



NEW VOCATIONAL WAYS AND QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF THE SECOND-HAND SECTOR

Ljubljana, 19 September 2008

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Reuse and Recycling social enterprises in the European Union

Project funded by the European Commission, DG EAC (Education and Culture) under the Leonardo da Vinci stream of the EU Budget

EUROPEAN GOOD PRACTICE REPORT
A study on possible qualification needs, approaches and strategies in the Second-Hand Sector in Europe

Coordinator of the project is the Institute Technology and Education (IT+B) of the University of Bremen

WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT TO PROFESSIONALISE THIS SECTOR?

- Society's attitude;
- Next EU's enlargement;
- Fast growth in Europe;
- Improved quality of the sector and
- Better quality for the consumers.

HOW AN EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONALISATION CAN BE REACHED?

- Increase the:
 1. Quality of goods on offer;
 2. Quality of the services offered;
 3. Quality of the operational procedures;
 4. Quality of business communication.

QUALITY OF SERVICES IS GUARANTEED THANKS TO:

- WELL TRAINED AND SKILLED MEMBERS OF STAFF.
- This requirement should be considered as a cross cutting issue for the different levels in the organisation and in the different areas of business.

HOMOGENEITY AND STANDARDISATION

- Best practices of the project tried to find out similar responses to the same exigencies (HOMOGENEITY) in the sector.
- Best practices of the project tried to catch those procedures in the operating processes which are similar (STANDARDISATION), provided the peculiarity of each country partner.

THE VALUABLE ASSET OF THE REPORT

- The best practice report as part of the project is deeply linked to the European Union long term strategy in the field of action of environment and training;
- Lisbon strategy for sustainable growth and jobs, as revised in 2005;
- Training of the second-hand sector is fully integrated in this strategy insofar it improves the quality of green jobs and green services.

The structure of the report/1 (Chapter 2)

- Different examples of the second-hand business activities in each country;
- The case study BELGIUM (in this presentation);
- Current level of education in the Second-Hand sector and the qualification approaches strategies and concepts;
- The results of these case studies provided an overview of the qualification needed in the framework of the qualification strategy behind the project.

The structure of the report/2 (Chapter 3)

- Detailed presentation of the core work processes and tasks in the Second-Hand enterprises;
- Fields of business:
 - Textile
 - Books and CD's
 - Furniture
 - Electric and electronic equipments;
- Different tasks in different sectors pave the way for an overall qualification specifically fitted for this sector.

The structure of the report/3 (Chapter 4)

- Results of the sector analysis and case studies;
- Development of uniform training sectors;
- No transferable best practice solutions in the European Second-Hand sector although good practice approaches and ideas were found.

Business activities in Belgium/1

Why?

- Belgium is small and highly populated;
- Waste collection, treatment and disposal as well as reuse are well developed;
- Federal way of governing the waste topic;
- Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels Capital Region deal with all the sector except nuclear waste and waste transit;
- 80% of household items treated or recycled.

Business activities in Belgium/2

The Second Hand Sector

- Belgium does not differ too much from other countries but some strenghts:
 - High intensive policy on reuse and recycling;
 - Widespread culture of purchasing second hand items in the « brocantes » (flea markets);
- Therefore in Belgium pioneristic initiatives to exploit the sector economically and socially;
- Economic and social opportunities.

Business activities in Belgium/3

The Second Hand sector

- Before going through the main (profit, non-profit) actors, a quick overview of different ways second hand products end-up in the market

1. Brocantes (Flea Market)

Average: 1.200 brocantes every year. Every one can be a « brocanteur »;

No limits: of time, items (few restrictions) on sell.

Huge quantity of items exchanged.

- Participants are rarely professional of the sector. Their goal is to increase the income or for passion;

Brocantes (Flea Market)/2

- Some brocantes have acquired nation wide reputation;
- Some of them see huge participation both of sellers and pruchasers;
- As we will see, there exist a training course offered by the Brussels region training centre on how to become a professional brocanter;
- **2 INTERNET and NEWSPAPERS.**

3. Shops and Professionals

- Low returns and labour intensive nature create the basis for a good social economy led environment;
- 650 shops doing business on second hands;
- Enormous differences in the way for-profit and not for profit entities work. The latter being much more focused on the human capital and on the environment, the first on money;
- Structure's differences: while for profit firms work principally as cash converters or depots for items, social firms collect material for free and invest money for jobs.

The for profit actors

- Represented by networks like:
- Eco-Shops (16 shops)
- Troc-International (27 shops),
- Troc (22 shops),
- Cash Converter (15 shops) and
- Deporama (2 shops);

The non-profit actors

- Represented by SE networks as:
- KOMOSIE (ex-KVK) and RESSOURCES.

➤ KOMOSIE - EFQM model

- Every two years a call for projects is launched amongst members for a coaching period given by internal consultants from KOMOSIE;
- The coaching is a combination of group workshops and individual coaching;
- The workshops stimulate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, with the aim of increasing motivation;
- The individual coaching has the objective of translating models and frameworks of the workshops into very concrete applications.

- KOMOSIE – EFQM model
 - During the coaching there is always:
 - A workshop for the management to introduce the framework and principles;
 - A workshop for the operational staff;
 - Individual coaching of personnel of the workforce;
 - The process is a so called learning process meaning that in the course of the implementation the tools are continuously improved and new ones are developed;
 - The objective of this coaching is mainly transfer of know-how and development of the necessary skills to work autonomously afterwards;
 - 55% of the members are working with the EFQM-K2.

- KOMOSIE – EFQM model
- The EFQM model is an answer to the quality challenge in the second-hand sector;
- KOMOSIE decided to establish quality labels to face the challenge. High quality in the management of people and products (Revisie);
- As far as EFQM concerned the success factor is the combination of working in-group and individual coaching set forth. Moreover the management role has been decisive since the managers have the general overview of the shop and of the quality in comparison to the effectiveness in the shop.

- KOMOSIE – EFQM model
- The combined approach means a strong commitment from both the management and the operational staff who were all strongly implied in the process;
- Currently a time of consideration of the process is foreseen in order to have the quality system proving in depth its value;
- An extra tool that will soon be developed to involve the « target group » workers more by using a kind of a « quality game ».

- Considerations

- In the for profit sector, the tasks are basically confined to selling the product and in some cases to the dismantling and reassembling furnitures;
- The work in the SE sector is more complex and elaborated and the skills vary depending to the task a person has been assigned to;
 - Formal/Informal training is guaranteed in order to get ready to manage different tasks;
 - Manual are provided for different kind of machines and in some cases there are quality systems in place that guarantee that the job is done according to the best practice in place.

Educational level in the profit sector/1

- Franchising enterprises (strongly represented in Belgium) do not have special requirements for the shop managers or the employees;
- Some exceptions in the small and medium enterprises;
- Anyhow the shop manager is generally someone who has already gathered experience in the field of sales and trading (strong business background).

Educational level in the profit sector/2

- Staff members working in the shop do not have a special profile (but being customer orientated, being capable of working in team, being good mannered, being able to listen to and assist the client);
- No particular education background is demanded. They only must be able to learn different tasks (e.g. how to attach a suitable price to an item and how to evaluate it);
- They have to know when it is time to take the item from the shelf, how to organise special events, when to get rid of stocks, etc..

Educational level in the not for profit sector/1

- In Belgium, the non-profit enterprises and networks also offer temporary job contracts to disadvantaged groups of persons;
- No experience or competences are required for the temporarily employed persons as they are offered numerous further training courses during their work. Thus it is neither expected that they already have an apprenticeship graduation or higher qualifications.

Educational level in the not for profit sector/2

- The instructors guide and monitor the employees individually and on a daily basis. They need different qualifications even if is not necessary a specific educational background;
- They should, however, have gathered experience on some levels of the enterprise. In general the instructors have the chance to become managers of the companies;
- Furthermore there are the employees in administration and management (who make up for a small share of the total staff);
- They often have a higher educational level as their work tasks concentrates on key positions in the enterprises. They are eventually responsible for a smooth operation of all business processes.

Cross-company and new qualification approaches in the second-hand sector

- Further qualification approaches involving several enterprises can be found in Belgium;
- Due to the very well developed network structures and the great number of franchisers with several member enterprises, very different qualification approaches arose;
- Networking system.

As example:

- A training course for a "*Brocanteur*" (flea market trader) in Brussels. The training is developed by the organisation "Bruxelles formation" responsible for the development of training courses for unemployed or young people with very low qualifications.
- The training is accessible to people with the lower school certificate. The programme is composed of three modules: Basic elements, Technical competencies, Practical activities.

- Basic elements: Analysis of the different styles and classic collections, basics of the restoration of old items, knowledge of materials, basic elements of graphic art;
- Technical competencies: a deeper knowledge of the previously treated subjects plus some elements of legislation and practical information on how to develop a business;
- Practical activities;
- After the training participants receive a "***promotion sociale***" (**social promotion**) diploma as a "*Brocanteur*" (flea market trader). The training is rather intensive and covers one year. It takes place on four days a week and encompasses 15 instruction hours per week.

Example for corporate requirements, qualification needs and strategies in profit enterprises

- The study was conducted on the basis of the national sector analysis of the partners countries participating in the project;
- Even if the study should not be considered exhaustive, it highlighted that there are no clear different qualification approaches based on corporate needs in the individual profit enterprises;
- In Belgium two very different profit oriented companies were surveyed: Pêlè Mêle and Cash Converter;
- Interviews.

- Pêle Mêle s.r.l.

- For profit limited company;
- Purchasing of second hand goods, CDs, DVDs, videogames, consoles, toys, models;
- 20 persons employed;
- Specialty in books, music, games;
- The requirements requested to the employees are not specific: generic diploma or less needed; education is not a key;
- Be quick, responsible, versatile, customer oriented and able to assign correct prices to the goods;
- What about the managers?

- Pêle Mêle s.r.l.

- Managers have different backgrounds, difficult therefore to set forth what is expected to become a good manager. It regroups diverse skills;
- Managers play a vital role in the staff's capacity building;
- The managers appoint a responsible person for each store's department;
- Pêle Mêle is convinced that the employees can learn more by doing their jobs than by undergoing special training courses;
- The staff are trained directly in the shop;
- The training is thus informal and the employees get support of their colleagues whenever it is needed;
- Employees are trained so they can rotate in different departments.

- Cash Converter

- No special requirements for shop managers and others employees could be identified within the franchising company;
- The shop manager is a person who has already acquired experience in the field of sales/trading;
- Solid financial help since the initial investment is high;
- Staff working in the shop have not a specific profile apart from being customer oriented, capable of working in a team, well mannered, well presented, able to listen to and assist the clients;
- Therefore no particular education background is needed;
- Even if special qualification is not needed...

- Cash Converter

- ..the franchising network has established its own training modules developed on the basis of experience gained in 20 years of operation;
- BUT the person interviewed could not give detailed information on the training's content because it is deemed confidential;
- The qualification of staff is developed directly by the franchising network with the assistance of a consultant specialised in vocational training;
- An Academy was also created: the training courses are organised three times a year for an average of 10 to 15 persons and involve the whole shop staff via a rotation system. The group is composed of persons with experience and those attending the course for the first time.

- Cash Converter

- The training within the Academy is developed around two main chapters: purchase and sales;
- The elements of the purchase modules are: perception, how to buy, purchasing mission and objectives, rules of purchasing, do's and don'ts when purchasing goods, understand the needs of the clients and negotiation techniques;
- The elements of the sales modules are: Objectives, how to determine needs, advertising, find good arguments for selling goods and how to close a sale;
- In addition, staff usually is highly self motivating since is composed of people who are interested in the things they sell.

Example for corporate requirements, qualification needs and strategies in non-profit enterprises (Se)

- As for the profit sector, the study was conducted on the basis of the national sector analysis of the partners countries participating in the project;
- Even if the study is partial, it shows that there are only few and different qualification approaches in the SE sector in the country object of analysis;
- In Belgium three very different non-profit enterprises were surveyed in detail: Ateljee vzw, Terre asbl and Les Petits Riens.

- Terre asbl

- Specialised in used textile;
- 280 people engaged;
- Different requirements for the employees were identified;
- Desired qualifications: experience in sales with some artistic background as an asset, since the employees decorate the shop;
- Again: friendly, customer oriented and capable of attracting new clients. Fashion catcher but able to manage the cash register;
- As far as the supervisor is concerned, the educational background is not extremely important but the person needs to have gained some experience in positions at the different levels of the chain.

- Terre asbl

- The shop's supervisor has to be capable of understanding the entire process of collection, selection and sales;
- To pursue the organisation's objectives, a qualification strategy was set up;
- Training is given taking into account finance and human resources skills;
- Three weeks of training to impart basic skills for selling clothes and to be more customer oriented;
- But part of training is considered also learning by doing;
- The training is repeated each season for the first year.

- Les Petits Riens (LPR)

- Created 70 years ago by a priest, E.H. Froidure;
- Its vocation towards marginalised people is well recognised in the Belgian population; it is recognised as part of the country's history;
- Multiple products in the shop but specialised in bulky items, furniture, textile and electronic appliances;
- Our case study focussed the attention on the electronic department (26 employees out of 190);
- Since reinstating marginalised people is the first objective, minimum selection requested to be employed;
- To be effectively employed, training within the HORIZON training centre is requested.

- Les Petits Riens - HORIZON

- People suitable for Horizon have to be older than 18;
- The quality of Horizon is high and therefore most of the people trained do not need more technical qualification whilst working;
- The Horizon's trainers are external consultants with expertise in the field of electric and electronic equipments;
- An average of 20 people attend the course;
- The training lasts one year and is focused even on the reparation of small appliances;
- The trainees receive theoretical and practical education. After one year they receive a certificate that is legally recognised by the Belgian education authority.

- Les Petits Riens - HORIZON

- Almost every Horizon graduate find a job once the training is over;
- Some of the trainees are retained at the enterprise if there is a need, but most of them easily find a job somewhere else;
- The system gives a lot of satisfaction because there is a win-win situation: job for people at risk and for the enterprise the possibility to cover the need for qualified employees.

- Ateljee vsz

- Based in Gent, in the Flanders;
- 250 full time employees, 40 of them in the management;
- It deals with a wide range of goods;
- No need to meet a lot of requirements since the reinstate of people at risk is the first objective;
- Anyhow, motivation and respect for rules and diversity is requested;
- The shop responsible should fulfill some more requirements like knowledge of shop management and personnel management.

- Ateljee vsz

- The organisation offers General education (language, computer basics, reading, writing, basics of math) and
- Specific job related training: safety and well being (first aid course) and receptive of customers;
- In addition, they propose different programmes on numerous issues at different levels (in cooperation with other local organisations or by the KVK network organisation) for the management as well as for the workers;
- The programmes they offer can be divided into coaching of the target group, technical training, ICT, management, management skills and prevention and well being. The instructor supervises them on a daily basis.

Operating processes and tasks in the second-hand sector

| <i>Area of Business</i> | Case studies | Countries | Non-profit businesses | Profit-oriented businesses |
|---|---------------------|------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Books/CDs</i> | 6 | 5 | 1 | 5 |
| <i>Electronic and electric devices</i> | 8 | 5 | 2 | 6 |
| <i>Furniture</i> | 9 | 7 | 4 | 5 |
| <i>Textiles</i> | 12 | 7 | 6 | 6 |

For each area relevant operating processes have been identified

Final Considerations/1

- The result of the analysis and the case studies carried out in the course of the best practice report pointed out that the Second-Hand sector clearly has deficits in the field of qualification;
- Few examples of qualifications were identified;
- Belgium is a particular case in the overall context of the European situation.

Final Considerations/2

- The analysis showed that there are no homogeneous qualification opportunities or standards in the European Second-Hand sector, neither on a European nor on a national level nor sector-internally;
- Increased pressure on the professionalisation of the second-hand sector;
- Key qualified staff is the key for challenge the changes;
- Homogeneous quality standards ensure comparability of qualification all over Europe.

Final Considerations/3

- Possibility to face current challenge by developing a qualifying concept; so pushing on:
- Environmental protection, significance of recycling, changing attitude towards second-hand goods;
- Considered the relevant importance of the non profit organisations in the sector, disadvantaged people can access the job market;
- From learning by doing to professionalisation by high quality standard: a long way to run!

RREUSE figures: (tons collected per year)

- *Electric and Electronic Equipments: 150.000;*
- *Textile clothing: 146.000;*
- *Bulky items: 265.000;*
- *Organic waste: 113.000;*

TOTAL

About 700.000 tons/year material diverted from landfill which can be either reused and, when this is not feasible, recycled.

I thank you for your attention
and am at your disposal for any question.

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