

## Overall summary of

“Research and Contextualisation Report”

In the framework of the project

“Assessment and enhancement of vocational language skills

in the wellness sector”- Assess Well

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## 1 Acknowledgement

This working document has been a partnership effort, with valuable contribution and input by individuals from the partner institutions and representatives of VET providers, language teachers in VET, as well as employees and employers in the tourism and wellness sector.

## 2 Introduction

This report summarises the research activities undertaken by four countries: Germany, Spain, UK and Italy on the qualifications, skills and competences of workers in the wellness sector. The main focus is to find out what kind of training courses (including work-based learning) are available at a national level, which subjects are addressed in the wellness sector curricula as well as the most popular treatments in this field. This should help to find out the training needs of staff members in the wellness sector for the enhancement of English language competences important to this sector, taking into consideration new trends in the industry.

The project Assess Well aims to develop, test and implement a new curriculum, using media-based language resources for the tourism sector, especially for the people currently working, as well as those who want to work in the wellness sector and are willing to upgrade their competences. The learning materials will be presented in the form of videos and learning exercises.

The results of the research activities will contribute to the development of a training curriculum for vocationally specific language skills in the wellness sector including intercultural elements.

The results of this research are based on desktop research and structured interviews with four groups of respondents:

- VET providers, VET managers, VET curriculum designers, furthering VET
- Language teachers in VET
- Tourism/Wellness sector employees
- Tourism/Wellness sector employers

The interviews conducted, with at least 3 representatives of each of the 4 groups, revealed the needs and skills of persons working in the wellness sector. All target groups in partner countries claimed that for those desiring to work in the wellness sector there is an obvious demand for broader communicative skills, knowledge of foreign languages and intercultural

skills if they want to raise their employment prospects. English language competences and awareness of other cultures are very important, due to the economic value of health and wellness tourism in Europe, especially in Spain and Italy.

The results of interviews revealed that almost none of the respondents were familiar with the existence of specific language courses for the wellness sector, despite having many years work experience in this field. Hence we can conclude that there is a need for this type of training. The majority were also interested in enhancing their language skills and attending such courses as well as using media-based learning materials, which include not only English but also information about new treatments in the wellness sector. This indicates that the creation of a specific course would meet a basic training need for future professionals and that the applicability and functionality of this type of training is proven. Nevertheless, their input is valuable as they all conclude the need for foreign language skills in this field.

### **3 Part 1 Summary of desktop research**

The desktop portion of the research was carried out at the national level in each of the partner countries.

The partners concluded the treatments vary greatly across the field, but the most common treatments include:

- beauty treatments and professional makeup,
- body and face massages as well as special massages like Hot Stone, aromatherapy and therapeutic treatments,
- non-surgical cosmetic procedures and laser treatments
- skin cleansing
- manicure and pedicure services
- hair removal treatments.

Treatments take place in beauty salons, wellness/spa hotels and resorts, dermatologist practices, department stores, hair salons, and in Germany and Spain also in fitness and nutrition centres. The facility depends on the precise treatment being requested. The people carrying out the treatments have various job titles, e.g. beautician, make-up artist, massage therapist, wellness manager, sports instructor, nutritionist, physiotherapist.

In Spain, Germany and Italy persons intending to work in the wellness sector have to be qualified. State-owned vocational schools and private educational institutions or specialized centres offer different training programs and courses. The courses can be full-time or part-time, evening and weekend courses. The curriculum and the duration of such courses may vary. Quite often an apprenticeship is included in the work training. Unlike the other partner countries, in the UK persons working the wellness sector do not have to be qualified or have experience.

Regarding **further education training programmes** there are a wide range of opportunities in every partner country for people to train in this sector, including privately run courses and vocational courses through state colleges. A large portion of the training includes not only classroom based theory, but also **apprenticeships, on-the-job training** periods in companies, simulations and real situation work-based assignments. These vary in length and structure. In most partner countries the programmes are supported by national institutions and upon completion learners usually receive a certificate.

The topics addressed in the curricula for professions in the wellness sector will vary depending on occupation, educational institutions, regional aspects and trends in the wellness sector. The curricula for esthetician occupations are similar in the partner countries and tend to cover theoretical subjects such as anatomy and physiology, chemistry, dermatology, health and safety practices in the salon, aesthetic devices, hydrothermal aesthetics, nutrition, communication and foreign language. Curricula also include some management aspects for example: product planning and marketing, organisational competences, business and entrepreneurial initiatives. The practical subjects take into consideration specific treatments in the areas: cosmetics, body treatments (body peeling, cellulite), massage (various types), hair removal, pedicure, make-up, skin treatments, eyebrow and eyelash treatments, hair removal using waxing techniques. It is worth noting that intercultural topics/elements are not included within courses in every country.

The informal courses available in the partner countries do not necessarily include any formal assessment or result in a qualification, and are usually short-term. The courses are focused mostly on treatment techniques, such as basic treatment procedures (body peeling, cellulite,

and hot stone), different massages and their benefits and effects, aftercare advice, correct posture, contraindications, pedicure, manicure and decorative cosmetics.

The partners also looked into the trends in the tourist industry and wellness services at regional/national levels which resulted in some commonalities. Andalucía is a destination in Southern Europe for healthcare and tourism. Europeans travel to Germany, which ranks among the top tourist and cultural countries in the world, for many reasons, but about 19% travel for relaxation, wellness or sport related reasons<sup>1</sup>. In Italy, spa resorts are important centres of attraction for tourist flows in which all the supply chain activities converge, from accommodation to nutrition, to those connected with leisure and entertainment and lifestyle-orientated wellness tools. In England you are able to visit spas and salons for treatments like massages, facials and reflexology, but if you are looking for non-surgical cosmetic procedures these are mostly carried out in larger cities, e.g. Birmingham or London. In all countries the type of people visiting the region is varied, from families to young couples and single people, although there is a notable increase in middle-aged visitors and those close to retirement or already retired.

#### **4 Part 2 Results of the questionnaires/ interviews**

The following section summarises the findings of the interviews carried out among 52 persons, representatives of VET providers, VET language teachers, employers and employees in the tourism/wellness sector in four partner countries: Germany, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom. They were aged between 23 and 63 and their working experience ranged from 1 to 40 years in the wellness sector. The different levels of experience in the sector provide more information and an analytical insight into the industry.

All but one person was employed, and about half worked in the private sector while the other half worked for public institutions that provide services for the adult and vocational educational sectors. Some of these employees have attended specific VET courses and

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<sup>1</sup> DZT/WTM 2014 (5) P.16

[http://www.germany.travel/media/pdf/dzt\\_marktforschung/ITB\\_Fassung\\_DZT\\_Broschuere\\_Web\\_280214\\_2.pdf](http://www.germany.travel/media/pdf/dzt_marktforschung/ITB_Fassung_DZT_Broschuere_Web_280214_2.pdf)

obtained qualifications in tourism, wellness and/or customer service. Several of the teachers have taught English to beauticians and wellness operators.

The partners asked the respondents to say what came to mind when we provided them with the following words. The answers were quite detailed and are helpful when deciding what content to include in the curriculum and course materials. The answers have been summarised in the table below.

Care cosmetics	Every day care, skin therapy, facial and medical treatments with appropriate products (age appropriate), skin problems, cosmetic studios, personal image, enhancement of the appearance, post-surgery treatment
Decorative cosmetics	Day and evening make-up, artistic and creative skills, outer beauty, manicure, pedicure
Whole-body treatment	Physical health, baths, whole-body wrap, anti-cellulite treatment, brush massages, peelings, relaxation, spa, hot-stone, Ayurveda
Nutrition	Balanced diets, alternative eating, individualised nutrition counselling, healthful nutrition, tackling obesity, eating for cosmetic reasons.
Hygiene and equipment	Maintenance of the machines and disinfection, sterilisation, regularly washing hands, body hygiene, wearing appropriate clothing (shoes, masks, gloves etc.), quality standards
Intercultural Competences	Openness, awareness and knowledge of other cultures, increase in intercultural skills, understand the differences in culture, communication, global tourism, (mis)understanding customers, relationship with guests.
Water Gymnastics	Aqua aerobics, healthy lifestyle, medical treatments, active holiday, wellness package, good for the joints, relaxation
Sport activities / fitness	Training and attention to special needs, fitness, tackling obesity, various sports (e.g. running, biking, football, aerobics), yoga, walking, healthy lifestyle, relaxation training

According to the statements of the interviewed employers and employees it is protocol to ask questions about allergies, operations, ailments they suffer, skin conditions, pregnancy, sensitive areas or problems with aromas in order to prevent any risk of allergic reactions.

All respondents attributed great importance to the command of several languages in order to perform customer care duties. English as a foreign language in the wellness sector was a top priority, followed by German, Spanish, French, Russian and Czech depending on the geographical position.

All interviewed persons emphasised the relevance of intercultural competences in the wellness sector. The persons working in this field should be aware of the lifestyle and culture of customers and should understand cultural differences in order to supply appropriate products and services. The workers in the wellness sector should also have an understanding of personal space and small talk questions which are acceptable in order to be not too intrusive. The majority responded that they should improve their communication skills and foreign language competences related to wellness sector in order to promote intercultural understanding.

The level of English skills in each partner country among the interviewed groups was different. Apart from the native speakers and language teachers, some respondents claimed to have an intermediate English level, others an elementary command of English, or admitted that they are unable to carry out lengthy conversations in English.

In regards to the question on available English courses aimed at the wellness sector, the majority of respondents declared they do not know specific courses for the wellness sector. Even the language teachers were not able indicate many specialised courses. There are some courses which have a theme: travel, tourism, reception and hospitality, but few of them have either a specific or direct application to the wellness industry. Thus none have experienced completing specific English courses focused on the wellness sector. When asked what a course should include, participants suggested: different types of treatment, information about cosmetic products, colloquial phrases used in the wellness sector – greeting, explanations of the treatments, small talk, appointment making and telephoning.

A high percentage of non-native English speakers in partner countries would be willing to undertake the virtual training and the mobility abroad. They would be interested in implementing multimedia learning materials, especially because these could be used as a resource in their classes and in this way foresee the inclusion of practical treatments within theory lessons.

Management aspects related to human resources management, organisation management, marketing strategies, ordering the necessary products, budget and administration, customer

satisfaction, communication, cost management and work safety were evaluated as a relevant part in the curriculum for the wellness sector.

There was a wide range of answers regarding the skills and abilities a person must possess once s/he completes a training program in the wellness sector. This should be in accordance with the qualification's purpose statement. The workers should be competent in whatever task/treatment they have been trained to do and be able to work independently and confidently.

Finally the participants were asked about their existing knowledge of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and also the EUROPASS. Regarding both questions the majority of respondents were not familiar with either. A few participants from the teaching sectors had some knowledge of learning outcomes.

For more information and detailed information, please see the "Overall Research and Contextualisation Report" which includes comparative results and annexed individual national reports.