

From Fast Fashion to Sustainable Style: Europe's Political and Ethical Challenge

Buying into fast fashion is not just a common action; it involves ethical, political, and social considerations.

Embracing sustainable fashion means choosing a path where elegance is defined by our respect for the planet and future generations.

Fast fashion is a significant source of **pollution**, hindering our efforts to achieve sustainability goals and the carbon-neutral target for 2040. Over the past decade, this aggressive business model **has driven down clothing prices** and put substantial pressure on the environment.

The Fast Fashion Industry is:

1.2 billion tons of CO2

2% of global greenhouse gas emissions

If current purchasing trends persist, the fashion industry's share of global greenhouse gas emissions could **rise to 26% by 2050**. Immediate action is **crucial**, including the enforcement of strict regulations on companies to address **overproduction** and prevent misleading practices that promote **overconsumption**, which contradict European values and goals.

WHY ACT NOW ?

In the global effort to achieve the **UN SDGs** and honour the commitments of **the Paris Agreement**, it is crucial to limit fast fashion practices. The European Union is currently finalising the adoption of an **ambitious Green Deal** to achieve **carbon neutrality by 2040**. To support this goal, addressing fast fashion issues and promoting more sustainable fashion practices should be a priority.



“
When you buy into fast fashion, no matter how many times you wash your clothes they will never be truly clean. They're stained by the sweat of those who made them, and the footprint it leaves on this planet.

Laura François ”

The fast fashion industry has led to significant overproduction and overconsumption that deeply strains environmental resources.

Its business model drives a constant increase in the number of collections and drops, **compelling other brands to adopt similar practices to remain competitive**, which leads to excessive production.

In 2015, 63% of European brands released collections biannually, but by 2020, only 49% did, with 70% relying on at least four deliveries per year. Brands now release new models at unprecedented rates, with some, like **Shein**, adding over **7,200 new models daily**. This relentless push for new collections forces the fashion production model to massively overproduce, which generates substantial CO2 emissions and exacerbates poor working conditions in factories.

Fast fashion advertising drives consumption by creating urgency and desire through emotional triggers, leading to emotional obsolescence where clothes are discarded for being outdated rather than worn out. Physical wear accounts for only 35% of a garment's end-of-life reasons, and fast fashion items are worn just 7 to 8 times before being discarded. The frequent introduction of new styles, sometimes weekly, encourages overconsumption.

Ads targeting younger demographics amplify peer pressure and social media influences, pushing constant wardrobe updates and leading to excessive waste. Consequently, these advertising practices result in significant environmental damage, with increased textile waste and CO2 emissions, while perpetuating unsustainable consumption patterns.

Greenwashing, which deceives consumers about a company's environmental efforts to create a false impression of sustainability. Despite claims of eco-friendly products, fast fashion brands often lack transparency and fail to make real changes. Study shows this misleading advertising influences consumer perceptions, leading them to accept these claims without scrutiny. **Greenwashing perpetuates overconsumption and environmental damage, as people unknowingly contribute to climate change and pollution under the guise of supporting "sustainable" fashion.**

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1

INTEGRATE A BAN ON FAST FASHION ADVERTISING INTO THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL TO DISCOURAGE UNSUSTAINABLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR.

This ban should compel fast fashion brands to redesign their business models if they wish to promote their products within the European Union. It must encompass both physical and online advertisements as well as the influencers promotion on social media.

COMBAT GREENWASHING ADVERTISEMENT BY ENDORSING THE DIRECTIVE ON GREEN CLAIMS, MANDATING THAT ALL ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS ARE SCIENTIFICALLY VALIDATED BY INDEPENDENT THIRD PARTIES.

2

This directive ensures that environmental claims are credible and based on rigorous evidence. By enforcing strict validation standards, the directive aims to eliminate misleading greenwashing and promote transparency. This approach will protect consumers from false claims and encourage brands to adopt sustainable practices.

3

DEFINE FAST FASHION BRANDS BY REGULATING CLOTHING PRODUCTION, SETTING A CAP OF FOUR COLLECTIONS PER YEAR WITH A MAXIMUM OF THREE DROPS ALLOWED PER BRAND.

This cap identifies fast fashion brands and controls excessive production. Brands surpassing these limits will be categorised as fast fashion and banned from advertising. This measure is designed to prevent brands from expanding their collections solely to follow trends and embrace the emerging fast fashion model. By slowing the pace of production and consumption, it aims to combat trend-driven consumerism and promote a more sustainable fashion industry.

REQUIRE MEMBER STATES TO IMPOSE PENALTIES ON FAST FASHION COMPANIES THAT EXCEED THESE LIMITS TO REDUCE OVERPRODUCTION.

4

This advocates for an annual cap on market launches, combined with a progressive reduction target, in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. A return to four annual collections to slow down production and consumption in the fashion industry should be an objective promoted by the European Union. Additionally, a bonus/malus system, similar to the French model, should be established. Overproduction, which often leads to environmental degradation and human rights abuses, should be penalised, with the fines redistributed to support sustainable brands economically.

WHO ARE WE ?

We are a group of **50 young people** from **nine European countries** united to advance the Sustainable Development Goals across Europe. Our mission is to engage **30,000 young people** and mobilise policymakers on environmental issues and sustainable living through **advocacy, online and street campaigns**.

We focus on **Fast Fashion** due to its profound impact on social and environmental issues, making it a critical concern for young people.

To achieve this, we plan to visit **17 European cities** over several weeks, including stops in Romania, Serbia, Italy, Slovenia, Germany, and France, before concluding at the European Institutions in Belgium. During this journey, we will **raise awareness, rally support, and gather the youth's perspectives** to craft a **Manifesto** that reflects the future young people want for Europe.

50



17

30 000



THE FRENCH EXAMPLE

In 2024, the French National Assembly adopted an ambitious bill targeting fast fashion. The goal is to combat unfair competition against companies that choose more sustainable textile production methods, which respect both people and the environment. According to French MPs, fast fashion undermines France's clothing sovereignty.

By slashing prices, it encourages delocation, outsourcing and competes unfairly with European textile manufacturers, who adhere to higher social and environmental standards.

Finally, the French Parliament is relying on the support from several actors of the sector in the French textile industry that are advocating urging them to impose stricter regulations on the textile industry.

Therefore, combating fast fashion benefits both French consumers and domestic textile producers and appears to have broad global consensus.

SOURCES

Assemblée nationale. (2023). Proposition de loi visant à réduire l'impact environnemental de l'industrie textile. Available at https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/16/textes/l16b2268_proposition-loi

European Environment Agency. (2023). *Textiles and Europe's Circular Economy*. Available at <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/textiles-in-europes-circular-economy>.

Fashion Revolution. (2023). *Why Fashion Transparency Matters According to the Experts*. Available at <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/why-fashion-transparency-matters-according-to-the-experts/>

Fashion Network. (2019). *Faster collections are forcing brands to anticipate their design timetable*. Available at <https://fr.fashionnetwork.com/news/L-acceleration-des-collections-pousse-les-marques-a-anticiper-leur-calendrier-de-conception,1183455.html>

Fashion United. (2022). *How a Brand's Collection is Created*. Available at <https://fashionunited.fr/actualite/historique/comment-se-cree-la-collection-d-une-marque-de-mode/2022122231050>

Greenpeace France. (2023). *Comment opter pour une mode plus éthique et responsable*. Available at <https://www.greenpeace.fr/comment-opter-pour-une-mode-plus-ethique-et-responsable/>

Les Echos. (2020). *Mode: les marques accélèrent le renouvellement des collections*. Available at <https://www.lesechos.fr/industrie-services/mode-luxe/mode-les-marques-accelerent-le-renouvellement-des-collections-1173065>

Oxfam France. (2023). *Loi fast fashion: le décryptage d'Oxfam*. Available at <https://www.amisdelaterre.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/decryptage-fast-fashion-vdef.pdf>

Oxfam France. (2023). *Loi fast-fashion: un premier pas historique pour en découdre avec la fast-fashion*. Available at <https://www.amisdelaterre.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/decryptage-fast-fashion-vdef.pdf>

Stop Fast-Fashion Coalition. (2023). *La coalition Stop Fast-Fashion lance un appel aux décideurs politiques*. Available at <https://www.amisdelaterre.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/decryptage-fast-fashion-vdef.pdf>

WeDressFair. (2023). 6 engagements des marques de mode éthique. Available at <https://www.wedressfair.fr/blog/6-engagements-des-marques-de-mode-ethique#:~:text=Pour%20mettre%20un%20terme%20à,%20plus%20de%2030%20!%20>