



Cities and consumption: Local solutions to curb textile waste and combat fast fashion

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Introduction

The global fashion industry has seen unprecedented growth in recent decades; global fibre production has more than doubled since the start of the millennium,¹ leading to a significant waste challenge, with the average EU citizen discarding 16 kg of textile waste each year—a total of 6.95 million tonnes in 2020. The average capture rate of textile waste is only 12%, while the remainder flows into mixed municipal waste and is either landfilled or incinerated.² Yet production continues to accelerate at a rapid pace.

Fast fashion, characterised by rapidly changing trends and low prices, has fundamentally altered consumer behaviour. This surge in consumption has created significant environmental and social challenges, such as concerns about labour rights, pollution, and impacts from fibre production and manufacturing. Recent research has shed light on ‘sustainable consumption corridors’³ for fashion and found that only around five new garments per person per year represent a sustainable level of consumption.⁴

Particularly at the local level, cities are grappling with mounting textile waste and the subsequent economic cost and environmental pollution. Moreover, the 2025 EU obligation to separately collect textile waste⁵ presents a significant challenge given the current insufficient textile collection, sorting, reuse, and recycling capacities in much of Europe.

This paper looks at the measures that cities, important hubs for catalysing change and influencing citizen behaviour, can take to tackle the challenges of fast fashion. To address these challenges, some cities are beginning to explore the concept of sufficiency. Sufficiency can be defined as a set of measures and practices aimed at reducing absolute resource and energy consumption while maintaining human well-being within planetary boundaries.⁶ This approach goes beyond efficiency improvements, which often lead to rebound effects, and instead focuses on changing consumption patterns and social norms. In doing so, we ensure that the way we consume and produce products fits within the ecological ceiling of our planet’s finite resources while meeting a minimum threshold of social and wellbeing indicators.

¹ Statista (2024) [Textile fiber production worldwide 1975–2030](#).

² European Environmental Agency (2024) [Management of used and waste textiles in Europe’s circular economy](#).

³ i: Defining consumption corridors enables humanity to live well within planetary boundaries. While lower limits of consumption ensures minimal needs satisfaction for all, upper limits to consumption are equally essential, especially in those domains where limits enhance rather than undermine essential freedoms. See: Fuchs, Sahakian, Gumbert, Di Giulio, Maniates, Lorek, Graf (2021) [Consumption Corridors. Living a Good Life within Sustainable Limits](#).

⁴ HotorCool (2022) [Unfit, unfair, unfashionable](#).

⁵ [Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste](#).

⁶ IPCC (2022) [Climate Change 2022. Mitigation of Climate Change. Summary for Policymakers](#), p. 35.

To introduce sufficiency in the textiles sector and counter the sector's negative externalities, municipalities have several key levers at their disposal to address fashion overconsumption:

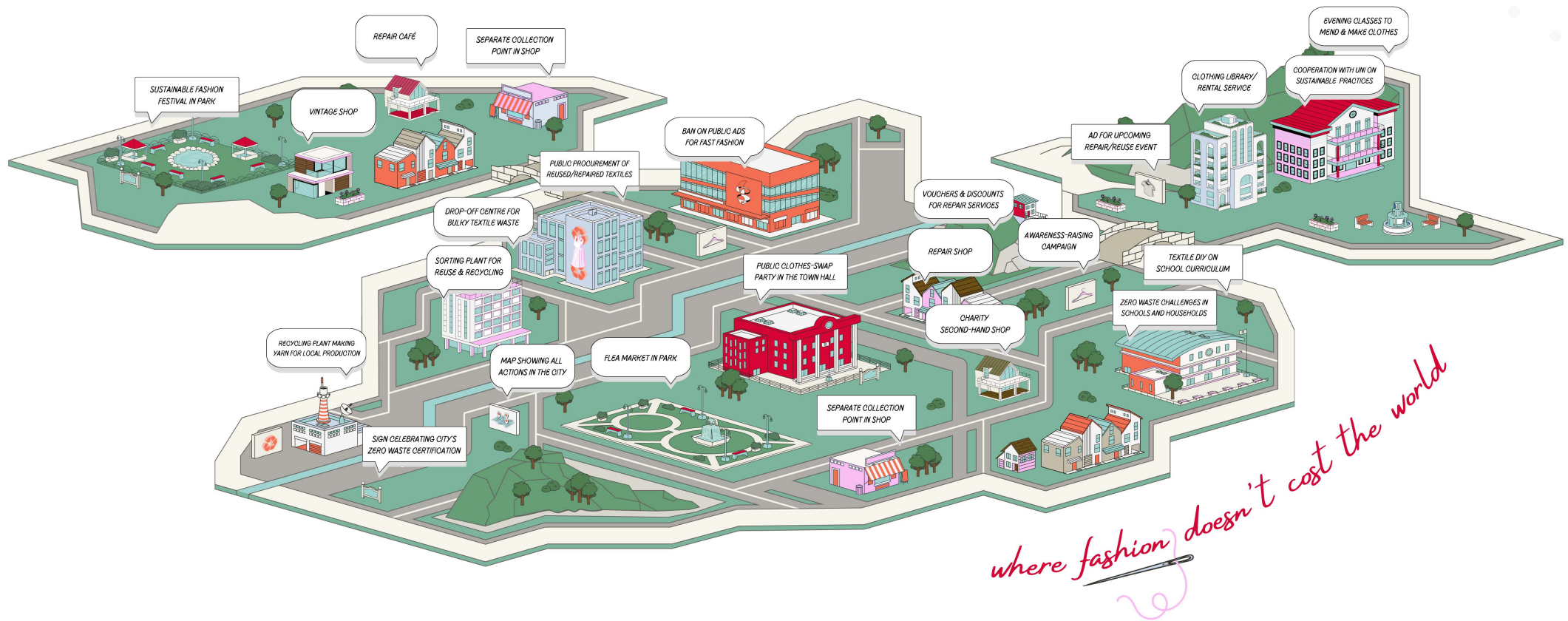
1. Influencing purchasing behaviour and restricting advertisements;
2. Extending the lifespan of fashion items by promoting repair and reuse initiatives;
3. Raising awareness to promote behavioural change (through events, festivals, educational campaigns, etc).

A fourth channel municipalities can pursue is to collectively advocate for broader policy changes at national, European, and international levels—for example, calling on the policymakers to legislate on fast fashion.

This introduction to textile sufficiency at the local level explores these strategies, presenting case studies and practical examples from cities around Europe that are taking innovative approaches to tackle the challenges posed by fast fashion. By implementing measures that promote more sufficiency-based behaviours, cities can play a crucial role in accelerating our societal transition towards more sustainable and equitable fashion consumption patterns, ultimately contributing to waste reduction, a just transition, and greater environmental protection.

Figure 1: Map of local sufficiency solutions

Greetings from **SUFFICIENCYCITY**



What is textile sufficiency, and why should cities care about it?

Textiles and fast fashion—an ever-growing challenge for cities

There are already enough clothes in the world to dress the next six generations,⁷ so what is driving this unnecessary growth in the sector? In the EU, clothing prices decreased by 30% between 1996 and 2018 relative to inflation. This development was enabled by the increasing use of cheap, synthetic fibres from fossil resources⁸ and the relocation of production to jurisdictions with poor labour and environmental standards.⁹ The subsequent rise of fast-changing fashion trends¹⁰ resulted in so-called 'style consumption'¹¹ rather than consumption to meet physical needs. The current dominant business model in the fashion industry relies on persuading consumers to continuously follow and buy new fashion trends. Constant digital advertising and the widespread use of social media have perpetuated this trend more recently.¹² Evidence shows that in 63% of cases, clothes are disposed of due to poor fit and perceived value rather than the quality of the garment.¹³

A clear-cut definition of a complex phenomenon like fast fashion is challenging; it can roughly be defined 'as cheap, trendy clothing that samples ideas from the catwalk or celebrity culture and turns them into garments at breakneck speed to meet consumer demand'. The idea is to get the newest styles on the market as fast as possible, so shoppers can snap them up while they are still at the height of their popularity and then discard them after a few wears.¹⁴ The European Parliament has called on the Commission and EU countries to adopt a clear definition of the term based on 'high volumes of lower quality garments at low price levels'.¹⁵

At the local level, high levels of consumption create a staggering waste challenge. The EU-27 generated an estimated total of 6.95 million tonnes of textile waste in 2020—around 16 kg per person. Of this, only 4.4 kg were collected separately for reuse and recycling, while the rest ended up in the mixed municipal waste stream.¹⁶ From 2025 onwards, municipalities across the EU will be obliged to separately collect textile waste, a daunting task since today, most textile waste is disposed of in mixed waste, and the collection, sorting, reuse, and recycling capacities are currently insufficient to cope with this volume.¹⁷

⁷ Anders Wijkman, Earth4All contributor and member of the International Resource Panel, and Janez Potochnik, Co-chair, International Resource Panel, Earth4All contributor (2023) [A circular economy isn't enough – we also need to consume less](#).

⁸ European Commission (2022) [EU strategy for sustainable and circular textiles](#).

⁹ Zero Waste Europe (2023) [Beyond Circular Fashion](#).

¹⁰ Fletcher, Kate (2014) *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles*. (second edition). Earthscan, London.

¹¹ Cho, Erin, Shipra Gupta, and Youn-Kyung Kim (2015) [Style Consumption: Its Drivers and Role in Sustainable Apparel Consumption](#). *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 39 (6): 661–69.

¹² WRAP (2019) [Consumer Research for ECAP 2016–2019](#).

¹³ Clothing research, Kirsi Laitala and Ingun Grimstad Klepp (2022) [Review of clothing disposal reasons](#).

¹⁴ good on you (2023) [What is fast fashion?](#)

¹⁵ European Parliament (2023) [Ending fast fashion: tougher rules to fight excessive production and consumption](#).

¹⁶ European Environmental Agency (2024) [Management of used and waste textiles in Europe's circular economy](#).

¹⁷ European Environmental Agency (2024) Press Release: [Most textile waste goes unsorted in Europe](#).

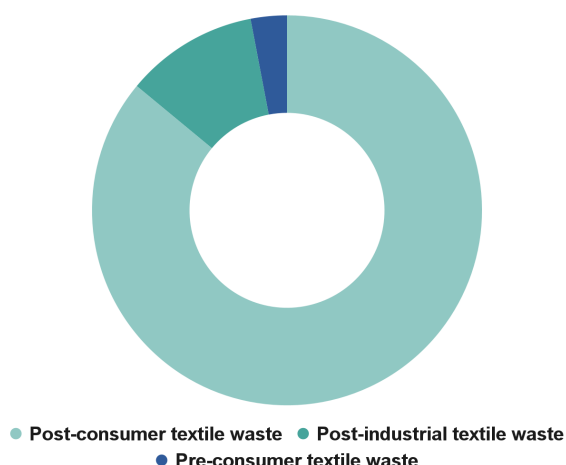


Figure 2: Textile waste generated in the EU in 2019¹⁸

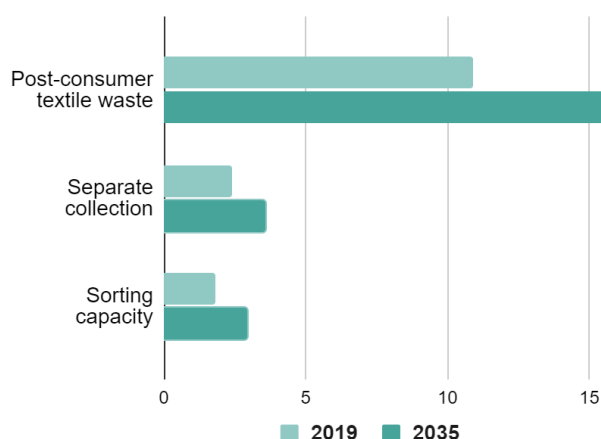


Figure 3: Post-consumer textile waste generation compared to collection and sorting capacity in million tonnes (Mt) for 2019 and projected for 2035¹⁹

To alleviate the enormous environmental burden of the textile sector and address local waste challenges, municipalities hold a number of key levers to reduce textile consumption, and in particular, fast fashion. Figure 3 shows that even with the expected extra capacity for reuse and recycling in the coming years, the share of textiles managed by these methods is predicted to increase only marginally between 2019 and 2035. Exports will still make up a significant share due to the saturation of European reuse markets, making exports the only profitable option for many collectors.

¹⁸ JRC (2023) [Techno-scientific assessment of the management options for used and waste textiles in the European Union](#).

¹⁹ JRC (2023) [Techno-scientific assessment of the management options for used and waste textiles in the European Union](#).

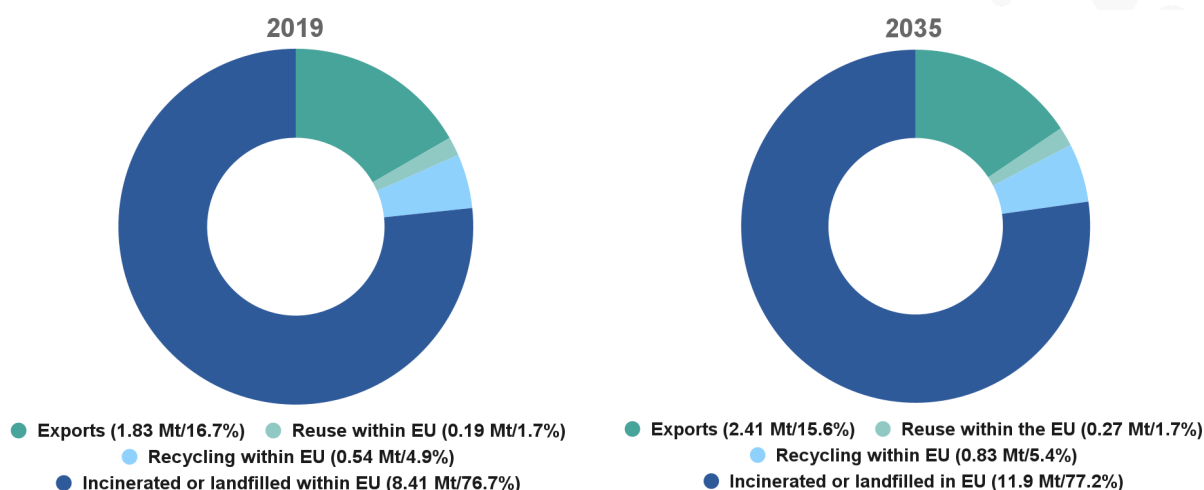


Figure 4: Estimations of end-of-life-destinations for post-consumer textile waste in the EU-27 for 2019 and projected for 2035 in million tonnes (Mt)²⁰

Simply increasing the capacity to collect and sort waste would, therefore, be a futile task, as long as the overall volumes of production and consumption keep growing. Instead, directly introducing local measures and supporting external initiatives that help foster a culture of sharing, repairing, reusing, and upcycling can make a real difference to discouraging overconsumption and production of fast fashion.

On top of the waste challenge, hazardous chemicals in textiles, such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), have been used in textiles for decades to repel water, oil, and dirt. The use of PFAS is concerning because of their persistence and their negative impact on the environment and human health. Since textiles are one of the biggest sources of PFAS pollution in Europe,²¹ reducing clothing consumption can contribute to alleviating the burden of chemical pollution on human health, a much under-reported threat posed by the overproduction-based model of today's economy.

After working on a comparative analysis of textile systems in different cities, some clear parallels are emerging: citizens are still not aware about how their garments are made. They are completely disconnected from production, despite the best efforts of campaigners. This enables the staggering levels of consumption we see today. On the other side, downstream, post-consumer textile systems further enable consumption. Collected second-hand textiles are often shipped abroad as there is little demand domestically, consumers are hence disconnected from the impact of the disposal of their garments. We can constantly continue buying because our wardrobes have a 'guilt-free' output system via donations.

Katia Dayan Vladimirova, Chief Research Officer at Post Growth Fashion Agency



²⁰ i: Figures based on approximation of textile production and waste management in the EU-27 for the reference year 2019 in Mt yr⁻¹, and represent best estimates based on available data; based on JRC (2023) [Techno-scientific assessment of the management options for used and waste textiles in the European Union](#).

²¹ European Environmental Agency (2024) [PFAS in textiles in Europe's circular economy](#).

What do we mean by sufficiency?

The triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution) is fuelled by the continued high demand for natural raw materials and resources. The amount of resources used to satisfy the needs and wants of Europeans is at an unsustainable level; the EU-27 is a 'net importer of environmental impacts'.²² If all people in the world had the same consumption patterns as the EU, humanity would exhaust the planet's natural resources available for the year 2024 already by May 3rd.²³ The circular economy has been promoted as the way to increase material efficiency, reduce the impact of our consumption, and prevent waste.²⁴ However, the latest stock take of the global circular economy confirms that **global circularity has, in fact, decreased** from 9.1% in 2018 to 7.2% in 2023 due to the increased demand for virgin material.²⁵ Increased material consumption is propelled by the so-called 'rebound effect,' meaning that efficiency gains enable more production and consumption, which in turn hike up the extraction of even more primary resources and the generation of waste.²⁶

If increased material efficiency through longevity, reuse, or recycling does not reduce overall material consumption, the circular economy has forfeited its 'raison d'être'. Instead, **sufficiency as a sustainability strategy includes 'a set of measures and daily practices that avoid demand for energy, materials, land, and water while delivering human well being for all within planetary boundaries,'** according to the IPPC.²⁷ It hence seeks to decrease absolute resource and energy consumption.²⁸ In this context, it is important to note that consumption happens within the social sphere: 'people consume to meet their biological needs, social expectations, and to satisfy desires. But people also consume the way they predominantly do because they are railroaded to do so by prevailing infrastructure and social norms,' according to Dr Lewis Akenji from Earth4All.²⁹

²² JRC (2023) [Consumption Footprint and Domestic Footprint: Assessing the environmental impacts of EU consumption and production](#), p. 5.

²³ Global Footprint Network (2024) [EU Overshoot day already here – "Unsustainable and irresponsible"](#).

²⁴ European Commission (2020) [A New Circular Economy Action Plan](#).

²⁵ Circle Economy (2024) [The circularity gap report](#).

²⁶ Resilience (2020) [Resources for a better future: Jevons Paradox](#).

²⁷ IPPC (2022) [Climate Change 2022, Mitigation of Climate Change. Summary for Policymakers](#), p. 35.

²⁸ ifeu (2023) [Sufficiency](#).

²⁹ Earth4All (2022) [Rethinking what we want to value as a society – a Q&A with Dr Lewis Akenji](#).

What can municipalities do?

There are many concrete examples of local sufficiency measures already in existence. These range from specialised urban planning to bring services closer to people's homes,³⁰ over circular building practices,³¹ to eliminate wastage of energy.³² Initiatives such as The Doughnut Economics Action Lab³³ translate the concept of living well within our safe planetary boundaries into concrete, tangible actions that businesses and cities can take at the local level, with the aim of creating regenerative and distributive economies that meet the needs of all people.

A recent research project mapped and analysed these practices across countries and found that the main barriers to local sufficiency initiatives were a lack of financial and human resources, but also limited support and understanding of the issue among municipal employees.³⁴

Many local sufficiency practices to reduce textile and fashion consumption have only emerged fairly recently, which makes it difficult to assess their impact thus far. Research is still in its infancy in this field; however, one comparative study of five European cities found that the following interventions can make a difference for local consumption patterns:

- Improving collection infrastructure for post-consumer textiles;
 - Facilitating local repair, exchange, and reuse of post-consumer textiles by empowering local initiatives, providing physical spaces in the city, or promoting collaboration between organisations;
 - Lowering demand for new clothing by setting targets and developing measures addressing purchasing behaviour and industry marketing practices, including regulating advertisements and seasonal sales.
- More advanced measures include redesigning commercial areas in cities and introducing a spatial separation between retail and leisure, reducing the interconnected nature between the two activities and, therefore, the chances of people shopping and consuming items which are not really needed.³⁵

In the absence of robust monitoring frameworks for the reduction of fashion consumption, this paper presents promising ideas and case studies that are emerging across Europe. We strongly encourage municipalities to complement these actions by designing a strategy that monitors the impact of any textile sufficiency measure implemented with the help of robust indicators.

³⁰ Energie-Suffizienz (2024) [Putting sufficiency into practice: The Hafen-Ost real-world laboratory in Flensburg, Germany.](#)

³¹ Circular Cities Declaration (2024) [Tampere, Finland.](#)

³² Covenant of Mayors – Europe (2024) [Embedding sufficiency into long-term climate and energy planning in Grenoble: Case Study.](#)

³³ Doughnut Economics Action Lab (2024) [About DEAL.](#)

³⁴ FULFILL (2023) [Report on municipal sufficiency strategies and policies.](#)

³⁵ Maldini, Iran, Laitala, Vitterso, Jestratijevic, Amaral, Vladimirova (2021) [Dress and the city: a comparative study on clothing and textiles environment policy in five European cities.](#)

Influence purchasing behaviour and restrict advertisements

Promoting a sufficiency-based wardrobe for individuals could include more restrictive measures beyond awareness-raising, such as so-called 'choice editing'. This is an approach that filters out unsustainable options from the range of products available on the market. This would require actively removing certain choices from the market and introducing sustainable ones while ensuring equitable access for everyone.³⁶ Choice editing might seem like a rather radical measure and one not necessarily feasible for cities. Yet, it is in fact commonplace with regard to public health and safety concerns (tobacco, medication) and increasingly used for environmental reasons, e.g., phasing out of internal combustion engine cars and fossil-fuel-based heating systems.

Restrictions on advertisements are a first step to positively influence consumer behaviour. This measure is already applied and accepted in many countries to limit the negative impacts of tobacco and alcoholic beverage consumption. Addressing environmentally harmful consumption through the regulation of advertisements has so far mainly centred around fossil fuel advertisements, with campaigns such as World Without Fossil Ads,³⁷ an initiative recently endorsed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres.³⁸ For example, Edinburgh City Council has banned public ads and sponsorships for fossil fuel companies, airlines, airports, fossil-powered cars, all SUVs, cruise ships, and arms manufacturers, stating that 'the promotion of high-carbon products is incompatible with our net zero objectives'.³⁹ Special emphasis could be placed on regulating seasonal sales times and redesigning commercial areas in cities to separate spaces for retail and leisure, lowering exposure to promotions.⁴⁰

Cities like Lille, Grenoble, and Lyon in France have restricted advertisements in public spaces; however, private spaces like shops and public transport are more difficult to regulate or fall under different layers of governance.⁴¹ In Lyon, as part of the city's climate strategy and its desire to discourage mass consumption, the municipality has committed to a 75% reduction in the number of advertising panels and a maximum size for the remaining panels. Also, digital screens in public spaces will disappear. In private shop windows, the size of screens will be regulated. In a survey, 80% of Lyon's citizens were in favour of reducing advertising, and some shopkeepers even saw the measure as a chance for their local business. The law in France allows local authorities to regulate the size and number of advertising panels but not the content (e.g., banning ads for

³⁶ HotorCool (2022) [Unfit, unfair, unfashionable](#).

³⁷ [World Without Fossil Fuel Ads](#).

³⁸ BBC (2024) [Ban fossil fuel ads to save climate, says UN chief](#).

³⁹ Financial Times (2024) [Edinburgh council bans SUV and cruise ship ads in climate crackdown](#).

⁴⁰ Maldini, Iran, Laitala, Vitterso, Jestratijevic, Amaral, Vladimirova (2021) [Dress and the city: a comparative study on clothing and textiles environment policy in five European cities](#).

⁴¹ The Guardian (2019) ['Advertising breaks your spirit': the French cities trying to ban public adverts](#).

aeroplanes, alcohol, or sexist marketing)].⁴² **Online advertisements**, and on social media, in particular, represent more challenging terrain for local policymakers to control.⁴³

Citizens taking action against harmful consumption: Geneva Zéro Pub

In Geneva, Switzerland, the Zéro Pub initiative has inspired action for several years, bringing together numerous civil society groups to ban ads from public spaces and raise awareness about the impact of consumerism and overconsumption.⁴⁴

In 2021, the Swiss Federal Supreme Court ruled that restricting outdoor advertising in both public and private spaces visible to the public does not constitute an infringement of economic freedom. Even though a ban on advertisements was narrowly defeated in a citizens' referendum in Geneva in March 2023, the 'Genève Zéro Pub' initiative inspired a debate across the region, leading to two municipalities in the 'République et canton de Genève' adopting restrictions on outdoor commercial advertisements (Lancy and Vernier). Also, Zurich's parliament passed two postulates calling for a significant reduction in outdoor advertising; Bern's parliament voted in favour of a ban in spring 2024, and authorities in La Chaux-de-Fonds and Vevey decided to make their public space less available for commercial advertising.⁴⁵

Some of the reasons campaigners named for the narrow loss of the referendum in Geneva were that as soon as the initiative became more concrete, opposition started forming, and several political parties started opposing it and pushing the topic as an ideological question. The campaign itself also had few resources to counter misconceptions about negative impacts on small businesses. Moreover, while the initiative focused exclusively on commercial billboards and excluded cultural advertisements, local groups feel this distinction might not have been clear enough during the campaign.

Campaigners will now focus their efforts on specific topics, such as fossil fuel ads. With regard to fast fashion advertisements in particular, online advertisements remain a significant hurdle, according to the group.



Freeing public space from commercial pressure is a major step forward in the movement towards a social and ecological transition. It is also an important step towards effectively implementing our cultural rights. The restriction of advertisements and zero waste go intrinsically hand in hand because they both address the huge challenges of climate change, emphasise collective responsibility over mere individual responsibility and reliance on technology, and are based on concrete and measurable actions.

Emmanuel Deonna, Former Socialist Member of the Geneva Grand Council and co-founder of the initiative 'Genève Zéro Ad: Let's free our streets from commercial advertising'

⁴² Energy Cities (2024) [Ads-free streets: let's give public space back to citizens](#).

⁴³ Goldfarb, A., & Tucker, C. (2011) [Advertising Bans and the Substitutability of Online and Offline Advertising](#). Journal of Marketing Research, 48(2), 207-227.

⁴⁴ Genève Zéro Pub (2023) [Let Us Fight Harmful Commercial Advertising A call on the occasion of Black Friday 2023](#).

⁴⁵ Genève Zéro Pub (2023) [Let Us Fight Harmful Commercial Advertising A call on the occasion of Black Friday 2023](#).

Make repair and reuse the new norm

Giving clothes a second life through resale, reuse, repair, or refurbishment can significantly lower the need to produce and purchase new garments. However, it remains crucial to remember that 'reuse' alone does not per se result in 'waste prevention' if it does not replace the purchase of new garments. 'Fast-reuse' practices, such as via online platforms, can encourage frequent purchasing and rapid turnover, which undermines the goal of waste reduction. Reuse operations in cities must, therefore, not encourage extra consumption of new items. That said, promoting local reuse can still contribute to reducing textile waste generation. In addition, setting concrete **targets for reuse** can provide a clear benchmark for policy measures. Several jurisdictions, such as Belgium, Spain, and France, have already introduced reuse targets for reusable goods.⁴⁶ For example, the Flemish region of Belgium has set a reuse target of 8 kg/capita that must be realised through reuse centres, one reuse centre recognised per region.⁴⁷

The Flemish region is also home to an outstanding example of public support for reuse: Flanders' **scheme for social enterprises**. Collecting, sorting, and preparing for reuse are labour-intensive activities that are essential for the circular economy. In Flanders, social enterprises benefit from a support scheme that covers parts of their operational costs, primarily in the form of wage support.^{48 49}

To boost local repair, several Austrian federal states have implemented a '**repair bonus**' that reimburses citizens up to 50% of the total cost of a repair.⁵⁰ **Education and skills training** are equally important when boosting the sector. Traditional skills like repairing, mending, and sewing clothes are less common now than several decades ago. Including those skills in school curricula and offering training opportunities for professionals can bring back this essential knowledge.

Moreover, increasing the demand for second-hand textiles, and therefore increasing the capacity of repairing and reusing textiles, could be generated through certain **public procurement** actions and guidelines introduced by the city. For example, requirements could be added mandating that workwear in the public sector must be second-hand.⁵¹

Supporting product-as-a-service business models such as '**Clothing Libraries**' is another way of keeping clothes in the loop for longer while allowing consumers to enjoy novelty in their wardrobe.⁵² Det Kollektive Klædeskab (the collective wardrobe) in Copenhagen, Denmark, is a sharing initiative where members can hand in clothes that they no longer use and gain points that can be used to purchase second-hand clothes in the

⁴⁶ RREUSE (2022) [Re-use targets](#).

⁴⁷ Zero Waste Europe (2023) [How to collect, sort, and reuse textile waste locally?](#)

⁴⁸ De Kringwinkel (2023) [FAQ](#).

⁴⁹ i: More information on the Flemish social economy is available here: [Een job in de sociale economie brengt 14.500 euro op](#).

⁵⁰ Right to Repair (2023) [Austria launches a nation-wide repair bonus scheme](#).

⁵¹ Zero Waste Europe (2023) [The State of Zero Waste Municipalities Report 2023](#).

⁵² LENA (2024) [Hoe het werkt](#).

stores. The initiative allows for clothing to be circulated between many users, thereby prolonging their usage, and gives their customers an alternative to shopping for new clothing.⁵³

Finally, support for **non-market exchange** consumption models, including citizen-led repair cafes, clothing swaps, or reuse events, can meaningfully promote lifestyles more based on sufficiency and less on consumption. Cities can be key actors here, providing the necessary space for such events and businesses, or at least subsidising some of the costs required. They can also receive extra promotion and attention within public communications, helping to direct citizens to these events and spaces. Cities can also offer discounts to businesses, or subsidised/free tickets to events, which promote and support business and consumption models that look more at sufficiency and slow fashion.

Raise awareness

Ensuring citizens are well-educated and empowered to make informed decisions about their consumption is one important part of the puzzle towards changing the fashion system. Instead of only highlighting the negative impact of consumption and demanding that citizens buy fewer clothes, presenting a positive vision of a sustainable fashion system could help win support. The municipality of Ghent in Belgium, for example, hosted the 'Fair Fashion Fest' for the sixth time in 2024, with the aim of promoting the sustainable and ethical fashion sector. The festival included events such as clothes swaps, fair fashion markets, expositions, talks, and documentary screenings to raise awareness of the high cost of fast fashion.⁵⁴ Geneva in Switzerland funds the 'GardReObes' festival, gathering sustainable fashion actors from the city and region to foster exchanges around sustainable fashion. The festival includes workshops, a repair café, fashion shows, wardrobe sales, an eco-market, and Slow Fashion Talks.⁵⁵

In France, ReFashion, the Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO) operating the French Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for textiles, which has been in place for over a decade, organises awareness-raising campaigns with local authorities. These include local events around waste prevention and the recovery of clothing (wardrobe declutter sales, school challenges and competitions, and upcycling fashion shows) and the development of communications kits for local authorities.⁵⁶ Whilst these actions are only small in comparison to the potential of what PROs could be doing to tackle the issue of textile waste, cooperation with a PRO presents a welcome opportunity for municipalities to access funding, especially since EPR for textiles will become mandatory across the block from around 2027 onwards.

⁵³ Fullfill (2023) [Mapping of local sufficiency initiatives](#).

⁵⁴ [Fair Fashion Fest](#) (2024)

⁵⁵ [GARDREOBES](#) (2024)

⁵⁶ Refashion (2021) [Re-Design Consumption](#).

A Slow Fashion Training,⁵⁷ designed to raise awareness of responsible fashion, has been rolled out as part of the CSR platform of the Nantes Metropolitan Area, receiving public funding. The course is run by Audencia's Positive Impact Chair⁵⁸ and is freely accessible to everyone.

What is the 'Slow Fashion Training' by Audencia?⁵⁹

The Slow Fashion Training is a free workshop designed by Audencia's Positive Impact Chair to raise awareness of more responsible fashion consumption. Over 3 years, Audencia has trained nearly 440 people (civil society, corporate partners, students, and high school pupils).

The course is raising awareness of the sector's impact, deciphering buying behaviour, and discovering more sustainable practices with the aim of facilitating a collective effort towards sustainable fashion. The training combines the expertise of Audencia's Positive Impact Chair with that of fashion industry specialists. The course was designed in partnership with the ERAM Group, a French fashion group.⁶⁰

Make your voice heard

Cities hold the reins on public planning, which can affect consumption patterns; for example., by providing space for reuse, restricting advertisements, and raising awareness. However, we must recognise that there are clear **limitations to cities' abilities to change a global system** that is based on overproduction, aggressive marketing, social media influence, as well as low prices due to the externalisation of social and environmental costs. This complexity compels all levels of governance to take action.

What cities can do immediately is to recognise that their voices matter, especially when done collectively with others in Europe and globally. A final recommendation of this report is for cities to begin speaking up more proactively about the change they wish to see to tackle the challenges posed to their communities by fast fashion—social, economic, and environmental. When cities unite in networks such as C40,⁶¹ their voices are more powerful and capable of influencing the necessary legislative levers at a national level (for example, during Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)⁶² discussions) or at the European and global levels.

⁵⁷ Audencia (2024) [Slow Fashion Training](#).

⁵⁸ Audencia (2023) [Positive Impact Chair](#).

⁵⁹ Audencia (2023) [Positive Impact Chair](#).

⁶⁰ [Groupe ERAM](#).

⁶¹ [C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group](#).

⁶² European Commission (2023) [Circular economy for textiles: taking responsibility to reduce, reuse and recycle textile waste and boosting markets for used textiles](#).

An example of such collective action is the city of Turku in Finland. Already known for their investment in infrastructure for textile circularity (collection, sorting, and recycling),⁶³ they have also teamed up with over 30 mayors from around the world to denounce fast fashion and sign the **Slow Fashion Declaration**.⁶⁴ The signatory cities call on the EU, the G7, and the OECD to introduce regulations that create a level playing field between slow fashion entrepreneurs and multinational fast fashion companies. Concrete demands include, among others: banning the advertising of fast fashion in public spaces; a European-level Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism⁶⁵ to be expanded to cover the textile industry; banning the presence of dangerous chemicals in the textiles; a European slow fashion label; and for national governments to adopt favourable taxation that support positive impact companies.

Case study: Geneva, Switzerland

Besides the 'GardReObes' festival for sustainable fashion actors in the city and wider region,⁶⁶ the city of Geneva commissioned the report 'Sustainable Fashion for Geneva?'⁶⁷ to investigate possible avenues for local action. This report proposes a number of recommendations to support sustainable fashion initiatives as part of building a circular economy at the local level. The main areas identified for the city to engage in are:

- Increasing the visibility of local initiatives (e.g., by creating a single online platform, organising festivals and events etc.);
- Restricting advertising content promoting fast fashion;
- Supporting synergies between initiatives and creating a slow fashion⁶⁸ centre, subsidised by the municipality;
- Building skills in garment repair, maintenance, and upcycling;
- Creating a community around sustainable fashion practices, bringing together a wide variety of players, including producers, consumers, repair professionals, second-hand retailers, and more;
- Improving waste management by creating separate collection points, as well as sorting, resale, and recycling infrastructure.

For the city, the research gathering data on local textile consumption was eye-opening, as it did not have comprehensive data on consumption, waste management, and the carbon footprint of textiles. Since

⁶³ Zero Waste Europe (2022) [The Finnish law on textile waste separate collection and implementation pilots](#).

⁶⁴ (2023) [European City Mayors Sign Pioneering Declaration to Drive Sustainable Fashion](#).

⁶⁵ European Commissions (2024) [Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism](#).

⁶⁶ [GARDREOBES](#) (2024)

⁶⁷ Vladimirova, K. & Sahakian, M. (2023) [Sustainable Fashion for Geneva?](#)

⁶⁸ i: Definition: 'The slow fashion movement is a direct response to the harmful impact of fast fashion on the environment and garment workers. It advocates for making fashion choices that are kinder to people and planet.' Oxfam (2024) [What is slow fashion?](#)

the publication of the report, the city has taken several measures, such as the coordination of relevant actors in a WhatsApp group for events like clothes swaps. New synergies between the different actors in the field are now allowing for more effective collaboration. The city also provides financial support for events, like the 'GardReObes' festival, markets, and talks to showcase local alternatives to fast fashion. In addition to this, they also supported a working group and started funding small initiatives, including education, university collaboration, a local weaving workshop, and the initiative 'Histoire Sans Chutes'⁶⁹—a library for off-cuts and left-over fabrics.

Despite these initiatives, **the municipality still sees clear limitations to local action as long as national and international policy measures are absent** and marketing continues to encourage fast fashion.

Since 2022, Geneva's climate strategy includes the overproduction of clothes; Geneva *'has to import the majority of everyday products, such as clothing and footwear, telephones, household appliances, and so on. As a result, it is difficult to reduce the GHGs emitted outside the region during the production of these goods. That's why the city is focussing on consumption patterns by supporting sufficiency, sharing, recycling, and, more broadly, the circular economy.'*⁷⁰

The next step, according to 'Sustainable Fashion for Geneva?'⁷¹ researcher Katia Dayan Vladimirova, is to figure out targets for fashion consumption in line with the climate strategy. One significant obstacle remains a lack of funding to facilitate this process.

⁶⁹ [Une histoire circulaire](#).

⁷⁰ Ville de Genève (2024) [Climate strategy: consumption of goods and services](#).

⁷¹ Vladimirova, K. & Sahakian, M. (2023) [Sustainable Fashion for Geneva?](#)

Conclusion

The challenges posed by fast fashion and textile waste are complex and far-reaching, requiring action at all levels of governance. However, as this report demonstrates, cities are uniquely positioned to catalyse change and influence consumer behaviour. By implementing measures that promote textile sufficiency, such as influencing purchasing behaviour, extending product lifespans, and raising awareness, municipalities can play a crucial role in accelerating the transition towards more sustainable and equitable fashion consumption. The case studies and examples presented here from across Europe showcase the innovative approaches already being taken by forward-thinking cities.

While recognising the limitations of local action in the face of a global industry, it is clear that cities' collective voice can be a powerful force for change. By advocating for broader policy changes at national, European, and international levels, cities can help create the regulatory framework needed to support a more sustainable fashion industry.

As we move forward, it will be essential for cities to:

1. Develop robust monitoring frameworks to assess the impact of their textile sufficiency measures
2. Foster collaboration between various local stakeholders, including citizens, social enterprises, and circular businesses
3. Learn from the experiences in other municipalities and continue to innovate and share best practices in addressing the challenges of fast fashion

Ultimately, the transition to a more sustainable fashion system will require a concerted effort from all sectors of society. However, by taking decisive action at the local level, cities can lead the way in reducing textile waste, promoting circular economy principles, and fostering a culture of responsible consumption that aligns with our planet's ecological limits.



Zero Waste Europe (ZWE) is the European network of communities, local leaders, experts, and change agents working towards a better use of resources and the elimination of waste in our society. We advocate for sustainable systems; for the redesign of our relationship with resources; and for a global shift towards environmental justice, accelerating a just transition towards zero waste for the benefit of people and the planet. www.zerowasteurope.eu



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