

| Overview | |
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| Country | Spain |
| Type of organization | NGO |
| Number of employees | 10 |
| Type of practice | Good practice |
| Level of investment | Big |
| Activity type | Collecting waste / Processing waste |
| Key words | Recycling / Upcycling / Reusing / Waste collection |

www.koopera.org

Summary

Koopera is a social and environmental organization focused on promoting social and labor inclusion through sustainable waste management. Established in Spain, Koopera operates a circular economy model that includes the collection, reuse, and recycling of textiles, electronics, furniture, and other materials. Through these activities, Koopera supports both environmental sustainability and social empowerment.

The organization runs a network of collection points and processing centers, employing advanced sorting technologies to efficiently separate and prepare materials for reuse or recycling. Koopera also operates stores where upcycled and recycled products are sold, fostering sustainable consumption. By integrating vocational training and employment opportunities, Koopera helps people at risk of social exclusion reintegrate into the workforce.

Koopera collaborates with various stakeholders, including government agencies, social organizations like Caritas, private companies, and volunteers. This broad partnership network enhances its impact on both environmental and social fronts. The organization combines economic viability with social responsibility, ensuring that profits from sales support ongoing community programs and environmental initiatives.

Overall, Koopera exemplifies an innovative model that blends circular economy principles with social inclusion, creating jobs, reducing waste, and raising public awareness about sustainability. Its approach serves as a replicable example for communities aiming to address environmental challenges while fostering social equity.

Background and origin

Koopera was created to tackle social and environmental challenges by combining sustainable waste management with social inclusion. The organization operates within a circular economy framework, focusing on the collection, reuse, and recycling of various waste materials such as textiles, electronics, and furniture. Its goal is to reduce waste and promote resource conservation while empowering marginalized groups through vocational training and employment opportunities.

Since its inception, Koopera has developed a broad network of collection points, processing facilities, and sustainable consumption stores. It collaborates closely with social organizations like Caritas, local governments, and private sector partners to support vulnerable populations and enhance environmental impact. This multifaceted approach positions Koopera as a leader in integrating environmental sustainability with social equity.

Relevance to the craft sector

Koopera's activities are relevant to the craft sector mainly through their focus on recycling and reusing materials like textiles, furniture, and paper, which can be repurposed for craft-related processes. While not directly involved in traditional crafts, Koopera's approach can inspire artisans to incorporate sustainable materials into their work and adopt circular economy principles. Additionally, their vocational training programs help individuals develop skills that are valuable in crafts, such as working with recycled materials and creating sustainable products.

Target groups

- Individuals at risk of social exclusion
- Long-term unemployed and low-income groups
- People with disabilities
- Local communities involved in recycling and sustainability
- Partner organizations like Caritas and local municipalities

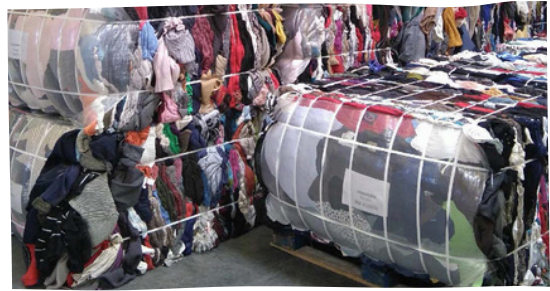


Source: KOOPERA

Material focus - type of waste material involved

Koopera focuses on recycling and reusing a wide range of waste materials, with a significant emphasis on textiles, including clothing, footwear, and home textiles. These materials are collected, sorted, and processed to extend their lifecycle through reuse or recycling, thereby reducing landfill waste and promoting sustainability. Beyond textiles, Koopera also handles electronics, small household appliances, and various other materials such as books, toys, paper, cardboard, furniture, packaging, batteries, and organic waste.

By managing such diverse waste streams, Koopera supports environmental conservation through resource recovery and pollution reduction. Their comprehensive approach ensures that materials are effectively sorted and repurposed, maximizing value while minimizing environmental impact. This broad material focus aligns with their mission to integrate social inclusion with sustainable waste management practices.



Source: KOOPERA

Stakeholders involved

- Caritas (major partner and supporter)
- EU Social Funds (financial support)
- Local municipalities (collaboration on waste collection and social services)
- Private companies (CSR partnerships and employment opportunities)
- Volunteers (support in collection, sorting, and store operations)
- Social workers and trainers (vocational training and support)

Professionals involved and their roles

- Teachers and trainers: Provide vocational and job training
- Volunteers: Assist with collection, sorting, and store operations
- Social workers: Offer personalized support to vulnerable individuals
- Technical staff: Manage recycling processes and quality control
- Sales and marketing teams: Operate stores and promote sustainable products.

Connection of the practice with the project-identified needs

Knowledge of Waste Materials

Koopera possesses extensive knowledge of waste materials, particularly textiles, but also including plastics and other recyclables. This expertise covers waste handling, sorting techniques, and preparation for reuse or recycling, ensuring efficient material recovery and compliance with environmental standards.

Green Entrepreneurial Skills

Koopera demonstrates green entrepreneurial skills by combining sustainability with social inclusion, managing scalable recycling systems, navigating regulatory requirements, and developing value-added products from waste. Although not primarily focused on entrepreneurial training, Koopera's model exemplifies green and inclusive business practices in action.

Creativity and Innovative Solutions

Koopera applies creativity and innovation through the use of advanced sorting technologies, digital platforms for sales and tracking, and social innovation programs that integrate marginalized individuals into the workforce. Their approach includes upcycling waste into new products, designing sustainable fashion items, and creating urban furniture, demonstrating an innovative blend of environmental and social objectives.



Methodological approach to implement the practice

Process description - step by step instructions for implementing the practice

Kooperá's process begins with assessing community needs and setting clear goals for waste collection, reuse, and recycling programs. The organization engages local authorities, businesses, and social partners to build support and secure funding. Facilities for collection, sorting, and processing are established, equipped with advanced technologies for efficient material categorization.

Staff and volunteers are trained in sorting, processing, and quality control. Collection points are set up to gather waste from the community, which is then sorted into reusable, recyclable, or disposable categories. Materials are processed and prepared for resale or recycling. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms ensure the program's effectiveness and enable ongoing improvements.



Source: KOOPERA

Related Resources that have been developed

Kooperá has developed extensive infrastructure, including numerous collection points and processing centers equipped with advanced sorting technologies. The organization also relies on a dedicated team of trained staff and volunteers, supported by partnerships with social organizations like Caritas. Additionally, digital tools for tracking material flows and managing operations enhance transparency and efficiency. Training programs and vocational courses further support workforce development and community engagement.

End product

Kooperá's end products include recycled and upcycled goods sold through their network of sustainable consumption stores. These products range from refurbished textiles and clothing to furniture and other household items. Additionally, Kooperá offers vocational training courses and employment opportunities aimed at empowering marginalized individuals and fostering social inclusion.

Sources of funding for this intervention

Koopera's funding comes from a mix of sources, including government grants and public sector funding, support from EU social funds, private sector partnerships through CSR programs, revenue from sales of recycled goods, service fees, and support from non-profit organizations like Caritas. This diversified funding model supports their social and environmental activities



Source: KOOPERA

Innovation, novel methods or technologies used

Koopera employs innovative methods such as automated and optical sorting technologies to efficiently categorize materials. They also utilize digital platforms for sales and material tracking, enhancing transparency and operational efficiency. Social innovations include inclusive employment programs and community engagement initiatives that foster sustainability and social responsibility.

Obstacles and challenges faced

Koopera has faced challenges including low digital literacy among participants, making training for long-term employment difficult; difficulties in achieving sustained labor market integration, especially for vulnerable groups like women; securing sufficient funding and resources to scale operations while maintaining quality; and engaging the community to change consumption habits and support recycling initiatives. Addressing these requires targeted programs, diversified funding, and extensive awareness campaigns

Steps further and plans for the future

Koopera plans to expand geographically and diversify the types of materials they collect and process. They aim to enhance their social and environmental impact by growing their network, improving operational efficiency, and continuing to integrate marginalized individuals through training and employment programs

Key impacts - environmental, economic & social

Koopera's key impacts include significant environmental benefits by diverting approximately 2 million tonnes of waste from landfills annually and promoting resource conservation. Economically, they create jobs and generate revenue through sales of recycled goods, supporting financial sustainability. Socially, Koopera empowers marginalized groups by providing vocational training, employment opportunities, and fostering community engagement, promoting social inclusion and cohesion.

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

| Qualities | |
|--|--|
| Effectiveness: How well does the practice achieve its goals? | Koopera effectively achieves its goals by managing large volumes of waste, significantly reducing landfill contributions, and adding value through the sale of upcycled products. Their social inclusion efforts successfully employ 40% of their workforce from marginalized groups and engage a large volunteer network, demonstrating strong impact on both environmental and social fronts |
| Efficiency: Does the practice minimize resources while maximizing outputs? | Yes, Koopera minimizes resource use by employing advanced sorting technologies and digital tracking systems, optimizing labor through volunteer engagement, and maximizing output by efficiently processing and selling recycled goods. This approach balances cost-effectiveness with social and environmental benefits |
| Sustainability: Does the practice contribute to environmental protection, social equality and long-term viability? | Yes, Koopera contributes to environmental protection by significantly reducing waste and conserving resources. It promotes social equality by creating inclusive employment and training opportunities for marginalized individuals. The organization's diversified funding and community engagement ensure its long-term viability and continuous positive impact |
| Transferability: Are the methods transferable in different contexts? | Yes, Koopera's methods are adaptable and have been replicated in multiple regions in Spain. However, successful transfer requires tailored social and logistical networks, as well as cultural adaptation to fit local contexts. Access to local resources and community engagement are key factors for effective implementation elsewhere |

Required Competences for the best practice implementation

Activities-to-competences mapping

| Associated competences | |
|------------------------|---|
| Knowledge | Environmental policies, recycling processes, waste management regulations, and circular economy principles. |
| Skills | Technical sorting and recycling skills, digital literacy for managing operations and online sales, and vocational training abilities. |
| Attitudes | Commitment to sustainability, social inclusion, adaptability, teamwork, and community engagement |

Training needs required for successful implementation

- Training in waste sorting and recycling techniques
- Digital literacy for staff and participants
- Vocational and job skills development
- Environmental regulations and sustainability practices
- Community engagement and social inclusion methodologies

Lessons learned

- Combining social inclusion with environmental sustainability is effective
- Community engagement and education are crucial for success
- Continuous adaptation to new technologies and regulations is necessary
- Strong partnerships enhance impact and resource availability
- Addressing digital literacy improves workforce integration

References / links

- *Koopera*: <https://www.koopera.org/>
- *Caritas Spain*: <https://www.caritas.es/>
- *EU Social Funds*: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en>



Source: KOOPERA