

ROUND TABLE 'CIRCULAR FASHION & TEXTILES' 29/10/20 SUMMARY RECORD

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SAMEN MAKEN WE
MORGEN MOOIER

OVAM

**FLAN
DERS DC** FOR
FASHION

- In Q3 2021, the European Commission will launch a textile strategy, creating momentum for policy action on the textile value chain.
- On 29 October 2020, OVAM and Flanders DC organised a digital round table on circular fashion and textiles.
- The aim was to get feedback on which policy actions are needed at the Flemish and Belgian level and which messages we want to give to the European level.
- This report reflects the most important messages that came out of the roundtable.
- OVAM and Flanders DC will also translate these messages into concrete actions with which they can contribute to a more circular textile chain in the years to come.

After a plenary presentation, a number of topics were discussed in 3 breakout groups.

This report contains all topics discussed and main messages from the 3 breakouts.

PARTICIPANTS

BREAKOUT 1

Chiel	Berends	European Commission, DG ENVI
Edwin	Maes	Centexbel
Eline	Boon	Federal Ministry for Environment
Evelien	Dils	VITO
Filip	Lietaer	Belconfect (absent)
Geert	Thorrez	VLAIO
Geraldine	Verwilgen	Comeos (absent)
Kris	Bachus	SuMMA - KU Leuven
Lisa	Broeckx	VF Europe
Maarten	Tak	(CAUSA SUI)
Merel	Decru	Ministry of Defense
Mieke	Pieters	The Global Picture / The Circular Hub
Murielle	Scherre	la fille d'O (absent)
Nathalie	De Greve	Comeos
Nathalie	De Nil	Wright / CN Fashion
Rozanne	Henzen	Antwerp Management School (absent)
Suzanne	De Strooper	be the fibre
Valérie	Boiten	Ellen MacArthur Foundation
Veerle	Spaepen	Thomas More Hogeschool
Veerle	Baert	Flanders Fashion Design International
Wouter	Noterman	Novavo nv
Wouter	De Broeck	Alsico

PARTICIPANTS

BREAKOUT 2

Alexandra	De Raeve	HOGENT FTILab+
AnnaMariaCornelia	De Gersem	Bekaert-Deslee
Arthur	Ten Wolde	Ecopreneur
Bie	Noé	B.Right
Elke	Timmerman	MAD
Evelien	Leenknecht	Federal Ministry for Environment
Inge	Overmeer	Solid
Jan	Laperre	Centexbel
Jo	Van Landeghem	Creamoda (absent)
Jonathan	Janssens	Gent Fair Trade
Joren	Verschaeve	HERW!N
Julie	Lietaer	European Spinning Group
Katrien	Janssens	IVOC vzw
Kris	Van Peteghem	Fedustria
Laure	Capitani	WBDM
Matthias	Multani	Summa
Niki	de Schryver	COSH! Conscious Shopping Made Easy
Peter	Sweron	VF Europe
Peter	Perquy	Duror Fashion Group
Saartje	Boutsen	Studio D
Sara	Ceustermans	Schone Kleren Campagne/Clean Clothes Campaign
Soraya	Wancour	Studio AMA
Tine	Buysens	Bel&Bo

PARTICIPANTS

BREAKOUT 3

Annick	Schramme	University of Antwerp/Antwerp Management School
Ann	Vande Kerckhove	FBT (Federatie Belgische Textielverzorgers/Belgian Federation Textile Maintenance)
Bert	De Busser	IOK Afvalbeheer (waste management)
Cédric	Vanhoeck	resortecs
Celine	Rigole	Brussels Environment
Emile	Bruls	Rijkswaterstaat NL
Frank	Gerard	PMV (Participatie Maatschappij Vlaanderen) (absent)
Jan	Merckx	CiLAB/GS1 NL
Joris	Smeuninx	Wolk-antwerp (absent)
Kathleen	Geysen	Be the fibre
Katrien	Molenberghs	TOP-atelier (IVOC)
Kristof	Bogaert	Denuo
Lieselot	Decalf	Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten (VVSG)/association of Flemish cities and municipalities
Michiel	Van den plas	Recydata (Circletex)
Mieke	Houwen	EWI
Pauline	Delfosse	Bel & Bo
Sam	Elinck	De Kringwinkel Antwerpen (reuse shop)
Sibille	Diederichs	Joseffa
Steven	Van de Velde	The Woody Group
Tatiana	Lambin	Federal Ministry for Economy
Tatiana	De Wée	Fashion Revolution Belgium / PI
Valerie	Geluykens	JBC, Mayerline
Veerle	Vermeyen	KU Leuven
Véronique	De Bruyne	Stad Antwerpen

CIRCULAR DESIGN - QUESTION

There are several ways to encourage circular design.

Providing platforms such as Close The Loop (<https://close-the-loop.be/en>) where you voluntarily follow a number of general design principles is one way.

However, the EU could also transpose some of these principles into legislation and impose specific product standards.

Examples of principles that can be used as

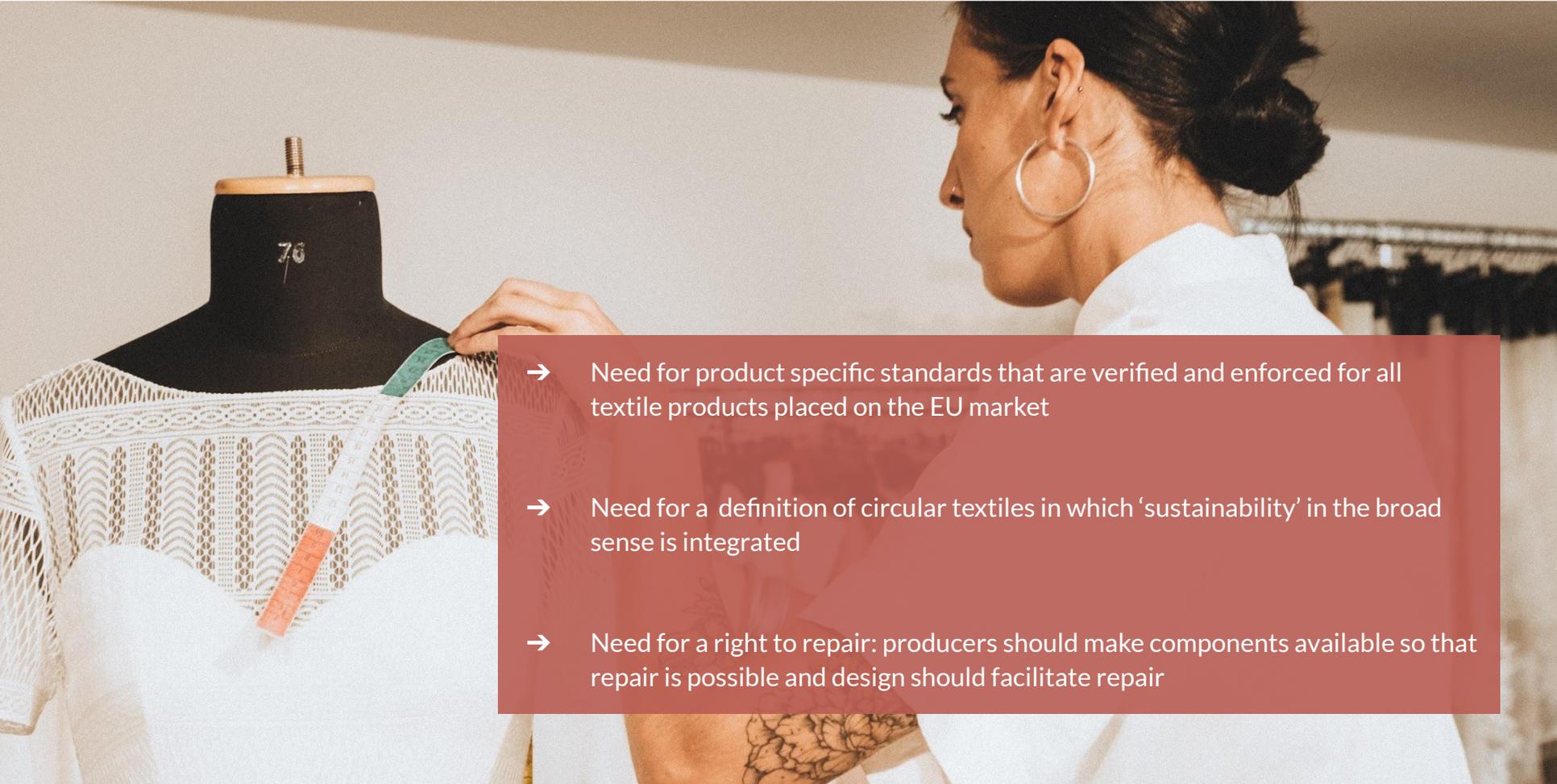
- 1) voluntary general design principles or
- 2) specific product standards:

- It must be possible to wash a garment at least 30 times at 60°C
- mixing fibres must be avoided as much as possible
- haberdashery (buttons, zips, etc.) must be easy to remove
- clothing must be free of harmful substances
- no production techniques may be used that deliberately harm the fabric (e.g. stone washing)



Are existing general voluntary design principles sufficient or is there a need for specific imposed product standards that are also enforced?

CIRCULAR DESIGN - MAIN MESSAGES



- Need for product specific standards that are verified and enforced for all textile products placed on the EU market
- Need for a definition of circular textiles in which 'sustainability' in the broad sense is integrated
- Need for a right to repair: producers should make components available so that repair is possible and design should facilitate repair

CIRCULAR BUSINESS MODELS - QUESTION

Circular business models move away from fast consumption and overproduction and ensure take-back for reuse and recycling.

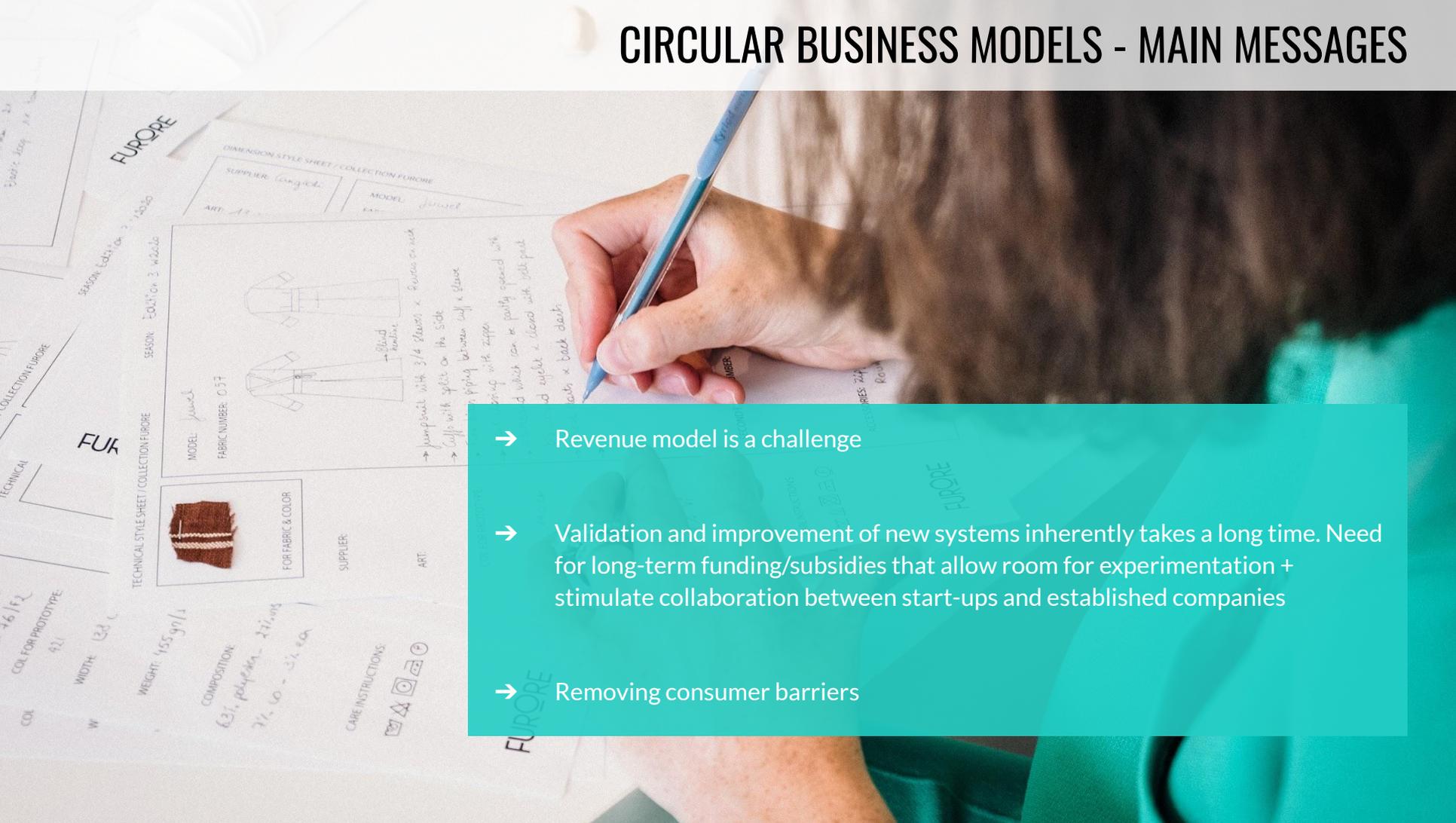
Examples include:

- leasing systems
- clothing libraries
- take-back with voucher systems



What is needed to make circular business models interesting for the producer and the consumer?

CIRCULAR BUSINESS MODELS - MAIN MESSAGES

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- ➔ Revenue model is a challenge
 - ➔ Validation and improvement of new systems inherently takes a long time. Need for long-term funding/subsidies that allow room for experimentation + stimulate collaboration between start-ups and established companies
 - ➔ Removing consumer barriers

EU MARKET FOR CIRCULAR TEXTILES - QUESTION

Although in recent years there has been an increasing supply of 'better virgin alternatives' to the most commonly used fabrics (e.g. GOTS certified cotton and Tencel) and of recycled fabrics (e.g. recycled polyester), their use remains limited.

There are clearly some challenges to creating an EU market for circular textiles.

Examples are:

- quality
- price
- market
- reliability and cost of certification/labels

for recycled fabrics:

- trade in discarded textiles (who has access to sufficient quantities of quality discarded textiles)
- storage capacity
- textiles that are difficult to recycle (because of quality or fibre composition)



What are the main challenges
and how do we solve them?

EU MARKET FOR CIRCULAR TEXTILES - MAIN MESSAGES

- Cost of certification too high for small companies
- Need for True Cost Modelling/True Pricing: as long as there is no correct pricing for textile products, circular products will not be competitive
- Need for a system that connects industrial residual flows with potential users intra-EU to promote recycling
- In terms of production, technical textiles are important for Flanders

EPR FOR TEXTILES - QUESTION

EPR = Extended Producer Responsibility

A debate is taking place whether EPR would make sense for the textile industry.

With EPR the producer is made responsible for the entire life cycle of a product with special attention to take-back, recycling and final disposal.

This would also encourage producers to redevelop their products with a view to eco-design, design-for-recycling, life-time extension, etc.

In Belgium, for example, EPR is already applied for, a.o. packaging waste, batteries

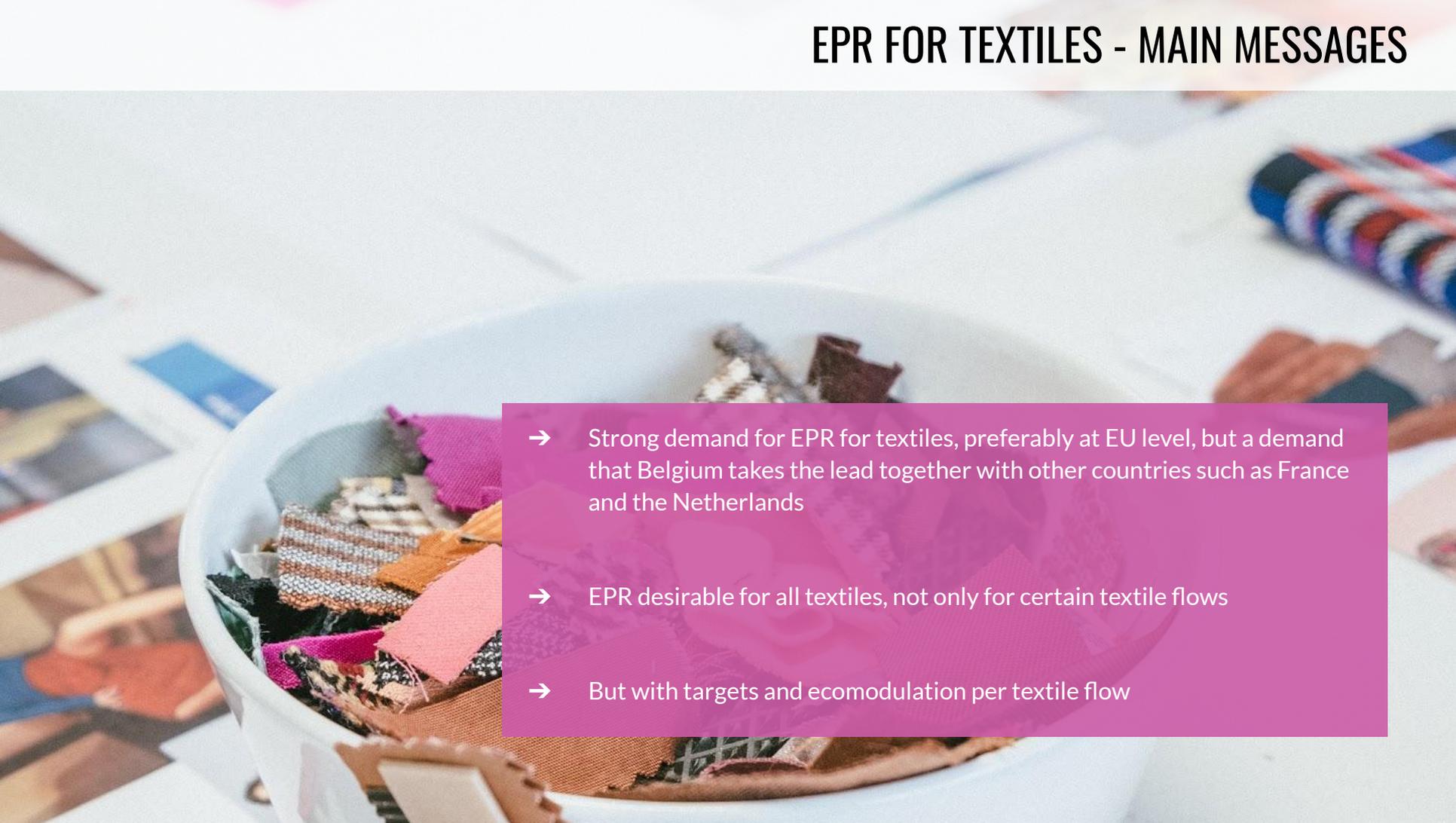
In France, there is already an EPR scheme for clothing, linen and shoes.



Are there particular textile flows that would lend themselves better for this system than others?

Think of clothing and accessories; bedding, kitchen and bathroom textiles; home textiles; professional workwear; ...

EPR FOR TEXTILES - MAIN MESSAGES

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- Strong demand for EPR for textiles, preferably at EU level, but a demand that Belgium takes the lead together with other countries such as France and the Netherlands
 - EPR desirable for all textiles, not only for certain textile flows
 - But with targets and ecomodulation per textile flow

AN EU BAN ON DESTRUCTION OF SURPLUS PRODUCTION - QUESTION

In France, there is a ban on the destruction of unsold items in order to prevent overproduction.

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Does an EU ban on the destruction of surplus production make sense?

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What are the conditionalities to make this work?

AN EU BAN ON DESTRUCTION OF SURPLUS PRODUCTION - MAIN MESSAGES

- Strong demand for such a ban
- Timeless designs and setting up pre-ordering systems are also mentioned in this context. The disadvantage of the system of pre-ordering is that the delivery time is then too long for 'last minute' decisions.
- By opting for local production, you can normally shorten the delivery time, but local production is often more expensive.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT OF CIRCULAR PROFESSIONAL TEXTILES - QUESTION

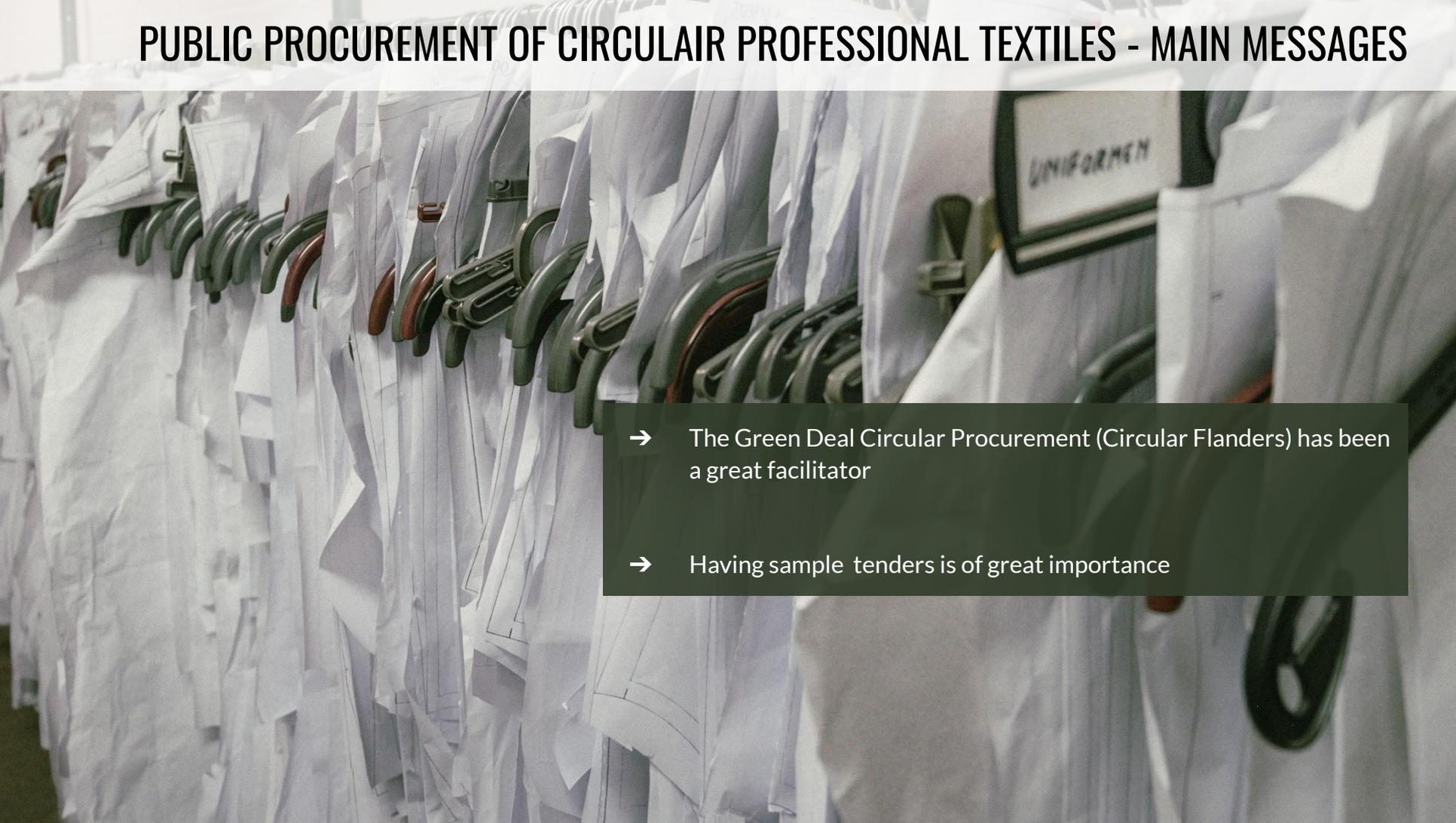
Committing to a circular fashion and textile sector can also be done through Public Procurement.

This means that there is a policy for sustainable public procurement whereby authorities choose solutions with the least environmental impact throughout the entire life cycle and which are also socially and ethically responsible.



For which textile flows does public procurement of circular professional textiles make sense?

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT OF CIRCULAIR PROFESSIONAL TEXTILES - MAIN MESSAGES

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- The Green Deal Circular Procurement (Circular Flanders) has been a great facilitator
 - Having sample tenders is of great importance

INNOVATION POLICY - QUESTION

The EU already funds research, technological development, innovation and support for SMEs through different research programmes (e.g. Horizon 2020, LIFE (with e.g. ECAP - European Clothing Action Plan)).

In addition, the introduction of an EPR scheme could also generate revenue to fund innovation programmes.

Examples of innovations for which funding could be used are:

- textile recycling
- avoidance of the release of microplastics and harmful substances
- consumer acceptance of circular business models (such as sharing, leasing, ...)
- circular design
- ...



Is there a need for public funding for
for technological innovation?

INNOVATION POLICY - MAIN MESSAGES

- Demand for a national vision on innovation policy from the government in order to create a vehicle to innovate together
- Important to create a market (with importance of EPR and VAT) for innovations
- "Lessons learned" from subsidies: more follow-up needed
- Most important topics are listed on the previous slide
- Innovation:
 - 1) Technical (e.g. sorting, chemical recycling,...)
 - 2) Policy (mandatory recycled content)
 - 3) Information (Belgium plays a pioneering role in product passport, consumer information)

TAX SHIFT - QUESTION

More and more voices are calling for a shift from taxing labour to taxing resource use and environmental impact.

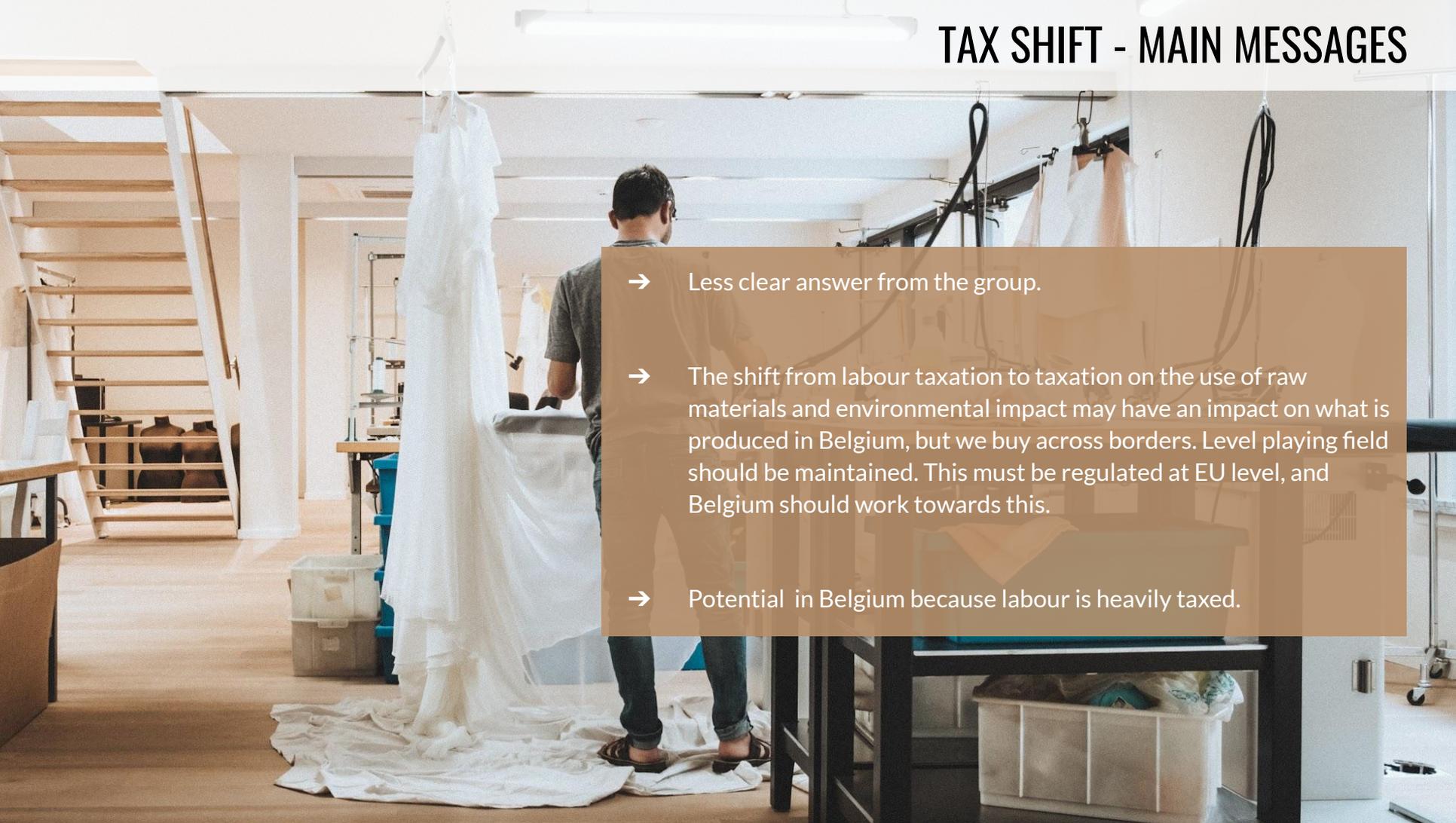
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Knowing that taxes are a national fact, should Belgium play a pioneering role in this evolution?

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What could be your own role in this?

TAX SHIFT - MAIN MESSAGES

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- Less clear answer from the group.
 - The shift from labour taxation to taxation on the use of raw materials and environmental impact may have an impact on what is produced in Belgium, but we buy across borders. Level playing field should be maintained. This must be regulated at EU level, and Belgium should work towards this.
 - Potential in Belgium because labour is heavily taxed.

VAT REDUCTION - QUESTION

A photograph of several spools of thread in various colors (purple, brown, orange) on a wooden surface in a factory setting. The background is slightly blurred, showing industrial equipment.

A reduction of VAT on circular products could positively 'nudge' consumers in the right direction. It is suggested that this could be a temporary measure to steer the market until a 'circular tax system' is in place, based on raw materials and energy consumption.

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Would a (temporary) VAT reduction on sustainable products make sense?

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Where do you see the main challenges and opportunities in this system?

VAT - REDUCTION - MAIN MESSAGES

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- A photograph of several spools of thread in various colors (grey, brown, orange) on a wooden surface in a factory setting. The spools are arranged in a row, with some in the foreground and others in the background. The background is slightly blurred, showing industrial equipment and lighting.
- Yes, this makes sense but is currently not possible due to the European VAT directive (prohibition to give a lower rate to circular products).
 - If introduced, important to encourage local products and not to give priority to recycles from far abroad.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE POLICY - QUESTION

A transition to a resource-efficient and circular fashion industry is closely linked to international trade policy. The trade in discarded textiles - even if the discarded textiles go to re-use - creates challenges.

This prompted some countries to impose (temporary) import bans.

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What changes in trade policy could help to, on the one hand keep enough quality discarded textiles for the EU market for circular textiles and on the other hand, to also channel exports of quality discarded textiles?

INTERNATIONAL TRADE POLICY - MAIN MESSAGES

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- Desire to limit exports of discarded textiles outside the EU, provided
 - ◆ Sufficient treatment capacity in the EU
 - ◆ Strategic policy: what do we want to produce in the EU and what not?
 - ◆ Revenue model of collectors/sorters should change
 - ◆ In the short term, it would already help to make a distinction between export for reuse and export for recycling (now falls under the same code, cfr. Waste Shipment Regulation review)
 - ◆ In the longer term: EPR, support for innovation
 - ◆ Facilitate more local reuse as product and as material
 - ◆ EU exchange/symbiosis platform: who can work with which fibre?

DUE DILIGENCE - QUESTION

Due diligence or supply chain responsibility suggests that companies detect, prevent, limit and combat abuses in the activities of their company, subsidiaries or elsewhere in their supply chain. Think of human rights violations, unsafe work situations or environmental damage. Self-regulation and codes of conduct, which the European Commission has always favoured, do not appear to be sufficient.

European Commissioner for Justice, Didier Reynders, announced that he wants to introduce legislation for not only clothing companies, but for all European companies working internationally. They will be obliged to carry out due diligence. Reynders has spoken very clearly about mandatory measures, and also wants to introduce sanctions when companies do not comply with rules.

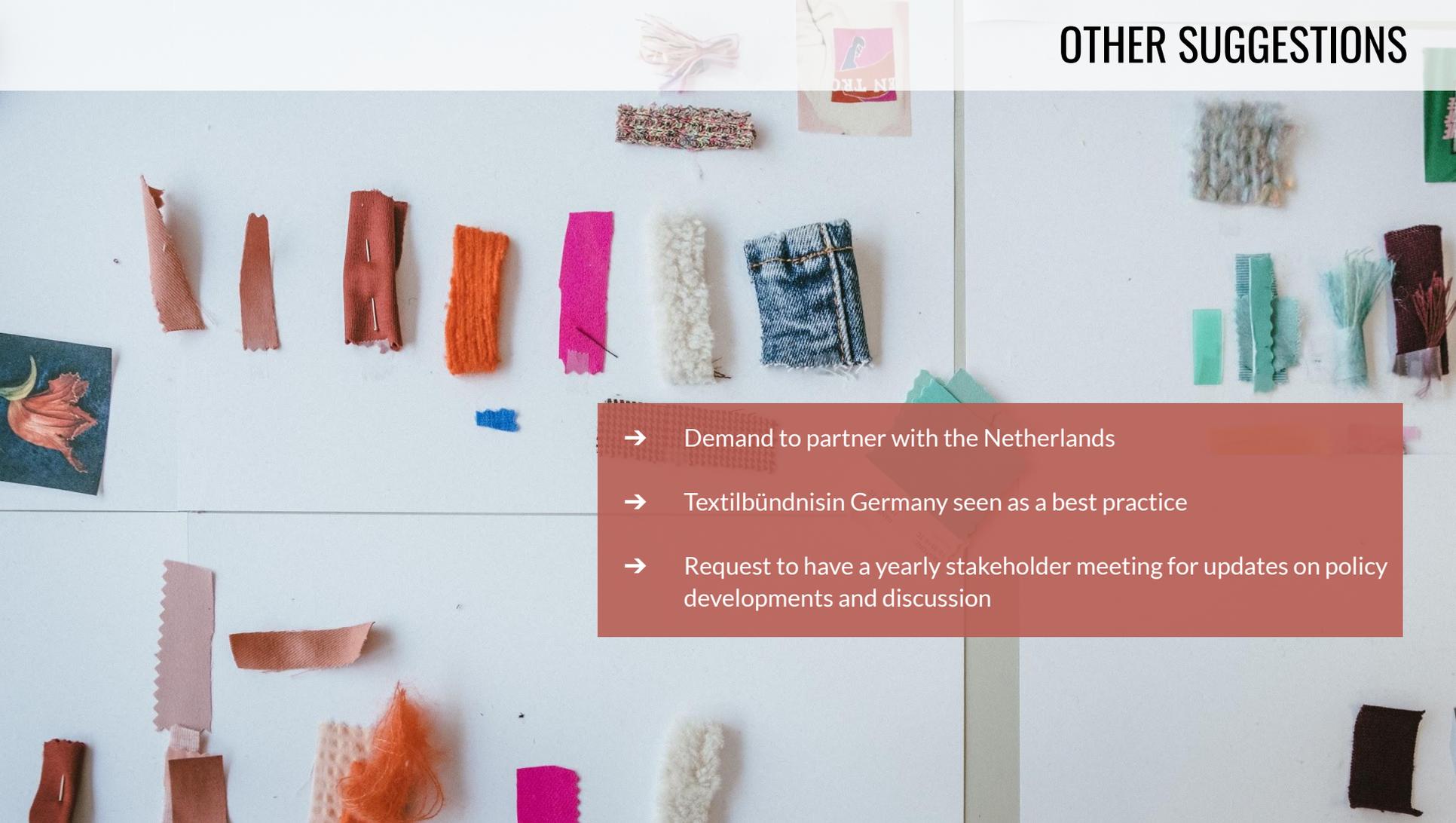
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Are there certain challenges and opportunities for the garment sector and specifically for Belgian companies?

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What is needed to ensure that we in Belgium are ready for this legislation? What support is still needed?

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- 
- Demand to partner with the Netherlands
 - Textilbündnis in Germany seen as a best practice
 - Request to have a yearly stakeholder meeting for updates on policy developments and discussion

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