

*Targets for Slowing Down
Fast Fashion: Submission*
**to the Public Consulta-
tion for the EU Strategy
for Sustainable Textiles**



Hot or Cool

Policy Brief

The European Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) identify textiles as a priority sector for achieving climate targets and implementing a circular economy. Fashion is the main application of textiles, with over 60% of global fibre production destined to fashion [1]. Clothing-production demand is increasing at an average 2% yearly, with fashion brands now producing almost twice the number of clothing collections compared with pre-2000 [2]. The increase in production of textiles and in clothing consumption is reflected by the increasing growth of the fast fashion sector, and is responsible for the rising environmental and social impacts of textiles [2].

Fast fashion is the main driver of increasing release of chemicals and microplastics, land and water use, material consumption, climate change impacts, and textile waste produced by the fashion industry [2]. To limit the production and consumption of fast fashion is essential for developing a meaningful EU Strategy for Textiles and enabling the transition to a circular economy.

Key Messages:

- 1** Fast fashion is the most important driver of increasing negative impacts of textiles. Measures for tackling fast fashion should hold a central place in policy strategies and agendas for more sustainable textile systems.
- 2** Policy enablers are essential for realising circular fashion models. Innovation and behavioural change alone cannot foster a transition to a circular economy for fashion and textiles.
- 3** Global over-production and consumption must be tackled, ensuring a safe and just transition to circular models while opening new business opportunities.
- 4** Governments should cooperate and call for increased transparency and traceability, including on emissions and across fashion value chains.

Researchers, institutions, and youth organizations are calling for policy-makers to act on fast fashion

Fast fashion is the increasingly more rapid production, purchasing, and discard of high volumes of clothing. It promotes trend-led products and relies on recurring consumption and impulse buying. It implies lowering production costs, lowering consumer prices, and shorter lifetimes of clothing items.

In recent years, the fast fashion industry has emerged as one of the most polluting worldwide, contributing between **4 and 10 per cent of global CO₂ emissions** along its value chains [2-3], and generating wide environmental and social negative impacts, including microplastic release, water pollution, and unsafe working conditions.

Amongst the indicators of fashion speed are the increase in number of clothing collections offered per year by clothing brands, the decreasing rate of expenditures

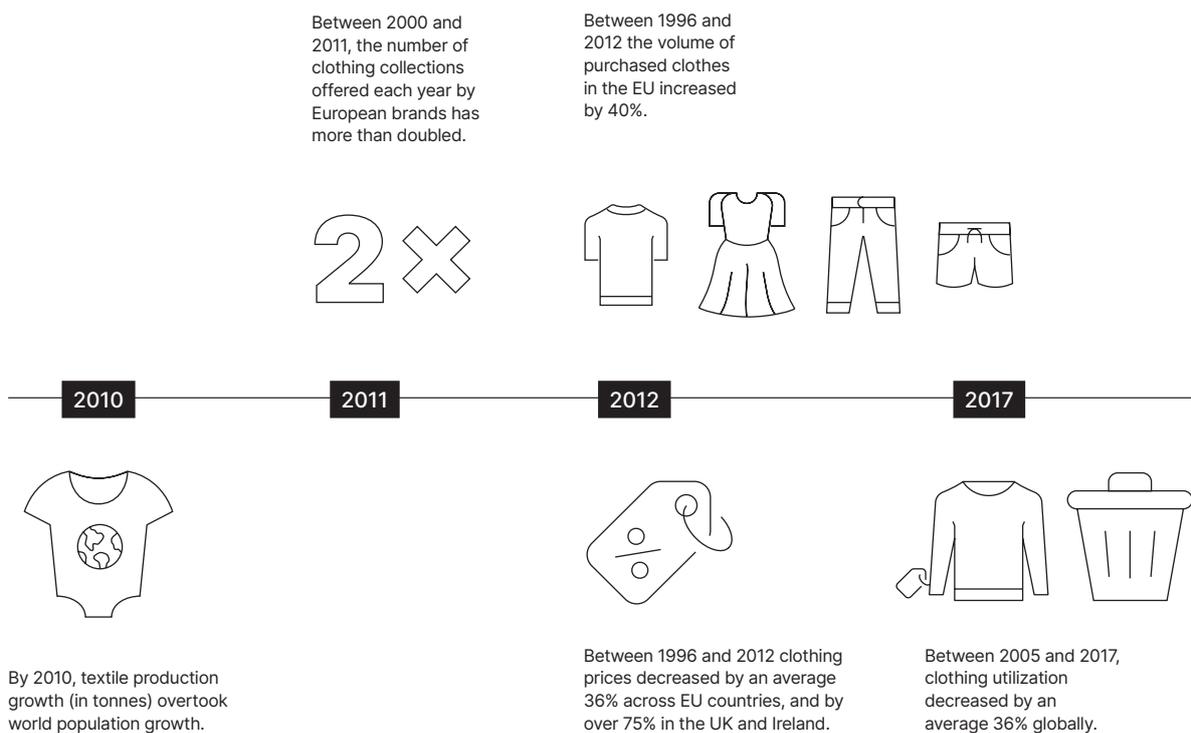
per clothing and footwear over number of garments owned, and the decreasing garment-use time. All these measures point to a rapid acceleration of fashion production and consumption in particular from 2010 (Fig. 1).

Based on increasing scientific evidence, researchers, institutions, and youth organizations are calling for policymakers to act for regulating fast fashion.

The Hot or Cool Institute and the independent think tank **Demos Helsinki** gathered some of the actors and stakeholders at the forefront of research and policy design for addressing fast fashion in a series of two workshops that took place on March 24th and April 12th 2021.

This brief shares findings from the workshops with the aim to inform the EU Strategy for Textiles on targets and actions on fast fashion.

Figure 1. The acceleration of fashion





Recommendations for addressing fast fashion

During two workshops hosted by the Hot or Cool Institute, the following points have emerged as important for guiding policymaking on addressing and mitigating fast fashion negative impacts:

→ Current fast fashion models are not in line with the principles of a circular economy. The development and successful scaling of circular fashion models requires integrating different types of innovation and the support of well-designed policies.

→ Policy enablers for circular fashion models are essential for aligning business model, technical and social innovation, as well as education and behavioural change. These enablers include durability and longevity standards and labels, taxes on fast fashion products with short lifetimes, reduced taxes on repair, extended producer responsibility schemes, and financial incentives to slow fashion companies. In lack of these policy enablers, behavioural changes and innovations will not succeed in limiting fast fashion impacts and achieving a circular economy.

→ Reducing production of garments is conditional to improved working conditions and increasing quality and lifetime of products. Policymakers in producer as well as consumer countries must take on this challenge and work together for ensuring a safe and just decelera-

tion of fast fashion. This includes implementing industrial strategies for shifting employment to alternative sectors with lower social and environmental negative impacts. It also includes implementing effective and accessible skill development programmes.

→ Increasing transparency of fashion value and supply chains is an essential first step for addressing and mitigating the negative impacts of fast fashion. Governments should cooperate and call for increased transparency and explore the potential of blockchain platforms and other solutions for traceability.

→ Fast fashion models allow for affordable solutions to the needs of many consumers. A transition to circular fashion models in a circular economy should be safe and just by putting in place mechanisms for ensuring equal access to fashion.

→ There is a need for re-thinking the purpose and responsibilities of business away from serving shareholders and maximising profits towards increasing societal wellbeing. Fashion, as other sectors, plays an important role in the context of a broader change needed in value creation, value proposition and value capture strategies for increasing societal wellbeing instead of just pursuing economic growth.

Global slow fashion targets by 2030

A comprehensive review of authoritative literature on fast fashion, its dynamics, and its impacts resulted in a collection of 6 Science-based targets proposed by researchers and organizations (Fig. 2). These targets represent existing targets that serve as the basis for an ongoing scientific analysis by the Hot or Cool Institute to propose fashion targets compatible with 1.5-Degree

100 Achieve safe, just, and equal working conditions:

All garment companies (100%) must ensure living wages to all workers in the supply chain and comply with the Global Framework Arrangements (GFAs) by 2030.

The increased productivity of the fashion industry is largely explained by reliance on low-tech and unsafe production systems, use of cheap and low-quality materials, poor or absent mitigation of environmental impacts, and far from decent working conditions [5].

Most of garment production in the upstream value chain takes place in low-income countries, where low formal employment rates leave workers with little or no other choice than to accept precarious working conditions, unfair payments, and informal arrangements with minimal or no social security.

Garment workers work for long hours, often far beyond legal limits, for poverty wages and in conditions that breach international labour, health, and safety standards. Precarious employment conditions are rife, with temporary contracts, agency work and sub-contracting the norm. Violations of the right to freedom of association are commonplace, unionization rates are extremely low and collective bargaining is rare. Over 90 per cent of workers in the global garment industry have no possibility to negotiate their wages and conditions.

The garment sector is characterised by a large share of informal workers and most of garment workers are women. This underlines the sector's role for promoting female economic empowerment and, at the same time, the possibility for the sector to be exploiting, and contributing to worsen, structural payment gaps and existing inequalities between male and female workers. Human rights and labour organizations, as well as fashion designers, are calling for a radical change in trade policy and legislation for allowing imported garments only if produced under the same Labour, Human Rights, Health and Safety and Environmental standards as in the consumer country [4]. This would improve the lives of all garment workers in the outsourced sector due to

Lifestyles [4]. A more refined version of these targets, their quantification, and interconnections between them, will be presented in a Report that will be published by the Hot or Cool Institute in 2021.

Achieving these targets presents important challenges and calls for changes in lifestyles, innovative business models, and more ambitious policies.

better pay, better and safer working conditions (a true living wage) and a safer and better environment.

Through Global Framework Arrangements (GFAs), companies commit to upholding the core labour standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO), including the right to freedom of association, in their own operations and in their supply chains.

50 Emission reduction: Reduce global GHG emissions in the value chain by 50% by 2030.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C has reinforced the need to urgently and drastically reduce GHG emissions in order to achieve the 1.5 °C target of the Paris Agreement [7]. Accounting for a substantial share of global GHG emissions, the fashion sector needs to undergo a system-level transformation if we aim at limiting global warming. The recent report of the Global Fashion Agenda "Fashion on Climate" explores emission reduction pathways of the industry for achieving the 1.5 °C target [3].

In the report, it is calculated that the fashion industry would have to bring down its emissions to 1.1 billion tCO₂e to be on the 1.5-degree pathway by 2030, which corresponds to a reduction in GHG emissions by 50 per cent compared to 2018. The pathways to a 1.5-degree fashion include 61% of emissions savings in upstream production through decarbonization of material production and processing; 18% emissions savings in brand operations through decarbonization of retail operations and improved material mix, and 21% emissions savings in usage and end-of-use through reduced washing and drying, among other actions.

20 Enable Circular Business Models: Switch of 20% of purchases from new clothes to clothes traded via circular business models by 2030.

The Circular Economy Action Plan recognizes the textile sector as a priority product value chain due to its

high environmental impacts during production, use, and end-of-life [10–11]. The EU Strategy for Textiles is being developed with the aim of creating a market for sustainable and circular textile products, services, and business models [12].

Circular business models include models based on renting, leasing, and sharing, which can lead to lower resource use by increasing the use rate of produced garments and fashion collections. Circular business models also include second-hand resale, and material reuse and recycling. The Global Fashion Agenda calculated that a switch of 20% of purchases from new clothes to clothes traded via circular business models could bring about a reduction of above 10% of global emissions from fashion [1]. However, the impacts of circular business models have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, as studies show that they do not always bring about a reduction of impacts [13], and that they could lead in some cases to increased levels of consumption. An in-depth analysis of circular business model innovation in the textiles sector is included in the European Environment Agency (EEA) Eionet Report "Business Models in a Circular Economy" [12].

20 Reduce global production of fast fashion garments: *Reduce fast fashion production by 20% by 2030.*

Fast fashion is driving the rapid increase of textile production we have seen in the last decades. In the 2010s, textile-production growth (in tonnes) overtook world-population growth, and now we buy and consume more clothing items than ever.

Globally, the consumption of clothing and footwear is expected to increase from 62 million tonnes to 102 million tonnes in 2030 [8]. In the EU, the amount of purchased clothes per person increased by 40% between 1996 and 2012 [9].

Fast fashion garments are produced based on perspective sales. This causes huge amounts of unsold products and waste to be continuously generated. At least 20% of produced garments are never sold. Accordingly, a reduction in garment production by 20% would sustain global levels of garment consumption and retail sales, while limiting the amount of resources used and waste produced.

A 20% reduction in garment production could save over 240 million tCO₂e from being emitted in the production phase of garments [6] and over 300 million tCO₂e to be emitted from brand and retail operations [3]. However, a reduction in fast fashion garment production has to happen once appropriate industrial strategies for shifting employment to more sustainable sectors, and training programs for workers to develop new skills, are in place.

36 Increase garment use time: *Increase garment use by 36% by 2030.*

While buying more clothes and spending a smaller share of income on clothing, consumers use garments today for half as long as they use to do 15 years ago.

Increasing garment quality would foster increased use times while potentially maintaining revenues through price adjustment. This could also stimulate higher quality production with improved working conditions along the supply chain.

In the EU, more than 30% of clothes are used for less than a year. Worldwide, garment use time has decreased by 36% from 2005 to 2017, while the number of garment units sold more than doubled [1]. It is technically feasible to return to use times comparable to 2005. This would allow to mitigate the negative impacts of fast fashion while ensuring that consumer needs are met. This target can be achieved by implementing quality and durability standards, by promoting public campaigns for a conscious consumption approach, and by supporting repair models, among other measures.

100 Collection and recycling of textile waste: *Recycle, re-purpose or reuse 100% of used clothing items at the end of life by 2030.*

Fast fashion is driving a dramatic increase in textile waste. Textiles now account for up to 22 per cent of mixed waste worldwide [15], and 92 million tonnes of textile waste are produced every year [9]. Fashion consumers today waste from more than 13 kg of textiles per person each year in some European countries, to up to 30 kg in the UK and the US.

While waste is increasing, textile recycling rates remain low, partly due to lack of collection schemes and to design and manufacturing processes that do not allow for high recyclability. Globally, the recycling rate of post-consumer textiles was only 15 per cent in 2015, and the share of textiles recycled into similar quality products is below 1 per cent. Over 70 per cent of textiles at the end-of-life are landfilled or incinerated, representing a missed opportunity for enabling circularity and add value to garment products. The EU adopted an obligation for the separate collection of textile waste by 2025 (Directive (EU) 2018/851). Additionally, the EU Waste Framework Directive stipulated a combined target for reuse and recycling, and some Member States are establishing more specific reuse targets. By designing fashion products that can be disassembled, eliminating the use of hazardous chemicals and contaminants in the production process, avoiding textile blends, and implementing collection schemes it is possible to aim at achieving 100% reuse, re-purpose, or recycle of textiles at the end-of-life.

Figure 2. Global slow fashion targets by 2030

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Achieve safe, just, and equal working conditions

All garment companies must ensure living wages to all workers in the supply chain and comply to Global Framework Arrangements (GFAs) by 2030

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Emission reduction

Reduce GHG emissions in the value chain by 50% by 2030

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Reduce global production of fast fashion garments

Reduce fast fashion production by 20% by 2030

36

Increase garment use time

Increase garment use by 36% by 2030.

20

Enable Circular Business Models

Switch 20% of purchases from new clothes to clothes traded via circular business models by 2030

100

Collection and recycling of textile waste

Reuse, re-purpose or recycle 100% of used clothing items at the end of life by 2030



Difficult Conversations: Empowering Solutions

This Policy Brief is the result of the methodology **Difficult Conversations: Empowering Solutions** developed by the Hot or Cool Institute.

What

Difficult Conversations: Empowering Solutions is the Hot or Cool methodology behind a series of facilitated workshops bringing together researchers, policymakers, youth, and innovators to develop science-based solutions to important but complex issues around behaviour change. With the aid of gamification and virtual platforms, we discuss on topics with high environmental impacts and logistical or moral complexities that present barriers to change.

Who

An inclusive policy process involves everybody across society to co-design policy targets and discuss on how to achieve them. Actors often excluded from policymaking include traditional and indigenous communities, minority groups, women, the youth, and new emerging actors that play a pivotal role in building consensus and influencing societal choices. We believe that influencers, disruptors, and communicators of the digital era have much to add to the design of effective policies and throughout the policy process.

How

Difficult Conversations are designed around three stages:

1. The Science

Our team of researchers and communication experts investigate the scientific literature and reports for policymakers to bring to the surface the underlying drivers and related impacts of existing patterns of behaviour, as well as the implications of alternatives. This provides an objective analysis on which difficult, multi-interest conversations can now be based.

2. The Policy Targets

We identify policy target areas with scientific agreement for a need for change. Stakeholders are engaged from this stage, with the aim of sensing levels of ambition across society. Based on the evidence gathered, participants are asked to quantify policy targets for transformation in the mid- and long-term.

3. The Solutions

This stage explores and outlines possible solutions at different action levels: existing solutions at grassroots levels that need to be supported, adapted, and scaled; innovations that need agile experimentation before being mainstreamed through policy and programmes; and areas for investment to fill knowledge gaps.

This Policy Brief is based on the outcomes from phase 1 (The Science) and 2 (The Policy Targets). The outcomes of phase 3 (The Solutions) will be presented in a Report that will be published by the Hot or Cool Institute in 2021.

More information on Difficult Conversations can be found at hotorcool.org

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