

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

Trainer Handbook



VERDEinMED

Interreg
Euro-MED



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PREFACE

This document aims to develop a skilled workforce through knowledge sharing, fostering experienced professionals in the Textile and Clothing Industry with a focus on circular strategies and textile waste management. It is a key outcome of the VERDEinMED project, specifically Activity 1.3 – Train the Trainers, which is part of WPI: Reforming the Industry through Sustainable and Circular Practices.

In particular, this document aligns with the theme “Promoting Sustainable Consumption Practices”, where addresses key topics, including sustainable product labelling, consumer behaviour, and community empowerment, providing actionable strategies and case studies for effective change. The information is organized by:

1. Sustainable product labelling and certification;
2. Communication and reporting;
3. Understanding consumer behaviour;
4. Consumer engagement and education campaigns;
5. Empowering communities for collective change;
6. Case studies and best practices;
7. Conclusion.



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Sustainable Product Labelling and Certification

Ecolabels play a crucial role in guiding consumers towards sustainable purchasing decisions. These voluntary environmental labels certify that products meet specific sustainability criteria, verified by independent third-party organisations, thereby fostering trust and transparency.

Sustainable product labelling and certification are essential tools for promoting environmentally responsible consumption and production. Ecolabels typically appear as logos, marks, or pictograms on products, packaging, or digital catalogues, providing clear visual indicators to help consumers make informed, sustainable choices. By enhancing transparency and credibility, ecolabels empower both consumers and businesses to align with environmental and ethical values, while also serving as a strong safeguard against greenwashing.

What is an ecolabel?

An ecolabel is a voluntary environmental certification awarded to goods or services that meet defined sustainability criteria. It acts as a visual indicator - such as a logo or mark - displayed on products, packaging, or digital catalogues, enabling consumers to identify environmentally responsible choices (Figure 1). Ecolabels are evaluated by independent third-party organisations, ensuring compliance with specific standards that vary according to product type and scope.

By providing clear and reliable information, ecolabels foster trust across the supply chain and empower consumers to make informed, sustainable purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, they play a vital role in combating greenwashing by offering verified transparency, preventing the misuse of ambiguous terms such as “eco-friendly” or “sustainable” that lack substantiation.



Figure 1 - Examples of ecolabels for different products/sectors. Pangea Green (2022)

Reflecting the rising adoption of environmental certification within the textile sector, the number of EU Ecolabel licences has steadily increased (Figure 2).

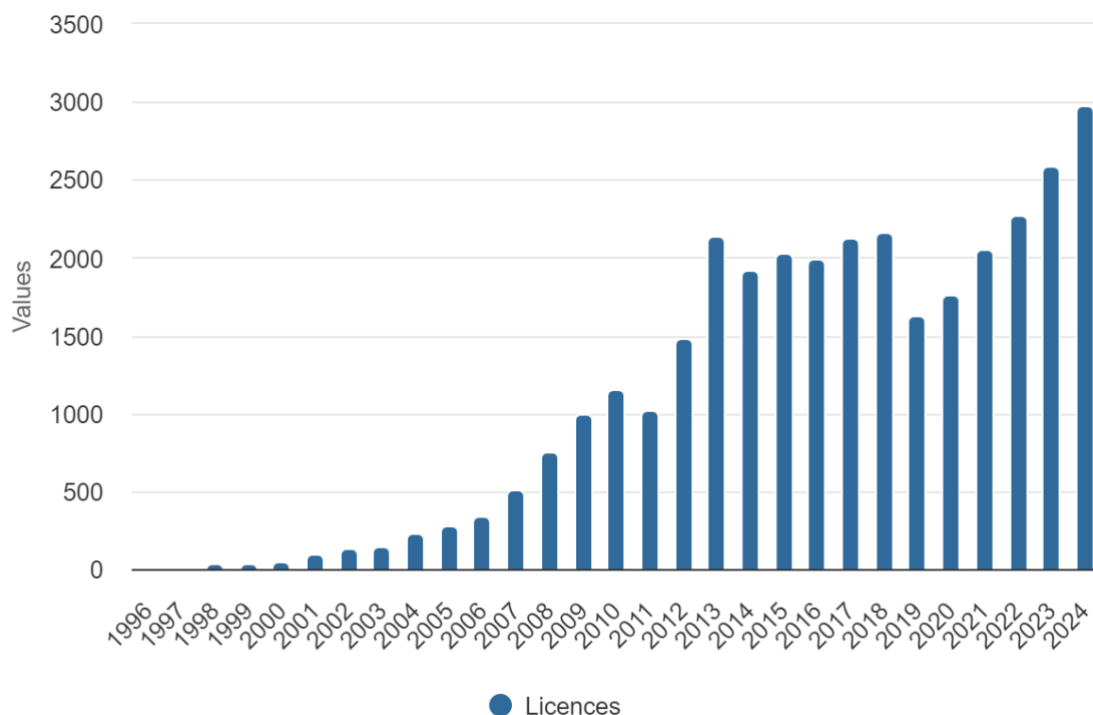


Figure 2 - The number of EU Ecolabel licences keeps growing. European Commission (2025)

Ecolabel: Standardization and Types

Ecolabels are regulated by internationally recognised standards to ensure consistency, transparency, and credibility. These standards, developed by organisations such as ISO (International Organization for Standardization), provide guidelines for environmental labelling that address both consumer expectations and industry requirements.

Below is an overview of the main types of ecolabels and their corresponding standards:

ISO STANDARDS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LABELS

ISO 14024 – Type I Environmental Labels

Type I Ecolabels- Multi-Criteria, Third-Party Verified:

These ecolabels are assessed by independent third parties and consider the entire product lifecycle, from raw material extraction to disposal. They apply rigorous environmental criteria to ensure that certified products meet high sustainability standards.

Example: The EU Ecolabel is the only EU-wide Type I scheme. It evaluates products across their full lifecycle and guarantees compliance through assessment by independent experts. Recognised throughout Europe, it provides a trusted benchmark for environmentally responsible products.

ISO 14021 – Type II Environmental Labels

Type II Ecolabels – Self-Declared Environmental Claims:

These ecolabels consist of environmental claims made directly by manufacturers or service providers. While they offer flexibility, such claims must be accurate, verifiable, and unambiguous to prevent greenwashing.

Example: Labels such as “100% recyclable” or “biodegradable” must be substantiated with reliable evidence to ensure that consumers are not misled.

ISO 14025 – Type III Environmental Declarations

Type III Ecolabels – Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs):

These ecolabels provide detailed, standardised data on a product’s environmental performance throughout its lifecycle. EPDs enable consumers and businesses to compare products objectively using quantifiable metrics such as carbon footprint, energy consumption, and resource use.

Example: A textile company publishing information on the carbon footprint and energy usage of its products, allowing consumers to compare the environmental impacts with alternative products.

Key Requirements for Environmental Claims

For ecolabels to be effective and credible, several key principles must be upheld. Environmental claims should be accurate, specific, and verifiable, ensuring that consumers receive reliable and transparent information. Claims must not be misleading or open to misinterpretation, as this can undermine consumer trust and diminish the credibility of sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, all claims should consider the entire product lifecycle, providing a comprehensive assessment of environmental impacts from raw material extraction through to disposal. By adhering to these principles, ecolabels can deliver clear, actionable insights for both consumers and other stakeholders, supporting informed decision-making and fostering genuine sustainability.

Benefits of Standardised Ecolabels

Standardised ecolabels provide multiple advantages for both consumers and the industry. They enhance consumer confidence by offering verified, reliable information about a product's sustainability, enabling informed purchasing decisions. Compliance with defined criteria and independent validation prevents greenwashing, protecting consumers from misleading or exaggerated environmental claims. Moreover, standardisation supports global efforts to harmonise environmental labelling, establishing a consistent framework that simplifies choices for consumers and encourages industry stakeholders to adopt sustainable practices.

Examples of Recognized Ecolabels

Ecolabels play a critical role in the textile industry, where sustainability concerns are particularly significant. With over 107 different ecolabels used worldwide, brands often select certifications that align with their sustainability strategies and help communicate their values to consumers.

- Several ecolabels have gained international recognition for their rigorous standards and contributions to sustainable practices:
- Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS): Certifies textiles made from organic fibres, ensuring both ecological and social responsibility throughout the production process.
- Cradle to Cradle Certified™: Evaluates products across five categories, including material health and circularity, to assess environmental and social performance.
- Blue Angel (Germany): Focuses on certifying products for environmental friendliness, such as low energy consumption or recyclability.
- Nordic Swan Ecolabel: Widely used in Nordic countries, this certification assesses the lifecycle impact of products, emphasising the reduction of emissions and waste.

Textile ecolabels typically require certification by accredited third-party organisations, such as GOTS, GRS, or OCS, to ensure compliance with their standards. These certifications provide assurance that brands meet rigorous environmental, social, and circularity requirements, aligning with industry expectations and responding to consumer demand for sustainable products.

Requirements for Ecolabels in the Textile Sector

Ecolabels in the textile industry must satisfy a range of criteria to ensure they address key aspects of sustainability. According to a study examining a sample of ten textile ecolabels, the requirements can be categorised into four main areas:

1	SOCIAL REQUIREMENTS	All ecolabels examined include standards for working conditions and human rights, ensuring ethical practices throughout the supply chain.
2	ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS	These criteria focus on reducing resource use, pollution, and reliance on harmful materials, while promoting sustainable practices such as water conservation and energy efficiency.
3	ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS	Ecolabels also encourage cost-effectiveness and economic sustainability, ensuring practices are financially viable for stakeholders.
4	CIRCULARITY REQUIREMENTS	Emphasizing durability, recycling, and reuse, ecolabels promote circular economy principles to minimize waste and maximize resource utilization.

Based on these requirements, the frequencies of the different categories of criteria in the sample of eco-labels are presented below. The figure highlights the strong presence of environmental and social criteria, compared to economic and circularity-related aspects (Figure 3).

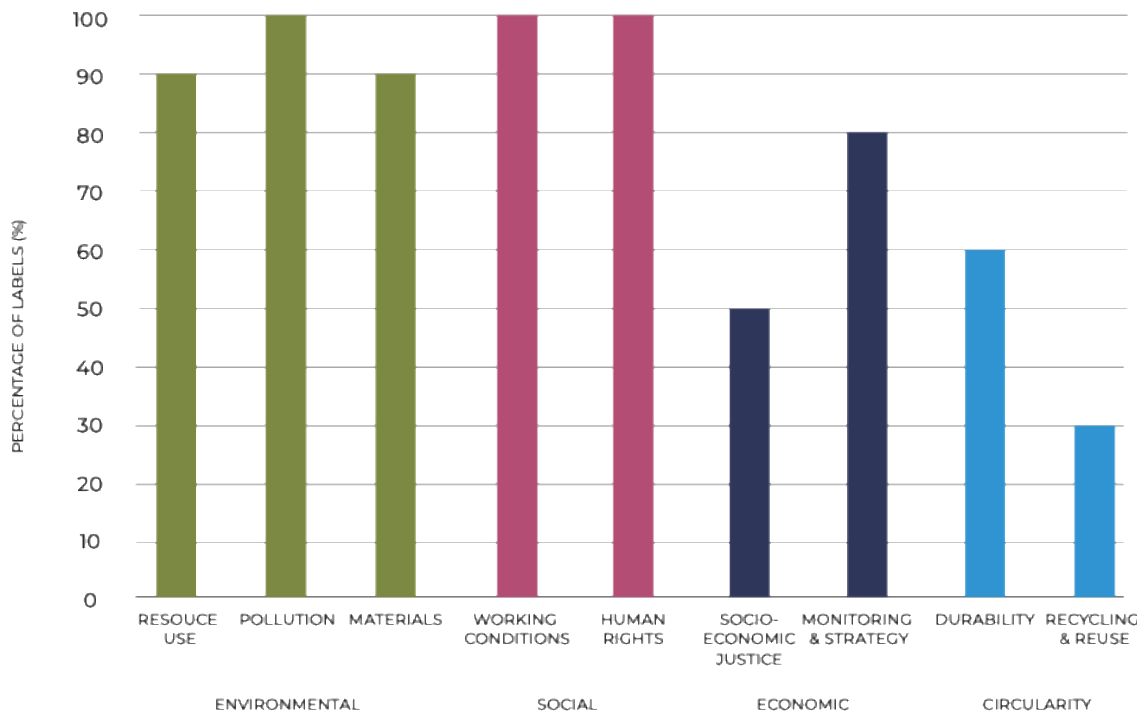


Figure 3 - Frequencies of the categories of criteria in the sample of eco-labels (n = 10) considering environmental, social, economic, and circularity dimensions (Prieto-Sandoval, V., Mejía-Villa, A., & Ormazabal, M. (2023))

Environmental Criteria and Lifecycle Stages

Ecolabels address environmental impacts throughout a product's lifecycle, promoting sustainability at every stage.

LIFECYCLE STAGES COVERED BY ECOLABELS

- Raw Material Extraction: Focuses on sustainable sourcing of natural and fossil-based materials, ensuring minimal environmental harm (e.g., GOTS, OCS certifications).
- Manufacturing and Production: Most ecolabel criteria emphasise sustainable textile production, addressing energy efficiency, chemical use, and supply chain traceability (e.g., GRS, RCS).
- End-of-Life Management: Recycling, disposal, and waste hierarchy principles are considered by fewer ecolabels, highlighting a need for broader adoption.

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL METRICS

- Reduced use of harmful chemicals and natural resources.
- Minimized energy consumption, waste generation, and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Improved water quality and effective wastewater management.

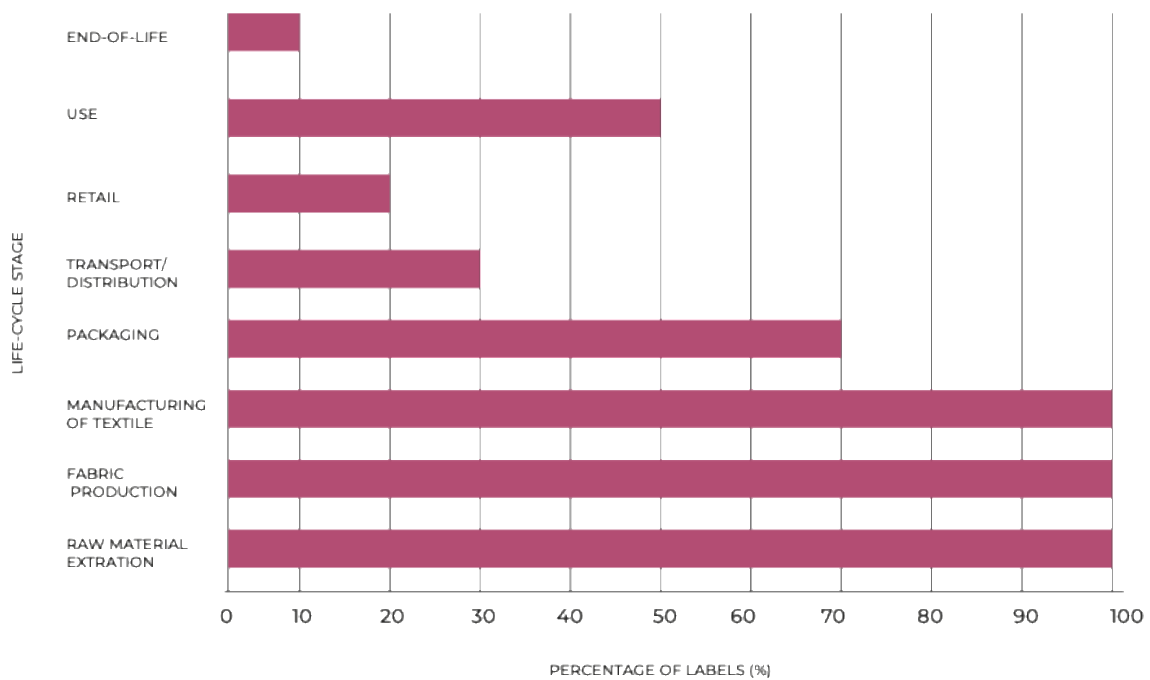


Figure 4 - Frequencies of life-cycle stages addressed by the sample of eco-labels (n = 10) (Prieto-Sandoval, V., Mejía-Villa, A., & Ormazabal, M. (2023))

These criteria cover the entire lifecycle of products, from raw material extraction to end-of-life processes, such as recycling and disposal. However, the majority of ecolabels concentrate on production stages, including textile manufacturing and supply chain traceability, with fewer standards addressing end-of-life management (Figure 4).

Ecolabels and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Ecolabels play a vital role in advancing global sustainability efforts, particularly in supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By promoting transparency, encouraging ethical labour practices, and fostering circular economy principles, ecolabels contribute directly to targets such as responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) and climate action (SDG 13). Many ecolabels now incorporate criteria focused on resource conservation, emissions reduction, and social equity, providing a comprehensive framework for sustainable development.

Future Trends and Innovations in Ecolabels

As consumer awareness of sustainability continues to grow, ecolabels are evolving to address emerging challenges and opportunities. Future trends include:

- Integration of Digital Tools: QR codes and mobile applications are increasingly being used to provide real-time information on a product's sustainability credentials, enhancing transparency and building consumer trust.
- Expansion into Emerging Industries: Ecolabels are being developed for sectors beyond traditional industries, including electronics and plastics.
- Focus on Social Sustainability: New certifications place greater emphasis on fair labour practices and community impact, broadening the scope of sustainability.

By upholding rigorous standards, ecolabels remain powerful instruments for enhancing transparency, promoting sustainable development, and enabling consumers to make choices that have a positive environmental impact.

Communication and Reporting

Effective communication and marketing are crucial for promoting sustainability, building consumer trust, and preventing misleading practices such as greenwashing. By employing clear storytelling, ensuring regulatory compliance, and providing transparent sustainability reporting, companies can engage stakeholders meaningfully and encourage positive environmental action (Figure 5).

STORYTELLING AND BRAND ENGAGEMENT

Storytelling is a powerful tool in sustainability marketing, enabling brands to forge emotional connections with consumers. By sharing authentic narratives about their environmental initiatives, companies can inspire action and strengthen trust. Examples include:

- Patagonia's Leadership: Yvon Chouinard, founder of Patagonia, transferred ownership of the company to combat the climate crisis, highlighting the brand's unwavering commitment to sustainability.
- Nike's "Move to Zero" Campaign: This initiative focuses on eliminating waste and reducing carbon emissions across the company's operations, demonstrating a proactive approach to environmental responsibility.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

Compliance with sustainability regulations is essential for ensuring accountability and transparency. Directive EU 2024/825 and Directive EU 2022/2464 (CSRD Directive) highlight the importance of corporate sustainability reporting, mandating that consumers have access to detailed information regarding the sustainability attributes and risks associated with products.

To support this, the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG), in collaboration with the European Commission, has developed new reporting standards. These frameworks aim to improve the quality and comparability of sustainability disclosures, addressing the growing demand for climate-related financial information as investors increasingly recognise the financial implications of environmental risks.

SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING IN THE TEXTILE SECTOR

In 2024, Portugal's textile and clothing sector published a comprehensive sustainability report in collaboration with 103 companies. The report presented key performance indicators (KPIs) covering environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices, showcasing progress in sustainable operations and enhanced transparency across the industry.

PREVENTING GREENWASHING

Greenwashing undermines consumer trust by promoting unverified or exaggerated claims about sustainability, giving stakeholders a misleading impression of a company's environmental performance. To combat this, businesses must ensure that all sustainability claims are accurate, transparent, and supported by verifiable data. Marketing strategies should align with recognised sustainability standards, ensuring consistency and credibility. Companies should also provide clear and accessible information about their environmental initiatives, enabling consumers to make informed and confident decisions. These practices not only prevent greenwashing but also build trust and reinforce a company's genuine commitment to sustainability.

COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION



Figure 5 - Components of effective sustainability communication.

UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

When it comes to driving sustainable change, one thing is clear: understanding consumer behaviour is strategic. Consumers' choices, values, and actions directly shape the demand for sustainable products and services. To encourage sustainable adoption, efforts must align with what matters most to people. Consumers prioritise quality, affordability, and ease of use - these are non-negotiables. By genuinely listening to their needs, we can design sustainability initiatives that resonate with their values and integrate seamlessly into daily life.

Science plays a crucial role in this process. It allows us to analyse behaviour, uncover motivations, and even anticipate trends. With these insights, campaigns can do more than inform - they can inspire meaningful change. Without understanding the consumer, attempts to shift behaviours towards sustainability are likely to fall short. The goal is not to impose sustainability, but to meet people where they are and guide them toward choices that benefit both themselves and the planet.

DRIVING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Understanding consumer behaviour is a cornerstone of promoting sustainable consumption. Research indicates that consumers often prioritise price and quality over sustainability, yet there is growing interest in repair, reuse, and recycling initiatives. Many consumers are willing to adopt more sustainable habits but feel constrained by a lack of knowledge about fashion's environmental impact. Studies show that 48.3% of consumers report insufficient awareness of sustainability issues in the textile industry, highlighting the need for targeted education and engagement.

Effective strategies, such as interactive campaigns and social media storytelling, can drive behaviour change by providing actionable information and incentives (Figure 6). For example, rewards such as discounts for recycling have been shown to motivate sustainable actions, with 61% of participants more likely to recycle when assured of responsible end-of-life processing. By aligning educational efforts with consumer values and addressing knowledge gaps, stakeholders can foster meaningful change and empower communities to embrace sustainability.

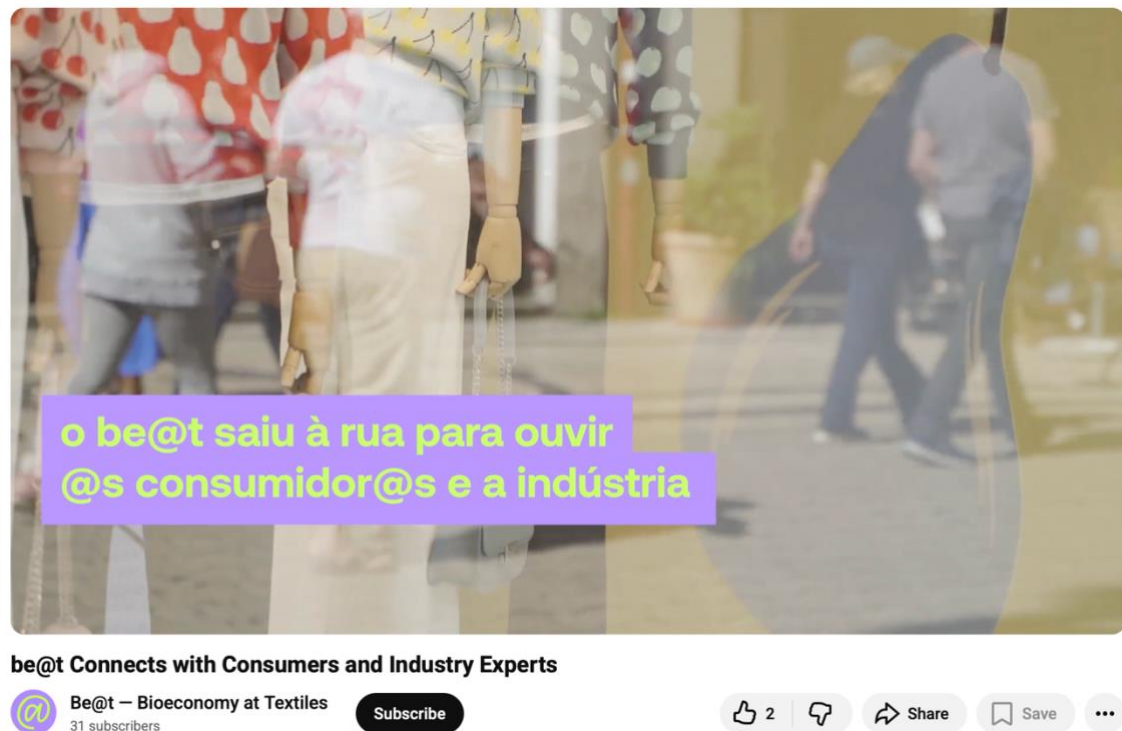


Figure 6 - be@t street campaign (<https://youtu.be/dEYtaksJ3jw>)

To effectively transform consumption patterns and achieve sustainability goals, it is essential to listen to consumers and incorporate their feedback into strategies and initiatives. Understanding their behaviours, motivations, and barriers enables organisations to design solutions that drive meaningful and lasting change.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE CHANGE

Empowering communities is vital for fostering collective action towards sustainability in the textile sector. By encouraging collaboration between schools, NGOs, and local groups, knowledge sharing and skill development can be tailored to the specific needs of each community. Interactive workshops, such as repair stations and creative upcycling events, provide hands-on learning experiences that actively engage participants in sustainable practices. These initiatives not only educate but also inspire a sense of collective responsibility, motivating individuals to take tangible actions, such as recycling, reducing consumption, and embracing sustainable alternatives. Digital platforms further amplify these efforts by connecting communities, sharing impactful stories, and promoting campaigns through social media and influencers. By creating spaces for reflection, skill-building, and collaborative action, empowered communities play a pivotal role in shaping a sustainable future.

Today's consumers are driving a sustainability revolution, placing greater importance on ethical practices, responsible sourcing, and product durability. This shift is clearly reflected in their purchasing preferences and behaviours. Over 77% of consumers consider ethical labour practices and social responsibility to be crucial factors in their buying decisions, while 74.5% prioritise sustainable materials, such as organic cotton. Remarkably, 72% of consumers prefer durability over cost or convenience when choosing products (Figure 7).

SUSTAINABLE USAGE PATTERNS

85.6% keep textiles for more than two years, reflecting longevity-focused habits; 68.6% follow care instructions, indicating awareness of maintenance's role in sustainability.



SUSTAINABLE USAGE PATTERNS

77% value ethical labor practices and social responsibility;
74.5% prioritize sustainable materials, e.g. organic cotton, recycled fibers;
72% emphasize product durability over cost and convenience.

END-OF-LIFE CHOICES

72.4% use textile recycling bins, while 40.8% repurpose damaged items;
39.3% are willing to pay for repairs if cost-effective.

Figure 7 - Understanding consumer priorities and actions

Sustainable behaviours also extend to product use. More than 85% of consumers retain textiles for over two years, demonstrating a commitment to longevity. Maintenance practices further reflect environmental consciousness, with 68.6% following care instructions to extend product life. End-of-life actions reinforce this trend: over 72% of consumers use recycling bins, and 40% creatively repurpose items. Repairability is also valued, as nearly 39% are willing to invest in repairs when economically feasible.

These findings illustrate a clear and growing consumer shift towards responsible consumption, highlighting the potential for the textile sector to engage and support sustainability-focused behaviours.

Addressing opportunities for deeper consumer engagement requires tapping into their willingness to learn and adapt. Over 91% of consumers want to better understand sustainable textile options, and 80% are open to modifying their consumption habits to protect the environment. This demonstrates a highly receptive audience eager for knowledge and actionable guidance.

Incentives play a critical role in encouraging sustainable behaviours. Assurance of responsible recycling motivates 61% of consumers to participate, while nearly 34% respond positively to rewards such as discounts for sustainable actions. Despite this willingness, a notable knowledge gap remains, with almost 48% of consumers reporting insufficient awareness of the environmental impact of fashion.

To empower consumers effectively, interactive campaigns - including workshops and hands-on experiences - provide practical, tangible learning opportunities. Amplifying these efforts through social media storytelling and influencer partnerships broadens reach and engagement. Additionally, reward programmes can reinforce eco-friendly behaviours, creating a virtuous cycle of education, action, and sustained commitment to sustainability (Figure 8).



WILLINGNESS TO LEARN AND CHANGE

91.5% want to learn more about sustainable textile options

80.5% are open to reducing or altering consumption habits for environmental protection.



INCENTIVES DRIVE RECYCLING

61% recycle if assured of a responsible end-of-life process

33.9% are motivated by rewards like discounts for sustainable actions.



KNOWLEDGE GAPS

48.3% feel they lack sufficient knowledge about fashion's environmental impact



CALL TO ACTION

Interactive campaigns and social media storytelling can educate and engage

Rewards boost recycling and sustainable practices

Figure 8 - Opportunities for engagement

THE CONSUMER-CAMPAIGN-SCIENCE ECOSYSTEM

This section presents the interconnected framework of the Consumer–Campaign–Science Ecosystem, a dynamic model central to advancing sustainable consumption practices. At the heart of this system is the consumer, whose behaviours, preferences, demographics, and purchasing patterns offer critical insights for developing effective strategies. These insights inform the design of targeted campaigns that utilise marketing techniques, branding, and social media platforms to foster meaningful engagement, influence decision-making, and inspire tangible, sustainable actions (Figure 9).

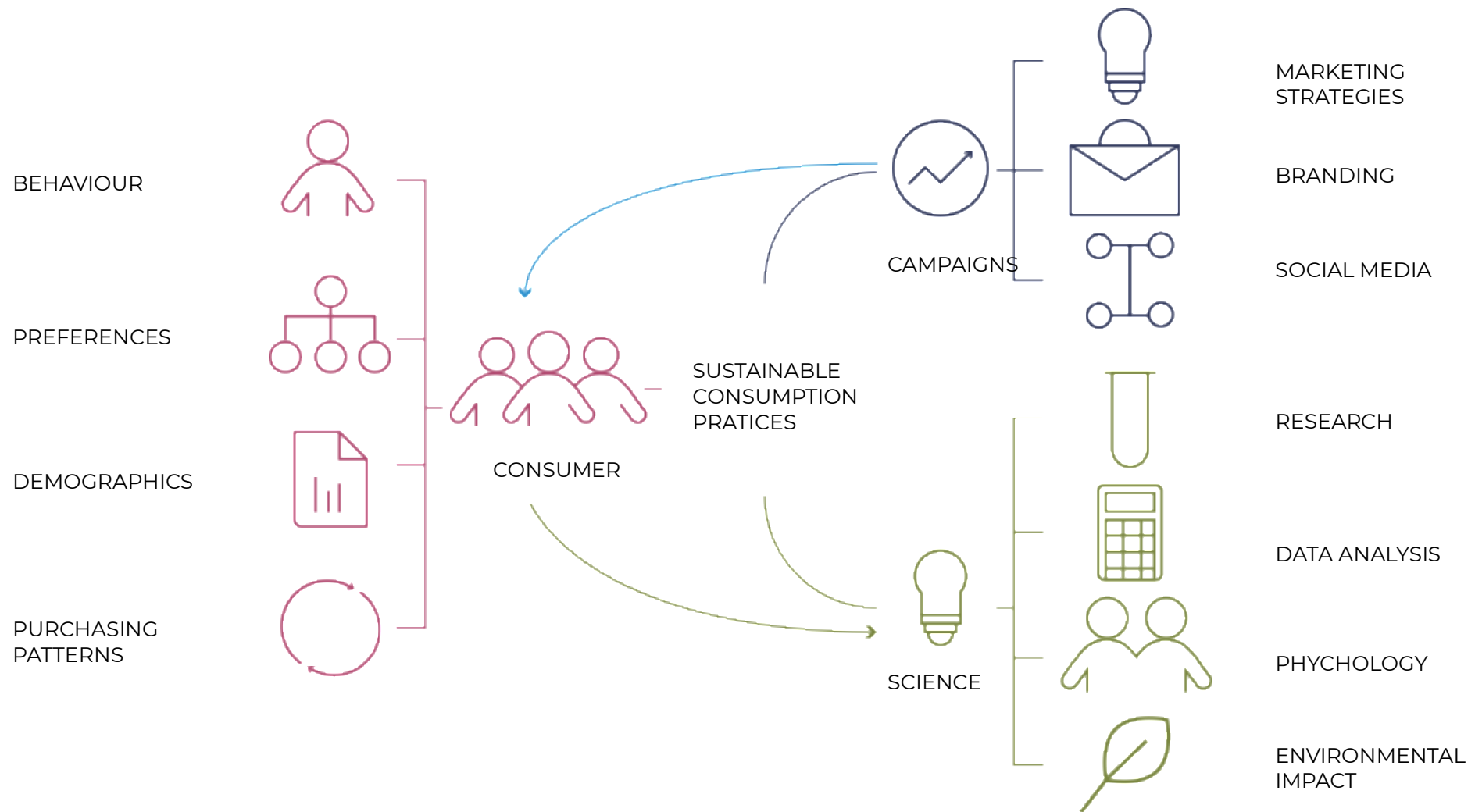


Figure 9 - The Consumer-Campaign-Science Ecosystem

The second pillar, campaigns, plays a pivotal role in engaging consumers. These initiatives are guided by consumer insights and employ creative storytelling, interactive experiences, and incentive-based approaches to encourage sustainable behaviours, including recycling, reuse, and conscious purchasing decisions.

The final pillar, science, ensures that all efforts are grounded in rigorous evidence. Research, data analysis, and insights from psychology and environmental impact studies validate and optimise the effectiveness of campaigns. By integrating scientific principles, the ecosystem establishes a robust foundation for addressing the environmental challenges associated with consumption patterns.

Together, these three components form a continuous feedback loop: consumer insights inform campaigns; campaigns engage and inspire consumers; and science validates and refines these interventions. This holistic approach not only drives behaviour change but also supports long-term progress, offering a scalable model for promoting environmentally conscious consumption practices. Through the synergy of these pillars, the ecosystem demonstrates how a collaborative, interdisciplinary framework can tackle sustainability challenges with measurable impact and purpose.

Consumer Engagement and Education Campaigns

Driving sustainable consumption depends on providing individuals with practical skills, accessible information, and opportunities for collective action. Through hands-on learning, digital engagement, and community-based initiatives, organisations can transform awareness into meaningful, lasting behavioural change.

Hands-On Learning for Consumer Impact

Practical, hands-on learning is a highly effective approach to inspiring and empowering consumers to adopt sustainable consumption practices. Workshops and interactive sessions, such as repair stations and upcycling events, provide participants with tangible skills and actionable insights, bridging the gap between awareness and meaningful action.

Repair workshops, for example, teach basic garment repair techniques, enabling individuals to extend the lifespan of their clothing and reduce textile waste. Participants can learn to mend tears, replace buttons, or alter garments for a better fit, fostering a culture of reuse and durability. Upcycling events, meanwhile, encourage creativity by transforming old or discarded materials into new, functional items, demonstrating how waste can become a valuable resource.

These experiential learning opportunities not only educate but also inspire participants to integrate sustainable practices into their daily lives. They cultivate a sense of community, allowing participants to share ideas, collaborate on projects, and collectively embrace the principles of sustainability.

For trainers, incorporating hands-on activities into workshops enhances engagement and knowledge retention. By combining practical exercises with theoretical knowledge, trainers can deliver a comprehensive learning experience that motivates lasting behavioural change. Interactive elements also provide a supportive environment to address common barriers, such as limited knowledge or skills, enabling participants to adopt sustainable practices confidently.

Using Digital Platforms to Educate and Influence

Digital platforms play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable consumption by effectively reaching and engaging diverse audiences. Through social media, online campaigns, and interactive content, organisations can disseminate information, inspire behaviour change, and foster collective action for sustainability.

- Social Media Campaigns: Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter offer powerful avenues to share sustainability messages. Campaigns featuring relatable storytelling, impactful visuals, and user-generated content create deeper connections with audiences. Hashtags and challenges, for example, encourage consumers to share their own sustainable actions, amplifying the campaign's reach and fostering a sense of community.
- Influencer Collaborations: Partnering with influencers who advocate sustainability can significantly increase campaign visibility. Influencers provide authenticity and trust, making it easier to engage followers in practices such as recycling, upcycling, or reducing consumption. Stories, videos, and live sessions offer interactive ways to demonstrate sustainable habits.

- Educational Content: Blogs, e-books, and webinars provide in-depth insights into the environmental impact of consumer behaviours while offering actionable tips for improvement. Tutorials on repair, DIY projects, and upcycling inspire audiences to take practical, hands-on action.
- Interactive Tools: Quizzes, calculators (e.g., carbon footprint tools), and gamified apps help users understand their environmental impact and learn practical steps to reduce it. These tools make sustainability both engaging and actionable.
- Multi-Platform Strategies: Integrating multiple digital channels creates cohesive campaigns with broader reach. For example, initiatives like Faça a Moda Circular combined Instagram, newsletters, and in-store activations to promote sustainable consumption and garment recycling effectively.

By harnessing digital platforms, organisations can educate and influence consumers effectively, creating scalable campaigns that drive meaningful and lasting sustainable behaviours.

Empowering Communities for Collective Change

Empowering communities is a cornerstone of fostering collective action for sustainability. By collaborating with schools, NGOs, local organisations, and community groups, initiatives can create spaces for knowledge sharing, skill development, and community-driven innovation. These efforts cultivate a sense of shared responsibility and encourage collective solutions to environmental challenges.

- Workshops and Events: Interactive activities such as repair stations, upcycling sessions, and community forums provide hands-on learning opportunities. Participants gain practical skills, such as repairing garments or repurposing textile waste, while fostering collaboration and creativity.

- Local Partnerships: Working with community leaders, schools, and local organisations amplifies the reach of sustainability campaigns. Local engagement ensures initiatives are culturally relevant and aligned with the community's needs and values.
- Education and Advocacy: Public discussions, artistic projects, and awareness campaigns promote understanding of sustainability issues and inspire action. Educational efforts equip individuals with the tools to reduce waste, recycle effectively, and make informed consumption choices.
- Digital Engagement: social media and online platforms extend the impact of community initiatives. Campaigns can connect like-minded individuals, share success stories, and encourage collective action. Hashtags, challenges, and digital storytelling create a ripple effect, inspiring broader participation.

Empowering communities transforms individuals into active agents of change. By fostering collaboration, building capacity, and encouraging local action, these initiatives create resilient networks that collectively advance sustainability.

This section is informed by insights and materials developed within the be@t project. CITEVE

Empowering Communities for Collective Change

Sustainability is a shared responsibility that requires collective action from individuals, communities, and organisations. The concept of “Together Towards Sustainability” highlights the power of collaboration in addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable practices at every level of society.

- Collective Action for Shared Goals: By uniting diverse stakeholders—governments, businesses, educators, and consumers—sustainability efforts can achieve broader impact. Community clean-ups, recycling initiatives, and public awareness campaigns demonstrate how collective action amplifies the effectiveness of individual contributions.
- Empowering Through Education: Knowledge is a cornerstone of sustainable change. Workshops, campaigns, and interactive learning opportunities equip individuals with the tools to make informed decisions, from reducing waste to embracing circular economy principles. Sharing knowledge fosters a culture of responsibility and commitment to sustainable practices.
- Building Sustainable Habits: Small, consistent actions by individuals can create ripple effects with significant environmental benefits. Practices such as reusing materials, conserving energy, and supporting ethical products collectively reduce ecological footprints.
- Leveraging Innovation: Digital platforms, emerging technologies, and creative strategies enhance engagement and reach. Campaigns using social media, gamification, and influencer partnerships inspire wider participation and demonstrate that sustainable choices are accessible to all.
- Commitment to a Shared Future: Sustainability requires long-term dedication and a vision of collective progress. Through partnerships and shared accountability, individuals and organisations can align their efforts toward achieving global sustainability goals.

Guidelines for Fostering Collective Sustainability

- Encourage Collaboration: Facilitate partnerships between diverse stakeholders to create inclusive, impactful initiatives.
- Promote Small Actions: Demonstrate how everyday choices, when adopted collectively, can drive meaningful change.
- Incorporate Innovation: Leverage digital tools and creative campaigns to engage and inspire audiences in sustainability efforts.
- Celebrate Success: Share stories of collective achievements to motivate continued participation and build momentum.
- Focus on Long-Term Impact: Emphasise sustainability as an ongoing commitment, rather than a one-off effort.

This section is informed by insights and materials developed within the be@t project. CITEVE

Case Studies and Best Practices

This section provides regions with the opportunity to showcase case studies and best practices tailored to their specific objectives and contexts. By presenting these examples, trainers can illustrate the practical application of the concepts discussed, inspiring participants to adopt sustainable practices and replicate successful initiatives within their own settings.

BE@T – BIOECONOMY AT TEXTILES

The textile industry is undergoing significant transformations, driven by global initiatives and collaborative efforts focused on sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness. CITEVE (Technological Centre for the Textile and Clothing Industries of Portugal) has been at the forefront of these developments, leading numerous impactful projects and partnerships. The following case studies showcase CITEVE's role in advancing the textile sector through innovative and sustainable solutions.

The "Bioeconomy at Textiles" project is structured around four pillars: biomaterials, sustainability, circularity, and society. It emphasizes the integration of bio-based materials and processes to reduce environmental impact and enhance economic sustainability. The Society pillar specifically focuses on raising awareness among consumers and all stakeholders within the sector. Efforts under this pillar include delivering targeted awareness campaigns, providing relevant information to foster informed decision-making, promoting repair and reuse practices, and strengthening the international visibility of the "Responsible Textiles From Portugal" brand.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS	BEST PRACTICES
Increased consumer awareness of sustainability challenges in fashion by providing clear, actionable information on resource use, production impacts, and end-of-life considerations through in-store campaigns, interactive workshops, and systematic data collection.	Provided factual, transparent, and accessible communication on environmental impacts to guide responsible purchasing decisions and promote sustainable behaviours such as reuse and recycling.
Enabled consumers and industry stakeholders to access verified sustainability information through the development and dissemination of the Textile Sustainability Index, supported by workshops, the Digital Product Passport platform, and an annual sector report.	Integrated standardized sustainability metrics into digital tools and reporting platforms to promote transparency and support informed, evidence-based decision-making.
Enhanced the sector's capacity to implement eco-design and eco-engineering principles through interactive initiatives, including designathons, seminars, and design-thinking workshops.	Used collaborative, creativity-driven learning formats to equip designers and product teams with practical skills for developing circular, low-impact products and processes.
Enhanced national and international recognition of Portugal's textile value chain by promoting the 'Responsible Textiles from Portugal' brand through networking events, open days, ambassador programmes, and international exhibitions.	Implement a strategic branding and visibility programme that connects project outcomes to the sector's identity, positioning the industry as a leader in sustainable bioeconomy innovation.
Enhanced public understanding of the BE@T project through coordinated communication across multiple channels, including a website, social media campaigns, newsletters, infographics, podcasts, and a dedicated series.	Implement a multi-channel communication strategy that ensures consistent and accessible dissemination of project outcomes while maximising societal engagement across diverse audiences.

Website: <https://bioeconomy-at-textiles.com/>

Conclusions

The handbook's central conclusions and key points can be summarised as:

- Ecolabels are essential tools for strengthening transparency, standardising sustainability claims, and empowering consumers and businesses to make informed, trustworthy choices in a market increasingly shaped by environmental responsibility.
- Clear, evidence-based sustainability communication—grounded in regulation, credible storytelling, and transparent reporting—is vital for building trust, preventing greenwashing, and enabling stakeholders to engage meaningfully with environmental action.
- A deep understanding of consumer motivations allows the design of targeted strategies that bridge knowledge gaps, inspire behavioural change, and align sustainability initiatives with genuine consumer values and priorities.
- Hands-on learning, digital engagement, and community empowerment form a powerful trio that drives lasting sustainable consumption by making knowledge accessible and actionable.
- Real-world examples demonstrate how innovative, collaborative approaches—such as bio-based solutions, circularity pilots, and community engagement models—translate sustainability principles into measurable impact across the textile value chain.



PreVEnting and ReDucing the tEXtiles waste mountain in the MED area

Project overview

The VERDEinMED project is an initiative funded by the Interreg Euro-MED programme to promote the circular economy in the textile sector. VERDEinMED is a thematic project that will provide a support service to boost circularity in the textile value chain for businesses, consumers, policy makers and academia.

The project is part of the Innovative Sustainable Economy mission of the Euro-MED programme, which seeks cooperation between Mediterranean countries to promote smarter and greener business models. VERDEinMED project brings together 10 partners and 15 associated entities from Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Tunisia, Turkey, Belgium and Lebanon



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Consortium

-CERTH – The Centre for Research & Technology, Hellas
-Bulgarian Fashion Association
-CITEVE
-Confindustria
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