

## **RUAH COOPERATIVE – Solidarity economies' area: TRICICLO LABORATORY**

TRICICLO was born in 1997 from an idea of Giulio Baroni, that in that years was the president of the Ruah migrants' welcoming centre. Giulio had understood that migrants didn't need just bed or food but another primary need was to learn Italian as quickly as possible and to work. Giulio had the idea of creating a small project where migrants would collect furniture, clothes and objects that the people of Bergamo no longer needed and make a small market. The incomes from market were used to cover expenses and give some money to the migrants themselves.

The idea was to make them feel useful and to use the tool of the job to learn the first rules of the Italian working world in order to fit as quickly as possible into the Bergamo society. The idea turned out to be a winning one and within a few years the requests for withdrawal increased exponentially and more space was needed for the material withdrawn. More and more migrants, not only from the welcoming centre, asked to work with us ... we moved from a small building and from a single van to this big warehouse and 10 vans. The main cooperative mission can be summarized in this sentence: "we transform needs into opportunities and diversity into a resource"

TRICICLO, in the cooperative Ruah, is part of the "solidarity economies' area" and over the years has developed various services:

- picking furniture from houses
- Second-hand market, home furnishings and clothing and various other services related to waste recycling:
- collection of used printer cartridges
- collection of used food oil
- collection of clothes used in Caritas yellow buckets (151 yellow bins)

**Why TRICICLO has a such long life?** surely because it was born to respond to a real need of the society and has grown up until now continuing to respond to social needs: the needs of people who are in socio-economic difficulty and after also the need to pay attention to the ecological aspect.

TRICICLO lives also thanks to the cooperative's choice to support it despite the fact that in recent years the activity is not completely sustainable from economic point of view.

Unfortunately, we don't get any public funding or private donations.

The incomes of our activities (picking furniture from houses, second-hand market, collection of clothes) are used to cover the "living expenses" of the labor costs of the employers while it is increasingly difficult to sustain the costs of the structure: the warehouse, the cost of the vehicles and of the waste disposal. Yes, because many permissions are needed to manage this activity.

In fact, the cooperative has been writing since 2003 in the national register of environmental managers in order to have the necessary authorizations for the transport of the clothes used in the yellow bins, for the toners and for the waste to be taken to landfills.

This aspect differentiates us from the voluntary associations or other associations as Mato Grosso for example: we are a real company, which respects all the laws on environmental, labor and fiscal matters.

We are a **social cooperative** enterprise, so we have the assembly of members who delegates the Board of Directors to carry out the guidelines decided at the meeting. The Board of Directors works in close contact with the board that sees all the managers of the various areas of the cooperative within it:

- Living area
- Culture area
- Solidarity economies area
- Area for asylum seekers and refugees
- Area of projects
- Human Resources Area

Then, each "manager" decides how transfer within his or her area all decisions made in the Assembly. In each area there are some coordinators who take care of connecting workers and management and try to achieve the objectives of the area.

The most interesting thing about TRICICLO is the part linked to the **job placement of disadvantaged people** and people in socio-economic difficulties.

Currently we are 25 employers of which 5 declared disadvantaged

- 2 from prison to replace a sentence
- 1 person with an addiction-related disadvantage
- 1 with physical and learning disability
- 1 with psychic disability

Almost all the other people come from difficult experiences: people who have always worked and who suddenly became unemployed because of the crisis, migrant persons or refugees, people sent by social workers and then hired. If initially TRICILCO was a mostly masculine environment, now also spaces for women's work have been opened and this is important: for women, especially migrant women often alone with children, it is always difficult to find employment. Job placements follow more or less three channels:

1. the Municipality of Bergamo that sends people in socio-economic difficulty followed by the social services and builds an individually project for each person together with the cooperative's reference educator. This insertion lasts from

three to six months and has the purpose of re inserting those people who, having lost their job, risk being sentenced to loneliness and super poverty. They are given a period of reintegration and so the opportunity to create new social relationships. They receive a minimum contribution of € 300.00 from the Municipality.

2. "Consorzio Mestieri" which indicates people with disadvantage in prison. Every year we insert 2/3 people from prison who make a trial period of 1 or 2 months with consortium tutorship, if this insertion goes well, they are hired at the end penalty. This allows them to leave prison and re-integrate into society.
  
3. Work-bags for young people without training or unemployed. Last year, for example, a job scholarship was opened for a girl who had just left high school and she spent nine months with us with the idea of specializing in the field of clothing. All these insertions ways are very useful both for users and for those who welcome: the main problem is the difficulty of giving continuity to the project. The risk is often that of these paths are ends in themselves. Before the economic crisis, some more capable, competent and willing people, after some time working with us, have found a job, in our cooperative or in other one or in generally in the not profit world. With the advent of the crisis this objective is difficult to achieve.
  
4. TRICILCO also accepts internship placements for schools: in particular we have an agreement in place with the "Caniana fashion institute" that sends us every year 3/4 apprentices in curricular training. We work also in partnership with the ABF Bergamo vocational training center that sometimes send us trainees with learning difficulties who came to work - school alternation.  
 The goal of internships and job placements is primarily to teach people to respect the basic rules of a job:
  - arrive on time
  - advise if they are absent
  - know how to work in a multi-ethnic team
  - respect the roles within the work group
  - respect the basic rules of safety at work

Our motto is **learning by doing!**

We just require basic skills: speaking italian at a minimum level, working using the logic, having a basic physical strength and above coming into play.

We are a protected workplace and every day we are growing together.

For further information:

[www.cooperativaruah.it](http://www.cooperativaruah.it)

[www.laboriotriciclo.it](http://www.laboriotriciclo.it)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCC6LQCeGorwwxP6TIIs7fXHw>

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