

NEWS

Europe needs to raise its game!

VocMat, the innovative new European-wide tourism training solution was officially launched at a seminar recently held in the Radisson Hotel at Stansted Airport. The seminar was attended by representatives from public and private sector tourism organisations, regional development agencies, educational institutions and accreditation bodies such as the HCIMA (Hotel & Catering International Management Association).

“Europe needs to raise its game if we are to compete successfully on the global tourism stage as competition intensifies” explained Liz Buchanan (Tourist Board Training, project leader, Scotland)

With statistics showing that tourist arrivals to Europe are growing at a slower rate than many other parts of the world, European tourism managers need to be better equipped to tackle the problems facing the tourism industry. Research has identified considerable skills gaps among tourism management staff, mainly due to a lack of access to quality management training *in the workplace*.

VocMat (Vocational management training for the tourism industry) aims to provide a European solution for this Europe-wide problem through the development of a flexible, modular programme that can lead to a formal qualification. Tourism managers will be able to select modules that can be delivered in the workplace through a combination of tools such as online learning, video conferencing and workshops.

The project will run for two years and brings together experts involved in tourism and vocational training from the United Kingdom, Estonia and Iceland. As the project develops there will be the opportunity for other countries to join the programme. News of the project was warmly welcomed by tourism and education professionals attending the seminar.

VocMat is funded by the European Commission through the Leonardo da Vinci Programme.

- Ends -

For further information about VocMat, please contact:

Project Promoter: Tourist Board Training

Liz.Buchanan@tbt.visitscotland.com

Partners:

- Centre for Tourism & Cultural Change, Sheffield Hallam University
- Enterprise Estonia / Estonian Tourist Board
- Iceland School of Tourism
- Icelandic Association of Tourist Officers
- Pärnu College of the University of Tartu
- Scottish Centre of Tourism, The Robert Gordon University
- Tourism Management Institute

P.F.Long@shu.ac.uk

tiina.tarma@eas.ee

fsk@mk.is

davidsam@sudurland.is

gea.kammer@ut.ee

r.nash@rqu.ac.uk

cathy.guthrie@dsl.pipex.com

erik.vandyck@club-internet.fr

Promotion Consultant: Erik van Dyck

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Notes For Editors

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM

Tourism is the fastest growing industry in Europe and:

- employs some **7.7 million people**
- and involves **2.2 million enterprises**
- accounts directly for **five per cent of the EU's total GDP.**

WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM VocMAT ?

The project addresses ways of meeting identified training needs amongst senior management in the public and private European tourism industry as well as providing opportunities for career development for middle management. It offers easily accessible and cost-effective training that tackles some of the barriers that prevent tourism management from being able to access training currently. **VocMat** will bring benefits to tourism businesses of all sizes but, in an industry that is predominantly made up of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), often in rural areas, it is expected that micro-businesses, in particular, will find that the **VocMat** project will suit their needs. The project results will be transferable to related sectors such as retail and transport.

THE OUTCOMES OF VocMAT

Based on research, a major outcome will be the development of a **model** (methodology) for accredited vocational training delivery that is appropriate for workplace training, using modules which will be recognised for formal qualifications in each country. This will lead to a **curriculum** that will allow tourism managers to select those modules that meet their skills gaps and that they can complete using printed and on-line training and assessment materials, CD-ROMs, a handbook, workshops, video conferences, an on-line forum and a helpline. Training materials will be supplied in all partner languages.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VocMAT

VocMat will make a considerable contribution to the development of vocational management training in the European tourism sector as it

- is **innovative** in terms of vocational training delivery mechanisms
- addresses a **Europe-wide** problem at a European level
- beyond the life of the project - **creates a curriculum** beyond the life of the project that can be recognised at a European level and is flexible and wide enough to be applied Europe-wide.