clothes and increased renting, resale and repair have the potential for more job opportunities in the Dutch clothing industry.[34]

3.1 Reducing incentives that promote consumption

People experience various incentives to keep buying new clothes. This is why the Ministry is proposing measures to reduce these incentives or stimuli. This could be price, or other incentives like advertising and sales. The large number of returns needs to be addressed as well.

Price incentives

The low price of textile products in general and clothing in particular is a significant incentive for buying new clothes, so measures that increase prices might be effective. Fiscal measures, including lowering VAT on second-hand textiles and repairs, are frequently mentioned by parties from within the sector. The government has indicated on previous occasions that lowering VAT rates for second-hand clothing would

31 Unfashionable – resizing Fashion for a Fair Consumption Space, Hot or Cool, 2012 - link
32 Parliamentary papers II 2023/24, 32 813, no. 1309
33 Input on circular textile policy: what will encourage people to buy fewer clothes? Motivaction, 2023 - link
34 Putting circular textiles to work – the employment potential of circular clothing in The Netherlands – Circle Economy, May 2021 - link

not be effective, according to the 2023 evaluation. Reduced VAT rates for repairs have already been implemented.

In 2024, the Ministry initiated a study to find out which price incentives might be effective to reduce the demand for linear textile products or increase the demand for circular textile products. This study explores several tax and pricing measures at both a national and European level. The two national measures that are being explored are rate differentiation (eco-modulation) within the framework of the textiles EPR and a minimum price for textiles. A European measure that is being explored is a higher import tariff on imported, non-sustainable textiles. Based on the results, the Ministry will identify the most promising measures for further development.

Influence of incentives on consumer behaviour

Consumer behaviour is not just determined by the price of clothes; other incentives contribute to high consumption levels as well. Examples of incentives are (embedded) advertising, influencers (on social media), sales, weekly new collections and trends, and sales techniques that create a (false) sense of scarcity (e.g. limited editions and timers on web pages). The Ministry of IenW is exploring the effect of different measures on consumer behaviour, such as a prohibition on (fossil) advertisements, limiting sales and a maximum number of clothing collections per year. Based on the results of the study, the Ministry will identify the most promising measures for further development.

Reducing the number of returns

The European Environment Agency (EEA) estimates that the average return rate for clothing purchased online is 20 percent – one in five garments that are purchased online is returned.[35] The return rate for products sold online is up to three times higher than the return rate for products that are sold in physical stores. With a return rate of 25 percent, and occasional spikes of 40 to 50 percent, the Netherlands is one of the countries with the most clothing returns in Europe.[36,37] The high return rate is a disadvantage for the businesses themselves as well, due in part to the processing costs they have to pay for each returned article.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and IenW have jointly commissioned a study on the potential environmental gains of reducing the number of returns. As agreed with the Parliament in 2024, this study will also look at the effects of potentially imposing return costs.

3.2 Helping consumers in making sustainable choices

Besides the reduction of incentives that tempt consumers to buy things, we also need measures to help people make sustainable choices, because many people are willing to make sustainable choices but they could use some help.

Consumer behaviour campaign

In 2024, Milieu Centraal successfully conducted the "Mijn Stijl iD" [My Style ID] training in combination with a behaviour campaign. Preliminary research showed that most clothes are bought by young women between the ages of 27 and 37. These women are also willing and motivated to modify their behaviour. This is why young women are the target group for this training. The training is based on the idea that participants will buy fewer clothes as they develop a style of their own that fits their personal values and identity. More than 9200 women registered for the training in 2024. The campaign received a lot of media attention and was shared frequently online. This resulted in 82,000 website visits. Milieu Centraal will also receive a subsidy in 2025 to conduct the "Mijn Stijl iD" training with the accompanying campaign.

Clear, reliable information

It's difficult for people to make sustainable choices, in part because it is not always clear which choice is the sustainable one. Clear, reliable information about the sustainability of textiles will help producers and consumers to make better choices. It will also make it easier for parties in the textile chain to share information. This is why Europe is introducing regulations to increase transparency in the textile chain, such as the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Green Claims Directive. Digital product passports will contribute to transparency in the chain as well.

A product passport for textiles is being developed within the framework of the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR). These digital product passports will provide all parties in the chain with detailed information about a textile product. For example, a product passport could include what the product is made of and how it can be recycled and repaired. The product passport also provides insight into the production chain of a textile product. The Netherlands supports the plans of the European Commission to impose ambitious requirements on

35 The destruction of returned and unsold textiles in Europe's circular economy – EEA, 2024 - link
36 Volumes and destruction of returned and unsold textiles in Europe's circular economy – EEA/ETC CE, 2024 - link
37 How many packages are returned? - Thuiswinkel.org 2023 - link

the information that should be included in the digital product passports. An important point for attention is that the information in product passports must be accurate and that the information will also be checked and verified.

The Netherlands is advocating for a single mandatory sustainability label for textiles in Europe, to ensure that the information about the sustainability of a product is reliable, understandable, and uniform.

The current laws on textile labelling require textile products to have a label with washing instructions and information about the composition of the material. The European Commission will determine whether this can be expanded to include information about sustainability and circularity and whether the label should also be provided in digital format. In 2024, the Ministry initiated a study on the best design for a sustainability label and what we can learn from existing labels for other products. The Netherlands will present the results of this study at the European level during the revision of future legislation for labels and information requirements.

3.3 Limiting the production and import of textiles

It's a challenge for people to buy less textiles when so much affordable new textile is entering the market. A prohibition on the destruction of unused textiles will be introduced at the European level. This is a step in the right direction, but it does not force producers to produce less textiles. One of the suggestions from the participation process for this new policy programme was a production ceiling: a maximum amount producers would be allowed to bring to the market.

Import quotas have been used in the past in the Netherlands to control textile imports from developing countries.[38] The EU also used quotas for textile import in the past, with exemptions for developing countries like Bangladesh. Since the abolition of these import quotas in 2005, about 70 percent of textiles sold in the EU are imported from outside the EU.[39] Clothes that are imported from outside the EU are still subject to import tariffs, but these tariffs are low, between 0 and 12 percent.[40] It was thought for a long time that production was determined by demand, specifically the demand for new garments to replace old ones. This study shows that that is not true. Production volume is determined by the growth objectives of companies, and demand is controlled by these companies through tactics such as the rapid succession of collections.[41] In other words, it is a production-driven system. As a result, textile consumption continues to grow, even though most people in the Netherlands have more than enough clothes in their closets.[42] So it makes sense to explore production quotas as a possible solution. The Ministry has commissioned an exploration of production quotas, taking into account import, economic effectiveness, legal aspects and the impact on the Global South. The exploration will also look at ways to limit textile production and import volumes through stricter quality requirements. The study will explore possible options at the national and European levels. The sector will be involved in the process. The Ministry will inform the Parliament about the study results in the first half of 2025.

38 Textiles Monitoring Body (TMB): The Agreement on Textiles and Clothing - WTO – link
39 Data on the EU Textile Ecosystem and its Competitiveness - European Commission, 2021 - link
40 https://www.overdedouane.nl/onderwerpen/douanerechten
41 Taking sustainability to the next level: how and why to reduce production and consumption levels in the clothing sector - I. Maldini 2023 – link
42 Measuring the Dutch clothing mountain - Hogeschool van Amsterdam 2017 – link

4 Measures for the substitution of raw materials

The goal of substituting raw materials is to have textiles made of sustainable and recycled materials with a smaller ecological footprint than regular materials. With regard to microplastics, we are studying the issue and we are working on European production requirements to limit pollution caused by microplastics. We are also addressing the issue of hazardous chemicals to ensure that textiles are made of safe materials.

Table 5. Overview of measures for the substitution of raw materials.

Measure	Standard-setting	Pricing	Stimulus	Year
Development of ESPR for textiles (including a mandatory percentage of recycled content and requirements for microplastics)	✓			2025/26
Mapping out solutions for obstacles to recycling through discussions and follow-up research			✓	2025
Research on opportunities for bio-based materials	✓		✓	2025
Research on animal welfare risks associated with textile products	✓		✓	2025
Research on revising the ESPR for washing machines	✓			2025
Research on chemicals that interfere with recycling	✓		✓	2025

4.1 Sustainable and recycled materials

The use of recycled materials is preferable to the use of virgin materials in the production of new textiles. This will reduce the use of raw materials and the environmental impact of textile production. However, it is not possible (yet) to use 100 percent recycled content. This is why there will always be a demand for new materials in a circular economy. In a circular economy, this (small) percentage of new materials will be fossil-free and bio-based. These could be natural bio-based materials such as sustainably grown cotton, linen, hemp or wool, but synthetic bio-based textile materials are being developed as well. The textile materials that are currently being used have advantages and disadvantages. Natural materials require a lot of land and often a lot of water as well, but they are not based on raw fossil materials. Synthetic materials produce microplastics while they are used and after they are discarded, but they require less land and often last longer. So a guiding principle for the use of materials in the textile sector is to use recycled content as much as possible, supplemented (if new materials are needed) by bio-based materials.

Use more recycled materials

Research and discussions with parties from the textile sector have led to the conclusion that 5 percent post-consumer recycled content[43] should be the minimum for all textile products.[44,45] A lower percentage would have a limited effect on the environment and the costs would outweigh the benefits. The Denim Deal (a Green Deal in which parties work together to use recycled content in denim products) revealed that it would actually be possible to use a higher percentage of post-consumer recycled content for certain garments, like jeans, without affecting the quality of new garments. In order to accelerate the use of recycled content, the Netherlands is calling at the European level for an ambitious, mandatory recycled content percentage in the ESPR.

In 2024 the Ministry commissioned a study on the maximum amount of recycled content that can be used in new textiles.[46] The study presents three scenarios, and it specifies for each of these how much material in textiles on the Dutch market could be replaced with fibre-to-fibre recycled content from Dutch textiles. The percentages range from 15 percent (in the conservative scenario) to 46 percent (in the optimistic

43 Post-consumer recycled content consists of recycled textile fibres from discarded, recycled textiles.
44 Studies within the framework of the textile EPR - Rebel, 2023 - link
45 Performance requirements for textiles. Input on EU sustainable design criteria for textiles – Tauw, 2023 - link
46 Potentially available recycled content from post-consumer textile – CE Delft, 2024

scenario). The percentage for the basic scenario is 19 percent.

The maximum amount of recycled content that can be used depends on different factors. First of all, it depends on the amount of reusable textile. The more textiles are available for reuse, the less there are for recycling. There are also a number of other factors that make recycling more difficult, such as nonremovable interfering elements (glitter, sequins, heavy coatings) and removable elements such as buttons and zippers. Furthermore, 45 percent of textiles in residual household waste is no longer fit for reuse or recycling because it is too soiled, for example. This is why the Ministry will explore potential solutions for these interfering factors. Follow-up research is needed as well to gain insight into the effects of a mandatory recycled content percentage. The results of these studies will be shared with the European Commission, so they can be incorporated in the further development of the ESPR for textiles.

Promote bio-based alternatives

Although the bio-based textile market is still in its infancy, it has great market potential. To find out which bio-based alternatives would be suitable from a technical and economic perspective, the Ministry is investigating scale-up possibilities for promising bio-based materials. Based on the results of this study, the Ministry will determine how we can promote the use of bio-based materials through policies and legislation. We can also learn from other sectors. For example, the National Approach to Bio-Based Construction is developing bio-based chains to use primary and residual textile production flows in construction. We are exploring whether this might be a promising approach for the textile sector as well. And finally, the government has made various subsidies available for chain partnerships and pilots with bio-based materials.

Promote animal welfare

Various parties who participated in the internet consultation for this policy program raised concerns about risks to animal welfare in the textile sector. One of the suggestions was to stop using materials from wild animals, such as fur or kangaroo leather, or products that were obtained through methods that are not cruelty-free, such as down from live animals and angora wool. A guiding principle in the Netherlands is that animal welfare must be taken into account in the production of animal products.[47] Fur farms have been prohibited in the Netherlands since 8 January 2021. Angora wool, down from live animals and kangaroo leather are not produced in the Netherlands, as far as we know.

One option for limiting the use of products from wild animals or products that were obtained through methods that are not cruelty-free is to make it illegal to sell them. The Ministries of IenW and LVVN (Agriculture, Fisheries Food Security and Nature) are looking into the possibility of prohibiting the sale of fur, kangaroo leather, down from live animals and angora wool.[48] Furthermore, in order to gain a better understanding of animal welfare problems in the Netherlands, IenW and LVVN will commission a study to find out how many animal materials that pose a risk to animal welfare are used in clothing, shoes and accessories. Public opinion about animal welfare aspects in the context of textile, and how this affects decisions to buy these products, will be explored as well.

4.2 Microplastics

Microplastics are small plastic particles that end up in the environment (primarily) as a result of product wear and tear. Textiles are a major source of microplastics.[49] A lot of textiles are made of plastic (synthetic textiles), and wearing and washing textiles generates large amounts of microplastics.[50] For example, one laundry load of synthetic textiles releases thousands of microplastic fibres (a type of microplastics) into the wastewater system.[51,52]All parties who come into contact with synthetic textile fibres can take measures: from producers to consumers and from washing machine manufacturers to wastewater purification plants. Pollution by microplastics is a cross-border problem throughout the life cycle of textiles. The Netherlands is therefore calling for ambitious European legislation and regulations to reduce the presence of textile microplastics in the environment.

47 Pursuant to Article 2.3a of the Animals Act

48 Parliamentary Papers II 2022/23, 36 254, no. 16 – these materials are in response to a motion from member Van Esch about barring products from Dutch stores.

49 A review on microplastic emission from textile materials and its reduction techniques – A. Prince Periyasamy, Polymer Degradation and Stability, 2022 - link

50 Release of microplastic fibers from synthetic textiles during household washing – S. A. Akyildiz, environmental pollution, 2024 - link

51 Microplasticvezels uit kleding: achtergrondrapport mogelijke maatregelen [Microplastic fibres from clothing: background report on possible measures] – RIVM, 2019 – link

52 Release of synthetic microplastic plastic fibres from domestic washing machines: Effects of fabric type and washing conditions – I. E. Napper, Marine Pollution Bulletin, 2016 - link

During the development process for ESPR requirements, The Netherlands wants to work on various ways to reduce microplastic pollution. First of all, by making the pre-washing of textiles a mandatory component of the production process, so microplastics are filtered out and removed from the chain at an early stage. This is in line with the Dutch principle of tackling microplastics as close to the source as possible. The effectiveness of the requirement depends on the presence of a good method for removing microplastic fibres from washing water and the presence of filters at the production site.

During the ESPR development process, the Netherlands will also call for a mandatory cap on the loss of microplastic fibres. This would prevent microplastics from ending up in the environment at an early stage in the chain. Specification of a maximum amount of fibre loss requires a validated method for measuring the loss of microplastic fibres from textiles. At the request of the Ministry, the TNO (Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research) has developed a uniform method for measuring microplastic fibres in water. Fibre loss requirements do need to be based primarily on broad environmental effects, however. For example, a polymer produced at slightly higher temperatures may result in fewer microplastics, but it may generate more greenhouse gas emissions during the production process.

And finally, the European Commission announced that it will conduct a study during the run-up to the revised ESPR for washing machines (expected in 2025) on the effectiveness of mandatory microplastic filters for washing machines. The Netherlands provided active support for this plan and will continue to urge the Commission to consider additional measures that are closer to the source as well, such as filters for industrial laundry operations.

4.3 Chemicals

The entire textile chain uses chemicals that may be harmful to humans, animals and the environment. These chemicals (inadvertently and unintentionally) end up in the water, the soil and the air. We must prevent the use of hazardous chemicals in (raw material) production and in the recycling process for new circular textile products. The Ministry is exploring what it would take to create a safe, circular textile chain. One group of synthetic materials that will receive special attention is PFAS. These substances are used to help textiles repel water, grease and dirt. PFAS substances are not biodegradable, which means they remain present in organisms and in the environment. Several types of PFAS have been determined to be very toxic and associated with health risks.[53] For this reason the government supports a European ban on PFAS. Textile products that are sold on the European market must meet the European Regulation on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH). This regulation specifies which chemicals are undesirable or prohibited. Chemicals that interfere with recycling are identified and listed, because it is important to properly recycle all textiles that appear on the Dutch market.

53 Emerging chemical risks in Europe – Environment Agency, 2019 - link

5 Measures for lifespan extension

The lifespan of textiles can be extended by improving the quality, repairing clothes and buying/selling more second-hand clothes. At the European level, the Netherlands is calling for sustainable, circular textiles to become the norm on the European market.

The government also wants to make textile repair and second-hand clothing more convenient, attractive options. To this end we are conducting several pilots and studies, and we are working with circular crafts centres.

Table 6. Overview of lifespan extension measures

Measure	Standard-setting	Pricing	Stimulus	Year
Development of circular design requirements within the ESPR framework	✓			2025/26
Research on design requirements for shoes	✓			2025
Exploration of the establishment of a repair register			✓	2025
Continued development of textiles EPR with special focus on repair	✓	✓		2025/26
Pilots for repair at circular crafts centres			✓	2025
Behavioural study on offering second-hand clothing next to new clothing in physical stores.			✓	Ongoing
Cooperation with circular crafts centres, more second-hand stores in retail areas			✓	Ongoing

5.1 Quality and design

80 percent of the environmental impact of a product is determined by its design. During the design process, choices are made about the type of material that is used (e.g. sustainable of recycled) and whether the product will be designed with circularity in mind. This determines the lifespan of the product and whether it will be possible to repair or recycle it later on. All textile products that are sold on the European market will eventually have to be designed with sustainability and circularity in mind. The purpose of the ESPR requirements is to ensure that this will happen. Textiles are the first group of products for which design and information requirements are being developed as part of this framework regulation. The Ministry already commissioned a study on possible design requirements for textiles.[54] The following design requirements have the highest priority in the Netherlands: inclusion of a mandatory percentage of post-consumer recycled content, minimum requirements for the lifespan of textiles, repairability, recyclability, pre-washing and a cap on fibre loss for textiles. The Netherlands will actively contribute to the development of Ecodesign requirements for textiles during the next few years to make this happen. To this end, the Ministry will organise stakeholder groups to facilitate the involvement of the textile sector. We are also conducting a study on sustainable design requirements for shoes, which explores the possibility of a mandatory percentage of post-consumer recycled content. The Netherlands will present the results of this study at the European level during the revision of the ESPR.

5.2 Repair

Repair is an important form of life extension. The government wants to work towards a new norm, where textile (home) repairs or alterations are considered the obvious course of action. Repairing products should be easy and affordable. It should also be clear where people can take their textiles for repair. As indicated above, the government is calling for an ambitious ESPR for textiles, with a special focus on repairability. The introduction of the European Directive on common rules for promoting repair of goods also requires textile suppliers to offer repairs within the warranty at the request of the consumer, provided the product can be repaired. The producer can offer repairs as an in-house service or in partnership with existing clothing and shoe repair

54 Parliamentary papers II 2023/24, 32 852, no. 266

businesses. The Repair Directive also requires member states to provide information about available clothing and shoe repair services by means of a repair services register. In 2025, the Ministry will explore how this clothing repair register can be implemented in the Netherlands.

During the development process for the EPR instrument, the Ministry will investigate how this can be aimed more at (the financing of) high-grade circular strategies, including repair. the Ministry is also organising pilots to identify driving forces and obstacles with regard to textile repair and to promote repair. Repair is a key focus area of circular crafts centres, which is why these pilots will be set up with input from circular crafts centres. This could also reinforce their social function. The pilots started in 2024. They will be evaluated, and possibly scaled up, in 2025.

5.3 Second-hand textiles

Although Dutch consumers are still primarily buying new textiles, we have seen in recent years that more and more people are willing to buy second-hand clothing.[55] The annual monitoring of recycling organisations in the Netherlands reveals the same trend.[56] The government would like to encourage this trend by increasing the supply of second-hand items and to help increase the visibility of second-hand clothes in the public eye. Research shows that a shift towards second-hand clothing provides opportunities for local employment.[57] Recycling organisations also major providers of supported employment opportunities in the Netherlands.

Second-hand options needs to become more convenient and attractive for consumers. This is why the Ministry is working with other government agencies and parties from the textile sector on ways to increase the supply of second-hand clothes in retail areas. To that end, the Ministry is conducting research on the behavioural effects of offering second-hand clothing alongside new clothes in physical stores. This research will help to determine the best way to lower the threshold for purchasing second-hand items. We are also working with circular crafts centres to attract more thrift stores to urban retail areas to increase the supply of second-hand clothes. Recycling organisations also make an important contribution to society by creating supported employment opportunities. And finally, it is important to collect a sufficient clothing supply in good enough condition that the garments can be sold as second-hand clothes. On 1 July 2023, the EPR for textiles went into effect, which requires producers to set objectives for the reuse of textiles, including in the Netherlands.

55 Hergebruik door consumenten in Nederland [Reuse by consumers in the Netherlands] - Rijkswaterstaat, 2024 - link
56 Monitor Kringloop Nederland 2023 – BKN, 2024 - link
57 Putting circular textiles to work – the employment potential of circular clothing in The Netherlands – Circle Economy, May 2021 - link

6 Measures for high-grade processing

The fourth circular strategy is aimed at the high-grade processing of textiles so they can be reused as a raw materials. Properly separated collection of textiles is essential in this context. Municipalities and waste collectors will be supported in their efforts to improve the quality of the collection process. Under the EPR, producers are responsible for textile collection, reuse and recycling. Measures will also be taken to minimise the negative impact of textile export. The scaling up of high-grade fibre-to-fibre recycling will be promoted.

Table 7. Overview of measures for high-grade processing

Measure	Standard-setting	Pricing	Stimulus	Year
Exploring the standardisation of collection	✓			2025
Research on stricter requirements for textile sorting	✓			2025
The VANG Huishoudelijk Afval (From Waste to Resource) Programme			✓	Doorlopend
Research on the reuse of shoes	✓			2025
Amendment to the EPR for Textiles Decree (including the addition of shoes and revision of the WFD)	✓	✓		2027
Evaluation of the EPR for textiles	✓	✓		2028
Placing export on the agenda and cooperating with international initiatives regarding the export of textiles			✓	Doorlopend
Developing European end-of-waste criteria (sorting criteria and recycling requirements)	✓			2025/26
Implementation of Circular Materials Plan (CMP)	✓		✓	2025
Developing an ESPR for textiles (mandatory recycled content percentage)	✓			2025/26

6.1 Collection and sorting

People are discarding their clothes more frequently and more quickly. On top of that, old clothes and textiles still end up in residual waste too often. Sector stakeholders such as municipalities, producers and retailers, recycling centres and waste collectors all agree that this is a shame, because we miss out on reusable clothes and raw textile materials. People would do better to donate their old clothes and textiles to a (second-hand) clothing or thrift store or to drop it off in a donation bin. The purpose of the EPR for textiles is to increase the amount of textiles that is collected for reuse and recycling. Producers are responsible for making this happen, but they also need the support of municipalities and other parties.

The Ministry is exploring whether the standardisation of waste collection in the Netherlands might be an effective way to improve the separate collection of waste flows, including textiles. The VANG (From Waste to Resource) programme is also designed to improve and increase textile collection. The programme supports municipalities with the “Regie op de textielketen” [Controlling the Textile Chain] manual and the VANG textile academy. The Academy helps municipalities to create a plan of action for improved textile collection and processing in their community. A textile conference is organised every year as well, to inform municipalities about developments in the textile field.

Effective, detailed sorting is important to maximise the amount of textiles that can be reused and recycled. To this end, the Ministry is exploring options for imposing stricter requirements on textile sorting through the Circular Materials Plan (CMP). See Section 6.4.

6.2 Strengthening the extended producer responsibility

The extended producer responsibility was introduced on 1 July 2023. EPR makes producers responsible for the collection, preparation for reuse and recycling of the textile products they sell. The objectives take effect in 2025, and producers will have start reporting on the

objectives in 2026. The focus during the next few years will be on the implementation and enforcement of the EPR system. The EPR for textiles will be evaluated and refined where necessary by 2028 at the latest.

Negotiations are underway in Brussels about the revision of the Waste Framework Directive (WFD), which will soon require all member states to implement an EPR for textiles and shoes. Producers will also be subject to different tariffs based on the design requirements set out in the ESPR. This means that a producer that designs a circular product will pay less than a producer that does not design a product with circularity in mind. The national EPR will be revised in accordance with this European amendment.

Every year, about 54 kilotonnes of shoes are brought to the Dutch market, which is equivalent to a production and distribution impact of about 0.6 million tonnes of GHG[58]. For this reason, the government announced at the end of 2023 that shoes will be subject to the EPR for textiles as well.[59] To this end, ambitious but feasible objectives will be set in consultation with the sector. In 2024, the Ministry initiated a study on the reuse of shoes to inform the development of these objectives. It is expected that shoes will be subject to the EPR for textiles by 2027, since this amendment will be incorporated in Dutch regulations together with the amendments to the European WFD.

Several parties have also called for improvements in the EPR instrument, which is the reason for an ongoing broader process for further development of the EPR instrument.[60] One of the focus areas is how the EPR can be used to promote good choices at the start of the production chain, through more frequent and more effective application of tariff differentiation and goals for reuse and repair. The Ministry will also explore if (and how) we can impose more conditions on producer organisations who implement the EPR on behalf of the producers in a particular sector. The EPR for textiles will be evaluated by 2028 at the latest. As part of this evaluation, the Ministry will determine whether the tariff differentiation is applied to a sufficient extent. If not, additional requirements will be imposed.

6.3 Export

In 2023 the Ministry commissioned a study on the export of textiles used in the Netherlands,[61] since the Netherlands is one of the top ten exporters of used textiles in the world. Exporting used textiles has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it creates job opportunities in the recipient countries and it supplies them with affordable textiles, but it also has negative effects on humans and the environment. The used extiles often end up in countries that don't have proper waste processing systems, which results in microplastics pollution in the water and soil and pollution resulting from dumping and incineration. Societal issues are a reality at the end of the value chain as well. The export of used textile is expected to continue to increase over the next few years, as people are buying more clothes and discarding them more quickly. In 2025, European countries will also be required to collect textiles separately, which will increase the supply of textiles for reuse and recycling.

Export of used textiles

With regard to the export of used textiles, the Netherlands will ask the European Commission to impose mandatory sorting criteria for textiles that are exported for reuse. The purpose of European sorting criteria is to ensure that the supply of textile for reuse meets the demand in the destination country. We must prevent situations where the exported textiles are dumped or incinerated outside of the EU. Regulations and international cooperation will also be needed to ensure that used textiles are exported under the right conditions. Various international organisations such the environmental programme of the United Nations (UNEP) are working on projects related to textile export. The Netherlands provides input in international studies aimed at improving the export of second-hand textiles, and places the export of used textiles on the agenda for European and international discussions. And finally, European regulations are being developed to improve transparency in the chain, for example through the introduction of product passports. The Netherlands will also urge the EU to include the end of the value chain in the regulations, after people have discarded their textiles.

Export of textile waste

The government wants to ensure that we don't export our environmental problems. This is in line with the revised European Waste Shipment Regulation (WSR). This revision, which took effect in 2024, imposes concrete requirements on the export of waste, including textiles. It is also expected that EU member states will want to impose a complete ban on the export of textile waste to non-OECD countries. Used textiles can still

58 Verkenning schoenen [Exploration of shoes] - Rebel Group, 2023 - link
59 Parliamentary papers II 2023/24, 32 852, no. 290
60 Parliamentary Papers II 2023/24, 32 852, no. 268
61 Gebruikt textiel uit Nederland: bestemmingen, gebruik en risico's [Used textiles in the Netherlands: destinations, use and risks] - Circle Economy, 2023 - link

be exported as secondary raw materials even after the implementation of a generic ban on the export of textile waste. Most textiles are produced outside of Europe, so export will still be necessary in order to use recycled materials in new textiles. This is why the Netherlands wants the EU to specify clear criteria to determine when textiles are no longer legally considered waste but a secondary raw material which can be offered on the global market without further restrictions. To this end the European authorities are working on end-of-waste criteria.

And finally, it is important to tackle the underlying cause, i.e. the enormous amounts of discarded textiles that are the result of overproduction and low-quality clothes. This is in line with the broader goals of this policy programme. We should also increase local reuse and recycling in the Netherlands to reduce the enormous volumes of exported textiles.

6.4 National Waste Management Plan (LAP)/Circular Materials Plan (CMP)

The National Waste Management Plan (LAP) offers governments and businesses knowledge and a uniform framework for handling waste and issuing permits. Sector Plan 5, Gescheiden ingezameld/afgegeven textiel (inclusief schoeisel)[Separately collected/donated textiles (including shoes)], describes the assessment framework for separately collected/donated textile, including shoes.[62] Separately collected textiles must be processed using the minimum accepted method (the "minimum standard"). The current minimum standard for reusable and recyclable textiles is "recycling". This means that permits can be granted only for the recycling of separately collected textiles. Waste-to-energy incineration is permitted only in certain exceptional circumstances.

The LAP will be succeeded by the Circular Materials Plan (CMP). The sector plan will be replaced in the CMP with the textile chain plan. This chain plan describes the choices that are available to textile designers, producers, users and processors to promote a circular textile chain. The intention is to increase the minimum standard in the CMP to "sorting", so separately collected textiles will have to be sorted first, to maximise textile reuse. The minimum standard may be increased further in the future by imposing more specific requirements on the sorting process for reuse as well as recycling.

6.5 Recycling

Recycling is a crucial step in the circular chain, because all textile products will eventually reach the end of their lifespan. Recycling will help to reduce the textile mountain, and textile recycled content will replace the use of new raw materials. This is how recycling contributes to reducing the environmental burden of the textile industry.

There are various ways to recycle textiles and there are various application options after recycling. Research shows that mechanical fibre-to-fibre recycling, also called closed-loop recycling, is the recycling method with the lowest environmental impact.[63] So the most desirable option is to recycle textile waste and to reuse it in new textile products. A less desirable option is to use textile recycled content in non-textile products such as automotive insulation materials or wallpaper. However, the recycling sector has not progressed to the stage where fibre-to-fibre recycling is the only method that can be used. We have the technology for effective sorting and high-grade recycling, but scaling up is the issue right now because there is not enough market demand for recycled content. This is why other forms of recycling will still be permitted for the next few years. There may be a point in the future when the CMP imposes a recycling standard with specific mandatory recycling techniques for particular flows. When that happens, not all forms of recycling will be permitted in every situation anymore.

The government promotes fibre-to-fibre recycling in two different ways. First, the Netherlands is calling for recyclability and a mandatory recycled content percentage as major requirements in the development of the ESPR in Europe. See Chapter 4.1 on sustainable and recycled materials. The government also promotes fibre-to-fibre recycling through the introduction of the EPR for textiles. Producers will have to meet the recycling objectives, which also include fibre-to-fibre recycling. Moreover, producers will have to optimise their use of recycled textile fibres from discarded post-consumer textile in new products.

62 Sectorplan 05: gescheiden ingezameld/afgegeven textiel (inclusief schoeisel) [Sector Plan 05: separately collected/donated textiles (including shoes)] – IenW, 2024 - link

63 SGS. Search (2024). mLCA Verwerkingsalternatieven textiel [Multi-lifecycle assessment of textile processing alternatives]- link

7 Additional policy

7.1 Green Public Procurement

The national government, local and regional authorities and (semi-)public parties buy large volumes of textiles every year. In their capacity as clients they can impose requirements with regard to sustainability, circularity and international social criteria in order to identify and address risks to humans and the environment in the procurement chain. [64] In doing so, the government sets an example and encourages the market to embrace sustainability, for example by using recycled materials in new work clothes or by opting for second-hand products. There are various examples of circular procurement by government agencies. Despite good intentions, government agencies still do not tend to use ambitious procurement criteria in their calls for tender, and price remains the primary factor.

Every few years, the Category Workwear Dutch national government creates a plan with objectives for the procurement of work clothes. By 2030, 50 percent of all work clothes must be procured on the basis of sustainability, and 15 percent of these clothes must be reused and 50 percent recycled after use. The Category also aims for reduced work clothes procurement volumes, reduced production and maximum harmonisation and standardisation of textile products. Government work clothes will be collected and recycled as much as possible. The goal is also for the ESPR requirements to become the standard for new clothes.

In recent years, Rijkswaterstaat has been working with a few leaders in the public sector to create a buyer group for work clothes and textiles for special investigating officers. A buyer group consists of representatives from contracting authorities who work with market parties on joint market visions, circular procurement and procurement criteria. This sends a clear signal to the market to scale up circular solutions and to accelerate innovations. The national government will continue to support the development of new buyer groups over the next few years.

At the European level, the use of Green Public Procurement Criteria, which is currently voluntary, may become mandatory under the ESPR. Buyers for public organisations in the Netherlands often use the Green Public Procurement tool.[65] The Ministry is using this tool to revise the procurement criteria for textiles, with input from practical users like the buyer group. This will make it easier for buyers to opt for sustainability and circularity. And finally, the Ministry is exploring the possibility of entering into agreements with leaders in this area about the use of circular solutions in the procurement of textiles for work-related purposes.

7.2 International corporate social responsibility

In a circular economy, businesses must adhere to the principles of International Corporate Social Responsibility (ICSR). The government expects businesses to exercise due diligence and identity, and where necessary minimise, risks to humans and the environment, in accordance with the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises. Within this ICSR policy framework, the government aims for a broad mix of mutually reinforcing voluntary and mandatory measures. For example, the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) took effect on 25 July 2024. This directive requires large companies to exercise due diligence in their value chain in order to identify, prevent and address risks to humans and the environment. The government has two years to transpose the CSDDD into national law. The government promotes sectoral cooperation to support businesses. Sectoral cooperation enables businesses to work together to identify risks and address these where necessary. The new Subsidy Policy Framework for Sectoral Partnerships for ICSR was published on August 2nd, 2024 in the Government Gazette and will be in effect until 2030.[66] If the clothing and textile sectors want to enter into a new sectoral partnership agreement to address ICSR risks in the textile chain, they can submit an application to the SER. In addition, (textile) companies can contact the ICSR help desk for information and support regarding the application of OECD guidelines. This will also help these companies to prepare for ICSR legislation.

Cooperation with local authorities and producers is also essential for the effective implementation of ICSR laws and for preventing negative effects of these laws on the countries and producers in question. The Dutch government wants a fair, responsible textile industry for everyone. This is why the government supports various organisations that tackle problems in the textile industry in production countries and in value chains. This includes programmes in which these organisations work with local businesses, civic organisations and authorities to promote liveable wages, good working conditions, no child labour, no violence against

64 The national government uses the International Social Criteria (ISC) to prevent and address abuses in the areas of working conditions, human rights and the environment in the supply chain.

65 For more information, see: SPP criteria tool (mvicriteria.nl)

66 Government Gazette 2024, 25516

women and combating environmental problems. The government supports these programmes and monitors what they achieve and how they help workers in the sector.

7.3 Incentivizing through subsidies

Besides using standardisation, pricing and taxation, the government also promotes circular choices through subsidies. There are different types of subsidies that are available to organisations in the textile chain. For example, ambitious textile projects may be eligible for the Circular Chain Projects subsidy, DEI+/ DEI+ CE, TSE Industry for the KIA-CE, MIT, Interreg (EU) and Horizon (EU).[67] Circular entrepreneurs can also contact Versnellingshuis Nederland Circulair! [Circular Business Acceleration!] for support and guidance.[68] Versnellingshuis helps entrepreneurs, companies and organisations to take (the next) steps in the circular economy by providing inspiration and information, making connections with other businesses and with expertise and knowledge in the network, and by supporting chain management from the exploration phase to the realisation of products on the market. Most textile businesses that apply for the various types of subsidies focus on dyeing/decolourisation of textiles, new bio-based materials, chemical and/or mechanical recycling, setting up new business models and textile repair. During the revision of existing subsidy regulations or the creation of new subsidy regulations that are relevant for textiles, every effort will be made to ensure that these are in line with the ambitions of the policy programme.

67 For more information, see the Netherlands Enterprise Agency's subsidy guide: https://www.rvo.nl/subsidies-financiering
68 For more information, see www.versnellingshuisce.nl

8 Getting started with the policy programme

We need everyone to do their part if we are going to achieve our goals, because all the links in the chain are interconnected, from designer to producer, from waste collector to recycler. The policy programme ambitions can only be achieved if everyone uses their own roles and responsibilities to work together. The government manages the process by bringing parties together. The Circular Textile Network Consultation was set up for this purpose at the start of the previous policy programme. These consultations will continue, and participants get together four times a year to discuss the progress and implementation of the policy. In terms of the implementation of the policy programme, the government will continue to work closely with the textile sectors, other government agencies and regional initiatives.

The progress of the policy programme is monitored on an annual basis. The Parliament receives annual progress reports with information about measures that have been taken, the results of these measures and their effects of closure of the chain. These activities build on previously developed monitoring systems, supplemented with indicators that provide insight into aspects from this policy programme such as lifespan extension and repair.

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