



SKILLS 4CMT

Country report the Netherlands

Sector-Specific Skills Development in
Coastal and Maritime Tourism: IO1 Occupational profiles

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Research Aim

European Commission highlights that limited awareness of the specific skill needs and a requirement for professional skills hamper coastal and maritime tourism (CMT) competitiveness at the EU level. The European Strategy for More Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism states that education should be used to match the supply of skills with the demand of the labour market. Thus, 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. In particular, the European Commission underlines the importance of closing skills gaps and promoting the development of the skills required for tourism professionals.

The research aim is to increase understanding of the needed sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism to tackle skills gaps and mismatches. In this project, occupational profiles corresponding the EQF levels 6 and 7 are designed with a complete description of the knowledge, skills and competencies using the ESCO tool to increase understanding of the needed sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism. These occupational profiles are a significant tool in curriculum and course design: they are translated into a new curriculum and courses in the following phase of the project.

The key occupations chosen for the development of occupational profiles are:

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

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

A1: Desk research was performed to identify occupational profiles with sector-specific professional knowledge, skills, competencies and qualifications in each country.

A2: New data was gathered related to the selected occupational profiles and sector-specific key skills in coastal and maritime tourism in each country. A sectoral reference group was established in each country consisting of experts of the selected occupations. In each country, a focus group meeting was organised with the reference group. In addition, six key experts working with coastal and maritime tourism were interviewed in each country.

A3: Occupational profiles were developed with a complete description and provisioning of the knowledge, skills and competencies. First, each country developed their own profiles and later these were summarized in order to develop joint occupational profiles.

Data Collection and Analysis Process

In the process of gathering data, three different approaches are employed. First, desk research was conducted, followed by several interviews with various regional stakeholders. Finally, a focus group with different stakeholders was organized to discuss several topics within CMT in Zeeland. The results of these approaches form the newly gathered data and will be discussed below.

Desk research

The first step in the data collection process was to do research in order to gain a broad understanding of existing marine and tourism related study programs and courses as the goal is to explore skills for future professionals in the coastal tourism sector. Besides reviewing existing marine and tourism study programs and courses, a variety of other yet related fields and domains were reviewed to explore what skills would be useful for future marine and tourism professionals. Some of these reviewed industries and study programs involve water management, revolve around the purpose economy, emphasize the circular economy, develop Imagineering principles, events management, society and environment studies, as well as reports on future company profiles and entrepreneurial skills in creative industries. An insight in the programs focusing on these industries/ domains provide a broad overview of useful skills for future marine and tourism entrepreneurs/ professionals, while also showcases how different domains are interlinked and point to tourism as a polysystem. Curricula of the reviewed studies and courses can be found in appendix 1.

When exploring these courses and curricula, attention was paid to the competencies, skills and knowledge students should possess in order to complete the course/ study program. The scheme provided was used to create a clear overview on 1) different types of study programs/ courses, 2) themes that would describe the types of competencies/ skills, and 3) a description of knowledge skills and competencies that students would need to possess after finishing the specific study program or course.

Interviews

As part of gathering new data, each partner of the Skills4CMT project interviewed various stakeholders from its region. In order to have a common approach and a similar way of conducting the interviews, all partners formed a collective framework of research questions to be asked to the interviewees. The used research instrument resulted from the questions suggested by all the partners. The goal of the questions and the interviews was to identify the skills that small businesses and tourism professionals lack in developing coastal and maritime tourism. Within the framework of research questions, there were several important topics to discuss with the interviewees:

- In general, on the current situation of the CMT regional industry associated visions
- Observations, gaps, needs and wishes in relation to CMT skills and knowledge

- Impacts of COVID-19 on industry performance
- Sustainability necessities and challenges
- Coastal zone management, laws and regulations
- Well-being and health
- Networking, stakeholder cooperation
- Digitalization

In order to select a representative group of candidates, suitable candidates were identified first. A shortlist was created that listed representative interviewees within the sector. In addition, networks were used to approach all the candidates by e-mail. In the invitation to the candidates, the Skills4CMT project was introduced. The project's flyer and website link were included to give candidates more information about Skills4CMT. Each interviewee was interviewed separately, using the questions from the framework.

six key stakeholders within the CMT-sector:

- # 1 – director-owner in the coastal hotel sector & chairman of a local Business Association.
- #2 – director-owner of holiday resort within the coastal zone.
- # 3 – director-owner of multiple SME's in CMT in Zeeland, product and real estate development
- # 4 – researcher in customer-driven innovation, focused on SMEs within the region
- # 5 – policy advisor tourism & recreation with the provincial government (Zeeland).
- # 6 – applied professor Purpose Economy, researcher-writer and initiator of a video platform that portraits purposeful entrepreneurs weekly

While every interview was recorded, notes were taken during the interviews as well. After each interview, a report was drawn with all key findings from the interview using the notes and the recordings. This resulted in six reports from six different interviews. Gathered insights were coded, and a code scheme was created to analyze similarities and differences. Based on this coding, the skills were assigned to different profiles. The code tree that was used for this step can be found in appendix 3.

Focus group

The focus group candidates were approached in a similar way as the interviewees. Step 1 was to determine the selection of candidates. During the interviews the focus was more on the overnight tourism, while during the focus group the emphasize was on daytrips and day tourism. Therefore, invitations were sent to entrepreneurs with businesses offering blue experiences in Zeeland. The approach to the invitations was similar to the approach with the interviews. This means every candidate also received information about the Skills4CMT project, by e-mail as well as through the flyer and website. The participants of the focus group blue experiences represented:

- # 1 Watersportcenter offering waterski, wingsurf and wakeboard experiences.
- # 2 SME offering blue experiences in a shark-type speedboat.
- # 3 Watersportcenter offering kitesurf lessons and experiences.
- # 4 SME offering sailing trips and events.
- # 5 Watersportcenter Brouwersdam offering surf, sail, sup, board and more blue experiences.

The focus group was hosted online using MS Teams due to the pandemic. The same research instrument as with the interviews was used during the focus group as well. An agenda was created with the key topics to be discussed during the meeting. A selection of research questions was used to start the discussion and to lead the conversation. During this meeting the focus was on the blue experiences in the region specifically and on the impact of the sea/water and the skills and knowledge this could require. Notes were made during the focus group as well as a recording in order to make a report of the key findings. Similarly, to the reports of the interviews, a report was made with all the key finding from the focus group. Based on this report, open coding has been applied to visualize the most important fragments from the focus group. These fragments have been incorporated into the results.

Desk Research Results

Desk research was performed in order to formulate an answer on the question which knowledge, skills and competencies managers and staff working in the area of Coastal and Marine tourism in Zeeland should possess. Different training profiles, existing curricula, previous project results and literature on this topic were studied in order to be able to answer the research question.

Tourism and recreation are of great value to the Netherlands. With a turnover of 91.2 billion euros and work for 813,000 people, the sector is of great economic significance. In addition, the sector is also deeply rooted in and contributes to our society. The Dutch coast has been one of the most important destinations in this area for decades, both nationally and internationally. Looking at only the southwestern coastal region (Zeeland), coastal and marine tourism had a significant economic value of € 1.85 billion in 2018. Employment in the same year comprised 16,700 jobs (almost 10% of the total Zeeland employment). Besides the economic values, tourism and recreation also adds value in other areas. For example, there is the value of participation in tourism and recreation, the value for the living environment and the value for social processes. But tourism also presents challenges. Societal challenges such as the pressure on the spatial living environment, sustainability, climate adaptation, quality of life, the preservation and development of nature, landscape and cultural heritage are current in the development of coastal tourism. In order to maximize the benefits and cope with social challenges, future professionals should be able to find leads for a valuable and sustainable development of the leisure sector in the coastal and marine area.

In line with the broad vision of coastal and maritime tourism in Zeeland, the literature study shows that tourism in a coastal and maritime context is seen as a part of a larger system in which a professional needs multidisciplinary knowledge to be able to encompass it. In this literature study, identified skills, competence and knowledge are partly described in the context of the occupational profiles, but it is important to consider these in a broader general spectrum as well.

The ability to collectively analyze complex systems across different domains (society, environment, economy, etc.), across different scales (local to global) and involving different stakeholders is important in order to successfully and sustainably manage a destination. A professional should have sufficient knowledge about the current problems and concerns of the coastal zone and the different actors involved: who they are, what they want and are able to do. Bridging contradictions between these different parties to a jointly tackled problem, wish or policy issue, and directing the implementation of interactive policy development are important to successfully develop and implement projects in the coastal zone. The (starting) professional therefore needs to be able to visualize the coastal landscape consisting of abiotic and biotic components (incl. humans), user values and mutual relationships. They consider the existing situation and its functions, the social context, natural conditions, the history of the area and expected climatic developments.

The use of living space, changes in the climate and the desire for a more sustainable society are also topics that recur in many study curricula. Also, here the ability to see these challenges in a wider context across different domains and on different scales is important in order to be able to cope with the various demands of identified stakeholders. The various themes fit in the development of a sustainable blue economy, making anticipatory competencies of great importance: the ability to collectively analyze, evaluate, and craft rich 'pictures' of the future related to sustainability issues and sustainability problem-solving frameworks. Besides mapping and specifying sustainability values, principles, goals, and targets a future professional in the occupation of a sustainability manager must be able to translate these into action. He or she therefore needs the ability to collectively design and implement interventions, transitions, and transformative governance strategies toward sustainability.

There is a need for a broad and social point of view, with respect to the current approaches in entrepreneurship that choose customer needs/ problems and customer benefit as the starting point of entrepreneurial activities. The modern profile of qualifications/ competences/ skills of a successful entrepreneur covers, for this reason, the ability to see his or her business as a part of a larger coastal and maritime system. The phenomena of leisure and tourism are increasing in complexity and require an integrated and multidisciplinary approach from various fields such as sociology, psychology, economics, management and marketing. A future professional should be able to analyze quality aspects of the CMT sector in the context of quality of human life from a multidisciplinary aspect.

Sustainability with regard to planet, people and profit is a central element. Knowledge about a more complex society with changing customer demands (due to a transition towards a more sustainable society), changing tourism management policies and destination designs, which are driven by for example changing ask for sustainable blue experience designs. Effective management and building

resilient businesses and destinations requires knowledge and expertise, which is closely interwoven with the destination itself. A future entrepreneur should be able to develop and implement an innovative business concept with a focus on purpose design. The ability to adapt to the rapid changes in markets and business models is key, often in response to social and economic processes. Effective change management and building resilient organizations requires knowledge and expertise, also touching the specific characteristics of a coastal destination it belongs to.

A distinction in required knowledge that can be made is that of domain specific knowledge and the more general knowledge of an upcoming professional. Leading or participating in projects in the field of coastal and sea management requires an understanding of these complex system. Furthermore, general skills like (project) management, interpersonal leadership, digital and research skills. Competences like working in an international field, managing time, money, quality, information and organization can also be highly supportive. Interpersonal competencies involve the ability to facilitate collaborative and participatory problem solving, while ensuring a respective and empathetic exchange of perspectives and actions. It allows, in this way, to deal with conflict resolution and are therefore an important addition for a professional to possess. Maybe one of the most important competencies of this current age are those related to technological development. The identification and adaptation of technological developments and digital skills are important as never before. Not only computational thinking like storage and dissemination of data, programming competencies and the use of big data, but also the ability to communicate and work in a virtual working area are important for as well managers as entrepreneurs. Finally, research skills a future professional should have is that she is be able to set up, execute and report coastal and marine research.

Interview and Focus Group Discussion Results

All interviewed stakeholders, also those who participated in the focus group, recognized that coastal and maritime tourism grows and therefore brings opportunities and new challenges. Coastal tourism in Zeeland is in a turning point (transition), which is why in Zeeland the (social) influences and other effects are mapped in a vision that emphasizes sustainable growth. Major challenges that are being dealt with are residents support (in relation to recreational pressure and degree of involvement), spreading visitors in space and time, the encouragement and own will of entrepreneurs to innovate and to be more sustainable, and updating and maintaining the qualifications of personnel.

At a strategic and tactical level, it is important that professionals can find a future-proof balance for the coastal region. It is important that there is focus on a long-term vision in which the interests of various identified stakeholders are considered. For this to happen, existing different interests and the associated contradictions need a continuously bridging in relation to relevant trends. Recognizing different elements in CMT is needed in order to bring them together. In this way, someone is able to work location-specific with location-specific resources. The strategic professional of the future has broad knowledge about the ecosystem, but also specific knowledge about resource management (on location), target groups, networks, procedural knowledge, the landscape, user values and spatial plans. In addition, he or she is able to identify (social) trends and to translate their consequences into a CMT environment in order to be able to respond to these changes.

Important trends mentioned by respondents are the effects of technology (a professional must be able to monitor, collect data on a large scale and be able to analyze and translate this data into policy / solutions), socially responsible tourism (this includes knowledge about socially responsible tourism and how to stimulate it and eye for the aforementioned balance issues), adjustments in consumer wishes (such as, for example, higher requirements with regard to service provision and responsible consumption). Being able to deal with the consequences of these trends is important for every profile in this research.

Other important skills relate to the ability to assess the vulnerability of the sustainable functioning of a zone. According to the respondents in this study, this also includes coastal specific characteristics in a local environment. For example, it is important that a professional in CMT has knowledge about the effect water can cause (including the forces associated with this, effects of currents in the sea and the consequences that these effects have, such as dangers for tourists), also influences and changes of the weather, the climate in a specific area and what is present in a specific environment and about environment-specific vulnerable places. That's why it is important that the future professional is aware of effects and consequences of nature (and especially water), regulations, nature conservation areas and laws and regulations in this area. Knowledge about sustainability, such as stimulating sustainable tourism, social models (instead of economic models) and establishing good connections between social issues and policy (living environment, support for residents, distribution in space and time and petrification) are seen as key competencies for the professional of the future.

Other skills specifically mentioned in the interviews and in the focus group are those of knowledge about legislation and regulations and how these should be applied in projects. This involves translating actions from paper into implementation within the frameworks of legislation and regulations as they apply specifically in a particular area. Regarding tourism activities a future professional must be able to connect these different elements of CMT with the customer journey and the influence that tourists have on the area and its ecosystem. One must be able to serve the changing needs of the customer in terms of focus on concepts that are built around (short) experiences, but also be aware which influence this customer journey has on the ecosystem. Consumers increasingly become experienced in experiences and expect yet another experience. Consequently, this makes creative thinking, event design, experience marketing and event working more and more important. Other skills that are seen as important are project management skills, soft skills (flexible, adaptable, cooperation, leadership qualities) and knowledge about research methods and the performance of research.

On a more day to day operational level it is important that a future professional can make the connection between a more strategic/tactical way of thinking and the employees within the organization. In the focus group and interviews it emerged several times that knowledge is needed on safety in watersports, digital skills and working independently. An operations manager needs to be able to identify the needs of the workplace (identifying the skill gaps between the current knowledge and skills of employees on the floor and the desired level of these employees) and based on these gaps can formulate training needs and / or realize strengthening of a team (HR-practices). Frequently mentioned skill gaps are those in the field of the desired and realized level of hospitality and soft skills such as adaptability, communication skills and cooperation.

Occupational Profiles

By desk research, interviews and a focus group several sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism are identified. These results show that a wide range of knowledge, competences and skills are required for professionals in a coastal and maritime tourism context. Obviously, skills, knowledge and competences might vary in relation to not only different (managerial) levels in an organization but also what particular responsibilities and tasks are executing in what kind of role. This section focuses on structuring the identified knowledge, competences and skills within the three existing, predetermined professional profiles.

Although the three profiles of resort manager, micro entrepreneur and sustainability manager require an own set of specific knowledge and skills, there are also competences identified that make sense for all of them. Seeing the notion of tourism as a system, it seems of utmost importance that **CMT professionals realize their role and organization is part of a system as well as being able to position themselves within one.** The entire system revolves around offering a positive, hospitable, sustainable and responsible visitor experience. For this reason, **CMT professionals find ways to contribute to the development and delivery of a meaningful, responsible coastal tourism experience.** What a meaningful experience is, depends on a seamless fit between a destination's sustainable use of resources and possibilities with the needs and wishes of consumers

as affected by larger market trends. Luckily, trends are shared frequently in professional journals or events. At the same time, data traces are more and more easier to analyze making use of technology. Given the information is available, **CMT professionals are able to use and analyze market intelligence in order to interpret trends in consumer needs and wants.**

Thus, it is important to understand the context in terms of the wider system and developments that take place yet at the same time the possibility to empathize with consumer needs. Combining these, it will certainly help when a **CMT professionals defines tourism experience challenges and relates these to problems in its larger system.** In order to set first steps that help facilitating desired change, **CMT professionals think in new, innovative and adaptive ways to come to cross-industry solutions.** Solutions that provide a more meaningful CMT experience can be invented alone, but not innovated in isolation. In terms of transdisciplinary working and collaborating, it is therefore a prerequisite that **CMT professionals contribute to collaborative and participatory problem solving by means of a respective and empathetic exchange of perspectives.** In this problem solving process, cross-cultural competencies are required, just as the possibility to collaborate virtually, seeing these turbulent times. **CMT professionals can identify their own strengths and weaknesses and use personal leadership to develop themselves.** If not being able to develop yourself as a CMT professional constantly, either the system will break down or a person will be excluded at one point. Social intelligence and project management skills are in this sense useful for all three profiles.

The actual creating of new visions, solutions, experiences, services or products that are of relevance and add value to the CMT consumer depends on the particular role and occupation. The same goes for the development, implementation and evaluation of the required associated change process. Despite the precise role a professional plays, it seems that they should have, although shaped or limited by their own means and scope, a design mindset: **CMT professionals think like a designer when solving problems as sustainable as possible.**

Resort manager

A resort manager is a bridge builder. These professionals bridge contradictions between different parties to a jointly tackled problem, wish or policy issue. They know the system as they flow through it, from one entity to the other. In doing so, they establish and foster relationships. They align, and facilitate a co-creation process of envisioning. Envisioning what the CMT sector should look like for a particular destination is key, while truly considering long-termism. Whenever a vision on the product is created, a resort manager must act as the facilitator of collaboration to arrive at that set point. It is essential that there is a continuous monitoring of opportunities in collaboration and to support these. The resort manager is helped in this by tools in monitoring destination development and for example sustainability levels. Technology is used to have real time insights in trends and carrying capacity, while it remains a human job to act upon those insights. The professional shifts from the past, to the future to the present, and anticipates. It is a balancing act to use the key attributes of a destination, yet develop or protect them at the same time. By all means, the constant relation to the quality of life within a destination needs to be integrated in developing a destination.

Tourism can and should be a vehicle to further a destination responsibly. Tourism can be used to develop a region in an inclusive, positive way. The resort manager is the **enabler** in this play.

Micro entrepreneurs

The micro entrepreneurs in this study are the ones that offer the true blue experience. In this, they are the unique but very important contributors to what makes tourism coastal and marine. These professionals need to know what goes on in their destination. Not just during the week, but also what is expected and agreed upon in terms of a mutually created tourism system and the branding of it. They know, because they ideally contributed to the creation of this agreed vision. They commit and collaborate. They network and seize strategic opportunities that can possibly result in a win for them, a win for the destination, the tourists and the residents. However, a shift in mindset is necessary for many of the current micro entrepreneurs. A true awareness of the limits to growth and the need for a more purposeful, regenerative type of economy is necessary for them to start changing ideologies and adapting organizations. In the process, the features that come with having a blue space must be understood, carefully considered and responsibly used in creating more valuable experiences. The blue space and how it makes regular tourism experiences true CMT experiences is one thing, while understanding and working with changes in weather and climate is another. A micro entrepreneur in the blue space needs to know what the sea does, what you can do with it, but in terms of safety also what you should not do with it. It is an **enthusiast** in creating these specific experiences that contribute to the overall CMT system within a destination.

Sustainability manager

The sustainability manager, or consultant, is on the one hand the expert in technologies that allow for more sustainable ways of acting and operating, while on the other hand a facilitator of change that succeeds in more responsible designs that exist in the CMT system. She will safeguard what is possible in relation to a destination's set of resources. Being a driven advisor, the sustainability manager is aware that without a shared vision on long termism and the true need to change from a profit economy to a wellbeing economy, advise and support on implementing techniques will not be sufficient. However, once mindsets are shifting, the sustainability consultant is the expert in explaining and implementing tools and techniques that are more regenerative, inclusive, responsible, circular and sustainable. The sustainability manager is **expert** on what is possible, how to do it, but also when to do it and how to foster a more positive right timing.

Conclusion on competences

The resort manager, the micro entrepreneurs and the sustainability consultant are all in need of competences, knowledge and skills that allow them to be design thinkers, doers and facilitators of change. The following generic competences are of use for all three of them:

As a CMT professional, regardless your specific occupation, you...

- *realize your role and organization is part of a system as well as being able to position themselves within one.*
- *find ways to contribute to the development and delivery of a meaningful, responsible coastal tourism experience.*
- *are able to use and analyze market intelligence in order to interpret trends in consumer needs and wants.*
- *define tourism experience challenges and relate these to problems in its larger system.*
- *think in new, innovative and adaptive ways to come to cross-industry solutions.*
- *contribute to collaborative and participatory problem solving by means of a respective and empathetic exchange of perspectives.*
- *can identify your own strengths and weaknesses and use personal leadership to develop yourself.*
- *think like a designer when solving problems as sustainable as possible.*

There are complete study programs based on the occupation of a destination manager, an leisure entrepreneur or a sustainability advisor/change-maker. Since the objective of Skills4CMT is to specifically address the educational gap in coastal context, we need to be cautious in spending (too) much precious time on training on general concepts. It will be more appreciative and rewarding for the sector to focus especially on those type of knowledge, competences and skills that are uniquely related to tourism's coastal context. In this context, the three occupational profiles need to work together and co-create a more sustainable, blue experience. In this, we see the destination managers as the connectors, the sustainability managers as the experts and the micro entrepreneurs as the enthusiasts. The association of these attitudes and roles help to pick from all generic competences those that makes most sense for each occupational profile. The following competences allocated to each role are therefore to be seen as additional ones and come from related programs, insights or competence frameworks as investigated and described above. On top of the eight competences above, the following ones are more specifically connected to the roles:

As an *enabler*, a **CMT Resort** or **Destination Manager**, you also...

- *collectively analyze complex systems across different domains and scales*
- *conduct coastal stakeholder analyses in order to identify, evaluate and prioritize issues in a given coastal zone.*
- *collectively analyze, evaluate, and craft rich 'pictures' of the future related to specific destinations and problem-solving frameworks.*
- *transfer conflicts of interest to attitudes of balancing interests in order to realize responsible and resilient destinations*
- *translate laws, regulations, guidelines, wishes and questions to practice and policy plans.*
- *bridge contradictions between different parties to a jointly tackled problem, wish or policy issue.*

As an *enthusiast*, a **CMT Micro Entrepreneur**, you also...

- *translate trends and technological developments to more responsible products, services, experiences and solutions in coastal and maritime tourism.*
- *contribute to destination planning and developing by tailoring your interests to a shared vision for the long term.*
- *develop innovative concepts that contribute to a more meaningful coastal and maritime tourism destination.*
- *co-create with other CMT stakeholders, including your employees, to pursue a win-win for all.*
- *model your organization in a way it fits a regenerative, wellbeing economy that revolves around purpose.*
- *creatively keep on adapting concepts and combating challenges to inspire others in their sustainability journey.*

As an *expert*, a **CMT Sustainability Manager** or **Consultant**, you also...

- *visualize the landscape as consisting of abiotic and biotic components and their mutual relationships.*
- *identify major coastal resources and environments requiring protection measures as well as current and potential impacts generated by different uses of the coastal areas.*
- *collectively map, specify, apply, reconcile, and negotiate sustainability values, principles, goals, and targets from a long-termism perspective.*
- *relate the landscape and user values to the influence of existing and future spatial plans on this.*
- *conduct and use independent practice-oriented research on both national as international state-of-the-art relevant sustainability solutions to advise on decision-making.*
- *collectively design and implement plans, interventions, transitions, and transformative governance strategies toward sustainability that takes into account economic, social, administrative and legal feasibility.*