

A useful tool for designers to enhance their contribution for a sustainable circular economy

According to current emerging trends in terms of sustainability and to the concept of circular economy, the value of materials and products should be preserved as long as possible, reducing waste volumes and enhancing recycling and reuse as a consequence.

Doing that, it could be possible to reduce the consumption of materials, that should be held back, once they are introduced in the production process and on the market, finding new ways to reuse them and enhancing, this way, their value again.

In this perspective, on the 2nd of December 2015, the European Commission adopted new policies aiming at the creation of a Circular Economy.

The objective of this policy is to put in action initiatives that could represent “the missing link in products’ life-cycle, that could bring benefits for both the environment and the economy”, offering customers durable, innovative and potential cost-saving products.

The textile sector itself can’t avoid taking action towards an enhancement of recycling and reuse practices in every step of products’ life-cycle: from production to consumption, from waste disposal to their reuse as secondary raw materials, in order to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emission.

Product planning plays a fundamental role, in achieving this goal and in reducing the environmental impact. In fact, when planning a product, its future is outlined, end-of-life included. A good practice could be employing, for example, materials that could be easily separated and, so, easily reused or durable materials that could lengthen product life-cycle and reduce textile waste.

Designers should ask themselves “How could fibres and fabrics used in clothing production affect the environment?” or “How could it be possible to better manage waste production during each manufacturing step?”

In theory, starting from a planning phase that already keeps into consideration the entire product life-cycle, eco-design should focus the attention on:

- Better knowledge of materials, through their performing and manufacturing features and on their different production processes, in order to reduce wastes, introducing recyclable/recycled materials or materials easy to be divided for easier recycling, etc.

- Use of local resources to reduce the impact of transports on the environment, for example;

- Reduce the volume of packaging.

Ecosign Project

At the basis of such a complex duty, a scientific education is required. For this reason, Ecosign project had been launched, with the contribution of experts coming from 4 European countries (Slovenia, Spain, Romania, Italy), to create a partnership in eco-innovation knowledge and to fulfill the designers’ lack of expertise in this field, focusing on the three following sectors: food packaging, electronic and electric devices and Textiles & Clothing.

Started on the 1st November 2015 and co-funded by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union, the project will end on the 31st October 2018. On the course of the project, a training course for Eco-designers will be developed to confer them better knowledge and skills in environmental technology matters. Furthermore, it will allow designers, already focused in other sector, to widen their expertise and, so, to operate in other sectors.

Target groups are:

- Vocational students;
- Food packaging designers;
- Fashion and industrial textile designers;
- Designers of electronic/electrical goods.

Further information about project results and topics on eco-design are available on the official website www.ecosign-project.eu and on official profiles on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook.

Partners:

