

Information Sheet

European Partnership Leonardo da Vinci QualiProSecondHand

The QualiProSecondHand project is a two-year research project supported by the European Commission which aims at developing qualification approaches and possible ways for the professionalisation of the second hand industry. In the framework of this project, the first important results are ready to be presented. They are based on both, a scientific analysis of the sector as well as on several case studies.

At first, the second hand sector in the partner countries of the project such as Germany, Finland, Belgium, Austria, Bulgaria, Slovenia and the UK seems to be quite heterogeneous. Nevertheless, numerous similarities were identified in the context of the sector's analysis. Thus, various parallels exist with regard to the employee structure, to the areas of business, to the clientele and to the development of certain trends. In addition to this the companies operating in the sector could be clearly divided into profit and not-for-profit organisations. And also, both the companies' structures within a type of business as well as the tasks and processes within the different areas of business are relatively similar. The second hand industry is an independent, growing sector whose professionalisation and quality can be increased by means of sector-specific qualifications. Therefore, it is amongst other things necessary to improve its comparability with the first hand market and to create more transparency.

The quality of the second hand businesses is an important starting point for comparability. The introduction of quality standards contributes significantly to their professionalisation. The quality is reflected e.g. in the products that are sold, the service, the operating schedule, the way a business is presenting itself and its individual structures and processes. The key to an improved quality and professionalisation is the qualification of the employees. A general sector-specific need for qualifications was identified in the context of its analysis. From this follows the necessity to develop qualifications for the sector on a European level which take into account ongoing developments like the cross-border trade and ensure coherence and comparability in doing so. The project takes the following steps in order to contribute to achieving this goal:

- The creation of a scope for the development of qualification concepts which are based on defined quality standards.
- The creation of a guideline for the development of qualifications. This guideline could serve as and should be a helpful business tool.
- The creation of a network design. This is done against the background of the introduction of sector-specific qualifications especially to be able to involve the small companies. The establishment of networks for the purpose of exchanging experiences strengthens the companies' innovativeness and competitiveness.

A significant contribution to more professionalisation is made by means of the products described. Furthermore, it can be assumed that the development of both, common quality standards as well as quality approaches or concepts, respectively, will have a positive effect on the development of the second hand sector in Eastern Europe which is comparatively underdeveloped. The details of the results of the sector analysis are available at www.QualiProSH.eu in the form of an overall european report and in the form of individual national reports.

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The second hand sector in Slovenia

Analysis of the second hand sector has shown that the majority of business activities take place in the private sector. These are small companies which found market niche in selling used goods on the market. Usually they are shops with one to 5 employees. The shops' owners are also employees who perform all the activities from purchase of goods to selling them. All the accounting for these companies is done by external accountant.

There is not a big demand for second hand goods. One of the reasons for that is also the price of second hand goods that is usually not much lower than the price of goods sold on price reduction in big trading centres. We have also detected that sale of electrical goods is not developed at all. The majority of shops sell used furniture, children clothes, CDs, and books. There are also shops which sell new goods in combination with used ones (i.e. mobile phones). These shops are very short lived. The main concern of the second hand shops is how to survive in this sector since with the sale of second hand goods they don't make enough earnings. This is the reason why they don't invest in training of the employees. All skills and knowledge is acquired through working experience mainly.

The qualifications acquired by employed in the sector are very diverse. At the moment the commercial activities are regulated in the legislation. Persons who work in retail have to have successfully finished a three year vocational programme. Those who are shop managers have to finish a four year technical programme in the field of commerce or a three year vocational programme and in addition a two year specialization in shop management. Those who have finished a four year technical programme in any professional field have to pass an exam at the Chamber of commerce and trade. Those who have acquired higher levels of education can work in retail without any additional examination. The majority of the employees have finished a three or four year educational programme.

We have established that flea markets do not present a special segment in the sector since there are only two flea markets in Slovenia. One in the capital city, Ljubljana where collectable items are sold and one in Maribor, which is the second biggest town in Slovenia, where everything from clothes to kitchen utensils are sold. Much more popular are occasional flea markets which have also the sociable aspect. They usually sell used schoolbooks, used children clothes or skiing equipment and are held in certain months of the year.

Despite the results of the analysis that show a rather undeveloped second hand sector in Slovenia, we have established that sale of used goods on the internet is very popular. There is prejudice about buying second hand goods in the shops while that is not the case for buying goods over the internet. We could say that the time spent for purchasing the goods is also important factor and internet sale shows us some shopping habits of Slovene people.

In any case the results gave us incentive to popularise the sector and implement activities for its development. Our activities in the project have been aimed in that direction.

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