

Overview	
Country	Czech Republic
Type of organization	Self-employed/solo trader/ freelancer
Number of employees	2
Type of practice	Promising
Level of investment	Low
Activity type	Product design from waste material
Key words	Upcycling / Repurposing

www.zaspas.cz

Summary

ZasPas is a Czech upcycling company that specializes in transforming automotive waste, specifically seat belts and airbags, into high-quality, fashionable products such as bags and accessories. The company's approach revolves around sustainable design and craftsmanship, where raw materials that would typically end up in landfills are repurposed into trendy, durable products.

ZasPas partners with automotive companies to source the seat belts and airbags, then employs local artisans to craft the products, ensuring the entire production chain is sustainable and supports local communities. This company not only reduces waste but also empowers artisans through fair work practices and provides consumers with eco-friendly alternatives to mass-produced goods.



Source: ZasPas, www.zaspas.cz

Background and origin

The idea for ZasPas was born in the summer of 2012, when founder Tereza, an architect, creative graphic designer and designer, learned from a friend—who owned and operated a car scrapyards—about the unfortunate fate of discarded seat belts. Struck by this waste of durable, high-quality material, Tereza was inspired to find a new use for seat belts. While most materials from car wrecks can be reused, seat belts inevitably end up in incinerators. She designed and hand-sewed her first handbag using the very material destined for destruction.

With the support of her brother-in-law Michal and close family members, Tereza decided to take the idea further, eventually developing it into a full-scale project. This led to the founding of ZasPas. Tereza was also awarded 1st place in a regional contest "Rozjezdy roku" (in English "Starters of the Year") in the Pardubice region.

Relevance to the craft sector

The company is connected to the craft sector by preserving traditional craftsmanship and creating high-quality products through skilled artisanship. By upcycling automotive waste, ZasPas highlights the importance of creating products with a long life cycle, offering local artisans an opportunity to work with repurposed materials.

Material focus - type of waste material involved

The products are 95% made of recycled materials, specifically seatbelts from cars that have been wrecked in car accidents or abandoned to the scrap yard.

Car seatbelts are primarily made from polyester webbing, which is chosen for its combination of strength, durability, and slight elasticity. The webbing is typically 2-3 inches wide and woven in a specific pattern to maximize tensile strength. The webbing is made most often from polyester, replacing nylon which was used in earlier seatbelts. Seatbelts also contain a retractor mechanism made from a spring and metal (usually steel) locking mechanism. A seat buckle and latch plate are typically made from metal with plastic coverings.

The polyester used in seatbelts undergoes special treatments to enhance its resistance to abrasion, heat, and chemicals as the resulting material needs to withstand thousands of pounds of force during a crash while remaining comfortable for daily use. This is beneficial for its further re-use in bags and fashion, making the products highly durable.

BAS  **48-19**

BLK  **48-17**

Source: ZasPas, www.zaspas.cz



Source: ZasPas, www.zaspas.cz

Target groups

- Environmentally conscious consumers
- Fashion-forward individuals
- Design enthusiasts who value sustainability and unique craftsmanship.
- Also, as the products are highly connected to the automotive industry, car fans and enthusiasts as well as workers and employees in the automotive industry are also the main target group

Stakeholders involved

- Material Suppliers: Automotive manufacturers and local recycling centers.
- Design Partners: Local fashion designers and craft collectives.
- Community Members: Artisans and consumers who support sustainable practices and buy the products.
- Seller: The entrepreneur has its own e-shop but also cooperates with selected fashion shops in Prague and in Vienna. She also attends various pop-up design markets in the Czech Republic like DyzajnMarket.

Professionals involved and their roles

- Designers: Oversee the creative transformation of automotive waste into wearable or functional products.
- Artisans/Technicians: Carry out the production, including cutting, sewing, and finishing.

Connection of the practice with the project-identified needs

Knowledge of Waste Materials

ZasPas requires in-depth knowledge of the properties of automotive textiles and plastics. Their process involves research into safe handling, cleaning, and processing techniques, ensuring the recycled materials are both high-quality and durable.

Green Entrepreneurial Skills

The enterprise demonstrates green entrepreneurial skills by identifying a niche market for upcycled fashion, adhering to environmental regulations, and designing scalable business models. Their practices serve as a blueprint for integrating sustainability into profitable ventures.



Creativity and Innovative Solutions

ZasPas is a prime example of creativity in upcycling, turning industrial waste into fashionable products. Their aesthetic integration of rugged, automotive-derived textures into sleek designs reflects an innovative approach to sustainable design.

Methodological approach to implement the practice

Process description - step by step instructions for implementing the practice

The process begins with a trip to the scrapyard, where discarded seat belts from end-of-life vehicles are collected. The ZasPas team selects suitable belts based on quality, durability, and color potential.

Once the materials are chosen, they are transported from the scrapyard to the workshop for further processing. The belts are then manually stripped of all remaining metal, plastic parts, and fasteners to ensure a clean raw material. This is followed by a soaking phase in a special cleaning solution, which helps loosen any stubborn dirt, oils, or residues.

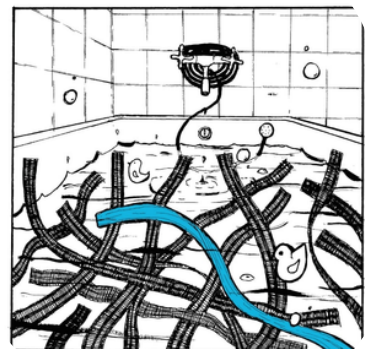
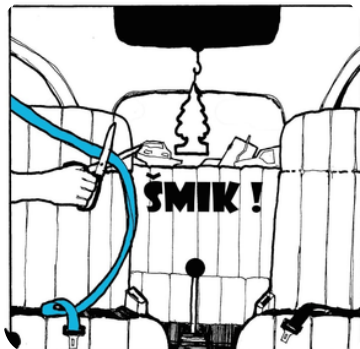
Next, the belts are washed thoroughly in a washing machine, ensuring hygienic and aesthetic standards. After washing, they are air-dried to prevent damage and maintain their structural integrity. Once dry, the belts are sorted by color and type, allowing for consistency in the design of the final product.

The next step involves cutting the belts into required shapes and lengths, and in some cases, braiding or layering them to create a unique texture or reinforcement. The pieces are then sewn together by skilled seamstresses, transforming the raw material into finished items like bags, wallets, or accessories. Every item undergoes a final quality check to ensure it meets ZasPas standards, followed by packaging and shipment to customers. The entire process is relatively time-intensive due to the careful manual work involved at each stage.

As a small enterprise, ZasPas relied on hands-on experimentation and collaboration with skilled craftspeople rather than external consultants. Their approach demonstrates how traditional manual processes and creativity can turn automotive waste into functional and stylish everyday products.

Related Resources that have been developed

- Access to car wrecking yards, scrapyard or junkyard.
- Washing machine
- Strong and powerful sewing machine and needles.



Source: ZasPas, www.zaspas.cz

End product

ZasPas offers Backpacks, Toiletry Bags, Handbags & Purses, Fanny Packs, Wallets, Braided Bags, Buckle Bags, Color Belt Bags, primarily made from old car seatbelts. What makes their collection truly unique is the creative naming system of each product – models are labeled with playful codes resembling car license plates, meaning the color (3 letters), label of the concrete product in the line (2 numbers), and a year of product design (2 numbers), for example: BLK-48-19 (black backpack from 2019), BAS-84-18 (black-silver bag from 2018), BAB-38-13 (black-brown bag from 2013).

Each item is unique and reflects the original material's story.

Sources of funding for this intervention

- Financial award from a regional contest "Rozjezdy roku" supported by T-mobile to jump-start the business.
- Own investment and revenue from sold products.

Innovation, novel methods or technologies used

ZasPas successfully carved out a niche market by transforming an overlooked and unconventional material—used car seatbelts—into stylish, durable, and eco-conscious accessories. At a time when sustainable fashion was gaining momentum but many brands focused on textiles, ZasPas turned to the automotive industry for inspiration. The brand identified a gap in the market for robust, original products that blend upcycling with design, especially appealing to customers who value both function and environmental responsibility. By emphasizing the material's strength, history, and unique aesthetic, ZasPas built a loyal customer base that appreciates not only the quality of their bags and accessories, but also the story behind each item. Their ability to merge craftsmanship, humor, and sustainability gave them a clear identity and allowed them to stand out in the crowded world of eco-friendly fashion.

Obstacles and challenges faced

Challenges include securing a consistent supply of quality waste materials and colorful seatbelts and creating small-sized products from seatbelts (it is hard to work with a hard material under a sewing machine).

The product is unique but not for everybody, its marketing thus should be focused on a specific target group. Overcoming public skepticism about upcycled products is also a challenge.

Steps further and plans for the future

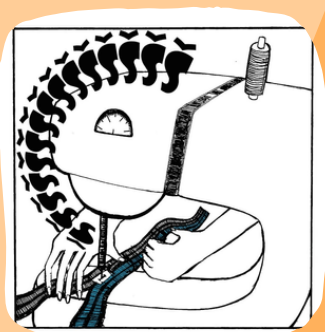
For further development, the company could look for partnerships with specific car manufacturers or car dealerships and offer the products to their customers as additional goods. In the past, ZasPas cooperated with Volvo on a Christmas gift edition for their clients. Cooperations like this can further enhance the brand's name.

Key impacts - environmental, economic & social

- Environmental: Significant reduction in automotive waste and reduced demand for virgin materials. Until now, they have recycled 68191 meters of seatbelts, which is 4091 kilos of seatbelts from 8523 cars.
- Economic: Creation of new jobs in sustainable manufacturing and opening new market segments, in this case, in a self-employment form or by hiring external support
- Social: Empowerment of local artisans and increased environmental awareness among consumers.

Qualities and criteria's to consider the practice effective, efficient, sustainable, transferable

Overview	
Effectiveness: How well does the practice achieve its goals?	ZasPas effectively achieves its goals by converting automotive waste into desirable, functional fashion items while raising environmental awareness and reducing the ecological footprint.
Efficiency: Does the practice minimize resources while maximizing outputs?	The practice minimizes resource use through optimized material processing and a lean production model, ensuring maximum output from available waste materials while reducing energy consumption.
Sustainability: Does the practice contribute to environmental protection, social equality and long-term viability?	By upcycling automotive waste into long-lasting products, ZasPas contributes to environmental protection, supports social equity by providing local job opportunities, and fosters a circular economy, ensuring long-term viability.
Transferability: Are the methods transferable in different contexts?	The methods employed by ZasPas are well-documented and can be adapted to other markets. Replication requires access to similar waste streams, basic upcycling technology (cleaning, cutting, sewing equipment), and skilled artisans.



Required Competences for the best practice implementation

Activities-to-competences mapping

Associated competences	
Knowledge	Understanding of automotive materials, environmental policies, and circular economy principles.
Skills	Technical proficiency in cleaning, cutting, sewing, and design software.
Attitudes	Sustainability-oriented thinking, creativity, adaptability, and a collaborative mindset.

Training needs required for successful implementation

- Workshops on upcycling techniques and material science.
- Courses on sustainable design and environmental regulations.
- Training in digital tools (CAD, online marketing) to improve design and outreach capabilities.

Lessons learned

- Sustainability is Fashionable: Transforming automotive waste into high-end fashion proves that eco-friendly practices can be both stylish and functional.
- Waste as a Resource: With creativity and technical know-how, discarded materials can find a second life and become valuable products.
- Continuous Innovation: The process of refinement and adaptation is essential for overcoming challenges and meeting market needs



References / links

Source: ZasPas, www.zaspas.cz

- www.zaspas.cz
- www.instagram.com/zaspasbags/
- www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/magazin-zivotni-styl-upcycling-v-cesku-pero-ze-zubnich-kartacku-nebo-taska-z-bezpecnostnich-pasu-265202