

How to implement circular economy in textile businesses?

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12 kg of textile waste per person is generated per year in the EU. Implementing circular economy principles is important to ensure the long lifecycle of textiles.

The Baltic2Hand project focuses on the textile industry, especially improving textile reuse and reducing textile waste through service design and co-creation. As part of the project, a series of 'Train the Trainer' training sessions are provided to the project team members. These training sessions focus on a range of different topics with the purpose of providing the practical skills and knowledge needed to achieve the project goals.

Two of the Train the Trainer training sessions were centered on the topic of circular economy, and they were provided by the Finnish start-up Double Round Ltd, which helps companies and public organizations find possibilities in the circular economy. The sessions were conducted in two separate training sessions, where both the understanding of circular economy principles and their practical application were covered.

Some of the key findings from the circular economy Train the Trainer training session:

Fast fashion today is designed not to last. Often, large fast fashion brands exploit labor, as they operate through low wages, forced labor, and unsafe working conditions. Many fast fashion brands also suffer from a lack of transparency, where information on their supply chain is often hidden. With product origin being often difficult to establish, consumers are unable to make informed decisions over their consumption choices. This lack of product transparency also makes holding brands accountable for their social and environmental malpractices challenging.

Emphasis on quantity not quality, results in short-lived products and contributes to a throwaway culture, where overproduction strains already limited natural resources and unsold stock leads to financial loss and unstable market dynamics. The excess products often end up in landfills or incinerated and therefore contribute to pollution, waste, and increased carbon footprint.

This is where the need for circular economy and sustainable thinking comes in. Quite often people think that the circular economy is a recycling economy and that the circular economy is the endpoint of everything. It is more of a journey. Truly thought-through physical products, from the design concept to the entirety of their lifecycle, will create value.

Key characteristics of circular thinking are:

- Keeping resources in use for as long as possible.
- Products are designed to last and when they reach the end of their life, something new can be created from them.
- It's not just about redesigning existing processes but rethinking the products from outset as well.

Main benefits from implementing circular economy in the business models are in the environmental, economic, innovation and consumer loyalty fields.

- **Environmental** means reduction of waste, energy consumption and the overall carbon footprint of textile industry.
- **Economic** value comes from the longer product lifespan, which means more value per item sold.
- **Consumer loyalty** means creating trust with consumers as the products last longer and are of greater quality.
- **Innovation Drive** comes from encouraging technological and process advancements in the textile industry.

Key strategy: Implementing circular economy is first and foremost about investing in materials and craftsmanship which ensures longevity. Also creating products that can be easily redesigned or modified, which extends their lifespan. In addition, offering services like mending and caring, which means that products stay in use longer. Alternatively, offering products as a service and creating sharing platforms.

There are many companies, who already implement circular and environmental principles in their business models:

- **Reet Aus** is an Estonian fashion designer and a trailblazer in the field of sustainable fashion. Some of her key initiatives are: waste upcycling, which means repurposing materials from larger factories. Also “Trash to Trend” footprint label, which informs customers about the environmental savings of each product.
- **Zadaa** is a Finnish digital marketplace tailored to buying and selling fashion. Using technology, they connect users with similar sizes and styles, making it easier to find and exchange clothing that fits. By reselling the clothes, they extend the lifecycle of textiles.
- **Niaga** has created a fully recyclable carpet – by using a single material, it allows the carpet to be recycled easily at the end of its life.
- **Lovia** is a Finnish brand, whose products are made from surplus materials. They have also developed their own Product DNA, which means that each product comes with detailed information about its origins, materials and the people behind its creation.
- **MUD Jeans** originates from Netherlands focuses on leasing jeans to customers and recycling denim once its life cycle is complete.
- **Patagonia** is an outdoor apparel brand, that has always been at the forefront of sustainability. For example, they have Worn Wear programme, through which consumers can trade their old Patagonia clothing in exchange for store credit. They also offer free repair guides. Patagonia uses recycled materials – one of their collections is made from 100% percent recycled down, wool, polyester, and cotton.
- **Baltic Flax** is a sustainable textile company focused on the production of linen from flax, a traditional crop of the Baltic region. Flax requires less water, fewer pesticides and improves soil health.

To get more information about Baltic2Hand project and opportunities for businesses, [check out Baltic2Hand website.](#)

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