

POLICY BRIEFS

IRELAND, 2026

SUSTAINABLE ADVOCATES

Encouraging Sustainable Choices
Among Young VET Learners



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Policy Brief 1

Reducing online pressure to buy fast fashion

A. THE ISSUE

Arising from our piloting in Ireland, we can deduce that consumer protection should be paired with practical education on shopping apps and online promotions. Learners in Ireland described repeated advertising, shopping games and expiring discounts as obstacles to avoiding fast fashion. Their accounts suggest that knowing the environmental impacts does not reliably protect against buying pressure. A targeted response should help learners to recognise these tactics and give regulators clearer evidence of the practices affecting young adults.

B. WHAT WE LEARNED

1. Social media marketing and gamified discounts were central discussion themes in Irish piloting, including games that reward engagement with shopping offers.
2. Awareness of the impact of impulse advertisements was high among Irish learners, but this coexisted with uneven confidence to resist these impulses.
3. Learners requested stronger advertising controls, clearer discount conditions and education about shopping games.

C. NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is Ireland's consumer protection authority. In November 2024, it announced coordinated European scrutiny of Temu, identifying concerns about false urgency, discounts and hidden conditions attached to shopping games.

D. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CCPC should develop a youth-focused reporting guide and invite anonymised examples of shopping pressure from VET settings over one academic term, directing cases to the appropriate enforcement channels and publishing the recurring concerns.
2. VET providers should offer practical lessons on countdowns, reward games and discount conditions, using sample promotions and voluntary purchase-delay exercises.
3. Education and Training Boards (ETBs) should provide guidance on notification settings, advertising preferences and shopping-app use with learners. Review usefulness after three months and feed unresolved patterns to CCPC.

E. WHO SHOULD ACT?

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC), Education and Training Boards (ETBs), VET providers, managers and teachers, and learner representatives should jointly lead delivery.



Policy Brief 2

Making clothing reuse affordable for Irish learners

A. THE ISSUE

Local authorities and VET providers should make clothing reuse an accessible everyday option for learners. The Irish challenge highlighted interest in second-hand clothing, borrowing and swaps, alongside difficulty finding suitable items and concerns about cost. Asking young people to choose sustainability will have limited reach if affordable alternatives are inconvenient or unavailable.

B. WHAT WE LEARNED

1. Irish respondents reported buying second-hand during the challenge and two respondents reported participating in a clothing swap.
2. Irish respondents proposed school swaps, including seasonal events, suggesting a practical opportunity for VET providers to support more sustainable habits in Ireland.
3. Access issues identified in the Irish pilot included the prohibitive price of alternatives to fast fashion and the lack of suitable second-hand clothes.

C. NATIONAL CONTEXT

Ireland's Circular Economy Strategy 2026–2028 identifies textiles as a priority and links action to a national circular textiles roadmap. The National Policy Statement and Roadmap on Circular Textiles sets a policy direction for a more circular textiles economy. Locally accessible reuse would translate that direction into a practical option for learners.

D. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Local authorities and Education and Training Boards (ETBs) should jointly pilot a small reuse fund for VET sites over one academic year, covering swap coordination, storage and links with local second-hand organisations.
2. VET providers should run one free clothing swap each term and trial an occasionwear borrowing rail.
3. Provider coordinators should record participation, items recirculated and learner feedback on price, fit and convenience. Review after two terms with local partners.

E. WHO SHOULD ACT?

Local authorities, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), VET providers and managers, learner representatives and community reuse organisations should coordinate funding, access and evaluation locally.



Policy Brief 3

Embedding practical clothing skills in Irish VET

A. THE ISSUE

Irish VET providers should embed practical clothing care, repair and consumption reflection into sustainability learning. The pilot suggests that awareness can increase while confidence and commitment remain uneven. Learners need repeated opportunities to use what they learn, with teacher support and realistic goals.

B. WHAT WE LEARNED

1. All Irish respondents affirmed greater awareness of links between clothing purchases, resource depletion and carbon emissions as a result of participating in the challenge.
2. While long-term commitment ratings were mixed among Irish piloting participants, with teacher support and a dedicated programme, this could be increased.
3. Irish participants reported upcycling and requested repair and reuse classes which shows engagement with the topic among Irish piloting participants.

C. NATIONAL CONTEXT

SOLAS Green Skills 2030 sets a national direction for developing skills for Ireland's green transition through further education and training. Its implementation plan includes transversal and technical skills, with SOLAS, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) and the 16 regional Education and Training Boards (ETBs) involved in delivery and oversight. This offers a route for providers to test clothing-related learning within existing sustainability provision.

D. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SOLAS and ETBI should invite ETBs to trial a short clothing sustainability module within existing provision during the one academic year, combining basic repair, clothing care, wardrobe planning and reflection on purchasing decisions.
2. ETBs should support participating teachers with a shared lesson pack, repair materials and preparation time. Run challenges during supported teaching weeks, with brief weekly check-ins and flexible goals that acknowledge learners' budgets and circumstances.
3. VET providers should use anonymous baseline, completion and three-month follow-up measures with consistent purchase questions.

E. WHO SHOULD ACT?

SOLAS, ETBI, ETB curriculum teams, VET managers and teachers, and learner representatives should develop and evaluate provision.



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