

NEWS

Innovative European Training Project Reaches New Shores

Tourism is not only the world's largest industry, it is also a profession which is coming of age in the 21st century and delivering growth potential throughout Europe. The **VocMat** project was created to address a Europe-wide barrier to this future growth by addressing a lack of opportunities for tourism managers to develop new skills that meet the demands of the 21st century customer.

Following a successful two-year pilot project involving tourism organisations, universities and tourism managers in Estonia, Iceland, England and Scotland, which developed and tested a new online tourism management training programme, the **VocMat** approach is being delivered to Malta, Catalonia, Turkey and Italy.

In **VocMat 2**, which has also secured European funding, further research has been carried out into skills gaps and barriers to training in the tourism industry and partners are recruiting tourism managers to test the approach, at no cost to them, using the Strategic Management for Tourism module which will be available in May.

The **VocMat** approach is based on a Virtual Learning Environment that allows participants to access the course from any internet connection and includes discussion boards and chat rooms which encourage the sharing of best practice from one country to another.

Participants in the Pilot Group during the development phase were very positive about the approach:

Sarah Woodford, UK – "Having been out of learning for some years, VocMat gave me the ideal opportunity to recommence study alongside my hectic work schedule."

Sabina Kaukis, Estonia – "The flexible and innovative training method gave me an opportunity to raise my qualifications and I found many new friends with an international tourism background."

Gunnar Rögnvaldsson, Iceland – "For us who live and work in rural areas, it is a huge benefit to be able to study at our own speed."

Tourism managers being recruited in partner countries during March and April will meet together in Estonia in May before beginning their course of study.

Ends

For further information about **VocMat 2**, please contact:

Project Promoter: Tourist Board Training Liz.Buchanan@tbt.visitscotland.com

Partners:

- Catalan Association of Tourist Officers jcasassayas@gestiocal.com
- Enterprise Estonia/Estonia Tourist Board tiina.tarma@eas.ee
- Malta Tourism Society ncfalzon@onvol.net
- Pärnu College of the University of Tartu, Estonia gea.kammer@ut.ee
- Sheffield Hallam University, UK J.Stocks@shu.ac.uk
- Sungurlu VTDA, Turkey muharrem@gazi.edu.tr
- Tourism Management Institute, UK cathy.guthrie@dsl.pipex.com
- University of Florence, Italy silvia.scaramuzzi@unifi.it
- University of Girona, Catalonia lluis.prats@udg.cat