

## BELGIUM

# Local development

### Location

Hageland

### Programming period

2014 – 2020

### Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local  
development

### Measure

M19 – LEADER / CLLD

### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 48 402

EAFRD 3 000

National/Regional 3 000

Private/other 42 402

### Project duration

2018 – 2020

### Project promoter

De Kringwinkel Hageland  
vzw

### Contact

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### Website

[www.kringwinkelhageland.be](http://www.kringwinkelhageland.be)

A social enterprise used LEADER funding to set up a stylish boutique selling quality second-hand items, supporting both reuse and the long-term unemployed.

## Summary

Since 1996, the social enterprise De Kringwinkel Hageland has been collecting reusable items from inhabitants of the Hageland district in the Flemish region of Belgium and selling them at their thrift shops and online. However, their existing outlets were not suited to the sale of more unique or high-quality garments. In this context, the social enterprise used LEADER support to set up 'About Queens and their dresses' – a boutique offering stylish second-hand women's clothing and accessories for a reasonable price at a historic location in Tienen.



## Results

Following its launch, the boutique had an average of almost ten customers a day. Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it attracted almost 3 000 customers and a sales volume of around EUR 90 000.

A training package for the boutique's employees has been developed between the reuse centre network in Flanders (Kringwinkell Reset) and the adult training centre (CVO).

## Context

Since 1996, the social enterprise 'De Kringwinkel Hageland' has been collecting reusable items from the inhabitants of the Hageland district in the Flemish region of Belgium, and selling them at its thrift shops and online. The discarded clothing and accessories are collected and sorted out by employees of the social company, which specialises in creating opportunities for people who have problems finding a job.

In recent years, the company realised that the current Kringwinkel outlets were not suitable for the sale of more unique and expensive high-quality garments, as they could not reach the target customers for this kind of offer. Their thrift shops in Aarschot, Diest and Tienen are very accessible, attracting 200 000 customers annually. However, when higher-quality garments and accessories were presented to customers in the shops, they were deemed to be far too expensive, despite being offered at a considerably lower price than their original cost.

Apart from this, the sales areas in the company's thrift shops were not suitable for the beautiful and exclusive character of these premium garments. The company also realised that they were missing out on an opportunity to give customer service training to their long-term unemployed staff members. Such training could really make a difference to their re-entry into the standard jobs market by helping them gain experience that would allow them to access customer-facing sales roles in the commercial sector.

That is why the company decided to set up the boutique 'About Queens and their dresses' which offers stylish second-hand women's clothing and accessories for a small price at a historic location in Tienen. The boutique was furnished using local partners (e.g. Atelier Night Light and architects AST77) who used renewable materials from 'De Kringwinkel Hageland' and it is now considered to be one of the most beautiful shops in the Hageland region.

## Objectives

The aim of this project was to promote a new shopping concept in the Region to improve customer satisfaction and deliver on the social enterprise's aims and objectives by boosting sales and creating new career opportunities for long-term unemployed people.

## Activities

From January 2017 to January 2019, the preparations for this endeavour took place. The social enterprise organised

a feasibility study, identified the shop location, carried out fundraising and planned the decoration of the shop. As part of the 'Leading Talent Development Trail (LTDT) programme', the bank BNP Paribas Fortis examined the feasibility and the practical implementation of a thrift boutique. The negotiations about renting the location took longer than expected. This was not really unusual considering that the location was part of a bigger project in Tienen's urban development plans, but it caused a delay of almost a year. The province of Vlaams- Brabant and LEADER supported the project financially.

From February to June 2019, the social enterprise renovated the building, furnished the store, developed the brand and style, and finally promoted the concept for the start-up. To furnish the boutique they worked together with a few leading entrepreneurs from Tienen: architects AST77 and Atelier Late Night.

The project works with a number of organisations including VDAB (public employment service of Flanders), the OCMW (public centre for social welfare), companies that offer specialist support to reintroduce the unemployed into work, psychiatric clinics and the association of Chambers of Commerce VOKA. A training package has recently been developed in collaboration with colleagues from Kringwinkel Reset (reuse centre network in Flanders) and the CVO (adult training centre).

Finally, on 17 June 2019, the boutique 'About Queens and their dresses' opened to the public – almost a year later than planned.



## Main results

At the opening reception there were about 150 guests.

Following its launch, the boutique had an average of almost ten customers a day and, prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, attracted almost 3 000 customers and sales of EUR 90 000.

A training package for the boutique's employees has been developed jointly between the reuse centre network (Kingwinkel Reset) and the adult training centre in Flanders (CVO).

## Additional sources of information

n/a