



Reuse and Repair in a Circular and Social Economy

A Policy Brief from the Policy Learning Platform on
Environment and Resource Efficiency

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Table of Contents

Summary	3
Reuse and repair in the waste hierarchy	3
European policy as driver for reuse and repair	4
From linear to circular	4
RREUSE Putting Secondhand First	4
Right to repair	5
Reusable replacing single use	5
European financial support for reuse and repair	6
Policy solutions for reuse and repair	7
Reuse of materials and social employment	7
Promoting repair	8
Guest contribution: How can local authorities support the repair economy?	9
Establishing reuse centres	10
Guest contribution: Reuse Centres in Maltese Islands	12
Deposit return systems	13
Recommendations and key learnings	15
The Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform supporting regions and municipalities in the adoption of reuse and repair	16
Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform information	16
Other sources	16

Summary

The linear ‘take, make, use, and dispose’ economy is driving the climate emergency. Extraction and processing of natural resources make up half of the total global greenhouse gas emissions and over 90% of water stress and biodiversity loss impact, according to the [International Resource Panel](#). Product re-use and repair are the building blocks of circular economy, which can contribute to climate change mitigation by preventing resource depletion, diverting products and materials from landfills and incineration (therefore preventing associated emissions), and reducing energy demand.

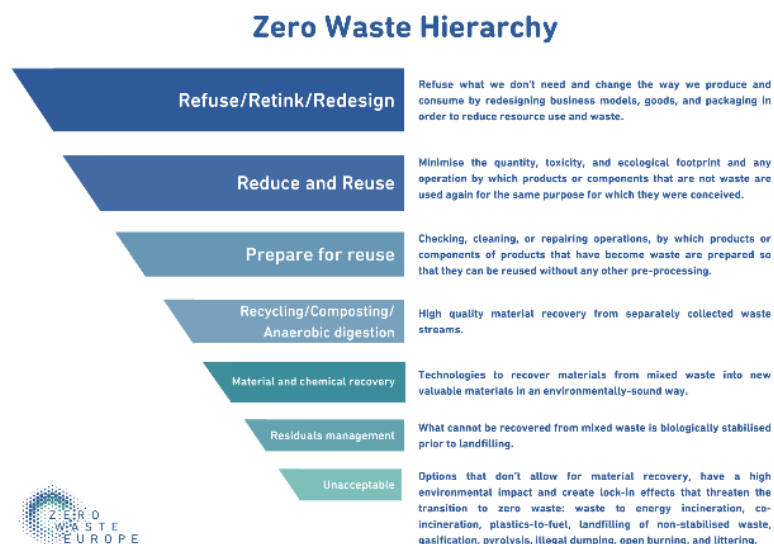
Activities at the top of the waste hierarchy also have a positive social impact, such as [high job creation](#) and employment of people struggling to find jobs. That is because activities necessary to extend the lifespan of products are labour-intensive. For example, in the re-use sector, these include the 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). Data from RREUSE show that a social enterprise active in re-use and preparation for re-use today creates on [average 70 jobs per 1,000 tonnes collected](#) with a view of being re-used. Moreover, most social enterprises employ between 45% and 80% disadvantaged groups in their operations.

The present policy brief provides an overview of EU initiatives that local and regional authorities can refer to for boosting their circular economy transition and introduction of various repair and reuse schemes in compliance with the EU Directives. It also presents a selection of Interreg Europe good practices and EU-funded projects of particular interest, with a high degree of replicability and adaptability to other municipal contexts.

Reuse and repair in the waste hierarchy

The definition of reuse, according to the [Directive \(EU\) 2018/851](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending [Directive 2008/98/EC](#) on waste, states that reuse is an **“operation by which products or product components that are not waste, are re-used with the same use for which they were designed.”**

Furthermore, the Directive promotes “re-use including through the establishment and support of re-use and repair networks, such as those run by social economy enterprises, deposit-refund and return-refill schemes and by incentivising remanufacturing, refurbishment and, where appropriate, repurposing of products as well as sharing platforms”.



One of the main principles of waste management is the waste hierarchy, first clearly defined in the European legislation in 1989. The aim of the hierarchy is to deliver the most environmentally sound practice; it has become the most widely adopted waste management framework in the world. The five-step waste hierarchy introduced by the European Union in the [Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC](#) in 2008 suggests taking into account social and economic impact, in addition to the environmental one. Following prevention (redesigning products for circularity and reusability, reduction of consumption), reuse is at the top of the waste hierarchy. The diagram on the following page shows an adaptation of the hierarchy, developed by [Zero Waste Europe](#), focusing on phasing waste out of the system and capturing the value of materials and resources.

European policy as driver for reuse and repair

One of European policy's crucial roles is setting binding targets and timelines, in order to foster the transformation of the waste sector towards more circularity.

From linear to circular

Progress is being made in Europe to reinforce an already ambitious waste policy and to establish a solid circular economy framework. EU is still losing out on opportunities to reuse a significant number of valuable resources due to inefficient waste management practices. Therefore, new initiatives such as the introduction of binding reuse targets are currently in development. The revised [Waste Framework Directive](#) encourages Member States to **promote reuse and repair of appropriate discarded products** or their parts, through the use of both educational and economic measures, such as the **establishment of accredited repair and reuse-centres and networks**. The preparation for re-use and recycling of municipal waste will be increased to a minimum [of 55 %, 60% and 65% by weight by 2025, 2030 and 2035](#) respectively.

The circular economy, which encourages reuse, repair, and redesign, rather than disposal of materials, offers Europe the possibility to significantly reduce carbon emissions, while providing new and sustainable competitive advantages. The [Circular Economy Action Plan](#), a key part of the [European Green Deal](#), envisions that circular economy will provide citizens with high-quality, functional and safe products which are designed to be repaired or reused.

Building upon the existing [Ecodesign Directive 2009/125/EC](#), the European Commission has published a proposal for a new [Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation](#) in March 2022. The proposal establishes a framework to set ecodesign requirements for almost all physical goods, which should improve their durability, reusability, repairability, energy performance, recyclability, amount of recycled content, and other environmental aspects. Depending on what will be included in the final list, the proposed requirements have a lot of potential to help the transition to a more sustainable production.

“Local municipalities can shrink their waste management budgets through implementing re-use measures, savings which can either be given back to citizens or used to increase spending in other public areas, such as education or health. For example, in Flanders (Belgium) analysis showed that by employing just one person previously unemployed within a social enterprise, this can bring a net return of almost 14,500 EUR per year to the government, society and the individual.”
RREUSE – <https://rreuse.org>

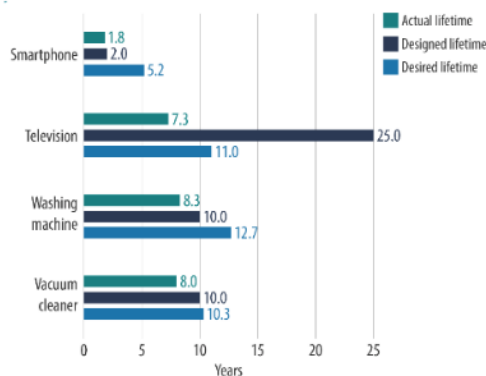
Right to repair

The introduction of an effective 'right to repair' for consumers has been announced in several of the European Commission's strategic documents: the [European Green Deal](#), the [circular economy action plan](#) and the [new consumer agenda](#). New products tend to break down faster, spare parts are hard to obtain, and repairs are costly and sometimes impossible. Repairs make products last longer, thus saving money on buying new things. At the same time, repair is an important part of circular economy and saving resources.

The “[right to repair](#)” is a concept which can refer to different things:

1. Right to repair **during a guarantee period**. Under EU law, consumers can have their products repaired free of charge for two years from the purchase.
2. Right to repair **after the legal guarantee expired**. After the two years, manufacturers and sellers are not required to repair products. Even if customers want to pay for the repair, they do not have a legal right for it and are often struggling to find someone to repair their products.
3. The right for consumers to **repair products by themselves**. Under EU law, manufacturers are not required to provide technical information (such as manuals and service handbooks) to consumers. Only professional repairers have a guaranteed right to access the technical information and the spare parts for some products.

Lifetime of electric and electronic products



Source: EPRS, based on a EEA [briefing](#)

Product obsolescence and durability is closely linked to repair. The [European Environment Agency](#) (EEA) recognizes absolute obsolescence (product no longer functions because of mechanical failure or software incompatibility), relative obsolescence (product is no longer desired) and premature obsolescence (breaks down too early). Some manufacturers are engineering planned or intentional obsolescence, which results in premature breakdown of a product. According to MEPs, practices which unduly [constrain the right to repair or lead to obsolescence](#) could be considered as “unfair commercial practices” and blacklisted in EU law.

Reusable replacing single use

A bold commitment to make all packaging reusable or recyclable by 2030 has been proposed in the European Green Deal. Reusable packaging was historically common in the EU, but its use fell dramatically over the years. “While just 25 years ago 80% of beverage bottles in Austria were reused, today that has fallen dramatically to 19%. In Denmark, reuse for beverages declined dramatically from [93% to 13% between 1999 and 2019](#)” (European Environmental Bureau). In that regard the [Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive](#) is currently being revised and is expected to introduce specific targets on reuse, in addition to the ones on recycling.

Some European countries including France, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, Austria, and Romania took matters in their own hands and established national packaging reuse targets. Austria plans to scale up reusable beverage packaging to [25% by 2025 and at least 30% by 2030](#). To deliver the desired environmental benefits, reuse systems need to be easily accessible and designed in a way where the impact of washing and transportation is minimised. Importance should be given to packaging design, and the possibility of pooling systems should be explored. According to the [Rethink Plastics Alliance](#), a reusable packaging target of 50% by 2030 for three key EU sectors (takeaway food containers and cups, e-commerce mailing packaging and household care product containers) could lead to the reduction of [3.7 million tonnes of CO₂, 10 billion cubic metres of water and nearly 28 million tonnes](#) of material.

European financial support for reuse and repair

The Multiannual Financial Framework ([MFF](#)) adopted for the 2021-2027 programming period supports European regions in becoming greener and more circular. EU's structural and investments funds ([ESIFs](#)) and direct funding instruments like the [LIFE](#) and [Horizon Europe](#) programmes will hence be accessible to projects aimed at the creation of reuse and repair networks in the lead up to a more circular economy.

In the upcoming years, the European Regional Development Fund ([ERDF](#)) could, for instance, support start-ups like [Refurbed](#), an online marketplace for refurbished products, to expand their operations to other European countries. It could also enable projects like [SURFACE](#), which was run in the framework of the [Interreg Central Europe](#) programme to help regions in nine partner countries to integrate reuse and waste prevention in local environmental strategies. Five Smart Reuse Parks were established in Germany, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Austria. They organised initiatives like repair cafés, reuse shops and workshops to show residents alternatives to a consumption-based lifestyle.

During the [2014–2020](#) programming period the [LIFE programme](#) supported the implementation of circular economy projects with over [EUR 945 million](#). In the present programming period, it will continue to enable waste prevention and reuse projects. The [new regulation](#) governing the programme between 2021 and 2027 allocated a budget of EUR 1,35 billion to the 'Circular Economy and Quality of Life' subprogram, which is expected to help the dissemination of best practices and solutions like those promoted by the [HEATSUN](#) project, to develop and implement innovative models for reuse, recycling and recovery of IT equipment, through the creation of a permanent partnership of public, private and non-government sectors, generating employment and training opportunities for local people and the creation of a sustainable local enterprise. Other relevant pilot projects include the likes of [Usa e Riusa](#), a project introducing the use of reusable boxes for fruit and vegetables.

Making Europe the first digitally enabled circular, climate-neutral and sustainable economy by transforming production systems and restoring Europe's ecosystems and biodiversity are two of the four 'key strategic orientations' of [Horizon Europe](#). As such, they were included in the [first strategic plan](#) that will guide the new EU research and innovation programme between 2021 and 2024. Horizon Europe [Cluster 6](#) – concerning food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment – is expected to contribute to the two aforementioned key strategic orientations and will be the major source of financial support for R&I projects in the area of reuse and repair as a way to transition to circular economy. Horizon Europe has a budget of €95.5 billion and runs until 2027. It will support projects such as [TERMINUS](#), which addresses the challenge of unlocking recycling and reuse of flexible multi-layer and multi-compounds packaging.

The new [Interreg Europe 2021-2027 programme](#) provides opportunities for exchange of experience within any Policy Objective of the Cohesion Policy, including the possibility to test out solutions through pilot actions where applicable.

Policy solutions for reuse and repair

Municipalities have a crucial role to play in the transition to a circular economy, as they are not only responsible for the collection and sorting of thrown away materials and products, but also for the facilitation of preparation for reuse (e.g. cleaning and repair). The European Union is increasingly likely to introduce binding targets on the volume of raw materials on the market, aiming to reduce EU's ecological footprint with more circular consumption and production. Systems and policies that facilitate greater re-use and repair are currently garnering greater interest from local and national governments alike, and many local and regional authorities throughout Europe are already implementing strong re-use strategies and policies.

Reuse of materials and social employment

The environmental benefit of reuse is undisputable, but it can also bring several social and economic benefits to local communities. According to guidelines for municipalities named “[Putting Second-Hand First To Create Local Jobs](#)” published by [Zero Waste Europe](#) and [RReuse](#), the implementation of reuse measures has proven to “create local employment, decrease the amount of waste generated and strengthen the local economy by facilitating more money being reinvested within the territory.” Reuse policies create over 200 times more employment opportunities than landfilling and incineration. They lead to **local green jobs creation** for various skill levels and enable **training of people** who have difficulty to find employment, such as low skilled workers, the long-term unemployed, persons with disabilities, ex-convicts and people struggling with addiction. Moreover, re-use measures can shrink local waste management budgets, generating savings, which can either be given back to citizens or used to increase spending in other public areas, such as education or health.

When designing local re-use strategies, municipalities can follow several key principles and recommendations.

1. **Adopt environmental and social public procurement criteria that prioritise reuse.** According to EU's [Waste Framework Directive](#), procurement is an important tool for municipalities to promote the uptake of reusable products and support re-use activities. A wide variety of voluntary tools exists to help guide environmental responsible public spending. These include the [Green Public Procurement](#) Criteria or [Circular Procurement](#). Yet, 55% of procurement procedures use price as the only criterion.
2. **Establish reuse and prevention targets.** Legislative and regulatory targets are one of the most important tools available to municipalities wanting to transition towards a circular economy and support their re-use strategy. However, these should only be considered in combination with other measures. One of the most important targets would be determining the volume of materials prepared for reuse.
3. **Invest and create quality collection points.** Provide financial and logistical support to collection points and reuse centres. These points should be easy to access and use by local citizens. Reusable products and materials should be collected separately from recyclable and residual waste. Staff needs to be trained in order to identify reusable materials and products. An example of such collection scheme is the [Reuse Box](#), which was implemented in Austria. A branded cardboard box is distributed to citizens which they can fill with small reusable items such as crockery, small household items, tools, shoes, clothes, children's toys, sports equipment, etc. The box can be then dropped-off at re-use centres or waste collection points and picked up by the re-use operator.



Source: [reuse-burgenland.at](https://www.reuse-burgenland.at)

4. **Create a local reuse culture.** Awareness raising and education of local citizens and businesses about the importance of reuse is key. Municipalities should make a list of key stakeholders and existing initiatives, create partnerships, and organise workshops and events on the topic. Initiatives such as reusable packaging at public events can be introduced.

Various materials can be reused and second-hand shopping is increasingly trendy and part of a more sustainable lifestyle.



The clothing store 'Latido Verde' (Zaragoza, Spain)

The LATIDO VERDE clothing store is a circular economy project that gives clothes a second life, reduces landfilling of textile waste and, at the same time, offers social employment. The collected clothes are either delivered to families at risk of social exclusion or sold to in-store customers. The main objective is to create a business model interlinking social employment and environmental benefits. The store also serves as a meeting point and a participation space where consumers play an active role in social change, promoting a social and sustainable economy.

Store employees undergo a specifically designed training coordinated by various bodies. It helps them acquire new skills, strengthen self-esteem and develop talent. Eventually, the trainees start working as shop assistants in the store. So far, the project has led to more than 43,000 reused pieces of clothing sold, reduction of CO₂ emissions and the consumption of raw materials for new clothes. 450 families have been assisted in the social integration program with 7,500 reused garments delivered. Five permanent jobs have been created.

Further information about the practice is available [here](#).

Foodsavers (Antwerp, Belgium)

Foodsavers Mechelen collects and redistributes food surpluses from supermarkets and wholesalers that would otherwise go to waste. At the same time, the organisation provides social employment to the people who collect and sort food in the distribution centre. Ecoso vzw, one of the region's main actors in social and circular economy also operating second-hand shops, is the main project partner of the City of Mechelen in this project.

The collected food is of high-quality, mainly fresh vegetables, fruit, meat and dairy, which have not exceeded the expiration date, but for various reasons cannot be sold any longer. Sometimes the organisation also receives dry food or non-food items. Every week, thirty deliveries of free food to social organisations in Mechelen and the public social welfare centres of two neighbouring municipalities (Putte and Bornem) are organised. The organisation ensures that each target organisation is getting the food they need, so that no food is wasted. The target social organisations distribute food to their clients. Foodsavers Mechelen delivers food to 15 organisations, reaching out to 400 households. The organisation collects over 11.000 kg of surplus food per month (saving four kilograms of CO₂ per one kilogram of food waste).

Further information about the practice is available [here](#).

Promoting repair

According to an [Eurobarometer survey](#), **79%** of EU citizens think that manufacturers should be required to **make it easier to repair digital devices** or replace individual parts, and **77%** would rather **repair their devices than replace** them. In the future, the measures to motivate consumers to choose repair could include the obligation to provide a replacement for the duration of repair for certain products, extending guarantees and granting bonuses for consumers who choose to repair.

Guest contribution: How can local authorities support the repair economy?

Author: Edoardo Bodo, RREUSE

In your view, what are the main challenges and barriers preventing wider adoption of reuse and repair?

EU-wide surveys have shown that EU citizens view repairing favourably¹, but there are some barriers that must be overcome to increase participation in the “repair economy”.

The main challenge is that repair is still expensive vis-à-vis cheap low-quality goods, which pushes consumers towards early replacement of goods with negative consequences on the environment due to increased resource use and waste generation.

What steps can local and regional authorities take to prioritise reuse and repair?

Local authorities can help facilitating repair by lowering the cost of repair operations. One successful example would be the Austrian repair bonus which started as a voucher in the city of Graz before being replicated in other Austrian cities (Vienna and Salzburg) and federal states (Styria and Upper Austria), saving [260 tons of e-waste](#), while supporting local repair jobs in the period between September 2018 and December 2019. This successful experience has led to the repair bonus being adopted on a [national level](#) in 2022, while similar schemes have since been introduced in the German states of Bavaria and Thuringia.

Local authorities can also help by supporting services that foster the adoption of a culture of repair among the citizens. A successful example in this regard is the initiative developed by the work integration enterprise [Solidança](#) with the support of the [Waste Agency of Catalonia](#) which provides an itinerant service throughout the province of Barcelona that teaches citizens how to repair and reuse objects through two mobile units: the [Reparatruck](#) (for bicycles, small appliances and IT equipment) and the “[Didaltruck](#)” for textiles.

Another issue is that many discarded items are prematurely thrown away: a study showed that up to [13 and 16 % of WEEE](#), used furniture and used leisure goods could be directly prepared for re-use in Bavaria. To ensure that discarded items are properly repaired and reused, it is important that collection happens at the earliest stage possible and that the reusability of items is maintained by proper handling and storage. Moreover, local authorities should ensure that reuse operators are granted access to the waste stream, in order to sort out potentially reusable items, thus allowing the correct application of the waste hierarchy.



Reparatruck and Didaltruck, image source: RREUSE

¹ Eurobarometer (2020) [Attitude towards the Impact of Digitalisation on Daily Lives](#)



Répar'acteurs: the network and brand of craftsmen who repair everyday objects (Cote d'Azur, France)

In response to the environmental, economic and social crises, new circular economy strategies are emerging. Repairs help reduce waste by extending objects' life, putting an end to disposable items. Repairing saves raw materials, energy and water, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions linked to production and transport. In recognition of this approach, the Chambers of Trade and Crafts, with the support of ADEME (National Agency for environment), have created a national label, Repar'acteurs, and a slogan "I repair...and it starts again!", creating a platform for repairmen/craftsmen in circular economy and waste management. The network currently has over 4500 certified members.

To join the Répar'acteurs network, craftsmen need to complete a free training course, then they sign a sustainable commitment charter and receive a physical and digital communication kit. The network aims to mobilize repairmen, promote the know-how of companies, facilitate contact with consumers, and helps create a local economy that creates jobs and social ties. Moreover, the network organises events dedicated to sustainable development, sets up local clubs of repairers and has a dedicated website which allows citizens to find repairmen nearby.

Further information on the practice is available [here](#).

Establishing reuse centres

Reuse centres are shops with various second-hand products, typically furniture, home goods, childcare products, sports equipment, toys, books, clothes etc. In many cases, reuse centres are much more than just a store, but rather social, environmental and educational centres. For example, in the Czech [Reuse Centre Ostrava](#) people can donate and buy used items, repair goods, relax, and meet. The Centre also promotes waste prevention and reuse activities by organizing lectures, workshops, or swaps. To make reuse easy and closer to citizens, eleven collection points have been installed around the city.



Reuse centre in Ostrava, Image source: [Reuse Ozo Ostrava](#)

The new Aarhus Waste Plan, Denmark – Resulting from the input gained in the [2LIFES](#) project, repair and reuse became major topics in the new Aarhus Waste Plan for 2021-2026. One of the projects under this new policy is the Rolling Repair Van, which has been rebuilt and equipped with all sorts of tools and materials. It has been conceived as a means to develop city level reuse. With the help of volunteers, repair sessions are organized throughout Aarhus in collaboration with different events and organizations.

Another initiative is related to the reuse of building materials in Lisbjerg Recycling Centre (Aarhus) and consists of a collection of building materials suitable for reuse, located in a specially designed area at a recycling station in Lisbjerg. Based on the experience from Lisbjerg, the plan is to spread direct recycling of building materials to six other recycling stations in Aarhus.

The first step in the policy development was a major user survey with 2600 respondents, where citizens expressed their interest in reuse and repair. The survey was followed by interviews with about 100 citizens, 15 local circular economy frontrunners, and four experts. The process was followed up with posts on social media and a website, where citizens of Aarhus could comment on proposals for new activities. A total of 3,700 citizens participated in the process.



Metropolitan area reuse centre (Helsinki, Finland)

The re-use centre Pääkaupunkiseudun Kierrätyskeskus (PK) is a non-profit social enterprise operating nine re-use shops in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (Finland). Environmental education is an essential part of its activities. In collaboration with the Helsinki Region Environmental Services Authority (HSY), the centre provides lessons for students ranging from kindergarten to high school, residents, educators and general public. The lessons focus on topics such as leading sustainable lifestyles through effective waste reduction and management or sustainable consumption through re-use and repair.

The centre organises courses about correct waste management, sorting, water consumption and composting, as well as tailor-made environmental management trainings for companies and public authorities, with the possibility of obtaining an official certificate. For example, PK organised a handcrafting workshop as a teambuilding session for companies and public authorities, and even the Finnish Ministry of Education took part. While environmental advice is free for residents, music performances, guided crafts, environmental games and specific workshops are subject to a fee, as they require participation of trained teams and solid pedagogical expertise. Training courses and other educational activities reach more than 65 000 people per year.

Further information about the practice is available [here](#).

The Centre of Value (Renosyd, Denmark)

The municipally owned second-hand shop called Værdicentralen was established in 2015 with the purpose of giving a new life to products from the recycling stations of Renosyd, the municipal waste management company located south of Aarhus. The second-hand shop enables direct reuse of products that would otherwise be destroyed or incinerated. Customers coming to the recycling station can now deliver products directly to the second-hand shop or donate them to local charities.

The Centre of Value's focus is on three bottom line results; economy, environment and people. After three years in business, the centre was able to create a sustainable business case through sales of second-hand items and now removes 500 tons of waste from the waste flow every year. It provides employment and internships to people struggling in the job market and contributes to creation of green jobs. Currently there are nine permanent employees in the centre.

Further information about the practice is available [here](#).

Guest contribution: Reuse Centres in Maltese Islands

Author: Clyde Falzon Bouvett, WasteServ

How did the project of reuse centres come to be and what stage is it in today?

As a waste management company, WasteServ has been receiving items which are still in good condition that were either segregated and sent for recycling or landfilled due to limited recycling options available. To address this problem and divert waste away from landfilling or expensive recycling processes, WasteServ decided to open four Reuse Centres.

In June 2022, WasteServ opened its first Reuse Centre in Hal Far, and a few months later opened another Reuse Centre in Xewkija (Gozo). Two more Reuse Centres will be opening in Hal Luqa and Mrieħel in the coming weeks. These Centres offer used and 'pre-loved' items that still hold value and can be reused. The public is encouraged to either acquire or donate items that are still in good condition. Drop-off points have been set up at all WasteServ's Civic Amenity Sites to make it easier for the public to donate. Things acquired from the Reuse Centres are either free or can be obtained for a small donation.

All proceedings gained through the Reuse Centres will be invested in environmental projects and initiatives. The results have been very encouraging and satisfactory in terms of uptake of items from the Reuse Centres and are expected to continue improving once all the Centres are opened.

What is the response of the public to this project?

The public reacted positively to the opening of the first two Reuse Centres. The wide selection of items which include furniture, books, ceramics, textiles, toys, musical Instruments, home decorations, accessories and pet supplies, amongst others, encourages the public to visit these Centres. The Centres were promoted on various local news outlets and social media platforms.

What are the benefits of reuse and repair at a local level?

In view of the limited recycling capacities available locally, recyclables are collected, separated, and then sold on local, European and even international marketplaces, so that they can be recycled and transformed into new secondary materials. In the majority of cases, this results in high transportation costs. On the other hand, items which cannot be recycled end up being landfilled.

Thus, through this initiative, we are diverting waste away from landfill, reducing costs, and our environmental impact (that result from landfilling, reducing the energy needed to recycle products or create new ones and reduce emissions from transportation). By reusing we are extending the items' lifespan, highlighting the importance of reusing and contributing towards a circular economy.

Are there opportunities for job creation in the reuse and repair sector?

With the opening of Reuse Centres, green jobs were created as salespersons were hired to attend to the centres, sort items received, and take stock of the items at each Centre. Thus, creating an array of job opportunities that attract job seekers from diverse backgrounds.

Relevant links to documents and guides: <https://www.ecohive.com.mt/en/reuse-centres>



Image source: WasteServ



Renew Hub – Reuse on an industrial scale (Greater Manchester, United Kingdom)

The Renew Hub and three Renew shops which opened in 2021 are a partnership between SUEZ recycling and recovery UK, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and nine local authorities in Greater Manchester (GM) to help manage its 1.1 million tonnes of municipal waste from over one million households. The Renew Hub aims to create a true circular economy in Greater Manchester and support the city region in meeting its target of becoming carbon neutral by 2038, while benefiting the community and some of the more vulnerable members of society.

The Hub is the central point for items donated by residents from eighteen recycling centres. The provision of donation containers for residents to dispose of pre-loved items such as furniture, toys and bikes, started in March 2021 and more than 330 tonnes of pre-loved items have been taken to the Hub to be sorted into items for sale or repair. Collection of electrical items has been added in November 2021. The Hub houses units focused on repairing and upcycling the items, which are run in partnership with qualified organisations, who provide workshops and train apprentices and volunteers in skills vital to the green recovery.

Further information on the practice is available [here](#).

Deposit return systems

Reusable packaging used to be the norm around the world but faced a serious decline due to the introduction of cheap single-use packaging options. With the adoption of a more sustainable lifestyle, it is experiencing a comeback and provides an alternative to single use. It comes in the form of reusable glass packaging for dairy products, refillable beverage containers, or reusable cups at festivals. Deposit return systems significantly increase packaging reuse and recycling rates. A small fee is added to the items' price and it is reimbursed when the packaging is returned to the point of sale. Deposit return systems are also one of the best options when it comes to collection of recyclable materials, and have

been proven to lead to increased collection, reduction of littering, clean material streams, and job creation.

A recent LCA study has shown that reusable containers and cups have a [13x and 4x lower environmental impact, respectively](#), compared to their single-use counterparts. A significant majority of studies (76%) points to reusable packaging as the most environmentally friendly option. These results, however, are highly dependent on the considerations and assumptions made in each study. Therefore, the decisions about the packaging types' environmental soundness should be made on a case-by-case basis, after due consideration has been given to all parameters (production, transport, washing, etc.) and applications that may impact the successfulness (or the lack thereof) of the reusable packaging system in question.



Réseau Consigne (Gironde, France)

The introduction of single-use packaging in 1980s has led to a serious decline of reusable packaging. However, there has been a new counteractive boom in recent years, and reusable packaging is now praised for its environmental and economic benefits, local job creation and a short supply chain. A large number of packaging items, such as bottles, jars, pots, food transport containers, kegs or takeaway food boxes are now subject to various deposit return schemes.

Réseau Consigne is a platform for the exchange of experience, as well as technical and legal resources, aiming to advance reuse in France. Formed as an association in July 2019, the Network brings together project leaders, professionals and local authorities to address local, national and European issues: economic resilience, circular economy, waste prevention, preservation of natural resources and limiting greenhouse gas emissions. Packaging reuse projects have a strong territorial dimension, which is particularly relevant when integrated into a local eco-system. They involve diverse actors (companies, local authorities, associations) and imply creation of activities and jobs.

Further information about the practice is available [here](#).



Reusable deposit cups at public events

CupCycle EST is a non-profit organisation replacing disposable cups with reusable, washable cups at public events and in coffee shops, takeaways, etc. The smart NFC chip on the bottom of the cup enables automated return and mobile deposit repayment on the spot. Customers receive their drink in a reusable cup and, at the same time, pay a deposit for the cup. Used cups can be returned to designated locations at the event, and a new cup may be obtained or the deposit repaid. CupCycle offers a full service for public events, with three different cup types available, handling logistics, washing up, and if necessary, brings their own staff for big events.

Replacing disposable cups with reusable ones significantly decreases the amount of resources needed for collecting and handling of waste in public events. The service offered by CupCycle EST NGO helps raise public awareness about environmental concerns by providing a practical solution for reuse.

Further information about the practice is available [here](#).

Recommendations and key learnings

Examples from Interreg Europe projects and the wider Interreg Europe community can be of inspiration for many, and it can provide real benefits to those who wish to engage in reuse and repair policies. A summary of the main lessons learnt from the investigation of such experiences is provided here below, in form of advice for policy makers.

- **Adopt environmental and social public procurement criteria** that prioritise reuse. Look at the good practice from [LCA4REGIONS](#) and [Slovenia](#)'s approach to green public procurement.
- **Establish reuse and prevention targets.** Legislative and regulatory targets are one of the most important tools available for municipalities wanting to transition towards a circular economy, aiming to boost their re-use strategy. Lead the way, for example by introducing refillable packaging at public events, as seen in [Estonia](#) with the [INTHERWASTE](#) project.
- **Invest in and create collection points** for reusable items. Provide financial and logistical support to collection points and reuse centres and make sure they can be easily accessed and used by local citizens. Learn about the good practice from [WINPOL](#), the [Reuse Box](#) collection scheme implemented in Austria.
- **Raise citizen and stakeholder awareness** about the importance of reuse and repair. Inform households, organise workshops and special events. Get inspired by [Symbi](#) project's good practice, the campaign of [Małopolska region](#) promoting upcycling, reuse, conscious shopping and use of repair points.
- Make a list of key stakeholders and existing initiatives; **create partnerships** to develop a **local reuse culture**.
- Focus on a **variety of materials**, when thinking about reuse. Support establishing social enterprises. The [CECI](#) project demonstrates several good reuse practices. [Zaragoza](#)'s (Spain) approach to second-hand clothing, [Mechelen](#)'s (Belgium) management of surplus food, or a platform to rent children's clothes and childcare products from the city of [Antwerp](#) (Belgium).
- Facilitate repair by **lowering the cost of repair operations**. The Austrian repair bonus is a successful example, which started as a [voucher in the city of Graz](#) before being replicated in other Austrian cities, federal states and eventually on a [national level](#).
- **Support services that foster the adoption of a repair culture.** A successful example in this regard is the initiative developed by the work integration enterprise [Solidança](#) with the support of the [Waste Agency of Catalonia](#), which teaches citizens how to repair and reuse objects through two mobile units: the [Reparatruck](#) (for bicycles, small appliances and IT equipment) and the "[Didaltruck](#)" for textiles.
- **Create a network** where local repairmen can easily be matched with citizens, as in [Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur](#) (France).
- **Open reuse centres** in your cities, as seen in [Helsinki](#) (Finland) and [Renosyd](#) (Denmark) in the [2LIFES](#) project example, in [Ostrava](#) (Czech Republic), the [CECI](#) project, or as in [Malta](#). Get inspired by the [Renew Hub](#), a good practice from Manchester (United Kingdom), from the [REDUCES](#) project, which combines resale, repair and upcycling of unwanted items.
- **Support** the development of voluntary and obligatory **deposit return systems** (DRS) on local, regional and national levels. Facilitate exchange of experience between DRS operators, as in [Gironde](#) (France).

The Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform supporting regions and municipalities in the adoption of reuse and repair

Interreg Europe, through its [Policy Learning Platform](#), provides a number of services to both ongoing projects and the wider regional policy [Community](#). As well as operating the [Good Practice Database](#), drawing together the best of the good practices identified by projects, and providing a [Knowledge Hub](#) of policy briefs and articles, the Policy Learning Platform offers on-demand [Expert Support](#), including a helpdesk, a matchmaking service and peer reviews to assist regions in their transition:

- Via the [Policy Helpdesk](#), policy-makers may submit their questions to receive a set of resources ranging from inspiring good practices from across Europe, policy briefs, webinar recordings, information about upcoming events, available European support and contacts of relevant people, as well as recommendations on matchmaking and peer review opportunities.
- A [Matchmaking](#) session is a thematic discussion hosted and moderated by the Policy Learning Platform, designed around the policy needs and questions put forward by the requesting public authority or agency. It brings together peers from other European regions to present their experience and successes, to provide inspiration for overcoming regional challenges.
- [Peer Reviews](#) are the deepest and most intensive of the on-demand services, bringing together peers from a number of regions for a two-day work session, to examine the specific territorial and thematic context of the requesting region, discuss with stakeholders, and devise recommendations.

Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform information

- Policy Brief on [sustainable waste management in a circular economy](#)
- Policy Brief on [separate waste collection](#)
- Webinar recordings from Circular waste management series on collection and recycling of [electronic waste](#), [plastic waste](#) and [construction and demolition waste](#)
- Story on [Kolding's shift towards circular economy](#)
- Story on [Socially minded platform for the reuse and recycling of Electrical and Electronic Equipment \(EEE\)](#)
- Story on [Introducing: RREUSE, the European Network of social enterprises](#)
- Story on [Reverse Advent](#)
- News on Waste prevention: [3 key learnings from the Styrian re-use map](#)
- News on [Initiatives for low quality second hand clothing](#)
- Peer review learnings on [Effective regional framework for sustainable waste management and circular economy](#)
- Peer review learnings on [Waste prevention and separate waste collection in a circular economy](#)

Other sources

- The [European Green Deal](#)
- The [new Circular Economy Action Plan](#)
- The revised [EU waste legislation](#)
- The [Reusable versus Single-use Packaging](#) report
- The [Research study on developing reuse networks in Europe](#)
- The [Right to Repair](#) briefing

Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform on Environment and resource efficiency

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Contact us to share your views on this policy brief!



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Image credit cover page: Reuse centre in Malta, WasteServ



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