



Skills Development in Coastal and Maritime Tourism

Final Report of the Skills4CMT Project

Skills Development in Coastal and Maritime Tourism

Final Report of the Skills4CMT Project

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences | Center for Tourism Business Development

Pori 2023

To cite this report: Renfors, S-M., Huuhka, J., Kärp, M., Burns, K., Derricks, T., Dunne, L., Grinfelde, I., Jõul, T., Jyllilä, S., Latomäki, I., Latvala, A-M., Nacipucha, D., Piirman, M., Ruoho, J., Röhl, C., Soeters, M. & Väliverronena, L. (2023). *Skills Development in Coastal and Maritime Tourism. Final report of the Skills4CMT Project*. Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, Series B, Reports 7/2023.



Satakunta University of Applied Sciences
ISBN 978-951-633-382-6
Series B, Reports 7/2023
ISSN 2323-8356
Copyright Satakunta University of Applied Sciences and authors

Publisher:
Satakunta University of Applied Sciences
Post Box 1001, 28101 Pori
www.samk.fi

Graphic design: Hanna Rissanen & Eveliina Sillanpää
Cover photo: Julius Jansson, Unsplash



AUTHORS

Kevin Burns, PhD, MA, MSs, is Head of Department at Dundalk Institute. He gained his Doctoral Degree from Hong Kong Polytechnic. Kevin also completed a Master in Learning and Teaching (MALT) at DKIT. He is currently the Research Group leader for the Tourism Research Group (TRg) at Dundalk Institute of Technology. This role involves supervising PHD level research students in the following areas: Destination Development, Stakeholder Engagement in the festivals sector and is currently working on a research project on 'Tourist Sentiments'.

Timo Derriks, PhD, is a cultural geographer with a background in leisure, tourism, hospitality, and the coastal environment. He is presently developing higher education at the HZ University of Applied Sciences. In this, he looks for innovative ways to create inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration spaces in which students learn by design thinking and doing. In research, he is interested in engaging stakeholders and aligning practices for the sake of regenerative destination development.

Lorraine Dunne, MHM, MBA, is a lecturer at Dundalk Institute and lecturers in Tourism, Event & Hospitality Management within the Business Studies School. She has an honours degree in Hospitality Management from The University of Ulster, Jordanstown and an MBA from Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT). Lorraine has also completed a Masters in Learning and Teaching (MALT) at DKIT and is currently completing her PhD in Business Tourism. She is a member of the Tourism Research Group at Dundalk Institute.

Ilze Grinfelde, Mg.soc.sc, works as lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Valmiera, Latvia. She has wide experience in international projects, as well in working closely with industry stakeholders. Her research interests are dark tourism, niche tourism, and sustainable regional development.

Jonna Huuhka, MBA, is a Senior Lecturer at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences in Finland. She holds a master's degree in business administration and a bachelor's degree in hospitality. She has been teaching for over two years in the International Tourism Management and Tourism and Hospitality Business Management programmes. She has extensive experience in the hospitality sector. Jonna has worked in supervisor roles in the accommodation sector for over 15 years.

Tõiv Jõul, PHE, works as a Project Manager at the University of Tartu Pärnu College, Estonia, where he is also a first-year master's student in Service Design and Management. He has extensive experience in marketing and tourism, with a proven track record in project management of EU-funded tourism-related projects. In addition, he has knowledge in graphic design, social media, and strong analytical and communication skills.

Sanna Jyllilä, MHM, works as a Senior Lecturer in tourism in Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, Finland. She holds a master's degree in hospitality management. She has long experience in developing rural tourism in several tourism projects focused on promoting tourism entrepreneurship and tourism industry as well as sustainable tourism.

Margrit Kärp, MBA, is Junior Lecturer in Spa Management at the University of Tartu Pärnu College. Areas of teaching and research include destination design and development, holistic wellness, active aging, and spa management. In addition to conducting the study, the launch of the new

destination management and marketing master's curriculum and the development of study courses are ongoing, as well as the development of study courses in two international projects.

Ilkka Latomäki, MSc, works as a Senior Lecturer in Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, Finland. He holds a master's degree in Tourism Management. He has long experience in teaching and development projects covering topics such as food tourism, entomophagy, and tourism development.

Anne-Mari Latvala, M.Ed., works as project manager at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, Finland. She holds master's degree in education and has long experience in vocational education, including online teaching. At SeAMK she has worked in various development projects in the field of tourism.

David Nacipucha, M. Sc., is currently a PhD candidate in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at the Technological University Dublin. He works as Lecturer in the Department of Hospitality Studies at the Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland. He holds a Master of Tourism Leadership. David's research interests are Tourism Innovation, Coastal and Marine Tourism, and Knowledge Management. He has been involved in tourism planning projects at the local, regional, and national level in Ecuador.

Marit Piirman, MBA, works as a lecturer at the University of Tartu Pärnu College, Estonia and is a PhD student of Human Geography and Regional Planning at the University of Tartu. She teaches research methods, tourism service design, visual thinking and creative methods and has been a co-author for handbooks. She has also participated in several EU-funded projects related to tourism and sustainable management. Her main research interests are tourism destination marketing and management, film induced tourism and humour.

Sanna-Mari Renfors, PhD, M. Ed., works as the Specialist Researcher in the Center for Tourism Business Development at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, Finland. She holds a PhD in marketing and a master's degree in education. She has extensive experience in developing tourism education and skills as well as planning and leading related international, EU-funded projects. Her research involves internationalisation of curriculum, skills and curriculum development, education for sustainable development, sustainable and circular tourism.

Jaana Ruoho, MSc, is a Senior Lecturer at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences in Finland, where she has been teaching and coordinating the International Tourism Management programme for over 12 years. With a background in Business Administration and Business Law, Jaana's teaching focuses on education for sustainable development, legislation, and coastal tourism.

Charlotte Röhl, MSc, works as head of projects and supervises students at the HZ Innovation Studio – The Garage, part of HZ University of Applied Sciences in Zeeland, the Netherlands. In addition, Charlotte is involved in the Tourism Management bachelor program as graduation supervisor. Driven by her passion to regenerate industries and places, Charlotte enjoys working with students on relevant and impactful topics within the Tourism and Leisure industry. In doing so, she focusses on design thinking and topics such as regeneration & innovation.

Maarten Soeters, Ba, is a researcher with the Research Centre for Coastal Tourism, part of HZ University of Applied Sciences, in Zeeland, the Netherlands. He holds a bachelor's degree in Tourism & Recreation Management and has gained experience within various aspects of the tourism sector inside the Netherlands as well as in Brussels, the south of France, Monaco & St. Maarten/Saint-Martin. Maarten conducts objective research into the demand, supply, (carrying) capacity, social value & the various impacts of the (regional) hospitality sector and shares this knowledge with the various stakeholders within the tourism ecosystem in Zeeland.

Linda Veliverronena, PhD, holds a PhD in media and communication from the University of Tartu, Estonia. She works as an assistant professor and senior researcher at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (Latvia). The study courses taught are related to consumer behaviour in tourism, qualitative research methods. Main research interests are related to engagement studies, studies of cultural heritage, tourism education and consumer (visitor) behaviour.

Contents

AUTHORS.....	5
1 Background	11
2 Skills4CMT project in a nutshell	13
2.1 Objectives and outputs.....	13
2.2 Summary of the process.....	14
3 Occupational profiles.....	15
3.1 Development process.....	16
3.2 Occupational profile: Resort Manager.....	18
3.3 Occupational profile: micro-entrepreneur offering blue experiences.....	19
3.4 Occupational profile: Sustainability Manager.....	20
4 Curriculum development.....	21
4.1 Course: Introduction to Coastal and Maritime Tourism.....	25
4.2 Course 2: Coastal and Maritime Tourism Sustainability Management.....	26
4.3 Course 3: Coastal and Maritime Destination Design.....	27
4.4 Course 4: Designing Blue Experiences.....	28
5 eLearning opportunities and Open Educational Resources (OER).....	29
6 Developing joint European education: Lessons learned.....	32
6.1 Course feedback.....	32
6.2 Lecturers experiences.....	36
7 Practical examples of tourism in cold-water destinations.....	39
From upper class destinations to overtourism.....	39
The challenge for Domestic Tourism Supplier in Ireland – and maybe elsewhere!.....	40
The changing profile of a tourist requires more skills from an entrepreneur.....	41
The value of Tourism & Recreation.....	42
There is no sun without a shadow and vice versa: coastal tourism in Latvia.....	44
Coast is more than just Coast.....	46
World Heritage in Coastal and Maritime sites – safeguarded, monitored and disputed.....	47
A scenic seafood trail could lead the way in sustainable tourism on the east coast of Ireland.....	48
'Uitwaaien'? Opportunities for coastal tourism in cold water destinations.....	49
Industry that never sleeps.....	50
Towards more sustainable food services in cold water destinations.....	52
Yyteri – the best and most sustainable beach of Finland?.....	53
An underwater secret in North-West of Estonia – hidden for millions of years.....	54
Structural innovation for the development and promotion of the Dingle peninsula.....	56
Tourism, Recreation and Flood Prevention.....	58
Zero-waste approach in coastal tourism destination.....	59
Circularity in the coastal region.....	60

1 Background

The beauty of the nature, cultural richness, and diversity of the European Union's coastal areas have made them a preferred destination for many holidaymakers in Europe and abroad. In fact, coastal and maritime locations are the biggest attractive factor in European tourism. Coastal and maritime tourism (later referred to as CMT) is also the biggest maritime sector in the EU in terms of the Gross Value Added (GVA) and employment. In addition, most tourism expenditure takes place in coastal regions at the EU level. Over half of the EU's tourist accommodation establishments are in coastal areas and 30% of overnight stays are at beach resorts. Around 2.8 million people were directly employed in the sector in 2018. Therefore, CMT is of major importance in the European economy as the competitiveness of the sector is a driver for sustainable growth, jobs, and social cohesion.

Coastal and maritime tourism consists of sea-related tourist activities in the coastal and maritime areas including landside facilities and services necessary for tourism. In cold-water destinations, it is a sustainable economic activity for which the proximity of the cold-water resources is an advantage, and which focuses on creating unique blue experiences for niche markets and increasing human well-being in coastal and marine locations. It provides growing potential for the economic use of the cold-water resources in developing specific added-value, experience-based products. Indeed, cold-water destinations have rather different issues in tourism development than their warm-water cousins.

The cold-water destinations include the following competitive assets: strong natural environment and direct encounters with nature, unusual terrestrial and marine wildlife, unique geologic and atmospheric features, scenic values, local culture, and special interest activities. These destinations are defined by small-scale tourism, and the nature of tourism is described as active, because people visit the destinations to engage in specific activities. Visitors usually value the quality of services more than cost-effectiveness. Due to low population and the low level of tourism penetration, the added value per tourist is greater than in warm-water destinations and the economic impact of tourism is important even with low figures. Cold-water destinations' appeal and attractiveness from the customer's point of view is based on similar features in Europe, which requires harmonising skills in European countries.

Due to all these features, a thematic and aligned curriculum is needed concentrating on the specific characteristics of coastal and maritime tourism in cold-water destinations. At present, there are extremely few offers for a sector-specific curricula and courses in coastal and maritime tourism in Europe as well as limited awareness of the specific skill needs. The lack of professional skills hampers tourism competitiveness. For this reason, the EU member states are invited to take into consideration challenges related to sector-specific skills development facing the EU tourism industry for taking advantage of new opportunities. It is important to close the skills gaps and match the supply of skills with the demand of the labor market. This means that tourism education and curriculum development must take a much more thematic approach to coastal and maritime tourism to increase educational offering, which is currently missing.

Skills development, in turn, stimulates regional economy, job creation and maintaining in coastal communities. It promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth ensuring also sustainable consumption and production patterns as well as sustainable use of marine resources. It increases economic importance and competitiveness of the CMT sector, its destinations, and

businesses at all levels. Countries, regions, destinations, and SMEs will be able to capture the growing potential of blue resources to foster blue growth, to create and seize entrepreneurial opportunities.



The project consortium visiting the Latvian coast (Photo: Skills4CMT project)

2 Skills4CMT project in a nutshell

2.1 Objectives and outputs

The Skills4CMT project makes a fundamental change to sector-specific skills development by improving the quality and digitalisation of thematic higher education in coastal and maritime tourism, since investing in people is a condition for its sustainable and competitive growth. The objective is threefold:

- 1.1. To increase understanding of the needed sector-specific skills and qualifications in CMT to tackle skills gaps and mismatches.
- 1.2. To develop a learning-outcomes-oriented curriculum to strengthen the strategic and structured cooperation of higher education institutions in CMT education.
- 1.3. To increase the use of innovative digital technologies, methods, and tools as well as open educational resources (OER) for skills development in CMT.

Project partners are six higher education institutions from five European cold-water countries with sea borders, namely Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Ireland, and the Netherlands. The main target group consists of potential and existing labour force working in coastal and maritime tourism in European cold-water destinations: Baltic Sea, North Sea, and Atlantic Isles. Other beneficiaries include higher education and vocational institutions and their teachers, tourism entrepreneurs and destination level organisations.

The Skills4CMT project produced three Intellectual Outputs (IOs) to reach its three objectives (Figure 1). Intellectual outputs are structured as follows:

IO1: Occupational profiles of three key occupations in CMT with descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and competences

IO2: Curriculum of coastal and maritime tourism (20 ECTS credits: 4 x 5 ECTS courses)

IO3: eLearning opportunities and Open Educational Resources (OER) for the curriculum

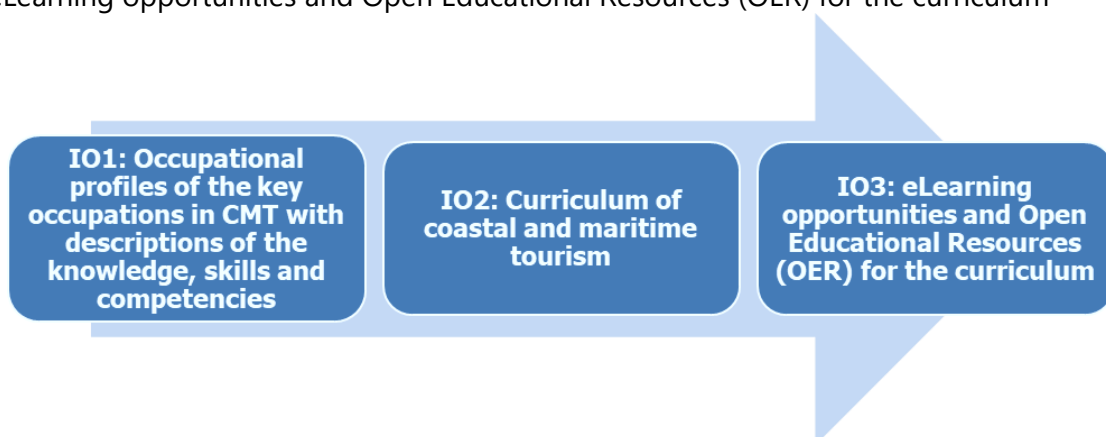


Figure 1. The structure of the project Intellectual Outputs

The Skills4CMT project aligns higher education better to the needs and opportunities of the coastal and maritime tourism sector in Europe, its countries and regions supporting the EU smart specialisation. It closes skills gaps and mismatches contributing to Erasmus+ priorities and promotes the development of the skills required to support the growth and competitiveness of coastal and maritime tourism sector. The Skills4CMT project stimulates regional economy, job creation and maintaining in coastal communities. As tourism is an international business, the project supports European cold-water destinations to grow as a coherent tourism destination and a common market.

2.2 Summary of the process

First, occupational profiles for three key occupations in CMT were designed by performing research activities. The European skills, competences, qualifications, and occupation (ESCO) reference tool was used as a framework. ESCO helps in identifying and classifying professional occupations and skills relevant for the EU labour market, education and training area and systematically showing the relations between those occupations and skills (European Commission, 2022b). In turn, occupational profiles help education and training providers to understand what skills the labour markets need, and potential employers to better understand the knowledge and qualification of students. They also support higher education institutions in redirecting skills that help to adapt to the changing business environment and promote graduates' employability. In other words, the occupational profiles enhance higher education institutions' capacity to match skills and jobs as well as provide them with labour market intelligence on current and future skills requirements.

Second, these occupational profiles were translated into a new curriculum of "The Curriculum of Coastal and Maritime Tourism in European Cold-Water Destinations" and its courses. The curriculum makes a fundamental change to sector-specific skills development and the quality of thematic higher education in CMT. It aligns the needed skills at the European level and supports European cold-water destinations to grow as a coherent tourism destination by concentrating to their specific features, multi-sectoral nature, and its niche products and markets. Countries, regions, destinations, and SMEs will be able to capture the growing potential of blue resources to foster blue growth, to create and seize entrepreneurial opportunities.

Third, eLearning opportunities and Open Educational Resources (OER) were designed and piloted. These resources support higher education institutions in taking up digital technologies and innovative and open pedagogies. This also increases integrated use of ICTs in the partner universities, digital competences of educators and virtual mobility of students.

3 Occupational profiles

In the beginning of the project, research was conducted to increase understanding of necessary sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism to tackle skills gaps and mismatches. The research question was: What knowledge, skills and competences are needed when a person works in one of the key occupations 1) a resort manager, 2) a micro-entrepreneur offering blue experiences or 3) a sustainability manager in the context of CMT?

As a result of the research, occupational profiles for three key occupations in CMT (Figure 2) were designed:

- resort manager responsible for destination planning and development,
- micro-entrepreneur offering blue experiences, and
- sustainability manager.

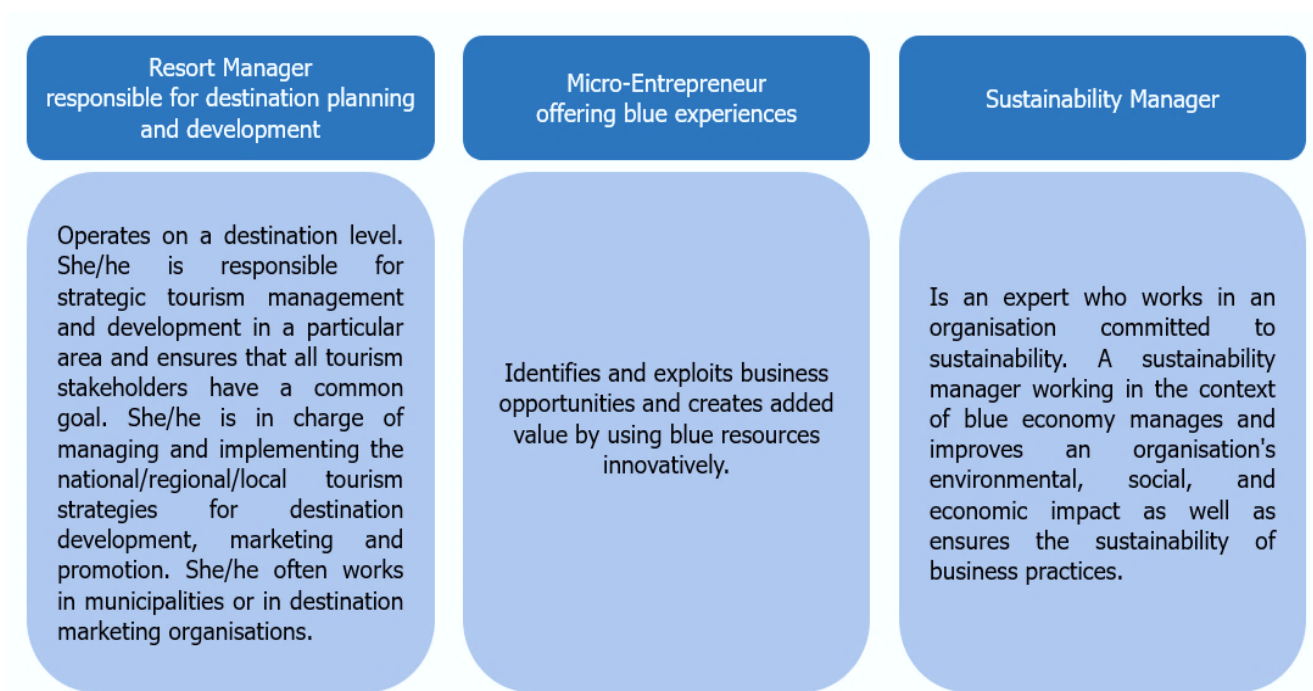


Figure 2. Definition of the key occupations

3.1 Development process

The development of the occupational profiles was executed with the following activities:

- Desk research was performed to identify occupational profiles with sector-specific professional knowledge, skills, competences, and qualifications in each country.
- New data was gathered related to the selected occupational profiles and sector-specific key skills in coastal and maritime tourism in each country. A focus group interview was established in each country consisting of experts of the selected occupations. In addition, six key experts working with coastal and maritime tourism were interviewed in each country.
- Occupational profiles were developed with a complete description and provisioning of the knowledge, skills, and competences. Each country developed their own profiles, and these were summarised to develop joint European level occupational profiles.

First, the relevant skillset in coastal and maritime tourism was identified in desk research, by reviewing existing curricula in vocational and higher educational institutions, national and regional tourism strategies and reports and previous projects' results. Altogether 40 strategies, 43 projects and 80 curricula were examined to provide a wide overview of the necessary sector-specific skills and competences. Additionally, several related articles were reviewed to identify the links between research, and strategies and curricula. The collected information was processed by qualitative content analysis, which allowed us to summarise the collected keywords and later generalise and interpret the findings.

Second, new data was gathered by interviewing key stakeholders during spring 2021. The interviewees were selected carefully to cover the widest possible area in terms of location, field of activity, experience as well as coherence. In total, 89 persons were included in the research either as interviewees or as participants in a focus group interview (Figure 3). The areas of activity of the interviewees were diverse including the representatives from various businesses such as accommodation, walking and hiking, food tourism, destination development, boat trips, glamping, adventure tourism, sailing and small ports' operating, coastal hotel and resorts, to higher education institutions and governmental or destination level development organisations.

Third, the emerging themes were identified, grouped together, and summarised regarding each occupational profile. The European skills, competences, qualifications, and occupation (ESCO) reference tool was used as a framework when developing the profiles. Qualitative content analysis was used to extract the relevant information and to examine patterns in a systematic manner. Additionally, to identify the word frequencies, new ideas and observations were sought. The outcome of this research was to three occupational profiles for the key occupations in CMT including the necessary, sector-specific knowledge, skills, and competences.

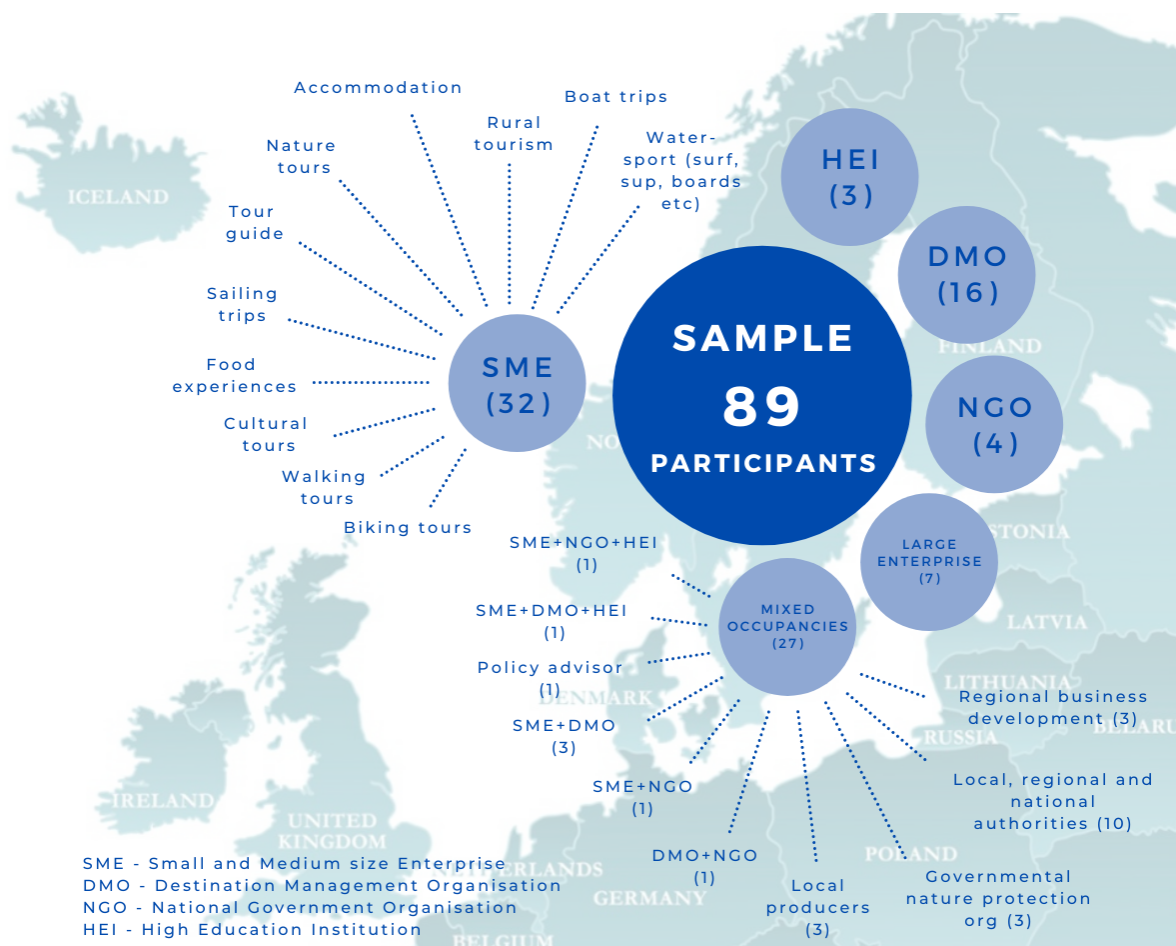


Figure 3. Sample composition of experts and focus group interviews.

What is ESCO?

ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) is the European classification of skills, competences, qualifications, and occupations.

ESCO works like a dictionary, describing, identifying, and classifying professional occupations and skills relevant for the EU labour market and education and training area and systematically showing the relations between those occupations and skills. ESCO provides descriptions of 3008 occupations and 13.890 skills linked to these occupations. The aim of ESCO is to support job mobility across Europe and therefore a more integrated and efficient labour market, by offering a "common language" on occupations and skills that can be used by different stakeholders on employment and education and training topics. It is available in an online portal where its dataset of occupations and skills can be consulted and downloaded free of charge.

Source: European Commission. Visit the online portal: <https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en>

3.2 Occupational profile: Resort Manager

The first occupational profile is a profile of a Resort Manager responsible for destination management. The person working as a Resort Manager is responsible for destination planning and development operates on a destination level, and for strategic tourism management and development in a particular area. She/he ensures that all tourism stakeholders have a common goal. She/he oversees managing and implementing the national/regional/local tourism strategies for destination development, marketing, and promotion. She/he often works in municipalities or in destination marketing organisations. In the following table 1, the knowledge, skills and competences are described.

Table 1. Occupational Profile of a Resort Manager

Category	Knowledge	Skills and competences
Sustainable destination management	Comprehensive stakeholder coordination in CMT	Analyse stakeholder potential in applying relevant long-term engagement methods, and mediate problem situations while demonstrating high-level leadership skills
	Integrated coastal zone management and policy development	Identify and implement coastal and maritime policy development related activities and communicate economic, natural, cultural impacts
	Project management in coastal destinations	Implement methods of sustainable management of resources in coastal tourism projects and analyse public and private funding opportunities Consider destination-specific protection/conservation issues and implement assessment methods of carrying capacity
	Seasonality management	Understand seasonality management needs and create necessary solutions in particular coastal destinations
Coastal destination marketing	Coastal destination branding and marketing	Develop and implement destination-specific marketing plans while using different marketing channels, promoting cooperation with coastal destination partners, and managing specific blue target groups
Support of tourism entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurial support in coastal and maritime tourism	Inform enterprises about the destination management strategy and activities, and support their competitiveness by organising courses, create platforms for dialog and increase the skills by providing trainings

3.3 Occupational profile: micro-entrepreneur offering blue experiences

The second occupational profile is a profile for a micro-entrepreneur offering blue experiences. The entrepreneur identifies and exploits business opportunities and creates added value by using blue resources innovatively. In the following table 2, the knowledge, skills and competences are described.

Table 2. Occupational profile of a micro-entrepreneur offering blue experiences

Category	Knowledge	Skills and competences
Cooperation	Collaborative business development	Collaborate between businesses, municipalities, and communities in product development, sales, and marketing
Service Design	Blue experiences design	Design meaningful, safe, and responsible coastal tourism experiences for different segments based on blue resources
	Specifics of seasonality management in CMT	Contribute to reducing seasonality through smart service design
	Coastal and maritime resources	Identify and integrate the uniqueness of coastal and maritime resources e.g., natural and cultural heritage, local (food) products and wellbeing effects in product development
	Storytelling	Use storytelling as a tool to enrich and enhance tourist experience and promote the uniqueness of coastal and maritime surroundings
Sustainability	Responsible and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources in coastal areas	Promote and contribute to the conservation and preservation of marine ecosystems and cultural heritage
	Interconnectedness of nature, entrepreneurship, and society in the coastal and marine surroundings	Achieve balanced growth in coastal regions by understanding close relationships between nature, entrepreneurship, and society
Marketing	Blue customer behaviour	Identify business opportunities related to coastal and maritime tourism niche markets and blue tourists as a target group, their motivations, and needs

3.4 Occupational profile: Sustainability Manager

The third occupational profile is a profile for a Sustainability Manager. The person is an expert who works in an organisation (e.g., in a hotel) committed to sustainability. In larger organisations, sustainability issues can be one's full-time job but in smaller organisations one might be responsible for a variety of different business activities, of which improving sustainability is just one of the duties. A sustainability manager working in the context of blue economy manages and improves the organisation's environmental, social, and economic impacts as well as ensures the sustainability of business practices and local communities. In the following table 3 the knowledge, skills and competences are described.

Table 3. Occupational profile of a Sustainability Manager

Category	Knowledge	Skills and competences
Sustainable Development	Pillars and principles of sustainable development	Apply sustainability principles in organisation's business activities and improve organisation's environmental, social, and economic performance
Resource-efficiency	Circular economy	Find and apply opportunities to keep materials and products in use, apply the 9R principle at organisational level
	Energy, water, and waste management	Implement and develop resource efficient practices in sustainable production and consumption of energy, water, and waste valuing the uniqueness of coastal and maritime surroundings
Co-operation	Value-chain co-operation	Promote local partnerships and build cross-industry networks in product/service production and consumption in coastal regions
Sustainability legislation	Legislation and regulations related to sustainability	Integrate the specifics and objectives of the EU and national legislations and regulations related to sustainability in organisation's actions
Impact management	Impact on environment and community	Develop and monitor organisational indicators related to organisation's impact on the environment (incl. climate change in coastal regions) and local communities. Promote initiatives related to plastics and the protection of seas as well as increased use of seafood
	Sustainability certifications	Apply and manage sustainability certification schemes relevant in organisation's situated in the coastal zones
	Sustainability communication	Communicate sustainability actions and indicators, increase customer awareness related to their role in sustainable development

4 Curriculum development

Next, these occupational profiles were translated into a new curriculum of “The Curriculum of Coastal and Maritime Tourism in European Cold-Water Destinations” and its courses (Table 4). The curriculum with its purpose, key learning outcomes, and course titles was designed. This stage also involved developing the course descriptions including the purpose of each course, the keywords describing the course content as well as the most important learning outcomes.

The developed curriculum makes a fundamental change to sector-specific skills development and the quality of thematic higher education in coastal and maritime tourism. It supports European cold-water destinations to grow as a coherent tourism destination and concentrates to their specific features, multi-sectoral nature, and its niche products and markets. The industry-driven curriculum meets the evolving labour market needs as it is designed in collaboration with tourism professionals.

The purpose of “the Curriculum of Coastal and Maritime Tourism in European Cold-Water Destinations” is to provide an aligned and relevant skillset and knowledge necessary for meeting the challenges and for seizing the opportunities of coastal and maritime tourism in European cold-water destinations. When taking these studies, learners acquire specialised knowledge, skills, and competences relevant to develop and manage coastal and maritime tourism in cold-water destinations. In this case, by cold-water destinations are meant the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, and the Atlantic Isles in Europe.

The key learning outcomes are related to understanding the fundamental concepts of coastal and marine tourism, its resources and legislation. The curriculum provides learners with applicable knowledge, skills, and competences for designing and management of sustainable destinations and designing coastal tourism products. The learner develops the ability to identify and exploit business opportunities, and to create value by using blue resources in an innovative way. The curriculum also provides learners knowledge, skills, and competence on how to manage and improve organisational level sustainability. In sum, the learning outcomes relate to designing and managing sustainable coastal tourism destinations, operating tourism businesses in this context as well as designing coastal and marine tourism products and services for different segments in a sustainable way.

Stakeholder cooperation and sustainability are the cross-cutting themes. The importance of collaboration and identification of the key stakeholders and their role are the key themes in the curriculum. The principles and practices of sustainability are explored within the context of individual businesses operations and from a destination perspective. All aspects of sustainability are included: economic, social, and environmental as well as understanding the interconnection between nature, business, and society in the coastal and marine surroundings.

The extent of the curriculum is 20 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits. It consists of four separate courses, each 5 ECTS credits. The curriculum is placed at level 6 in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF 6) equivalent to bachelor level studies in European higher education institutions. The curriculum can be integrated in the bachelors’ degree programmes as a 20 ECTS credits specialisation module or a minor. It can be delivered during one academic semester.

Table 4. Curriculum of Coastal and Maritime Tourism in European Cold-Water Destinations

Title of the curriculum	Coastal and Maritime Tourism in European Cold-Water Destinations
Extent of the curriculum	20 ECTS credits
Curriculum level	EQF 6, Bachelor level
Duration of the curriculum	1 semester
Target group	First, second, and third-year tourism and hospitality bachelor level students as well as tourism industry stakeholders. Tourism entrepreneurs, destinations managers, and sustainability managers are encouraged to participate. All interested learners, not depending on their background, can participate in the introduction course to learn basics of tourism in coastal and marine cold-water destinations.
Purpose	The purpose is to provide an aligned and relevant skillset and knowledge necessary for meeting the challenges and for seizing the opportunities of coastal and maritime tourism in European cold-water destinations. When taking these studies, learners acquire specialised knowledge, skills, and competences relevant to develop and manage coastal and maritime tourism in cold-water destinations.
Key learning outcomes	<p>The curriculum aims at increasing understanding about the fundamental concepts of coastal and marine tourism, its resources and legislation. The curriculum provides learners with applicable knowledge, skills, and competences for designing and management of sustainable destinations and designing coastal tourism products. Learners develop the ability to identify and exploit business opportunities, and to create value by using blue resources in an innovative way. The curriculum also provides learners knowledge, skills, and competence on how to manage and improve organisational level sustainability.</p> <p>In sum, the learning outcomes relate to designing and managing sustainable coastal tourism destinations, operating tourism businesses in this context as well as designing coastal and marine tourism products and services for different segments in a sustainable way.</p> <p>Stakeholder cooperation and sustainability are the cross-cutting themes in the curriculum. The importance of collaboration and identification of the key stakeholders and their role are the key themes in the curriculum. The principles and practices of sustainability are explored within the context of individual businesses operations and from a destination perspective. All aspects of sustainability are included: economic, social, and environmental as well as understanding the interconnection between nature, business, and society in the coastal and marine surroundings.</p>

Course list	<p>The curriculum consists of four courses, 5 ECTS credits each. The introductory course includes the basics of coastal and marine tourism while three thematic specialisation courses cover the key themes of coastal and marine tourism in European cold-water destinations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to Coastal and Maritime Tourism (5 ECTS credits) 2. Coastal and Maritime Tourism Sustainability Management (5 ECTS credits) 3. Coastal and Maritime Destination Design (5 ECTS credits) 4. Designing Blue Experiences (5 ECTS credits)
Study mode	<p>The curriculum is implemented as an international online curriculum that increases flexibility of studying and provides learners with intercultural competences. The curriculum uses innovative digital technologies, methods, and tools as well as open educational resources. The courses of the curriculum can be studied in a digital platform at own pace with pre-recorded lectures, variety of contemporary online activities, and academic sources.</p>

The courses are the following (Figure 4):

1. Introduction to Coastal and Maritime Tourism
2. Coastal and Maritime Tourism Sustainability Management
3. Coastal and Maritime Destination Design
4. Designing Blue Experiences

The introductory course number 1 focuses on the basics of coastal and marine tourism while three following courses from 2 to 4 are thematic specialisation courses covering the key themes of coastal and maritime tourism. See the course descriptions in the next pages.

The target group of the curriculum are first, second, and third-year tourism and hospitality bachelor level students as well as tourism industry stakeholders. Tourism entrepreneurs, destinations managers, and sustainability managers are encouraged to participate as the curriculum provides value for the industry. All interested learners, not depending on their background, can participate in the introductory course to learn basics of tourism in coastal and marine cold-water destinations.

The curriculum is implemented as an international online curriculum that increases flexibility of studying and provides learners with intercultural competences. The curriculum uses innovative digital technologies, methods, and tools as well as open educational resources for skills development. The courses of the curriculum can be studied in a digital platform at own pace with pre-recorded lectures, a variety of contemporary online activities, and academic sources.

Introduction to Coastal and Maritime Tourism, 5 ECTS credits

- Coastal and Marine Tourism Components and Resources (incl. Natural and Cultural Heritage); Impacts of Tourism in Coastal Areas; Blue Tourist Wellbeing; Tourism Entrepreneurship in CMT; Sustainable and Responsible Tourism; Tourism Policy and Regulations in Coastal Surroundings

Coastal and Maritime Tourism Sustainability Management, 5 ECTS credits

- Sustainability Management and Development in Coastal and Maritime Tourism Organisations; UN's Sustainable Development Goals, Circular Economy within Tourism Organisations; Climate Change and Tourism in Coastal Areas; Co-operation and Communication for Sustainable Tourism; Sustainability Certificates for Tourism Organisations

Coastal and Maritime Destination Design, 5 ECTS

- Stakeholder Relations; Co-Creation (Facilitation, Consulting); Tourism Impact on Destination; Destination Design; Criteria, Characteristics, and Challenges of Competitive and Sustainable Destinations; Tourism Trends; Sustainable Destination Development and Its Challenges Process, Impact Factors and Carrying Capacity; Seasonality Management

Blue Experience Design, 5 ECTS

- Collaboration, Process and Strategies; Stakeholders Mapping Techniques; Coastal and Maritime Resources; Blue Tourist Profile; Product Development Process (incl. market segmenting); Tools for Coastal Tourism Services; Safety in Coastal and Maritime Tourism; Innovative Digital Solutions; Storytelling

Figure 4. Courses of the curriculum

4.1 Course: Introduction to Coastal and Maritime Tourism

The first introductory course to coastal and maritime tourism is an informative starter pack of the coastal and maritime tourism sector and its key issues. It provides learners with an understanding of the fundamental issues, concepts, and resources available in coastal and marine tourism. The short course description is introduced in the next table 5.

Table 5. Introduction to Coastal and Maritime Tourism course

ECTS Credits	5 ECTS
Competence	By passing this course, learner understands the fundamental issues, concepts, and resources in coastal and marine tourism from tourist's, tourism businesses', and destination's point of view.
Content	Introduction to Tourism and Coastal and Marine Tourism; Coastal and Marine Tourism Components and Resources; Responsible and Sustainable use of the Resources; Impacts of Tourism; Blue Tourist Wellbeing; Tourism Marketing; Tourism Entrepreneurship; Responsible and Sustainable Tourism; Tourism Policy and Regulations
Learning Outcomes	On completion of the course, learner will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the key practices in coastal and marine tourism. • Identify the component elements involved in the development of coastal and marine tourism at a destination. • Interpret the practices of sustainable development within a coastal and marine destination. • Classify the topical areas of coastal and marine tourism. • Summarise the elements and impacts of the blue tourism experience in the coastal and marine tourism industry. • Explain the appropriate regulations and legislation relating to coastal and marine tourism.

4.2 Course 2: Coastal and Maritime Tourism Sustainability Management

The second course is about sustainability management in coastal and maritime tourism. The course develops competences of transdisciplinary sustainable management in coastal and maritime tourism organisations. It focuses on sustainability matters in the context of blue economy and provides learners knowledge on how to manage and improve the organisation's environmental, social, and economic impacts. The course also provides skills of sustainability communication targeted at internal and external stakeholders. The short description is attached here as table 6.

Table 6. Coastal and Maritime Tourism Sustainability Management course

ECTS Credits	5 ECTS
Competence	By passing the course, the learner develops knowledge and expertise to become an expert who works in a tourism or leisure organisation committed to sustainability in coastal and marine areas.
Content	Sustainability Management and Development in Coastal and Maritime Tourism Organisations; UN's Sustainable Development Goals, Circular Economy within Tourism Organisations; Climate Change and Tourism; Co-operation and Communication for Sustainable Tourism; Sustainability Certificates for Tourism Organisations
Learning Outcomes	On completion of the course, learner will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the UNs sustainable development goals (SDG's) in tourism destinations and businesses. • Determine the interconnectivity between tourism and climate change. • Integrate sustainable development and circular principles within tourism destinations and businesses. • Monitor and measure sustainable development in tourism destinations and businesses. • Communicate sustainable practices towards stakeholders, especially to customers.

4.3 Course 3: Coastal and Maritime Destination Design

The third course is about coastal and maritime tourism destination design. The purpose of the course is to provide learners with applicable coastal and maritime tourism sector-specific knowledge, skills, and competence in designing and managing sustainable destinations. The short course description is in table 7 below.

Table 7. Coastal and Maritime Destination Design course

ECTS Credits	5 ECTS
Competence	By passing the course, learner gets knowledge and practical tools to understand and apply the principles of holistic destination development. Blue destination manager sees the big picture and far horizon simultaneously recognising micro level aspects that could become turning points.
Content	Stakeholder Relations; Co-Creation (Facilitation, Consulting); Tourism Impact on Destination; Destination Design; Criteria, Characteristics, and Challenges of Competitive and Sustainable Destinations; Tourism Trends; Sustainable Destination Development and Its Challenges Process, Impact Factors and Carrying Capacity); Seasonality Management
Learning Outcomes	On completion of the course, learner will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe characteristics and challenges of sustainable and competitive coastal and maritime destinations. • Identify the role of key stakeholders and their interconnectedness in blue destination development. • Analyse the current situation of a coastal destination for sustainable development • Create a future vision for sustainable development of a coastal destination.

4.4 Course 4: Designing Blue Experiences

The fourth course is about designing coastal and maritime tourism experiences. The course provides learners with knowledge of tools for designing coastal tourism products, to develop the ability to identify and exploit business opportunities, and to create value by using blue resources in an innovative way. This course also increases skills to find creative sustainable solutions for the development of business in the coastal tourism sector and to apply the principles of design thinking in designing blue experiences. The short course description is in table 8 below.

Table 8. Designing Blue Experiences course

ECTS Credits	5 ECTS
Competence	By passing this course, the learner develops creative thinking skills, learns to create sustainable solutions for the development of business in the coastal and marine tourism sector, and to apply principles of service design in designing blue experiences. The course provides knowledge of the principles of collaboration and co-creation and the application of these principles in service design.
Content	Collaboration, Process and Strategies; Stakeholders Mapping Techniques; Coastal and Maritime Resources; Blue Tourist Profile; Product Development Process (incl. market segmenting); Tools for Coastal Tourism Services; Safety in Coastal and Maritime Tourism; Innovative Digital Solutions; Storytelling
Learning Outcomes	<p>On completion of the course, the learner will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the importance of collaboration, identify, and discover key stakeholders of the coastal and marine tourism business. • Understand the characteristics of blue tourism services (incl. safety, seasonality, resources) and integrate these efficiently in the development and design of innovative coastal and maritime tourism experiences. • Determine the customer segments relevant to the business and designs the persona for a segment. • Select proper service design tool for the development tourism products and applies it for the sustainable development of the business. • Study local traditional or content related stories and to create, modify, integrate, and interpret them with other services of the business. • Identify and exploit business opportunities and create value by using blue resources in an innovative way.

5 eLearning opportunities and Open Educational Resources (OER)

One of the project's main objectives was to develop digitalisation of European higher education in coastal and maritime tourism. Therefore, for the developed curriculum, eLearning opportunities and Open Educational Resources (OER) were designed. In practice, a Moodle platform was designed to pilot all four courses. The platform can be accessed through the project website www.skills4cmt.eu

Introduction to Coastal and Maritime Tourism is a 5 ECTS credits self-study course that is possible to study according to participant's own schedule, even if it is designed to be completed in six weeks. The participant can study one part at a time and then continue to the next one. It is, however, possible to study the different topics in preferred order.

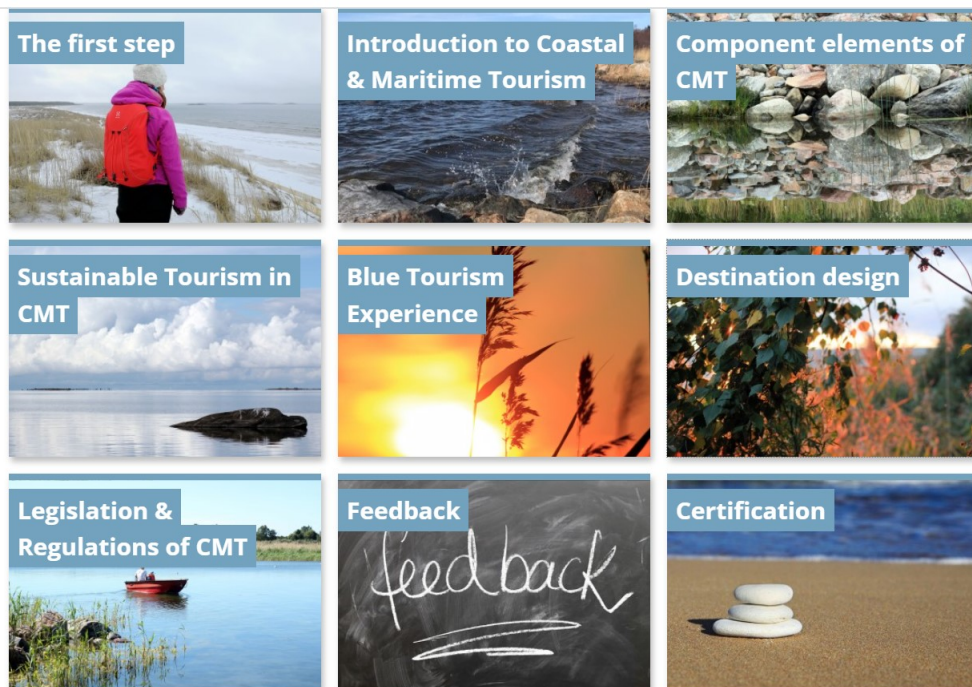


Figure 5. Topics of the introduction course

The purpose of the Sustainability Management course is to develop competences of transdisciplinary sustainable management in coastal and maritime tourism organisations. The course is a self-study 5 ECTS credits course that is designed to be completed in over five weeks. The participants can also proceed at their own pace, depending on the base knowledge.

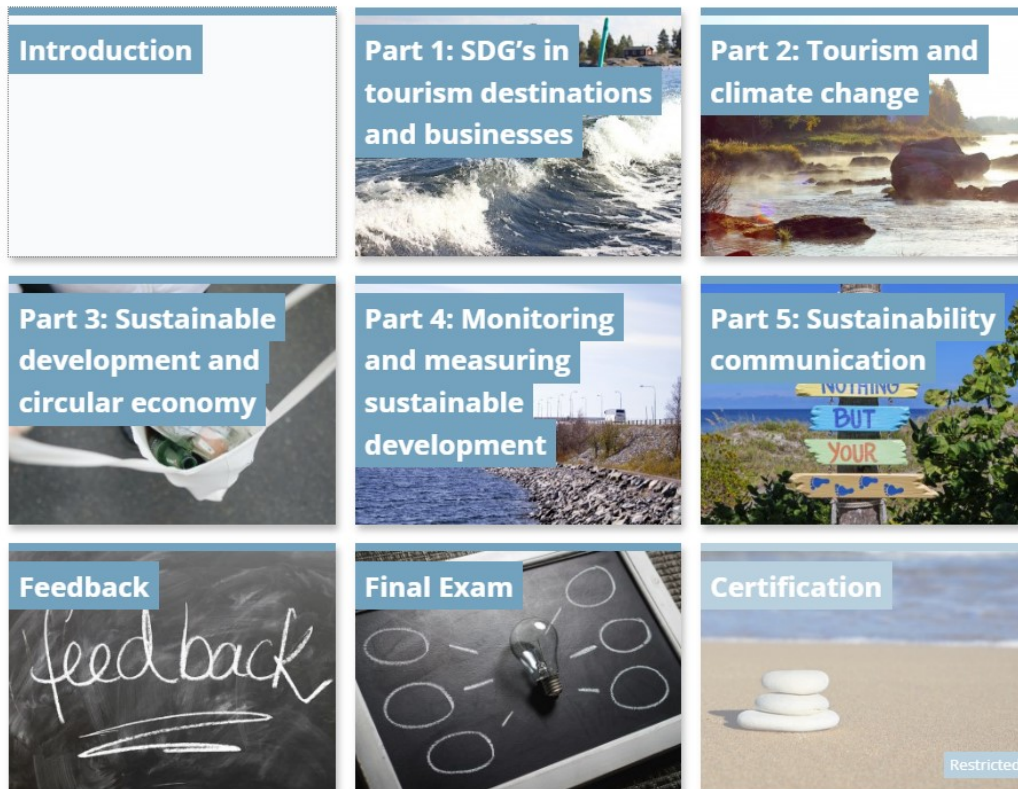


Figure 6. Topics of the sustainability management course

The course *Coastal and Maritime Destination Design* is also a 5 ECTS credits self-study course about that the participants is able to study according to the own schedule, even if it is designed to be completed in six weeks.

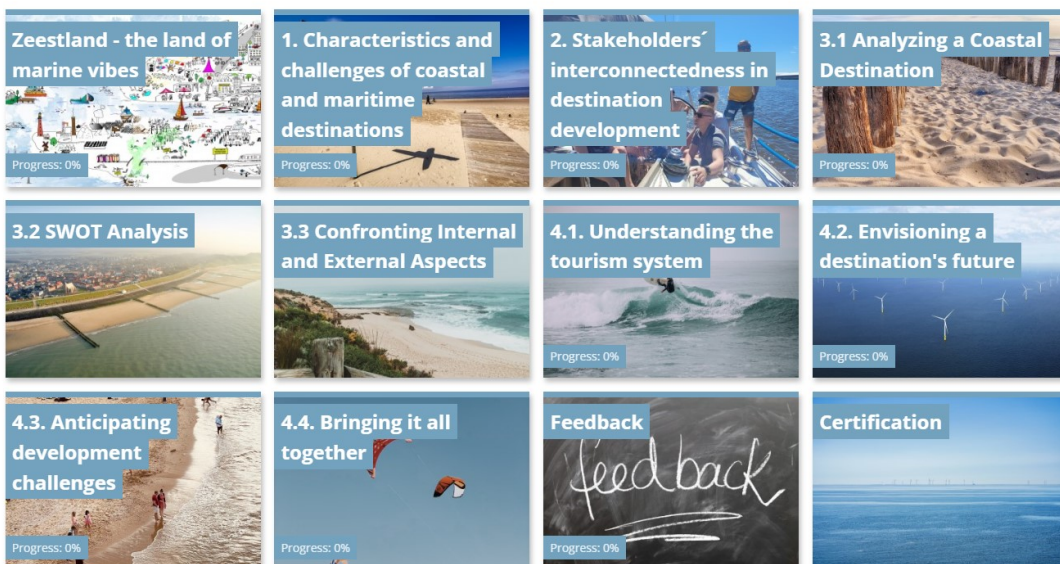


Figure 7. Topics of the destination design course

The purpose of the Blue Experience Design course is to provide knowledge of tools for designing coastal tourism products, to develop the ability to identify and exploit business opportunities, and to create value by using blue resource in an innovative way. This thematic course provides skills to find effective, creative, and sustainable solutions for the development of one's business in the coastal tourism sector and skills to apply the principles of design thinking in designing blue experiences.

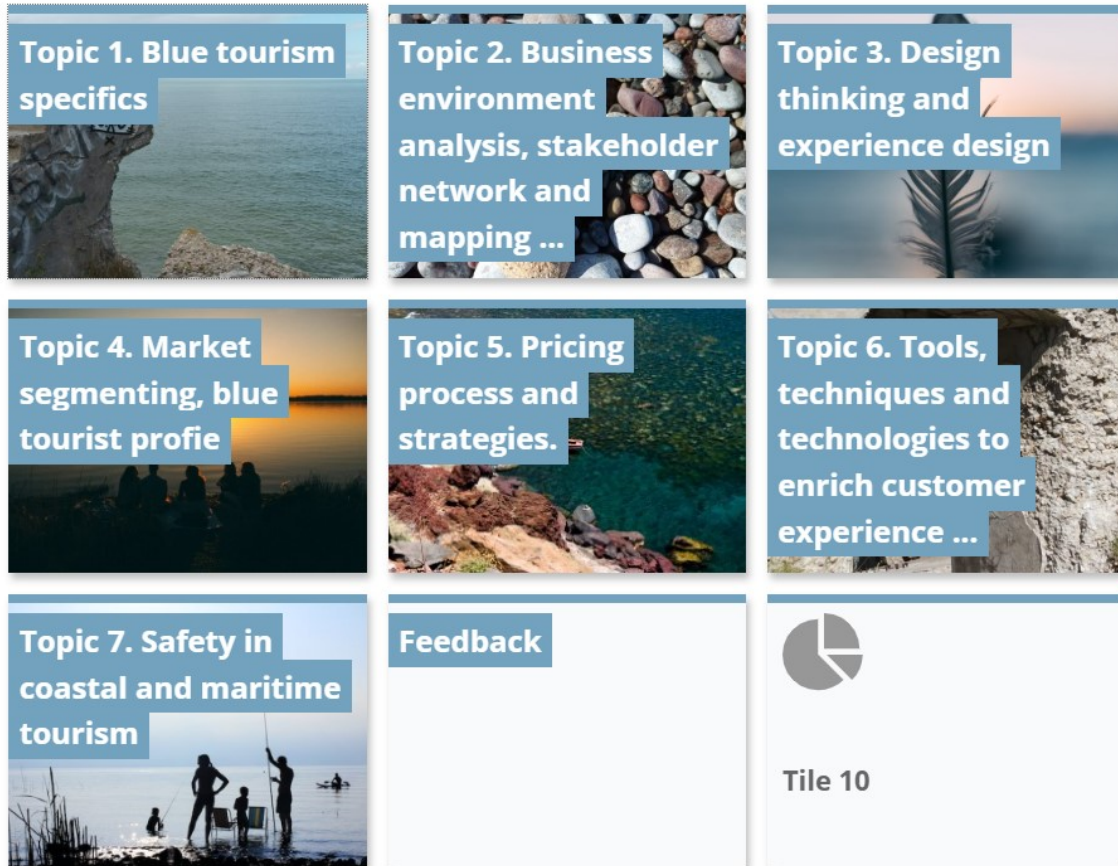


Figure 8. Topics of the blue experience design course

6 Developing joint European education: Lessons learned

6.1 Course feedback

When the eLearning opportunities and Open Educational Resources (OER) were piloted, feedback was collected from the participants with a survey. It focused on addressing their relevance to the target group's needs and learning outcomes. Based on this feedback the eLearning opportunities and Open Educational Resources (OER) were revised.

Feedback was received from 104 respondents (Figure 9). Of these, 78 respondents were full-time students, 9 were employees, 6 were entrepreneurs, and 11 did not want to state their occupation.

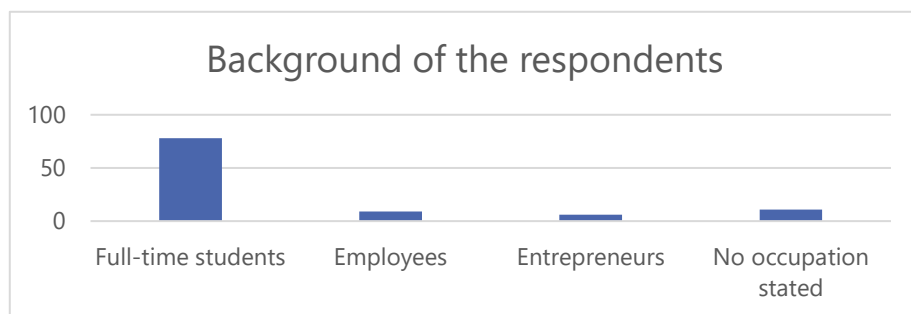


Figure 9. Background of the respondents (n=104)

In terms of location, 44 respondents were from Finland, 39 were from Estonia, 9 were from the Netherlands, 10 were from Greece, 4 were from Latvia, 1 was from Ireland, and 1 was from Nigeria (Figure 10).

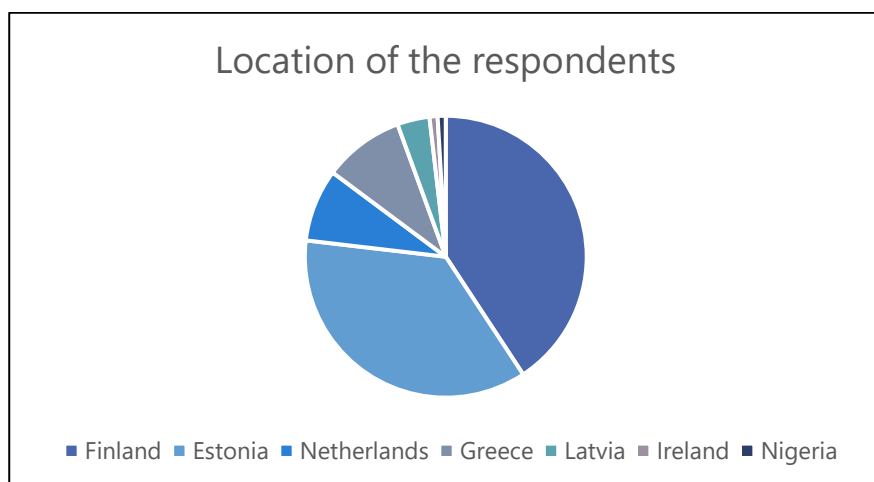


Figure 10. Location of the respondents (n=104)

6.1.1 Introduction to Coastal and Maritime Tourism

The first course, Introduction to Coastal and Maritime Tourism, aimed to provide an overview of coastal and maritime tourism, highlighting its importance, challenges, and opportunities. The course had a total of 34 feedbacks: 24 were full-time students, 4 were employees, 2 were entrepreneurs, and 4 others. From these respondents, 27 were from Finland, 4 from the Netherlands, 3 from Greece, and 1 from each of the following countries: Estonia, Ireland, and Nigeria.

Based on the feedback the course received positive ratings. Most of the students found the registration process to be smooth, and the Moodle platform was deemed appropriate and well-designed. The course structure and materials were clear, diverse, and interesting to most participants, and the course assignments were found to contribute positively to their learning. The guidance provided during the course was also considered good by most participants. Most participants perceived that the course increased their sector-specific knowledge of Coastal and Maritime Tourism.

The feedback also provided insight into areas of improvement for future iterations of the course. The participants suggested improvements in language consistency, clarity, and conciseness of the materials, practicality, platform usability, personal interaction, test practicality, and additional resources. Some participants requested more practical content and case studies, while others wanted more opportunities for personal interaction with fellow students and instructors. Some students found the tests to be irrelevant to their daily work as coastal entrepreneurs and requested more practical and relevant tests.

In conclusion, the Coastal and Maritime Tourism course received positive feedback from most of the participants, and the availability of free online learning opportunities was highly appreciated. The course materials and structure were clear and well-organised, and the concept of the course was interesting and inspiring to many participants.

6.1.2 Coastal and Maritime Tourism Sustainability Management

The second course, Coastal and Maritime Tourism Sustainability Management, aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of sustainability management in coastal and maritime tourism. The survey had a total of 19 respondents: 15 were full-time students, 1 was an employee, 2 were entrepreneurs and 1 did not want to state his/her status. In total, 9 respondents were from Finland, 5 from Netherlands and 5 from Greece.

The course was well-received by the participants who gave feedback. The registration process was smooth, and the Moodle platform was found to be appropriate and well put together. The Moodle platform received very positive feedback for its course design and structure. The guidance provided during the course was considered good, and the course was found to increase sector-specific knowledge about CMT. The course assignments were ranked very positive for contributing well to the participants' learning, and the overall grade for the course material was positive. The concept of the course was well-liked, and the material provided was informative and easy to understand. Most of the feedback was positive, and based on the feedback, the course was informative and valuable. The feedback also provided insight into areas of improvement for future iterations of the course, such as improving the navigation of the course platform, incorporating more sustainable company examples, and adding more videos. Some participants also found certain aspects of the assignments

unclear or confusing. Technical issues, such as difficulty accessing certain articles and videos, were also reported. In summary, the course on Coastal and Maritime Tourism Sustainability Management was generally well-received.

6.1.3 Coastal and Maritime Destination Design

The third course, Coastal and Maritime Destination Design, aimed to provide an understanding of destination design principles in coastal and maritime tourism. The course had a total of 44 respondents of which 34 were full-time students, 4 were employees, 1 was an entrepreneur and 4 did not want to state their status. In total, 38 respondents were from Estonia, 4 from Finland, and 2 from Greece and the Netherlands.

Participants generally found the registration process to be smooth, while Moodle was considered an appropriate platform, but the course design and structure received a lower rating. Guidance during the course was considered good, and the course was helpful in increasing sector-specific knowledge about CMT. The course assignments were seen to contribute to learning. According to the feedback, the course had good materials, interesting exercises, informative case studies, and a convenient structure. However, some participants expressed negative feedback, indicating that they did not like certain aspects of the course, such as complicated or technically not working exercises, and long and boring tests.

The most common issues that need to be addressed include the abundance and volume of materials, technical construction, clarity of instructions, and relevance of assignments. Some participants also reported technical issues, such as errors during tests and losing their work due to system errors. Despite the issues, some students appreciated the knowledge gained from the course and the materials referred to, as well as the course structure and materials.

6.1.4 Designing Blue Experiences in Coastal Maritime Tourism

The last course of the 20 ECTS module, Designing Blue Experiences in Coastal Maritime Tourism, aimed to provide an understanding of the development of blue experiences in coastal and maritime tourism. There were 7 respondents on this course of which 5 were full-time students, 1 was an entrepreneur and 1 did not want to state her/his status. Based on the responses, there were 4 students from Latvia, 2 from Finland, and 1 from Greece.

Participants generally found the registration process to be smooth, while Moodle was seen as an appropriate platform with a well put together course design and structure. Guidance during the course was rated as good, and the course was helpful in increasing sector-specific knowledge about CMT. The course assignments were seen to contribute to learning. The overall grade for the course material was also positive. Based on the responses the concept of the course was particularly appealing to most of the respondents. They found the course to be very well-organised, with interesting and informative materials, including videos and reading materials that provided detailed explanations of the topics covered. Some participants specifically mentioned that they appreciated the video materials, as they made learning easier for them.

It was suggested that assignments could use clearer instructions and feedback to help students better understand and improve their work. Some participants found the course layout to be impractical and difficult to navigate, suggesting that a more user-friendly design would be beneficial. Also, some participants preferred live lectures to better facilitate their learning. Lastly, some participants found the course material too long and difficult to comprehend, indicating that the course content could be refined or presented differently. Overall, the feedback from the respondents suggests that the course was engaging, informative, and well-structured.

6.1.5 Summary of results

In conclusion, the results of all the courses suggest that the courses met their intended learning outcomes and provided the participants with the knowledge and skills required to make informed decisions in the sector (Figure 11). Overall, in all the courses the registration process was found to be smooth, and Moodle was seen as an appropriate platform. The courses were helpful in increasing sector-specific knowledge about CMT. The guidance provided during the courses was considered good. The course assignments were seen to contribute to learning and the material provided on the courses was seen as informative and the exercises interesting.



Figure 11. Positive aspects of the courses

Based on the feedback provided, there are several areas which could be improved across the four courses (Figure 12). The most common areas that need to be addressed include clarity and conciseness of the materials, practicality, platform usability, personal interaction, test practicality, and additional resources. Participants requested more practical content, case studies, along with clearer instructions and feedback for assignments. Technical issues, such as difficulty accessing certain articles and videos, were also reported. Some participants preferred live lectures to better facilitate their learning, while others found the course material too long and difficult to comprehend.



Figure 12. Improvement suggestions for the courses

Overall, these findings are critical for the development of the coastal and maritime tourism sector, as they demonstrate the need for continued education and training in this area. As the industry continues to evolve, education and training will be essential in ensuring that stakeholders are equipped to manage the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Based on these results, the effectiveness of online learning platforms in providing education and training for the coastal and maritime tourism sector could be a valuable topic to examine closer.

Two courses were primarily taught by Finnish instructors and had Finnish students, and the feedback received was noticeably different from the other courses, with a more positive tone. It raises the question of whether the variation in feedback is due to the lecturers' online teaching experience or the students' preparedness for online learning, or possibly a result of cultural differences. Due to this, cultural factors that influence online learning, such as communication styles, learning preferences, and technology usage, and how they may differ across cultures could be investigated in the future. In addition, the impact of cultural differences on student feedback and performance in online learning environments is an important topic to explore.

The feedback from the course participants was summarised with the assistance of ChatGPT, a language model trained by OpenAI. Additionally, it was used to identify new research topics.

6.2 Lecturers experiences

In the end of the project, lecturers participating in the project evaluated the project implementation and its impact on their organisations and their personal development. According to the lecturers, the most important impact was the skills development in online teaching and learning of the lecturers. The lecturers expressed that they learned a lot about digital pedagogy and teaching in general. In the project, they were able to test online pedagogy in a different way than they normally do in their own organisation. They got tools for online teaching and learning, a change to reflect their own teaching contents and methods and compare it with other lecturers and higher education

institutions. This in turn gave ideas about developing these in the own institution. Joint discussions also increased understanding of educational offerings in the countries.

The lecturers stated that they learned about new ways of designing assignments and to use online platforms in their teaching. They also learned to broaden their perspective, consider other perspectives as well as their negotiation and multicultural teamwork skills improved. To many lecturers, this was their first Erasmus+ project, which meant that they also learned about the project work itself. Some of the lecturers were also just starting their career as lecturers, and they felt that they learned many essential issues about course design: how to plan and structure a course. In addition, many lecturers stated that the project increased their understanding of self-paced online teaching and learning, because this was a new format to them.

Furthermore, the project improved the lecturers' skills in developing an industry-driven curriculum, because the curriculum was developed based on industry interviews. These research activities enabled a deeper understanding of the skills gaps and needed skills as well as the common skills for the European cold-water destinations. It also increased learning about the similarities and differences in coastal and maritime tourism around European cold-water destinations. The industry-academia collaboration also encouraged the industry stakeholders to reflect on their skills and their development. The industry understood the importance of the topic and now they have educational self-study resources to increase their skills. The project also proved to the industry that academia can anticipate the skills needs and respond to those.

The project developed online course offering in the institutions. In the future, they have thematic courses to study, which hopefully raises students' interest towards working in coastal and maritime tourism, fosters their employability and increases their awareness of career opportunities in the industry. The participating institutions will be able to design micro degrees and minors based on the developed courses. The courses also increase their course offering in English, and they can serve better the needs of the exchange students. They can utilise the course offering in their elective studies and the developed materials in many ways. The designed assignments and their templates can also be adapted for other courses.

As project partnerships form a European expert network, partners can utilise it to promote internationalisation and collaborate in many different forms in the future. The partners can e.g., organise joint study visits, intensive weeks, summer schools as well as do joint research activities. Educators outside the partnership can also utilise the project outputs as they have access to high-quality eLearning materials and OER to use with their students. Higher education institutions can exploit the occupational profiles and the curriculum as tools when revising their existing study offering.

In sum, lecturers felt that they gained the following issues by participating in the project:



- Skills in online teaching and learning
- Negotiation skills, skills in multi-cultural teamwork and project management
- Skills in industry-driven curriculum development, course design
- Understanding in skills gaps and needs
- Understanding in tourism development in European cold-water destinations
- Increase in industry-academia collaboration
- Perspectives to educational offerings and practices in higher education institutions
- Increased international collaboration and partnerships
- Increased educational offering and possibility to develop the existing curriculum with the project outputs



The consortium meeting in the Netherlands (Photo: Skills4CMT project)

7 Practical examples of tourism in cold-water destinations

During the project, the project partners wrote blog posts related to the development of coastal and maritime tourism in cold-water destinations, their strengths and challenges. These texts can also be used as small case studies to increase learners understanding of the issues.

From upper class destinations to overtourism

18 February 2021 | Blog

Text: Jaana Ruoho

Fishing ports and seaside villages started to develop into seaside resorts during the industrial revolution in the latter half of the 18th century. People travelled to these coastal destinations mainly for health reasons. Names of these seaside resorts are familiar to many: Scarborough, Brighton and Blackpool in the UK and Heiligendamm in Germany, among others. The French Riviera became a destination for the British upper class by the end of the 18th century.

The explosion of mass tourism since the end of the WW2 developed the Mediterranean area to the main tourist area of the world. The distribution of this tourism is, however, unbalanced, concentrated in the north shore. Today, many Mediterranean destinations suffer from overtourism, and there is a need to renew the destinations.

Sun, sea, and sand package holidays remain popular even if coastal destinations attract tourists for a variety of different reasons: natural and cultural heritage, gastronomy, art, sport, recreation and shopping. Since coastal tourism is based on valuable and scarce resources: clean water and nature, beaches and landscape, cultural heritage, fresh and healthy food - sustainability of tourism is fundamental.

Conflicts in land use should be balanced with different stakeholder's needs to ensure environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Both cold-water and warm-water destinations need expertise, good destination management, up-to-date infrastructure, and investments in new technology to meet the requirements of sustainability.

Therefore, sector-specific knowledge and skills are essential to ensure needed expertise both on the company and destination management levels. A responsible business approach is required from all tourism businesses in coastal regions, regardless of the size of the company, or of the type of the coastal destination.

The challenge for Domestic Tourism Supplier in Ireland – and maybe elsewhere!

12 March 2021 | Blog

Text: Kevin Burns

'Rip of Ireland' a familiar term uttered by domestic holidaymakers. A repetition of negativity that focuses on price over value, and doesn't always compare like-for-like, is a growing concern for tourism providers in traditional busy tourist destinations. Tourism businesses in Ireland have been advised to plan on the basis that Irish holidaymakers will be their main source of revenue this year as the Covid-19 pandemic continues. Tourism has been at a near standstill due to restrictions on international travel. The near-term reduction will no doubt have some benefits on coastal ecosystems due to reduced pressure from activities such as boating and diving, as well as reductions in wastewater emissions from largely unoccupied coastal hotels and villages. But the socioeconomic impacts of dramatically reduced tourism activity on coastal tourism jobs and businesses are unprecedented and there are significant concerns regarding how the industry will recover in the medium and even longer term.

With staycation the only option for many, our coastal resorts and wilderness is expected to be thronged come the summer months. Providing an industry closed for nearly 9 months to reap benefits and overcharge due to demand, which will quick-trigger 'Rip of Ireland' outrage causing irreversible damage.

Tourism businesses have been advised to plan on the basis that Irish holidaymakers will be their main source of revenue this year as the Covid-19 pandemic continues. Increasingly, 2021 is looking like another year of the staycation, with Failte Ireland the national tourism body investing over €6 million to encourage the Irish tourist to 'Keep Discovering' Ireland, when the time is right. The Irish tourism offering will need to be "incredibly competitive" in quality and pricing. Much of this domestic Tourism will be along a coastal zone, be it the Wild Atlantic Way or along the Irish Sea Way. However, tourists are continually complaining about pricing and value in the Domestic tourism offering; this constant reference to over-pricing is at risk of doing reputational damage to an industry that desperately needs future overseas visitors to recoup 160,000 job losses. Operating a tourism business in Ireland is high, a long-term, sustainable, regenerative approach needs to be applied. We need to make our won domestic tourist ambassadors – and be proud to have holidayed in Ireland – thereby choosing to return and endorse, even all year round! Generations of people and families influence each other greatly.

Tourists all want the same this summer – the need for a well-earned holiday after numerous lockdowns due to COVID; yet the domestic sector needs these tourists to sing, shout and tweet 'I want to holiday in Ireland again'. We don't want them saying: 'Never again'."

The changing profile of a tourist requires more skills from an entrepreneur

12 April 2021 | Blog

Text: Margrit Kärp

There has been a major shift in human behaviour and mentality in terms of sustainable thinking and acting. The principles of sustainability are more topical in tourism than ever before, and it seems that they are naturally implemented into every development and service provided.

Environmental awareness is growing among visitors which, in turn, requires better services of higher quality, and an environmentally friendly attitude in every aspect of actions taken. Visitors value local heritage and expect a high quality and diversity of services including more activities on the water.

Businesses also receive different visitors who want to get actively involved in water sports and sailing, which can be enjoyed all year round. It is evident that the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the visitor profiles who are now mostly locals enjoying the marine environment. However, for many people the seaside mostly means the sun and beach but nothing more. This is something the tourism industry should consider when developing coastal and maritime tourism.

In addition, tourism entrepreneurs who are not local, or who have recently moved to the coast to start providing tourism services, are keener to develop different and new services than locals. The locals seem to remain passive, which can be explained by the fact that they do not want to have too many visitors who could potentially disturb their life. They want to keep the flow of visitors rather moderate and are not so much focused on making profits.

To increase attractiveness of coastal areas, tourism entrepreneurs need skills in service design, product development and digital marketing. Local micro-entrepreneurs often keep their business as a side activity for the high season and have another job during the low season. They lack focus on service development and keep it as simple as possible. These skills gaps keep the existing services basic and therefore below the actual demand.

This was discovered in the expert interviews organised in Estonia by the Skills4CMT project. The interviews aimed to increase understanding of the needed sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism. In addition to Estonia, the interviews were conducted in Finland, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Ireland.

The value of Tourism & Recreation

11 May 2021 | Blog

Text: Maarten Soeters, Charlotte Röhl and Timo Derriks

The importance of tourism and recreation is deeply woven into society. The sector contributes to the success of other sectors and to a variety societal challenge (quality of life, happiness, inclusion, etc.). As our society is changing, so is the tourism sector, both before and during the pandemic. These changes also alter future challenges for professionals in the sector. Therefore, it is essential to have a clear overview of the needed knowledge and skills for a future professional to be able to deal with those challenges in the tourism sector. The Skills4CMT project provides a great opportunity to research which knowledge and skills are needed for future (coastal & maritime) tourism professionals. Especially within CMT, it is important to be able to act on trends and developments and to apply them within the sector. The CMT-sector in Zeeland is a part of the entire Dutch tourism sector, which makes it important to clearly outline the value of tourism & recreation in the Netherlands, as described in this blogpost. This blogpost is based on research conducted by the Centre of Expertise Leisure Tourism & Hospitality (CELTH) which explored the value of tourism for the Dutch society.

Economic value

The sector has an immense economic value in the Netherlands. The expenditure related to tourism & recreation amounted to 91.2 billion euros in 2019, around 4,4% of the Dutch GDP. This expenditure naturally translates into many jobs. In addition to the absolute number of jobs, the sector also creates value through the diversity of the jobs. People working in the sector can learn a lot of new skills. (Employees at) suppliers to the sector also benefit from tourism & recreation.

Tourism & recreation can boost the local economy and can contribute to the climate for businesses. The effect of the sector on prices can be beneficial for the economy but can also confront residents with higher prices. This is (partly) compensated for by the fact that residents, through tourism & recreation, get more opportunities for work and income.

Environmental value

The environment is part of the product on the one hand yet influenced by that same product on the other hand. One of the ways in which tourism & recreation (directly) contribute to the environment is because the sector's facilities and catering establishments offer their services and products to the residents of the region. Often the residents are even regular guests. If there are too many visitors or if the visitors do not match the existing industry, there is a high likelihood of overexploitation.

Cultural and natural heritage add to the attractiveness of a region for visitors and can contribute to the preservation and accessibility of this heritage. Sufficient destination management is necessary to prevent (too much) tourism & recreation leading to great pressure on this heritage and/or high(er) maintenance costs.

The sector contributes to public facilities and infrastructure. Tourism & recreation can lead to more investments and support for new public facilities, such as public transport, health care, police etcetera. Great numbers of visitors can put pressure on these facilities. The presence of visitors creates atmosphere, liveliness, and conviviality. However, in places where there are (too) many visitors, the influence can change from positive to negative.

Social value

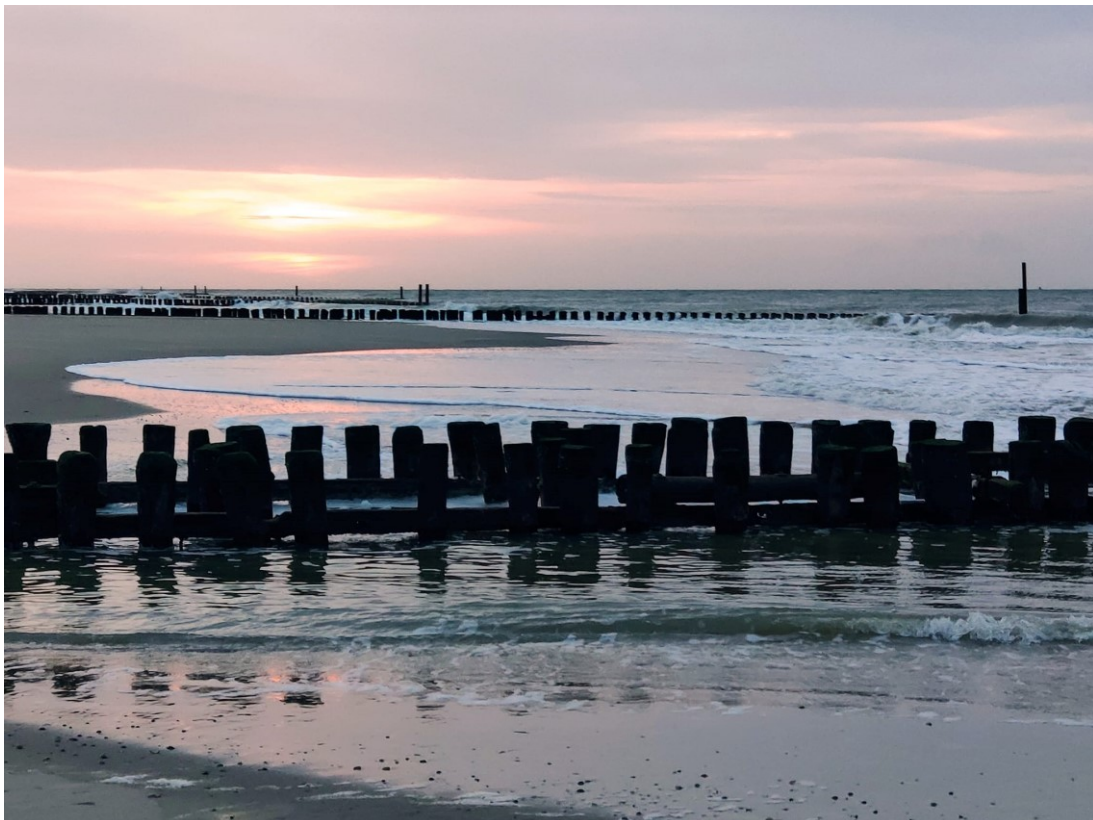
The presence of visitors can contribute to a sense of security. At the same time, tourism & recreation can also have a negative impact on perceived security (theft, gambling, vandalism, etc.). Residents appreciate their environment and culture differently with the presence of visitors. They feel proud because their region is worth visiting.

The use of regional stories and symbols within the sector can further strengthen that identity, although commodification is lurking. Involving residents in developments is a precondition to allowing identity and culture to grow rather than affect it. Tourism & recreation can lead to cultural exchange. The companies and organisations within the sector house employees with many different backgrounds, ages, and educations. The sector also provides education and jobs for those with fewer opportunities. Inclusivity is therefore important for the sector. The role of tourism & recreation in bringing people together translates into an important contribution to social cohesion.

Value of participation

Participating in tourism & recreation is of great value to all people. Vacationers generally feel better while on vacation, compared to their day-to-day life. This stems from psychological well-being and psychological growth, being active, connections with others and comfort.

The above-mentioned value of tourism and recreation also applies to the Dutch coastal regions, of which Zeeland is a part. Within the Skills4CMT project, desk research is conducted alongside interviews with various stakeholders in the region to develop three sector-specific occupational profiles and a curriculum for coastal and maritime tourism.



Sunset in Zeeland (Photo: Sanna-Mari Renfors)

There is no sun without a shadow and vice versa: coastal tourism in Latvia

20 May 2021 | Blog

Text: Ilze Grinfelde

There is no sun without a shadow and vice versa. The pressure of epidemiological safety restrictions has created quite a doom view in regards of coastal tourism in the bigger resorts and mass tourism destinations in Latvia. However, many coastal tourism companies in periphery, probably, experienced the best year in the last decade. Local travel has increased extremely. Some travelers finally discovered there can be jams in their own country and established new travel practices. Meanwhile, small and micro entrepreneurs, representing local tourism sector in coastal areas, have developed new services still maintaining high level of hospitality and showing care of the visitor in a level not seen before. We hope that both aspects will become good ground for the future tourism development in the coastal areas.

Then and now – what happens in coastal areas

Latvia has excellent seashore - approximately 500 km long with perfect sandy or a bit stony beach. During the Soviet period (1945 -1991) the parts of the seacoast were considered as strategic, military territories with restricted access. As a result, nowadays coastal territories have not only rich natural heritage or fisherman culture, but also military heritage. However, the density of population and settlements is rather low. Also, around a half of Latvian seashore are territories with some level of nature protection status.

Overall, there are just some international level destinations and majority of the tourism services along with infrastructure available on the seacoast should be characterised as suitable for individual travelers, rural, who prefer to spend their holidays in natural rural settings. This means that tourism companies are small, frequently run as lifestyle or side business, therefore more resilient and with higher ability of the adaptation.

Besides commercial services, numerous infrastructure objects and facilities has been developed mostly by using EU project financing. One of such examples is 1420 km long Seaside hiking route (Jūrtaka, <https://baltictrails.eu/lv/coastal>) which starts at the Lithuanian-Russian border in the village of Nida in Lithuania, leads through Latvia and finishes at the Port of Tallinn in Estonia. It is obvious that the hiking trail attracts a wide range of audience generating new tourist flow that is important precondition for the destination development.

Pandemic time trace on the shore

Nature resources in Latvia are for free. Yes, so simple. For entrepreneur and traveler. That is a nice and socially responsible political decision, however, increase of visitors of natural territories with recreational motives have created more of anthropological pressure. This results in a need for maintenance works for infrastructure more often, waste management and regulation of visitor flows are needed in sites that before pandemic would never be considered as popular. It is important to admit that there are enough visitors who will remember their first visit to some coastal nature area with pandemic time. This means another behavioral pattern in regards of consumption of natural

territories which requests reaction from the destination management organisations and other stakeholders. Consequently, the public discussion about nature free of charge has been raised. Who how and why should pay for usage or resources and how to create manageable system for implementation of such a solution – these are challenges that tourism industry must deal with as soon as possible.

Meanwhile in a small seaside tourism company

As already said, small tourism businesses with a focus on local, individual visitors (or micro size groups) experienced increase in demand. Small, rural accommodations and unique experience providers have been busy since summer 2020. Some observed that they did not have classical offseason in autumn and winter. Obviously, adjustment of services happens naturally as entrepreneurs know that their response must be very rapid, of course it meant that educators had to react the same way offering concentrated seminar type educational events, for example, how to prepare the accommodation for the self-isolation or individual, very targeted consultations about other topicalities, as digital marketing or specific project proposal preparation. The ability to see beyond your own yard has been important to adjust services for the needs of visitors. For instance, hiker friendly accommodation, transfer services for linear route hikers or cyclists, a hot tube under the open sky in the pine forest near the dunes or digital solutions for surrounding nature interpretation.

To sum up

Still there are many steps to accomplish to reach an ideal, sustainable, and smart coastal destination system. This will be a challenge for all involved parties, especially for destination management organisations and request enhancement of knowledge, skills and competences in collaboration, networking, problem solving and common systemic vision development.



Latvian coastline (Photo: Sanna-Mari Renfors)

Coast is more than just Coast

13 August 2021 | Blog

Text: Anne-Maria Mäkelä, Sanna Jyllilä, Sanna-Mari Renfors

Coastal and maritime locations are the biggest attractive factor in European tourism. South Ostrobothnia region is a land locked area, which is within one to two hours driving distance from the coastline. 'Hospitable South Ostrobothnia', the tourism development strategy for the region covering 2020-2028, highlights sustainability and responsibility as well as collaboration with stakeholders and neighboring regions.

The proximity of the coast brings opportunities for tourism SMEs and visit organisations. At the national level, South Ostrobothnia is considered part of the Coast and Archipelago -area based on which the brand is being developed and tourism experiences and services are being marketed for the international visitors. The collaboration brings visibility and new opportunities to internationalise tourism in South Ostrobothnia. Especially the Swedish market is of vital importance thanks to the new environmentally friendly boat connection between Vaasa (FI) and Umeå (SE).

The seed for closer collaboration among higher educational institutions, tourism attractions and SMEs in Satakunta and South Ostrobothnia is laid in the Skills4CMT -project. Networking with different actors is essential for tourism development at the destination and company level. Networking enables joint product development related to round trips, coastal-inland cooperation and the utilisation of products from local producers in tourism companies. Increasing peer support, e.g., in applying sustainability labels is essential. A group of enthusiastic tourism developers and SME representatives will visit Merikarvia and Krookan Plassi in Satakunta in August 2021 to learn more about circular economy principles in tourism development and business.

Satakunta and Seinäjoki Universities of Applied Sciences together with their international partners in cold coastal regions are developing specific training modules for Coastal and Maritime Tourism. Tourism entrepreneurs and students will have an opportunity to update their knowledge from 2022 onwards. We encourage all interested parties to follow the website for more information.

World Heritage in Coastal and Maritime sites – safeguarded, monitored and disputed

28 September 2021 | Blog

Text: Jonna Huuhka, Jaana Ruoho

In the UNESCO list of World Heritage there are over 1100 properties, 50 of them are marine and coastal sites. These sites have a variety of habitats, unique marine life, outstanding ecosystems, and iconic biodiversity. These sites are safeguarding the cultural, natural and marine heritage for future generations.

Cooperation of all stakeholders is needed to succeed in the protection and preservation of the outstanding universal value in the sites. All hands must be on deck by the site managers, local communities, scientists, and government officials while the World Heritage Centre has an important role in monitoring the sites.

An example of monitoring and the outcome from it, is what happened to the Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City in England. The site was deleted from the UNESCO's World Heritage list in 2021. It was considered that the constructions in the site caused harm to the site's authenticity and integrity. It was only the third property to lose its World Heritage status.

Old Rauma in Finland, not a marine or coastal destination, but in the right approximation of the coast, face the same challenges as Liverpool. Construction of a new shopping center near Old Rauma threatens Old Rauma's status as a World Heritage Site. UNESCO and ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) have raised their concern about the impacts of the construction project and its impacts to Old Rauma and have requested to freeze the project.

The reactions in Liverpool and Rauma are quite similar: the cities don't believe that construction is a threat to the outstanding universal value they possess. In fact, comments heard from Liverpool state that the World Heritage of the city has never been in a better condition than now due to investments.

The heritage list is all about recognising and preserving the sites to the greatest extent possible. However, the status of a World Heritage site usually attracts more visitors and so investments are needed to manage these visitor flows. At the same time, the cities grow and face pressure of new construction projects and infrastructure improvements. Since coastal environments are fragile and the use of the areas face conflicting interest, shared understanding must be created about the meaning of having the status of UNESCO World Heritage site.

A scenic seafood trail could lead the way in sustainable tourism on the east coast of Ireland

15 December 2021 | Blog

Text: Kevin Burns

“The success of the Wild Atlantic Way can be replicated on the east coast, particularly when it comes to sustainable tourism. Areas like Carlingford and the wider Cooley Peninsula have the potential to draw in more tourists outside the traditional holiday season through the development of niche attractions and sustainable visitor experiences. However, we must ensure that the correct infrastructure is in place and that there is no adverse impact to the environment. It’s crucial that all stakeholders come together to strengthen sustainable tourism in the area, which would lead to further job creation and provide a boost to the Louth economy. This could also feed into plans for a tourism trail from Carlingford Lough to Cobh called ‘The Irish Sea Way’. The National Programme for Government commits to a consultation process with communities along the eastern and southern coastline as part of the project while plans for greenways are already progressing. International visitors want greener options when it comes to tourism and there is nowhere as green as Ireland to offer them that choice.”

Based on research carried out SEMRU (Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit) based at University College Galway, Ireland more than 77% of respondents had actively engaged in marine related activities, on either day or overnight trips, during the year 2018. The most popular land-based coastal activities were walking/running along the coast/beach/cliffs/etc., beach or seaside trips, and coastal sightseeing. The most popular water-based activities were sea swimming, surfing, recreational boating of different types and sea angling. Significant differences in participation rates were observed across several socio-demographic classifications including age, social class and education attainment levels. The results also indicate that domestic tourists undertake most of their marine activities on the West and South coasts of Ireland.

Coastal tourism and blue experience operators are aware that marine active tourists have been shown to spend more and stay longer than the average tourist: Traditionally, the overseas market is often the focus of the development agencies, the domestic marine tourism market offers significant opportunities for growth. Given the sector will, for the present, must focus on the domestic side of the market in the short to medium term, now is the ideal opportunity to explore innovations in delivering new visitor experiences and marine tourism products aimed at the home market. Tourism in Ireland like all Destinations are looking to domestic demand for recovery — and the evidence points to the huge potential for coastal and marine tourism to contribute to rebooting activity in this sector.

'Uitwaaien'? Opportunities for coastal tourism in cold water destinations

18 January 2022 | Blog

Text: Maarten Soeters, Charlotte Röhl and Timo Derriks

In recent years, terms like 'hygge' and 'friluftsliv' have gained popularity throughout the world. These concepts have been a part of Scandinavian culture for many years. Hygge, which is a Danish concept, is defined as a quality of cosyness and comfortable conviviality that engenders a feeling of comfort or well-being. The Norwegian tradition 'friluftsliv' translates as open-air living. 'Friluftsliv' involves embracing nature and making outdoor time a part of daily life, no matter the weather. Early 2022, the Washington Post mentioned the Dutch 'uitwaaien' as the latest wintertrend. Can these concepts provide opportunities for coastal tourism in cold water destinations, especially during the pandemic?

'Uitwaaien' has been around for a very long time. The Dutch word literally translates as "out blowing" but is better understood as "to walk in the wind". Typically, 'uitwaaien' is used as a noun and describes the undertaking of an outdoor physical activity in (very) windy conditions. As local wisdom goes, wind refreshes and recalibrates. The concept 'uitwaaien' has become even more popular during the pandemic. With various restrictions to contain the coronavirus not much is allowed aside from outdoor activities. On top of this, spending time outside can be very beneficial for both physical and mental health. Just like 'hygge' and 'friluftsliv', 'uitwaaien' can be a very fitting tactic and a great opportunity for coping with our pandemic lives.

Concepts like 'uitwaaien' can be of great value to both locals and visitors in a certain region or destination. Many cold-water destinations welcome most visitors during the summer, but winter themed concepts like these that can attract visitors during the colder months of the year as well. Concepts like 'hygge', 'friluftsliv', 'uitwaaien' and other relevant trends related to health and wellbeing can stimulate a more diverse cold-water destination, appealing to different types of visitors all year round. For some of the locals, many of these terms and concepts may not be a secret. However, this does not mean all locals fully explore and enjoy their region during the winter months. Its new trends like 'uitwaaien', which are growing in popularity throughout the world, that motivate both locals and visitors to explore and enjoy (local) cold water destinations during the winter season. Similar trends and concepts, for example related to (seasonal) local food culture, can provide many opportunities for coastal tourism in cold water destinations, especially during the pandemic.

Trends and concepts like 'uitwaaien' are very relevant for the Skills4CMT project. Within the Erasmus+ Skills4CMT project, partners from Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Ireland, and the Netherlands are developing a curriculum for coastal and maritime tourism. The project will make a fundamental change to sector-specific skills development and the quality and digitalisation of thematic higher education in coastal and maritime tourism. It aligns higher education better to the needs and opportunities of the coastal and maritime tourism sector, since investing in people is a condition for its sustainable and competitive growth. The project stimulates regional economies and the creation and maintaining of jobs in coastal communities. Destination management, seasonality management and sustainability are all very important topics during the development of the curriculum.

Industry that never sleeps

15 February 2022 | Blog

Text: Ilze Grīnfelde and Linda Veliverronena

Usually, this part of the year is considered as the silent season in tourism, except destinations that have relevant resources to develop products and services for winter activities – downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, or polar adventures. However, tourism destination management organisations and entrepreneurs are already designing solutions for summer –the main season for the seaside resorts, coastal areas of inland water bodies. This process entails looking for solutions for personnel.

Wait, if there is still tourism after pandemic? COVID-19 pandemic continuously impacted nearly any sphere of the life globally, thus Latvia has not been the exception. Even more – tourism in Latvia has experienced tough restrictions of the operation of the industry in comparison with other economic activities and countries. Besides primary impacts induced by legal measures, secondary impacts should be considered, such as “domino effect” in regards of changes of some aspects of tourism industry or changes of the values, attitudes, mindset, and behavior of various groups of society. It is important to emphasise that the effects of a pandemic situation represent both – positive and negative.

We can easily observe how fast tourism and leisure-related industry has learned and adapted to new reality. New offers, solutions of tourist flow management to reduce pressure form the most popular objects to valuable, crowd management, but not so well known, new accessibility strategies in digitalisation of services and events along with other viewpoint on hygiene and safety. Covid 19 can even be nominated as catalyst for long-awaited changes in industry. However, “heavy footprint” of pandemic also reflected in regards of tourism organisation personnel as some of tourism providers closed their businesses or applied shrinkage strategies due to previously mentioned restrictions. Part of talents formerly involved in tourism industry have re-qualified, found new workplaces in another industry. This has affected both – low skilled professions, but especially – management level. But stop, if at this moment you want to make sigh fulfilled with compassion.

Heads and hands - wanted! Already Aristotle said: “Nature abhors vacuum,” meaning that every empty space will be filled and that is one of the ground rules of nature. In regards of recent state of the tourism industry – despite high level loss in various aspects, we can assume that adaptation level and potential recovery already is at the doorstep. Travel and good leisure opportunities also mean quality of life; it is reflected in the steady growth of the number of overnights in tourist accommodation. According to data of National Central Statistic Bureau, in August 2021, 148.5 thousand local tourists were served in tourist accommodation in Latvia, which is 3.4% more than in August 2020 and 19.2% more than in August 2019 before the pandemic also, the number of nights spent increased by 3.5% compared to August last year (LR CSB, 2022). At the same time – there is still a challenge in how to increase the interest of international tourists and return to numbers before pandemic. As one of Latvian seaside destination managers said – “there can happen whatever, anyway people will come to our coastal destinations!”

Nearly every day there is a public call of private network message about vacancies in tourism nearly in any level and sector. Destination management organisations are looking for extra force, companies dispute with universities, whether there is a chance to receive students as trainees. Surely, global

contexts add layers of skills that will be important already tomorrow – sustainability management, organisational ethics, creativity, design thinking and many more.

The tourism industry will soon revive and will offer wider than ever career opportunities due to the lost heads and hands, doesn't give in to the misconception of a long period of peace in the industry and be ready for the opportunities to come.



Coastal and maritime areas are attractive throughout the year
(Photo: Sanna-Mari Renfors)

Towards more sustainable food services in cold water destinations

20 March 2022 | Blog

Text: Ilkka Latomäki

Restaurants and other food services are essential component of any tourism trip. In Finland, roughly 13 % of tourism demand output was created in food services during 2018-2019 (VisitFinland) and approximately 30 % of restaurants turnover goes in to covering costs of food ingredients. Therefore, one might argue that any steps taken towards a more sustainable tourism industry must include ideas of how restaurant food purchasing is going to be developed. Here is an example from Finland.

To verify any sustainability claims, we must make sure that the food that we buy in our restaurants can be traced back to where it originates. This means that a restaurant is able say from which farm its beef or chicken or any other food ingredient is sourced from. This sounds easy, but it isn't so. In Finland, there are few companies, such as Atria PLC, a meat producer in Finland, which have been able achieve this. Now, farm names are used to provide marketing information for consumers, but it could also mean more to a sustainability expert.

In Finland, there is ongoing public discussion about farming and pollution it creates. This has led to changes in farming practices. Farmers are currently rethinking for example how to improve soil growth conditions, how optimise the use of fertilisers, and what kind of crop rotation farmers should implement. These steps should decrease the ecological food print of agriculture and decrease the level of eutrophication of waterways and Baltic Sea.

Combining traceability and information of farming practices could be used to improve restaurant ecological sustainability. Restaurants would be able to purchase food from local sources that have implemented more sustainable farming practices, which would then be good for the development of the coastal destinations and for the coastal and maritime tourism in general.

There is also a challenge for restaurants. For example, crop rotation means that farmers need to plant crops such as fava beans or peas, which can be used to improve nitrogen levels in soil. For a farm to be profitable, there must be a reasonable amount of demand for a certain crop. Demand for certain products can be improved by promoting them in restaurants. Currently, most of the fava beans grown in Finland is sold as a feed, sales directly as a food has been increasing but the pace of the change is relatively slow.

The road to sustainability is long but maybe we as restaurant professionals should also do our fair share and promote our guests more sustainable food solutions and make sure that the local farmer can adapt to changes.

Yyteri – the best and most sustainable beach of Finland?

6 June 2022 | Blog

Text: Jonna Huuhka, Jaana Ruoho

Yyteri beach is six kilometers long and located in Pori, Western Finland. It is the finest beach in the Nordic region. Yyteri area also includes Reposaari, Kallo and Ahlainen and the scenery between them. Yyteri is part of the internationally acknowledged Natura and nature conservation area.

The visitor numbers of Yyteri have increased remarkably and nowadays over 300 000 visitors visit the area yearly. Most of the visits to Yyteri are during the summer season, but more and more visitors are going to the area during other seasons as well. The peak in the visitors is during July and the weekly visitor amount has been up to 52 000. The increasing visitor numbers are one of the reasons why Yyteri is on the path to more sustainable and responsible tourism.

The land area of Yyteri beach is owned mainly by the City of Pori and the city is committed to developing the area in a sustainable way. The key points in development are the beach, nature, cleanliness, and safety. Responsible tourism is developed in the area to preserve the authenticity of the beach and keep it clean for the future generations.

“We want to reach a healthy balance between locals, domestic and international tourists, the city of Pori, businesses in the area, and of course the magnificent nature environment” says Tove Vesterbacka, special advisor for Yyteri.

In 2022, Yyteri was awarded the international Blue Flag environmental certificate as the first beach in Finland. The Blue Flag programme is celebrating its 35th anniversary with over 5 000 Beaches, Marinas & Tourism Boats in 48 countries. The iconic Blue Flag is one of world’s most recognised voluntary awards for beaches. To qualify for the certificate, a series of stringent environmental, educational, and accessibility criteria must be met and maintained.

Yyteri means different things for different people, but there is one experience that is common to every visitor: in Yyteri, you will discover your true nature (VisitYyteri).

An underwater secret in North-West of Estonia – hidden for millions of years

3 November 2022 | Blog

Text: Margrit Kärp

Believe it or not, one of the few Baltic Sea meteorite craters is in the shadow of a small island Osmussaar in Northern Estonia. It is called the Neugrund crater. This hidden gem induces discussions between different interest groups, including the state, renewable energy companies, scientists, locals, tourism operators, guardians of the island, conservationists, tourists, and others.

Discovered only a quarter of a century ago, the 535 million years old underwater meteorite crater is the largest and oldest in Estonia. It is considered one of the best-preserved shallow sea craters in the world. The crater is completely underwater and largely filled with sediments. The initial depth of the crater has been proposed to be more than 500m, currently the measured depth is 40-70m. The asteroid that fell into the sea was about 0.5 km in diameter. Extremely powerful explosion created a giant crater surrounded by a wide ring wall (2.5-3 km) and a ring-shaped upheaval (Ø 20-21 km) that bounds it. The diameter of the crater, measured from the ridge of the ring wall, is up to 9 km.

In the center of the crater is the Neugrund lowland, with only 1-10 m of water above it. This limestone plateau is surrounded by a semi-circular canyon 30-70 m deep and 200-500 m wide.

As a result of the giant explosion, a unique rock, neugrund breccia, was formed. Glacial ice has carried the breccia rock far to Western Estonia and the Western Estonian archipelago in an area of about 200 km long and up to 50 km wide, which is called the distribution fan of neugrund breccia.

For various reasons, there are many interested suitors revolving around the Neugrund crater area. Each of them has their own interests and goals, justifications for their actions and objections to the actions of other suitors.

For example, a private company prepares to build an offshore wind farm on the Neugrund plateau, the capacity of which is calculated to cover nearly 20% of Estonia's energy needs. However, almost fifteen years of dealings with state structures have not resulted in the necessary approvals for construction. A wind farm with up to 38 wind turbines is planned for the Neugrund plateau, about 10 kilometers from the coast. However, the technology has developed rapidly over the delayed years, and it would already be possible to build a wind farm with an initially significantly higher capacity.

For divers, the Neugrund crater is like a small paradise in Baltic Sea – the low plateau and steep depressions create opportunities for both hobby divers and serious researchers. Many diving companies in Estonia offer more experienced divers the opportunity to explore the underwater landscape and geological formations that are over 500 million years old.

Conservationists also value the area and consider it necessary to establish a protected area on the Neugrund lowland to preserve its uniqueness and integrity, as well as the complete ecosystem of the area's marine life and bird habitat.

Furthermore, the Neugrund lowland is significant from the point of view of national defense. To be precise, the area overlaps with the areas defined as a special area of national defense, which are formed to conduct air defense, artillery, naval or other types of exercises.

The small Osmussaar, located 8 km from the mainland and in the neighbourhood of the Neugrund crater, offers geologists a great joy of discovery. Of particular interest are the unique breccia rock and the bedrock exposed on the bank at the northwest end of the island, where many fossils can be found.

Open to the Baltic Sea, the waves are shaping the island – receding the coastline by breaking the bank on one side of the island and expanding the coastline by beach ramparts made of pebbles on the other side.

In addition to geologists, Osmussaar also offers a worthwhile discovery and sight for both bird researchers and bird watchers. The island has diverse habitats suitable for different species, the lagoon lakes in the southern part of the island are especially rich in birds. 158 bird species have been registered on the island, nearly 90 of them nest on the island. The birds that pass through Osmussaari are also rich in species, especially in Arctic species.

The settlement history of Osmussaare dates to Viking times. The first written mention of the island was made in 1250. Among the cultural monuments, the limestone chapel of the coastal Swedes (1765), the threshing floor and the ruins of a barn have been preserved.

Osmussaar is believed to be the tomb of the mythological Odin. Both the island's name (Odensholm means Odin's grave in Swedish) and the Odin's boulder (Odinstain) that was blasted by soviet army indicate this. According to legend, Odin was buried on the island under this boulder after Ragnarök.

In recent years, Osmussaare has also been discovered by tourists who enjoy and appreciate nature. Day trips to the islands are offered by several companies, the boat captains and guides are former coastal fishermen who know both the sea and the island like the back of their hand. While waiting for the ship or returning from the island, the sea view can be enjoyed at the port restaurant in Dirhami.

One small area, yet many stakeholders are interested in the development of this coastal area. Comprehensive development of the destination requires meeting the expectations and needs of all interest groups in the best possible way, and conscious cooperation and management. Natural values must be protected, but it is also important that the region is also economically wealthy, and livable for the locals. If the livability of the place suffers and decreases due to meeting the needs of some interest group and benefiting from it, then this loss must be compensated to the locals.

Structural innovation for the development and promotion of the Dingle peninsula

7 December 2022 | Blog

Text: David Nacipucha

The Dingle Peninsula is an Irish coastal destination that stretches 30 miles (48 kilometers) into the Atlantic Ocean on the southwest coast. The range of mountains stands out in the peninsula, running from the Slieve Mish range to the Conor Pass and Mount Brandon, the second-highest peak in Ireland. The magnificent coastline consists of steep sea-cliffs such as Sleah Head, dramatic headlands broken by sandy beaches, with the award-winning beach at Inch in the south and the tombolo of Maharees to the north (Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance n.d.). The Dingle Peninsula is considered a national treasure due to its stunning beauty and its residents are proud of their local area. Some elements combine to create the magic of the destination, Dingle remains one of Ireland's largest Gaeltacht communities, so tourists can enjoy the richness of the spoken Irish language and traditional music. Moreover, across the Dingle Peninsula exists the most incredible landscape, untouched and unspoiled by the passage of time. These elements contribute to creating a unique character, which makes Dingle a destination recognised globally as a gem and a must-visit destination for the Irish diaspora living in the United States of America (Fáilte Ireland 2021).

'However, tourists tend to spend little time and little money there and only key pockets benefit. This can be seen in the many coaches and vehicles that bring traffic, without delivering much value to the area. Dingle town is considered a hot spot due to its strong tourism infrastructure, dominating the other villages which do not benefit and are not developed to the same extent. This imbalance also extends to seasonality. While Dingle town is perceived to enjoy a nine-month visitor season, smaller communities in the region only benefit for three months each year' (Lucey 2021). This has led the tourism stakeholders to undertake innovation to develop the peninsula more evenly by working and promoting the whole Dingle peninsula.

Innovation is relevant because it enables the improvement or creation of visitor experiences that enhance destination competitiveness (Gardiner and Scott 2018). Moreover, innovation appears to respond to the competitive environment, economic crisis and climate change that destinations have to overcome (Williams 2014). Despite the importance of coastal destinations, research on how innovation can contribute to the tourism development of coastal destinations is very scarce. Coastal tourism is considered vital for a wide range of coastal regions in the European Union and there is a challenge to increase the economic benefits to destinations and their communities (Ecorys 2013). Structural innovation is a contribution to the types of innovation in tourism, it is defined as 'the implementation of a new or significantly improved collaborative or regulatory structure, network, or initiative to maximise overall benefits to the local economy, community, or destination. Such activities extend beyond the boundaries of a firm or an institution' (Booyens and Rogerson 2016, p.521).

The Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance is an example of innovation for the development and promotion of a region with different levels of seasonality, where smaller and individual efforts of smaller villages were replaced by an umbrella tourism group that represents the whole peninsula; that works together to encourage tourists to come to Dingle and increase their length of stay by visiting Dingle town and the surrounding villages of the peninsula. 'Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance is a voluntary not-for-profit organisation, dedicated to the development and promotion of tourism on the Dingle Peninsula. It was created as the umbrella tourism promotion and development vehicle

for all towns, villages, and parishes on the Dingle Peninsula. It is run by a committee and represents a cross-section of the area's businesses, communities and committees on the Dingle Peninsula including self-employed people and employees in a range of tourism and non-tourism businesses. It provides an inclusive approach to every group operating on the Dingle Peninsula both, directly and indirectly, involved in tourism. It collectively represents over 180 member businesses across the Peninsula and promotes every village from Derrymore on the North Shore, west to the Blasket Islands and east to Castlemaine on the southern side. Its main objectives include increasing visitor numbers in winter and shoulder periods, increasing visitor dwell time and the dispersal of visitors across the Peninsula, in turn increasing the number of year-round jobs for the region' (Comharchumann Forbartha an Leith Triúigh Teo n.d.).



Dingle peninsula is an Irish coastal destination (Photo: David Nacipucha)

Tourism, Recreation and Flood Prevention

7 February 2023 | Blog

Text: Ilkka Latomäki

Our project group visited in HZ University of Applied Sciences at Vlissingen last November. Our program included a visit at the Delta Works which consists of 13 sections. Together they form the largest flood protection system in the world. In a visitor center, on an artificial island called Neeltje Jans, we learnt the reasons why Delta Works have been built, how human ingenuity have solved engineering problems along the way and how important part of local history the 1953 North Sea flood is.

Flood prevention have had important role to play in the development of South Ostrobothnia region in Finland as well. Whereas Delta Works have been built to keep water out from the land, South Ostrobothnia region have taken steps to control the flow of water into the sea. In fact, it was the very same year 1953 which can be traced to be the starting point of flood prevention in the region. In 1953, region suffered from two significant floods, first flood was caused by melting snow during the Easter and second flood was caused by long lasting rain season during summer.

Kyrönjoki river, which flows through South Ostrobothnia, is today harnessed by flood prevention mechanisms such as multiple artificial lakes, raised banks, water pumps, artificial rapid and hydroelectric power plants. Planning and building process took more than fifty years. Last project to be completed was Malkakoski, artificial rapid, 2004. Nowadays, the artificial lakes are important part of area's tourism and recreation. For example, at the shores of Kalajärvi (artificial lake) locates an award-winning camping area and the largest recreational area and route network locates next to Kyrkösjärvi (artificial lake).

Sustainability issues have now taken a larger role in Kyrönjoki project. River was highly polluted due to untreated wastewater let into the river, even so that fisheries thought that the river was beyond saving before the project started. Today, artificial lakes are popular recreational fishing locations and Malkakoski rapid includes fish steps that allow fishes to swim up-river to spawn.

Our region's flood prevention measures have been the largest flood prevention project in Finland. Although, there are some significant tourism companies included, we have not been able to tell the story of human ingenuity in the project and how important part of local history the project has been. Sometimes it is better to go abroad to understand what you have at home.

Zero-waste approach in coastal tourism destination

14 March 2023 | Blog

Text: Jaana Ruoho

Coastal tourism destinations are known for their beauty, but they also face a significant waste problem. Tourism generates a lot of waste, and inadequate waste management infrastructure makes it challenging to manage. This waste can harm wildlife, habitats, and ecosystems and turn away potential tourists. However, efforts are being made to address this waste problem, including recycling programs, beach clean-ups, and waste reduction campaigns. Sustainable waste management practices not only benefit the environment and the local community's health and livelihoods but can also have a positive impact on tourism. Coastal tourism destinations must prioritise sustainability and adopt zero-waste principles to attract environmentally conscious travellers.

Zero-waste movement is a sustainable approach that has been gaining momentum in recent years. The concept of zero-waste involves the reduction of waste generated during production and operation processes. The aim of zero-waste is to adopt a circular economy model where resources are kept in use for as long as possible and waste is minimised through various methods such as recycling, composting, and redesigning products to be more eco-friendly. By adopting a zero-waste business model, businesses can reduce their environmental impact and reap financial benefits while inspiring others to follow suit.

The zero-waste movement presents an excellent opportunity for businesses to mitigate the negative effects of tourism on coastal destinations and pave the way for a more sustainable future. By embracing a circular economy model and reducing waste businesses can not only protect the natural resources of the coastal area but also benefit financially and inspire others to follow suit.

While transitioning to a zero-waste business model may not be possible overnight, businesses can start taking steps towards reducing their waste and environmental impact, such as implementing recycling and composting programs, using eco-friendly materials, and packaging, and educating employees and customers on sustainable practices.

Tips for a small business:

- Identify the types and quantities of waste. This will help to identify areas where waste can be reduced.
- Focus on reducing waste at the source by choosing eco-friendly materials and products that are durable, reusable, and recyclable.
- Avoid single-use plastics and packaging whenever possible.
- Implement recycling and composting programs. Educate staff and customers on proper waste sorting and disposal.
- Choose products made from eco-friendly materials.
- Offer refillable or reusable options for things like water bottles and coffee cups.
- Choose packaging that is compostable or recyclable and avoid excess packaging whenever possible.
- Work with other local businesses and organisations to promote zero-waste practices and host joint events such as beach clean-ups and waste reduction campaigns.
- Educate staff & customers on how to properly sort waste and recycle.

Circularity in the coastal region

4 January 2023 | Blog

Text: Charlotte Röhl

Zeeland, the southwestern coastal region of the Netherlands cannot do without tourists, but the rising number of guests is also accompanied by concerns. Globally, tourism is increasing by five to eight percent per year, according to the World Tourism Organization of the United Nations. The sector needs to adapt to an increase in the number of tourists, but even more so to the effects of climate change. Events caused by or somehow related to climate change have a tremendous effect on tourism operations and alter future challenges for professionals in the sector. Consequently, the sector will highly benefit from or is even in need of circular adaptations. Due to the fragile coastal ecosystems, Coastal and Maritime Tourism (CMT) requires actions and implement regenerative solutions. In teaching skills for coastal and maritime tourism (see the ins and outs of the Skills4CMT project) we therefore pay attention to circularity in the coastal region.

If we zoom in on possibilities regarding circular developments within the CMT sector, we see that in Zeeland, there are several initiatives to make tourism future-proof. The Interreg 2 Seas project FACET, which is co-funded by the EU, is a good example of a project that stimulates such developments (Interreg 2seas, n.d.). FACET aims to encourage and help entrepreneurs in the tourism industry to develop circular solutions and apply them within their business operations. Circular solutions ensure that entrepreneurs can maximise the value of used raw materials and natural resources as efficiently as possible and, where possible, preserve them.

From theory to practice

In the coastal region of Zeeland there are six beach pavilion owners who made a start with thinking about the implementation of circular solutions within their own businesses. Until recently, waste streams went straight into the container. The beach pavilion owners increasingly became more aware of the fact that they can play an important role in this circularity. Many of them now believe they can make a difference in the areas of waste and logistics.

Multiple solutions and practices are being explored, piloted, and evaluated. For example, by ordering less packaged products and paying close attention to the quantities of food and drinks they purchase. Today, six beach pavilion owners together produce about 12,000 kilos of waste per year. Some of that, such as coffee grounds and seafood waste, they aim to reuse, therewith directly reducing the amount of waste kilograms per year.

One of the examples they are experimenting with is the growing of oyster mushrooms on their own coffee production waste. These oyster mushrooms are later processed into typical Dutch croquettes to be ordered from their menu. Another example entails the waste from seafood production that serves as a breeding ground in oyster beds and the processed orange peels being used for soap.

Although these examples might seem small in nature, they can be of great impact. Especially when scale comes into play and more beach pavilion owners will share these or somewhat similar practices. The Netherlands alone is good for more than 400 beach pavilions. Imagine the difference coastal entrepreneurs can make when they all contribute a little.

Concerning the FACET project, it must be noted that it was also examined whether all circular innovations can and are allowed in terms of regulations and financing. Governments and companies from outside the sector and financiers have joined FACET and think along about the feasibility of circular solutions. Projects like FACET are a great example of how coastal entrepreneurs can take a step forward to circular entrepreneurship, as they take their responsibility and help regenerate the coastal areas.

Within the Erasmus+ Skills4CMT project, regenerating coastal areas plays a vital role. The modules that train stakeholders in essential sector specific skills are designed to inspire and educate. We do expect that from this, young professionals will develop tourism activities that contribute to the development of coastal areas. Skills4CMT aligns higher education better to the needs and opportunities of the coastal and maritime tourism sector, since investing in people is a condition for its sustainable growth. The project stimulates regional economies and the creation and maintenance of jobs in coastal communities. Let us all try to think in circles!

This is the final report of the Erasmus+ funded project Skills4CMT - Sector-Specific Skills Development in Coastal and Maritime Tourism, which tackled the sector-specific skills gaps and needs in coastal and maritime tourism in the European cold-water destinations. The report includes information on all project outputs and the lessons learned in the project.

ISBN 978-951-633-382-6



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

