



Open letter

Unique opportunities to unlock the potential of social economy in making the green transition a just one.

11th March 2024

Dear European Union policy makers,

As you revise the European Union's circular economy policies and legislation, you have a unique opportunity to advance sustainable resource management, nature conservation and climate neutrality as well as the fight against poverty, inequality and social exclusion. This opportunity to simultaneously advance environmental and social objectives currently lies in protecting and enhancing social economy enterprises' vital role in addressing the problem of textile waste.

Alongside [EU institutions](#), the [OECD](#) and other [international institutions](#) we recognise social economy enterprises as important social economy actors and circular economy pioneers. They are the only actor in the textile value chain that prioritises local reuse, and they showcase a unique business model that promotes community wellbeing, active citizenship and a sufficiency approach at the same time.

By prolonging textiles' life cycle these social economy actors reduce both the overall quantity of textile waste and the cumulative environmental impact of producing new garments. They do so while setting examples for a just transition by providing inclusive local jobs and developing crucial green skills.

In the area of textiles alone, social enterprises in Europe [create 20-35 jobs per 1,000 tonnes](#) collected for reuse. Through these jobs, they ensure labour market integration of people with disabilities, members of the Roma community, refugees, people experiencing homelessness and others at risk of poverty, social exclusion or long-term unemployment. They also offer affordable second-hand clothing and repair services in their communities, thereby mitigating the impact of the cost-of-living crises and addressing material poverty.

Therefore, the European Union should use the ongoing revision of the Waste Framework Directive (WFD) and the upcoming Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Schemes for textiles to preserve and enhance the social economy's vital role in driving forward a more inclusive and sustainable textile value chain and society at large.

The European Commission's proposal for the WFD revision included several positive provisions regarding the involvement of social enterprises in the re-use and preparing for re-use of textiles. These were taken on board, with improvements, by the European Parliament's ENVI committee. Yet, a lot is still at stake as the legislative process moves toward the EP plenary vote, the Council's general approach and the trilogues.

Certain commercial operators and their associations have pushed back against specific provisions on social economy actors. They disregard the distinct nature and ethos of the social economy and the higher upfront cost compared to commercial actors.

To actually “level the playing field” and give social economy a chance to live up to its potential in making the green transition a just one in the area of textiles, we jointly call upon EU policymakers to:

- Uphold all positive provisions on the social enterprises’ role in the collection and management of used and waste textiles that the European Commission included in its proposal for a WFD revision;
- Grant decision-making power for social enterprises, alongside municipalities, in the Extended Producer Responsibility schemes’ governance;
- Require that Extended Producer Responsibility fees cover all costs associated with re-use and preparing for re-use activities carried out by social enterprises, including the management of residual waste;
- Ensure that social enterprises maintain ownership over the used and waste textiles they collect.

Strengthening the role of social economy in textile reuse and waste management is an environmental imperative as well as a catalyst for inclusive economic and social development. We count upon you and everyone else in positions of power across the EU to make this a reality through the ongoing legislative processes and beyond.

Sincerely,

Neva Nahtigal, Director, Reuse and Recycling European Union Social Enterprises (RREUSE)

Françoise Bonnet, Secretary General, Association of Cities and Regions for Sustainable Resource Management (ACR+)

Judith Vorbach, Head of office, AK Europa

Maria Nyman, Secretary General, Caritas Europa

Chiara Martinelli, Director, Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe

Agnès Mathis, Director, Cooperatives Europe

Carina Aaltonen, Chair, Emmaus Europe

Justin Wilkes, Executive Director, Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS)

Wieteke Dupain, CEO, Euclid Network - the European Social Enterprise Network

Heather Roy, Secretary General, Eurodiaconia

Juliana Wahlgren, Director, European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)

Thomas Bignal, Secretary General, European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)

Diana Dovgan, Secretary General, European confederation of industrial and service cooperatives (CECOP)

Patrick ten Brink, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Daniel Sorrosal, Secretary General, European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks and Financiers (FEBEA)

Patrizia Bussi, Director, European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE)

Jamen Gabriela Hrabaňová, Director, European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network

Oliver Greenfield, Convenor, Green Economy Coalition

Julia Kondur, President, International Charitable Roma Women Fund “Chiricli”

Fernando Rodríguez-Mata, Director General, New European Reuse Alliance

Violeta Naydenova, Open Society Foundations

Rob Buurman, Director, Recycling Netwerk Benelux

Sarah de Heusch, Director, Social Economy Europe

Laura de Bonfils, Secretary General, Social Platform

Mikael Leyi, Secretary General, SOLIDAR/SOLIDAR Foundation

William Wauters, President, Textiles With Ethical Sustainability and Solidarity (TESS GEIE)

Aline Maigret, Head of Policy, Zero Waste Europe

## NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Matthias Neitsch, Director, Re-Use Austria, Austria

Gerald Pfiffinger, Director, Umweltdachverband, Austria

Eva Verraes, Director HERW!N, Belgium

Luc Deriez, Coordinator, Repair Together ASBL, Belgium

Kira Van den Ende, Policy Expert Circular Economy, Bond Beter Leefmilieu, Belgium

Ivan Božić, Manager, Social cooperative Humana Nova, Croatia

Zrinka Jakl, Managing Board President, Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development Sunce, Croatia

Jelena Silajdžić, Director, Slovo 21, z.s., Czech Republic

Anne Seiersen, CEO, Kooperationen - Danish Cooperative Employers' Organisation, Denmark

Erno Kääriäinen, CEO, Elävä Foundation, Finland

Harri Hakola, Executive Director, Fida International, Finland

Kimmo Kumlander, CEO, Finnish Center of Expertise for Social Enterprises, Finland

Juha Lehtikuja, Chair, Recycling Centers of Finland Association, and Executive Director, Helsinki Metropolitan Area Reuse Centre, Finland

Tuovi Kurttio, Chair, RENET Reuse network Finland

Eeva Salmi, Director, Silta-Valmennusyhdistys, Finland

Virve Groning, Managing director, U-landshjälp från Folk till Folk i Finland sr, Finland

Julia Faure, President, En Mode Climat & Co-President, Mouvement Impact France

Sabine Rolf, Managing Director, Re-Use Deutschland e.V., Germany

Thomas Ahlmann, Managing Director, Fairwertung, Germany

György Szabó, Zero Waste Program Manager, Humusz Szövetség, Hungary

Erika Saly, President, Hungarian Society for Environmental Education (HSEE), Hungary

Emma Kavanagh, National Network Executive, Community Resources Network Ireland

Trevor Anderson, Trading Director, Oxfam Ireland

Linda Ward, Secretary, Charity Retail Ireland

Claire Downey, Research and Policy Director, Rediscovery Centre, Ireland

Chris MM Gorodn, CEO, Irish Social Enterprise Network, Ireland

Rossano Ercolini, President, Zero Waste Italy

Daniilo Boni, National Coordinator Reuse and Repair, Italy

Giorgio Rosso, waste treatment director, La Città Verde SCSarl Italy

Potito Ammirati, President, Associazione Rete 14 Luglio, Italy

Andrea Minutolo, Head of the national science office, Legambiente, Italy

Rachel Heijne, Director, Branchevereniging Kringloop Nederland (BKN), The Netherlands

Corine van de Burgt, Director, De Omslag, The Netherlands

Antoine Heideveld, Director, Het Groene Brein (Network of scientists for a circular Economy), The Netherlands

Auke van der Hoek, Director, KringCoop, de kringloop coöperatie, The Netherlands

Jessica de Ruijter, Director, National Network of Social Cooperatives, LaNSCO, The Netherlands

Stefan Panhuijsen, Director, Social Enterprise NL, The Netherlands

Janusz Paszkowski, President, National Auditing Union of Worker Cooperatives (NAUWC), Poland

Susana Fonseca, Vice-President, ZERO, Portugal

Damien Thiery, Managing Director, Asociatia Ateliere Fara Frontiere, Romania

Alexandra Ghenea, Vice President Ecoteca, Romania

Angela Achitei, President RISE Romania & ADV Romania

Katja Sreš, President, Ekologi brez meja, Slovenia

Carmen Aja Ruiz, Director, Asociación española de recuperadores de la Economía social y solidaria, AERESS, Spain

Rafael López García, Presidente, Federación de Asociaciones Empresariales de Empresas de Inserción, Faedei, Spain

Lisete Gelves Jaimes, Ecolabora Cantabria SLU, Spain

Julio Cortés Rodríguez, Director, Tiebel Servicios de inserción, Spain

Marc Pintor González, Director, Solidança Treball EI SL, Spain

José María González Bengoechea, Secretary of the Sustainable Life Foundation, Spain

Rosaura Serentill Renom, President, Associació de centres i serveis de Reutilització de Catalunya, aREca, Spain

Luis Jorge Sanchez García, Director, Ataretaco, Spain

Maitè Buil Blasco & Patricia Calvo Prieto, Co-directors, Aviva Spain

Gonzalo Revilla Parody, Coordinador de Traperos de Emaús Huelva, Spain

Luis Miguel Jurado, President, Spanish Confederation of Workers' Cooperatives (COCETA), Spain

Julio Cortés Rodríguez, President, Red de Economía Alternativa y Solidaria de Aragón, Spain

Eduardo Javier Calderón Piñero, Administrador, Isonorte Empleo S.L.U., Spain

Maria Suau Font, Environmental Director, Fundació Deixalles, Mallorca-Balearic Islands, Spain

Maria Jaume Jaume, Insertion Company Director, Deixalles Serveis Ambientals EI, S.L, Mallorca-Balearic Islands, Spain

Pilar Rodríguez Sánchez, Presidenta, Porsiete, Spain

Jordi López Bezunartea, Technical secretary, Xarxa d'Economia Alternativa i Solidària de les Illes Balears (REAS Balears), Balearic Islands - Spain

Igor Arbatov, Chairman of the Board, Future Development Agency, Ukraine

