

RETURN

Recovery Tourism
after Natural Disasters

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FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH REPORT



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1. Introduction and aim

Output of the PR1 is the construction of the Competence Framework that fully understands the relevance of professional training in tourism recovery sector with reference to the partners' countries and to those areas VET institutions that have suffered natural disasters, as well as major training programs in the EU that include modules on transformation of tourism as a fundamental part of the curriculum.

This takes the form of an analysis of current data available for each partner country, as well as feedback shared by tourism professionals, local communities and tourists from areas affected by natural disasters aimed at:

- understanding the impact of natural disasters on the local tourism industry
- identifying the training needs required by the tourism industry to determine the EQF on which modulates the training course and the skills to be trained.
- the skills framework will be used as a basis for the development of other PRs.

2. Methodology

As established by the research aim and agreed among the project partnership, a qualitative approach is adopted for the identification and construction of a theory through the analysis of emerging variables and recurrent behaviors. In tasks 1.2 and 1.3 it's multiple case study, a particularly useful method in surveys aimed at answering questions like "How" and "why".

In fact, the training offers in risk management area and disaster-risk management and in tourism have been analysed (1.2) followed by the analysis of the needs emerging from the focus groups (1.3) through case analysis and cross-case analysis. (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2002; Spiggle, 1994).

Therefore, starting from the results of the desk research (research on secondary data) of the partners and from the definition of a professional profile of Tourism Recovery Expert (see Annex I), the design of the methodology of the empirical research phase (on primary data) started.

For the PR1 task 1.3, the partnership had:

- shared the methodology to conduct focus groups;
- designed the research protocol to conduct the focus groups;
- identify the panel of experts, managers, SME entrepreneurs operating in the tourism sector, also creating a database and a mailing list to be able to involve them in further project activities
- conducted focus groups in the national contexts (1 IT, 1 GR, 1 SLO, 1 DE, 1 HUN);
- prepare the report on the focus groups' results.

The coordinator UNIMC has elaborated the present document, which serves as a final report of results, to finally produce the Competence Framework of the Tourism Recovery Expert.

Focus group interviewee sample (details in annex) were composed of 5-8 participants per country, tourism companies, SMEs, who have had experience from natural disasters.

The focus group was conducted by the moderators to ensure the best comprehensibility of the topic and to foster the discussion among subjects, with different levels of education and experience. Focus groups were managed in the national language but were recorded, transcribed and translated into English and shared for data analysis and processing.

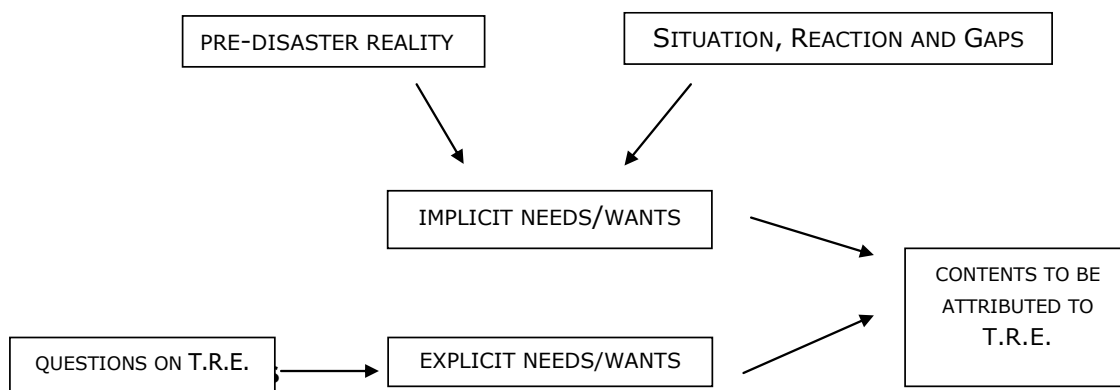
The focus followed the following structure (see figure 1):

1. *Pre-disaster reality*: enterprise management and daily experience
2. *Situation, Reaction and Gap* experienced during disaster:
 - a. Description of the period and conditions of life and suffering experienced
 - b. Type of decisive support in terms of role, persons, workers, managers
 - c. Type of gap - in terms of role, people, workers, managers - experienced in that period
 - d. Type of support - in terms of role, persons, workers, managers - desired at that time and after the disaster
3. *Description of the figure* in question in terms of knowledge, tasks, skills, position.
in order to better specify role, skills, position and tasks of the Tourism Recovery Expert:

The underlying logic behind the choice of arguments was as follows:

- a. The pre-disaster reality, compared with the situation during and after the disaster, allowed to better define the variation of the situation experienced during and after the disaster.
- b. This aspect, linked to Situation, Reaction and Gaps, allowed identifying the implicit needs/wants.
- c. The questions on the figure made it possible to define explicit needs/wants.
- d. The comparison between implicit and explicit needs guaranteed the best specification of the contents to be attributed to the figure of the Tourism Recovery Expert, as well as the indirect verification of the explicit contents attributed to the figure in question.

Figure 1.



3.1. Sample

The overall sample comprised N=24 interviewees / focus group participants from the 5 national contexts of the project, including entrepreneurs, association members, experts that have experienced natural disaster in their contexts (earthquake, flood, avalanches, fire). Sample characteristics is summarised in table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

N.	Country	Role	Organization
1	Germany	Commercial Manager	Tour Operator
2	Greece	Deputy Director	Sustainable Tourism Development Laboratory (TOURLAB)
3	Greece	Head of cultural tourism, IT & environment	Municipality
4	Greece	Environmental Scientist	University
5	Greece	Civil Protection worker	Municipality
6	Greece	Owner	Camping site and NGO, for alternative tourism promotion in youth
7	Greece	Expert in Culinary Art at the Organisation of Tourism Education and Training	
8	Greece	Marketing Manager	KENTA Hotel
9	Hungary	Project manager in tourism	/
10	Hungary	Office leader	Tourist office
11	Hungary	Founder of tourist organization	Tourist Organization
12	Hungary	Guide and owner	/
13	Hungary	Deputy head	Tourist Association
14	Italy	Entrepreneur	SME / B&B
15	Italy	Entrepreneur	SME / B&B
16	Italy	Entrepreneur	Organic Farm and B&B group
17	Italy	Tour Guide and Head / President	Association of enterprises born after the disaster (Earthquake)
18	Italy	Entrepreneur, Member of the board of national union for hospitality for region Umbria, Member of the regional council of Umbria	B&B, hotels and restaurants group

19	Italy	Entrepreneur	B&B, Camping area and Organic educational farm
20	Slovenia	Founder / Entrepreneur	Camping site
21	Slovenia	Head / President	Tourist Association
22	Slovenia	Director	Camping site
23	Slovenia	President	Tourist Association
24	Slovenia	Museum Director	Museum

3.2. Situation

Earthquake/disaster effects can be traced back to various levels

The first level is the immediate damage on the economic return of the territory

Damages may be declined in terms of:

- *Image*: the disaster radically changes the image of the destination/territory, which becomes a place of destruction and pain. The name that connects the territory is used as a reference to locate the disaster, without discriminating between zone and zone, and this aspect, often linked to the communication of the disaster by the media in emphatic and inaccurate terms, implies an oversizing of the effects even in areas that have not actually suffered damage
- *Collapse of clients of the territory*: the disaster and the damage of image leads to an immediate cancellation of bookings and, in general, the turnover of companies.
- *Fall in the employment rate* as a result of the fall in attendance.
- *Lack of news and lack of understanding* of the actual situation of the territory by the population present, as well as by the rest of the public

The second level is related to structural damage, mild or medium and not solvable within a few months. The first and most pressing need is linked to the restoration of public physical structures (roads, services) that represent the first step for the reconstruction. At the same time, the reconstruction of private facilities is a priority. There is often a lack of public support, especially in political terms, while the presence of civil protection activities is described as strong and fair.

The third level is related to the territorial devastation connected to the long-term hard and soft aspects. There are damages related not only to physical structures (roads, railways, public buildings, etc.), but also to key elements of attraction of the territory, such as museums, monuments, leisure services, or aspects related to the quality of life (lack of services, impoverishment of areas) that leads citizens to leave the territory, causing a further impoverishment of the same.

3.3. Reaction

These three levels of damage correspond to some psychological dimensions of reaction:

In the very short term, what prevails is the shock, the discouragement, the lack of confidence, the loneliness. Loneliness intervenes as a reaction to the shock, to the loss of references, but also for the lack of figures to refer to, to turn to for information and indication, from which to have reassurances and directives for the immediate future.

In the short and medium term external support comes; solidarity can be more or less organized according to the countries. In countries where solidarity is not managed, the risk is to obtain resources that are inconsistent with the real needs; the more the management of solidarity increases the better the return that it produces on the territory.

The other aspect that is highlighted, with the passage of time and shock, is the increase in the sense of community, the desire to change the way of doing and working, to reset things in a new way. The disaster leads people and communities to do things that had never been done before; since everything is destroyed and you have to start again, the spirit of the group, the positive reaction, the search for the new, for different dimensions never tried before, prevails. This aspect too has helped to nourish hope, but this drive is destined to run out with time and with the re-emergence of the needs of everyday life; but the desire to play on new and different schemes remained.

3.4. Gaps

The gaps experienced after the disaster were different.

In the very short term, the first immediate shortcoming was the lack of support, the loneliness in the catastrophe, coupled with the feeling of having no one to guide, pull the strings, and provide direction. Everyone complains about the lack of network, of managed relationships in order to provide correct information and focus actions.

In the short and medium term, the lack of support concerns reconstruction aid: What emerges is the demand for support, the focus and the effective and non-dispersive management of economic aid

A further gap experienced is the lack of an institution or someone who could grasp the community thrust of the post disaster and address it virtuously and in the long term, avoiding its dispersion after a physiological time. This aspect is experienced especially in Italy, or in general in the countries where the associationism on territory is less present.

Another gap was the lack of a working group: to define the impact of the disaster not only from a physical and structural point of view but also in terms of the social structure, of lost elements of value; to understand how to restart considering the existing and questioning the old practices, in order to set new ways of doing and create new dynamics and potential that would allow not only a reconstruction but a true development.

In general, it is thought that reconstruction should follow a development plan that starts from the conditions of the post-disaster to imagine a new way of managing and giving value to the territory, for creating a system that acts as a multiplier of the value generated by the individual. It would be necessary to set the reconstruction starting from the situation of the post disaster and in function of the potentialities of the territory, so as to build a real development, a growth trend of the territory higher than the pre disaster. In addition, the request is to set up interventions that are defined based on the real needs of residents and that involve their involvement, avoiding decisions and activities imposed from above.

Where disasters have a tendency to recurrence, or have a character of possible predictability, the request to effectively set up and manage prevention activities increases, with the need to sediment experiences and improve possible responses

4. Competences, capacities, roles and functions explicitly assigned to the TRE.

The indications explicitly provided are as follows:

the TRE must have psychological and economic skills, data analysis/ understanding, strategic vision:

- He/she must be an expression of the territory and permanently reside on, so as to live and understand it.
- He/she must have knowledge of the sector.
- Continuous and systematic work is needed.
- He/she must collaborate with the different actors involved in the reconstruction and at the same time with operators, enterprises and organizations involved in the disaster
- He/she must stimulate the collection of financial resources
- Strategic but also implementation capabilities are needed.

Regarding the position of the TRE, the answers are mixed: in summary, the figure is required

- on a temporary basis,
- external to enterprises, able to manage strategy and implementation linked to the territory
- *but* it requires at the same time its involvement in individual organizations, in order to guide them both from a strategic point of view and implementation, in line with what is implemented on the territory.

5. Conclusions

From the consideration of Situation/Reaction/Gap, emerged:

1. the focal points for the restart are individuate in: loyal customers, community work, solidarity managed and organized, territory and strategy of the territory;
2. the answer following the explicit question is consistent with the gaps emerged and the supports required in the previous part; for this reason it can reasonably be assumed that this type of analysis structure can be valid for exploratory research in this field when we want to bring out the demands of the territory.
3. Even if different situations emerge between the various states, the requests and the gaps highlighted lead to homogenous requests about the figure of the THREE

6. The contents of the Tourism Recovery Expert profile

The hypothesized professional profile knowledge and skills are listed in Annex I. The profile details have emerged as a synthesis of the features analyzed in the desk research and of the needs emerged in the focus groups. The Tourism Recovery Expert will act at various levels:

- In the very short term:
 - o helps to eliminate the sense of loneliness, of disorientation in tragedy;

- manages the reactions of panic and abandonment of the territory by the external public, linked to misinformation or the emphasis and lack of accuracy of the information;
 - builds a network of contacts and relationships among those present, in order to provide continuous and correct information and suggest targeted and organized actions;
 - provides a photograph of the existing;
 - allows to maintain and manage public/private relations.
- In the short and medium term:
- provides listening to understand the positions and situation of different actors and stakeholders;
 - defines solutions with different actors and stakeholders - *“by collecting our confidences and visions we could create new vision and from there build and put together”*;
 - manages solidarity in line with the needs of the territory and its paths of development and growth;
 - coordinates the new spirit of activism and community in order to create new models of cooperation and development;
 - deals with setting up an analysis of the territory through:
 - a) the analysis of structural damage;
 - b) the impact of the damage on the territory in hard and soft terms;
 - c) the impact of the damage on the social structure;
 - d) strategies of restart and development through the analysis of strengths and weaknesses in the two physical/structural and social/lifestyle dimensions. (What is expected is an analysis that is a synthesis between economic and social);
 - deals with defining a series of strategic interventions:
 - a) starting from the analysis made;
 - b) set up with the participation of the various stakeholders and shared with them, in order to have an involvement and participation in the subsequent implementation phase;
 - c) based on the new situation and the new potential of the territory, which also implies the evaluation between returning to the old methods/models or defining new ones to seize new opportunities. In short, it is a matter of giving a vision of development based on the current situation defined by the data, the evaluation of the relations existing between the different elements of the territory, listening to the requests of the different actors and stakeholders - *“He/she must implement an evolved community project, change the participation of individuals and the collective, small and large”*; *“the activities on the territory must be the result of monitoring and shared will, it should be avoided doing crap and disparate investments”*;
 - is responsible for implementing strategic interventions at the level of the territory, at the level of individual operator, through the management of the daily. Every single operator should act according to the strategy set for the territory, operate from what is set for the territory - *“He/she must come to the company, let us understand what to do and how to do it”*; *“it can be the opportunity to change completely, to insert the company in the future”*;
 - makes a synthesis between public and private, in order to provide coherence between public investment and private will;
 - manages/increases the economic resources destined to the territory;
 - Manages the prevention activity.

With regard to its position, we can assume a double configuration:

- a figure or a structure composed of several coordinated figures acting outside the enterprise, collaborating with enterprises and different stakeholders; a figure of social connection and coordination, who has a recognized stable and continuous role.
- a figure who, within the company/organization:
 - a) manages the information consistent with all the aspects related to the urgencies;
 - b) takes care of the relations with the outside;
 - c) manages the relations with the various public;
 - d) set the strategy and guide the implementation by balancing the aspects of territorial planning with the needs of the enterprise

Keywords

- psychological skills
- economic skills
- data analysis/understanding skills
- strategic vision
- implementation skills
- territory bond,
- public-private link to give coherence to public investments and private will
- continuity

ANNEX I: NEW PROFILE

Profile Name Tourism Recovery Expert

EQF LEVEL: 6

General profile description

The profile of the Tourism Recovery Expert has to have disaster specific and psychological skills to motivate the recovery; is able to implement analysis in the positioning of the destination before and after the damage, is able to manage the new environment and redefine how to intervene in terms of rebuilding the image (rebranding) and restoring peoples' confidence; can help the affected sites/facilities to turn a disaster into new opportunities integrating economic, natural, social and human approach

ABILITIES AND KNOWLEDGE

1) Abilities

The candidate is able to:

- IDENTIFY
 - propose the arrangement of premises for the implementation of leisure activities in relation to the existing infrastructure
 - constantly recognize mutual business interests and seeks networking opportunities with purpose
 - Attitude to understand that something is wrong or that it will go wrong. (It refers to the attitude of recognizing problems and not their solution)
 - Understand the implications of new information for solving present and future problems and for decision-making processes
 - is aware of the structure and importance of tourism as a significant contributor to economic recovery;
 - knowledge of relevant laws, written and unwritten rules, ability to keep abreast of changes;
 - is digitally literate, knows how to use professional software;
 - has an overview of the work processes involved in the tourism business;
- ANALYZE
 - regularly visit or otherwise contacts individual destination providers and collects their suggestions

- prepare indicative estimates of the costs associated with the implementation of leisure
- plan business cooperation and coordinates work with other providers, public and private sector representatives
- analyze detected threats
- identify any bugs or imperfections in applications
- Analyze the general conditions of tourism services

- INTERVENT

- activities and events and promotion
- protect health and the environment
- represent local communities, regions or countries in tourism promotion activities
- carry out campaigns to attract guests and business partners
- provide guests and various customers with promotional and informative material
- encourage innovative and creative design of integrated thematic products
- constantly recognize mutual business interests and seeks networking opportunities with purpose
- connect individual destination providers in order to create integrated and thematic tourism products and partner marketing activities
- organize thematic meetings or round tables for the professional public
- organize meetings (round tables) for local residents
- coordinate the implementation of the destination strategy and verifies the implementation of the set activities of stakeholders involved in the tourist destination
- lead individual projects for the development of integrated tourism products
- check and supervises the implementation of activities
- create solutions to problems
- think analytically
- manage budgets
- manage different departments in a hospitality establishment
- manage health and safety standards
- implement marketing strategies
- implement sales strategies
- maintain customer service
- simulate the phases of an attack on the system
- prepare reports on the security levels of the systems
- prepare reports on the performed activity
- participates in the preparation of environmental plans;
- liaises with environmental and nature protection authorities, water

authorities and the public in municipal areas;

- participates in the preparation of tenders;
- assisting in the enforcement of environmental and nature protection legislation and safety regulations.
- participate in hazard management

2) Knowledge

The candidate has to know:

- the environment in which he/she operates
- Marketing and sales
- knows basic historical, geographical information about the destination and hotel
- uses modern information and communication technology
- has the knowledge and skills to lead and work in a team
- knows the forms and basic rules of communication with different publics
- knows the usefulness and role of natural and cultural heritage in tourism
- knows the basic methods of statistical data collection, data analysis, interpretation and presentation of data
- knows the importance of marketing practice and entrepreneurial approach
- knows concrete implementation plans for marketing the tourist offer
- knows how to establish a professional relationship with providers and representatives of the public and private sector
- knows how to identify and connect the potential interests of providers at the destination
- knows the basics of successful project coordination and management
- knows the regulations relating to the activity
- knows measures to increase synergies
- knows the methods of identifying the needs of individual target groups
- knows ways to motivate
- knows how to prepare a destination development strategy
- knows how to assess the economic impact of individual marketing activities
- knows the principles and directions of sustainable development
- understand the connection between land use, sustainable development and conservation of natural resources
- Circular economy principles and strategies
- common principles and application aspects of current legislation on safety
- safety at work: rules and methods of behavior (general and specific)
- Knowledge of human behavior and performance, of individual differences in attitudes, personalities and interests, of learning and motivation mechanisms, of psychological research methods
- Emergency management - Coordinate technical or administrative functions as part of civil protection emergencies, Take care of the technical and

administrative investigations preparatory to declarations of states of emergency

- Databases and systematization of information, logistics of assistance to the population, Census and damage assessment
- Emergency logistics - Continuity of essential services Coordination of operational structures
- nature protection legislation and safety regulations
- knowledge on hazard identification and management



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