



# SKILLS 4CMT

## Summary report

**Sector-Specific Skills Development in Coastal and Maritime  
Tourism**

**Intellectual Output 1:**

**Occupational profiles of the key occupations in Coastal and  
Maritime Tourism**

**with descriptions of the knowledge, skills and  
competencies**

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## Content

Summary	3
Introduction	5
Research Aim and Design	8
Data Collection and Analysis Process	10
Desk Research Results	15
Interview and Focus Group Discussion Results	18
Impacts of Covid-19	26
Intellectual Output 1: Occupational Profiles	28
Resort manager	29
Micro-entrepreneur	30
Sustainability manager	31
Appendices	33
Appendix 1 Desk research template	33
Appendix 2 Examined documents in desk research	34
Appendix 3 Research questions framework	35
Appendix 4 Occupational profile template	37

## Summary

This report is a part of the Erasmus + Strategic Partnership Skills4CMT project which aims at developing sector-specific skills, the quality and digitalisation of thematic higher education in coastal and maritime tourism in European cold-water destinations. This report explores the necessary sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism (CMT). For understanding the skills and competencies in CMT, and identifying any skills gaps, desk research, expert interviews and focus group discussions were conducted. The same research was undertaken in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Ireland during spring 2021.

A study of secondary data showed that although CMT is seen as a very important aspect of the overall tourism product in all destinations; no education and training specifically for coastal and maritime tourism is provided in any of the project partner countries. Curricula in tourism management and hospitality management exist in study programs, and many other curricula provide related topics and the necessary practical training, but no specific program for coastal and maritime tourism businesses was found.

However, the different development plans and strategic programs related to coastal and marine regions indicate that versatile and **comprehensive knowledge and skills** are increasingly expected from the actors in this field. The need for diverse knowledge and skills was also expressed during the expert and focus group interviews.

Along with specific knowledge and skills related to the sea and seashore, or a business, CMT tourism professionals are expected to have a broader view of destination development and business management. Having the skills in **risk management** and **spatial planning, agile thinking** and action, good **self-management**, and the capability to **manage changes**, emerged to be essential for managers in CMT. **Visionary and long-term thinking**, the ability to ensure the **well-being of both employees and customers**, the **awareness of climate change** and its effects, and finally the understanding and implementation of **current legislation** in this particular field are also considered as necessary skills in CMT. In addition, the necessity and ability to **develop the destination as a whole** was emphasized, and the

skills of **cooperative and systematic thinking** were considered to have a major role in this process.

Compliance and implementation of **sustainable principles** were seen as essential and inevitable throughout the study, business activities are supposed to support all three sustainability pillars – environmental, social, and economical. However, most of the study participants linked sustainability to the use of natural resources and waste management, and the social and economic dimension was rarely mentioned.

Another issue that emerged, was the importance and skills of **collaboration between all parties**. Parties are considered to be all those involved or affected by activities, or benefit from the activities in the area - local government and residents, various businesses, legislatures, tourists, nature protectors, etc. **Involvement** of different stakeholders and **bridging contradictions** between different parties, were seen as facilitators for successful and sustainable management of the destination.

It was also found that there is a **lack of service design skills** in CMT such as use of existing resources, storytelling, creative thinking, creation and development of a product/service based on the customer, etc.

The participants of the study evaluated their skills in **market segmenting, targeted marketing, digital marketing** and exploitation of **social media** as rather deficient, and in light of outbreak circumstances in recent times these skills were considered as key skills in the future.

The research activities contributed to the threefold objective of the project:

- To increase comprehension about sector-specific skills and qualifications required in CMT, together with addressing gaps and mismatches in presently available skills.
- To develop a learning-outcomes-oriented curriculum to strengthen the strategic and structured cooperation of higher education institutions in CMT education.
- To increase the use of innovative digital technologies, methods and tools as well as open educational resources (OER) for skills development in CMT.

Following the results of the research, occupational profiles for three key occupations in CMT, corresponding the EQF levels 6 and 7, were designed with a complete description of the knowledge, skills and competencies. The occupational profiles were designed with the support of the European skills, competencies, qualifications and occupation (ESCO) reference tool to ensure recognition, validation and transparency of competencies and qualifications.

The final outcome of the project includes the creation of e-curricula that are based on the occupational profiles of three sector-specific occupations.

## Introduction

The beauty of the nature, cultural richness and diversity of the European Union's coastal areas and cities, have made them a preferred destination for many holidaymakers in Europe and abroad. Coastal and maritime tourism (CMT) is considered as an important tourism sector, employing more than 3.2 million people until the Covid-19 outbreak situation.

Despite of the pandemic in 2020-2021, the tourism sector is recovering from the vast setbacks. The challenge is to exploit the potential of coastal and maritime tourism in a way that creates sustainable economic benefits. Being the largest maritime activity in the European Union (EU), CMT is of major importance in European economy as the competitiveness of the sector is a driver for sustainable growth, jobs and social cohesion.

The European Strategy for More Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism (2014) brings out the challenges for CMT: knowledge gap, lack of skills and innovation, environmental pressures, access to EU funding, fragmentation and volatility. The same strategy highlights that limited awareness of the specific skill needs and a requirement for professional skills hamper coastal and maritime tourism competitiveness at the EU level, and states that education should be used to match the supply of skills with the demand of the labour market.

At present, there are extremely few offers for specific curricula at higher education level and for courses in coastal and maritime tourism, and more thematic and harmonized education is needed that focus on the specificities, cross-sectoral nature and development of coastal and maritime tourism.

Therefore, the EU member states should take into consideration challenges related to sector-specific skills development and take 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.

### *Contribution to sustainability goals of European Union*

Coastal and maritime tourism largely rely on healthy marine ecosystems, and tourism development must be a part of integrated coastal zone management in order to help conserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems and serve as a vehicle to promote a blue economy. The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) strategy Tourism in the 2030 (UNWTO, 2020) states that tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all 17 global sustainability goals (SDG) (United Nations, nd), more specifically to 4th – “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, to 12th – “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”, and 14th – “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, in particular.

This project contributes strongly to UN's Sustainable Development Goals, additionally to previously mentioned also to 8th of SDG – “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”, and at last to 13th of SDG – “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”.

### *About the Project*

Skills4CMT is a sector-specific project with a focus on European cold-water destinations as a whole, coherent destination and in particular on remote areas, where tourism is a significant driver of regional development with a high potential for sustainable jobs and growth. Six Higher Education Institutions from 5 European countries with sea borders, namely Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Ireland and the Netherlands, are included to Skills4CMT project. The approach of the project is transnational by nature; any national activity or bilateral process could not reach the anticipated transnational added value from the recognised opportunities and outcomes.

Project addresses the needs of sector-specific skills and competencies in CMT to tackle skills gaps and mismatches. The objective of the project is threefold: 1) to compile the occupational

profiles for three key occupations in CMT, 2) to develop a learning-outcome oriented curriculum, and 3) to increase the use of innovative digital technologies.

The purpose of the Skills4CMT project is to design, develop and implement innovative pedagogies to address sector-specific skills improvement in CMT for the industry to grow, increase its competitiveness and take advantage of new opportunities. The project aims to develop sector-specific skills and the quality and digitalisation of thematic higher education in CMT contributing also to United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

### *Research*

The presented research report is the first phase of the Project, and it identifies the necessary sector-specific skills and qualifications in CMT in five European cold-water destinations. For understanding the skills and competencies in coastal and maritime tourism, and identifying the skills gaps thorough desk research, expert interviews and focus group discussion were conducted simultaneously in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Ireland during spring 2021.

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

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

These occupational profiles will be translated into a new curricula and courses in the following phases of the project.

## Research Aim and Design

The aim of the research was 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 competencies 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?

Following the results of the research, occupational profiles for these three key occupations in CMT, corresponding the EQF levels 6 and 7, were compiled with a complete description of the knowledge, skills and competencies. The occupational profiles were designed based on the European skills, competencies, qualifications and occupation (ESCO) reference tool to ensure recognition, validation and transparency of competencies and qualifications.

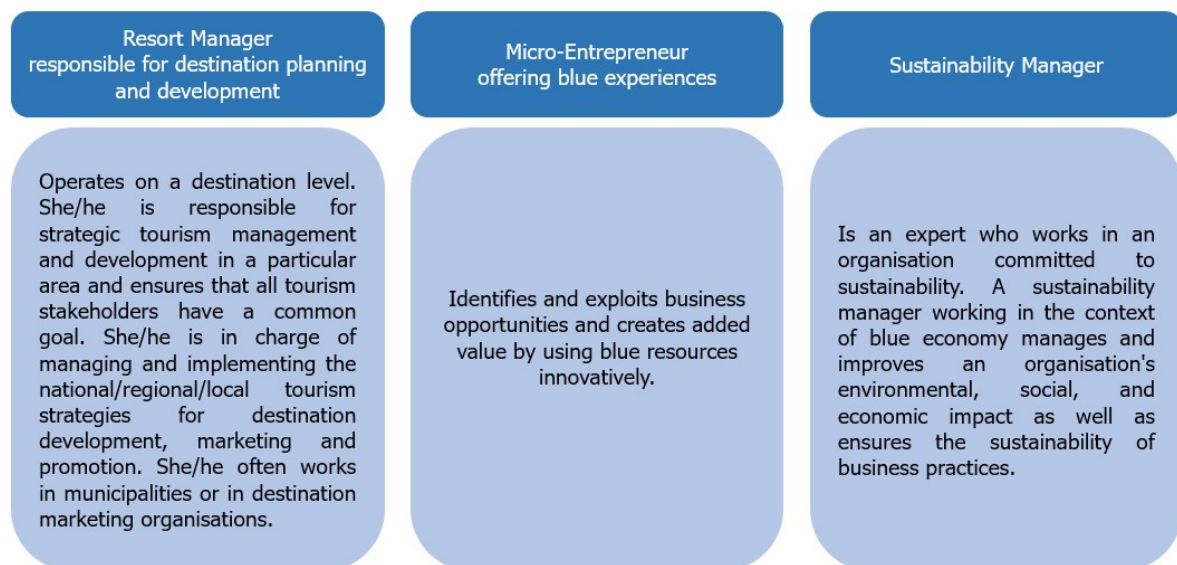
In this report, a clear distinction was made between the roles, knowledge, skills and competencies of three above mentioned occupations. It is obvious that there will be some overlapping of the knowledge, skills and competencies, as in reality in smaller destinations under the one title there are many functions hidden. 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.

The occupational profiles help 1) tourism education and training providers to understand what skills the labour markets need, and 2) potential employers to better understand knowledge and qualification of students. 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.



Based on this knowledge, the job descriptions for key occupations of the project are as followed:

## Key Occupations of the Project Skills4CMT



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.

Each project partner performed the research independently following the framework and the timeline for the research, which was agreed between the project partners during several on-

line meetings (Figure 1). Since the kick-off meeting in November 2020, within the ten months project partners were contributing to discover the necessary skills and competencies, also skill gaps and mismatches in CMT.

## Development of occupational profiles IO1

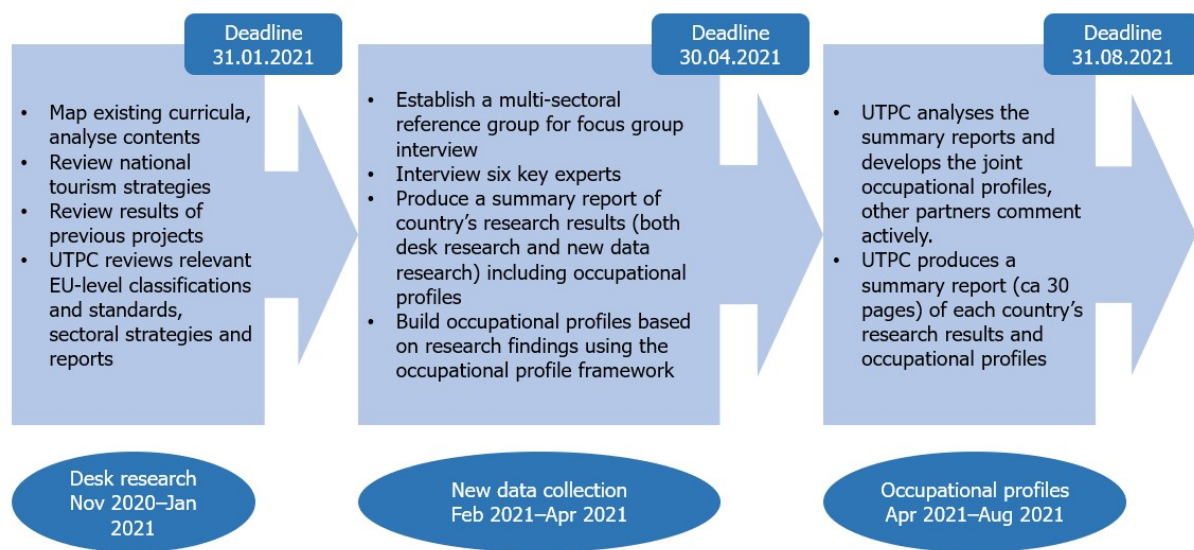


Figure 1. Research design.

The results of the studies were presented by each project partner in separate country reports. The leading partner for the first phase of the project (University of Tartu, Pärnu College) aligned the information from the country reports into summary report and developed the joint occupational profiles for key occupations in CMT. The occupational profiles provide essential input to the curriculum and course design in the following phase of the project.

## Data Collection and Analysis Process

To fulfill the project aim the research was conducted by utilising three data collection methods – 1) desk research, 2) expert interviews, and 3) focus group interview.

Firstly, 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. The secondary data was categorised by using the descriptions of the three occupational profiles: resort manager, micro entrepreneur offering blue experiences and sustainability manager.

The desk research framework (Appendix 1), approved by the project participants in the joint discussion, was used to analyse the related documents. When exploring the courses and curricula, the attention was paid to the competencies, skills and knowledge students should gain in order to complete the course/ study program. Strategies and projects were examined to find out on what kind of skills and knowledge are lacking in CMT sector to accomplish the goals yet are essential and required in CMT in the future.

Altogether 40 strategies, 43 projects and 80 curricula were examined to provide the wide overview about the necessary sector-specific skills and competencies (Appendix 2). Additionally, a number of 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 to summarize the collected keywords and later generalize and interpret the findings. The detailed information about reviewed curricula, strategies and projects can be found in [country reports](#).

Second, new data was gathered by **interviewing key stakeholders** during spring 2021. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the views of destination management organisations (DMO) and small and medium size entrepreneurs (SME) concerning the present situation in CMT, structure and effective governance of DMOs, as well as to gather information on how sustainability as a term is approached and understood. In addition to that, it was of particular interest to know, what kind of effects have accompanied with the pandemic and how companies have coped with them, and what kind of changes have been inevitable.

For the representativeness, the sample in each country consisted at least of six interviewees covering the spectrum of occupations relevant to the project – 2 persons operating in

destination management, 2 representing micro-entrepreneurs, and 2 persons involved in sustainability management. The exact content of samples can be found in separate [country reports](#). The interviewees were selected carefully in order to cover the widest possible area in terms of location, field of activity, experience as well as coherence. In addition to the interviews and the focus group, the questionnaire was used in Ireland to collect more detailed information. The questionnaire was answered by 15 small business owners and 3 destination managers.

In total, 89 persons were included in the study as experts, either as interviewees or as participants in a focus group interview (Figure 2). 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.

Project partners reported that multiple participants share different roles within their professional duties, for example, work for private companies and NGO etc. This enabled the participants to analyse the sector from the level of both the company and the regional developer, as well as from the educational level. Such a variety of representatives contributes to adequate overview about the CMT sector.

In addition, the results of the project 'Towards Sustainable Tourism in South Ostrobothnia' funded by ERDF during the autumn 2020, as well as the project called Science Meets Region funded by European Parliament during spring 2019, were included into the project study.

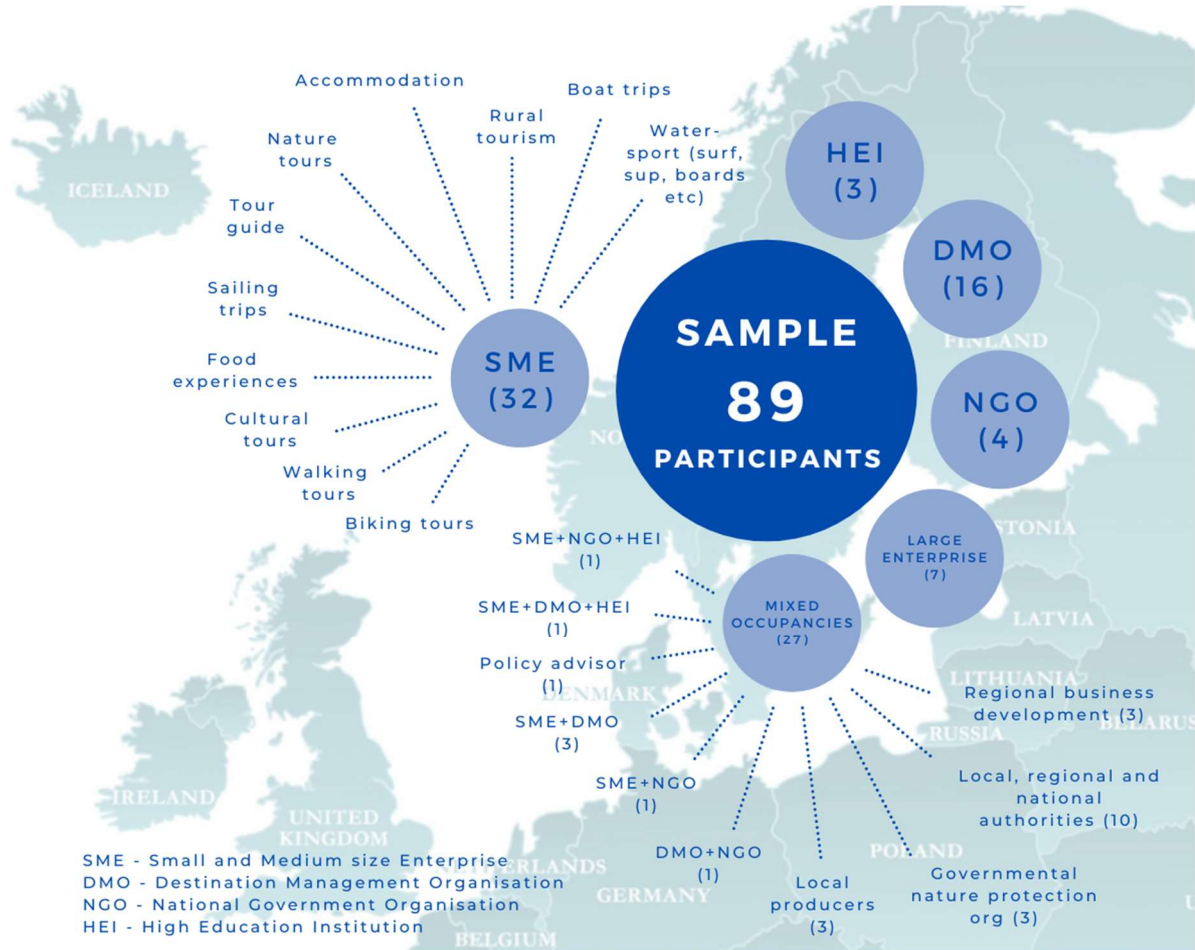


Figure 2. Sample composition of experts and focus group interviews.

Each partner used the appropriate approach to their interviewees to gain trust in order to collect relevant and constructive data to accomplish the aim of the project. The project and topics covered in the interview were introduced to the participants along with the invitation letter to participate, so the preparation for the interview would be more convenient for them.

Based on the research questions framework (see Appendix 3), which was compiled and agreed in a joint debate with project partners, the interviewees were asked about the present situation as well as future vision in coastal tourism, what kind of specific knowledge, skills and competencies are needed in the field, how has the pandemic situation shaped their activities and business, who should be responsible for destination development, and on what extent

sustainability is considered in their everyday activities. Each interviewee was interviewed separately, using the guiding questions from the framework and interpreting them according to the responses.

The emerging themes were identified, grouped together and summarised. The qualitative content analysis was used to extract the relevant information and to examine patterns in communication in a replicable and systematic manner. Additionally, to identify the word frequencies, new ideas and observations were sought to support the design of the curricula, related to this project.

Thirdly, the **focus group interviews** were performed. The participants were selected by the same criteria as for the expert interviews in order to obtain the widest possible expert opinion. Majority of the expert and focus group interviews were held online using different web platforms. Similarly, to expert interviews, the qualitative content analysis was used to identify, group and summarize the emerged topics regarding to the occupational profiles of the project.

The aim of the research was to map the necessary sector-specific skills and qualifications in coastal and maritime tourism to tackle skills gaps and mismatches. Following chapter will provide the overview of necessary sector-specific skills and competences, also the identified skills gaps and mismatches.

## Desk Research Results

Despite of sharing the same context, the approaches to CMT in cold water destination vary from country to country, and destination specific aspects must be considered when drawing the relevant conclusions and making plans for the future. The country reports emphasise both similar and different business skills and knowledge necessary for CMT professionals. Therefore, the short overview of the result of each country is presented.

### Finland

Finland's desk research results show that the key knowledge, skills and competencies in coastal and maritime tourism relate to sustainability, business opportunities provided by blue resources, blue experience design and stakeholder cooperation. Report highlights that **understanding and applying sustainability** in the context of cold-water maritime and coastal destinations is fundamental. Knowledge in **climate change, circular economy, environmental protection, responsible business practices, sustainable products and services, sustainability monitoring and reporting**, and **participatory planning** were mentioned frequently. Understanding the importance of **seasonality, digitalisation** and comprehensive **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)** was also highlighted in country report.

### The Netherlands

From the Netherlands' report it becomes evident that coastal and maritime tourism is seen as a part of a larger system in which a professional needs **multidisciplinary knowledge** to encompass everything. The ability to **collectively analyse complex systems** across different domains such as society, environment, economy, etc., across different scales (local to global), and **involving different stakeholders** and **bridging contradictions** between different parties for successful and sustainable management of the destination, are emphasized in the report. The desire for a more sustainable society is seen as a source of need for skills and abilities, such as the ability to **collectively analyse and evaluate future**

**related to sustainability issues and solving those issues.** The ability to **collectively design and implement interventions, transitions, and transformative governance strategies** toward sustainability have become essential for CMT professionals.

Considering the complexity of the tourism and leisure sector, the demands on tourism professionals are growing, and the future professional should be able to analyse quality aspects of the CMT sector in the context of quality of life from a multidisciplinary aspect. High capabilities are expected in both human related and technological fields such as **project management, interpersonal leadership, time management, quality management, information management**, collaborative and participatory **problem solving** etc. are as much essential and required as the digital skills, such as **storage and dissemination of data, programming competencies** and the **use of big data**, and especially the **ability to communicate and work in a virtual working area.**

Finally, in the Netherlands' report, the **research skills** were marked as "should have" competence for CMT professionals to be able to set up, execute and report coastal and marine research.

#### Ireland

Ireland reported that the tourism related study programs delivered in Ireland have quite a broad tourism focus, with no specific modules with focus on of coastal and marine tourism, yet some have programs have study modules in sustainable tourism. Tourism degree programmes and courses are largely focusing on development of key management skills and competencies through the delivery of **marketing, finance, entrepreneurial** and **management** modules.

Conclusively the report underlines the definite need for more focused education for managers and staff working in the delivery of products and services in Coastal and Marine Tourism.

#### Latvia



Latvian report declares that coastal and maritime tourism has not been highlighted as specific in a context of strategic planning, educational offer and project management. Current life-long and advanced education in Latvia focusses on **general management, hospitality, digital marketing and service design**. Destination management is taught as a part of strategic management within Master's programs. Skills, knowledge and competencies associated with an entrepreneur are covered in Bachelor level programs, however none of them focus specifically on creating blue experiences. Sustainability manager in Latvia is a relatively new concept without professional standards, in education market only few Master's programmes with the focus on environmental aspects cover the topic.

#### Estonia

Although many indirect indications were found, according to Estonian desk research findings there is no exact skills listed or clear descriptions of the tasks to be found that three key occupations should perform. It became clear, that there is a need for competent professionals, who **think strategically, initiate developments, projects, and investments, plan, execute and manage the businesses** in a sustainable way, to **collaborate** with different stakeholders and **involving local communities**. The expectations for managers are very high. Tourism needs leaders with a "new way of thinking", with a vision, with a bold ability to **initiate, create and design**. The managers need to be **business minded** and see the "bigger picture" by **thinking and acting internationally, cooperating locally**, exchanging information with different parties, uniting, and engaging them to branding, and promoting blue economy and multilevel international marketing the destinations together.

At the same time, the professionals working as managers are expected to have a deep understanding of **tourism economy, global developments, changes, and trends; the principles of sustainable management and tourism development; ecosystem protection, environmental awareness, hygiene, maritime safety and preservation of maritime cultural heritage and traditions**. The volatile tourism sector needs specialists who are able to **face and react** to economic and social changes, **adapt** to new circumstances, and **create** new possibilities to businesses.

Managers also need to master “soft skills” like **communication, listening, open-mindedness, intercultural teamwork, leadership, and coaching**. They should show a good knowledge of **digital skills and competencies**.

The managers in maritime tourism sector are expected to have skills and competencies to **develop and design authentic, environmentally friendly products and services** based on the specifics of the destination (conference, maritime, sports, experience, medical, rural, nature, cycling tourism, ecotourism).

The overall results of the desk research indicated, that although CMT is seen as a very important aspect of the overall tourism product in all destinations, there is very little focus on the delivery of specific educational modules or courses in the countries of the project partners. The desk research results, in line with gathered new data research results, were used for the future as input in designing the complete occupational profiles.

## Interview and Focus Group Discussion Results

In order to identify the skills and competencies skills that are essential for the development of the CMT sector, a great emphasis was paid on collecting new data. The country reports shared the common understanding that the beauty and uniqueness of coastal areas is known and appreciated, and both cultural and natural heritage is highly valued. Moreover, every country reported that there is a **lack of skills to highlight and present these unique values**. However, differences between countries revealed, so the most important results are presented separately for each country.

### Finland

The interviews for gathering new data were conducted in two regions in Finland of major importance to CMT – in Satakunta region, and the regions of Ostrobothnia, Central Ostrobothnia, and South Ostrobothnia. Respondents indicated that for developing the industry and their businesses, the support from the municipality is required and there should be more

**cooperation between all stakeholders. Seasonality** was considered to be a challenge, as well as the **legislation and restrictions**, especially in the light of the pandemic.

When it comes to skills, the greatest shortcoming was identified in **marketing** – identification of the target markets, customer segments and profiling them, in **service design** – how to design products and services that suit these different segments, in **digitalisation** – search engines and website optimisation, Google analytics, online reservations, marketing communication to attract tourists, and in **language skills**.

**Responsibility** and **sustainability** were seen as important aspects in business operations, however many entrepreneurs mentioned that sustainability is not the key factor for the current market segment to make a purchase decision. Sustainability was known in principle, but mainly focusing just on one pillar, mostly socio-cultural or ecological sustainability. Reduction of energy, water, paper, heating and plastic consumption, as well as minimization of loss and waste, were largely considered among most of the enterprises due to cost savings.

Focus group recognized that tourism development is based on sustainability and responsibility at both the destination and company level. Additionally, participants emphasized that it is important to consider the **three, closely linked pillars of sustainability**: ecological, socio-cultural and economic, and both **sustainable and responsible actions need to be communicated** purposefully to enlarge the awareness of customers of the nature and importance of sustainability. However, it revealed that tourism entrepreneurs do not communicate their sustainability actions. On the other hand, Finnish companies are already making sustainable choices and taking measures, but some are not aware that these choices can be called sustainable.

The importance of **collaboration** and **networking** was discussed as essential for tourism development at the destination and company level. During the interviews the topics like **wellbeing and health related aspects of sea, global warming and climate change, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), legislation awareness, and changing needs of the customers** emerged as relevant to CMT.

## The Netherlands

Study participants agreed that the growth of coastal and maritime tourism grows brings opportunities and new challenges such as 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. It was stated that professionals in CMT must focus on a **long-term vision** in which the interests of various identified stakeholders are considered. Interviews revealed that **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 planning** is essential for the CMT professionals. In the light of the rapid development of technology, **ability to operate** in agile changing environment and **adapt to changes**, were highlighted as necessary skill.

Study participants agreed that future professional is aware of effects and consequences of nature (and especially water), 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.

One intriguing aspect emerged from the interviews – customers get more used to the experiences and therefore their expectations to experiences get higher. Consequently, this makes **creative thinking**, **event design**, **experience marketing** and **event working** substantially important. In addition to such specific knowledge as **water sports safety**, skills gaps in the desired and achieved level of **hospitality**, and soft skills such as **adaptability**, **communication** and **collaboration** were frequently mentioned.

## Ireland

All respondents were very much aware of the beauty and uniqueness of the coastal area, and most of them wished to **incorporate the health and wellbeing associated with coastal and marine tourism destinations** in the provision of their products and services as they believe they can capture competitive advantage through the inclusion of this. The study revealed that sustainability issues in the field of CMT are tacitly integrated into the activities of other occupations, and sustainability manager as such cannot be identified in separate. Therefore, the researchers focused on obtaining as much information as possible from the destination to managers and entrepreneurs.

According to study results, the key challenge for micro-entrepreneurs is **being informed of the available financial funds and support** that help to set up businesses, but also operate and manage the businesses. Participants linked this with the lack of actual destination management in a particular region in the area. Entrepreneurs also mentioned the **lack of special flexible education**, and the adaptable approach in the delivery of further education was desired.

**Lack of business acumen** was mentioned as a challenge for micro-entrepreneurs, and along with customary business management skills, such as **accounting, marketing, digital marketing and business planning**, the greater need for **knowledge about market segmentation** and **amending of the product/service to suit the needs of changing consumer needs and wants** was identified. Moreover, the ability to produce quality **digital and social media marketing** and possibly sell the product via e-commerce was seen as critical going forward.

The issue of **sustainability** was approached in a variety of ways amongst the respondents. Depending on the field of activity, the entrepreneurs mentioned using the **sustainability approach the operation and management, recycling** (e.g. furniture, composting, biodegradable packaging, etc), **environment protection, special benefits for cyclist**. However, the focus on sustainability is often shadowed by cost implications of adopting sustainable practices. Although entrepreneurs were aware of the need to **communicate the**

**benefits of sustainability and sustainable activities**, the **lack of knowledge about sustainability** was admitted.

The **inclusion of locals** as key stakeholders in the overall tourism product was noted as very important, and **collaboration of all stakeholders** in the provision of a specialised form of tourism in a particular area is understood and wanted by the micro-entrepreneurs, however in some areas this has not been successful from a destination perspective.

Studying the destination manager's point of view, the necessity of supporting micro-entrepreneurs, especially **providing the information** about specific tourism related business management knowledge, specifically in **new product development, marketing, accounting, digital marketing and business planning** was highlighted. The role of destination manager was seen in instilling the confidence and knowledge in micro-entrepreneurs to develop their product from an idea to an actual product/service available to the tourism market, and how to overcome the fear of failure. There is a need for relevant information, in particular that supports the development – how to **commercialise** the product/service, where to seek **funding** for the businesses to develop the product, how to **progress the ideas** and to **access the appropriate knowledge** to develop these ideas.

A substantial topic of seeing and being able to **tell the story** about the region as a whole, emerged from the interviews. The idea of creating '**destination experiences**' and outsourcing stakeholders to **develop the region/area** rather than each micro-entrepreneur focusing on their own business and not seeing the larger scale idea of creating an experience, seemed to have a major focus in recent years and in the future also. The **involvement of all stakeholders** was emphasized as essential for success of area branding strategy, and each business needs to understand how they 'fit' under the branding of the area.

**Sustainability** was another challenge, which the destination managers have identified as a factor which must be **embedded in tourism development strategies** within all regions in the future.

Latvia

The participants considered coastal resources to be important ones amongst the informants, but no significant differences regarding destination/tourism company management were highlighted. Yet, the ability of a tourism business to **respond quickly to changes** was seen as the key to its success. The participants found it challenging to **conform the dynamic legal base**, follow the changes in legislation, interpret them correctly and adapt to them.

The **cooperation between different stakeholders** of the region and **system thinking** were discussed as constructive tools to ensure the complete vision about the complex territory development, and the **involvement of local people** was seen as key aspect for CMT development.

In the light of contemporary customer's awareness and expectations, sustainability was not highlighted separately due to the self-explanatory nature of this term. And yet, regarding **sustainability**, participants referred to **nature conservation**, and other aspects such as society, economy, etc. were neglected. However, the need for a **customer guidance on sustainability** was noted.

According to both commercial and public sector representatives the entrepreneurs and other stakeholders expect short and practical advice on agile problem solving. Additionally, entrepreneurs are interested in participating and contributing to joint development projects.

Participants of the study highlighted the role of skills, knowledge and competencies related to **hospitality and product design** (creative and unique solutions, prolongation of the visitor stay, attracting new segments etc.). Some reported a need for enhancement of **digital marketing** skills, provision of informative seminars on **available funding** etc. Also, there were some references on **quality management** and **response generation** in rapidly changing situation.

Estonia

According to respondents, most tourism enterprises in Estonia, are lacking **skills to highlight and present** the unique values of the coastal areas and market themselves. Interviewees

acknowledged that despite the opportunities there are not enough services or experiences offered on the open water, and coastal areas **lack of services that are designed for international tourist.**

The interviews and the focus group discussion made it clear that there is a **lack of** capability in **storytelling, innovative approach to service design** and **creative thinking skills.** The opinion was expressed that beach, coastal area, nature, birds, sunset etc. are considered as a natural part of everyday life, the real value of which is often forgotten to present. Also, it revealed that entrepreneurs have fears about how to maintain the promised service, when the consumption of the service is unpredictable.

Focus group discussion revealed that **targeted marketing** and **good communication skills** are essential in CMT, as well as more **specific knowledge about environment, balanced consuming of nature resources and cultural heritage.** Considering the latest experience with the pandemic, the focus group emphasized the **risk management, analysis, leadership** and **team motivation skills,** and maintaining **personal wellbeing** particularly important in crisis situations.

The interviews revealed that SMEs have an awareness of the **development of the region as a whole,** but in actions they tend to remain company oriented. Creating a **common marketing concept** as well as a common image for the region was considered as a great challenge. Focus group acknowledged jointly that in some cases destinations are not developed sustainably.

There was no clear consensus among the interviewees and focus group on how sustainability needs to be interpreted. Mostly, **sustainability was linked to the environmental issues** – such as nature protection, recycling, nature preservation and nature education, local food and raw materials. Focus group indicated that the awareness of the customers dictates the sustainable behaviour of entrepreneurs, as well as the regulations by the government. None of the interviewees could share the experience where sustainability manager had been hired as a separate occupation. The intertwining of tasks and occupations was particularly evident in the case of sustainability.



Interviews revealed that although the cooperation is considered to be important, entrepreneurs tend to focus on their company, and an **active and respected initiator is needed for cooperation**. The **involvement of community** is seen as the key to the development of the destination and tourism enterprises, and usually the only option to achieve the goals.

With a desire to remain independent, a clear vision and goal, as well as support and guidance are expected from the DMOs. Finally, the focus group highlighted the fact that on 80% of cases, profit is the driving force behind developments, and willingness to give back to society and nature is raising once personal business goals have been achieved.

#### Common ground and differentiation

Research revealed that in every project country for the successful business, the professionals in CMT need to have and implement wide range of knowledge and skills, both general and specific. Running the business effectively, offering services that are expected by the customers, having creative and motivated staff, using resources sustainably etc., specialists and managers are expected to be great leaders and communicators, open- and business minded, respond and adapt quickly to changes, skilful in time and project management, and being able to manage the personal well-being of oneself and one's employees at the same time.

Moreover, the strategic and entrepreneurial skills such as visionary, strategic and system thinking, business planning and risk management, were seen as essential for professionals in CMT. The interviews and focus groups revealed that there is a lack of seeing the broader view in developing the area or region as a whole.

Commonly to all countries, support from the municipality was declared as insufficient and more expected by CMT businesses, especially in terms of such turbulent time periods, as the pandemic. The co-operation and collaboration between all stakeholders were reported as poor. Thus, participants agreed that co-operation requires the contribution of everyone, and the initiative of the municipality alone is not enough for the productive development.

All countries reported the importance of service design, however the Netherlands report highlighted the real reason for that – customers have become more accustomed to the

experience and therefore their expectations for the experience itself are growing. Every project country acknowledged the existence of natural and cultural resources, yet reported that there is a lack of skills to highlight and present those unique values of a destination in different tourism services.

Alongside the similarities, more important issues emerged in different countries. Ireland reported the lack of business acumen and special education, participants in Estonia were short of targeted marketing and good communication skills. Responsibility and sustainability were the topics emerged in Finland research more clearly than in other countries, the Netherlands emphasized the necessity to reduce the effects of seasonality. In Latvia, quick response and adapting to changes was seen as the key to success in tourism business.

Despite the location of the countries, cultural differences and the organization and regulation of the tourism industry, the activities and the concerns in the CMT are quite similar. Based on that conclusion the sector-specific occupational profiles for destination manager, micro-entrepreneur and sustainability manager were compiled.

## Impacts of Covid-19

Considering the global pandemic situation, which has shaken every industry in a large scale, the impact of COVID-19 to CMT sector was explored in this study as well. Each country of the project reported the closing down the enterprises during the first wave of restrictions in the beginning of 2020, followed by the rise of domestic tourism in summer 2020, especially on countryside and in coastal areas. The businesses which had focused on international visitors, B2B customers and large groups only, experienced a total shortage of visitors.

Participants acknowledged that pandemic situation has accelerated the necessity for **developing and designing the services and products** in tourism sector, for making changes in **approaching the customers**, for **digitalizing** the processes. The entrepreneurs expected support and guidance from governmental structures to keep their businesses running. The subsidies to cover fixed costs such as rents, insurances, electricity, and other running operating costs were mentioned, as well as investment subsidies and development grants.

It was pointed out that **crisis and risk management, restructuring** of the business operations, **communicating** and **cooperation** have become more relevant than ever before. In addition, the **marketing of the destination as a whole** was considered to be more beneficial to all stakeholders than ever before.

To manage the impacts of the pandemic, the measures like diminishing the number of activities, redundancies, changing the business concept, ending certain contracts and closing down businesses, were practiced. Businesses adopted new approaches, policies and operational functions in order to respond to the impacts of COVID-19. Most of the enterprises had to increase the safety and hygiene protocols in order to ensure the safety of visitors and employees. For overall survival and long-term strategy on the businesses, the need for enhanced sustainability was identified as a necessary focus in post-pandemic era. Increasing need for focusing on the attraction of new market segments and tailoring their product/service to meet the needs of these customers was emphasised in each country report.

Along the negative impacts some positive ones were noted, 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, remote workplaces etc.

In conclusion, despite of all difficulties the interviewees and focus group were optimistic about the forthcoming years. Changes in customer behaviour, expectations and preferences are expected, making the service design and development, as well as the sustainable approach more challenging for every business in CMT. The overall recovery of tourism industry depends on global economic recovery, travellers' wealth and available income, and destination specific restrictions.

## Intellectual Output 1: Occupational Profiles

Based on the desk research, interviews and focus group interviews, the sector specific occupational profiles of three key occupations in CMT were developed during several workshops and discussions, using the agreed template (Appendix 4). European skills, competencies, qualifications, and occupation (ESCO) reference tool was used as a framework to ensure recognition, validation and transparency of competencies and qualifications. According to ESCO, the skills and competences are considered as one category in occupational profiles. To increase understanding of the necessary sector-specific skills and competences in CMT, the occupational profiles are corresponding the EQF level 6 , with a complete description of the knowledge, skills and competencies.

The outcome of desk research and new data research was to create the occupational profiles for three key occupations in CMT based on the results of the research in each project country. This chapter combines all the data from country reports and aligns the necessary (sector-specific) knowledge, skills and competences into the joint occupational profiles of resort manager responsible for destination management, micro-entrepreneur offering blue experiences and sustainability manager.

## Resort manager

Occupation	<b>Resort manager responsible for destination management</b>	
Description	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 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.	
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

## Micro-entrepreneur

Occupation	<b>Micro entrepreneur offering blue experiences</b>	
Description	Identifies and exploits business opportunities and creates added value by using blue resources innovatively.	
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

## Sustainability manager

Occupation	<b>Sustainability manager</b> (in blue economy)	
Description	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.	
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
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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Desk research template

<b>Resort Manager (destination level)</b>		
Name of the document	Theme	Knowledge, skills, competences
<b>Existing curricula</b>		
<b>Previous project results</b>		
<b>National and regional tourism strategies</b>		

<b>Micro-entrepreneur producing blue experiences</b>		
Name of the document	Theme	Knowledge, skills, competences
<b>Existing curricula</b>		
<b>Previous project results</b>		
<b>National and regional tourism strategies</b>		

<b>Sustainability Manager (company level)</b>		
Name of the document	Theme	Knowledge, skills, competences
<b>Existing curricula</b>		
<b>Previous project results</b>		
<b>National and regional tourism strategies</b>		

## Appendix 2 Examined documents in desk research

Country	Curricula	Relevant projects	Strategies
Finland (SeAMK, SAMK)	28	14	9
Netherlands (HZ)	15	4	4
Ireland (DkIT)	15	11	3
Latvia (ViA)	10	8	4
Estonia (UTPC)	12	6	20
<b>Total amount</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>

### Appendix 3 Research questions framework

Research questions framework: **The goal is to identify the skills that small businesses and tourism professionals lack in developing CMT.**

TOPIC	Set of questions
<p>General questions  <b>Current situation</b>  <b>Future vision</b></p> <p>Questions focusing on the state-of-art in CMT and future opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would You describe the uniqueness of Your business in coastal maritime tourism?</li> <li>• What makes management/development/enjoyment of coastal and marine tourism unique (or different from for example urban tourism, winter sports tourism) in your region?</li> <li>• What is the current situation of coastal maritime tourism in Your region? What has led to the present situation?</li> <li>• What kind of challenges do you think the tourism industry and/or your organization will face in the next five years?</li> <li>• What are challenges related to CMT in your region? What is needed to overcome those? What makes overcoming those a success, a difficulty? What makes it complex or not?</li> <li>• Is there any inspiring example or best case in CMT elsewhere you know of that feeds your vision for CMT in your region/business?</li> <li>• Describe your vision for the future of the CMT in your region/organization.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Skills and knowledge</b></p> <p>The questions should lead very specifically to <b>coastal and maritime tourism</b>.</p> <p>We are creating very specific curricula, not general.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of tasks, activities and responsibilities do you believe are important to make a positive change within the CMT spectrum of operations?</li> <li>• Is there any particular knowledge missing in the majority of CMT stakeholders?</li> <li>• Name the three most significant skills/"know-how" that you feel are missing from the tourism industry and/or your organization. What kind of expertise is needed in the tourism industry and/or your organization in order to meet the challenges and opportunities mentioned above?</li> <li>• How do You see Your skills, knowledge and expertise matching with the essence and needs of Your work (job)?</li> <li>• What are essential elements to offer in state of the art CMT education curricula?</li> <li>• If You could choose courses or trainings for Your self-development, which ones would You choose? What is it that You need the most?</li> <li>• If you were given an opportunity to participate in curriculum development, which skills and knowledge you would include?</li> <li>• What kind of expertise do you feel that you will personally need more in the near future related to tourism industry?</li> <li>• Are there additional skills/expertise that you have identified which you or your staff require that would benefit your business in the future?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impacts of Covid</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you renew your business and activities to meet the changing needs of consumers? What kind of new business opportunities do you see in the post-corona era?</li> <li>• Has your product/service changed or had to be changed/amended since Covid-19 has begun?</li> <li>• Has the way that you market your product/service changed since Covid-19?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have your target markets changed since Covid-19 and how do you envisage this will be going forward?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainability</b> The question about knowledge and experience of the interviewee in sustainability, also in circular economy, in general should come first. If the knowledge is only about environmental aspects, then the explanation about the sustainability is not necessary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does sustainability and responsibility mean to you? How is this reflected in your organization in practice? How do you communicate about sustainability and responsibility? What skills do you need to further develop sustainability and responsibility?</li> <li>• How are responsible/sustainable products and CMT solutions being created, designed?</li> <li>• How could sustainable business models and processes be improved? What kind of training is needed for that?</li> <li>• To what extent is the circular economy of interest/benefit for CMT operations? How does climate change impact CMT and what kind of skills are needed to respond to this?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other relevant themes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Coastal zone management, laws and regulations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What kind of knowledge and skills is needed related to coastal zone management?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Well-being and health</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are the positive wellbeing and health effects of the sea considered in tourism development in your region/organization? If not, what kind of knowledge and skills you need more to accomplish this?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Networking, stakeholder cooperation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How do you ensure cooperation between different stakeholders is tourism development? Is there any conflicts and if there is, between which stakeholder groups?</li> <li>○ How do you engage the community in tourism development activities?</li> <li>○ What is the role of local authorities in CMT development and management?</li> <li>○ What kind of skills are needed to increase the level of cooperation?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Digitalization</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How would you promote digitalization in CMT?</li> <li>○ What are the key skills to promote digitalization in CMT?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Appendix 4 Occupational profile template

### Occupational profile template

	Resort Manager responsible for destination planning and development	Micro-Entrepreneur offering blue experiences	Sustainability Manager
Sector and occupation specific knowledge (and their description)			
Sector and occupation specific skills and competences (and their description)			

**Knowledge:** the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study

**Skill:** the ability to apply and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems, skill refers typically to the use of methods or instruments in a particular setting and in relation to defined tasks.

**Competence:** the ability of a person – facing new situations and unforeseen challenges – to use and apply knowledge and skills in an independent and self-directed way.