

Quali Pro ———
————— *Second Hand II*

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

- Belgium -

Project management and coordination:

Universität Bremen
ITB - Institut Technik und Bildung
Heike Arold
arold@uni-bremen.de
Tel.: +49 (0)421 218 – 66271
Fax: +49 (0)421 218 - 66299
www.itb.uni-bremen.de

Belgium partner:

RESSOURCES – ASBL,
Etienne Daloze
Namur
e.daloz@res-sources.be
Tel.: + 32 (0) 8171 1581
Fax: + 32 (0) 8171724
www.res-sources.be

Content

1. Status of the second hand sector in Belgium..... 3
2. Activities for sustainable implementation of the project products..... 4
3. Proposals for a further sustainable implementation of the projects products..... 5

1. Status of the second hand sector in Belgium

The following description of status of the second hand sector in Belgium will be based on what was written in Leonardo da Vinci project „QualiProSecondHand”, and will be continued by a review of the situation in Brussels and Wallonia.

In Belgium exists two big networks in the second hand sector. RESSOURCES and KVK federate the (social) reuse centres in the three Belgian regions. These federations see their activities highlighted within the context of the Network RREUSE in which they are part of. The Network guarantees the exchange of information on available partnerships within the framework of the European area countries.

At first RESSOURCES has to be named. RESSOURCES constituted in 1999. It regroups 65 social economy enterprises with activities in reuse and recycling. RESSOURCES federates its networked organisations (committed to environment and social economy) on the basis of the activities they carry out, the stream sector they focus on and by the geographical where they work. This network employs 1500 persons on a full time equivalent basis. It gains support from several environmental and social economy organisations and grants from the Environment Ministries of the Wallonia and Bruxelles Capital regions.

As far as the Flemish network KVK is concerned, it seems worth to recall it was established in 1994 and now federates all the (social) reuse centres in Flanders. KVK supports members' mission (reuse, employment for low-skilled and long-term unemployed people) through mutual collaboration to guarantee the realisation of the mission of the sector. It defends the interests of the sector towards local authorities, government and stakeholders and sustains the members by developing project related support and mutual collaboration to guarantee the realisation of the mission of the sector. Consultation of members, exchange of ideas and information, development of common vision and strategy are the means KVK network acts and the result is a constant growth of sector and customers, positive perception of public towards reuse and second hand, reuse sector seen as best example of social economy.

Although similarities in the structure of the designs can be easily spotted (common objectives, focus on specific areas of interest, etc.), the difference that permits to choose the Network instead of the other proposed solution memberships is, in addition, awarded by the way the cooperation within the network members is guaranteed. Freedom of action and inputs from any organisations concerned are the keys for the success of the Network. As written before, what is needed is, however, a good executive secretariat which could collect, update, manage and disseminate the inputs on which the organisations are concerned, so to create a bulky visible field of action for the network.

Beside this two main networks that focus on reuse in social economy in Belgium other networks exist such as Cash Converter, Troc International, plus a lot of individual shops, from 10 m² to 1000 m², and personal or associative initiatives, in the whole country. It also worth to mention an Internet initiative: www.2ememain.be ; this is not a second “e-bay”, one can feel the „community“ spirit, and the announcement is free.

Cash Converter: Cash Converter is the Belgian subsidiary of an Australian company funded in 1984 that has corporate philosophy: bring what you want, we pay it cash and we will sell it. They have subsidiaries in Australia, UK, South Africa, France, Switzerland and Belgium. Cash Converter does not sell clothes nor big electro appliances or furniture. Their catalogue is composed of watches/jewellery, heating devices, small electrical appliances, phones, HiFi, kids toys, computers, music, video games, tools, photo & video, sport, TV entertainment. In total exists 21 shops in Belgium, which are all on the same model and working under a franchising system.

Troc International: It is a pan-european company which stores the products someone has to offer and it sells it then by giving back a percentage of the sale price to the “seller”. In total exists 190 shops in France, Spain, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium.

These two initiatives have nothing to do with the “social field”, despite the fact they say “we sell you things at affordable price”. In fact, they surf on the consumption “need” (one “needs” cash to buy other things, one “needs” to fill one's house with commercial stuff...). They do not repair anything. They just act as “brokers”.

In the French speaking Belgium RESSOURCES asbl is the only network of social enterprises working on second hand market. The qualification of the workers is supported through quality improvement programs such as

- **Managens:** A program focused on environment management dedicated to very small enterprises and associations, with low-skilled people (some of the members of the program have been registered as EMAS or ISO 14001 enterprises)
- **ElectroREV:** A guarantee system that focuses on the warranty of the refurbished WEEE product: to ensure this warranty, trainees have to follow rules and procedures, so that they get trained to work with quality.
- **Rec'UP:** A label that certifies that the entire flow of 2nd products respects a list of criteria (120 criteria ranging from recollection to after sales, including efficient sorting and presentation in shops); again no standard training program but a rise in competencies amongst the trainees and workers of the associations and enterprises that comply to the Euc'UP rules.

Plus a number of limited subsidies devoted to quality improvement that some association may use in developing their teaching practices.

2. Activities for sustainable implementation of the project products

As the project is time-limited, it seemed necessary to imagine ways of sustainability for it. So far, the project and its products are disseminated:

On the internet, via the website **www.res-sources.be**. A web domain-name has been created : **www.valoriste.eu** where the word “valoriste” refers to the function of a professional in second hand enhancement and valuation. This web presence is important because it has two targets: the members of the network of social enterprise, and the visitor, being a private person who discover that quality is managed also in terms of training of the working people, or a public authority that will

be reassured that the funding that is spent through social enterprises is also used to improve the quality of service and the quality of training of the people. Feedback is still modest in numbers, but encouraging in quality.

Furthermore different activities take place in the project to disseminate and to implement the products. These were:

- amongst the members of the RESSOURCES network by preparing:
- articles in the newsletter;
- meetings,
- visits,
- and implementation of part of modules in their own training programmes.

These activities intend to make the members of the network aware of the richness that exists in the network itself: A lot of members of a social federation are used to work “on their own”, trying to re-invent the wheel sometimes. Therefore, a special effort has been put on communication to the network, for the network, to make it clear that dedicated tools and internal competencies exist for training the second hand workers to do their jobs with a better and more valuable knowledge. Members appreciate to know they can recount on valuable training material and are willing to appropriate at least part of the module. However, they are not keen to adopt the full structure of the modules, and prefer to adapt it to their specific needs.

To the FOREM, the largest vocational training operator in Wallonia (97,925 people trained in 2009 for a total of 9,135,698 training hours!), negotiations have been undertaken to make use of the modules (or parts of them) in the “operations & environment” training programme. Here, the target is clearly the public authority in vocational training that is solid enough to integrate, teach and develop the tools that have been created in the Leonardo da Vinci project „QualiProSH II” program. Its own public, mostly composed by people looking for short professional training to have better chances to find a job, is the ideal public for the modules developed in the project. At the time of writing this report, there is a great interest from the Director of the sector “operations & environment”, who will discuss with his colleagues to adapt and integrate parts of the module in their own training of “waste enhancer”.

3. Proposals for a further sustainable implementation of the projects products

Till now, the project has been focused in Belgium mainly on the textile field. Because it is a historic flow in second hand sector, it is the first necessity. Thus, a good expertise already exists in this domain, and the project „QualiProSH II” has the immense benefit of formalising this expertise, and putting it in a form that can easily be shared. The proposed vision for the development and deployment of the project's products is the translation into other fields of activities, such as WEEE and furniture.

This will bear different advantages:

- capitalization of the work already done
- diversity in the flows, thus diversity in the fields of activities, thus maximizing employment possibilities for the trainees, in the fields that suit them best.

Spreading the content into other fields will invite other organisations to consider the integration of the modules in their training programmes.

Of course, this will need a major effort of “translation”, and a real adaptation to the need of existing companies, and emerging organizations.

In that meaning, it would be also useful to build module for different levels of public: In Belgium, vocational training can be roughly stratified in

- pre-qualification, with the main objective to help people to acquire “functional” working habits (wake up and come to work regularly, accept instructions from an instructor, getting pride of ones own work etc.) That is the level where most of Social Economy organisations work
- qualification or vocational training, where people really learn a trade, a craft
- specialisation or expertise
- diversification trough a change of level: transforming a good craftsman into a manager

For doing this, a change must be operated in the project management, in that meaning that major actors in vocational training are to be “first-line partners” so that the method can be deployed for the different levels (at this time, the program has been developed and tested in the first level, the pre-qualification one). So, the “critical mass” will be reached and the project and its products will be fully sustainable.