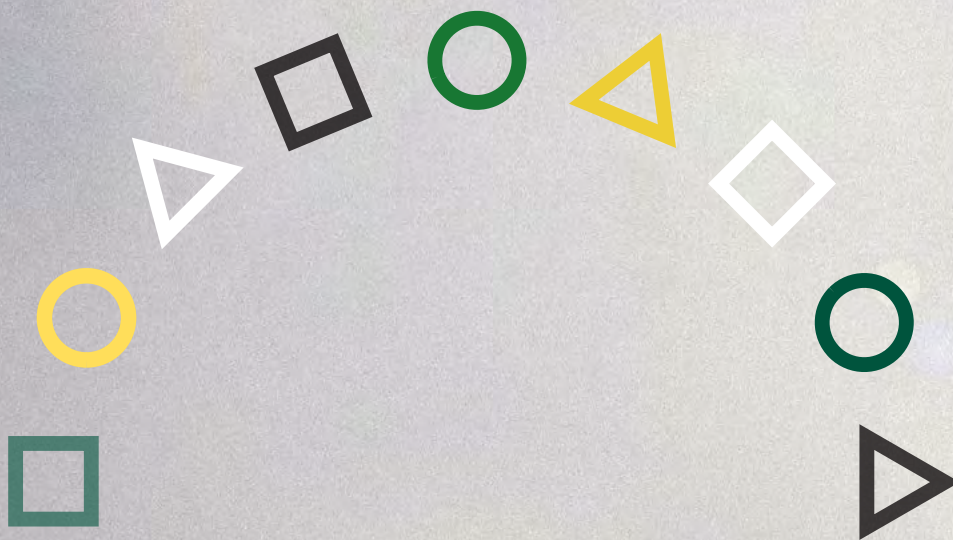
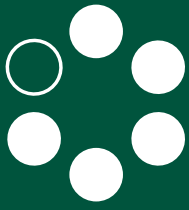


# Putting people and skills at the core of the circular economy: 18 stories from social enterprises





RREUSE is the international network representing social enterprises active in the circular economy, notably in re-use, repair and recycling with more than 30 members across 28 European countries and the USA. Collectively our wider social enterprise network consists of circa 1,000 individual organisations handling 1,2 million tonnes goods and materials annually, through which they provide job and training opportunities to 105,000 individuals,

many of whom are at risk of socio-economic exclusion. 18 of these organisations are featured in this report. Our mission is to empower, represent, and support the social and circular enterprise community, helping drive its development through positive change in European policy, facilitating the exchange of best practices, and fostering meaningful partnerships. Our vision is an inclusive circular economy based on re-use and repair in solidarity with both people and the environment.

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Circularity will extend the lifespan of existing products and materials and avoid CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. But there is very little research on how to rapidly upskill the people who currently work in a linear take-make-waste economy.

Without a good understanding of the skills a circular economy needs, it will not be possible to tailor training provision accordingly. This risks an imbalance between labour supply and demand. In turn, that could slow down the transition to a circular economy.

For decades, social enterprises have been engaged in the re-use and preparation for re-use of goods, creating job opportunities and providing training for the most vulnerable in our communities. On average, a social enterprise creates 70 jobs per 1,000 tonnes of the goods and materials it collects with a view to being re-used<sup>1</sup>.

This report explains how social enterprises are contributing to upskilling and reskilling for an inclusive circular economy, with a strong focus on the manual skills needed in the re-use sector. It showcases 18 social enterprises that are contributing to the development of circular skills, mainly among low skilled and other disadvantaged individuals. These case studies cover a variety of product streams, including textiles, electrical and electronic equipment, furniture, bikes, and building components.

The aim is to cast light on the important role social enterprises have to play in an inclusive and just circular transition.

1 RREUSE (2021) Job creation in the re-use sector: data insights from social enterprises. (Available [here](#)).



“ Social enterprises have demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusive upskilling and reskilling in the circular economy, providing training opportunities adapted to the needs of vulnerable individuals. In accordance with the European Pillar of Social Rights, everyone has the right to quality and inclusive training to acquire skills and manage transitions in the labour market.

## Main findings

For generations, manual skills have been in decline in Western countries due to the rise of automated production systems and the prevalence of the linear take-make-waste economy. This has resulted in limited training opportunities in the re-use and repair sectors. However, social enterprises have helped to preserve manual skills by providing these services with people and skills at the core.

Social enterprises have demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusive upskilling and reskilling in the circular economy. They provide training adapted to the needs of vulnerable individuals, with an emphasis on work-based learning. This type of training is not only suitable for the manual skills required in the circular economy but is also more accessible for individuals with a low skills baseline. To be effective, training must be adapted to the right level and the right format.

Psychosocial support and professional guidance are an essential part of the efforts social enterprises make to help disadvantaged individuals to acquire the necessary skills to find a job.

Social enterprises and companies can benefit from partnering to provide training. These partnerships can help prevent skills gaps while easing disadvantaged individuals' move into the labour market.

Work integration programmes are holistic processes that involve a thorough assessment of the individual's skills, personal situation, and professional objectives, followed by a personalised work plan. The plan helps individuals build work habits and psychosocial skills as the basis to acquire new vocational skills and eventually transition to the traditional labour market.

Despite the efforts of social enterprises to facilitate the upskilling and reskilling of vulnerable individuals in the circular economy, a number of challenges need to be addressed. These include a lack of funding, difficulty in finding qualified instructors, lack of recognition of social enterprises in the provision of training, limits on the duration of work integration programmes, imbalances between skills supply and demand, and the lack of focus on learner-centric and work-based training in VET programmes. These challenges are multifaceted and involve a number of stakeholders.

## Policy reflections relevant to the EU's Skills Agenda

We make a number of initial policy reflections to develop in future discussion with members and other stakeholders. These should be seen as starting points for debate, and should be discussed with the broader stakeholder community to explore how best to advance the development of circular skills in an inclusive way.

It is necessary to promote an enabling policy framework with greater integration between the EU's social and circular agendas. This framework should link policies that adapt the provision of training to policies that increase the demand for circular skills, preventing an imbalance between the supply and demand of circular skills and creating inclusive jobs.

Training opportunities provided by social enterprises should be better combined with existing Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems. Social enterprises' approach to

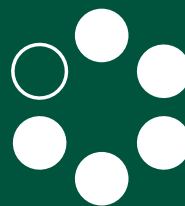
training is particularly valuable in developing circular skills in an inclusive way, due to their focus on social inclusion, accessibility, and work-based training. For greater impact, social enterprises should play a bigger role in certifying skills, particularly for unemployed people and other disadvantaged groups.

To implement the circular economy successfully, it is necessary to improve skills intelligence. This will bolster the understanding of knowledge and skills required for a circular economy, helping to prevent skills and labour shortages and enable swift adaptation of training and work integration programmes.

Partial qualifications, skills passports, and low-level qualifications can be effective tools for making training opportunities more flexible and inclusive. These can recognise skills regardless of how they are acquired, shifting the focus to the skills needs of the circular economy.

### What is RREUSE?

RREUSE is the international network representing social enterprises active in the circular economy, notably in re-use, repair and recycling with more than 30 members across 28 European countries and the USA. Collectively our wider social enterprise network consists of circa 1,000 individual organisations handling 1,2 million tonnes goods and materials annually, through which they provide job and training opportunities to 105,000 individuals, many of whom are at risk of socio-economic exclusion. Our mission is to empower, represent, and support the social and circular enterprise community, helping drive its development through positive change in European policy, facilitating the exchange of best practices, and fostering meaningful partnerships. Our vision is an inclusive circular economy based on re-use and repair in solidarity with both people and the environment.





While circularity will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the environment by extending the lifespan of existing products and materials and avoiding CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, there is very little research on how to rapidly upskill the current workforce entrenched in a linear take-make-waste economy. In other words, it is unclear what types of employees and skills will be necessary to accommodate the future job creation of the circular economy.

Indeed, the circular economy has the potential to create a significant number of new jobs. The number of circular jobs in the EU grew by 5 percent between 2012 and 2018<sup>2</sup>, and a net employment increase of 700,000 jobs could be reached in 2030 through by transitioning to a circular economy<sup>3</sup>.

The re-use sector is particularly labour-intensive. It creates more jobs than recycling per tonne of goods because it requires more intrinsically labour-intensive activities, including reception of goods (identification, first quality checks, sorting), storage and logistics (adequate transport and handling, dismantling, storage of surplus merchandise), and restoration (dismantling, cleaning, repair, functionality checks). On average, a social enterprise creates 70 jobs per 1,000 tonnes of goods and materials collected with a view to being re-used<sup>4</sup>.

For decades, social enterprises have been actively engaged in the re-use and preparation for re-use of goods, creating job opportunities

and providing training for the most vulnerable in our communities. Consequently, the re-use sector is essential not only to promote the circular economy, but also to ensure that the transition does not result in additional burdens for individuals distanced from the labour market. At the same time, the emergence of digital technologies presents a new set of challenges, including the need for digital skills. Social enterprises also play an important role in this area.

However, without a good understanding of the skills requirements of a circular economy, it will not be possible to tailor the provision of training accordingly, risking an imbalance between labour supply and demand. A lack of workers with the right set of skills could potentially slow down the transition to a circular economy, and impede its environmental and social benefits. This is especially the case for jobs that require manual skills, which have been in decline in western countries for decades, but which will be necessary to shift to an economy that preserves the value of products for as long as possible.

This report aims to bolster understanding of how social enterprises are contributing to upskilling and reskilling for an inclusive circular economy, with a strong focus on the manual skills needed in the re-use sector. However, because social enterprises focus on developing skills necessary to enter the labour market, it will also cover certain digital and psychosocial skills. Firstly, the introduction defines what a

- 2 European Commission (2020) Circular Economy Action Plan: For a cleaner and more competitive Europe (Available [here](#)).
- 3 Cambridge Econometrics, Trinomics, and ICF (2018) Impacts of circular economy policies on the labour market. Final report. (Available [here](#)).
- 4 RREUSE (2021) Job creation in the re-use sector: data insights from social enterprises. (Available [here](#)).

circular skill is, what a social enterprise is, and how it provides jobs and training opportunities.

The core of this report consists of 18 case studies from across Europe, showcasing how social enterprises contribute to the development of circular skills, mainly among low-skilled and other disadvantaged individuals. The case studies aim to map the skills required in the re-use sector, describe existing upskilling and reskilling initiatives in the social economy, understand the impact of training, and identify barriers and enablers to developing further training opportunities in the circular economy.

Finally, this report identifies the main existing challenges in the development of circular skills, and the policies required to support inclusive upskilling and reskilling opportunities in the circular economy. Ultimately, this contribution is intended to cast light on the important role of social enterprises as a key partner in an inclusive and just circular transition.

## What are Circular Skills?

In this report, the term “circular skill” will refer to any skill used to preserve the value and extend the lifespan of a product or material<sup>5</sup>. Through the development and use of these skills, workers ensure that material loops are closed and thus form the core of the circular economy.


5 In the past, RREUSE has been involved in the Quali Pro Second Hand project, which aimed to identify the skills and qualifications necessary for the re-use sector in Europe, as well as the strategies and approaches for achieving them.

There is a gap between the skills of today's workers and those they will need to work in a closed loop circular economy. To preserve and extend the lifespan of what is already made, more traditional and manual skills are needed, providing opportunities for individuals with a low skill baseline.

This is particularly the case for activities higher in the waste hierarchy such as repair, re-use, and preparation for re-use, which will be the focus of this report. Re-use involves taking an existing product that has been discarded or donated and ensuring that it retains its function and value. It therefore involves skills that require a great deal of practice and manual dexterity. Manual skills are needed for tasks that require fine motor control and rely on human judgment and experience. Circular skills also allow individuals to identify the characteristics, function, and value of an item or material, so they can adjust it for different purposes or modify it to extend its lifespan.

## Other Relevant Skills

Developing psychosocial, digital, or cognitive skills helps workers to succeed and evolve in the labour market, which is the core mission of social enterprises. These skills are highly transferable to other sectors but are also necessary to transition to a circular economy. This is why we also cover these skills in this report.



Many social enterprises provide digital skills training to vulnerable individuals to improve their employability and social inclusion. Basic digital skills such as browsing the internet, creating, and using an email account, and using spreadsheets are essential for anyone seeking employment. In some cases, more advanced skills are necessary in the re-use sector, including route planning for the collection of re-usable goods, online reviews of resale value, inventory control systems, or e-commerce, among others.

In the re-use sector, a variety of cognitive skills and knowledge are necessary. For instance, to effectively re-use and prepare for re-use electric and electronic equipment, workers must understand safety standards and electrical wiring. This is why social enterprises typically provide training that includes courses on the fundamentals of electricity and safety standards.

Finally, this report will also cover psychosocial skills such as self-motivation, communication, teamwork, and emotional intelligence. This helps individuals outside the labour market to develop work habits and stability. These soft skills are critical to finding employment and lifelong learning in the future.

## What is a Social Enterprise?


Social enterprises operate by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and often innovative way, having social and/or environmental objectives as the reason for their activity<sup>6</sup>.

Work integration social enterprises (also known as WISEs) are a common type of social enterprise across Europe<sup>7</sup>. They specialise in providing work opportunities for disadvantaged people including long-term unemployed individuals, refugees, convicts and ex-convicts, people with substance use disorder, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, victims of domestic abuse, people experiencing homelessness, and more. These groups struggle to find a job in the conventional labour market due to a set of interconnected barriers such as social exclusion, low educational attainment, and lack of work experience. While work integration social enterprises will be the focus of this report, RREUSE will use the term ‘social enterprise’ in the broad sense for the purpose of this study.

Given these obstacles to entering the labour market, support is usually required. Through work placement and training opportunities, social enterprises have designed personalised work integration programmes by which

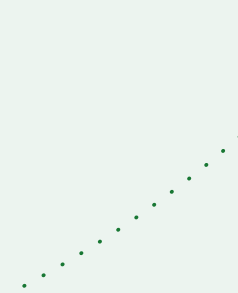
6 European Commission (2021) Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP) (Available [here](#)).

7 For more information, see ENSIE (2021) Impact WISEs (Available [here](#)). Impact-WISEs is a study conducted by ENSIE and its members in order to demonstrate the social and economic impact of WISEs in Europe.



disadvantaged individuals develop their skills and self-esteem. With this support, individuals become more skilled, autonomous, and confident to enter the conventional labour market.

Integration pathways are usually co-designed with the individuals themselves, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and goals—making them proactive in the development of a professional career. These programmes typically involve a combination of classroom instruction, on-the-job training, and other activities, such as job placement and counselling. In fact, personal and professional development is monitored and supported all along the work integration process, often with support from labour technicians, psychologists, and/or coaches. Individualised attention and support are critical to ensure vulnerable individuals feel comfortable and motivated.



In short, work integration programmes are designed to help individuals develop the skills and qualifications needed to obtain and keep employment and become self-sufficient. The need for continuous learning has been highlighted (among others) in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan<sup>8</sup>, which set a target of 60 percent of adults participating in training every year by 2030.

The report will also explore synergies between social enterprises and Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers<sup>9</sup>. By providing the opportunity to upskill and reskill workers, VET plays an important role in preparing individuals to work in the circular economy. Therefore, RREUSE recognises the need to evaluate the potential barriers and enablers in fostering cooperation between social enterprises and VET providers so as to develop circular skills in an inclusive way.

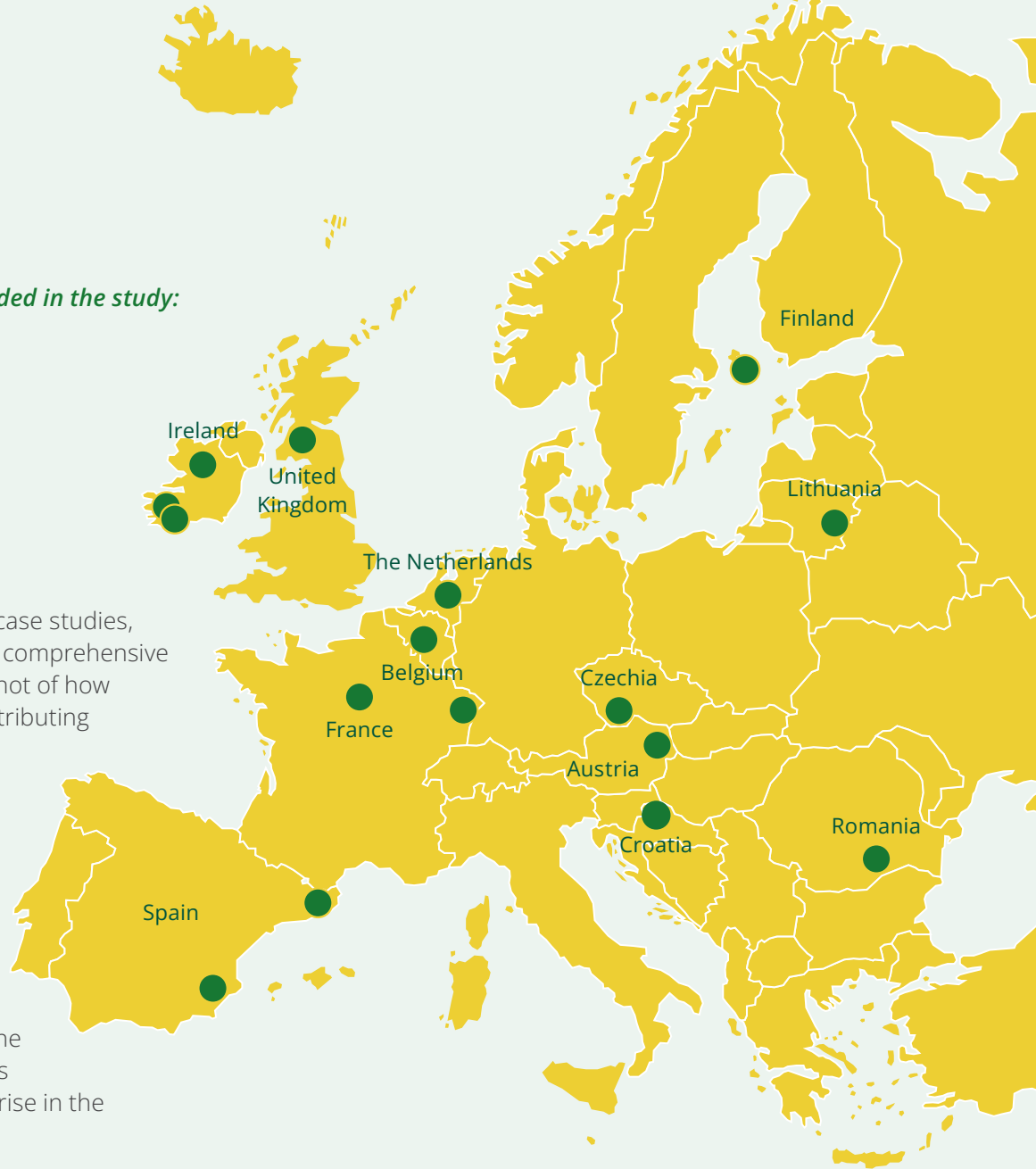
## Case Studies and Methodology

The core of this report features 18 case studies of social enterprises active in the circular economy from various European countries. Some have well-established circular economy policies while others are just starting the transition. To be representative of the sector, the case studies cover a variety of product streams, including textiles, electrical and electronic equipment, furniture, bikes, and construction and demolition waste.

8 European Commission (2021) The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (Available [here](#)).

9 In the interest of simplicity, this report will overlook the complexity of different VET systems across the European Union, focusing instead on providing an overview of the challenges that social enterprises encounter in their cooperation with VET providers.

*Map of case studies included in the study:*



Through this selection of case studies, RREUSE aims to provide a comprehensive and representative snapshot of how social enterprises are contributing to the development of necessary for the circular economy in an inclusive way. While the structure of each case study will vary, the case studies aim to outline the main skills developed, the approach to training, the certification of skills, the impact, and the challenges faced by the social enterprise in the provision of training.

RREUSE has followed a structured methodology to conduct this study. Firstly, we created a list of potential case studies to ensure they reflected the different geographies and product streams in the re-use sector. A representative from each social enterprise was asked to fill out an initial comprehensive survey to identify the main skills, training approach, challenges, impacts, and partnerships of the

case study. The responses were used to frame a semi-structured interview with each representative. These interviews were then transcribed and analysed using qualitative analysis software, which identifies and classifies themes in the data. RREUSE then drafted the final case studies and sent them to each organisation for review.



# Roscommon Women's Network

IRELAND

Roscommon Women's Network (RWN) is a local community project and charity dedicated to supporting women and families throughout County Roscommon, Ireland. Among other initiatives and projects, RWN has created CycleUP, an environmental and training social enterprise that tackles the issue of textile waste by upskilling and reskilling women in the upcycling of textile products. CycleUp raises awareness about the circular economy while educating and empowering women in a rural context.

## Background

CycleUp was a bottom-up initiative. From the outset, Roscommon Women's Network opened a second-hand store with the goal of fundraising in the context of the economic downturn.

However, after a few years, workers and volunteers noticed that the volume and quality of goods being donated for resale was high, but a significant number of garments went unsold. This observation made the team reflect on the reasons for and impact of textile waste, and they began to empower their team to find answers and solutions. Ultimately, this led them to launch a textile upcycling project to enable people to gain a variety of skills: CycleUp.



© Roscommon Women's Network



## Main skills

- **Textile knowledge:** Understanding of the different types of fabrics and other elements present in clothing. Capacity to identify fabrics and assess what can be upcycled.
- **Garment deconstruction:** Ability to dismantle existing garments and fabrics into their component parts in such a way that the re-use of components is maximised, thus reducing waste.
- **Design out of waste:** Ability to create a desired look using existing materials from textile waste.
- **Sewing:** Ability to make or mend clothes or other textile products by using a needle and thread manually or making use of a sewing machine. It involves knowledge of sewing techniques.
- **Resourcefulness:** Capacity to find ways to use limited materials to create something functional, durable, and beautiful.



Before, we had problems trying to convince people about the merits of upcycled items. But I think we're finally getting there. The public has bought in now at this point. It's all talking about the circular economy at the moment. And we really need to move on now. We need to get accredited courses up and running: the time is right to have accredited courses and qualifications for upcycling skills.



© Roscommon Women's Network

## Approach to training

CycleUp's eight-week training course covers a substantial amount of tasks in the curriculum, with the final deliverable of completing at least two upcycled items.

The organisation is now working on tailoring the approach by interviewing each person who signs up, to better understand their needs and to adapt the modules based on their previous skills and understanding.

This is important as upcycling requires a change of mindset and may require people to adapt skills they have had for many years. Moreover, the participants that attended the courses had varying levels of sewing knowledge, with some having extensive skills and some having never threaded a needle. They also had different motivations. For a few, the main motive was to contribute to a circular fashion initiative. Some were chiefly motivated by the prospect of finding a job in the field. Others mainly wanted to pursue sewing for the sake of improving their skills.

The goal of CycleUp is not only to teach upcycling techniques, but also to raise awareness of textile waste and empower women to gain independence and help them integrate into the conventional labour market.

## Certification of skills

Six women have been trained to a QQI Level 6 qualification, allowing them not only to improve their skills, but also to become tutors. In fact, three of them are already confident enough to teach in front of a full classroom at CycleUp, while the other three are running workshops in schools.

The organisation has been working to get the participants' upcycling skills accredited with a specific recognised qualification, but so far this has not been achieved. Conversations are ongoing with VET providers and other organisations from the social economy.

## Challenges

1. The CycleUp initiative encountered the significant early obstacle of a lack of tutors with the necessary expertise and skills to instruct on upcycling. This is relevant, because tutors must have the necessary experience to be able to provide effective instruction and help students reach learning goals. Furthermore, tutors need to be able to tailor their instruction to the specific needs of students, which requires experience and a solid understanding of the subject matter.



We're all about working with people who experience social exclusion, people who experience prejudice and the long-term unemployed. We are an integrated group with women coming from the various experiences of lone parenting, mental health issues, rural isolation as well as participants just looking for connection and inclusion with a group of like-minded people.



© Roscommon Women's Network

2. Some participants expressed their desire to skip the beginner course, due to their considerable sewing experience. CycleUp struggled to communicate that this was not a conventional sewing course. The principal focus of the beginner course is, in fact, learning about the environment and the impact of textile waste. It therefore has a strong focus on identifying materials and deconstructing them. However, some women expressed their frustration over the need to use only textile waste. CycleUp has learned from this experience and makes

sure it conveys the importance of the entire first course and of changing linear economy mindsets.

3. Initially, the aims and activities of CycleUp were not fully understood when it attempted to link up with VET providers. When the social enterprise asked about the availability of upcycling tutors, a local VET provider insisted on hiring a professional sewing instructor. But most women involved in CycleUp already knew how to sew. Upcycling requires a broad and diverse set of skills and therefore, a tutor with these specific skills. However, CycleUp's request was met with confusion.
4. More generally, at the beginning of the initiative, CycleUp found a rigid mindset in established organisations, which influenced funding and cooperation opportunities. To rapidly upskill and reskill the current workforce entrenched in a linear take-make-waste economy, flexible training and education institutions will be needed. They will need to adapt to the diversity and breadth of skills necessary for a circular economy.



<https://rwn.ie/projects/cycleup/>





# Cambio Circular

SPAIN

Cambio Circular is a social enterprise created under the umbrella of Proyecto Abraham, a non-profit supporting the most vulnerable in the region of Murcia. Spain. Cambio Circular creates employment for people in vulnerable situations through circular economy activities, and Proyecto Abraham also provides training and participates in numerous projects to promote social inclusion in the region. They have a strong focus on sorting, re-using, and recycling textiles and footwear.

## Main skills

- **Developing work habits:** capacity to develop a routine, prioritise tasks, follow instructions, and focus on the task at hand. It focuses on self-discipline and the ability to stay motivated and organised.
- **Textiles knowledge:** Understanding of the different types of fabrics and other elements present in clothing. Capacity to identify fabrics and assess what can be re-use and upcycled.
- **Sorting:** Ability to accurately classify textiles into different categories based on their material composition, type of garment, condition, and other characteristics.
- **Sewing:** Ability to make or mend clothes or other textile products by using a needle and thread manually or making use of a sewing machine. It involves knowledge of sewing techniques.
- **Basic digital skills:** Ability to type, use email, navigate the internet, and use and create different types of files, among others.



## Approach to training

People who take part in work integration programmes at Cambio Circular and Proyecto Abraham have to meet certain criteria, such as being a user of the municipal social services and being registered as a jobseeker. Every year, these organisations must apply for a subsidy, which is allocated by the General Directorate for the Self-Employed, Labour and Social Economy of the Regional Ministry to create and maintain employment for those at risk of social exclusion.



© Cambio Circular



Our biggest wish is to be able to be sure that a person who spent three years with us and acquired a good set of skills will be able to find a job, a big challenge at the moment. Opportunities for them to quickly find a new job or to stay as employees in the social enterprise should be facilitated.

At the start of the programme, an interview assesses the individual's situation and skills and helps map out a personalised integration plan. During the programme, a support technician and a production technician offer workers the tools, instruction, and support necessary to feel comfortable and acquire new skills.

For instance, participants in Atelier el Costurerico, a workshop focused on sewing and upcycling, embark on a personalised training programme that generally begins with the Camina entre Telas employability project. At Camina entre Telas, participants acquire skills such as sewing, garment repair, customer service, and e-commerce. Then, in the workshop, they continue to practise and acquire other essential skills for the circular economy such as sorting, deconstructing garments, or designing upcycled clothes. These skills teach them how to use existing resources creatively, upcycling waste into functional and valuable products.

Work integration programmes last a maximum of three years, after which Proyecto Abraham and Cambio Circular offer continued support, guidance, and follow-up to help people transition to the conventional labour market.

## Gender perspective

Atelier El Costurerico is a workshop for people at risk of social exclusion, mainly women victims of gender-based violence, the long-term unemployed, those with disabilities, or experiencing other difficulties. It provides an opportunity for personal and professional growth and for creating a strong network of support. The workshop currently employs almost 20 women and is mostly self-financed but with support from the Regional Ministry of Women, Equality, LGTBI, Family and Social Policy, the City Council of Murcia, and private entities. Proyecto Abraham also participates in the Local Committee for Immigrant Women coordinated by the Cartagena City Council, which aims to promote and design activities to support women from immigrant backgrounds, encouraging their active participation in society.



© Cambio Circular

Finally, Proyecto Abraham also includes concepts of equality in its training courses. Training in gender equality covers topics such as countering stereotypes; the gender gap and the glass ceiling; the reconciliation of personal, family, and professional life; and the creation of an equal and safe working environment.

## Digital skills

Proyecto Abraham helps people at risk of social exclusion to acquire essential digital skills through work integration programmes or one-time courses.

Digital upskilling opportunities cover a range of topics, from basic digital skills to e-commerce or the digital tools needed for jobseeking. Basic skills include learning how to use a computer, browsing the internet, using email, preparing a CV, creating and using different types of files, and managing online profiles. While these skills can help people find employment, they also provide full access to public services and other opportunities.

The organisation also offers more advanced courses for people interested in learning how to code, design websites, or even create video games.

## Impact

1. In 2021, Camina Entre Telas involved almost 200 participants from 15 municipalities. In addition, Atelier El Costurero provides training opportunities for approximately 20 women at a time. This is an opportunity for the participants to develop skills, build work habits, and promote personal well-being.



© Cambio Circular

2. Thanks to its workforce and trainees, Proyecto Abraham runs a series of social impact projects to help the local community. For instance, Ropero Regional is a programme that aims to meet the clothing and footwear needs of vulnerable people. In 2021, it donated 9,000 items of clothing and footwear, helping more than 1,100 people. Ropero Regional also delivered Christmas toys to over 300 children from vulnerable families, and during the COVID-19 emergency provided goods to help homeless people.
3. In 2021, Proyecto Abraham and Cambio Circular collected over 2,000 tonnes of clothing, footwear, and toys with a view to re-use. This is equivalent to saving 50,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Gender gaps remain pervasive in the Spanish labour market. In late 2022, the female unemployment rate was four points higher than the male rate, at 14.8 percent compared to 10.7 percent for men. To address this gender disparity, social enterprises like Proyecto Abraham are working to facilitate the transition to the labour market and addressing the gender gap in skills and access to employment.



<https://www.proyectoabraham.org/>



# Humana Nova

CROATIA

Social Cooperative Humana Nova encourages the employment of people with disabilities or socially excluded through the production and sale of quality, innovative textile products made from ecological and recycled fabrics. In this way, it actively contributes to poverty reduction and the circular economy. Humana Nova has recently won the EASPD Innovation Award 2022 from the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities.

## Background

Humana Nova was created as part of a European project, after many local textile workers from the MTC factory lost their jobs in Međimurje county, Croatia.

Founded 11 years ago, Humana Nova positioned itself as a collector and recycler of textiles, and a producer of textile upcycled goods and new products from eco-certificated materials. It enabled individuals from different marginalised groups to find jobs, including people with mental and physical disabilities, the long-term unemployed, and Roma, among others.

In Croatia, the concept of the circular economy is still relatively new and has yet to be developed and strategised. There is also a lack of funding opportunities for circular economy initiatives, with Humana Nova entirely funded through commercial operations, primarily B2B.



© Humana Nova

## HumanaNOVA

Today, Humana Nova has 44 employees, including 25 individuals with disabilities and 13 from other vulnerable groups.

## Main skills

- **Self-confidence:** Capacity to believe in oneself and one's abilities. It also involves being able to make decisions and be independent.
- **Sorting:** Ability to accurately classify textiles into different categories based on their material composition, type of garment, condition, and other characteristics. This is essential to ensure that the textiles can be re-used in the most appropriate and efficient way possible. It can involve both manual and mechanical sorting.
- **Sewing:** Ability to make or mend clothes or other textile products by using a needle and thread manually or making use of a sewing machine. It involves knowledge of sewing techniques.
- **Garment deconstruction:** Ability to dismantle existing garments and fabrics into their component parts in order to maximise their re-use, thus reducing waste.

- **Design out of waste:** Ability to create a desired look using existing materials from textile waste.

## **Approach to training**

At the start of the training program, Humana Nova assesses the self-confidence, capabilities, and practical skills of participants. To help them build trust, mutual respect, and tolerance, they are then rotated through different workplaces and encouraged to have conversations with other employees. Through monitoring and an individual-focused approach, participants are encouraged to overcome fears and obstacles they may have. Monthly informal meetings and communal activities give participants the opportunity to forge friendships. When working with people from different socially excluded groups, it is essential to create a safe and supportive environment.

Humana Nova recently hired a social worker to help individuals strengthen their self-confidence, trust, and tolerance through conversations and personalised support. This is essential for some individuals to be able to function effectively in the work environment. Following two months of rotation, the sense of belonging improves considerably, and Humana Nova can better assess the participants'

**“ We mostly employ individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities, including those with multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, physical impairments, deafness, and visual impairments. ”**

The European Pillar of Social Rights outlines the right of people with disabilities to a work environment adapted to their needs and to access to resources that allow them to take part in the labour market. However, only 50 percent of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 75 percent of the non-disabled population. Moreover, fewer than 25 percent of them attain a tertiary degree compared to 35 percent of those without disabilities.

skills. They are then assigned a specific task and offered the chance to work more independently. Humana Nova's strategic goal is to preserve its core values while making work integration a priority, but also to promote the circular economy.

## **Partnerships**

Humana Nova is currently working with more than 100 private companies, including big corporations such as Decathlon, IKEA, ERSTE Bank, and Carlsberg, and local SMEs such as ELFS, Regeneracija, Sobočan, and Tehnix. Through these partnerships, Humana Nova can create jobs and provide training opportunities for socially excluded people.

For example, Humana Nova has partnered with Regeneracija to process leftover textiles that cannot be re-used or upcycled. The textiles are ground down into non-woven textile and felt, which is packed at Humana Nova, and Regeneracija exports it to other EU countries. This process not only gives discarded textiles a new purpose, but also provides employment opportunities for marginalised groups: the partnership has enabled Humana Nova to secure eight full time annual jobs and to offer additional training opportunities.



© Humana Nova

In one of the most difficult moments for the cooperative, a partnership with ELFS, a Croatian fashion brand, proved vital. At first Humana Nova was responsible for sewing tracksuits. Now it is responsible for the whole of ELFS' cotton collection, which includes t-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, and a variety of dresses.

The passing of a new law in Croatia that mandated companies with more than 20 employees to hire a certain number of disabled persons enabled Humana Nova to establish partnerships with major companies. These companies could either employ people with disabilities, or support them in other ways, such as buying products and services from companies where more than half the employees have disabilities. These partnerships are invaluable in supporting social enterprises and helping socially excluded people to develop skills, experience, and confidence in the labour market.

Public procurement is also essential to obtain support and create demand for the social and circular economy. Receiving a public procurement contract to sew flags for the city of Zagreb was a major turning point for Humana Nova in 2017.



<https://humananova.org/>

“ People with Down’s syndrome can become competitive in the conventional labour market with the right training and support. We have held fashion shows in the past featuring two models with Down’s syndrome. It was an amazing five minutes of glory for them, as they competed to see who was the better looking one. It was like a game or competition. With help from institutions and organisations like Humana Nova, people with Down’s syndrome can gain self-confidence and continue to thrive and grow.

# Formació i Treball

SPAIN



In 1992, Càritas established Formació i Treball to provide training and job opportunities for people at risk of social exclusion and to collect, sort, and prepare for re-use clothes, furniture, and other household goods. These items are then sold or distributed to vulnerable families from Càritas and the various Barcelona social services. Over the years, Formació i Treball has provided work placements to 4,000 people and currently employs 700 individuals.

## Main skills

- **Developing work habits:** Ability to develop a routine, prioritise tasks, follow instructions, and focus on the task at hand. It focuses on self-discipline and the ability to stay motivated and organized.
- **Textiles knowledge:** Understanding of the different types of fabrics and other elements present in clothing. Ability to identify fabrics and assess what can be re-use, recycled, or upcycled.
- **Sorting:** Ability to accurately classify textiles into different categories based on their material composition, type of garment, condition, and other characteristics. It can involve both manual and mechanical sorting.
- **Furniture identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the quality of furniture and determine if it is suitable for re-use.
- **Careful handling and transport of goods:** Ability to properly handle, transport, and store products to ensure they are not damaged and remain in good condition for future re-use:
- **Basic digital skills:** Ability to type, use email, navigate the internet, and use and create different types of files, among others.



## Approach to training

To enter Formació i Treball's work integration programme, individuals must obtain certification from social services indicating they are at risk of social exclusion. Therefore, previous contact with and referral by social services is essential.

After this, the social enterprise conducts interviews to identify their skills and needs and establish a training itinerary for them. The only prerequisite is to have availability, motivation, and a desire to work.



© Formació i Treball

“ We start with language skills, so Spanish and Catalan, and then digital skills. However, soft skills are also essential. That’s why we work on teamwork, adaptation, and emotional intelligence skills. And from there, we design a work plan for every worker. The aim of this plan is to assess the personal situation, find out the skills baseline and where training is needed. Skills development is achieved through both on-the-job training and tailored training courses.

During the reception and adaptation phase, Formació i Treball evaluates more thoroughly the individual’s personal situation, job objectives, and employability, including language, digital, manual, and psychosocial skills. The work plan is created based on the individual’s objectives and is supplemented with professional training and the provision of jobseeking skills. The goal is that by the end of the work plan, integration workers will have improved their employability and be able to look for a job independently.

Formació i Treball uses several tools to measure the impact of their work integration programmes. These include the Insertion Index, which shows how long a person worked before starting the programme and one year after completing it, and the Employability Index, which gives a numerical index of the employability of the individual, based on several criteria evaluated by the individual and the social enterprise in a questionnaire. The Employability Index is calculated before and at the end of the programme, so as to assess its impact. Formació i Treball also uses a questionnaire to find out more about a worker’s experience and the emotional support they received.



© Formació i Treball

## Certification of skills

Formació i Treball provides training in accordance with the needs and objectives of workers, developing their skills and improving their employability. An important element of this is the provision of low-level qualifications, such as a driver’s licence and other relevant qualifications for various tasks in the circular economy. Formació i Treball may refer individuals to programmes available at other organisations in some cases, especially when it involves specialised or long-term training.

Following a verification process conducted by public authorities, Formació i Treball has the authority to issue Certificates of Professionalism. The verification process includes approving the location where the training will take place and the necessary material for the course. While it is important to ensure that quality criteria are met, this process can be overly complicated and detailed (see section below, “Challenges”). Formació i Treball also applies for public calls, including FOAP (Provision of Training in Priority Areas, in Catalan) to offer training with governmental support. Additionally, other organisations that provide dual VET programmes delegate Formació i Treball to provide a portion of the training.

Internally, Formació i Treball generally focuses on providing concise, tailored courses to enable integration workers to acquire very specific skills. For example, as part of its large textiles sorting plant in Sant Esteve, Formació i Treball offers courses such as warehousing assistance (twelve hours) and bar code



scanning (eight hours). These courses are brief to accommodate those who have full time jobs or family responsibilities.

For those with low skill levels or complicated personal circumstances, existing training opportunities at VET centres may be too long. To accommodate these individuals, Formació i Treball limits the amount of time spent in the classroom and provides practical, effective, and hands-on training instead. They also look for strategies that can be applied to individuals according to their needs. That might involve, for example, not starting a course at 9am, so single mothers can attend without difficulty. Ultimately, flexibility is key when providing training to individuals with low skills or those at risk of social exclusion.

## Challenges

1. The verification process to be able to issue Certificates of Professionalism, regulated by the public employment service, can be overly complicated. While it is important to ensure that quality criteria are met, over-regulation may prevent training from taking place. Formació i Treball suggests that a degree of flexibility and autonomy should be given to social enterprises, especially when the target

audience consists of people at risk of social exclusion and who require flexibility and adaptation to their needs.

2. Social services often refer people with severe mental health difficulties or very long periods out of work, who can find it hard to adjust to a new environment and the tasks expected of them. Furthermore, they may not have basic literacy skills. While the goal of social enterprises is to provide work and training opportunities to those furthest from the labour market, it is essential that social services assess whether an individual's is able to undertake a work integration programme at a particular time. In some cases, additional support or treatment for mental health issues, or provision of basic adult education might be more appropriate before introducing them to the demands of the workplace.

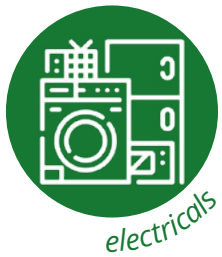
3. This is compounded by the fact that social services sometimes do not share all the necessary information that would enable Formació i Treball to effectively begin a work integration programme. Without the required information about a person's background, it is difficult to establish a personalised work plan for them. In some cases, and for a variety of reasons (such as cultural and language barriers, and inadequate documentation), the onboarding interview may not provide all the relevant information. For this reason, social services should provide a comprehensive profile so that the person's background and social circumstances are clear and known. Individuals referred to start a work integration programme at social enterprises must also receive all the necessary information they need before they begin.



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<https://www.formacioitreball.org/>



# Fédération Envie

FRANCE

Fédération Envie is a national network made up of more than 50 social enterprises employing around 3,000 people, 2,200 of them on employment integration schemes. The network generates almost €100 million in turnover across France. Envie's mission is threefold: social (integration of people distanced from the labour market), environmental (encouraging repair and re-use), and economic (promoting local and regional economic development and job creation).

## Background

In 2021, after a year of preparatory work, Federation Envie was awarded the "QUALIOPI" label from the Ministry of Labour and Integration for its own training centre. This label is an official recognition that the organisation meets the necessary criteria for the development and implementation of training.

For the Envie network, this recognition was a crucial step before the launch of the Envie Reuse and Repair School and supports its efforts to develop and accredit skills in the circular economy. Two training programmes have already been created, one for technicians and one for sellers. The next step is to register the training programmes in the national directory of professional certification (Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles). Subsequently, the plan is to expand the training catalogue to cover all the roles and skills required in the electrical appliance re-use, repair, and recycling value chain.



## Main skills

- **Technical knowledge:** Fundamental understanding of the different elements and functioning of electrical appliances and more generally, the basics of electricity and electromechanics.
- **Identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the state and functioning of used electrical appliances and determine if they are suitable for re-use. This involves inspecting the appliance for signs of damage or malfunctions and carrying out any additional diagnostic tests required. It requires technical knowledge.
- **Use of inventory and traceability systems:** Ability to use digital inventory management systems to accurately track and monitor the movement of items which also involves digital skills.



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Since Envie was created, skills development and professional training have been at the heart of our commitment to work integration and social inclusion. The Envie network is nationally recognised by its stakeholders for its professional expertise on how to re-use and repair large household appliances. Thus, numerous training programs have been launched by Federation Envie and by local Envie units.

- **Extraction, storage, and use of spare parts:** Ability to identify and extract components from an electrical appliance, store them in an organised manner, and use them in a repair or preparation for re-use process. This requires technical knowledge of the different components of different brands and manual dexterity to extract and install again spare parts.
- **Careful handling and transport of goods:** Ability to properly handle, transport, and store products to ensure they are not damaged and remain in good condition for future re-use.
- **Disassembly:** Ability to take apart an electrical appliance and separate it into its component parts. It might require the use of specialised tools.
- **Testing:** Ability to test an electrical appliance for functionality and optimal performance. It requires technical knowledge.

## Approach to training

At Envie, content and learning methods are designed for low-skilled people, and the training centre has a high level of professionalism that meets the requirements of re-use and repair workshops and future employers. This professionalism also allows Envie to support, diversify, and scale up its activities.

Several training programmes have already been created with the aim of strengthening continuous learning. The “TSPE—Technician Specialised in Household Appliances” course is a good example. This programme takes 135 hours to complete over 25 weeks and allows participants to learn and apply the basics of electricity and electronics to household appliances. The teaching style is based on the principle of “discovery, enrichment, application”, which means that the training programme relies on theoretical rules applied to practical situations.

During the programme, participants gain knowledge of essential concepts such as Ohm’s and Joule’s laws, learn the basic components of electronics and semiconductors, and are taught how to use a multimeter. They gain the practical skills necessary to troubleshoot common malfunctions in electrical appliances such as dishwashers, washing machines, driers, or fridges. Participants are evaluated both by their workshop supervisor and trainers, with a major part of the evaluation taking place in re-use and repair workshops in order to test practical skills.

Envie’s approach is based on a mix of e-learning content, theoretical classroom lessons, and hands-on experience within their refurbishing workshops. Through long experience they have found that learning by doing is a key learning method. Additionally, soft skills (communication skills, emotional intelligence, etc.) are also included in the training modules to help participants enter the conventional labour market.



Envie is becoming a learning enterprise. That means that we want to be an organisation that puts in place the necessary culture and processes to encourage the development of everyone's skills.

Additionally, Envie has a strong national presence with six regional excellence training hubs, and strong partnerships with the biggest appliance manufacturers to facilitate job opportunities for integration workers when they complete the programmes.

### ***Certification of skills***

Envie's provision of training is innovative in multiple aspects. It provides long training courses leading to nationally recognised certifications, but in line with the principle of modularity, Envie also offers the opportunity to validate "blocks of skills" with a partial qualification.

A block of skills is equivalent to 120 training hours and one of its main advantages is that trainees who only obtain a single skills block can complete their training programme at any time without losing validation of the skills already acquired.

The network continuously adapts these programmes to its members' needs and has recently been recognised by the Ministry of Labour and Integration with the "QUALIOPI" label. Through an audit of 32 indicators, the "QUALIOPI" certification guarantees the quality of Envie's professional training and enables the organisation to develop accredited training programmes.



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Envie awarded the first diplomas in early 2022 to 12 workers who had completed its course, which was a major milestone in its efforts to promote circular skills and social inclusion. Awarding a diploma is a way to recognise the dedication of the participants and validate the skills developed during the programme, giving a feeling of accomplishment, and improving employability.

The network's goal is to scale up internal training activities through the creation of the Reuse and Repair Envie School and to deliver nationally recognised certifications to 1,000 employees by 2025, representing 120,000 hours of training, being a minimum of 120 hours per beneficiary to acquire one block of skills certificate. The next step is to register the training programmes in the national directory of professional certification ("Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles").

## Partnerships

Envie has built strong partnerships to enable the development of professional skills and find job opportunities for its beneficiaries.

Firstly, partner companies such as Darty, Boulanger, and Derichebourg benefit from the training at Envie, as they are able to employ trainees once they have completed their work integration contract. As a result of the training received at Envie, they become employees with the needed knowledge and skills in the field. In 2022, France Competences identified electronic technicians and re-use sorting professionals for consumer goods as among the most sought after occupations in France.

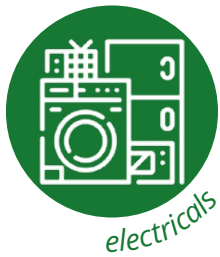
Envie is also involved in research projects with French universities to scale up its activity in big cities, 3D Complex spare parts impression, and to test innovate industrial methods. These partnerships allow Envie to access the latest research in the field and apply it to its own processes, developing a skills and knowledge base, ensuring that the social enterprise is up to date with the latest technological advances, and positioning Envie at the forefront of the circular economy.

Additionally, Envie also works in cooperation with the apprentice training centre Ducretet to provide a training module about household appliance repair in its nine month technician training programme. Lastly, instructors from household appliances manufacturers such as Bosch Siemens Household Appliances (BSH) and Beko are involved in Envie's technician training programme, organising training for products from large companies.

By building partnerships and providing training opportunities to individuals, Envie encourages the development of a skilled workforce capable of repairing and re-using household appliances, which is essential for the long-term success of the circular economy.



At the end of the training, awarding a diploma is a way of recognising the hard work and dedication of our integration workers. It's always a special moment for the Envie network to witness the realisation of our mission. These ceremonies highlight our social and environmental commitment to accelerate the transition to an inclusive circular economy.

**R.U.S.Z**

AUSTRIA

R.U.S.Z (Reparatur- und Service-Zentrum) is a social enterprise founded in 1998 in Vienna with the purpose of reintegrating the long-term unemployed and other people at risk of social exclusion into the labour market. It provides manufacturer-independent repair services for electrical and electronic appliances, sells certified used equipment, raises awareness about premature obsolescence, and offers vocational training to provide the necessary skills in the sector. R.U.S.Z was successfully transformed into a non-profit private enterprise in 2008. Today, the organisation is recognised as a national leader in the re-use and repair sector, operates on a cost recovery basis, and has more than 20 employees.

### Background

One of the broader goals of R.U.S.Z has always been to raise awareness among customers and the public about the premature obsolescence of electronic and electrical devices. R.U.S.Z has published some 500 relevant editorial contributions on this topic. In the day-to-day business this effort is put into practice by R.U.S.Z employees who always advise customers to repair a device rather than throw it away and buy a new one.

In 1999 R.U.S.Z, in collaboration with 12 smaller repair businesses in the area, created the Vienna Repair Network (ReparaturNetzWerk Wien). This network now consists of over 100 small and medium enterprises that offer repair services for electrical and electronic devices, as well as other household goods.

In Austria, social enterprises are also integrated into labour market policy. The Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) commissions social enterprises to provide training to people who are vulnerable and outside the labour market to help them secure regular jobs.

In 2013, R.U.S.Z ran an interesting project with support from the European Social Fund and the AMS—the StarGate vocational training programme for mechatronic engineers who had not completed their primary education. After a year, the pilot project was discontinued



### Reparatur- und Service-Zentrum R.U.S.Z

due to a lack of trainees, but the programme was successful, with 55 percent of trainees completing their education in that time.

### Main skills

- **Technical knowledge:** strong understanding of the different elements and the functioning of electrical appliances and more generally, the basics of electricity and electromechanics.
- **Identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the state and functioning of electrical appliances and determine if they are suitable for re-use. This involves inspecting the appliance for signs of damage or malfunctions, and any additional diagnostic tests required.
- **Extraction, storage, and use of spare parts:** Ability to identify and extract elements from an electrical appliance, store them in an organised manner, and use them in a repair or preparation for re-use process.

This requires technical knowledge of the different components of different brands and manual dexterity to extract and reinstall spare parts.

- **Careful handling and transport of goods:** Ability to properly handle, transport, and store products to ensure they are not damaged and remain in good condition for future re-use.
- **Repair of electrical appliances:** Ability to assess and troubleshoot any issues with electrical appliances. It requires technical knowledge of electrical systems and the use of tools such as multimeters, screwdrivers, or soldering irons. It also requires manual dexterity to carry out tasks such as screwing, glueing, or soldering.
- **Testing:** Ability to test an electrical appliance for functionality and optimal performance.
- **Customer service:** Ability to anticipate and meet the needs of customers, provide courteous service, and generally ensure customer satisfaction.

## Certification of skills

In 2021 the AMS commissioned a new training programme for qualification of repair technicians to R.U.S.Z and BFI, a vocational training centre. The programme, called ReSeTech, was intended to set the stage for a regular nationwide training offer in the sector.

R.U.S.Z and BFI developed a course structure of 50 percent theory (provided by BFI) and 50 percent practical training (provided by R.U.S.Z). The curriculum was designed to cover a wide range of theoretical topics, ranging from sustainability and resource conservation to policies and regulations on repair. In addition to the fundamentals of electrical power, the course also covered first aid and safety



© R.U.S.Z

practices, reading and understanding technical documents, quality standards, and more.

In the practical part of the course, participants were taught about the components of electrical appliances, how to take them apart, how to maintain and repair them, and when is not possible or cost-effective to do so. This entailed the use of essential manual skills such as screwing, glueing, or soldering, among others. Additionally, the course also taught communication and customer service skills.

The exam consisted of both written and practical tests. The written test covered electrical engineering and safety standards, while the practical test focused on device repair. During the practical test, experienced technicians and instructors were present to oversee the trainees, assessing whether they had the knowledge and manual skills required to work with electrical appliances.

The ReSeTech programme has generated some key lessons for the provision of training and partnerships:

- The programme proved not to be ideal for the specific target group of long-term unemployed and/or low skilled people. R.U.S.Z has expertise in working with individuals distanced from the labour market and has observed that a theoretical approach is not the best fit for this audience. While it was important to introduce to participants the notion of sustainability and circular economy, R.U.S.Z believes that the course should have been more focused on practical aspects. In addition, R.U.S.Z



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has observed that psychosocial support is necessary as part of the training to assist the target group in the learning process.

- The training also proved to be very demanding for the trainees. Even the most successful of them were not able to meet the requirements after the six-month course. R.U.S.Z considers that trainees should have received at least two or three months of follow-up on-the-job training to repair independently and ensure productive labour hours to finance the programme. Currently, two former ReSeTech trainees are working full-time at R.U.S.Z.
- Lastly, to enhance the effectiveness of the AMS in selecting participants for R.U.S.Z's training programmes, the social enterprise suggests refining the occupational classification to include the occupation of repair technician. Currently, only the service technician occupation appears in the classification. This could help make future assignments more effective and formalise the importance of this job.

In January 2023, R.U.S.Z launched ReTech, a revised version of the programme, with greater control over the curriculum. This version, supported by the AMS, focuses more on practical skills, reducing the theoretical part of the course to 20 percent, and providing on-the-job training. This training may include a work placement in another social enterprise, such as the Emmaus Community in St. Pölten, with which R.U.S.Z has had conversations.

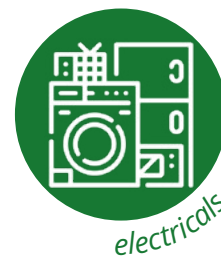
## Challenges

1. R.U.S.Z encountered some difficulty in creating a programme oriented to practical training in partnership with the BFI, which is essential for developing manual skills in the and repair sector. To ensure inclusive upskilling and reskilling opportunities in the circular economy, the design and provision of training programmes should be flexible, to adapt to the changing needs of the transition to a circular economy.
2. Despite the six month duration of the programme, the most successful trainees still did not meet the requirements to become R.U.S.Z repair technicians. To fully realise its potential, ReSeTech required at least two to three months of follow-up on-the-job training at the end of the programme to gain the necessary skills and experience to become a professional repair technician, especially for repairing large household appliances at customers' premises. This example highlights the importance of work-based learning in developing the manual skills needed in the re-use and repair sector.
3. Another institutional barrier is that repair technicians are not recognised in the occupational classification of the employment agency. Changing this would allow the agency to directly select participants for training programmes focused on repair. The lack of specification of skills in vocational trainings is an interconnected challenge.
4. Finally, while there was frequent and regular communication, the partners could have worked more closely together in developing the curriculum and the teaching materials for the ReSeTech programme.



<https://rusz.at/en/>





# Ateliere Fără Frontiere

ROMANIA

Ateliere Fără Frontiere Association is a Romanian non-profit organisation offering personalised counseling, skills training and a job placement programme to people who are socially excluded. It has established four workshops designed to develop workplace skills through social and circular economy activities: educlick, remesh, the bio&co farm and logietic. This case study will mainly focus on educlick, which is a national platform for collecting and refurbishing waste electronic and electrical equipment (WEEE) and donating refurbished IT equipment to schools from deprived communities in Romania, and on the WISE for Digital Upskilling project, an ERASMUS+ project focused on digital literacy.

## Main skills

- **Developing work habits:** capacity to develop a routine, prioritise tasks, follow instructions, and focus on the task at hand. It focuses on self-discipline and the ability to stay motivated and organised.
- **Knowledge of hardware:** strong understanding of the different elements and the functioning of laptops and computers' hardware.
- **Disassembly:** ability to take apart a computer and separate it into its component parts. It requires manual dexterity and technical knowledge. It requires the use of specialised tools.
- **Testing:** ability to test a computer or laptop for functionality and optimal performance.
- **Basic digital skills:** ability to type, use email, navigate the internet, and use and create different types of files, among others. (Developed in the context of the WISE project).



## Approach to training

At Ateliere Fără Frontiere, individuals from vulnerable backgrounds are offered an extensive 24-month work integration programme, which may be extended to up to 36 months if the person faces severe difficulties.

The programme combines social and professional counselling to equip individuals with both hard and soft skills. After the selection process, the two-month phase of adjustment is designed to provide urgent solutions to individuals' social and personal problems, such as family difficulties, domestic violence, health issues, addictions, housing problems, or missing legal documents, among others. During this phase, individuals are also taught the fundamentals of adjusting to the workforce.

REFERENCE & SELECTION 1 month	ADJUSTMENT 2 months	STABILISATION I 6 months	STABILISATION II 6 months + 6	PROFESSIONALISATION I 5 months + 3	PROFESSIONALISATION II 5 months + 3	MONITORING 6 months
SOCIAL COUNSELLING	Urgent social solutions	Socialising, soft skills, personal development	Reconstruction of social and	Psychotherapy, building self-esteem, confidence in others	Acceptance of change, recovery of autonomy	Personal and social stability
PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING	Adapting to the workplace	Professional life skills	Skill review, defining a professional project	Individual training and job qualification plan	Internships, interview preparation, job mediation	Durable employability

The following 12 months are divided into two phases of stabilisation, during which a skills assessment is conducted, a professional project is defined, and psychosocial skills are reinforced with a focus on building social relations, including relations with work colleagues.

During the professionalisation phase a plan is created to provide individual training and job qualifications, with a focus on strengthening self-confidence and pursuing a professional project.

Due to existing legislation in Romania on lower education limits, some integration workers cannot access VET courses leading to recognised qualifications. Moreover, Ateliere Fără Frontiere is not accredited to provide training that leads to a recognised qualification. However, the organisation creates a profile of integration which outlines workers' skills and the tasks they have completed. This information can be helpful in the traditional job market when trying to find employment.

Once the work-based training is completed, Ateliere Fără Frontiere continues to monitor the individual's employment path and stability. This is essential to assess the impact of the work integration programme.

## Digital skills

The WISE project, or Work Integration Social Enterprises for Digital Upskilling, is a two-year project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme which aims to create and provide learning materials for upskilling the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged in social enterprises. The project also aims to enhance the instructional abilities of the job coaches who work with integration workers, through the provision of a job coaching guide.



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For this purpose, the outcomes of the project were:

- a study of social enterprises in four different countries.
- a set of pedagogical materials for low skilled adults requiring basic literacy, numeracy, and digital skills.
- a set of pedagogical materials for the job coaches, who are the primary personnel working directly with the participants of the work integration programme.
- an online observatory to collate all information in one place that is readily accessible by the project's target group from anywhere and at any time.

## Impact

1. In Romania, there is still a large IT gap between urban and rural areas. Opportunities to access laptops and computers are concentrated in big cities. By refurbishing and donating computers to schools in the most deprived communities of Romania, educlick is tackling the digital divide, enabling individuals to gain access to ICT and the ability to use it. For example, in 2022, Ateliere Fără Frontiere's 'Let's Click on Romania' project provided more than 3,500

computers to more than 200 educational institutions. This is a powerful step towards bridging the digital gap and empowering students with the skills they need to succeed.

2. However, the digital divide goes well beyond the distribution of ICT products and also relates to training and digital skills. The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) shows that 40 percent of adults in Europe lack basic digital skills, despite their crucial role in achieving equality and inclusiveness. This figure rises to 72 percent in Romania. Through work-based training and the WISE project, Ateliere Fără Frontiere aims to improve the digital skills baseline of disadvantaged workers.
3. Ateliere Fără Frontiere offers the opportunity for participants in its work integration programme to gain first hand insight into the workings of different companies. By visiting companies and seeing their operations on the ground, participants can gain a better understanding of the working culture of the companies, the roles they could potentially take on within the labour market, and the skills they need to succeed in them.

“ Employment agencies usually work with unemployed people who are registered with them. However, those who are more distant from the labour market tend to not be registered, so organisations such as Ateliere Fără Frontiere have to register them in order to provide them with the help they need. Moreover, employment agencies typically provide generic services such as courses, job postings, and job fairs, and they do not offer special services tailored to those who are more distant from the labour market.

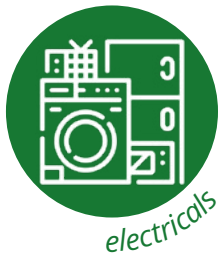
While the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) shows that 40 percent of adults in Europe lack basic digital skills, this figure rises to 72 percent in the case of Romania. Moreover, only 6 percent of companies offer ICT training, compared to an average of 20 percent across the EU.

## Challenges

1. Ateliere Fără Frontiere has highlighted the negative impact of legislation that limits access to VET courses leading to recognised qualifications to those with a minimum of eighth grade educational attainment. These measures pose a risk to the professional development and integration of low skilled people since they create even more barriers to their access to training and the labour market.
2. Moreover, while legislation on apprenticeship schools exists in Romania, these schools are not really functional at the moment. Apprenticeship schools are necessary to provide an alternative source of education and training for those who lack resources or face other barriers to attending traditional educational institutions. These centres offer a more hands-on and personalised learning experience that allows individuals to gain the skills to enter the labour market at their own pace and receive a recognised qualification for the training received.
3. Finally, the lack of competent workplace assessment providers (certification is required) and the minimum of six months of practical work experience per job has also been a significant challenge.



<https://atelierefarafrontiere.ro/>



# Le Hublot

BELGIUM

Le Hublot is a Socio-Professional Integration Centre (CISP) approved by the region of Wallonia, Belgium. It provides training to adults in a work environment, mainly in the field of household appliances repair and preparation for re-use, to promote their socio-professional integration. Low skilled jobseekers can develop new skills needed for the circular economy and become closer to the job market.

## Background

Socio-professional Integration Centres (CISP) offer vocational training and socio-professional integration for adults who are unemployed and have low educational attainment. Training opportunities at Le Hublot are therefore reserved for unemployed people registered with the Public Service for Employment and Vocational Training in Wallonia (FOREM) who have achieved, at a maximum, a certificate of secondary education of second degree (CESDD). They are also accessible to jobseekers who have been unemployed for at least 18 months in the 24 months preceding the training. There are, however, other groups who can potentially access training opportunities at Le Hublot, including individuals recently released from prison or those with an immigration background and low educational level.



To incentivise and facilitate the participation of unemployed people in VET, the Public Service for Employment and Vocational Training in Wallonia (FOREM) offers an allowance of two additional euros per hour of training in a CISP to each participant as well as a contribution to travel and childcare costs. This allowance is added to existing unemployment benefits.

To be approved as a CISP, organisations must be non-profit. It is also necessary to draw up an educational plan including reception and orientation of the trainee, creation of tailored individual training programmes, educational monitoring, social support, participative evaluation of training, and recognition of the knowledge and skills acquired by the trainee. A CISP must also establish partnerships with other training providers, social enterprises, and other social support operators.



© Le Hublot



Le Hublot is probably the only centre in Wallonia with expertise in repairing the winding of copper wires that connect the various electrical components of an engine. We know how to repair this, and this skill is very helpful because it can be applied not only to electrical appliances, but also a variety of industries such as wind turbines and trams. Unfortunately, it's often cheaper to buy a new engine than to get it repaired.

## Main skills

- **Technical knowledge:** strong understanding of the different elements and functioning of electrical appliances and more generally, the basics of electricity.
- **Identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the state and functioning of electrical appliances and determine if they are suitable for re-use. This involves inspecting the appliance for signs of damage or malfunctions, and any additional diagnostic tests required.
- **Extraction, storage, and use of spare parts:** Ability to identify and extract elements from an electrical appliance, store them in an organised manner, and use them in a repair or preparation for re-use process. This requires technical knowledge of the different components of different brands and manual dexterity to extract and reinstall spare parts.
- **Repair of electrical appliances:** Ability to assess and troubleshoot any issues with electrical appliances. It requires technical knowledge of electrical systems and the use of tools such as multimeters, screwdrivers, or soldering irons. It also requires manual dexterity to carry out tasks such as screwing, glueing, or soldering.
- **Testing:** ability to test an electrical appliance for functionality and optimal performance.

## Approach to training

Le Hublot follows a work-based training approach, which involves placing people in a real working environment where they make and sell products and services. Indeed, while Le Hublot's focus is on providing training opportunities, the organisation prepares electrical appliances for re-use and to be sold through another social enterprise, and also provides citizens with a low-cost repair service.

At Le Hublot, new trainees go through a few initial courses with an instructor, covering topics such as health and safety in the workplace, as well as other essential issues. After this, trainees begin to learn how to repair washing machines, starting with how to disassemble and reassemble them. This is an important part of the training process as it is the foundation on which more complex skills can be built. It also allows trainees to become familiar with the tools required in the workshop. After they have acquired the basic skills, they begin to learn how to tackle other specific problems. Then they learn how to work with other electrical appliances such as driers, dishwashers, and ovens.

To learn the skills needed, they receive help from the instructor and other trainees. Indeed, peer learning is encouraged as a way to develop skills. At any given time, there are 8-10 trainees in the centre, but they come in two by two, not at the same time, allowing more experienced trainees to mentor new ones. This includes



© Le Hublot

shadowing other trainees to practice and learn new skills. Trainees can stay at Le Hublot for a maximum of 18 months.

Le Hublot also offers training courses focused on electrical engineering, administration, and digital skills. The social enterprise has been approved as a training operator under the Plan Mobilisateur aux Technologies de l'Information et Communication (PMTIC). This training aims to give a first introduction to computer tools and other digital skills useful for jobseekers.



<https://www.lehublot.be/>

## Certification of skills

Le Hublot is a legally recognised Socio-Professional Integration Centre (CISP), providing training to individuals distanced from the labour market. However, it is unable to issue recognised qualifications due to the lack of third-party external inspection of its pedagogical model. As a result, there is a gap between CISPs and conventional education and VET institutions: the former depend on Belgian regions, and cannot issue recognised qualifications, while the latter depend on the Belgian linguistic communities, and can provide recognised qualifications. This means that Le Hublot can only provide an attestation of skills learned and of the duration of training, and not an officially recognised educational certificate.

The system of CISPs is a valuable resource in terms of providing accessible training opportunities to unemployed individuals with a low skills baseline. However, to ensure trainees are employable and re-use and repair skills are recognised professionally, measures should be taken to enable these organisations to provide recognised qualifications.

**“** We have around eight trainees at once, who come two by two. The more experienced trainees mentor the new ones, who shadow them. This way, they can practice with their peers and quickly develop manual skills.

# Duhallow Revamp

IRELAND

IRD Duhallow is a company with charitable status that was established in 1989 to address the economic, social, and environmental needs of the North Cork/East Kerry region of Ireland. It is a combined effort by state bodies, local authorities, and individual entrepreneurs that share resources for the benefit of the local community. Duhallow REVAMP was established in 2016 as a social enterprise under the umbrella of IRD Duhallow, and aims to provide affordable second-hand furniture to disadvantaged individuals in the community while offering job and upskilling opportunities.



## Main skills

- **Refurbishing furniture:** this process involves a variety of skills, including sanding, staining, painting, French polishing, and varnishing. Furniture restoration requires attention to detail and a good understanding of furniture construction, materials, and finishes.
- **Upholstery:** this process requires a range of skills, including fabric selection and cutting, pattern making, sewing, foam padding, and tufting. It also requires the use of tools such as staple guns, hammers, and sewing machines, problem solving skills, and manual dexterity.
- **Identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the quality of furniture and determine if it is suitable for re-use. This includes assessing the structural



© Duhallow Revamp



integrity and making sure that there are no major defects. It requires knowledge and experience to identify different types and styles of furniture. Safety issues must be assessed as well.

- **Waxing of furniture:** Ability to apply a thin layer of wax to the surface of furniture, making sure to spread it evenly and ensuring complete coverage.
- **Preparation for re-use of paint:** this process requires a range of skills, including the identification of contaminants, the assessment of the condition of the paint, and the identification of different types and shades of paint. Ability to mix, filter, and recolour paint.

## Approach to training

Duhallow REVAMP takes a comprehensive and hands-on approach to training, providing practical instruction in health and safety standards, manual skills, and customer service, with a focus on furniture re-use, including chairs, tables, lockers, chests of drawers, wardrobes, beds, and more. Duhallow REVAMP



They don't see immediately what they're doing for the circular economy. In the beginning, it's just a job. But after a while, you can explain to them that this chair that came to be upholstered would have ended up in landfill if we didn't work on it. The donations would have ended up in landfill if we didn't take it in, clean it and resell it. We explain them this so that they know the impact of their work and the importance of a circular economy.

also provides a refurbishment service for furniture owners who wish to have their old pieces refurbished or upcycled.

In fact, Duhallow REVAMP was the first organisation in Ireland to be awarded the Re-mark certification, Ireland's Reuse Quality Mark of Excellence. Re-mark was established by the Community Reuse Network of Ireland (CRNI) through EPA's Green Enterprise funding, to address consumers' concerns regarding the quality and safety of re-use goods. It has contributed to more efficient, safe, and effective re-use operations, which in turn has an impact on the skills needed and thus the provision of training.

To ensure that the training is engaging and that workers can develop various skills, integration workers are involved throughout the process from beginning to end, covering activities such as goods reception, quality checks, upholstery, furniture restoration, waxing, and customer service over the course of the 12-months work integration programme. In addition, workers have the opportunity to switch between different initiatives and social enterprises under the umbrella of IRD Duhallow if they are not comfortable or interested in a particular activity. This approach makes it possible to adapt training to the individual's needs and interests.



© Duhallow Revamp

At the end of the work integration programme, Duhallow REVAMP seeks to help integration workers find employment. However, this can be difficult as the majority of jobs are located in nearby cities, such as Cork, and some individuals lack access to transport. To help integration workers find local job opportunities, the organisation relies heavily on referrals and networks with local businesses and entrepreneurs, as this can help stronger relationships with locals. Such an approach is particularly useful and necessary in tightly knit rural communities.

### **Certification of skills**

Duhallow REVAMP highlights the potential impact that the certification of skills and skills passports could have on social enterprises, especially in helping integration workers improve their employability and self-esteem.

Offering low-level or partial qualifications could also help to encourage a more committed workforce, validate skills, and improve the value of social enterprises in offering an inclusive and flexible approach to upskilling and reskilling. If social enterprises could provide recognised qualifications, then work integration programmes would have a greater impact on the development of skills, because workers



would be more motivated to complete the programme, learning new skills, validating them, and getting closer to the labour market.

It is also important to note that recognised qualifications in the re-use sector could also facilitate the continuity of skilled and qualified workers within the organisation, who could transition from integration workers to employees, and eventually from employees to instructors. This could also help find skilled and qualified instructors in the sector.

A skills passport could provide a way for social enterprises to recognise an individual's proficiency in certain manual tasks, such as upholstery and furniture repair. The passport could serve as a record of the skills and qualifications acquired, allowing the individual to demonstrate their preparation and experience to prospective employers. This could provide an alternative to traditional qualifications, allowing individuals to gain recognition for their skills without having to complete a full qualification programme.

In conclusion, a more flexible system should be devised to validate the practical skills that are acquired on-the-job, including in the context of work integration programmes.



© Duhallow Revamp

## Impact

1. Duhallow REVAMP provides affordable second-hand goods to the local community. Discounts are available for students, pensioners, low-income households, or for anyone in receipt of a means tested welfare payment. This is key in ensuring that the transition to a circular economy is fair and inclusive.
2. In a rural area, social isolation and lack of work and training opportunities can be a major problem. Upskilling and reskilling opportunities may be limited, thereby reducing access to the labour market for socially excluded people. Duhallow REVAMP provides a local platform to enable people to work, develop their skills and create stronger bonds with the community.
3. Duhallow REVAMP has had a significant impact in reducing flytipping in the region, which was a major problem that led public authorities to enact measures promoting re-use and repair. Since 2016, it has diverted 215.3 tonnes of furniture from landfill and illegal dumping, 191.7 tonnes of which have been given back to the community through re-use and repair. The rest is mostly stored for future sale or downcycled into items like pinboards.
4. While integration workers in the re-use sector have a significant environmental impact, most of them are not aware of their contribution and importance. To solve this, Duhallow REVAMP strives to educate its workers about the environmental impact of furniture re-use, in an effort to inform them about the significance of their work and to promote behaviour change in the community.



<https://www.irdduhallow.com/>



# Emmaüs Mundo

FRANCE

Emmaüs Mundo is a social enterprise based in Alsace, France. Its aim is to socially and professionally integrate people who struggle to enter the labour market, with special attention to former and current prisoners. Emmaüs Mundo has set up a furniture refurbishment workshop in the detention centre of Oermingen and also runs a bicycle repair workshop at Strasbourg prison.

## Background

The Emmaüs movement was launched in France by the priest and activist Abbé Pierre when Europe was in ruins after the Second World War. He started a grassroots movement to promote social inclusion and equality. By collecting and re-using unwanted goods and waste, the movement supported itself, linking circularity to social inclusion. This is where the combination of recycling and solidarity was born.

Among other actions, Emmaüs Mundo has set up a workshop in the detention centre of Oermingen to provide training opportunities to inmates and former inmates, in response to a request from the Ministry of Justice. The workshops offer woodworking and furniture refurbishment training to people at the end of their sentences and provides them with socio-professional support to help them readapt to life outside prison and find a job. Emmaüs Mundo also operates a bicycle repair training workshop at Strasbourg prison.



© Emmaüs Mundo



## Main skills

- **Identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the quality of furniture and determine if it is suitable for re-use. This includes assessing the structural integrity and identifying the type and style of furniture.
- **Careful handling and transport of goods:** Ability to properly handle, transport, and store products to ensure they are not damaged and remain in good condition for future re-use.
- **Bicycle repair:** Ability to inspect the overall condition of a bicycle, diagnose and repair mechanical problems, replace worn out tyres and other elements, adjust brakes and gears, and clean and lubricate the components.
- **Refurbishing furniture:** this process involves a variety of skills, including sanding, staining, painting, French polishing and varnishing. Furniture restoration requires attention to detail and a good understanding of furniture construction, materials, and finishes.



© Emmaüs Mundo

## Certification of skills

Emmaüs Mundo offers on-the-job training which at present does not result in recognised qualifications. However, when monitoring and supporting individuals released from prison, Emmaüs Mundo can refer them to an accredited VET provider if they wish. This helps them improve and prove their skills. While Emmaüs Mundo wants to be able to offer these accreditations in-house, it is currently a complex process.

Emmaüs Mundo has collaborated with the AFPA, l'Agence nationale pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes, to establish a vocational training course in Strasbourg to develop the necessary skills to become a professional bicycle mechanic. Being part of the programme has enabled those who are outside the job market to gain the skills and knowledge to find a job locally or even start their own business in the sector. Strasbourg has pioneered the use and popularity of bicycles in France, so there is a thriving ecosystem of businesses that are focused on selling, maintaining, repairing, and re-using them.

“Once released from prison, people may choose to pursue accredited training after experiencing the sector in our prison workshops. Then, our colleagues from the social area will attempt to get these people into an external, accredited training centre to gain the necessary qualifications. We would like to have the ability to provide this training ourselves, but this may take time.

## Impact

1. Former inmates often have serious difficulty finding employment after they have been released. While in jail, they may lose their skills and are rarely given the chance to acquire useful work experience. Moreover, many employers are generally reluctant to hire individuals with a criminal record. Inclusive upskilling and reskilling opportunities increase their chances of finding a job when they are released: 80 percent of Emmaüs Mundo programme participants find employment upon release from prison.
2. Offering job opportunities to people in prison while they are still incarcerated allows them to be active and develop a daily routine, which is necessary for emotional stability. This may facilitate the transition to freedom and reintegration into society once they leave the detention centre.
3. Overall, Emmaüs Mundo provides over 100 jobs, 75 percent of them for people with a low or very low level of formal education. Training in prison addresses low educational attainment and people in prison are offered the chance of a better life.
4. Emmaüs Mundo collects around 1,400 tonnes of products per year, of which more than 30 percent is re-used and 60 percent recycled.



<https://emmausmundo.com/linsertion-avec-emmaus-mundo/>



# Deaf Enterprises

IRELAND

Founded in 1987, Deaf Enterprises is Ireland's only dedicated employer of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. The organisation was set up to tackle the high rates of unemployment among Cork's Deaf community but has since grown to provide training and work placement opportunities. In 1988, Deaf Enterprises launched a workshop providing reupholstery, sewing, French polishing, and furniture manufacturing and restoration. They have also recently initiated a new programme focused on bicycle repair.

## Main skills

- **Refurbishment of furniture:** this process involves a variety of skills, including sanding, staining, painting, French polishing and varnishing. Furniture restoration requires attention to detail and a good understanding of furniture construction, materials, and finishes.
- **Upholstery:** this process requires a range of skills, including fabric selection and cutting, pattern making, sewing, foam padding, and tufting. It also requires the use of tools such as staple guns, hammers, and sewing machines, problem solving skills, and manual dexterity.



© Deaf Enterprises



- **Identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the quality of furniture and determine if it is suitable for re-use. This includes assessing the structural integrity and making sure that there are no major defects. It also requires knowledge and experience to identify different types and styles of furniture and to estimate potential demand. Potential safety issues must be assessed as well.
- **Review of resale value and/or repair costs:** Ability to utilise industry knowledge and experience to assess the market value of an item and the cost of repairs required.
- **Bicycle repair:** Ability to inspect the overall condition of a bicycle, diagnose and repair mechanical problems, replace worn out tyres and other elements, adjust brakes and gears, and clean and lubricate the components.



Some of our people live alone. And they've got no community, they've got no other external source of engagement. So, beyond the professional aspect, it's very important for them. Some of them come in very early in the morning and have their breakfast in here before they even start work because they want to, it's their only outlet. And it's so, so important to them.

## **Certification of skills**

Deaf Enterprises strives to provide jobs and training opportunities to the Deaf or Head of Hearing community, thus helping them become more independent. In this context, qualifications are a way for Deaf or Head of Hearing people to find a job more easily, gain recognition for their work, and demonstrate that they have the skills and knowledge to contribute to society.

The state education system previously offered a very structured and complete furniture and upholstery training course, in which candidates would be tested throughout and came away with a recognised formal qualification. This stopped some years ago and since then Deaf Enterprises has been struggling to establish an alternative. In the meanwhile, the company has been providing on-the-job training, though this is not accompanied by a formal accreditation.

The social enterprise is considering different options to provide recognised qualifications for their furniture training programmes. However, there is currently no specific assessment and training provider within the country. The enterprise may therefore need to send their participants outside Ireland, which presents a challenge, particularly for Deaf or Head of Hearing people, as they would need a specific interpreter (and Irish Sign Language is different from all other sign languages, including British Sign Language).

Deaf Enterprises has also been exploring the potential of partnering with educational training boards, such as the Cork Education and Training Board. The social enterprise has been investigating the possibility of setting up a suitable upholstery course, and if so, how to work with the training provider to supply students to the course and provide trainers, as they have qualified people who have the necessary skillset. Deaf Enterprises is open to being innovative and supplying the trainers if the course is created.

Finally, Deaf Enterprises has recently started offering a bicycle repair training programme with a recognised qualification. Participants must pass a number of tasks and tests, and upon completion of the two-week course they receive a low-level qualification. Two or three people have already gone through the accredited training and have qualified. The qualification is provided by City and Guilds, a charity based in the UK but which provides the accredited training locally in Cork.

## **Partnerships**

While Deaf Enterprises has already formed a strong partnership with the state body that supports people with disabilities to find employment, it is exploring the idea of launching its own supportive employment service to aid those in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community who are struggling to find a job.

This service would match these individuals with suitable employers and provide job coaching, both at the beginning of their search and during their employment. Furthermore, courses would be offered to these individuals to make them more employable and to help them understand the working environment and the skills and attitudes required of them.

This service would also work with the private sector to help them strengthen their corporate social responsibility and promote an inclusive workplace for Deaf and Hard of Hearing workers. The goal is to engage with large organisations located in and around Cork to collaborate and facilitate the placement of individuals.

## Impact

1. Deaf Enterprises currently employs 37 people, the vast majority of them from the Deaf and Head of Hearing community. It also aims to develop its own supported employment service. Deaf and Head of Hearing people face many barriers when attempting to access employment and training opportunities. National sign

“ We just completed a piece of work for a hotel this week, a very complicated upholstery job on an enormous four-metre-long piece of furniture. The furniture had overlapping leather with buttons, so it was a really complex piece of work. Only a few of our team can manage it. It was quite a challenge.

language interpreting services are often not provided, preventing Deaf people from participating on equal terms. In the work application and hiring process Deaf people also face challenges, as employers may have prejudices and lack of knowledge and consider them an economic burden. Social enterprises such as Deaf Enterprises are a key actor to improve the inclusivity of the labour market.

2. This social enterprise also offers training programmes that lead to qualifications, which can benefit disadvantaged people both mentally and in terms of employability. They can give disadvantaged individuals the confidence and self-esteem necessary to pursue their ambitions, as well as proof of their skills to potential employers.
3. Through its activities, Deaf Enterprises also prevents and breaks cycles of loneliness and exclusion. It creates a supportive community and facilitates participation in society.



© Deaf Enterprises



<https://www.deafenterprises.ie/>

# Kabinet CB

CZECH REPUBLIC



Kabinet CB is a social enterprise that specialises in the re-use and repair of furniture. Their primary aim is to provide quality second-hand furniture and other household goods to socially disadvantaged and low-income families while promoting re-use and creating job opportunities for the unemployed. Kabinet CB also holds workshops and courses, provides furniture rental and removal services, offers re-usable tableware for various events, and rents its space and equipment.

## Main skills

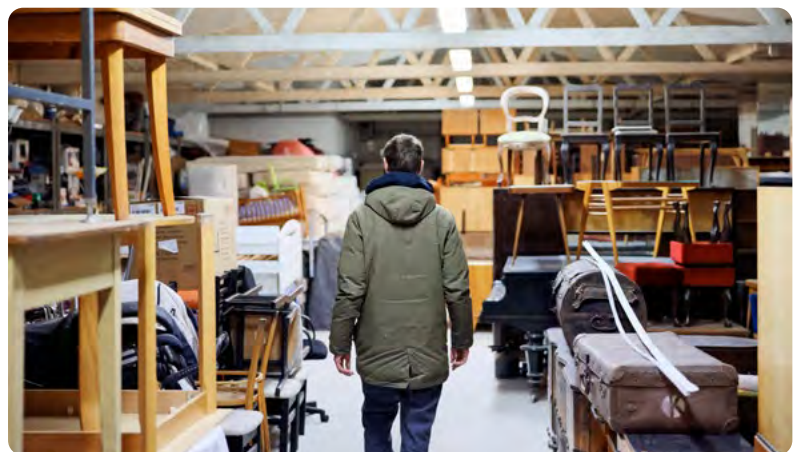
- **Organisation of goods clearance and route planning:** Ability to think ahead and plan efficient routes for collecting used products from various locations. It requires the use of specific planning software and tools.
- **Careful handling and transport of goods:** Ability to properly handle, transport, and store products to ensure they are not damaged and remain in good condition for future re-use.
- **Furniture identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the quality of furniture and determine if it is suitable for re-use.
- **Refurbishment of furniture:** This process involves a variety of skills, including sanding, staining, painting, and varnishing. Furniture restoration requires attention to detail and a good understanding of furniture construction, materials, and finishes.
- **Upcycling of furniture:** Ability to take an old piece of furniture and give it new life by refurbishing or repurposing it into a new item. This could include repainting, reupholstering, or even completely reconstructing a new furniture item from disassembled components.



## KABINET CB

## Approach to training

Kabinet CB first evaluates the worker's needs in accordance with a protocol and creates a training path for them to follow. During this process the organisation can identify areas that need improvement. Training takes place via a structured curriculum and a supervised learning process. Additionally, performance reviews are conducted to determine if the training and support provided is having a positive impact on acquiring skills and helping the worker to reach their goals. These reviews also help the organisation to understand its impact and ensure that it is providing a quality service.



© David Ch. Lichtag, source: MMR



© David Ch. Lichtag, source: MMR

Furthermore, Kabinet CB provides educational activities such as workshops and courses to the public. Through these activities, the social enterprise provides hands-on experience to acquire skills in furniture renovation, upholstery, or sewing, among others. Participants learn how to use the necessary tools and equipment and are given advice on traditional practices. The workshops and courses are tailored to a variety of age groups and interests and are designed to foster a sense of community. They also rent out their workshop, offering customers the opportunity to use the tools and materials to create their own designs and products out of re-used products and materials. By providing these opportunities, Kabinet CB aims to empower people to make more sustainable choices, acquire circular skills, and reduce the amount of waste produced in the region.

## Partnerships

Kabinet CB has established a partnership with the Furniture Bank of the South Bohemian Region. Kabinet CB prepares furniture items and other household goods for re-use, and the Furniture Bank supplies these products to users of social services in the South Bohemian Region and to nonprofit organisations for free. This partnership makes it possible to put old and unwanted furniture back into circulation, thereby reducing the quantity of waste generated and the need to use new resources.

The social enterprise also cooperates with DialogCB, an organisation based in České Budějovice which works to support fundraising activities and encourage cooperation and

partnership between the non-profit and for-profit sectors.

Finally, Kabinet CB is a founding member of Reuse Federace, a network of furniture banks and re-use centres operating in the Czech Republic. The purpose of Reuse Federace is to facilitate connections between existing re-use operators and initiate the creation of new re-use centres. To achieve this, Reuse Federace offers consultation for those interested in opening a re-use centre, works with local and national public authorities, and shares knowledge and experience gained from national and international sources.

## Impact

1. Kabinet CB established a socially beneficial partnership with the Furniture Bank of the South Bohemian Region, which in 2020 delivered 50 tonnes of furniture and household goods prepared for re-use to socially disadvantaged families.
2. The organisation has contributed to reduce the amount of waste in České Budějovice and the surrounding municipalities. Moreover, Kabinet CB's activities has averted the release of 60 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the equivalent of over 2.5 million trees absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> in one day.
3. Kabinet CB has observed a shift in customer and donor behaviour towards re-use. Kabinet CB's activities to promote re-use locally have contributed to an increase in donations in České Budějovice, Kaplice, and nearby areas. When deciding what to do with their used furniture, many people now prioritise re-use over disposal. In this respect, education activities, workshops, and courses have played an important role.



<https://www.kabinetcb.cz/>



# Žiedinė Ekonomika

LITHUANIA



Žiedinė Ekonomika was founded to support a zero-waste lifestyle in Lithuania and to make the principles of the circular economy more widely known among citizens, businesses, and public authorities. It offers a range of volunteering and training opportunities at re-use centres, with the primary goal of enhancing the employability of people with disabilities who are not active in the conventional job market.

## Background

Stotelė Dėk'ui are waste collection sites operated by the Vilnius County Waste Management Centre (VAATC) where collected goods are checked, prepared for re-use, and delivered to citizens, who can even reserve them online.

Žiedinė Ekonomika, in cooperation with the local social employment agency SOPA and VAATC, has been implementing the “Renewal” project at one Stotelė Dėk'ui in Pilaitė, Vilnius, with the aim of helping people with disabilities to acquire new skills and apply them in their future professional lives.

Finding employment for individuals with disabilities can be difficult due to stringent labour market standards, inadequate and inaccessible training opportunities, and employers’ prejudices and discrimination.

## Main skills

- **Developing work habits:** Capacity to develop a routine, prioritise tasks, follow instructions, and handle different responsibilities at work. It focuses on self-discipline and the ability to stay motivated and organised.



- **Identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the quality of furniture and determine if it is suitable for re-use. This includes assessing the structural integrity and identifying the type and style of furniture.
- **Refurbishment of furniture:** This involves a variety of skills, including sanding, drying, staining, painting, and varnishing. Upholstering and repairing wood frames may also be involved.



© Žiedinė Ekonomika



Stotelė Dėk'ui sites are a great place to showcase skills. Through practical activities, you can see many qualities that can be used later on in the job search. It is a kind of pre-employment training that can help us to identify the strengths of people with disabilities.

Evidence shows that those who get involved and actively participate in the activities find a job faster and are better placed in the workplace.

- **Other skills for textiles:** Sorting, folding, cleaning and shelving clothes neatly for a better customer experience at the Stotelė Dėk'ui ('thank you station'). Pairing shoes.

### **Approach to training**

Individuals attend an introductory meeting and Žiedinė Ekonomika creates an individual training plan tailored to their needs.

To assess the impact of the training, there is a one-month evaluation period. However, evaluation through performance in the workshops is key, as it reveals important aspects such as progress, motivation, manual skills development, and other competencies. There are also regular conversations with the individuals to assess their feelings and goals, and to gain an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

### **Partnerships**

One of the key objectives of the workshops is to foster collaboration with various companies to provide attendees with an understanding of the job market, help them acquire new skills, and open up potential employment opportunities.

Company professionals organised workshops on a variety of topics. For instance, Rimi Lietuva held workshops on pricing and customer

service, Ekobazė on sorting, Sneaker Spot on shoe refurbishment, Lietuvos paštas on route planning, Makveža on warehousing, VAATC on CV writing, and Reitan Convenience on preparing for a job interview. In some cases, cooperation with companies also included them hiring individuals after being the workshops. In this regard, flexibility is crucial to accommodate employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

In addition, Žiedinė Ekonomika has implemented a programme in collaboration with various companies, which allows participants to spend a day on the ground, observing the workings of a company, thus providing them with a better understanding of potential job roles and opportunities within the labour market.



© Žiedinė Ekonomika



© Žiedinė Ekonomika

Another key actor of this initiative is SOPA, a social employment agency operating in Vilnius. Its mission is to provide employment services with support for people who have fewer opportunities in the labour market. SOPA monitors job opportunities for these people and facilitates the transition to employment.

## Impact

1. Through the Stotelė Dėk'ui initiative, Žiedinė Ekonomika has enabled 74 individuals from vulnerable groups, mainly those with disabilities, to gain access to inclusive training opportunities. After the experience, a total of 30 have been successful in finding jobs. Social enterprises can provide jobs and training opportunities tailored to the

individual's skills and preferences, creating a supportive environment for people with disabilities, where they can receive guidance, mentorship, and accessible opportunities.

2. In 2022 Žiedinė Ekonomika held more than 80 workshops, engaging almost 200 volunteers and 16 independent professionals in a wide range of activities, including furniture preparation for re-use, mending clothing, warehousing, pricing, customer service, and candlemaking, among others. These experts have employed a step-by-step participatory approach to teach practical skills to attendees.
3. By also offering workshops that teach job search skills, CV writing, and how to apply for jobs, people with disabilities can gain the necessary skills to be successful in the job market. Thanks to cooperation with 25 companies, these workshops also give the attendees important information about different job profiles and potential employers.
4. Finally, Žiedinė Ekonomika is taking action to support Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees, donating necessary items to a local foodbank and helping other socially disadvantaged groups.



The training activities focus a lot on manual skills, but also address learning working habits, psychosocial skills, and general competencies. Some important skills are sociability, motivation, and forming a routine.



# Emmaus Åland

FINLAND

Emmaus Åland wants to contribute to a sustainable and inclusive society by developing new systems and models for re-use and recycling in the Åland Islands, while addressing the causes of inequality through work integration and training opportunities. It works towards the broader Emmaus vision of ensuring that every person lives with dignity in a community where everyone has equal value.

## Background

The Emmaus movement was launched in France by the priest and activist Abbé Pierre after the Second World War, when Europe was in ruins. He initiated a grassroots movement in favour of social inclusion and equality. By collecting and re-using unwanted goods, the movement supported itself and provided job opportunities to socially excluded individuals, thus connecting re-use with social inclusion.

Since its inception 25 years ago, Emmaus Åland has worked with marginalised groups who, for various reasons, have ended up outside the labour market. Among other activities, Emmaus Åland collects 13 tonnes of textiles and shoes and 17 tonnes of furniture and building materials per year with the aim of re-using them.



© Emmaus Åland

The logo for Emmaus Åland. The word 'emmaus' is written in a bold, lowercase, red sans-serif font. Below it, the word 'ÅLAND' is written in a smaller, uppercase, black sans-serif font. A dotted green line starts from the top left of the logo and extends diagonally across the page.

## Main skills

- **Sorting:** Ability to accurately classify textiles into different categories based on their material composition, type of garment, condition, and other characteristics.
- **Identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the quality of furniture and determine if it is suitable for re-use. This includes assessing the structural integrity and identifying the type and style of furniture.
- **Careful handling and transport of goods:** Ability to properly handle, transport, and store products to ensure they are not damaged and remain in good condition for future re-use.
- **Pricing of goods:** The process of deciding a price for second-hand goods, which requires an understanding of market trends, the condition of the goods, and the value of similar items.

“ Work structures daily life, finances, and identity. Building a routine through work is essential for individuals with a background of social exclusion. Other requirements are language proficiency, stress management, punctuality, flexibility, and other psychosocial skills. At Emmaus Åland, individuals distanced from the labour market can put these skills into practice in a real work environment with real tasks.



© Emmaus Åland

## **Certification of skills**

At Emmaus Åland, trainees and workers can validate their skills through the Open College Network method (OCN), acquiring a certificate that describes their skills in a certain area.

OCN opens up training opportunities by recognising skills development through credit-based qualifications. Skills are assessed through activities which are established internally by tutors, with external guidance. Each activity must be marked against a set of assessment criteria, which are either “achieved” or “not achieved”. The portfolios of assessed evidence are then externally reviewed by an OCN moderator.

This is an innovative solution for a broad range of people, but particularly for socially excluded people with a low level of formal education.

In fact, Emmaus Åland pointed out that such certificates are not only important for employability, but also a social justice issue. While many Emmaus Åland workers already have a number of relevant skills, their formal educational attainment is low. This is not necessarily due to a person’s abilities but is often due to the barriers faced by disadvantaged people in the education system. They may not have the time or the availability to take a course, especially if it takes a long time. In many cases, training opportunities may be inaccessible because of formal obstacles, such as certification requirements to access a course. In other cases, the cost of a course stands in the way. In this context, Emmaus Åland noted that existing VET opportunities are not sufficiently flexible and accessible for their workers.

In this respect, a possible solution could be to provide partial qualifications. These attest that a person possesses a skill to a certain standard but have fewer requirements than regular qualifications and usually cover a more specific set of skills. In addition, they are not necessarily preceded by a formal training programme and may be delivered as a result of on-the-job training. This system is more flexible and better meets the needs of disadvantaged people.

## Impact

1. The organisation not only focuses on the development of circular skills, but also on the promotion of basic and psychosocial skills necessary to find and maintain a job. These may include language proficiency, digital skills, punctuality, interpersonal communication skills, and stress management, among others.
2. Another key component of Emmaus Åland's activities is to create a community and facilitate individuals' participation in society. Work and training opportunities prevent and break cycles of loneliness and exclusion. Basic skills are essential for participation in society and individual wellbeing.

“ Many of our employees already have skills. But they maybe don't possess the corresponding documentation or diplomas. Therefore, it is essential to recognise and validate these skills through the awarding of diplomas for what we call micro-skills. Because in many cases, individuals are very good at one specific task. There is no need to do a whole training programme. For example, if an employee is particularly skilled in repairing bicycles, they should be awarded the appropriate diploma, as they may not have the time or resources to complete a full vocational training programme.



© Emmaus Åland

3. Lastly, the certification of skills can be incredibly important for the personal and professional wellbeing of disadvantaged individuals. These qualifications can give disadvantaged individuals the confidence and self-belief they need to pursue their goals, particularly for those with a background of low educational attainment. Professionally, qualifications are important to improve employability, as they provide employers with evidence that the individual has a specific skillset or certain level of competency. Having a diploma can also open doors to further education and training opportunities.



<https://www.emmaus.ax/>

# Kringloop Zeist

NETHERLANDS



The social enterprise Kringloop Zeist has been active in the Zeist region for 40 years. It is committed to giving goods and people a second chance by providing meaningful employment in the re-use sector to people who would otherwise have difficulty finding work, including refugees, people with substance use disorders, and people with mental or physical disabilities.

## Background

Kringloop Zeist is committed to sustainability and social inclusion and strives to ensure that all its activities are beneficial to both the local community and the environment. It currently employs more than 350 people per year, including paid staff, integration workers, trainees, and volunteers.

An important part of its activities is the development of local and innovative partnerships. The social enterprise has joined forces with local businesses, educational institutions, and other non-profit organisations to provide upskilling and reskilling opportunities in the circular economy. These initiatives aim to help people acquire the necessary skills and competences to enter the labour market.



© Kringloop Zeist



Kringloop Zeist collects 2,000 tonnes of products every year, most of which are re-used. Their main focus is on furniture, textiles, bicycles and books. While most of these goods are sold in shops, the organisation also provides some goods to those in need either free or at very low cost, providing a sustainable and inclusive alternative.

## Main skills

- **Developing work habits:** Capacity to develop a routine, prioritise tasks, follow instructions, and focus on the task at hand. It focuses on self-discipline and the ability to stay motivated and organized.
- **Product identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the quality of a product and determine whether it is suitable for re-use.
- **Sorting:** Ability to accurately classify textiles into different categories based on their material composition, type of garment, condition, and other characteristics. This is essential to ensure that the textiles can be re-used in the most appropriate and efficient way possible. It can involve both manual and mechanical sorting.



© Kringloop Zeist

- **Bicycle repair:** Ability to inspect the overall condition of a bicycle, diagnose and repair mechanical problems, replace worn out tyres and other elements, adjust brakes and gears, and clean and lubricate the components.
- **Bicycle dismantling:** Ability to disassemble the various components of a bike for the re-use of components or recycling. During dismantling, iron, aluminium, rubber, and other residual fractions are collected separately and recycled.

## Partnerships

Kringloop Zeist has established various partnerships with other organisations. These partnerships have been essential to the training and skills development of integration workers, creating an ecosystem of skills and knowledge in the region.

One of these partnerships is with the local, social, and sustainable organisations Samen Duurzaam Zeist, Vollenhove Vooruit and Meander Omnium. Together with Kringloop Zeist, these organisations opened a circular textile workshop, where old curtains are transformed into new, free curtains for residents of a disadvantaged neighbourhood who often lack them. As well as being attractive,

these curtains also allow them to save energy. New products are also manufactured from residual textile fractions, such as window and door textile draft excluders, which are filled from old cushions. This initiative helps to reduce the amount of textile waste that is thrown away unnecessarily and offers an alternative to purchasing new goods. In addition, it offers decent work to socially excluded people, notably migrants and refugees. In brief, this partnership demonstrates the added value of building innovative partnerships with a collaborative mentality in the social and circular economy.

By joining forces with Hogeschool Utrecht and ROC Midden Nederland, Kringloop Zeist has been able to offer internships to students of MBO (middle-level applied education) and HBO (higher professional education) social work courses. As a result, they have gained practical experience in a work environment, improving their skills and contributing to the activities of Kringloop Zeist. Through this experience, social work students have acquired skills in guiding and supporting integration workers from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the Netherlands, the Regional Investment Fund (RIF) for MBO aims to stimulate cooperation between MBO providers, the public sector, and companies, including social enterprises. These



partnerships allow students to be trained in the most up to date techniques and methods, preparing them for the job market.

Through a collaboration with the Regional Social Service, Kringloop Zeist has supported people with linguistic disabilities. The team organises fun activities to help them practise Dutch in a safe environment. This is done with assistance from a social work intern. Language skills are a key component of entering the labour market and preventing social exclusion.

Kringloop Zeist has also partnered with a private training provider, Spa Group, to train low skilled workers to become recognised environmental and logistics employees. Spa Group is a company specialised in targeted support for individuals and organisations involved in the management of waste and the environment.

Overall, Kringloop Zeist's partnerships have created a thriving skills ecosystem, providing valuable experience and training in the circular economy, while also contributing to the reintegration of those who need basic digital, psychosocial, or language skills. The experience of Kringloop Zeist has proven that cooperation and partnerships can have a positive impact on people and the environment.

## Impact

1. Kringloop Zeist employs more than 350 people per year, including paid staff, integration workers, trainees, and volunteers. The organisation has a focus on facilitating the social inclusion of socially excluded groups such as refugees, long-term unemployed individuals, people with substance use disorders, and people with mental or physical disabilities, among others. Since its foundation 40 years ago, it has had a major social impact on the local community.

2. Kringloop Zeist has strengthened the supply of circular skills training in the region with its activities, particularly in the field of furniture, textiles, and bicycles. In addition, it has emphasised the development of basic skills and competences needed to enter the labour market. These include basic digital skills, work habits, language skills, teamwork, and other psychosocial skills.
3. Finally, the social enterprise also provides an invaluable service to the community by providing cheap second-hand goods to those in need. For example, Kringloop Zeist collects bicycles and prepares them for re-use before distributing them to children whose families cannot afford one (one in nine families in the Netherlands). Every child has the right to own and use a bicycle. The organisation also provides bicycles to adults in need, such as newly arrived refugees. Furthermore, Kringloop Zeist provides additional resources to people in need through donations to NGOs and churches. In 2021, for example, the organisation made significant donations to Afghan refugees. All these efforts ensure that people in need have access to essential goods, ensuring a just and inclusive transition to a circular economy.



© Kringloop Zeist



<https://kringloopzeist.nl/>



# Engrunes

SPAIN

Engrunes is a social enterprise based in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area with the aim of supporting people at risk of social exclusion. Through training and paid employment opportunities, Engrunes works to combat poverty and social exclusion. Every year, it employs more than 100 integration workers and collects approximately 800 tonnes of materials.

## Main skills

- **Developing work habits:** Capacity to develop a routine, prioritise tasks, follow instructions, and handle different responsibilities at work. It focuses on self-discipline and the ability to stay motivated and organised.
- **Organisation of goods clearance and route planning:** Ability to think ahead and plan efficient routes for collecting used products from various locations. It requires the use of specific planning software and tools.
- **Furniture identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the quality of furniture and determine if it is suitable for re-use.
- **Sorting:** Ability to separate textiles into categories based on their material, size, and condition. It can involve both manual and mechanical sorting.

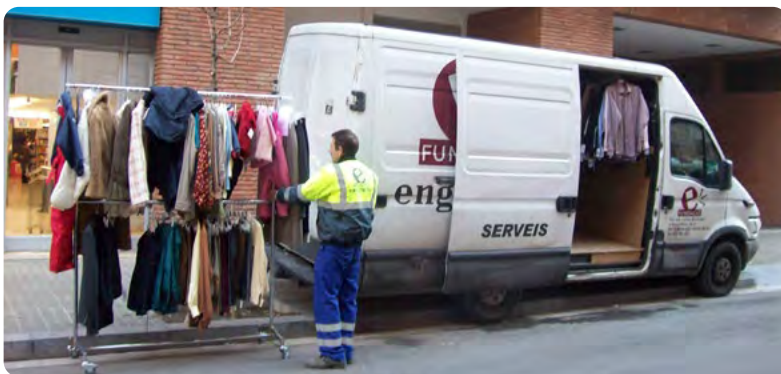


- **Dismantling of products when not reusable:** Ability to properly remove and disassemble components from a product, while also identifying any hazardous substances for their proper treatment.

## Approach to training

To recruit integration workers, Engrunes contacts social services or employment services of municipalities in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. For instance, the Barcelona City Council initiated years ago Programa L'àbora, a city-level, public-private cooperation project that orients, trains and accompanies people in vulnerable situations to bring them closer to the labour market.

Initially, Engrunes carries out an interview to evaluate the worker's social context and skillsets. Afterwards, Engrunes works together with the worker to jointly detect strengths and weaknesses, skills and needs. This approach allows employers the opportunity to provide tailored training and mentorship to workers and gives them the opportunity to develop their skills in a safe and supportive environment. In fact, bimonthly assessments are conducted to evaluate the worker's progression and provide



© Engrunes



I think the most important support we provide to a person is a lot of stability. We provide contracts that can last up to two or three years. In this regard, you can plan your life better, improve your housing situation, and address other important needs. We also help a lot in terms of security and self-esteem.



© Engrunes

feedback. In this context, the integration worker also has the chance to express any needs or issues they have. In Spain, work integration programmes can last up to two or three years.

## Certification of skills

Engrunes strives to provide its workers with the chance to formalise their skills through recognised qualifications, which are essential in terms of employability and self-esteem.

The organisation tries to make employment compatible with short training programmes that can improve and formalise workers' skills. If this is not possible, Engrunes links the individuals with different services or entities that provide this training or with the Municipal Employment Service at the end of the programme. This is important to make sure that they do not slip back into social exclusion. For example, Engrunes may bring together a group of workers interested in taking the

certified forklift operator course and refer them to an organisation that offers subsidised training. However, there are several institutional barriers associated with provision and referral to accredited training (see section below, "Challenges").

Lastly, Engrunes is also involved in several additional training programmes aimed at facilitating work experience and training for socially excluded groups. One example is the Work and Training Programme for young people who have been in care. The aim is to provide professional experience to these particularly vulnerable young people, in order to ease the subsequent transition to the conventional labour market. These professional experiences last 12 months and are supported by training.

## Challenges

1. While Engrunes strives to give its workers the chance to achieve recognised qualifications, a number of institutional barriers have to be highlighted. Currently, many VET providers lack the necessary flexibility to accommodate the needs of insertion workers from social enterprises. For instance, it is challenging for socially excluded people to commit to a 600-hour (or even longer) training programme, especially those with a low income and/or caring responsibilities. This is a substantial burden for someone in a precarious situation. Other institutional barriers include costs, formal requirements, inconvenient class times or a limited range of training paths.



Many people want to stay because they're content. However, [at some point] you have to tell them that the programme is ending so it's very hard for them. If they could leave with a certificate, they would be more prone to think that it was worth it. They would have been here for two or three years, they would have learned new things, and they would leave with a certificate that will help them find a job. Having a certificate that validates and shows what they have learned is also very important in terms of self-esteem, and it helps them to feel that they have achieved something. Having a recognised qualification gives more meaning to the journey, it helps them to find a job, and it gives them a sense of closure.

2. Engrunes reports complexity and lack of guidance regarding requirements to provide accredited training. The organisation has explored the potential for increasing the number of training programmes related to the circular economy with VET providers or independently, but reports a lack of guidance to navigate the complex legal requirements necessary to organise them. To address this issue, Engrunes requested a subsidy to gain additional guidance on how to provide professionally recognised qualifications.
3. While local social enterprises collaborate with each other in some areas such as the referral of users, Engrunes recognises the need to collaborate in other areas to further enhance the collective capacity of the social economy.

Unemployment in Spain at the end of 2022 stood at around 2.8 million people, approximately 12 percent of the active population. Over 900,000 of them have been out of work for more than two years. Social enterprises can provide valuable support to unemployed individuals, enabling them to receive an income, develop their skills, and gain meaningful work experience.

4. Engrunes provides a job search platform that allows people who have completed their work integration programme to find job opportunities. They have approached numerous waste management companies to hire people, especially those with a Corporate Social Responsibility programme. While there have been many success stories, jobs in these companies often require educational qualifications that integration workers typically do not possess, due to the barriers discussed earlier. This is one of the main issues that integration workers face and is why they require social enterprises' support.



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<https://engrunes.org/>

# BauKarussell

AUSTRIA



BauKarussell is a project consortium that specialises in social urban mining. This involves taking building components and waste materials from construction sites and re-using or recycling them, while also providing job opportunities to disadvantaged individuals. The consortium supports construction projects by providing guidance on planning and implementing selective demolition, which allows building components and materials to be re-used or recycled. It also provides training, skills certification, and work integration placements for employees of local social enterprises. BauKarussell has established itself as the first provider of social urban mining on the Austrian market and has received multiple awards and nominations for its innovative approach.

## Background

The consortium has already participated in approximately 20 large- and small-scale real estate projects, working with different real estate developers and social enterprises, not only in Vienna, but also in Upper Austria and Tirol. It is currently starting work in the region of Styria.

BauKarussell was awarded the City of Vienna's environmental prize in 2018. The same year, it received the Phönix special prize for "waste prevention". The Raw Materials and Circular Societies Prize 2020 (third place) was a European level award. BauKarussell was nominated for the ÖGUT environmental award 2021 for its work at the MedUni Campus Mariannengasse with the Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft mbH. Finally, in



Removal of parquet flooring at MedUni Campus Mariannengasse, Vienna (2019-2020, Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft) © Harald A. Jahn

## BauKarussell

2019, BauKarussell was named as best practice by the European Commission in a country report on Austria: "With the BauKarussell project, a new business model for the demolition of large buildings was successfully introduced, which enables the re-use of building elements and high-quality recycling."

## Main skills

- Developing work habits:** Capacity to develop a routine, prioritise tasks, follow instructions, and focus on the task at hand. It focuses on self-discipline and the ability to stay motivated and organised.
- Identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the condition of building components to determine their potential for re-use or recycling.
- Understanding of safe deconstruction and demolition practices:** These include the use of appropriate tools, safety equipment, and the correct handling and disposal of hazardous materials.



At the end of the course, the CEO of the organisation came to hand out the certificates, and the participants were very proud of their achievement. It was a great experience to see them engaged and empowered. With this certificate, they will have better chances of finding a job on the labour market.

- **Knowledge of building construction materials and components:** These include structural steel sections, beams, doors, bricks, fluorescent tubes, windows, hazardous materials, heavy furniture, and other wooden components.
- **Knowledge of other techniques** such as carpentry, electrical wiring, and plumbing, among others.

### Approach to training

BauKarussell has developed an innovative approach to help individuals who are outside the labour market to gain the skills and qualifications they need. This adapted training, and the opportunity to certify their new skills, enables them to grow in self-confidence and find employment.



Social Urban Miner Zertifikatsübergabe © Job-TransFair



Removal of fluorescent tubes at VILLAGE IM DRITTEN, Vienna (2021, ARE Austrian Real Estate)  
© Anna Rauchenberger

The programme takes into account that individuals distanced from the labour market may not have the same level of knowledge and skills as experienced professionals - and is therefore tailored to their needs. Training for urban miners must be practical and relevant for the labour market. They must learn to inspect and evaluate the condition of building components to decide whether they can be re-used or recycled. This requires knowledge of different products and materials, their features, and whether they can be re-used or recycled. For instance, they should understand the difference between various types of copper and their respective waste fractions, since different management methods affect the price of secondary materials. They should also have the expertise to decide if wooden building components can be re-used or if there are any contaminants that would prevent it.

Participants must also be familiar with safe deconstruction and demolition practices, such as the use of proper tools and safety gear, and the appropriate disposal of hazardous material, which requires both theoretical and practical training. Furthermore, they are taught circular economy principles and the environmental impact of urban mining, which is important to help them understand the impact of their work, making it more meaningful.

Since its creation in 2016, BauKarussell has created work and training opportunities for around 170 people.

## **Certification of skills**

BauKarussell provides accessible training opportunities in the construction and demolition sector by delivering an effective, low-level, and concise training course held by their partnered local social enterprises. The one-week social urban mining course teaches selective deconstruction and re-use of building components and has a focus on practical skills.

When designing the programme, it was necessary to adapt it to the needs and skills level of the target group, shortening it and emphasising practical skills. In fact, some partners of the consortium are VET providers and one specifically helped create the curriculum and organise the provision of the one-week training programme. BauKarussell is also in constant exchange with university representatives about the techniques and impact of dismantling and deconstruction.

**“ But what we realised is that they received training on the deconstruction sites, performed the tasks required, and then they left. And that’s it. These people learned a lot, and the feedback from them and from the social enterprises was very positive. And then we came up with the idea: if they were learning new skills, we should support them on their way back to the first labour market by providing them with a certification of their new skills.**

Construction and demolition waste has become the most prevalent waste stream in the EU. In addition, the construction sector consumes globally between 30 and 50 percent of natural resources. The re-use of building components is therefore essential, but this only happens in a small fraction of cases.

At the end of the course, participants must take a test, and if they pass, they receive their certification, awarded personally by the CEO of the organisation. This is a powerful moment for the participants as it can be a pathway to further education and better employment opportunities. It also provides a sense of personal achievement which is vital for self-esteem and motivation, particularly for those who have a background of low educational attainment.

## **Partnerships**

The individuals and organizations involved in BauKarussell are Thomas Room (a construction planner architect), pulswerk GmbH (the consulting company of the Austrian Institute of Ecology), RepaNet (the Austrian network of social enterprises active in re-use), the social enterprise Caritas SÖB (Vienna), the Dismantling and Recycling Centre (DRZ) of the Vienna Adult Education Centre (VHS) and Die KÜMMEREI (sponsored by BFI Vienna/ Job-TransFair). These social enterprises act on behalf of, and with, funds from AMS Vienna, the local public employment service.

BauKarussell has also links with companies to find construction and demolition projects to work on, and with other educational institutions to enhance their operations and training.



# Bike for Good

UNITED KINGDOM

Since its inception in 2010, Bike for Good has worked to ensure that everyone in the community can benefit from cycling. With a team of 42 staff members and more than 50 volunteers, Bike for Good provides access to low-cost but good quality second-hand bikes, diverts tonnes of waste from landfill, and offers job and training opportunities to improve the life chances of individuals who are not in education or employment.

## Main skills

- **Bike identification and first quality check:** Ability to assess the condition of bicycles and determine if they are suitable for re-use or repair. This involves analysing their structural integrity, spotting any broken damaged components, recognising various models and types of bicycles, or estimating the potential demand, among others.
- **Extraction, storage, and use of spare parts:** Ability to identify the parts that are needed to extract or be used, locate them on the bike, remove them safely, store them in a safe and organized manner, and know how to use them to repair other bikes.



© Bike for Good



- **Bicycle repair:** Ability to inspect the overall condition of a bicycle, diagnose and repair mechanical problems, replace worn out tires and other elements, adjust brakes and gears, and clean and lubricate the components.
- **Technical knowledge of bicycle components and mechanics:** Knowledge of bicycle mechanics and how the components work together. This includes knowledge of brakes, tyres and tubes, drivetrain, wheel, gear set-up, and suspension components, among others.

## Certification of skills

Bike For Good operates the 'Cytech Training Scotland' programme in Glasgow, providing the highest levels of training and accreditation for current and aspiring bicycle technicians. Bike for Good is currently the only training provider of the industry standard Cytech training in Scotland. Bike for Good offers three Cytech paid courses: Technical One, Technical Two and Home Mechanic.



Technical One is the foundation of all Cytech technical courses, teaching candidates core skills in professional bike maintenance. It also involves teaching health and safety at the workplace and the Consumer Protection Act. The course includes theory and practical training in areas such as frame alignment, lubricants and greases, and tyres, among others. The theory part of the course can be done from home, while the practical part is done at any of the Cytech training providers' facilities and takes two days. Those already proficient in cycle maintenance can opt for a one-day assessment instead.

Technical Two is the international benchmark in bicycle maintenance, providing full practical training and assessment in assembly, setup and ongoing servicing and maintenance. This course covers hubs and bearings, wheel truing, and spoke replacement, among others. It is designed to equip both experienced and novice bike mechanics with the skills and knowledge required to perform a wide range of bicycle maintenance tasks.

The Home Mechanic course is designed to give everyone a good level of mechanical ability, including those not working in the sector. This two-day course covers the practical basics of bicycle maintenance and repair, including gear set-up, brakes, or tyres. Led by an experienced instructor, it provides a relaxed and safe environment to learn and practice. On completion, participants receive the Cytech home mechanic certificate.



© Bike for Good

## ***Gender perspective***

Following the success of a pilot project in 2022, Bike for Good has announced a second edition of the Women & Non-Binary Mechanic Traineeship programme. This two-week intensive programme is designed to provide five new candidates with the industry standard Cytech technical qualifications.

Through the Women & NonBinary Mechanic Traineeship programme, applicants receive training and funding to enrol for the Cytech Technical One and Two examinations. The programme is designed to be flexible: for example, participants can complete the Cytech Technical Two examination up to a year later, and Bike for Good provides access to the facility throughout that period. Moreover, to facilitate

access for women and nonbinary people from all backgrounds, Bike for Good will cover transportation and registered childcare costs during the two-week training. This allows them to gain the necessary skills and recognition to find a job in the sector.

In conclusion, by creating a welcoming and open environment for women and nonbinary people, Bike for Good is striving to promote gender equality. This is a crucial step towards challenging gender norms and stereotypes in the sector, which has a male dominated workforce.

## Impact

1. In 2021, 672 people engaged with skills development classes, programmes, or activities, therefore enhancing their skills and employability prospects. Bike for Good is providing qualifications to become bike mechanic, validating the skills acquired.
2. The organisation provides the people of Glasgow with access to low-cost quality bikes. Bike for Good refurbishes over 1,000 bikes a year, out of 2,000 bikes donated by the public. The rest of the bikes are mostly stripped for parts and used for training purposes. The organisation also repairs around 400 bikes per year.
3. In 2021, Bike for Good delivered 132 free bikes to children in low-income households and 115 to key workers. Cycling had become a lifeline for many during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the Bikes for All programme provides Glasgow residents on a low income with heavily discounted access to a citywide bike hire scheme, and the organisation operated the Cycle Repair Scheme to provide free repairs and maintenance for those facing financial difficulty due to the pandemic.
4. Finally, Bike For Good also promotes the use of bikes through a variety of actions, such as orientation rides or instruction in multiple languages. In 2021, 2,500 people engaged with the Community Outreach team across different initiatives. 61 percent of participants now cycle as their main mode of transport, an increase of 47 percent before engaging with Bike for Good. This encourages individuals to lead a more active lifestyle while reducing pollution.



© Bike for Good



<https://www.bikeforgood.org.uk/>

## Social enterprises' contribution to Inclusive Upskilling and Reskilling

Social enterprises have demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusive upskilling and reskilling in the circular economy, providing training opportunities adapted to the needs of vulnerable individuals. In accordance with the European Pillar of Social Rights, everyone has the right to quality and inclusive training to acquire skills and manage transitions in the labour market.

As seen in the case studies, work integration programmes are holistic processes that involve a thorough assessment of the individual's skills, personal situation, and professional objectives, followed by a personalised work plan. The work plan helps individuals build work habits and psychosocial skills as the basis to acquire new vocational skills and eventually transition to the traditional labour market.

Learner-centric and inclusive training at social enterprises involves prioritising work-based learning, flexibility, and establishing partnerships with companies to facilitate the individual's transition to the conventional labour market. Psychosocial support and professional guidance are also an essential element of efforts to help individuals distanced

from the labour market to acquire the necessary skills to find a job.

Social enterprises have a particularly important role to play in the upskilling and reskilling of workers in the circular economy. For generations, manual skills have been on the decline in western countries due to the rise of automated production systems and the prevalence of the linear take-make-waste economy. This has led to limited training opportunities in the re-use and repair sectors, leading to a sharp decrease in the valuable manual skills currently necessary to transition to a sustainable circular economy. Social enterprises, however, have helped to preserve some of these manual skills through their efforts to re-use and repair goods.

Despite the efforts of social enterprises to facilitate the upskilling and reskilling of vulnerable individuals, a number of challenges need to be addressed to make the transition to the circular economy more effective and inclusive. These challenges are multifaceted and involve a number of actors and stakeholders.

## Challenges in Developing Circular Skills

After gathering information for the case studies, RREUSE has identified several common challenges facing social enterprises which are trying to upskill and reskill workers in the circular economy.

- To ensure inclusive training opportunities and support the transition to a circular economy, it is essential that all stakeholders thoroughly examine and discuss the lack of funding opportunities to support social enterprises' upskilling and reskilling initiatives. This is exacerbated by a lack of awareness and understanding of existing funding opportunities.
- Low-skilled and disadvantaged workers have limited access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes due to various barriers, such as direct and indirect costs, minimum educational requirements, lack of work-based learning opportunities, inflexibility, and a dearth of psychosocial support services. These challenges prevent them from taking part in existing training programmes, for example, after or during a work integration programme in a social enterprise.
- A lack of recognition and focus on the manual skills needed for the circular economy in VET systems. For example, there has been a decline in the number of VET providers offering circular skills training in electrical appliances or upholstery.
- Difficulties in finding qualified instructors with the manual skills required to provide inhouse training in re-use and repair.
- The need for further support for social enterprises to provide certificates to individuals who have taken a work integration programme to validate their skills and competences. This is due to a lack of recognition of social enterprises as VET providers and a lack of alternative ways to validate the skills acquired through on-the-job training.
- In some Member States, there are limits on the duration of work integration programmes at social enterprises, which hinder stability and the capacity to develop the vocational skills needed to succeed in the labour market.
- Lack of public-private partnerships in the provision of inclusive upskilling and reskilling opportunities, missing the potential to combine publicly funded vocational training with social enterprises' expertise in developing skills in a work environment, with appropriate pedagogical and psychosocial support. This is also necessary to support individuals in the transition between social enterprises and VET programmes, or vice versa.
- In some cases, limited opportunities to find job opportunities in the circular economy that require the skills recently acquired. Matching up skills supply and demand, thereby supporting circular skills training (but also creating an enabling policy framework for the circular economy that increases the demand for these skills), is necessary to scale up the circular economy and ensure a just transition.

## Policy Reflections

Based on the information gathered and analysed for the case studies, RREUSE offers a number of initial policy reflections to develop in future discussion with members and other stakeholders. We suggest that these considerations are seen as starting points for debate and discussed with the broader stakeholder community to explore how best to advance the development of circular skills in an inclusive way.

The RREUSE network is committed to accelerating the development of the skills needed for the circular economy in an inclusive way, and it will continue to work on this issue.

- **Promote an enabling policy framework with greater integration between the EU's social and circular agendas.** Such a framework should link policies that adapt the provision of training to policies that increase the demand for circular skills, therefore preventing an imbalance between the supply and demand of circular skills and creating inclusive jobs.
- **Reinforce the role of social enterprises in the provision of recognised qualifications.** Despite social enterprises' expertise in providing job and training opportunities to disadvantaged individuals, in many Member States they are not officially recognised as providers of vocational education and training. In this regard, similarly to the Socio-Professional Integration Centres (CISP) in Wallonia, Belgium (see case study 8, Le Hublot), social enterprises should be officially recognised by national policies as able to provide VET to jobseekers and to other disadvantaged groups, given their experience with work-based and inclusive training. In addition, public authorities should

provide funding to social enterprises for the development of learner centred training programmes and promote the establishment of public-private partnerships.

- **Promote partial qualifications, skills passports and low-level qualifications.** To make VET more inclusive and accessible, it is necessary to remove access barriers to conventional qualifications such as duration, direct or indirect costs, lack of flexibility, or theory bias, among others. One option is to promote partial qualifications by which the completion of modules can be validated and gradually accumulated, eventually leading to a full qualification. Additionally, a skills passport (a document outlining a person's skills, qualifications, and experience) can give individuals who may not have the capacity or availability to pursue conventional programmes the opportunity to demonstrate their skills. Low-level qualifications can also help to recognise particular skills or sets of skills efficiently, without the need for lengthier training programmes. These qualifications can recognise skills regardless of how they are obtained. As noted above, this is particularly important in the re-use and repair sectors, where manual skills are often acquired on-the-job, rather than through formal training programmes.
- **Prioritise work-based training in the circular economy.** To rapidly upskill the current workforce to meet the requirements of circular activities, training must be adapted to the right level and the right format. There is evidence that work-based training opportunities are better suited to the needs of adult workers who need a skills upgrade. Classroom learning formats might

not produce the same results. Therefore, VET content and delivery should be re-evaluated to promote the skills needed for a circular economy. This is particularly relevant for the re-use and repair sectors, which are highly reliant on manual skills. Work-based training should be given priority, and certifications should be based on learning outcomes, not formal requirements.

- **Allow social enterprises greater flexibility to adapt the duration of work integration programmes to the needs of disadvantaged individuals.**

Longer programmes provide individuals with more stability and give them the opportunity to not only develop work habits and psychosocial skills, but also to consolidate the vocational skills they need to succeed in the labour market. Social enterprises should be allowed greater flexibility to extend work integration programmes, which in some Member States are limited to a maximum of six months. The field experience of RREUSE's members tells us that, to be effective, a work integration programme should last at least 24 months.

- **Foster synergies between conventional VET programmes and social enterprises.**

Social enterprises should be seen as complementary to existing VET programmes, with the potential to create dual VET systems and collaborative partnerships. This would enable the development of practical and psychosocial skills in a work environment, with appropriate pedagogical and social support. This will also facilitate the transition between social enterprises and VET programmes.

- **Adapt VET provision to improve flexibility and inclusivity.**

To accommodate the needs of disadvantaged individuals and to enable a just and inclusive transition to a circular economy, VET opportunities should be flexible, and learner centred. To this end, whenever possible, public courses should be concise and targeted, with a focus on practical skills and flexible hours, and offer personalised social and pedagogical support. Public authorities should also ensure local training opportunities (particularly in rural areas), remove minimum education requirements for access to programmes, and cooperate with social enterprises to harness their experience in providing inclusive training opportunities. To help cover the training costs of the unemployed or socially excluded, governments should provide subsidies and incentives. It is also necessary to prevent over-regulation of low-level training opportunities, which can slow down adaptation to the needs of a circular economy. Quality criteria must focus on the skills that learners are expected to acquire, rather than on requirements such as hours of training or characteristics of the training environment.

- **Prioritise circular training in regions hard hit by the decline of polluting industries,**


in line with the principle of just transition (see case study 3, Humana Nova). An inclusive circular economy is an opportunity everywhere but in these regions it may be particularly important to compensate for the loss of jobs in polluting industries. Support for training initiatives should be aligned with enhanced support for social enterprises operating in the

circular economy, thereby facilitating the creation of “circular jobs”. A well-structured training system, with a focus on circular skills, is required to ensure that people in hard hit areas, notably those with low skills, are prepared to take advantage of these opportunities.

- **Adapt academic curricula to promote green social entrepreneurship concepts**, including social economy business models, the employment potential of the circular economy, climate change, and other environment-related areas. Special attention should be given to underrepresented categories of workers, including young entrepreneurs.
- **Improve skills intelligence in the circular economy.** A clear and up-to-date understanding of knowledge and skills required is necessary for training and work integration programmes to adapt swiftly. To prevent skills and labour shortages in the circular economy, it is essential to improve skills intelligence. The inclusion of a comprehensive set of circular skills in datasets and platforms such as the Labour Force Survey, the ESCO classification, the CEDEFOP Skills Forecast, and Skills-OVATE should be guaranteed. This could be done under the umbrella of initiatives like the European Skills Agenda, which should be used to collect comprehensive data about skills and profiles needed in the circular economy. Social economy actors should play a relevant role together with other stakeholders. Public authorities should also work with social enterprises, companies, trade unions and higher education institutions to ensure that the qualifications developed are up to date and relevant.

- **Expand national and EU classifications of skills, qualifications, and occupations to include the repair and re-use sectors.** The inclusion of re-use and repair occupational profiles and skills in classifications such as ESCO (European Skills, Competences, and Occupations) would create a well-defined framework, allowing for the development of a common language across all stakeholders. This will also prepare the ground for the provision of EU recognised qualifications. This could be a major advantage in certain Member States, where the inclusion of such profiles in national classifications is a prerequisite for the allocation of public funds for training programmes. Expanding these classifications would make VET training in the re-use and repair field more mainstream and accessible, while also giving the sector more recognition, leading to an increased focus on skills needs.
- **Raise awareness of funding opportunities and capitalise on events and initiatives to promote a mindset of inclusive upskilling and reskilling.** The EU Social Economy Gateway should be utilised to ensure that information about available funds for social economy actors is properly highlighted. This is necessary to support the upskilling and reskilling work of social economy actors, following the recommendations of the EU Skills Agenda and the Transition Pathway for the Proximity and Social Economy as part of the EU Industrial Strategy. Furthermore, the European Year of Skills 2023 and other events and initiatives should be used to promote the visibility of social enterprises and to foster mutual learning, networking with philanthropic organisations, microfinance investors, and national authorities. These events should also emphasise the importance of public procurement and of partnerships with the private sector in skills and training.

## Summary of case studies

KEY INFORMATION			SECTIONS								
Material focus	Case studies	Country	Background	Main Skills	Approach to Training	Certification of skills	Partnerships	Gender Perspective	Digital Skills	Impact	Challenges
<i>textiles</i> 	<b>1</b> Roscommon Women's Network	Ireland	●	●	●	●					●
	<b>2</b> Cambio Circular	Spain		●	●			●	●	●	
	<b>3</b> Humana Nova	Croatia	●	●	●		●				
	<b>4</b> Formació i Treball	Spain		●	●	●					●
<i>electricals</i> 	<b>5</b> Envie	France	●	●	●	●	●				
	<b>6</b> R.U.S.Z	Austria	●	●		●					●
	<b>7</b> Ateliere Fără Frontiere	Romania		●	●				●	●	●
	<b>8</b> Le Hublot	Belgium	●	●	●	●					
<i>furniture</i> 	<b>9</b> Duhallow REVAMP	Ireland		●	●	●				●	
	<b>10</b> Emmaüs Mundo	France	●	●		●					
	<b>11</b> Deaf Enterprises	Ireland		●		●	●			●	
	<b>12</b> Kabinet CB	Czech Republic		●	●		●			●	
<i>multi-product</i> 	<b>13</b> Žiedinė Ekonomika	Lithuania	●	●	●		●			●	
	<b>14</b> Emmaüs Åland	Finland	●	●		●				●	
	<b>15</b> Kringloop Zeist	Netherlands	●	●			●			●	
	<b>16</b> Engrunes	Spain		●	●	●					●
<i>construction &amp; demolition</i> 	<b>17</b> BauKarussell	Austria	●	●	●	●	●				
<i>bikes</i> 	<b>18</b> Bike for Good	United Kingdom		●		●		●		●	



**Access to training.** Conditions, circumstances, or requirements (such as qualifications, education level, competences, or work experience) governing admittance to, and participation of an individual in, learning<sup>10</sup>. Access to education and training can be hampered by many factors, including lack of information and lifelong guidance, exclusion of learners with disabilities, cost of training, or lack of infrastructure, among others.

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**Certificate** (or diploma, or qualification). Official document, issued by an awarding body, which records the knowledge, know-how, information, values, skills, and competences of an individual following assessment against a predefined standard<sup>11</sup>.

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**Certification of skills** (or recognition of learning outcomes). Process of granting official status, by an accredited body, to skill of an individual through award of qualifications (certificates, diploma, or titles) or validation of non-formal and informal learning<sup>12</sup>.

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**Circular skills** (or skills necessary for a circular economy). Ability to apply knowledge and use know-how in order to preserve the value and extend the lifespan of a product or material, therefore completing tasks necessary for a circular economy<sup>13</sup>.

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**Cognitive skills.** Ability to use one's knowledge, know-how, aptitudes and experience to find, understand and synthesise new information, reflect on ideas, apply reasoning to communicate, carry out tasks, solve problems and take decisions<sup>14</sup>. Some key cognitive skills are thinking, reading, learning, remembering, reasoning, and paying attention.

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**Competences.** Demonstrated ability to use knowledge, know-how, experience, and skills, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development<sup>15</sup>. It involves cognitive, technical, and psychosocial skills.

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**Digital divide.** Within a population, the disparity between individuals with access to information and communication technologies (ICT) and make use of services offered on the Web, and those without<sup>16</sup>.

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10 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

11 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

12 Adaptation from CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

13 Adaptation from CEDEFOP's generic definition of skill (see below)

14 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

15 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

16 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

**Digital skills.** Ability to make confident, critical, and responsible use of, and engage with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society<sup>17</sup>.

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**Disadvantaged individuals.** In the European policy agenda, group of individuals that experience a higher risk of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, and violence than the general population<sup>18</sup>.

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**Dual VET.** A form of Vocational Education and Training (VET) that combines traditional classroom instruction with on-the-job training at another organisation.

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**Educational attainment.** Highest level of education or training completed by an individual. It is measured according to the highest education or training programme successfully completed, which is typically certified by a qualification<sup>19</sup>.

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**Employability.** Combination of factors which enable an individual to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to progress during his/her career<sup>20</sup>.

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**European Year of Skills 2023.** An initiative of the European Commission to raise awareness of the importance of skills in the transition towards a digital and green economy<sup>21</sup>

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**Formal training** (or formal learning). Acquisition of knowledge, know-how, information, values, skills and competences in an organised and structured environment in terms of learning objectives, time or resources (e.g. an education or training institution or a company)<sup>22</sup>.

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**Inclusive upskilling and reskilling** (or inclusive training). Training opportunities ensuring equal access to all people, including those from disadvantaged groups, therefore preventing them from being left behind and maintaining their employability<sup>23</sup>.

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**Informal training** (or informal learning). Acquisition of knowledge, know-how, information, values, skills and competences in the framework of daily activities – work, family or leisure – which are not explicitly designated as learning activities in terms of objectives, time or learning support<sup>24</sup>.

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17 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

18 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

19 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

20 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

21 For more information, see the website of the European Year of Skills 2023 (Available [here](#)).

22 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

23 Based on International Labour Organisation (2020) Guide on making TVET and skills development inclusive for all (Available [here](#)).

24 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

**Low-level qualifications.** Qualifications that validate specific skills or sets of skills without requiring lengthy training programmes. They can be particularly useful in sectors where practical skills are acquired mostly on the job.

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**Manual skills.** Ability to perform tasks and activities which require manual dexterity, agility or bodily strength<sup>25</sup>.

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**Matching supply and demand of skills.** Process by which existing skills and qualifications (*skills supply*) meet the labour market needs (*skills demand*). Therefore, a skills mismatch occurs when there is a mismatch between skills supply and demand.

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**On-the-job training.** Training given in a real work environment<sup>26</sup>. It can be combined with other types of training.

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**Partial qualification.** Unit of learning acquired by an individual, and which have been assessed and certified by a competent body against a predefined standard, but which does not lead to a full qualification. There are different types of partial qualifications, including modules which can be combined as building block of a full qualification or stand-alone elements<sup>27</sup>. Generally, partial qualifications have fewer requirements than other qualifications and may be awarded through on-the-job training.

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**Psychosocial skills.** Ability to interact in a socially appropriate manner. Psychosocial skills include problem solving, teamwork, communication, time management, self-regulation or emotional intelligence, and are important to enable individuals to deal effectively with a wide range of professional situations<sup>28</sup>.

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**Qualification.** Formal outcome (certificate, diploma or title) of an assessment process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards and/or possesses the necessary competence to do a job in a specific area of work. A qualification confers official recognition of the value of learning outcomes in the labour market and in education and training<sup>29</sup>.

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**Reskilling.** Training enabling individuals to acquire new skills giving access either to a new occupation or to new professional activities<sup>30</sup>.

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25 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

26 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

27 Adaptation from CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

28 Based on the information gathered and analysed within the scope of this study.

29 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

30 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

**Skills.** Ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems<sup>31</sup>.

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**Skills intelligence.** Information on key trends and demands in the labour market which can support guidance and counselling, recruitment processes, provision of education and training, and career paths<sup>32</sup>.

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**Skills needs.** Demand for particular types of knowledge and aptitudes on the labour market (total demand within a country or region, economic sector, etc.)<sup>33</sup>.

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**Skills passport.** Document or online tool containing a record of skills, competences, and qualifications of an individual. Skills passports might be useful in increasing the recognition and visibility of the skills of individuals distanced from the labour market.

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**Skills shortage.** Situation where skill supply (type of abilities and number of people available on the labour market) is not sufficient to meet labour market demand.

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**Technical knowledge.** Specialized knowledge and expertise about the characteristics of a product or set of products, which enables to complete tasks and use specific tools.

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**Theory bias.** Focus on theoretical knowledge and classroom-based learning, rather than practical skills and work-based learning. Theory bias in certain contexts can hinder the provision of inclusive training opportunities in the circular economy, as it requires a level of schooling that is usually inappropriately high for learners with lower education backgrounds<sup>34</sup>. In addition, the emphasis on theory may not sufficiently address the need for manual skills.

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**Training.** Process of teaching or developing a skill. It can be formal or informal (see above).

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**Training provider.** Individual or organisation providing education or training services. An education and training provider may be an organisation specifically set up for this purpose (school, training centre, etc.) or an organisation which provides training as part of its business activities<sup>35</sup>.

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31 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

32 Europass (Available [here](#)).

33 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

34 Based on International Labour Organisation (2020) Guide on making TVET and skills development inclusive for all (Available [here](#)).

35 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

**Training system.** Set of interrelated institutions and structures (governments, social partners, – public and private – education and training providers, lifelong guidance bodies), policies and provisions (laws and regulations, standards, objectives, operating modes, curricula and programmes, methods and approaches), activities (initial and continuing education and training, lifelong guidance) and resources (human, educational, material and financial) required by a society to develop, improve and keep up to date the knowledge, skills and competences of its population<sup>36</sup>.

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**Transferable skills.** Knowledge, know-how, abilities and attitudes that an individual can use across jobs and across his/her career and education or training path<sup>37</sup>.

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**Upskilling.** Short-term targeted training typically provided following initial education or training, and aimed at supplementing, improving or updating knowledge, skills and competences<sup>38</sup>.

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**Vocational Education and Training (VET).** A formal training system that focuses on teaching specific skills and knowledge that are required for a particular job or sector. VET can be delivered in different ways, at different levels, and by different organisations. In the EU, Member States have a rich diversity of VET national systems<sup>39</sup>.

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**Work-based training.** Instructional model in which the learner acquires knowledge, know-how, information, values, skills and competences carrying out – and reflecting on – tasks at the workplace or in a simulated work environment<sup>40</sup>.

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**Work integration programmes.** A holistic process that involves a thorough assessment of the individual's skills, personal situation, and professional objectives, followed by a personalised work plan. The ultimate aim is to make disadvantaged individuals enter the labour market. The duration of work integration programmes varies from country to country<sup>41</sup>.

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**Work placement.** Period of time, usually forming part of an education or training programme spent in a company or organisation to get work experience<sup>42</sup>.

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36 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

37 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

38 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

39 See CEDEFOP, VET in Europe (Available [here](#)).

40 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

41 Based on the information gathered and analysed within the scope of this study.

42 CEDEFOP (2023) Terminology of European education and training policy (Available [here](#)).

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