

Circular economy: going sheltered makes a difference

07 August 2025, 17:13

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From sustainable cleaning to logistics: MAAAT supports organisations with their sustainability ambitions

Cleaning for reuse: large-scale circularity

Industrial washer, pressure booster unit, smart soap dispensers… Sheltered workshop MAAAT has invested heavily in professional cleaning technology and infrastructure in recent years. Why? Because more and more companies are opting for less waste, fewer disposable materials and more reuse.

From bins and containers to tableware and cutlery: consumers expect a hygienic product, while companies want to operate on a circular and cost-effective basis. MAAAT proves that this is possible. The sheltered workshop has grown into a team of 20 to 30 full-time employees that makes circular cleaning possible on an industrial scale.

A range of sectors: retail, logistics and events

Spotless crates for Colruyt Collect&Go
Have you ever had your shopping prepared for you by Collect&Go? Then you'll remember the folding crates. MAAAT cleans and checks them and takes care of storage, with a partially automated line and manual handling, unloading docks, space for buffer stock and more. The result is an efficient throughput without any hold-ups, and fast, reliable deliveries. A complete service, perfectly tailored to the needs of customer and carrier.

Spick-and-span containers for Woosh
A world without nappy waste: that's the mission of Woosh. The company supplies recyclable nappies to daycare centres and picks up them up again in containers. And MAAAT doesn't turn its nose up at cleaning these collection containers. The workshop has developed a cleaning line with a closed water circuit, automatic soap dispensing and manual drying and stacking. Both circular and hygienic!

Spotless tableware for hospitality & events
What about cleaning cups, dishes and cutlery? Again, MAAAT is awash with enthusiasm, as a permanent partner for event suppliers committed to sustainability. With flexible logistics support, every event becomes a circular success.

Growing together in circularity: MAAAT and Robi

Circularity doesn't stop at cleaning. MAAAT works actively with customers that want to make a sustainable impact. An example to quench your curiosity is its partnership with Robi, a manufacturer of smart water filters that combine the benefits of tap and bottled water.

MAAAT already supports the production of Robi filters with activities such as printing, assembling and packaging plastic components. If the market grows, MAAAT will also invest in repair and reuse in the near future.

From lessons to success

MAAAT has already worked with a number of startups: Woosh, Re-Sound, Grami-Therm, Loomy and Robi, to name but a few. Unfortunately, the results haven't always lived up to expectations – so there are lessons to be learned. In order to carry on innovating and allocate time, resources and space efficiently across different initiatives, MAAAT has established some **clear principles**.

1 Allocate resources carefully
Choose carefully how to allocate time, money and space. Base this choice on the project's chances of success and expected impact – in line with circular objectives, whether short- or long-term, and with one-off or ongoing collaboration in mind.

2. Focus on specific expertise
Building expertise in a single field makes it easier to spot opportunities and respond to specific needs. Assignments with similar characteristics will then follow of their own accord.

3. Offer related services
Cleaning alone isn't always cost-effective. Offering additional services such as storage, loading and unloading, labelling or registration, both increases the added value for the customer and improves the logistics flow. Reliability and flexibility of this kind are exactly what make the difference.

4. Take a local and network-based approach
The circular economy calls for local collaboration with minimal transport costs and maximum value creation. Actively reaching out to organisations – including those in networks – opens doors to local businesses. Visiting a business in the local area can also lead to valuable connections being formed.

Circular entrepreneurship requires more sheltered workshop activity

Sheltered workshops possess unique strengths: flexibility, expertise and customised facilities. This puts them in a perfect position to meet the needs of companies wishing to place more emphasis on reuse, logistics and sustainable processes.

If you take strategic advantage of these strengths, a sheltered workshop doesn't just create economic added value: it also contributes to a clean, sustainable future. The challenge is to actively seek out partnerships and innovative applications where your expertise really makes a difference.

Take the first step towards a circular manufacturing industry.

Sirris introduced the **Remanumaat framework** at MAAAT, a basic structure for identifying and leveraging its strengths for ReX activities. Other workshops also offer opportunities to make Re-use, Re-pair, Re-manufacture and Re-furbish (ReX) a reality. Wondering how your organisation can help build a circular manufacturing industry? Or could your organisation perhaps be the subject of an inspiring case blog?

Plan a visit and discover the framework

I pport from VLAIO.

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