

# Empowering Change: Recycling and Upcycling Good Practices for Disadvantaged Groups

A Comprehensive Guide for Sustainable  
Business Models and Inclusive Practices

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EMPOWERING CHANGE: RECYCLING AND UPCYCLING GOOD PRACTICES FOR  
DISADVANTAGED GROUPS - A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS  
MODELS AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES  
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## GOOD PRACTICES

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## WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE?

The main target group of this guide are people that belong in disadvantaged groups, facing social and economic challenges. The guide can be used to encourage them to engage in recycling and upcycling initiatives as a means of income generation and community involvement.

The guide may also be utilized by a diverse range of stakeholders, including Social Enterprises and Nonprofit Organizations to explore innovative business models and best practices that involve and empower disadvantaged groups in recycling and upcycling activities. It may also be used by public bodies to understand successful initiatives that promote social inclusion and sustainable development and support similar programs in their regions. Companies interested in corporate social responsibility (CSR) or seeking opportunities for social impact can gain insights from the guide as well. Similarly, startups and entrepreneurial ventures aiming to integrate disadvantaged individuals into their business models can gather ideas and strategies from this guide to design more inclusive and sustainable enterprises. Other stakeholders include educational institutions such as schools and universities who can use it as an educational resource to teach students about social entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, and inclusive business models. Lastly, the guide can be used by anyone interested in supporting or participating in recycling and upcycling activities, promoting social inclusion, and contributing to environmental sustainability.

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# A GUIDE TO INCLUSIVE RECYCLING AND UPCYCLING PRACTICES

## Introduction

This guide provides invaluable insights into the sustainable transformation of materials and lives by bringing together a multitude of information and cutting-edge methods from around the globe.

## About the Project

The development of this guide is a component of the project known as "Train Sustain," which emerges from a critical need to provide essential training to NGO workers, volunteers, and educators. The project is specifically focused on enhancing the competencies of VET-trainers and volunteers who teach recycling and upcycling techniques.

At its core, "Train Sustain" is designed to empower disadvantaged groups by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to thrive in an ever-evolving world, especially in the context of emerging green business opportunities. A deep understanding of recycling and upcycling practices is sought to be fostered, with the aim of promoting social inclusion, sustainable practices, and economic opportunities for those facing various disadvantages.

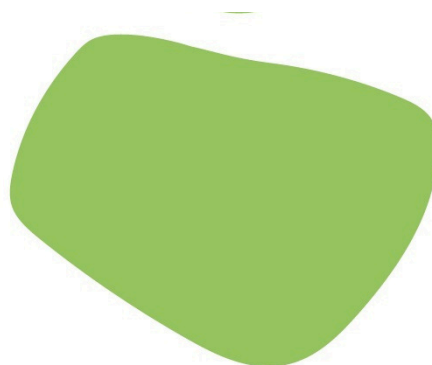
This project is co-funded by the European Union and coordinated by FO-Aarhus, Denmark, an esteemed Association for Adult Education. The rest of the partnership is consisted by DINAMO in Belgium, dedicated to Adult Education by Volunteers, Synthesis Center for Research and Education in Cyprus, Solution Solidarité & Inclusion in France, Proportional Message, specializing in Education, training and support in Portugal and Gureak, a renowned Center for Research and Education in Spain.

## The purpose

In Europe, upcycling and recycling have permeated society at all levels, serving as a pathway to a sustainable future. These initiatives promote environmental sustainability and, at the same time, create new employment opportunities. As global awareness of environmental issues and climate change continues to rise, nations are making efforts to mitigate the consequences of decades of irresponsible waste disposal. Leading this global endeavor is the European Green Deal (EGD), which aims to decouple economic growth from resource consumption and guide the EU towards a prosperous, carbon-neutral society by 2050. Amid these environmental objectives, the plight of marginalized communities, particularly those with disabilities, has often been overlooked.

Given the persistent employment gap and social marginalization experienced by these individuals, it is imperative that we focus on empowering them to enhance their quality of life and make meaningful contributions to a sustainable and thriving society. This project recognizes this need and seeks to bridge the gap by providing underprivileged groups with training and skills in recycling and upcycling, thereby improving their employability and expanding their job prospects.

This guide has been developed to assist this group of individuals with proven best practices that have been implemented across Europe, showcasing what has proven effective and what hasn't. The guide also offers advice on how to implement these practices and provides insights into what to expect, all while being mindful of their limitations.



## GOOD PRACTICE DEFINITION, CRITERIA AND AREAS OF ACTION

The following section of the guide will showcase a diverse range of best practices that exemplify innovative socio-economic recycling and upcycling business models.

In the context of this compilation, we define "good practice" as approaches, experiences, or initiatives that have demonstrated effectiveness and can be successfully replicated in other settings. These practices encompass techniques and methods that yield positive outcomes and results.

"Good practices" can encompass both processes or interventions that are easily transferable and the process of planning and synthesizing research from various sources. The terms "good practices" and "best practices" are sometimes used interchangeably. "Best practice" refers to advancing the application of existing norms and principles, both at the international and national levels. These practices are characterized by their innovativeness, creative problem-solving, positive impact on implementation, sustainability, and potential for replication.

### Criteria

#### 1. Technical Feasibility

The good practice is easily comprehensible and feasible for implementation.

#### 2. Efficacy and Success

The good practice has demonstrated its strategic relevance as an effective means of achieving specific objectives. It has been successfully adopted and has had a positive impact on refugees and communities.

#### 3. Replicability and Adaptability

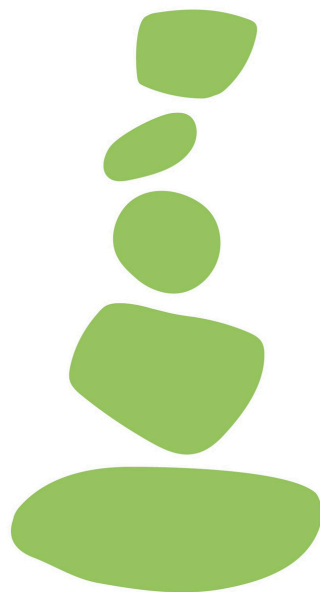
The good practice is adaptable and holds the potential for replication, making it suitable for similar objectives in diverse situations, including various local or national contexts.

#### 4. Gender Sensitivity

The good practice promotes gender equality, considers the distinct gender realities of women and men, and incorporates gender-related considerations into all aspects of the initiatives.

#### 5. Innovation

A good practice can be considered innovative when it introduces novel, effective, and sustainable approaches for addressing societal challenges. It significantly improves outcomes and contributes to positive change.





# GOOD PRACTICES

## RETO CYPRUS

The RETO Cyprus project, established in 2012 and ongoing, takes place in Nicosia, Cyprus, and is a remarkable example of a successful socio-economic business model. Operating on an international level, RETO Cyprus, or RETO A LA ESPERANZA, serves as a beacon of hope for disadvantaged groups by engaging them in recycling and upcycling activities. These activities are tailored to upskill participants, enabling them to thrive in a changing labor market with emerging green business opportunities.

The primary methodology of RETO Cyprus revolves around collecting various types of products for recycling and upcycling. This serves as a tool for promoting social inclusion, addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups, and facilitating their detoxification and reintegration.

At the heart of the RETO Cyprus project is a unique key concept. The project relies on the personal experiences of community leaders who are former addicts themselves. These leaders, along with the guidance of the community's scientific staff, provide a strong paradigm of reintegration for individuals still undergoing treatment. The project emphasizes that participants live together 24 hours a day, regardless of the form of dependency they are battling. The project's target group is individuals aged 18 and above who are dealing with drug and substance addictions. Importantly, the project welcomes participants from diverse educational, social, national, and other backgrounds.

RETO Cyprus addresses social exclusion, ensuring a smooth social integration process. It aims to provide to participants a therapeutic program to help them gain the skills necessary to sustain themselves in a work environment and lead an autonomous, sustainable life.

The project's methodological approach is comprehensive. It includes a structured daily schedule with individual and group activities. Individual activities focus on personal skill development, while group activities encompass therapeutic meetings, recreational activities, and various workshops. Notably, these workshops cover a range of professional-level skills, including carpentry, furniture restoration, upholstery, household appliance repair, and recycling.

The project operates in three phases, starting from collecting used items from the community and informing the public about the project, then repairing and upcycling collected items in the community's workshops. The final phase includes the selling of the repaired items at nominal prices through a shop and an e-shop, with profits reinvested into the program.

RETO Cyprus's holistic approach addresses five different areas simultaneously: employability, vulnerability, green practices, skills acquisition, and social inclusion. Its financial sustainability through workshop profits allows it to provide free assistance to those in need. Furthermore, the project's success supports replication in other countries with similar or different target groups, such as people with disabilities, migrants, and other vulnerable groups. While RETO Cyprus has demonstrated remarkable success, its adaptability to different contexts remains untested.

RETO Cyprus has achieved remarkable results, including self-financing the therapeutic and rehabilitation program and ensuring social reintegration of participants. It also fostered a sense of community since the participants live together 24/7. Furthermore, the project's workshops provide valuable skills and produce repaired, refurbished, and upcycled products. Lastly, the project offers services such as deliveries and removals.



The impact of this initiative towards the participants is highly positive. They experience increased self-esteem, smooth reintegration into society, and skill acquisition. At the same time, participants contribute to the community's maintenance and improvement, fostering enhanced job morale and social interactions. Conversely, there are some challenges faced that include the risk of social exclusion due to participants' backgrounds and employers' hesitation to hire former addicts. Lessons learned emphasize that vulnerable individuals with substance addictions can lead normal lives, and skill acquisition equips participants for the labor market, regardless of their backgrounds.

In conclusion, RETO Cyprus is a shining example of a good practice that engages disadvantaged groups in recycling and upcycling. Its comprehensive approach to social inclusion, skill development, and financial sustainability offers hope and transformation for individuals battling addiction. RETO Cyprus serves as an inspiration for those seeking to replicate similar models and make a positive impact on vulnerable communities.

#### Find more information

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## BEYOND INCLUSION

The Beyond Inclusion project, which ran from December 2020 until February 2023, is a multi-country initiative implemented in Cyprus (Nicosia), Greece (Athens), Romania (Bucharest), Bulgaria (Sandanski), and Spain (Palma de Mallorca). The project represents a significant advancement in addressing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, particularly within the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sector.

The core objective of the Beyond Inclusion project was to underscore the pivotal role of employment providers, specifically SMEs, in promoting job opportunities for persons with disabilities. The project embarked on equipping SMEs with a comprehensive set of tools and practices, openly accessible through e-learning and e-consulting formats. These resources aimed to help SMEs recognize the benefits of including disabled individuals in their workforce, moving beyond the typical 'philanthropy – social responsibility – law abiding' nexus.

The project's key concept revolves around empowering persons with disabilities and beneficiaries with structured approaches, tools, practices, and methodologies. These resources, offered through e-learning adapted to diverse learning capabilities, focus on job skills development. This includes job-seeking skills, self-marketing, job expectations, and self-presentation skills. Additionally, it addresses transferable soft skills required for professional development in the workplace. In essence, the project equips persons with disabilities with the appropriate tools, practices, and soft skills orientation. It offers them a methodology to best showcase their unique skills in a professional context or when seeking employment. The ultimate goal is to promote a disability-inclusive mindset within SMEs, where disability is viewed as an asset.

The project sought to address several key challenges including the need and right of persons with disabilities to find work, reducing the risk of poverty. It also aims to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve autonomy and independence and equip participants with the necessary skills to fit into a company or work environment, mitigating the risk of social exclusion. The project simultaneously addressed four critical areas: employability, disability, workability, and business development. It introduced a new approach to inclusion, highlighting the advantages that SMEs can gain by including this untapped human potential within their workforce.

Regarding the methodological approach of the project, it was based on a comprehensive research study examining the employability-disability nexus. Subsequently, it developed content tailored to the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and SME actors.

The Beyond Inclusion project has delivered substantial outcomes, notably by generating a fresh pool of job candidates who have gained empowerment in promoting themselves within the workforce. Moreover, the project has effectively cultivated open and inclusive mindsets among SMEs, enabling them to recognize the unexploited potential residing within individuals with disabilities, thereby fostering an inclusive and dynamic labor market. The project's achieved results offer valuable support for replication in other countries and with different target groups, such as migrants, NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), and other vulnerable populations. It is worth mentioning that the impact of the project towards participants has been substantial, fostering improved skills and employability, while also enhancing interactions among employees with disabilities and their co-workers, contributing significantly to job morale, company culture, and the broader social mission. Moreover, it has yielded high performance ratings and better attendance records for employees with disabilities when compared to their non-disabled colleagues, resulting in an enhanced company reputation and increased revenue. Additionally, the project has been effective in reducing employee turnover, with long-serving employees demonstrating unwavering faith, dedication, and loyalty.

# Beyond Inclusion





Nonetheless, the challenges observed at the implementation of the project include employers' hesitation to include persons with disabilities in their workforce and the limited tools available for disabled individuals to develop and promote their unique skills.

The gained lessons from the implementation of the project include the recognition that people with disabilities often cultivate unique skills attributed to their disabilities, making them valuable assets in the workforce. Furthermore, companies that choose to employ individuals with disabilities not only gain valuable, retainable employees but also experience tangible enhancements in their working environments. The project also underscores the significance of diverse skills among employees, contributing to overall team success. Furthermore, it highlights that employees working in inclusive workplaces tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement and motivation, resulting in a positive and dynamic work environment.

The Beyond Inclusion project is an exceptional example of a good practice, driving inclusive employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Its approach to equipping SMEs and empowering individuals with disabilities has far-reaching implications for promoting inclusivity in the labor market. Beyond Inclusion showcases the potential of inclusive employment, benefitting both employees and employers.

Find more information

- Website: <https://beyond-inclusion.eu>

## DIS-ENTERPRENEURSHIP COMMUNITY SUPPORT CENTRES

The Dis-Entrepreneurship Community Support Centres initiative, was implemented from November 2019 to January 2022, and has made a significant impact at the European level. It operated across multiple locations in Cyprus (Larnaca & Nicosia), Greece (Athens), Austria (Wien), and Slovenia (Podravska & Novo Mesto). The project, led by Promoting organization CENTER PONOVNE UPORABE (SI) and other partners, aimed to equip young adults with disabilities with essential key competences, particularly digital and entrepreneurial skills, enabling them to engage in social entrepreneurship.

The project's core focus was to provide a structured upskilling pathway program for young adults with disabilities. It empowered them to acquire, develop, assess, and validate key competences, specifically digital and entrepreneurial skills. These skills were essential for setting up and running a social enterprise. The project's development was grounded in skills screening, intervention through lifelong learning opportunities (face-to-face training, e-learning, workshops), and external assessment-validation of newly acquired competencies in a non-formal learning setting. Additionally, the project included a pilot test for setting up social entrepreneurship community centers and assessed their impact in participating EU countries.

The target groups included persons with disabilities, covering various types of impairments, such as physical, sensory, mental illness, cognitive, and intellectual impairments. Additionally, the project indirectly benefited adult educators, trainers, social workers, caregivers, and experts.

The methodological approach of the project involved a comprehensive research study in each partner country, examining the current status of social entrepreneurship practices. The project subsequently developed training materials and provided hands-on training in social entrepreneurial and digital skills for the target groups. Additionally, it incorporated recycling and upcycling workshops, utilizing specialized electrical recycling equipment, allowing participants to engage in all stages of the process.



The project successfully addressed critical challenges by meeting the imperative need and fundamental right of individuals with disabilities to access employment opportunities, thereby reducing the risk of poverty and ensuring financial independence among this demographic, effectively contributing to their economic empowerment and social inclusion.

The results of the project include the establishment of part-time job opportunities tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities, the successful launch of aluminum upcycling workshops, and the introduction of engaging art and handicraft workshops, collectively fostering economic participation, environmental sustainability, and artistic creativity within the community.

The project has been instrumental in promoting self-employment for people with disabilities through the establishment of their social enterprises. It emphasizes the pursuit of independence and autonomy, fostering improved work-life balance, and providing flexibility in work pacing to accommodate the status of disability. Moreover, the results achieved by the project offer valuable insights into the potential replication of this best practice in other countries and with different target groups, including migrants, NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), and other vulnerable populations.

It is worth mentioning that participants in the project have experienced substantial improvements in knowledge, skills, and experiences, resulting in greater engagement in the job market through part-time employment. The project has boosted their autonomy, self-confidence, sense of belonging, and inclusion, enhancing their independence and survival skills in modern society. Moreover, it has improved socializing skills and enabled participants to explore various ways of using materials to generate income, including pottery, painting, handicrafts, and wickerwork. This has contributed to their knowledge and creativity and inspired the creation of entrepreneurs with disabilities.



Concerning challenges, the project has encountered barriers for persons with disabilities accessing the labor market, employer discrimination, lower employment rates, and lower earnings. What was learned through this experience was the recognition that creativity, focus, and collaboration are the competencies most valued by people with disabilities. Also, depending on the degree of disability, training may need to focus on basic skills, including communication, computer literacy, basic writing, and numeric skills, or more advanced skills, such as social and entrepreneurial competencies.

The Dis-Entrepreneurship Community Support Centres project is an exemplary good practice that empowers people with disabilities to gain digital and entrepreneurial skills, fostering social inclusion and access to the labor market. It has made substantial strides in addressing the unique challenges faced by persons with disabilities and enabling their meaningful participation in society and the workforce.

#### Find more information

- website: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2019-1-SIO1-KA204-060426>

## RECYCLING OF OFFICE FURNITURE

"Recycling of Office Furniture" is an innovative initiative that began in 2021, hailing from Denmark and led by regional partners, Skejby Rangers and Region Midtjylland's Centre for Sustainable Hospitals. The project focuses on recycling office furniture, particularly office desks and chairs, with a dual objective of promoting economic and resource-wise sustainability while significantly reducing CO2 emissions. Additionally, the initiative aims to create green job opportunities within the labor market.

The primary aim of the "Recycling of Office Furniture" project is to introduce a sustainable alternative to new office furniture purchases and drive down carbon emissions. Simultaneously, it seeks to create job opportunities for individuals on the fringes of the labor market, often faced with physical, mental, or social limitations. The project's target groups encompass hospitals in Region Midtjylland, marginalized individuals employed by Skejby Rangers for furniture recycling, and the broader community benefiting from reduced CO2 emissions.

The project employs a methodological approach that emphasizes individualized support and safety. It includes regular follow-up meetings with each employee to tailor work processes to their specific needs, ensuring health and safety requirements are met. This approach guarantees that the workplace is adapted to accommodate the distinct abilities and limitations of employees.

"Recycling of Office Furniture" has yielded impressive results, including the recycling and reselling of nearly 100 desks and 50 office chairs to Region Midtjylland's hospitals. Additionally, desks produced by Skejby Rangers are undergoing type approval, enhancing their market potential. The initiative has created more than 50 new paid job opportunities for individuals on the margins of the labor market across various business areas. The impact of this project has been positive, benefiting hospitals with cost-effective, sustainable furniture options, enhancing the financial independence and social inclusion of marginalized employees, and contributing to environmental well-being.

This initiative stands as an innovative business model that combines environmental sustainability and economy by championing office furniture recycling. It serves as a pioneering example of reducing CO2 emissions while creating employment opportunities for individuals facing permanent occupational limitations. The project exhibits substantial potential for replication both within Denmark and internationally. Nonetheless, the encountered challenges included establishing crucial collaborative relationships and securing financing for production equipment. A key lesson learned through this project is the importance of cost-effectiveness in the purchasing decisions of buyers.

In conclusion, the "Recycling of Office Furniture" project stands as a remarkable best practice that addresses environmental and socio-economic challenges. It promotes sustainability, economic viability, and social empowerment, positioning itself as a beacon of hope not only in Denmark but also on a global scale.

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## RECYCKLING

Recykling, an Aarhus-based initiative, has been at the forefront of bicycle recycling since 2016. With a clear mission in mind, the project aims to offer a sustainable alternative to new bicycle purchases, reduce CO2 emissions, and create employment opportunities within the 'green' labor market. At its core, Recykling focuses on refurbishing and reselling used bicycles, extending their usability while minimizing environmental impact. The initiative also provides bicycle servicing and interest-free financing options through collaboration with a bank.

Recykling's overarching objectives encompass environmental sustainability, economic cautiousness, and social inclusion. It aims to provide Aarhus residents with eco-friendly transportation alternatives, offer job opportunities to individuals with disabilities who participate in bicycle recycling, and reduce CO2 emissions for the wider community. The employees with disabilities are a diverse group who share the common characteristic of facing physical, mental, or social limitations that make traditional job roles inaccessible.

The initiative employs a methodological approach based on practical, peer-to-peer training for new employees, emphasizing hands-on experience over theoretical learning. Regular follow-up meetings are conducted to optimize workday organization tailored to individual employees' needs, ensuring the highest standards of health and safety.





Over the past seven years, Recyckling has achieved significant growth, boasting the largest selection of recycled bicycles in Denmark while steadily improving its financial profitability. The project's contributions are multifaceted, with an innovative business model focused on bicycle recycling, carbon footprint reduction, and job creation for individuals with permanent occupational limitations. The initiative's adaptability is evident in its adoption by multiple Danish cities and towns, with an estimated 15-20 similar companies operating across the country. Participants have enjoyed numerous benefits, from affordable sustainable transportation options for Aarhus residents to crucial job opportunities for vulnerable groups. The initiative has made a significant contribution to reducing the carbon footprint within its community.

Recyckling's business model exemplifies innovation through its commitment to bicycle recycling, carbon footprint reduction, and job creation within the 'green' labor market. Its adaptability is evidenced by its successful expansion to several Danish cities and towns, showcasing potential for replication within Denmark and internationally. Challenges initially centered around obtaining professional qualifications and resources for bicycle recycling, as well as securing financing for workshop and business facilities, including production equipment. Notably, affordability remains the pivotal factor influencing purchasing decisions, emphasizing the importance of cost-competitiveness in the recycling model.

In brief, Recyckling's journey showcases a good practice that addresses multiple societal challenges while promoting sustainability, economic viability, and social inclusion. With the potential for replication and upscaling, the initiative stands out not only in Denmark but also on a global scale, leading the way in bicycle recycling, carbon footprint reduction, and job creation for individuals with permanent limitations.

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## GRÜNBAG

Grünbag, a Danish private enterprise, has been dedicated to producing and selling unique designer bags made from recycled or reused materials since 2011. The initiative aspires to achieve several overarching goals, including the creation of a sustainable alternative to purchasing new bags, reduction of CO2 emissions, and the generation of new 'green' job opportunities.

Grünbag's key concept revolves around crafting high-quality, distinctive bags from highly durable and long-lasting materials, with a strong focus on reducing future waste. Their zero-waste approach actively encourages the recycling of scrap and the development of creative methods to prevent waste production. A remarkable 90% of the materials used by Grünbag consist of either recycled or sustainable materials, reflecting their commitment to environmental direction. This includes utilizing discarded pieces of tarpaulin from truck cover production, repurposing white sails and life rafts from Viking Life-Saving Equipment, and employing recycled plastic for linings. Furthermore, the initiative integrates materials from discarded thermal suits into their products.

The project targets a wide range of individuals, including those in Europe and around the world who seek sustainable, quality, and design-wise superior bags, people who fill new 'green' job positions offered by Grünbag, and the broader community benefiting from reduced CO2 emissions. Grünbag's workforce comprises seamstresses, both trained and self-taught, although the initiative is not explicitly focused on employing individuals from the margins of the labor market. Nevertheless, the creation of these 'green' jobs contributes to providing new employment opportunities for those in need.



Grünbag's methodological approach has thus far involved peer-to-peer training for new employees, tailored to their specific needs. Regular follow-up meetings ensure that each employee's workday is organized optimally to address their unique requirements.

Over the past decade, Grünbag has expanded its reach, selling its distinctive designer bags worldwide and achieving growing financial success. The project's contributions are characterized by its innovative business model, which involves the creative reuse of materials like tarpaulins, party tents, boiler suits, and used sails to craft designer bags, ultimately reducing CO2 emissions and generating 'green' job opportunities. The potential for replication and upscaling both within Denmark and internationally is promising, and the initiative is highly adaptable to other regions and countries. Therefore, participants have experienced numerous positive outcomes since Grünbag has successfully sold its unique designer bags worldwide, enjoying sustained financial growth. The creation of 'green' jobs indirectly contributes to a larger number of marginalized individuals gaining employment. Moreover, the initiative bolsters the carbon footprint reduction.

Initial challenges in implementing this best practice included securing accessibility to a supplier network and developing the professional skills required for crafting designer bags from reused and recycled materials. Financing was another early obstacle, particularly related to acquiring the necessary workshop and business facilities, as well as production equipment like sewing machines and warehousing.

In general, lessons learned from Grünbag emphasize the importance of storytelling and unique design to appeal to customers. The narrative behind the designer bag, along with its distinct identity, significantly influences its market competitiveness.

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## KONTOER

Kontoer, located in the heart of Turnhout, Belgium, is a multifaceted project uniting six unique concepts under one roof, collectively emphasizing experience, quality, and sustainability. This innovative project addresses a multitude of goals. It offers diverse services ranging from an educational bistro and sustainable food practices to a second-hand boutique, clothing adjustments, a Giving Point, and a flexible pop-up space for young entrepreneurs.

Kontoer's core concept revolves around fostering a close-knit community with a shared commitment to the creation and reuse of authentic and sustainable products. The project strives to deliver quality items that can be repurposed and reused. Its target groups encompass a wide spectrum of individuals, including adults seeking fashionable second-hand clothing, affordable and eco-conscious products. It also engages with individuals who have distanced themselves from the labor market, providing training opportunities, employment, and crucial support for enhancing their skills and employability.

Kontoer's methodological approach employs a staircase system that progressively integrates employees or learners into a work environment. Learners begin by enhancing basic skills in an industrial estate, gradually taking on more complex tasks with increasing customer interaction. The final step involves working in the bistro or shop, engaging with both colleagues and customers. Learners undergo a 12-week training program, ending in a recognized certificate and coverage of their expenses.



Kontoer has showcased significant success through its innovative approach, consolidating multiple services under one roof, appealing to a diverse customer base, and advocating sustainability. As a learning center, it provides training programs for over half of its 25 employees, enhancing their employability. This good practice is replicable in other municipalities and adaptable to diverse contexts, offering benefits to a broader audience. Participants, or employees/learners, have the opportunity to learn and work in a motivating environment and, upon training completion, receive a certificate, increasing their job market prospects. Kontoer effectively extends quality employment opportunities to individuals who have distanced themselves from the labor market, providing them with genuine prospects for long-term employment.

Kontoer has encountered challenges, including financial constraints driven by the need for a larger workforce and lower profit margins due to affordable pricing. Ensuring a competent teaching team for training remains crucial, necessitating collaboration with certified training centers. Lastly, success is closely tied to effective partnerships with various stakeholders, such as training centers, social institutions, and thrift shops.

Kontoer's journey offers several important lessons. First, the initiative underscores the significance of effective collaboration and partnership with certified training centers and social institutions, which are instrumental in addressing the needs of individuals distanced from the labor market. Second, maintaining affordability while ensuring sustainability can be challenging but is vital to attract a diverse customer base. Finally, the project highlights the importance of creating a motivating and inclusive work environment, fostering the development of both basic and advanced skills among employees/learners, thereby increasing their prospects in the job market and promoting long-term employment.

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## NATURE AND LANDSCAPE CARE (NATUUR- EN LANDSCHAPSZORG) - CULTIVATING ENVIRONMENTAL CAREERS

Nature and Landscape Care (Natuur- en Landschapszorg vzw) is a Belgian initiative that has been evolving since February 1999, addressing the intertwined issues of long-term unemployment and limited education. Designed as a tailor-made company specializing in nature management, this innovative project plays a pivotal role in reshaping the lives of individuals who, for various reasons, have fallen out of the employment circuit. It offers them a chance to rediscover their talents, rebuild their self-esteem, and gain specialized knowledge while making a positive impact on nature in Flanders, Belgium. What sets Nature and Landscape Care apart is its pioneering role in the sheltered workshop landscape and its commitment to combining nature-friendly entrepreneurship with social responsibility.

The core concept behind Nature and Landscape Care is to create a sustainable balance between environmental stewardship and human development. It recognizes that individuals who have been unemployed for extended periods and possess minimal formal education can find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle, deprived of motivation, self-confidence, and the essential rhythms required in the professional world. This project aims to break that cycle by offering these marginalized individuals the opportunity to regain their dignity and sense of purpose through nature-friendly employment. By fostering professional pride and work attitudes, Nature and Landscape Care positions itself as a catalyst for their transformation, playing a vital role in bridging the gap between environmental needs and human potential. The primary target group of Nature and Landscape Care comprises long-term unemployed individuals who have been without work for more than five years and hold, at most, a primary education diploma. The initiative also serves various organizations and municipalities in Flanders that are involved in nature preservation and ecological park or roadside management.



Nature and Landscape Care employs a multi-faceted approach that promotes personal growth and vocational development. Team leaders focus on nurturing a positive atmosphere and offering constructive feedback to empower participants. The structure includes several teams led by team leaders who are, in many cases, social workers themselves. This cooperative leadership model helps build trust among the team members and allows for better monitoring of their progress. The initiative also maintains a quality charter that oversees safety, environmental sustainability, and expert guidance within the sheltered workshops.

The initiative's success is evident in its substantial workforce, with 196 workers distributed among 25 regional teams. A survey conducted in 2015 underscored the positive impact of the project: 98% of the target group workers expressed enjoyment in their work, and 96% felt accepted within their teams. The initiative has managed to create a strong sense of professional pride among individuals who have long been excluded from the labor market. In this way, Nature and Landscape Care has consistently demonstrated that social employment, which emphasizes human development alongside ecological conservation, can serve as a vehicle for personal growth and societal reintegration.

While Nature and Landscape Care has thrived, it relies heavily on government subsidies, presenting a challenge to its ongoing sustainability. As it approaches the boundaries of replicability within Belgium, the initiative faces questions related to potential policy changes and the adaptability of its model. Nevertheless, it remains a testament to the power of social employment in reshaping lives, instilling professional pride, and promoting environmental leadership.

In brief, Nature and Landscape Care, with its pioneering approach to sheltered workshops and its commitment to nurturing human potential while caring for the environment, offers a compelling model for addressing long-term unemployment among those with limited formal education. By maintaining a focus on both human and environmental needs, this initiative is the first step for transformation, emphasizing the value of dignity, self-esteem, and sustainable employment.

Find more information

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## REPAIR CAFÉ - FOSTERING SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH REPAIR CULTURE

The Repair Café project began in Turnhout, Belgium, in 2013, and since then, it has spread to other places both domestically and abroad. This creative endeavor aims to foster a culture of repair and resourcefulness within the broader context of sustainability. Repair Café is a social enterprise that actively contributes to waste reduction, the development of new and old skills, and the strengthening of community ties by bringing people together to mend things together.

A number of fundamental ideas underpin The Repair Café, with sustainability and waste minimization taking center stage. Its main goals are to promote a culture of repair, reduce the growing amount of waste, make it easier for participants to share their skills, and strengthen the sense of community within the community. The Repair Café promotes sustainability by embodying the idea that things may be fixed and repurposed instead of being thrown away. The Repair Café caters to a variety of customers, including adults who are interested in fixing their items to prolong their lifespan, frequently due to financial limitations and volunteers, who are qualified people eager to contribute their repair knowledge in order to further the larger objective of sustainability.

Getting volunteers involved in the Repair Café is one of its biggest challenges. Even though a lot of volunteers are quite skilled in the real world, this program helps them improve their social and communication abilities. It establishes a platform where those with significant technical know-how may learn how to interact with the larger community and efficiently impart their knowledge. Through the use of a learning-by-doing methodology, the Repair Café empowers users to actively participate in the repair of their belongings with the assistance of knowledgeable volunteers. The Repair Café also promotes a grateful mindset, honoring the group effort to repair and repurpose objects.

Both the environment and the community have been greatly touched by The Repair Café. An average of sixteen products are successfully fixed each month, which lowers waste. Additionally, in the event that an item is beyond repair, the café frequently offers guidance to customers, empowering them to investigate substitute options. About twelve volunteers participate in the program each month, and about thirty-five people visit on a regular basis.



One of the first of its kind in Flanders, Repair Café Turnhout's success has encouraged the creation of numerous other similar projects around the area. Governments and companies who prioritize sustainability can provide financial support, as well as a readily accessible location with sufficient space, for this reproducible model. Repair Café is innovative because it takes a collaborative approach, teaching participants how to fix their own items alongside professionals and giving them useful skills for the future. Over 2,000 copies of The Repair Café have already been made all over the world, each with its own set of regulations and methods of operation. It provides support and a starter kit to anyone who wants to launch comparable projects.

The Repair Café is a prime example of how a local project can spark a worldwide movement because it was established on the tenets of sustainability, repair culture, and community involvement. Through waste reduction, enabling people to acquire useful skills, and fostering a sense of collective responsibility, the Repair Café provides insightful insights into cooperative problem-solving and a possible route towards a more sustainable future.

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## EMMAÜS DÉFI - FOSTERING SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH REUSE AND RECYCLING

An important integration project called "Emmaüs Défi" has been running since 2007. In order to fight social isolation, this project recycles used items including toys, clothing, and lamps. The main objective is to reintegrate people who are separated from the labor into society by having them participate in the sale and reuse of used goods. The main recipients of the necessary social and job help are people who are homeless or in insecure circumstances.

The primary aim of "Emmaüs Défi" is to offer jobs and social assistance to people who have considerable difficulties in obtaining employment. Those in difficult conditions and the homeless are among them. The group also provides services to those in need of reasonably priced used goods, such as clothing.

The project takes a thorough approach, offering people a few hours of weekly training sessions. Following this training, they are given the chance to work 26 hours a week, which enables them to take care of other elements of their lives and administrative issues.



The creative aspect of the initiative is how well it balances ecological change with social assistance. It highlights how crucial it is to have skilled instructors, networks of support from other groups to deal with social concerns, public donations, and governmental or EU funds to pay for salaries and training. Replicability and upscaling entail expanding the project's scope by selling used goods and creating new training areas. "Emmaüs Défi" exemplifies the model's flexibility by emphasizing the training and employment of those in need. The project showed dedication and adaptation by carrying on with its operations, including cushion production and needlework teaching, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial limitations and a lack of available space are among the constraints; nonetheless, the Paris City Council's backing has made it possible to acquire additional space.

"Emmaüs Défi" is a prime example of an integration initiative that effectively unites ecological responsibility and social inclusion. People in precarious situations are given jobs and training, which helps them rebuild their confidence and become more involved in society. The project's significance and influence are highlighted by the model's creative methodology, adaptability, and potential for replication. It provides an important lesson in how to handle social issues with training and jobs that are sustainable.

Through the integration of individuals facing social difficulties and their training in jobs related to reuse and recycling, "Emmaüs Défi" effectively integrates ecological and social challenges. Participants benefit from this method, which helps people rebuild their self-esteem and sense of belonging in a social and ecological framework.

### Find more information

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## TRANSFORMING OLD BOAT BUOYS INTO DECORATIVE LAMPS - RECYCLING INNOVATION BY ATELIER POUPE

An innovative project called Atelier Poupe turns used boat buoys into beautiful lamps. Working in conjunction with waste recovery and recycling businesses in the PACA area, the project tackles the problem of this kind of plastics' lack of recycling channels. The main goal is recycling old buoys to keep them from being buried or burned, giving them a new breath on life and encouraging artisanal and manual innovation.

The project's goal is to repurpose obsolete buoys instead of burying or burning them. The local Marseilles community, businesses, governments, and everyone else with an interest in this creative strategy are all benefactors of this best practice. Ports, coastal towns, and recycling businesses also contribute by giving Atelier Poupe resources and assistance. The founder of the project set up a workshop in her house during the COVID-19 shutdown and started rescuing antique buoys that had been eroded by the water and the passage of time.



The inventor uses no water at all to clean and polish the vintage buoys in order to manufacture these unusual lighting. The buoys are drilled with varied patterns, and depending on the customer's preferences or the artist's imagination, they are then painted in different colors. The imaginative and environmentally responsible project of turning old buoys into beautiful lamps is where the innovation resides.

Both cooperating businesses and the designer have benefited from the project. Old buoys are supplied by the ports and recycling businesses, which Atelier Poupe buys for free, helping all parties. Every year, about twenty-five old buoys are repurposed, saving them from being buried or burned.

Atelier Poupe's creativity resides in the way it turns vintage buoys into eye-catching lights. To replicate this best practice, collaborations between ports and recycling firms are required, along with an emphasis on innovation development. This approach's flexibility is further demonstrated by its prospective expansion to other coastal towns in Europe, which would present opportunities for recycling different kinds of outdated rubbish into artistic creations. The project came across difficulties getting the required supplies, equipment, and real estate. The fact that it persisted and overcame these challenges highlights the idea that practically everything can be recycled or upcycled, giving a variety of items a second chance at life.

Finally, the inventive way that Atelier Poupe turned used buoys into beautiful lamps illustrates the possibilities for imaginative recycling and upcycling projects. It encourages innovation and provides a sustainable alternative in addition to repurposing existing buoys. The initiative offers an encouraging example of environmental responsibility and creativity, and its good effects on the environment and cooperating entities show the possibility for similar projects to succeed.

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## LA RECYCLERIE

A noteworthy good practice project called "La Recyclerie" launched in 2014 in France, more precisely in the regions of Région Ile de France and Ville de Paris, which are parts of Paris. The project is a complex enterprise that functions as a third-party location for ecological vegetable farming, a restaurant that serves only local produce, a workshop for repairs, and a site for environmental conferences. Its main goals include experimenting with ecological farming techniques, giving the locals a place to eat and fix things, and encouraging the sharing of best practices among neighbors.

The main objectives of "La Recyclerie" are to provide a space for ecological experimentation, a communal eating experience with locally produced food, a repair workshop, and conferences that promote environmental consciousness. Residents of Paris's 18th district and its surrounding areas make up the project's main target audience. Given that this neighborhood is frequently described as sensitive and impoverished, the recycling center serves as a vital hub for both ecological and social solutions.



"La Recyclerie" uses a thorough methodological approach to accomplish its objectives. It hosts regular conferences, creates educational podcasts about environmental issues, arranges educational tours, and asks people to join their association in order to have access to repair workshops. Building a network of regional producers is the project's main goal, as demonstrated by the restaurant's exclusive use of short circuits to obtain its food. Furthermore, the group places a high priority on educating people and educational institutions about embracing more ecologically friendly consuming habits, with a focus on ecological farming techniques.

One of the project's results is the opening of a café inside the recycling center that only offers food made from short circuits, supporting regional manufacturers. "La Recyclerie" has also been successful in educating individuals and school groups about ecological farming methods and improved consumption habits. The project's goal of encouraging ecological awareness and sustainable living among its target audience is furthered by these findings.

"La Recyclerie" is a prime example of ecological awareness and sustainable urban living. With its diversified approach, it offers residents of the 18th district and beyond a useful resource by combining ecological farming, dining, maintenance services, and environmental teaching. The project is a noteworthy excellent practice that can motivate comparable projects around the world because of its creativity, adaptability, and dedication to tackling both social and ecological concerns.

#### Find more information

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## ARGUSRECYCLING

A remarkable project called Argusrecycling has been running in the Portuguese district of Arganil since 2017. This project demonstrates the commitment of the non-governmental organization "Iniciativa da Unidade Funcional de Arganil da Associação Portuguesa de Pais e Amigos do Cidadão Deficiente Mental (APPACDM)," which is still having a big influence. Increasing community knowledge of the vital concepts of reducing, reusing, and recycling is the main goal of Argusrecycling. They actively collect recyclables, carefully sort and store them, and then make sure the right kind is recovered.

It is clear that a methodical approach has been followed in the implementation of the Argus recycling project. To understand the unique requirements and difficulties of the target population, which includes people with intellectual disabilities and those who are socially excluded, in-depth planning and research were conducted. In order to promote a sense of community and understanding about recycling and social inclusion, the initiative involved the target group and the community through awareness-raising events, campaigns, and workshops. Specialized training courses were created to give participants the information and abilities needed to contribute effectively. Establishing vital infrastructure, such as recycling centers and collection sites, was also required to simplify the process of gathering, sorting, and storing recyclables. Additionally, partnerships were established to build a waste management company, local businesses, and other stakeholders. In order to ensure the project's effectiveness and continuous improvement, continuous monitoring and assessment were carried out.

Among the project's outcomes are awareness raising initiatives that attempt to increase public knowledge of environmental problems and the value of recycling. In order to give people the necessary information and abilities about recycling and garbage management, they also created training courses and seminars. Consequently, vulnerable persons were able to access green employment alternatives, which greatly improved their financial state.



A new approach that stabilizes the waste management system locally and regionally was introduced by this research. In addition, it highlights environmentally friendly waste management techniques by presenting creative methods for cutting waste, conserving resources, and lessening environmental effects.

Strong institutional support, laws and regulations that promote effective waste management systems, and a supportive environment that offers funds, legal support, and incentives for replication are all necessary for the successful replication of this good practice. Furthermore, in order to ensure financial sustainability through collaborations with waste management businesses and the sale of recyclable materials, replication requires sustainable funding structures and economic incentives. A culture of environmental responsibility and inclusivity must be fostered through community participation, education campaigns, and advocacy activities to shift attitudes and build public acceptance of recycling practices and social inclusion. These strategies are essential for the effective replication of these practices. Last but not least, fostering environmental responsibility and the adoption of sustainable waste management techniques depend heavily on the community's high environmental consciousness.

In conclusion, the Argus recycling initiative has brought hope and transformation to the Portuguese province of Arganil. Its emphasis on recycling and social inclusion has improved marginalized people's general well-being by creating meaningful work opportunities and making society a more inclusive and ecologically conscientious place. This all-encompassing strategy shows that meaningful and beneficial change can be achieved by involving the community, offering training, forming partnerships, keeping an eye on developments, and guaranteeing economic viability. For other projects hoping to build a more sustainable and inclusive world, this one is a great model.

#### Find more information

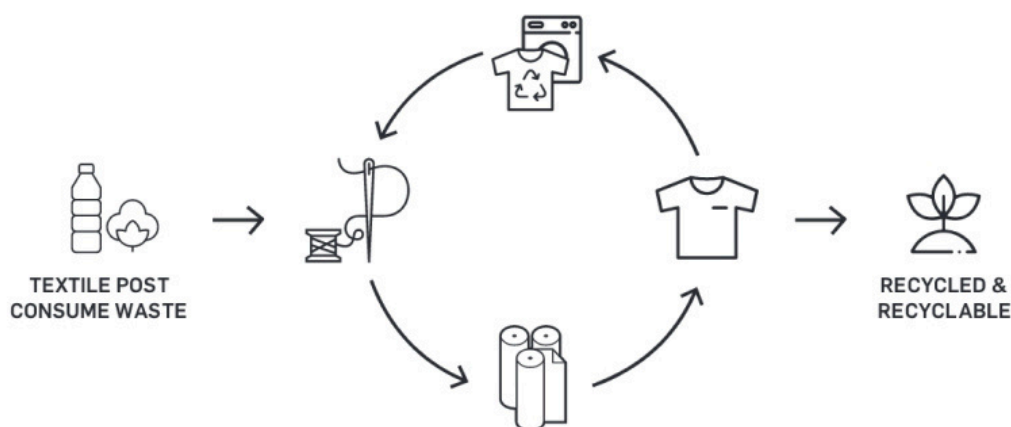
- Tel.: +351 235 203 153
- Website: [www.appacdmcoimbra.pt/argusrecycling/](http://www.appacdmcoimbra.pt/argusrecycling/)
- E-mail: [argusrecycling@gmail.com](mailto:argusrecycling@gmail.com)

## WEARCYCLE

Since 2022, Wearcycle has been an environmentally innovative project that promotes the circular economy by creating clothing and accessories from leftover materials. The partnership between Gureak, Belda Llorens, the Gipuzkoa Provincial Council, and Ihobe - Basque Government - European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) produced this distinctive and ecologically conscious collection. They create a highly durable and sustainable thread for their products by using textile waste from laundries.

The promotion of a circular economy, recycling, sustainability, economical resource usage, and non-pollution of the environment are the primary objectives of best practices. The project's employees, including those with disabilities who work for Gureak, consumers who buy the product because of its high quality, and the larger community as a whole are all beneficiaries of sustainability.

The best pieces of fabric from Gureak's laundromats are methodically chosen by the initiative and turned into brand-new clothing. At the Belda Llorens mill, these chosen sheets are mechanically recycled, shredded, and turned into fiber. To make resilient and sustainable clothing out of recycled and organic cotton, the raw fiber is spun into bobbins.



A distinctive line of apparel and accessories with a heavy emphasis on circular economy concepts is the project's end product. Participants experience improved self-esteem as they work on a genuine sustainability project, a rise in social understanding of sustainability, and an improvement in the employability of those with disabilities.

By repurposing old sheets to produce a distinctive and ecologically conscious collection, the initiative supports a cutting-edge circular economy effort. Additionally, it generates employment that supports disabled people's social and professional inclusion. The project can be widely copied and is extremely adaptable to many circumstances. To succeed in other places, though, it needs government backing in addition to commercial and societal awareness.

The eco-friendly enterprise by Wearcycle is a great illustration of the circular economy in action. It not only produces distinctive and sustainable items but also improves participants' employability and self-esteem by involving persons with disabilities and encouraging sustainability. With the correct funding and resources, the initiative may function as a flexible and repeatable model that benefits other communities and advances sustainability and the circular economy.

#### Find more information

- Website: [www.gureak.com/es/contactar](http://www.gureak.com/es/contactar)
- Additional website: <https://www.ternua.com/com/sustainability-wearcycle->
- Video: <https://youtu.be/xSGXmKHDKYk?si=QKQy6nJNpZKoBMRq>
- Collection: <https://www.ternua.com/es/catalogsearch/result/?q=wearcycle>



## ULTRIPLO LDA

A private company called Ultriplo Lda, based in Braga, Portugal, is leading the way in a revolutionary initiative that blends sustainability and social responsibility. Their mission, which involves working with other organizations, such as Cruz Vermelha, advocates for the 3 R's: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. For typical textile businesses, Ultriplo aims to prolong the life-cycle of textile materials, eliminating waste, rather than just producing goods.

The three guiding concepts of Ultriplo—Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle—serve as the foundation for their dedication to sustainable development and environmental preservation. In addition, they incorporate social responsibility into their company plan by actively collaborating with nonprofits and giving priority to underprivileged or marginalized people. Ultriplo targets a broad spectrum of people, including marginalized groups including immigrants, the disabled, and those going through different difficulties. Their main goal is to create job opportunities, giving preference to members of affiliated groups.

Ultriplo uses a methodical, team-based strategy that includes partnership development, customized training curricula, and in-depth needs assessments in order to build a holistic model.

This program has produced a variety of outcomes. Ultriplo helps vulnerable people reintegrate into society by creating sustainable enterprises that employ them. Through their efforts, more environmentally friendly industrial processes are developed, and "green" jobs are created, especially for underprivileged people. Ultimately, partnerships between various businesses and groups encourage teamwork and collaborative action.



Ultriplo's idea is not just inventive, but revolutionary as it fosters social inclusion and challenges conventional labor patterns. It increases economic growth and productivity by making use of unused talent. Additionally, it integrates sustainability into all facets of its company operations and raises public awareness of environmental issues. Replicating Ultriplo's best practices requires a number of prerequisites, including institutional support, a stable economic climate, social awareness, and environmental conscience. Coordinating these factors will enable the replication of environmentally beneficial practices, hence expanding the impact and scope of the program. The adaptability of this endeavor in different contexts depends on cultural differences, local socioeconomic conditions, and the unique needs of disadvantaged groups. It must be adjusted to specific circumstances, taking into account input from members of the community, social groups, and local stakeholders. Strongly favorable results are experienced by participants, such as returning to the workforce, learning new skills, and making constructive contributions to society. Meeting the diverse demands of social groups requires overcoming obstacles like cultural barriers, resource limitations, and resistance to change. These challenges are addressed through the use of strategies like stakeholder involvement, awareness-raising, funding acquisition, culturally sensitive tactics, specialized training curricula, and one-on-one support.

In conclusion, Ultriplo has shown how much potential there is to combine social responsibility, sustainability, and employment possibilities for marginalized groups through its great practices. Their comprehensive approach emphasizes the need of sustained commitment to uphold positive change, encourages fair opportunities, places a strong emphasis on teamwork, demands customization, and supports continuous learning. It also demonstrates the complex outcomes of integrated methods.

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## FROM GRANNY TO TRENDY

The "From Granny to Trendy" initiative, started by the company "Vintage for a Cause," operates in Porto, Guimarães, Esposendo, and Gondomar, among other places in Portugal. It is notable as an effort with an amazing concentration on empowering women who are beyond fifty years old. This initiative combines skill development, social inclusion, and environmental concern to support active aging and the integration of older women into society by tackling the issues of unemployment and social isolation faced by these women.

Essentially, this program is a sewing workshop meant to help elderly women with issues like social isolation and unemployment. The initiative gives older women a feeling of purpose and encourages active aging through sociability, skill development, and environmental sustainability.

The complete approach of the project encompasses a number of different components, including outreach, monitoring, evaluation, collaboration, documentation, needs assessment, setting up sewing workshops, social inclusion, environmental education, information sharing, and feedback sessions. This multifaceted strategy guarantees that the project meets the demands of older women in an efficient manner and offers a nurturing atmosphere for their development.

The project's results vary, from the development of long-term jobs in the fashion industry to social inclusion and empowerment. Gaining new skills helps participants become independent, which facilitates their reintegration back into society and presents chances for them to start their own enterprises.



The project's creative solution to the particular problems faced by older women is what makes it so successful. It is reproducible and effective in areas with aging populations because it not only gives people the confidence to start their own businesses, but it also gives them the skills necessary to do so. Moreover, the project's capacity for replication and expansion is apparent, and it can be effortlessly embraced by other nations or areas that possess the target audience and fashion labels that possess the ability to set up regional workshops. It is feasible that this effort might be tailored to various settings as long as the intended audience is present and there are companies that can set up regional workshops. Consequently, the participants experience an overwhelming sense of empowerment as a result of the program's emphasis on environmental responsibility, social interaction, and skill development for older women.

Despite its achievements, the initiative has encountered difficulties in engaging the intended audience, achieving a balance between the social and economic elements, and ensuring long-term viability. Nonetheless, these difficulties have been solved in part due to the project's flexibility and resilience.

The takeaways from this best practice underscore the ability of innovation, eco-friendly endeavors, and financially viable projects to promote a more diverse, ecologically aware, and financially viable community.

As demonstrated above, the "From Granny to Trendy" project empowers older women and significantly improves their lives by embodying innovation, social inclusion, and environmental conscience. The project's adaptability, replication potential, and varied approach highlight how important it is to address the issues older women experience and give them a sense of purpose and community.

Find more information

- Website: <http://www.vintageforacause.pt>

## TXUKUNDU

Operating since 2023 in the Basque Country's Gipuzkoa region, the "Txukundu" initiative is an outstanding example of a cooperative effort between a person who is passionate about assisting people in organizing their wardrobes and a nonprofit organization that provides training to persons with disabilities.

"Txukundu" centers on the recycling of clothes, emphasizing the empowerment of learners with disabilities. Through the use of Vinted and Instagram, the project highlights the recycling of apparel. In order to provide a sustainable solution for clothing that could otherwise go to waste, students with disabilities actively participate in all aspects of the project, from marketing and customer service to handling point-of-sale operations.

A partnership between Gureak, a nonprofit, and a second-hand clothes provider is involved in the "Txukundu" project. Students with impairments are an essential part of the process; they take part in activities like choosing and gathering clothes and taking pictures for Vinted and Instagram. Their practical experience gained from this involvement also improves their employability.

### TXUKUNDU



The project's main goals are to recycle clothing, improve students' communication and business abilities, and increase public awareness of social and environmental issues rather than to make money. Resources like professional networks for secondhand apparel acquisition and access to appropriate training locations are necessary to replicate this approach. It is possible to adapt this initiative to various contexts, particularly for private enterprises who are interested in recycling clothing and for training facilities that want to work on projects related to sustainability and the circular economy.

There are two results from the project. First of all, it supports recycling and sustainability ideals by reusing clothing that would otherwise be thrown. Second, it makes a big difference in the students' employability, which is a major accomplishment for their professional and personal development. Participants have significant benefits, including improved self-esteem and employment. The project helps disabled students get real-world experience and gets them ready for jobs in the future.

The project's main challenges include integrating students into an actual work environment, giving them practical experience in shipping occupations, and improving their technical and transferable skills.

In conclusion, by allowing students with disabilities to apply their training skills in a real-world situation, the "Txukundu" project serves as an example of how it is possible to build a genuine initiative that helps them. This practical approach emphasizes sustainability and recycling while preparing them for issues they might experience in a professional work environment. It also fosters their personal and professional growth.

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## COMMUNITY COMPOSTING

An important effort in sustainable waste management was started in the Basque Country town of Hernani in 2009 with the launch of the "Community Composting" initiative. The Hernani Town Council and Gureak Zerbitzuak, a public-private partnership, are working together on this project.

The project's main goal is to manage organic waste, and Hernani locals are encouraged to compost using both individual composters in homes with gardens or orchards and community composters. The initiative includes door-to-door collecting of organic waste, in which individuals with disabilities actively participate and keep an eye on various composting process factors. This partnership tackles issues pertaining to jobs, the environment, and society.

The project's methodological approach entails a weekly schedule of tasks that are carried out in an organized manner. These activities include turning over the garbage, analyzing and categorizing waste, and keeping an eye on the status of the compost bin. The waste that is produced is put to personal use, such as fertilizing vegetable plants.





The effort has produced significant practical results; around 25% of the people in Hernani are composting organic waste. With 950 families participating in community composting and 633 in self-composting, a total of 210 kg of organic waste are managed in community composters each week. The project's creativity and success are highlighted by Hernani's attainment of Zero Waste Europe certification, which also demonstrates a dedication to sustainable waste management and job creation, especially for people with disabilities.

Hernani is now the first municipality in the Basque Country to be certified by Zero Waste Europe thanks to this innovative and successful project. Replicability and possibility for scaling up show promise for efforts of a similar nature in different nations and locations. Nonetheless, in order to be flexible enough to work in different settings, governmental institutions and waste management firms would need to effectively coordinate, allocate funds, and launch awareness programs.

With 15 to 20 persons employed annually through this program, the impact on participants is significant, especially in terms of improving the employability of individuals with disabilities. One of the constraints is that adequate garbage sorting is required to avoid contamination, and this can occasionally mean that plastic bags end up in the communal compost.

Lessons learnt include transforming garbage into useful resources, hiring disabled people, raising environmental awareness, teaching people about sustainable habits, and allocating funds for waste management programs.

In summary, the "Community Composting" initiative is a perfect example of how to manage trash sustainably and create jobs, with an emphasis on empowering people with disabilities. The project's creative strategy and successes in Hernani could work as a template for comparable global efforts, emphasizing the advantages for environmental awareness, employability, and trash management.

Find more information

- <https://www.gureakzerbitzuak.com/es/contacta/>,
- <https://www.hernani.eus/es/hernani-ezagutu/jasangarria/hondakinak>
- <http://www.compostaenred.org/proyectos/JornadasPontevedra2016/presentaciones/Hernani.pdf> )

