

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 Bulgaria

From 1990 to 1997 in Bulgarian economy appeared all features of recessive and critical state. In this period the low purchasing power of population created favorable basis for development of Second Hand industry and its more significant presence in economic sector and particular in trade. This is the beginning of Second hand market in Bulgaria.

Its important characteristic is that almost 97% of the second-hand goods are imported, but there is no specific import regime for the second hand goods. They are charged with taxes and customs duty as non-used goods. There is no official definition about the Second Hand Sector in Bulgaria and this sector is not represented in the official statistics.

Second Hand market in Bulgaria is multidimensional and wide-range. It includes:

- All kinds of textile articles
- Machines for home and professional use
- Electric appliances
- Furniture and decoration
- Computers and office equipment
- Children utensils and clothes

As structure biggest share (about 48%) have cars and car parts second hand. Most used form to implement the activity for private organizations in second hand sector are small family firms. Quite less are registered business units which are limited companies – about 13%. Small family firms employ minimum persons to implement their activities, often these employees are only members of this family. That is why average list number of employees in the Second Hand sector is small – it varies from 3 to 5 persons in 87% of the firms. Unfortunately there are not exact statistics for employees in bigger limited companies that are part of Second hand sector. Unfortunately, there are no branch organisations and associations in the structural subdivisions of the second hand market.

There are no registered social companies in the Second Hand branch. This depends on the fact that the state doesn't have enough financial funds to support the activities of such companies and the small family managed enterprises don't have capacity to employ more than 3 – 4 people. In the past years (2002 – 2006) there is a tendency to better development of Second Hand market in small towns than in big cities, municipalities and villages. This can be explained with the level of incomes. Consumers that live in big cities have bigger incomes and big shopping centers are situated there. They provide profitable payment schemes and they can offer more competitive prices that smaller shops and trade objects. This makes part of costumers to prefer new goods to second hand goods.

The need of skillful and well-educated employees as shop assistant or manager who speak foreign languages is big. The owner themselves need a qualification in their function as manager: effectively organisation of the working process, price calculation, marketing, personnel management.

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