



Photo: EVPA



START DATE:
2011



LEGAL FORM:
Social co-operative



N° EMPLOYEES:
47



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).

The cooperative was founded in 2011 as the result of the project "ESCO - Education for Social Co-Operatives: 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.

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.

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.



GOVERNANCE MODEL

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.

Humana Nova was the first type A social co-operative to be established. It therefore practices open membership and participative democratic decision-making.



SOCIAL IMPACT

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.

ENVIRONMENT:

- Reused or recycled 1,500 tons of used clothes and textile waste.
- Reduced CO2 emissions by 1,300 tonnes.
- Saved 2,000 billion litres of drinking water
- 11.3 tonnes of fertiliser and 74.2 tonnes of pesticides.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION:

70% of employees are marginalised by having been long-term unemployed, having a disability, or being a woman over 55 or a Roma.

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.
- 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.