

Overview	
Country	Germany
Type of organization	Social enterprise / Sustainability-focused company
Number of employees	Approximately 17
Type of practice	Best
Level of investment	Medium to High
Activity type	Product design from waste material
Key words	Recycling / Reusing / Waste collection

## Summary

[www.wildplastic.com](http://www.wildplastic.com)

Wildplastic is a German social enterprise that collects plastic waste from the environment, mainly in countries with poor waste management systems, and transforms it into 100% recycled and recyclable packaging products. Their goal is to reduce plastic pollution, cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and improve the working conditions of waste collectors.

The company works with local partners in countries like India, Indonesia, and Haiti to collect "wild plastic" from landfills, beaches, and open dumps. This waste is often non-recyclable locally and would otherwise remain in the environment. Wildplastic ensures that collectors are fairly paid and work under ethical conditions.

Once collected, the plastic is cleaned, sorted, and processed into granules in Europe. These are then used to manufacture climate-friendly products such as mailing bags and polybags, which are sold to businesses through partnerships with companies like **OTTO and Hermes**.

Wildplastic places strong emphasis on transparency. Through their digital tool, **WILDTRACKER**, customers can trace where the plastic in each product came from and follow its journey through the recycling process. This adds credibility and educates users about the impact of their choices.

The environmental benefits include reducing the use of virgin plastic and lowering carbon emissions. Socially, the model supports decent work for informal waste collectors. Wildplastic operates under a steward-ownership model, which ensures profits are reinvested in the mission rather than distributed to investors.

In summary, Wildplastic presents a scalable and ethical business model that combines waste collection, social impact, and sustainable product design.

## Background and origin

Wildplastic was founded in 2019 in Hamburg, Germany, by a group of entrepreneurs including Christian Raddatz, Gesa Biermann, and Jasper Gabrielsen. The idea emerged from the realization that millions of tons of plastic waste remain unrecycled, especially in countries without functioning waste management systems. Wildplastic targets this “wild plastic”, plastic waste found in the environment, and brings it back into the recycling cycle.

In its first year, the company began collaborating with local waste-collecting organizations in India, Indonesia, and Haiti, focusing on ethical sourcing and fair pay.

By 2021, Wildplastic launched its first product: a 100% recycled mailing bag, made from plastic collected in these regions and processed in Europe.

The team has grown to around 15 employees and operates under a steward ownership model, ensuring that the company’s purpose remains central and profits are reinvested. Wildplastic partners with well-known companies such as OTTO and Hermes, and introduced their WILDTRACKER transparency tool in 2022.

## Relevance to the craft sector

Wildplastic’s approach is highly relevant to the craft sector through its focus on material reuse, ethical production, and sustainable design. By transforming collected plastic waste into new, functional products, Wildplastic demonstrates how discarded materials can be repurposed creatively and responsibly: core values shared by many craft professionals. Their model encourages small producers and designers to rethink material sourcing, offering inspiration for integrating recycled plastics into handmade or small-batch goods. This aligns with growing consumer demand for eco-conscious products and supports circular economy principles within craft-based production.

## Target groups

- Business Clients (B2B)
- Environmentally Conscious Consumers and Supporters
- Waste collectors



Source: <https://wildplastic.com>

# Material focus - type of waste material involved

Wildplastic focuses on plastic waste collected from the environment, specifically:

- Low-density polyethylene (LDPE) – commonly used in plastic bags and film packaging
- High-density polyethylene (HDPE) – found in bottles, containers, and other durable packaging
- Polypropylene (PP) – used in various consumer goods and packaging materials

This “wild plastic” is sourced from landfills, streets, beaches, and unmanaged dumpsites in countries lacking effective waste management systems.

The collected plastic is then cleaned, processed, and turned into 100% recycled, recyclable products.



Source: <https://wildplastic.com>

## Stakeholders involved

- Local Waste Collectors and NGOs: Engage in the collection of wild plastic and ensure fair labor practices
- Business Partners: Companies like OTTO and Hermes collaborate with WILDPLASTIC for sustainable packaging solutions
- Consumers: Purchase products made from recycled wild plastic, supporting the initiative

## Professionals involved and their roles

- Product Designers
- Supply Chain Managers
- Software Developers
- Communications & Marketing Specialists
- Impact Partners
- Sustainability Officers

# Connection of the practice with the project-identified needs

## Knowledge of Waste Materials

Wildplastic demonstrates deep material expertise by identifying, sourcing, and processing various types of plastic waste (e.g. LDPE, HDPE, PP). Their work shows how to distinguish usable plastic types, assess quality, and convert them into new raw material: knowledge essential for sustainable craft and production practices.

## Green Entrepreneurial Skills

As a purpose-driven business, Wildplastic embodies green entrepreneurship. It combines environmental impact with a viable business model, ethical sourcing, and product development. Their approach teaches how to launch and grow a sustainable venture: building supply chains, engaging stakeholders, managing impact, and creating products from recycled inputs – all critical skills for emerging eco-entrepreneurs in the craft sector.

## Creativity and Innovative Solutions

Wildplastic transforms waste into value through innovative product design (e.g. climate-neutral mailing bags), transparent tracking tools like the WILDTRACKER, and partnerships with large retailers. Their solution-driven mindset proves how environmental challenges can inspire functional, market-ready, and scalable innovations, showing learners how to design responsibly while meeting real-world needs.



# Methodological approach to implement the practice

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

### Short Implementation Steps

1. Choose plastic waste (e.g. LDPE, HDPE).
2. Partner with ethical collectors abroad.
3. Collect and transport the plastic.
4. Recycle it into granulate.
5. Make new products (e.g. bags).
6. Add traceability (e.g. QR tool).
7. Sell to businesses.
8. Promote and grow.

## Related Resources that have been developed

- WILDTRACKER – A digital tool for tracking the origin and journey of recycled plastic.
- Product Lines – 100% recycled mailing bags and polybags.
- Partnership Models – Templates for B2B collaboration (e.g. with OTTO, Hermes).
- Educational Content – Blog posts and impact reports explaining plastic recycling and ethical sourcing.



Source: <https://wildplastic.com>



Source: <https://wildplastic.com>

## End product

Reusable, 100% recycled and recyclable mailing bags and polybags made from plastic waste collected in unmanaged environments, designed for sustainable packaging in e-commerce and retail.

## Sources of funding for this intervention

- Initial grants from IFB Hamburg
- Loans from GLS Bank
- Investments from Purpose Ventures and other impact investors

## Innovation, novel methods or technologies used

- WILDTRACKER: A digital tool that traces the plastic's journey from collection to product, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- Sourcing from unmanaged waste streams: They collect plastic directly from landfills, beaches, and streets in regions without formal waste systems—an uncommon, high-impact approach.



Source: <https://wildplastic.com>

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## Obstacles and challenges faced

- Inconsistent supply from regions with poor infrastructure
- High transport costs for moving waste to recyclers
- Investor misalignment with long-term goals
- Technical challenges in processing mixed plastic
- Need for transparency, solved by creating WILDTRACKER

## Steps further and plans for the future

WILDPLASTIC aims to expand its product range, increase collaborations with businesses seeking sustainable packaging solutions, and enhance its impact by recovering more wild plastic and supporting additional waste collector communities.

## Key impacts - environmental, economic & social

Wildplastic's key impacts are environmental, economic, and social. Environmentally, it removes plastic waste from nature, lowers CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and reduces the need for virgin plastic. Economically, it turns waste into marketable products, supports circular business models, and generates income. Socially, it creates fair employment for waste collectors, improves working conditions, and builds ethical, inclusive supply chains.

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

Qualities	
Effectiveness: How well does the practice achieve its goals?	WILDPLASTIC's practice demonstrates effectiveness by significantly reducing environmental plastic waste and converting it into valuable, fully recyclable products like WILDBAGS. A Life Cycle Assessment indicates that their products can reduce CO <sub>2</sub> emissions by up to 69% compared to conventional plastic bags.
Efficiency: Does the practice minimize resources while maximizing outputs?	In terms of efficiency, WILDPLASTIC minimizes resource use by utilizing existing plastic waste, thereby reducing the need for virgin materials. Their collaboration with local collection organizations ensures a streamlined process from waste collection to product manufacturing.
Sustainability: Does the practice contribute to environmental protection, social equality and long-term viability?	WILDPLASTIC contributes to environmental protection by removing plastic waste from ecosystems and promoting recycling. Socially, they empower marginalized groups by partnering with waste collectors in countries lacking formal waste management systems, providing fair wages and improved working conditions.
Transferability: Are the methods transferable in different contexts?	WILDPLASTIC's model is adaptable to various contexts, especially in regions with significant plastic pollution and informal waste collection sectors. Their approach of collaborating with local organizations and integrating collected plastic into recyclable products can be replicated elsewhere, provided there is access to similar partnerships and

# Required Competences for the best practice implementation

## Activities-to-competences mapping

Associated competences	
Knowledge	Plastic types and recycling processes; sustainable product design; ethical sourcing and logistics; brand communication and advocacy.
Skills	Plastic sorting and processing; product design and software use; supply chain coordination and negotiation; content creation and public engagement.
Attitudes	Environmental commitment, creativity, ethical responsibility, and proactive, user-centered thinking.

## Training needs required for successful implementation

Training needs include knowledge of plastic recycling, skills in processing and design, supply chain coordination, and sustainability communication, along with strong teamwork and ethical awareness.

## Lessons learned

Building a sustainable plastic recycling model requires long-term commitment, ethical partnerships, and transparent communication. Technical challenges and investor alignment are critical. Innovation, like traceability tools, strengthens trust and impact.

## References / links

<https://wildplastic.com/en>  
<https://wildplastic.com/en/pages/mission>  
<https://wildplastic.com/en/pages/wildtracker>  
<https://purpose-economy.org/content/uploads/purpose-wildplasticcase-study.pdf>



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