



Competence profile

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The NATOUR project is coordinated by the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain, and involves eight universities from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Germany and Portugal joined by a consultancy company from Bulgaria. This publication is developed by the project team of [name of partner organisation(s)].

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Competence profile

Introduction

One of the main objectives for the development of the project was to identify the competence profile, a document that should help defining the structure and contents of the post-graduate study programme in Ecotourism and Interpretive nature guiding.

The process began in January 2021 when all the project partners were informed about the general process to follow. UAB, as project coordinator, initially prepared a template for listing and describing competences among project partners.

The analysis carried out in the application stage of the project allowed the identification of four main groups of competences that a graduate in ecotourism and nature guiding should possess:

- technical competences (incl. nature guiding),
- managerial competences (incl. entrepreneurship),
- interpersonal competences (incl. interpretation skills), and
- sustainability-related competences.

Following the European Qualification Framework (EQF), those competences were structured into three main categories:

- a) Knowledge (i.e. the collection and assimilation of information through learning);
- b) Skills (i.e. the ability to apply knowledge and carry out tasks); and
- c) Attitudes (i.e. the personal, social and/or methodological abilities).

Additionally, it was also added an open list of transversal competences (sometimes also called soft skills).

All the partners were asked to complete the template table, putting as many competences as possible, including contents on:

- Ecotourism and nature-based tourism
- Creation and management of ecotourism products and companies
- Interpretation of the natural environment
- The profession of nature guide

After collecting all the suggested competences by the partners, a list of more than 250 competences was obtained in March 2021. The next step was to validate and select the most relevant competences by asking the opinion about them to relevant stakeholders in the field of ecotourism through a survey. Seeing that such large amount of competences was unmanageable for a normal survey, it was decided to undertake a new round of revision of the list by the project partners. An exercise of simplification of the list of

competences (joining some of them, removing others that were very similar to others, etc.) was done, and a new list of 97 competences was obtained in April 2021.

That list of 97 competences was the basis of the survey that was distributed among ecotourism stakeholders in Brazil, Chile, Colombia and the Azores. The list of competences was converted into a valuation questionnaire where each competence had to be valued from a 1 to 4 scale. The results should help to identifying the most valued competences, and this would help project managers in defining the NATOUR curriculum in the next stage.

The survey was conducted between April and June 2021, and a total number of 127 answers were obtained (41 from Brazil, 35 from Chile, 33 from Colombia, and 18 in the Azores). Most of the stakeholders consulted found each and every one of the more than 90 competences that had been initially selected as very important and the results, indeed, confirm that the differences at the time of the specific assessment are minimal and the values are very high for most of them (between 3.5 and 4 on a scale of 1 to 4, and from 94% to 100% on a percentage scale).

Between June and August 2021 every Latin American university also organized a consultation workshop with local stakeholders (administration, universities, private sector, etc.) and there was also a common agreement, similar to the survey results, on the general validation and agreement on the suggested competences.

Although there were not significant enough differences to select and rule out competences, some of those that received less values were eventually rejected. Another decision to decrease the total number of competences that would be part of the definitive version of the competence profile was to move the Knowledge competences to the learning content of the NATOUR Curriculum. This action allowed to have a final list of 39 competences, structured into four main categories, as it can be seen in the following pages: Managerial skills, Interpersonal skills, Sustainability-related skills, and Attitudes.

List of competences

Technical skills

- To be able to recognize the ecological and biodiversity values at a tourism location.
- To further develop and deliver guidance, tools and techniques in personal delivery skills for nature guiding.
- To be able to look for update knowledges and skills, in order to be actualized in nature-based tourism and ecotourism principles and normative.
- To be able to apply techniques of assistance, oratory and group leadership.
- To be able to incorporate in a responsible way the knowledge on natural and cultural heritage and the local cosmovision to improve ecotourism experiences.
- To be able to devise innovative and tailor-made ways of involving and actively engaging visitors in heritage interpretation, dialogue and human-nature (re)connection, improving visitors' experience.

- To be able to plan the resources for the execution of tourism experiences, including the organization of work teams.
- To be able to develop and use field-guides and to help implement ecotourism activities.
- To be able to design sustainable tourism products and services based on experiences for the customers' profile by integrating joy and care of the environment.
- To be able to deliver the best experiences and activities based on tourist demand but also on the supply of experiences built in a bottom-up approach based on solid principles of ecotourism.
- To be able to use efficiency ICT tools for the development and implementation of an ecotourism product, in favour of the sustainable tourism proposal and experience.
- To be able to read a map and the basic needs for self-orientation and GPS using.
- To be able to apply first aid techniques and basic evacuation techniques.

Managerial skills

- To be able to plan, organize, direct and control an ecotourism and nature guiding activity, providing personalized customer service to all groups of customers.
- To be able to cooperate with ecotourism stakeholders to develop and deliver a value creating activity.
- To be able to identify and apply good practices of management in tourism industry.
- To be able to apply different skills to promote sustainable tourism in different regions according to their resources and potential.
- To be able to apply legal, safety and sanitary procedures in the tourism operation.
- To be able to identify and relate all the variables under management of an ecotourism or nature guide enterprise.
- To be able to prepare briefings before a guided tour and to organize and prepare the logistics and activities required for a guided activity and tourism process.
- To be able to build interpretative plans.

Interpersonal skills

- To be able to communicate in an appropriate way the interpretive message, according to the type of tourists, demonstrating verbal and nonverbal communication skills, as well as active listening skills in the professional setting (e.g. during a nature guiding activity), and interpreting important terms and communication signs, on foreign languages.
- To be able to connect activity participants to the site or destination intellectually and emotionally through engaging content and participatory activities, delivering personalised interpretation that increases the potential for transformative experiences.



- To ensure that the interpretive presentation of a complex theme that involves multiple disciplines, is balanced, credible, appropriate and accurate.
- To be able to proactively identify and resolve conflicts through mediation, problem solving, compromising, etc.
- To be able to manage relationships among and between nature guiding activity participants and local community members.

Sustainability-related skills

- To demonstrate environmentally responsible behaviour in natural areas, particularly during nature guiding activities, encouraging visitors' support for environmental protection initiatives.
- To be able to present solutions and stimulate/inspire sustainable behaviours.
- To be able to identify and link ecotourism and its related activities with other types of initiatives for the local and regional development.
- To be able to identify the main natural and cultural resources of the territory of operation.
- To be able to design, implement and monitor sustainability practices throughout company's operations, as well as to promote adherence of partners along the tourism value chain to such practices.

Attitudes

- A responsible attitude of curiosity and enquiry towards the environment.
- Adaptation capacity to the dynamic use of technologies and tools.
- Proactivity and creativity.
- Interdisciplinary teamwork.
- Business ethics and responsibility.
- Intercultural competencies and attitudes (ability to engage with other cultures and interest on learning about different cultures)
- Empathy, sociability and spirit of service.
- Socially and environmentally responsible attitudes, having the capacity to play a role of an agent transmitting sustainability-related values and attitudes to tourists / visitors.





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