

PRESS RELEASE

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Sustainability and Employment from promotion of waste The results of the European project SIFOR in Emilia-Romagna and Europe

On 31 of October it finishes SIFOR, European project for the transfer to Italy of expertise for the development of waste. Financed by the European Commission, promoted by **Emilia-Romagna Region** and coordinated by **Association Orius**, from 2012 SIFOR - *training system to the labor value of reuse* - has enabled to identify an **innovative professional profile already present in France and Belgium: the "Valorizer of waste" that is prevalent position in social cooperatives and centres of Reuse / Recycling of public and private, as a place of innovation for excellence.**

"The Valorizer represents a strategic activity for the development of "green jobs" related to social sustainability - reports Serenella Sandri, project leader of Sifor for Emilia-Romagna Region – *in order to manage the selection, preparation for re-use and marketing of recovered waste to a new life . The "Copernican revolution" of the Promotion is to reverse the order of the treatment of waste: before any other processing (and therefore recycling, incineration and landfill) waste should be subject to the check of the possibility of be re-used"*.

Among the Italian partners also the **University of Modena and Reggio Emilia**, which has provided scientific mentoring to testings and the **National Association ATIA-ISWA**, who organized targeted training activities. **From Europe** there are the partners **Envie Strasbourg**, founder of one of the largest European networks on WEEE with 25 social enterprises, 45 shops, a sold throughout in all France about 80,000 units a year; the network **RREUSE based in Brussels**, which represents 22 non-profit organizations engaged in environmental activities in 11 EU countries; the **Foundation Trinijove** in Catalonia that manages environmental activities with disadvantaged people and the waste collection of the local airport; the **Foundation Pestalozzi** in Romania who care training for the inclusion of disadvantaged people.

Focus of the project are **WEEE, textiles and bulky waste** to be recovered through reuse practices also in Italy, thanks to the examples of excellence in Europe. The aim of these activities, in addition to the environmental waste reduction, is the **employment inclusion of disadvantaged people within the Centres of Reuse / Recycling managed by cooperatives and social enterprises.**

The conclusive briefing, held by videoconference from the headquarters of the Emilia-Romagna Region, was attended by the Italian partners and European partners who have contributed to the results.

Giorgio Rosso, president of Orius, began focusing especially the importance of "***the study visits in Belgium and France, and then the training in the workplace, which we experienced in the 11 social cooperatives. Thanks to the contribution of the partners*** - still Rosso shows – ***there are arising in Italy 3 regional networks of social enterprises under the brand RESTARTER, which will enable more and more "industrial" size and common strategies, overcoming the traditional individualism that too often it characterizes us"***.

Among **RESTARTER** there are the projects in the **textile supply chain**, where is already planned the first Centre dedicated to the re-use and, in the wake of initiatives undertaken during the project in the provinces of Bologna, Modena, Ferrara, there are already the **first 12 employments, of which 50% disadvantaged people, with the recovery of about 2000 tonnes of used clothing**. In the **WEEE supply chain** it is being signed the first Italian trade agreement with the **Irish social network RECOSI** (member of RREUSE) under which **it is expected to start employment for 10/15 people of which at least 40% disadvantaged**. In the **bulky supply chain**, the most complex to manage, at the moment it has planned a model **Centre for re-use**, with activities of **trash design and 3D moulding** of worn parts of the waste for re-use.

Moreover, in order to establish a *social management* that is able to support all of this, **three management tools** were adapted from the French model, **which are aimed at acting in an integrated fashion within the networks**, with shared work procedures and the ability to communicate to the public, with just one “voice” from the network, a transparent social report.

During the videoconference, **Pascal Monard** of Envie confirmed the importance of these management tools—which have been transferred to Italy—in making sure the French network would establish itself as one of the first in Europe. He also stressed the key role of a high-quality vocational training for disadvantaged workers and the need to monitor the growth of their skills.

Paolo Ferraresi of Rreuse spoke immediately after, describing the process of transfer from Belgian social enterprises of the best management practices for the textile and bulky supply chains. He also mentioned the related multiple vocational training activities that take place in Belgium. In terms of qualifications, new professional profiles, both managerial and executive, have been designed. Ferraresi also stressed the role of Rreuse in leading communication activities for the project.

Elizabeth Diaz of Trinijove is collaborating with the **Catalonia Region** to conduct the first regional-scale survey to measure the vocational training needs of social workers and recognize the skills that they acquired on-the-job, besides the experimental vocational training of the first 20 workers.

Daniela Mihaita of Pestalozzi said that the knowledge necessary to start new environmental sustainability projects in the social economy—a reality that is still very much underestimated—is in the process of being developed in Romania too.

*“We supported all the designing and operational phases of the project—said **Rita Gamberini**, person in charge for the project at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia—with feasibility studies and data processing on business plans models. We also successfully experimented a **process for the effective hygienization of second-hand clothing**, which is an Italian law requirement to start re-use activities in this supply chain. We expect that once full operating speed is reached—concluded Gamberini—these re-use processes will allow for the **recovery of 20-25% of the total volume of waste collected in these three supply chains in our territory.**”*

Manuela Ratta of the Emilia Romagna region waste division stressed the need to foster and govern the new “preparing for re-use” requests, as included in the **Regional Plan for Waste Management upon suggestions found in the European directives**.

Elisabetta Di Pardo of the Emilia Romagna Region qualifications division concluded by describing the planning of the **new professional profile of Waste Valorizer, designed with the partnership between the Emilia Romagna Region and Catalonia Region. The profile includes “broadband” managerial skills** for the planning and management of collection plants/services, treatment, and sale of good/waste, to ensure maximum conformity of the profile with the demands of the public and private job market. ***“The plan for the future—concluded Di Pardo—could be the implementation of profiles for industrial planning/production, with the aim of a “circular” economic system in which the same resources are exploited multiple times by means of continuous recycling.”***

A dedicated YouTube channel will include video testimony of Sifor’s good social, environmental, and vocational training practices, with the goal of **fostering maximum dissemination and the transfer, in Italy and Europe, of social economy strategies and the professional profile of the Valorizer to regional and/or national systems of qualifications.**

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