



BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Humana Nova is a textile recycling business based in Čakovec, Croatia.

The business collects used textiles locally and then repurposes it to second-hand shops, as industrial cloths or as insulation materials (mostly for the car industry). It now works in three towns (**Čakovec**, **Zagreb** and **Labin**) and hopes to expand to eight.

The cooperative was founded in 2011 as the result of the project “**ESCO - Education for Social Cooperatives: New Opportunities for People with Disabilities**” funded by the EU’s Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and implemented by the Autonomous Centre (ACT), a non-governmental organisation active in Medimurje County. The project aimed to provide education for people with disabilities in order to increase their competitiveness in the labour market. The participants in the project gained new skills and qualifications such as web administrators, accountants and professional sewers, which led to the foundation of several social enterprises employing people excluded from the labour market, one of which is Humana Nova.

Today Humana Nova has sewing factory in Čakovec, which **converts clean but unusable textile**

items into new products such as patchwork covers, handbags, slippers, laptop and mobile bags, garments etc., which can be bought in the cooperative’s shops in Čakovec and Koprivnica or in other greenware shops in Croatia. In addition, the manufacturer sews for other external clients, converts unusable material into industrial cloths or delivers it to recycling companies. In addition, usable clothes are, after cleaning and sorting, sold in second-hand shops.

The main customer segments are Croatian and foreign CSR companies, CSOs, trade unions, kindergartens and eco-conscious citizens.

In September 2016 Humana Nova opened branches in Zagreb and in Labin in Istria.

Turnover is around €600,000 a year, with 52% coming from sales, 34% being public subsidy for the employment of people disadvantaged in the labour market, and 15% other income. As a non-profit social co-operative, Humana Nova reinvests all its profit. It is an active member of the European RREUSE network, and in 2017 hosted its annual conference.



GOVERNANCE MODEL

The form of the social co-operative was introduced into Croatian law in 2011, and Humana Nova was the first type A social co-operative to be established. It therefore practices open membership and participative democratic decision-making.

The sovereign body is the general assembly of all members. Workers can become members after 1 year if they have a permanent employment contract, and at the Čakovec site (which accounts for 54% of the co-op’s workers) **70% of workers are members**. The General Assembly meets twice a year. It is responsible for setting strategy and for electing the general manager, who is responsible for operations.

A supervisory board is legally required for co-operatives with more than 20 members. Humana Nova’s supervisory board, which meets quarterly, has three members: 1 worker, 1 member, 1 external expert.

The core of the governance system is the workers. They are involved in operational decisions through weekly briefing meetings every Monday and quarterly ‘check-point’ meetings. All workers (not only those who are members) can attend general assembly meetings. Workers are educated so that they can play an active role in the co-operative’s decision-making.

There is no continuous relationship with trade unions. Social impact is audited each year.



START DATE:
2011



LEGAL FORM:
Social co-operative



N° EMPLOYEES:
47



SOCIAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENT:

over 7 years Humana Nova has reused or recycled 1,500 tons of used clothes and textile waste, which has reduced CO2 emissions by 1,300 tonnes. It has also saved 2,000 billion litres of drinking water, 11.3 tonnes of fertiliser and 74.2 tonnes of pesticides which would have been consumed to produce new textiles.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION:

the cooperative employs 47 workers on its 3 sites. 70% of them are marginalised, for instance by having been long-term unemployed, having a disability, or being a woman over 55 or a Roma.

POLICY INNOVATION:

Humana Nova has stimulated sustainable public procurement, with a contract reserved for work integration enterprises being tendered for the first time by Zagreb in 2017.

COMBATING POVERTY:

the co-operative provides affordable clothing for over 800 regular customers of modest means and including many Roma; in 2015, it donated goods and services to 80 families and individuals and 10 local organisations.



STRENGTHS

- A pioneer WISE in Croatia.
- Combines social and environmental benefits.
- Pays attention to educating workers for participation.
- Wide range of partners: good working relations with the national administration (environment, professional rehabilitation, probation, employment, co-operative development), cities, private businesses (textile sector), European networks.
- Membership of ACT Grupa and RREUSE ensures future development.
- Raised private investment to open Labin branch.



WEAKNESSES

- No supportive environment of other co-operatives.
- Too many workers do not take part in decisions.
- Lack of capital means it has to rent its premises.



RIGHTS TO GROW
information consultation
participation rights
help social enterprises grow



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