



Textile recovery unprecedented crisis: getting our heads above water, learning lessons and getting on board the circular economy train.

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Europe is currently experiencing an unprecedented crisis that imposes the existential question : Can we build the circular economy of tomorrow if we let the actors of today's circular economy perish ? In the light of common sense and in line with the development of a more circular and resilient Economy desired by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, the answer is no. We must act quickly and effectively. **TESS GEIE and its members are raising the alarm.**

An entire sector on the brink of collapse and the imminent threat of a social and environmental catastrophe

Europe's textile recovery sector is facing an **unprecedented crisis, threatening to wipe out tens of thousands of jobs and leaving hundreds of thousands of tonnes of textile waste untreated.** Throughout Europe, the sector's sorting centres are now saturated due to the fall in product quality and upheavals in the international market. For **Jean-Baptiste Verjans (Terre asbl, Belgium)**, "*in the short term such a situation risks leading to the incineration of unimaginable quantities of reusable textiles*", a costly and ecologically catastrophic outcome. And unfortunately, "*a practice that is already starting to be observed here and there.*"

From Spain, **Formació i Treball** puts it into perspective: "*We are only a few weeks away from the introduction of the obligation to collect all textiles separately in Europe, and **while the imperative to drastically increase collection and sorting capacities has become obvious everywhere, it is precisely all the the driving forces of collection and sorting, pillars of our circular economy of textiles, which are threatened with disappearing.***"

Producer responsibility is more striking than ever, but it is taking too long to be translated into action.

The textile market is booming, due to a lack of regulation. **Ludovic Ferez, Director of the Relais EST (France)** raises the alarm: "***Fast fashion and ultra-fast fashion, clothes that are neither sustainable nor easily recyclable are the source of the mountains of waste that are now becoming unmanageable.***"

Having grasped the importance of the economic, social and environmental issues affecting textiles, the European Union and some national legislators have been working for several years to put in place new rules concerning the circularity of textiles, in particular related to **eco-design** and **extended producer responsibility** (EPR). Although extremely important, "***these regulations must be***

harmonised, but are slow to materialise and will unfortunately not see the light of day for a few years", a reality reported from Italy (Giuseppe Finocchiarro, Consorzio Farsi Prossimo / Rete RIUSE).

The urgency of an appropriate response to a major crisis: the lessons to be learned from the crisis and the historical role of decision-makers.

The current situation calls for a lucid observation: **the crisis could have been avoided** if the **many actors in the re-use sector** who **had warned of the fragility of the sector**, whose profitability was not holding up very well, had been listened to. It has to be said, however, that **the focus was elsewhere**, in any case more on the side of producers and recyclers.

In the end, this brutal crisis is the flagrant demonstration of the fragility of the reuse actors, **the bankruptcy of the giant SOEX being unfortunately only the tip of the iceberg** (Geert de Kegel, Oxfam).

Emerging from the crisis and finally getting back on track: Appropriate urgent measures and foundations for a strong and sustainable circular economy for textiles

For **Alexandre Bohl (TESS GEIE)**, *"in this continental turmoil, European decision-makers have a crucial role to play. As such, they bear a historical responsibility. We must act now, both for today and for tomorrow."* From this perspective, TESS GEIE recommends a three-stage action plan:

1. **Avoid a complete standstill in collections by the allocation of emergency funding:** cash advance and storage financing, reimbursed *a posteriori* by the EPR PROs
2. **Enable the sector to hold out until a suitable EPR is put in place by setting up an interim emergency fund.**
3. **Structural measures to ensure the development of a strong and sustainable circular economy**, in particular: binding and impactful eco-design and eco-modulation standards; genuinely ambitious quantified targets for reuse that are separate from recycling targets; harmonised end-of-waste (EoW) criteria for reusable textiles and different criteria for recycling; governance of textile EPR PROs that guarantees fair representation of stakeholders.

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