

International research project

“Developing New Distribution Skills”

boosts competences of automotive dealers and university students

EC-funded project aims to make European automotive dealers fit for the future

The globally well-known enterprises *KTM Sportmotorcycles AG*, *Skoda Auto* and *Snap-On Business Solutions* cooperate with a consortium of European universities to develop new training and education concepts and materials for automotive dealers and university students. The aims of the project are to explore the challenges in the distribution of cars and motorcycles and to identify necessary new skills and competences of automotive dealers and higher education students to be well prepared for the future. Based on these findings, training and education concepts are being developed and new teaching materials for the development of these skills are being elaborated and tested.

The automotive industry, i.e. the car and motorcycle business, is often a benchmark for other industries and anticipates developments. Its distribution is mainly organized through small and medium sized enterprises. However, there is a rising number of automotive dealer bankruptcies each year in Europe. Moreover, environmental changes are strongly influencing customer needs which force dealers to adapt to the rapid changes in the consumer market. Topics like green mobility, Web 2.0 communication, tight credit conditions, new mobility patterns like rent-a-vehicle, generational changes, and many more require new skills and a broader knowledge of automotive dealers and of university graduates aiming to work in the distribution area.

The project *“Developing New Distribution Skills”* aims therefore, at identifying skill deficiencies and improving skills of automotive dealers as well as better preparing students for their future careers in sales and distribution, specifically in the automotive sector. The significance of developing new skills is also emphasized by the European Commission which co-finances the project through its life-long-learning programme of the EACEA (Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency). The cooperation between enterprises and higher education institutions was one of the decisive factors for the final support by the European Union: because the developed training concepts and materials are finally made available to companies, especially small and medium sized automotive dealers, and the university sector.

Cooperation of scientific institutions and industry

The University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria (Austria) as leader of the project, the Polytechnical University of the Marches (Italy), the University of Gdańsk (Poland), the Skoda Auto University (Czech Republic) and the two enterprises KTM Sportmotorcycles AG and Snap-On Business Solutions - a multinational service provider specialized in the training and consulting of automotive dealers (UK and GER) - will bundle their expertise and networks for this project by September 2014.

Long-lasting, previous bilateral cooperation like double-degree programmes, research projects and extensive student and professor exchanges were the basis for the identification of the research need and establishment of the project.

Education as key factor for quality and future success

Starting with a broad international survey of dealers, the major challenges, weaknesses and skill deficiencies of automobile and motorcycle traders are identified on a North-South axis in the participating countries (Poland, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria and Italy). This assessment is then compared to the estimation of automotive experts of science, industry,

media and national associations. The results constitute the basis for educational programmes aiming to increase the qualification of dealers and students and hence, providing the ground for future success in automotive distribution. The training and teaching concepts developed hereafter include an online self-assessment instrument for evaluating the target group's competences in distribution. Moreover, new teaching and training materials are being developed and tested for business as well as for academia. Hereby, the emphasis is put on the use of new media and applied education concepts (videos, case studies, etc). Finally, entire training modules tailored for dealers and majors of business study programmes are being designed and will be presented in a concluding international conference where other training and higher education institutions are invited to contribute with materials and expertise. The entire collection of output that is developed is made available to the public, especially dealers, associations, training institutions and other European universities. They can be downloaded from: <http://www.new-distribution-skills.eu>.

Participating project members



University of Applied Sciences

University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, Faculty of Management, Global Sales and Marketing Programmes, Steyr (Austria)

The University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria is one of the leading Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences. It offers an internationally recognized, well-established, practice-oriented education at university level at four locations in the central region of Upper Austria. It also supports the economy with cutting-edge products from its research and development centers. The Faculty of Management at the Campus in Steyr is specifically internationally focused in the field of leadership and international management. Students are provided with the very latest internationally recognised input while cross-cultural management and English as the language of instruction are the order of the day.

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UNIVERSITÀ POLITECNICA
DELLE MARCHE

Università Politecnica delle Marche (Ancona, Italy):

Università Politecnica delle Marche (UNIVPM) is made up of 5 Faculties: Engineering, Sciences, Agriculture, Economics and Medicine and Surgery. Each Faculty offers all possible Courses of the higher education cycles: graduate, post-graduate, professional post-lauream courses and PhD Schools. The University is endowed with up-to-date scientific and technical laboratories. As far as the international aspect is concerned, the University has signed Agreement of Co-operation with many Universities and Research Centres all over the world. The University takes part in different European programmes promoting and sustaining research, international collaboration and mobility, including LLP Erasmus. The mission of the University is based on a "3T" paradigm: **Talents**, attracting and educating the best people, **Technology**, acquiring excellence in applied research, **Territory**, serving the needs of people and firms in the region.

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ŠKODA AUTO University

Škoda Auto University (Prague, Czech Republic):

ŠKODA AUTO University was founded in 2000 and to this date is the first and the only company-owned university in the Czech Republic. The founder of the school is ŠKODA AUTO a.s., a car producer which has been manufacturing passenger cars for more than a century and is one of Europe's largest automotive brands within the Volkswagen group.

ŠKODA AUTO University provides unique educational experience to 1,200 students from more than 20 countries. The school offers three bachelor and four master degree programmes focused on business in the automotive industry. Students and graduates of ŠKODA AUTO University serve the global business community and work as interns, specialists or managers on three continents. ŠKODA AUTO University is proud to participate in the project Developing New Distribution Skills in cooperation with renowned international partners. The result of the project are directly implemented in the bachelor degree programme "Business Administration and Sales" and reflected in dealer management of ŠKODA AUTO along the north-south European axis. The school is located in the new campus in the city of Mladá Boleslav 50 km north east of Prague.

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UNIWERSYTET GDAŃSKI

University of Gdansk (Poland):

University of Gdańsk (UG, Uniwersytet Gdański) is the largest educational institution in the Pomorze region. It offers about 40 different fields of study with over 140 different specializations. UG has 11 faculties with almost 33.000 students, doctoral students and post-graduates. The fields of study are Biology, Biotechnology, Chemistry, Oceanography, Quantum Physics, Pedagogy, Psychology and Economic Sciences. Within the framework of EU programs and national programs (MOST), UG students can study abroad or at any of the 19 HEIs in Poland.

The University cooperates with HEIs and research institutions from almost all over the world. This enables a broadening of its range of courses and an increase in the expertise of the academic staff. In the period from 2002 to 2011, the University of Gdańsk participated in over 190 international projects.

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KTM-Sportmotorcycle AG (Austria):

KTM entered the race for the title of the most victorious motorcycle manufacturer in 1953. The R100, with an innovative light alloy drum brake, was a sensation, making an impressive debut at the Vienna Spring Trade Fair. Then the first KTM model arrived at the place where it belonged: on the racetrack. And that was only the beginning: 1970 the first national motocross

title; one year later, the first world championship points and in 1974 the first world championship title. Countless offroad, world and European titles later, KTM is Europe's most state-of-the-art motorcycle company. Its unconditional passion for engines and racing has made KTM what it is today: Ready to Race.

Under the umbrella of KTM Power Sports AG, KTM-Sportmotorcycle AG based in Mattighofen / Austria manufacturers and develops offroad and street motorcycles, as well as ATVs and, since 2008, the X-BOW extreme sports car. The goal is always racing success. More than 200 world titles demonstrate this impressively. The same applies to all products: Only those machines that battle for victory out there on the track are real KTMs - and therefore Ready to Race. Only when a model bears this race-proof seal of approval is it offered for sale via the network of 21 sales subsidiaries and two joint-venture companies with a total of 1,200 dealers. Because only the best is good enough.

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Snap-On Business Solutions (UK, Germany):

Snap-on Business Solutions Ltd is a leading supplier of Automotive Dealer Network Solutions worldwide. Based in Reading, England, the company has over 40 years experience in the automotive industry and now supports some 25,000 Dealers in Europe, USA, China, India, South Africa and South America with operations staff speaking over 20 languages. The Company specialises in reporting financial and operational performance for individual Dealers, Brand Networks and Market Areas. These Inter Firm Comparisons form the basis of network planning tools used by OEMs to manage their network strategy. Customers are supported by market based consultants who assist Dealers and National Sales Companies in the use of these tools and the interpretation of their financial and operational performance results. Snap-on Business Solutions Ltd is wholly owned by Snap-on Incorporated, a US S&P 500 Company with a turnover of \$3 billion.
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