

Business field specific qualification  
for the Second-Hand sector  
„Specialist for used electrical appliance“



Summarization of the national qualification concept of  
Austria  
(Sepp Eisenriegler)

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## **1. Introduction**

The recent regulatory developments about Circular Economy in the EU let expect another surge in demand for high-quality second-hand products, leading to a significant growth in the market throughout the EU. The sector already provides numerous jobs and employment opportunities, especially for people disadvantaged on the labor market. This qualification concept should contribute to the professionalization of the second-hand sector, create new job opportunities and promote labor market mobility, as well as implement an EU-wide comparability of competences.

The national qualification concept was developed by the Austrian partner of the Erasmus + project "QualiProSH Electro" R.U.S.Z – Verein zur Förderung der Sozialwirtschaft under the lead of "nordprojekte Kaufmann&Partner" and "INBA – Institut nachhaltige Berufsbildung und Arbeit".

The basis for the national qualification concept was the European concept for a segment-specific qualification for the second-hand sector "specialist WEEE" developed under the Erasmus + project "QualiProSH Electro", together with the qualification and quality standards developed in the context of two previous Leonardo da Vinci projects "QualiProSecondHand" and "QualiProSH II". The respective teaching and learning contents and objectives as well as the competencies and skills taught in the training, were identified through detailed work process analysis from the Institute technology and Education (IT + B) of the University of Bremen. The content and the structural implementation have been adapted to the national framework of the Austrian vocational training system, the national labor market conditions and the needs of the target group in Austria.

The national qualification concept is based primarily on the revised Lisbon Strategy for sustainable growth and employment (2005) and contributes to the professionalization of the business segment "WEEE". The EU's 2008 Waste Framework Directive strengthens clearly activities for reuse and preparation for reuse. The EU's 2013 7th Environment Action Programme calls for the longevity of products, their repair-friendly design and their reuse until 2020. The Circular Economy Action Plan of the European Commission and the opinions and comments published since then show the currently growing demand for such qualifications, but also the lack of necessary adjustment measures in the form of education and training of workers.

## **2. Target group(s)**

The main target group are young people who have difficulty to (re) gain a foothold in the labor market. Whether they are considered long-term unemployed, they are registered as seeking employment, or have allowed themselves a longer break after high school is of minor importance from our current perspective. Also, apprenticeship dropouts who as a result found no adequate job opportunities, come into question.

If there are not enough young people for testing the overall qualification concept, we could turn to long-term unemployed and train them in the context of the standardized 12-week work training.

Another highly interesting group target, because of its growing importance in Austria, could be the so-called pension transit people: unemployed, who have only three years to the statutory retirement ahead. Special programs are currently being developed for this target group by the AMS Vienna and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

One rule for all: a technical pre-qualification is advantageous, craftsmanship is a prerequisite.

## **3. Elements of the qualification concept**

Basis of European comparability of the qualification "WEEE specialist" are the same teaching and learning objectives and content on the one hand, as well as the same instructional skills and quality standards on the other hand.

The quality standards describe the conditions and the framework for the implementation of the qualification. This set of criteria is valid regardless of the region where the concept is

being implemented. The criteria should help to ensure that the qualification concept meets certain requirements and guidelines by making them measurable. The measurability delivers a contribution to the comparability of competences and skills acquired by the qualification (training).

The didactic preparation of the modules is both uniform and on the other hand designed practicable and comprehensible. This was done against the background that the individual modules can also be implemented stand-alone. Each module includes an introduction, a table of the teaching / learning content, a rough concept to implementation and detailed schedules, as well as a variety of teaching and learning materials.

To ensure the European comparability of qualifications, only slight changes in the content should be made.

The qualification "WEEE specialist" comprises a total of three different learning areas:

1. General contents that also come into play in other second-hand business areas.
2. Business area specific content that takes account of the specific work processes in the business area WEEE.
3. Content that promotes the necessary social skills.

The three learning areas are divided into a total of 11 modules:

1. Administration and Business Processes
2. Procurement of goods
3. Acquisition of goods and customers
4. Organization of goods receipt
5. Sale
6. Transport of WEEE
7. Storage of WEEE
8. Cleaning and repairing of WEEE
9. Disassembling and disposal of WEEE
10. Social skills I - personal skills
11. Social skills II - skills related to employees and customers

#### **4. Implementation in Austria**

The preparation for the successful conclusion of the training is ensured by motivation work, training of key skills and acquisition of practice in two training firms of R.U.S.Z and participating in a preparatory course in small groups for the final examination, but also individual coaching.

The innovative character of this setup consists in the approach to address the participants with a model with a strong market connection as a learning environment (as opposed to a school-based system).

The analysis of the European second-hand sector has not only revealed a general need for training of the workers or companies, but due to the foreseeable and future development of the second-hand sector, the development of an initial training, for example, for second hand specialists is appropriate.

The numerous features that have been identified with regard to the working processes and tasks show that it makes sense to implement an initial training in the sector. For this, the numerous business areas and task areas provide enough potential and approaches, as well as, inter alia, also possibilities of business-unit-related specializations.

R.U.S.Z has a first-class, relevant network that is mostly interested in the implementation of the results, and can be considered as a user:

“die umweltberatung” Wien coordinates the repair network Vienna, the first spin-off of R.U.S.Z. It is part of the organization in the large umbrella organization of Vienna Adult Education "Wiener Volkshochschulen GmbH". The Austrian "advisor" is the head of "Eco Counselling" Vienna.

The Wiener Volkshochschulen are the largest adult education organization in Vienna and, as such, is predestined to work constructively in the implementation. The director of the Volkshochschule Donaustadt has already expressed an interest.

The ReparaturNetzWerk Wien, a quality group of serious repair and ReUse companies has nearly 70 member companies and provides a potential for future employment as trained "WEEE specialist". When integrated early in the process, small businesses can be more interested in the employment of the target group persons.

RepaNet Austria, the Austrian umbrella organization for social integration enterprises, which are active in the ReUse- and recycling sector is particularly suitable as the addressee for educated target people, but also for the application of the curriculum for their own purposes. The Public Employment Service Vienna (AMS Wien) is the largest relevant player. Although budgets are increasingly scarce in times of rising unemployment, there is still a chance to collaborate for specific projects on the ongoing cooperation (work training for long-term unemployed).

All these organizations / institutions have been working together for many years in order to achieve environmental and / or social objectives. They are all interested in the creation of new, promising job profiles and want to create green jobs.

With the awareness raising within these important stakeholders during our Multiplier Event in September 2015, it is easier to attract adult education organizations and the AMS (as funding organisation) for the implementation. The Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection and a senior Commission representative held the keynote speeches, representatives of the Chamber of Labour, the Vienna Environmental Protection Department and the AMS have expressed their views during the discussion. Based on the experiences from a project that accompanied apprenticeship dropouts to the apprenticeship degree in an adult education innovation project appointed by the AMS Vienna, R.U.S.Z has suggested the development of a semi-apprenticeship, similar to a bachelor's versus Master program, representing a formal education for disadvantaged young people, that also can be expanded to a full-fledged apprenticeship degree, and - if it fits. This proposal has been discussed with the attending experts and was qualified as a good but tedious idea (agreement of the social partners is a prerequisite).

The interest in the training for WEEE specialist was fueled again in the context of the ReUse platform of the Ministry of Environment in April 2016. The R.U.S.Z chairman had been invited to present the now practically tested qualification program. The representatives of the Viennese municipal waste management department can imagine to have existing staff qualified, but in any case also to encourage socio-economic institutions that provide services for them to make use of this training program for their staff.

It is recommended to use the existing interest after the project and to proactively contact the relevant institutions of adult education to include the developed concept in their standard program: the Wiener Volkshochschulen, the Institute for Economic Promotion (<http://www.wifi.at/start>) and the Vocational Training Institute (<http://www.bfi.at/home/>).

In any case, it is advantageous to acquire resources of active labor market policy (in Austria, the AMS is the responsible funding body) for this qualification model.