

Fibre Recovery

Internal support



Rijkswaterstaat
Ministry of Infrastructure and the
Environment



From 2016 until 2019 nine fibre to fibre pilots have been implemented by the European Clothing Action Plan - ECAP. The fibre to fibre pilots were aiming to support the use of recycled post-consumer textile fibres.

Three workwear companies, a linen supplier and five fashion companies were involved in the ECAP pilots. They individually trialed the use of fibres from post-consumer textiles in new garments and shared the learnings from their experiences in case studies and factsheets.

Key Findings

- Top management should be involved to create support
- Employees have to feel engaged before incorporating circularity in daily activities
- A lot of large tenders already demand circular workwear which makes it a safe investment for both parties
- Customers' demand for circular clothing is needed to manufacture and sell the new products
- Cooperation with design departments induces the creation of appealing circular fashion
- Sales and marketing departments have a key role in educating the customer about circularity

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The aim in the fibre-to-fibre project was to change the status quo and to incorporate the circular vision in the daily affairs of design, production and business. To do so, customers demanding more sustainable clothing and textiles are crucial, as well as finding support for a circular vision by the employees within the company. A crucial role for creating this support internally lies with the top management.

Integrate circularity in existing processes

Top management involved

Some pilot companies were small family businesses, wherein the top managers were also the initiators of the project. By running the pilot themselves, they inspired their employees. This made it easier to incorporate the circular processes in the daily tasks.

Support of the top management was also found crucial in larger, international companies. The departments in large companies have different focusses: whereas the design department is working on next year's collection, the production department is focused on next season's collection and sales & marketing is occupied with the current collection. The top management is needed to achieve a shared perspective at sustainability and circularity.

Employee engagement

Employees were more willing to change their behavior when they felt like the new issue was part of their work, and not something that came on top of their regular work. Making circularity a living subject in the entire company ensured that everyone was involved and dedicated. Besides inspiring employees, training them in circular approaches made a great deal in creating support among the staff too. Several participating companies involved their personnel by training them in the topic during informal gatherings or by attending presentations. Training retail personnel on the other hand was more difficult. This was due to the lack of resources to facilitate the training alongside the work in the stores.

'We can only manufacture circular workwear if clients want to purchase clothing with recycled content and moreover, want to hand in their discarded clothing for recycling'

Shirley Schijvens
Managing director of Schijvens

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Demand for circular workwear

The workwear companies' experiences in the sale of the garments were quite good, since circular textile is high on the agenda of large tenders for workwear. This makes it attractive for suppliers and clients to invest. The circular workwear clients understood the 'what's in it for me' factor, like improving their companies' image and reducing the amount of discarded uniforms and workwear after its using period. As a result the workwear suppliers created partnerships with their clients. An approach like this asks for a higher involvement between supplier and customer and strengthens the customer relationship.

Develop a strategy to work more circular and decide upon your focus

Circular fashion

Several fashion brands experienced a lack of demand for a more sustainable line of clothes. This could be explained by the absence of a strong 'what's in it for me' factor for fashion customers. Their strongest and often only motivation for buying garments is the appeal of the design. Therefore, it is of high importance to share the circular story to educate customers about the origin of their clothing. The marketing departments of the companies although still find it challenging to find a balance between educating and engaging the customer. Still, both workwear- and fashion brands cannot live up to their circular ambitions without the support of their customers. So, in the end this bridge has to be crossed and the sales and marketing departments are the ones to do so.

Best practice: HAVEP

HAVEP is a Dutch workwear supplier and has engaged its employees as well as its clients in the circular thought. HAVEP experienced this as the only way to actually successfully create a circular product. Their tips:

- Organise training days for different departments: Sales, Marketing and Communication, Design and Purchasing and finally Managing Board, Facilities & CSR.
- When designing workwear: **involve the user**. HAVEP did this on a client event day.
- [HAVEP pilot video](#)



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The European Clothing Action Plan - ECAP is €3.6 million EU LIFE part funded project. ECAP contributes to creating a more circular approach to reduce clothing waste and water and energy use during production.

ECAP mission

Cutting the environmental impact of clothing across the supply chain. Generating value for business through collaboration, measuring and sharing best practice.

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The fact sheets were generated as a result of pilots carried out for ECAP by Rijkswaterstaat and the named organisations from 2016 to 2019.

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