

## Best Practice 03 CE



# Harnessing Reuse opportunities for local benefits

Local governments are playing an important role in the reuse of materials by enabling the development of infrastructure and creating favorable conditions for the uptake of circular solutions. Communities of all sizes are becoming reuse innovation hubs, supporting refurbishment and repair enterprises, adopting reusable takeaway packaging solutions, facilitating construction materials exchanges and, connecting residents and businesses to more sustainable products and services.

Reuse models offer important environmental, economic and social benefits (e.g. local jobs and businesses revenues, reducing waste, resource utilization and carbon emissions)<sup>1</sup>. Cities that develop a comprehensive plan and monitor results can orient their investments and realize important gains<sup>2</sup>.

## Local government actions can deliver strategic benefits:

- **Setting clear reuse policies** and city targets, monitoring and reporting results.
- **Procurement of products in city operations**, in the renovation and maintenance of city-owned buildings, events and infrastructure.
- **Funding or facilitating reuse hubs**, repair clinics or small-business grants.
- **Investing in or supporting** quality collection points or reuse infrastructure.
- **Promoting, raising awareness** and creating a culture of reuse in the community.

how to make reuse part of their broader sustainability plan, measure its impact and drive the way forward with planned actions and investments.

## Flanders: from waste management to material management

Flanders (*pop. 6.8 million in 2024*) is a circular economy leader in Europe. The densely populated and highly industrialized region began the ambitious transformation of its traditional waste management approach into a model of sustainable materials management in **2011** backed by the Materials Management Act. The Local Materials Plan **2023-2030**<sup>3</sup> maintained the focus on waste prevention, closing materials loops, eco-efficient production and eco-design, including amplifying actions on reuse with a new goal of 8 kg of reuse per resident from 6kg/person reached in **2022**<sup>4</sup>.

Enabling various reuse channels to thrive is an important part of their approach. Today a **network of approximately 138 accredited reuse centres (De Kringwinkel)** offer jobs and training to unemployed people, operating alongside other reuse channels that include private second-hand shops, on-line platforms, fairs and charity events, and family exchanges. De Kringwinkel are distinct because of their focus on social employment, sustainable activities and offering consumer goods at low prices. Their role is embedded in waste and material policies and in local governance bodies<sup>5</sup>.

## Success factors of Flanders' Reuse Centers

1. **Linking** reuse & social employment: most reuse centers receive subsidies.
2. **Embedding** reuse centres in waste policies: integrating centers in Extended Producer Responsibility and take-back obligations.
3. **Federation of centres**: supports professionalization and representation to authorities.
4. **Continued professionalization**: creation of strong brand, standards and marketing.



Measuring and sharing progress  
First European Reuse Barometer was released in 2024  
<https://zerowasteurope.eu/library/european-reuse-barometer/>

## Cities making it work

Two leaders with long-standing reuse commitments, the region of **Flanders, Belgium** and **New York City, USA** showcase

In Flanders **to measure is to know**. Their **Circular Economy Monitor**<sup>6</sup> presents more than 100 indicators with accompanying analyses, including for reuse. Their experience

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shows how reuse channels co-exist, how government policies enable growth and contribute to waste diversion and social objectives, and the evolving consumer preferences.



### Reuse a vital part of New York City's Sustainability blueprint OneNYC<sup>7</sup>

New York City's Department of Sanitation (**DSNY**) leads the city's waste diversion efforts, monitors results and reports on diversion rates as per local laws. Their Reuse Sector Assessments which started modestly in 1995 and evolved into valuable in-depth reports 2017 and 2019<sup>8</sup> inform meaningful actions to grow the reuse economy. The 2019 report highlighted the progress made in each of the eight areas of reuse for potential growth flagged in 2017: (1) repair, (2) food rescue, (3) sharing economy, (4) donation model, (5) disaster response planning, (6) distribution of reuse outlets throughout the city, (7) new technology and (8) reuse and exchange of surplus goods.

From savvy **donateNYC**<sup>9</sup> campaigns, to food rescue technology platforms, ReFashion week and annual conferences, **NYC** takes reuse seriously as a means to achieve their zero waste target. City operations are also not exempt from doing their share. Since 2017, **DSNY** has piloted new ways to relinquish surplus goods and donate stocked supplies for disaster response to vetted agencies through the **donateNYC** program. This collaboration has become a model for city agencies managing stock supplies and surpluses. **DonateNYC** also provides a searchable map of close to 1,000 locations where residents can donate and procure gently used items. In addition, refashion **NYC** provides convenient in-building donations bins for clothing, textiles and shoes. **Today there are some 2,503 buildings participating in refashionNYC** and in 2024, **DSNY held 38 reuse and recycling events collecting over 93,500 pounds of reusable goods** .

There is a lot to learn from **DSNY's** engagement on reuse, their work to characterize the sector and track progress. The methodological details presented in the 2019 report (e.g. quantitative profiling, new mass balance) set a high standard but also provide useful guidance for any city that wants to advance reuse practices<sup>10</sup>.

**There are many other leading examples of reuse and guidance available. Learn and be inspired by their commitment and actions:**

- **RREUSE:** international network for social enterprises active in re-use, repair and recycling : <https://rreuse.org/> and <https://rreuse.org/research-study-on-developing-re-use-networks-in-europe/>
- **The ReUse Vanguard Project:** <https://zerowasteurope.eu/project/reuse-vanguard-project-rsvp>
- **Putting second-hand first to create local jobs – guidance for municipalities to develop local re-use strategies:** <https://www.circularity-gap.world>
- **WEF Consumers Beyond Waste Summary Document Reuse Metrics Measurement 2022.pdf** ([weforum.org](http://weforum.org))
- **Circular Innovation Council:** <https://sharereuserepairhub.ca/>

1. <https://rreuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/just-transition-briefing-rreuse-2022.pdf>

2. [https://zerowasteurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/ZWE\\_June24\\_Report\\_InOff-plastic-european-reuse-barometer-.pdf](https://zerowasteurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/ZWE_June24_Report_InOff-plastic-european-reuse-barometer-.pdf)

3. <https://cemonitor.be/en/policy/>

4. <https://cemonitor.be/en/indicator/consumer-goods/reuse-and-recovery/reuse-of-consumer-goods-via-reuse-centres/>

5. <https://transition-pathways.europa.eu/best-practices/de-kringwinkel-model-social-and-circular-economy-through-second-hand-shops>; <https://ce-centervlaanderen>

6. <https://cemonitor.be/en/home-english/>

7. <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cpp/our-programs/onenyc.page>

8. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/downloads/resources/reports/recycling-reports/2017-reuse-sector-report.pdf> and <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/downloads/resources/reports/recycling-reports/2019-reuse-sector-report.pdf>

9. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/donate/site/>

10. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/downloads/resources/reports/zero-waste-plan/zero-waste-report-2024.pdf>



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