



Circular Textiles strategy and roadmap – consultation response by Community Resources Network Ireland

Introduction

CRNI (Community Resources Network Ireland) is the representative body for the community based reuse, repair and recycling sector in Ireland. Through its active and committed membership of 40 social enterprises and other community-centred organisations and businesses it serves the unique and valuable role of developing resource efficiency and circular economy initiatives via information sharing, member opportunities, and sector development and advocacy.

Our vision is an Ireland where the word ‘Waste’ doesn’t exist and where our entire community benefits from the social, environmental and economic value of all reusable resources. Our mission is to promote community based, sustainable management of reusable resources as a practical and effective way of tackling Ireland’s growing waste problem.

Almost half of CRNI’s members include textiles in their reuse, repair and recycling activities. Between 2020-23, CRNI’s members were responsible for the reuse or upcycling of nearly 20,300 tonnes of textiles, and for diverting a further 16,200 tonnes of textiles from landfill.

Summary

1. On behalf of CRNI’s members we welcome this strategy and roadmap and the guidance it provides for future policy decisions and measures. We agree that **“growing reuse and repair practices”** (p3) is an important factor of promoting reuse and repair, and recommend that these practices are adequately supported to minimise barriers to growth.

Textile Design and Production

2. With reference to the proposed “skills gap analysis and the development of a plan to bridge the gap to support employment in the sector” (p5), we agree that the skills required within circular textiles practices need to be fully understood. A report from [RREUSE](#)¹ explains the importance of understanding the skills needed within a circular economy, with corresponding tailored training programs. Via case studies it evidences the vital role that social enterprises currently play in providing this tailored training to upskill and reskill workers in readiness to work in a circular economy

¹ RREUSE (2023) *Putting people and skills at the core of the circular economy: 18 stories from social enterprises*

environment. Therefore a skills gap analysis should acknowledge these skills and the skills transfer activity that already exists within the sector².

Emphasis should also be placed on developing formal training provision and accreditation of these skills specifically for professional target audiences, in order to mainstream reuse and repair businesses. A survey of repair skills training courses in Ireland found that clothing and textiles was among the most well represented product categories, but there was an absence of any clothing and textiles courses specifically targeted at professionals³.

Recommendation (in relation to Action no. 7):

- A skills gap analysis should be informed by the range of existing skills within the community-based reuse and repair sector.
- Existing provision of formal training and accreditation in clothing and textiles repair is further developed to accommodate both professional and non-professional target audiences

3. **Facilitating collaboration in circular design** The strategy states the absence of a mechanism to facilitate circular design collaboration, and the lack of a roadmap for adopting circular design principles. There are already excellent instances of such mechanisms in Ireland that facilitate circular design collaboration across a range of business activities (including Circuléire and the Rediscovery Centre). However, supplementing these existing circular enablers with initiatives that are dedicated to textile circular practices would be both welcome and necessary.

Recommendation:

- The existing landscape of circular enablers is used to inform development of new initiatives that are dedicated to textile circular practices.

Textile Consumption and Use

4. The strategy notes “increased volumes of used and discarded textiles being generated, impacting the competitiveness of second-hand sales and potentially swamping collection infrastructure.” (p7). We would argue that the collection infrastructure is already swamped. We would also caution against over-reliance on Ireland's “historically strong charity sector” (p8) as a key part of the ongoing solution

² For example, upcycling clothing requires traditional sewing competencies *and* skills that are unique and specific to upcycling discipline (eg garment deconstruction, designing out waste), alongside broader skills including problem-solving and resourcefulness.

³ EPA (2025), Repair Skills Training and Education in Ireland.

in a post-consumer market dominated by fast fashion, and that the pressures that have resulted in a swamped infrastructure are addressed.

5. The strategy proposes that “Essential skills and knowledge are needed at all stages of the used textiles value chain, notably in the **repair and repurposing sectors**. Addressing this skills gap is essential to help accelerate the circular textiles transition.” (p8). Relating to point 2 earlier in this response, it should be noted that these essential skills and knowledge are already present in the community-based reuse and repair sector. Therefore efforts to accelerate the circular textiles transition should include plans for developing formal training provision and accreditation of professional skills specific to textile reuse and repair⁴.

Recommendation:

- As above (Existing provision of formal training and accreditation in clothing and textiles repair is further developed to accommodate both professional and non-professional target audiences)

Post-Consumer Textiles

6. In relation to the portion of post-consumer textiles “being sold to commercial textile operators” (p12), it should be noted that “Unsold or unusable stock received by members of Charity Retail Ireland are *directed* [not necessarily sold] to commercial textile recyclers”⁵. Furthermore, since the referenced [EPA report](#) was published in 2023, CRNI’s members have reported fewer commercial textile operators willing to buy (or even accept) post-consumer textiles. This puts additional financial and operational pressures on the community-based reuse sector to manage the increasing volume of post-consumer textiles in Ireland.

⁴ To illustrate this with an example from the bicycle repair sector: in 2024 the Rediscovery Centre launched Ireland’s first bicycle repair technician training accredited by Cytech, an internationally recognised training and accreditation scheme for bicycle technicians.

⁵ EPA (2023), Developing a circular textiles system for Ireland