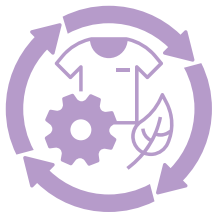




Fast Fashion and the Circular Economy

What is the Circular Economy?



A circular economy aims to maintain the value of products, materials and resources for as long as possible by returning them back into the product cycle at the end of their use, while minimising the generation of waste. Basically it designs out waste restoring and regenerating nature extending the lifespan of our textiles. Circular Fashion tackles climate change and biodiversity loss together while addressing social needs. According to the latest circularity gap report, our world is only 7.2% circular.

The fashion industry is at a turning point for the transition to a circular economy. More legislation and policies have been implemented. Nevertheless, with a circularity material use rate of 1.8% (relative to an EU average of 12.8%) in 2020, Ireland shows significant scope for progress.

By increasing the number of times an item is worn, through circular business models (CBMs) that are designed to keep clothing in circulation for as long as possible, we can replace the need for clothing production and avoid the associated environmental impacts. This means that the industry can reduce the number of products made, while remaining profitable and serve the needs of a growing consumer population.

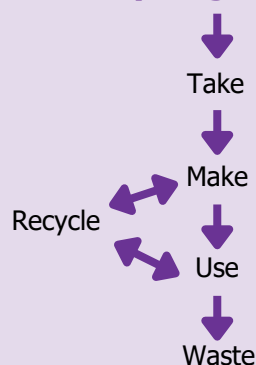
This fits under the broader concept of a circular economy where systems and services keep resources in use for as long as possible, extracting the highest value from them and recovering and regenerating products and materials to bring them back into service again after the primary end of life.

Through reuse we can move away from the linear model of take, make, use and dispose.

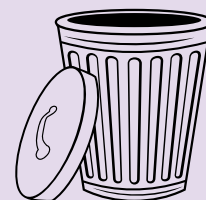
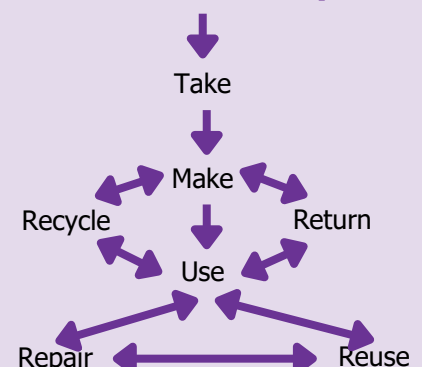
Linear Economy



Recycling Economy



Circular Economy



What can we do?

Combating the negative impacts of fast fashion and reducing clothing waste requires collective action at different levels. Here are some steps we can take to address these issues:



Buy Less, Choose Well: Buy fewer, higher-quality clothing items that are durable and timeless, rather than trendy and disposable.



Second-hand and Vintage Shopping: Enjoy shopping at charity / second hand shops - you'll never know what treasures you might find!



Clothing Swaps and Rental Services: Run a clothes swap with friends or use rental services for special occasions to reduce the need for new purchases.



Care for Clothes: Identify what it's made from. Follow care instructions to prolong the life of garments, such as washing in cold water, air drying, and avoiding excessive ironing.



Repair and Upcycle: Learn basic sewing skills to repair damaged clothing or repurpose items into new garments or accessories (e.g. tshirts can easily be upcycled into tote bags).



Raise Awareness: Educate others about the environmental and social impacts of fast fashion through workshops, campaigns, and educational resources.



Research and Choose Ethical Brands: Support brands that prioritise sustainable and ethical practices, including fair wages, safe working conditions, and environmentally friendly production methods. We have some examples of sustainable Irish brands on the next page.



Demand Transparency: Encourage brands to disclose information about their supply chains, environmental impact, and efforts to reduce waste.



Resell: As products keep value after customers no longer want them, second hand trading is encouraged. The resale of used clothing can be provided directly through businesses, branded buy back schemes, charity retailers, or encouraged between shoppers on a peer-to-peer basis where the brand, retailer, or platform provider gets a commission but are not directly involved in authentication or quality-assurance of the used product.

What else can we do?



Write down any other ideas you have to combat fast fashion. What (if any) changes will you try and make relating to your fashion consumption habits?

What do people require to change their attitude to circular fashion?

What would change your behaviour?

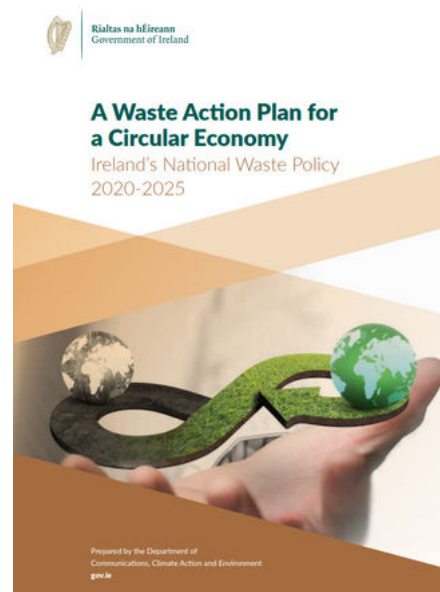
Beyond personal responsibility who do you think might be responsible for instigating change?

Policies Supporting the Circular Economy

The Circular Economy Act 2022 builds on the government's commitment to achieving a circular economy.

A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy 2020-2025, our roadmap to move away from waste disposal and make it easier for Member States to implement the requirement to collect textiles separately from 2025.

The EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles addresses the production and consumption of textiles. It implements the commitments of the European Green Deal, the Circular Economy Action Plan and the European industrial strategy.



Circular Designers

Circular designers focus on creating products that minimise waste and extend the life cycle of materials by incorporating principles of wear, care, mend, lend. They are essential in transitioning the fashion industry towards sustainability, as they help reduce the environmental impact of clothing production and consumption by designing with the end-of-life of products in mind, ensuring that resources are kept in use for as long as possible.

Examples of Circular Designers include;

1. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation
2. Rediscover Fashion

Brands like Patagonia and Stella McCartney have also been leading the way globally in changing their business models.



Find some interesting examples of circular economy in the fashion industry.

Create a short slideshow to showcase what it is and what you like about it to share with your school community.

Examples of Sustainable Irish brands

Mamukko

Mamukko, based in Kinsale Co. Cork is a circular business, transforming the materials from old boat sails and the leather from airplane seats into beautiful bags and accessories. This breathes new life into these materials to continue their life and prevent the materials from going to landfill.

<https://www.mamukko.ie/>



Sampla

Sampla is an innovative Irish footwear company. Wanting to do more about the fashion waste and environmental impact of sourcing leather, Finbarr set out to find an alternative. This is when Sampla was born. Sampla create stylish shoes from leather using apple core.

<https://www.sampla.ie>

Sampla

Change Clothes Crumlin

An excellent initiative is [Change Clothes Crumlin | Social Sharing | Dublin](#) who lead mend and repair workshops, upcycling stations, swap shops and are now expanding into rentals.

<https://www.changeclothes.org>



Pure Clothing

PURE Clothing is a sustainable clothing brand based in the West of Ireland. Their products are made to last and doing their very best to achieve a circular economy..

<https://www.pureclothing.ie/>



Examples of Sustainable Irish brands

FéRí Designs

FéRí collections are designed in an array of colourful prints and embroideries which are hand-painted and drawn in their studio in Wexford. Every piece is made using natural certified organic fabrics or dead-stock and re-purposed textiles. The collections are hand-made in small batch quantities both locally in Ireland and with a certified manufacturer in India.

<https://www.feri.ie>



The Upcycle Movement

Passionate about the great outdoors, and about protecting it, Irish Designer, Lynn Haughton founded the multi award winning community organisation 'The Upcycle Movement' in 2012 to promote and inspire the rethinking of what we consider as waste - recognising this as a positive way to keep items out of landfill and contribute to a circular economy.

<https://theupcyclemovement.com/>



Due South

Due South is an Irish sustainable clothing company. Their goal is to raise the profile of the "Slow Fashion Movement". They only work with manufacturers who equally respect the women and men who make their clothes by providing humane working conditions.

<https://www.duesouth.ie/>



Can you think of someone you know that shops excessively. Would any of these options encourage them to change their behaviour? What would encourage them to change their behaviour? Discuss with your class.

Further Learning

OECD: 'The Circular Economy in Ireland', 2022 Report

<https://www.oecd.org/publications/the-circular-economy-in-ireland-7d25e0bb-en.htm>

EPA: The Circular Economy Programme 2021 - 2027

https://www.epa.ie/publications/circular-economy/resources/EPA_Circular_Economy_2021_Programme_Apr22_Web.pdf



Fashion and a Circular Economy

<https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/topics/fashion/overview>

What is Circular Fashion? <https://goodonyou.eco/what-is-circular-fashion/>

Rediscover Fashion <https://www.rediscoverycentre.ie/about/social-enterprise/rediscover-fashion/>

Make Fashion Circular <https://www.thersa.org/regenerative-futures/make-fashion-circular>

Circularity Gap <https://www.circularity-gap.world/countries>

The Circular Design Guide <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-design-guide/overview>

The Circular Design Institute <https://circulardesigninstitute.ie/>

Eco Age <https://eco-age.com/>