

Article – The impact of textile production and waste on the environment (infographic)



Greenhouse gas emissions

It is estimated that the fashion industry is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions – more than [international flights and maritime shipping](#) combined.

[According to the European Environment Agency](#), textile purchases in the EU in 2017 generated about **654 kg of CO2 emissions per person**.

Textile waste in landfills

The way people get rid of unwanted clothes has also changed, with items being thrown away rather than donated.

Since 1996, the amount of clothes bought in the EU per person has increased by 40% following a sharp fall in prices, which has reduced the life span of clothing. Europeans use nearly 26 kilos of textiles and discard about 11 kilos of them every year. Used clothes can be exported outside the EU, but are mostly (87%) incinerated or landfilled.

Globally less than 1% of clothes are recycled as clothing, partly due to inadequate technology.

Tackling textile waste in the EU

The new strategy aims to address fast fashion and provide guidelines to achieve high levels of separate collection of textile waste.

Under the [waste directive](#) approved by the Parliament in 2018, EU countries will be obliged to collect textiles separately by 2025. The new Commission strategy also includes measures to support circular material and production processes, tackle the presence of hazardous chemicals and help consumers to choose sustainable textiles.

The EU has an [EU Ecolabel](#) that producers respecting ecological criteria can apply to items, ensuring a limited use of harmful substances and reduced water and air pollution.

The EU has also introduced some measures to mitigate the impact of textile waste on the environment. Horizon 2020 funds [RESYNTEX](#), a project using chemical recycling, which could provide a circular economy business model for the textile industry.