FIBERSORT project successfully enters phase 2 of the INTERREG North-West Europe (NWE) funding programme

Last year November, the FIBERSORT partner consortium led by Circle Economy, submitted a phase 1 proposal for the '**Market demonstration and validation of FIBERSORT technology':** an automated sorting technology able to sort large volumes of mixed post-consumer textiles based on material composition. **Now, a year later, the partner consortium has successfully proceeded to the final step of the INTERREG NWE programme and is a serious contender to receive funding to support further plans.**

The textiles industry is the second most polluting industry in the world and fashion is the second largest consumer and polluter of water. This is why over one year ago, Wieland Textiles, Valvan Baling Systems, Metrohm Applikon, Worn Again, Salvation Army ReShare and Circle Economy joined their forces in the Textile Sorting Project. The project aims to demonstrate FIBERSORT technology to the market in a demo plant to validate this as the key value adding innovation to enable the shift to high value recycling for recyclable textiles and create a **tipping point for a closed loop textiles industry.** The objective is to realize widespread implementation of the technology.

"We are proud to announce that the NWE Monitoring Committee has approved the proposal and all partners are excited and dedicated to submit the final phase 2 proposal by June 24th of this year", comments Hélène Smits from Circle Economy.

Interreg North-West Europe (NWE) is a European Territorial Cooperation Programme funded by the European Commission with the ambition to make the North-West Europe area a key economic player and an attractive place to work and live, with high levels of innovation, sustainability and cohesion. It invests EUR 370 million of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in activities based on the cooperation of organisations from eight countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The Project

In North-West Europe ±4650 Kt of textiles are discarded every year, of which only ±30% is collected. Of these collected textiles ±40% is not suitable for re-wear and these recyclable textiles are currently being down cycled. Of these, ± 50% could be regenerated into new textiles through high value (textile to textile) recycling routes.

Essential to the success of this project is the collaboration between different stakeholders in the value chain. Within the partner consortium, all three domains that are needed to achieve the main objective and outputs are represented: textile recycling value chain (Wieland Textiles, Salvation Army ReShare, Worn Again), technology providers (Valvan Baling Systems, Metrohm), market uptake & implementation (Circle Economy and associate partner network).

Extra info on partners

1. TEXTILE RECYCLING VALUE CHAIN

• Textile collection: Salvation Army ReShare.
ReShare collects ± 23 Kt of used clothing in the Netherlands annually. Through the project, ReShare aims to increase the value of collected volumes (through access to higher value textile to textile recycling markets), create environmental impact reduction for the industry they are active in and create jobs for people with a distance to the labour market.

• Textile sorting: Wieland Textiles
Wieland Textiles is a sorting company of 45 employees and processes 7 to 8 Kt of used textiles annually. The company has a crucial role in setting up and optimizing operations of the demo plant as an extension of their current business to ensure optimal technological performance and improve the business case. Wieland textiles aims with the demo plant, to establish a more sustainable business model for recyclable textile.

• Textile recycling: Worn Again.
Worn Again is developing a textile to textile recycling technology that separates and recaptures polyester and cellulose from cotton from end of use textiles to be reintroduced into the supply chain as new. Within the Textile Sorting Project Worn Again is dedicated to achieving the shared goal of creating circular supply chains for textiles through collaboration and new technologies.

2: TECHNOLOGY PROVIDERS

• FIBERSORT machine engineering: Valvan Baling Systems.
Valvan Baling Systems is market leader in the supply of automated sorting systems. Within the Textile Sorting project Valvan Baling Systems is involved in the design, engineering, software development and construction of the FIBERSORT machine.

• Optical detection technology expert: Metrohm.
Metrohm is responsible for developing the optical detection technology for the FIBERSORT.

3: MARKET UPTAKE

• Circle Economy.
Circle Economy is a social enterprise, organized as a cooperative, that aims to accelerate the practical implementation of circular economy around the world. The project is part of the Circular Textiles Program, a sector specific initiative within Circle Economy. In addition to managing the project, Circle Economy is responsible for ensuring long term effects of the project: widespread implementation of the FIBERSORT in NWE.

• Associate partner network

The textile collection/sorting/recycling industry is very determined by local context. Therefore, to ensure Long Term effects, the project partners will collaborate with local network organisations that represent potential customers and market for the FIBERSORT (E.g. Textile Recycling Association, Vereniging Herwinning Textiel, Euratex, WRAP, ESMOD Berlin, RCA).