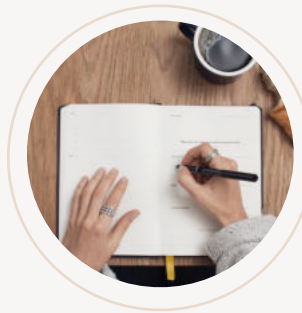




Letz Retail

Policy



Brief

Over the last years, small businesses set in previously successful commercial areas have faced a number of challenges, including the crisis and the growing competition of online shopping. Many businesses that operated in areas which were once the commercial centre of the town or neighborhood, were forced to close. This had a spill over effect on the hospitality and cultural businesses, which suffered from a reduced number of visitors.

In many medium-sized and bigger towns, large malls on the outskirts offer a "one-stop-experience" for shopping, culture and hospitality, generating even more difficulties for the smaller ones in the centres to subsist. COVID-19 crisis has created additional challenges and put more pressure on small businesses trying to compete with established online shopping companies and large malls.

The deterioration of commercial areas is raising interest from municipalities and civic organizations, as the reduction in retail, commerce, hospitality and cultural activities in these kind of areas results in an overall deterioration of the area, with less movements of persons. Many municipalities are looking for solutions which can help them give new life to these areas and spaces.

Trends related to increased awareness among consumers about sustainability issues, the impact their decisions have on the environment, and the "slow"-movement (which advocates a cultural shift toward slowing down life's pace, and of which the "slow-food" movement is the most well-known), generate ample opportunities to bring about the so-much desired change. Proximity products and services are gaining ground.

Also, consumers nowadays not only acquire a product or services, but look for an "experience" or a statement with regards to their preferences and lifestyles. Attracting consumers to the commercial areas requires added value to be provided, e.g. an experience, or a combination of products or services not easily found somewhere else, or with clear added value, e.g. sustainable, ecological, environmental-friendly.





Although there are already some initiatives springing up in commercial area, which cover the consumer demands with regards to sustainability, proximity and the slow movement such as shops which offer products in bulk so the consumer can buy exactly the needed amount, or those offering local ecological produce, there are many which have not adapted to this new setting.

It is difficult for a small commerce, retail, hospitality or cultural/creative business to provide answers to the aforementioned challenges individually, and when they do, the impact is limited to the specific type of consumers they address. Hence intense collaboration through the joint creation, design and implementation of new products and/or services, offering the consumer the needed experience is key.

LETZ RETAIL provides an answer to the aforementioned challenges by offering a learning programme aimed at owners, managers and self-employed persons of small retail, commerce, hospitality and cultural/creative businesses in commercial areas in decay (or at risk of) which gives them the knowledge, skills and competences to:

- Adapt their individual offering to the new environment;
- Co-design, co-create and co-work to develop new (or adapt and combine) existing products, services and experiences.
- Respond to trends related to sustainability, green & circular economy.

By acquiring these skills, they will be able individually and jointly provide an answer to the demands of the sustainable conscious and digital-native consumer, open to the slow-movement concept and compete through differentiation offering a different and unique experience.

LETZ RETAIL goes to the root of the problem, the lack of a collaborative spirit between actors to unite willingness, needs and opportunities in an informal and constant way, that leads to the success of local businesses.

LETZ RETAIL has developed a learning programme that develops the knowledge and competences, through the use of co-creation, co-design and co-working techniques and tools, to find relevant solutions such as offering the clients/visitors new experiences, activities, products and/or services.

Complementary to the learning programme and with the aim to ensure take-up while safeguarding the approach and quality of the results, LETZ RETAIL GUIDES are elaborated. These are a set of concrete and focussed guides for each of the relevant stakeholders belonging to the ecosystem of commercial zones/areas, and how these can take advantage of the approach and learning programme.



LETZ RETAIL Learning Guide

Aimed at the direct target group and will outline how they can acquire the skills and competences on co-creation, co-design and co-working through the LETZ RETAIL learning programme.

LETZ RETAIL Train the trainer guide

Address how (VET) trainers, training bodies and educational institutions can build upon and leverage LETZ RETAIL.

LETZ RETAIL Guide for Innovation Intermediaries & business associations

Aimed at those organizations and associations that offer services and support in relation to the commercial area/zone's ecosystem, such as business associations; commerce associations, chambers of commerce, and incubators, accelerators or hubs.

LETZ RETAIL Civil society guide

Aimed at civil society organisations/ NGOs active in the areas and/or working with the targeted sectors, such as those focussing related to sustainability, green & circular economy or urban regeneration on how to leverage LETZ RETAIL to realise their objectives in cooperation with the target groups/other stakeholders

LETZ RETAIL Policy Brief

How public bodies can stimulate co-creation, co-design and co-working among the target groups and the commercial zone/area's ecosystem, both through targeted commercial and business development programmes as well as through VET training policies for the target group.

Target Group

This guide is aimed for public bodies. In particular to learn about LETZ RETAIL and how to stimulate co-creation, co-design and co-working among the target groups and the commercial zone/area's ecosystem, both through targeted commercial and business development programmes as well as through VET training policies for the target group.

A public body is ideally placed to help companies get back on their feet after setbacks and change of market trends, while optimising current business processes. The LETZ RETAIL materials are created in such a way it is easy to use and integrate in existing public programmes and can be used to optimize current VET training policies for the target group(s).

LETZ RETAIL has developed an attractive and user-friendly online learning space that can be beneficial to VET trainers as well as to public bodies as it has a potential to enrich their support to a commercial zone/

area ecosystem, as well as inspire the development of new public programmes focused on the development of skills that are essential for successful co-creation, co-design, and co-working.

The present guide includes recommendations on how to leverage LETZ RETAIL to develop public

policies and/or programs envisaging the reinforcement of skills and competences for professional audiences related to the targeted sectors of small retail, commerce, hospitality, cultural/creative. It contains insights into how the LETZ RETAIL learning methodology and content can be taken up and the development of said policies/programmes.



INNOVATIVE TOOLS FOR PUBLIC BODIES' PROGRAMMES

LETZ RETAIL has created and developed an innovative training programme with materials that provide the target group with fundamental knowledge, skills, and competences on how to implement co-creation, co-design, and co-working in practical terms, while keeping in mind sustainability and green and circular economy. LETZ RETAIL is mostly aimed at adult learners that need to develop innovative skills. It is assumed that the learners have a certain level of digital literacy and motivation in order to engage in an independent online learning process.

The training programme is composed by 10 knowledge units in total. The learner doesn't need to follow the programme in a specific order and can choose the knowledge units that are most adequate for his/her profile. The curriculum is integrated in an innovative and appealing learning environment through ICT, including practical exercises, inspiring case studies, and other tools. It is also noteworthy that the methodological approach and learning contents are highly adaptable and transferable to different settings and audiences.





Specifically for public bodies, namely the ones interested in the creation of targeted commercial and business development programmes to stimulate co-creation, co-design, and co-working, as well as VET training policies for the target group(s) and the commercial area(s) ecosystem, LETZ RETAIL can offer the following materials:

- *A comprehensive research report to explain the most important skill set for small businesses in the fields of retail, hospitality and culture, and the competences framework linked to this research. This extensive and professional research can be used to support decisions on the development of public programmes.
- *A total of 25 case studies that demonstrate by example best practices adopted by organizations from different sectors, that justify and sustain the aforementioned research.
- *A ready-to-use LETZ RETAIL online learning environment which you can provide to your staff or partner organizations in the context of VET training policies to be developed for the target group(s) and the commercial area(s) ecosystem you wish to reach. Should you implement a VET public programme, your beneficiaries can learn about the most essential skills while upgrading their business operations and become more resilient towards new market challenges.

When developing the learning content, it has been considered the negative economic effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic put an additional strain on small commerce and retail, which were already competing with large shopping malls and online stores for customers. The months-long lockdowns have led to the closure of many businesses in areas which were once the commercial centre of the town or neighborhood.

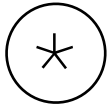


LETZ RETAIL for BUSINESS

The learning content was developed specifically to help companies get back on their feet after setbacks and change of market trends, while optimising current business processes. The programme is perfectly tailored for all small businesses in the retail, culture, and hospitality sectors, especially for those who are struggling to overcome the pressure of digitalisation and large shopping malls.

Businesses and entrepreneurs can use the above-described innovative online learning programme LETZ RETAIL. As the course is free, they can adopt and use its materials in a flexible way. The materials were developed to easily use and integrate them in a business workflow and can be used to optimize current business methodologies and operations. Both the best practices and learning programme are suited to use in innovation processes.

The LETZ RETAIL learning programme can be used by businesses with a simple click in <https://letzretail.eu>. The business owner/manager can go through the course him/herself and then share the link among associates and/or staff, giving them the opportunity to go through the materials independently and have own responsibility reading it and learning from it. To go a step further, the responsible for the company or for the human resources can define its own training approach. In this case, to explain all the theoretical parts of the relevant units and use the exercises available in the workbook, to educate your staff and apply the theory into practice.



THE TRAINER APPROACH

Should your approach be the one of the trainer/“teacher”, you can follow the following methodology:

1. Determine which skills you want your staff to acquire and use the LETZ RETAIL training offer to educate your employees and include essential units of the LETZ RETAIL programme. In any case, teach your staff about the opportunities Co-design, Co-work and Co-creation can bring, as well as the current trends in the green economy and sustainable products.
2. Provide the basic learning elements from the LETZ RETAIL programme and point out which units and topics your staff should go through.
3. Use the workbook to let your staff get familiar with the fundamental business theory. The workbook can be downloaded for free on the LETZ RETAIL platform, and includes several practical assignments, which can be used to reflect on the theory and to put it into practice. Let your staff (in this situation, also your trainees) think about their role in your business, the lessons learnt and how to turn this theory into practical skills.
4. Allow your staff the time to implement the newly acquired solutions and schedule a meeting to evaluate the outcomes.





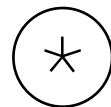
LETZ RETAIL for URBAN POLICIES

The LETZ RETAIL learning programme is aimed at those policy makers active in the field of business development and entrepreneurship, in particular those interested in regenerating commercial areas in decay (or at risk of).



The commercial challenges of the last decades sparked by online shopping, topped by the COVID-19 economic crisis, has put additional strain on small commerce and retail, which has led to the closure of many businesses in areas which were once the commercial centre of the town or neighbourhood.

The LETZ RETAIL learning programme offers valuable advice for urban policy making directed at improving urban areas affected by the crisis by providing small businesses the possibility to acquire knowledge and skills that are important to their survival, competitiveness, and growth.



LETZ RETAIL MATERIALS

The COVID-19 pandemic has been uncharted territory for public bodies charged with urban policies. Elected representatives, officials and public service leaders around the world are making profound decisions with no precedent to draw upon and little certainty on how to overcome the challenges raised by the sanitary crisis.


On top of this unpredicted crisis, the small retail was already suffering from having to compete with online stores or large shopping malls. The sector is at a tipping point, but this can be an inflection point for a public body responsible for the implementation or coordination of programmes to fight the decay of urban commercial areas.

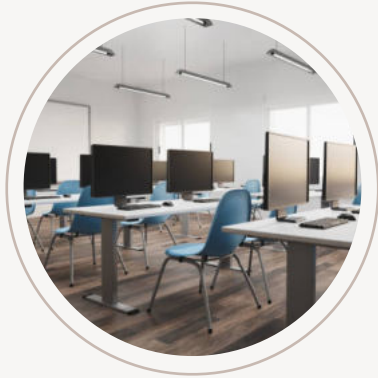
In order for small business owners from the field of commerce, retail, hospitality, or culture/creativity, especially those focussing on sustainability, green and circular economy, or urban regeneration, to be able to compete with online stores, they need to be able to quickly adapt and offer a unique service/product or experience that is not sold online.

The deterioration of commercial areas is raising interest from municipalities and civic organisations, as the reduction in retail, commerce, hospitality, and cultural activities in these areas results in an overall deterioration of the area, with less movements of persons. Many municipalities are looking For solutions which can help them give new life to these spaces.

LETZ RETAIL materials were developed as a learning programme aimed at development of innovative and most needed co-design, co-creation, and co-working skills in urban areas in decay (or at risk of). The outcoming urban policy from said skills shows to the beneficiaries of said areas that working together small businesses will become stronger and ready to respond to new market trends and challenges.

For urban policies envisaging the revitalization of small retail's commercial areas, the programme provides:

- *A comprehensive research report to explain the most important policies on skill set for small businesses in the fields of retail, hospitality and culture, and the competences framework linked to this research. This extensive and professional research can be used to support decisions on the development of public policies for urban areas.
 - *25 case studies that demonstrate by example best practices adopted by businesses and other organizations from different sectors, that can be used to inspire and complement any policy advice on urban regeneration.
 - *A ready-to-use LETZ RETAIL online learning environment which a urban policy stakeholder can provide to their staff or partner organizations in the context of VET training policies to be developed for the target group(s) and the commercial area(s) ecosystem to reach. The policy beneficiaries can learn about the most essential skills while upgrading their business operations and become changing actor in the urban ecosystem it operates.
- 

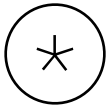


LETZ RETAIL for EDUCATIONAL POLICIES



The LETZ RETAIL programme can help any public body in charge of educational policies to complement its training portfolio and knowledge. All materials are available on <https://letzretail.eu/> and doesn't only include innovative ideas and important knowledge about entrepreneurial competences, it also provides 25 best practices and relevant practical assignments for your beneficiaries and peers to apply the newly acquired knowledge.

It is difficult for a small business to provide answers to the aforementioned challenges individually, and when they do, the impact is limited to the specific type of consumers they address. Hence intense collaboration through the joint creation, design, and implementation of new products and/or services offering the consumer the needed experience is key and a public body is in better position than any other organization to provide a holistic solution. As such, it can integrate the LETZ RETAIL materials in their programmes, that target business from these sectors, especially those focussing on sustainability, green and circular economy, or urban regeneration, and offer small retail owners an innovative training course that is time-efficient, with practical applicability and free of charge.



The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a common European reference framework whose purpose is to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems. Covers all types of qualifications ranging from those acquired at the end of compulsory education (Level 1) to the highest qualifications such as Doctorate (Level 8 in the QCF and Level 12 in the SCQF).

While developing LETZ RETAIL training materials, the level 5 of the EQF was maintained as a consistent factor in the training content. Learning outcomes are based on the EQF, so that the LETZ RETAIL target group achieves EQF 5 level knowledge, skills, and attitude.

European Framework for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) is a European wide framework to support quality assurance in vocational education and training (VET). It is used in

national quality assurance systems, for both initial and continuing vocational education and training. LETZ RETAIL has met a number of EQAVET Framework quality criteria (as described in Annex II of the Council Recommendation of 24/11/2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience: consultation with local stakeholders took place in order to identify specific needs of the target group, the developed learning programme uses a learner-centred approach and enables learners to meet the expected learning outcomes and become involved in the learning process, the project promotes innovation in teaching and learning methods, etc.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The commercial challenges of the last decades sparked by online shopping, topped by the COVID-19 economic crisis, has put additional strain on small commerce and retail, which has led to the closure of many businesses in areas which were once the commercial centre of the town or neighbourhood.

The LETZ RETAIL project, enabled with the support of Erasmus+, offers support to small businesses affected by the crisis, through a possibility to acquire knowledge and skills that are important to their survival, competitiveness, and growth.

To fight these negative consequences, the LETZ RETAIL materials were developed to support small businesses through a learning programme aimed at development of co-design, co-creation, and co-working skills. Working together, small businesses will become stronger and ready to respond to new market trends and challenges. The learning methodology and contents is flexible, modular, and transferrable to various learning settings.

As part of the learning experience, the participating businesses can develop a concrete action plan for a specific experience, activity, product, or service, which will help attract visitors/clients to their area. Special attention is paid to initiatives, experiences, products, and services in line with sustainability, ecology and green and circular economy as high potential market trends for the targeted sectors and commercial areas.

Public bodies are invited to explore and use the learning materials and online space created by LETZ RETAIL in order to provide learning opportunities that support and inspire thriving businesses in their communities.





Learning Detours



Co-funded by the
**Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union**

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein