

# SKILLS 4CMT

## Country report Finland

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

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## Summary in English

This report explores sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism in Finland. The report is part of the Erasmus + Strategic Partnership Skills4CMT project. The project aims at developing sector-specific skills, the quality and digitalisation of thematic higher education in coastal and maritime tourism in European cold-water destinations.

The research aims to increase understanding of necessary sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism in Finland to tackle skills gaps and mismatches. The research was performed simultaneously in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Ireland. The results are merged and translated into a new sector-specific curriculum and courses in coastal and maritime tourism.

To reach the aim a desk research was performed by analysing the content of the existing curricula, tourism-related strategies and reports. New data were collected with eight expert interviews and a focus group discussion with four experts. With all collected data occupational profiles were developed containing a complete description and provisioning of the knowledge, skills and competencies.

The results show that sustainability and responsibility are the key words in tourism development in Finland. Sustainable tourism development is a cross-cutting theme all tourism actors should consider in their activities. It is important to understand the three sustainability pillars: economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability, and their interconnection to achieve balanced growth. Furthermore, it is essential to understand sustainable production and consumption as well as utilising tools to monitor sustainable development impacts. The results highlight the importance of sustainability communication. It is necessary to show the progress on sustainability commitments since a big part of sustainable development is to express in a transparent way to others what has been implemented.

The results suggest that skills related to marketing are essential, in particular due to the changing customer behaviour. This means that understanding and adapting to the changing needs of the customers and the operational environment as well as rethinking how to operate accordingly is crucial. Certainly, skills in digital marketing from various perspectives should also be enhanced.

In blue experience design, understanding the unique characteristics and resources of coastal and maritime surroundings is a prerequisite. The local natural and cultural heritage are the building blocks of product development. It is also imperative to understand the wellbeing effects of the sea and water as well as legislation and safety issues.

Stakeholder cooperation is strongly highlighted in coastal and marine surroundings, since there is a variety of different stakeholders operating and living in the area. Balancing with conflicting interests, identifying different stakeholders and co-operation models as well as

coordinating cooperation with a common goal is important. Special attention should be paid to public-private cooperation.

In addition, other specific characteristics of coastal and marine surroundings should be acknowledged. Safety and possible risks are an important issue when operating in such an environment. All stakeholders should also have knowledge of specific legislation and understand its influence on their business activities. Furthermore, there should be more knowledge about Integrated Coastal Zone Management i.e., the coastal management process for the management of the coast to achieve sustainability.

## Tiivistelmä suomeksi

Tässä raportissa tarkastellaan merellisen matkailun alakohtaisia osaamista Suomessa. Raportti on osa Erasmus+ strategista kumppanuushanketta Skills4CMT. Kyseisen hankkeen tavoitteena on kehittää merellisen matkailun alakohtaista osaamista sekä alaan liittyvän korkeakoulutuksen laatua ja digitalisointia Euroopan kylmillä vesialueilla eli Itämerellä, Pohjanmerellä ja Euroopan Atlantilla.

Raportti esittelee hankkeessa toteutetun tutkimuksen tulokset, jonka tavoitteena oli lisätä ymmärrystä tarvittavasta merellisen matkailun alakohtaisesta osaamisesta Suomessa. Sama tutkimus toteutettiin samanaikaisesti Suomessa, Virossa, Latviassa, Alankomaissa ja Irlannissa. Kaikkien maiden tulokset yhdistetään ja muunnetaan myöhemmin uudeksi alakohtaiseksi opetussuunnitelmaksi.

Tutkimustavoitteen saavuttamiseksi analysoitiin olemassa olevia aineistoja kuten aiheeseen liittyviä opetussuunnitelmia, strategioita ja raportteja sekä kerättiin uutta aineistoa kahdeksan asiantuntijahaastattelun ja neljän asiantuntijan fokusryhmäkeskustelun avulla. Kerättyjen aineistojen avulla kehitettiin merellisen matkailun kolme keskeistä ammattiprofiilia sisältäen kuvauksen tarvittavista tiedoista ja osaamisesta.

Tulokset osoittavat, että kestävyys ja vastuullisuus ovat Suomen merellisen matkailun kehittämisen avainsanoja. Kaikkien matkailutoimijoiden on tärkeää ymmärtää kolme kestävän kehityksen pilaria: taloudellinen, sosiokulttuurinen ja ympäristöllinen sekä näiden integrointi tasapainoisen kasvun saavuttamiseksi. Lisäksi ymmärrys kestävästä tuotanto- ja kulutustavoista on olennaista, jotta kestävä kehitys voidaan edistää tehokkaasti. Tähän sisältyy myös erilaisten työkalujen hyödyntäminen matkailun kestävän kehityksen vaikutusten seuraamiseksi. Tulokset korostavat myös kestävyysviestinnän merkitystä. Ei siten riitä, että toimitaan kestävästi, vaan kestävyuden edistämiseksi tehdyistä toimista tulee viestiä läpinäkyvästi.

Tulosten mukaan markkinointiosaamisen merkitys korostuu asiakkaiden käyttäytymisen ja toimintaympäristön muuttuessa. Tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että ymmärrys ja sopeutuminen asiakkaiden muuttuviin tarpeisiin ja toiminnan uudelleen suuntaaminen on ratkaisevan tärkeää. Toimintaympäristön muutos vaatii myös digitaalisen markkinoinnin taitojen jatkuvaa päivittämistä. Merellisten elämysten suunnittelussa ja tuottamisessa merellisen toimintaympäristön ainutlaatuisten ominaisuuksien ja resurssien ymmärtäminen ovat perusedellytyksiä. Paikallinen luonnon- ja kulttuuriperintö ovat tuotekehityksen rakennuspalikoita. On myös välttämätöntä ymmärtää meren ja veden hyvinvointivaikutuksia.

Sidosryhmäyhteistyötä korostetaan voimakkaasti merellisessä matkailussa, koska alueella toimii ja asuu erilaisia sidosryhmiä. Tärkeänä pidetään eri sidosryhmien intressien ja erilaisten yhteistyömallien tunnistamista sekä yhteistä tavoitteen asettelua. Erylistä huomiota olisi kiinnitettävä julkisen ja yksityisen sektorin yhteistyöhön.

Lisäksi merellisessä matkailussa olisi tunnustettava muut toimintaympäristö erityispiirteet. Turvallisuus ja siihen liittyvät riskit tulee huomioida liikuttaessa vesistöissä. Kaikkien sidosryhmien tulisi myös tuntea erityinen toimintaympäristöön liittyvä lainsäädäntö ja ymmärtää sen vaikutus liiketoimintaansa. Lisäksi tarvitaan tietoa merialuesuunnittelusta, jolla edistetään merialueen eri käyttömuotojen kestävä kehitystä ja kasvua, luonnonvarojen kestävä käyttöä sekä meriympäristön hyvän tilan saavuttamista.

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## Introduction

Coastal and maritime locations are the biggest attractive factor in European tourism. Simultaneously, coastal and maritime tourism, as the largest maritime activity in the European Union, is of major importance in European economy as the competitiveness of the sector is a driver for sustainable growth, jobs and social cohesion. However, European higher education institutions are not paying enough attention to the skills in developing coastal and maritime tourism. Thus, this sector is characterised with low education level. In the industry there are many workers with a lower educational level (20.5%) and medium educational level (50.1%).

More thematic and aligned education is needed concentrating to specific features, multi-sectoral nature and development of coastal and maritime tourism. It is notable that higher education doesn't provide, with some slight exceptions, sector-specific curricula or specialised courses in coastal and marine tourism. In Finland, the archipelago, coastal areas and the Lakeland - a blue labyrinth of lakes, islands, and rivers - are the main travel regions characterised by niche tourism. Thus, it is pivotal to adjust the general tourism education for the specific needs and characteristics of coastal and maritime tourism in cold-water destinations such as Finland.

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. European Commission highlights that limited awareness of the specific skill needs and the lack of professional skills hamper coastal and maritime tourism competitiveness at the EU level. Therefore, 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.

This report explores the needed sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism in Finland. Different research activities were performed to increase understanding of these skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism to tackle skills gaps and mismatches. The same research was undertaken in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Ireland during spring 2021. In Finland, the research was performed in the following regions: Satakunta, Ostrobothnia, Central Ostobothnia, and South Ostrobothnia.

Research activities contribute to the objective of the Erasmus + Strategic Partnership Skills4CMT project: to develop sector-specific skills and the quality and digitalisation of thematic higher education in coastal and maritime tourism in European cold-water destinations. The objective is threefold:

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

In practice, this means that with the increased understanding of a sector-specific curriculum in coastal and maritime tourism with eLearning resources are developed in the later stages of the project.

## Research Aim

*The research aim is to increase understanding of necessary sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism in Finland to tackle skills gaps and mismatches.* The research question is: What knowledge, skills and competencies are needed when a person works as a resort manager, a micro entrepreneur offering blue experiences or a sustainability manager in the context of coastal and marine tourism?

This increased understanding is utilised when designing occupational profiles with a complete description of the knowledge, skills and competencies in coastal and maritime tourism. The occupational profiles are designed with the support of the European skills, competences, qualifications and occupation (ESCO) reference tool to ensure recognition, validation and transparency of competences and qualifications.

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

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

In this report, a clear distinction was made between the roles, knowledge, skills and competencies of three different occupations: a resort manager, a micro-entrepreneur and a sustainability manager. It is obvious that many of the knowledge, skills and competences are overlapping, especially in small destinations. The occupational roles are more specialised and distinct in larger destinations characterised with a rich variety of companies and with well-resourced professional managed DMO's.

To develop sector-specific skills and a curriculum, it is first necessary to understand what are those skills and qualifications, skills gaps and mismatches. Therefore, 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 occupational profiles help tourism education and training providers to understand what skills the labour markets need as well as potential employers to better understand what students have learned as well. It also supports 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 and provides them labour market intelligence on current and future skills requirements.



***A resort manager*** in a coastal and maritime destination operates on a destination level. She/he is responsible for strategic tourism management and development in particular area and ensures that all tourism stakeholders have a common goal. She/he is in charge of 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.

***A micro-entrepreneur*** offering blue experiences identifies and exploits business opportunities and creates added value by using blue resources innovatively.

***A sustainability manager*** is an expert who works in an organisation 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 organisation's environmental, social, and economic impact as well as ensures the sustainability of business practices.

## Data Collection and Analysis Process

*First*, the desk research was performed. The relevant skillset in coastal and maritime tourism was identified by reviewing existing curricula in vocational and higher educational institutions, national and regional tourism strategies and reports and previous projects' results. This secondary data was categorised by using the descriptions of the three occupational profiles: resort manager, micro entrepreneur offering blue experiences and sustainability manager.

*Second*, new data was gathered by interviewing key stakeholders during spring 2021. In total, 4 tourism entrepreneurs and 4 Destination Management Organisations were interviewed in Satakunta, Ostrobothnia, Central Ostrobothnia, and South Ostrobothnia. They were asked about their current situation and future vision, impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, sustainability, and skills and knowledge required in coastal and maritime tourism. The emerging themes were identified, grouped together and summarised.

These interviews were also complemented by the results of 15 interviews conducted under the project 'Towards Sustainable Tourism in South Ostrobothnia' funded by ERDF during the autumn 2020. The interviews included 5 bigger enterprises, 7 rural tourism enterprises, and 3 local producers which are also tourist sites. In addition, 18 interviews conducted in the Finnish coast in the Science Meets Region project funded by European Parliament during spring 2019 were merged to data. These interviews included 3 local authorities, 5 regional authorities, 2 national authorities, 3 non-governmental organisations, 2 regional business development organisations, and 3 tourism micro entrepreneurs.

The focus group discussion was organised on 16.4.2021 online. Four tourism stakeholders participated the focus group: 2 tourism entrepreneurs, 1 municipality representative and 1 destination level representative. Each participant presented the current state of their business and destination as well as expressed their opinions about the knowledge, skills and competencies needed in coastal and maritime tourism. The emerging themes were identified, grouped together and summarised.

All the results were summarised (see the table 1). The occupational profiles were designed using the pre-determined descriptions of occupations and connecting the identified knowledge, skills and competencies with these descriptions.

## Desk Research Results

The results of the desk research show that the key knowledge, skills and competencies in coastal and maritime tourism relate to sustainability, business opportunities provided



## Resort Manager’s Perspective

The knowledge, skills and competencies required from a resort manager are diverse. They include a multidisciplinary approach and balancing with conflicting stakeholder relationships (Figure 2). A resort manager needs to understand and value the natural and cultural resources, understand the impacts of the climate change and the interconnection between nature, business and society, to understand coastal and maritime business characteristics and promote innovation and growth. A resort manager needs a broad understanding of the blue economy with its special characteristics and opportunities for all stakeholders.

Resort manager has to be future-oriented and understand the needed skills in the future and the impacts of COVID-19 on the industry, to be able to seek and promote sustainable solutions, promote resource efficiency and modernisation of experience products and services in the context of coastal and maritime tourism.

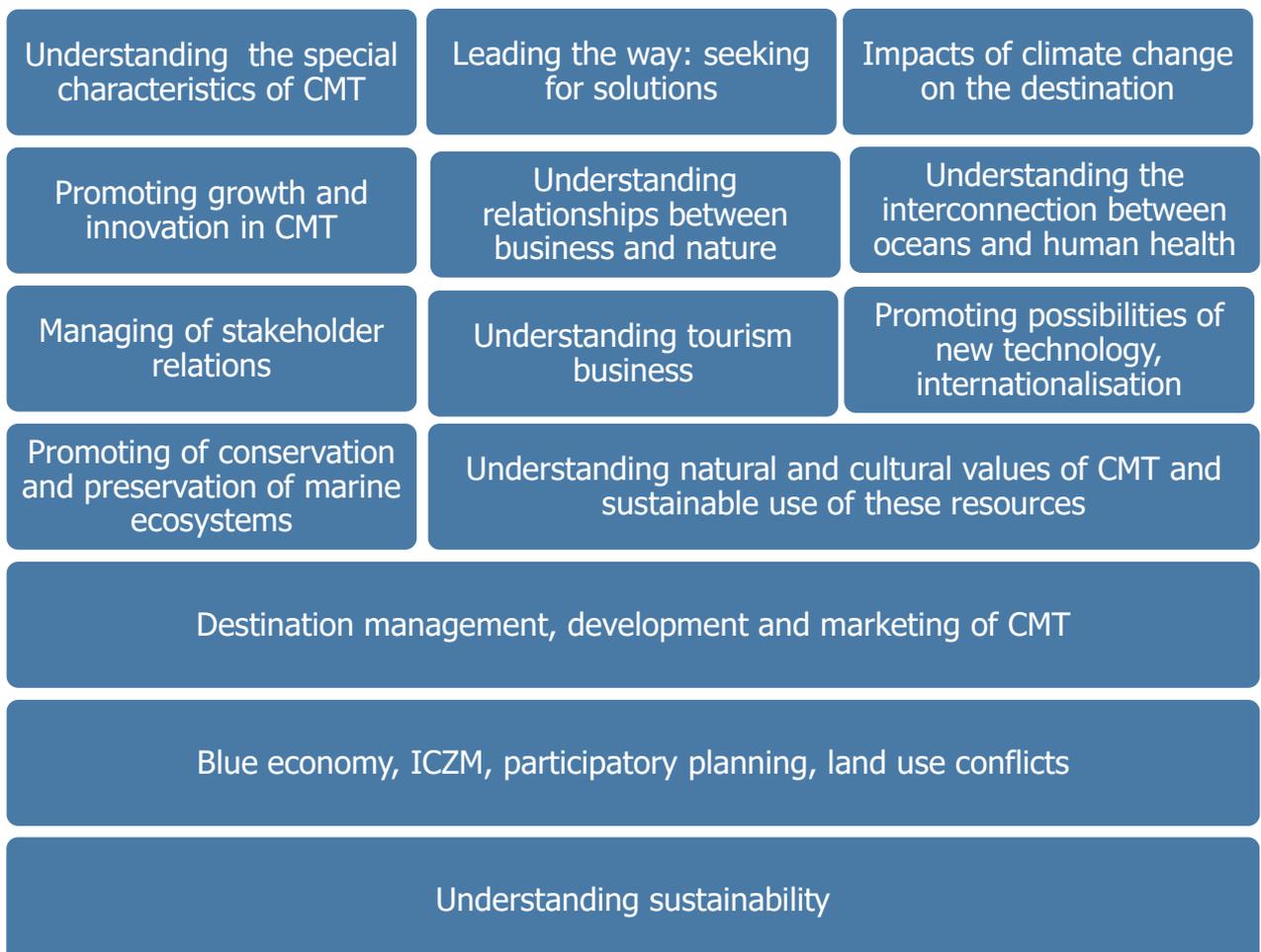


Figure 2. Knowledge, skills and competencies of a resort manager (coastal and maritime tourism is referred as CMT)

## Micro-Entrepreneur's Perspective

Necessary knowledge, skills and competencies of a micro-entrepreneur producing blue experiences relate to sustainable use of natural resources in designing and offering sustainable blue services with a strong brand and good quality (Figure 3). Certainly, general entrepreneurial and tourism business management skills that aim at year-round business are essential. Responsible business practices that contribute to sustainability as well as reporting them are fundamental skills for micro-entrepreneurs. Since micro-entrepreneurs operate in different kinds of environments and markets, education must be sector-specific but general enough to offer value to all micro-entrepreneurs operating in this context.

As micro-entrepreneurs work either as solo-entrepreneurs, or with a small team, they face pressure in mastering a variety of different tourism related business skills, of which responsible business practices are just one example. They have limited resources and they need to carefully consider their core competencies, the core business operations they manage themselves and what can they outsource. It is vital for micro-entrepreneurs to join networks and utilise co-operation models that provide resources and support, since one can not know or manage everything alone.



Figure 3. Knowledge, skills and competencies of a micro-entrepreneur

Since innovation, identifying and exploiting new business opportunities and value creation for business and customers are in general the core competencies of entrepreneurs, supporting these competences is a vital part of coastal and maritime tourism education.

## Sustainability Manager's Perspective

The core knowledge, skills and competencies of a sustainability manager are managing, improving, monitoring and reporting responsible business practices in an organisation. Sustainability manager is also responsible for environmental programmes and sustainability certifications and labels to ensure the sustainability of a tourism business. One has to know the business environment, i.e., the special characteristics of coastal and marine tourism, understand regional sustainable tourism development, manage stakeholder relationships, and understand the conflicts of land use in coastal areas.



Figure 4. Knowledge, skills and competencies of a sustainability manager

# Interview Results

## Satakunta Region

Blue Growth is one of the most important emerging themes in Satakunta regional development. Satakunta is located on the coast of the Bothnian Sea and all types of water bodies can be found in the region. Rocky and shallow coastal area in Satakunta is about 140 kilometers long. There are numerous individual islands and archipelagos along the coast. In front of Satakunta is Finland's largest marine national park, the Bothnian Sea National Park. The largest water body in Satakunta is the Kokemäenjoki River, its estuary is the largest estuary in the Nordic countries. There are about 550 lakes in the province, more than one hectare in size.

The respondents highlighted the uniqueness of coastal and maritime locations in relation to their nature and enjoying outdoors. Nature is near, the sea, sunsets, sea breeze and nature related outdoor activities were mentioned as sources of attraction. Therefore, despite the current pandemic, the future of coastal and maritime tourism was seen positive. The respondents had plans and ideas for developing the industry and their business operations. In order to make a positive change and develop the operations, support from the municipality is required and there should be more cooperation between all stakeholders.

The challenges of coastal and maritime tourism were diverse. Some suffer from the decrease of international and business-related customers. In particular, the changing restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic were seen as a challenge. Other challenges in coastal and maritime tourism were related to legislation and restrictions. As an example, the number of people attending to canoeing tours is restricted as well as distributing fuel in the archipelago. In addition, lack of cooperation and uncertainty about the decisions made by the municipality and how these decisions would influence business operations were highlighted. Seasonality is also a challenge: how to increase tourism in off-season and get the products for sale to tour operators to reach wider markets. Sustainability was also mentioned – in particular the poor environmental condition of the Baltic Sea and how to develop business operations keeping sustainability in mind.

According to the respondents, the most important skills missing are marketing, service design, digitalisation, and language skills. One of the key missing skills was digitalisation to support potential customers in buying the products and services as effortless as possible. One key skill was also customer-orientation, in other words "how to think like a tourist" to help customers meet their goals.

The respondents felt that more training would help to obtain the missing skills (Figure 5). Especially training on marketing i.e., identification of the target markets, customer segments and profiling them, digitalisation and internationalisation as well as digital

marketing communication to attract tourists were mentioned. More skills in service design and product development are needed i.e., how to design products and services suited for these different segments. Other example mentioned were skills related to resilience i.e., adapting to the changing needs of the customers and the operational environment. Furthermore, there was an interest in training on maximizing additional revenue.



Figure 5. Skills and knowledge required in coastal and maritime tourism

Responsibility was seen as an important aspect in business operations. It was commonly noticed that in Finland entrepreneurs are making sustainable choices and taking sustainable actions, but some are still unaware that these choices are sustainable. In addition, there is a lack in communication about sustainability and responsibility. Many mentioned that using local products was one of the most important choices related to sustainability. Many other sustainable actions and choices were mentioned such as participating in projects sustaining clean waters, using local fish, displaying the origin of food on the menu, reducing spoilage, using recycled materials, measuring the water pressure and building enough toilets.

Wellbeing and health related aspects of sea were arised in the reserach. The health benefits of water sports, sauna and ice swimming and fresh air as well as enjoying the

silence we mentioned frequently. The benefits of seafood and other sea-related natural products such as sea buckthorn were mentioned.

Furthermore, the respondents felt that sustainable products and services should be developed, because customers demand responsible choices. On the other hand, the guidance of customers and setting an example for them was seen important. In addition, developing products related to conservation of nature was important. According to the respondents sustainable choices can be developed with quality materials and with the help of professionals.

Global warming and climate change was mentioned as a threat by the respondents. These phenomena affect on nature and tourism industry activities. For example, more windy seasons lead to the sand moving and changes in dunes of Yyteri beach. In addition, the climate change causes challenges for the year-round tourism, because operators cannot necessarily benefit from the frozen sea. However, the climate change also extends other seasons, which was seen positively. The respondents found circular economy to interesting, but they did not have any clearer picture about it.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) was seen as a quite difficult issue but obeying and following the rules and regulations was considered to be important. Experts would be essential to develop practices followed by the ICZM.

The respondents felt that cooperation is important, in a larger proportion. There should be coordinated common vision and goals. Cooperation requires time, which is a challenge. Local authorities provided support and guidance to entrepreneurs, but on the other hand they were considered to hinder the development and complicating issues.

Digitalisation and the skills to manage it were one of the key issues in coastal and maritime tourism. It is important to provide applications suggesting destinations and places to visit and make reservations directly using them. Search engine and website optimisation, google analytics, online reservations and other IT-skills were mentioned. Training is essential to learn these skills, but on the other hand, that practical help and working side by side on digitalisation is needed.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the respondents have started to understand consumers' changing needs. There have been changes in marketing services and products. More marketing in social media and targeting domestic markets since international tourism has been restricted. For many enterprises, the situation have changed due to missing business customers. Services have been targeted to individuals and for example educational elements have been added to products and services. Online stores and take away options have been offered. Some respondents commented the demand of their services had increased.

## **Ostrobothia, Central Ostobothia, and South Ostrobothia Regions**

In the coast of Ostrobothnia, the unique Kvarken Archipelago is Finland's only Natural World Heritage Site on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The listing is shared with Sweden's High Coast. On Finland's side, visitors can experience and understand the land uplift phenomenon caused by the last Ice Age. This phenomenon is also seen along the coast as well as in South Ostrobothnia, which is the old seabed revealed by the rising of the earth.

Majority of South Ostrobothnians live in river valleys and on the shores of a small number of lakes. The biggest lakes in South Ostrobothnia are Lappajärvi, Ähtärinjärvi, Evijärvi, Kuortannjärvi, Niemisvesi, Hankavesi-Välivesi, Kuorasjärvi and Alajärvi. In addition, there are few artificial lakes such as Hirvijärvi, Kalajärvi and Kyrkösjärvi. Even small bodies of water have a significant impact on the well-being of the residents and the vitality of the area. Improving the status of nearby waters will increase the attractiveness of the region and creates new stimuli. The water quality is considered adequate. The most significant factors affecting water quality are eutrophication, acidification and structural changes.

Another unique feature along the coastal region of the Bothnian Gulf is the influence of Sweden based on the long joint history. The people also have special characters. As stated by Kaarlo Hänninen in his book 'Primary School Geography and Homeland Theory' for the single teacher schools from the year 1929, 'the Ostrobothnians are a special tribal branch that seems to have been born through the mixing of Häme, Savo and Swedes. The Ostrobothnians are energetic, brave, fiery and boastful.' However, it has been difficult to develop products which highlight these characteristics and behaviour and allow the tourists to emerge into the Ostrobothnian culture.

The results show (Figure 6) that current entrepreneurs have limited knowledge of the legal framework e.g., for developing marine and coastal experiences. Thus, the respondents emphasised that they need to provide up-to-date information about the legal framework for product development in coastal and maritime tourism. This should include not only national requirements but also EU directives. These form a base for product development and the minimum requirements.



Figure 6. Skills and knowledge required in coastal and maritime tourism

Tourism entrepreneurs have both challenges and opportunities vis-à-vis sustainability. There is an overall understanding on sustainability, but the attitude could be improved. Sustainability is an important theme, but maybe not remain in the focus of business operations. Many entrepreneurs mentioned that sustainability is not the key factor for the current market segment to make a purchase decision. Motivation for sustainability among the entrepreneurs is based on cost savings, supporting local organisations and associations, and keeping the environment clean. Overall, good and high quality operations support sustainability. Living in harmony with the environment is deep-rooted in the DNA of Finns.

Sustainability was known in principle but mainly focusing on one pillar, mostly socio-cultural or ecological sustainability. Reduction of energy consumption was considered among most of the enterprises due to cost savings. Socio-cultural sustainability was described as responsibility for the employees (long-term employment, good working atmosphere) and for maintaining the local culture and cultural heritage (buildings, working methods, materials). Under this pillar, collaboration with the local stakeholders e.g., associations, educational institutions, and local recruitment companies were mentioned. 'Reduce' was the key word in ecological sustainability among the tourism entrepreneurs: reduction in consumption of water, electricity, heating, paper, plastic as

well as minimization of loss and waste. Some were keen to monitor the ecological status and conditions of the water body which is of vital importance for the business as well as selecting sites based on their carrying capacities. However, tourism entrepreneurs do not communicate their sustainability actions.

Due to the nature of tourism entrepreneurs being part-time/lifestyle entrepreneurs, their motives for development do not necessarily stem with the targeted market segments and their requirements. Thus, there is a need to improve the knowledge of current and potential customers, their motivations, preferences, and future trends. This is closely connected to improving marketing and sales skills and capacities as well as service quality. It would be important to understand the value of the cultural heritage and local characteristics. More training on communicating sustainability was requested by both entrepreneurs as well as DMO representatives.

Training on certificates and ecolabels would serve the stakeholders as well as hands-on training on how to process the applications. These labels would be promoted by Visit Finland as well as specific market segments. These labels lead to more sustainable production and consumption patterns and should be included as part of a business plan.

Accelerating the digitalisation is a common training topic among both tourism SMEs and DMOs. Fostering SMEs' capacity and skills in using new digital technologies may lead to some new business models, improvements in tourism management, tourism offer and stronger stakeholder collaboration through the use of data analytics, new digital apps and platforms.

## **Focus Group Results**

The main message of the participants was that tourism development is based on sustainability and responsibility at both the destination and company level. The tourism company and destination should leave the smallest possible ecological footprint of their activities and respect locality in all choices. It is important to consider the three, closely linked, pillars of sustainability: ecological, socio-cultural and economic. Local economy, nature and cultural heritage are all integrated.

A successful tourism company and destination communicates its sustainable and responsible actions to customers. This is important because customers need understand the importance of sustainability. Tourism companies and destinations should therefore invest more time in exploring how to communicate more about sustainability to customers before and during their visit.

The participants highlighted the importance of increasing cooperation. Networking with different actors is essential for tourism development at the destination and company level. Networking would enable, for example, joint product development related to round trips, coastal-inland cooperation and the utilisation of products from local producers. Cooperation should be increased between different entrepreneurs and between municipalities. In addition, peer support for entrepreneurs would benefit them.

About legislation the participants mentioned growing bureaucracy and tightening regulations related to e.g., rental boats. These play a major role in the coastal and maritime tourism operational environment. Operators are required to have various safety documents and training. On the coast, for example, there would be a great need for a small-scale boat taxi service. However, to be able to drive a boat taxi one needs training, even if the driver has decades of practical experience.

#### Highlights

- Contemporary tourism is sustainable and responsible
- All sustainability pillars are integrated
- It is essential to communicate sustainability actions before and during visit
- Sustainable tourism development requires cooperation between different actors
- Legislation plays a major role in coastal and maritime tourism operational environment.

# Survey of the Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

SeAMK conducted two surveys in the South Ostrobothnia region about the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on tourism. The first survey took place in April 2020 with 78 respondents and the second in October 2020 with 56 respondents. SAMK conducted two surveys in the Satakunta region. The survey in May 2020 collected the opinions of 65 respondents and the survey in October 2020 those of 51 respondents.

The respondents represented a variety of actors: Hotels, B&B and cottage accommodation, camping sites, restaurants, cafeterias, catering, programme services (e.g., guides, nature-based tourism services) events, tourism sites to visit (e.g., art galleries, museums, souvenir and farm shops), meeting services, DMOs, tour operators, travel agents, and transport services. There were solo-entrepreneurs and SMEs.

The results showed that the impact on turnover hit already at the beginning of the crisis. Many lost almost all income and facilities were closed. The respondents were highly concerned about the impacts of the pandemic on their financial situation.

Summer season 2020 was characterised by the growth of domestic tourism. Some businesses enjoyed a busy summer season with local and domestic visitors, especially families and small groups renting cottages, while others were still struggling. The regions were missing international visitors, B2B customers and large groups.

To manage the impacts of the pandemic, the respondents diminished the number of their activities, laid-off staff, changed their business concept, ended certain contracts and closed down their businesses. Some entrepreneurs had done nothing. Other measures to counteract the effects of COVID-19 included:

- closure of business for the time being, minimising the costs, reducing salaries, using buffer money, and not hiring summer replacements/workers
- increasing safety related activities such as intensifying cleaning, quarantine periods of employees, guiding customers and paying attention to safety intervals
- increase the owner's/entrepreneur's own work input and extend working days, reduce summer workers, and not to offer work to zero-hour contract workers as well as request payment extensions
- increase marketing activities
- focus or not to focus on development e.g. construction of new facilities

There were some positive impacts, such as, time for renovation and cleaning, reviewing and analysing different areas of business in-depth, reorienting operations towards activities that support e-commerce as well as marketing and promotion activities, rationalising the cost structure, developing new products and services, for example,

quarantine accommodation and provision of remote workplaces and revising and renewing the business concept.

In all surveys, the respondents were asked whether they have applied for support and funding from various public sources. Many of the responding enterprises were not eligible for the subsidies or they did not intend to apply for them, and many felt that application criteria were too strict. However, many had received some support and funding.

Companies welcome subsidies to cover fixed costs such as rents, insurances, electricity and other running operating costs. In addition, investment subsidies and development grants would be highly appreciated. In addition to the financial support and subsidies, companies need assistance in developing digital communication about the subsidies and other type of support, developing new business models and new products, enhancing peer-to-peer mentoring, webinars about current affairs.

Respondents believe that international tourism will most likely return to sustainable levels in year 2022. As the pandemic continues to devastate communities with new waves, the expectations for recovery are gradually postponed. Growing popularity of local and domestic tourism and the vaccinations are vital for the businesses to survive. VAT-reduction is hoped for, as well rent decreases and pay subsidies for the staff. In 2021, discussion in media has revealed the need for subsidies to cover fixed costs, logical and justified decisions on restrictions and a credible exit plan from the pandemic.

In sum, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic has not fully been realised, but it is likely to be notable. Changes are expected in customer behavior and preferences. Some entrepreneurs will close their business and aim at a new career, while new business opportunities emerge. As financially strong enterprises are resilient, they are able to invest and likely to increase market share after the pandemic, while some enterprises are losing their competitiveness and market share.

Tourism enterprises need to reset and rethink how they operate in future and be ready to adopt more sophisticated and flexible use of technology. The recovery of tourism depends also on the economic recovery, travelers' available income and some unexpected local restrictions. As tourism is a seasonal business mainly occupied by small companies, the special features of micro-size and part time entrepreneurship should be recognised better in Finland. Steps towards a micro-size business friendly regulation framework is vital.

## Summary of the Results

The results show that sustainability and responsibility are the key words in tourism development in Finland (Table 1). It is a cross-cutting theme all tourism actors should consider in their activities. Currently, the state-of-art and motivation for sustainable tourism development differs between actors. Some actors have just started and some have been implementing sustainability actions very passionately for years.

In the context of coastal and maritime tourism, it is important to understand the three sustainability pillars: economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability, and their interconnection to achieve balanced growth. Furthermore, it is essential to understand sustainable production and consumption patterns to contribute effectively to sustainable development and sustainably manage and efficiently use natural resources. This includes developing and implementing tools to monitor sustainable development impact for tourism.

The results highlight the importance of sustainability communication. It allows tourism actors to tell customers and other stakeholders what they do and how they do it. Telling about the progress on sustainability commitments is necessary since a big part of sustainable development is to show transparently what activities have been implemented. The results emphasise that the goal of consumer information on sustainability is to increase customer awareness and consciousness, guide customers as well as engage them in sustainable individual tourism-related choices.

Different aspects of three sustainability pillars were underlined. In environmental sustainability, promoting conservation and preservation of marine ecosystems, understanding the impacts of climate change, shift from linear to circular economy, promoting resource efficiency were mentioned frequently. In addition, conserving cultural heritage and engaging locals in tourism development from various perspectives were emphasised. Employing locals and reducing seasonality were seen as key aspects of economic sustainability.

Table 1. Summary of the knowledge, skills and competencies needed in coastal and maritime tourism in Finland

Theme	Contents
<b>Sustainable development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding the interconnection between nature, business and society in the coastal and marine surroundings</li> <li>- Understanding sustainable production and consumption patterns</li> <li>- Applying, managing, monitoring, and reporting sustainability (incl. sustainability certifications and labels)</li> <li>- Communicating sustainability actions, increasing customer awareness, guiding customers</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability pillars</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrating sustainability pillars for balanced growth</li> <li>- Promoting conservation and preservation of marine ecosystems</li> <li>- Understanding the impacts of the climate change in coastal and marine environment</li> <li>- Promoting resource efficiency: reducing energy consumption and water consumption, minimising waste, using recycled materials</li> <li>- Promoting circular economy</li> <li>- Promoting and maintaining local maritime and fishing cultural heritage</li> <li>- Cooperating with local producers and using local products (e.g. fish)</li> <li>- Employing locals responsibly</li> <li>- Reducing seasonality and extending the tourism seasons</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying target groups, fulfilling their requirements</li> <li>- Increasing resilience i.e., understanding and adapting to the changing needs of the customers and the operational environment, rethinking how to operate</li> <li>- Marketing digitally and utilising digital marketing communication tools: data analytics, digital apps and platforms, search engine and website optimisation, online reservations, social media</li> </ul>
<b>Blue experience design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding and integrating the uniqueness of coastal and maritime resources e.g., natural and cultural heritage and wellbeing effects in product development</li> <li>- Designing sustainable products and services based on blue resources for different segments</li> <li>- Decreasing seasonality in coastal and maritime tourism with product development</li> </ul>

<b>Stakeholder cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leading and coordinating cooperation with a common vision and goals</li> <li>- Managing stakeholder relationships, balancing with conflicting interest</li> <li>- Identifying co-operation models and partners that provide essential resources</li> <li>- Increasing cooperation between businesses, between municipalities as well as public-private cooperation</li> </ul>
<b>Legislation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding legislation on coastal and maritime tourism and its influence on business activities</li> <li>- Understanding the principles of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)</li> <li>- Using participatory planning in sustainable tourism development</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language skills</li> <li>- Safety and risks</li> </ul>

The results suggest that skills related to marketing are imperative. In particular, the COVID-19 has emphasized the importance of the skills in building a resilient tourism business and in answerin to changing customer needs. This means that identifying the target groups and their needs as well as adapting to changes and rethinking how to operate is crucial. Certainly, skills in digital marketing from various perspectives should also be enhanced.

In blue experience design, understanding the unique characteristics and resources of coastal and maritime surroundings is a prerequisite. The local natural and cultural heritage (e.g., fishing, boat building, seafaring) are the buildings blocks of product development. It is essential to understand also the wellbeing effects of the sea and water (e.g., the health benefits of fish, sauna and ice swimming, calming scenery, water sports, fresh air, silence). Understanding the changing needs of customers and integrating sustainability in product development from various perspectives are the key skills. Utilising the particularity of different seasons is needed to prolong the high-season with product development.

Stakeholder cooperation is strongly highlighted in coastal and marine surroundings, since there are so different stakeholders operating and living in the area. Finns have a strong emotional bond with the nature which may cause conflicts. Balancing with conflicting interests, identifying different stakeholders and co-operation models as well as coordinating cooperation with a common goal is important. Special attention should be paid to public-private cooperation.

In addition, other specific characteristics of coastal and marine surroundings should be acknowledged. Safety and related risks are an important issue when operating in such

an environment. All stakeholders should also have knowledge of specific legislation and understand its influence on their business activities. Furthermore, knowledge about Integrated Coastal Zone Management i.e., the coastal management process to achieve sustainability is needed.

## **Occupational Profiles**

The occupational profiles were designed using the pre-determined descriptions of occupations and connecting the identified knowledge, skills and competencies with them. This chapter presents the three occupational profiles (Table 2): a resort manager (destination level occupation), a micro-entrepreneur offering blue experiences and a sustainability manager (company level occupation).

Afterwards, these occupational profiles will be summarised with the similar profiles created in Estonia, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Ireland. They will be merged to joint profiles covering the European cold-water destinations. Later, they will be translated into a new curriculum and courses in the following phase of the project.

Table 2. Occupational profiles

	<b>Resort Manager</b>	<b>Micro-Entrepreneur</b>	<b>Sustainability Manager</b>
<b>Description</b>	Responsible for strategic tourism management and development at the destination level	Identifies and exploits business opportunities and creates added value by using blue resources innovatively	Manages and improves organisation's environmental, social, and economic impact as well as ensures the sustainability of the business practices
<b>Sector and occupation specific knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specific characteristics of tourism in coastal and marine surroundings including its resources and legislation</li> <li>- Sustainable tourism development, sustainability pillars</li> <li>- Market knowledge, changes in operational environment and customer behaviour</li> <li>- Stakeholders' interests, cooperation needs and models</li> <li>- Digital marketing trends and tools</li> <li>- Principles of service design and product development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Market knowledge, changes in operational environment and customer behaviour</li> <li>- Uniqueness of coastal and maritime resources e.g., natural and cultural heritage and wellbeing effects in product development</li> <li>- Legislation related to coastal and maritime tourism and its influence on business activities</li> <li>- Sustainable tourism development, sustainability pillars</li> <li>- Principles of service design and product development</li> <li>- Digital marketing tools and channels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specific characteristics of tourism in coastal and marine surroundings including resources and legislation</li> <li>- Sustainable tourism development, sustainability pillars</li> <li>- Corporate responsibility, sustainable business practices</li> </ul>
<b>Sector and occupation specific skills and competencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responding to changing customer needs, marketing the destination using digital marketing communication tools</li> <li>- Designing sustainable products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying target groups, understanding and adapting to customers' changing needs and in the operational environment</li> <li>- Designing sustainable and safe products and services based on local blue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Applying, managing and improving sustainable and responsible business practices</li> </ul>

	<p>and services based on blue resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leading and coordinating stakeholder cooperation, managing stakeholder relationship, ensuring public-private cooperation</li> <li>- Promoting conservation and preservation of marine ecosystems</li> <li>- Applying, managing, monitoring, and reporting sustainability (incl. sustainability certifications and labels)</li> <li>- Communicating sustainability actions, increasing customer awareness, guiding customers</li> </ul>	<p>resources for different segments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decreasing seasonality in coastal and maritime tourism with product development</li> <li>- Applying, managing and improving sustainable and responsible business practices</li> <li>- Focusing on sustainable production and promoting resource-efficiency</li> <li>- Integrating local culture and food with products and services</li> <li>- Monitoring, reporting, and communicating sustainability (incl. certifications and ecolabels)</li> <li>- Improving service quality</li> <li>- Marketing digitally and using digital marketing communication tools</li> <li>- Cooperating between businesses and with the public sector</li> <li>- Anticipating and managing risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Measuring and reporting sustainability</li> <li>- Managing environmental programmes and sustainability labels</li> <li>- Promoting resource efficiency: reducing energy consumption and water consumption, minimising waste, using recycled materials</li> <li>- Communicating sustainability actions, increasing customer awareness, guiding customers</li> <li>- Applying circular economy principles in business practices</li> <li>- Considering the local cultural heritage and locals in business practices</li> <li>- Employing locals responsibly</li> <li>- Cooperating with local stakeholders, managing stakeholder relationships</li> </ul>
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