# CIRCULAR FASHION

Repair, Recycle, Reuse

**PROMOTING INCLUSIVENESS, ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH CIRCULAR FASHION PRACTICES**

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# Pedagogical Handbook

***Partners***

Le MONDE des possibles

Infodef INSTITUTO PARA EL FOMENTO DEL DESARROLLO Y LA FORMACIÓN

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INNOQUALITY SYSTEMS

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# CIRCULAR FASHION PEDAGOGICAL HANDBOOK

## AIM

This handbook aims to provide target users with in-depth information, basic concepts, definitions and innovative methodological approaches to support young people with fewer opportunities by applying Circular Fashion Principles: **Reuse-Redesign-Repair**- to promote their social inclusion, active citizenship and environmental awareness.

## IMPACT AND TARGET GROUPS

The Circular Fashion Pedagogical Handbook targets youth workers, educators, trainers and mediators, with a particular focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged youth facing barriers to education and participation. It is an inclusive and innovative learning tool that integrates circular fashion practices with green, digital, and entrepreneurial skills. The handbook contributes to environmental impact by raising awareness of sustainability and promoting responsible consumer behavior. It also generates social and economic impact by supporting active citizenship and social inclusion, enhancing employability, and encouraging creative and entrepreneurial pathways for vulnerable young people.

# THE PEDAGOGICAL HANDBOOK STRUCTURE

# 1. Introduction

### General description of Circular Fashion project

### Objectives

The Circular Fashion project seeks to empower young people who encounter barriers to learning and participation due to economic, social, cultural, geographical, or health factors. Through the introduction of circular fashion practices based on reuse, redesign, and repair, the project will support the development of key competences, foster creativity, and promote social inclusion, active citizenship, environmental awareness, and entrepreneurship.

### Target groups

Target USERS are youth workers, intercultural mediators and volunteers that will be upskilled and provided with pedagogical and digital tools to support young people with fewer opportunities by applying circular fashion practices and principles of reuse-redesign-repair.

Target BENEFICIARIES are young people with fewer opportunities, who face challenges in accessing learning and participation opportunities.

### Results

The Circular fashion project will produce several results including: -Quality and Monitoring Plan -Training Curriculum to apply Circular Fashion Practices to support young people with fewer opportunities -Pedagogical Handbook for Youth Workers -Digital Database on Circular Fashion for environmental awareness and social inclusion -Circular Fashion Interactive Toolbox -Piloting Report and Recommendations -Promotion Plan and Exploitation Strategy -Network and community of practice on Circular Fashion and Youth Inclusion.

### Expected project impact

**Pedagogical and Digital Impact**: The project strengthens digital transformation through the creation of an online Digital Database and an Interactive Toolbox that offers a wide range of multimedia materials and participatory learning activities. Its inclusive educational methodology integrates sustainable practices, green skills, and digital competences, fostering innovative, learner-centred, and accessible education for all participants.

**Environmental Impact**: The project promotes environmental responsibility by raising awareness of sustainable consumption and circular practices. Participants will develop a deeper understanding of environmental challenges and acquire practical skills related to reuse, repair, and sustainable fashion, contributing to more eco-conscious behaviors and lifestyles.

**Social Impact**: The project supports the social inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people by providing equal access to learning opportunities. Through collaborative and creative

activities, it enhances participation, self-confidence, and active citizenship, strengthening their sense of belonging within their communities.

**Economic Impact**: By acquiring green, digital, and creative skills, participants will improve their employability and increase their potential for entrepreneurship. The project equips young people with competences aligned with emerging labour market needs, supporting their integration into the workforce and encouraging sustainable economic initiatives.

# 2. Training programmes

The Circular Fashion project focuses on the capabilities and sense of initiative of young people to promote an inclusive transition to a greener economy by providing them with knowledge of circular fashion practices to acquire key competences, enhance creativity, apply principles of reuse-redesign-repair and promote social inclusion, active citizenship, environmental awareness and entrepreneurship. To boost the expression of these capabilities, the Circular Fashion project partnership has developed a Circular Fashion Training Curriculum aimed at providing **youth workers, intercultural mediators and volunteers with the competencies necessary to train young people with fewer opportunities in Circular Fashion practices**. This curriculum aims to provide a comprehensive framework that enhances the knowledge, skills, and autonomy of the above-mentioned adult learners, aligned with European Qualification Framework (EQF) standards and designed according to ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training).

The Circular Fashion Training Curriculum is structured into five units, each with defined learning outcomes to which ECVET points are allocated as indicated in the table below.

| Unit | Learning Unit title | Allocated ECVET Points |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction to Circular Economy: from Fast Fashion to Circular Fashion | 0,4 points (10 hours of blended learning) |
| 2 | Teaching in non-formal education contexts | 0,4 points (10 hours of blended learning) |
| 3 | Circular fashion as a tool for Social Change and Empowerment | 0,4 points (10 hours of blended learning) |
| 4 | Designing and Facilitating Circular Fashion practices | 0,4 points (10 hours of blended learning) |
| 5 | Circular fashion and Social Entrepreneurship | 0,4 points (10 hours of blended learning) |
| | | TOTAL ECVET POINTS: 2 |

# 3. CF pedagogical handbook -Modules

## Module 1: Introduction to Circular Economy: from Fast Fashion to Circular Fashion




Source: Freepik

### Theoretical introduction, approaches and general notions on CFP to support vulnerable youth

**Applying circular economy principles to fashion to support vulnerable youth**

The circular economy (CE) is an alternative to the linear "take–make–dispose" production model traditionally used in fashion. It emphasizes **designing out waste, extending product life,** and regenerating natural systems. Within the fashion sector (one of the world's most resource-intensive and waste-producing industries), the CE offers both an environmental necessity and a social opportunity. When linked with youth development, CE practices can become vehicles for empowerment, skills-building, and social inclusion. Vulnerable youth (those facing socioeconomic marginalization, unemployment, migration, family instability, or limited access to education) can benefit significantly from initiatives that combine sustainable production with personal and professional development.

Because circular fashion relies heavily on repair, reuse, upcycling, material innovation, and collaborative consumption, it naturally creates accessible entry points for learning technical, creative, and entrepreneurial skills. This makes the sector well suited for programs aimed at engaging young people who may struggle to enter the mainstream labour market. CE principles

not only encourage low-barrier skill acquisition but also foster values such as stewardship, responsibility, and community engagement), **key pillars for the empowerment** of vulnerable groups.

## Conceptual knowledge and Methodological support related to youth educators

### The circular methodology

Circular economy principles are based on eliminating waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, regenerating natural systems, designing for longevity and resource efficiency and fostering systemic collaboration and innovation.

How could these principles be put into practice in the fashion world?

The table below provides methods of integration of the circular economy into fashion.

| Circular economy principles | Circular fashion integration |
|---|---|
| Eliminate waste and pollution | • Use non-toxic dyes and finishes (safe chemistry).<br>• Reduce cutting waste via pattern optimization, 3D knitting, on-demand production.<br>• Choose mono-materials or easy-to-disassemble construction to prevent downcycling.<br>• Avoid microplastic shed by choosing better fibres and constructions. |
| Keep products and materials in use | • Design garments for longevity, modularity, and repair.<br>• Create business models supporting prolongation: resale, rental, repair services, subscription.<br>• Implement take-back programs.<br>• Enable fibre-to-fibre recycling through clear labelling and material separation. |
| Regenerate natural systems | • Choose regenerative agriculture for cotton, wool, hemp, leather.<br>• Use biodegradable and compostable bio-based fibres that safely return to nature.<br>• Shift to renewable energy in factories.<br>• Reduce water pollution by eliminating toxic chemicals. |
| Design for longevity and resource efficiency | • Make garments durable in quality and style. |

| Circular economy principles | Circular fashion integration |
|---|---|
| | • Use resource-efficient production processes (laser cutting, dope dyeing, digital printing).<br>• Reduce energy, water, and chemical inputs across the lifecycle.<br>• Adopt minimal-impact packaging. |
| Foster systemic collaboration and innovation | • Collaborate across brands, recyclers, fibre producers, logistics, and tech providers.<br>• Use digital passports for traceability.<br>• Co-create sorting and recycling infrastructures.<br>• Engage customers through education, incentives, and transparent communication |

## Innovative pedagogical approaches and Assessment methodologies

### Pedagogical approaches

Youth workers, intercultural mediators and volunteers can use different pedagogical approaches such as Project-Based Learning (PBL), inquiry-based learning, experiential & hands-on workshops, design thinking, youth-led action and participatory learning, digital & media Literacy approaches, game-based learning, service learning and critical pedagogy.



Source: Pixabay

**Project Based Learning** encourages systems thinking, creativity, and collaboration and it connects learning to actual community challenges. Examples of project-based learning activities can be:

- Creating a circular fashion capsule collection using upcycled textiles;
- Mapping the life cycle of a garment;
- Designing communication campaigns exposing greenwashing;
- Running a "repair & redesign" pop-up event.

**Inquiry-based learning** builds critical thinking and research skills; empowers youth to find solutions. Learners investigate provocative questions:

- *"Where does my T-shirt come from and where does it go?";*
- *"How do we identify greenwashing in fashion marketing?";*
- *"How can a community shift from fast fashion to circular fashion?".*

**Experiential & hands-on workshops** transform abstract sustainability concepts into tangible, memorable experiences. Examples of practical activities can be:

- Clothing repair and upcycling workshops;
- Material identification and recyclability tests;
- Garment disassembly to understand design choices;
- Chemical-free dyeing or natural textile experiments.



Source: Pixabay

**Design thinking** helps youth understand sustainability as a design challenge rather than just a problem. A structured creative approach to ideating solutions can include:

1. Empathise (understand consumer behaviour, global supply chains);
2. Define (what is the challenge in fashion sustainability?);
3. Ideate (circular design concepts, greenwashing-free communication);
4. Prototype (model garments, business models, tools);
5. Test (present to peers, users, or local community).

**Youth-led action and participatory learning** boosts ownership, leadership, and motivation. Participants can co-create:

- Sustainable fashion guidelines for their school/organization;
- Awareness campaigns or exhibitions;
- Swap parties, mending circles, or thrift markets.

**Digital & media literacy** approaches connect sustainability to youth culture and strengthens digital critical thinking. Activities can include:

- Analysing influencer marketing for greenwashing;
- Creating social media content debunking sustainability myths;
- Using AI tools to redesign garment waste.

**Game-based learning** increases engagement, cooperation, and problem-solving. Examples of game-based learning activities:

- “Fast Fashion Supply Chain Simulation”;
- Sustainability escape rooms;
- Circular economy board games;
- Gamified challenges (e.g., “Zero Waste Fashion Week”).

**Service learning** combines community service with education and builds empathy and real-world understanding. Examples of service learning approach:

- Partnering with local charities to repair or sort clothing;
- Supporting community recycling or textile banks;
- Running workshops for younger children.

**Critical pedagogy** links sustainability to social justice and equity. It encourages youth to question power structures through the following possible questions:

- Why do fast fashion workers earn so little?
- Who benefits from greenwashing?

- Whose voices are being ignored in the fashion system?

**Assessment methodologies**

Several assessment methodologies can be used to evaluate youth learning, engagement and motivation on circular fashion practices such as peer-to-peer assessment, self-assessment, reflection journals, and scenario-based assessment.

**Peer-to-peer assessment** supports collaboration, improves feedback literacy, and builds communication skills. Young people evaluate each other's designs, presentations, campaigns, and circular business model ideas.

**Self-assessment and reflection journals** boost self-awareness and metacognition. Guided reflection prompts can be *"What surprised me about the fashion supply chain?", "How did my actions contribute to waste reduction?" and "What biases did I have about sustainable fashion?".*

**Scenario-based assessment** applies theory to practice in dynamic, realistic ways. Youth can be given fictional but realistic scenarios such as "A brand claims to have a 'sustainable' collection. Evaluate the truth", "A school wants to adopt a circular fashion policy. What do you propose?" and "You have 10 kg of textile waste. Create a circular solution".

These approaches strengthen systems thinking (circular economy), material awareness and product design (circular fashion), critical literacy (greenwashing detection), socio-environmental understanding (fast fashion impacts), creativity and innovation (solutions-focused learning) and youth empowerment and leadership (community projects).

## Cutting-edge practices, successful and inspiring experiences

**Moda re-** is a non-profit social initiative cooperative promoted by Cáritas Spain, dedicated to managing the entire cycle of used clothing: from collection and preparation for reuse, to recycling, social donation and sale. With a circular economy approach, Moda re- promotes social employment and optimises the collection and recycling processes for used clothing. Their work is based on innovation and economic sustainability, with all profits going towards the development and continuous growth of the project.

Source: https://modare.org/

**Sustainability in fashion: how to incorporate circular fashion** (organised by La Casa Encendida)

This course aims to highlight the circularity and urgency of a change of approach in the fashion ecosystem. By questioning its production and consumption model and proposing alternatives with a positive impact, it seeks to be a source of inspiration and reference for people involved in fashion.

**Objectives:**

- To encourage interest in and the development of sustainable fashion.
- To learn about complementary options and alternatives to fast fashion.

- To discover resources, networks and methodologies for generating new circular economy projects in the field of fashion.

Source: https://www.lacasaencendida.es/medio-ambiente/sostenibilidad-moda-como-incorporar-moda-circular

**Sustainable Fashion Barcelona,** an association promoting circular fashion and textiles, that organises a training programme designed to transform established or developing companies, SMEs, micro-enterprises or start-ups. Key aspects of the training are: sustainable transition, circular business model, ecodesign, communication, greenwashing and legal aspects.

(Source: https://www.modasosteniblebcn.org/formacion-en-moda-circular-y-sostenible/)

**ClyUp** is the first circular fashion community marketplace for those who want to sell, create and buy unique, certified and sustainable garments. https://www.clyup.com/

**Palingen** is a social and sustainable tailoring service that transforms waste into resources, and broken lives into new possibilities, stories and opportunities. “We believe in beauty that regenerates, in work as a means of redemption, and in inclusive, ethical, and conscious fashion. Each of our garments is sewn by hands that mend the present and dream of a better future.” https://www.palingen.it/

**Risvolta** is about “Creating Made in Italy garments using recycled and organic materials, with complete transparency and without waste.” They use **recycled** and **organic** raw materials that have a **lower impact** on water and energy resources than traditional raw materials with a zero waste approach (production only by order). The **product passport ensures t**ransparency **documenting the entire production chain** from the origin of the raw materials to the individual processing stages. https://www.risvolta.com/it/

**FastFeetGrinded** exists to transform the international footwear industry into a circular one by providing innovative recycled materials and building a sustainable future for us and generations to come. FastFeetGrinded is the world’s first facility fully dedicated to recycling shoes and converting them into valuable raw materials. https://www.fastfeetgrinded.eu/

**Food Bag Foundation** is a project born between Morocco and England, in which used plastic bags are transformed into durable bags embroidered by hand by local women. The project combines upcycling, craftsmanship and social impact. https://www.foodbag.foundation/

**Guri zi** is a project created to provide work for vulnerable women in the poorest areas of Albania, who handcraft beach towels, tablecloths, beauty cases and much more. https://www.guriizi.com/

**Lena Fashion Library** is a library of clothes where you can borrow and buy clothing from their store in Amsterdam or online via the web shop. https://lena-library.com/

**IntoCarry,** through in person workshops and online tutorials, share techniques and patterns to turn everyday materials into quality carry pieces. https://intocarry.co/

## Useful information and additional readings

**Collective Fashion Justice** aims to illuminate the interlinked injustices in fashion supply chains that harm the planet, people and our fellow animals. https://www.collectivefashionjustice.org/

**Sustainable fashion films to watch:** The Machinists, The Next Black, Riverblue, Slowing Down Fast Fashion, Unravel.

**Sustainable fashion podcasts**: The Business of Fashion Podcast, Conscious Chatter, Ethical Fashion Podcast, The Circular Economy Show Podcast, Sustainable Talks with N&N.

**Human Rights Watch** investigates and reports on abuses happening in all corners of the world including also the workers in the fashion industry. https://www.hrw.org/

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Source: Freepik

# Theoretical introduction, approaches and general notions on CFP to support vulnerable youth

**European Policy Context and Non-Formal Education**

Across Europe, non-formal education (NFE) plays a vital role in reaching young people who are excluded from formal education or employment pathways. The European Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2020) highlights lifelong and life-wide learning as a strategic priority to ensure inclusion, employability, and participation. Non-formal learning settings—youth centres, NGOs, cultural spaces—are often the first and most accessible learning environments for young people with fewer opportunities.

The EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles (2022) and the European Green Deal (2019) promote sustainability, innovation, and circular thinking across education and society. Integrating circular fashion practices within NFE thus aligns with EU goals of fostering green competences, civic engagement, and inclusive participation.

Furthermore, the Council Recommendation on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (2012) and the Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2018) underline that key competences are developed across formal, non-formal and informal learning settings throughout life, including youth work, volunteering and community-based activities. The 2018 European Reference Framework highlights skills such as personal, social and learning-to-learn, citizenship and entrepreneurship competences as essential for employability, social inclusion and democratic participation. In this perspective, participatory and learner-centred youth work positions youth workers as facilitators of empowerment, creativity and active citizenship – core elements of sustainable development, social cohesion and young people's resilience in times of rapid social change.

**Defining Non-Formal Education**

**Education, in its broadest sense, encompasses all organized and sustained forms of** communication intended to foster learning. According to the *International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)*, education involves a structured process designed to bring about knowledge, skills, and attitudinal change. However, this institutional definition has often been viewed as restrictive, as it underplays the importance of learning processes that occur outside formal systems—those spontaneous, community-based, or self-directed forms of knowledge acquisition that shape human development throughout life.

In educational theory, three main categories of learning are widely recognised: formal, non-formal, and informal education. These categories differ in their organisation, intentionality, and degree of institutionalisation but together form a continuum of lifelong learning.

Formal education refers to the structured, hierarchical system of schooling that operates within established institutions—schools, colleges, and universities—under a fixed curriculum and certified teaching staff. It is characterised by standardisation, age-graded progression, and nationally recognised qualifications. Formal education aims to be universal, sequential, and institutional, offering continuity and certification for learners who meet its entry and progression criteria.

Non-formal education, by contrast, is defined by Coombs et al. (1973) as "any organised educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve identifiable clienteles and learning objectives." It includes structured, purposeful learning activities that are organised but not institutionalised within formal schooling. Its key features are:

- Intentional organisation — learning is consciously planned by both educator and learner;
- Defined target groups — programmes are often designed for specific audiences such as youth, women, or workers;
- Flexible curricula — adapted to local contexts, community needs, or emerging socio-economic priorities; and
- Short-term or modular structure — courses may be time-limited, voluntary, and community-based rather than compulsory or standardised.

Non-formal education functions as a complement or alternative to formal schooling. It arose historically in response to the limitations of rigid school systems, particularly their inability to reach disadvantaged populations or respond quickly to changing social and economic realities. As Hamadache (1991) explains, non-formal education "was designed to compensate for the shortcomings of the traditional school system and to satisfy the often-urgent needs overlooked by formal education." Its adaptability allows it to meet the learning needs of communities more effectively, and its decentralised, participatory character makes it particularly relevant for social inclusion, literacy, vocational training, and civic engagement.

Informal education, finally, refers to learning that is neither structured nor consciously organised. It occurs through daily interactions with family, peers, media, and society—through observation, imitation, and participation in cultural life. Unlike non-formal learning, it lacks predetermined objectives or curricula. As Evans (1981) and Hamadache (1991) note, informal education may involve either the learner or the source of information having an educational intent, but not both. It is therefore unstructured, incidental, and often lifelong in nature, encompassing socialisation, cultural transmission, and self-directed exploration.

**Relevance of Non-Formal Education in Circular Fashion Practices**

The European Union increasingly recognises non-formal and informal learning as crucial instruments for achieving its sustainability, inclusion, and lifelong learning objectives. The European Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2020) stresses that skills for the green and digital transitions must be developed not only through formal schooling but also through flexible, community-based, and experiential learning settings. Similarly, the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019) and the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles (2022) call for educational actions that foster behavioural change, circular thinking, and social innovation. CEDEFOP (2022) and the Council Recommendation on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (2012) further underline that recognising competences acquired outside formal education is essential to create inclusive learning pathways and a responsive labour

market. Within this European policy framework, non-formal education serves as a bridge between skills development, environmental citizenship, and community engagement.

In the field of Circular Fashion Practices (CFP), non-formal education provides a learning arena where the principles of the circular economy are experienced rather than merely discussed. While formal education introduces sustainability concepts through curricular instruction, it often lacks the immediacy and community connection that stimulate personal transformation. Conversely, informal learning—through family habits, media, or peer networks—raises awareness but rarely ensures depth, continuity, or validation. Non-formal education occupies the middle ground, combining the intentional design of learning experiences with the flexibility to adapt to local realities and learner diversity.

In circular fashion projects, this approach translates abstract sustainability principles into creative, practice-based experiences. Through workshops, repair cafés, upcycling labs, or community swap events, learners engage in experiential and participatory processes that mirror circularity itself: observation, experimentation, reflection, and reinvention. Participants not only gain practical competences such as sewing, natural dyeing, or design thinking but also develop transversal abilities—collaboration, problem-solving, and environmental literacy—identified by CEDEFOP (2021) as core elements of the "green competence framework."

Non-formal circular fashion education also advances social inclusion and active citizenship, two central goals of the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027). Because participation is voluntary, dialogic, and community-based, it lowers barriers for young people with fewer opportunities—migrants, NEETs, or those disengaged from formal schooling—to re-enter learning through creativity and shared purpose. These environments encourage collective ownership of both the learning process and the sustainability agenda, strengthening what UNESCO (2020) defines as "transformative education for sustainable development," where learners not only understand global challenges but act on them locally.

Moreover, non-formal education supports the validation and visibility of competences gained through circular fashion initiatives. Tools such as Europass, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and EPALE enable learners to document skills acquired through non-formal routes, ensuring continuity between community learning and professional development. This recognition mechanism reflects the EU's commitment to making lifelong and life-wide learning a coherent ecosystem, where creativity and sustainability are equally valued alongside academic achievement.

In this perspective, non-formal education within CFP is not peripheral but integral to Europe's transition toward a green, inclusive, and circular economy. It cultivates both the technical and human dimensions of sustainability: manual competences that extend product lifecycles, and civic competences that nurture empathy, participation, and ecological responsibility. By linking creativity, culture, and environmental awareness, non-formal learning in circular fashion directly contributes to the EU's twin transitions—green and digital—and to the broader vision of a resilient, climate-neutral Europe by 2050.

**Constructivism and Experiential Learning**



Source: Freepik

**Constructivist theory** asserts that learners build knowledge through active engagement with their environment. Learning is most meaningful when participants can connect new experiences to their prior knowledge (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978).

**Experiential learning**, as articulated by Kolb (1984), follows a cyclical model:

1. **Concrete experience** (doing)
2. **Reflective observation** (reviewing)
3. **Abstract conceptualization** (understanding)
4. **Active experimentation** (applying)

This model resonates strongly with the goals of circular fashion education—learners create, test, and reflect on sustainable practices, from repairing clothing to co-designing eco-friendly products.

## Conceptual knowledge and Methodological support related to youth educators

### Learner-Centred and Participatory Approaches

A learner-centred approach positions learners as active participants rather than passive recipients of information. In practice, this means adapting content to participants' interests, fostering dialogue, and encouraging co-decision-making.

In non-formal settings, this often manifests as:

- Group learning that values cooperation over competition.
- Dialogue-based facilitation rather than lecturing.
- Co-creation of learning goals between educator and learners.

Participatory approaches, closely linked to learner-centred methods, emphasize collective exploration, community engagement, and mutual learning. As Gover, Loukkola, and Peterbauer (2019) note, participation enhances motivation, ownership, and accountability in the learning process.

In circular fashion contexts, participatory approaches help participants connect sustainability with personal experience—for instance, by exploring the emotional stories behind garments, or by designing creative upcycling projects that reflect their identity and values.

**Educator Competences and Roles**



Source: Freepik

According to the European Training Strategy Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally (SALTO-YOUTH, 2023), effective youth educators and facilitators in non-formal education must demonstrate a combination of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviours that enable them to empower young people through participatory, learner-centred, and inclusive approaches.

The model identifies nine competence areas, several of which are particularly relevant to circular fashion education: facilitating learning, designing programmes, communicating meaningfully,

collaborating in teams, and being civically engaged. These competences translate into three interrelated domains that are essential for youth educators working with vulnerable or marginalized learners.

- Personal competences include empathy, self-reflection, intercultural sensitivity, and openness to ambiguity. Educators must be aware of their own values, privileges, and biases, and cultivate trust, respect, and solidarity in diverse learning groups. These attitudes form the foundation for genuine dialogue and empowerment.
- Pedagogical competences encompass the ability to design experiential and participatory learning processes, assess needs, and adapt methods to individual and group contexts. Youth workers are expected to create safe spaces for exploration, encourage self-directed learning, and support participants in transforming experiences into actionable knowledge. As highlighted in the ETS model, this means "trusting young people's capacity to direct their own learning" and fostering creativity, critical thinking, and "out-of-the-box" problem-solving.
- Digital and green competences relate to integrating digital tools, sustainability principles, and ethical awareness into youth education. The ETS model emphasises the importance of addressing the "digital divide," promoting environmental responsibility, and using online and blended learning environments to extend inclusion and participation.

Rather than acting as traditional instructors, youth educators in non-formal settings are facilitators, mentors, and co-learners. Their primary role is to create conditions for discovery—allowing young people to experiment, fail safely, and learn through doing (European Commission, 2018). Within the context of circular fashion education, this may involve mentoring a group repairing garments, guiding a co-design workshop on textile reuse, or facilitating community discussions about sustainable consumption.

By adopting this reflective and participatory stance, educators embody the ETS principles of young person-centredness, participation, empowerment, voluntariness, and democratic values. These principles ensure that non-formal learning becomes not only a vehicle for competence development, but also a transformative process fostering belonging, agency, and sustainability.

### Methods for Fostering Participation and Inclusion

Key participatory techniques that support inclusion in NFE include:

- **Community mapping:** identifying local sustainability issues or textile waste sources.
- **Role play and simulation:** exploring the social and environmental consequences of fashion choices.
- **Visual storytelling:** using textiles, art, or digital media to express personal narratives about clothing.
- **Learning circles:** structured group reflections encouraging peer feedback.

These methods engage multiple learning styles and promote dialogue, collaboration, and creativity—essential elements for empowering disadvantaged youth (Kucharcikova & Tokarcikova, 2016).

## Innovative pedagogical approaches and -Assessment methodologies

### Innovative Pedagogies in Circular Fashion Learning



Source: Freepik

Non-formal education thrives on innovation and creativity. In line with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) literature, effective pedagogies are learner-centred, participatory, experiential, and action-oriented, enabling young people to question fast-fashion norms and practise circular solutions in real contexts (Tilbury, 2011; UNESCO, 2020).

**1. Project-Based & Industry-Linked Learning (PBL)**

Participants co-design small-scale circular fashion projects—upcycled capsules, repair clubs, or swap events—often in collaboration with local brands or NGOs. PBL has been shown to strengthen systems thinking, creativity, and entrepreneurial competences, especially when linked to real industry briefs (European Commission, 2013; Sood & Sharma, 2023).

**2. Design Thinking & Circular Redesign**

Learners move through empathy, ideation, prototyping, and testing to reimagine textile waste as new products or services (e.g., redesigning returns, rental schemes). Design thinking is highlighted as a key approach for circular economy education, helping students integrate sustainability into design decisions and user experience (Andrews, 2015).

**3. Gamification for Pro-Environmental Behaviour**

Game elements such as eco-points, challenges, leaderboards, or “carbon budgets” can frame workshops or campaigns on circular fashion. A systematic review shows gamification can

effectively support learning and pro-environmental behaviours by using rewards, feedback and social competition (Huang, Saleh, & Zolkepli, 2022).

**4. Digital & Social-Media-Based Learning**

Online platforms, micro-learning videos, and social media campaigns enable youth to co-create digital storytelling on overconsumption, greenwashing, or garment worker rights. UNESCO's ESD roadmap underlines the role of digital tools and global connectivity in scaling transformative sustainability learning (UNESCO, 2020).

**5. Experiential, Hands-On Learning ("Learning by Doing")**

Workshops on mending, zero-waste pattern-cutting, natural dyeing, or wardrobe audits allow participants to experience circular practices with their own garments. ESD research identifies experiential and action-oriented learning as core processes for developing sustainability competences and shifting values and habits (Tilbury, 2011; UNESCO, 2020).

**6. Participatory & Community-Based Learning**

Youth co-design circular economy initiatives—swap markets, community repair cafés, or local awareness campaigns—with residents, activists, and small businesses. Participatory approaches have long been associated with empowerment and more sustainable behaviours, as learners take collective responsibility for local problems and co-create solutions (Pretty, 1995; Tilbury, 2011).

### Assessment in Non-Formal Learning

In non-formal contexts, **assessment focuses on growth and engagement**, not grades or certification. Effective assessment strategies include:

- **Self-assessment:** Learners reflect on personal growth using journals or guided questions.
- **Peer feedback:** Peers evaluate collaboration and creativity, fostering mutual respect.
- **Portfolio-based evaluation:** Participants compile photos, designs, and narratives documenting their learning journey.
- **Facilitator observation:** Trainers provide feedback on communication, participation, and problem-solving.

These approaches align with the **EQAVET** (European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET), which promotes reflective and process-based evaluation over formal testing (CEDEFOP, 2022).

### Measuring Empowerment and Inclusion

Empowerment and inclusion in non-formal circular fashion learning can be evaluated through **accessible yet evidence-based indicators**. Key measures include the **participation and sustained engagement of marginalised groups**, learners' **self-reported sense of belonging, confidence, and agency**, and **observable collaboration, communication, and problem-solving**

**skills**—all recognised in inclusive education research as indicators of meaningful participation (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2025).

To capture learners' voices, youth workers can integrate **simple participatory assessment tools**, such as *mood meters, reflection cards, or short exit questions*. UNESCO highlights that such qualitative, learner-centred tools strengthen empowerment by ensuring young people actively shape both the learning process and programme refinement (UNESCO, 2020).

## Cutting-edge practices, successful and inspiring experiences

### Türkiye: Circular Fashion Collective

Located in İstanbul, the Circular Fashion Collective is a community-based initiative that combines **traditional crafts** and **modern sustainability practices**. Led by designer **Yasemin Uluçınar**, the collective organizes workshops and cultural events that encourage participants to reuse, redesign and repair textiles instead of discarding them.

Its training programme runs for about five months and includes both **theoretical inputs and practical sessions** such as natural dyeing, flax cultivation, textile repair, and creative upcycling. Every workshop blends **hands-on learning** with reflection and peer exchange, allowing participants to understand the environmental impact of fashion while developing creative and technical skills. At the end of each cycle, participants exhibit their work, turning the learning process into a public dialogue about sustainability.

Beyond training, the collective also hosts a **monthly "Swap Festival"**, where community members of all ages exchange clothes, books and accessories under the slogan *"What is old for one, becomes new for another."* The event demonstrates how sustainability can be practiced in everyday life and how shared experiences can connect people from different backgrounds.

This initiative reflects the essence of **non-formal education**: voluntary participation, learning through doing, and inclusion through creativity. It offers a welcoming space for youth, migrants, and local residents to explore sustainable lifestyles while strengthening their sense of belonging. Many participants continue these practices afterwards, some even starting their own small sustainable fashion initiatives.

The project's success lies in its **accessibility, cultural authenticity, and community focus**. By bringing together artisans, students, and volunteers, the Circular Fashion Collective transforms awareness into action and shows how circular fashion can become a tool for learning, empowerment and social change.



More Info

**Belgium: M-Fair – Fair and Circular Fashion Festival (City of Mechelen)**

The M-Fair in Mechelen, Belgium, is an annual community-based festival that promotes fair, sustainable, and circular fashion through education, creative collaboration, and civic engagement. The initiative responds to the environmental and social impact of fast fashion, encouraging citizens to adopt more conscious consumption habits and to discover local, ethical alternatives.

Organised by the City of Mechelen since 2019, M-Fair serves as a non-formal learning platform connecting designers, educators, students, cultural institutions, and citizens. Each year, more than twenty partners from the educational and cultural sectors co-create the event. In the months leading up to the festival, schools and youth centres host workshops on repairing, upcycling, and second-hand fashion, while design students and young volunteers prepare a fashion show showcasing clothes made from reused materials. These participatory activities transform sustainability into an accessible, creative, and enjoyable experience for all generations.

The festival culminates in a public fair where local makers, retailers, and social enterprises present circular products and initiatives. Visitors can participate in repair cafés, textile swap areas, and creative reuse labs—each space encouraging hands-on engagement rather than passive observation. Through this approach, M-Fair bridges learning, community participation, and environmental awareness, embodying the principles of non-formal education: voluntary participation, experiential learning, and empowerment through practice.

With an annual attendance of around 3,000 visitors, the event has become a recognised part of the national Week of Fairtrade and receives support from both local and national government.

Its communication campaign extends citywide, featuring videos, posters, and even sustainability messages printed on bread bags and digital screens across Mechelen—making the topic visible and relatable in daily life.

M-Fair demonstrates how municipalities can act as facilitators of learning by creating participatory environments where people learn through doing and reflecting together. It shows that circular fashion is not only a niche trend but a realistic, socially responsible alternative that can be scaled through education, creativity, and collaboration. By integrating cultural, educational, and environmental dimensions, the festival helps build a local ecosystem of learning and sustainability that other European cities can easily adapt to their contexts.




More Info

**Italy: (Re)made in Italy – Prato Textile District**

Located in Tuscany, the City of Prato represents one of Europe's most advanced and historic examples of circular textile production. For centuries, the district has been a hub for fabric manufacturing and innovation, transforming textile waste into new materials long before "circular economy" became a policy concept. Today, Prato is a living laboratory where industrial heritage, technological innovation, and environmental responsibility converge.

Nearly half of the world's carded woollen fabric exports originate from Prato, and about 80% of this production comes from regenerated fibres—proof that large-scale textile circularity is not only possible but economically viable. The district includes more than 7,000 businesses and 43,000 employees, creating a deeply interconnected ecosystem based on collaboration, tradition, and continuous innovation.

Under the EU Cities Mission, Prato launched its Net Zero District project in 2025, coordinated with the cities of Bergamo, Parma, and Rome. The initiative aims to achieve zero-waste and zero-water consumption targets through new shared infrastructure, including industrial aqueducts, expanded sewer systems, and advanced water-reuse technologies. The Progetto Acqua consortium, representing around 200 companies, demonstrates how collective action at district level can achieve measurable sustainability goals that no single enterprise could reach alone.

To tackle post-consumer textile waste, Prato is developing a new mechanical recycling and sorting plant capable of processing up to 20,000 tonnes of textile waste per year, with cutting-edge Near Infrared (NIR) spectroscopy technology to automatically classify fabrics by fibre and colour. This innovation will close the loop on textile production and strengthen regional resource efficiency.

Beyond industrial innovation, Prato also invests in education and safety. The district recently launched SicurFAD 4.0, an e-learning platform for workplace safety training, available in five languages and supported by a €10 million national investment fund. This tool enhances digital literacy, risk awareness, and inclusion in a multicultural workforce. Another initiative, Memory and Future, digitises historic textile archives to connect heritage with contemporary design education, turning the district's past into a resource for future learning.

Prato's approach is both local and European: its cooperation agreement with the Tuscany Region to establish a permanent office in Brussels ensures its expertise contributes directly to EU policies on eco-design, textile recycling, and digital product passports. The district shows how cities can combine industrial innovation, collective learning, and policy engagement to advance the circular economy while preserving social and cultural identity.



More Info

## Useful information and additional readings

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EEA/ETC Report: *Textiles and the environment in a circular economy*.Link

EU Transition Pathway for the Textiles Ecosystem: *Report on stakeholder pledges and commitments.* *Report on stakeholder pledges and commitments.pdf*

Council Recommendation on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning.Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning

Teaching Circular Design- A handbook for Educators. Handbook in Innovative Design for Sustainability - Circular Design

Eco-Design for Circular Economy in the Textile and Fashion Industries: E – learning Courses. Link

OECD Report on Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning : Outcomes, Policies and Practices. Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning | OECD

Soft Skills and Education for Circular Economy, Citizens and Consumers.Soft Skills and Education for Circular Economy, Citizens and Consumers | Rakowska | Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio H – Oeconomia

Sustainable Fashion in Circular Economy. Link

Student-centred learning: approaches to quality assurance.student-centred learning_approaches to quality assurance report.pdf

Use Of Participatory Methods in Teaching. Makaleler.pdf

*Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.(PDF) Experiential Learning: Experience As The Source Of Learning And Development*

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Source: Freepik

## Theoretical introduction, approaches and general notions on CFP to support vulnerable youth

The global fashion industry is one of the most resource-intensive and socially unequal production systems, characterised by fast consumption cycles, environmental degradation, and labor exploitation. Therefore, Circular fashion should be understood not merely as a technical solution to textile waste, but as a **transformative social practice**. It embodies the principles of ecological citizenship, participatory economics, and creative empowerment. By integrating sustainability with education, entrepreneurship, and cultural production, circular fashion offers a powerful framework for fostering social change and empowering youth to become designers of both material and socioeconomic futures.

This unit introduces trainers to the social challenges faced by vulnerable youth and explores circular fashion as an innovative pathway for inclusion and empowerment. It focuses on understanding the key causes and consequences of youth exclusion while highlighting the transformative potential of circular fashion practices as tools for social participation, creativity, and sustainability. Through participatory and co-creation approaches, learners will analyse best

practices, design inclusive strategies, and develop engaging communication tools that promote circular fashion as a way of life. The unit ultimately aims to strengthen learners' capacity to facilitate collaborative processes, foster active citizenship, and support youth autonomy in building more inclusive and sustainable communities.

**Key challenges faced by vulnerable youth**

Vulnerable youth face multiple and interconnected challenges that limit their opportunities for social inclusion and personal development. **Economic barriers** such as poverty, unemployment, and unstable family income often restrict access to basic needs, training, and decent work, increasing the risk of long-term exclusion. These economic difficulties are frequently compounded by **social barriers**, including discrimination, stigma, and weak social networks, which reduce young people's sense of belonging and participation in community life. Marginalised youth such as migrants, refugees, or those from disadvantaged neighborhoods, may experience isolation and limited access to supportive services, reinforcing cycles of exclusion and dependency.

In addition, **cultural and educational barriers** play a significant role in shaping vulnerability. Cultural differences, language limitations, and lack of representation can prevent young people from fully expressing their identities or engaging with institutions that do not reflect their lived realities. Educational barriers, such as early school leaving, low-quality schooling, or limited access to vocational and creative learning pathways, further restrict their ability to acquire relevant skills and qualifications. Together, these challenges reduce self-confidence, limit aspirations, and hinder active citizenship. Addressing these interconnected barriers requires inclusive, participatory approaches that recognise youth as capable agents of change and provide them with opportunities for learning, creativity, and meaningful social engagement.



Source: Freepik

**Causes of youth exclusion**

Youth exclusion in Western communities is often driven by a combination of structural and social factors, including **poverty**, which limits access to resources, stability, and opportunities for personal development. **Discrimination** based on ethnicity, migration status, gender, or disability further restricts young people's participation in education, employment, and public life, reinforcing feelings of inequality and injustice. A **lack of access to quality education and decent employment** pathways—often linked to socioeconomic background and unequal institutional support—creates barriers to skills acquisition and long-term integration into the labour market. These challenges are intensified by **social marginalisation**, where weakened family support, fragmented communities, and limited social networks isolate vulnerable youth and reduce their sense of belonging and active citizenship.

**Consequences of youth exclusion**

Youth exclusion has profound consequences for both individuals and society, negatively affecting **personal development**, **social cohesion**, and **community well-being**. On a personal level, excluded young people often experience low self-esteem, limited aspirations, and reduced access to skills and opportunities, which can lead to long-term unemployment and dependence on social support systems. At the societal level, youth exclusion weakens **social cohesion** by increasing inequality, mistrust, and disengagement from civic life, creating divisions between groups and reducing participation in shared values and institutions. For communities, this results in diminished collective resilience, higher risks of social conflict, and lost potential in creativity, innovation, and economic contribution, ultimately undermining sustainable and inclusive development.




Source: Freepik

**Circular Fashion as a hub of opportunities and a Tool for empowerment**

Circular fashion can be a **hub of opportunities** that connects environmental sustainability with social inclusion and economic participation. By promoting practices such as reuse, repair, and upcycling, circular fashion creates accessible spaces for **skill development, entrepreneurship, and community engagement**, particularly for vulnerable youth who may face barriers to formal education or employment. Workshops, social enterprises, and community-based initiatives enable young people to acquire practical competencies in design, craftsmanship, and communication while actively contributing to local solutions. This link between circular fashion and social inclusion transforms fashion from a consumer-driven industry into a participatory platform where youth can collaborate, learn, and generate value for their communities.

At the same time, circular fashion acts as a powerful **tool for empowerment**, fostering youth agency, creativity, and sustainable lifestyles. Through creative expression and co-creation processes, young people gain confidence, voice, and a sense of ownership over social and environmental change. Circular fashion embodies the connections between **sustainable development, social change, and youth empowerment**, showing that ecological responsibility can go hand in hand with social justice and active citizenship. By engaging diverse groups in inclusive practices, circular fashion contributes to the creation of **more sustainable and cohesive communities**, where innovation, solidarity, and responsibility shape new cultural norms and future pathways for youth participation.

**Strategies to promote circular fashion as a lifestyle and social inclusion tool.**

Strategies to promote circular fashion as a lifestyle and social inclusion tool should combine education, participation, and communication to encourage long-term behavioral change. These include integrating circular fashion into youth training and community programs through hands-on activities such as upcycling workshops, clothing swaps, and repair cafés, which foster skill development and social interaction. Participatory approaches that involve young people in co-designing projects strengthen ownership and empowerment, while partnerships with schools, NGOs, and local enterprises help create inclusive networks of support. In addition, creative mass communication strategies such as digital storytelling, social media campaigns, and public events, can reshape perceptions of fashion, promoting sustainable values, reducing stigma around second-hand clothing, and reinforcing circular fashion as a positive, accessible, and socially engaging way of life.



Source: Freepik

# Conceptual knowledge and Methodological support related to youth educators

**1-Youth social inclusion**

The process of ensuring that young people, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalised, have **equal opportunities to participate fully in education, work, community life, and decision-making**, fostering a sense of belonging, empowerment, and social equity

**2. Circular Fashion**

A sustainable approach to fashion that emphasises **reduce, reuse, recycle, upcycle, and slow consumption**, integrating environmental, social, and economic dimensions.

**3. Youth Empowerment**

Processes that enable young people to gain **agency, skills, confidence, and decision-making power**, fostering active citizenship and social participation.

**4. Participatory Approaches / Co-Creation**

Methods that actively involve youth and communities in **designing solutions**, promoting collaboration, shared responsibility, and engagement in decision-making processes.

**5. Sustainable Development and Social Innovation**

Integration of ecological, social, and economic sustainability principles, using innovative strategies (like circular fashion) to create **social and environmental impact**.

**6. Communication for Change**

Use of **mass communication, digital storytelling, and social campaigns** to promote circular fashion, influence behaviors, and raise awareness about sustainability and inclusion.

**7. Circular Economy**

An economic model that aims to **minimise waste and make the most of resources** by designing products and systems for reuse, repair, recycling, and regeneration, creating sustainable value for both people and the planet.

**8. Ethical Consumption**

Understanding consumer choices that consider **environmental impact, labour conditions, and social justice**, encouraging responsible purchasing and lifestyle decisions.

**9. Skills Development / Capacity Building**

Practical and soft skills acquired by youth through circular fashion activities, including **design, entrepreneurship, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving**.

**10. Community Engagement**

Active participation of youth in **local initiatives, workshops, and social projects** that foster networks, solidarity, and shared responsibility for sustainable and inclusive practices.

# Innovative pedagogical approaches and -Assessment methodologies

**Innovative pedagogical approaches**

**Participatory approach**

**Description:** Learners actively engage in identifying social inclusion challenges faced by youth and co-develop strategies to address them. The process emphasises reflection, discussion, and collaborative problem-solving.

**Application:** Students work in groups to map exclusion barriers in their communities and design circular fashion initiatives (e.g., upcycling workshops, swap events) that address these barriers.

**Benefit:** Fosters ownership, critical thinking, and real-world problem-solving, while directly linking learning to social action.

**Design Thinking for Social Innovation**

**Description:** A human-centred, iterative approach that encourages creativity, empathy, and prototyping of solutions.

**Application:** Learners interview vulnerable youth to understand their needs, brainstorm circular fashion-based solutions, prototype low-cost interventions (e.g., sustainable fashion campaigns, DIY upcycling kits), and test their ideas.

**Benefit:** Promotes innovation, participatory engagement, and practical skills in project design, communication, and evaluation.

**Digital Storytelling & Gamified Learning**

**Description:** Using multimedia and gamification to communicate knowledge, experiences, and social messages effectively.

**Application:** Learners create short videos, podcasts, or interactive social media campaigns to showcase circular fashion practices and their social impact. Gamified challenges can be incorporated, such as point systems for sustainable actions or virtual design competitions.

**Benefit:** Enhances communication skills, creativity, and engagement; allows learners to advocate for inclusion and sustainability while reaching wider audiences.

**Assessment methodologies**

Project-Based Assessment (PBA)

**Description:** Learners are assessed on a tangible, real-world project that addresses youth inclusion through circular fashion practices.

**Application:** Groups of learners co-design an initiative (e.g., upcycling workshop, sustainable fashion campaign, clothing swap program).

**Assessment criteria** include: identification of key challenges, application of participatory approaches, innovation, feasibility, and reflection on social impact.

## Cutting-edge practices, successful and inspiring experiences

**Good practices of social changes and youth empowerment through circular fashion**

**Girls Go Circular (EU-wide educational initiative)**

The EU-funded programme, *Girls Go Circular*, equips girls aged 14–19 across Europe with skills in digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and circular economy principles through interactive, challenge-based learning activities. It uses a **learning-by-doing** approach to empower participants to tackle societal issues such as waste, fast fashion, climate change, and consumption, encouraging them to become agents of change in their communities. This initiative not only raises awareness of circular fashion but also builds competence and agency among young women — helping to break gender stereotypes in STEM and sustainability fields while fostering leadership and entrepreneurial confidence.

**Adidas × Parley for the Oceans – Upcycled Marine Plastics**

Adidas collaborates with Parley for the Oceans to transform marine plastic waste into high-performance sportswear and footwear. These products incorporate recycled ocean plastics into their materials, turning environmental waste streams into fashion input.

This good practice turns a problematic waste stream into product innovation, demonstrates how partnerships can unlock new circular material sources, and it raises awareness of ocean pollution through fashion.

***Dress to Change* - Investment and advocacy for circular and ethical fashion-TRIODOS Bank.** Through *Triodos Investment Management* and its white paper *Dress to Change*, the bank articulates a clear vision for transforming the fashion industry. It encourages **slow fashion models, higher quality and longer-lasting products, and the use of recyclable or recycled materials**; all core elements of circular fashion. Triodos engages with companies it funds to improve their sustainability performance and uses its role as investor to **influence corporate behaviour towards better environmental and social practices**.

**The COSH! Digital Wardrobe**

A Belgian digital tool that helps people track what they own, how often they wear items, and connects them automatically with local repair services, resale shops and second-hand opportunities. This supports consumers to reuse, repair and resell garments instead of throwing them away, turning everyday wardrobe decisions into circular actions.

## Useful information and additional readings

Daniele Caccherano (2024), FABLE, EPALE: a project using sustainable fashion to create inclusive spaces for young people, fostering entrepreneurship, creative learning and critical thinking.

Futurewear project consortium (2024), Futurewear Toolkit, EPALE: an educational toolkit for sustainable and circular fashion training, with a focus on young people, including those from socially and economically vulnerable contexts.

From Linear to Circular Clothing Toolbox, SALTO-YOUTH: an educational toolbox designed to help young people understand sustainable fashion and circular economy principles through interactive activities, reflection and group work.

CI-YOU – Circular Economy Youth Leaders: a European project supporting young people in developing skills, initiative and entrepreneurship in the circular economy.

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Source: Freepik

## Theoretical introduction, approaches and general notions on CFP to support vulnerable youth

Circular fashion is often introduced as an environmental response to overproduction and waste. However, for youth workers and mediators, it is much more than that. It is a pedagogical tool, a confidence-building pathway, and a bridge to social and economic participation.

The concept of a circular economy is based on keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible. When applied to fashion, this translates into reuse, repair, redesign and upcycling.

This module aims to support educators in transferring circular fashion competences through inclusive, accessible and engaging learning methods. The following chapters explore key aspects of circular fashion education, including:

- the meaning and application of **reuse, repair, redesign, recycling and upcycling** in fashion;
- strategies for **selecting fabrics and materials** suitable for circular practices;
- guidance on recommending the **appropriate equipment and tools** according to fabric characteristics;
- identification of **sustainable and unsustainable textiles** and their environmental impact;
- innovative **resources, activities and teaching tools** that facilitate inclusive learning;
- **assessment methodologies** that allow educators to evaluate participants' learning, motivation and engagement in practical workshops.

Special attention is given to teaching approaches that support **non-formal and experiential learning**, where participants learn by doing, experimenting and collaborating.

By combining environmental awareness with practical textile skills, circular fashion education can help young people become **active contributors to more sustainable communities**. At the same time, it offers opportunities for personal development, creativity and potential pathways toward employment in emerging green sectors.

Ultimately, this module seeks to demonstrate that circular fashion is not only about clothing, it is also about **empowerment, inclusion and the responsible use of resources**. Through accessible training and supportive learning environments, educators can help young people rediscover the value of materials, develop new skills and participate in shaping a more sustainable future.

## Conceptual knowledge and Methodological support related to youth educators

### Transferring technical competences on circular fashion practices to people with fewer opportunities.

#### Reuse: developing critical thinking and environmental awareness

Reusing an item is the act of taking an old item and, instead of throwing it away, finding a new use for it. This allows the product to be revitalised and reintroduced into the loop by extending its life or reintroducing it into the market (a practice that allows companies to reduce waste and optimise production processes while responding to a growing market demand for conscious purchasing).



Source freepik

Reuse can also mean giving the item away as second-hand clothing, donating it, or exchanging it so that someone else can wear it.

To take full advantage of this principle is very important to identify the quality of the garment, understand textile types and learn proper washing and care techniques.

**Repair: building precision and resilience**

Repair involves fixing a damaged garment to restore its original function. The goal is not to transform it but to make it wearable again.

Repair requires technical skills such as sewing, patching or replacing components and it focuses on mending damage, preserving the original design and extending the usability of the garments.

Examples of repairing are sewing a missing button on a shirt, fixing a torn seam in trousers, patching a hole in jeans, and replacing a broken zipper in a jacket.

**Redesign: encouraging creativity and innovation**

Redesign is the process of changing a garment's shape, style, or function to better fit the wearer's needs or aesthetic preferences. The main goal is to adapt or improve an existing item, rather than create something entirely new or higher in value.

Examples of redesigning are turning an oversized shirt into a fitted dress, shortening trousers into shorts, converting a long-sleeve top into a sleeveless blouse and altering a jacket to improve fit or style.

**Upcycling: adding value through creativity**

Upcycle means to creatively transform a garment or textile waste into a new product of higher value, improved function or enhanced aesthetic.

Examples of upcycling are turning old jeans into a tote bag, combining fabric scraps into a patchwork jacket, transforming an oversized shirt into a fitted dress and decorating a plain jacket with embroidery to increase its value.

Upcycling is both a creative and entrepreneurial practice. It allows individuals to create unique pieces while reducing waste.

**Why fabric selection matters**

In circular fashion, creativity begins with informed material selection. Choosing the right fabric determines whether a repair will last, a redesign will fit properly, or an upcycled product will be durable and safe.

For young people with fewer opportunities such as migrant, disabled, or low-skilled youth, learning how to select fabrics builds technical literacy, strengthens decision-making skills, increases autonomy, prevents frustration caused by material failure and develops market-relevant knowledge.

Teaching fabric selection is not about turning participants into textile engineers. It is about giving them practical criteria and confidence to make informed choices.

**Understanding basic fabric types**

Educators can use the table below to have a clear view of fabric types and their main characteristics.

| TYPE OF FABRIC | EXAMPLES | CHARACTERISTICS |
|---|---|---|
| **NATURAL FIBRES** | Linen, hemp, cotton, wool, Tencel/lyocell, Jute, Ramié, Silk, Bamboo | Breathable<br>Often biodegradable<br>Comfortable on skin<br>Usually easier to sew |
| **SYNTETHIC FABRICS** | Polyester, nylon, acrylic | Durable<br>Less/not breathable<br>Often cheaper<br>Can be harder to repair invisibly |
| **BLENDED FABRICS** | Blends combine fibres (e.g., cotton-polyester). | Blends may offer durability but can be harder to recycle or not recyclable at all |

**Understanding fabrics sustainability**

Below is a comparative table of sustainable and unsustainable fabrics in fashion, which educators can use to explain textile choices to young people learning circular fashion practices.

| FABRIC TYPE | SUSTAINABILITY CATEGORY | ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT |
|---|---|---|
| ORGANIC COTTON | SUSTAINABLE | Textile fibre is far superior to conventional cotton because its production **strictly limits the use of pesticides and insecticides** and requires far **less water** than conventional cotton. Organic cotton certification schemes protect **workers' rights, health and safety**. |
| LINEN | SUSTAINABLE | It requires **minimal use of fertilisers and pesticides**; furthermore (particularly in Europe), it does not require more water than that provided by normal rainfall. |
| HEMP | SUSTAINABLE | It grows quickly with minimal water and pesticides; it improves soil health. |
| TENCEL/LYOCELL | SUSTAINABLE | Produced from wood pulp using closed-loop manufacturing processes. |
| JUTA | SUSTAINABLE | Jute can be blended with other natural fibres such as cotton and wool to improve the properties of garments.<br>It does **not require fertilisers, herbicides or pesticides, nor does it compromise soil health** or deplete the associated aquifers (very low environmental impact). **Biodegradable**. |
| RAMIÉ | SUSTAINABLE | The cultivation of ramie is highly sustainable: it is a plant that requires little human intervention, particularly in terms of chemicals and precious resources such as water. **Biodegradable**. |
| RECYCLED COTTON | SUSTAINABLE | Made from second-hand clothing and accessories or textile waste. The mechanical recycling of cotton does not require the use of additional chemicals. It's a **key material for the circular fashion economy**, as it enables huge savings in water, chemicals, energy and raw materials used in the production of virgin cotton. |
| SILK | IT DEPENDS | **Ahimsa silk** is a method of nonviolent silk breeding and harvesting (the pupa is allowed to hatch and the leftover cocoon is then used to create silk). Conventional silk harvesting requires the silkworms to be killed in their cocoon stage (steamed or boiled). **Biodegradable**. |
| BAMBOO | IT DEPENDS | Often processing bamboo comes with significant environmental costs: the bamboo pulp is usually dissolved using chemicals like carbon disulfide and sodium hydroxide. This |

| FABRIC TYPE | SUSTAINABILITY CATEGORY | ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT |
|---|---|---|
| | | process can produce toxic waste, which can harm workers and the environment. Bamboo is **sustainable if certified** by Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) or Textile, Oeko-Tex Made in Green for example. |
| WOOL | UNSUSTAINABLE | High water consumption, use of chemicals during processing, and exploitation of land and animals. |
| LEATHER | UNSUSTAINABLE | High water consumption, use of chemicals during processing, and exploitation of land and animals. |
| CONVENTIONAL COTTON | UNSUSTAINABLE | It is the cause of **many environmental problems due to the use of large quantities of water, GMO seeds, pesticides** and fertilisers and its massive production is often connected with child labour exploitation. |
| POLYESTER | UNSUSTAINABLE | Fibre derived **from fossil fuels such as oil: it is not biodegradable and releases microplastics** into the environment every time we wash our clothes. **Microplastics** can end up in the seas and, as they move up the food chain, even in the food we eat. |
| RECYCLED POLYESTER | UNSUSTAINABLE | Most recycled polyester is made from used PET plastic bottles or plastic collected from the oceans. Just like garments made from polyester, those made from recycled polyester release **microplastics** into the drains when washed, and from there into rivers and seas. Contrary to what the name might suggest, garments made from recycled polyester are not recyclable: once thrown away, they effectively become waste. |
| NYLON | UNSUSTAINABLE | Non-biodegradable synthetic fibres derived from fossil fuels such as oil |
| ACRYLIC | UNSUSTAINABLE | Non-biodegradable synthetic fibres release microplastics during washing, which end up in waterways and the environment. |
| VISCOSE/RAYON | UNSUSTAINABLE | Viscose, also known as rayon, is produced by combining wood cellulose with caustic soda, carbon disulphide and sulphuric acid. The use of these chemicals also has a negative impact on the environment and on |

| FABRIC TYPE | SUSTAINABILITY CATEGORY | ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT |
|---|---|---|
| | | the health of those exposed to them during the manufacturing process. |
| PVC/SYNTHETIC LEATHER | UNSUSTAINABLE | Non-biodegradable synthetic fibres derived from fossil fuels such as oil. |

In the fashion industry, textile certifications are an essential tool for identifying garments that have been produced in an ethical and environmentally-friendly manner.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)** | One of the most comprehensive certifications, covering the entire textile supply chain and incorporating both environmental and social criteria. |
| **IVN Best** | Currently the most rigorous certification on the market for organic natural fibres. |
| **Naturland Textile** | Originating in the food sector, Naturland certification has extended its rigorous criteria to organic textiles as well. |
| **Oeko-Tex Made in Green** | One of the most stringent standards for the management of chemicals in textile manufacturing. It also covers all types of textile fibres. |

Source: Greenpeace.org

**Key educational points that the educator can highlight:**

- natural fibres are not always sustainable, but many are more environmentally friendly when responsibly produced;
- synthetic fibres derived from petroleum tend to have higher environmental impacts and contribute to microplastic pollution;
- recycled fibres (especially cotton, linen, hemp, Tencel/lyocell, jute and ramie) help reduce waste and extend the life of existing materials, aligning with circular fashion principles.

**Teaching fabric assessment skills**

It is very important for the learners to familiarise with the materials. Material selection must become practical and intuitive.

Educators can teach this aspect through **visual inspection, touch and strength testing** and by encouraging learners to check fibre content labels.

For the visual inspection, the educator could provide participants with garments in different conditions, ask them to look for stains, fading, fabric thinning, seam integrity and pilling and to classify them as:

1. good for reuse
2. suitable for redesign
3. best for upcycling into small items
4. not suitable (explain why)

This activity builds analytical thinking.

For the touch and strength testing, the educator can demonstrate a gentle pull test for elasticity, rub the fabric to check durability and do a stretch recovery test (does it return to shape?).

For the fibre content labels, educators can explain the basic label information such as fibre composition, washing symbols and ironing limits.

**Selecting materials for different circular practices**

Material selection is an important aspect to consider in order to achieve good results and must match the intended circular strategy. Educators can use the following table as a guideline for teaching young people with fewer opportunities the material selection.

| MATERIAL SELECTION FOR | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **REUSE** | **REPAIR** | **REDESIGN** | **UPCYCLING** |
| Minimal structural damage<br>Strong seams<br>No severe staining<br>Appropriate hygiene condition | Medium-weight cotton<br>Denim<br>Wool<br>Sturdy woven fabrics | Sufficient fabric surface<br>Limited damage in key structural areas<br>Fabric flexibility for reshaping | Decorative fabrics<br>Denim<br>Leather remnants<br>Strong upholstery scraps |
| **EDUCATOR CAN MAKE THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS** | | | |
| Can this garment be worn again without major modification?<br>Is cleaning sufficient? | Avoid extremely thin, fragile textiles and severely degraded synthetic fabrics<br>Patch fabric weight should be similar to original<br>Thread strength must match fabric strength | Start with oversized garments<br>Avoid highly structured or tailored jackets | Avoid mouldy textiles<br>Be cautious with chemically treated fabrics |

Teaching fabric and material selection is more than technical training. It develops observation skills, critical thinking, environmental awareness, confidence in decision-making and professional standards.

For youth workers and mediators, guiding participants through fabric selection means helping them understand value not only in textiles, but in their own abilities.

Through careful observation, practical experimentation, and inclusive facilitation, fabric selection becomes the foundation for meaningful circular fashion practices that promote sustainability, social inclusion and personal growth.

**Why equipment choice matters**

When teaching circular fashion practices such as reuse, repair, redesign and upcycling, educators must help participants choose the **right tools for the right fabrics**. Many beginners struggle not because of a lack of motivation, but because they use inappropriate equipment (for example, a thin needle for thick denim or blunt scissors for delicate fabric).

For young people with fewer opportunities such as migrant youth, young people with disabilities, or low-skilled learners, selecting appropriate equipment is especially important. The right tools:

- increase **success in practical tasks;**
- reduce **frustration and learning barriers;**
- improve **safety and accessibility;**
- build **confidence and autonomy;**
- support the development of **technical competences linked to the circular economy.**

Circular fashion principles emphasise extending the life of garments. Appropriate equipment plays a crucial role in making these practices effective and accessible.

Recommending the right equipment according to fabric characteristics is a fundamental step in teaching circular fashion practices. When educators guide young people in selecting appropriate tools, they help them **work more safely, efficiently and confidently**.

By combining technical knowledge with inclusive teaching approaches, youth workers and educators can empower participants to:

- Extend the life of garments
- Develop practical textile skills
- Express creativity through redesign and upcycling
- Contribute to more sustainable fashion practices

Through these learning experiences, circular fashion becomes not only an environmental practice but also a pathway toward **inclusion, empowerment and sustainable livelihoods**.

The table below summarises the **recommended equipment** depending on the (sustainable) fabrics.

| Sustainable fabric | Main fabric characteristics | Recommended needle | Recommended thread | Cutting equipment | Machine settings / sewing approach | Recommended equipment for reuse, redesign, repair & upcycling |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Organic cotton** | Soft to medium weight; woven or knitted; generally easy to sew; may shrink | Universal **70/10–90/14** depending on weight | Organic cotton or recycled polyester thread; all-purpose polyester where durability is priority | Fabric shears; rotary cutter | Straight stitch **2.5–3 mm**; zigzag for edge finishing | Domestic sewing machine, overlock/serger, seam ripper, fabric clips, iron, patching tools |
| **Linen** | Strong, breathable, relatively stiff; wrinkles easily; can fray | Universal **70/10–80/12** | Linen, cotton or polyester thread | Very sharp fabric scissors; rotary cutter | Straight stitch **2.5–3 mm**; zigzag/overlock for edges | Overlock/serger, sharp shears, seam-finishing foot, pressing cloth, iron |
| **Hemp** | Strong, durable, increasingly soft with use; medium–heavy; can be slightly stiff | Universal **80/12–90/14**; Jeans needle for heavy hemp | Strong cotton or polyester thread | Heavy-duty fabric scissors; rotary cutter | Straight stitch **2.5–3.5 mm**; slower speed for thick layers | Strong domestic/industrial machine, walking foot for layers, heavy-duty shears, seam ripper |
| **Tencel™ / Lyocell** | Smooth, soft, fluid; often lightweight; can be slippery; good drape | Microtex **60/8–80/12** | Fine polyester or lyocell-compatible thread | Sharp fine scissors; rotary cutter | Straight stitch **2–2.5 mm**; moderate/low tension | Microtex needles, fine scissors, clips, walking foot where necessary, pressing cloth |
| **Jute** | Coarse, strong, highly textured; prone to fraying; usually used in heavier fabrics/bags | Universal **90/14–100/16**; Jeans needle for very dense fabric | Strong polyester, cotton or blended thread | Heavy-duty scissors; rotary cutter | Longer stitch **3–4 mm**; reinforce seams; finish edges | Heavy-duty sewing machine, Jeans needles, walking foot, strong thread, overlock/edge-binding equipment |
| **Ramie** | Bast fibre; linen-like; strong, lightweight to medium; can be crisp and prone to fraying | Universal **70/10–80/12** | Cotton, linen or polyester thread | Sharp fabric scissors / rotary cutter | Straight stitch **2.5–3 mm**; finish seams to prevent fraying | Overlock/serger, sharp shears, seam gauge, pressing equipment |
| **Recycled cotton** | Variable depending on fibre source; often shorter fibres; may be softer or less uniform; woven/knitted | Universal **70/10–90/14**, according to weight | Recycled polyester, cotton or durable polyester thread | Fabric scissors / rotary cutter | Straight stitch **2.5–3 mm**; test tension and stitch length first | Sewing machine, overlock, seam ripper, patching kit, fabric clips; **always test before intervention** |

**Recommended equipment according to Circular Fashion practices**

| Activity | Organic cotton | Linen | Hemp | Tencel/ Lyocell | Jute | Ramie | Recycled cotton |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reuse** | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓ | ✓✓ | ✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ |
| **Repair** | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ |
| **Redesign** | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ |
| **Upcycling** | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ |
| **Overlock/ serger useful** | Yes | Highly useful | Yes | Yes | Highly useful | Highly useful | Yes |
| **Walking foot useful** | Sometimes | Sometimes | Recommended | Sometimes | Recommended | Sometimes | Sometimes |
| **Heavy-duty needle needed** | Only for heavy fabric | Rarely | Often | No | Yes | No | According to weight |

**Key guidance for educators**

1. Organic cotton, linen, hemp, ramie and recycled cotton are generally compatible with conventional sewing equipment, but needle size should increase with fabric weight.
2. Tencel/Lyocell requires greater attention to fabric movement and distortion because of its smooth, fluid structure; fine needles and controlled feeding are preferable.
3. Jute and heavy hemp require stronger needles, thread and cutting equipment because of their density and fibre strength.
4. Linen, ramie and jute can fray, so overlocking, zigzag stitching, binding or another suitable seam-finishing method is important.
5. Recycled cotton can vary considerably depending on its source and manufacturing process. A small test piece should therefore be used before selecting needle, thread, tension and stitch length.
6. For circular fashion, repair should generally be prioritised before transformation: preserve the original garment where possible, then redesign or upcycle when repair no longer provides sufficient functional or aesthetic value.
7. Equipment should be maintained, repaired and shared wherever possible, extending not only the life of garments but also the useful life of the tools used to transform them.

**Fabric choice and health**

The healthiest fabrics to wear are **natural fibres** like cotton, linen, hemp, silk. These fibres share key advantages: they allow air to circulate against your skin, manage moisture without trapping it, and carry far fewer chemical residues than most synthetic alternatives.



Imagine by vecstock on Freepik

For youth workers and intercultural mediators teaching about clothing and textiles, it is important to raise awareness of how fabrics can affect health. Our skin is the largest organ of the body, and clothing stays in contact with it for many hours every day. The **type of fibre, fabric structure and chemical treatments** used in garments can influence skin breathability, moisture accumulation and the substances that may be absorbed through prolonged contact.

Synthetic fabrics such as polyester and nylon are produced from petroleum-based plastics. When sweat is trapped between the skin and non-breathable materials, it may contribute to skin irritation, heat rash or bacterial growth, especially in warm conditions.

In addition, many textiles (especially synthetic but also natural) are treated with chemicals during manufacturing. These may include substances used for wrinkle resistance, strong dyes, water-repellent finishes or plastic-based prints. Some of these compounds belong to a group known as **endocrine disruptors**, which can interfere with the body's hormonal system.

Youth workers can encourage simple practices to reduce potential exposure, such as **choosing natural fibres**, **washing new clothes before use, choosing untreated or minimally processed fabrics when possible, and paying attention to recognised safety or sustainability certifications**. These small steps can support healthier clothing choices while also encouraging more conscious and sustainable consumption.

## Innovative pedagogical approaches and -Assessment methodologies

### Pedagogical approaches

**1. Learning by doing (experiential learning)**

Use Kolb's cycle:

1. Experience (hands-on activity)

2. Reflection (group discussion)
3. Conceptualisation (what did we learn?)
4. Application (try again with improvements)

Keep theoretical explanations short and practical.

**2. Peer-to-peer learning**

Encourage participants who master skills faster to support others.

The benefits of this approach are multiple: it builds leadership, reduces hierarchy, and enhances group cohesion.

**3. Micro-credentialing and recognition**

Educators can provide certificates of participation, skill badges and organise small exhibitions or fashion shows. Public recognition strengthens motivation and employability.

### Assessment methodologies

When educators teach circular fashion practices it is important to evaluate not only **technical learning**, but also **engagement, motivation and personal development**. For young people with fewer opportunities, assessment should support learning rather than create pressure.

Assessment in this context should aim to:

- Measure **skills development**
- Identify **learning needs**
- Encourage **self-reflection**
- Recognise **progress and achievements**
- Strengthen **motivation and confidence**

**Formative assessment** methodology refers to monitoring learning during the process and focuses on observing and supporting participants **while learning is happening**, rather than evaluating only the final result.

Educators can use structured observation checklists to monitor participants' progress during workshops. Indicators may include:

| TECHNICAL SKILLS | LEARNING BEHAVIOUR |
|---|---|
| • Ability to identify different fabrics<br>• Correct use of tools (needles, scissors, sewing machines)<br>• Ability to repair a simple seam or attach a button | • Attention during demonstrations<br>• Willingness to experiment<br>• Problem-solving ability<br>• Collaboration with peers |

| TECHNICAL SKILLS | LEARNING BEHAVIOUR |
|---|---|
| • Creative application of redesign or upcycling techniques | |

This method allows educators to detect difficulties early and provide personalised support.

**Skills demonstration assessment**: because circular fashion activities are practical, one of the most effective ways to evaluate learning is through demonstration tasks.

Participants are asked to complete a small technical task, such as repairing a torn garment, selecting appropriate equipment for a specific fabric, redesigning a garment into a new item, and creating an upcycled accessory from textile scraps.

Educators evaluate the process according to criteria such as appropriate tool selection, quality of stitching, creativity and functionality and ability to follow instructions.

The focus should be on effort and improvement, not perfection.

**Portfolio-based assessment**: a learning portfolio allows participants to document their progress throughout the project.

Participants collect evidence of their work, including photos of garments before and after repair or redesign, sketches or design ideas, notes about materials used and reflections about what they learned.

For participants with low literacy, portfolios may include: drawings, visual mood boards and short audio or video explanations.

Portfolios provide a visual record of progress and help participants recognise their achievements.

**Self-assessment techniques** encourage young people to reflect on their own learning, which helps develop autonomy and confidence.

At the end of each session, participants may answer simple questions such as:

- What new skill did I learn today?
- What was difficult for me?
- What did I enjoy most?
- What would I like to learn next?

For participants with language barriers, educators can use emoji-based reflection cards or simple rating scales.

Self-assessment promotes awareness of personal progress and encourages intrinsic motivation.

**Engagement assessment** measures how actively participants take part in activities.

| INDICATORS | ENGAGEMENT SCALE |
|---|---|
| • Attendance and punctuality<br>• Active participation during activities<br>• Asking questions<br>• Helping peers<br>• Taking initiative during projects | 1. Passive participation<br>2. Moderate participation<br>3. Active engagement<br>4. Leadership and initiative |

Tracking engagement helps educators identify participants who may need additional support or encouragement.

**Project-based evaluation**: circular fashion programs may conclude with a final project that integrates all learned skills.

Participants create a complete item such as:

- An upcycled bag from old jeans
- A redesigned garment
- A repaired clothing item with decorative elements

Evaluation criteria may include:

1. Technical competence, such as appropriate material selection, proper use of equipment and quality of construction;

2. Creative expression, such as original design ideas and innovative use of materials;

3. Personal development, such as effort and persistence, ability to work independently or in teams and problem-solving approach.

This method highlights practical learning outcomes.

**Community presentation and exhibition:** at the end of the program, giving a community presentation or holding an exhibition can serve as both evaluation and celebration of learning achievements. Events like these also connect learning outcomes to sustainability movements such as Fashion Revolution, which encourages awareness about responsible clothing practices.

## Cutting-edge practices, successful and inspiring experiences

**Sustainable boutique: second-hand wedding dresses**

In the province of Treviso, Italy, there is a small charity boutique run by the local Caritas organisation, which offers a special service: **lending out wedding dresses**. The initiative is based on a philosophy of reducing waste and promoting solidarity

**Helps Nature, ethical Italian brands of clothes for children:** Helps Nature's creations are made from organic, certified materials, reimagining the life cycle of fabrics, treating them not as waste but as resources to be utilised. The process is based on the circular economy model and

environmental protection, and the logo features a cute chick with the world in its heart, because educating others and respecting the environment is a choice born of love that comes from within us. https://www.studiohelpsnature.it/

**Rifò, Circular Fashion made in Italy:** an Italian brand pioneering circular and ethical fashion, which has been producing high-quality garments and accessories since 2017, has chosen to focus on regenerated, natural and biodegradable materials, breathing new life into fine fibres. Production takes place within a 30-kilometre radius of Prato, with skilled artisans who share the same vision of sustainability. https://rifo-lab.com/

**Atelier Riforma**: an innovative start-up with a social mission that focuses on circular economy solutions applied to the textile and fashion sector. They have developed the innovative Re4Circular technology, which smartly catalogues end-of-life garments collected through textile recycling schemes and directs them towards circular processes such as reuse, recycling and upcycling. https://atelier-riforma.it/

**FabBRICK**: driven by creativity and respect for the environment, a young French woman has come up with the idea for a new brick, FabBRICK, designed for interior decoration and made from recycled fabrics of all kinds. It is a 'circular' concept aimed at curbing the abandonment and failure to recycle old clothes worldwide. https://www.fab-brick.com/

## Useful information and additional readings

Helle Abelvik-Lawson (2023) , How to ditch polluting fast fashion for a more ethical and sustainable wardrobe, Greenpeace.

Helle Abelvik-Lawson (2023) How fast fashion fuels climate change, plastic pollution, and violence, Greenpeace.

Vibhu Mishra (2025), Fast fashion fuelling global waste crisis, UN chief warns. United Nations.

Fashion Revolution: the world's largest fashion activism movement

RREUSE: the Europe's largest network of social enterprises active in the circular economy, with a focus on reuse, repair and recycling.

James Miller (2026). Is Polyester Toxic & What are the Health Risks?

Broadhead R, Craeye L, Callewaert C. The Future of Functional Clothing for an Improved Skin and Textile Microbiome Relationship. Microorganisms. 2021 May 31;9(6):1192. doi: 10.3390/microorganisms9061192. PMID: 34073029; PMCID: PMC8226598.

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Redress, Upcycling Guide

Montahah Ali (2022) The Difference Between Reuse And Upcycle

Eleonora Marini (2019), Recycling vs upcycling: all the differences

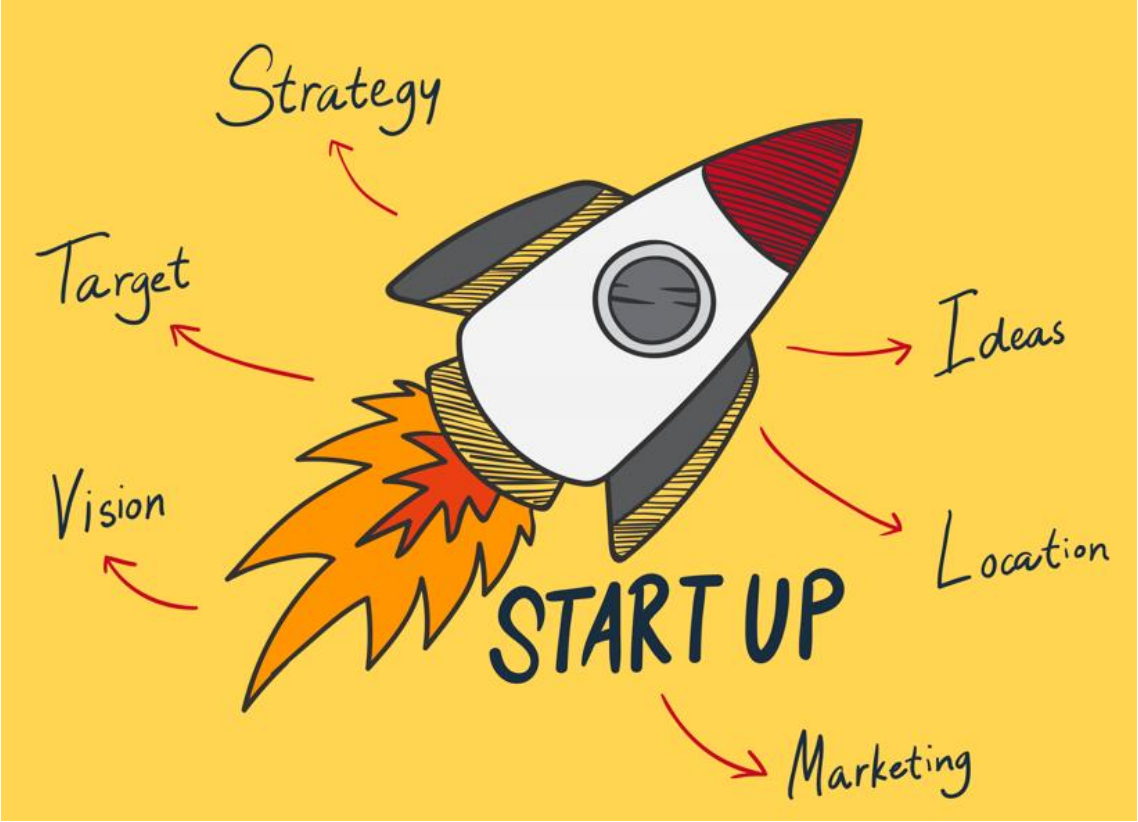
Sustainability Awards (2025) Is Bamboo a Sustainable Fabric?

Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017). A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future.

Greenpeace. Fast fashion, la moda ultrarapida che distrugge il pianeta *(Fast fashion, the ultra-fast fashion that's destroying the planet)*

Science Insights (2026). Healthiest Fabrics to Wear — and Which to Avoid

## Module 5: Circular fashion and social entrepreneurship




Source: Freepik

## Theoretical introduction, approaches and general notions on CFP to support vulnerable youth

**Circular Fashion & Social Entrepreneurship**

According to the OECD, **young people today are increasingly pursuing careers with positive environmental and social impacts** and tend to favour self-employment to working for an employer.[1] Circular fashion social entrepreneurship education helps enable young people to achieve these aspirations.

Social entrepreneurship education aims to equip learners with the skills and knowledge to **address a social and/or environmental problem** through the creation and management of a business. It has been shown to **positively impact students' mindsets**, including their attitudes towards social problems and innovative solutions.

**Experiential learning, mentorship** and **partnerships with local communities** and **businesses** are examples of good practice in the field of social entrepreneurship education.[2]



Source: Pexels

Defined by its aim, to address social issues over generating profit, social entrepreneurship provides a unique framework for integrating circular economy principles, which emphasise resource efficiency and waste reduction. Circular fashion business models can be implemented to **keep textiles 'in the loop' for longer – facilitating extended use through repair, reuse, repurpose, and recycle** - and helping to reduce the negative impacts of fashion textiles while generating business opportunities and safe and fair employment.

Types of circular fashion business models that extend textile use include:

**RESALE**: Selling pre-owned garments – at markets, online, shop.

**RENTAL/ LOAN/ SWAP**: Renting, borrowing or swapping items of clothing, shoes or accessories

**REWORK**: Creative reuse of materials with added value - reworking surplus fabric into a new garment

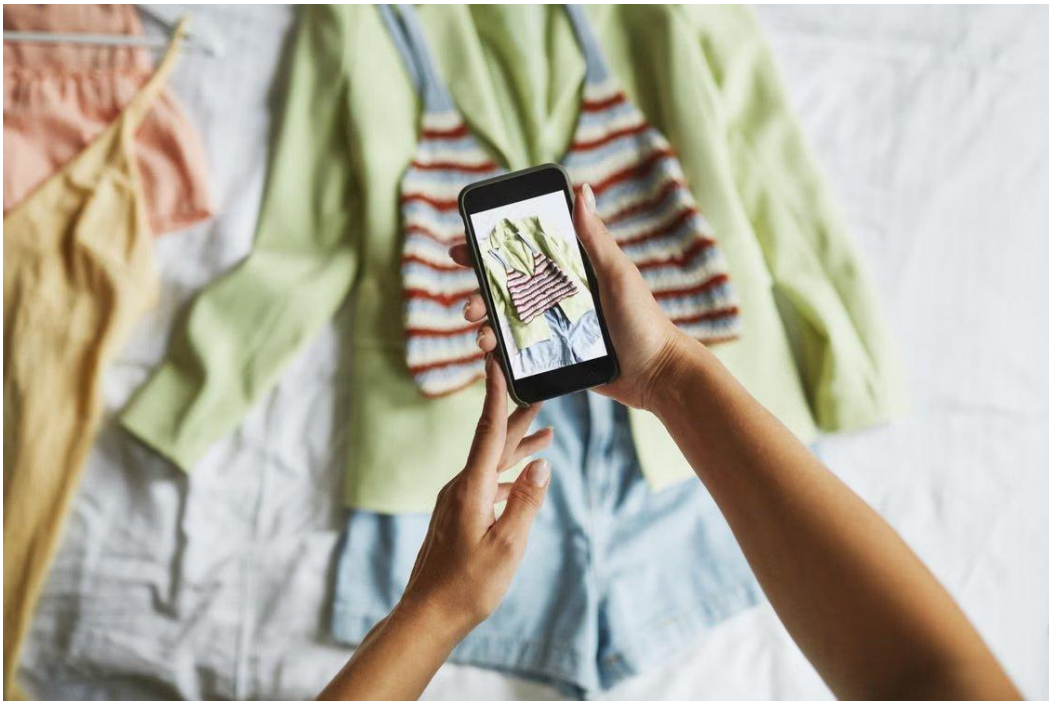
**REPAIR**: Extends use phase by repairing damage

**RECYCLE**: Transforming old textiles into new fibres or garments.

The integration of circular fashion and social entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly significant as a pathway to achieving **sustainable development goals (SDGs)**. Through the leverage of innovative business models, such as the **Social Business Model Canvas,** which makes social equity and environmental sustainability a priority, social enterprises can play a vital role in the promotion of circular economy principles.

In the context of circular fashion, social entrepreneurship can include the following activities:

- Selling second-hand goods on online platforms (Vinted, Depop)
- Reworking surplus fabric scraps and transforming them into new products (+ creating local employment opportunities)
- Operating repair hubs that combine skills training and community inclusion
- Organising clothing swap and reuse events
- Re-maker sessions (bring an item of clothing to upcycle, alter or transform)
- Skills training sessions (sewing, etc)
- Providing accessible sustainable fashion to communities in need
- Integrating marginalised and vulnerable groups in design, production or sales processes.



Source: Pexels

This training module will provide educators with the skills and knowledge to **guide learners to design and develop their own circular fashion projects!** It introduces key concepts, business models, methodologies and teaching approaches that educators can draw from to inspire their learners to **get creative!**

## Conceptual knowledge and Methodological support related to youth educators

**Conceptual Knowledge**




Source: Magnific

**Value Creation:** In circular fashion social enterprises, value is multidimensional: 1/ **Economic**: revenue, cost management, scalability; 2/ **Environmental**: resource conservation, emissions avoided, waste reduced; 3/ **Social**: Community benefits, skills development, inclusion.

**Triple-Bottom Line (TBL):** A sustainability framework based on the 3 P's:

**Profit:** to ensure long-financial viability, profits need to be sustained, and ethical social and environmental practices followed. **People:** to address social issues, promote social well-being and improve equity. Involves measuring the impact of the business on the local community, customers and stakeholders. **Planet:** to reduce harm to the planet and reduce emissions.

**Life cycle Thinking (LCT):** Life cycle thinking involves going further than the traditional focus on one factor, such as production processes – it is a mindset that considers the social, environmental and economic impacts of a service or product over its entire life cycle.

**Lean Start-up Methodology:** The Lean Startup emphasises the importance of speaking to potential customers early and often. It emphasises **customer feedback over intuition** and **flexibility over planning** and ensures a higher chance of recovery from failures without the need for outside funding, elaborate business plans or the perfect product. It focuses on **learning from**

**customers, testing assumptions, and iterating or pivoting quickly** based on feedback and data. It involves continually testing iterative and incremental versions of the product, almost from day one.

**Social Business Model Canvas:** The Social Business Model Canvas is an adaptation of the traditional business model: Business Model Canvas, an essential tool when launching a business. The SBMC model has been adapted for social enterprises to help social entrepreneurs

**outline how they create, deliver and capture value while focusing on social objectives.** The template features 14 boxes to complete including: Key Stakeholders, Social Mission, Social Value Proposition, Social Impact Measurement Strategy, Channel, Relationships, Key Delivery Partners, Activities, Resources, Competition, Macro-environment, and Revenue. Access a Social Business Model Canvas template here: Social Business Model Template

## Methodological Support

### Project-based learning

Rooted in constructivist pedagogy, Project-based learning is an innovative and dynamic teaching approach that enhances learners' autonomy, responsibility, and critical skills through, over time, **collaboratively working on and exploring solutions for a complex, authentic problem.** Skills and knowledge acquisition are demonstrated by creating a product or presentation.

It involves posing a compelling, open-ended question, allowing learners to **take charge of their own learning and providing a degree of freedom, opportunities for collaboration, sharing ideas and problem solving in groups**, taking an interdisciplinary approach – building connections between different subjects, and working towards a clear tangible end product.

o Teaching activity: Set the question: How might we reduce textile waste in our town? Project: Design a small-scale circular fashion project using the Lean Start up, Social Business Model Canvas, and examples of good practice (case studies). Consider which circular fashion business model to use.



Source: Pixabay

**Design thinking**

Design thinking is crucial to the idea generation and co-creation stage. At this stage, learners turn their awareness of sustainability challenges into actionable ideas, combining creative exploration, empathy-based insight and collective intelligence. It is a non-linear, iterative process, which **helps learners to understand their product or service users, challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create innovative solutions to prototype and test**. It involves 5 stages: 1**/ Emphasise, 2/ Define, 3/ Ideate, 4/ Prototype and 5/ Test.**

**Human-Centred Design (HCD)**

One of the reasons why business start-ups fail is a lack of market need for the product or service. **Human-centred design puts people at the centre of the development process and ensures the products or services designed are tailored to their needs.**

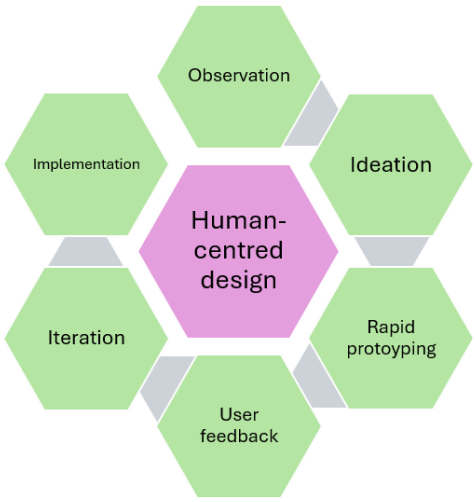
HCD is focused around 4 principles:

**1/ People-centred**: When designing, think about the people who will use the product. Consider their needs, perspectives and experiences.

**2/ Find the right problem:** Look at the fundamental issue and not the symptoms of the problem.

**3/ View everything as a system:** It's important to keep the whole user journey in mind.

**4/ Small and simple interventions:** Avoid rushing into a big solution. It's important to do the iterative work, creating small prototypes and testing solutions until needs are met.




The phases of HCD involve:

**1/ Observation:** Put assumptions aside and ask the target audience for their opinions. Observe and learn from them.

**2/ Ideation**: Brainstorm ideas based on what you learned in phase 1.

**3/ Rapid prototyping:** Create a simple prototype to test with users. It should have just enough core features to deploy the product, and no more. It is a product version which is just about

usable by early customers who can then be asked for feedback to inform future development (Minimum-Viable Product).

**4/ User feedback:** Obtain feedback – the most critical part of the process.

**5/ Iteration:** Use the feedback obtained in the previous phase to adjust your design – iterate, test and iterate and test – until you are satisfied that the product or service is ready.

**6/ Implementation:** The design is ready to be implemented in the real-world, however it is important to continuously monitor and keep learning and keep testing to continue to improve the product or service.

o Teaching Activity: Design thinking and Human-Centred Design workshops: as the approaches are so similar, they can be used in combination to guide learners in their design and creation of a small-scale circular fashion project.

**Experiential learning**

The Experiential Learning Theory is framework to describe how people learn through experience, and consists of a four-step experiential learning cycle: 1/ **Experiencing:** Learning starts as learners use their senses and perceptions to understand what is happening now (Concrete experience); 2/**Reflecting**: Afterwards, learners reflect on the experience and connect feelings with ideas about what happened (Reflective observation); 3/ **Thinking**: Learners think about possible conclusions, theories, concepts or general principles that can be tested (Abstract conceptualization); 4/ **Acting:** Learners test the theories, conclusions, etc. and apply what was learned to obtain feedback and create the next experience.

o Teaching Activity: To encourage structured reflection, learners can be given a reflection diary which they should use to regularly reflect on key steps, outcomes and lessons learned. Encourage learners to view setbacks as positive - that can lead to better outcomes and encourage reflection loops – after implementation, pause to assess what worked, and what to change next iteration.

**Culturally responsive Pedagogy**

Culturally responsive pedagogy is vital in the creation of inclusive learning environments. Valuing the learners' diverse backgrounds enhances academic achievement and engagement and promotes positive relationships which foster belonging and wellbeing.

o Teaching Activity: Encourage learners to share textile traditions and custom repair methods from their cultures, as well as to research other traditional textiles or repair techniques from different cultures. Display images/ samples on the walls like a gallery, with a text box underneath explaining what it is. Learners walk around and view as if at a gallery. They should discuss their thoughts and feelings about the different fabrics and discuss how these examples could inspire circular fashion practices with each other as they wander around.



Source: Pixabay



Source: Pixabay

## Innovative pedagogical approaches and -Assessment methodologies

**Pedagogical Approaches**

**Project-based learning**

**First steps:**

o Support learners to work collaboratively to map out the life cycle of a garment - to identify the economic, environmental and social impacts at each stage **(life cycle thinking and value creation**) and engage in ethical and critical reflection about fashion's social and environmental impact. Learners present their findings via poster presentation.

o Define a local sustainability challenge linked to fashion: e.g. How might we reduce textile waste in our town? Guide learners to map local textile waste streams (e.g. clothing donations, online marketplaces) and use Problem framing to prompt learners to reframe and redefine challenges using 'How might we…?' statements that are open-ended, optimistic and action oriented.

o Encourage critical thinking with provocative questions such as, 'What if clothes could be rented like books?' 'What can we make with textile scraps in our community?', etc.

**Design thinking:**

o Design thinking workshops: engage learners in the 5 key stages of Design Thinking to support idea generation and co-creation for their project idea in a workshop setting.

o Idea generation is said to be positively influenced by factors such as teamwork, problem-solving skills and creativity.

o Empathy mapping: Encourage learners to engage with real users (peers, parents, local tailors, markets, online clothing marketplaces, etc.) to discover clothing habits, repair attitudes and style considerations) and use the information to inform their project planning (Lean Startup).

**Inclusivity and Intercultural dimensions:**

o Ensure mixed groups that combine different skills and cultural perspectives.

o Deliver classes that are culturally responsive, inclusive and supportive.

**Prototyping and Experimentation:**

o Aligns with Experiential Learning Theory (doing, reflecting and refining) and Human-Centred Design and involves hands-on creativity and problem solving.

o Learners build quick prototypes (Minimal Viable Product) which integrate circular fashion principles.

o Learners experiment rapidly, test and iterate – emphasis that trial and error is a normal part of the design journey (resilience is a key skill necessary to develop in learners & framing mistakes as learning opportunities fosters persistence and innovation).

o Encourage learners to reflect on what went well, what didn't and what next?

**Case Studies**

o Present learners with the different circular fashion social enterprise case studies. Learners work collaboratively to map out the **3 P's** of this organisation: Profit, People and Planet.

**Educational Setting**

o Provide access to tools and safe workspaces (e.g. sewing machines, fabric scraps, design software).

o Encourage collaborative learning and making.

o Support reflection through design journalling and iteration logs.

o Model a failure-friendly culture, emphasising that setbacks lead to better designs.

o Foster learners' connection of practical making to sustainability concepts: How does reusing this fabric reduce emissions or waste?

**Business Models & Impact Planning**

o Introduce learners to the Lean Start Up Methodology, including Minimum-Viable Product and the Build-Measure-Learn feedback Loop.

o Introduce the Social Business Model Canvas to learners and provide examples of completed templates for analysis.

o Guide learners to fill out a Social Business Model Canvas Template about their circular fashion project idea.

o Explore impact logic with learners: What are the outcomes (e.g. reduced waste, employment opportunities, increased awareness) and how can they be measured?

o Entrepreneurial simulations: Simulate a circular fashion start-up.

o Role-play different scenarios: investors, customers, supply chain.

**Implementation and Logistics:**

o Deliver workshops with activities where learners can practice planning sourcing, organising the supply chain, planning distribution channels, and implementing quality control measures.

o Encourage continuous monitoring and reflection

**Scaling and Sustainability:**

o Conduct activities with learners where they consider replicability, forming partnerships and ways to adapt or pivot their project ideas based on real-world constraints.

**Marketing:**

o Explore online marketing tools for promoting their circular fashion project with learners, introduce Canva, a free tool for creating digital posters, eflyers, newsletters. Link to Canva free design tool.

Set the task that learners should each create a social media post (in word version, not to be published). They can be stuck up around the classroom, and viewed as a gallery scenario, with learners providing peer review and suggestions.



Source: Magnific

## Assessment Methodologies

Because circular fashion projects are creative, multi-dimensional, and process-orientated, assessment should be authentic, formative and participatory. Suggested rubrics include:

**Project Portfolio/ Showcase:** Learners are asked to document the process, from their ideation sketches, to prototypes, iterations, final product, marketing material and reflection. Include an impact statement of environmental and social outcomes.

**Reflection & Learning Journal:** Learners keep a log of their activities, decisions, insights, reflections. Ask: What surprised me? What assumptions did I challenge?

**Peer & Self-Assessment:** Use structured rubrics for teamwork, contribution, reflection.

**Impact Metrics Tracking:** Use simple, measurable indicators to track progress: number of items of clothing reused, repaired & refashioned, waste diverted, participants engaged, revenue, if applicable, community reach.

**Oral Presentations & Pitching:** Teams pitch their idea to the audience of potential investors. Q&A.

**Assessment Rubrics**: Design assessment rubrics that align with the learning objectives.

Learners can be assessed according to the process (iterations, adaptations, team dynamics and reflection) and the product/ service they design (needs analysis, planning (use of business models and concepts), prototype, pilot), with more weighting on the process stage.

**Feedback and Growth Orientation:**

- Use **Feedforward** – a technique that focuses on the future and makes suggestions for growth and improvement as well as summative feedback.
- Host peer reviews where participants sit in a circle and share their prototypes and give each other feedback and feedforward to help shape the next iteration.



Source: Magnific

**Follow-up Impact and Reflection:** To reinforce entrepreneurial resilience and real-world learning, if relevant/ possible, engage learners in a post-project reflection, 3-6 months later, to discuss: 1/ Was your circular fashion project idea sustainable? 2/ Did it grow? 3/What real-life impact was seen? 4/ What lessons or pivots did you undertake? 4/ If your project is still going, describe the process to now - What are your key lessons learned? 5/If you were to do it again, how would you do it differently? 6/ If you aren't working on your project anymore but are interested in trying a different one, what's your idea?



Source: Magnific

Youth-led social enterprises are helping to address key worldwide environmental and social issues. The OECD reports that there are already many examples of successful youth-led social enterprises. Related to circular fashion, a social enterprise in Italy is highlighted as an example of a successful and inspiring experience: *Progetto Quid*, which was founded by young entrepreneurs in Verona in 2013. They use recovered, end-of-line, surplus fabrics and **rework** them into affordable, limited-edition, ethical clothing, employing 140 staff from disadvantaged backgrounds.[1]

The European Commission describes how Progetto Quid's successful marketing strategy, combined with its entrepreneurial focus has ensured customer and stakeholder satisfaction – and has led to financial sustainability though the production of high-quality, stylish products which in addition, are ecologically sustainable having been ethically sourced. Furthermore, Progetto Quid provides support to their staff consisting of vulnerable individuals facing significant employment barriers, by collaborating with social services to provide a holistic support service, such as psychological support and support with bureaucratic issues when needed. [2]

*Change Clothes* social enterprise in Dublin, Ireland is a community-based clothing **reuse** hub, which started small, when the founder, Mary Fleming began hosting monthly pop-up clothes swaps. Today, Change Clothes offers accessible second-hand fashion to swap plus delivers a variety of activities and events from its permanent premises, including **rework** sessions, **repair** sessions, and train-the-trainer training programmes for youth workers in clothes repair & upcycling.

[1] Unlocking the potential of youth-led social enterprises (EN)

[2] Progetto Quid | European Social Fund Plus

Additionally, they provide a range of initiatives aimed at creating positive opportunities for the community. They support Tus trainees (community work placement scheme for long-term unemployed) by providing work placements across their production service, swap store and scrap store, for example, working in small batch production to create products using second life materials which they sell in their swap shop. And through their Community Closet, Change

Clothes provides clothing to people most in need by connecting with housing services and featuring a 'free to take' clothing rail in the store. They also lend anyone interested in running their own swap shop at a community event all of the necessary equipment for free.



Source: Magnific

Circular Dress Collaborative is another inspiring social enterprise, based in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Ireland, dedicated to the principles of **resale, repair, repurpose** and **rebuild.** It is one of the first social enterprises in Ireland to receive People + Planet First verification, which means it meets 5 core standards: 1/ Purpose: it exists to solve a social and/or environmental problem, 2/ Operations: they prioritise purpose, people and planet in organisational decisions, 3/ Revenue: they have a self-sustaining revenue model, 4/ Use of surplus: they invest the majority of any surplus towards their purpose, 5/Structure: they choose legal structures and financing that lock-in purpose long-term. Verification

Customers bring pre-loved clothing to the shop, where items are assessed, priced and placed for resale. The customer receives a percentage of the sale price, keeping money in the local economy. Those who both purchase from and bring items into Circular Dress Collaborative receive a higher percentage return — rewarding circular behaviour. Over 9,300 garments have been saved from landfill and counting. Even garments that cannot be resold are repurposed — dresses become garment carrier bags rather than waste. The model serves the average Irish consumer across every socio-economic background, with wardrobes full of every label and brand from high street to designer.

In Romania, ALTRNTV (Alternative) works with local artisans to produce handcrafted clothing and accessories which are crafted from sustainable vegan and organic materials. The social enterprise is committed to circular economy practices, offering **recycling** services for used clothes and **reworking** textile scraps from clothing to create clothing, accessories and shoes. All profit is donated to providing medical and dental care for vulnerable children across the country. Additionally, the social enterprise runs regular workshops to raise awareness and share their artist's visions of sustainability.



Source: Magnific

LINA is the first online and offline fashion library in the Netherlands with a system for **borrowing** clothes, providing an extensive wardrobe for all occasions.

EtMoi, a Belgium-based circular fashion project involves local prisoners in the production of office textiles, such as chair cushions and card holders using conference lanyards and ties and scarves that are no longer worn.

Rediscover Fashion is a social enterprise in Ireland which produces 100% **redesigned** and **repurposed** clothing, accessories and homeware from unwanted textiles, thus preventing the materials from being sent to landfill. Also, they deliver interactive workshops, training and courses on reuse, repair and circular design, motivating and enabling people to repair and repurpose, restore and redesign.

One of Rediscover Fashions stand out projects is their annual Relove Fashion Competition, a sustainable fashion competition which challenges secondary school students to use their creative design skills to design and create a rewearable, sustainable outfit using clothing sourced from a swap shop, charity shop or an item they have at home.

There are many successful examples of circular fashion and social entrepreneurship across Europe from which learners can gain inspiration, insights and knowledge for their own circular fashion projects and initiatives. Access the Circular Fashion Digital Database for more examples! **https://interactivetoolbox-cfashion.infodef.com.es/digital-database/**

## Useful information and additional readings

**Every entrepreneurial journey begins with an idea, but how do you know if it has the potential to become a valid business?** The most relevant reading for validating a business idea is the book written by Eric Ries: *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses.* The main idea is that instead of relying on intuition regarding what customers want, entrepreneurs should communicate with potential customers from the start to discover what they actually want to avoid wasting time and finances in the initial stages of creating a business.

Key principles within the **Lean Startup methodology:**

***Minimal Viable Product (MVP):*** A *minimal viable product (MVP)* has just enough core features to deploy the product, and no more. It is a product version which is just about usable by early customers who can then be asked for feedback to inform future development.

***Build-Measure-Learn:*** One of the core components of the Lean Startup framework is the *Build-Measure-Learn* feedback loop. This loop begins with a definition of what the problem is that needs solving and building a minimum viable product that can be tested and measured as soon as possible using actionable metrics. Entrepreneurs can learn from the data acquired and continue the cycle.

**Additional Readings**

**Business Models:**

Ries, E, 2011. The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses.

Social Business Model Canvas: Social Business Model Canvas

**Teaching approaches**

**Project-based learning:**

European Commission, 2020. European School Education Platform. Enhancing creativity through a Project-Based Learning approach. Enhancing creativity through a Project-Based Learning approach | European School Education Platform

Tes Magazine, 2025. What is project-based learning? What is project-based learning? | Tes Magazine

**Design thinking:**

Interaction Design Foundation, 2025. The 5 Stages in the Design Thinking Process. The 5 Stages in the Design Thinking Process | IxDF

Creately, 2025. Design Thinking Methodology/ Frameworks and Best Practices. Design Thinking Methodology | Frameworks, Tools & Best Practices | Creately

**Human-centred design:**

Harvard Business School Online, 2020. What is Human-centred Design? What Is Human-Centered Design? | HBS Online

Interaction Design Foundation, 2025. Human-Centred Design (HCD). What is Human-Centered Design (HCD)? | IxDF

**Inspiring Circular Fashion Social Enterprises:**

Change Clothes, Social Enterprise, Dublin, Ireland. Change Clothes

Circular Dress Collaborative, Social Enterprise, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Ireland. Shop Sustainable Fashion at Circular Dress Collaborative

Rediscover Fashion, Social Enterprise of the Rediscovery Centre, Dublin. Rediscover Fashion – The Rediscovery Centre

CycleUp Textiles, Roscommon Women's Network Social Enterprise. CycleUp Textiles | Upcycled Textiles | Roscommon, Ireland

**Additional resources:**

A directory highlighting 40+ social and circular enterprises across Ireland. Published by the Economic Development Office, Dublin City Council, 2023. So Circular Brochure, SoCircular Brochure

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Life Cycle Initiative,2025. What is Life Cycle Thinking? What is Life Cycle Thinking? - Life Cycle Initiative

European Commission, 2024. Circular Economy and Social Entrepreneurship. Circular Economy and Social Entrepreneurship | EPALE

UX Design Institute, 2023. What is human-centred design? What is human-centered design? A complete guide

Social Business Model Canvas, 2025. Social Business Model Canvas – A digital collaborative template that helps you plan for Social Impact!

Caingcoy, M.E. 2023. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Systematic Overview (PDF) Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Systematic Overview

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Gov.ie. 2025. Tus Community Work Placement Initiative, Ireland.Tús (community work placement initiative)

Dublin City South Partnership. Social Entrepreneurs Ireland. Success story – Change Clothes. success story – Change Clothes Crumlin – DSCP – Dublin South City Partnership

Gov.of Ireland. Change Clothes Crumlin | Sustainability | Ireland.ie | Ireland.ie

European Union, 2025. European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. Good practices. Good practices | European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform

Interreg Europe, 2022. Reuse and Repair in a circular and social economy.Policy brief on reuse and repair in a circular and social economy.pdf

# 4. How the training modules can be adopted and integrated

The Circular Fashion training modules are a flexible resource, not a fixed programme. They can be delivered as a whole or in parts, adapted to different organisations and groups, and improved over time using feedback from the people who deliver them and the young people who take part. This section shows how youth workers, intercultural mediators, volunteers and their organisations can adopt the modules, fit them into existing activities and keep them relevant.

### 4.1 Flexible adoption pathways

The five modules (10 hours of blended learning and 0.4 ECVET points each) can be adopted in different ways, depending on the organisation's aims, resources and time:

- **Full training pathway (50 hours, 2 ECVET points):** all five modules in order, from basic knowledge (Module 1) and facilitation methods (Module 2) through social impact (Module 3) and practical workshops (Module 4) to entrepreneurship (Module 5). This suits organisations that want to build long-term staff capacity in circular fashion.
- **Stand-alone modules:** each module can be used on its own to fill a specific gap. For example, Module 2 works as an induction for new volunteers in non-formal education, and Module 4 as a technical refresher for staff who already run creative workshops.
- **Thematic combinations:** modules can be grouped to meet particular needs:
    - *Awareness and hands-on skills:* Modules 1 + 4
    - *Inclusion and active citizenship:* Modules 2 + 3
    - *Employability and entrepreneurship:* Modules 4 + 5
    - *Train-the-trainer:* Modules 2 + 4, then the trained staff run workshops with young people
- **Integration into existing programmes:** individual activities, case studies and assessment tools can be added to programmes that are already running, such as youth centre activities, second-chance education, NEET and employment programmes, migrant and refugee support services, summer camps, Erasmus+ youth exchanges and European Solidarity Corps projects.

### 4.2 Adapting the modules to local contexts and target groups

The modules work best when they reflect participants' own lives. Organisations are encouraged to:

- **Use local examples.** Add local case studies, second-hand shops, repair cafés, textile collection points and social enterprises alongside the European examples in the handbook, so young people see circular fashion as something already happening near them.
- **Map local textile flows.** Start with the community mapping activity (Module 2) or the waste-stream mapping activity (Module 5) so that projects respond to real local problems.

- **Value cultural diversity.** Use participants' own textile traditions, repair techniques and clothing stories as learning material, following the culturally responsive approach in Module 5.
- **Adjust language and literacy levels.** Simplify texts, translate key materials into participants' languages, and use visual, oral and hands-on formats (pictograms, demonstration videos, audio reflections) for participants with low literacy or limited knowledge of the local language.
- **Ensure accessibility.** Adapt tools, workspaces and tasks for participants with disabilities (for example ergonomic scissors, large-eye needles, seated workstations, step-by-step visual guides).
- **Match intensity to the group.** Break the content into shorter sessions spread over more weeks when participants have irregular attendance, caring duties or other commitments.

### 4.3 Blended and flexible delivery

Each module is designed as 10 hours of blended learning. Organisations can split the hours according to their resources, for example:

- short online or self-paced inputs for theory (concepts, policy background, case studies) using the Circular Fashion Digital Database and Interactive Toolbox;
- face-to-face sessions for practical workshops, co-creation, reflection and peer feedback;
- follow-up online spaces (closed messaging groups, shared digital portfolios) to support learning between sessions.

Where participants have limited internet access or devices, digital content can be downloaded in advance, projected in group sessions or given out as printed handouts, so the blended format does not widen the digital divide.

### 4.4 Integration with the other Circular Fashion project results

The modules are strongest when used together with the other project results:

- **Training Curriculum:** use it as the reference for learning outcomes and ECVET allocation when planning a course.
- **Digital Database:** send learners there for more case studies, good practices and resources.#
- **Interactive Toolbox:** use its ready-made activities and multimedia materials to put the module content into practice.
- **Piloting Report and Recommendations:** use the lessons from the piloting phase to decide which activities work best with which groups.
- **Network and community of practice:** share adapted materials, session plans and results with other youth workers, and learn from how they have used the modules.

# 5. General recommendations on how to use the training modules

The following recommendations are intended to help youth workers, intercultural mediators and volunteers use the modules effectively, inclusively and safely with young people with fewer opportunities. They complement the three recommendations already in the handbook (hands-on activities, social inclusion and collaboration, communication and awareness).

**Start from participants' needs, interests and prior experience**
Before delivery, run a short needs and interests' assessment (informal conversations, a questionnaire, a "clothing story" icebreaker). Find out what participants already know and can do, what motivates them and what barriers they face. This helps you choose which modules and activities to focus on, and gives you a baseline for measuring progress.

**Create a safe, welcoming and non-judgemental learning environment**
Many young people with fewer opportunities have had negative experiences of education. Agree group rules together, respect different levels of skill and confidence, and make it clear that mistakes are part of learning. Take a trauma-informed and sensitive approach, especially when discussing personal clothing stories, identity or financial situations.

**Avoid blaming or shaming consumption choices**
Young people on limited budgets often rely on cheap fast fashion. Present circular fashion as an opportunity and a set of accessible choices, not as a moral judgement. Address the stigma sometimes attached to second-hand clothing and highlight the creativity, style and savings circular practices can bring.

**Keep theory short and learning practical**
Present concepts in short, clear inputs and connect them immediately to a hands-on task, a real garment or a local example. Follow the experiential learning cycle (do, reflect, understand, apply) described in Modules 2 and 4.

**Build skills progressively**
Move from simple to complex tasks, for example: sorting and assessing garments, then simple repairs (buttons, seams), then redesign, then upcycling into new products, and finally planning a small project or social enterprise. Quick early successes build confidence and motivation.

**Reduce practical barriers to participation**
Make sessions free or low-cost, provide all materials and tools, choose accessible venues and times, offer snacks or transport support where possible, and consider participants' caring responsibilities. Small practical measures often decide whether vulnerable young people can attend regularly.

**Use accessible, multilingual and visual materials**

Support written content with images, pictograms, demonstrations and videos. Translate key instructions, use plain language and invite bilingual participants or intercultural mediators to support peers. Adapt reflection and assessment tools (emoji cards, audio notes, drawings) for participants with low literacy.

**Make circular fashion personal and local**

Link global issues (supply chains, textile waste, workers' rights) to participants' own wardrobes, neighbourhoods and communities. Activities such as a wardrobe audit, the "Where does my T-shirt come from?" inquiry or mapping local textile waste make abstract topics concrete and relevant.

**Give young people ownership and leadership roles**

Involve participants in choosing projects, planning events and setting learning goals. Encourage those who progress quickly to become peer tutors or co-facilitators. This builds leadership and confidence, and helps sustain activities after the training ends.

**Connect learning to next steps**

Help participants see where their new skills can take them: further training, volunteering, work placements, local repair or reuse initiatives, selling their creations, or developing a social enterprise idea (Module 5). Where possible, connect them with mentors, local social enterprises and employment services.

CIRCULAR FASHION

Website: https://dev.cfashion.mdpossibles.be

LinkedIn page: https://www.linkedin.com/company/circular-fashion-eu-project

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