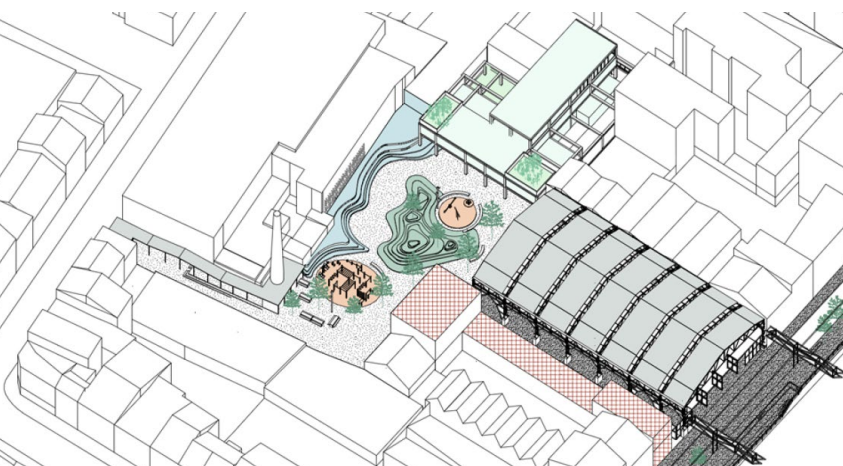




# THE “GRANDE HALLE” AND SURROUNDINGS

## A visit organised for journalists in the context of the European Week of Regions and Cities 2023

**11 October 2023**



### Context

Since its creation in 1989, the Brussels-Capital Region has decided to focus its urban revitalisation programmes along the Canal area by combining local and regional funding (Sustainable Neighbourhood Contract) with European funding.

Over the years, the Canal area has benefited from the following European programmes:

- 1994-1999: URBAN I
- 2000-2006: URBAN II and ERDF Objective 2 Program: 120 million euros
- 2007-2013 ERDF: 115 million and 32 projects.

This funding has been consistently maintained up to the present day. During the 2014-2020 period, close to twenty ERDF projects have been developed for the benefit of the residents of the Canal area and its surroundings. Within the Brussels Regional Public Service, the administration Brussels International was founded in order to develop a coherent European and foreign policy for the Brussels-Capital Region. The ERDF department is part of Brussels International and is responsible for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of operational programmes for the European Regional Development Fund in Brussels.

Brussels International presents the ERDF “Grande Halle” and “Liverpool nursery” projects, within the framework of the European Week of Regions and Cities 2023 edition.

Journalists participating in this visit will have the opportunity to learn more about those two projects and the ones that encompass them while bringing life to the place. The hall and the nursery have been financed by the ERDF as part of the 2014-2020 Programme. The "Grande Halle" is an outstanding example of the evolution of former industrial blocks into mixed-use urban spaces, adjusted to the current needs of the city while facilitating engagement and collaboration among individuals from diverse backgrounds. The nursery, a be.exemplary 2018 winner project, motivates us to address pressing energy and climate concerns, while the social projects of Boomerang, ArtiZan and Circus Zonder Handen, provide creative opportunities for fostering human interaction, revitalizing spaces and promoting job opportunities.

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## The "Grande Halle"

### Context and ERDF support

The "Grande Halle" is located in a former industrial building dating from the early 1910s on the Quai de l'Industrie (no. 79-81) within the block formed by the Quai du Canal, Rue de Gosselies, Rue de Liverpool and Rue Heyvaert. This former 1780 m<sup>2</sup> industrial hall's last use was related to the import-export business of used cars. Within its walls, this new open public space brings together community activities linked to the associative network and public services (including a nursery); inter-generational housing; a bicycle recycling space; play areas for children and, soon, the "Circus Zonder Handen" circus school. This open space in a densely built-up area provides a new connection between the Quai du Canal and Rue Heyvaert. This route for pedestrians and cyclists will improve the local soft mobility network. Two cranes overlooking the canal, a reminder and symbol of the building's industrial past, have been restored. The Grande Halle is a new visual landmark in the Brussels Region's Canal Plan, which aims to revitalize some 700 hectares along the waterway that runs through the west of the capital.

This project is part of the 2014-2020 ERDF programme led by the Municipality of Molenbeek. In particular, the project met an environmental challenge in a district characterised by a relatively unattractive environment and the need for local infrastructure and structural facilities. The Grande Halle notably provide the neighbourhood's residents with access to public spaces within easy reach of where they live and strengthen social cohesion in the neighbourhood.

The project received €1,370,000 of support from the ERDF, with 50% of the amount coming from Europe and 50% from the Region complemented by €430,000 dedicated to soil decontamination as part of the 3rd axis of the Programme: Support the development of a circular economy and the rational use of resources in promising sectors.

**A flagship project of the canal area vast transition strategy, mixing functions, enhancing traces of the past and contributing to a city rich in social spaces.**

What makes the Grande Halle stand out is its embodiment of Brussels' unique approach to revitalize former industrial zones. Instead of displacing economic activities, the strategy is to retain them, ensuring a diverse range of functions and users, positively impacting mobility, and reducing gentrification risks. This approach involves a seemingly paradoxical combination: increasing the quantity of housing and activities within blocks (quantitative densification) while simultaneously improving the quality and open space inside these areas (qualitative de-densification). This dual approach aims to simultaneously address the city's current demands for housing, services, and employment, while fostering a more open, sociable urban environment.

This redevelopment project has transformed a former industrial site into a multi-purpose space, being part of a complete transformation of the cityblock in which it is located. The project is interconnected with various initiatives and strategies, working towards the realisation of Brussels' vision for the transformation of the strategically important Canal area.

The urban planning programmes supporting this project, namely the Canal Plan and the "Sustainable Neighbourhood Contract" (Contrat de Quartier Durable), allow for a rapid operationalisation in terms of budget, deadlines and project set-up. For instance, construction on the «Grande Halle» began in 2019 and the inauguration took place in 2022, even in the face of prevailing health challenges.

Lastly, the "Grande Halle" exemplifies the commitment to promote the repurposing of existing structures and the conservation of architectural elements from the industrial period, such as the roof of the main hall. A notable challenge was the preservation of the chimney at the back of the site.

[The "Grande Halle" / ERDF Project](#)

[Be.exemplary](#)

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# The Nursery

The French-speaking nursery hosting 84 children on the "Grande Halle" site is a be.exemplary 2018 winner. The concept of sustainability has been recognized as an essential aspect of the project, in terms of design, construction and maintenance now that the building is being used. This concept is illustrated at the following levels:

- 1. Bioclimatic design:** The nursery is designed based on a bioclimatic approach, using as much as possible natural resources such as natural light and passive solar heating. Spaces are oriented to maximize energy efficiency and thermal comfort, reducing dependence on heating and cooling systems. On the outside, floor coverings have been chosen to limit the heat island effect, while the surface circulation of much of the rainwater contributes to the adiabatic cooling of the site.
- 2. Energy efficiency:** The building is equipped with highly efficient heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems. High-quality insulation materials are used to reduce heat loss, offer optimal airtightness, while energy-efficient windows minimize heat loss and maximize natural light.
- 3. Renewable energies:** The project incorporates renewable energy sources such as photovoltaic solar panels for the production of clean electricity (installation of 11 kWc on the rooftop covering ventilation and fridge consumption). This reduces the nursery's overall carbon footprint and contributes to the goal of energy sustainability.
- 4. Sustainable materials:** Building materials were selected for their durability, low environmental impact and recyclability. Strict criteria have been established to minimize emissions of VOCs (volatile organic compounds) or other pollutants and to favor health-friendly materials as well as for the construction of the building as for his interior design.

**5. Waste management :** The project has implemented measures to minimize the production of construction waste, reuse materials where possible and recycle waste through appropriate channels to limit landfill disposal. The post-and-beam structure and precast concrete slabs, supplemented by cast-in-place concrete, are an example of this desire to limit waste. These construction methods also allow the potential building's complete reversibility into other functions, such as schools, workshops or residences.

**6. Indoor air quality:** To guarantee a healthy and safe environment for children and staff, the nursery is equipped with a high-performance ventilation system featuring high-efficiency large-surface filters for the finest and most harmful particles, which also allow humidity to be recovered from the air. Low-emission building materials have been used and the furniture and cleaning products for daily maintenance have also been chosen with attention to this air quality. The results can be controlled using the continuous air-quality monitoring system and measures can be taken if needed. In addition, the following bioclimatic strategies are implemented to ensure pleasant summer temperatures without active cooling systems:

- Intensive natural ventilation
- Thermal inertia, to store coolness in hot periods
- Solar protection, differentiated and/or combined according to space, orientation and use: vegetated pergolas, stretched canopies, movable screens, etc.

**7. Water management:** The project incorporates rainwater management features such as infiltration systems, rainwater collection tanks and retention systems. Combined with water-saving equipment (taps, showers, toilet flushes), this helps to reduce drinking water consumption and prevent flooding problems.

The project received €2,060,000 euros of support from the ERDF, with 50% of the amount coming from Europe and 50% from the Region as part of the 4<sup>th</sup> axis of the Programme: Improving the living environment of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and populations.

["Liverpool" Nursery / ERDF Project](#)

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# Circus ZonderHanden

## The main activation actor of the Hall

Circus Zonder Handen is a Brussels-based circus school dedicated to making its high-quality courses accessible to the greatest number. The project lies at the crossroads of four themes: youth, culture, well-being and sport. It aims to play a role in the development of a self-confident Brussels youth, seeing "superdiversity" as an advantage and inclusion as a matter of course. The association adapts itself to each profile to ensure that its goal of equal opportunity is achieved, and uses a wide range of tools to this end. For this inclusive, social, youth-oriented vision, Circus Zonder Handen has been chosen to be the main activator of the Grande Halle, where it will organise its regular classes as soon as the renovation work on its dedicated buildings is completed. In the meantime, the project occupies the space during holidays.



## The philosophy

CZH wants to be a warm place in the neighbourhood, on the one hand to introduce children and young people to circus in a low-threshold way, to systematically create more bonding and long-term connections. On the other hand, with his "foyer", CZH also wants to create a meeting place that is visited more widely than by 'circus adepts'. At CZH, you don't necessarily have to hang in the trapeze yourself to have a place in the organisation. Keeping the cafeteria open, co-managing the equipment or just 'hanging out' are all valuable ways.

## In figures

Circus Zonder Handen is...

- 52 weekly classes in 9 districts at 13 locations with 800 weekly participants and 4 weekly open training moments
- A team of 15 staff, 50 trainers and a whole heap of fluctuating 100 volunteers



## CZH's ambitions for their new home base

Journalists will have the opportunity to discover the plans of CZH's future permanent space. The organisation's ambitions as to its destination can be found here:

- All circus school activities currently organised will take place at the new location: circo-pyschomotor education for pre-schoolers, circus classes, acrobatics, freerunning and tricking for children, youngsters and adults as well as various specialisation classes.
- During holiday periods, CZH organises camps and playgrounds
- CZH organises Open Training moments for young people & artists who would like to come and train but do not yet want to enroll in a class or for members who come to train an extra moment in addition to their weekly classes.
- The infrastructure can also be used for shows and performances. To this end, the halls will be multifunctional.
- Given the real demand for this kind of infrastructure, CZH wants to open his space up to "day partners" of various kinds: the circus college, circus artists, companies wishing to use rehearsal or creation space. In this way, a meeting place between the professional and leisure sector will be created. Other "day partners" could be schools or other external partners, which tend to be tight on sports infrastructure.

On a site-wide scale, Circus Zonder Handen's creative activities complement those linked to the reuse of materials and the training of young people (Recyclo, Boomerang), creating a fertile breeding ground for the creation and stimulation of new uses and jobs.

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[Circus Zonder Handen](#)

[Circus Zonder Handen on Youtube](#)





## Boomerang and ArtiZan

### Social and circular projects

Boomerang Design is part of "Groot Eiland" association, whose aim is to provide opportunities for people encountering difficulties to find employment in the mainstream labour market, by offering training and advice. The Boomerang project has been set up to teach woodworking and produce high-quality furniture products from recycled and residual materials treated with biobased products. Objects are designed in collaboration with established and emerging designers. The floor above Boomerang is home to ArtiZan. This is a workshop of Groot Eiland where people get 'care through work'. They are encouraged to work as volunteers in a meaningful daytime activity. The team mainly composes gift and goodie packages. For this, they produce tote bags from recycled textiles colored with vegetable dyes. The tissues come from Brussels hospitals via Cyclup. The products in the packages are locally made. The team is always looking for great startups offering sustainable and local drinks and food. The artisanal gadgets that ArtiZan likes to surprise its customers with, are handmade in the workshop.

### More about Boomerang

The aim of this project is to optimize the raw materials chain through recycling, and make the seat adaptable to different frames without losing the ability to mass-produce. As well as in design, production and waste management, circular economy principles are followed as much as possible.

Specifically, this means that:

1. The materials used either come from residual batches or are recycled materials.
2. If new materials or semi-products are needed, they are acquired or made locally whenever possible.
3. Before and after production, the objects are treated only with natural products or products that have low impact on our environment (sandblasting, powder coating, bio-based varnish or oil, ... )
4. The finished products are packed only with natural materials for transportation.
5. The objects comply with the training provided in Atelier Groot Eiland.

Boomerang Design is a laureate of the project Be.Circular.







## More about ArtiZan

ArtiZan offers original gift packages, made with care and creativity by workers in employment care.

ArtiZan is the creative workshop of Groot Eiland.

The crea-team put together original surprise baskets for private people or for companies with delicious local products, such as artisanal honey, local beers and fair-trade chocolate and handmade creations.

People working there are motivated to do a meaningful and creative job as volunteers, without stress. In the workshop, they build lasting contacts with their colleagues and can be proud of their work. Those who want to can take maths or language classes.

As the products offered come from local producers and the packaging and creations from recycled materials and vegetable dyes, ArtiZan is definitely a social and circular project!

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