

The project Boosted has started!

What is it all about?

The project Boosted is about boosting tourism business growth through higher vocational education jointly in Finland, Estonia and Latvia. We aim at providing an aligned and relevant skillset for the Central Baltic region to grow as a coherent tourism destination.

In the project we

- identify and align the skills in tourism business development through research.
- translate the skills into a joint curriculum of advanced tourism business development.
- implement the curriculum as a joint study programme online in Finland, Estonia and Latvia.

During the project we organise events in three countries: focus groups discussions with the entrepreneurs and authorities to explore the needs of the tourism industry, public events to inform the industry and educators about the aligned skills in tourism business development, coaching events for the future lecturers as well as an innovation camp for the students.

Tourism entrepreneurs and the employees as well as authorities can participate to the study programme also as students through open university. Tourism entrepreneurs are welcomed to provide cases that are jointly solved in the courses.

The project is implemented by [Satakunta University of Applied Sciences](#) (FI), [Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences](#) (LV), [University of Latvia](#) (LV) and [Tallinn University of Technology, Kuressaare College](#) (EE).

How to get information about the project?

The project has its own website www.projectboosted.eu Contact information can be found also from the webpages.

Follow the project activities also on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CBboosted/>

What is going on in the project?

The first project activities include *identifying the relevant, mutual skills and competencies for the curriculum development*. We have been identifying the skills needed in tourism business development by analysing the existing curricula, national and regional tourism strategies and students' internship reports in these three countries. The results will be shortly presented here below.

During February-April 2017 focus group discussions and interviews will be held with the tourism entrepreneurs, tourism authorities and other important stakeholders for *gathering data about the skills needed in tourism business development*. Based on the data industry-driven curriculum and its courses are designed in the autumn 2017.

The first research results are here! What do the existing curricula and tourism strategies say about the skills needed?

Finland

The results pointed out that in Finland the development of demand oriented products, services and high-quality experiences as a theme is widely represented in both higher education curricula and in tourism strategies. As well, adopting customer orientation and service-design approaches, managing business operations and profitability in tourism companies are considered of great importance in the curricula. Digitalisation is emphasised in the strategies and also increasingly included in the topics of the courses. Skills in increasing the effectiveness of marketing activities and making the travel services offering easier to find and buy are emphasised especially in the strategic level. In addition, skills of how to market and sell the products to international markets, customer know-how and information on international markets on segment level as well as skills related to networking are needed in Finland according to strategies and should be integrated more effectively into curricula.

Latvia

The preliminary research findings suggest Latvian tourism education study programmes strive to provide general knowledge of the tourism and hospitality sector, skills for marketing and management, communication, and ICT. Strategic planning documents emphasize the need to strengthen skills for marketing tourism destinations and products, for innovative product development, and for improving the quality of tourism services. An analysis of the tourism sector suggests the need to train sales skills and know-how to build relationships with customers, to increase networking and cooperation capacities, and to integrate ICT more intensely into study programmes. Educators should also emphasize a hands-on approach in tourism training and work in close cooperation with the tourism sector to be able to respond to its needs in a more pro-active way.

Estonia

In Estonia there are five first-cycle higher education tourism management curricula which all have a rather narrow focus either on hotel/restaurant management, nature tourism, spa and wellness, etc. However, they all include an entrepreneurship module together with courses in customer service and project management. Tourism development plans and surveys conducted among entrepreneurs refer to the core competences required in tourism: strong marketing and promotion skills with good knowledge of target markets, entrepreneurship skills and innovative product design using contemporary IT solutions, networking and communication skills. To be competitive in tourism product development, thorough knowledge of target markets and their needs, as well as professional marketing and promotional skills enabling to define selling points for international tourists, are required. Based on strategic development goals, the Estonian tourism sector is in need of a workforce with an innovative, creative and holistic approach to tourism development.

Contact information

Sanna-Mari Renfors, Project manager
sanna-mari.renfors@samk.fi