

Geography

Old clothes, new attitude

RecyCOOL Lessons

Disclaimer

These lessons have been created for and tested with young people in Slovakia, the Czech republic, Germany, Hungary and Croatia. They are open-source and available for adaptation for different groups globally.

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Old clothes, new attitude

Description

This lesson is focused on textile recycling in the EU, research about it and critical consideration of given data. Learners will start by reading an article about textile recycling in the EU, with information collected from Google research. Then they will work with outline map and answer questions to recollect information from the article. At the end they will critically reflect on information from the article – which is to help them to look at any given information (not just given in this lesson) in a wider context, with a critical eye and to establish relevant connections to the outside world.

Objective

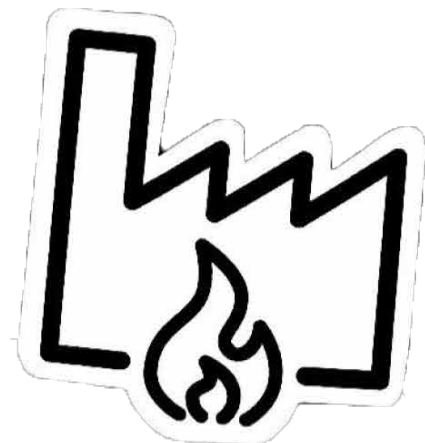
Objective of this lesson is to explore clothing recycling in EU countries through research based on Google searches during the pandemic, critically consider data from the article, look at and try to understand the problem within a wider context.

After this lesson you will be able to

– critically think about the connection between culture and clothing

Tools and materials

pen and paper



TEXTILE DISPOSAL:

Textile disposal is the process of collecting, processing, and recycling or deposition of the textile waste and garments.



Have you ever thought about what's happening to your clothes once you decide to give them away? How much clothing is collected in textile collection points? Are there some groups of people or nations, which recycle clothing more?

Write down on paper your idea of clothing recycling in your country and in the EU. Based on your consideration, which countries are probably recycling clothing more and which less - and why?

Task

Read the following article on research based on EU Google searches about clothing recycling in the EU during the pandemic in 2020. The article also discusses demand for recycling centres. Try to consider information you are reading in the context of your own knowledge or experience.

Top 10 EU countries for recycling clothes

[\[article\]](#)

Earlier this year, Europe's worst offenders for burning and binning clothes were revealed. Yet [energy comparison site SaveOnEnergy](#) found one of the positives of the current pandemic is a change in attitude toward old textiles and how we recycle clothes.

Research by SaveOnEnergy found that Google searches for "organise closet" have increased by 53% since January 2020 and up to 2,500 people a month have taken to Google to search for "how to organise a closet."



Speaking with Gill Hasson, esteemed author of “Declutter Your Life: How Outer Order Leads to Inner Calm”, she tells people to ask themselves the following seven questions when contemplating whether to keep or recycle old clothes:

Do I feel good when I wear it?

Do I look good when I wear it?

Am I comfortable in it?

Is it out of fashion and not coming back? And even if it is, am I likely to want the updated version?

Has my lifestyle changed? Maybe you used to work in an office but now work freelance from home, so you don't need 'office clothes.'

Does it hold any sentimental value?

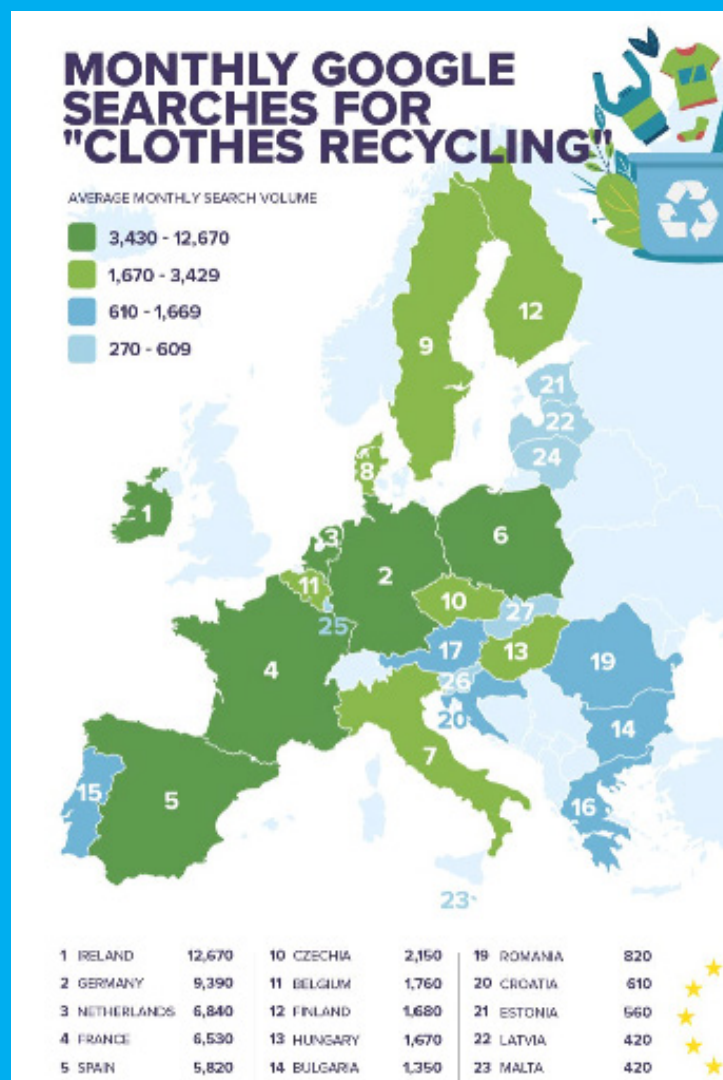
Does it need cleaning or altering?



Demand for recycling centres

Gladly, it seems, many of us are intent on clearing out our closets in an environmentally friendly way rather than burning and binning. In fact, there has been a reported 500% surge in Google searches like “when will recycling centres open” after many were shut down due to Covid-19. Delta Global, packing provider and retail expert, adds: “The obvious benefits of reusing, recycling and repurposing old items we find while cleaning out our cupboards are the environmental ones. There are also clear cost savings that can be made by maximising the life of items we’ve already purchased. A less obvious benefit is the positive impact it can have on our emotional and psychological well-being, particularly in a time full of stress, adversity and boredom.”

Which EU country has been most inspired to organise closets and recycle old clothes?



SaveOnEnergy found Google searches like “Clothes Recycling” are currently highest in Ireland. In fact, in the last 30 days, 12,670 people in Ireland have taken to Google to inquire how to recycle old clothes. This is followed by clothes recycling searches in Germany (9,390) and the Netherlands (6,840.) At the other end of the scale we find countries like Luxembourg, Slovenia, and Slovakia. In Luxembourg just 330 people a month search for keywords like “Clothes Recycling.” While in Slovenia and Slovakia, it’s as low as 300 and 270 searches a month, respectively.

Top 10 countries for recycling clothes

Ireland
Germany
Netherlands
France
Spain
Poland
Italy
Denmark
Sweden
Czechia



Top 10 EU countries recycle these items most

TOP 10 EU COUNTRIES RECYCLE THESE ITEMS MOST



Apparently, the five most worn items of clothing worldwide are t-shirts, jeans, shoes, underwear and coats. SaveOnEnergy analysed search volumes in deeper detail to find out which of the most-worn items of clothing are recycled most in each of the top ten EU countries listed above. Shoes and jeans vie for top place! The results show shoes are the most recycled item of clothing in 70% of the ten countries analysed, including Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain. While jeans are the most recycled item of clothing in 30% of the ten countries analysed, including Germany, France, and Italy.

- Methodology Saveonenergy.com/uk inputted several keyword variations like "Clothes Recycle", "Clothes Donation", and "Textile Recycling" into the keyword analytics section of online visibility and marketing tool SEMrush. Results for all 27 EU countries were inputted and analysed individually, before final results were listed.

While you were reading, did you come across any information that surprised you? Pause for a moment and try to think why this is. Are there some connections or context that's probably missing?

Now we will explore Europe on this blind map. The map shows countries mentioned in the article. Read the following questions and try to answer correctly – then mark the country on the map. Write your answers down. Try not to sneak into the previous article, let's play an honest game :)

Questions

According to an article you have read, which EU country was the most inspired to do 'clothes recycling' during 2020?

Mark this country on the map with **red** colour.

Name two other countries in the top 10 in this research.

Mark these countries on the map with **green** colour.

Name two countries, which are according to this article in the bottom 10 – so they were the least inspired to do the 'clothes recycling' during 2020?

Mark these countries with **blue** colour.

Try to place the most worn garments in the top 10 EU countries recycling the most. Use all your **favourite** colours!



Reflection

Compare your answers with the article and map in it. How many answers did you get right?

It is important to consider any information we are given and look at it within a wider context. When reading, pause and think if there are some connections or relationships which are not mentioned in the article you are reading, video you are watching or podcast you are listening to. There can be some missing points, which can mean that the picture we are given is not absolutely clear.



- Why, for example, in this article some countries seem to be more interested in recycling clothing and some not? Maybe we can explore it more through following questions – please read them and try to find or figure out the answers.
- Does the report consider the size of population in each country, or are the results based only in plain sight without relation to the population? Or are the results based on the number of Google searches per person? (If not, bigger countries might reach higher numbers.)
- What about different approaches to ‘recycling’ in each country? (Some cultures prefer and practise donations and swap within families or communities. These are probably less interested in searching for recycling centres simply because they don’t need them.)
- Does the report consider the amount of clothes sold in each country? (The more clothes sold, the more to be disposed of, creating a higher demand for recycling centres.)
- Does searching for ‘clothing recycling’ mean that people really organised their wardrobes? Does it suggest it?
- How do you feel about this article – are you given all relevant and necessary information, or not? Could this article be a part of a marketing campaign, even though it doesn’t look like that at the first sight?
- Does a positive green article or information necessarily mean that it’s true or that it shows all relevant connections? Can you tell your own experience, when you were presented with incomplete information?

If you want to explore more about what's happening to clothes after they are disposed or given to charities or recycle centres, you can widen your view by looking into following articles and links:

[Why are clothes so hard to recycle?](#)

[What happens to donated clothing?](#)

[The basics of recycling clothing and other textiles](#)

Or you can learn more about social justice in relation to fashion, you can see the actions of [Or Foundation](#).

And to explore more about solidarity in secondhand supply chain, you can watch this [panel discussion by Fashion Revolution](#).



Resources

Save on energy. Top 10 EU countries for recycling clothes. 2019.

Available at: <https://cwb-online.co/the-top-10-eu-countries-for-recycling-clothes/>

Attachment

Answers:to questions

1. Ireland

2. Germany, Netherlands, France, Spain, Poland, Italy, Denmark, Sweden

3. Slovakia, Slovenia, Luxemburg, Lithuania, Malta, Latvia, Estonia, Croatia, Romania

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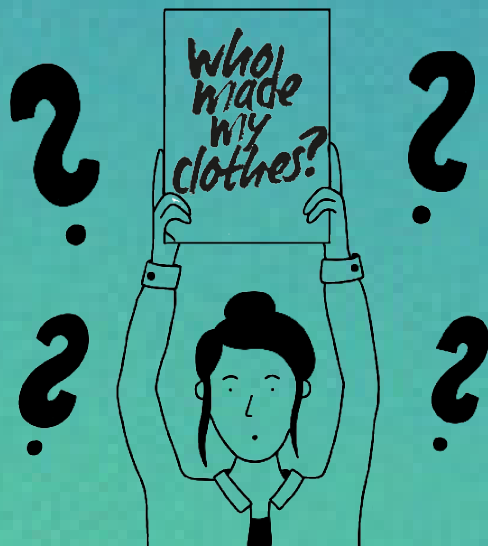
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