

Executive Summary

Data from EUROSTAT shows that the population is ageing in EU-28. There are more people above 65 years old than below 14. The median age increased from 38 years in 2001 to 42,5 years in 2016, and it estimates that the percentage of the population in the EU above 85 years will triplicate from 2016 until 2080. This was the motto for the creation of a project co-funded by the Erasmus + programme under the title ***Training on Social Inclusion in Tourism, by including elderly people as local storytellers for the Tourism Industry – TSITour.***

The project was designed in the scope of the strategic partnerships for vocational education and training (VET) since it aims to develop a Training Module for the VET courses on the fields of care and welfare in the five southern European participating countries. Some VET offers for social workers in the EU include a training module on how to implement projects for avoiding the idleness of the people under social care. However, minimising the idleness brings only limited benefits for the psychophysical health of the elderly, and does not bring significant socio-economic gains to society.

In contrast, the project proposes a methodological approach that will benefit both VET professionals on the tourism and social sectors and elderly people under social care. In this framework, the project proposes the creation of a new training module for the VET courses in the fields of care and welfare, which will provide training on how to implement projects that will take advantage of the competencies of people under social care and value them. This will not only prevent their idleness but will also show them that they have an important role in society, which will boost their psychosocial health and will result in socio-economic gains for the countries.

The concept note of the project departed from the contribution of the elderly to the tourism industry, by working as volunteer local storytellers in the touristic sites. This will exploit their capacities and allow the tourism industry to provide more authentic experiences to the tourists, resulting in economic gains, and contributing to the dissemination of the culture and history of the communities. The choice of the tourism industry as a working model was based on the fact that it is probably the most relevant economic sector in the Mediterranean, it is strongly expanding in EU-28 and is very open to innovative solutions. As a result, the project created a symbiosis between two focal areas – the social inclusion and the tourism industry, which will enrich both areas.

This publication is focused on the concept proof in the sense that it presents a roadmap of the activities that were designed and implemented so as to achieve the structure of the proposed training programme. It is a tangible intellectual production tailored to the needs of its beneficiaries that will spotlight the main findings from the

activities developed, namely, the compilation of the benefits of the local Storytellers for the tourism industry; the state of the art and needs of performance of social professionals concerning elderly people's integration efforts; the compilation of good practices; the benchmarking of the existing VET courses focused on valorisation, and the round tables to discuss the main findings.

The activities enabled the Consortium with an in-depth understanding of both sectors involved in the project – social inclusion and tourism- and they have established the foundations for the creation of the TSITour Training Module by identifying the possibilities of combination of both areas. The existing gaps in the VET curricula were suppressed by a new multidisciplinary approach, and by explicitly taking into consideration the expertise of professionals currently working either with elders or in the tourism sector. These were fundamental actors in the process of design of the training programme structure, which was framed and supported by the significant data collection over eight months of implementation.

The approach of the training programme structure to the European Qualifications Framework principles is justified by the effort made by the Member States to better transparency and comparability of qualifications. Even though the module does not entitle its beneficiaries with a qualification, it is conceived to a specific target and level (4), which is recognised in the participating countries and other countries.

To sum up, this publication is a guiding document to relevant stakeholders that operate in the tourism and social areas, including VET trainers. Its reading endows the readers with knowledge on the importance of engaging the stakeholders in the construction of an adjusted answer to a problem or gap, which will produce fruitful results as a consequence of the exchange of expertise and field experiences.