



NordTourNet

NORDIC-BALTIC TOURISM LEARNING – NORDTOURNET-2

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WP1: SITUATION DIAGNOSIS

Qualitative Research Report 2018



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction	5
2	FINLAND	6
2.1	Description of small businesses involved in the research	6
2.1.1	Pulsan Asema Oy (Pulsan Asema tie 21, Pulsa).....	6
2.1.2	Saimaa Travel Oy (Ratakatu 23, Lappeenranta)	7
2.1.3	Saimaan Palju ja aktiviteetit sole trader and Saimaan Palju ja lautta (Satamatie, Lappeenranta)	8
2.1.4	Säräpirtti Kippurasarvi, Säräpirtti Ky (Rantatie1, Lemi) ..	9
2.1.5	Taiga Saimaa	9
2.2	General information about the entrepreneurs and their companies involved in the research	10
2.3	Opportunities, challenges and development needs for remotely located Businesses	11
2.4	Experience of improvement of qualification related to business development.....	12
2.5	Current learning needs for entrepreneurs	14
2.6	Cooperation and exchange of knowledge between enterprises.....	15
2.7	Conclusions	17
3	SWEDEN.....	18
3.1	Description of small businesses involved in the research ...	18
3.1.1	YumYum Thai (Bangatan 10, Örkelljunga)	18
3.1.2	Strandhem Mission House (Smålandsvägen 48 Örkelljunga)	19
3.1.3	EFS-Åsljunga Garden (Ånhultsvägen 31, Åsljunga).....	20
3.1.4	Turkish Pizza House (Hallandsvägen 13, Örkelljunga)	21
3.2	General information about the entrepreneurs and their companies involved in the research	22
3.3	Opportunities, challenges and development needs for remotely located Businesses	23
3.4	Experience of improvement of qualification related to business development.....	23
3.5	Current learning needs for entrepreneurs	25
3.6	Cooperation and exchange of knowledge between enterprises.....	25
3.7	Conclusions	26
4	ESTONIA.....	28



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4.1	Description of small businesses involved in the research ...	28
4.1.1	Kopra Farm / Kopra Turismitalu (Tuhalaane küla, Mulgi vald, Viljandi county).....	28
4.1.2	Matkamees OÜ (Operates in lake Võrtsjärv, Oiu port, saildhips)	29
4.1.3	Männiku Forest Farm (Intsu küla, Viljandi vald, Viljandi maakond).....	31
4.1.4	Mulgi Savikoda / Mulgi Pottery House (Hendrikumõisa, Viljandimaa).....	32
4.1.5	Wildest OÜ, www.wildest.ee, operates on South-Estonia forests, rivers and lakes.....	33
4.2	General information about the entrepreneurs and their companies involved in the research.....	34
4.3	Opportunities, challenges and development needs for remotely located businesses.....	35
4.4	Experience of improvement of qualification related to business development.....	36
4.5	Current learning needs for entrepreneurs	37
4.6	Cooperation and exchange of knowledge between enterprises.....	38
5	LITHUANIA.....	40
5.1	Description of small businesses involved in the research ...	40
5.1.1	SPA Levanda (Padvarių village, Kretinga district)	40
5.1.2	Bakery-Cafe "Gardumėlis" (Nida, Neringa municipality)	41
5.1.3	"Marių laivai" (Nida, Neringa municipality)	43
5.1.4	Česlovo vynos" (Virkytų village 1, Šilutė district)	44
5.1.5	Holiday home "Naujoji gelmė" (Preila, Municipality of Neringa).....	45
5.2	General information about the entrepreneurs and their companies involved in the research.....	46
5.3	Opportunities, challenges and development needs for remotely located businesses.....	47
5.4	Experience of improvement of qualification related to business development.....	48
5.5	Current learning needs for entrepreneurs	51



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VALSTYBINĖ
KOLEGIJA



Loodi



5.6	Cooperation and exchange of knowledge between enterprises.....	52
5.7	Conclusions	54
6	Overall Conclusions	55
7	Applicability	57
	Sources.....	58



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1 Introduction

This report aims to conclude the findings from Nordic-Baltic Tourism Learning – Nordtourney-2 -project. The project is led by Education, Research & Consultancy Center from Klaipėda, Lithuania. The other participants are from Sweden, Estonia and Finland.

The aim of the qualitative research was to map out the challenges of tourism business development and entrepreneurship training, especially in remote border regions. In addition, the research investigated the current areas of improvement in both co-operation between small businesses and the entrepreneurs' desires from trainings held in these areas.

In total, 19 participants from the four countries gave their views about the subject. They were individually interviewed by the corresponding partner in their own country. Their answers were collected and written down to forms. Once all entrepreneurs were interviewed in a specific country, the partner gathered all the findings in a single document. This report has combined those findings in to one easy to read format.

More information about the partners and the project are available on www.nordtourney.com.

2 FINLAND

The participants of the qualitative research were 5 small enterprises from South Karelia area in Finland which operate in remote areas and provide various services and products for tourists from Finland and abroad.

2.1 Description of small businesses involved in the research

2.1.1 Pulsan Asema Oy (Pulsan Asema tie 21, Pulsa)

Business activity: since 2015.

Legal status: Limited company.

Activities: Bed & breakfast services, Café, Gift shop.

Employees: The restaurant is a family business and employs 2 people fulltime and has 2-4 seasonal workers.



History. CEO Petra Karjalainen is originally from Switzerland and has been living in Finland the past twenty or so years. She is married to Lasse Karjalainen who was born in Pulsa, Lappeenranta, Finland. When the family moved back from Switzerland to Finland, they settled down to Pulsa which is located 30 kilometres from downtown Lappeenranta. In their own words it is “in middle of nowhere”.

Once the Pulsa’s former train station was being to offer, the family brought to in hopes to save it from rapture. Soon after Petra started planning a business idea which would involve a Boutique, a Café and B&B. Lasse helped her as a business consultant.

Target group. Their target group consist mostly from middle aged tourists from Finland and Central Europe, who appreciate authentic and traditional way of living as well as culture and peacefulness of the area.

2.1.2 Saimaa Travel Oy (Ratakatu 23, Lappeenranta)

Business activity: since 1996.

Legal status: Limited Company.

Activities: Single day cruises to Russia from Lappeenranta, visa and traveling agency services.

Employees: The company employs 9 people on full-time and 17 summer time workers.



History. Once the Soviet Union collapsed it opened new markets to Russia. At the same time company called Saimaa Lines ended their operation in the area. This sparked the idea and Saimaa Travel begin to offer cruises to Vyborg through Saimaa canal.

Target group. Their main target group consists of Finnish and European consumers and tourists. They also provide services to international travel agents and to companies which are looking for business trips to Russia and/or trips to enhance well-being at work to their employees.

2.1.3 Saimaan Palju ja aktiviteetit sole trader and Saimaan Palju ja lautta (Salamatie, Lappeenranta)



Business activity: since 2015.

Legal status: Sole trader.

Activities: Saimaan Palju ja aktiviteetit offers its customers activities from relaxing nature treks to exiting paintball matches. Saimaan Palju ja lautta offers floating sauna cruises in lake of Saimaa.

Employees: They employ one fulltime worker and one-part time worker.

History. The idea got its roots from entrepreneur's own interests in different outdoor activities and group events. Also, in his own words he wished to find a work which would be fun and enjoyable to do.

Target group. For the Saimaan Palju ja aktiviteetit the target group is local households as well as domestic and foreign tourists. Saimaan Palju is focussed on companies, bachelor/hen parties and foreign tourist groups.

2.1.4 Säräpirtti Kippurasarvi, Säräpirtti Ky (Rantatie 1, Lemi)

Business activity: since 1978.

Legal status: Limited partnership.

Activities: restaurant.

Employees: 5 people full-time
employed, 3 part-time workers.



History. A competition named “Seven Finnish wonders” was held in 1972, where Lemi’s Särä was chosen as one of the wonders, being the only food dish to hold the title. This spiked up the demand and the municipality of Lemi began to seek a restaurant that would serve the dish. The current owner’s parents found a sole trader business named Korpikoulun Säräpirtti ja kotileipomo. The business was originally located in Pöllölä’s old elementary school building which the previous owners bought. In 1988 the business moved to new building near the downtown of Lemi.

Target group. There are three equal groups: private consumers, group customers and businesses. During the summer tourists are the main focus, whereas Christmas time has a lot more Christmas parties. Groups tend to be between May and August and lastly the people travelling to see the theatre come and go during the whole year.

2.1.5 Taiga Saimaa (operating in lake Saimaa)

Business activity: since 2017 (planning of business took 2 to 3 years).

Legal status: Limited company.

Activities: Outdoor activities.

Employees: 3 people.

History. The founder's dream was to be able to work in the nature with congenial people. The work that would be more than "just a work", it would be a way of living.

Target group. People who enjoy nature and hiking and especially tourist from Central Europe who enjoy the clean nature. Also many Russian tourists who are interested in fishing in Saimaa.



2.2 General information about the entrepreneurs and their companies involved in the research

The average age of the respondents (3 men and 2 women) was 49 years. Their positions included: the founder/owner, CEO and customer manager. The qualifications and level of the respondents vastly varied: a physical education, a bachelor of business, a restaurant supervisor, a bachelor in liberal arts and a Diploma in Engineering.

3 out of 5 did work (partly or completely) in an area suitable for their acquired qualification. However, the other 2 of the group were "learning by doing" and experience. This was mostly due the fact they had interest to the subject in their personal life. 3 businesses were

family businesses that have been operating for many years. All but one entrepreneur had a clear strategy for their businesses, but they also face difficulties:

- basics of running a business (as a new entrepreneur)
- marketing in general (as a new entrepreneur)
- Initial funding was limited
- Competition (as a single product business)
- Availability of the single ingredient
- Some locations were out of reach for many potential customers
- Russian bureaucracy
- A somewhat positive problem was the overwhelming amount of customers
- Finding seasonal workers for the holidays and weekends

All the surveyed companies belong to organizations or networks related with entrepreneurs. All companies were part of the Federation of Finnish Enterprises in some shape or form.

The responses regarding the qualification of business was positive. The response was that all of them had participated in extra training and 4 out of 5 respondents had done so within a year.

2.3 Opportunities, challenges and development needs for remotely located Businesses

- Opportunities. Globalization and the appreciation for the beauty of Finnish nature had help many of the companies. The exotic locations and the tradition culture and architecture has unique appeal to many tourists. Also the location near the St. Pietersburg brings many foreign tourists. Some of the businesses don't have much if at all competition at their field.
- Challenges. Some businesses rely on seasonal traffic and they are aiming to find a way to increase to operation to cover the full year. Location was seen as a double-edged sword as many

businesses were located in remoted areas with poor connections. One respondent even mentioned that their headquarters are located on an island which makes it quite impossible to passer-by to occur. The financial support from the smaller municipalities were limited. The bureaucracy concerning the cruises to Russia had been troubling and unpredictable.

- Development. The new entrepreneurs wished to learn more the practicalities involving running a business which involved anything from finances to maintenance with the boats and property. In addition, productization, service packaging, pricing, customer acquisition were hot topics. One respondent told that getting more qualifications in the restaurant fields would benefit the business and improve the service. But in all cases marketing and particularly the digital marketing raised the most interest to develop in. As all of the companies seek also international customers the marketing and customer services wished to be multilingual someday. One respondent told that he had interest in connecting more with the local companies to improve customer acquisition. The answer to the question “Is there a need to upgrade your business development skills?” varied between 1 and 5 depending on the age (as an entrepreneur) and the background of the respondent. Mainly the newer ones tend to find need to improve whereas the ones going through generation switch in the company find the need to develop not as important.

2.4 Experience of improvement of qualification related to business development

The entrepreneurs were asked how familiar they were with the possibility of educational and training services in the region and they answered that they were very familiar with the educational services (the score on the five-point scale is 4.2). The entrepreneurs rated the availability of educational services in the region as 4.0 on the five-point scale.



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Taiga Saimaa Oy had participated in training during the last year. The training was provided by the municipality. Those trainings included productization, marketing, event hosting and the laws concerning the package trips. He has found the trainings quite helpful as those inspire him to innovative and improve his concept. Attending also helps to connect with local entrepreneurs. Trainings have some cons too, as they are usually short, and the content is quite basic and not target to his specific field. Taiga Saimaa Oy has taken inspiration from the trainings and for example has inspired to open the digital marketing platform. Lastly, he wished to attend the trainings held in Helsinki area but those area quite expensive and are conducted in such manner that it is hard to attend from out of town.

Säräpirtti Ky has good background with high level education and warm relations to university which provides some training. Federation of Finnish Enterprises and Go Saimaa also provide one day trainings and seminars. He has attended multiple times to these events during the last year. The last two topics discussed involved around stakeholder groups and the 5-year plan. Everything thought (even outside his business field) has been helpful in someway and has opened his eyes to different types of problems before facing them himself. Only major problem has been the timetables of these trainings. He lists implementation of accounting and POS systems as practical examples which have saved a lot of hours and money thanks to the training.

Saimaa Travel Oy has partaken trainings hosted by public institutions and non-government organizations. Subjects have included the following: Personal register Legal Training, GDPR and training on travel service combinations. Both the entrepreneur and the office manager have attended these training and have found them helpful. The helpfulness shines as they arise the awareness in juridical issues and show clear legal boundaries. This knowledge has been implemented to the business practices.

Pulsan Asema Oy was the only one which has not partaken in training during the last year but they have taken in the past (in the last 3 to 5 years). Yet they still grade the availability and their own knowledge of the services at 5. Their own training has been provided by public institution. The entrepreneur had studied the interior designer diploma and found it helpful as it prepared her to understand scale of the projects and such. Also it was a big help while choosing the selection of the products.

Saimaan Palju ja aktiviteetit ranked the availability of the trainings highly and has taken part in trainings hosted by Federation of Finnish Enterprises and local NGOs. Topics where the following: travel service combinations and travel marketing. Most of them were helpful expect the international travel marketing which had some parts of the training missing due internal issues. A lot of then thing he has learned are not used in day-to-day basis but are “good to know just in case”.

The respondents overall were quite satisfied on the training opportunities and have found them helpful. Biggest issues where the trainings which where too broad and basic. Most responded wished for more focused training to their specific field and with more forgiving timetables.

2.5 Current learning needs for entrepreneurs

- Marketing communications (both national and international)
- Finance
- Leadership skills (self-improvement and staff managing)
- The use off social media platforms in marketing
- Networking and interaction skills
- Russian language skills as well as other languages
- Digitalisation
- Sustainable tourism

Specific job-related skills

- Catering and baking skills
- Construction and property maintenance
- Saimaa's Geopark intelligence and the geological effects from ice age

Most entrepreneurs said they wanted to attend training in small – medium sized groups mainly at evening time. Some said that daytime would suit them the best. The time scale and duration were varied from 1 day – 1 month but most were willing to commit to longer courses. Also individual online studying would be well received. All respondents wished to be contacted via internet or by email.

2.6 Cooperation and exchange of knowledge between enterprises

Almost all surveyed companies did cooperate with other companies or institutions in their region or other cities/towns. The cooperation between enterprises was rated by the entrepreneurs was 4.3 on the five-point scale.

Taiga Saimaa Oy is part of group enterprise project with the local Go Saimaa organization and the national Visit Finland. Taiga Saimaa Oy sees the benefits of working together as they share the same vision. They wished to receive more support in project support funding, business consulting and networking with other local businesses. Entrepreneur events which would involve workshops supervised by specialist would encourage them to seek more training.

Säräpirtti Ky finds it limiting to co-operate in their secluded area but are working hard with the business located in neighbouring cities. Their local taxi company transports the customers in and from their business. More co-operation would be beneficial and could involve more package trips with event organizers where Säräpirtti Ky could provide the catering services. Most support is needed in finding new marketing channels and improving sales. South Karelian

entrepreneurs' KarjaLove project has been very helpful to them as well.

Pulsan Asema Oy does co-operations with Go Saimaa but feels that they are not fully benefitting from it as Go Saimaa uses a lot of its' resources to promote local area to markets in Russia and China. Pulsan Asema Oy does not see need to do any more cooperation with other business other than networking more in casual way, such as trips and get-togethers.

Saimaan Palju ja aktiviteetit is very active and wishes to stay that way. It is necessary to work with other service providers as the small size of the business limits the capacity of the operation. They are currently under staffed and wish to receive financial support to hire more employees. Go Saimaa and Visit Finland are important partner as they provide a lot of contacts and marketing. Currently the respondent is improving their selection and searching to find trainings involving tourism and travelling.

Saimaa Travel Oy is also partnering with Go Saimaa and Visit Finland and states that without them their visibility outside Finland would be miniscule. Respondent wishes to work with other local companies to create more travelling packages. Group marketing (international and online) would also be beneficial to all parties involved. Saimaa Travel Oy is taken part in KarjaLove project.

All respondents were working already with at least one other business or organization. They saw the potential in cooperation and the partnering had been beneficial to everyone. Go Saimaa and Visit Finland were the main partners to most respondents.

2.7 Conclusions

- All of the respondents do work in an area relevant to their business.



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- Every respondent has partaken in training in some time these past 5 years and most of them this past year.
- 80% see the benefit to seek and participate in complementary training in the current state of their business.
- All entrepreneurs would be interested in attending a training locally.
- All respondents wish to receive training in small – medium groups with addition of online self-study material.
- Go Saimaa and Visit Finland were the most commonly named partners.
- Most wanted trainings involved marketing, packaging services and digitalization.
- Every respondent is mostly satisfied with the current selection of training opportunities but wishes more personal approach to their specific area of business.
- Most, if not all, of the business are stand-alone business with little to no competition.
- Russian tourists play a role in 60% of the businesses' audience following China and Central Europe.
- The niche of all respondents is the beauty and peacefulness of Finnish nature.

3 SWEDEN

The participants of the qualitative research were four small enterprises from Southern Sweden which operate in remote areas and provide various services and products for tourists from Sweden and abroad.

3.1 Description of small businesses involved in the research

3.1.1 YumYum Thai Örkelljunga (Bangatan 10, Örkelljunga)

Business activity: since 2017.

Legal status: Private Limited Company.

Activities: Thai food buffet and takeaway service.

Employees: 4 people.



History. The owner of the company was the respondent, Benny Tam. The restaurant is a family business and employs 4 people; waitresses, front of house and also chefs. The employees have remained the same since the business opened January 2017 years ago. He moved to Sweden in 1980s and opening the restaurant was a natural transition for him.

Target group. Their target group is tourists and local people who want to enjoy and experience traditional Thai food. They are the only international restaurant in Örkelljunga.

3.1.2 Strandhem Mission House (Smålandsvägen 48, Örkelljunga)

Business activity: since 2002.

Legal status: Non-Governmental Organisation.

Activities: Bible School, food catering, hotel, camping site, weddings, funerals, parties.

Employees: approximately 10 people on a part-time, full-time and temporary basis.



History. The mission house Strandhem is a Christian facility that was operating for a number of years but was officially registered 2002-10-03. It is located just outside of Örkelljunga. The surrounding area near to Hjälmjön with possibilities for swimming, boating, canoeing, sauna, fishing and many other activities. Strandhem has a broad business area: children's camp, congress camps, youth camps, Bible & Teachers school, theme days, hostels, conferences and much more.

Target group. The main target group of Strandhem is Bible students and then international volunteers/students taking internships in the local NGOs. Also, young families come to enjoy the touristic parts of the business. The new hostels and rooms were built in 2015 with the plan of attracting more people to the area and also allowing students who have previously graduated, and often meet their husband or wife while studying, the chance to come back and visit with children and other family members. The company, profitable side of the mission house, was registered in 2002.

3.1.3 EFS-Åsljunga Garden (Anhultsvägen 31, Åsljunga)

Business activity: since 1932.

Legal status: Non-Governmental Organisation.

Activities: Camps for children, confirmation candidates and young adults, theme parties such as Bible days, parish weekend and training for parish leaders. The farm also opens up for a large flea market of arts and crafts, gala dinner, Christmas market, Christmas table and Christmas celebrations.

Employees: approximately 5 people on a part time, full-time and temporary basis.



History. This is an ancient farm that was built in 1932 and is today a modern and flexible facility, ideal for courses, conferences, camps and parties of different character in a relaxing and homely atmosphere. EFS Farm Åsljunga is owned by a farm association and the EFS in

southern Sweden. EFS is an independent organization within the Church of Sweden with emphasis on mission, ideal resources and everyday Christianity.

Target group. The meeting place's target group is people of all ages.

3.1.4 Turkish Pizza House (Hallandsvägen 13, Örkelljunga)

Business activity: since 2016.

Legal status: Private Limited Company.

Activities: International Food – Restaurants and Takeaway.

Employees: 4 people.



History. This respondent is a migrant entrepreneur that owns two restaurants offering local people and tourists international food. He came to Örkelljunga in 2008 and is originally from Turkey. He is the manager of both restaurants.

Target group. Families and young people.

3.2 General information about the entrepreneurs and their companies involved in the research

The average age of the respondent was 48 years old. 3 males and 1 female participated. Their position was mostly the chairman or owner. The qualifications and level of the respondents varied: Theology and religious studies, business studies, standard high school education and teaching backgrounds.

Half of the group did work (partly or completely) in an area suitable for their acquired qualification. However, the other half of the group were “learning by doing” and experience. Half of the respondent were family businesses that have been operating for just 1 or 2 years. All entrepreneurs have a clear strategy for their businesses, but they also face difficulties:

- Initial funding was limited.
- Lack of knowledge and training on the business “behind the scenes” - Communication in a language different from their mother tongue. - Seasonal problems; lack of customers in the colder months.
- Hostility, misunderstanding of the local community, racism.

None of the surveyed companies belong to any organizations or networks related with entrepreneurs.

The responses regarding the qualification of business was varied. The response was overall “open minded to learning to something new” but “time is money” and taking time out of their businesses, especially those started newly was not something they were willing to do.

3.3 Opportunities, challenges and development needs for remotely located Businesses

- Opportunities. With previous experience it wasn't difficult to start the business in Sweden. With the knowledge of the Swedish financial system and relevant procedures needed to open and run their business it was an easy process. There is little to no competition on Örkelljunga.
- Challenges. The main difficulties that respondent 1 mentioned was changing the opinion of the local people. Some of the businesses had a poor reputation previously because of previous owners. They also needed to change the Swedish people's opinions that their business is better than a large corporate brand. For the two businesses that were led by migrant background owners it was very difficult to communicate at the beginning and there were always possibilities for misunderstanding. Also, making people from outside the area aware they exist. They have not participated in any training in the last 3-5 years.
- Development. Most of the respondents were happy with the skills they currently have and the way their business is processing and succeeding. Most of the business does have a clear strategy; in Strandhem's case for example they want to continue hosting students for the foreseeable future and also to host larger groups and fill the rooms for most of the financial year.

3.4 Experience of improvement of qualification related to business development

The entrepreneurs were asked how familiar they were with the possibility of educational and training services in the region and they answered that they were completely unaware of it. (the score on the five-point scale is 1.5). The entrepreneurs rated the availability of educational services in the region as 1.7 on the five-point scale.



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Strandhem Mission House's staff receive training and education in the bible school side of the business but there is no business education for them. Tomas Nillson, the manager, attends board meetings and development meetings on how to manage and run Strandhem but for the most part these decisions are beyond his control and not his decision.

Yum Yum and Turkish Pizza House are not interested in attending any long-term training at this current time due to their businesses being newly started and they declared they need to spend as much time as possible working rather than training. Yum Yum did indicate they would be interested in attending some training if it was done on an intensive basis.

EFS-Åsljunga Garden is currently not involved in any training and is completely unaware of any training available in the local and surrounding areas. She did declare that she is sure there are some business-related courses in Lund or the larger cities but indicated they "aren't directed at me and are for younger people and start-up (...) also if you have a lot of time on your hands or want a business degree but that takes 4 years.

The respondent on the whole were open minded for training opportunities but explained that in the surrounding areas of Örkelljunga there are no courses relevant to them that can also fit into their schedules and timeframes. It would be most convenient to have the training in Örkelljunga and the trainer travel to them to meet in a local meeting place.

3.5 Current learning needs for entrepreneurs

- Better integration into the Swedish society because they have no intention of leaving Sweden and no intention of depending on social services.
- Foreign language courses (English and Swedish).
- Intensive language training and social and cultural codes training.
- Rules of conduct in the labour market.
- Capacity building, and general business development, services for start-ups and existing businesses.
- Risk Management.
- Problem Solving.
- Accessing EU funds and EU workers/volunteers.

Specific job-related skills:

- Transporting overseas goods
- Catering
- Food hygiene
- Interpersonal Communication (oral & written).

All entrepreneurs said they wanted to attend training in small – medium sized groups. The time scale and duration were varied from 1 day – 1 month.

3.6 Cooperation and exchange of knowledge between enterprises

Almost all surveyed companies did not cooperate with other companies or institutions in their region or other cities/towns. The cooperation between enterprises was rated by the entrepreneurs 2 on the five-point scale. Although they recognized the positives of cooperation, they currently were not.



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Strandhem is collaborating and working with several NGOs and sporting companies including; IFALL, Örkelljunga Volleyball, FC Örkelljunga, Hello Youth and other religious groups in the local area and is able to book the whole of the area for weeks on end with the cooperation. They are able to book well in advance due to limited competition and the cooperation really supports their business. They have repeat consumers during the sporting season and times within the religious calendar.

All respondents emphasized the importance of cooperation with other companies in the same or surrounding area. The YUM YUM Thai owners and Pizza House didn't see any cooperation opportunities in the near future but didn't mention the possibility of finding international cuisine supermarkets.

EFS- Åsljunga Garden would like to cooperate more with other local companies and business to host meetings and conferences. This would help them to fill the campus during times of low season.

3.7 Conclusions

- 50% of the respondents do work in an area relevant to their business.
- None of the respondents take part in training in the local or surrounding areas relevant to their field of work.
- 75% have a "learning by doing" approach to their businesses.
- All entrepreneurs would be interested in attending a training locally if they trainer/training came to them.
- All respondents wish to receive training in small – medium groups of no more than 12 people.
- Most, if not all, of the business are stand-alone business with little to no competition.
- 50% of the respondents were from an immigrant background and faced issues very different from their Swedish peers; racism, lack of integration, hostility and rejection.



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- 1 of the respondents found his business as a life saver “Securing our lives and our families, here and back home, it is a war zone, and also for a better life style”.
- The respondents had a mixed response on the delivery method of the training; some wanted formal seminar type approaches where other preferred non-formal creative methods.

4 ESTONIA

The participants of the qualitative research were five small enterprises from South-Estonia, which operate in remote areas and provide various services and products for tourists from Estonia and abroad.

4.1 Description of small businesses involved in the research

4.1.1 Kopra Farm/Kopra Turismitalu (Tuhalaane küla, Mulgi vald, Viljandi county)

Business activity: since 2000.

Legal status: Private limited company (LLC).

Activities: Accommodation, catering and other tourism services. Seminars, conferences, weddings, celebrations.



Employees: Kopra Farm employs 7 people. Two owners have been working there since the foundation of the company. Other helpers have been there 5-10 years. The company has been growing steadily for the past 18 years and the need for employees has been growing because of the expansion of business.



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History. The current owners had an idea to establish rural tourism farm. One of the owners had some experience of working in such guesthouse in Sweden and wanted to do something similar in Estonia. The land for the farm belonged to her family and they still have a home there, but the enterprise is not homestead, it is built entirely on new spot so the guests can feel free and do not disturb the family living there. Also the Estonian State gave some support for founding businesses in remote areas back in the beginning of 2000 and the owners obtained the funding and had some resources of their own to start the business. In high season (summertime) Kopra Farm can house up to 180 people at the same time in wintertime they have 130 beds ready. 4 buildings, 2 types of saunas, swimming area, kids playground, sports facilities. They have been expanding and adding different facilities to cater to the needs of clients constantly.

Target group. Big events – accommodation and other services (seminar, food, recreation, business groups) for 100 people in wintertime, 200 in summertime. For bigger events also camping is option. There are covered (roof) open air stage/seminar/party area in addition for the 4 houses that also has seminar areas. The maximum amount of people has been groups and events up to 1000 people.

4.1.2 Matkamees OÜ (Operates in lake Võrtsjärv, Oiu port, saildhips)

Business activity: since 2003.

Legal status: Private limited company (LLC).

Activities: Lake cruises, gourmet cruises and accommodation on historic yacht MS Victoria.

Employees: 2 people – the owner and his partner.



History. The owner has been involved with lakes, rivers, nature reserves and nature tourism for last 15 years. This particular business idea of cruises is only 1 year old. Before that he reconstructed and developed a small port for small yachts and fishing boats by the lake Võrtsjärv (the second biggest lake in Estonia) including diner/restaurant area and guesthouse for accommodation. At the moment this port is his property but is rented out and operated by other people.

Target group. Basically the busy season is 3 months (June, July, August). The customers are people on vacation, tourists, business meetings, parties and celebrations. The group for cruise on lake can be up to 14 people. The gourmet food is available, also accommodation on yacht (for 2-6 people), romantic cruises for couples.

Since the business concept is new, it is still in the time-frame of introducing this new opportunity for customers and tourism info centres, websites and so on.

4.1.3 Männiku Forest Farm (Intsu küla, Viljandi vald, Viljandi maakond)

Business activity: since 2000.

Legal status: Private limited company (LLC).

Activities: Tourism, accommodation for groups, seminars, parties, celebrations, weddings.



Employees: Männiku Forest Farm employs 3 people, in peak season or big events up to 10 people. The owner and 2 closest all-year helpers have been with the company since the beginning. Staff turnover is low. During the season, the same employees come back.

History. The current owner inherited an old farm in the woods where neighbours are not close by. The farm is in a beautiful natural location 10 km outside of Viljandi (17 000 people live in Viljandi). At the same time she was in the school and had to write a school task – business project. She used the idea of establishing a tourism farm in the inherited land and old farm. When the project in school were finalized she realized that it was not a bad idea. Also the opportunity to apply for a business start-up funding were open so she applied and got the funding and the first building got renovated and were ready for guests. At the moment the farm has two cosy holiday houses which can be connected if requested. There is a unique suite and a double-suite in historical log houses and in summer there is possibility to camp. There is also separate building for seminars and parties with big hall, dining area, sauna, small lake and outdoor resting areas.

Target group. Business is busy and sold out most of the year and reserved months ahead. The customers are Estonians and also groups and guests from other countries. The unbeatable forest setting

offers plenty of ways to enjoy holidays, parties, meetings, summer or winter retreats and more. The food is popular with everyone, as they offer high-quality meals using locally sourced ingredients. The interior design stems from Estonian national handicraft and is very welcoming and cosy.

4.1.4 Mulgi Savikoda/Mulgi Pottery House (Hendrikumõisa, Viljandimaa)

Business activity: since 2015.

Legal status: Individual enterprise, non-profit association.

Activities: Handmade pottery, workshops, master classes in making of pottery.

Employees: Staff is 1 person – the owner. Also 1 other pottery professional is sharing the business space.



History. The business was set up mainly to make a living in remote area of South-Estonia. The owner has been doing pottery over 10 years but completed official studies to obtain professional certificate in 2014 and looked for the opportunity to set up her own business. She found the perfect spot in Loodi village – former corner-shop that had been empty for several years. It is situated right by one of the main

roads, 10km from Viljandi town and has a big parking space by the building so it is easily accessible even with big tourist buses. It is also highly visible from road and very welcoming. There are one other lady doing pottery there so they are sharing space and equipment. They have a habit to keep the front door open and have a sign “If the door is open, come and look inside”. It is very welcoming and they have a lot of random visitors passing every day. Usually hand-made pottery is also something that you take to fairs and other outdoor markets but this pottery house is so busy, that they have given it up and do not go anywhere anymore since the customers find them anyway.

Target group. Individuals that want to try out how to make their own bowl or cup. Groups of friends, associates, students can have a crafting class. Also people with special needs can use the pottery crafting as a therapy session. School classes or groups of children can have a pottery classes.

There are no competitors of such field close by. The closest same kind of pottery house is 35km away and has a different business concept.

4.1.5 Wildest OÜ, www.wildest.ee, operates on South-Estonia forests, rivers and lakes



Business activity: since 2012.

Legal status: Private limited company (LLC).



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Activities: Personalized hunting tours to pristine wilderness of Estonia.

Employees: Staff is 1 person – the owner.

History. A friend recommended that this kind of business would be interesting and suitable to some people. So that is how it started. The owner is a fishing and hunting expert and a man of nature and knows everything about hunting wild animal and fishing in all seasons. He can organize all kind of hunting trips for adventurous hunters.

Target group. Small groups and individuals who are interested of hunting.

4.2 General information about the entrepreneurs and their companies involved in the research

3 women and 2 men took part in the survey. They were all the owners of their companies. The average age of entrepreneurs participating in the qualitative research is 49,8 years. Four out of five respondents had a higher education and 1 of them is attending vocational school at the moment. Everybody has had the vocational training needed for their business. For example, the owner of Wildest OÜ has all the shooting permits and a weapons permit needed; owner of Matkamees OÜ has the ship manager's papers to be able to sail the yacht; Mulgi Pottery House owner graduated vocational school in pottery making; the owner of Männiku Forest Farm is trained in vocational school of cooking and handicraft; owner of Kopra Farm has had the training in business economy.

Most entrepreneurs do work (partly or completely) according to the acquired qualification.

The difficulties lie in all other areas then their direct profession:

- Better accounting skills are needed.
- Better knowledge of the laws that apply to their business.

- Better marketing skills are needed, also better visibility in internet and web-based marketing.
- Better knowledge of foreign languages.
- Sometimes it is hard to find staff just for the short season or individual events.
- There is need to know better the market for similar services in adjoining countries (Latvia, Finland, Russia, Sweden, Germany).

The need to upgrade the business development skills were rated average 3 on the scale of 5.

Kopra Farm, Männiku Forest Farm and Matkamees are members of non-profit organisation Estonian Rural Tourism. It's objective is to represent the common interests of rural tourism service providers in order to support the development of countryside tourism in Estonia.

Accommodation providers who have joined the organisation count for 45% of the total number of Estonian countryside accommodation providers.

4.3 Opportunities, challenges and development needs for remotely located businesses

All respondents said that there is no competition in their region, mainly because every business has its own individuality, some kind of distinction, and also because only they provide a particular service/product in the neighbourhood area.

Kopra Farm is the only accommodation business in Viljandi county who can take big groups of people over 100. Mulgi Pottery House has unique hands on policy, so everybody can go and try the craft and they do not have to make the appointment in ahead (appointment is needed with groups over 10 persons). Männiku Forest Farm has original interior that stems from national handicraft and they offer wholesome Estonian food that are made by the owners original recipes. In the lake



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Võrtsjärv there are no other entertainment yachts and hunting with Wildest OÜ is always very personalized experience.

All companies have a clear strategy, a vision of development or just a wish to maintain the current level.

The common feature of all the businesses involved in the research is that the owners perform many functions. They are both managers and sellers, often accountants and development managers, as well as the ones having knowledge of marketing and being aware of the process of producing/supplying their own products/ services, i.e. they are not only managers, but also good specialists in their field.

4.4 Experience of improvement of qualification related to business development

The entrepreneurs were asked how familiar they were with the possibility of educational and training services in their region and they answered that they were completely aware of them or in one case only partially familiar with them. The score on the five-point scale is 3,8 – two companies answered 5, two answered 4 and one answered 1. The entrepreneurs rated the availability of educational services in the region as 4 on the five-point scale.

Estonia is divided into sections or action groups of the Leader-program that cover all of Estonia. Every action group has 3-5 people working on the program to help the local businesses to acquire funds from EU or national programs, to hold seminars and training courses to assist local small entrepreneurs. They also organize meetings and study trips to gather entrepreneurs who are working in the same area or same field of business to exchange the knowledge and experience.

Most of the businesses said that they receive plenty invitations to courses, training days, seminars and study trips. Mostly they are free of charge since the Leader-group or some government organization is funding the events. 3 out of 5 business-owners said that in the last

year they participated at least 3 times in a training. Usually there are also transportation and dinner or some catering involved when it is all-day event, sometimes the trainings are 2-days with accommodation that is also free of charge for participants. The business owners were pleased with the training opportunities and said that it is also important that you meet and get to know other entrepreneurs in those meetings.

The most memorable and useful teaching methods listed by respondents are:

- Hands on experiences, practical assignments.
- Study trips or visiting other businesses for new ideas.
- Group work is more interesting than listening to lecturer.
- Interactive training.
- If the teaching method leaves you with a pleasant experience, then you remember it later.
- Role-play in learning.

The interest to participate in the trainings is to widen the net of familiar business owners, to open up the possibilities for co-operation, to get the reassurance that you do everything correctly or that you are in the right track of business, to exchange knowledge and experience.

4.5 Current learning needs for entrepreneurs

The entrepreneurs mostly need training on:

- marketing, advertising on-line and how to attract a customer.
- Product development.
- Managing the accounting and overall management.
- Training on personal development and psychology (improving communication skills, self-motivation, discipline, time management).
- Improving the quality of services.
- Foreign business language courses (English, German, Russian).

Need for specific training:

- Gourmet food preparing.
- Special skills in ceramics and pottery.
- How to use special materials, tools and skills in pottery.
- Sailing and hunting permits that need to be upgraded in certain time.

The needs in terms of time and duration of the training for the surveyed entrepreneurs were quite similar. Mostly one-day or two-day courses were preferred because it will give the necessary time to get deep down on the topic and it is time-efficient.

All entrepreneurs said that the best way to receive information about training is by e-mail.

4.6 Cooperation and exchange of knowledge between enterprises

Almost all surveyed companies cooperate with other companies and institutions in their region or other counties. The cooperation between enterprises was rated by the entrepreneurs as 4.5 on the five-point scale.

Ways of cooperation:

- Share customers – offer services of other companies. For example the people stay in Männiku Forest Farm and attend a pottery class in Mulgi Savikoda or go hiking in nature trail.
- If the customer asks for a reservation but the calendar is full, then recommend somebody else near by.
- Distribute information about their service or product in companies and institutions that work with tourist flows. Get their company information up to the websites that are mostly visited by foreign tourists like visitestonia.com or Estonian Rural Tourism website maaturism.ee.



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All respondents emphasized the importance of cooperation with other companies in the same or surrounding area.

5 LITHUANIA

The participants of the qualitative research were five small enterprises from Western Lithuania, which operate in remote areas and provide various services and products for tourists from Lithuania and abroad.

5.1 Description of small businesses involved in the research

5.1.1 SPA Levanda (Padvarių village, Kretinga district)

Business activity: since 2008.

Legal status: Individual activity under a certificate. Activities under a certificate:

- Hairdressing and other beauty salon activity
- Physical well-being activity (the main activity of SPA Levanda since 2011)
- Other retail sale of food in specialised stores
- Retail sale of cosmetic and toiletries in specialized stores





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Employees: SPA Levanda employs 9 people. The age range of employees working with clients is from 24 to 46 years. There is no staff turnover in the company. Two employees have been working since the foundation of the company. One of the employees has left for Switzerland, but constantly comes back and cooperates with the former colleagues. The number of employees is growing. New employees usually remain for a long time.

History. The current owners had a land plot and decided to take a bank loan in order to build a sauna and establish a rural tourism homestead. Later they changed their mind, as it turned out that their rural tourism homestead with a sauna was in an inappropriate location - the guests of the sauna could make noise and disturb the neighbours.

Then the owners changed the project. The new idea involved a sauna with beauty services and spa treatments. The specialist of SPA program helped to create first treatment programs. At first, just a few programs were offered, and later the founders and employees of SPA Levanda themselves began to develop new treatment programs. The clients wrote their reviews in a special book. The feedback from clients was very good. So far, the business has been successful.

Target group. The residents of Kretinga and Klaipėda, more likely women, especially couples, families, youth from the age of 18 and under 30, emigrants, foreigners, retired 1 people are less common clients. Regular clients account for 50 per cent. The most popular treatment is "A Moment for Two". There are no competitors for this business.

5.1.2 Bakery-Cafe "Gardumėlis" (Nida, Neringa municipality)

Business activity: since 2003.

Legal status: Individual enterprise of Irutė Bagdonienė. Activity according to the classification of economic activities: manufacture of bread, manufacture of fresh pastry goods and cakes (NACE 107100).

Employees: There are 7 employees during the off-season and 15-20 employees during the season. There is no staff turnover. In the summer the same employees, who have been working in the bakery during the season for 3-4 years, come back for work. Three employees have been working for many years.



History. Until 2003 the owner of the bakery, Irutė Bagdonienė, worked as the director of the hotel "Eglių slėnis" (this position provided with some management and communication knowledge). The EU Phare programme launched a call for applications for business start-ups and a friend from a consulting company prepared a project for this programme. He assured that there was no bakery in the Curonian Spit, and he had visited one of the islands of Germany where he had seen a successful operation of a bakery there.

The project was written in one year and it received funding. However, Irutė Bagdonienė had no experience, premises or understanding of the design or equipment of the bakery. The premises for the rent of the current bakery-cafe were chosen randomly with the help of the mayor of the town. "Gardumėlis" started its activity at the end of August, when

the season had ended. However, according to the project, the bakery had to open until the beginning of September. It was a big challenge. Although the bakery-cafe "Gardumėlis" has been successfully operating for 14 years, the owners think they would not like to take such a risk again.

Target group. Individual holidaymakers from Lithuania, Germany and Russia are the main target groups (80%). The client is usually an intelligent person who does not need kitsch. The company also take orders for celebrations from local people, businesses, Neringa municipality. There are no competitors.

5.1.3 "Marių laivai" (Nida, Neringa municipality)

Business activity: since 1991.

Legal status: Individual enterprise of Romas Šležas. Activity according to the classification of economic activities: Inland passenger water transport (NACE 503000).



Employees: There are 3 employees (the owner, his son and an accountant) during the off-season, and up to 10 employees in the summer. Staff turnover is low. During the season, the same employees come back.

History. The beginning of the business was the rent of the ship. A lot of Germans started coming to the Curonian Spit and they were provided a ship rental service because Nida lacked entertainment for tourists. At the beginning there was a smaller 20-seat ship and a larger one with 70 seats. At present, Romas Šležas' individual enterprise has 2 own ships "Austėja" and "Aistis".

Target group. They are German tourists, individual tourists from Lithuania and abroad. Tourism agencies also provide their clients. The third target group is related to 2 entertainments (mainly for corporate events, about 60% of clients), weddings. Individuals who rent a ship make up 40 per cent of all clients. There are no competitors.

5.1.4 "Česlovo vynos" (Virkytų village 1, Šilutė district)

Business activity: since 2004.

Legal status: Closed joint stock company (UAB).

Type of activity: Fruit and berry wine production; Wholesale and retail trade.

Employees: 2 employees (1 shop assistant during the season).



History. Česlovas and Tatjana Ramoškos had an old rural tourism homestead. At first they grew raspberries and sold them in the market. This business was not very successful. Tatjana offered to make wine. Thus, the owners made some wine and people really liked it. So, they

decided to legalize and produce more wine. A new law was necessary for small businesses to produce wine without a laboratory, i.e. it was necessary to legalize home wine making. Česlovas had meetings with the government officials (in the Seimas) for 5 years until such a law was passed.

At present, the homestead in Virkytų village is famous for a successful winery, range of wines, which are stored in basements and sold not only on the farmhouse, but also in cafes, restaurants, hotels and shops.

Target group. 65 per cent of customers are Lithuanians (local people and guests from Vilnius, Kaunas and other cities who are fond of discovering Lithuania). 35 per cent of customers are foreigners (Germans, English people). One restaurant in England sells the wines of "Česlovo vynas".

5.1.5 Holiday home "Naujoji gelmė" (Preila, Municipality of Neringa)

Business activity: since 2005.

Legal status: Working under a business licence.

Type of activity:
Accommodation (bed and breakfast).



Employees: 2 employees (family business). Daughter and sons help when they can. Sometimes they ask volunteers for help.

History. The family bought real estate in Neringa, wishing to convert it into a residential house. After the global financial crisis, their plans changed: they built another house, and left the old one for rent – they have rented it for 12 years. The family offers a double service: a hostel type summerhouse (40 beds), Soviet-time holiday home, for the warm

period from May to September. In the residential building of a newly built fisherman's house there are also three newly equipped apartments with a yard and a possibility to sit on the bank of the Curonian Lagoon.

These apartments are mostly accommodated by Germans. In addition to their rest, they are offered sightseeing tours to the Lithuania Minor, Klaipėda Region, where they are introduced to Prussian Lithuanians - people who are close to the common Lithuanian-German culture. Additionally, the Meyer family apartments for these tourists are like an information centre – which helps to learn not only about the Curonian Spit but also about Lithuania. On request, breakfast can be served with home baked whole-grain bread, whole-grain pastries, homemade jam, etc.

Target group. Holiday home - middle class, youth from Lithuania and all over the world, groups, 70% of holidaymakers are regular clients. 99% of clients of the apartments are tourists from Germany.

5.2 General information about the entrepreneurs and their companies involved in the research

The average age of entrepreneurs participating in the qualitative research is 53 years. 5 women and 1 man took part in the survey. Their position is mostly the director or owner. The qualifications of the respondents vary: medical cosmetology, chemist, builder-engineer, food technologist, physical education, journalism. Most entrepreneurs do not work (partly or completely) according to the acquired qualification, and develop their business intuitively, learning from their mistakes and experience. All businesses are family businesses that have been operating for many years - 10, 12, 15 or even 27 years. All entrepreneurs have a clear strategy for their businesses, but they also face difficulties:

- Most entrepreneurs suffer from the seasonality of their business.
- Lack of managerial knowledge.

- Communication among women.
- Inadequate allocation of tasks.
- Hostility, misunderstanding of the local community.
- Weakness – marketing.
- Lack of funds for the renovation of the building.

Only UAB “Česlovo Vynas” is a member of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts. Other surveyed companies do not belong to any organizations and do not participate in any networks or enterprise clusters. All entrepreneurs replied that there is a need to get a qualification related to their business development, because "learning is always beneficial".

5.3 Opportunities, challenges and development needs for remotely located businesses

All respondents said that there is no competition in their region, mainly because every business has its own individuality, some kind of distinction, and also because only they provide a particular service/product in the neighbourhood area. For example, UAB “Česlovo vynas” is the only company which has legalized and sells labelled wine. The bakery-cafe "Gardumėlis" is the only bakery in Neringa. The bakery has a mill where they grind whole grain flour, thus producing and selling healthier baked goods and eco-products. SPA Levanda is the only one in Kretinga district, which has a lavender garden and provides spa treatments, “Marių laivai” has great experience and a great captain.

All companies have a clear strategy, a vision of development, or an opportunity to develop their business. For example, the bakery-cafe "Gardumėlis" is planning to transport their products to Klaipėda in the winter time, and all year round – to Vilnius, where the owner's son Dominykas Bagdonas opened a cafe. UAB “Česlovo vynas” has plans to expand to Scandinavia, because these countries do not produce wine. The owner of “Marių laivai” claims that huge opportunities for

their business would include a trip by ship all around the Curonian Lagoon and tourists from the Kaliningrad region.

The common feature of all the businesses involved in the research is that the owners perform many functions. They are both managers and sellers, often accountants and development managers, as well as the ones having knowledge of marketing and being aware of the process of producing/supplying their own products/ services, i.e. they are not only managers, but also good specialists in their field. Most other functions are performed by other family members.

5.4 Experience of improvement of qualification related to business development

The entrepreneurs were asked how familiar they were with the possibility of educational and training services in their region and they answered that they were completely unaware of it or only partially familiar with it (the score on the five-point scale is 2.4). The entrepreneurs rated the availability of educational services in the region as 2.7 on the five-point scale.

SPA Levanda receives offers only for massage training that is irrelevant to them. The owner Jolanta is not aware of learning opportunities in Klaipėda, Kretinga, or Palanga. The owner of the bakery-cafe “Gardumėlis” is not interested in training in Neringa. She is only involved in the training of companies that sell raw materials, as they provide technological cards and recipes. The owners of “Marių laivai” are interested in training courses organized in Neringa, but they do not take part in them. Most often, these are free training courses for entrepreneurs by the municipality of Neringa. “Marių laivai” believes that these courses are organized only in order to spend public money, but not to achieve the goal – to provide useful information for entrepreneurs. The captain Roman Šležas and his sons every five years attend pilot refresher courses in Klaipėda to renew their licences. UAB “Česlovo Vynas” receives offers for training by e-mail.

Most of them come from the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, various agricultural enterprises, business organizations, and higher education institutions in Kaunas. The owners of the company believe that they receive too few training offers, and they must look for them themselves. Although for many entrepreneurs and their staff it is not a problem to go for training to other cities/towns of Lithuania during the off-season, all entrepreneurs mentioned that too few training courses take place in Klaipėda. For them it would be most convenient to go for training to the nearest city.

The entrepreneurs who took part in this qualitative research rarely take part in training. The reason is that they do not receive training offers on the topics of their interest. They usually go on a training course in order to obtain/renew the licence. The owner of the SPA Levanda took part in the training activities a long time ago (10 years ago) in the training course for the heads of SPA centres, where she was taught:

- Market segmentation
- Customer segmentation
- Product creation

The training was useful. It was organized by a private company - the ISPADO Academy. At the moment, SPA Levanda is hiring a private English language teacher for its employees, who, for several hours under a flexible schedule teaches English, especially specific work-related terms at the premises of SPA Levanda. The owner mentioned that language courses are useful, and she and her staff apply acquired knowledge at work.

The owner of the bakery-cafe “Gardumėlis” 15 years ago participated in short courses for accountants about the PRAGMA program. After that, she individually learned how to work with this program. At first, she did all the bookkeeping and accounting herself, now it is done by an audit firm. Every year she also takes part in the training organized

by the suppliers of products (for example, the presentation of margarine without hydrogenated fats). All training has been useful.

“Marių laivai” is only involved in water craft training courses every 5 years to renew the licence. The owners of UAB “Česlovo vynas” Česlovas and Tatjana Ramoškos are more involved in training activities than other surveyed companies. During the last year, they participated in an online training course organized by a wine-maker from Krasnodar (Russia). 1-3 years ago they took part in the training courses of Klaipėda Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, the Association 5 "Lamatos žemė", Kauno kolegija/University of Applied Sciences. The topics of the training were the following:

- Training for start-ups and business development.
- Use of EU funding.
- Wine making technologies (compulsory training at Kauno kolegija/University of Applied Sciences for obtaining a certificate for a licence).

Not all training courses were useful, sufficiently professional and competent or could be adapted to business. Tatjana and Česlovas Ramoškos learn a lot on their own and from books. They also participate in business missions, meetings with businesspeople from other countries. The owners of the holiday home "Naujoji gelmė" often take part in training. Main topics:

- Development of EU projects.
- Courses on Creative Writing.
- Courses for the Guides.
- Bread Making Courses.
- Foreign language courses. All of the training is useful and can be applied to the daily activities of the holiday home. The owner Raimonda Meyer organizes tours around the Curonian Spit for tourists, thus attracting them to stay at the holiday home.

The most memorable and useful teaching methods listed by respondents are:

- Various practical methods (practical assignment, case study, situation analysis)
- Working in pairs
- 50% of theory, 50% of practice
- Not the name and the title of the lecturer is important, but the relevance, awareness and applicability of the information
- It is important to have a qualified lecturer
- Interactive training

5.5 Current learning needs for entrepreneurs

- The entrepreneurs mostly need training on marketing, advertising and how to attract a customer
- Foreign language courses (English, Russian and German)
- Managing the accounting of individual activities, in particularly the recruitment/dismissal of employees
- Training on tax changes
- Financial planning
- Training on psychology (improving communication skills with clients, etiquette for communicating with clients)
- Improving the quality of services
- Management
- Human resource management
- Crisis management
- Communication
- Division of labour
- Financing of tourism from EU funds

Need for specific training:

- Baking, cake decoration

- Prepacking of products, packaging, labels (visual product attractiveness)
- Veterinary training.
- Training for people to understand wine, its origin, how it is made
- Catering services
- Quality of baked goods
- Food technology
- Training for the owners of hostels: Budget holiday - what is necessary to satisfy a contemporary tourist, what is meant by minimal comfort in the 21st century, and so on.

The needs in terms of time and duration of the training for the surveyed entrepreneurs were very different. The entrepreneurs located in Curonian Spit (Nida) can attend training courses at any time during the off-season (during all autumn and winter), training can be longer (even half a year) and include several forms of training (face to face learning + online learning). Other entrepreneurs would like to learn only during the day or in the evening, 1-3 days a week or 2-3 days in a week. Several entrepreneurs have mentioned individual learning with a private tutor as an acceptable form of training. All entrepreneurs said that the best way to receive information about training is by e-mail.

5.6 Cooperation and exchange of knowledge between enterprises

Almost all surveyed companies cooperate with other companies and institutions in their region or other cities/towns. The cooperation between enterprises was rated by the entrepreneurs as 4.5 on the five-point scale. Ways of cooperation:

- Diversify and expand the range of services/products by selling interesting products related to the activities of the company. For example, SPA Levanda sells apple cheese with lavender, assortment of medicinal herbs with lavender, cosmetics with lavender and so on. The cafe-bakery "Gardumėlis" sells healthy

products from local Lithuanian producers - assortment of medicinal herbs, Lithuanian berry wine and so on. UAB "Česlovo vynos" sells local apple cheese, serves snails from the snail farm "Aspersa" during wine tasting. All companies try to sell only Lithuanian products.

- Distribute information about their service or product in companies and institutions that work with tourist flows. For example, UAB "Česlovo Vynos" collaborates with tourism and information centres of Klaipėda city and district, Šilute, Palanga, Švėkšna Craft Centre and travel agency "Delta Tours". "Marių laivai" collaborates with hotels, cafes, which provide information to their clients about the possibility to take a boat trip.
- Cooperation with some companies of specific activities in order to provide the highest quality service or product. For example, UAB "Česlovo Vynos" collaborates with UAB "VORTO gama" from Vilnius, which works with food, beverage, pharmaceutical companies, research centres, laboratories and medical institutions, supplying them with materials and equipment for production and solving technical or technological issues. The cafe-bakery "Gardumėlis" cooperates with Coffee Roast House MUSANGAS, which offers only the highest quality organic coffee beans from the world's best coffee plantations and private farms.
- Cooperation with shops, cafes and restaurants to sell their products.

All respondents emphasized the importance of cooperation with other companies in the same or surrounding area. The surveyed owners of small businesses would like to cooperate more with other companies. The owners of UAB "Česlovo vynos" claim that cooperation between businesses and sharing of experience would increase the number of tourists in the region. For example, the occurrence of new tourist routes with more legal wineries would greatly increase the number of 7 tourists. Jolanta, the owner of SPA Levanda, is convinced that the

attraction of other small businesspeople and the trade of their unique products also contribute to their success.

SPA Levanda and UAB “Česlovo Vynas” are also engaged in charity activities. SPA Levanda performs free-of-charge therapy treatments for patients in the Centre of Oncology and UAB “Česlovo Vynas” has donated 1,000 euros to the Švėkšna community.

5.7 Conclusions

- Most entrepreneurs do not work (partly or completely) according to the acquired qualification.
- They rarely take part in training courses and develop their business intuitively by learning from their mistakes and experience. They mostly need training for obtaining /renewing the licence.
- All entrepreneurs agree that continuous learning is necessary. They would like to attend training courses, improve their qualification, but they receive very few training offers, or they are on the topics that are not relevant to them. The entrepreneurs were asked how familiar they were with the possibility of educational and training services in their region and they answered that they were completely unaware of it or only partially familiar with it.
- All entrepreneurs want to receive offers for training via email.
- Small businesses do experience competition in their region, mainly because every business has its own individuality and also because only they provide a particular service/product in the neighbourhood area
- The common feature of all the businesses involved in the research is that the owners perform many functions (manager, accountant, development manager, etc.). Most other functions are performed by other family members. All small businesses involved in the research are family businesses

- Surveyed entrepreneurs do not understand the concept of a "teaching method". While performing a qualitative research, it was necessary to provide explanation of teaching methods that can be applied. It turned out that during various courses and seminar the entrepreneurs have not experienced a variety of teaching methods
- For business people, it is important that training involves not just theory, but also practical tasks. Theory is necessary, but it is very important that it is presented by a qualified specialist
- The entrepreneurs mostly need training on the topics of marketing, advertising and how to attract a customer
- It would be most convenient for entrepreneurs to go for training to the nearest town/city. Too few courses, seminars and trainings are offered in Klaipėda.

6 Overall Conclusions

On average the participant business was 14 years old, limited company or some type of sole trader and most likely had been family ran business at some point. The average number of employees (including the owners) was four with four seasonal or part-time employees. But to be noted, the mode for part-time workers was one. The difference was due few high data points in the answers. With few exceptions, every business could be categorized under accommodation-, restaurant-, outdoor activity and cruise services. All were located in remote areas and usually had the advantage of being the only service provider in the area without competition. In most cases the business had a clear strategy which they operated under. Lastly, little over half of the entrepreneurs told that they have suitable qualification for their current job title, and "learn by doing" method was most used way to improve their knowledge. This is important to remember as there were many similarities with the answers, and it is quite easy to find common themes in them.

To begin the conclusion, one should first look at the rankings which each country gave to their local training opportunities. There were two trends which could be used to categorize the participants. The first group with Finland and Estonia, were quite happy with the current situation, ranking their local training possibilities and their own familiarity with the topic at four in five-point scale. The second group with Sweden and Lithuania were a lot less familiar with the training possibilities ranking their local training possibilities at two. The sample size is too small to draw accurate conclusions why this is, but group one had in common that the businesses were usually a member of a national umbrella organization for entrepreneurs. This surely increases their knowledge of the possibilities as these organisations advertise their services publicly and directly. In result, the group one was more active to participate in any type of training compared to their group two peers.

There was a small difference between the groups, as group one were more towards tourism services (e.g. cruises and outdoor activities) and the second group had on average more restaurants which serve the local community. While this difference is quite small, this conclusion suggests that restaurant owners are more tied down to their work (as the business must be ran same way all around the year, with insignificant differences between seasons). This easily leads very little time search or participate in trainings. Also, entrepreneurs with immigrant backgrounds usually found it more difficult to find useful trainings for their business type than native entrepreneurs.

But one factor was shared between the groups: If there were to be held a training near their location, which would tackle the subject closest to them, they would all participate in them. This is in a way contradicting the previous answers from group two, but it could be explained with their busy time table and lack of participation in organization (which leads to ignorance for possibilities).

The subjects which are the most asked for were the following:

- Marketing (both traditional and digital)
- Language courses
- Financial and labour laws (both on national and EU level)
- Management, accounting and financial planning

As all of the businesses rely on tourism on some level and therefore benefit from globalization, the need to reach and serve the customers in their own language is increasing rapidly. The businesses which have partaken in trainings in these topics found that they usually too broad or too basic to be useful. To be more precise, the training only touched their area of interest briefly before moving on to another topic. The second remark was that the more potentially helpful trainings were held in far away and in such times that it was very inconvenient to join them. This type of premium training is also more expensive as it is usually held by private organizations rather than by the state. Around half of the businesses wished to learn more about their job-specific skills in addition to the previous list.

Lastly, when asked about co-operation between other small businesses in the area, the Finland, Estonia and Lithuania ranked themselves at 4.4. They all saw the potential at helping the local businesses and shared the mutual goal to provide the customers a great experience. They either did (or wished to do) this by combining their services. For example, accommodation providers had deals with local transport businesses or recommend the other businesses to their customers.

7 Applicability

The ideal way to contact businesses regarding training opportunities would be via email. This was the most preferred way between all countries. There were differences about the structure of the training, but the three most common answers where the following:

- One to two-day seminars with workshops in small groups



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- One-on-one private training sessions with specialist tutor
- Online self-study material, which could be accessed at anytime

In ideal situation, the training should happen near the businesses and would be held at off season when the entrepreneurs have more time off work. The topics should be tailored to match the entrepreneurs' needs and the trainer should investigate beforehand the participants' background to be able to do this. If seminars would stretch overnight, then they could go in more detail about the subject and the participants could get more out of it. Also, these types of events would connect the local entrepreneurs to each other even more, and they would increase the co-operation between them. Participants from Sweden could greatly benefit from joining their national organization, like equivalent of The Federation of Finnish Enterprises, as that would greatly increase their knowledge about the possibilities for training.

The largest issue in all cases is the remote location which cannot be easily solved. Recommendation to ease this problem is to apply for funding which could be used to hire and deploy these specialist tutors around the countries. Alternatively, an online database with pre-taped lectures and an ability to chat with a professional could also solve the time and place dilemma.

Sources

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