

The chairman of the House of Representatives  
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Dear chairman,

The ambition for a fully circular economy by 2050 demands effort, creativity and decisiveness. It requires a different way of thinking and a transition from a linear to a circular economy, in the textile sector as well. Also on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, I hereby send you the circular textile policy programme, as promised in my letter to the House of Representatives of 9 October last year.<sup>1</sup> This policy programme runs until 2025.

The enclosed policy programme contains ambitious targets I have agreed on with the partners from the textile chain. Like many other sectors, the textile sector is hit by the current coronavirus situation. It has a major impact on many parties in the chain. The next few months will demand a lot of the sector's creativity and flexibility. The trade organisations also indicate that these are tough times for their sector but that they still fully support the measures under the policy programme. During implementation, they would like an adjusted time frame for the elaboration of extended producer responsibility for textile. Naturally, when necessary, I'm prepared to take this into account during the implementation of the announced measures and I will consult them about this.

### **Reason and urgency**

The ecological footprint of the textile industry is large. The high - and exponentially rising - use of land, water, energy and chemicals means the textile industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world. The total emissions of greenhouse gases by the textile industry are 1.2 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. This is more than the fuel emissions of all international aviation and shipping combined.<sup>2</sup> The working conditions in production countries are often poor as well. The strong increase in production and consumption and the declining reuse of textile result in a growing waste heap.

The cabinet wants to help turn the tide and the momentum is there. The trade organisations and other parties in the textile chain aim to reduce wastage and pollution. We also see more awareness in society. There are numerous wonderful initiatives where women borrow party dresses rather than buying them, brands produce sustainable collections and influencers do not only unwrap yet another sponsored package but they also set a good example by organising clothing swaps, for instance. People are finding new ways and that is cause for optimism.

### **Vision and objective**

In a circular economy, raw materials are used smartly and sparingly and the same should apply to textile. My vision for 2050 is as follows. Circular business models are the standard, with clothing, textile and fibres being used and reused to a high standard. All products are designed for long-term use and contain recycled material and consist of materials that make it possible to use them for a

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<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary Papers II 2019/20, 32 852, no. 95. This policy programme is about (corporate) clothing, domestic textile and curtains.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen McArthur Foundation, *A new textile economy*, 2017, p. 20.

long time to a high standard. The working conditions in the production countries are good, production processes are clean and businesses are transparent about the production process and products. Textile waste is a thing of the past because discarded materials are used in new products. With this aim for sustainable use and reuse of textile and other materials, this policy programme contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 12: responsible consumption and production.

My ambition is for the textile chain to comply with the above description by 2050. I want to achieve this step by step, with objectives agreed on with the chain partners:

<b>2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The share of recycled (post-consumer)/sustainable material in textile products is 25%.</li> <li>- 30% of (raw) materials and products sold in the Netherlands are recycled after collection, if immediate reuse is no longer possible.</li> </ul>
<b>2030</b>	<p>By 2030, we are half-way through the transition towards the circular economy, which means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All textile products sold in the Netherlands contain 50% of sustainable material. Of that 50%, at least 30% is recycle and no more than 20% is sustainable material.<sup>3</sup></li> <li>- 50% of (raw) materials and products sold on the Dutch textile market are recycled after collection, if immediate reuse is no longer possible.</li> </ul>
<b>2035</b>	The aim is to half the ecological footprint of the textile sector in the fields of emissions, water consumption, chemicals and microplastics.
<b>2050</b>	Fully circular economy.

### Figures and monitoring

On the instruction of Rijkswaterstaat, FFact conducted a study into the collection, processing and sale of discarded domestic textile for 2018. It concerns textile that is given to thrift stores, disposed of in clothing containers or ends up with residual waste.

In 2018, a total of 305.1 kilotons of textile were discarded in the Netherlands. Of this, 44.6% was collected separately in thrift stores or clothing containers, the rest of the textile ended up with residual waste. In 2012, 255 kilotons of textile were discarded in the Netherlands. Of this, 43% was collected separately.

Of the total collected and imported textile, 53% was immediately reused in 2018, 33% was recycled and 14% was incinerated for energy recovery purposes. In 2012, those figures were 56% for immediate reuse, 37% for recycled and 7% for energy recovery purposes. For the other figures, please refer to the enclosed study report.

There are a lot of figures in circulation but there is also a lot we still do not know, especially about the start of the textile chain (the production process). I have asked for the current ecological footprint of the textile sector to be mapped out. This year, the chain partners and I will develop a dashboard with the most important key indicators and associated ambitions. The year 2020 will act as the base year for the ambitions we will formulate for 2025, in addition to the aforementioned objectives and/or as further elaboration thereof. Examples include the target values for the lifespan of clothing and for the collection thereof. This is a joint effort by all partners in the textile chain.

Progress of the policy programme will be monitored. I will present the House of Representatives with an annual progress report to give them insight into the measures taken, the results thereof and the effects on closing the loop. The impact of this transition on working conditions, employment and the environment in developing countries will also be monitored.

<sup>3</sup> This is in line with the carried Kröger motion – Parliamentary Papers II 2018/19, 32 852, no. 104. What exactly constitutes sustainable material is subject to evolving insights, innovations and market developments. In this case, sustainable materials include the sustainable (or more sustainable) alternatives for the customary virgin materials such as bio/organic and better cotton (BCI), Lyocell from sustainable cellulose sources (such as Tencel) and the bio-based alternatives for the oil-based synthetic yarns (such as PLA and bioPES, PEF).

### **Sectoral consultations**

Collaboration in the chain is essential to achieve a circular economy. All links hook up, from designer to producer, to waste collector to recycler. The ambitions set out in the policy programme can only be achieved if the collaboration is good, everyone on the basis of their role and responsibility. The government will take the lead and brings parties together. It does, in any case, concern the trade organisations Modint and INretail, frontrunner businesses, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), the Association for Refuse and Cleansing Management (NVRD), the Textile Recovery Association (VHT) and the Trade Association for Recycling Businesses (BKN). This group will convene four times a year to discuss progress and to work on the implementation of measures.

### **Policy coherence**

This policy programme also discusses the areas of overlap with the Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation policy area, particularly international corporate social responsibility (IRBC), impact in production countries and social trends in the textile chain.

### **A final note**

By turning one of the most polluting sectors into a clean, sustainable and closing chain, the partners from the textile chain and I want to make an important contribution to a circular economy with similar effects on climate, biodiversity and sustainable development goals in the world. It demands efforts from all parties in the textile chain, nationally and internationally. It is good to see all parties willing to assume responsibility to bring the ambitions closer through concerted efforts. The government will inform the House of Representatives of progress on an annual basis.

Yours sincerely,

THE STATE-SECRETARY OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND WATER MANAGEMENT,

S. van Veldhoven - Van der Meer