

## Overview Report on Tourism and Leisure Field Study Programmes

In total nine programmes were reviewed in two separate visit programmes. The majority of the programmes evaluated led to Professional Bachelor Degrees, but two were university level programmes.

No college had the full range of practical training facilities that one may expect to find in leading Tourism/Hospitality schools: these normally include

- Food preparation and food service facilities where meals are prepared and served to paying guests
- Hotel reception units where guests can be checked in and guest accounts maintained
- Accommodation facilities where students can learn how to make beds, clean bathrooms, plan the décor of rooms, etc.
- Travel agency units where students can practise writing airline tickets, organising tourist itineraries (with the exception of Marijampole College)

In the absence of such training facilities, colleges rely on periods spent on placement in industry. But both students and social partners felt that, in general, students got insufficient practical training. In several instances students complained that they got little or no assistance from the colleges to help them find placements in industry.

The tourism/hospitality industry is very international in nature and requires personnel capable of dealing with clients who do not speak Lithuanian. The social partners have identified that English, Russian and German (in that order) are the key foreign languages in which students should be competent. Currently, colleges do not achieve a sufficient fluency in these languages.

Students can benefit from periods of study or work in a foreign country but only a small minority of students are internationally mobile. Furthermore, as the number of foreign students attending the programmes is small (in some instances it is zero), the students emerge from the programme lacking an international perspective.

There is a large number of colleges and universities offering programmes in tourism/hospitality (at least 12) and this has resulted in several programmes being unable to attract a viable cohort of students.

Perhaps because of the inadequate student enrolments, some colleges require the students to sit in lectures with students on other programmes e.g. students who require a Tourism Marketing programme are given a general Marketing module. While efforts are made to

contextualise the subject by giving tutorials in Tourism aspects of Marketing for the Hospitality/Tourism students, the arrangements are less than ideal.

Each college makes some attempt to get feedback from the social partners about the particular needs of the Tourism/Hospitality industry, but the arrangements were often informal and ad hoc. As a result, programme aims and learning outcomes were not always well adjusted to the needs of the labour market.

The teachers whom the panels met were generally highly dedicated and gave freely of their time to assist their students. Relations between staff and students were very good.

In general, there was an insufficient amount of research being undertaken by the staff of the colleges and in particular research that was relevant to Tourism/Hospitality.

In the main, students were not sufficiently involved in research, perhaps because of the low level of staff research.

Some colleges made sustained efforts to provide for the professional development of their staff, including development of teachers in pedagogy and assessment, but not all do so.

All the programmes met the legal requirements in regard to the structure of the programme and the qualifications of the staff. There was also an adequate number of staff in each college.

While the number of staff was adequate to deliver the programme, some colleges relied heavily on part-time staff or staff members who have jobs in nearby universities or colleges.

In the majority of colleges there has been a sharp decline in the enrolment of students in recent years. In addition, drop-out rates are relatively high.

Libraries varied in their quality from quite good to almost non-existent but all were helped by arrangements with other libraries (university or public libraries) to give students access to books and journals. This access is vital.

Colleges have invested in an e-learning platform (generally Moodle) which is commendable. However, there has been no attempt to share resources. The service to students could be improved at lower cost if resources were shared.

The colleges should embark on a sustained programme of internationalisation in terms of students going abroad, staff going abroad, more foreign languages, some visiting teachers from abroad, more emphasis on foreign languages, more foreign language books in libraries, etc.

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