

Newschat Competencies Report

A competency research on the needs of future
course participants working with inclusive tourism



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1. Introduction

This is a report based on the Professional Profile Empathy Map, leading towards competencies needed for future course participants working in the field of inclusive tourism.

Empathy Maps are used in 'Service Design Thinking' as part of a more customer friendly design of e.g. training courses. This Empathy Map is constructed by the organisations being part of Newscat who are cooperating closely with guides and guide services or other tourism agents, and who understand the need of Customer Care in Inclusive Tourism. The organisations are Agència de Turisme de les Illes Balears, EMPLEA, Mesteri, LATMIL and NASO.

The outcomes are both summarizing as well as showing the specific situations in the diverse organisations in different countries. At the end of each chapter, the conclusions are included.

The report finalizes with the concluded competencies.

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2. Persona

ITEM 1.

Profile of the person or group you have in mind when doing the course. What kind of person is he or she, typical age, lifestyle, attitude. Is he very practical, theoretical?

2.1 Age and composition

In general, the course participants are in between 18 and 65 years old. The Agència de Turisme de les Illes Balears participants are a bit older: above 40 yers, while Mesteri talks about 'between 18 and 50'. For Latmil the middle age of group could be approximately under 35 years. For NASO the age of the participants will be between 18 and 50 years.

The group will be composed of both man and women.

2.2 Profession

In general, het professionals are any agents working in the tourism or hospitality industry, but more specific it would be tour guides, people working for tour operators and other related professions.

Agència de Turisme de les Illes Balears

In the Balearic the professional background are tour guides. Some of them work for a particular company (travel agency) while others are 'freelancers' working on their own. In many countries, like in Spain, they are organized into unions or associations that protect their interests.

Emplea

For Emplea the professional profile would be any agent of the tourism industry, such as a manager or staff member of a hotel, restaurant, travel agency, tour guide company, transportation company (be it trains, buses, ships or airlines) or taxi drivers, sport and leisure facility workers, boutiques/loges/commerces/ shopping centre workers, urbanism technicians from town councils of tourist destinations, and so on.

Mesteri

The group could be composed by men or women graduated in Tourism Services or Sciences of Education, as well as by people working as tourist guide/tour operator (also freelancers).

LATMIL

The person or group LATMIL has in mind are middle level hotel managers and supervisors. The group includes tourism operators as well as persons working in the tourism information centres.

NASO

For NASO the target group of the customized accessible tourism training course in Bulgaria will be incoming and outgoing travel agencies' staff as well as hotels' staff.

2.3 Background knowledge, skills and attitude.

Specified per organisation:

Agència de Turisme de les Illes Balears

The Balearic Islands hold the first professional Tourist Guide Association in the world. In order to work in the Balearic Islands as "official tourist guide" you should pass an examination on languages and on knowledge in tourism and cultural/environmental heritage. This is the way to be qualified (convened by the Regional Ministry of Tourism). They should hold a Bachelor or magister normally in Tourism, pass the Government examination, hold the official qualification and be registered as member of the Balearic Islands Official Guides Union.

Future course participants know about geography, history, archaeology, architecture, ecology, tourist information, cartography, arts, dynamics of services and receptive tourism, customs, folklore...

Knowledge and skills they have are:

- General knowledge about the role of the tour guide.
- General knowledge on the economy of the area.
- Knowledge on tourism legislation and on the Tourism Market.
- Knowledge about cultural and environmental Heritage (some of them are specialists on a particular subject like: Jewish Quartier, Nature walking, medieval city of Palma...)
- Knowledge of First Aid.
- Ability to communicate in a clear, audible, modulated and friendly way the information delivered.
- Ability to guide groups and to deal with group dynamics and group management.
- Ability to do animation activities.
- Ability to captivate audience while presenting a wide variety of illustrative and reference topics.
- Ability to quickly and effectively solve problems in unforeseen situations.

- Ability to respond to conflict situations.
- Positive attitude.
- Sympathy and empathy
- Flexibility
- Orientation to needs.
- Social Skills.
- Human relations capacity.
- Leadership Skills

EMPLEA Foundation

The course participants are be very practical and engaged in the world of tourism. They are willing to provide quality and customised service to their clients.

Mesteri

The course participants are dynamic, extrovert, listening oriented, have good communicative abilities, are available to formation, with innovative attitude and strong commitment to social inclusion and equal opportunities.

LATMIL

The education of the course participants is mainly bachelor or magister in tourism and hotel business. All the group participants are already working in practice and have some work experience in the field of tourism, but they lack the knowledge and skills in Customized Accessible Tourism (CAT).

2.4 Learning style

In general it can be said that the people following the course are very practical oriented. NASO suggests the course to be both practical and theoretical. They very much like to see the practical side of the theory learned in the course and like to know real life-case studies. They know about tourism and are engaged in the industry, but have no skills in Customized Accessible Tourism (CAT).

2.5 Conclusions Profile Course participants

- Because of the huge diversity of the course participants it is difficult to give one persona.
- The age of the course participants is very broad, 18 tot 65. A persona would be about 35 or 40 years old;
- The target group could be any agent from the tourism industry. As a primary target group of the course is suggested that most of them will be tour guides, but also people working at hotels, travel agencies, tour operators and tourism information centres, at a middle to high level;
- As a secondary target group, the course should also target managers or staff members of restaurants, transportation companies (be it trains, buses, ships or airlines) or taxi drivers, sport and leisure facility workers, boutiques/loges/commerces/shopping centre workers, urbanism technicians from town councils of tourist destination;

- Because some course participants work as a freelance, it could be interesting to include entrepreneurial skills of inclusive tourism/CAT
- In general, the course participants are fairly high educated, holding a bachelor in tourism services or guiding. This is not always the case though. Most of the future participants of the primary target group are medium to highly educated, so the level should be accessible and understandable.
- In general, future course participant are communicative, empathetic, willing to learn and have an innovative attitude.
- The preference is towards a practical course. Theory can be offered, but only in service of practical application. Case studies are appreciated.

3. Needs of course participant

Item 2. What are practical and emotional needs of the person for embarking on this course? How does he or she feel or think? What really matters to this person? What are the problems he or she encounters? (also think about online and training courses.

In general, the majority of the course participants have little or no knowledge on accessible tourism. They have sometimes to deal with groups/people with special needs, so there might be some experience, but they are eager to learn about the communication with persons with disabilities and about the needs of persons with disabilities.

Agència de Turisme de les Illes Balears

When talking to potential participants, future course participants mention that they would appreciate it if the course is very practical with practical issues they can easily put into practice in their everyday work. They also said they prefer a face-to-face course, of a few days duration organised in winter (low tourism season for tour guides), and use the internet as a reference or support tool for the course.

EMPLEA

For EMPLEA, course participants have to devote at least one hour every day to the course. The course may have 30/40 theoretical hours and 30/20 practical hours, 60 hours in total. The students would have to be able to manage a personal computer and to follow an English online course.

Course participants should be eager for more information about:

1. the field of disability (normalisation principle and mainstreaming, diversity of groups, specific needs of every different group, tools and assistance technology, support techniques and resources, community based services, personal assistance, reasonable accommodation, universal design and accessibility for all, person centred planning, etc.);
2. more information on local territory and geographical surroundings, in order to advise the best excursions, beaches and visits, as well as the local culture, history and gastronomy field in order to plan the best visits to historic monuments, restaurants and places;
3. finally, they should be eager for more information on all available resources and support services at their tourist destination in order to help any client participate in sports or leisure activity in the same way as the vast majority of tourists.

The course should raise awareness on *human diversity* and on the *lack of quality accessibility* at tourist destinations, ultimately in order to improve the means, environments, resources and services available to all citizens and tourists who

need support and guidance to enjoy a holiday or a visit as any other citizens.

Mesteri

For the course participants of Mesteri, the aim is to renew the tourism sector in order to make it more and differently accessible, not only for standard tourists, but specifically for tourists with particular and specific necessities: people with disabilities, both psychic and mental, elderly people and families with children.

Just some hypothetical example of attendants:

Profile 1)

Person working for a social cooperative that is planning to develop a new branch of activities in the tourism sector.

He/she has a deep knowledge of disability/accessibility issues but doesn't know how to *apply this knowledge* in tourism services and offer. In addition, he/she lacks *technical competences* in Tourism Market, management, promotion and communication, customer care, etc.

Profile 2)

Young person graduated in tourism services (so with strong technical competences) that would like to foster his/her skills on social and sustainable tourism.

In particular, he/she is interesting in accessibility and is volunteer for an association of social promotion that organizes free-time activities for children with disability. Thus, he/she wants to know more about which are the specific needs of disabled people while travelling. His/her objective is to become the first tourist guide/operator to offer customized accessible tourism services in his/her city.

Profile 3)

Person with more than 40 years that works for a tourist agency.

He/she has good communicative, commercial and problem solving abilities, language proficiency and IT knowledge. He/she aims to innovate the agency where is working in, by widening its target of reference.

LATMIL

For Latmil, it is very difficult to characterize their feelings or thoughts, as the group have not yet been composed. In communication with some of the potential course participants LATMIL has noticed that they need very practical information – where to ask advice, with whom to communicate in case they need advice.

The online course would be very good as they are very busy in their daily work and they can participate in the course at suitable time.

NASO

The reasons for embarking on the project training course will be the following:

1) The outgoing travel agencies' staff will aim at increasing the number of their target group by involving persons with disabilities as their clients.

2) The incoming travel agencies' personnel as well as the hotels' staff will go for improving the quality of services provided to persons with disabilities.

At this point, the course target group feels insecure regarding the adequate service provision to persons with disabilities due to the lack of trainings on this matter in the tourist sector. Hence, through the project, the training target group will become more confident when working with persons with disabilities as well as more aware of their personal needs.

Currently, the major problems encountered by travel agencies' and hotels' staff are related to the lack of information leading to difficulties in the communication and meeting the needs of persons with disabilities.

Conclusion:

- When it comes to the needs, the course participants mostly have hardly any knowledge on customized tourism, although this might not be the case for all.
- In general, the course participants is a very diverse group. Choices have to be made: either focus on a few 'persona' like the tour guide, or come up with different modules/levels in order to be able to target an even broader group of course participants.
- Many course participants prefer an online course (there is a mention of 60 hours), but a real live course is preferred as well. The online course should also be a reference.
- Some ideas for competences are mentioned but will be proposed at the end of the report.

4. Role of Newscat

ITEM 3. How could Newscat cater for this person during the course? What questions would need to get answered? What would influence this person or group?

In general, the goal of project NEWSCAT would be to get more tourist agents in four different tourist destinations (Mallorca, Milano, Varna and Riga) equipped with the appropriate information on persons with disability and to train them in how to support these persons or how to get them the support resources they need during their holiday so that they can enjoy the same visits, excursions, sports and activities as any other tourist.

More specifically, course attendees wish to learn how to better understand and respond to the needs of a person with disabilities and how are they as consumers (their habits). Different types of disabilities, how to better communicate with them, guidelines for special needs customer service, how to organize accessible tourist activities, how to better guide them and satisfy their needs.

EMPLEA

According to Emplea, the questions that would need to get answered are as follows:

- Which hotels, restaurants, theatres, concert halls, churches or monuments, sports facilities, etc., are fully accessible?
- Which means of adapted transport can we offer?
- Which local bodies can provide support to the tourists with support needs if necessary?
- Which excursions have an acceptable level of accessibility?
- Which tourist guides have enough knowledge and skills on Customised Accessible Tourism?
- Which local organisations can provide me personal assistants?
- Which local bodies can provide adapted sports?

Mesteri

Mesteri adds the following questions to the general information above;

-How could we promote our services addressed to these particular target groups?

-How a social cooperative could develop a new service in the customised tourism sector?

LATMIL

Latmil adds it is important that course attendees know where to get the appropriate support to meet the needs of persons with disabilities

NASO

Naso adds that it would be useful if persons with disabilities themselves share their experience through video clips or in person about situations they have been in during their stay at hotels and/or when using the services of travel agencies.

- 1) The incoming travel agencies' staff would answer questions about how to improve the tourist services for persons with disabilities in Bulgaria.
- 2) The outgoing travel agencies' staff would answer questions about improving the services for persons with disabilities in the tourist sector in other travel destinations.
- 3) The hotels' staff would answer questions related to first aid and an adequate support provision to persons with disabilities in need.

Conclusion Role of Newscat

- The needs from Newscat are mostly overlapping or complementary. An exception is 'How a social cooperative could develop a new service in the customised tourism sector?' by Mesteri.
- The points are inserted in the competencies list in Chapter 6

5. Goal of the Course

ITEM 4. When would the person be satisfied *after the course*? What would be the ultimate goal? What are the most important skills, insights, theories etc to take home?

In general, the answer is that future course attendees would be able to provide a higher quality tourism service that respond to the needs and demands of the persons with disabilities. it also improves job and career opportunities. More specific:

Agència de Turisme de les Illes Balears

The agencies adds that they also like to improve the care provided to disabled people in our tourism destination. For this purpose they wish to learn practical information they can use in their everyday work.

EMPLEA

If the training course for Customised Accessible Tourism provides information and knowledge on the four fields mentioned above in answer number 2, the students will be satisfied. After the course, they will have the skills to provide CAT services and to assess if the means, environments and services are accessible and if they meet the needs of the clients or, what in other words, that they meet the required quality standards following the article 9 of the UN CRPD

Ultimate goals for participants could be:

- To find a (first) job in tourism sector, by developing and providing customised accessible tourism services
- To develop technical competences in order to develop a new branch of activities for their own company/social cooperative
- To strengthen their knowledge about disability according to accessible tourism needs
- To be able to identify accessible tourist activities/services in their territories

LATMIL

Persons will be satisfied if they will get some theoretical information (concentrated) and the pack with practical information, which will be possible to use in their daily work. Ultimate goal is to be able to provide the tourist service according to the needs of persons with disability and their family members and to be able to ensure positive tourism experience for person with disability.

NASO

After the training course, the participants should be able to:

- 1) know how to work with different groups of persons with disabilities;
- 2) have an opportunity to extend the scope of their clients' network;
- 3) be able to establish a network of different stakeholders in the tourist sector;
- 4) have the capacity to promote and improve the overall image of Varna and other tourist cities as travel destinations for persons with disabilities.

The outgoing travel agencies' staff would answer questions about improving the services for persons with disabilities in the tourist sector in other travel destinations. The hotels' staff would answer questions related to first aid and an adequate support provision to persons with disabilities in need.

Conclusion Goal of the Course:

- After the course, the participants will have the skills to provide CAT services and to assess if the means, environments and services are accessible and if they meet the needs of the clients or, what in other words, that they meet the required quality standards following the article 9 of the UN CRPD.
- The points are inserted in the competencies list in Chapter 6

6. Conclusion on Competencies

Specific needs for the course and competencies deriving from the Empathy Maps are:

1. Have knowledge in the field of disability and knowing how to apply this in the tourism industry, in order to improve quality and standards, in the field of:
 - Normalisation principle and mainstreaming,
 - Tools and assistance technology
 - Support techniques and resources
 - Community based services, personal assistance
 - Reasonable accommodation
 - Universal design and accessibility for all
 - Person centred planning
2. Knowing what the specific tourist needs, behaviour and requirements of people with a disability, elderly people or families with children, and knowing how to respond to them (e.g the customer journey)
4. Being aware of the diversity and dynamics of people with a disability, elderly people or families with children.
3. Knowing how to involve people with a disability, elderly people or families with children
5. Have knowledge on how to find more information on local territory and geographical surroundings, in order to advise the best excursions, beaches and visits, as well as the local culture, history and gastronomy field in order to plan the best visits to historic monuments, restaurants and places; eg.
 - Which hotels, restaurants, theatres, concert halls, churches or monuments, sports facilities, etc., are fully accessible?
 - Which means of adapted transport can we offer?
 - Which local bodies can provide support to the tourists with support needs if necessary?
 - Which excursions have an acceptable level of accessibility?
 - Which tourist guides have enough knowledge and skills on Customised Accessible Tourism?
 - Which local organisations can provide me personal assistants?
 - Which local bodies can provide adapted sports?
6. Able to find more information on all available resources and support services at their tourist destination in order to help any client participate in sports or leisure activity in the same way as the vast majority of tourists.
- 7 Being innovative and entrepreneurial by offering customized services and activities, and seeing it also as a business opportunity.
In a broader sense: how a social cooperative could develop a new service in the customised tourism sector.

8. Marketing(communication): Knowing how to promote services to these particular target groups and how to communicate with them
8. Being able to establish a network of different stakeholders in the tourist sector
9. Being able to influence and renew the tourism sector by asking for innovation and change of attitude towards disabled people.
10. Raise awareness on *human diversity* and on the *lack of quality accessibility* at tourist destinations
11. Learning from real life experience cases (e.g. video)