

D 2.1 REPORT
**Skills Gap Analysis
in Albania's Tourism
Sector**

**V-ROADS: Vet-Responsive Opportunities for Albania's Dynamic
Tourism Skills Ecosystem for Digital Innovation and Social
Inclusion**

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Skills Gap Analysis in Albania's Tourism Sector:

Digital and Inclusive Competencies for VET

Development

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a skills gap analysis conducted within the framework of the V-ROADS project, VET-Responsive Opportunities for Albania's Dynamic Tourism Skills Ecosystem for Digital Innovation and Social Inclusion, implemented under the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training (VET) programme. The project aims to support the modernisation and responsiveness of the VET system in Albania by strengthening its alignment with labour market needs, particularly in high-growth sectors such as tourism.

The main objective of the report is to identify current and emerging skills needs in Albania's tourism sector, with a specific focus on digital competencies and inclusive tourism practices. The analysis assesses the extent to which existing VET provision responds to labour market demands and identifies gaps that may hinder workforce development, sector competitiveness, and sustainable tourism growth.

The report is grounded in the challenges identified during the project design phase and supported by national and international evidence. These challenges include weak alignment between VET systems and private sector needs, insufficient development of digital and transversal skills, limited continuous professional development opportunities for VET trainers, and the absence of structured training in inclusive and accessible tourism. They reflect broader systemic issues in the VET ecosystem, including fragmented training provision, limited flexibility in programme design, and insufficient integration of work-based learning.

Tourism is a key driver of economic growth and employment in Albania, but the sector is undergoing rapid transformation. Digitalisation, changing tourist expectations, demand for personalised experiences, and the growing importance of sustainable and inclusive tourism require a workforce equipped with practical, digital, social, cultural, and service-oriented competencies. Traditional training models are often insufficient to respond to these dynamic and interdisciplinary skills needs.

Particular attention is given to the Elbasan region, which serves as a case study for understanding local tourism dynamics and skills needs. Through semi-structured interviews and one focus group discussion with representatives from public institutions, private sector actors, VET providers, universities, NGOs, information points, and tourism operators, the report captures diverse perspectives on sector development, workforce challenges, and training needs in an inland region with growing but still underutilised tourism potential.

The findings are intended to inform the next phase of the V-ROADS project, particularly the development of competence-based training modules, stronger linkages between VET provision and labour market needs, and alignment with European frameworks such as the European Qualifications Framework. The report also supports the development of micro-credential-based approaches, understood as short, flexible, and modular learning units designed to address specific skills gaps and support rapid upskilling and reskilling.

By linking identified skills gaps with training development, the report moves beyond diagnosis and provides practical directions for designing responsive, modular, and labour-market-oriented

training solutions. These solutions aim to support a more competitive, inclusive, and sustainable tourism sector in Albania.

2. METHODOLOGY

This skills gap analysis is based on a qualitative and exploratory research design, combining desk research with stakeholder consultations. The approach was selected to capture both system-level perspectives and practical field-based insights on current and emerging skills needs in Albania's tourism sector. It also supports the identification of priority areas for competence-based training modules and micro-credential-based learning approaches within the V-ROADS project.

2.1 Desk Research

The desk research included a review of national and international reports, policy documents, and strategic frameworks related to VET, tourism development, labour market trends, digital transformation, and inclusive tourism. Particular attention was given to documents addressing skills development in tourism, digitalisation, business competitiveness, accessibility, and inclusive service provision.

European frameworks, notably the EQF, were also considered to ensure alignment with competence-based approaches. The review also drew on the needs assessment conducted during the project design phase, which identified challenges such as limited digital and transversal skills, weak alignment between VET provision and labour market needs, insufficient integration of inclusive tourism principles, and gaps in the capacity of VET trainers.

2.2 Stakeholder Consultations

To complement the desk research, stakeholder consultations were conducted through 11 semi-structured interviews and one focus group discussion in April 2026. The interviews involved representatives from tourism businesses, VET providers, public institutions, NGOs, information points, business actors, and sectoral associations. They provided insight into recruitment challenges, required competencies, digitalisation needs, inclusion-related capacities, and gaps in existing training provision.

The focus group brought together 16 participants from local and regional institutions, the Municipality and Regional Council of Elbasan, AKPA, university representatives, VET providers, NGOs, information points, and sectoral organisations such as the Albanian Federation of Mountaineering and Mountain Tourism. The focus group helped validate findings, identify shared challenges, and capture collective perspectives on tourism development and skills needs in Elbasan.

The selection of participants aimed to ensure balanced representation of actors involved in tourism service provision, skills development, employment support, local development, and policy implementation. The focus on Elbasan provides a grounded case study of how broader national tourism and skills challenges are reflected at territorial level.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

Data collection was guided by structured interview and focus group questionnaires designed to explore skills demand and training provision in the tourism sector. The tools focused on current and emerging workforce needs, required competencies for tourism-related occupations, gaps between labour market requirements and existing training programmes, and challenges related to service delivery.

Particular attention was given to digital skills, inclusive tourism competencies, customer service, communication, workforce shortages, recruitment difficulties, and the role of VET providers, universities, employers, and public institutions in responding to labour market needs. The questionnaires combined open-ended questions with structured elements, allowing both detailed qualitative insights and comparison across stakeholder groups.

2.4 Analytical Approach

The data collected through desk research and stakeholder consultations were analysed using a thematic approach. Responses were grouped into key categories, including digital skills, inclusive tourism competencies, workforce gaps, training provision, infrastructure and structural constraints, and the responsiveness of education and training systems.

The analysis identified recurring themes, common challenges, discrepancies between existing and required skills, and emerging trends in tourism development. Particular attention was given to the connection between skills gaps and wider structural issues, including infrastructure limitations, informality, weak coordination, lack of long-term strategic planning, and limited data availability. Findings from stakeholder consultations were triangulated with desk research to strengthen reliability. The analysis was also oriented towards generating practical insights for the design of micro-credentials as flexible, modular learning solutions that respond directly to identified skills gaps.

2.5 Limitations

Given the qualitative nature of the analysis and the limited timeframe for data collection, the findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than exhaustive. The stakeholder sample provides diverse perspectives but does not aim to be statistically representative of the entire tourism sector in Albania or of all tourism actors in Elbasan.

A further limitation relates to data availability and reliability. The tourism sector is characterized by informality, fragmented reporting, and discrepancies between institutional data, local-level information, and stakeholder perceptions. The limited availability of disaggregated data, including by gender, age, employment status, occupation, and type of tourism activity, also constrains more detailed analysis of participation, access to training, and inclusion in tourism-related employment. Despite these limitations, the combination of desk research and stakeholder consultations provides a credible basis for identifying key trends, challenges, and priority skills gaps. The focus on Elbasan further enables a contextualised understanding of local dynamics that can inform both local interventions and broader sectoral approaches.

3. TOURISM SECTOR AND SKILLS CONTEXT IN ALBANIA AND ELBASAN

3.1 Overview of tourism sector in Albania

Tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors of the Albanian economy, contributing approximately 26% of GDP when total direct and indirect effects are considered (WTTC, 2024). International tourist arrivals have increased to approximately 10 to 12 million visitors annually (OECD, 2024). However, tourism remains highly seasonal and geographically concentrated, with over 60% of flows concentrated during the summer months. Inland destinations such as Elbasan have important potential, but continue to face challenges in infrastructure, promotion, service quality and workforce preparedness.

Table 1: Albania Tourism Context and Skills Relevance

Indicator	Current situation	Relevance for skills development
Tourism contribution to GDP	Approximately 26% of GDP, including direct and indirect effects	Confirms tourism as a strategic sector for employment and training investment
International arrivals	Approximately 10 to 12 million visitors annually	Increases demand for service quality, communication, digital tools and foreign languages
Seasonality	Over 60% of tourism flows concentrated in summer months	Creates unstable employment and repeated training needs
Territorial concentration	Strong focus on coastal areas	Highlights the need to develop inland destinations such as Elbasan
Sector transformation	Digitalisation, inclusive tourism, sustainable tourism and experience-based services	Requires updated, flexible and competence-based training approaches

Source: Author's elaboration based on WTTC (2024), OECD (2024), Council of Europe (2021) and European Commission (2021).

Tourism-related activities account for a substantial share of employment, with estimates suggesting that around 20% of total employment is directly or indirectly linked to tourism (WTTC, 2023). However, employers report difficulties recruiting staff with practical experience, customer service competencies, digital skills, foreign languages and professional behaviour. Informality, seasonality and limited exposure of VET trainers to industry practices further complicate skills planning and training relevance.

Digitalisation has become central to tourism competitiveness. Online booking platforms, digital marketing, social media, CRM systems, online reviews and digital communication are increasingly important for attracting visitors and managing customer relationships. However, less than 40% of Albania's population possesses at least basic digital skills, below the EU average (OECD, 2024). Inclusive and sustainable tourism is also increasingly important. In Albania, accessibility standards, inclusive service delivery and sustainability principles remain underdeveloped in both

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service provision and training. This creates a gap between emerging market expectations and the preparedness of tourism workers to serve elderly visitors, persons with disabilities, families, international tourists and diverse client groups.

Table 2: Tourism Skills Challenges and Training Priorities

Area	Main challenge	Implication for training
Labour market supply	Difficulty recruiting qualified workers for service roles	Strengthen practical and occupation-specific skills
VET alignment	Training often perceived as too theoretical	Increase work-based learning and employer involvement
Digital skills	Limited digital literacy and uneven use of online tools	Include booking, marketing, CRM, reviews and data use
Inclusive tourism	Limited capacity to serve diverse groups	Include accessibility, inclusive communication and service adaptation
Informality and data	Weak evidence on workforce and business practices	Integrate monitoring indicators and basic data skills
Trainer capacity	Need for stronger exposure to industry practices	Support ToT and continuous professional development

Source: Author's elaboration based on ETF (2023), OECD (2024), UN Albania (2023), UNWTO (2020) and stakeholder findings.

3.2 Local Context: Elbasan Area

Elbasan is an emerging inland destination with potential in cultural tourism, eco-tourism, curative tourism, gastronomy, outdoor tourism and locally based experiences. In 2023, Elbasan Prefecture had 232,580 residents, with 116,575 men and 116,005 women (INSTAT, 2023). The population structure is relevant for skills planning because the working-age population represents the potential labour force for tourism, while population ageing increases the relevance of accessible and age-sensitive services.

Table 3: Population of Elbasan by Municipality and Gender, 2023

Municipality	Total population	Men	Women
Elbasan	115,101	57,262	57,839
Cërrik	25,163	12,482	12,681
Librazhd	23,312	11,854	11,458
Prrenjas	18,768	9,541	9,227
Belsh	17,123	8,435	8,688
Peqin	16,580	8,581	7,999

Gramsh	16,533	8,420	8,113
Total	232,580	116,575	116,005

Source: Author's elaboration based on INSTAT (2023).

Tourism activity in Elbasan remains modest compared to its potential. Available estimates suggest that the region receives approximately 30,000 visitors annually, while nearby Belsh and the Dumre region have reported over 200,000 visitors annually. Elbasan continues to function largely as a transit destination due to limited integrated tourism products, weak promotion, infrastructure constraints and insufficient accommodation capacity.

Table 4: Elbasan Tourism Development and Skills Implications

Area	Current situation	Skills and training relevance
Tourism potential	Cultural, eco, curative, gastronomy, outdoor, scientific and industrial tourism	Requires guiding, storytelling, product design, digital promotion and service quality
Visitor numbers	Around 30,000 visitors annually, lower than nearby Belsh and Dumre	Need to strengthen destination promotion and increase length of stay
Destination role	Often functions as a transit destination	Need for integrated packages and experience-based tourism skills
Infrastructure	Road access, lighting and accommodation capacity remain constraints	Limits tourism growth and affects service delivery
Labour market	Shortages in hospitality, guiding, customer service and digital promotion	Requires practical, flexible and locally relevant training
Inclusion	Ageing population and diverse visitors increase need for accessible services	Training should include inclusive tourism and age-sensitive service delivery
Data and informality	Limited local and disaggregated data	Need for monitoring indicators and evidence-based planning

Source: Author's elaboration based on INSTAT (2023), RisiAlbania (2021), Ministry of Tourism and Environment (2024), Regional Council of Elbasan (n.d.), ETF (2023) and stakeholder findings.

4. FINDINGS FROM STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Overview of Stakeholder Consultations

The findings presented in this section are based on stakeholder consultations conducted in the Elbasan region, including semi-structured interviews and one focus group discussion carried out in April 2026. In total, 11 interviews and one focus group with 16 participants were conducted,

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involving representatives from tourism businesses, local and regional institutions, VET providers, universities, non-governmental organisations, information points, and sectoral organisations.

The consultations aimed to capture practical insights into tourism sector dynamics, workforce needs, and skills gaps, with a particular focus on digital competencies and inclusive tourism practices. The diversity of participants ensured a comprehensive perspective, reflecting both labour market demand and training provision. The interviews provided more detailed individual perspectives, while the focus group allowed for interaction among stakeholders and helped validate common challenges and priorities.

Overall, the stakeholder consultations confirm that tourism in the Elbasan region is growing, but that this growth is taking place in a context where infrastructure, coordination, human resources, digitalisation, and training provision remain key constraints.

4.2 Tourism Sector Trends

Stakeholders described tourism in the Elbasan region as growing, but still fragmented and insufficiently structured. Several participants referred to a recent “boom” in tourism, especially in nature-based and mountain tourism, as well as in the increasing number of guesthouses. As one participant noted, “there is a boom of tourists, and the number of guesthouses is increasing” (Information Point Specialist, Funar, 24 April 2026).

At the same time, stakeholders emphasized that tourism products are not yet well connected. Natural, cultural, gastronomic, and curative tourism elements often remain separate, limiting the attractiveness of the destination and reducing opportunities for longer stays. As highlighted during consultations, “we need to connect mountains, culture and nature at the same time” (Director of Tourism, Municipality of Elbasan, 24 April 2026).

Another recurring issue was Elbasan’s role as a transit destination. Stakeholders noted that many tourists pass through the region without staying, which points to the need for better destination positioning and more structured tourism packages. As one stakeholder emphasized, “we need to make Elbasan a city where tourists stay, not just pass” (Tourism Stakeholder, April 2026).

Stakeholders identified several emerging niches, including curative tourism, eco-tourism, outdoor tourism, cultural tourism, mountain tourism, gastronomy, and artisan-based experiences, particularly in areas such as Gjinar and Funar.

4.3 Skills Needs Identified by Stakeholders

Stakeholders identified a combination of technical, digital, and soft skills as essential for tourism development. Communication and customer service skills were repeatedly mentioned, especially for front-line roles and interaction with foreign visitors. As one stakeholder noted, “communication is very important, especially foreign languages” (Director of Tourism, 24 April 2026).

Digital skills were also identified as a priority, particularly online promotion, booking systems, digital marketing, social media communication, and digital customer engagement. However, many small businesses still rely on traditional and informal methods. As one participant stated, “we still have businesses that function with a notebook in hand” (Tourism Representative, 24 April 2026).

In addition to technical and digital skills, stakeholders emphasized soft skills such as responsibility, behaviour, patience, work ethic, and professional communication. These are especially important in service-oriented roles, where the quality of interaction with visitors directly affects the tourism experience. As one business representative noted, “the most important skills are responsibility, good behaviour and communication” (Curative Tourism Business, Tregan, 30 April 2026). Stakeholders also noted that small tourism businesses increasingly need flexible workers able to perform more than one function, combining customer service, administration, digital promotion, and operational support.

4.4 Skills Gaps and Challenges

Despite the growing demand for tourism services, stakeholders reported difficulties in finding qualified personnel for key roles. These include guides, waiters, bartenders, receptionists, kitchen staff, accommodation service workers, and tour operators. As one business owner stated, “the most difficult positions to find are guides, bartenders and waiters” (Tourism Business Owner, 30 April 2026).

Stakeholders also pointed to gaps in soft skills, particularly among young workers. Communication, patience, responsibility, work culture, and professional attitude were frequently mentioned as areas requiring improvement. As one participant observed, “young people often lack communication skills, patience and a sense of responsibility” (Tourism Business Owner, 30 April 2026).

Digital skills gaps were also emphasized, especially in digital marketing, online sales, social media management, booking platforms, online communication, storytelling, and destination branding. Training providers confirmed this demand. As noted by a VET representative, “there is strong demand to learn digital marketing and online promotion” (VET Centre Representative, 30 April 2026).

Inclusive tourism was identified as another important gap. Stakeholders noted that many businesses and workers are not sufficiently prepared to serve diverse groups, including elderly tourists, persons with disabilities, families, and international visitors. This highlights the need for accessibility awareness, inclusive communication, and practical service adaptation.

4.5 Training and Education Challenges

Stakeholders considered current education and training provision to be often too theoretical and insufficiently connected to labour market needs. As one academic representative noted, “we need to better connect theory with practice” (University Representative, 25 April 2026). Business representatives also emphasized that young people often enter the labour market without enough practical exposure.

There is strong demand for short, practical, and modular training courses that respond directly to market needs. As highlighted during consultations, “we need short courses that respond directly to the market” (NGO Representative, 30 April 2026). Priority areas include digital marketing, booking systems, customer service, communication, accommodation management, inclusive tourism, and experience-based tourism.

Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of stronger cooperation between VET providers, universities, employment services, and the private sector. Internships, on-the-job training, mentoring, business-based learning, and the involvement of tourism professionals in training delivery were identified as key ways to improve training relevance and employability.

4.6 Structural Challenges: Infrastructure, Strategy and Data

Infrastructure challenges were consistently identified as a major barrier to tourism development in the Elbasan region, especially in rural and high-potential areas such as Gjinar and Funar. These challenges include road access, lighting, accommodation capacity, and basic tourism infrastructure. As noted by a local stakeholder, “the road to Gjinar is a problem” (Information Point Representative, Gjinar, 30 April 2026).

Stakeholders also pointed to the lack of a clear long-term tourism development strategy. As one NGO representative stated, “we need long-term strategies, not reactive ones” (NGO Representative, 30 April 2026). This reflects a broader concern that tourism development is often driven by short-term opportunities rather than strategic planning.

This reactive approach limits the development of integrated tourism products, weakens coordination among actors, and reduces the competitiveness of the region. It also makes it harder to link culture, nature, gastronomy, curative tourism, and local experiences into coherent visitor packages.

The sector is also affected by weak digitalisation, informality, and limited data. Stakeholders from the private sector emphasized the need to strengthen the use of platforms such as Booking and TripAdvisor, as well as online promotion more broadly. The lack of reliable and disaggregated data, including by gender, age, employment status, occupation, and type of tourism activity, further limits evidence-based planning and targeted interventions.

5. SKILLS GAP ANALYSIS IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

Building on the stakeholder consultations, this section presents the main skills gaps identified in the tourism sector in the Elbasan region. The analysis draws on interviews, the focus group discussion, and desk research, and highlights the mismatch between current workforce capacities and labour market needs.

The analysis shows that skills gaps are not only individual weaknesses, but are also linked to wider sector challenges, including infrastructure constraints, weak coordination, limited strategic planning, informality, and insufficient use of data and digital systems. Therefore, skills development should be closely connected to broader tourism development priorities.

5.1 Current Skills Needs in the Tourism Sector

Stakeholders emphasized that tourism increasingly requires a multi-skilled and adaptable workforce, especially in small businesses, guesthouses, restaurants, accommodation structures, and tourism operators where workers often perform several roles. Traditional role-specific skills

are no longer sufficient; employees are expected to combine technical, interpersonal, organisational, and digital competencies.

Communication, customer service, and foreign languages were identified as essential, particularly for front-line roles such as reception, guiding, food and beverage services, and customer interaction. As one stakeholder noted, “communication is very important, especially foreign languages” (Director of Tourism, 24 April 2026).

The AKPA representative also emphasized employability-related skills such as work culture, customer orientation, professionalism, and responsibility. This confirms that tourism skills are not limited to technical knowledge, but also include attitudes and behaviours that directly affect service quality.

Stakeholders also highlighted the growing importance of transversal skills such as adaptability, patience, problem-solving, teamwork, and responsibility. These are especially relevant in tourism, where workers interact directly with visitors and must respond to diverse needs, seasonal pressures, and unexpected situations.

Emerging tourism segments, including eco-tourism, curative tourism, mountain tourism, cultural tourism, gastronomy, and experience-based tourism, also require more specialised skills. These include guiding, storytelling, knowledge of local culture and natural resources, environmental awareness, and the ability to connect nature, culture, and local identity into attractive visitor experiences.

5.2 Digital Skills Gaps

Digital competencies represent one of the most significant cross-cutting gaps. Although digital tools are increasingly important for tourism, many businesses and workers lack the practical skills to use them effectively. This affects business visibility, competitiveness, customer communication, and destination promotion.

Stakeholders pointed to the continued use of traditional practices. As one participant noted, “we still have businesses that function with a notebook in hand” (Tourism Representative, 24 April 2026). This shows that digitalisation is still uneven, especially among small and family-based tourism businesses.

The main digital gaps include limited use of online booking systems, digital marketing tools, social media platforms, customer communication channels, online review systems, and data for decision-making. National data confirm the growing relevance of digitalisation: in 2025, 28.0% of enterprises in Albania sold products or services through a website, application, marketplace website or app, while e-commerce was higher in accommodation and food service activities, at 48.2% of enterprises (INSTAT, 2025).

However, focus group evidence suggests that local digital practices remain uneven. Participants estimated that only around one-third of tourism businesses in Elbasan actively use online platforms, while many webpages and social media accounts are not regularly updated and customer reviews are rarely answered (Focus Group, April 2026). This indicates that the gap is not only about access to digital tools, but also about their regular and strategic use.

Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized the need for stronger online presence through platforms such as Booking, TripAdvisor, Airbnb, social media, and dedicated webpages. A VET representative

confirmed this need, noting that “there is strong demand to learn digital marketing and online promotion” (VET Centre Representative, 30 April 2026). Digital skills are therefore both operational skills and strategic tools for destination development.

5.3 Inclusive Tourism Skills Gaps

The analysis also highlights gaps in inclusive and accessible tourism. While stakeholders recognize the importance of inclusion, practical capacity to provide accessible and inclusive services remains limited. As one stakeholder emphasized, “we need to improve accessibility, for example for blind people and the elderly” (Tourism Stakeholder, 24 April 2026).

Inclusive tourism is especially relevant in light of demographic and disability data. According to the 2023 Census, disability prevalence in Albania among the population aged 5 and over is 6.5%, with a higher prevalence among women, at 7.2%, compared to 5.9% among men. The census also shows that 59.5% of persons with disabilities are aged 65 and over, with the most common limitations related to walking, climbing stairs, and seeing (INSTAT, 2023).

This is particularly important for Elbasan, where 19.7% of the population is aged 65 and above, representing 45,739 individuals (INSTAT, 2023). This demographic profile strengthens the need for age-sensitive and accessible tourism services, especially in curative, wellness, natural, and rural tourism areas.

Stakeholders also noted the need for better services for elderly tourists, persons with disabilities, families, and international visitors. Inclusive tourism requires not only physical access, such as ramps and accessible facilities, but also respectful communication, adapted services, intercultural awareness, and gender-sensitive practices. Addressing these gaps would improve both visitor experience and inclusive local employment opportunities.

5.4 Gaps in the VET System and Training Provision

The identified skills gaps are closely linked to limitations in the VET and training system. Stakeholders consistently emphasized that existing training programmes are often too theoretical and insufficiently aligned with labour market needs. As one participant noted, “we need to better connect theory with practice” (University Representative, 25 April 2026).

Tourism requires practical learning because service quality depends on customer interaction, communication, workplace experience, and the ability to respond to real situations. Stakeholders therefore emphasized the need for more internships, workplace-based learning, mentoring, and direct involvement of tourism professionals in training delivery.

Another key issue is the limited availability of short, flexible, and targeted training opportunities. As highlighted during consultations, “we need short courses that respond directly to the market” (NGO Representative, 30 April 2026). This strongly supports modular and micro-credential-based approaches, especially for skills such as customer service, digital promotion, booking systems, accommodation management, guiding, storytelling, and inclusive service delivery.

For Elbasan, this is particularly relevant because the region is trying to move beyond a transit model towards more diversified tourism, including curative, cultural, mountain, nature-based, and

experience-based tourism. However, this requires locally relevant skills linked to guesthouses, information points, rural destinations, and emerging tourism areas such as Gjinar, Funar, and Tregan.

The AKPA perspective also confirms that VET programmes can support employability when they respond to real market demand, particularly in hospitality and service-related occupations. However, training must go beyond technical content and include soft skills, digital skills, work culture, and professional orientation.

5.5 Structural and Strategic Skills Gaps

Beyond individual skills, tourism development in Elbasan is constrained by structural and strategic capacity gaps. These relate to the ability of institutions, businesses, and sector actors to plan, coordinate, promote, and manage tourism in an integrated way.

Stakeholders repeatedly mentioned infrastructure limitations, particularly road access, lighting, and accommodation capacity. These challenges affect business operations and visitor experience, and they also reduce the impact of skills development, since improved services cannot fully compensate for weak accessibility or insufficient infrastructure.

Strategic planning and coordination were also identified as major gaps. Stakeholders described tourism development as fragmented and reactive rather than planned. As one NGO representative stated, “we need long-term strategies, not reactive ones” (NGO Representative, 30 April 2026).

This points to the need for strategic skills at institutional and business-management level, including destination management, product development, networking, partnership-building, digital promotion, data use, and local tourism planning. Without these capacities, the region risks continuing with isolated initiatives rather than developing a coherent tourism offer that increases visitor stays and local economic value.

Data limitations and informality also remain important systemic gaps. The lack of reliable and disaggregated data by gender, age, occupation, employment status, and type of tourism activity makes it difficult to assess tourism performance, identify labour market needs, and design targeted training interventions.

5.6 Emerging Skills Needs

The analysis identifies several emerging skills that are expected to become increasingly important in the tourism sector. These include advanced digital competencies, especially digital marketing, online platforms, online reputation management, digital storytelling, and data use.

Experience-based tourism is another important area of demand. Stakeholders emphasized the need to connect natural, cultural, gastronomic, and curative assets into structured visitor experiences. As one stakeholder noted, “the future is digital marketing and storytelling” (VET Representative, 30 April 2026). This requires skills in guiding, itinerary development, local product promotion, storytelling, and interpretation of cultural and natural heritage.

There is also growing demand for skills related to sustainable tourism, environmental awareness, safety, and responsible tourism. These are especially relevant for eco-tourism, mountain tourism, outdoor activities, and nature-based tourism in areas such as Gjinar and Funar.

Entrepreneurship and innovation skills are also becoming more important for guesthouse owners, artisans, guides, small operators, and local service providers. Tourism development will depend not only on employees, but also on the capacity of local actors to create, manage, promote, and improve tourism products.

These findings provide a strong basis for the development of targeted training interventions. They highlight the need for flexible, modular, and competence-based learning approaches that can respond quickly to identified skills gaps and support tourism workforce development in the Elbasan region.

Table 5: Skills Gap Matrix – Tourism Sector (Elbasan Case)

Source: Author's elaboration based on desk research, stakeholder interviews and focus group discussion conducted in April 2026.

Area	Current Situation	Skills Identified	Gaps	Evidence Source	Implications
Tourism Product Development	Growth in nature, curative, cultural, mountain, and experience-based tourism, but fragmented offers	Lack of integrated tourism packages, weak product design, limited experience development		Interviews and FG, 24 and 30 April 2026	Limited length of stay and low value-added tourism
Digitalisation	Low level of digital adoption, with many businesses still operating manually	Digital marketing, social media use, booking platforms, storytelling, online presence, and basic data use		Interviews with VET, business, municipality, and tourism stakeholders	Low visibility, reduced competitiveness, and weak destination promotion
Communication and Languages	Communication skills are recognised as important, but quality remains inconsistent	Foreign languages, customer communication, front-office skills, guiding communication, and client interaction		Interviews with AKPA, business, municipality, and tourism stakeholders	Weaker tourist experience and limited international reach
Service and Professional Skills	High demand for hospitality and customer-facing workers	Customer service, responsibility, work ethic, patience, professionalism, and service standards		Interviews with business representatives, curative tourism provider, and AKPA	Service quality gaps and reputational risks

Labour Market Supply	Labour shortages persist despite existing VET provision and some positive employability outcomes	Lack of qualified guides, waiters, bartenders, receptionists, kitchen staff, and accommodation staff	Interviews and FG	Limits sector growth and service expansion
Education and Training System	VET programmes exist, but are not always sufficiently practical or flexible	Limited practical training, weak links with businesses, insufficient work-based learning, and limited flexibility	University, VET, AKPA, business representatives, and FG	Persistent skills mismatch and weaker transition to employment
Short-term Training Needs	Limited availability of flexible and short training programmes	Demand for short, practical, market-oriented courses and modular learning	Interviews and FG	Missed opportunities for rapid upskilling and reskilling
Inclusion and Accessibility	Inclusive tourism services remain underdeveloped	Skills for working with elderly tourists, persons with disabilities, international visitors, and diverse groups	Municipality, NGO, tourism stakeholders, and FG	Untapped market potential and limited inclusive service quality
Infrastructure and Accommodation	Poor infrastructure and limited accommodation capacity constrain tourism growth	Operational and service skills linked to accommodation management, infrastructure use, and quality standards	Info points, businesses, and FG	Constrains tourism expansion, service quality, and visitor experience
Sector Coordination and Strategy	Weak coordination and reactive tourism planning	Strategic planning, destination management, networking, partnership-building, and coordination skills	NGO, municipality, regional actors, and FG	Fragmented and unsustainable tourism development
Emerging Skills and Future Needs	Transition towards experience-based, digital, sustainable, and inclusive tourism	Digital promotion, storytelling, sustainability, guiding, experience design, safety, and environmental awareness	All stakeholders	Need for a forward-looking and adaptive VET system

6. Alignment with European Frameworks and Training Approaches

The V-ROADS training response should be structured around European frameworks that support transparency, comparability and labour-market relevance. The EQF provides a reference for organising learning outcomes around knowledge, skills and autonomy or responsibility (European Commission, 2008; Council of the European Union, 2017). In this report, EQF principles help translate identified skills gaps into clearly defined competencies that can inform training modules and micro-credentials.

Micro-credentials are short, targeted and quality-assured learning experiences that support lifelong learning, employability and responsiveness to labour market needs (European Commission, 2022; Council of the European Union, 2022). They are particularly suitable for tourism because businesses need practical, flexible and immediately applicable training in areas such as digital marketing, online booking, inclusive service and storytelling.

ESCO provides a useful reference for linking skills with occupations and competence categories across the European labour market (European Commission, n.d.). It supports the alignment of VET content with recognised occupational profiles and helps identify transversal competencies such as communication, customer orientation, teamwork, problem-solving, digital literacy and responsibility. These directions are consistent with the European Skills Agenda and the Digital Education Action Plan (European Commission, 2020; European Commission, 2021).

Table 6: European Frameworks and Their Relevance for V-ROADS

Framework	Role in this report	Implication for V-ROADS
EQF	Structures competencies through knowledge, skills and autonomy or responsibility	Supports learning outcomes and comparability
Micro-credentials	Provides short, flexible and targeted learning units	Supports rapid upskilling and reskilling
ESCO	Links skills to occupational and competence categories	Supports labour-market relevance and employability
European Skills Agenda and Digital Education Action Plan	Emphasise lifelong learning, digital skills and responsive education	Supports digital and modular training priorities

Source: Author's elaboration based on European Commission and Council of the European Union sources.

7. Competence Framework for Digital and Inclusive Tourism

The competence framework translates the skills gap analysis into priority competence areas for the V-ROADS training framework. It is not a final curriculum, but an analytical bridge between the findings and the next phase of framework development. It identifies core and specialised competencies that can later be translated into structured learning outcomes and modular training units.

7.1 Digital Tourism Competencies

The increasing digitalisation of tourism services requires employees and small business operators to possess a combination of technical, practical, and communication-related digital competencies. Digital tools are no longer optional in tourism. They are central to business visibility, customer communication, booking management, destination promotion, and service quality.

Table 7: Digital Competences

Competence Area	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy or Responsibility
Digital booking systems	Understanding of online booking platforms and reservation systems	Manage bookings, update availability and interact with clients online	Independently manage booking processes and ensure accurate information
Digital marketing	Knowledge of social media, online promotion and basic marketing principles	Create and manage content, promote services and engage customers online	Maintain online presence and adapt promotion strategies
CRM and online reviews	Understanding of customer data, feedback and service management tools	Respond to feedback, manage customer interactions and improve service quality	Use customer information responsibly to improve satisfaction
Data use	Basic understanding of bookings, reviews and performance indicators	Interpret simple data to support decisions	Use data insights to improve services and operations

Source: Author's elaboration based on stakeholder consultations, skills gap analysis and EQF/ESCO approaches.

7.2 Inclusive Tourism Competencies

The following competencies respond to the identified gaps in inclusive and accessible tourism, particularly the limited practical capacity to serve elderly visitors, persons with disabilities, families, international tourists and other diverse groups. They are intended to support tourism workers and businesses in improving service quality, adapting communication to different client needs, and creating more welcoming, respectful and non-discriminatory tourism environments.

Table 8: Inclusive and Accessible Tourism Competencies

Competence Area	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy or Responsibility
Accessibility awareness	Basic accessibility principles and common barriers	Identify and respond to accessibility needs	Contribute to accessible and respectful service delivery
Intercultural communication	Cultural diversity and communication differences	Communicate effectively with international and diverse clients	Adapt communication to customer needs
Customer care for diverse groups	Inclusive service practices for elderly visitors, families and persons with disabilities	Provide respectful and client-centred service	Maintain inclusive and non-discriminatory standards
Gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches	Gender equality, inclusion and non-discrimination principles	Apply inclusive practices in daily work	Promote equal treatment and inclusive service environments

Source: Author's elaboration based on stakeholder consultations, skills gap analysis and EQF/ESCO approaches.

7.3 Transversal Competencies

Transversal competencies are essential across all tourism-related occupations, regardless of the specific role or workplace. Stakeholder consultations showed that communication, responsibility, adaptability, teamwork and problem-solving are critical for improving service quality, strengthening employability and supporting more professional tourism services in Elbasan.

Table 9: Transversal Competencies for Tourism Service Delivery

Competence Area	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy or Responsibility
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Communication	Service communication and customer interaction	Interact effectively with clients, colleagues and partners	Manage communication in different service situations
Problem-solving	Common operational and customer service challenges	Respond to unexpected situations and complaints	Handle issues independently where appropriate
Adaptability	Changing work environments and customer expectations	Adjust to new tools, processes and tourism trends	Support continuous improvement
Responsibility and work ethic	Professional behaviour, reliability and service standards	Demonstrate responsibility, patience and respect	Maintain professional conduct
Teamwork	Cooperation in service delivery and tourism operations	Work with colleagues, businesses and institutions	Contribute to coordinated service delivery

Source: Author's elaboration based on stakeholder consultations, skills gap analysis and EQF/ESCO approaches.

The framework can support the development of short, practical modules on online booking, digital marketing, storytelling, customer communication, basic data use, accessibility awareness, inclusive customer care and intercultural communication. Transversal competencies should be integrated across all modules to ensure that learners also strengthen communication, responsibility, teamwork and problem-solving.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the findings of the skills gap analysis, and in alignment with the European frameworks and the proposed competence framework, this section outlines key recommendations for the development and implementation of training interventions within the tourism sector. The recommendations are designed to address the identified gaps in digital, inclusive, and transversal skills, while also strengthening the responsiveness of the VET system to labour market needs.

The recommendations should be understood as mutually reinforcing. Skills development alone cannot fully address the challenges of the tourism sector if it is not linked to stronger cooperation with businesses, more practical learning opportunities, better digitalisation, improved coordination, and local tourism development priorities. For this reason, the proposed actions combine training-related measures with broader recommendations aimed at improving the connection between skills development and tourism competitiveness.

8.1 Development of Micro-Credential-Based Training Modules

A central recommendation is to develop short, practical micro-credential-based modules that respond directly to identified tourism skills gaps. Priority areas include digital marketing, customer service, tourism operations, online booking systems, inclusive tourism, communication, storytelling, accessibility awareness, and service standards.

Micro-credentials are suitable because they allow learners to gain specific competencies in a short time and progressively build a broader skills profile. They can support young people, existing workers, small business operators, women, seasonal workers, and unemployed jobseekers who may not be able to attend longer training programmes.

Modules should be based on clear learning outcomes, aligned with EQF principles, and adapted by VET providers and project partners to local labour market needs and institutional capacities.

Table 10: Indicative Micro-Credential Training Modules

Proposed micro-credential	Target group	Duration	Main content	Expected learning outcome
Digital Marketing and Online Booking for Tourism Businesses	Small businesses, guesthouses, information points, young jobseekers and existing workers	4 to 6 weeks	Booking platforms, social media, content creation, online communication and review management	Learners can use basic digital tools to promote and manage tourism services
Inclusive Customer Service and Accessible Tourism	Front-office staff, guides, accommodation providers, restaurant staff and VET learners	3 to 4 weeks	Accessibility awareness, elderly visitors, persons with disabilities, intercultural and gender-sensitive communication	Learners can apply inclusive service principles in tourism settings
Storytelling and Local Experience Design	Guides, young people, artisans, information points and local operators	2 to 4 weeks	Local heritage, itinerary design, storytelling, culture, nature, gastronomy and curative tourism	Learners can design and communicate a basic local tourism experience

Source: Author's elaboration based on stakeholder findings and proposed V-ROADS training priorities.

8.2 Strengthening Digital Skills Training

Digital skills should be treated as a core requirement across tourism occupations, not as an optional or specialised area. Training should focus on the practical use of online booking platforms, reservation systems, digital marketing, social media communication, content creation, online reputation management, CRM tools, and basic data analysis.

Training should be hands-on and linked to real tools used by tourism businesses. Learners should practise creating social media posts, updating booking information, responding to online customer requests, interpreting customer reviews, and preparing simple digital promotion materials. This

would directly respond to the finding that many businesses still rely on manual practices and have limited online visibility.

Special attention should be given to small tourism businesses, guesthouses, family-run accommodation providers, local guides, and rural tourism operators, as these actors often have high potential but limited digital capacity.

8.3 Integrating Inclusive and Accessible Tourism Skills

Inclusive and accessible tourism should be integrated as a core part of training programmes. This is important because inclusion is directly linked to service quality, customer satisfaction, social inclusion, and destination competitiveness.

Training should cover accessibility awareness, inclusive service design, communication with diverse client groups, intercultural communication, and gender-sensitive service approaches. Learners should understand how to serve elderly visitors, persons with disabilities, families, international tourists, and clients with different communication needs.

Inclusive tourism training should combine awareness-raising with practical exercises. Learners should practise identifying accessibility barriers, adapting communication, responding respectfully to diverse needs, and understanding how inclusive services improve the visitor experience. This is especially relevant for curative tourism, nature tourism, accommodation services, and front-line roles.

8.4 Enhancing Practical and Work-Based Learning

Training programmes should place stronger emphasis on practical learning. Tourism employability depends heavily on real work experience, customer interaction, communication, problem-solving, and service behaviour.

Training providers should increase the use of internships, on-the-job training, simulations, case studies, role plays, and real-life service scenarios. Learners should be exposed to tourism environments such as accommodation facilities, restaurants, information points, tourism routes, cultural sites, and local businesses.

Tourism businesses should also be more involved in training delivery. Business owners, guides, hospitality professionals, digital marketing practitioners, and local tourism actors could contribute as guest speakers, mentors, or practical trainers. This would make training more relevant and better connected to labour market realities.

8.5 Strengthening Cooperation Between VET Providers and the Private Sector

The findings show that skills gaps are also a coordination issue. Stronger cooperation is needed between VET providers, tourism businesses, employment services, local government, universities, NGOs, and sectoral organisations.

Employers should be involved in curriculum development, training design, practical sessions, internships, and feedback on learner performance. This would help ensure that training reflects real job profiles and emerging skills needs.

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AKPA and employment services can support this process by identifying occupations in demand, linking learners with job opportunities, supporting career orientation, and monitoring whether training contributes to employment. Local government and regional institutions should also be involved where skills development is linked to local tourism priorities.

8.6 Promoting Flexible and Lifelong Learning

Training should not target only young people entering the labour market. It should also support existing workers, business owners, seasonal workers, women, unemployed persons, and others who need to improve or update their skills.

Flexible learning formats should include short-cycle modules, part-time participation, blended learning, recognition of prior learning, and continuous professional development. This is particularly important in tourism, where workers may have seasonal schedules, limited time, or family and care responsibilities.

Blended learning can be useful for topics such as digital marketing, customer communication, and inclusive tourism. Online components can provide flexibility, while in-person sessions can focus on practical exercises, simulations, and peer learning.

8.7 Supporting Local Tourism Development Through Skills

Training should be linked to local tourism development priorities in Elbasan. It should support the creation of tourism experiences that connect culture, nature, gastronomy, curative tourism, mountain tourism, and local identity.

Priority skills include guiding, itinerary design, storytelling, local product promotion, artisan and heritage interpretation, digital storytelling, customer communication, and coordination among businesses. These skills can help increase visitor stays and generate higher value for local communities. Specific attention should be given to rural and community-based tourism, especially in areas such as Gjinar and Funar, where natural and mountain tourism potential is strong.

8.8 Strengthening Strategic Planning, Coordination and Data Use

Because tourism development in Elbasan remains partly reactive and fragmented, local and regional actors need stronger capacities in strategic planning, destination management, partnership-building, coordination, and evidence-based decision-making.

Capacity-building should support the use of tourism data for planning and training design. Data should be collected on visitor flows, tourism services, employment needs, training participation, and skills demand. Where possible, data should be disaggregated by gender, age, occupation, and type of tourism activity.

Better data would help VET providers, employment services, and local institutions identify priority occupations, update curricula, and respond more accurately to labour market needs.

8.9 Ensuring Sustainability and Scaling

Training interventions should be designed so that they can continue beyond the V-ROADS project. Training modules, competence frameworks, and micro-credential-based approaches should be practical, modular, easy to update, and adaptable to different groups of learners.

Sustainability also requires institutional ownership. VET providers, local institutions, employment services, and private-sector actors should be involved from the design stage so they can continue to use and adapt the outputs.

The Elbasan case can also provide useful lessons for other Albanian regions with emerging tourism potential, fragmented tourism development, and similar skills gaps. Scaling should therefore be based on practical lessons from implementation, especially in relation to digital skills, inclusive tourism, rural tourism, and flexible training approaches.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 - LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Nr	Institution / Sector	Position	Date	Location
1	Information Point, Funar	Specialist	24 April	Funar
2	Municipality of Elbasan / Tourism Federation	Director of Tourism / President	24 April	Elbasan
3	National Employment Agency (AKPA)	Director	24 April	Elbasan
4	Faculty of Business and Law	Dean	25 April	Elbasan
5	Curative Tourism Business, Tregan	Business Representative	30 April	Tregan
6	NGO Sector	Representative	30 April	Elbasan
7	Vocational Training Centre (VTC) Elbasan	Trainer	30 April	Elbasan
8	Regional Tourism Directorate / County Council	Tourism Director	30 April	Elbasan
9	Private Sector (Hospitality, Outdoor Tourism, Recruitment)	Business Owner	30 April	Elbasan
10	Federation reps	Guides	21 April	Elbasan
11	Information Point, Gjinar	Representative	30 April	Gjinar

ANNEX 2 – EXPANDED STAKEHOLDER QUOTES

A1.1 Information Point Specialist – Funar (21 April)

The Information Point Specialist from Funar emphasized that the tourism sector in the area is experiencing rapid growth, describing it as a “boom” in tourist arrivals. This growth is particularly visible in the increasing number of guesthouses and small accommodation structures. However, despite this positive trend, the stakeholder highlighted significant gaps in skills, particularly in booking systems, welcoming practices, and digital competencies.

The need for training is especially important for young people entering the sector, who often lack practical experience. The stakeholder stressed that tourism development is outpacing skills development, creating a mismatch between demand and available competencies.

A1.2 Director of Tourism, Municipality of Elbasan / Federation Representative (21 April)

The Director of Tourism highlighted that nature tourism and mountain tourism are growing rapidly, but emphasized that the sector remains fragmented. According to the stakeholder, there is a need to better integrate different tourism components, including mountains, culture, and nature, into a unified tourism offer.

He noted that the region is still in the early stages of tourism development, stating that “we are still at the first steps of organizing tourism.” A major concern is the lack of qualified human resources, particularly at the local level, and the need for both short-term and long-term training programmes. The stakeholder also stressed the importance of foreign languages and communication skills, as well as digitalisation. He pointed out that many businesses still operate using traditional methods, with limited use of digital tools. At the same time, he highlighted the importance of inclusive tourism, noting that services need to be improved for groups such as the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Finally, he emphasized the need to shift the role of Elbasan from a transit city to a destination where tourists stay longer, requiring better coordination, training, and infrastructure.

A1.3 AKPA Representative (21 April)

The representative from the employment office emphasized that vocational training programmes already show high employability, particularly in tourism-related fields. However, there is a strong need to further strengthen work culture, legislation, and soft skills.

The stakeholder highlighted the importance of digital skills, especially in areas such as digital marketing, customer orientation, and long-term business management. Particular attention was given to the importance of roles such as receptionists, where communication and professionalism are essential.

A1.4 University Representative – Dean, Faculty of Business and Law (25 April)

The university representative emphasized that tourism in Elbasan remains underdeveloped and not fully explored, despite its potential. He highlighted the need for infrastructure improvements and standardisation of services, particularly in the context of sustainable tourism.

The stakeholder stressed the importance of strategic planning and stability, noting that frequent changes in pricing and lack of long-term strategies negatively affect the sector. He also emphasized the need to integrate technology into tourism, including the use of applications, online platforms, and internet-based promotion.

Another key point was the importance of storytelling and destination branding, including the promotion of tourism through social media and international platforms such as Booking and TripAdvisor.

The representative also highlighted the importance of inclusive tourism, accessibility (e.g. ramps), and training of specialised guides. He stressed the need to better connect theory and practice in education and to develop interdisciplinary skills, including knowledge in biology, environment, and safety.

A1.5 Curative Tourism Business – Tregan (30 April)

The business representative operating in curative tourism emphasized that their services are mainly used by elderly clients, which requires specific competencies such as responsibility, patience, good communication, and appropriate behaviour.

The stakeholder highlighted the need for specialised training programmes, particularly in digital skills and marketing. However, a major concern remains infrastructure, especially road access and lighting, which directly affects business operations and client experience.

A1.6 NGO Representative (30 April)

The NGO representative emphasized the need for better coordination and information systems in tourism, as well as a stronger understanding of tourism capacities at the local level.

A key concern raised was the lack of a long-term tourism strategy, with current approaches often being reactive rather than planned. The stakeholder stressed that sustainable tourism development requires well-designed, long-term strategies.

In terms of skills, the NGO representative highlighted the need for short-term training courses, particularly focused on soft skills and general competencies. He also emphasized the importance of collaboration between tourism actors and the need to shift away from a short-term profit mentality towards more sustainable development.

A1.7 VET Trainers – Vocational Training Centre Elbasan (30 April)

VET trainers highlighted that there is a strong demand for digital skills training, particularly in computer use, online communication, and digital marketing. Current programmes include short courses in digital skills and longer programmes in digital marketing, which have attracted significant participation.

However, they emphasized that business promotion remains weak, particularly due to the lack of storytelling and digital presence. According to the trainers, the future of tourism development is

closely linked to digital marketing and online communication, and training programmes should focus more on these areas.

A1.8 Regional Council Representative (30 April)

The regional representative highlighted the increase in quality tourism, particularly in curative and cultural tourism. However, there is a strong need for networking and coordination, including linking artisans with cultural heritage.

The stakeholder emphasized the need for “smart tourism packages”, but noted that these are currently limited by a lack of human resources. The need for fast and targeted training programmes was also highlighted, particularly in communication and service roles.

A1.9 Tourism Business Owner (30 April)

The business owner managing multiple tourism-related activities emphasized the importance of attitude and soft skills, noting that even inexperienced workers can be trained if they are motivated and open-minded.

However, the stakeholder highlighted significant challenges in finding staff for key roles such as guides, bartenders, and waiters. The main gaps identified include communication skills, patience, and responsibility, particularly among young people.

The stakeholder also stressed the importance of digital presence, including platforms such as Booking and TripAdvisor, and highlighted the need for training in social media and online promotion. He noted that the tourism sector in Albania was initially positioned as “cheap tourism,” which created long-term challenges for quality development.

A1.10 Information Point – Gjinar (30 April)

The representative from Gjinar emphasized that infrastructure remains a key challenge, particularly road access. While hospitality is strong, it is not sufficient without proper infrastructure and service development.

The stakeholder highlighted the need for digital promotion and better communication channels, noting that current efforts are limited. He also emphasized the potential for eco-tourism and biodiversity-based tourism, suggesting the need for skills in areas such as biology and environmental knowledge.

Despite increasing visitor numbers, the stakeholder noted that only around 40% of tourists return, indicating a need to improve service quality and overall experience.

ANNEX 3: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

PYETJE PËR FOKUS GRUPET

A. Tendencat e sektorit

1. Si e shihni zhvillimin e turizmit në vend dhe në Elbasan në vitet e fundit?
2. Cilat janë shërbimet turistike që po rriten më shpejt?
3. Çfarë ndryshimesh keni vënë re në kërkesat e turistëve?

B. Nevojat për fuqi punëtore

4. Cilat janë profesionet më të kërkuara aktualisht në sektorin tuaj?
5. A keni vështirësi për të gjetur staf të kualifikuar? Pse?

C. Mangësitë në aftësi

6. Cilat janë aftësitë që mungojnë më shumë tek punonjësit e rinj?
7. A mendoni se ka diferencë mes asaj që kërkon tregu dhe asaj që ofron shkolla profesionale?

D. Aftësitë digjitale

8. Çfarë mjetesh digjitale përdorni në punën tuaj (booking, rrjete sociale, etj.)?
9. Si i vlerësoni aftësitë digjitale të stafit aktual?
10. Cilat aftësi digjitale mungojnë më shumë?

E. Turizmi gjithëpërfshirës)

11. Sa e rëndësishme është për ju të ofroni shërbime për klientë të ndryshëm (të huaj, persona me aftësi të kufizuara, etj.)?
12. A ndihen punonjësit tuaj të përgatitur për këto situata?
13. Çfarë aftësish mungojnë në këtë drejtim?

F. Trajnimi dhe arsimiti

14. Si e vlerësoni përgatitjen e të rinjve që vijnë nga shkollat profesionale apo universiteti?
15. Çfarë duhet të përmirësohet në programet e trajnimit?

G. Zgjidhje

16. Çfarë lloj trajnimesh do të ishin më të dobishme për sektorin tuaj?
17. A mendoni se trajnimi praktik (on-the-job) është më i rëndësishëm se teoria?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

A. Sector Trends

1. How do you assess the development of tourism in Albania and in Elbasan over the past 3–5 years?
2. Which tourism services or segments are growing the fastest (e.g., accommodation, guiding services, agritourism, etc.)?
3. What changes have you observed in tourists' profiles and demands (e.g., quality expectations, experiences, digitalization)?

B. Workforce Needs

4. What are the most in-demand professions in your sector currently?
5. Do you face difficulties in finding qualified staff? If yes, what are the main reasons?

C. Skills Gaps

6. What are the key skills most commonly lacking among young job applicants?
7. How do you assess the alignment between labor market needs and the skills provided by vocational education and training (VET) institutions?

D. Digital Skills

8. What digital tools or platforms do you use in your work (e.g., booking platforms, social media, customer management systems)?
9. How would you assess the digital skills of your current staff?
10. Which digital skills are most lacking?

E. Inclusive Tourism

11. How important is it for your business to provide services to diverse clients (e.g., international tourists, persons with disabilities, families, etc.)?
12. Do your employees feel prepared to handle such diversity?
13. What skills or knowledge are missing in this regard?

F. Training and Education

14. How do you assess the preparedness of young people coming from vocational schools or universities?
15. What improvements are needed in current training or education programs?

G. Solutions and Recommendations

16. What types of training would be most useful for your sector?
17. Do you consider practical (on-the-job) training more important than theoretical training?

ANNEX 4: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PYETJE PËR INTERVISTA INDIVIDUALE

1. Për organizatën
 1. Mund të na përshkruani shkurt rolin tuaj dhe aktivitetin e organizatës?
2. Nevojat për aftësi
 2. Cilat janë aftësitë kryesore që kërkonin tek punonjësit?
 3. A ka role që janë të vështira për t'u plotësuar?
3. Mangësitë
 4. Cilat janë aftësitë që zakonisht mungojnë tek kandidatët?
 5. Mund të jepni një shembull konkret ku mungesa e aftësive ka krijuar problem?
4. Digjitalizimi
 6. Sa të rëndësishme janë aftësitë digjitale në punën tuaj?
 7. Cilat aftësi digjitale janë më të nevojshme sot?
5. Përfshirja (inclusion)
 8. A keni raste kur punonjësit nuk janë të përgatitur për klientë të ndryshëm?
 9. Çfarë trajnimi do të ndihmonte në këtë drejtim?
6. Trajnimi dhe VET
 10. Si e vlerësoni përgatitjen e të rinjve nga sistemi arsimor?
 11. Çfarë duhet të ndryshojë në programet ekzistuese?
7. E ardhmja
 12. Si mendoni se do të ndryshojë sektori i turizmit në 3–5 vitet e ardhshme?
 13. Çfarë aftësish do të jenë më të rëndësishme në të ardhmen?

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. About the Organization

1. Could you briefly describe your role and the activities of your organization?

2. Skills Needs

2. What are the key skills you look for in employees?
3. Are there specific roles that are difficult to fill? Why?

3. Skills Gaps

4. What skills are most commonly lacking among candidates?
5. Can you provide a concrete example where a lack of skills has caused challenges?

4. Digitalization

6. How important are digital skills in your daily operations?
7. Which digital skills are most critical today?

5. Inclusion

8. Have you encountered situations where staff were not prepared to deal with diverse clients?
9. What type of training would help improve this aspect?

6. Training and VET

10. How do you assess the preparedness of young people coming from the education system?
11. What changes would you recommend in existing training programs?

7. Future Outlook

12. How do you expect the tourism sector to evolve over the next 3–5 years?
13. What skills will be most important in the future?

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