

# Impact of the EU waste shipment regulation and waste framework directive on Second Hand Clothes and reuse industry



The Second Hand Clothes (SHC) and reuse industry endorses the key aims of the revised Waste Framework Directive (WFD) and the Waste Shipment Regulation (WSR), and there are some unintended consequences for the industry.

*Regulatory changes will have unintended consequences*

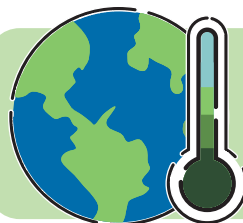
Clothing and textiles production is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). Around **10% of the world's carbon budget** is taken up by the sector.



The **European Green Deal** seeks to drastically reduce harmful waste' in key sectors, including textiles. Currently, **5.8 million tonnes** of textiles are discarded in the EU every year, equivalent to **11 kg of textiles** per person.



The **Second-Hand Clothes (SHC)** sector currently plays an important role minimising waste by collecting, sorting, processing and cleaning discarded textiles for reuse. Around **2 million** tonnes of SHC are collected in Europe every year, and are either sorted in Europe or packaged into bundles for export to third countries, where they are sorted and reused.



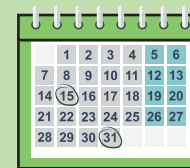
**SHC reduce emissions**

**Reusing SHC reduces carbon emissions**, even when exported. Production of new clothes are costly and emissions-intensive, even when produced from fibre-to-fibre recycled material. Landfill and incineration cause emissions and degrade biodiversity and natural resources.



**Risk** with changes involved

However, there is a risk that the proposed regulatory changes will have **unintended consequences** and undermine the green transformation of the textiles sector.



**More collection rates**

The revised **Waste Framework directive (WFD)** will make it mandatory for EU states to collect textile waste, significantly increasing collection rates.



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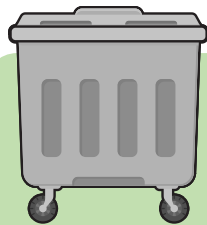
Under the WFD, all textile waste will be classified as green waste, even though it generally carries a high proportion of reusable content. **Three quarters of SHC currently collected in Europe is reusable.**



**3/4**  
SHC is reusable

## There is insufficient sorting capacity within Europe

to absorb additional volumes of SHC. Significant demand for European SHC lies in non-EU countries. Preventing the export of SHC from Europe is likely to fuel additional demand for new, cheap and unsustainable clothing in these regions



**Insufficient Sorting Capacity**

Furthermore, the **Waste Shipment Regulation (WSR)** will make it more bureaucratic to export unsorted SHC to third countries. This could lead to less reuse: it is estimated that a global market would make it possible to reuse **up to three times more clothes** than if the reuse market was confined to the EU.

There is significant experience, expertise and infrastructure to sort SHC located outside of the EU. Sorting facilities rely on highly skilled staff who exercise discretion about the quality and reusability of items to sort clothes into 200 different categories, thereby maximising reuse.



**200**  
categories maximising reuse



Sorting SHC outside Europe also creates jobs and economic opportunities in countries that most need them. There is significant potential to expand the SHC business model - reuse only accounts for **3.5% of the global fashion industry.**

## To avoid unintended consequences, we recommend three main amendments to the WSR

**1**

**Make it possible to export unsorted collected ('original') clothes outside the EU after 2024.**

Under an EU auditing that would certify eligible sorting centres.

**2**

**Making a distinction between green waste and unsorted SHC (original clothes').**

This would allow a valuable resource such as unsorted SHC to be exported for sorting in other countries, reducing the need to produce new clothes or recycle fibres.

**3**

**Finally, we recommend supporting third countries with co-finance to continue developing their cutting-edge capacity to process, repair and reuse exported clothes.**

This would ensure more efficient sorting and distribution of SHC, maximise reuse and minimise waste