

# Rent i Skogen



| Overview             |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Country              | Sweden   |
| Type of organization | Privately Owned Micro Enterprise                         |
| Number of employees  | 3 (30 people involved)                                   |
| Type of practice     | Promising  |
| Level of investment  | Low  |
| Activity type        | Collecting waste / Product design from waste material    |
| Key words            | Waste collection ( Recycling / Upcycling / Repurposing ) |

## Summary

[www.rentiskogen.se](http://www.rentiskogen.se)

Rent i Skogen is Sweden's first company dedicated to cleaning forests and natural environments from litter. They work year-round in collaboration with municipalities and companies, recycling collected waste and creating green jobs for people far from the labor market. Their model combines environmental action with social impact and public engagement.

Rent i Skogen exemplifies a promising practice because it offers a replicable, socially driven model that tackles both environmental waste and labor exclusion. Although still operating at a modest scale, its innovative combination of hands-on clean-up work, storytelling campaigns like CO<sub>2</sub>-Kampen, and upcycling of collected materials shows real potential for broader implementation. The initiative has demonstrated impact through measurable litter removal, job creation for individuals outside the traditional labor market, and public engagement via digital reporting and resale of select items. While not yet formally evaluated at scale, the practice has clear pathways for growth and adaptation in other regions, making it a strong source of inspiration for circular economy solutions with social impact.

Its mobile, low-tech, and narrative-driven approach makes it accessible for replication in both urban and rural settings, particularly where public lands or natural spaces face ongoing waste challenges.

## Background and origin

The initiative was founded to address a gap in environmental services by combining circular economy principles with employment opportunities and public awareness. Joel Knutsson, a successful salesperson by profession, began picking litter in the forest near his home during his free time. What started as a personal hobby quickly gained public attention, engaging both media and local politicians. This growing interest led him to start a company. The first public cleanup event was held in 2022. Since then, over 150 people have contributed to collecting more than 300 tons of waste. The initiative is funded through a combination of content creation, sponsorship from local businesses, online sales via platforms like Facebook and Tradera, and selling recyclable materials to recycling companies. They also collaborate with schools as part of educational programs, offer lectures, and run labour market projects.

## Relevance to the craft sector

Rent i Skogen renovate, upcycle, and create art pieces which they sell to private individuals, with potential to also sell to companies. The work is carried out both by staff and by young people through summer jobs and labour market initiatives. Their approach shows strong potential for upcycling found waste into public art or educational objects. It can inspire design, repair, and creative reuse practices, and is applicable in eco-design education and hands-on learning contexts.

## Target groups

- Locals
- Local companies
- Municipals
- Recycling companies
- Schools



Source: Rent i Skogen [rentiskogen.se](https://rentiskogen.se)

## Material focus - type of waste material involved

**For upcycling and reselling:** Primarily furniture, household items, electronics, and architectural salvage items such as door handles and other metal fittings.

**For recycling sales:** Circuit boards, metals, plastics, glass, electronics, and other recyclable materials.



## Stakeholders involved

- Municipalities provide summer jobs and contract Rent i Skogen for clean-up of public areas.
- Private landowners and companies hire them for clean-up and often act as sponsors.
- Sponsors and campaign partners support financially and raise awareness, especially via CO<sub>2</sub>-Kampen.
- Labor offices help place jobseekers in environmental work programs.
- Citizens and schools join clean-up events and sustainability education.
- Team members include staff, youth, and jobseekers of all genders in both field and outreach roles.



Source: Rent i Skogen [rentiskogen.se](http://rentiskogen.se)

## Professionals involved and their roles

- Environmental workers for collection.
- Supervisors and project leaders.
- Educators and youth leaders engage communities, lead school programs and awareness campaigns.
- Upcycle carpenters and other craftsmen.

# Connection of the practice with the project-identified needs

## Knowledge of Waste Materials

Rent i Skogen builds practical knowledge of plastic waste through collection and manual sorting. While not engaged in chemical recycling, it plays a key role early in the recycling chain by preparing materials for downstream reuse or processing. Staff and participants are trained to identify plastic types, contamination levels, and material value. They also learn safe handling of sharp or hazardous items, and how to assess which waste streams are worth sorting for resale or upcycling.

## Green Entrepreneurial Skills

The company operates as a mobile, scalable service that contracts with municipalities and landowners for clean-up and environmental reporting. This market-based model transforms environmental responsibility into a viable business. Campaigns like CO<sub>2</sub>-Kampen add commercial and social value through storytelling and measurable environmental data. Rent i Skogen ensures compliance with Swedish environmental and labor laws, and demonstrates how social enterprises can generate income, provide jobs, and expand into value-added reuse or circular product development.

## Creativity and Innovative Solutions

While focused on clean-up, Rent i Skogen integrates creative reuse through youth engagement, schools, and community partners. Community clean-ups often lead to awareness campaigns or symbolic displays. The model shows strong potential for expansion into local craft, public art, and educational installations, especially in collaboration with artists and educators.



# Methodological approach to implement the practice

## Process description - step by step instructions for implementing the practice

### 1) Scouting & Area Mapping

Identify littered areas via public tips, environmental reports, or municipal requests.

### 2) Team Mobilization

Assemble a team, including local jobseekers when possible. Provide safety and sorting training.

### 3) Clean-Up Operations

Equip teams with gloves, bags, and tools. Collect waste manually from targeted areas – forests, paths, parks, coastal zones.

### 4) Sorting

Sort waste into categories (plastics, metals, general waste, hazardous items) and items for reuse or upcycling.

### 5) Upcycling / Creative Reuse

Hand unique materials to partner artists, youth leaders or craftsmen to create awareness-raising installations or for selling.

### 6) Recycling & Disposal

Send recyclable materials to local facilities. Non-recyclable waste is documented and properly disposed of.

### 7) Reporting & Communication

Summarized impact in digital reports with metrics (e.g. kilos collected, CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent saved), used in campaigns.

A single clean-up operation: 1–3 days. Ongoing program in a municipality: scalable from 1 week to full-year contracts. Full model setup in a new region takes approx. 1–2 months, depending on partnerships and staffing.

## Related Resources that have been developed

- Sales and outreach materials
- Educational materials
- Campaign formats
- Carbon impact calculator
- A children's book on recycling

## End product

- Cleaned environments
- Sorted and recycled materials
- Impact data reports
- Upcycled items
- Resale of found objects



Source: Rent i Skogen [rentiskogen.se](http://rentiskogen.se)

## Sources of funding for this intervention

Currently income comes mainly from employment-related programs, such as youth summer jobs and labor market initiatives. Support is provided from local businesses, recycling companies, tool sponsors, and educational book backers who help fund operations. Additional income comes from lectures, workshops, and product sales.

## Innovation, novel methods or technologies used

Rent i Skogen offers a hands-on, community-driven approach to circular economy by transforming waste collection into a platform for learning and local engagement. Unlike centralized recycling systems, it focuses on early-stage sorting, manual identification, and creative reuse.

By upcycling collected wood, metal, and plastics into craft, repair, or art materials, the initiative builds circular value before recycling. Youth and jobseekers gain practical skills that support green employment. Through mobile units, simple tools, and campaigns like CO<sub>2</sub>-Kampen, Rent i Skogen raises awareness, involves schools and communities, and positions waste as a source of innovation and entrepreneurship.

## Obstacles and challenges faced

Main challenge has been securing direct payment from companies and the public sector for litter collection services as removing waste is often undervalued or expected to be done voluntarily. Looking back, the team recognizes the need to more clearly communicate the economic and ecological value of waste removal. Building stronger business cases, with measurable environmental data (e.g., CO<sub>2</sub> savings), and integrating these into service offers from the beginning, could have helped establish waste collection as a paid service rather than an add-on to social employment.

## Steps further and plans for the future

Rent i Skogen plans to expand nationally and internationally, grow creative reuse partnerships, and develop circular products — aiming to become a leading platform for local clean-up, circular innovation, and social inclusion.

## Key impacts - environmental, economic & social

- 1.Environmental:** Reduces litter supporting cleaner ecosystems and biodiversity.
- 2.Economic:** Generates income through services, reuse sales, and sponsorships while reducing public clean-up costs.
- 3.Social:** Foster local engagement and green jobs for marginalized groups.

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

| Qualities  |   |
|--|---|
| Effectiveness: How well does the practice achieve its goals?   | Perfectly, it has proven effective in achieving its core goals of reducing waste, engaging marginalized groups, and promoting circular economy practices at the local level.  |
| Efficiency: Does the practice minimize resources while maximizing outputs?   | Yes, maximizing social and environmental impact through low-cost, resource-light methods.   |
| Sustainability: Does the practice contribute to environmental protection, social equality and long-term viability? | Yes, contributes meaningfully to environmental protection, social equity and long-term viability. By combining ecological restoration with social impact and financial pragmatism, Rent i Skogen positions itself as a sustainable model for community-based circular transformation.   |
| Transferability: Are the methods transferable in different contexts?   | Yes, highly transferable and adaptable to various geographic, social, and economic contexts. Its key strengths lie in its simplicity, mobility, and modular structure, making it suitable for both urban and rural areas. The Rent i Skogen model is highly adaptable, allowing regions to emphasize youth employment, biodiversity, or upcycling. Its core methods, such as campaign formats, educational tools, and partnership strategies, are being documented for replication. The initiative requires minimal infrastructure, needing only land access, basic tools, a trained coordinator, and local partnerships. With the right support, it can be replicated by municipalities, NGOs, or social enterprises aiming to link environmental action with social employment and circular innovation. |

# Required Competences for the best practice implementation

## Activities-to-competences mapping

| Associated competences |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Knowledge              | Knowing harmful waste, material types, reuse value, sustainability basics, local roles, buyer needs, and storytelling                 |
| Skills                 | Using tools safely, sorting materials, guiding groups, marketing products, pitching ideas, and communicating circular stories clearly |
| Attitudes              | Caring for nature, showing creativity, patience, empathy, pride, and a belief in circular value and opportunity.                      |

## Training needs required for successful implementation

- Circular economy basics, material knowledge and safe handling
- Upcycling skills, basic repair and creative reuse of materials
- Communication and digital skills, using social media
- Entrepreneurship like pitching, budgeting, and building partnerships
- Soft skills for teamwork, leadership, creativity, and inclusion mindset

## Lessons learned

- Waste has value
- Inclusion creates impact
- Simple scales
- Partnerships are key
- Storytelling drives change

## References / links

- Campaign: [CO2Kampen.se](https://CO2Kampen.se)
- Media: [mitti.se/nyheter/skogsstadaren-joel-det-ar-fullt-av-uppbrutna-kassaskap-6.27.34110.ef6e0a9594](https://mitti.se/nyheter/skogsstadaren-joel-det-ar-fullt-av-uppbrutna-kassaskap-6.27.34110.ef6e0a9594)

