

# *Quali Pro* ——— ————— *Second Hand II*

**Guidance with proposals for network development  
for the sustainable use of the products**

**- Austria -**

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This project was supported by funds of the European Commission

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## 1. The status quo in the second hand sector in Austria

In the scope of the first project QualiProSecondHand the then Austrian project partner "die umweltberatung" (Eco Counselling Austria) carried out in 2007 an analysis of the Austrian second hand sector<sup>1</sup>. The document that consolidated the results made detailed information available for download on the project website **www.qualiprosh.eu**. The most important characteristics of the sector are again briefly consolidated and listed for understanding the following pages. They will be expanded by the experiences during the project running time of QualiProSecondHand II and findings of the Austrian Partners Association RepaNet - Reparturnetzwerk Österreich.

The figures quoted in this section of the document come from the mentioned sector analysis and relate to - as far as no others listed - to the year 2007. Now the second hand sector has surely changed by the alterations of the legal regulations - keyword: EU Waste Framework Directive (abbreviated in text to WFD2008) - and the implementation of some initiatives concerning this, on which is later more precisely elaborated, the 2007 figures are still suitable to convey an impression of the structure of the Austrian second hand sector. At this point it is maintained that the RepaNet Association makes no claim on completeness in the production of this document, but reflects its influences and knowledge gained in the scope of project implementation and other tasks.

In addition to private people, who sell their goods primarily in flea markets and/or the internet, in the year 2007 around 880 businesses were involved in the second hand sector in Austria. In the business community private and socioeconomic companies must be differentiated. The sector analysis has revealed that this economic sector is regionally organised and that approx. 68% of the businesses involve scrap dealers and antique dealers. The proportion of second hand shops occupies about 22%, approx. 10% belong to the socioeconomic business circle.

In 2007 in Austria, on average, one second hand business existed per 9 400 inhabitants, although a steep town-country gradient can be identified. Furthermore during the course of the project phase of QualiProSecondHand II, RepaNet additionally registered a difference between East and West Austria. In East Austria a significantly larger proportion of second hand businesses exist, primarily in the private sector. In comparison to this, the mostly socioeconomically organised West Austrian business can consistently come up with a noticeably earlier company founding. The experience resulting from this is reflected in the size of the company, the comparatively high amount of employees, the level of professionalism, and the quantity of sales.

In the private economic sector sole traders operate primarily with little or no staff, usually less than 10 employees. The companies are very often run as family businesses and generate only small profits.

As these businesses - just as the socioeconomic businesses - acquire most of their goods from house clearances the barrier between antiques, scrap and used goods is

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<sup>1</sup> Hackel A., Leutgöb J.: Sektoranalyse für den Second Hand Sektor in Österreich. Leonardo da Vinci programme of the European Union „QualiProSecondHand“. A project for the professionalization of the second hand sector, Vienna 2007

fluid in Austria. By law second hand trade is considered to be so-called "Free trade", to the practice of which no training and qualifications are linked. The knowledge gain and the further training are results of individual initiative.

Fewer businesses operate in the socioeconomic area of the Austrian second hand sector which are just as regionally organised. Their task is the preparation of people in difficult life situations for reintegration into the job market. This is achieved by providing relatively secure jobs limited from 6 to a maximum of 12 months for this so-called "transitory work force". The essential social work care and/or technical instruction are carried out by the securely employed so-called "key workers". In the Austrian second hand sector the socioeconomic companies may have an amount of employees, incl. "key workers", of over 50 people. They receive state subsidies for the implementation of their tasks and they must raise the rest of the amount by a self-generating funds quota.<sup>2</sup>

The socioeconomic companies' entry into the second hand branch took place initially on the basis of the cheap possibility of acquisition of goods and the numerous qualification fields offered there for the transitory workers. A clear change in responsibilities took place here in recent years. The increasingly scarce funds corresponding to the strained economic situation lead to a constant increase in the self-generating funds quota. At the same time the demand for second hand products grew due to socially disadvantaged parts of the population. The gradual implementation of the WFD2008, happening since the end of 2010, additionally clarified which economic, social and ecological potential is appropriate to the second hand sector (waste prevention, retention of cultural goods, redistribution of wealth, etc.) that is valid to be used by the socioeconomic companies.

The business fields which are involved in the second hand sector have remained the same since the sector analysis of 2007. Two legal regulations from the EU exerted a great influence in recent decades on the development of the economic branch and lifted its social significance. The so-called WEEE Directive<sup>3</sup> specifies a free take back requirement from old devices which in part are resold as second hand devices. Details on this decision are to be checked in the European report of QualiProSecond-Hand I<sup>4</sup>.

Since the publication of the mentioned sector analysis, the WFD2008<sup>5</sup> outlines the most significant alterations. Austria ratified it in January 2011. It is considered to be precedent-setting basis for the future of the EU internal second hand sector as the reuse of used products (Re-Use) adjudicates a decisive role as a measure for the prevention and management of waste. Out of the three-tier waste hierarchy that was valid until then and which determines prioritisation, a five-tier one was developed in which, after "waste prevention on the first place, the "preparation for re-use" can be

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<sup>2</sup> Meissner M., Bernhofer G., Pladerer C.: Re-Use Shops Steiermark Businessplan. Österreichisches Ökologie-Institut (Hg.), Vienna. November 2010

<sup>3</sup> WEEE Directive 2002/96/EC – Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment

<sup>4</sup> Arold H., Koring C.: Europäischer Bericht. Eine Untersuchung und Analyse des Second-Hand-Sektors in Europa. Leonardo da Vinci program of the European Union „QualiProSecondHand“. A project on the professionalization of the second hand sector, Bremen 2007, p. 53f

<sup>5</sup> Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste and repealing certain Directives

found even before recycling. The directive obliges all member states to take measures to the promotion of re-use.<sup>6</sup>

The Austrian second hand market has received a lot of attention because of the pilot project ReVital, started in Upper Austria in July 2009.<sup>7</sup> The idea of a nation-wide networking of socioeconomic companies with the communal waste management was initially implemented here in Austria, of course with voluntary participants. The public authorities are additionally integrated into this network as funding bodies.

ReVital is a brand name for used products, with which the guarantee is linked that the purchased product is in good condition, reliable, functioning properly, safe and hygienic. Consumers recognise the ReVital certified objects with the help of the clearly recognisable stuck on logo. The aim of the project is to establish a network of collection, treatment and sales outlets for second hand goods in Upper Austria. The partners working together in the umbrella campaign benefit regarding exterior design and goods presentation, public relations and advertising material which is accompanied by a professionally designed marketing concept. A further benefit is the clearly defined quality criteria passed on to the consumer, which are checked. The following five collection categories are offered as product range:



- WEEE small
- WEEE big
- House hold contents
- Small furniture and sport and leisure equipment
- Big furniture

The areas of activity are regulated inside the network by the following measures:

The communal waste collection centres offer product procurement. A publicly owned company (LAVU AG) manages the logistics between the collection, processing and sales outlets. The quality assurance and preparation for sale take place at the socioeconomic companies. Sale of products takes place in cooperation with the non-profit employment projects that can decide whether to run a ReVital shop, in which exclusively certified products may be sold, or whether they want to take part as a so-called "ReVital partner". The latter runs a clearly indicated department with certified objects in their local shop along side their own trade goods. The possibility of direct donations of possible Re-Use products is available at all locations. At this current point in time 4 ReVital shops and 5 ReVital partner companies exist in Upper Austria.<sup>8</sup>

The cooperation with socioeconomic and non-profit organisations shall not only achieve ecologic benefits, but also positive political effects on the job market. This message will be conveyed to the target group as a part of the entire marketing concept.

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<sup>6</sup> Meissner M., Bernhofer G., Pladerer C.: Re-Use Shops Steiermark Businessplan. Österreichisches Ökologie-Institut (Hg.), Vienna. November 2010

<sup>7</sup> [www.revitalistgenial.at](http://www.revitalistgenial.at)

<sup>8</sup> [www.revitalistgenial.at](http://www.revitalistgenial.at) [accessed on 15. August 2011]

Within 18 months over 156.000kg of ReVital products were sold and in part the sales revenue tripled according to the feedback from the project partners. The project can record a reuse quota of 78%, based on pre-sorted stock. In addition 32 employment places were created<sup>9</sup>.

The development in Upper Austria strengthens the timely, nearly parallel chosen route of another federal state, Styria. In their state waste management plan 2010 the objective can be found that in each RegioNext region<sup>10</sup> at least one socioeconomically run Re-Use Shop for the sale of used (repaired) goods will be available by 2015<sup>11</sup>. Under the incorporation of the stakeholder necessary for the implementation, the "Styria Re-Use Network" was set up and a business plan created as a directive that contains the "implementation concept Re-Use Styria 2011-2015".

The project is at the moment in the first of the three implementation phases<sup>12</sup>. 2011 is about the realisation of pilot activities in three areas:

- Expansion of the cooperation between the (communal) waste collection centres and the socioeconomic and Re-Use companies
- Expansion of the cooperation between the socioeconomic and Re-Use companies themselves in the areas
  - Goods exchange
  - Logistics
  - Specialisation
- Development of a cooperation between Styrian socioeconomic and Re-Use companies and furniture stores through the development of an offer packet for this sector of the private economy

At the beginning of the year 2011 the Styrian state government decided to economise 25% of its social budget. The implementation of the Styrian Re-Use network was nevertheless able to be started as it shall replace the less lucrative employment fields of some socioeconomic companies and maintain the work places of the otherwise economised employees. Furthermore the Re-Use centres enable a year round economy instead of the until now often seasonal economy of most socioeconomic organisations. As a result more market revenue and a higher self-generating fun quota is expected.

In the business plan of the Styrian initiative the availability of goods and wares and their quality, amongst other things, were defined as definite factors for economic success. The latter can be reached by clearly defined quality standards and acceptance criteria. Equally as essential is the development of the marketing concept with a consistent brand presence towards customers. The already described project ReVital had to confront the same challenges and coped - looking back from today - success-

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<sup>9</sup> Presentation by managing director Thomas Anderer on the RepaNet Infoday on 26. January 2011 in Altmünster, accessible at [www.repanet.at](http://www.repanet.at)

<sup>10</sup> [www.regionext.steiermark.at](http://www.regionext.steiermark.at) – an initiative for the strengthening of the regional habitats. Styria comprised of the 7 RegioNext regions Liezen, Upper Styria East, Upper Styria West, East Styria, South East Styria, South West Styria and Styrian Central Region.

<sup>11</sup> Meissner M., Bernhofer G.: Pladerer C., Re-Use Shops Steiermark Businessplan. Österreichisches Ökologie-Institut (Hg.), Vienna. November 2010, p. 4

<sup>12</sup> Details and more specific information see: Meissner M., Bernhofer G., Pladerer C.: Re-Use Shops Steiermark Businessplan. Österreichisches Ökologie-Institut (Hg.), Vienna. November 2010, p. 38 ff

fully with them. For this reason it was decided to use the ReVital label for the Styrian Re-Use network.

On a national-wide level the WFD2008 brought just as much movement in the Austrian second hand sector. The so-called "Re-Use Platform", an expert group from politics, the public and private waste management, social partnership, some of the well-known producers and external subject specialists, initiated in 2008 by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW), works on questions of waste laws and quality assurance, amongst other things, in this context in work groups, in order to submit proposals for solutions in detail regarding these matters. One possible result discussed at the time can be the establishment of an umbrella organisation for the Re-Use sector on a national level. The Ministry sees the implementation of the directive, amongst other things, in the acquisition of the ReVital label by all nine federal states, which along side the state of origin Upper Austria is considered to be fixed for Styria, Burgenland and Tyrol. Discussions are still underway with the remaining five states.

The initiatives described here illustrate the significance of Re-Use, not only for the Austrian and European second hand sector, but also for other economic branches, such as e.g. waste management and social economy. The implementation of WFD2008 within the EU leaves an exciting and eventful next few years to be expected in the area of used goods.

## **2. Activities for sustainable implementation of the project products**

The realisation of the training essentially added itself to the implementation of the project product as in the scope of which the contents and instruments of the participants were made known and available, which they were able to immediately check for applicability in their work environment.

Equally as fundamental are the so-called "dissemination activities" which are an intrinsic part of the project execution. Therefore two further project websites are available along side the official website for the Austrian partners (**[www.repanet.at](http://www.repanet.at)**; **[www.arge.at](http://www.arge.at)**), which bring interested people information and results in further detail even after the project completion.

RepaNet is an umbrella association of organisations from the repair, dismantling and recycling area and the sustainable development for the purposes of agenda 21. Its main activity lies in the promotion of developments through distributing information and networking of different organisations with each other and with the responsible authorities. The implementation of the project product therefore takes place via the association of available networks.

Two examples of illustration are given here:

As visible in the first part of this document, WFD2008 is the dominant theme of the Austrian second hand sector and RepaNet is significantly involved<sup>13</sup> in its implementation. The association can let influence the results at the central location. In the mean time the findings are considered to be undisputed, that the qualification of the employees is essential for the success of the Re-Use initiatives and fortunately it was taken into account in the various implementation plans<sup>14</sup>.

For a wider product distribution RepaNet organised an information day in January 2011 on the topic "Re-Use: new impulses for social businesses", which, amongst other things, offered the possibility to introduce QualiProSecondHand II. The contents were aimed primarily - besides all the interested people - at the business managers and leading employees from socioeconomic organisations. The participation was fortunately close to 50 people, the BMLFUW was also represented. The feedback concerning the project was very positive and confirmed once more the large interest in the qualification possibilities as since the sector analysis produced during QualiProSecondHand I there were no noteworthy improvements for the essential structure. Besides their participation in the QualiPro training series, many organisations use the opportunity to convey their requests and requirements to RepaNet. The training structure, which was designed according to the project specifications and the available resources, was only applicable for a few participants and therefore their number remained small. Now, however, the dialogues came into operation which, together with the initiatives on the occasion of WFD2008, raise confidence that the qualification structure in Austria is further promoted.

### **3. Proposals for further sustainable implementation of the project products**

#### **Visions and Ideas**

The realisation of the QualiProSecondHand II project was the first step towards the professionalization of the European second hand sector through sector-specific qualifications.

At the same time one can see that it is still a long way to uniform EU-wide sector-specific training. National differences on the levels of market and business structure as well as the job market and promotional policy are still too great. Therefore the acquisition of, for example, the products tested in the first phase by the subsequent partner state was only very limitedly possible.

It was furthermore clear to the Austria project partner that very big differences exist within the sectors of the individual state. Although the central problems are often very similar (questions of acquisition of customer and goods, pricing, etc.) the methods of resolution must be individually adapted on the basis of strong regional differences. Therefore it made it extremely difficult to create a training series with the available resources that were, at the same time, as nation-wide as possible and suitable to the

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<sup>13</sup> As an example: Neitsch M., Spitzbart M., Hammerl B., Schleich B.: Implementation concept for the implementation of the "re-use" bid in accordance with WFD2008 in Austria. Verein RepaNet – Reparaturnetzwerk Österreich (Hg.), Vienna. April 2010, on behalf of the BMLFUW dept. IV/6, accessible at [www.repanet.at](http://www.repanet.at); in chapter 5.2.7 Advice for the necessity of the professionalization of the Re-Use sector.

<sup>14</sup> As an example: Meissner M., Bernhofer G., Pladerer C.: Re-Use Shops Steiermark Businessplan. Österreichisches Ökologie-Institut (Hg.), Vienna. November 2010

many and various requirements of potential participants, which was expressed in the number of participants.

Despite these "starting difficulties" the feedback from the socioeconomic part of the sector regarding the case of a qualification offer was very positive. The interest in further training and networking (learning from experiences of other people, use of common resources, etc.), and in general professionalization among it is very big. The experiences of the last two years are summarised by the following findings: Purpose can only be and remain the strengthening of the second hand sector through further Europe-wide but also through national networking!

Therefore RepaNet suggests the following steps:

At the beginning, the focus has to be more on the fact that sector-specific qualification possibilities are generally available on the national levels. Therefore it is important to specially develop trainers and make them familiar with the particularities of this branch.

In the design of the training structure it is recommended for Austria out of experience to use small module and lesson units with a large practical part, ideally with one special subject each training day (e.g. "methods of quality assurance", "Internet trade", etc.) Furthermore, not to be ignored is the consideration of the regional components which influence the company to be trained. Guided tours through second hand companies essentially add to the networking of the sector and bring meaningful, practically oriented influences, which is why they are always popular with the training participants.

In order to approach this goal of EU-wide uniform sector-specific training with a common curriculum, RepaNet recommends at the present time the promotion of networking on a European level and of the contents exchange and advanced training of the sector-specific qualifiers and coordination people of the national second hand networks. These are provided with experiences and new ideas and then teach systematically in their states according to the already existing structures, conditions and target groups. In doing so, the forms of a branch, which are still so different today, are able to be gradually adjusted to one another.

### **Useful networks and partners**

RepaNet works together with numerous organisations in the implementation of the project product, of which the full list would go beyond the scope available here. Those named here only represent an excerpt. If interested RepaNet is available for further information.

In the first part of this document the initiatives *ReVital*, *Styria Re-Use Network* and the *Re-Use Platform* of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management are already described.

On a national level RepaNet works with, amongst others, the following organisations, which are active in the second hand sector and the domain of sustainable development:

*„die umweltberatung“ Österreich (Eco Counselling Austria):*

The partner in the QualiProSecondHand I project is the umbrella association of Austrian environmental counselling centre and represented in five of the nine federal states.

**[www.umweltberatung.at](http://www.umweltberatung.at)**

*Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, national board Sekundärrohstoff- und Altwarenhandel (Secondary Raw Materials and Second-hand trade):*

In Austria the second hand dealers are organised via the committee Secondary Raw Materials trade within the national board.

**[www.sekundaerrohstoffhandel.at](http://www.sekundaerrohstoffhandel.at)**

*Gemeinnütziger Verein ARGE Müllvermeidung (ARGE Waste Prevention Association):*

Just like its subsidiary company, ARGE Abfallvermeidung, Ressourcenschonung und nachhaltige Entwicklung GmbH ( ARGE Waste Prevention, Resource Conservation and Sustainable Development), ARGE Müllvermeidung (ARGE Waste Prevention Association) is involved in the area of environmental education, creation of work places in the environmental area, and with appropriate ecological issues.

**[www.arge.at](http://www.arge.at)**

*Österreichisches Ökologie Institut (Austrian Institute of Ecology):*

This research and advice institution is active in the areas of ecology and sustainability and works therefore with policy and administration, economy and lobbies as well as private people.

**[www.ecology.at](http://www.ecology.at)**

*Bundesdachverband für Soziale Unternehmen (bdv Austria):*

Nation-wide lobby of non-profit social organisations offers the networking of around 250 organisations and projects.

**[www.bdv.at](http://www.bdv.at)**

On an international level RepaNet is networked with the following initiatives amongst others:

*RREUSE:*

This international network with its head office in Brussels represents and supports national networks and associations of socioeconomic companies from 10 European countries who operate in the area of reuse and recycling.

**[www.rreuse.org](http://www.rreuse.org)**

*ACR+:*

The objective of this international network is the promotion of the sustainable handling with resources and waste management through avoidance, re-use and recycling. The more than 100 members come from local and regional authorities and national networks but also from NGOs and other public and private institutions.

**[www.acrplus.org](http://www.acrplus.org)**

*CERREC – Central Europe Repair & Re-use Centres and Networks:*

CERREC is an EU project authorised in the CENTRAL EUROPE programme that tracks the implementation of WFD2008 and aims at implementing repair and re-use

centres and networks. It started in April 2011 and has a run time of 40 months. The nine project partners come from seven European countries. The Austrian leading partner is the Abfallwirtschaft Tirol Mitte GmbH.

**[www.cerrec.net](http://www.cerrec.net)**