dTour

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INTRODUCING DIGITALISATION FOR BOOSTING SMEs IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

2ND INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT:
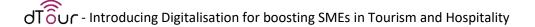DEVELOPMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE FOR AGENT IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY DIGITALISATION

DIMITRA
educational organization

RINOVA
innovate, create & regenerate

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Management Centre

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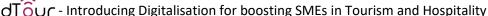of Thessaloniki

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Introduction

This document sets out the second intellectual output (IO2) of the dTour Erasmus+ project, entitled '*Occupational Profile for the dTour Adviser in Tourism and Hospitality Digitalisation'*. It has been designed through a programme of development activity in the dTour partnership, underscored and informed by the analysis of data gathered during a comprehensive programme of desk research and field research, including stakeholder consultation, during the production of a study report '*Benchmarking of Current Digital Tools in Tourism and Hospitality*' (IO1).

The results of that study pointed, in outline form, to the need to define common competency standards to inform the occupational profile and role of the newly-designed 'dTour adviser' in Digitalisation. This occupational profile provides a detailed description of the range of competencies required in order for the role to be performed effectively. The profile focuses on what is required in terms of competences (Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes) for the dTour adviser to be able to advise and promote the digital opportunities within the Hospitality and Tourism sector to SMEs in order that they are able to maximise the opportunities that digital technologies have to offer.

The occupational profile is designed at EQF Level 4/5, which is a core reflection of where the profile is likely to operate in national contexts. This does not mean that all competences are at this level and some are set above, but the overall level of the occupational profile as been set at this level to capture the mainstay of core competencies attached to the role. The use of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) to set this benchmark as the level and provides a reference point for its integration into the National Qualification Frameworks that operate across Europe and it also provides the pivotal and foundational structure that underwrites and informs the design and production in dTour of curriculum content, training material and an ISO-aligned certification scheme to support and validate the occupational profile.

Context and rationale

It has been said that digitalisation is key to success in the Tourism sector. Various organisations across the whole range of different areas in the industry are already moving into the digital era at an accelerating pace. Digitalisation takes place in various tasks, activities, and operations in the sector, which develop organisations in terms of their internal management but also in their business activities that are aimed at finding new customers or serving the needs of customers for tourism services of ever-higher quality. Such developments may be an everyday routine for larger companies in tourism. However, this is not the case for SMEs who are, arguably, fundamental to the success of Europe as the top world Tourism destination. SMEs often do not have the capacity or resources to adapt to industry change and innovation and can be at risk of continuing to rely on outdated and less effective business processes and methods. Without intervention and support for SMEs, this lack of ability to embrace digitalisation may result in lost opportunities to boost business performance.

The aim of the dTour project is to train and certify people who work in the Tourism and Hospitality sector with innovative digital skills in order to provide high-quality digitalised services to small and medium-sized businesses with more of a focus on hotels and accommodation.

Furthermore, the project gives Tourism and Hospitality SMEs the opportunity to navigate through new digital technologies and tools available for them to use to benefit their business.

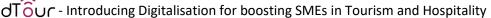## Description of the dTour Adviser Role:

'dTour advisers' can operate in a range of contexts: They may be employed as business advisers or as sector advisers by economic development agencies or chambers of commerce; they may be employed as consultants or coaches in training organisations working with SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) and employees. They may be doing so in a salaried capacity or working as freelance or self-employed consultants. With SMEs, they are most likely to be involved with programmes that have an element of public funding to support the tourism sector, although this profile also takes into account those who work purely in private practice.   Irrespective, the occupational profile and competencies have been designed to cover those who, whether in part or in whole, work in an occupation which involves them supporting tourism sector companies to progress on their journeys towards enhancing the digitalisation of the business. The advisers could be people that have been already working in the Tourism and Hospitality sector and would like to enhance their skills and employment opportunities. They could also be owners and operators of SMEs that understand the need for digitalisation and would like to bring their own business to the new digital era, or business consultants that already work or are interested in cooperating with SMEs in the sector.

Initially, the term 'agents' was used to describe the profile, but on further review this has been replaced by the term 'adviser', to better describe the advisory relationship between the individual who performs this role and the companies that they support.

In terms of other aspects of their profile, the dTour adviser is expected to be experienced in, and have a good knowledge of, the Hospitality and Tourism sector; they are keen to develop their skills in this area to further their employment opportunities and to share their skills and knowledge to benefit others in the sector. They have excellent digital skills themselves – although they may or may not be an ' I.T. expert' as such - and possess a good understanding of contemporary digital transformation trends and technologies in the sector, which they can combine with good insight into business needs. The dTour adviser uses their knowledge of available technologies and their understanding of the business needs of the sector to advise and guide SMEs to exploit these digital opportunities to gain maximum benefit. They work with SMEs to understand their current position, the tools already being used and any planned digital enhancements and then use this to provide

appropriate solutions using the most appropriate technology or applications, that best fit the needs of the business, to enhance the SME's digitalisation of their processes and/or services.

The dTour adviser prioritises the introduction to SMEs of open resource solutions that can be adapted and used for their business that are low-cost or no-cost (as opposed to acting as a sales agent for specific solutions and products) or propose more specific 'off the shelf' and tailor-made solutions appropriate to the needs and investment available for digitalisation.

Although the profile of the dTour adviser has not been designed to be that of a 'digitalisation trainer', they are expected to be able to provide information and guidance on the suitability of available technology and, in some circumstances, directly coach the SME in a way that will 'upskill' and enable the utilisation of certain digital applications and standard e-commerce and e-business tools (including online booking platforms and management systems).

Person Specification: Description of the Role and the incorporated Occupational Domains

The Matrix of Learning Competencies (IO2) for the dTour adviser is comprised of seven different Occupational Domains;

1. Diagnostic and Action Planning (SWOTs, TNAs) - The competencies described in this domain focus on the ability of the dTour adviser to use tools and diagnostics to better orientate themselves with the SMEs' current situation, business model and business processes, identifying strengths and weaknesses. The information gathered is assessed to explore areas for improvement, how improvement could be achieved and the manner in which digitalisation could support this improvement. This domain not only considers and recommends digital interventions but looks further at the most practical and effective manner, including any training requirements, to implement the changes to ensure they are effectively embedded into new business processes. These elements are then brought together to create an improvement plan to support the SMEs' business to develop and adopt new technologies to do so.

2. **Using Digitalisation for Improving Business Networks** – the second domain focuses on the competencies needed by the dTour adviser to support the SMEs in the use of technology to develop their business networks. Digitalisation itself has already contributed to our ability to connect with friends and family across the world and no longer to be restricted by physical location. This domain aims to develop this to encourage the SMEs to develop their networks and "Reach" in a business setting. To this end the dTour adviser is familiar with the existing online tools and techniques available for networking and support the SME in extending their online presence and networks. This includes being familiar with the networks and groups in the SMEs' own country as well as those across sectors of the industry. The dTour adviser supports the SMEs by encouraging them to join appropriate online groups and portals to share information, contacts, and advice.

3. **Finding new customers** – this competency considers the focus on using digitalisation to find new customers and expand the business. The dTour adviser understands how technology and digital solutions are used within the industry to promote businesses and gain new customers. They know the current market trends and are able to use these to increase the market share and customer base for the SMEs. They use their knowledge to seek out emerging technologies to ensure the SMEs have the most up to date information and are able to capitalise on this. They use digital channels to research the industry and understand the different technologies most appropriate to different areas of the sector.

4. **Improving customer experience** – this domain focuses on the competencies needed for the dTour adviser to advise the SMEs in improving the customer experience. Arguably one of the most critical competencies as improving the experience of existing customers not only leads to repeat bookings and visits but also recommendations, which are a powerful method for increasing customer numbers and growing the business. For this competency the dTour adviser needs to understand the precise setting in which they are operating and the associated specific requirements that lead to an improved customer experience. They need to 'put themselves' in the customer's place and analyse the customer journey identifying areas for improvement and considering digital options available to implement
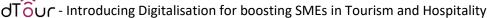
that change. They need to be mindful that any changes put in place must benefit most customers and not be restrictive. They also need to be aware of the impact that *not* implementing an improvement could have on the business.

5. Improving quality **–** Whilst increasing aggregate customer numbers and extending business networks are undoubtedly positive for the SME, the dTour adviser must ensure that any proposed solution not only achieves the increased numbers but that it does so without compromising on the quality offered. Therefore, this domain focuses on how the quality of the product or service being offered can be enhanced using technology. The dTour adviser is able to identify areas of the business which could be automated to improve quality and those where a more traditional approach is likely to be considered better. They need to be able to understand and break down complex processes to identify the component parts to determine where technology offers the greatest enhancement. They can explain how technology makes improvements and frees up staff where technology is not the best option.

6. Option Appraisal (digitalisation options, models, off the shelf and bespoke options) This domain focuses on competencies needed by the dTour adviser to enable them to understand the current products and applications available in the marketplace as well as predicted market trends and upcoming solutions. This domain supports the dTour adviser in analysing the business area for the application of each of the available solutions and comparing the 'pros and cons' of similar products to be able to provide the SMEs with a comprehensive recommendation for any digital solution.

7. Internationalisation **–** this competency considers how technologies and digital solutions can meet the needs of many users including across partner countries. The dTour advisers share product information across their wider networks and with colleague advisers in other countries to promote solutions which address common challenges across hospitality and tourism and can therefore form part of a wider international solution.

Each module consists of learning objectives anchored in three competence areas:

Knowledge: Knowledge is a familiarity with, awareness, or understanding of someone or something, such as facts, information, descriptions, or skills, which is acquired through experience or education by perceiving, discovering, or learning. Knowledge is a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. It can be implicit (as with practical skill or expertise) or explicit (as with the theoretical understanding of a subject). Knowledge acquisition involves cognitive processes: perception, communication, and reasoning.

Skills: A skill is the ability to carry out a task with predetermined results. Often this is constrained by a given amount of time, energy, or both. Skills can be divided into so-called hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills refer to labour market and VET information or how retrieve relevant information online. Soft skills, however, refer to communication skills, emotional intelligence, empathy towards the clients' needs and overall attitude.

Attitudes: An attitude is an individual's feeling or opinion; it shows in the way you behave. Attitudes are complex and are acquired through experiences over time.

The Competencies

1. Diagnostic and Action Planning

Competency objectives:

With reference to diagnostic and action planning, dTour Advisers can demonstrate:

- Knowledge and understanding of relevant and varied strategies and tools for (a) supporting Tourism sector client SMEs to identify and diagnose realistic and achievable digitalisation requirements and (b) for compiling a plan to achieve those requirements;

- The ability to enable empower client Tourism sector companies to identify their motivations and overcome barriers to progression towards 'next steps' in the digitalisation of their businesses;

- Professional qualities that enable the dTour Adviser to establish and maintain a good rapport with Tourism sector client SMEs throughout the process.

Competencies:

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Demonstrate knowledge of: • SWOT or SWOT/B analysis exercises and tools • Development Needs Analysis (DNA) or Training Needs Analysis (TNA) • Force field analysis (Help and Hindrance) • Checklists, tools and references to use with decision-makers in the company • The heterogeneity and	**Demonstrate the ability to:** • Establish strong rapport with clients • Find out what particularly motivates clients to embark upon their digitalisation journeys • Identify and analyse the barriers (real and perceived) that exist towards taking the 'next step' in the	**Demonstrate:** • Empathy and understanding towards clients and the situation of their businesses • An emphasis on listening and empowerment rather than instruction and prescription • A non-judgemental and encouraging stance • Openness and understanding • Optimism and confidence according to the clients' situation and their problem-solving capacity and trading

differing learning styles and preferences that exist amongst SME owners and decision-makers • Different benchmarks and standards that represent relevant and achievable 'norms' in relation to the client and the present digitalisation situation of their business	digitalisation process • Support clients to set SMART goals to overcome these barriers and in accordance with their digitalisation action plans • Manage expectations and define appropriate boundaries in relation to the service(s) being offered • Realise the potential of the service being offered, but also set boundaries and recognise the limitations of the service that can be/is being offered to companies	potential through digitalisation

2. Digitalisation for Improving Business Networks

Competency objectives:

With reference to digitalisation for improving business networks, dTour Advisers can demonstrate:

- Knowledge and capacity to understand the complexity of tourism sector in terms of interactions in the value chain, within SMEs, with customers and in relation to the tourist destination. In-depth knowledge of digital tools and their applications, to be able to advise on the best strategies and uses to enhance effectiveness and flexibility of networks for business success;

- Capacity to support SMEs for self-diagnosis and for setting up strategies and action plans for continuous improvement of the digitalization of business networks;

- Professional qualities that enable the dTour Adviser to establish and maintain a good rapport with Tourism sector client SMEs throughout the process.

Competencies:

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Demonstrate knowledge of:	**Demonstrate the ability to:**	**Demonstrate:**
• Analysis & diagnosis techniques for tourism business networks evaluation • Strategic vision and formulation of actions plans for continuous improvement of the digitalization of business networks • The dynamics of the	• Establish strong rapport with clients-Tourist SMEs • Find out what particularly motivates clients to embark upon their digitalisation journeys • Identify and analyse the barriers (real and perceived) that exist towards taking the 'next step' in the digitalisation process	• Empathy and understanding towards clients and the situation of their businesses • An emphasis on listening and empowerment rather than instruction and prescription

tourism sector in terms of interactions in the value chain, within the enterprises, with customers and in relation with the tourist destination • Digital transformation as a way to enhance effectiveness and flexibility of networks for tourism business success. • How to build networks in the context of a smart tourist destination • How to build networks in the context of tourism circular economy. • Enhancing customer-tourist experience through digital networking.	• Support clients to set SMART & sustainable goals to overcome these barriers and in accordance with their networking digitalisation action plans • Identify and align policies and projects with client and networking partners needs and aspirations • Manage expectations and define appropriate boundaries in relation to the service(s) being offered • Realise the potential of the service being offered, but also set boundaries and recognise the limitations of the service that can be/is being offered to companies	• A non-judgemental and encouraging stance • Openness and understanding • Optimism and confidence according to the clients' situation and their problem-solving capacity and trading potential through digitalisation

3. Finding New Customers

Competency objectives:

With reference to finding new customers, dTour Advisers can demonstrate:

- Knowledge and understanding of relevant and varied strategies and tools for (a) supporting Tourism sector client SMEs to identify and diagnose realistic and achievable digitalisation requirements and (b) for compiling a plan to achieve those requirements;

- The ability to enable empower client Tourism sector companies to identify their motivations and overcome barriers to progression towards 'next steps' in the digitalisation of their businesses;

- Professional qualities that enable the dTour Adviser to establish and maintain a good rapport with Tourism sector client SMEs throughout the process.

Competencies:

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Demonstrate knowledge of: • Tourism & marketing principles. • Computer and digital systems • The trade, the partners and stakeholders • Tourism policies, strategies, target markets, new and emerging markets • Current and future	**Demonstrate the ability to:** • Use Digital Systems (i.e., Central Reservations Systems, online booking systems, internal software, POS, channel management systems) • Use social media and internet in order to identify new opportunities/leads and for promotion and marketing • Understand what customers are looking for	**Demonstrate:** • An understanding of individual customer requirements and the ability to adapt and tailor based on each unique customer • Willingness to respond to requests and queries in a personalised manner (that

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trends in digital tourism • Their own destination and what it offers. • How to digitally market SMEs and relevant restrictions (i.e., limited capital) and advantages (i.e., personalised customer service)	and where SMEs fit into this need • identify and analyse strengths and weakness and focus on promoting strengths of the business • People skills (i.e., networking skills and building good relationships) • Cultural awareness and how to approach each target market • Effectively transfer knowledge	would be lacking in a larger enterprise) • Polite, professional and respectful • Interpersonal skills and understanding of diverse customers • Efficient and good at problem solving • Ability to identify opportunities and ways in which to capitalise on these, and to ascertain where there are gaps/ areas that are lacking

4. Improving the Customer Experience

Competency objectives:

With reference to improving the customer experience, dTour Advisers can demonstrate:

- Knowledge and understanding of relevant and varied strategies and tools for providing tailor-made support for Tourism sector client SMEs to improve their customers' experience

- The ability to suggest client Tourism sector companies with the appropriate digital tools that can best enhance their customers' experience within their context

- Professional qualities that enable the dTour Adviser to establish and maintain a good rapport with Tourism sector client SMEs throughout the process of choosing the appropriate digital tools

Competencies:

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Demonstrate knowledge of:	**Demonstrate the ability to:**	**Demonstrate:**
• Current and relevant tourism policies, new trends on digital tourism and emerging target groups	• Spot the tourism market gaps and the deficiencies in local tourism SMEs	• Understanding of the diversity in tourism target groups
• The current status of the deficiencies in the local tourism market concerning customer experience	• Identify the latest relevant trends, function and application of tourism digital systems oriented towards personalised customer experience	• Empathy towards tourism SMEs' education needs on new digital technologies
• How to apply personalised experience in tourism (knowledge of customer relationship	• Match the appropriate personalised digital systems to the respective tourism SMEs	• Eagerness to providing knowledge on new digital technologies
	• Use social media and	• Leading,

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management software) • Collecting, analysing, assessing and exploiting customers' feedback • Innovative digital systems – applicable to SMEs – that enable and enhance customer experience, such as chatbots or the development of personalised digital business applications that could also apply to customer retention • Monitoring social media channels in order to provide custom made services according to customers' arrivals and preferences	acknowledge their impact, as well as work with advanced activities linked to social media, such as the process of monitoring • Transfer relevant specialised and overall knowledge on tourism • To fit the emerging technologies to the type of tourism SMEs and the tourism target group of the area	problem-solving and filling the gaps with new suitable solutions

5. Improving Quality Through Resource and Staff Management

Competency objectives:

With reference to improving quality through resource and staff management, dTour Advisers can demonstrate:

- Knowledge and understanding of relevant quality measures in order to maximise the potential of the existing resources and staff;

- Ability to identify and apply digital tools that can contribute to the utilisation and improvement of the resources and staff management;

- Professional qualities that enable the dTour advisers to provide support and motivation for further continual development of the staff members and existing practises by means of digital tools and methods.

Competencies:

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Demonstrate knowledge of:	**Demonstrate the ability to:**	**Demonstrate:**
• Quality measurement methods/digital tools	• Apply/Make use of the most relevant quality measurement methods/digital tools to individual needs of SMEs	• Sensitivity towards the situation of staff being evaluated/measured
• Most relevant methods of quality measurement used within SMEs	• Analyse results of digital quality measurement tools	• Encourage the development of skills abilities of staff members
• Needs for continual /new/smart in-service training for improving the quality	• Diversify analyses to accommodate particular	• Interest in making staff feel incorporated within

of services • Current (or trending) customer trends/patterns for improving the quality of services • Different digital resources/tools and their possible impact(s) on the quality of services provided by a specific SME	SMEs • Present evaluation insights from quality measurement tools in an easily comprehensible format • Compare current customer trends and patterns to available resources and staff potential • Make use of resources according to the need of SMEs	the quality improvement process • Attention to differing ideas and perceptions about quality/quality assurance • Support to the future visions and hopes of SMEs

6. Option Appraisal

Competency objectives:

With reference to option appraisal, dTour Advisers can demonstrate:

- Whether each option can improve investment, modernise services, enhance organisational capacity, achieve efficiencies, and achieve regeneration benefits;

- The ability to provide an opportunity to fully assess the economic, social, and environmental impact of options;

- Identify a preferred option which is expected to demonstrate that the project will deliver the benefits required and provide good value for money.

Competencies:

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Demonstrate knowledge of:	**Demonstrate the ability to:**	**Demonstrate:**
• The main EU policy priorities and National Funding Programmes in the Tourism sector and the European funding definitions and criteria • Assessment of impacts, which should include a descriptive analysis and, where costs and benefits can be quantified, numerical and financial provided	• Identify and assess all the potential risks • Assess and adopt best practice procedures to meet policy and project requirements and standards for external funding if this is required • Identify and align policies and projects with local needs and aspirations • Maximise the opportunities for service improvement and ensure the best use of technology, resources and	• Empathy and understanding towards clients and the situation of their businesses • A non-judgemental and encouraging stance • Openness and understanding to views and comments of service users, potential future users and other

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including the sources and assumptions used to estimate impacts	assets in meeting social needs	stakeholders.
• More than one employment model, which may be suitable for some options and each should be fully assessed. The appraisal should assess the risks borne by employees	• Achieve equity and equalities objectives and identify any adverse impacts and to design action to eliminate or mitigate adverse impacts	• Opening up thinking to external challenge.
• Cost/benefit analysis, Risk assessment, Market analysis, Scenario analysis and Sensitivity analysis methods and techniques	• Meet the requirements of fiduciary duty to identify the full range of costs and benefits and to obtain sustainable value for money	• Deep understanding of equality issues and how adverse impacts may be eliminated or mitigated
	• Ensure future scrutiny and review will not expose policy and process failings or weaknesses	
	• Evaluate user needs and forecasts of demographic and lifestyle change	
	• Organize workshops and establish rapport with the clients and their employees	

7. Internationalisation

Competency objectives:

With reference to internationalisation, dTour Advisers can demonstrate:

- Knowledge and understanding of relevant and varied strategies, campaigns and tools for custom made solutions concerning international expansion and appeal of SMEs, within their context;

- Ability to identify the international potentials of tourism's sector SMEs and optimize these possibilities through the appropriate digital tools/technologies;

- Professional qualities that enable the dTour Adviser to motivate and boost the expansion of tourism and hospitality SMEs at international level

Competencies:

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Demonstrate knowledge of:	**Demonstrate the ability to:**	**Demonstrate:**
• Functioning of the international tourism and hospitality market • Emerging digital evolutions in tourism • Strategies for the internationalisation of SMEs • Methods of globalisation of business activities/collaborations • International markets' high-quality training	• Understand the behaviour of international customers • Discover digital innovative tools in the tourism sector • Analyse and exploit the current international network of a specific SME • Identify opportunities and implement activities for the expansion of the international network of a specific SME • Customise and apply strategies for the	• Empowerment and motivation for internationalis-ation • Appraisal of the effort made by the staff to adapt to new practices • Open-minded attitude towards potential connections • Support in the diversity that occurs by the

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strategies • Methods of digital marketing	internationalisation of a specific SME • Utilise technological advances for penetration in the international market	internationalis--ation of an SME • Responsive behaviour to questions and difficulties that may arise in relation to new/innovative digital practises • Adaptability to new situations and challenges that may occur in the internationalis-ation process