



Setting a baseline for the VocMat project

July 2006

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Objectives and method

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to set a baseline for the activities of the VocMat project. It pulls together and summarises research that the project partners have undertaken so far. It then explains what the findings mean for VocMat. The report will serve as a reference point for those involved in the project and form the baseline for the interim and final evaluations.

As we stated in our proposal for this research, setting the baseline means in this case establishing

- Satisfaction levels with training;
- Partners' expectations; and
- Expectations of the pilot groups.

Starting from VocMat's objectives, it identifies the key areas the project needs to address to achieve these objectives. Within these areas we have identified what the needs and expectations of stakeholders and a sample of potential users are. The key issues section then pulls together the issues that VocMat should address.

Our method

Our evaluation approach follows UK Treasury Green Book standards and we set the baseline to enable effective interim and final evaluations following these standards. We therefore:

- Analysed the data VocMat's initial research produced;
- Critically assessed the VocMat research methods;
- Drew findings that give a clear indication of which issues the project has to address to fulfil the evaluation criteria of: efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, utility and sustainability.

VocMat objectives

The VocMat project aims to develop a new innovative, flexible training method for middle and senior management staff in the European tourism industry. The specific objectives of this Leonardo funded project are to

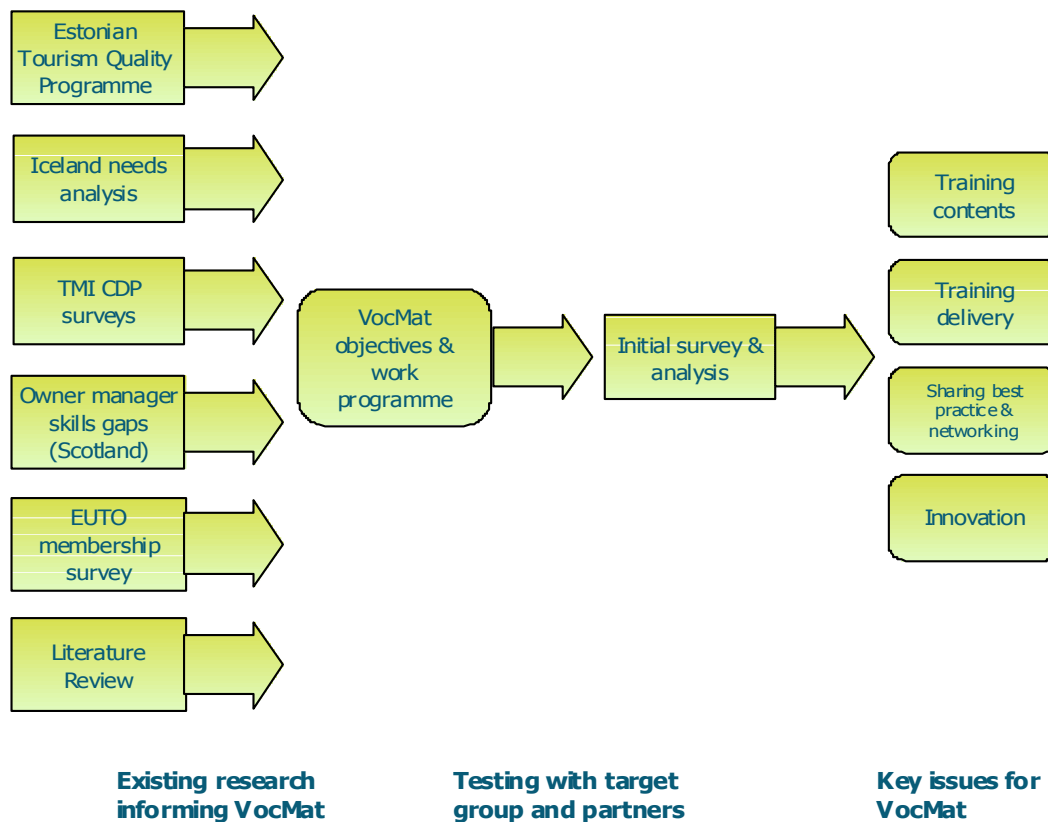
- "Produce an agreed approach for improving the management skills and competencies of middle and senior management staff in tourism organisations;
- Identify the key management skills needed by the tourism sector in partner countries and means of addressing them through training;
- Develop a suite of leading edge training products, procedures and processes (including e-learning) that will be transferable geographically and across the diversity of the tourism sector;

- Promote the improvement of key management skills by using transnational working groups and reference to leading practice Europe-wide in tourism and other sectors;
- Promote quality in, and access to, management training in a vocational setting through dissemination throughout this and other sectors in Europe;
- Develop and transfer innovation in vocational management training and, in doing so, provide the means to promote competitiveness and entrepreneurship;
- Share best practice in vocational management training between tourism organisations throughout Europe and to leave a legacy of networking between organisations;
- Make equal opportunities an integral part of management training in the tourism industry.”

Developing a baseline

Various pieces of research have informed the VocMat work programme. The diagram below shows the most important research work influencing VocMat and how the baseline was developed. Details of the existing research are in the VocMat research report¹.

Figure 1 Developing a baseline



¹ VocMat research report and training needs analysis, Cathy Guthrie FTMI FTS, March 2006

Areas for change

From the objectives, we have identified the following areas for change, which may be monitored or evaluated:

- Identifying training needs and means of addressing them
- Developing training products and processes
- Transnational working
- Access to training
- Quality of training
- Developing innovation
- Sharing best practice and networking.

Measuring progress

The outcomes VocMat aims to achieve are mostly qualitative rather than quantitative which makes it difficult to set quantifiable targets. To a certain extent activities related to transnational working, sharing best practice and networking are quantifiable in that numbers of meetings, pilot training sessions, videoconferences and contacts with other networks can be recorded. Innovation on the other hand is difficult to measure and there has been much discussion around this. If VocMat partners can agree on a common definition of innovation in the context of tourism management training, evaluators will then be able to show, through interviews and possibly questionnaires, what progress has been made.

Using the information project partners have provided and the data collected through focus group and pilot group introduction sessions, we have developed a baseline for VocMat under the following broad headings:

Existing skills levels and needs – This refers to the contents of the new training system, looking at existing skills levels and gaps in training provision.

Training availability and use – The initial research has also provided information on how training is delivered and how it should be delivered to be most effective.

Expectations from VocMat – This covers the expectations stakeholders and potential users have from the VocMat project.

Methods of the initial VocMat research and method issues

Identifying the key management skills needed by the tourism sector in partner countries and means of addressing them through training is one of the objectives of the VocMat project. Initial research was undertaken towards this objective as part of the first phase of the project and the findings published in the research report mentioned above. We have used this information to set up the baseline for VocMat activities.

The initial research consisted of a

- review of relevant academic research – looking at abstracts of relevant journal articles;
- review of existing initiatives in the partner countries;
- review of existing research carried out by project partners; and
- questionnaire based survey of partners and target group representatives.

Our sources of information and the data we had to work with were not as robust as they could have been. The low number of survey participants who gave information on their expectations, for instance, raises the question if the findings can be seen as representative. Also, the main research tool – the survey questionnaire – was used in two versions, one of which did not include a question on needs about training delivery which would have been more useful than asking participants what types of training are being used. We refer to these weaknesses in the respective sections of this report.

VocMat survey

The purpose of this was to confirm and further refine the findings from previous research, including priority areas VocMat should address in terms of training contents and delivery. The survey also sought to explore the expectations of those involved in the project – both partners and potential users.

For this the project team developed a questionnaire made up of three parts. Two versions of this were used and copies of these are in the appendices:

- Existing skills levels – participants rated their current skills level and their need for (re)training in different skills areas using a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (excellent).
- Access and delivery – access to, availability of and uptake of training was rated on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (excellent or very high).
- Expectations – In one version of the questionnaire, participants were asked which subject areas the project should focus on; how they would like to see training being delivered; and what were their overall expectations from the VocMat project. In the other version, participants listed three main expected benefits from VocMat and what wider impact these would have.

The project team used the questionnaire as a basis for group discussions. For recruiting participants, project partners used their respective networks to identify a good spread of potential users of the new VocMat system. The response was good and 70 people took part.

During the sessions participants filled in the questionnaires and then discussed any issues that were important to them.

The partners in the different countries chose to handle the data from the research differently which had an effect on the data available for baseline setting:

- In England and Scotland one focus group session each took place. Tourist Board Training entered responses into an on-line survey tool and session leaders also wrote up summaries of group discussions.
- In Estonia research participants filled in questionnaires that were also added to Survey Monkey.

- The Icelandic partner chose to provide a brief summary report of a group discussion as well as the results of an extensive needs analysis into education & information in the Icelandic tourism industry which was used to feed into the VocMat research.

Pilot group seminars

Continuing piloting of the findings of the Research & Development Group and the resulting training modules is a key part of VocMat. To introduce the first set of pilot groups to VocMat, induction seminars were held in Iceland, Estonia and Sheffield (two groups), followed by a feedback session. Group participants came from different backgrounds and had different levels of experience and included small guest house owners, local authority tourism officers and tourist board representatives. The aim is to keep the same pilot group for the life of the project although there may be change in membership because of individual circumstances. This will enable the pilot group to give even more feedback on the delivery mechanism in the second test phase. This is because they will have been consulted on its effectiveness at the end of the first test phase and their views used to make any necessary adjustments.

The seminars also served to explore participants' expectations from the project. The write up from the feedback session fed in to our baseline analysis.

Research and initiatives

VocMat partners want to develop a management training system that fills the gaps in existing training provision in terms of contents and delivery. As part of the project they also aim to undertake research and development in tourism management training building on existing research and initiatives without duplicating efforts.

This section gives a brief overview of the findings of the initial research as set out in the March 2006 VocMat report. Where we make references to the *research report* we are referring to this report.

Academic literature review

The main information source for this review was abstracts from articles in academic journals. These focused on literature related to tourism training, competences, and training and learning issues faced by owner-managers in tourism SMEs and micro-businesses. According to the research report existing academic research on tourism management training

- is mostly theoretical; or
- looking at conceptual models relating to *academic* teaching and learning;
- occasionally includes case studies.

The researcher, Cathy Guthrie from Tourism Management Institute, concludes there is little – if any – research into and provision of vocational material for senior and middle managers. For VocMat this means the project is **innovative** by developing new methods and products; and developing knowledge and expertise where little currently exists.

Any research VocMat's Research & Development Group will undertake in this field, and the project's outcomes, will help to fill the gap identified in the review.

The academic literature review found little in the way of existing good practice that could contribute to the VocMat programme. So lessons learned by VocMat are potentially very important and breaking new ground, therefore innovative. The review does imply that there is a need for more practice oriented research on tourism management training in a vocational setting.

Other research and existing initiatives

When developing the project idea, project partners also looked at existing skills development programmes and strategies in the partner countries. This was to identify gaps, examples of good practice and ways of linking the VocMat system to other initiatives and systems, including qualification frameworks. To help establish at which level to pitch the training materials a mapping exercise, covering the English and Scottish national qualifications frameworks, was carried out.

The key findings from this part of the initial research are:

- In Estonia and Iceland there is little structured vocational education and training leading to vocational qualifications in tourism.
- In the UK most tourism employers concentrate on training which is job specific, short-term, addressing basic skills and often just focused on meeting legislative needs such as health and hygiene.
- There is evidence that where training *is* available it is not well used, so the VocMat research needs to identify the reasons.
- Most existing training is delivered through the traditional routes of FE colleges and universities using mainly traditional methods.
- There is a need for more flexible training provision which VocMat has to address.
- The absence of management training is seen as a barrier in both the private *and* public sector (support agencies).
- VocMat materials should be pitched at English National Qualification Framework level 7/8, (SCQF level 11) or NVQ/SVQ level 4/5, or postgraduate certificate, diploma and Masters degree.

Project partners and other relevant organisations within the participating countries have carried out research that VocMat is using and building on. This work is described in the research report.

Evidence of need is patchy and needs to be presented clearly from the research phase. There is limited primary evidence either from existing research or from the project's own research. However, it had been agreed that surveys of groups representing employers would be accepted as proxy for primary research to demonstrate need.

The review has identified that the planned activities for VocMat will not duplicate existing initiatives in the partner countries. The size of the sample in terms of training needs has restricted the ability to establish a clear transnational need although we expect that the perceptions of survey participants are very similar to the real picture (see note below). Where training is available but not utilised VocMat should explore the reasons for this. The new training system should be pitched at the equivalent of the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework and the English National Qualification Framework level 7/8, or postgraduate diploma and Masters degree. The absence of management training can act as a barrier to economic growth and career progression and VocMat must address both private and public sector needs.

Training contents

A key purpose of setting a baseline is to identify areas of tourism management skills VocMat needs to address. This section focuses on existing skills levels and resulting training needs, as well as some other aspects related to training contents. It sets out the findings from the analysis of the data from the first section of the survey questionnaires and comments participants made in the third section. This is backed up with information from write-ups of discussion sessions.

Figures 2 to 6 show how survey participants rated current skills levels and the need for training or retraining on average on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (outstanding or very high), covering the key skills areas:

1. Providing quality service
2. Marketing skills
3. Operational management skills
4. Strategic management skills
5. Human resource skills.

The results reflect people's perceptions of skills levels and training needs. So they should be looked at with caution because establishing actual skills levels would need much more in depth research using a larger, more representative sample.

Providing quality service

Figure 2 below sets out how respondents rated their existing skills levels and training needs in providing quality service. The categories surveyed are ranked in descending order by perceived training needs:

- o Generating repeat business through raising standards
- o Recruiting and retaining the right staff to deliver a quality product/service
- o Standard setting, monitoring and evaluation
- o Exceeding customers' expectations
- o Practising quality management
- o Utilising quality assurance schemes
- o Knowing your customers.

Figure 2 – Providing quality service

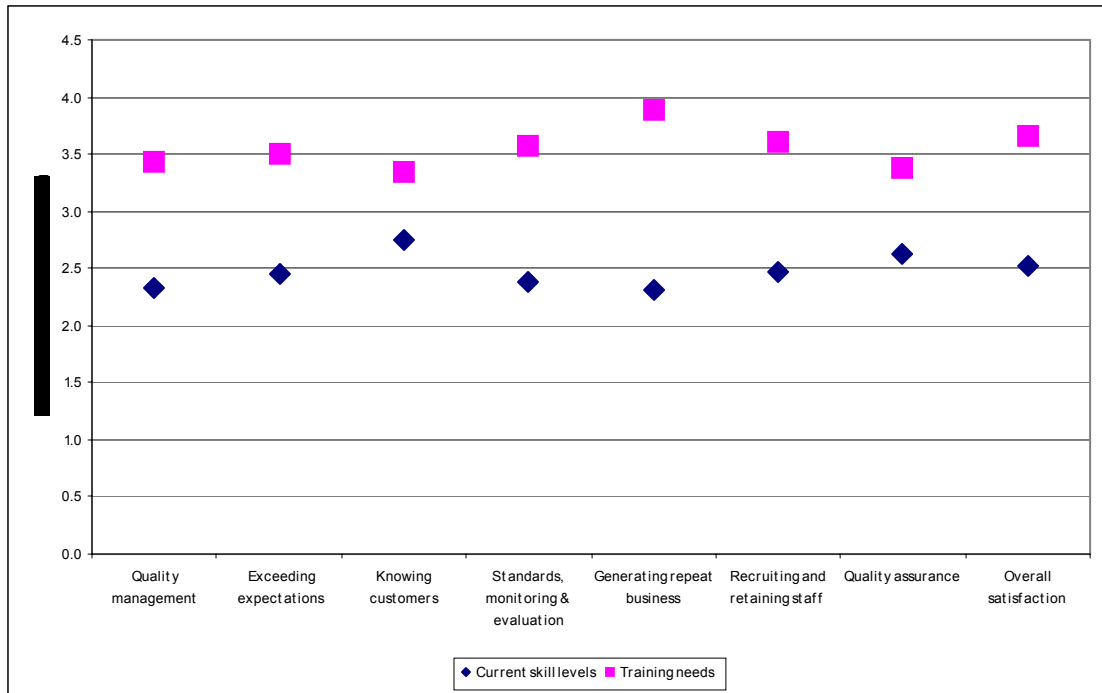


Figure 2 shows that participants felt their current skills levels in all the skills categories were less than satisfactory. Training needs were rated high accordingly. Existing skills related to ‘generating repeat business’ appear low. The average rating of existing ‘knowing your customers’ skills is slightly higher and the perceived training need slightly higher than in the other categories. But it may be that respondents only *think* they know their customers without doing so.

Icelandic survey participants rated existing skills in recruiting and retaining staff highest, followed by ‘exceeding customer satisfaction’ and ‘knowing your customer’. Quality management is also the content area that got the second most mentions – behind marketing skills - where survey participants listed what their expectations from VocMat were.

The VocMat training system should address all subject areas related to providing quality service.

Marketing skills

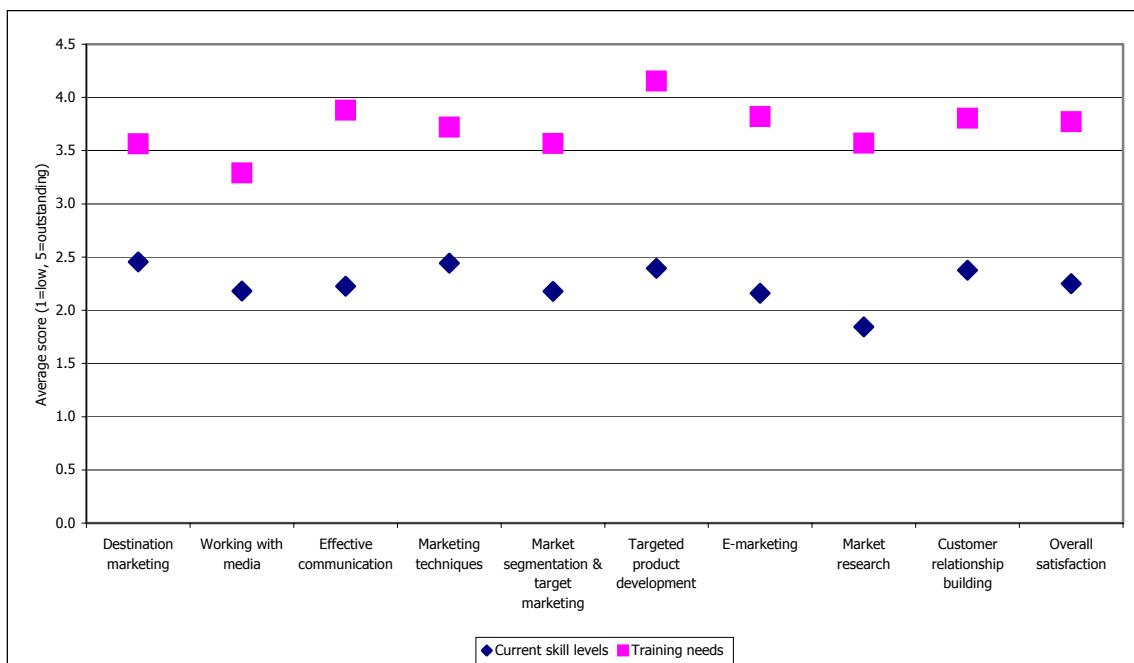
This list sets out the priority order of perceived training needs in the categories surveyed:

- Developing a product to address a target market
- Effective communication
- E-marketing
- Customer relationship building

- Marketing techniques
- Market research
- Market segmentation and target marketing
- Destination marketing
- Working with the media

As figure 3 shows, overall average existing marketing skills level are slightly lower than those in providing quality service and training needs are slightly higher. Market research skills appear low with an average rating of just below 2, which means less than fair skills levels. Training needs are rated highest in targeted product development where the average rating is above 4 (=high). The Icelandic discussion group confirmed this by also rating training needs in marketing as high.

Figure 3 Marketing skills



Focus group participants pointed out that many tourism operators, especially SMEs, didn't even know what marketing was and that it was often equated with selling. Most of those surveyed named a focus on marketing skills as one of their key expectations from VocMat.

Marketing is a key area the new VocMat system needs to address, with a particular focus on targeted product development.

Operational management skills

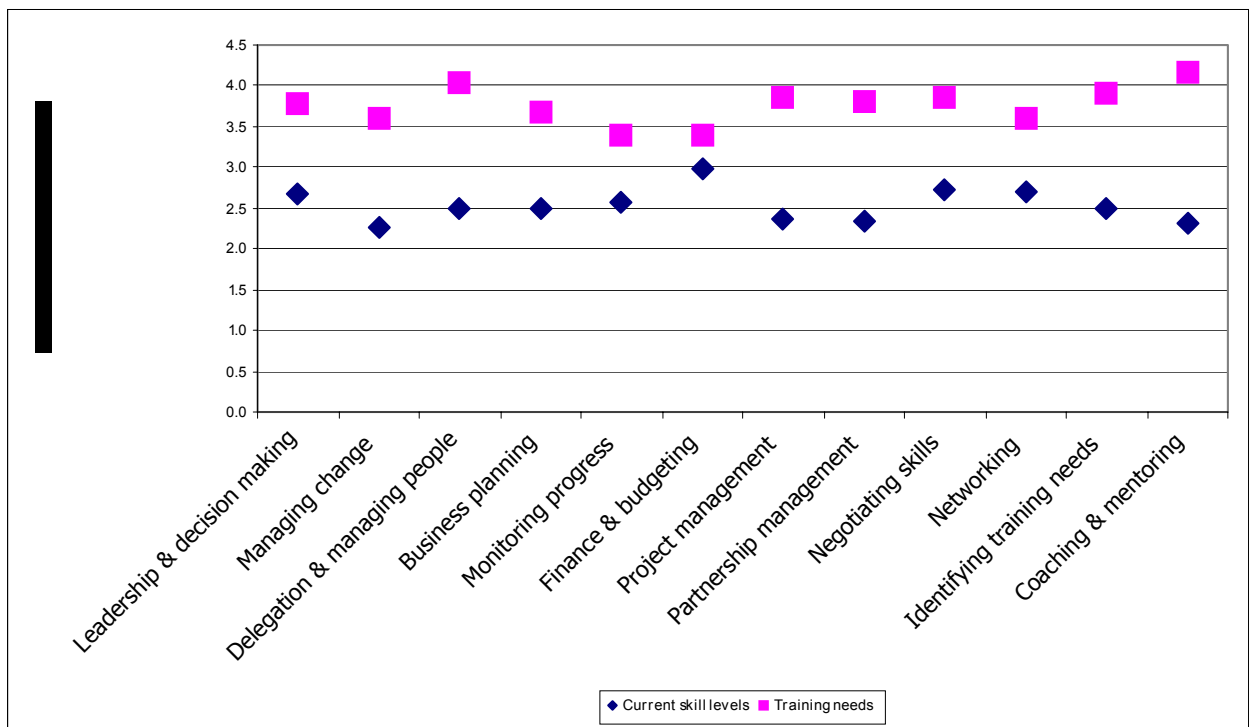
Figure 4 shows perceived training needs in operational management skills:

- Coaching and mentoring staff
- Delegation and managing people

- Identifying staff training needs
- Project management
- Negotiating skills
- Partnership management
- Leadership and decision making
- Business planning
- Networking
- Management of change
- Finance and budgeting
- Monitoring business progress.

As in other content areas, research participants rated existing skills levels less than satisfactory. Average ratings were somewhere between fair and satisfactory, with skills levels in managing change, project management, partnership management; and coaching and mentoring getting the lowest ratings (below 2.5).

Figure 4 Operational management skills



The gap is smallest in finance and budgeting, where skills levels are slightly higher than those in other categories with an average rating of 3 (=satisfactory). Training needs, on the other hand, appear highest in delegation and managing people, as well as coaching and mentoring. Again, these findings were reflected by the findings of the Icelandic discussion group session and the key expectations from VocMat.

All operational management skills categories identified are relevant for VocMat. Skills related to managing people should get special attention.

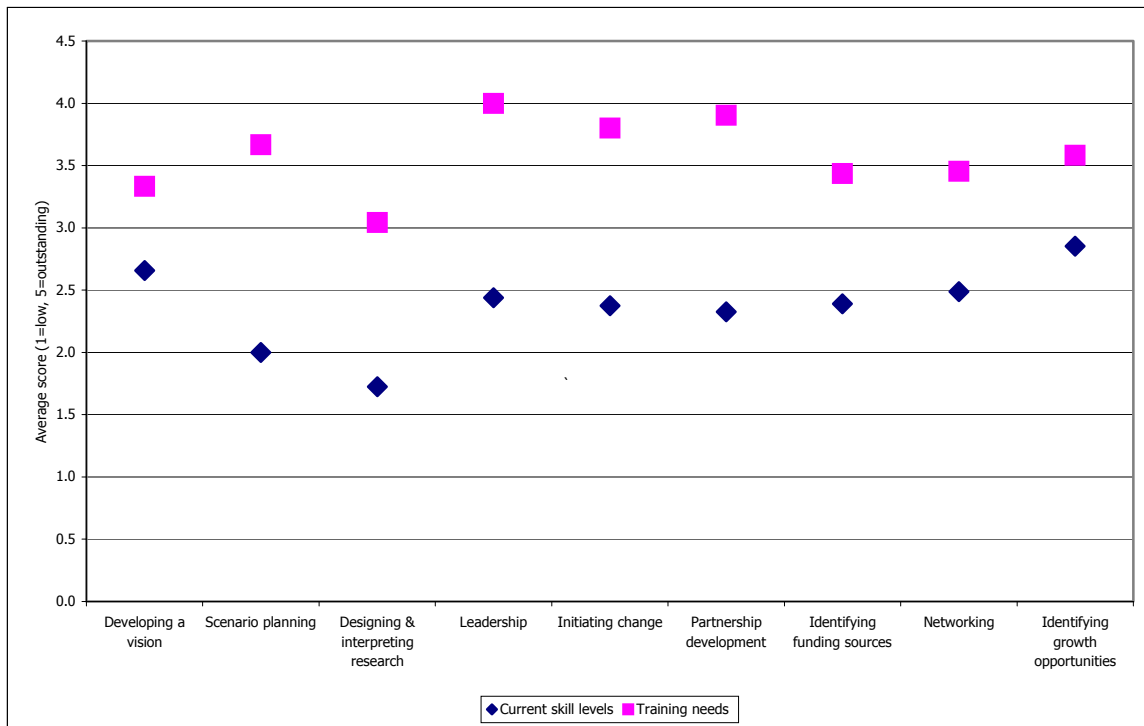
Strategic management skills

Figure 5 shows the situation in strategic management, specifically:

- Leadership
- Partnership development
- Initiating change
- Scenario planning
- Identifying opportunities for business growth
- Networking
- Identifying sources for funding
- Developing a vision for your business
- Designing and interpreting research

Existing levels of strategic management skills are similar to those in previous areas. But designing and interpreting research stands out as a category where skills levels are low at 1.7 – less than fair. Scenario planning skills follow with an average rating of 2 (=fair). Skills levels in identifying growth opportunities are rated slightly higher than the other categories, but still less than satisfactory.

Figure 5 Strategic management skills



Categories where training is needed most (average rating of 4=high) are leadership, partnership development and initiating change. Icelandic focus group participants agreed that they were “not familiar at all with or using strategic planning in their business”.

Strategic management skills are also a key area of need where VocMat can make a difference

Human resource skills

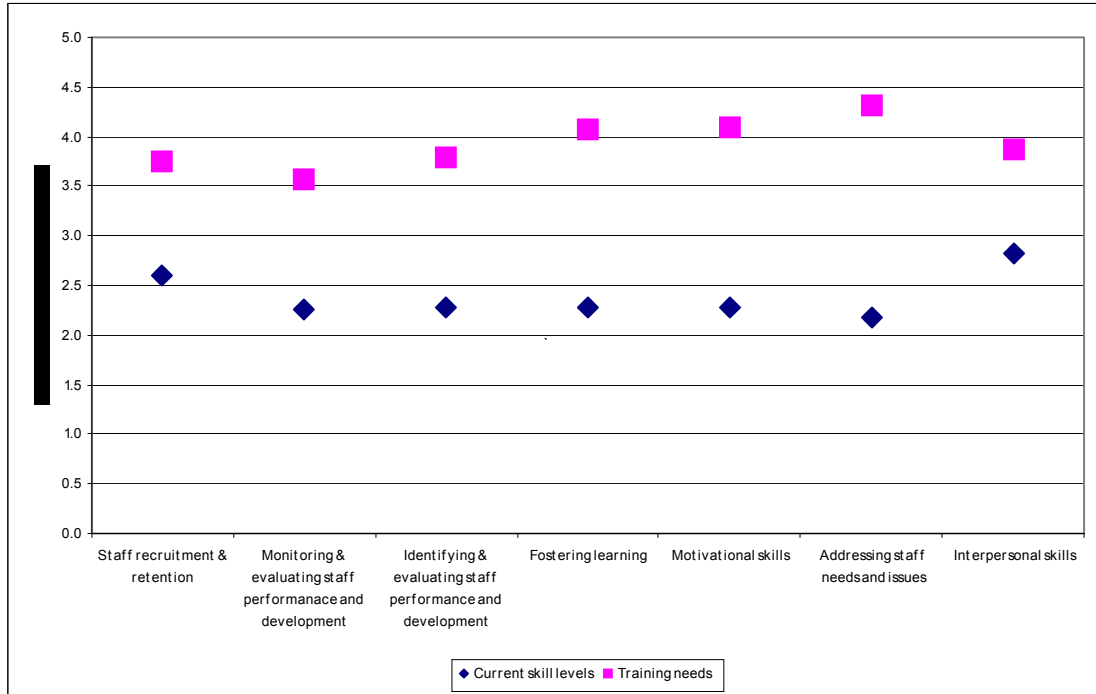
Training needs in the categories within human resource skills were rated in this order:

- Addressing staff needs and issues
- Motivational skills
- Fostering learning among staff
- Interpersonal skills
- Identifying and evaluating staff performance and development
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Monitoring and evaluating staff performance and development

As figure 6 shows, survey participants rated existing human resource skills levels between 2 (=fair) and 3 (=satisfactory). Levels of interpersonal skills appear slightly higher than other categories. The need for training or retraining on addressing staff

needs and issues is seen as highest at around 4.3, closely followed by other “soft” skills such as motivational skills.

Figure 6 Human resource skills



Some discussion group members stressed that people management skills were particularly needed for employees from the new EU Member States. The Icelandic discussion group confirmed the strong need for training in human resource management skills and knowledge.

VocMat training should address all areas related to human resources. There is a particular need for training in soft skills such as motivational and interpersonal skills. The project should exploit its transnational nature to address issues related to managing international staff.

Other training needs

During the group discussions, participants identified several skills areas they thought should be included in the VocMat research:

- Time management and work planning
- Team building skills
- Internal communication
- Managing information
- Employment law and
- Productivity.

Research participants also pointed out a “need for management training on cross-cultural customer perceptions and expectations”, referring to the European nature of VocMat. Some also stressed that training contents should avoid use of jargon and too academic language.

A few additional skills came up during the focus group sessions the real need for which the Research and Development Group could explore further. Partners from different European countries working together also is an opportunity for adding a European dimension to training contents where possible.

Although we expect that the perceptions of survey participants are very similar to the real picture, the data needs to be triangulated to establish training needs in a more detailed way. The average rating of existing skills levels in all areas surveyed was between 2.2 and 2.6 (2=fair, 3=satisfactory).

Delivering training

The other key part of the new training system is how it will be delivered. This includes looking at availability of training and barriers to take up. This section sets out the findings from the questionnaire survey and discussion sessions.

In section two of the questionnaire respondents rated on a scale from 1 (=low) to 5 (=very high/excellent)

- How accessible training is in their environment;
- What types of training are available; and
- What training their organisation uses.

We don't find the scale labels 'good' (=4) and 'excellent' (=5) very suitable for rating training use so we interpreted them as high and very high for our analysis.

Access to training

Table 1 in the appendix sets out respondents' views on how they can access training. It shows that almost three-quarters of those surveyed (72%) thought the chance of people being able to undertake training within working hours was average or above. The figures are similar where they were asked if businesses were likely to pay for the training. 75% thought that was the case, and that individuals weren't willing to pay for training themselves.

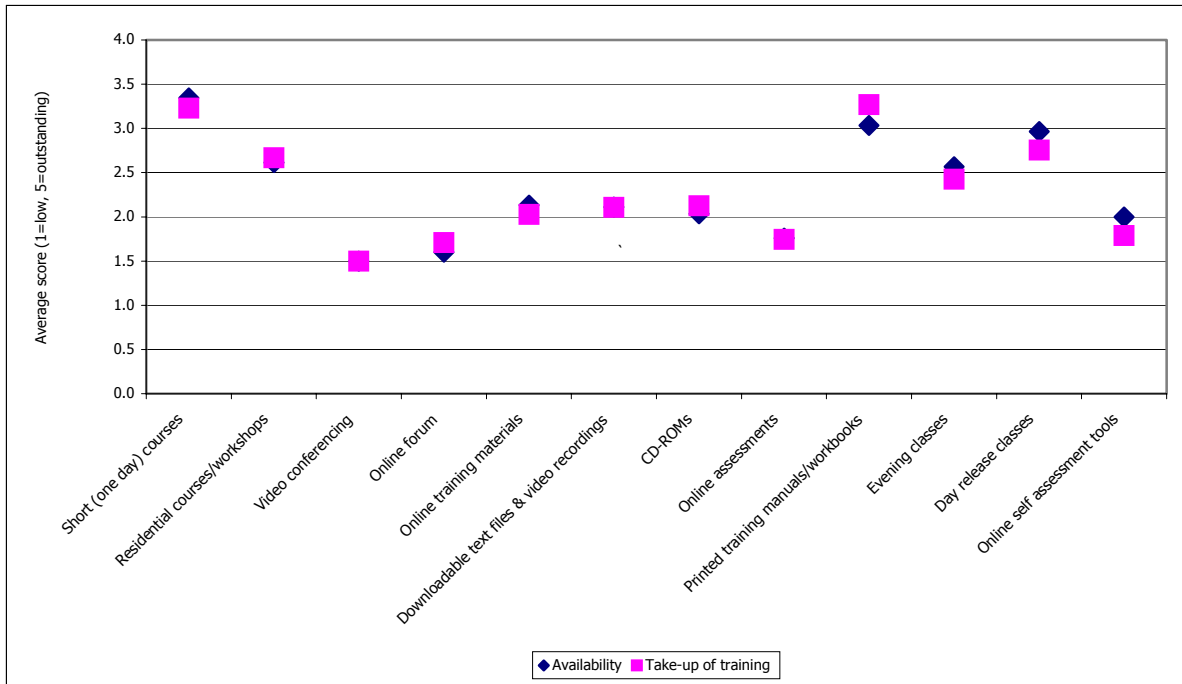
That family commitments seem to be a barrier to taking up training and tourism training establishments often are not found close to tourism businesses emphasises the need for more flexible training provision, such as on-line training. However, almost three-quarters of respondents didn't think that on-line training for tourism was easy to access. The majority also thought individuals in tourism businesses didn't have the IT skills to undertake on-line training. The new VocMat training system should address these issues and include relevant IT skills. Only Icelandic focus group members thought that staff had the right IT skills for on-line training.

As employers seem willing to allow staff to undertake training within working hours – and also to pay for it – VocMat training should be delivered in a flexible way, using online delivery to suit those with family commitments and those who live further away from existing training establishments. It will also have to provide training participants with the necessary IT skills.

Types and availability of training

Figure 7 shows what types of training and assessment are available and what their take up is in the partner countries.

Figure 7 Types of training



The take up almost exactly reflects training availability. According to those surveyed, most training happens in the form of short (one day) courses and day release classes – to a slightly lesser extent evening classes –, using printed training materials. The availability of distance learning tools and assessment, such as video conferencing and downloadable materials, is – on average – rated as fair or below.

Focus group participants generally favoured training in ‘bite-size’ modules. They stressed the importance of scheduling and timetabling of face-to-face course delivery. Results from the ‘expectations’ section of the questionnaire mostly name a mixture of on-line and face-to-face delivery as the most desired option, such as forums and workshops supported by e-learning.

A mix of face to face and e-learning appears to be the most favoured form of training delivery. There is a strong need for more flexibility in training provision. VocMat should make use of new technologies whilst retaining a face to face element. Tourism managers basically take up what is available. Asking participants for their *needs* in terms of training delivery would have been useful for establishing the baseline. We suggest carrying out further research into this.

Other expectations from VocMat

Part three of the questionnaire asked for people's expectations from the VocMat project. Where these expectations related to training contents or delivery, we have included results in the respective sections of this report. This section gives an outline of what else partners and focus group participants expect from project activities. To reflect different viewpoints we looked at partners and other respondents separately.

However, there was limited data available as not all research participants filled in this section of the questionnaire (29 out of 45). So findings may not necessarily be representative of what people think.

What partners expect

In project partners' views VocMat should

- Raise national awareness of tourism management skills and develop them;
- Improve standards of management for SMEs and NGOs in tourism;
- Raise quality within the European tourism sector;
- Put an emphasis on sharing European experience and practices;
- Address both the private and public sector;
- Create methods to motivate and encourage its target group to develop their companies; and
- Provide a qualification based on industry needs.

What the target group expects

Focus groups

Not all people representing the target group at the initial discussion group sessions or those who completed the questionnaire independently filled in their expectations from the project. However, many did and, in particular, Estonian representatives of the target groups. There was a degree of commonality transnationally and expectations include:

- "To be able to spread best practice on new modules/curriculum all over Europe";
- "Improved productivity/ profitability/ sustainability";
- "Supported career development";
- "Better service, motivated staff, better national tourism reputation";
- "Better customer care, less staff turnover, entrepreneurial attitudes";
- "Skills to bring the issues of importance of quality to all employees";
- "Skills to persuade people in tourism to acquire a customer-centred approach";
- "Sustainable development of tourism in the region alongside local entrepreneurs";

- “Wider recognition in the European market”;
- “Different learning opportunities that offer Estonian tourism staff equal career opportunities both in Estonia and abroad;
- “Adding a theoretical base to practical skills”;
- “Gain new knowledge and experience so that I can be a specialist in this field in Estonia” and
- “More communication and cooperation within the tourism sector”.

The summary reports from the discussion groups and the overall analysis of all questionnaires reflect these expectations. They added the qualifications aspect – “standardised industry qualifications” and “European mapping of qualifications” – and expect better career opportunities and progression. A significant number of the Estonian respondents referred to opportunities to learn from and, even, work in other European countries where knowledge gained could feed back into Estonian practices. An important issue one focus group raised was there was a danger the project might focus too much on the needs of private businesses. They asked for public sector needs to be taken into consideration as well.

People also highlighted the need for continuing consultation with the industry across all levels throughout the project, also to avoid duplication of provision. Some participants expect VocMat to help improve the image of the tourism sector.

Pilot groups

At the induction seminars for the first pilot groups participants also told their expectations. According to the summary write up, participants’ expectations are on different levels:

Individual level - expectations related to self-development, becoming more professional, becoming more conscious about marketing and management

Organisational level – business development, looking for partners in other countries, developing networks

As an overarching expectation, group members also emphasised that they wish to get continuous support from the project and “encouragement to keep the momentum going when they go back to their daily lives”.

As well as developing the core outputs in terms of training contents, delivery and accreditation, VocMat needs to address the less tangible areas international partnership working and awareness raising. It is important that the VocMat system meets the needs of both private and public sector organisations. From a process point of view support to project participants and ongoing consultation with the target group are essential. Subject leaders, local mentors and the online forum play key roles in this.

Key issues for VocMat

This section sets out what the findings of the initial research mean for VocMat. Having established the need for the VocMat activities, Figure 1 on the next page summarises the baseline and gives an overview of which VocMat activities can contribute to which desired outcomes.

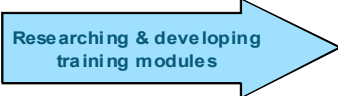
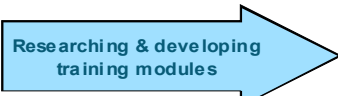
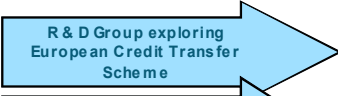
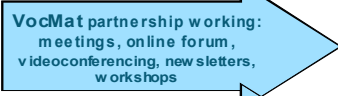
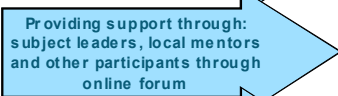
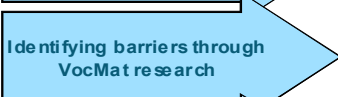

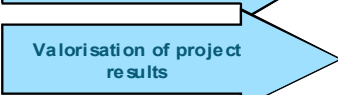
The findings need to be looked at in the context of the research questions the interim as well as the final evaluations will have to answer which include:

- Has the R&D phase confirmed the original premise for the project or have changes been made in response to the information collected?
- Are the needs of the target group being addressed from both an employer and manager perspective?
- Has the project been efficiently administered?
- Has cooperation between partners been working and is it likely to continue beyond the project?
- Have the innovative elements of the project been implemented and where else is innovation possible?
- How successfully have the products been exploited or disseminated? Is there awareness of the project in the wider tourism community in the partner countries?
- How sustainable is the project?

And the criteria we will apply for our evaluation are

Efficiency
Effectiveness
Relevance
Utility
Sustainability

Figure 1 Summary table

Baseline situation	VocMat activity	Desired outcome at end of VocMat project (2007)	Desired wider outcome
<p>Low skills levels (average rating): Providing quality service (2.5 = satisfactory-fair) Marketing (2.2 = fair) Operational management (2.6 = satisfactory) Strategic management (2.4 = fair) Human resources (2.4 = fair)</p> <p>Other (potential) skills gaps: Time management and workplanning Team building skills Internal communication Information management Employment law IT skills for using online training</p>	 <p>Researching & developing training modules</p>	<p>Training contents addressing skills gaps of private and public sector organisations</p>	<p>Increased management skills levels across the European tourism industry in all priority areas (average rating 4 to 5 = high to outstanding)</p>
<p>Poor availability of and access to training, particularly in: online delivery, materials and assessment (2.0 = fair) CD-ROMs (2 = fair)</p>	 <p>Researching & developing training modules</p>	<p>Module based training system delivered through a combination of face to face and online training</p>	<p>Better availability of and access to flexible management training (average rating 4 to 5 = high to outstanding)</p>
<p>Lack of recognised qualifications</p>	 <p>R & D Group exploring European Credit Transfer Scheme</p>	<p>Accreditation of training modules</p>	<p>Transparent qualification system for tourism management training across Europe</p>
<p>Lack of partnership working among tourism organisations</p>	 <p>VocMat partnership working: meetings, online forum, videoconferencing, newsletters, workshops</p>	<p>Improved partnership working</p>	<p>Established partnerships and networks</p>
<p>Need for support to project participants</p>	 <p>Providing support through: subject leaders, local mentors and other participants through online forum</p>	<p>High levels of commitment and confidence</p>	<p>Improved professionalism and motivation</p>
<p>Low utilisation of available training</p>	 <p>Identifying barriers through VocMat research</p>	<p>Awareness of barriers</p>	<p>Increased utilisation of training</p>
<p>Gaps in existing research</p>	 <p>Research of Research & Development Group</p>	<p>Innovative products meeting identified demand</p>	<p>Increased research on vocational management training across Europe</p>
<p>Low levels of awareness and poor reputation of tourism industry</p>	 <p>Valorisation of project results</p>	<p>Improved levels of awareness</p>	<p>Improved tourism image</p>

Desired changes through VocMat

Skills gaps and training needs

The average rating of skills levels in all areas surveyed is between fair and satisfactory:

- Marketing (2.2)
- Strategic management (2.4)
- Human resources (2.4)
- Providing quality service (2.5)
- Operational management (2.6)

The research of the VocMat R&D Group needs to address these skills gaps through new training contents and possibly some additional areas like time management and information management. Further research is needed - into these additional skills as well as the other skills areas because of limited data. Skills related to managing people should get special attention, as well as the IT skills necessary for using on-line training. As a transnational partnership the project will be in a position to address skills related to managing international staff.

Availability of training

Generally, staff can undertake training during working hours with employers paying for it. But the new training modules should be flexible to improve accessibility. The target group favours a mix of face-to-face and on-line training. Addressing both private and public sector needs is important.

Qualifications

In response to an identified lack of recognised qualifications the new VocMat system should develop accreditation for the training modules. This includes exploring the European Credit Transfer Scheme.

Partnership working

Partnership working through the VocMat project is an opportunity to improve partnership working in the tourism industry in general and to establish and further develop lasting networks. The number of meetings, videoconferencing sessions, newsletters, workshops and use of the on-line forum will serve as indicators towards this.

Support throughout

The success of the project will partly depend on how involved people feel and what support they get from the project partners, but also from one another. Support through subject leaders, local mentors and other participants through the on-line forum will contribute to increased motivation and professionalism.

Using training

Where management training is available it doesn't always get used. It is important the VocMat research identifies barrier to use so they can be addressed.

Research gaps

Research undertaken so far has shown there are gaps in existing research on tourism management training. Specifically there is a need for research on non-academic training in a vocational setting. This is one of the areas where VocMat can be innovative, which is one of the project objectives.

Image of tourism

Research participants were aware of the poor reputation of the tourism industry and a lack of awareness of issues around management training. Through extensive valorisation of project results as outlined in the dissemination strategy VocMat can potentially make a big difference here.

Appendix

Table 1 Access to training

	1 low	2 fair	3 average	4 advanced	5 outstanding
Training to be undertaken within working hours	0%	28%	35%	23%	14%
Tourism businesses pay for individuals' training	2%	23%	28%	35%	12%
On-line training for tourism is easy to access	23%	49%	9%	14%	5%
Individuals in tourism businesses have the IT skills to undertake on-line training	16%	35%	33%	9%	7%
Tourism training establishments are found close to tourism businesses	10%	50%	26%	10%	5%
Family commitments do not stop individuals taking up training	7%	41%	22%	22%	7%
Individuals are willing to pay for their own training	26%	57%	10%	7%	0%

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