



SKIVRE Training Module 4:

How to Sell Monastic Products Authentically

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This training module is a part of SKIVRE training scheme containing 10 learning modules in total, which has been developed within the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership **SKIVRE - Skills Development for the Valorisation of European Religious Heritage**.

In SKIVRE a team of 6 European institutions – all linked to religious heritage preservation - developed a training scheme for manufacturing and marketing of high-quality handcrafted products of European monasteries. The training contents at a glance:

SKIVRE Training Scheme
Module 1: Introduction
Module 2: Marketing Strategies
Module 3: Monastic Products
Module 4: How to Sell Monastic Products Authentically
Module 5: Distribution Channels
Module 6: Social Media and Communication
Module 7: Value Adding Through Networks
Module 8: Creating a Strong Brand
Module 9: Financing Strategies
Module 10: Aspects of Sustainability

You can find more information at the homepage: www.skivre.eu

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About the Module

Training description

In this module, you will learn the different motives and expectations of customers and sales staff that go along with buying and selling monastic products.

The meaning of the term “authenticity” will be explained, as well as its importance for the sale of monastic products. The significance of authenticity and the related historical importance behind the monastic product will be described in the following. The module will present the necessity of a monastery shop when it comes to creating an authentic sales atmosphere for monastic products and enabling the customers to have an emotional shopping experience.

In the final part of the module, we will reflect the fact that the authentic selling of monastic products is directly related to the sales staff and is of essential importance.

For better understanding, please read Module 3 before you start with Module 4. These two modules build-up on each other and should be worked through in this order.

Objectives of this training module

This module gives you a definition of “authenticity” and its meaning for the sale of products in a monastic setting. The description of the target group will help you to become better acquainted with your customers and their needs. Through exercises, you will be able to check whether the customer expectations are compatible with your goals and ideas. You will understand why, for the sale of monastic products, an authentic surrounding and well-trained staff are of the same importance as the story the product tells.

Target groups

This SKIVRE-training module is designed to fit the training needs of the monks and nuns, management, staff and volunteers at European monasteries, no matter if they are run by Catholic or Protestant Orders or the Orthodox Church; by public or private operators.

All modules are relevant for the below mentioned groups of people, but some have a more specific character. They are all interconnected, even if they are not formally complementary. They differ in terms of information and competence level and address three groups:

- **Target group 1:** For people working on the implementation level like those in monastery shops, three modules are recommended: Module 1, as introduction to the training, modules 3 and 4 about monastic products and authentic selling of monastic products. People who want to start considering certain strategic aspects may be inspired by Module 7 on adding value through networking.
- **Target group 2:** For people with a special knowledge or experiences or a certain background and/or specified tasks in the monastic management, Module 2 on marketing strategies, Module 5 on distribution strategies, Module 8 on creating a strong brand, and Module 6 on social media and communication offer learning content and reflection.
- **Target group 3:** People on a strategy decision level with a highly specialized / experienced background and respective responsibilities in a monastery (Modules 9 on financing strategies and Module 10 on sustainability aspects).

Gained knowledge and skills after finishing this module

After having become familiar with this training module, you will:

- get to know customer expectations and sales motivation behind monastic products,
- get to know the definition of „authenticity“ and its importance for the sale of monastic products,
- be aware of the necessity of “storytelling” while authentically selling monastic products,
- understand why an authentic product needs to be sold in an authentic setting.

Training method

SKIVRE focuses on an interactive training approach, no matter if you use it as a self-learning course or instructed by a trainer. This training module includes:

- Individualized self-learning - a powerful learning method that enables each learner, based on his/her own experience and knowledge, and based on newly acquired knowledge, to reach development decisions on his/her own;
- Self-assessment - ongoing self-assessment tests or homework that learners send to their trainer prior to the commencement of each subsequent module;
- You might also work in small groups of 2 or 3, e.g. if you decide to implement this module with colleagues as a self-learning group in your monastery or supported by an external trainer.

You gain knowledge individually or in a group using:

- Training materials in this module;
- Training materials in nine more SKIVRE training modules which are closely linked to this module;
- The interactive SKIVRE online training platform: www.skivre.eu/training;
- Facilitated training sessions for learning in a group with a professional trainer.

If you would like to implement the training with a professional trainer, please contact the SKIVRE partner in your country. They are all published on the SKIVRE website: <https://skivre.eu/about/partnership/>.

Training content

Unit 1: Motivation and expectation to monastic products

In the previous modules you have learned what a typical monastic product is, what is important when developing one as well as the criteria that must be met. In Module 2 “Marketing Strategies” we described marketing as a helpful instrument for merchandising and selling monastic products. Now we will discuss the different motives and expectations that may arise when buying or selling monastic products. The monastery, as the selling part, will pursue different goals than the visitors and customers. With the help of the target groups defined in Module 3 “Monastic Products”, the customer needs will be assessed, which will lead you to a better understanding and perception.

The motivation to run a shop within a monastery complex is different from the target group's expectation leading to the purchase of monastic products. There must be a clear distinction of these objectives, and they must be examined thoroughly. It is of great importance in order to manage a monastery shop in a sustainable and thus successful way (for sustainable management of your monastery shop, please read Module 10 "Aspects of Sustainability").

1.1. Motivation of the monastery for product development and operation of a monastery shop

Over the years, the image of the monastery shop has changed. In the past, the focus was purely on the need to care for pilgrims and to contribute to local (health) care. Today it is an integral part of the so-called "overall experience" of visiting a monastery. A monastery may have different goals that make the running of a shop meaningful or necessary. They range from providing services for monastery visitors to generating additional income to economic necessity. Further inducements might be offering a platform to present the house's products or giving access to people who do not come for religious or spiritual reasons. Finally, yet importantly, a monastery shop is also a signal to the local population, offering the shop as the gateway to the monastery and thus enabling people to get an insight into monastic life.

It is therefore important to define one's own goals and to derive a vision from them. From this vision should emerge:

- why products are sold
- with which product and quality requirements these are defined
- what these products are supposed to do for buyers
- the purposes for which the income will be used.

You have already learned more about this in **SKIVRE** Module 2 “Marketing Strategies” and will find it in the following **SKIVRE** Modules 5 - 10, in which all these topics are covered in detail.

Please do exercise 4.1: Motivation of the monastery

1.2. Customer expectations when purchasing monastic products

Just like the monastery, customers have different expectations when buying monastic products. These can be assigned to the four target groups of monastery and monastery shop visitors (already defined in Module 3 “Monastic Products”). Let us briefly recapitulate who these groups are:

- a) **Locals**
(population from the surrounding area, purchasers from your region, people who live nearby and bring their own visitors)
- b) **Tourists**
(People from outside your region who come by car, bus or hiking or cycling; they all behave differently when it comes to buying in your monastery shop)
- c) **Spiritual tourists / people of faith**
(Pilgrims / people with Christian orientation who want to strengthen their religious faith)
- d) **Education-motivated monastery guests**
(tourists, school classes, participants of seminars or workshops offered by your monastery, who are not necessarily interested in spiritual offers)

People of faith/ spiritual tourists may be looking for devotional objects as a spiritual value and tourists for souvenirs that bring the emotional monastic experience to their home.

Whereas **regional or supra-regional customers** come to the monastery shop to choose from a range of monastic products differing in quality and originality from comparable product offers, meeting their attitude and needs and possibly being unique. To further deepen the monastery experience and perhaps also the acquired educational contents at home, the group of **education-oriented monastery guests** will usually also not miss the opportunity to browse the monastery shop.

In times of food scandals and the desire for quality, purity and honesty in food production, customers hope to find exactly this in the monastery shop. Finally, it is arguments of sustainability that distinguish monastic products from other products - which product brands can claim to be based on traditional and proven recipes?

Please do exercise 4.2: Customer expectations when buying monastic products

1.3. Compatibility of the monastery's motives and the target group's expectations

Let us now once again focus on the motives you pursue as a monastery shopkeeper. Are these goals compatible with the customer's expectations? If the target group's expectations of a monastic product are not fulfilled at the time of purchase, the economic success of the established permanent product range and the entire shop will fail to be achieved.

It is therefore essential to know the target group's expectations and to match them with the product selection and assortment. Quality should always rank above quantity. In some cases, it is not possible to fulfil all the wishes and expectations of the visitors regarding monastic products, as they might stand in contrast to monastic life or to one's own product range. One must also refrain from always wanting to satisfy all target groups equally. A target group analysis can provide decision reliability. The quality of one's own product should rank in first place and should be reflected in the monastery's mission statement. This will be continued in the following chapters.

Please do exercise 4.3: Compatibility of the different goals

Tags for Unit 1:

Motivation, expectations, goals, product range, tourist, person of faith, spiritual tourist, local, education-motivated monastery visitor

Unit 2: Authentic sale of monastic products

"Authenticity" as the key to success. How is it used in sales and why is it so important? What is the necessity of storytelling when selling monastic products? How do you create an emotional sales experience? These and other questions related to the sale of monastic products will be illustrated and explained in the following chapter.

Let us be very clear at the beginning: Your monastery products and the monastery shop should absolutely have a connection to the monastery and monastic life, because this is the only way to make the monastery shop and the monastic product offer authentic. Always keep in mind: The products found in your monastery shop are all - without exception - subject to your own clearly defined rules and quality requirements, which must pass the inspection by your customers.

2.1. "Authenticity" as the key to success

To find out what the term "authenticity" means for monastic products, we recommend that you visit a normal supermarket. Take a look at the product range, for example, to see how many and which products are directly related to monasteries or churches – you will probably be surprised! Maybe a cheese is called "monastery cheese" or the name of a saint is related to a product (e.g. to the Benedictine, abbess, poet, composer, and outstanding universal academic Hildegard von Bingen).

There are package graphics that associate a monastery or seals that relate to a monastery, often generated by the fact that architectural forms are visible in the background and, for example, may be evocative of a cloister. Here is an example:



© SKIVRE

In these examples, the packaging does not deal with the product itself, but rather prioritizes the relation to a monastery. Is this authentic? Certainly not!

The term authenticity is equated with quality, purity, genuineness, honesty, originality and credibility. Referring now to the SKIVRE survey of European monasteries (see <https://skivre.eu/training-modules/>), the monastery employees' statement regarding customer expectations of monastic products is consistent with its results. Monastery products are appreciated by customers for their authenticity. The monastery employees themselves also defined their products as: "authentic, natural and healthy products, made from organic ingredients and of high quality". The monastery product stands for uniqueness. This special product cannot be bought everywhere and has a strong relation to the monastery or the region.

In 2019, a study¹ focused on the question whether consumers are actually able to distinguish between authentic and non-authentic products. The study confirmed that they are indeed. The three most important features are:

- origin of the product
- production techniques

¹ Die The study "Economic aspects of geographical indication protection at EU level for non-agricultural products in the EU" was commissioned by the EU Commission (Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs) and will be published in 2020. First results were presented on 18 November 2019 in Brussels. They are methodologically based on behavioral experiments conducted by the assigned research group.

- a perceived higher quality

Above all, origin and production techniques are decisive influencing factors for purchase decisions. The researchers are particularly positive about the fact that the clear identification of origin, production techniques and materials / ingredients are perceived very intensively by consumers and are included in their purchase decisions. Higher-priced products are thus definitely accepted. These attributes of authenticity (origin of the product, production, and quality) are also characteristics of customer loyalty in monastic products. And something else adds to this special relationship of customers to monastic products: they have confidence. It is up to the monastery to redeem this credit of trust, and it can do so in very different ways.

2.2. Creating a mental relationship to the product

The monastery stands for its products with its own image and its own (quality) standards. Thus, using the example of cheese products (see above), it gives the impression that the cheese is a "genuine" monastery product. Which consumer will bother to research the origin of these products and to trace a monastic origin in the sense of the criteria defined in Module 3 "Monastic Products"?

With monastic products, the aim is to enable buyers to have a mental relationship with the producing monastery and to have confidence in the product and the attitude behind it. For quite some time, consumer researcher Stephan Grünewald from Cologne has been observing an existing trend to look for products that convey orientation and a sense of home. The "monastery business perfectly fits into modern times," he says. The customer longs for something handmade, something that was produced exclusively for him/her or at least gives the impression. The crucial factor is the emotional access to the products, such as the nun who bakes cookies in small batches. Grünewald doubts that the purchase in a monastery shop is in any way linked to a religious statement. Most shoppers are not interested in spiritual closeness to the monastery, but rather in what this place, with its consistency, embodies to the outside world. The religious tradition functions as a paradise of shelter. With the purchase of monastic products, people would be able to bring this feeling to their homes, regardless of their faith. (Source: Klask, Fabian. 2017)

For the customer, a monastery product can be linked to and charged with emotions when a story about its origin and its monastery background is told. This is known as "storytelling". If the story is told with sincerity and credibility, it can create a good feeling for the customer, even if the direct benefit of the product is less important. Emotions can be shared; they are repeatable and can also be retrieved at home. (see also Modules 6 „Social Media and Communication“).

This applies to every product, whether rosary, biscuit or beer, in any case handmade, rare or with a special charisma - the story behind it is decisive. Please have a look at the Good practice 28 "Quince products - new trend with old monastic recipes". The products, made from Bronnbach quinces and offered in the monastery shop, are based on a story with which customers can identify, which is authentic and has a plausible connection to the old Cistercian monastery. This is "storytelling".

Similar mental emotions can be built up through advertising, even if there is no story behind the product. As with the Good practice 27 "Monastic Dry Gin - Made in Silence", which is produced in the Bochum-Stiepel Monastery. With the catch phrase: "This gin has its source in the walls of the monastery, it breathes the power of silence". Images come to mind through this slogan. Reading this phrase, customers can imagine exactly how, over the years, this gin matures in the monastery and reveals a unique taste experience.

Please do exercise 4.4: history of your products

2.3. Careful selection of the product portfolio

Careful selection of the product range and concentration on the special/unique, make the monastery shop trustworthy and authentic. Again, quality is more important than quantity. Less is more, so that customers do not have the feeling of standing in a convenience store. Nevertheless, it is important that the large product range invites you to explore.

Authenticity also means not being obliged to follow every trend and satisfy every target group. On closer examination, the limitation of customer orientation does not have any negative effects, quite the contrary. Thus, credibility and authenticity are communicated to customers through a targeted "setting of limits". In Koob & Weber's case study, such a customer relationship proves to be more profound, as the customers experience the monastery as an institution that does not satisfy all needs but develops its own unique personality. Exactly this "obstinacy" generates trust in the institution. (Source: Koob, Clemens/ Weber, Michael.1999)

Many monasteries work precisely according to this approach: the production of individual products (meat, honey, herbal teas) is naturally limited by capacity. The focus here is on "authenticity", rather than maximum customer orientation. Only an authenticity-based customer relationship leads to a high degree of satisfaction, a high purchase intention and a positive recommending behavior.

To illustrate this, we take a beer brewing monastery. The monastery is confronted with a target group's need for "non-alcoholic" beer. This type of beer would probably find a ready market in the corresponding target group. However, the beer would no longer be brewed according to traditional formulas because there are no traditional recipes for this non-alcoholic beer. Would the whole range of beer still be authentic? Possibly not. A conscious decision to expand this range must be carefully made.

Please do exercise 4.5: Assessment of the own assortment

Tags for Unit 2:

Authenticity, storytelling, quality, purity, authenticity, honesty, originality, credibility, building intellectual relationships, trend, carefully selected product portfolio

Unit 3: The importance of the monastery shop

The monastery shop can create an authentic environment for the sale of the monastery product and generate an emotional shopping experience for visitors. The qualifications of the personnel who are in direct contact with the customer must not be neglected, as authentic and good professional advice is the final touch to a positive buying experience

The product range and the salesroom of a monastery shop have a different importance than in a supermarket. Authentic products require an authentic environment for sale. The monastery shop can provide this setting by reflecting what is special and unique and cannot be found anywhere else. In Module 3 "Monastery Products", the advantages of the monastery shop have already been dealt with in detail, based on the so-called unique selling point. The careful selection of monastery products and the composition of the assortment, differing in quality and originality from comparable shops, has also been dealt with in the previous chapters.

In order to create an authentic sales atmosphere, the following criteria should be followed when arranging the monastery shop.

3.1 The location of the monastery shop is significant

Let us start with the location of the monastery shop. Choose a suitable central location in your monastery complex, where the infrastructure conditions can also be fulfilled.

It is not the size of the sales area that is decisive for the monastery shop's economic success, but the location and authentic presentation of the goods. (Source: case study SMB. 2004) If the shop is situated outside the monastery walls, it is difficult to associate it with the monastery and it may lose some of its authenticity. In addition to the visibility of the shop, good accessibility, and a car park within walking distance with sufficient space is equally important.

3.2 Creating a sales atmosphere

When it comes to arranging the shop, there are no limits to ideas and design. For the creation of a good sales atmosphere, it is however important to ensure that the shop is integrated into the monastery environment and is authentic for the visitor. It could also be a "shop of silence". (Visitors should feel comfortable and have an emotional experience during their visit, so they will connect positive emotions and a good feeling with the monastery shop and its products).

Let the visitors test and try You will be amazed at how they get drawn to the products on offer. Address visitors with all of their five senses. The nose to smell, the eyes to see, the tongue to taste, the ears to hear and the skin to feel. Taste wine or spreads, let them smell soaps, try out creams or enchant the eye with colours.

Of course, the sales staff also reflects authenticity and quality: a nun or a monk, dressed in their habit, as still found in some monastery shops, offers the opportunity to address other topics related to the monastery and its spiritual aspirations, apart from pure selling. It goes without saying, however: monk's and nun's robes are no costumes that can be put on arbitrarily. Unfortunately, only in rare cases a member of the order is still active in the monastery shop.

Product information is important. But if the products are supposed to tell stories, no displays or photos will help to, for example, document the harvest or product development. The most authentic and effective way of telling stories is always through personal conversation between sales staff and customer.

3.3 Qualification of the sales staff

Of all factors, the most important one in the design of the monastery shop and its establishment is certainly the sales staff. With appropriate leadership, qualification and

motivation, all employees of the shop can perform customer-oriented selling of monastery products. Continuous qualification of the personnel is therefore of essential importance. It is not enough to "park" somebody behind a sales counter. By developing the **SKIVRE** modules, the monastery shop staff can be sensitized, but this does not replace getting familiar with the existing product range to guarantee expert advice. This naturally also applies to volunteers or temporary helpers who are in direct contact with customers. The staff must identify with the monastery shop and their own work in order to guarantee successful business. In addition, any anecdotes to the product are well appreciated by customers and build up an emotional relationship. They will always remember it when using or consuming the product and pass it on positively.

Do you, your colleagues and employees, know the entire product range of the monastery shop well enough? Can customers' questions be answered, can shoppers be well advised, or can recommendations be given? The staff must regularly be informed about new products. Access to advanced training ensures long-term motivation among sales staff, and thus this important job is valued and provides security in all customer contacts.

Tags for Unit 3:

Monastery shop, sales environment, authenticity, shop design, creating a sales atmosphere, staff qualification

Good Practice

There are several good practice examples referred to in this module and here are some more of the SKIVRE library closely linked to the topic of this training module:

- Good practice 2. The Bronnbach Monastery Shop “Bronnbacher Klosterladen”, Germany
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP2-EN>
- Good practice 5. Tturnogorski Monastery – Authentic Monastic Products with a Strong Brand, Bulgaria
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP5-EN>
- Good practice 8. EUCOSMIA e-shop, Greece
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP8-EN>
- Good practice 10. Kremikovtsi Monastery "St. George the Victorious" – Successful Sales with a Strong Brand, Bulgaria
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP10-EN>
- Good practice 20. The Brand “Abbey Beer”, Belgium
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP20-EN>
- Good practice 21. I segreti del chiostro - Monastic Products of Monastero Santa Caterina d’Alessandria, Palermo Italy
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP21-EN>
- Good practice 27. Monastic Gin – a New Product from the Cistercian Monastery Bochum-Stiepel, Germany
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP27-EN>
- Good practice 28. Quince products - new trend with old monastic recipes, Bronnbach Monastery Germany
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP28-EN>
- Good Practice 29: The New Traditional Monastery Beer, Bronnbach Monastery Germany
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP29-EN>
- Good Practice 31: The Role Model Monastery Shop in Athens, Greece
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP31-EN>

Test your knowledge

Exercises

Exercise 4.3. Compatibility of the different goals

Please consider:

<p>1. Does the monastery shop meet your goals?</p>	
<p>2. Do your goals match the motives of your customers when buying monastic products?</p>	
<p>3. Does your offer correspond to/ cover the target groups' expectations regarding the assortment of the monastery shop and the monastery products?</p>	
<p>(Question no. 3 should be answered for all target groups</p>	

Take your time and thoroughly review everything. It may also be possible that the expectations of certain target groups are not (yet) fulfilled. Your considerations will help you to identify such "gaps". This exercise is especially suitable to be worked on in a team of all employees of the monastery shop.

Exercise 4.4. The Stories of Your Monastic Products

Many of your monastic products surely have a story - try to capture it - in written or oral form.

Your monastic product	The product's history

Now consider - preferably in teamwork with colleagues - whether and how these stories can be presented: In a product sheet? A video? An article on your homepage, your Facebook page? Perhaps in a monastery event where you tell these stories? Perhaps they might even be suitable subjects of a workshop, a publication? Be inspired by the many Good practice collected on the **SKIVRE** learning platform! Create the stories for your different target groups.

Exercise 4.5. Assessment of the own assortment

Thoroughly search your store for authentic and non-authentic products. What would happen if you did without the latter altogether? Would this result in a loss of sales? Would this be a chance to present the other products better and to create completely new contexts?

In short: Do "tabula rasa" in your mind according to the motto "check everything and keep the good" (Paulus).

Non-authentic product	Consequence in case of waiver
	RISK: OPPORTUNITY:
	RISK: OPPORTUNITY:
	RISK: OPPORTUNITY:
	RISK: OPPORTUNITY:
	RISK: OPPORTUNITY:

References

■ Books and articles

Klask, Fabian: Das Kloostergeschäft passt in die Zeit. ZEIT online. (5.12.2017)

<https://www.zeit.de/2017/49/produkte-aus-kloestern-boom-gruende/seite-2>

Koob ,Clemens; Weber, Michael: Erfolg durch authentizitätsorientiertes Marketing. Fallstudie Kloster Andechs. Absatzwirtschaft.de: ASW NR. 004 (10.04.1999); Page 74

Study : Museumsshops als Marketinginstrument für Museen: von Institut für Museumkunde; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin und Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin 2004).

https://www.smb.museum/fileadmin/website/Institute/Institut_fuer_Museumsforschung/Publikationen/Mitteilungen/MIT028.pdf

The SKIVRE Partnership: Empowering development of monastic products

SKIVRE is an Erasmus+ project aimed at empowering management, staff, monks, and nuns at monasteries with a most interactive training approach in gaining relevant skills for raising revenues for the preservation of religious heritage sites:

The **SKIVRE** homepage www.skivre.eu (including access to many social media tools) provides you with an inspiring multi lingual blog on monastic products, data and analyses, training material and training events in seven European countries.

The partnership comprises a multidisciplinary European team, which represents the target groups and expertise needed for training development:

media k GmbH | GERMANY (coordinator)

media k GmbH offers long-year expertise in religious heritage preservation and in the management of heritage preservation projects.

www.media-k.eu

Future for Religious Heritage | BELGIUM

Future for Religious Heritage is a non-faith organisation open to all. It brings together those working to protect religious heritage all over Europe.

www.frh-europe.org

GUNET | GREECE

GUNET is a Greek specialist in creating online learning platforms, which offer different kind of learning experiences adapted to different topics.

www.gunet.gr

INI-Novation Bulgaria OOD | BULGARIA

INI-Novation is an education provider specialised in generating economic effects from cultural heritage.

www.ini-novation.com

Bronnbach Monastery| GERMANY

Bronnbach monastery is a former Cistercian monastery now operated by a public authority in the German Tauber valley. The monastery started to develop monastic products based on the history of the site.

www.kloster-bronnbach.de

Wissenschaftsinitiative Niederösterreich | AUSTRIA

Wissenschaftsinititative is an education provider with longstanding experiences in developing learning platforms and learning material for heritage preservation.

www.wissenschaftsinitiative.at

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