

Roba Amiga

Case Study

1. General information

Context

The system of production and consumption of textiles is highly globalised with millions of producers and billions of consumers spread across the world in highly linear value chains involving raw material extraction, production, transportation, consumption and after-use disposal.

Although the European Union (EU) is a net importer of textiles, mainly from Asia, it also exports huge amounts to other regions, representing more than 30 per cent of the world textile market. In 2018, the textiles sector in the EU consisted of 171,000 companies, employing 1.7 million people and with a turnover of EUR 178 billion. (Textiles and the environment in a circular economy European Topic Centre Waste and Materials in a Green Economy (2019) Eionet Report)

The textile sector, including the fashion industry, has significant environmental footprint across its value chain. Natural fibres, such as cotton and wool, are produced using vast areas of agricultural land and large amounts of water, energy and chemicals, while the manufacture of synthetic fibres is based on fossil fuels. The use of chemicals and additives in textile production exerts significant impacts on local and regional water bodies.

Their global distribution network emits greenhouse gases and generates packaging waste. In the use phase, washing and drying of textiles result in significant water and energy use as well as the release of chemicals and micro-plastics into rivers and the marine environment. The sector is a major contributor to climate change through its energy use and waste management. Apparel and footwear have been estimated to produce as much as 8 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions through their life-cycles.

The collection and recovery of waste for its reintroduction in the market has been an activity traditionally developed by social entities in Catalonia, which have found in this specialization an innovative vein of employment for the insertion of people in situations of social risk.



Different types of take back and collection systems have been put in place by brands, charities or public authorities, with different objectives. While brand-specific take backs are mostly aimed at high-quality product resales, general collection schemes aim at a combination of reuse, recycling and waste treatment. Both private and public actors are active in textile waste collection, and an important role is played by not-for-profit entities.

The growth of this activity and its consolidation in the market has generated a new business activity with two specific identity traits: the social and the environmental, which acquire prominence in front of the economic, objective par excellence of any business activity. Today, job placement companies have become a strategic agent of transformation in our society. With their work, they introduce values such as social, environmental and economic sustainability, and are a benchmark in the dissemination and promotion of the environmental practice of the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle).

The consortium of entities of the Cooperativa Roba Amiga is currently formed by the following placement companies: Formació i Treball, ADAD-L'Encant, Solidança, Troballes and Recibaix, and aims to modernize the sector in terms of 'efficiency and profitability, making the process of managing second-hand clothes in Catalonia more efficient, to reduce textile waste as much as possible through a model that promotes the insertion of people in situations or at risk of social exclusion. (<http://robaamigaei.org/roba-amiga-group/>)

The Roba Amiga cooperative is made up of different non-profit entities that work for the socio-labor insertion of people at risk of social exclusion through different initiatives, such as Roba Amiga.



The orange container is the key element for the collection of textile waste.

The objective of the Roba Amiga Cooperative is to continue expanding the number of containers in Catalonia and for them to become another element of the landscape of our municipalities. Today there are more than 1,700 containers distributed throughout the Catalan territory in more than 450 municipalities and private locations that comply with their corporate social responsibility actions.

The Roba Amiga container is easily recognizable thanks to its orange color and serves as a point of information for citizens who want to deposit their bags of clothes, since through its infogram it targets people of how and what can go inside, in addition to explaining what will be the purpose of the donations and their destinations.

The design of the orange containers is constantly being modified to continue improving their safety and functionality always following Ecodesign criteria.



TEXTILE WASTE: The textile waste collected is divided into reusable, recyclable and waste.

RECYCLABLE TEXTILE WASTE: From the 60% of waste collected, according to the tests carried out, 75% potentially recyclable would be extracted, which is broken down into 49% cotton, 34% wool and 17% synthetic fibres.

2. The insertion model/program and the professionals who support it

3. Beneficiaries and support services for them

