

Opening keynote

Textiles in Europe's circular economy: Latest trends

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The European Environment Agency

EU institution with the mandate to monitor Europe's environment and climate



Our team analyse circular economy in Europe



1 EU strategy and policies on circularity of textiles

2 Benefits and scaling of circularity

3 Trends in circularity of textiles

2022 EU Strategy on Circular and Sustainable Textiles

Vision for 2030



EU strategy for sustainable
and circular textiles



All textile products placed on the EU market are:

- durable, repairable and recyclable
- to a great extent made of recycled fibres
- free of hazardous substances
- produced respecting social rights



"Fast fashion is out of fashion" - consumers benefit longer from **high quality textiles**



The EU textiles policies: 4 years after the EU strategy

Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)



- Requirements for products placed on the EU market
- Repairability, durability, recyclability and recycled content
- Large companies **prohibited from destroying unsold textiles** from July 2026, **medium-sized firms from 2030**
- (EEA study 2024: between 4% and 9% of unsold textiles across Europe are destroyed each year before being worn)

The EU textiles policies: 4 years on after the strategy

Waste Shipments Regulation



- Limits the exports of textiles waste (as of May 2026)
- Requirements for exports of used textiles: Guarantee of reuse or recycling

Waste Framework Directive



- Member States are required to establish Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes
- Producers will pay a fee for each product they place on the market
- All separately collected textiles will be considered as waste

Points

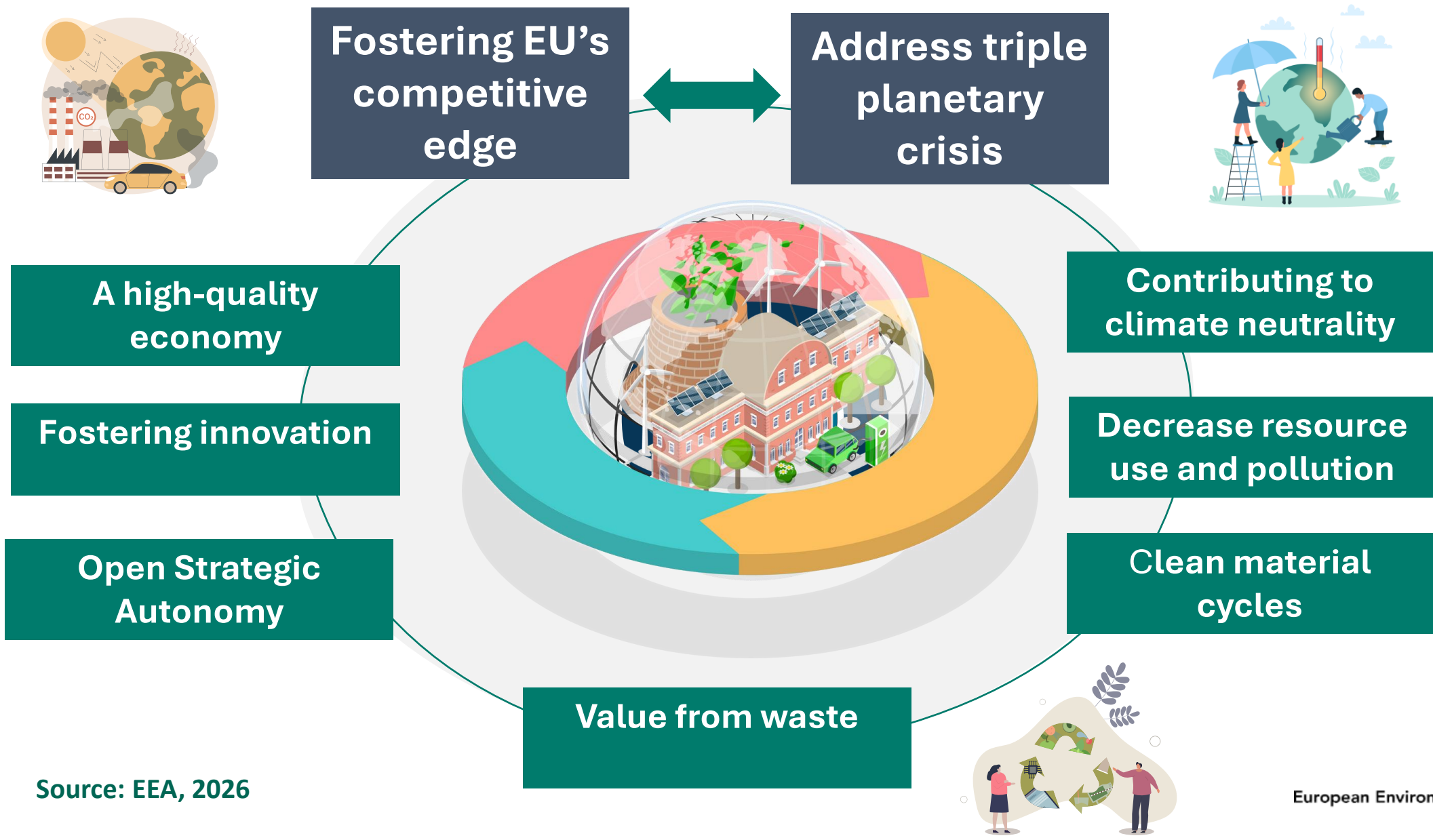


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Circular economy: A driver for competitiveness and prosperity

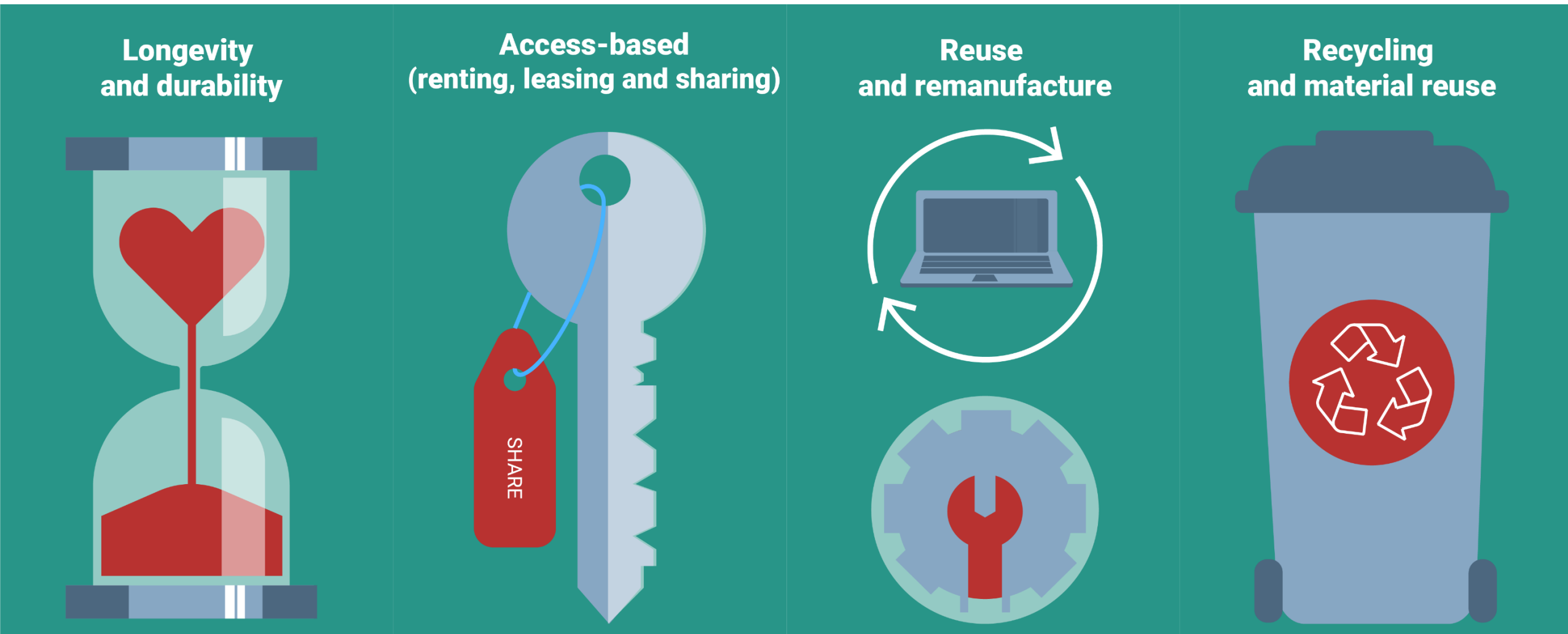


Source: EEA, 2026

Circular progress needed across nine R strategies

BEFORE USE		REFUSE	Consider the necessity to acquire an additional product
		RETHINK	Design for longer lifetimes, repair and recycling or provide the function without making an additional product
		REDUCE	Produce the product with minimal environmental impact
DURING USE		RETAIN	Use and maintain existing products for a long service life
		REUSE AND SHARE	Provide products to others for further usage
		REPAIR	Fix defective products and return them to original functionality
		REMANUFACTURE	Rebuild products to deliver as-new, or upgraded, functionality
AFTER USE		RECYCLE	Process discarded products into useful, high-quality materials
		RETURN	Substitute virgin resources with secondary raw materials

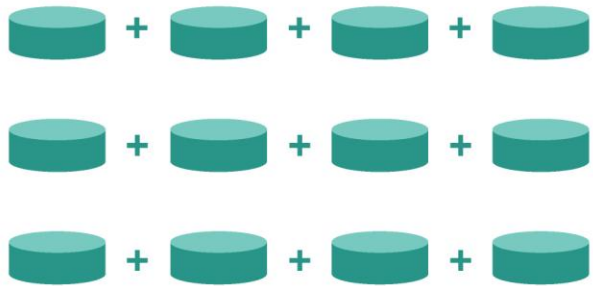
Widespread scaling of circular business models still not evident



Source: EEA, 2026 ...for textiles and other sectors

Need for scaling out, scaling up and scaling deep

Scaling out



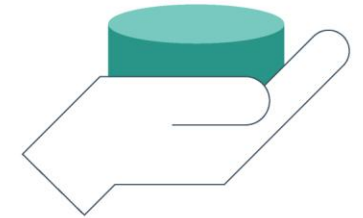
Expanding the number of customers by increasing geographical reach or replicating and diffusing circular business practices in new locations or markets

Scaling up



Transforming the broader system in which businesses operate to support broader adoption of circular business models

Scaling deep



Cultural and behavioural shifts and aims to embed circular principles in citizen and consumer mindsets and societal norms

Main enablers for scaling circular business models



Regulation and other policies determine the foundational conditions for scaling, representing an overarching enabler.



Technological innovation operationalises circularity, rendering circular business models feasible while improving efficiency, transparency and user experience.



Finance and insurance supply the capital and risk transfer needed.



Social innovation and behavioural change are necessary conditions to embed circular business models in everyday practices and norms, building the trust, legitimacy and participation required for uptake and retention.



Supply-chain and ecosystem collaboration are required to coordinate actors across lifecycle stages, enabling shared infrastructure, aligned standards and viable flows to ensure scaling.

Points

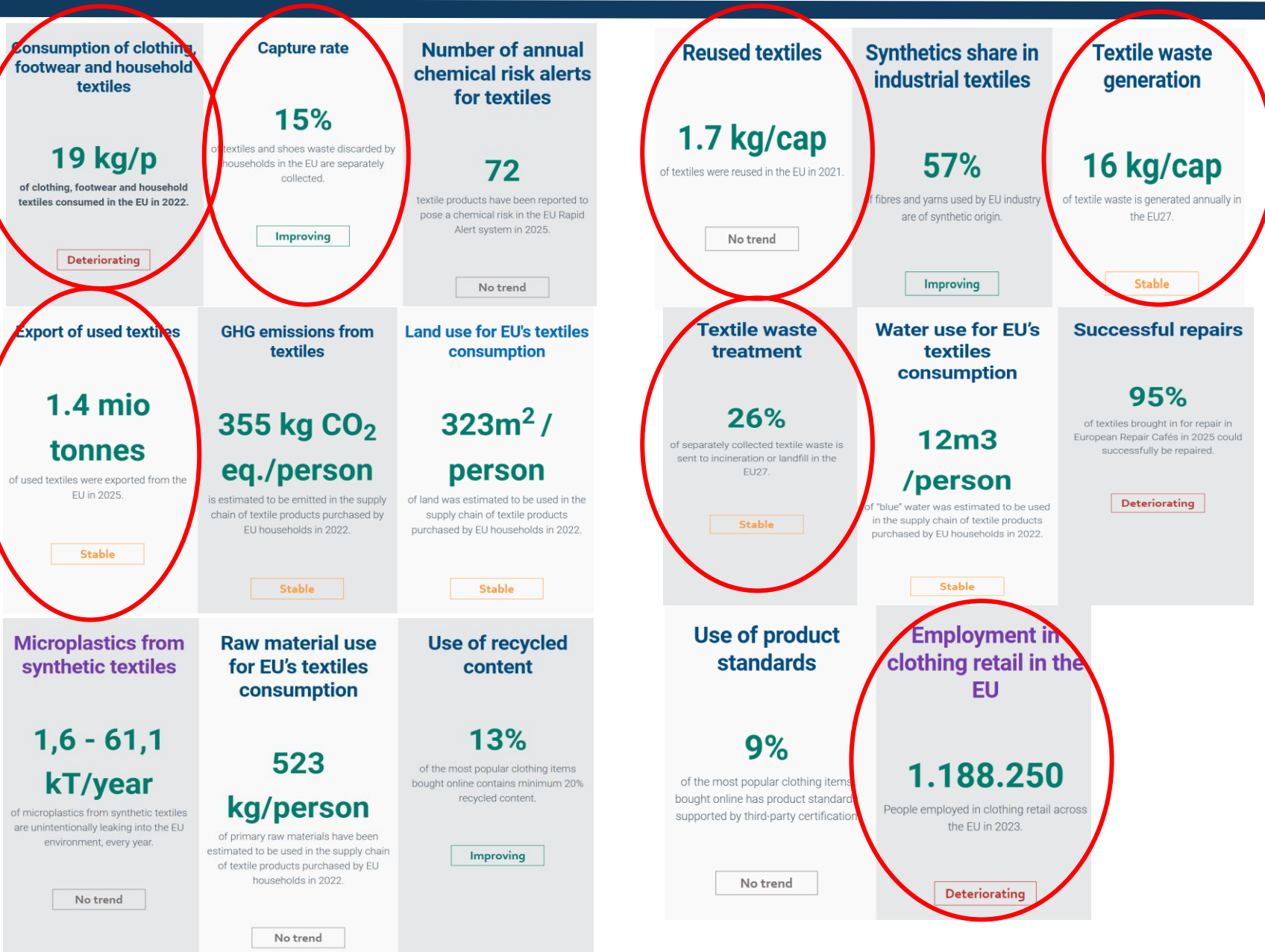


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EEA Circular Metrics Lab: 17 metrics on textiles circularity



Updated annually by the EEA

Source: [EEA Textiles](#)
[Thematic modules](#)
[Circularity Metrics Lab \(EEA\)](#)

EU consumption of textiles: 19 kg per person per year

In 2022, each person in the EU consumed on average around 19 kg of clothing, footwear and household textiles. This amounts to around 8,5 million tonnes of total EU consumption of textiles.

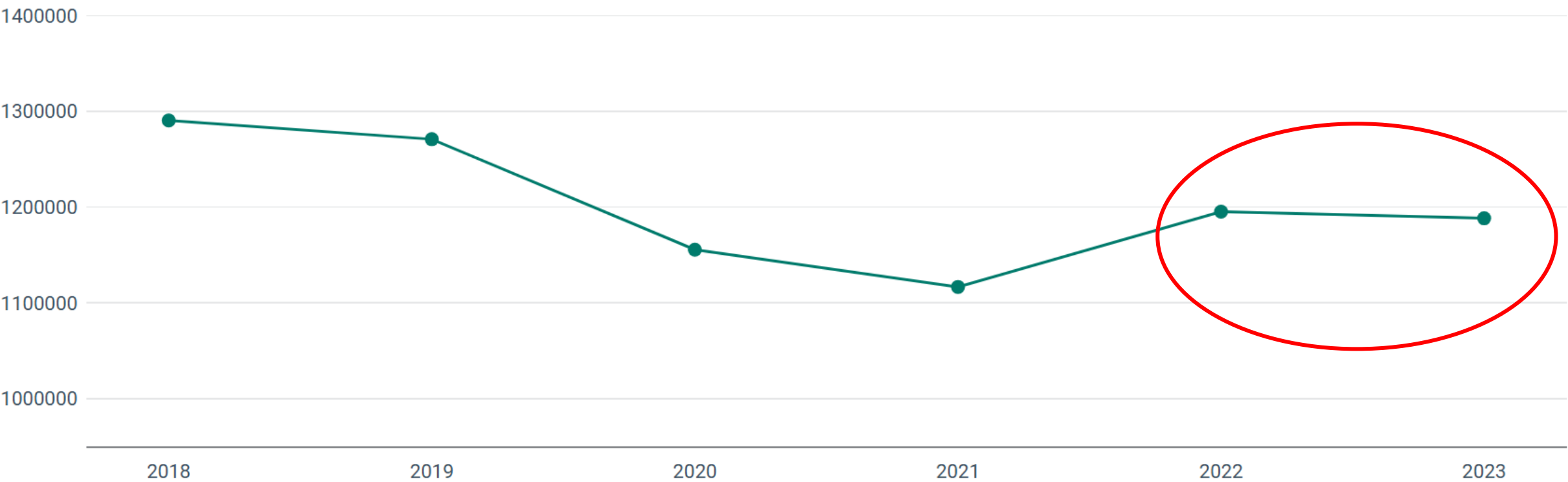


Source: EEA Circular Metrics Lab

Employment in clothing retail in the EU: Declining

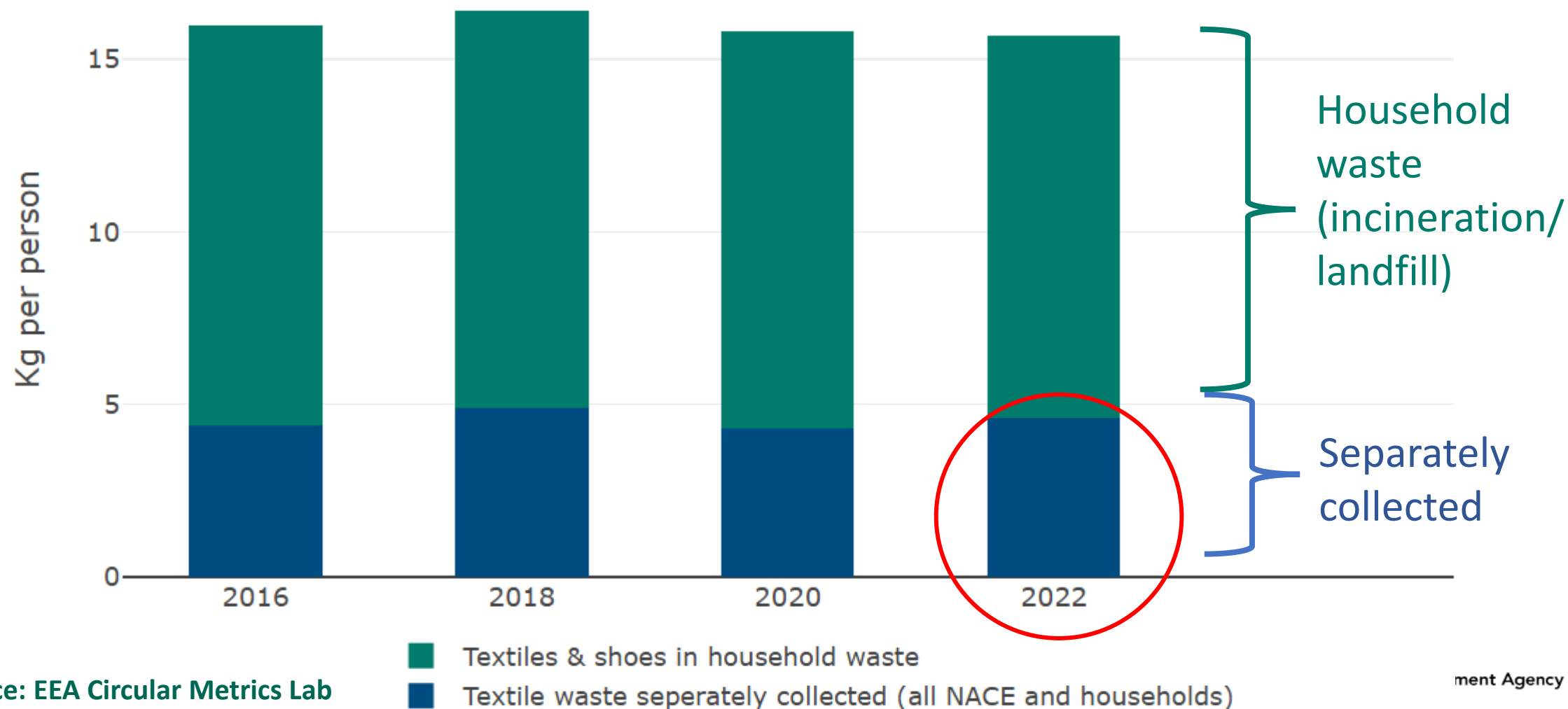
In 2023, employment in clothing retail was 1.188.250. It decreased by 6 884 employees since 2022 across the EU, alongside the continued decline in the number of stores.

No. of employees in clothing retail in the EU, 2018-2023



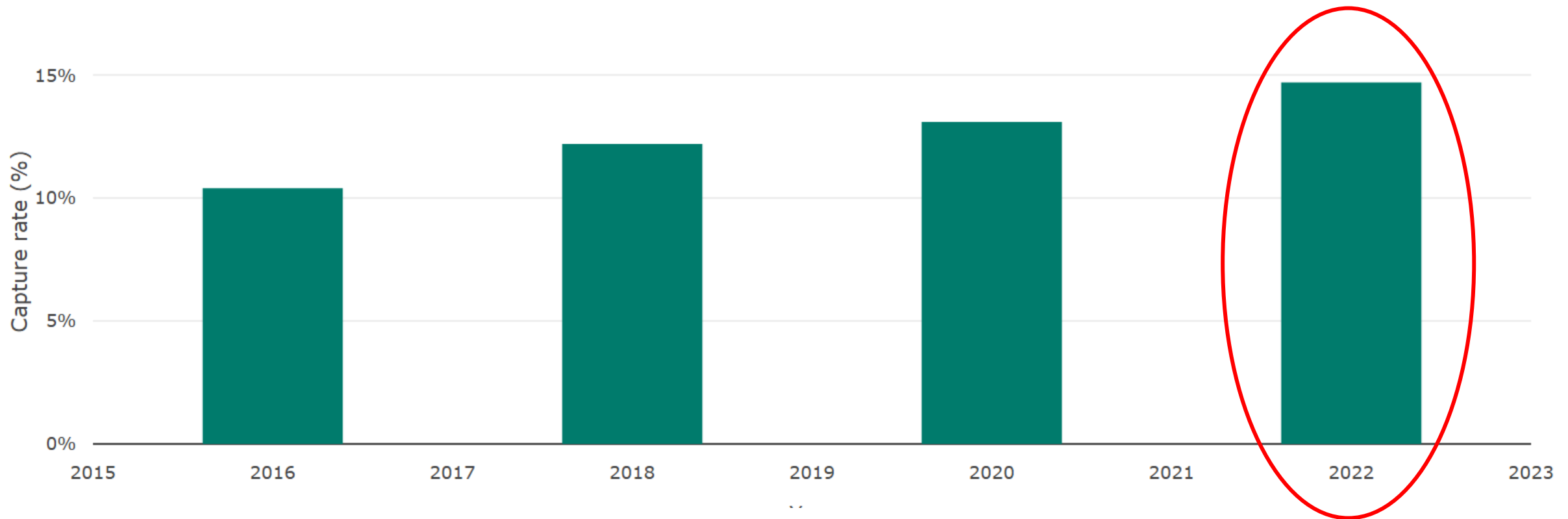
EU textiles waste: 16 kg per person per year

Total textile waste generation in the EU27 was 16 kilograms per person in 2022 and has remained rather stable since 2016.



EU capture rate: Just under 15%

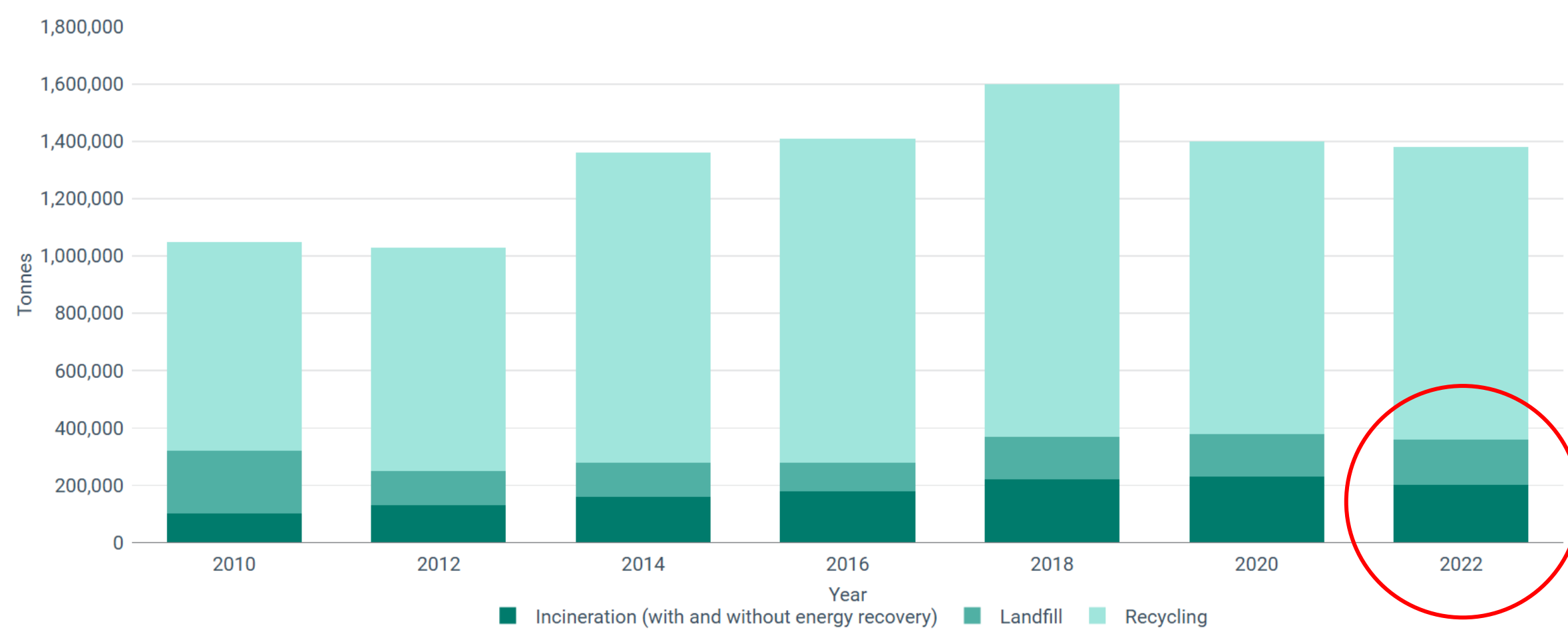
In 2022, the average capture rate for textiles and shoes waste from households in the EU27 was just under 15 %, which means that most of the textiles and shoes waste are not separately collected and end up in the mixed household waste.



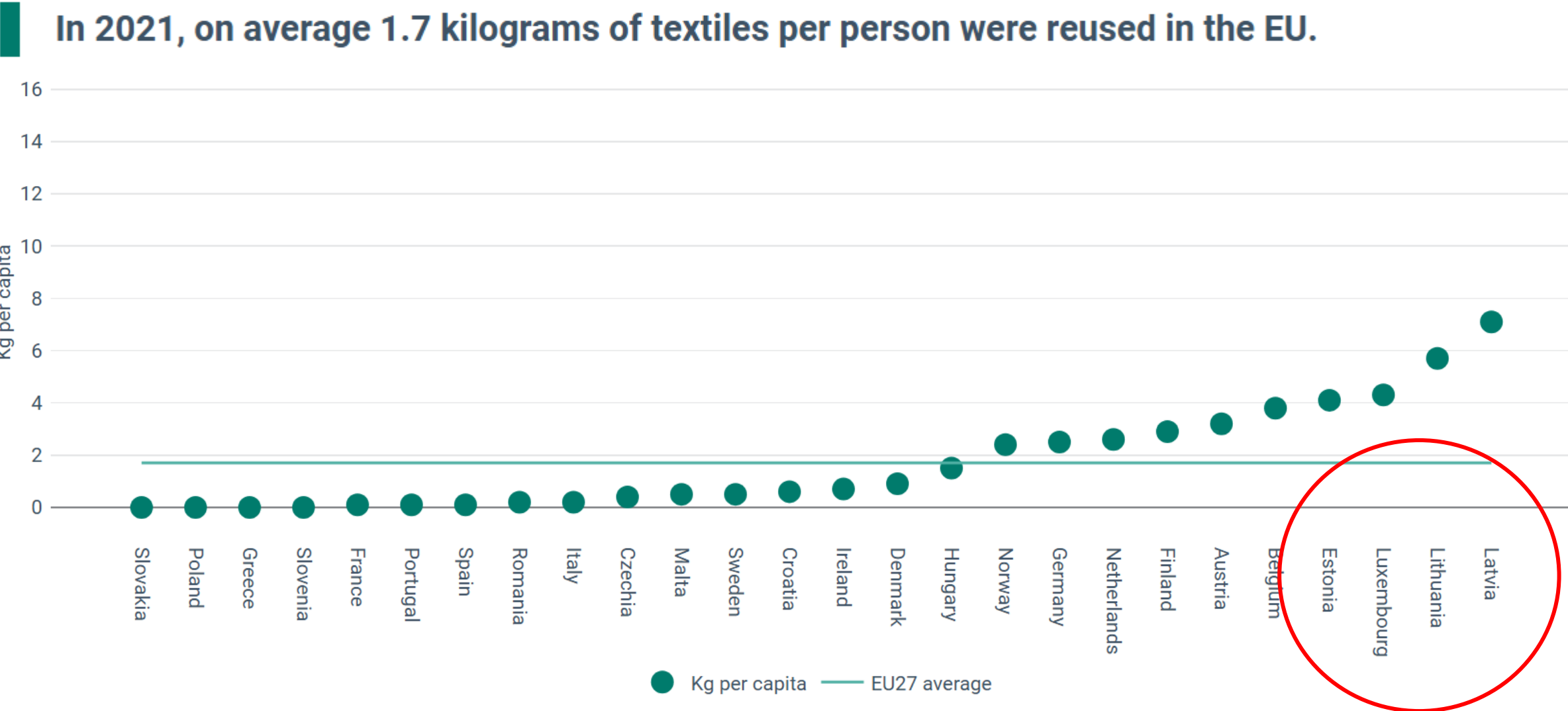
Source: EEA Circular Metrics Lab

Separately collected textiles: 26% sent to landfill or incineration

The share of separately collected textile waste sent to incineration or landfill has remained rather stable since 2010, standing at 26% in 2022 in the EU27.



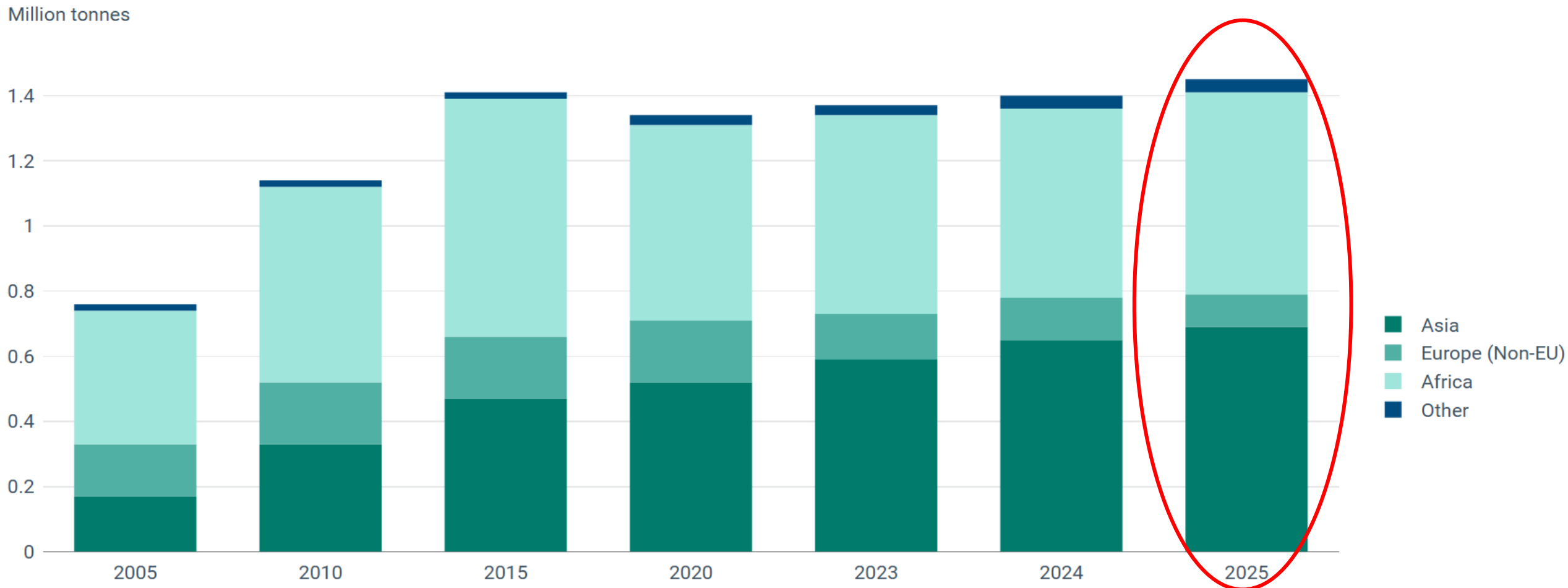
Reuse: 1.7 kg per person per year



Source: EEA Circular Metrics Lab

EU exports of used textiles

The yearly volume of used textiles exported from the EU has nearly doubled since 2005, with continued high amounts of exports of around 1.4 million tonnes annually since 2015, and most exports going to Africa and Asia.



To conclude



- 1 We have a strong and ambitious EU strategy and policies on circularity of textiles
- 2 There are many benefits of circularity in textiles and huge potential for scaling circular business models
- 3 Trends in circularity of textiles are very mixed: Some progress is observed. Huge potential.

THANK YOU

Further information and connection details:

- [Circularity of the EU textiles value chain in numbers | European Environment Agency's home page](#)
- [Textiles | Circularity Metrics Lab](#)
- <https://www.eionet.europa.eu/etcs/etc-ce/products/etc-ce-report-2025-6-textiles-and-the-environment-2013-the-role-of-digital-technologies-in-europe2019s-circular-economy>
- <https://www.eionet.europa.eu/etcs/etc-ce/products/etc-ce-report-2025-7-measuring-europe2019s-textiles-circularity-2013-through-the-lenses-of-the-eea-circularity-metrics-lab>



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