

Approved Re-use Centres and Networks – Principles

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Introduction

Despite the significant amounts of re-usable products and materials entering the waste stream¹, there is a lack of legislative support for the establishment and development of (accredited) re-use centres and networks² active in preparation for re-use³.

This document aims to help inform policy makers about the general principles such actors should abide by, in order to help promote a stronger policy framework for the sector such as the setting of re-use targets and improved access for approved re-use centres and networks to the waste handled by operators of waste collection schemes, centres and facilities.

Note that the word '*accredited*', has been substituted by '*approved*' because the former, when translated into different languages, has connotations to mandatory certification by an accredited body or institute that need not be the case.

These principles have been written from the perspective of RREUSE members who are social enterprise networks active in re-use and preparing for re-use and carry considerable expertise in the sector. As such it takes into account, as much as possible, the differing state of the preparation for re-use sector across Europe.

¹ In Ireland alone, at least one third of items ending up in the waste stream have reuse potential (RXI, 2013)

² Article 11 and Annex IV(12) of EU Waste Framework Directive calls for the support and establishment of (accredited) re-use in order to increase re-use of products and preparing for re-use activities

³ (16) "preparing for re-use" means checking, cleaning or repairing recovery operations, by which products or components of products that have become waste are prepared so that they will be re-used without any other pre-processing

This labour intensive field provides an ideal framework for job provision and training opportunities especially for those distanced from the labour market whilst at the same time providing environmental benefits through more re-use of products and materials.

Approved re-use centres and networks: summary description⁴

Approved re-use centres and networks : An organisation or network of organisations where used goods are either re-used and/or prepared for re-use. The term 'network' refers to a number of enterprises working together along the re-use/ preparation for re-use process chain, dividing the tasks where necessary according to their specialization.

Such organisations separate re-usable goods from non-reusable goods and are officially recognised by a relevant public authority as being competent to carry out this activity. The public authority must be accountable to all stakeholders and have participatory governance.

Note: The term approved re-use centre will be used synonymously with approved re-use networks from now on.

Principles for approved re-use centres

The following list is a non-exhaustive list of principles that approved re-use centres and networks should abide by:

1. full *safety requirements* for workers, vicinity and environment
2. records of all material streams entering the re-use centre and all materials going out. Records of materials that are no longer fit for re-use/preparation for re-use and thus sent for recycling and other treatment must also be kept (full documentation based on mass).
3. For every product group prepared for re-use by the re-use centre a qualified or competent person and/or training regime must be in place. For example the re-use centre could have a qualified or competent mechatronic/electrical technician for WEEE or a carpenter for furniture etc. Alternatively a training scheme must at least be in place under the supervision of a relevant qualified person in order to train both permanent and non-permanent staff (the latter being, for example, persons on insertion/integration contracts).
4. Proper handling of used goods in a controlled manner (collection, dismantling, testing...)
5. commitment to make available safe used goods and reusable parts as applicable (being sales or donations) in line with any relevant national rules on warranty

⁴ Adapted from Code of Practice for the reuse of (W)EEE (OVAM, 2012)

6. compliance with national commerce and waste regulations if applicable. Exemptions from national waste regulations/waste collection or treatment permits (or some of the restrictions / obligations connected with these permits) for re-use centres that only conduct preparation for re-use, not different from commercial repair workshops. These are recommended at national level in order to ease access to small enterprises and social enterprises
7. full compliance with relevant legal standards e.g. for electronics, electrical safety testing to ensure equipment is safe for purpose
8. For products classified as waste the approved re-use centre determines their end of waste status. Prior to waste items gaining the status of a product these are to be sorted, checked, and where appropriate tested, repaired and cleaned. These steps must be carried out exclusively by approved re-use centre staff who determine that the item in question is fit for purpose and can be re-used (in line with the conditions laid down in the Waste Framework Directive for End of Waste⁵).
9. Should the organisation also be active in recycling operations (e.g. dismantling), and other forms of waste treatment, they must provide evidence of how they ensure that (preparation for) reuse activities are prioritized, in accordance with the waste hierarchy.
10. provide evidence that the products are not going for illegal export
11. Concerning used products from re-use centres, these must fulfill the same legal obligations in the respective Member State concerning producer liability, warranty and safety as other used products put on the market by other retailers

Further key demands

1. Access to the Waste Stream

As mentioned in the introduction, In order to improve preparation for reuse rates in particular, it is essential for approved re-use centres to gain access to the waste stream to sort out potentially re-usable goods and materials.

In addition, operators of waste collection points and waste management authorities must have the right measures in place that enforce waste prevention and preparation for reuse activities and allow citizens to contribute. Therefore, all end-users of products must have the possibility to place their re-usable goods in special designated areas at collection points, which are available exclusively to personnel from approved re-use centers and networks.

2. Social Economy Actors

RREUSE believes that organisations from the social economy actors should exclusively manage approved re-use centres or to be at least privileged and supported by Member States in order to do so.

Given the experience and historical presence of social economy entities, particularly in the field of preparation for re-use, reserving this sector to the social economy actors would help boost resource efficiency, poverty alleviation and significant job creation, fully in line with the EU 2020 strategy. The social value primarily comes from the employment and training of persons distanced from the labour market including the long-term unemployed, workers with disabilities, and can also include marginalised groups formerly active in the informal sector. In addition goods and services are provided at affordable prices to low income groups.

For this reason, within France's Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for furniture, re-use and preparation for reuse activities have been reserved exclusively to actors from the social economy.

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Who we are:

The Reuse and Recycling EU Social Enterprises network (RREUSE) is a European umbrella organisation for national and regional networks of social enterprises with re-use, repair and recycling activities. Approximately 42,000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees work throughout our 25 member organisations across 15 EU Countries and one in the U.S.A. Although structures and national contexts are diverse, RREUSE members share common elements such as the protection of the environment, the fight against poverty and, especially, the progress of disadvantaged people back into the labour market. RREUSE's main goal is to put sustainable development into practice by encouraging job creation and social inclusion in the field of waste prevention and sustainable waste management activities.