



Guide: How to build, run and sustain a multifunctional resource centre

Part of the NiCE D.2.4.1 Solution Box

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NICE GUIDES OVERVIEW

This document is a part of the NiCE Solution Box – a set of four guides offering practical and interconnected approach to advancing circular lifestyles and sustainable development in cities. Though each guide addresses a specific area, together they provide a complete toolbox for organizations, businesses, authorities, and citizens seeking to make urban spaces more resilient, resource-efficient, and community-oriented. All guides can be accessed on the NiCE Knowledge Platform: <https://circularlifestyle.eu/resources>.

Methodology Kit on stakeholders' engagement in circular lifestyles

This guide focuses on the human and organizational dimension of circular development. It provides step-by-step methods for NGOs, schools, and public authorities to initiate participatory processes, re-activate spaces, and encourage behavioral changes toward sustainability. It emphasizes scaling successful initiatives and sustaining impact over time. The kit combines theory with good practices from Central European cities (Bologna in Italy, Brzeg Dolny in Poland, Budapest in Hungary, Graz in Austria, Jihlava in Czechia, Košice in Slovakia, Ptuj in Slovenia, and Würzburg in Germany), offering versatile tools that can also be applied in other areas of sustainable urban development.

Guide: How to build, run and sustain a multifunctional resource centre

This guide focuses on transforming underused urban areas into dynamic hubs supporting circular practices. It provides a framework for planning, designing, and managing spaces that encourage the sharing, repair, and reuse of materials. Targeted mainly at NGOs and SMEs, this guide emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement, financial planning, and day-to-day operations. It also includes case studies from the NiCE Project that show how such centres can become economic and social anchors for city centres in Brzeg Dolny (Poland), Graz (Austria), Košice (Slovakia), and Ptuj (Slovenia).



Guide: How to link sustainable online commerce with city centres

This guide responds to the growing influence of e-commerce on local economies. It offers SMEs actionable strategies to connect their online business activities with physical urban spaces, ensuring that city centres remain vibrant and economically relevant. This includes exploring localized delivery systems, creating synergies between digital and physical marketplaces, and encouraging sustainable practices that align with circular lifestyles. The guide also identifies opportunities for collaboration with logistics providers, technology developers, and community groups, positioning SMEs as key drivers of sustainable urban commerce.

Circular Water Kit addressing water re-use and water saving in cities

This guide highlights water as a critical resource in urban environments. It explains how local authorities and citizens can improve water efficiency, integrate reuse technologies, and enhance climate resilience. The guide's focus is both educational and applicative: it raises awareness about the value of water and provides policymakers and planners with tools to implement circular water strategies. Real-world examples from Bologna (Italy) illustrate the benefits of collaboration between public authorities and communities, showing how saving and reusing water can strengthen sustainability efforts across cities.



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
3D	3-Dimension
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DIY	Do-It-Yourself
ESG	Environmental, Social, And Governance
EU	European Union
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NiCE	Interreg Central Europe Project "From Niche to Centre - City Centres as Places of Circular Lifestyles"
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small And Medium Size Enterprises



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context: about the NiCE project

The NiCE (From Niche to Centre - City Centres as Places of Circular Lifestyles) project is a transnational initiative aimed at revitalizing urban centers by promoting circular and sustainable lifestyle and consumption. In response to challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of online commerce, which have led to the decline of traditional retail spaces, NiCE seeks to transform city centers into vibrant hubs of circular lifestyles.

Central to the project's vision is the promotion of sustainable consumption habits and the establishment of strategic frameworks to support circular lifestyles. Through innovative urban development approaches, NiCE encourages the repurposing of spaces for reuse, repair, and sustainable consumption initiatives. The project also emphasizes education and collaboration, offering inspiration and practical tools to municipalities, citizen associations, and policymakers to foster sustainable behaviors and practices.

NiCE operates across eight Central European countries – Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia – bringing together a diverse group of partners to share knowledge, implement pilot projects, and scale successful models. By doing so, it aims to position city centers as active hubs of sustainability and circular innovation, inspiring broader adoption of these practices throughout the region.

In line with this overarching vision, the present guide provides detailed insights into creating, operating, and sustaining multifunctional resource centres that bring NiCE's principles to life in revitalized urban spaces.

1.2. Purpose of the guide

This guide is designed to provide a comprehensive framework for building, operating, and sustaining multifunctional resource centres that serve as key enablers of circular lifestyles in revitalized city centres. Recognizing the transformative potential of such centres, the guide explores practical strategies for optimizing space utilization, crafting impactful service offerings, achieving economic viability, and fostering robust community engagement. By addressing these critical aspects, it ensures that the resource centres can contribute to long-term urban sustainability and resilience.

A multifunctional resource centre is a space designed to support circular economy practices by offering a variety of services and opportunities that promote the reuse of materials, sharing of resources, and sustainable consumption. These centres often transform underutilized urban



spaces into vibrant hubs where communities can access repair workshops, material exchanges, educational programs, and other services that align with circular lifestyle principles.

Central to this guide is the emphasis on supporting stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in their journey to establish and manage these centres effectively. It incorporates financial models tailored to varied local contexts, offering insights into sustainable revenue streams and funding opportunities. Operational guidance is also provided to streamline daily activities, mitigate risks, and navigate regulatory landscapes. To complement these strategies, the guide features case studies highlighting successful examples of resource centres, showcasing their role in promoting local, sustainable trade and consumption. These practical examples serve as valuable inspiration and learning opportunities for those embarking on similar initiatives.

In essence, this guide aspires to empower its readers with the tools and knowledge needed to transform underutilized urban spaces into thriving hubs of circular economy practices, creating lasting benefits for both the environment and local communities.

1.3. Target groups of the guide

This guide is primarily intended for NGOs and SMEs, as these groups play a key role in fostering local, sustainable development and implementing circular economy practices. NGOs can leverage the insights and strategies provided to advocate for and establish multifunctional resource centres that benefit communities. SMEs, on the other hand, can use this guide to explore new business opportunities, align their operations with sustainable practices, and contribute to the revitalization of city centres.

While NGOs and SMEs are the primary audience, other stakeholders can also find valuable content within this guide. Municipal authorities, urban planners, and community organizations can draw inspiration and practical advice for integrating circular economy principles into urban development strategies. Researchers and educators may also use the guide to further understand and disseminate the potential of multifunctional resource centres. By addressing a diverse audience, the guide ensures broad applicability and encourages collaboration across sectors to achieve shared sustainability goals.



2. DEFINING THE MULTIFUNCTIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE

2.1. Overview of multifunctional resource centres

In the NiCE Project, we understand multifunctional resource centres as spaces designed to support inhabitants in the transition towards a circular economy by promoting sustainable consumption, reuse, and community engagement. Located in urban areas – often in revitalized or underused buildings – these centres serve as accessible hubs for individuals, local businesses, and civil society organisations to participate in practical, hands-on circular activities. Their core purpose is to reduce the environmental impact of urban lifestyles by extending product lifecycles, minimizing waste generation, and encouraging more sustainable behaviours at the local level.

Usually, these facilities provide a variety of services and events catered to the needs of the community. Stations for material reuse, where people can donate or pick up used goods like electronics, furniture, tools, or textiles, are typical features. In order to help people fix broken clothing or appliances instead of throwing them away, many centers offer repair workshops. To lessen the need for individual ownership, sharing platforms are frequently integrated, such as tool libraries or equipment rental services. Resource centers also frequently hold training sessions, public gatherings, and educational programs with the goal of increasing public awareness of climate responsibility, sustainability, and circular practices. Such centers do not have a single model; instead, their designers can select from a variety of services and customize the offer to meet the needs of the community.

Multifunctional resource centers serve as catalysts for local circular economies by combining these disparate services under one roof. By promoting product repair and reuse, they help to conserve resources by lowering the need for virgin materials. Waste is kept out of landfills, and people are given the tools they need to actively participate in creating more sustainable and circular communities. By providing areas where individuals from various backgrounds can exchange knowledge, develop new skills, and take part in group environmental action, the centers also promote social inclusion. As a result, multipurpose resource centers are important catalysts for behavioral and cultural change in urban areas in addition to serving as useful infrastructure for circular living.

2.2. Importance of circular lifestyle in revitalized city centres

Living a circular lifestyle is not just about making eco-friendly choices from time to time – it is a mindset and a way of living that prioritizes using resources wisely, reducing waste generation,



and making things last longer. Instead of the usual 'take-make-dispose' model, circular lifestyle focuses on reusing, repairing, sharing, and recycling as everyday habits. It invites people to think differently about how we consume, how we value what we already have, and how our habits impact the planet and the communities around us.

Bringing a circular lifestyle into city centers is a chance for added value in those places. Lots of urban areas across Europe are currently undergoing transformation, from old shopping districts or post-industrial areas into lively, people-friendly spots. These transitions are a great chance to weave circular ideas into everyday urban life. As city centres seek new identities and functions, the principles of the circular economy can provide a strong foundation – creating places that are more inclusive, resilient, and community-driven.

Circular lifestyles have significant positive effects on the environment in urban areas. Urban waste streams can be significantly decreased by encouraging repair over replacement, minimizing single-use consumption, and reusing materials. Additionally, less manufacturing and transportation of goods results in lower carbon emissions and less strain on natural resources. Since buildings consume a large amount of energy in cities, circular practices like renovating with energy efficiency improvement instead of demolishing, or using recycled construction materials, further support resource efficiency and climate action.

However, the effects are not limited to the environment. The growing popularity of circular lifestyles creates opportunities for local companies and entrepreneurs to provide new services, such as repairing and upcycling services (e.g. clothes, shoes, electric appliances, furniture), tool rental, second-hand and vintage shops, car- and bike-sharing, refill stations and zero-waste stores, designers and artists upcycling and creatively reusing materials). Circular initiatives can therefore boost the local economy, generate employment, and improve the social cohesion of urban neighborhoods.

Another benefit of a circular lifestyle is an increased sense of social bonds in the communities. When people get together to swap things, trade clothing, or participate in community workshops, they develop social ties and trust. In order to minimize inequality and encourage inclusion, circular initiatives frequently give people access to goods and services that might otherwise be out of reach. Shared resources, such as multipurpose resource centers, community gardens, or libraries of things, increase accessibility to sustainability for people from all backgrounds and income levels.

Encouraging circular lifestyles aligns with broader policy and climate goals. The design of longer-lasting products, waste reduction, and material reuse are encouraged by EU initiatives such as the *Circular Economy Action Plan*, especially in high-impact industries like electronics,



textiles, and construction. The significance of circular lifestyles is also emphasized by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). While SDG12 advocates for waste reduction through recycling and reuse, SDG11 advocates for inclusive and sustainable cities. By reducing emissions and increasing resource efficiency, circular practices also help achieve SDG13 on climate action. By establishing green jobs and guaranteeing equitable access to shared resources, they also help achieve decent work (SDG8) and less inequality (SDG10). Cities that prioritize circularity in urban regeneration not only support these global goals, but also improve living, working, and social environments.

Embracing a circular lifestyle in the heart of our cities is not just a response to environmental challenges. It is a promising, practical path toward healthier, fairer, and more vibrant urban communities.



3. PLANNING, ESTABLISHING AND RUNNING A RESOURCE CENTRE

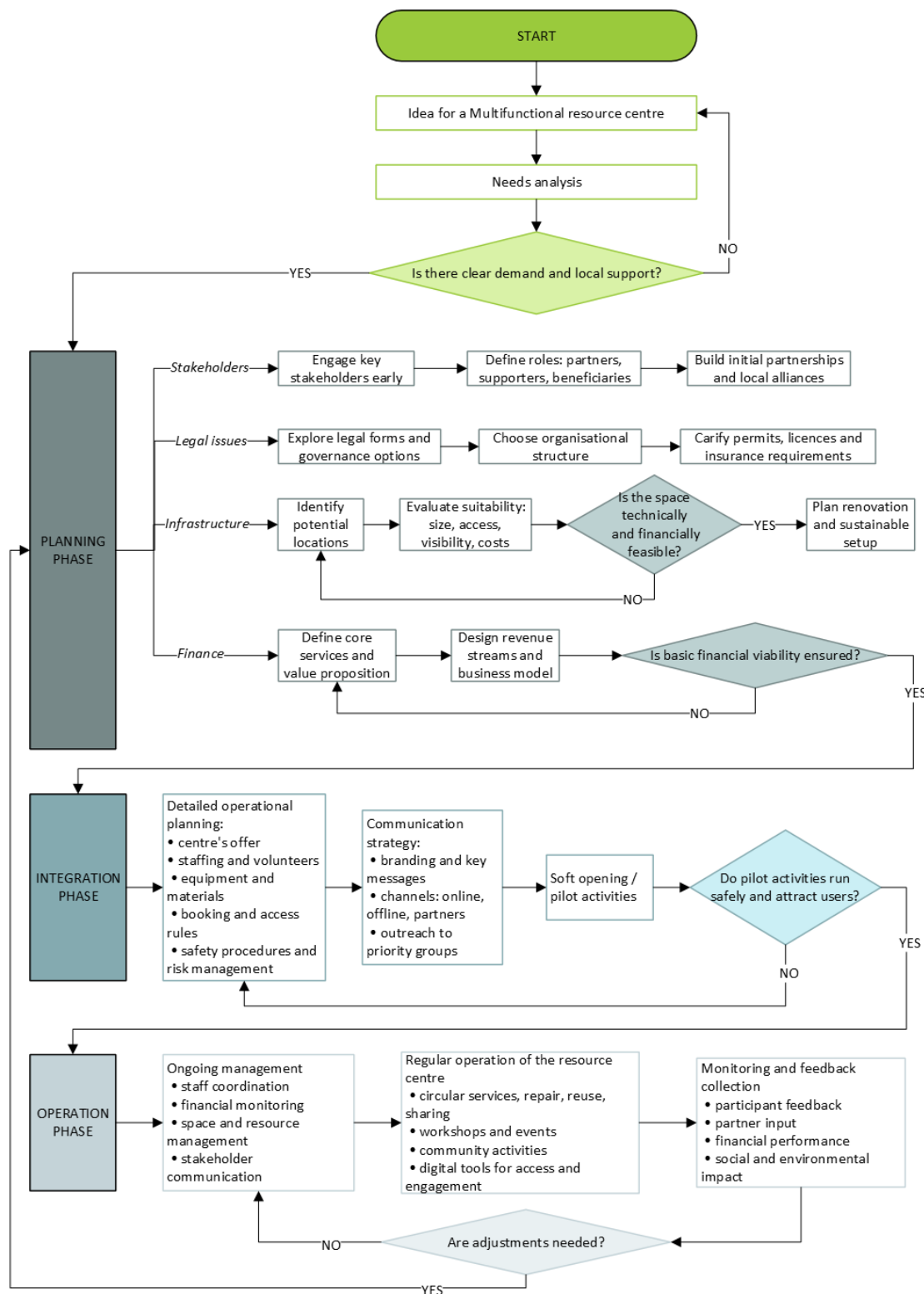


Figure 1 Flowchart of planning, establishing and running a multifunctional resource centre.
Source: RIC Pro-Akademia



3.1. Needs analysis

3.1.1. Identifying and mapping stakeholders

Establishing a successful centre begins with understanding the local ecosystem. Mapping of stakeholders is a crucial first step to ensure the centre meets real needs, has strong partnerships and becomes embedded in the community.

A recommended approach is to start by identifying key groups whose interests, resources, or missions align with circularity, social support, or community development. These include:

- Local NGOs and charities – Especially those working with vulnerable groups (e.g. families in crisis, homelessness people, or low-income households), as they can help identify actual material needs and ensure that second-hand donations are used effectively.
- Municipal authorities – Local government departments (e.g. environment, social, culture, etc.) can offer institutional support, help with visibility and integrate the centre into broader city strategies.
- Community organizations and cultural spaces – Groups active in sustainability, grassroots engagement, or local arts can be valuable allies for joint programming, outreach and events.
- Schools and educational institutions – Can be engaged for awareness-raising, volunteering, or workshops connected to sustainability and reuse.
- Local businesses – Especially those in retail, hospitality, or manufacturing, who may have useful surplus materials or wish to support reuse initiatives through donations or corporate social responsibility.
- Corporate volunteers from large companies – Engaging employees from larger corporations, especially those with structured volunteer programs (e.g. skills-based volunteering or CSR days), can bring valuable expertise to the Centre, particularly in areas like IT, logistics or project management. These contributions can also support companies' sustainability and social responsibility commitments, including reporting under ESG frameworks. Establishing meaningful collaboration opportunities can turn corporate volunteers into long-term allies and ambassadors for circular initiatives.
- Informal groups and individuals – Local changemakers, hobby communities (e.g. DIY, sewing), or neighborhood associations can bring knowledge, time and word-of-mouth support.

Once a broad list is created, it's useful to assess each stakeholder's potential role (e.g. donor, recipient, promoter, expert), motivation (e.g. environmental values, social support, business

Stakeholder mapping should be treated as an ongoing process. New actors may emerge along the way, and building trust takes time. A relational, transparent and open-minded approach from the start helps set the tone for long-term collaboration and shared ownership of the centre.

For planning and establishing a resource center that meets local needs and that offers its services for the long run, it is essential to understand the local context. Exploring the socio-economic environment, environmental and cultural characteristics of the city and / or region the center will be situated in, gives valuable information about the people's needs and usual consumption patterns. There is a great variety of methods that can also be combined depending on available time and resources.

Engaging with the wider community might be helpful as well. Participation in, or organisation of, neighbourhood or street festivals offers an effective way to reach a broad and diverse group of people and to facilitate informal discussions in a relaxed setting. More structured formats, such as focus group discussions, can provide deeper insights into specific topics or target groups. In addition, surveys focused on particular needs or issues can be conducted through face-to-face conversations with passers-by, as well as through analogue or digital questionnaires aimed at the general public or selected stakeholder groups.

Understanding how people meet their needs outside of conventional consumption patterns, and which formal or informal networks they rely on, helps to identify existing potentials, unmet needs, and structural gaps. In the context of a multifunctional resource centre, it is particularly important to assess local attitudes towards sharing goods and services, using second-hand products, and



engaging in repair activities. These insights form a critical knowledge base for designing relevant services and ensuring long-term acceptance and impact of the centre.

It is additionally of great importance to identify key stakeholders. These may belong to very different categories including residents, companies, local or regional authorities, NGOs and/or other community groups. Their involvement or influence can vary greatly. Nevertheless, it is important to gain an overview of who will benefit from a future resource centre and who can support and promote the project. Creating synergies is also a big issue. It is not only financial support that counts but there are many other possibilities for support (organisational and communication skills, network, rooms for meetings etc.), that are of great value.

In order to identify opportunities for new offerings and areas of unmet demand it is also necessary to evaluate what is already there. Which infrastructure does exist where? Which services and initiatives in the city or region do already offer something connected within the field of circularity? What has been there and does no longer operate? Why? Mapping all information that can be found helps visualizing infrastructure and stakeholders and shows clearly what is missing.

Future trends and future challenges may also play a crucial role in establishing a resource center in your city or region. Trying to anticipate demographic shifts that may e.g. provoke a change in attitude or technological advancements that may help solve current difficulties in circularity as well as considering environmental challenges support designing solutions that remain relevant.

Taking into consideration to collaborate with local / regional stakeholders in a future resource center can be of great advantage. Especially intense communication and if possible cooperation with bodies of the municipality / regional government may bring great support on a more strategic level. Collaboration or partnerships with local businesses and organizations helps bundle resources, share risks and broaden networks.

3.2. Legal and regulatory considerations

When planning a multifunctional resource centre, it is advisable to consider the appropriate organisational form and legal structure from the very beginning, taking into account the intended duration of the centre's activities and its long-term development perspective. This process should be supported by legal expertise, as the choice of legal entity is closely linked to the planned financing model and the degree of economic activity. A key strategic question is whether the resource centre will be fully financed through public or private funding, whether it will combine subsidies with its own income, or whether it is expected to operate as a fully self-supporting, market-oriented entity (Table 1).



If the centre is planned as a purely subsidy-based initiative, establishing an association is often the most straightforward option, as this form is generally easy and inexpensive to set up and manage. For centres that combine grant funding with revenue-generating activities, hybrid models such as a non-profit limited liability company or a cooperative may be more suitable. In cases where the centre is designed to be fully self-financing and operate primarily on market principles, a classic limited liability company or a general or limited partnership may be the most appropriate choice.

In practice, many circular economy and sustainability-oriented initiatives start as associations due to their simplicity and low administrative burden. As economic activities expand, these organisations often establish a subsidiary limited company to manage commercial operations. This approach allows the core organisation to remain eligible for public funding while enabling the professional sale of products and services through a separate legal entity.

In addition, considerations should include which stakeholders are involved and to what extent the circle of contributors should expand over time. It is also important to consider which stakeholders want to take responsibility for the project and to what extent. It may well be the case that not all stakeholders and / or all offers of the resource centre are known at the start of the project. In this case, the chosen organisational form should be flexible enough to integrate additional stakeholders, roles and business cases at a later date. Do also consider to address one or more experts in the field of organisational forms in order to not oversee anything.

Parallel to looking for suitable forms of organisation and fitting spaces it is relevant to identify necessary permits or licenses required to operate the centre legally. These may vary very much from city to city or region to region. Information can be obtained from the relevant municipality or regional government. It also makes sense to ask potential cooperation partners whether they have already had experience with the approval of a similar entity.

Table 1 Comparison of legal forms options for a multifunctional resource centre

Organisation	Character	Advantage	Remarks
Non-profit organisation (funding-oriented), e.g. association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most common for non-profit initiatives Suitable for: educational work, workshops, repair cafés, projects with a strong focus on funding or donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple & cost-effective foundation. Only under certain conditions and with considerable administrative effort, it can be recognised as a non-profit organisation → Donation benefits, tax advantages. Access to public funding (e.g. climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democratic structures, board must be elected Limited entrepreneurial freedom → economic activities are permitted, but must not be the main purpose.



		and energy funds, urban/rural programmes), often with higher funding rates than SMEs).	
Non-profit limited liability company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is largely identical to a normal LLC, but offers tax advantages as it pursues "exclusively and directly non-profit, charitable or ecclesiastical purposes" Limited liability company whose articles of association are based on non-profit status Suitable for: Centres that sell products and offer services but still want to remain non-profit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional framework, legal security Combination of funding and commercial activity possible Managing director is not privately liable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation costs More administrative costs
Mixed forms (partly subsidised, partly self-funded), e.g. cooperative (co-operative association)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Association of members (persons, organisations, companies) Suitable for: If the resource centre is supported by many stakeholders (e.g. city, citizens, businesses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democratic (1 member = 1 vote). Raising capital via membership fees/cooperative shares. Ideal for community-led projects in the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation requires notarial deed and entry in the commercial register. Ongoing auditing obligation by auditing association → higher costs.
Fully self-supporting models (market economy), e.g. Limited liability company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classic company forms Suitable for: if the centre is mainly financed through the sale of products, catering or services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full entrepreneurial freedom Economic activities take centre stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No access to subsidies that require non-profit status Fewer tax advantages

3.3. Selecting and preparing suitable locations

3.3.1. Identify potential locations

To search for suitable premises in a targeted and efficient way, it is first necessary to define the approximate location within the city or region where the resource centre could be established. This decision should be guided by the planned focus of the centre, such as retail activities, events and workshops, repair and upcycling services, or a combination of several functions, as well as by the characteristics and needs of the intended target groups. Accessibility, visibility, and integration into everyday urban life are key factors that influence how easily different user groups can reach and engage with the centre.



When identifying potential locations, it is important to consider a broad range of options. Vacant or temporarily unused spaces can offer cost-effective and flexible solutions, while premises owned by city or regional administrations may be available under favourable conditions. In addition, partnerships or cooperation with existing organisations, such as local companies, social enterprises, or NGOs, can open up opportunities to share or co-use spaces. In some cases, a partner organisation may already operate a suitable location that can be expanded to include the functions of a resource centre. Such arrangements can create valuable synergies, for example by sharing infrastructure, audiences, or services, and can strengthen the centre's visibility and integration within the local ecosystem. In general, spatial proximity to complementary activities and actors can significantly enhance the added value and impact of the resource centre.

3.3.2. Evaluating potential spaces

Once potential premises have been identified, it is essential to define and assess a set of key parameters to ensure that the space is suitable for the planned activities of the resource centre. This includes clarifying the required size of the premises, ideally within a defined minimum and maximum range, as well as evaluating accessibility both for logistics and for the target groups. Good connections to public transport, barrier-free access, and sufficient possibilities for loading and unloading are particularly important. Further aspects to consider are the availability of outdoor areas, the visibility of the premises, for example through shop windows or a street-facing entrance, and the presence of adequate office and storage spaces. Depending on the concept, facilities for gastronomy, sanitary infrastructure, and compliance with relevant health and safety standards may also be required.

The condition and technical characteristics of the premises play a significant role in long-term feasibility. The existing energy supply and energy efficiency should be carefully assessed, as ancillary operating costs directly affect the overall financing and economic sustainability of the centre. It is also necessary to determine whether renovation or adaptation of the space is required and whether such modifications are technically and legally possible. Ultimately, the premises must be affordable in a comprehensive sense, meaning that monthly rent, operating costs, and the costs for renovation and furnishing are calculated realistically and considered together.

If renovation is needed, it should be planned and implemented according to principles of climate friendliness and sustainability. The use of local, bio-based, recycled, or second-hand materials for construction, renovation, and furnishing should be prioritised wherever possible. Short transport distances should be taken into account to reduce environmental impacts, and existing



materials or furniture on site should be checked for their potential to be reused, repaired, or remanufactured. By applying these principles from the outset, the resource centre can act as a visible and practical example of circular lifestyles and resource-efficient practices.

3.3.3. Compliance with regulations

Visiting or working in the resource centre must be safe for the health and safety reasons. Local requirements and standards should be considered at an early stage and taken into account in all planning and operating phases.

The main rights and obligations between tenant and landlord are regulated in a regular rental agreement. If there is no rental agreement, a usage agreement between both parties is important, which, in addition to general rights and obligations, regulates the period of use, the amount of rental and operating costs, maintenance obligations and, in short, responsibilities. It should also be clearly defined what should happen in the event of damage to the building / inventory / products. In addition, it is advisable to clarify appropriate insurance coverage, such as liability and property insurance, to protect both parties against potential financial risks.

Fire safety aspects must be taken into account at building level (usually by the landlord) and for the equipments (usually by the tenant).

Operating licences, work permits and information about the required infrastructure and the permissible extent of additional (delivery/loading) traffic, noise or other emissions must be obtained from the local authorities in advance.

Accessibility for employees and visitors/customers must be guaranteed on the basis of applicable regulations. In existing buildings, suitable, possibly unconventional measures must be considered and coordinated with the authorities.

3.4. Developing services and offerings

3.4.1. Circular economy-based services

Circular economy is not just about collecting and recycling waste correctly. It addresses the entire life cycle of products, from design and production to use, repair, reuse, and eventual reprocessing. Energy consumption and environmental pollution already occur during the extraction of raw materials, production and transport. In most cases, products are only used for a short time, after which waste disposal poses a further environmental problem. Resources should therefore remain in the cycle for a long time so that only a very small proportion ends up as waste.



To achieve this, the circular economy promotes a series of strategies often referred to as the “R’s,” which focus on preventing waste before it is created and making the most of existing resources (Figure 2). These strategies encourage designing products more intelligently, minimizing the use of raw materials and energy, extending the life of products through repeated use, repair and restoration, finding new purposes for items when their original function ends, and recovering valuable materials or energy at the end of life. Together, they create a system in which resources circulate longer and more efficiently, reducing the pressure on the environment and supporting sustainable growth.



Figure 2 R's – circular economy strategies

Within a multifunctional resource centre, **waste reduction services** play a central role in translating these principles into everyday practice. Making functional second-hand goods easily



accessible, for example through a second-hand shop, directly supports reuse and helps prevent usable items from becoming waste. Swap events for clothing, books, media, or household items are another effective and popular format. They encourage people to exchange rather than buy new products, strengthening awareness of resource conservation while fostering community interaction.

Upcycling and repurposing refer to the creative transformation of used or discarded materials and products into new items with the same or even higher value and a different or extended function. Both strategies require more structured processes and infrastructure. Materials must be extracted from broken or discarded products, sorted, and stored in an organised and accessible way. This requires adequate space and trained personnel who can assess which components are suitable for further use. Materials that can no longer serve any function need to be separated and forwarded to appropriate recycling or disposal streams. Upcycling materials should be available for workshops, initiatives, or companies to develop new products, either through professional design processes or in participatory formats involving visitors. Typical examples include sewing workshops, textile, paper, or furniture upcycling sessions, repair cafés, and creative swap events. These activities not only reduce waste but also build skills, creativity, and engagement around circular practices.

Repair and maintenance services are another key pillar of circular economy-based offerings. Providing spaces and services for repairing electronics, furniture, clothing, or other everyday goods helps extend product lifecycles and reduces the demand for new resources. Such services require dedicated workspaces and storage areas and can be offered either as paid professional services or as community-based formats. Repair cafés, where people bring broken items and repair them together with experienced volunteers or experts, are a particularly effective model. They combine practical problem-solving with knowledge sharing and awareness raising, highlighting the importance of repairable products and valuing the time and expertise contributed by skilled individuals. Through these services, the resource centre becomes a place where circular economy principles are not only explained but actively practiced and experienced.

3.4.2. Sharing and rental services

Product-sharing or rental of goods and appliances are particularly relevant in situations where items are only needed occasionally, are relatively expensive, or require significant storage space. These models also respond to the needs of people who want to test a product before deciding whether they truly need to own it. By offering shared access instead of individual ownership, resource centres can reduce overall consumption while increasing the efficient use



of existing products. Typical categories for sharing or rental services include household and garden equipment, creative and craft tools, leisure and fitness items, as well as multimedia and technical equipment. Examples range from outdoor games, tents, sewing machines, drills, lawn trimmers, or table tennis sets to cooking appliances, photo printers, daylight lamps, or health-related devices such as blood pressure monitors. Making such items available through a resource centre lowers financial and spatial barriers for users and supports more sustainable consumption patterns.

3.4.3. Repair and upcycling workshops

Repair and upcycling workshops are key instruments for translating circular economy principles into practical action and for actively involving different target groups in the work of the resource centre. By combining hands-on activities with learning and exchange, these formats help build skills, raise awareness, and strengthen the sense of shared responsibility for more sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

Educational activities on sustainability and circular economy can be integrated into repair and upcycling workshops and extended through cooperation with schools, vocational institutions, and universities. Introducing these topics in educational settings supports the long-term growth of the initiative by raising awareness among students and young people. Placing the resource centre within a broader societal context highlights its relevance and shows that advancing circularity requires the joint efforts of individuals, communities, municipalities, and countries. This perspective helps participants understand that their everyday actions are part of a wider transition towards sustainability.

Workshops and training programmes focusing on repurposing, upcycling, and repair can form a regular part of the resource centre's activities. These workshops are often designed as do-it-yourself formats and can be organised in cooperation with external partners who contribute specific expertise, for example in working with textiles, furniture, wood, or electronic devices. Upcycling workshops are particularly effective in linking circular economy concepts with creativity, self-efficacy, and enjoyment, making sustainability tangible and motivating. Complementary workshops on waste management can introduce the "R's" of the circular economy while providing concrete information on how much waste is generated in everyday life and how waste separation and recycling systems operate at the local or regional level.

Public awareness campaigns further amplify the impact of repair and upcycling workshops by reaching audiences beyond direct participants. Through press coverage, social media activities, interviews, posters, and other communication channels, the resource centre can inform the wider public about sustainability challenges and local responses to them. These campaigns



should actively invite participation and be supported by an open and accessible programme of dialogue formats, workshops, information sessions, hands-on events, and excursions. Designing offers for a wide range of target groups, including children and young people, helps ensure inclusiveness. Ideally, participants are encouraged not only to consume information but also to contribute their own experiences, ideas, and skills, reinforcing community engagement and ownership of the transition towards circular lifestyles.

3.4.4. Leveraging digital tools for service delivery and access

Digital tools play a crucial role in complementing the physical activities of a multifunctional resource centre by making services more accessible and extending their reach. When used strategically, digital services become powerful enablers that support the growth and long-term impact of the initiative.

A dedicated website or landing page can serve as a central information hub, presenting the centre's mission, services, workshops, and events, and, if relevant, linking to an online shop. It may also include a registration form, enabling online registration for events or individual participation.

Digital tools can also enhance visibility directly within the city centre and the immediate surroundings of the physical space in ways that support access to services. QR codes placed on shop windows, posters, or flyers allow passers-by to access workshop registrations, product information, or event calendars instantly. More advanced formats, such as augmented or virtual reality elements, can create interactive experiences in shop windows, for example by explaining product stories or recycling processes in an engaging way.

Virtual formats further extend the reach of the resource centre beyond its physical location. Online workshops, webinars, and expert talks enable participation by people who cannot attend in person and support networking across regions. These formats can be promoted and managed through digital event and booking tools, for example Eventbrite, Meetup, or Pretix, that facilitate registrations, ticketing, and appointment scheduling.

Finally, e-commerce solutions and online marketplaces can significantly improve access to circular products, services, and materials. Online shops such as Shopify or WooCommerce allow the resource centre to sell or exchange sustainable products beyond opening hours, while established marketplaces focusing on sustainability, for example Etsy or Avocadostore, can provide additional reach and visibility. Integrating simple digital payment solutions, such as SumUp, Stripe, or PayPal, both on site and online, ensures a smooth and user-friendly



experience. Together, these digital tools help create a seamless connection between physical spaces and online access to services and products.

3.5. Economic viability

Ensuring the economic viability of a multifunctional resource centre is essential for its long-term operation and impact. Financial sustainability not only secures the continuation of services but also strengthens stakeholder confidence and enables the centre to grow and adapt to community needs. This chapter outlines diverse strategies and opportunities to support the centre's financial health.

3.5.1. Revenue streams and business models

Multifunctional resource centres can utilize a variety of revenue streams, with the exact mix depending on their mission, services offered, and local context (Table 2). Income is often generated through service-based activities, such as participation fees for workshops, repair sessions, or training programmes, as well as through the rental of tools, equipment, or co-working spaces. Additional revenue may come from membership models that provide regular users with tiered access to resources, reduced prices, or exclusive offers. The sale of products also plays an important role, particularly in the case of upcycled or second-hand items, materials, or do-it-yourself kits developed within the centre. Hosting events and renting out space to community groups, local businesses, or private users can further contribute to financial stability, while partnerships with local enterprises may result in corporate sponsorships or service exchanges aligned with circular economy principles.

These revenue streams can be combined within different business model approaches. Non-profit models are often chosen by centres that focus strongly on social impact and rely primarily on public funding, grants, or donations. For-profit social enterprise models, on the other hand, generate income through market-based activities while explicitly prioritising community benefit and environmental goals. Hybrid structures combine elements of both approaches, blending commercial services with mission-driven activities and offering greater flexibility in terms of financing, governance, and long-term development.

Regardless of the specific model, aiming for a diversified mix of revenue sources is essential to reduce dependence on any single income stream and to increase resilience. Cooperation with municipalities, NGOs, or private businesses can help cover costs through co-financed services or in-kind contributions, such as the provision of staff time, equipment, or materials. Above all, the selected business model should be fully consistent with the centre's mission and values, ensuring that sustainability principles are embedded in everyday operations and decision-making, rather than being limited to communication or branding.



Table 2 Revenue streams available for multifunctional resource centres

Income type	Main advantages	Potential disadvantages	Opportunities to share costs and broaden income
Service fees for workshops, repairs, trainings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ directly linked to mission and impact, ▪ flexible to adjust, ▪ encourages active participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ income may be irregular or seasonal, limited affordability for some groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ co-funded programmes with municipalities or ngos, ▪ guest trainers sponsored by partners, ▪ grants covering participation of vulnerable groups
Rental of tools, equipment, co-working space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ efficient use of existing assets ▪ recurring local demand ▪ promotes sharing culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ requires maintenance and administration ▪ risk of damage or loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ partnerships with makerspaces, schools or SMEs for sharing equipment costs, ▪ sponsorship of specific tools by companies
Membership models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ predictable recurring income, ▪ builds loyal community, ▪ strengthens long-term engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ requires continuous value for members, ▪ administrative effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ member-supported volunteering, ▪ member discounts sponsored by local businesses, ▪ institutional memberships (e.g. schools or NGOs)
Sale of products (second-hand, upcycled, DIY kits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ confirms circular mission in practice, ▪ visible impact, ▪ can attract new audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sales can fluctuate, ▪ storage and logistics needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ consignment models with local creators, ▪ shared retail spaces, ▪ collaboration with designers or social enterprises
Event hosting and space rental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ uses space outside core hours, ▪ connects new target groups, ▪ can generate higher one-off income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ possible conflicts with mission or schedule, ▪ additional coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ co-organisation of events with community groups, ▪ sponsored events, ▪ in-kind support such as catering or equipment
Corporate sponsorships and service exchanges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ access to financial or material support, ▪ strengthens local business ties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ risk of mission drift, ▪ dependence on few sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ barter arrangements (materials, services, expertise), ▪ joint visibility campaigns, ▪ employee volunteering programmes

3.5.2. Funding opportunities and grant programs

Start-up and operational funding for multifunctional resource centres can be sourced from a broad range of public and private instruments. Public sector grants at municipal, regional, or national level are often a key starting point, as they commonly support activities related to community development, environmental innovation, social inclusion, or urban revitalisation. For centres with a transnational or pilot-oriented character, European Union funding programmes can be particularly relevant. Initiatives such as Interreg, Horizon Europe, or LIFE support projects that contribute to circular economy objectives, knowledge exchange, and innovation across borders.

In addition to public funding, private foundations and corporate social responsibility programmes of companies may offer grants for activities linked to education, sustainability, or social and



environmental innovation. These sources can be especially valuable for specific components of a resource centre, such as educational programmes, pilot services, or targeted investments. Crowdfunding campaigns represent another complementary option. When well designed and communicated, they can generate not only financial contributions but also local visibility, community engagement, and a sense of shared ownership, particularly if combined with clear narratives and attractive reward schemes.

Community-based fundraising and donor programmes, such as “friends of the centre” initiatives, can further strengthen long-term local support. These approaches rely on building strong relationships with individuals and organisations that identify with the centre’s mission and are willing to contribute on a regular basis. Across all funding applications, it is crucial to clearly align the objectives and activities of the resource centre with broader strategic frameworks, such as the EU Green Deal, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, or local and regional climate and sustainability strategies. Demonstrating this alignment can significantly increase the credibility and competitiveness of funding proposals and support long-term financial sustainability.

3.5.3. Pricing strategies

Pricing services and activities in a multifunctional resource centre require a careful balance between financial sustainability and broad accessibility. Fees should be set in a way that allows the centre to cover its costs and operate reliably, while at the same time ensuring that services remain inclusive and affordable for different social groups. One common approach is cost-based pricing, where prices are calculated to at least cover direct expenses such as materials, external facilitators, or operational costs associated with a specific activity.

To further support inclusion, pricing can be complemented by subsidies from grants, public funding, or partnerships, enabling reduced fees or free participation for low-income groups. Flexible models such as tiered pricing or pay-what-you-can schemes allow participants to choose a payment level according to their financial situation, helping to lower barriers to participation without excluding those who are able and willing to pay more. Membership schemes can also play an important role, offering regular users discounted or free access to services in exchange for a monthly or annual contribution, which provides the centre with more predictable income.

Additional measures such as group discounts or promotional rates can make services more attractive for specific target groups, including schools, students, senior citizens, or community organisations. Service bundles and loyalty programmes can encourage repeated use of workshops or facilities by offering incentives for ongoing engagement. Donation-linked pricing models can further strengthen participants’ willingness to pay. For example, a clearly



communicated share of a participation fee can be dedicated to a charitable purpose, a community solidarity fund, or support for free access for low-income participants. This approach connects individual participation with a broader social impact and reinforces the centre's values in a tangible way.

Across all pricing strategies, transparency is essential. Clearly communicating how fees contribute to covering costs and supporting the centre's mission can strengthen trust, increase community acceptance, and enhance the willingness of users to contribute financially.

3.5.4. Long-term financial sustainability

Ensuring long-term financial sustainability requires a strategic and proactive approach that combines careful planning, regular monitoring, and the ability to adapt to changing conditions. A solid financial management framework helps resource centres anticipate challenges early and make informed decisions over time. This includes establishing annual budgets and conducting regular cash flow forecasts, for example on a quarterly basis, to identify upcoming financial needs and potential risks in advance.

Stability is further strengthened by developing reliable and predictable income sources, such as long-term service contracts, subscriptions, or strategic partnerships. At the same time, it is important to diversify funding streams in order to reduce vulnerability to sudden funding cuts, shifts in public policy, or market fluctuations. Implementing tracking and evaluation systems allows centres to monitor financial performance, better understand user behaviour, and adjust services, pricing, or operational models when necessary. Building financial reserves or emergency funds provides an additional safety net, helping the organisation cope with unexpected expenses, repairs, or temporary revenue shortfalls.

Beyond technical financial management, long-term resilience is closely linked to relationships and trust. Cultivating strong and lasting connections with funders, donors, partners, and the wider community enhances stability and credibility. Transparent financial reporting, clear communication of social and environmental impacts, and a willingness to respond to stakeholder feedback all contribute to reinforcing trust and securing ongoing support for the resource centre's activities.

3.6. Operations and management

3.6.1. Efficient resources and space management

When establishing a Resource Centre, maximizing the use of available space is crucial. Adaptation of a location that may have previously served a commercial, municipal, or community purpose can offer flexible spatial potential. A multifunctional layout should be prioritized - using



mobile or modular furniture (e.g., foldable tables, stackable chairs, wheeled workbenches) allows for easy rearrangement according to the type and size of activities. Cordless equipment and the ability to use outdoor space further enhance versatility. This approach ensures that the centre can host diverse formats, from structured workshops to drop-in community sessions.

Even without major infrastructure upgrades, centres can adopt daily energy-saving practices to reduce their operational costs and environmental footprint. Simple measures such as using natural lighting, turning off appliances when not in use, and repurposing furnishings help promote sustainable behaviors. Optimizing heating and cooling systems, for example through programmable thermostats, improved insulation, and regular maintenance of ventilation systems, can significantly reduce energy consumption while maintaining comfort. We also recommend the use of recycled materials. For example, the Multicentrum Zero Waste in Brzeg Dolny, Poland, used recycled flooring materials. Additionally, using natural materials for interior design, such as wood, is advisable. Wood offers greater longevity and is inherently a zero-waste material. Where possible, centres should also consider sourcing energy from renewable providers or installing small-scale renewable energy solutions, such as rooftop solar panels, to further lower their environmental impact.

Effective inventory management is essential for maintaining operational continuity. Centres should implement systems, either digital or manual, for tracking tools, materials, and consumables. Regular reviews (e.g., monthly) help monitor usage, identify shortages, and plan restocking. Donations from local businesses or institutions can provide valuable material support; categorizing and documenting these inputs from the beginning helps maintain order and transparency. Sustainable maintenance practices should also include the use of environmentally friendly cleaning materials and low-impact maintenance products to reduce harmful emissions and improve indoor air quality. Efficient water management, such as installing water-saving taps, monitoring consumption, and promoting mindful use among users, can further reduce operating costs and environmental pressures.

To manage community access and participation, a simple and transparent booking system is key. Digital tools (emails, online forms, social media sign-ups) can be used to announce events and accept registrations. For high-demand programs, publishing monthly schedules and maintaining waiting lists can help manage expectations and ensure fairness in participation. Administrative simplicity is especially important for small teams.

3.6.2. Staff management

Staff and facilitators should be selected not only for their technical skills but also for their experience in community engagement and willingness to co-create the centre's culture.



Collaborating with local networks (e.g., NGOs, Local Action Groups, social enterprises) can help identify individuals already active in education or sustainability. Volunteers may also support delivery and outreach. Training, often informal, should be part of onboarding – especially covering safety protocols, facilitation methods, and the centre’s thematic goals.

A clear division of responsibilities is essential for smooth operation, especially in small teams. Typical roles may include:

- Management staff – oversee daily operations, schedule planning, external partnerships, and internal coordination.
- Workshop leaders/educators – deliver programs, supervise equipment use, and guide participants.
- Open space supervisors – provide on-site support for individuals working on personal or group projects.
- Volunteers – assist with setup, communication, participant support, and may also lead workshops themselves. This helps fill scheduling gaps when projects lack sufficient funding.
- Ambassadors – act as trusted local representatives of the centre, support outreach activities, share information through their own networks, and help gather feedback from the community to improve services and inclusiveness.

This structure enables efficient operations even with limited human and financial resources.

Regular team meetings – weekly or bi-weekly – enable staff to align on program plans, material needs, and participant feedback. Instant messaging tools (e.g., WhatsApp) can support daily coordination and quick responses to emerging needs. Encouraging informal communication and a collaborative mindset enhances flexibility and strengthens team cohesion.

While formal incentive programs are not in place, staff motivation is supported through visible community impact, appreciation from participants, and opportunities to contribute creatively to the program. Volunteers are recognized publicly and encouraged to propose their own initiatives. Opportunities for professional development remain informal, but the pilot has opened avenues for networking with experts from other regions, particularly through the NiCE project's transnational exchanges. Long-term, securing stable funding could enable more structured incentives and training opportunities.

3.6.3. Risk management and contingency planning

Before launching, centres should conduct a basic risk assessment covering operational, safety, and participation-related risks. Common concerns include accidents involving tools or



equipment, low attendance, excessive demand, and staff shortages. Clear rules and regulations (including health, safety, and fire protocols) should be publicly displayed and available online. All users – especially in hands-on areas like carpentry or culinary spaces – should sign safety acknowledgments and receive basic tool-handling training. It is also important to take national legislation into account, particularly regarding the protection of minors. Organizers should ensure their standards comply with such legal requirements from the outset. In addition, consultation with health and safety authorities (e.g., the sanitary inspectorate) is recommended for organizing food-related spaces like kitchens. This ensures legal, hygienic, and ergonomic compliance. Moreover, it is essential to incorporate monitoring systems already at the design stage, especially in workshops like carpentry where the risk of injury is high.

To manage risks, centres should establish clear safety routines (e.g., pre-activity briefings), limit participant numbers to ensure proper supervision, and conduct regular equipment inspections. Rotating themes and maintaining waitlists help manage high interest and promote broader access. For activities involving youth, adult supervision is essential. Preventive strategies should be flexible to accommodate different types of workshops and age groups.

Furthermore, it is essential that the Resource Centre is covered by comprehensive insurance, ideally through the managing entity (e.g., municipality, NGO, or community foundation). Coverage should include liability for workshops and events, as well as protection against damage to facilities or equipment. This ensures a baseline of operational security and facilitates cooperation with external partners or schools.

3.7. Communication and stakeholders' engagement

3.7.1. Developing an effective communication strategy

An effective communication strategy is essential for ensuring visibility, building trust and creating a strong sense of community around a re-use centre. At the heart of such a strategy is the need to make the mission of the centre understandable, relatable and relevant to different audiences.

Setting clear goals is the first step. Communication efforts should aim to raise awareness about the centre, promote reuse and circularity as everyday practices and encourage community participation. Beyond visibility, communication should also support behaviour change – motivating individuals to donate, repair, swap and engage.

Choosing the right communication channels is crucial. Social media remains a powerful and accessible tool for engaging both individuals and organisations. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram allow for regular updates, sharing success stories and promoting upcoming events or collection needs. For reaching partners, authorities and institutions, newsletters and direct



email communication are often more effective. In-person interactions, such as info sessions or public events, remain key for building relationships and trust.

Crafting tailored messages means adapting the tone and content based on the target group. For citizens, messages should be practical and inspiring. For local authorities, communication should highlight the environmental and social value of reuse initiatives. With NGOs and businesses, the focus may be on partnership opportunities and impact.

Maintaining dialogue rather than one-way communication ensures that stakeholders feel seen and heard. This includes responding to feedback on social media, regularly updating followers and creating moments for exchange – whether through participatory events, volunteer days, or behind-the-scenes glimpses into the Centre's daily operations.

Finally, consistency and transparency are key. Even small updates or celebrating small wins can build a positive and engaged following over time. Communication is not just about informing, it's about involving.

3.7.2. Encouraging community involvement

Community involvement is at the core of every successful re-use centre. It transforms the centre from a place of collection and redistribution into a shared, participatory space that reflects the values, needs and creativity of its community.

One of the most effective ways to engage people is by organising regular events and workshops. These activities not only raise awareness about waste reduction and circular practices, but also create opportunities for hands-on learning and social connection. Creative upcycling workshops, repair tutorials, swap events or thematic talks can appeal to a wide range of age and interest groups, making sustainability both practical and accessible.

Ensuring inclusivity and equity is crucial. Community involvement should not be limited to a specific demographic. This means offering events at different times (including evenings and weekends), making them free of charge and ensuring physical accessibility to the space. It also includes working with community partners who already have strong connections to underrepresented or marginalised groups and inviting their input in designing activities that are culturally relevant and welcoming.

Involvement is also about listening. A simple and effective way to build trust and improve services is by integrating feedback tools. Feedback boxes at events, short surveys (both paper and digital), or informal conversation circles can help organisers understand what works, what needs improvement and what the community would like to see next. Social media polls and online forms also offer low-barrier ways for people to express their opinions.



Beyond feedback, it's important to give community members an active role. Inviting volunteers to co-host events, donate their skills, or become “ambassadors” of the centre gives them ownership of the initiative and helps embed the re-use culture into daily life. Community involvement thrives when people see that their presence and contribution matter.

Ultimately, building community around a re-use centre is an ongoing process, one that grows stronger through openness, collaboration and shared purpose.

3.7.3. Leveraging digital tools for communication and community engagement

Digital tools play an important role in strengthening visibility, communication, and community engagement around a multifunctional resource centre. Online platforms such as websites, social media channels, and mobile applications help connect different target groups and promote events.

A strong digital presence forms the basis for visibility, both online and locally. Setting up a Google Business Profile is a simple and cost-free way to ensure that the resource centre appears in local searches and on digital maps, with up-to-date information on opening hours, photos, and upcoming events. Social media platforms further support storytelling and regular communication. Channels such as Instagram and Facebook are well suited for sharing visual content, short videos from workshops, and event announcements, while platforms like TikTok can offer creative behind-the-scenes insights or short do-it-yourself clips related to recycling and upcycling. LinkedIn can be used to build professional networks with local companies, municipalities, and partner initiatives. To ensure continuity and efficiency, social media planning tools can help organise and schedule regular communication.

Digital tools can also enhance visibility within the city centre through cooperation with municipalities or advertising providers, for example by using digital city information screens to promote activities and events.

Building and maintaining a community benefits from additional digital communication channels. Regular newsletters provide a structured way to share updates, announce events, and remind subscribers of upcoming workshops. Messaging services such as WhatsApp or Signal can offer a more direct and informal connection to the community, while platforms like Slack or Discord can support more active exchanges within dedicated groups focused on upcycling, repair, or sustainability topics.

Using event functions on widely used platforms, such as Facebook or Google Business, also increases the likelihood that activities appear in online searches and local event listings, further strengthening outreach and stakeholder engagement.



If you would like to dive deeper into effective approaches for engaging stakeholders, we recommend consulting the ***Methodology Kit on stakeholders' engagement in circular lifestyles***, which is one out of four guides developed by the NiCE Project. It provides practical tools, templates, and step-by-step guidance tailored to circular economy initiatives. It is especially useful for planning outreach, building partnerships, facilitating dialogues, and strengthening participation across diverse groups.

The Kit is available on the NiCE Knowledge Platform and can complement the strategies outlined in this chapter. You can access it here: <https://circularlifestyle.eu/resources>.



4. CASE STUDIES OF MULTIFUNCTIONAL RESOURCE CENTRES IN CENTRAL EUROPE

4.1. Austria: Pop-up store in Graz

4.1.1. Overview of the resource centre

In April 2024, the City of Graz offered a small vacant room in Herrengasse 10, close to the main city square, for temporary use during the summer. The space, owned by the City of Graz and provided free of rent and side costs, became the pilot location for a pop-up store focused on circular economy products. The location is characterized by a high volume of tourists and locals alike. The premises measured 22m² and featured small display windows for visibility to the outside.

The initiative was supported by the city's urban activation program “#schau-vorbei,” which required the shop to be open Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. throughout the pilot.



Figure 3 The pop-up store opened in Graz. Source: StadtLabor

After initial coordination and outreach in April and May 2024, the pop-up officially opened on 1 June 2024 and ran until end of September 2024, concluding with a joint closing event on 21 September 2024.

4.1.2. Goals and objectives

The pop-up store aimed to increase the visibility of circular economy products and businesses in a prime city-centre location, providing start-ups, small local entrepreneurs, and social enterprises (without their own storefronts) with a platform to present and sell their sustainable and upcycled goods.

The initiative emphasized sustainable consumption by showcasing upcycled and handmade products, facilitating direct conversations between creators and visitors, and raising awareness of circular lifestyle practices through demonstrations.



4.1.3. Identifying the space

After several months of unsuccessful negotiations with private property owners for a suitable space, the City of Graz stepped in with an offer of a centrally located, vacant room at Herrengasse 10. This spontaneous opportunity allowed for a visible pilot project in Graz's main shopping area.

Because the intervention was short-term, the focus was on furnishing and equipping the space for retail and demonstration purposes; no major structural renovations were required, low cost adaptations (e.g. painting of walls, putting up furniture) were done by the participants themselves.

4.1.4. Stakeholder involvement

The key partners and contributors included the following:

- *City of Graz* (provided the space and administrative support)
- *StadtLABOR* (mediator and project facilitator)
- Local circular-economy entrepreneurs and start-ups as participants
- Support from #schau-vorbei and "Graz City of Design" for visibility and promotion

From the earliest phase, interested entrepreneurs were engaged in discussions about shared room usage, agreements, schedules, and shop setup. During the pilot, shared room usage and activities were organized collaboratively.

4.1.5. Services and offerings

The pop-up offered sale of upcycled and sustainably produced products, as well as "Open production" demonstrations such as jeans repair, soap making, and other crafts. One participant, a social enterprise, "LebensGross", engaged people with disabilities in on-site production and workshops.

Visitors could observe live demonstrations, ask questions, and engage with makers. Given the small indoor space, many activities and product displays were also located outside on the street to attract passers-by.



4.1.6. Funding and financial sustainability

The space was provided free of charge by the City of Graz; no external grants or private rental income were used. Entrepreneurs covered their own costs for equipment, workshop materials, and promotions and supported each other.

No formal self-sustaining business model was implemented, as the cost-free space was central to enabling participation. Most producers were unable to generate sufficient sales to cover typical rental costs, highlighting the importance of subsidised space for early-stage circular enterprises.



Figure 4 Entrepreneurs taking part in the pilot in Graz. Source: StadtLABOR

4.1.7. Challenges and solutions

Key difficulties faced during planning, implementation, and operation included:

- Difficulty securing centrally located private spaces at affordable conditions
- Intensive communication needed between the City and entrepreneurs regarding shop operation, responsibilities, and logistics
- Required opening hours set by the City (8 hours a day, six days a week) were difficult for producers to meet due to their own production schedules

To overcome these challenges, StadtLABOR functioned as an accessible “mediator” on an every day level, helping bridge communication between city officials and entrepreneurs, clarifying usage agreements, and supporting participants to overcome practical challenges.

4.1.8. Impact and outcomes

The initiative generated clear social and environmental benefits, particularly in terms of visibility, awareness and collaboration. Circular economy products and the work of local producers gained significantly higher visibility thanks to their presence in a prominent and accessible location. This exposure helped raise awareness of sustainable consumption among both residents and visitors, while also encouraging closer collaboration and resource sharing among participating entrepreneurs. Over time, the process contributed to building trust between the municipality and small producers, laying the groundwork for future cooperation.



These benefits translated into several concrete outcomes. A total of 16 entrepreneurs participated in the initiative for varying periods, contributing to a dynamic and changing offer. The space attracted between 20 and 35 visitors on an average day, with particularly strong engagement during the opening event, which drew 40-60 visitors, and the closing event, attended by 50-70 people. The initiative also received public attention through 6 press articles and numerous social media posts shared by StadtLABOR and the participants themselves. Notably, one participant leveraged the experience to open her own independent shop, and the shared-space concept was subsequently adopted by another city-run store, demonstrating the model's potential for replication.

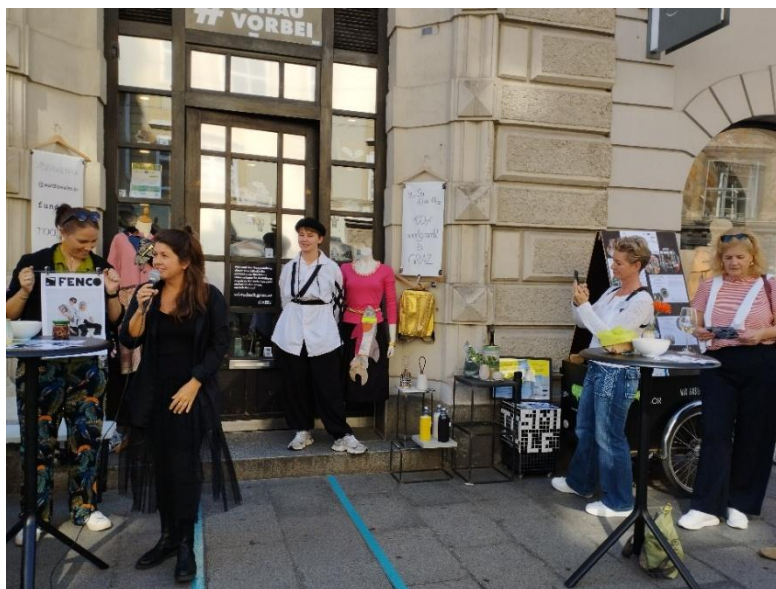


Figure 5 Closing event in Graz. Source: StadtLABOR

4.1.9. Lessons learned

Several important lessons emerged from the experience of establishing and operating the centre. Network calls and targeted outreach proved effective in engaging entrepreneurs, although some were ultimately unable to participate due to a mismatch with their products, limited time availability or a reluctance to share space with others. Cooperation among stakeholders was essential to the overall success of the initiative, but it required a strong foundation of trust, clear communication and a shared sense of responsibility. Both physical visibility at street level and a consistent online presence were also critical in attracting visitors and raising awareness of the centre and its activities.

Based on these insights, a number of recommendations can be made for other centres planning similar initiatives. Clear guidelines and transparent communication should be established from the outset to manage expectations and support smooth collaboration. Appointing a local mediator or facilitator can significantly improve coordination and help resolve challenges as they arise. Finally, encouraging cooperation among participants allows costs and risks to be shared, lowering entry barriers for small producers and making participation more accessible and sustainable.



4.1.10. Future plans

Based on the pop-up's experience, a broader concept called the “House of Future” is being developed. This larger-scale initiative aims to create a multifunctional space for sustainability, circular economy information, workshops, events, gastronomy, co-working, and co-creation, jointly organized by municipal actors, entrepreneurs, civil society, and scientific partners.

The long-term vision for the centre is to establish a permanent, inclusive hub for sustainability and the circular economy in a central location in Graz. The aim is to involve a broad range of stakeholders and citizens in the co-creation of forward-looking, climate-positive activities that respond to local needs and ambitions.

Several key steps toward this goal are already underway. These include dedicated mission and vision workshops held in December 2024, ongoing communication with real estate owners to secure a suitable long-term location, and stakeholder presentations in May 2025. In addition, a national funding application was submitted in July 2025, marking an important milestone in securing the resources needed to operationalize the centre's long-term vision.

4.2. Poland: Zero Waste Multicentre in Brzeg Dolny

4.2.1. Overview of the resource centre

The Zero Waste Multicentre is located in the city centre of Brzeg Dolny, Poland, in a renovated former commercial premises. The space, which previously housed a household appliance shop and later a TV repair service, had remained unused for several years before being adapted into a multifunctional community hub supporting circular lifestyles.

The Multicentre was established as part of the NiCE Project and officially opened in February 2025. It became the first permanent, publicly accessible place in Brzeg Dolny dedicated to hands-on circular education, reuse, and community-based learning.



Figure 6 Multicentre's entrance. Source: Municipality of Brzeg Dolny



The development of the resource centre followed a sequence of clearly defined milestones that structured the transition from initial concept to full operation. The process began with a comprehensive needs assessment and consultations with key stakeholders during the period 2023 to 2024. This phase helped identify local priorities, potential partners, and the most relevant services to be offered.

Based on these findings, architectural design and renovation works were carried out in 2024 to adapt the selected premises to the functional and sustainability requirements of the centre. As the physical space took shape, specialised workshop zones were equipped between late 2024 and early 2025, ensuring that the necessary tools, materials, and infrastructure were in place for repair, upcycling, and educational activities.

At the same time, efforts focused on building a competent team of educators and establishing cooperation with local partners in early 2025. These human and institutional relationships formed the foundation for delivering high-quality programmes and embedding the centre within the local community. The process culminated in the official opening and the start of regular operations in February 2025, marking the transition from project development to ongoing service provision.

4.2.2. Goals and objectives

The main goal of the pilot was to create an accessible, multifunctional space where residents could learn and apply circular economy principles in their everyday lives. The Multicentre aimed to translate abstract sustainability concepts into practical skills, empowering citizens to reduce waste through reuse, repair, and conscious consumption.

At the same time, the initiative aimed at strengthening social ties and activating the city centre by offering inclusive activities for different age groups, including adults, seniors, young people, and families. By combining education, creativity, and community engagement, the Multicentre supports a long-term shift toward circular lifestyles while enhancing the social vitality of Brzeg Dolny.



Figure 7 Mayor and the project team opening the venue. Source: Municipality of Brzeg Dolny



4.2.3. Identifying the space

Several locations were considered during the planning phase, with priority given to central accessibility and functional flexibility. The selected premises were centrally located and offered multiple rooms suitable for transformation into workshop and meeting spaces.

The adaptation process included renovation works, installation of technical infrastructure, and interior redesign to accommodate different functions.

Three main workshop zones were created: woodworking, sewing and textile upcycling, and a kitchen for zero-waste cooking activities. The aim was to create a welcoming, practical, and flexible environment that could host educational workshops, community meetings, and informal exchange.



Figure 8 Multicentre's renovation – view from the carpentry room to open-space.
Source: Municipality of Brzeg Dolny.



Figure 9 NiCE 1on1 meeting with representatives of Municipality of Siechnice and Social Services Centre in Siechnice. Source: Municipality of Brzeg Dolny



Figure 10 Open space- upcycling workshop.
Source: Municipality of Brzeg Dolny



Figure 11 Open-space – sewing workshop.
Source: Municipality of Brzeg Dolny

4.2.4. Stakeholder involvement

The pilot was implemented by the Municipality of Brzeg Dolny in close cooperation with a broad group of stakeholders:

- Local NGOs and associations active in education, culture, and social inclusion
- Local SMEs and producers donating materials and equipment
- Schools and educational institutions engaging pupils and teachers
- Individual educators, craftsmen, and circular lifestyle practitioners
- Municipal units responsible for development, culture, and social affairs

Stakeholders were involved at different stages, from needs assessment and concept development to programme delivery and promotion. Sample workshops organised during outdoor events before the official opening helped test ideas, raise awareness, and build anticipation among residents.

4.2.5. Services and offerings

The Zero Waste Multicentre provides a diverse range of circular economy–based services focused on hands-on learning and community engagement. Its core activities are organised around regular workshops in the following thematic areas:

- **Carpentry** – making small objects from reclaimed wood, basic DIY skills, repairs
- **Furniture renovation**- repairing and upholstery of old tools and chairs
- **Sewing and textiles** – upcycling clothes and fabrics into bags, accessories

- **Cooking** – zero-waste cooking techniques, plant-based recipes, food waste reduction
- **Upcycling** – transforming useless items into new products
- **Knitting** – promoting slow approach in fashion, using leftover yarn
- **Creative workshops** – zero-waste home décor

Activities are adapted to different target groups, with simpler formats for children and skill-developing sessions for adults and seniors. The Multicentre also hosts community events, educational meetings, and cooperation initiatives with schools and local organisations.



Figure 12 A wall clock made of a slice of wood during a woodworking workshop. Source: Municipality of Brzeg Dolny



Figure 13 Patchwork artwork created from scraps of fabric and construction materials donated by the Municipal Utilities Department. Source: Municipality of Brzeg Dolny

4.2.6. Funding and financial sustainability

The pilot was co-funded by the Interreg Central Europe NiCE project, which supported programme development and pilot activities. A significant contribution came from the Municipality of Brzeg Dolny, which invested over €200,000 in renovation and equipment of the space, demonstrating strong local commitment to long-term operation.

Financial sustainability of the Mulicentre's operation is based on a mixed model combining municipal support, project funding, partnerships with NGOs, and potential future income from



workshops or cooperative activities. Donations of materials and in-kind support from local businesses further reduce operational costs.

4.2.7. Challenges and solutions

One of the main challenges was building awareness and trust before the centre opened. This was addressed through sample workshops during outdoor events, which allowed residents to experience circular activities in an informal setting. Another challenge was aligning workshop topics with real community interests; conducting a needs analysis helped tailor the programme accordingly. Operational challenges included organising logistics, sourcing materials sustainably, and coordinating educators. These were addressed through partnerships with local companies, careful scheduling, and gradual scaling of activities.



Figure 14 Culinary workshop – plant based soups.
Source: Municipality of Brzeg Dolny



Figure 15 Participants with handmade waist bags created during sewing workshop from textile scraps donated by upholstered furniture manufacturer. Source: Municipality of Brzeg Dolny

4.2.8. Impact and outcomes

Within the first months of operation, the Multicentre became a visible and active point on the city map. Dozens of workshops engaged residents of different ages, fostering practical skills, environmental awareness, and social interaction. The initiative contributed to waste reduction by extending the life of materials and encouraging reuse practices. In total, 82 workshops have been organised in 2025, bringing together 855 participants across different age groups.



Equally important were the social outcomes: participants reported increased motivation to change everyday habits, stronger connections with other residents, and a greater sense of ownership over the space. The Multicentre successfully demonstrated how circular economy initiatives can strengthen both environmental and social resilience at local level.

4.2.9. Lessons learned

The experience showed that hands-on, practical formats are very effective way to engage citizens in circular lifestyles. Central location and accessibility significantly influence participation, while early involvement of stakeholders increases relevance and acceptance.

Testing ideas through pilot activities before launching a permanent centre proved valuable for refining the offer. Combining environmental goals with creativity and social interaction helps sustain long-term engagement and broadens the audience beyond already environmentally conscious groups.

4.2.10. Future plans

Future plans include expanding cooperation with schools, SMEs, and regional partners, as well as introducing new thematic cycles such as repair culture, sustainable fashion, and circular food systems. The Multicentre aims to become a permanent element of Brzeg Dolny's social and educational infrastructure.

In the long term, the model is intended to be replicated in other municipalities and further developed through transnational cooperation, building on the tools and methodologies created within the NiCE project

4.3. Slovakia: Re-use Centre in Košice

4.3.1. Overview of the resource centre

The Re-use centre is located at Kováčska 18 in the historical centre of Košice, Slovakia. The space is a previously unused municipal building that was transformed into a community-oriented hub for circular living. Before the pilot, Košice lacked a physical place that combined re-use, education and social support in one visible, accessible location.

The centre opened on 12 October 2024 as part of the NiCE – From Niche to Centre project, marking an important step in bringing circular lifestyle solutions into the heart of the city. Its development was preceded by a series of coordinated milestones that combined spatial preparation, stakeholder engagement, and programme design.

The process began with a series of Living Labs held between December 2023 and April 2024, during which stakeholders jointly shaped the concept and core functions of the centre. In



parallel, renovation and preparation works were carried out during summer 2024 to transform an unused municipal space into a functional and welcoming environment. These efforts laid the groundwork for the official public launch in October 2024.

Following the opening, the centre quickly moved into active operation. Between October 2024 and April 2025, it delivered 12 educational workshops and organised 10 targeted donation campaigns, engaging the local community and testing different service formats. At the same time, the centre initiated collaboration with IBM and T-Systems to explore the development of a future digital matching tool, aimed at improving connections between resources, needs, and users. Its integration into the wider urban context was further strengthened through the organisation of and participation in city-wide events, such as Earth Day and Swap initiatives in April 2025, which helped increase visibility and community involvement.



Figure 16 Re-use centre in Košice. Source: CIKE

4.3.2. Goals and objectives

The main goal was to create a space where reuse supports not only environmental goals, but also people in vulnerable situations. The Re-use centre became a place where citizens can donate functional items and where NGOs can directly collect what their clients need. It filled a gap in Košice's social and sustainability services by offering structured, respectful and targeted help.

The centre promotes a shift from a “throw-away culture” to a mindset of reuse, repair and care. Through workshops, donation campaigns and community events, it makes circular living practical, understandable and accessible for everyday citizens.

4.3.3. Identifying the space

The project originally considered several spaces, but the key requirement was a central location. Kováčska 18, an unused municipal site managed by K13 - Košice Cultural Centres, was selected due to its accessibility and potential for both indoor and outdoor activities.



The space required cleaning, painting and full reorganization. Two indoor rooms were adapted for workshops and donation campaigns, with the possibility to use the courtyard for events. The aim was to create a welcoming but simple environment suitable for both education and material collection.

4.3.4. Stakeholder involvement

Key partners and contributors included the following insitutuons:

- City of Košice (Department of Strategic Development)
- K13 – Košice Cultural Centres
- NGOs: ETP Slovakia, DEDO Foundation, MyMamy, Arcidiecézna charita, Crisis Centre for Mothers with Children, Spletinia, UVP Animal Shelter
- Corporate volunteers: IBM, T-Systems. These partners helped to define needs, run donation campaigns and support logistics.

Three Living Labs involving citizens, NGOs and experts shaped the final concept. Donors, workshop participants and volunteers actively formed a new “Re-use community” around the centre.

4.3.5. Services and offerings

The centre offered a range of circular economy–based services that addressed both environmental goals and community needs. Its core activities included the collection and redistribution of second-hand items such as household goods, products for children and small pieces of furniture. In collaboration with partner NGOs, the centre organised targeted donation campaigns tailored to the specific needs of vulnerable groups. Through this approach, it supported



Figure 17 Donation campaign. Source: CIKE

homeless individuals, single mothers, seniors and people experiencing various forms of crisis.



Alongside these services, the centre developed a strong educational and community-building programme. Over the course of the initiative, it hosted twelve workshops covering a wide spectrum of circular lifestyle topics, including reuse, minimalism, ecodesign, textile upcycling, waste literacy and even 3D printing for repair. To further encourage community engagement, the hub organised activities such as a Mini Book Swap and took part in Earth Day 2025, helping weave circular practices into everyday city life.



Figure 18 Workshop organised in the Re-use Centre.
Source: CIKE

4.3.6. Funding and financial sustainability

The pilot was funded through the Interreg Central Europe NiCE project. The City of Košice and K13 supported the operational set-up, including access to the municipal space. IBM and T-Systems contributed voluntary work for digital tools.

Current efforts focus on securing municipal support to continue the centre long-term. Future sustainability will rely on a combination of city support, NGO partnerships, volunteer programs and potentially small-scale funding through community activities.

4.3.7. Challenges and solutions

The centre faced several challenges during its operation, many of which stemmed from the physical limitations of the space and the seasonal conditions. Insufficient heating in winter made workshops less comfortable, which in turn contributed to lower attendance during the colder months. The limited size of the space created additional constraints, affecting both the number of participants that could be accommodated and the amount of storage available for donated items. Parking and drop-off difficulties also posed problems for donors, especially when they wished to bring larger items. Another persistent challenge was reaching new audiences beyond those already interested in sustainability.

To address these issues, the team implemented a series of practical solutions. Additional heaters were installed to improve comfort, and communication efforts were strengthened to rebuild trust and reassure participants. Workshop schedules and promotional activities were adjusted to better align with community needs and seasonal preferences. Clearer donation guidelines helped streamline logistics, making drop-offs more manageable for both donors and



staff. Finally, a stronger presence on social media, combined with closer cooperation with NGOs, proved effective in engaging new groups and expanding the centre's reach.

4.3.8. Impact and outcomes

Over the course of just six and a half months, the Re-use Centre grew into a trusted local hub that combined circular practices with strong social support. Working closely with seven NGOs serving vulnerable groups, the centre carried out ten targeted donation campaigns that directly assisted dozens of families, seniors, mothers with children, homeless individuals and refugees. By collecting and redistributing hundreds of reusable items, the initiative not only reduced waste but also extended the life of everyday products. At the same time, the twelve educational workshops, attended by more than sixty recurring participants, helped build a growing community of conscious and active citizens committed to reuse and conscious consumption.

Several success stories highlight the centre's impact. A large, unexpected donation of men's clothing made it possible to provide immediate support to a local shelter for homeless people. During the holiday campaign "How Much Love Fits in a Shoebox?", the community gathered 300 gift boxes for seniors, bringing warmth and dignity to many older residents. In another case, targeted donation efforts supplied essential items to a family who had lost their home in a fire, demonstrating the centre's ability to respond quickly and compassionately to urgent needs.

4.3.9. Lessons learned

Several key insights emerged from the operation of the centre. The experience showed that reuse becomes far more meaningful and impactful when it is directly connected to real people and their immediate needs. Even a small, well-located and accessible space can generate significant community engagement when it is open, visible and welcoming. Trust and efficiency were strengthened through clear communication and well-defined donation campaigns, which helped both donors and partner organisations understand exactly how to contribute. Educational activities, particularly workshops, proved essential in shifting everyday consumption habits and encouraging more mindful, circular behaviours.

These learnings translate into several recommendations for other centres considering similar initiatives. It is helpful to begin with a simple operational model while maintaining enough flexibility to adapt to emerging needs and opportunities. Close collaboration with NGOs is crucial, as they possess deep knowledge of local communities and can help shape meaningful support. Combining reuse services with learning opportunities and community-building activities helps sustain long-term engagement. Finally, guidelines for donors and participants should remain simple, friendly and respectful: clear enough to be helpful, but always aligned with the welcoming spirit of “Be clear, but NiCE.”



4.3.10. Future plans

Looking ahead, the centre is preparing several new initiatives that will deepen its impact and extend its reach. One significant development is the launch of a digital donation-matching tool created in cooperation with IBM and T-Systems, which will help connect donors and recipients more efficiently. The centre also plans to expand its regular targeted donation campaigns and to further strengthen its volunteer and ambassador programs, ensuring broader community involvement and more consistent support.

In the longer term, the vision is even more ambitious. A key goal is to integrate the centre into the structures of the City of Košice or K13, which would provide stable operational conditions and long-term continuity. Plans also include scaling the model into a network of reuse spaces across the city, creating a stronger infrastructure for circular practices. Finally, the centre aims to contribute to the upcoming EUI project SAM SUD, which focuses on reusing vacant buildings and promoting community-based urban regeneration: an initiative closely aligned with its mission and experience.

4.4. Slovenia: Ptuj's Circular Economy Pop-Up Resource Centre

4.4.1. Overview of the resource centre

This case study presents the development, implementation, and outcomes of Ptuj's Circular Economy Pop-Up Resource Centre, established within the NiCE Project. Located in a previously vacant heritage building in Ptuj's historic centre, the pop-up operated as a multifunctional hub demonstrating practical applications of circular economy principles. Through collaboration among artisans, NGOs, social institutions, the Municipality, and the Reuse Centre Ptuj, the pilot successfully activated an underused urban space, showcased upcycled products, delivered hands-on workshops, and increased community engagement with sustainable practices. The pilot generated measurable impacts and offers a replicable model for small and medium-sized cities aiming to revitalise heritage spaces through temporary use.

Ptuj was selected as the Slovenian pilot site due to its compact historic



Figure 19 Entrance to the Ptuj's Circular Economy Pop-Up Resource Centre. Source: ZRS Bistra Ptuj



centre, the presence of underused cultural heritage buildings, and the organisational capacity provided by ZRS Bistra Ptuj. These elements created favourable conditions for piloting a multifunctional circular economy hub aligned with the NiCE project framework.

The resource centre was implemented as a temporary circular economy pop-up store under the name Art Kolektiva "Pri Zamorcu". Located on Prešernova Street in the old town, the centre served as:

- a showroom for locally produced upcycled goods,
- a workshop venue for hands-on circular activities,
- a micro-retail testing environment for creative entrepreneurs,
- a community meeting point promoting sustainable lifestyles.

The temporary use concept enabled low-cost activation of a heritage building while creating visible, tangible entry points for circular economy adoption.

4.4.2. Goals and objectives

The pilot sought to advance NiCE project goals by focusing on the following objectives:

- Encourage circular consumption behaviours through practical demonstrations, workshops, and direct engagement with reused materials.
- Strengthen the local creative sector by providing a temporary exhibition and sales platform.
- Revitalise a vacant heritage space through temporary use and increase activity in the old town.
- Foster cross-sector collaboration between artisans, NGOs, social institutions, the Municipality, and the Reuse Centre Ptuj.
- Demonstrate an accessible and replicable model for circular economy promotion in smaller cities.

4.4.3. Identifying the space

By reactivating the historic "Pri Zamorcu" façade, the pilot centre symbolically bridged continuity between past and future-honouring Ptuj's cultural heritage while demonstrating how circular economy practices can shape modern urban life.

The selected venue was a small, formerly vacant historical space at Prešernova Street 1, previously used as an art gallery. Reasons for selecting this location included:

- Long-term vacancy and strategic position in the old town.
- Strong symbolic identity due to the historic façade element "Pri Zamorcu."



- Visibility from key pedestrian routes.
- Suitability for low-cost refurbishment using reused furniture and materials.

Space preparation included repair of basic infrastructure, installation of reused furniture supplied by the Reuse Centre Ptuj, and decorating with upcycled elements to communicate the circular message visually.

4.4.4. Stakeholders involvement

The pilot was developed through a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach:

- Artisans and Creative Practitioners (10 participants): Textile designers, woodworkers, painters, ceramicists, and mixed-media artists contributed products, workshops, and staffing.
- ZRS Bistra Ptuj: Lead partner responsible for coordination, communication, reporting, and overall conceptual development.
- Municipality of Ptuj: Support in administrative procedures, permits, and urban-space coordination.
- Reuse Centre Ptuj (Center ponovne uporabe): Provided furniture and materials used to equip the interior.
- ZUDV Dornava (Institution for people with disabilities): Co-created an inclusive workshop promoting social sustainability.
- Volunteers and community members: Assisted with operations and outreach.

The multi-actor collaboration significantly increased community ownership and project acceptance.

4.4.5. Service and offerings

The resource centre offered a diverse range of services and activities that combined circular economy principles with community engagement. Its core functions included the exhibition and sale of upcycled and locally crafted products, alongside live demonstrations of reuse, repair and creative circular processes. To support wider accessibility, the centre also provided multilingual informational materials that introduced visitors to circular practices in a clear and inclusive way.



Workshops and events played a central role in activating the space. These included public upcycling workshops focused on wood, textiles and paper, as well as a seasonal Christmas stand in December 2024 featuring sustainable gift ideas. The programme was further enriched by an art exhibition



Figure 20 upcycled and locally crafted products offered by the Pop-Up Resource Centre. Source: ZRS Bistra Ptuj

presenting objects made from discarded materials and an inclusive workshop organised in collaboration with ZUDV Dornava, which highlighted the social dimension of circular creativity.

Beyond its programmed activities, the centre functioned as a place of community support and exchange. It offered space for informal meetings, conversations and the sharing of knowledge, while also giving artisans the opportunity to test market interest in upcycled products in a real-life setting. Complementing the physical space, social media campaigns showcased practical examples of circular lifestyles, helping to extend the centre's reach and inspire a broader audience.

4.4.6. Funding and financial sustainability

The pilot was primarily funded through the NiCE Interreg Central Europe project, covering:

- rental or use of space,
- communication materials,
- coordination and operational costs,
- workshop organisation,
- minor refurbishments and supplies (mostly reused).

Additional sustainability-related cost savings occurred due to:

- reuse of furniture and materials provided by Reuse Centre Ptuj,
- volunteer support,
- shared responsibilities among artisans.

While not designed for full financial self-sufficiency, the pilot demonstrated potential for revenue streams through:



- sales of artisan products,
- workshop fees,
- seasonal markets,
- partnerships with local SMEs.

Future models may explore social enterprise structures or cooperative models.

While the pilot was not designed for full financial self-sufficiency, the experience demonstrated potential pathways for future sustainability. Cooperative or social enterprise models appear most realistic, as they would allow artisans and NGOs to jointly manage operations, pool resources, and reinvest revenues from product sales, workshops, and seasonal markets into maintaining the hub. Such structures could also strengthen community ownership and resilience.

4.4.7. Challenges and solutions

Challenge 1: Limited foot traffic

The location experienced lower-than-expected spontaneous visits.

Solution: Targeted promotion, social media campaigns, and thematic events increased visibility.

Challenge 2: Ensuring continuous staffing

With only 10 artisans, covering opening hours was demanding.

Solution: Flexible scheduling, volunteer support, and reduced opening hours during low-traffic periods.

Challenge 3: Administrative barriers (receipt issuing)

Multiple sellers created logistical and tax-related complexities.

Solution: Standardised forms and clearer guidelines; exploring single-operator models for future pilots.

Challenge 4: Winter weather limitations

Outdoor activities were restricted in colder months.

Solution: Seasonal programming and more indoor-focused workshop formats.

4.4.8. Impact and outcomes

The activities of the centre resulted in both measurable and qualitative impacts. In quantitative terms, the centre operated for a total of 104 days and hosted five public events. Ten artisans were actively involved in the programme, with workshops typically engaging around ten



participants each. In addition, three volunteers contributed to the daily functioning and organisation of activities.

Beyond these figures, the initiative generated significant qualitative impact. Public understanding of circular economy concepts increased through hands-on demonstrations, workshops and exhibitions. The local creative sector was strengthened by improved visibility and new



Figure 21 Visitors of the Pop-Up Resource Centre. Source: ZRS Bistra Ptuj

opportunities for collaboration among artisans. Social inclusion was enhanced through cooperation with ZUDV Dornava, ensuring that activities were accessible and inclusive. The project also successfully activated a vacant cultural heritage building, giving it a new social and educational function. Together, these elements contributed to a stronger sense of local identity and community pride.

In addition to the planned outcomes, several unanticipated benefits emerged, including spontaneous donations, interest from local media and a noticeable rise in community participation, further reinforcing the centre's role as a vibrant local hub.

4.4.9. Lessons learned

Several important lessons were learned through the implementation of the initiative. The temporary use of vacant buildings proved to be an effective instrument for urban regeneration and for activating circular economy policies in practice. Hands-on workshops emerged as the most impactful format for influencing behaviour change, as they allowed participants to engage directly with circular processes. Collaboration among multiple stakeholders significantly increased both ownership and the long-term sustainability of the initiative.

The experience also highlighted the importance of visibility. A strong social media presence was essential for engaging the public, particularly in areas with low pedestrian traffic. At the operational level, the initiative demonstrated the need for clear administrative procedures when several artisans sell products within a shared space, ensuring transparency and smooth coordination. Finally, the project confirmed that circular initiatives are most effective when environmental objectives are combined with social inclusion and community-oriented activities.



4.4.10. Future plans

Looking ahead, Ptuj aims to build on the success of the pilot by transforming it into a more sustainable and long-term model. The city plans to expand the pop-up concept through seasonal or rotational formats, allowing circular activities to remain dynamic while reaching different audiences over time. New thematic cycles, such as sustainable fashion, local food and repair culture, are foreseen as a way to deepen engagement and diversify the offer.

At the same time, Ptuj intends to strengthen collaboration with schools, NGOs and social institutions, ensuring broader participation and stronger social impact. A key ambition is to explore the creation of a semi-permanent Circular Hub in the historic old town, which would provide continuity and visibility for circular practices. Finally, insights gained from the pilot will be used to inform municipal strategies related to the circular economy, temporary use and the revitalisation of historic spaces, embedding the lessons learned into long-term urban policy.

4.5. Lessons learnt from case studies

Establishing and running a multifunctional resource centre in cities comes with a set of recurring practical challenges, regardless of local context. These often relate to space, funding, staffing, community engagement, and day to day operations. The experiences gathered from NiCE pilot cities show that while the problems are similar, there are multiple workable ways to address them depending on local conditions, partnerships, and available resources. The overview below presents common obstacles and illustrates how different cities approached them in practice (Table 3).



Table 3 Common challenges in setting up and operating multifunctional resource centres and practical solutions tested in NiCE pilot cities

Challenge	Graz, Austria: Pop-up Store	Brzeg Dolny, Poland: Zero Waste Multicentre	Košice, Slovakia: Re-use Centre	Ptuj, Slovenia: Circular Pop-up Resource Centre
Securing suitable, affordable central space	City provided free municipal space; short-term pilot avoided private rental negotiations.	Centrally located former commercial premises selected and renovated with municipal support.	Unused municipal building repurposed; K13 provided space access.	Vacant heritage building in old town selected; low-cost refurbishment using reused furniture.
Limited financial capacity of participants / small producers	Shared space and responsibilities; costs reduced through municipal support; mediator helped coordinate efforts.	Mixed funding: municipal investment, project funds, NGO partnerships, in-kind donations.	Reliance on municipal support, NGO cooperation, volunteer involvement; small-scale funding from community activities.	Shared responsibilities among artisans; volunteer support; potential revenue from workshops, product sales, seasonal markets.
Low initial awareness or community engagement	Outdoor extension of activities; emphasis on visibility; StadtLABOR coordinated promotion.	Sample workshops during outdoor events before official opening; stakeholder engagement to tailor offerings.	Clear communication, social media presence, collaboration with NGOs to reach vulnerable groups.	Targeted promotion, social media campaigns, thematic events to increase foot traffic.
Staffing / operational capacity	Entrepreneurs managed own schedules; mediator supported coordination.	Careful scheduling and gradual scaling of activities; partnerships with local educators.	Volunteer and ambassador programmes; NGO support; adjusted workshop schedules.	Flexible scheduling, volunteer support, reduced opening hours during low-traffic periods.
Administrative complexity (e.g., multiple participants, sales, logistics)	StadtLABOR helped clarify agreements and responsibilities.	Partnership coordination with NGOs and local companies helped manage logistics.	Clear donation guidelines; streamlined drop-off and collection processes.	Standardised forms and guidelines for multiple sellers; exploring single-operator models.
Physical limitations / seasonal constraints	Short-term pilot used small indoor and outdoor spaces; minor adaptations only.	Renovated premises with dedicated zones for workshops; functional flexibility.	Insufficient heating in winter, limited storage and parking addressed with heaters, adjusted schedules, clearer logistics.	Outdoor activities limited in winter; indoor-focused workshops and seasonal programming implemented.
Matching activities with community needs	Direct interaction between visitors and producers; flexibility in product display and workshops.	Needs assessment conducted; programme adapted to real interests; stakeholder involvement from early stages.	Targeted donation campaigns for vulnerable groups; workshops designed for local needs.	Hands-on workshops and exhibitions aligned with circular practices and local creative sector; multilingual info materials for accessibility.
Key lessons learned / replicable approaches	Appoint a local mediator/facilitator; share costs and responsibilities among participants; combine street-level visibility with online promotion.	Engage stakeholders early; test activities through pilot events; combine environmental, social, and creative goals.	Start with a simple, flexible operational model; cooperate closely with NGOs; combine reuse services with community-building activities.	Ensure strong visibility and communication; hands-on workshops are most effective; clear administrative procedures for shared operations; link environmental objectives with social inclusion.