

Innovation in tourism

How to create a tourism learning area

The handbook

**Developing thematic, destination-level and regional
tourism knowledge networks**

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FOREWORD

Learning Areas are the concrete application of a new approach to basic education and training for sectors with a high diversity and highly complicated learning situation. They help in organising the necessary dialogue and collaboration between education and training institutions and the sector stakeholders, as well as the capability of enterprises to develop the existing workforce. They constitute local cooperation platforms for learning and qualification of tourism professionals.

The proposal to develop the Handbook was made by the working group on 'Improving training in order to upgrade skills in the tourism industry', as described in the Commission's communication 'Working together for the future of European Tourism' of 2001. The communication states that 'Strategies and measures designed to upgrade skills in the tourism industry show a trend towards more holistic solutions based on partnerships and dialogue between training institutions, the tourism industry and other major stakeholders, such as public authorities.' The Learning Areas approach involves all tourism and training stakeholders in the learning and innovation process through active practical cooperation and networking. Publishing the present 'Handbook on how to create a tourism learning area' is one of the specific actions to promote the economic and social stability of European tourism, foreseen in the Commission's communication 'A renewed EU Tourism Policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism' of 2006.

The Handbook is a practical guide for implementation of learning areas. The objective behind the launching of this Handbook is to provide a guide for action to the tourist areas. It develops an innovative approach, that of learning areas, to upgrade skills in the tourism industry, thus enhancing the economic and social dimension in the tourist areas and improving competitiveness.

I believe the Handbook for Learning Areas in the tourism sector will encourage innovative practices and foster the contribution of learning and skilled workforce to the operation of small and medium sized enterprises and to entrepreneurship. Tourism is a sector with particularly close links to economic and social dimensions. I am convinced that the Handbook will provide a contribution to the works envisaging the growth of local economies and the sustainable development of tourism, and to improving the labour environment and careers perspectives of the local population.

The main aim of the renewed European tourism policy will be to improve the competitiveness of the European tourism industry and to create more jobs, through the sustainable growth of tourism in Europe and globally. It follows the review of the Lisbon strategy which focused the priorities on growth and employment. The main goals are to make Europe a more attractive place to invest and work, to raise our capacity to grow through knowledge and innovation, and finally, to create more and better jobs.

I am convinced that the publication of this Handbook will contribute to achieving those goals.



Pedro Ortún
Director for Tourism, CSR, Basic and Design Industries
in DG Enterprise and Industry, European Commission



About this handbook

This handbook has the dual purpose of informing the reader about:

- (a) all the issues connected with tourism learning areas, and
- (b) how to set up a tourism learning area.

The handbook is divided into three interrelated sections.

1. The first part covers theoretical topics, explaining what learning areas are, the background to the subject, why they can be useful, how they concern the tourism sector, and who should be interested in developing a learning area.
2. The second section provides practical advice and information on how to set up a learning area for the tourism sector.
3. Lastly, there is a comprehensive technical appendix containing a set of generic tools to help with the practical day-to-day tasks of setting up and running a tourism learning area.

This handbook is accompanied by a CD-ROM, which contains the manual in PDF format. It also contains further electronic material so that users can take material from the paper-based handbook copy and use it in template form in their own work, to produce locally relevant material. The CD-ROM also contains a series of PowerPoint® presentations that can explain the concepts and processes involved in setting up a learning area in more detail.

Contributors

Thanks are extended to all those who contributed to the process of writing this manual, especially to the provisional learning-area coordinators, who piloted much of the implementation phase; the team of specialist experts, who developed chapter material; the design team; the members of working group B, who have provided continuity from the original concept to realisation; and the European Commission Tourism Unit, which has made it possible for this handbook to be produced.

Gordon Sillence, *Ecotrans tourism learning-areas project coordinator 2006*

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Ecotrans the European network for tourism and sustainable development 2006

Who should read this handbook? (the target audience)

Tourism learning areas concern all stakeholders in the tourism industry and related sectors, since a well-run learning area can provide the continuous information, training and learning processes needed in our modern European 'knowledge-based' economy. Specifically, however, the main target groups for this handbook are government departments, business associations and social partners that deal with **tourism, education, employment, environment** and **information technology**.

A tourism learning area will encompass all these subjects, and will develop a complex set of partnerships and networks to improve learning opportunities in order to stimulate human potential. To achieve this, it is most likely that the **implementation** phase of a learning area will be undertaken by public administrative and educational bodies who can take a leading role in the process **in partnership** with private tourism business associations and key social organisations. **Who** does **what** and **how** they structure their work is the subject of the handbook. Therefore the content of this handbook should be of primary interest to:

- (a) regional development organisations (coordinating bodies, sectoral departments, public-private partnerships);
- (b) local/regional authorities (councils, NUTS III-V) ⁽¹⁾;
- (c) learning centres (educational or training institutes); and
- (d) SME business associations.

Within this target group, the handbook is aimed at two types of **individuals**:

- (a) individuals who have the capability to take policy-level decisions and can take action to ensure that a learning-area policy is developed at destination level (or for a thematic area);
- (b) individuals whose job it will be to implement, manage and advise on that policy as it unfolds as a networking/partnership/IT exercise to stimulate learning and innovation.

Additionally, the **use** of a tourism learning area is of interest to:

- (a) public authority staff in the geographical area who are interested in tourism-sector activities;
- (b) learning centres seeking closer links with SMEs and public programmes;
- (c) business associations (SMEs, managers, owners, employees) seeking to be more innovative, competitive or sustainable;
- (d) local social partners (trade unions, NGOs) who offer or require access to tourism-sector learning opportunities; and
- (e) individual consumers, destination residents and workers.

These groups will find the handbook of interest inasmuch as they will be the beneficiaries of learning-area processes and should be included in the construction of individual tourism learning areas.

⁽¹⁾ A system of territorial units used by Eurostat to classify administrative regions in Europe.

Introduction (executive summary)

Over the past few years the European Commission has gathered valuable information from all over Europe on how to improve the performance of the small business, tourism and education sectors, bearing in mind the overall objective of developing a modern knowledge-based economy by the year 2010. The Tourism learning-areas handbook is one result of that work, bringing together the latest approaches being used to stimulate the links between learning, innovation, competitiveness and sustainability into a practical 'How to' manual. Its production has been overseen by the Enterprise and Industry DG's Tourism Unit, which is integrating the broad processes of cohesion policy, good governance, competitiveness, innovation, entrepreneurship, education and the information society into the tourism sector, using the concept which they have called the 'tourism learning-area approach'.

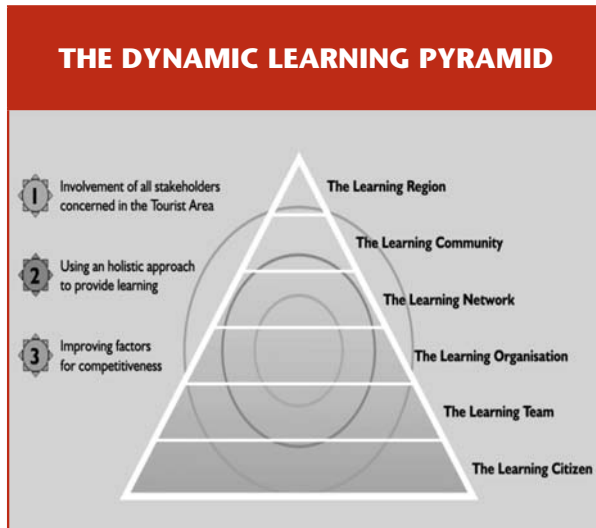
This learning-area approach, originating from the fast-evolving fields of education and regional development, addresses the competitiveness and sustainability problems of the tourism sector through the multiple learning processes that are available to SMEs, public administrators and the tourism workforce. The aim of the approach is to improve the quantitative and qualitative development of **stakeholder performance in the tourism industry**. That means: making SMEs more innovative and competitive; making public administrators more supportive and efficient; gearing learning centres towards fostering innovative and entrepreneurial potential; and helping members of the workforce and local residents to improve their contribution and rewards. How? By taking the processes of **formal, non-formal and informal learning**, and structuring them in a more coherent and effective manner to achieve better workforce/SME performance and improved sectoral administrative processes in a given tourist destination.

Improved coordination of all learning processes — either at the destination level or across networks of stakeholders involved in a thematic issue — is seen as being increasingly important in the ever-changing, technically oriented, globalised economy in which markets move, skills change and problems or opportunities arise faster than ever before. Tourism learning areas set out to enable stakeholders to keep up with this busy pace and, through improved regional or thematic coherence, will give destinations and supply-chain stakeholders an added market advantage, better managed natural and cultural resources, and improved social interaction.

Although Member States have made considerable efforts to reform and adapt their lifelong learning systems to the knowledge-based economy, the changes made are still not sufficient to meet the challenge. Evidence strongly suggests that in order to create and maintain a minimum level of knowledge-intensive employment, a region must first build up a critical mass of workers with a wide variety of skills. The Community has for many years organised networks linking universities, training institutions and businesses within and between regions and more recently has made efforts to establish networks of 'learning regions'.

A new partnership for cohesion, EU, 2004, p. 11.

To fully appreciate the subject matter involved in a tourism learning area, it is essential to understand many new and complex issues, such as the concept of **lifelong learning**, the development of **learning regions**, the idea of **knowledge networks** and the formation of **network clusters**. Additionally, themes such as **human capital, complex systems, innovation, entrepreneurship** and **sustainability** need to be considered. All these terms will be clarified in the course of this handbook, where the reader may be pleasantly surprised to find that the overall concept is quite simple, although its implementation involves a fair amount of development work. This involves crafting better public and private governance of the education and enterprise sectors, using a multi-stakeholder networking approach that now characterises the task of managing the complexity of local and regional economies. **The end result of such work, however, should ensure more coherent development of tourism destinations, in which improvements can be made in regional human potential to underpin and enhance the innovative capacity, competitiveness and sustainability of the SME business community.**



Learning-area theory

The diagram of the **learning pyramid** is an excellent graphic representation of all the levels of activity that are generated in a **learning region**. The pyramid also shows how each level is integrated in a regional networking process. At the stage when all levels are in place, a significant added value is provided to both the whole and its parts, i.e. better information flows and a more developed supply of learning provides the higher skill levels and innovative opportunities that help in shaping the consequent performance improvements for the entire spectrum of stakeholders. The 'three dynamic wheels' in this diagram show how stakeholder participation, holistic learning and entrepreneurial innovation are brought into a single process to animate each level of the learning area.

Defining a tourism learning area

We can formally define the concept using a technical definition that explains both the processes and structure found in the approach.

'A tourism learning area (TLA) is a concept of a multi-stakeholder, inter-sectoral, problem-solving approach aimed at improving SME performance and human potential in the tourism sector at the destination level.

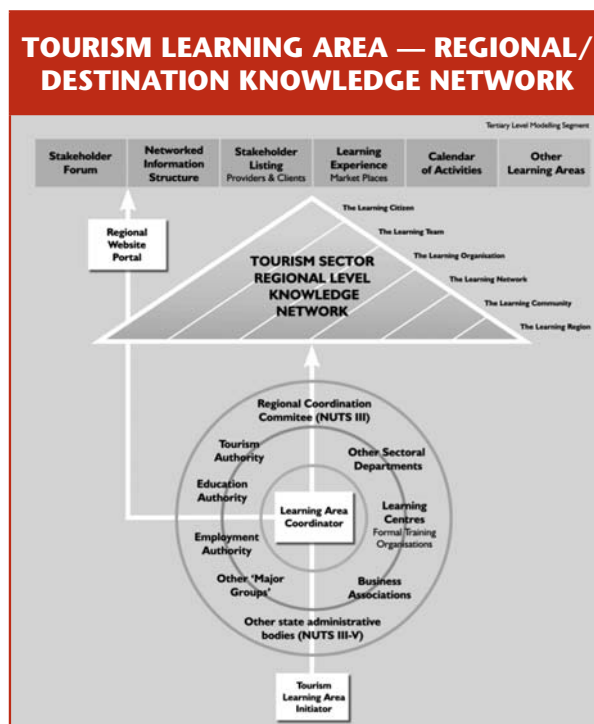
The TLA approach engages a broad range of regionally based stakeholders, bringing them together in a top-down/bottom-up process to form coherent information and cooperation networks.

When structured as the primary regional tourism-sector knowledge network, a TLA can address contemporary tourism-sector challenges by developing inter- and intra-organisational collaboration alongside a set of holistic learning opportunities.

These are aimed at continuous improvements in labour competences and organisational management, in order to foster better entrepreneurial quality, innovation, competitiveness and sustainability.'

The model of excellence

Just as any significant undertaking in the construction field starts from plan drawings and scale models, the TLA handbook develops a **model of excellence** which participants can use to build their own learning area. As an example, this part of the model (right) shows the role of a tourism learning-area initiator, and a learning-area coordinator, working with key stakeholders. This is the component structure of the coordinating body. The stakeholders who have developed this are also interacting in a coherent organisational structure. Public-sector stakeholders in this coherent structure are drawn from different sectors, cover a range of thematic issues and may belong to different administrative levels. Social partners come from private-sector business associations, chambers of commerce, and other business networks, and trade unions and NGOs. Learning centres are a third important strand of this multi-stakeholder approach, bringing their research and expertise in the learning-area equation to stimulate innovation in tourism businesses and among employees.



Their interest is to manage destination development or tourism value-chain learning activities and stakeholder interactions, which they can do via a communications and information structure centred on a coordination portal. The portal mirrors the formation of the learning area in reality, showing (top of diagram) stakeholder networking, listings, information forums and multiple marketplaces for learning experiences, and a calendar of events. This can be made operational by a capacity-building process to create a new (or upgrade an existing) learning centre, or a network of such centres, which would form the nucleus of a core group of stakeholders using the portal as their working communications tool. This core grouping would be committed to providing the type of learning that enhances SME innovation and competitiveness through a focus on human potential development.

The portal can be used by the learning-area core group to develop the learning-area (regional or thematic) **knowledge network** to do this job. The knowledge network uses the portal as its primary source of tourism-sector learning and communication for networking. Members of the network can access the portal data and link to other learning areas. The knowledge network is managed by the coordination body via the portal. It is a practical knowledge gateway to tourism-sector innovation opportunities to improve the quality, competitiveness and sustainability of tourism products and services.

Three steps to setting up a tourism learning area

This handbook takes you through a three-stage process designed to establish a tourism learning area **in real terms**. In the **initiation phase** you will develop an understanding of the concept, prepare its presentation, and establish who is to be involved in a defined area. In the **coordination phase** you will develop a coherent work structure to coordinate existing activities. In the **development stage** you will develop these activities to match your destination's learning needs to the processes of human potential development and SME capacity building.

Examples of best practice

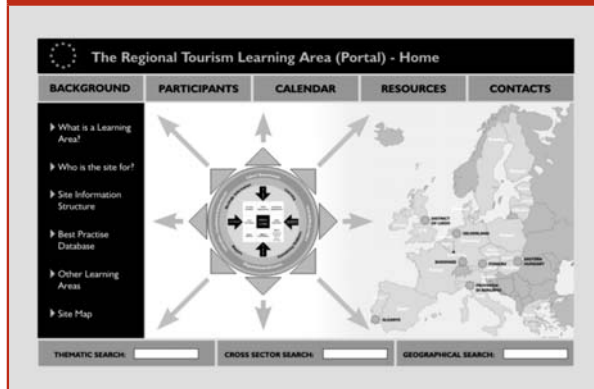
There are several examples of good practice of setting up innovating regions, learning regions and other lifelong learning projects, which can act as clear guidance for partnership, coordination and IT development strategies. Furthermore, in the course of the research of this handbook, eight provisional learning areas were established, each of which contains valuable experience of how to establish the process on the ground. Finally, several good-practice examples which refer to the various activities in setting up a tourism learning area will be highlighted and can be used to give direction to the development of a TLA.

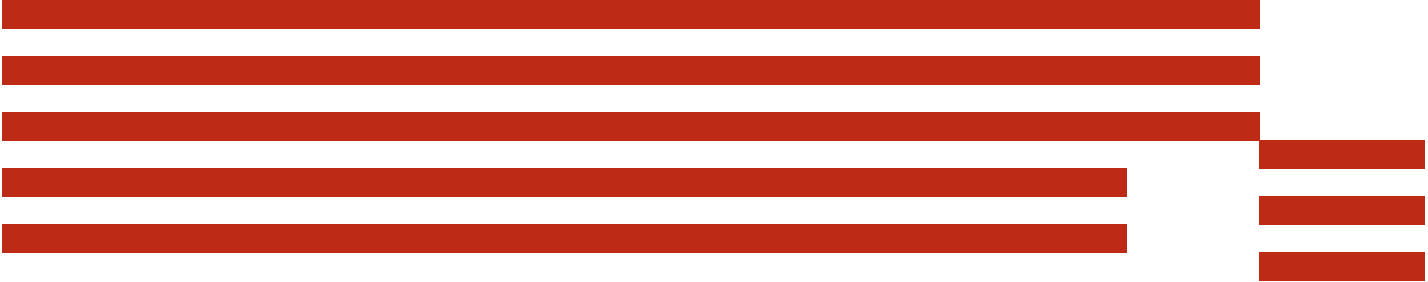
Further support

Developing a tourism learning area should be seen as a high-status, European-minded, good-governance activity in regional-municipal level tourism development planning — good for entrepreneurial business and a useful part of any job creation, environmental awareness and socialisation programme. The **marketing** of destinations is the principal activity that has shaped a destination identity up to now, but the learning-areas process takes a step further by saying that meeting a destination's **learning requirements**, and developing the tourism destination dynamic by stimulating good governance and SME innovation through an **ever-increasing quantity and quality of learning experiences**, is the way to operate in the contemporary complexity of an enlarged Europe and the overall globalisation process.

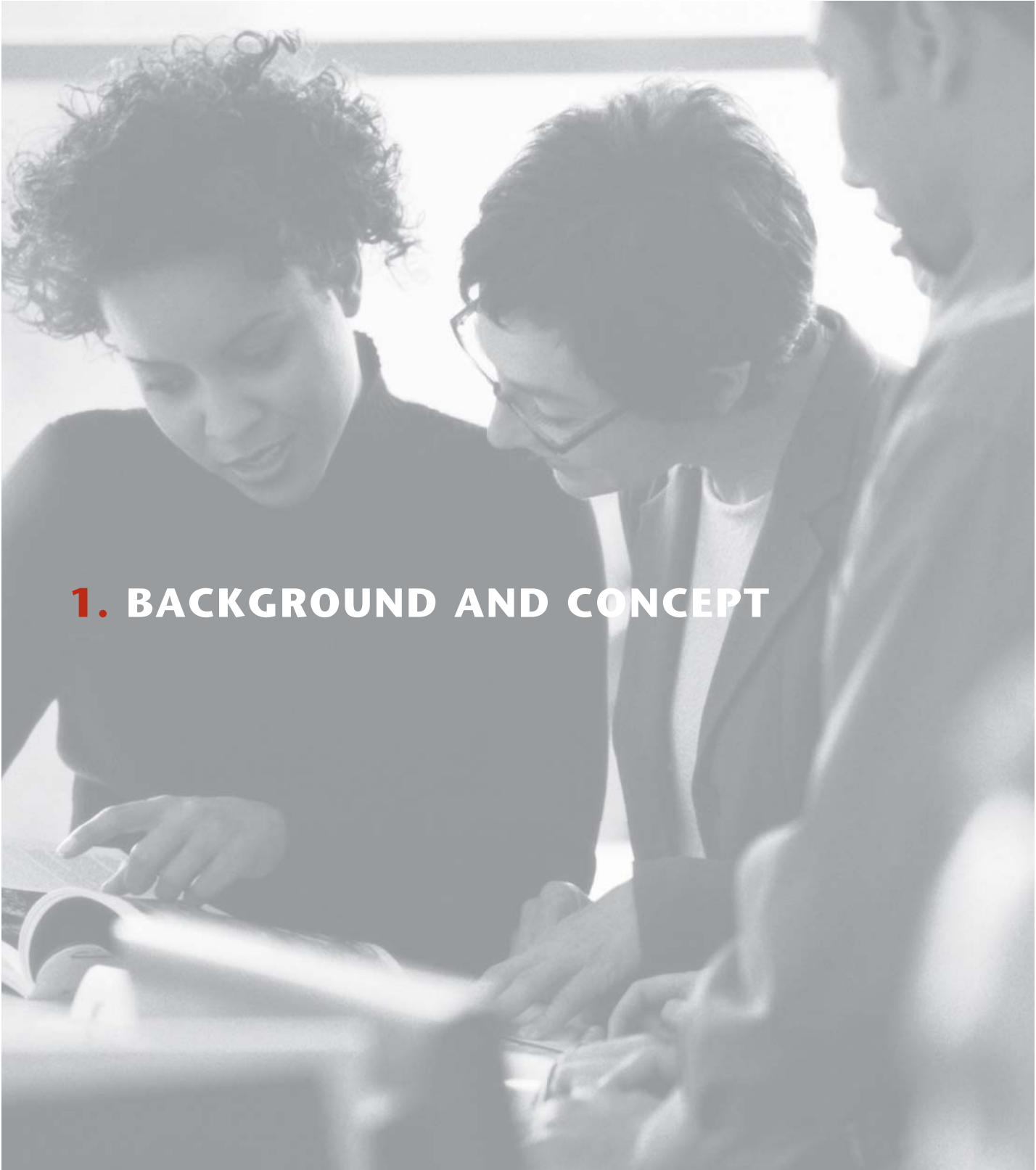
The message from the Commission and this handbook is that facing the future, with all its complexity, needs the learning-area approach across all European tourism destinations. With this approach, more coherent policy implementation for the destination level and other parts of the tourism-sector value chain can be achieved, simplifying the complexity of communications and engendering dynamic tourism destination management, business competitiveness and overall sector sustainability.

COORDINATION PORTAL





1. BACKGROUND AND CONCEPT



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BACKGROUND AND CONCEPT

Background to learning areas

The term 'globalisation' has become a common part of our vocabulary, just as the concept of an integrated European Community has become a part of our everyday reality. Both processes reflect how the new technologies of the 21st century have significantly altered the way we can work and live — improved transport and communications have been instrumental in bringing international markets and global culture within reach of every local European business and citizen. This has created a new set of economic, environmental and social potentials, as well as revealing a complementary set of interrelated and complex problems.

The tourism sector is at the heart of this transformation, being instrumental in developing the global economy through increased travel opportunities, making use of new technologies to deliver its multiple products and services, and being used as a central tool in local and regional development strategies. However, the continued growth and sustainability of the sector also has to be adapted to these new conditions, which is why learning to innovate is so important. An overview of global and European trends helps us to see the context of how learning and innovation is so necessary for continued tourism-sector competitiveness and sustainability.

The metropolitan experience in the USA

In order to cope with or take advantage of these fundamental changes, the traditional economies of nation states are now restructuring with the aim of ensuring their survival in the face of competition in the global marketplace. Europe is no exception — indeed the 2005 Kok report ⁽¹⁾ on progress of the Lisbon strategy singles out the global challenges from America and Asia which threaten European economic performance and our consequent social prosperity. In a post-modern, high-technology era, knowledge and information are the currency of global business and quality of life. The USA, outperforming all but the best of European Member States, has led the way in the development of the information economy, but information technology alone has not delivered guaranteed success:

'... today, it is increasingly recognised that the fundamental building block of national economic prosperity is the wealth and prosperity generated by metropolitan regional economies' ⁽²⁾.

The growth of the US metropolitan regions as the economic engines of the global economy provides a model for modern development strategies elsewhere. In such a model, businesses are increasingly linked within the metropolitan regional structure, forming industry networks that combine a diverse range of specialist enterprises into coherent, spatially connected productive and competitive units. Economic advantage is gained through the flexibility of the overall grouping of enterprises in 'clusters' — groups of companies that cooperate in spatially-proximate networks to deliver compatible goods and services. And at the regional level, social and environmental considerations are more readily taken into account, providing a holistic development ethos in which communities and their workforces are seen as a key component of such economic activities.

⁽¹⁾ Over the period 1996–2003, the EU-15 productivity growth rate averaged 1.4 %, as opposed to 2.2 % recorded for the USA. The decline in EU labour productivity growth rates in the mid-1990s can be attributed more or less equally to a lower investment per employee and to a slowdown in the rate of technological progress. *Facing the challenge — The Lisbon strategy for growth and employment — Report from the High Level Group chaired by Wim Kok*, November 2004, pp. 14–15 (<http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/2004-1866-EN-complet.pdf>).

⁽²⁾ H. Cisneros and M. Weiss, 'Metropolitan economic strategy for America's cities and regions', *Towards the learning region*, Cedefop, 1999.

The European Union experience

Through the Lisbon agreement ⁽¹⁾ and its renewed emphasis in the 2005 'Jobs and growth' initiative ⁽²⁾, the European Union has declared its intent to establish itself as a 'knowledge-based' economy, looking to develop information and communications technology (ICT) throughout its Member States as a means of delivering a competitive edge to its businesses and workforce. Information has become the principal ingredient of every successful economic endeavour, and the means and media in which information is exchanged are of paramount importance. Furthermore, the EU sustainable development strategy ⁽³⁾, the Cardiff process of environmental integration ⁽⁴⁾ and the 'Europe of the regions' of the European cohesion process ⁽⁵⁾ are used as policy guidance for Structural Fund investment to leverage increased regional development to promote an e-European economy capable of counterbalancing its global partners.

In these approaches, it is widely acknowledged that at the regional level, both natural and human resources can be more effectively managed through partnerships between public administrations, businesses and local communities. Increasingly, with the awareness that careful use of natural resources is only one part of the story of economic success, attention has turned to the management of 'human capital' or human potential in the 21st century.

The Lisbon strategy calls for:

information society: defining a regulatory framework for electronic communications; encouraging the spread of ICT; creating conditions for e-commerce; supporting European leadership in mobile communications technologies;

research: setting up of an area of research and innovation; boosting spending on R & D to 3 % of GDP; making Europe more attractive for its best brains; promoting new technologies;

education and human capital: halving the number of early school leavers; adapting education and training systems for the knowledge society; fostering lifelong learning for all; promoting and facilitating mobility.

Learning regions

The move to implement the concept of **learning areas in the tourism sector** stems from this debate on human potential, in which the process of **learning** is seen as the key to improving our individual and collective performance at work and with regard to social and environmental issues. In synergy with the work being done on US metropolitan regional development, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission developed the idea — via the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) ⁽⁶⁾ — as **learning regions or learning communities**. These regions are now being established through the R3L (regional lifelong learning) initiative ⁽⁷⁾.

In 2001, the Commission communication 'Working together for the future of European tourism' ⁽⁸⁾ (developed by the Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission) focused one of its working groups on the question of how to improve training in order to upgrade

⁽¹⁾ 'Lisbon action plan incorporating EU Lisbon programme and recommendations for actions to Member States for inclusion in their national Lisbon programmes', SEC(2005) 192.

⁽²⁾ europa.eu/growthandjobs/index_en.htm

⁽³⁾ Communication of the European Commission, 'A sustainable Europe for a better world: a European Union strategy for sustainable development', COM(2001) 264 final.

⁽⁴⁾ EU summit held in June 1998.

⁽⁵⁾ *A new partnership for cohesion*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004, p. 117.

⁽⁶⁾ <http://cedefop.europa.eu>

⁽⁷⁾ <http://r3l.euproject.net> (see also *Getting to work on lifelong learning: policy, practice and partnership*, Cedefop, 2004, for an examination of the findings of this process).

⁽⁸⁾ Communication of the European Commission, 'Working together for the future of European tourism', COM(2001) 665 final.

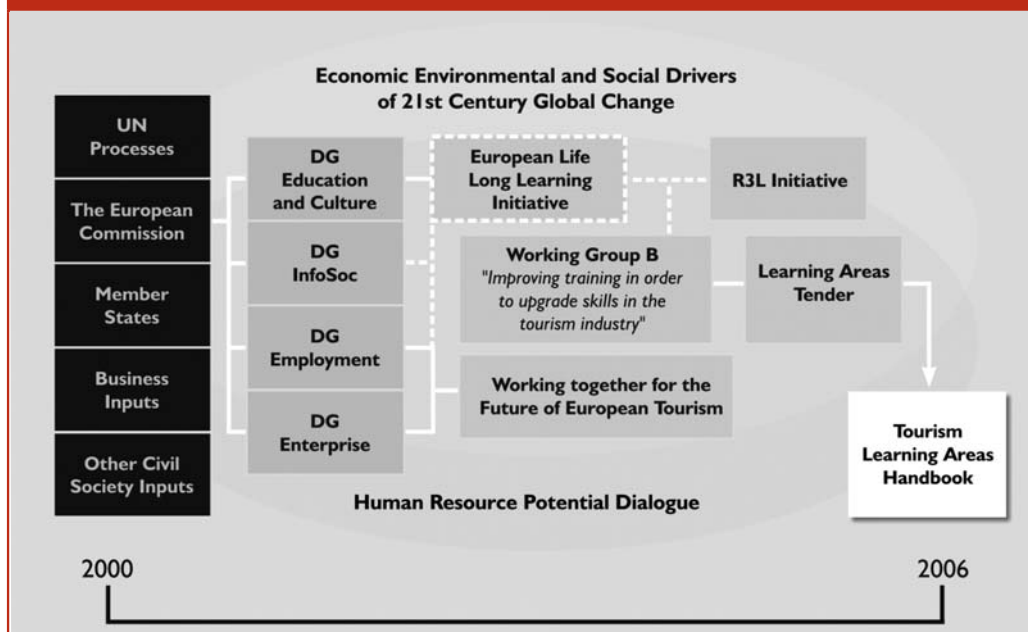
skills in the tourism industry, where the following issues were seen as causing difficulties for tourism stability and growth throughout the European tourism sector:

- (a) attracting, retaining and developing skilled labour;
- (b) supporting micro-enterprises to improve competitiveness;
- (c) ensuring destination quality in an expanding and global market.

A new partnership for cohesion

Although Member States have made considerable efforts to reform and adapt their lifelong learning systems to the knowledge-based economy, the changes made are still not sufficient to meet the challenge. Evidence strongly suggests that in order to create and maintain a minimum level of knowledge-intensive employment, a region must first build up a critical mass of workers with a wide variety of skills. The Community has for many years organised networks linking universities, training institutions and businesses within and between regions and, more recently, has made efforts to establish networks of 'learning regions'.

A ROAD MAP OF THE EU'S TOURISM LEARNING AREA PROCESS



Currently, while the handbook has been under development, tourism learning areas have been piloted in seven different countries. Also, many examples of good practice exist as a result of similar initiatives in which partnerships and networks have been created, in particular within the framework of the R3L initiative (lifelong learning in learning regions), the innovative regions network ⁽¹⁾, and the multitude of regional sectoral entrepreneurial and educational developments that seek to coordinate different actors towards meeting common goals via information exchange and networking.

⁽¹⁾ www.innovating-regions.org

The learning area: a suitable tool for the tourism sector

The tourism learning-area approach is essentially a problem-solving methodology. It is an approach that has to deal with the overall situation of the European economy, which was discussed briefly in the previous section, and also it must provide solutions to the specific challenges faced by the sector. The Commission communication 'Working together for the future of European tourism' ⁽¹⁾ pointed out that the tourism industry in general has problems of retaining labour (high labour turnover) and, in some countries, is experiencing problems of recruiting labour. In many countries the industry struggles with a poor image as a low wage, seasonally erratic employer (particularly in the accommodation and restaurant sectors). Tourism is also experiencing a skills gap.

Despite an improvement in the level of formal education, tourism is still — with exceptions for sub-sectors such as travel agencies, transport companies and tourism organisations — characterised by a relatively low level of education compared with other sectors of the economy. Furthermore, there is evidence that empirical knowledge is no longer enough for businesses to be competitive ⁽²⁾. Finally, in many areas of Europe, the regional environmental resource base and cultural heritage issues challenge the sector to be more aware of its impacts and to be more responsible for maintaining this natural and cultural heritage for the tourism stakeholders of both current and future generations.

Learning and innovation in the tourism value chain

When discussing tourism-sector learning needs and solutions, it is useful to distinguish between large tourism enterprises, who generally manage their own in-house training quite well, and micro-enterprises or small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), who usually have neither the time, inclination nor capacity to benefit from training and educational processes. Yet the European tourism industry value chain consists of over 2 million SMEs, all needing to respond to modern sectoral issues, as well as more than 7.7 million workers ⁽³⁾, who, as individuals, face the same global challenges in their personal lives.

There is therefore an ongoing need to develop a suitable framework for analysing and delivering learning opportunities, particularly for SMEs, and for analysing and identifying skills needs (competencies) in anticipation of contemporary and future job profiles, and to ensure that newly acquired information and knowledge lead to improved entrepreneurial performance. The Commission's working group ⁽⁴⁾ set up to deal with this issue has called for a general improvement of skills for all categories, giving priority to the integration of traditional technical skills with the skills derived from the emerging new job profiles.

⁽¹⁾ See footnote 8 on page 3.

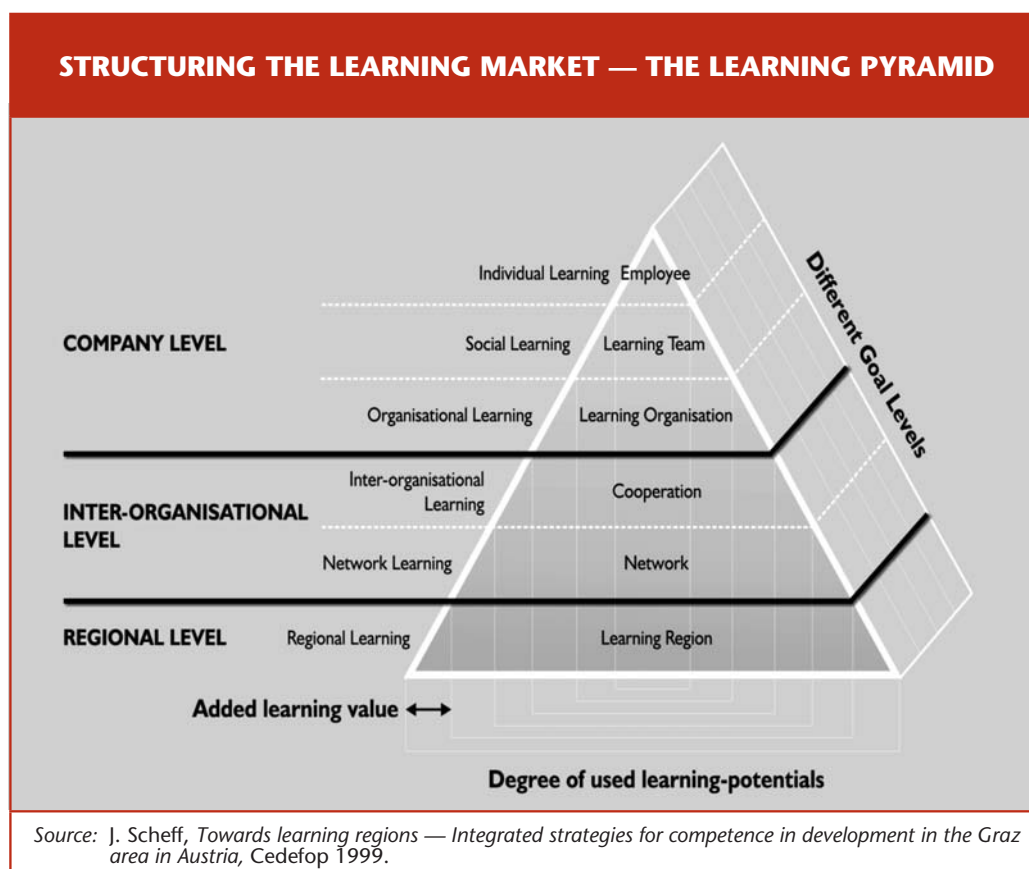
⁽²⁾ Working together for the future of European tourism, working group B, 'Improving training in order to upgrade skills in the tourism sector', interim report, 2000, p. 20.

⁽³⁾ Agenda 21 discussion document, Enterprise DG, 2003.

⁽⁴⁾ Working group B, 'Improving training in order to upgrade skills in the tourism sector'.

Learning organisation

Importantly, this process has identified that the changes in economic operational structures — together with the new job profiles — require SMEs to move from the current situation where their activities are purely based on operations, to a stage where **the organisation, while still being operational, also becomes a development/learning organisation which addresses current and future training needs**. In a learning-area approach, you would expect and encourage companies to be able to adapt to the market by ensuring they implement a learning company strategy. The same is true of the public administrations managing the sector. Such strategies help build the innovative and competitive capacities of SMEs. The following diagram shows how different components of a learning area could be structured for mutual advantage. In this structure, educational processes go beyond the confines of school and university buildings, encompassing every level of economic activity from individual employees to regional development.



The learning area

With this approach, the diverse and often fragmented structure of the tourism sector necessitates the overall development of regionally accessible learning systems. These systems should take account of the problems of seasonality and micro-enterprise/SME needs. Public authorities and their business and social partners should play a major role in the development of these systems, using the existing educational and training structures to build close links with the industry and resident workforce (i.e. creating the 'public administration–learning centre–SME learning for innovation' trinity).

A tourism learning-area administration would support such company development, and even go further than that by focusing on improving business effectiveness in three different ways:

- within educational structures (partnerships between business and higher education, and entrepreneurial education in schools);
- within thematic approaches (networking learning for innovation and sustainability);
- within the geographical region (improved business administration, regional coordination of networks and clustering of networks).

The learning-area approach creates the focus not on formal education as the single solution to the problems but on the capability of the enterprise to develop the existing workforce — in cooperation with training institutions, local/regional authorities, the social partners and other relevant stakeholders. In this manner the development of human resources offers SMEs the opportunity to gain sustainable and competitive advantages alongside other businesses.

Strategic learning

There is also an increased need for research and research-based education through the establishment of close links between universities, the industry and public authorities to improve mutual understanding of problems and goals, and to ensure the coherent dissemination of such knowledge. This type of strategic learning is crucial for understanding how to make the learning-area approach operational; hence the strong emphasis on establishing and reinforcing informal learning structures and continued dialogue between stakeholders. Strategic learning should be developed to improve innovation, competitiveness and sustainability.

Improving the formal and non-formal training and education offers

In particular, alongside strategic learning, the training needs identified in the tourism sector show that there is a requirement for improving general management skills. Attention should be given to skills needed to contend with the impact and potential use of ICT and the development of human resources. Management, networking and training skills are necessary for decision-makers and supervisors. Integrating traditional technical skills with the skills appropriate to emerging new job profiles is most important for the skilled (and semi-skilled) workforce.

A classification of a generic core curriculum for a tourism learning area to be delivered by the area's learning centres is provided in the technical annexes (see Technical Annex 12). It can be targeted at specific tourism stakeholders and broken down to specific courses. Furthermore, such a learning curriculum must be underpinned by user-friendly qualification systems that are achievable by European citizens, reliable for employees, and flexible enough to work in the fast-moving knowledge-based economy. The question remains, though, as to how this be delivered so that it reaches SMEs, public administrators and the tourism workforce? These groups are notoriously short of time (Cedefop has labelled this as a **time-bind** that is currently a common European-wide limitation). That is where a tourism learning area approach comes in ...

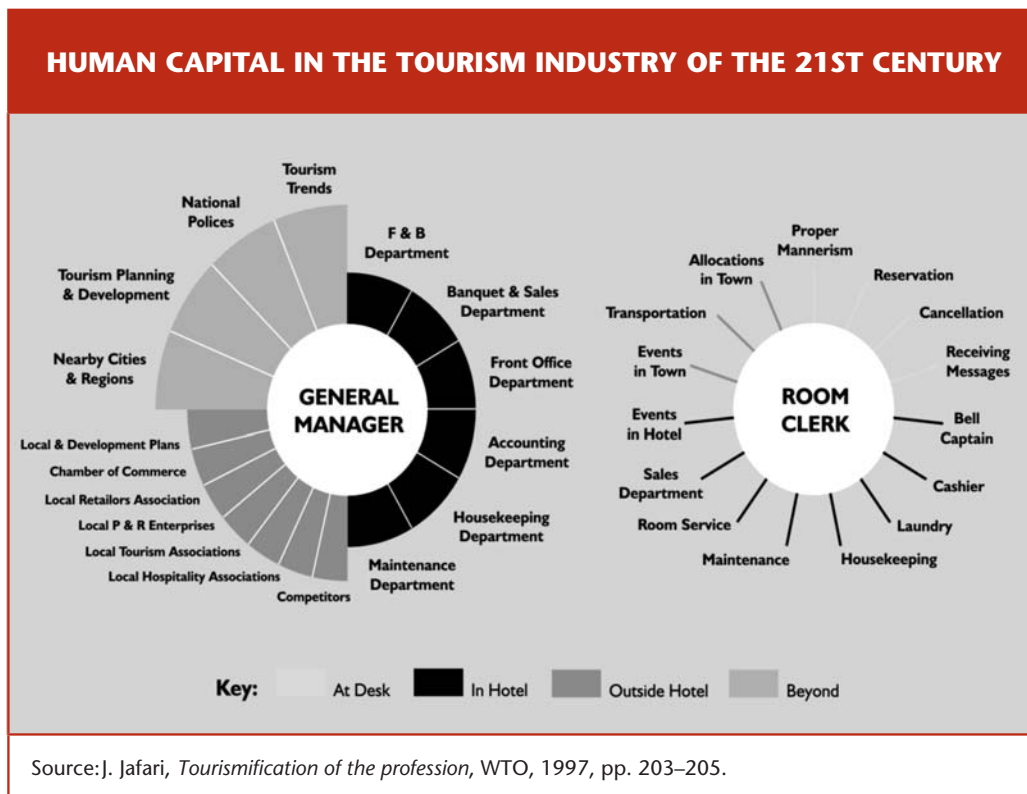
Developing client-centred learning opportunities in the tourism value chain

Learning occurs in a range of formal, non-formal and informal **learning experiences (or learning opportunities)** that can be accessed for any purpose (job-specific or thematic learning), by any age group (lifelong learning), in a variety of settings (for instance schools, colleges, at home, on computers, by word of mouth, newspapers) and by anyone (across a range of stakeholder interrelationships).

The client or demand side of a learning area should not be overlooked when considering how to construct the approach in reality. Both **organisations** and **individuals** will be '**learning-experi-**

ence clients' ⁽¹⁾. Organisations need learning experiences for their staff to ensure that their business is functional and effective. Individuals need learning experiences to further their economic and social opportunities. **Learning organisations/companies** and **learning citizens/employees** are positive elements to be developed in a learning area.

Take a look at the following two diagrams and the host of **learning experiences** they generate. How a destination then meets these demands is up to the **learning-experience providers** — such as educational institutions, trainers and consultants — so that the workforce and SMEs can access the information and skills to meet these new globally driven needs.



These diagrams show how tourism jobs have had to change in order to deal with an ever more sophisticated and complex market situation. Both the position of general manager and room clerk require the employee to be aware of many factors beyond the core work tasks. Providing learning opportunities to deal with such expanded job descriptions is one part of tourism learning area activities. Such learning should encourage employees to innovatively and creatively seek solutions to the problems they encounter.

Learning to innovate in tourism destinations

Within the framework of the learning area, stakeholders who are 'learning-experience providers' (not just learning centres, but all organisations providing information, know-how and guidance) can fine-tune their services by gaining a better understanding of the organisational and individual learning needs in their region.

⁽¹⁾ See the implementation section on stakeholder supply chain links to understand this provider–client relationship more fully.



By raising the profile and status of learning activities, **a learning area develops a dynamic synergy between the individual, the company and the territory**, as shown in the learning pyramid diagram on page 6. An example of this synergy is the continuing efforts of many municipalities and regions to improve local living conditions, to attract skilled workers to live in an area, to create a human resource base, to attract companies and to improve regional competitiveness. Such synergy is a key for developing innovation.

Recently it has become common practice for destinations to jointly market a comprehensive range of products and services within a destination package. In the new economy destinations need to address the issue of learning in the same manner. This can be done by identifying common needs and opportunities, grouping together the relevant stakeholders, and providing common regional infrastructure to meet stakeholders' learning as opposed to marketing requirements. In this respect, the positive experiences of metropolitan areas and innovative regions can be used by tourism destinations to ensure healthy regional economies. The clustering of products and services in the regional supply chain is seen as one of the key goals of a tourism learning area.

Looking at good practice

The innovating regions in Europe (IRE) network (www.innovating-regions.org/) is the platform for European regions to exchange experience and access good practice in regional innovation policies and schemes. Supported since 1994 by the Commission's Enterprise and Regional Policy DGs, the network was recently extended to candidate countries, and now includes more than 200 member regions in 27 European countries, represented by consortia of regional authorities, development agencies, business support professionals, universities and research centres.

The Regional Policy DG offers the following analysis to regions who wish to improve their competitiveness.

'If they wish to be more competitive, businesses – and in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which form the basis of the regions' productive fabric, must anticipate and adapt to the technological changes that are occurring increasingly rapidly on international markets. In this new economy, knowledge and know-how are becoming the raw materials. Consequently, the possibility of gaining swift, easy access to them will be one of the principal strategic competitive weapons. In these circumstances, human capital is proving to be more and more of a determining factor; continuing training and lifelong learning are becoming the keys to innovation and regional competitiveness.'

The learning-area framework is an aid to this process. The higher the quality of the learning opportunities and qualifications, the more likely individuals will be to contribute positively to the overall development of the learning area's economic, environmental and social processes. By centering its participating organisations on the needs of individual workers and companies, the learning area can stimulate the development of more relevant and effective training/educational programmes. Once again, this all leads to a greater ability of individual and firms to deliver innovative entrepreneurial solutions.

Benefits of a tourism learning area

To summarise then, it is worth asking what would be achieved in practical terms if the concept were to be implemented and functioning effectively. When applied to the tourism sector, **a learning area should develop stakeholders who are more capable of:**

- forming partnerships, networks and clusters;
- improving the quality and flow of timely information to regional stakeholders;
- accessing a higher level of learning experiences at the destination/regional level;
- creating quality products and services;
- demonstrating innovative capability;
- increasing performance and outputs to achieve greater competitiveness;
- being more autonomous;
- displaying greater workplace flexibility;
- operating in an entrepreneurial context;
- working with changing technology;
- developing adaptive strategies in the face of globalisation and global change;
- understanding how to work in a more sustainable way;
- enjoying an increase in quality of life, based on fuller access to information.



The Touristische Bildungsoffensive in north-western Germany is for people working as employers or employees in tourism information centres, hotels and restaurants, as farmers or tour guides, or as politicians or decision-makers in administrations. The online platform offers the complete quality assessed training and learning programme of 10 regional providers. Since 2001, through over 300 courses and seminars, thousands of participants have raised their skills to better welcome guests, calculate prices, create new products and market them successfully (www.tourbo-nordwest.de).

From this list it can be seen that a tourism learning area links local/regional public and private-sector stakeholders to an improved set of learning opportunities in order to create innovative, competitive and sustainable businesses. It is clear that destinations, SMEs and public administrations have a lot to gain from taking this development approach. For policy-makers, it is worth asking what would happen if you were not to take such an opportunity to bring some coherence into learning tourism and innovation processes.

Those who are left behind will miss the experience of working in the way information will be accessed in a fully mature global marketplace of regions. Whether they be government departments or businesses, they will suffer from competition or pressure from more informed, more efficient and more qualified rivals whose partnerships and networks are well secured by a learning-region or learning-area approach.

Good practice examples in this handbook

Throughout this handbook you can find examples of good-practice projects which have produced a variety of economic, environmental and social benefits for their areas through learning partnership and innovation initiatives indicative of tourism learning-area actions. Decision-makers should be made aware of these benefits so that learning-area implementation is backed by the necessary level of political support. **Also look at the experiences of the eight provisional tourism learning areas given at the end of the section on implementation.**

Theoretical foundation of learning areas

In order to implement the tourism learning-area concept we need to understand its theoretical foundations. The following explanation initially defines the meaning of the words 'learning' and 'area', before demonstrating the conceptual approach implied in the term.

About the word 'learning' ...

We can start with a look at the concept of '**learning**' in relation to that of '**education**'.

It is important to differentiate between education and learning. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) ⁽¹⁾ defines **education** as follows: '... the term education is ... taken to comprise all deliberate and systematic activities designed to meet learning needs' (ISCED 1997, paragraph 7). Education consists of two subfields: formal and non-formal education. By contrast, **learning** is characterised from the perspective of the individual as '... any improvement in behaviour, information, knowledge, understanding, attitude, values or skills' (ISCED 1997, paragraph 9). The activities to be covered therefore comprise three main areas: formal and non-formal education as well as informal learning (see box).

From these definitions it is clear that a learning area necessarily covers more than the traditional education offer. It is in fact the shortcomings of the traditional education offer that have moved us from the narrow concept of a classical education towards the modern idea of **lifelong learning**.

Formal education: According to ISCED, formal education refers to '... the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous "ladder" of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at age five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old' (ISCED 1997, Glossary). In some countries, however, these age limits need to be extended.

Non-formal education comprises 'any organised and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the above definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages' (Unesco ISCED 1997, Glossary).

Informal learning consists of all intended learning activities and/or situations that cannot be classified as formal or non-formal education. Informal learning activities are characterised by a relatively low level of organisation and may take place at the individual level (e.g. self-directed learning) as well as in groups of people (e.g. at the workplace or within the family). Some of these settings, such as computer-based learning modules or other structured learning material may to a large extent be similar to non-formal programmes while others, such as learning within the family or by visiting cultural events, are difficult capture statistically.

⁽¹⁾ International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (www.unesco.org/education/information/nfsunesco/doc/isced_1997.htm).

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is a concept of a process in which education never ends. Education is open to all ages, continuing after formal education as a range of both formal and informal learning experiences/processes. Lifelong learning offers re-skilling of all sectors of society to reflect the more modern, flexible economy. It is effectively the pedagogical methodology (**style of education**) that ensures competitiveness within a sustainable production and consumption framework. This concept is also accompanied by the idea of 'life-wide' learning (¹), in which learning experiences can be found and developed across the broad spectrum of everyday living. The 'lifelong/life-wide framework' has now been widely accepted as a means of restructuring the educational processes required in the new economy.

About the word 'area' ...

To understand what the word 'area' means in this approach we can take a look at two different meanings usually associated with the word. The first is a physical space; something which has location and boundaries.

Here we use the term to refer to a territorial region, which could be:

- an administrative region,
- a geographical region, or
- a tourism destination.

Secondly, the word 'area' refers to something conceptual:

- a thematic subject matter, or
- a focal point of understanding.

With regard to this concept of a tourism learning area, we can consider the word 'area' in this sense to refer to a thematic subject matter.

Note that in this second case, the term **learning area** has **already** been utilised, and its use can be found in existing educational vocabulary, referring to **subject areas** (such as geography, mathematics, etc.) as 'learning areas'.

From schooldays to lifelong learning

'Lifelong learning encompasses learning for personal, civic and social purposes as well as for employment-related purposes. It takes place in a variety of environments in and outside formal education and training systems. Lifelong learning implies increasing investment in people and knowledge; promoting the acquisition of basic skills, including digital literacy; and broadening opportunities for innovative, more flexible forms of learning. The aim is to provide people of all ages with equal and open access to high-quality learning opportunities and to a variety of learning experiences, throughout Europe. Educational systems have a key role to play in making this vision a reality. Indeed, the communication "Making the European area of lifelong learning a reality, 2001" stresses the need for Member States to transform formal education and training systems in order to break down barriers between different forms of learning.'

European report on quality indicators of lifelong learning, Cedefop, Brussels, June 2002.

(¹) Cf. OECD Ad hoc group on lifelong learning, 1999, Chapter 4.

Learning community

‘A learning community is a city, town or region which goes beyond its statutory duty to provide education and training for those who require it and instead creates a vibrant, participative, culturally aware and economically buoyant human environment through the provision, justification and active promotion of learning opportunities to enhance the potential of all of its citizens.’

Learning region

‘A region which recognises and understands the key role of learning in the development of basic prosperity, social stability and personal happiness, and mobilises all its human, physical and financial resources wisely and innovatively to develop the full human potential of all its citizens.’

Source: European lifelong learning initiative (ELLI).

‘Learning’ + ‘area’ =

This handbook uses the two words together to convey the concept of learning applied to both a geographical area and a thematic area. We can take as examples the **Algarve tourism learning area** or a ‘tourism learning area on sustainable production and consumption’. However, for the main part, this handbook is focused on the definition and realisation of geographically located learning areas, **particularly at the destination or regional level**, although clearly it can be used to develop thematic tourism learning areas.

The term **learning area** in the context of this handbook has developed from two concepts that form the basis of the tourism learning-area viewpoint, namely: learning community and learning region.

From learning regions to tourism learning areas

The learning region concept has moved a long way towards efforts to improve human capital. The quote below shows the three principal ways in which a learning region structure contributes to positive development outcomes.

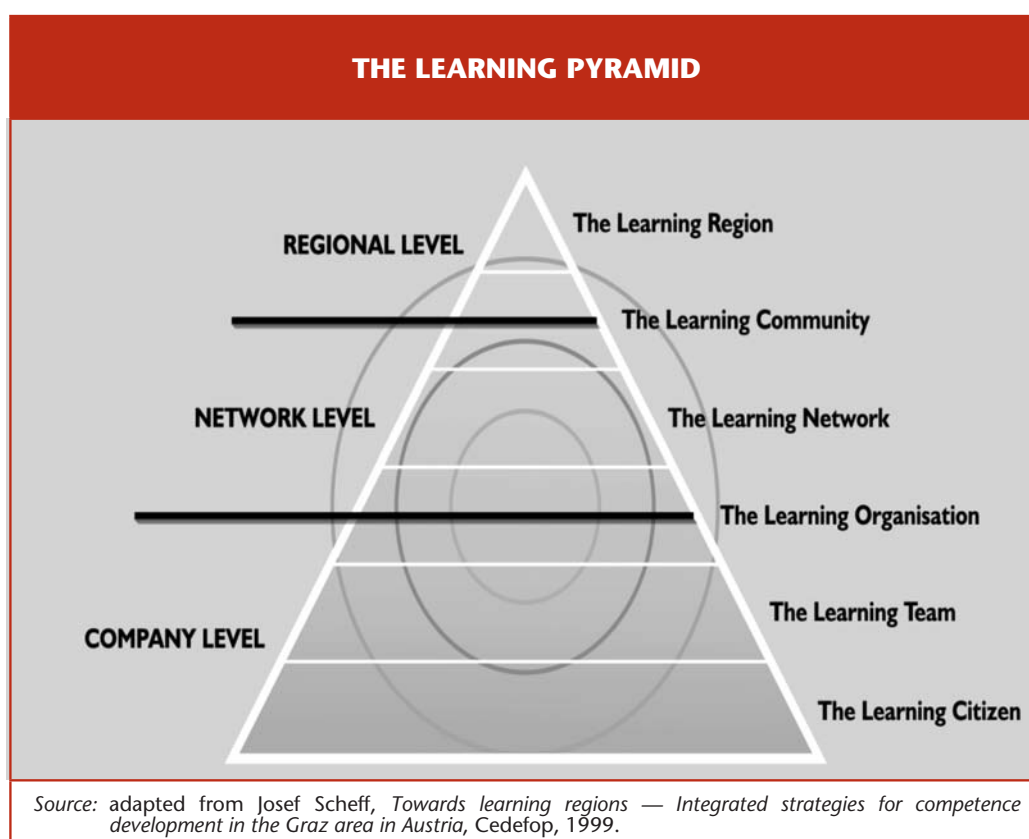
‘Recent studies suggest that knowledge is the central element of production and crucial input to competitive economic activity and the generating of economic growth (OECD, 2001; Malmberg et al., 1999). It also seems that even the most specialised forms of knowledge are becoming resources with a short lifespan. Thus, the capacity to learn continuously and adapt to rapidly changing conditions determines the performance of firms, regions and countries (Lundvall and Borras, 1998). The competitive success depends mainly on the ability to produce knowledge, the diffusion of knowledge and utilising it in the production of goods and services (OECD, 2001; Wolfe, 2002; Morgan, 1997). These factors also form the three central processes of the learning region and the strategic objects of regional development policy utilising its framework.’

Source: Jari Ritsilä and Jukka Haukka, *The role of structural funds in developing learning regions*, University of Jyväskylä School of Business and Economics Centre for Economic Research.

Learning regions and human potential

These are all themes developed within the debate on human resource potential, or the discussion of what has been termed 'human capital'. Making the most of natural resources is clearly understood, is seen as desirable and is achieved under certain conditions of sustainability. However, large gaps remain in developing our full human potential, or human capital, meaning that each destination or thematic area has an untapped potential which can be brought into being by improving the process of learning in the destination. The learning pyramid mentioned in the previous section shows how this can be an inclusive and related regional process, linking individual learning to company learning to regional learning. This type of learning process can turn a region's human potential into practical innovative activities that improve competitiveness and sustainability.

The diagram of the **learning pyramid** is an excellent graphic representation of all the levels of activity that are generated in a learning region. The pyramid also shows how each level is integrated in a regional networking process.



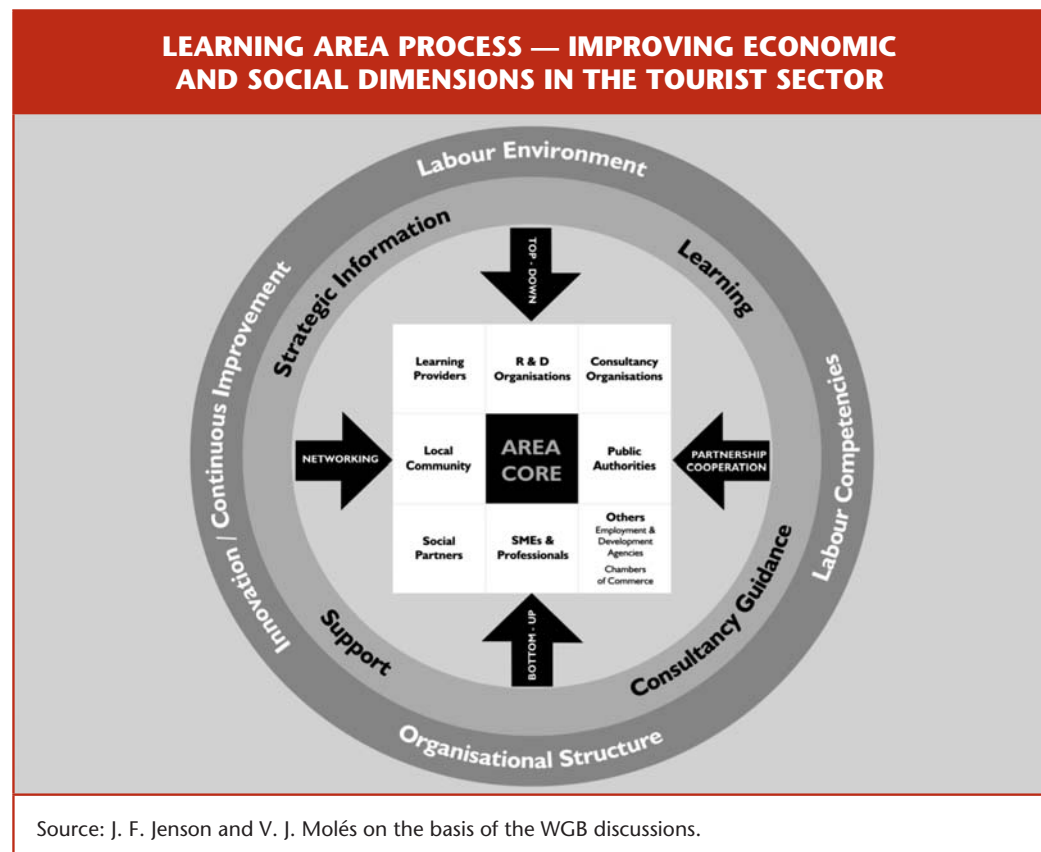
Once all levels are in place, a significant added value is provided to both the whole and its parts, i.e. better information flows and a more developed learning offer provide the higher skills levels and resulting performance improvements for the entire spectrum of stakeholders.

The R3L initiative was launched by the European Commission in April 2003. With EUR 2 million of funding, 120 regions across Europe, centred around 17 projects, are exchanging knowledge and know-how and developing research in order to promote advanced lifelong learning education and

training strategies ⁽¹⁾. Although this initiative is central to the theoretical evolution of tourism learning areas, there has not yet been a comprehensive approach to linking the two subjects in practice. For this reason, the development of the learning-area approach for the tourism sector has its own conceptual dynamic, including and applying the experience of innovative regions and learning regions.

The three dynamic wheels of a tourism learning area

Initially, applying the learning-areas concept to the tourism sector was defined as an approach at the local/regional level aimed at improving competitiveness through learning and innovation. In such an approach, an holistic and systemic solution (i.e. using problem-solving processes that take **all** aspects into consideration from the outset) could be developed to face up to the main challenges of the tourist sector. This conceptual approach was based on three basic premises, which can be visualised as dynamic wheels moving the sector forward ⁽²⁾.



1. The dynamic wheel of stakeholders (centre), formed by involvement of all stakeholders in an area through coherent partnership, networking, and coordination actions that followed top-down/bottom-up approaches.

⁽¹⁾ See footnote 7 on page 3.

⁽²⁾ The following diagrams of the three dynamic wheels approach with their adapted explanation are sourced from V. J. Molés, 'Learning region as an alternative for enhancing the economic and social dimension in tourist areas — some reflections', Agora, Thessaloniki, 15 and 16 March 2001, p. 8.

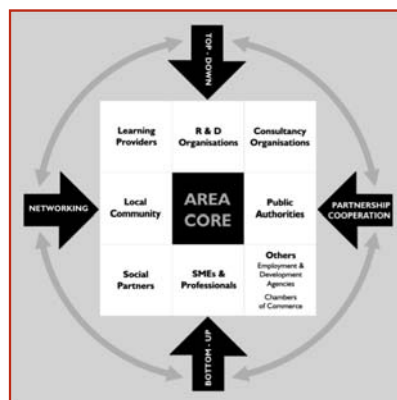
2. **The dynamic wheel of learning (inner)**, formed by the combination of strategic information, learning, consultancy/guidance and support.

3. **The dynamic wheel of labour factors for competitiveness (outer)**, formed by improvements in competitiveness by taking into account the labour environment, organisational structures and competences for transforming knowledge into innovation.

The dynamic wheel of stakeholders

A tourism learning area is built on the involvement of all relevant stakeholders concerned in the solving of the challenges and problems identified for the area. Cooperation is essential, using the partnership/networking practices according to the tradition and culture of the area. SMEs (micros), tourism professionals and employees are the main target group for both stimulating innovation and to ensure ownership and responsibility.

The learning-area process is essentially a bottom-up process but, on the other hand, the bottom-up process needs political and public authority support as a basis for long-lasting support and a holistic view on the number of initiatives that might occur (top-down).



The dynamic wheel of learning

The learning-area concept bridges the gap between education and training systems and the learning processes in the industry in order to improve the transfer of knowledge between research/education institutions and the industry.

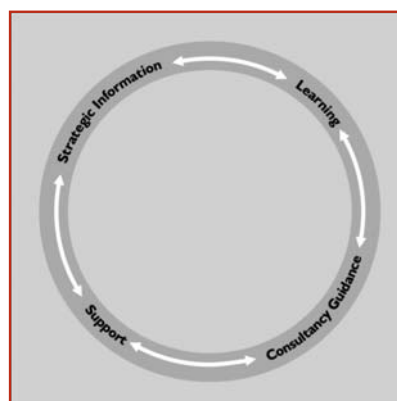
This wheel shows the need to offer strategic information to the industry, for management decisions and prioritising key learning topics. Learning processes need guidance, consultancy and mentoring for transforming knowledge in innovation and support at all levels for running the process.

The dynamic wheel of labour factors for competitiveness

When looking at the competitiveness of enterprises from a human resource perspective, three factors are intimately integrated with innovation and continuous improvement of the company processes:

- (a) labour competences,
- (b) the organisational structure, and
- (c) the labour environment.

The value of the labour competences and the ongoing learning process is closely linked to the organisational structure of the enterprise. Improvements in organisational structure should help the enterprise to engage, combine and use the individual labour competences in an organic manner. And provided there is a sound labour environment, the relationship between the individual and the organisation can result in continuous improvement as well as innovation.



Turning the wheels ...

'For transforming learning into innovation the three wheels must act together; all of them being dynamic and interactive elements. These elements play a critical role in three contexts: inside the enterprises, inside the tourism sector and in the tourism-sector environment (support sectors). All of these contexts are interlinked: that is a very complex reality' ⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ V. J. Molés, 'Learning region as an alternative for enhancing the economic and social dimension in tourist areas — some reflections', Agora, Thessaloniki, 15 and 16 March 2001, p. 8.

In order to manage this complexity and to link these three conceptual elements together in a practical form, the concept of a knowledge network has been applied. This knowledge network is based on structuring a coordination forum:

- to activate the dynamic wheel of stakeholder activity;
- to establish a web portal to activate the dynamic wheel of learning;
- to develop information networks and business clusters to transform learning opportunities into product and service innovation;
- to establish a tourism observatory and innovation centre to manage knowledge network information and transform this information into innovative products and services. (NB: This is a key step, and one of the most important added values of the TLA approach.)



In this formation, participants can use learning opportunities to develop innovative solutions to the sector's challenges. Partnership agreements, marketing networks and business supply-chain clustering are all examples of practical ways in which stakeholders can transform their knowledge into good business practice.

A tourism learning area definition

'A tourism learning area (TLA) is a concept of a multi-stakeholder, inter-sectoral, problem-solving approach aimed at improving SME/micro-enterprise performance and human potential in the tourism sector at the destination level.

The TLA approach engages a broad range of regionally based stakeholders, bringing them together in a top-down/bottom-up process to form coherent information and cooperation networks.

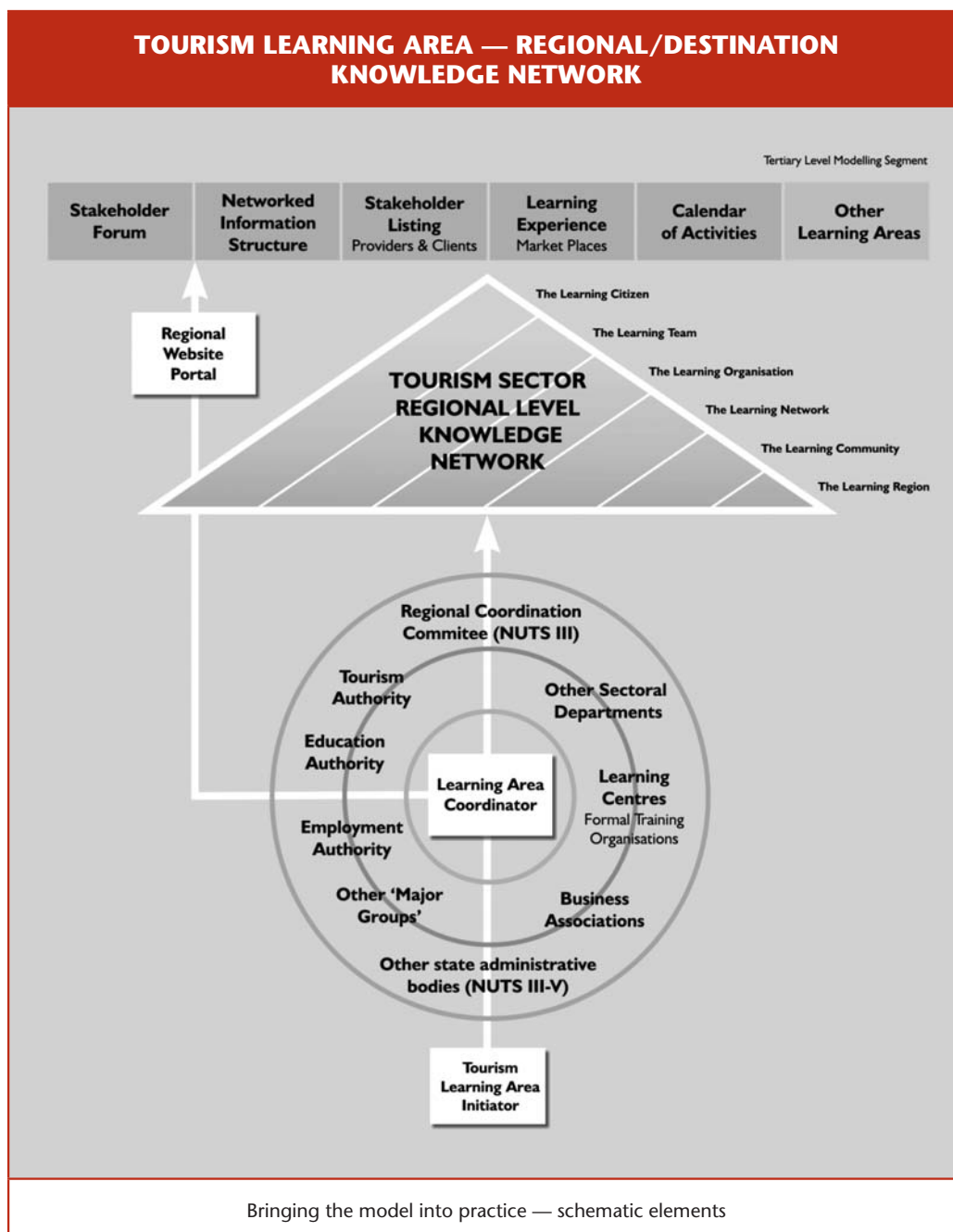
When structured as the primary regional tourism-sector knowledge network, a TLA can address contemporary tourism-sector challenges by developing inter- and intra-organisational collaboration alongside a set of holistic learning opportunities.

These are aimed at continuous improvements in labour competences and organisational management, in order to foster better entrepreneurial quality, innovation, competitiveness and sustainability.'

Here are three ways in which pilot learning-area coordinators have described a learning area.

'A learning area aims to bring together people in a destination (or thematic area) in order to work together to improve their individual performance and the quality of tourism (in the area) through the development and exchange of skills, knowledge and experience. This should include public-sector bodies involved in tourism management and development, representatives of tourism enterprises and facility managers, and training and enterprise support bodies.'

'A learning area aims to maximise the opportunities for learning within an area, or destination learning may arise from participation in courses and from local experiences. Opportunities will be stimulated and coordinated to take into account of what enterprises need to learn. Such needs will be determined by a cooperative approach between public authorities, learning institutes and enterprises themselves.'



'A tourism learning area (TLA) is a concept aimed at improving skills in tourism. It is based on an exchange of learning experiences aimed at increasing quality, innovation and competitiveness within the industry. A TLA consists of a network of all sectors and individuals who contribute to tourism (including local authorities, entrepreneurs, learning institutions, community groups and farmers). It can focus on a geographical area or a specific type of tourism activity.

A TLA recognises the importance of lifelong learning, and accepts that learning takes place in a variety of formal and informal settings, from classrooms to chatting in the street. The process requires an element of central coordination, but ultimately depends on the contribution of all suppliers and consumers of tourism-related learning.⁽¹⁾

From the theoretical concept in the previous section, and now from these viewpoints of how to describe a tourism learning area, we can formally define the concept using a technical definition that elaborates both the processes and structure found in the approach.

The concept of a learning area for the tourism sector should stress the need to focus on improving SME performance through development of a destination-specific learning and innovation framework.

‘That improvement should contribute to the growth of the local economy and the sustainable development of tourism, generate sustainable employment and improve the labour environment and careers perspectives of the local population involved in or entering the sector.’⁽¹⁾

The definition takes into account the economic, environmental and social dimensions of the tourism sector and the tourist geographical area.

Activities to be undertaken in a tourism learning area

A set of key learning-area activities to be undertaken by a multi-stakeholder approach can now be elaborated:

- identifying relevant stakeholders;
- identifying regional characteristics and resources;
- diagnosing destination-specific tourism-sector problems and opportunities;
- improving the flow of timely and useful information between relevant stakeholders;
- providing strategic information to improve competitiveness and sustainability;
- acting as a support and catalyst for innovation and continuous improvement in the area;
- using information distribution channels to facilitate bottom-up networking processes such as building partnerships, enhancing stakeholder cooperation and aggregating tourist products and services into efficient clusters⁽²⁾;
- understanding regional learning needs;
- providing a greater range of relevant learning opportunities;
- improving the quality of learning opportunities;
- dynamically supporting the placement of skilled people in the sector (attracting workers, training staff and securing jobs);
- supporting and developing specific programmes for managers in SMEs and micro-enterprises focusing on human resource management;
- providing training and support for improved public administration of the destination;
- identifying potential markets, sources of funding and capacity-building initiatives for the area stakeholders;
- using ITC to deliver the above activities.

⁽¹⁾ V. J. Molés, ‘Learning region as an alternative for enhancing the economic and social dimension in tourist areas — some reflections’, Agora, Thessaloniki, 15 and 16 March 2001, p. 13.

⁽²⁾ Clusters: ‘geographic concentrations of complementary, interdependent, yet competing enterprises, their suppliers, service providers and associated institutions’, communication from the Commission entitled ‘Innovation policy: updating the Union’s approach in the context of the Lisbon strategy’, COM(2003) 112 final, p. 8.

The scope of learning-area activities

Central to these activities is the holistic way of providing learning — the ‘**dynamic wheel of learning**’ elaborated in the theory section. The key actors in a learning area should be fully aware of how to develop strategic information, learning, consultancy/guidance and support for the benefit of local and regional stakeholders. This facilitates the transformation of **knowledge into innovation** ⁽¹⁾ and **continuous quality improvement** for SMEs, the workforce and the public administrators managing the destination.

It is clear from the above list that a tourism learning area has a very wide scope of activities. **Prioritisation of activities** will be the main means for determining the scope of a learning area in practice. However, since education and learning accompany almost all aspects of living and working, then it is really a matter for learning-area participants to prioritise their activities. To start with, **as argued above, priority should be given to the organisation of coherent inter-sectoral educational governance for the benefit of tourism activities conducted by the destination’s SMEs. This means getting the right people round the table to implement a coherent work programme to improve learning opportunities that foster entrepreneurial ability and pragmatic networking processes.**

Setting up such a structure involves a process of determining what issues a tourism learning area should address, and how it should prioritise these issues. The following stakeholders have such knowledge, and can together determine the form and content of each learning area:

1. regional development organisations (coordinating bodies, sectoral departments, public–private partnerships);
2. business associations (SMEs, managers, owners, employees);
3. learning centres (educational or training institutes);
4. local/regional authorities (councils, NUTS III–V);
5. local social partners (trade unions, NGOs);
6. individual consumers, destination residents and workers.

As learning areas have been conceptualised as following both top-down and bottom-up processes, identification of all stakeholders is a key part in defining the scope of a given learning area. In view of the number, diversity and complexity of the stakeholder interactions of any tourism destination, it is useful to develop an overview of how stakeholders can be placed in their market role by mapping them into a **tourism value chain and destination development model** ⁽²⁾. In the following diagram we can see the potential links in the production and consumption patterns of tourism stakeholders.

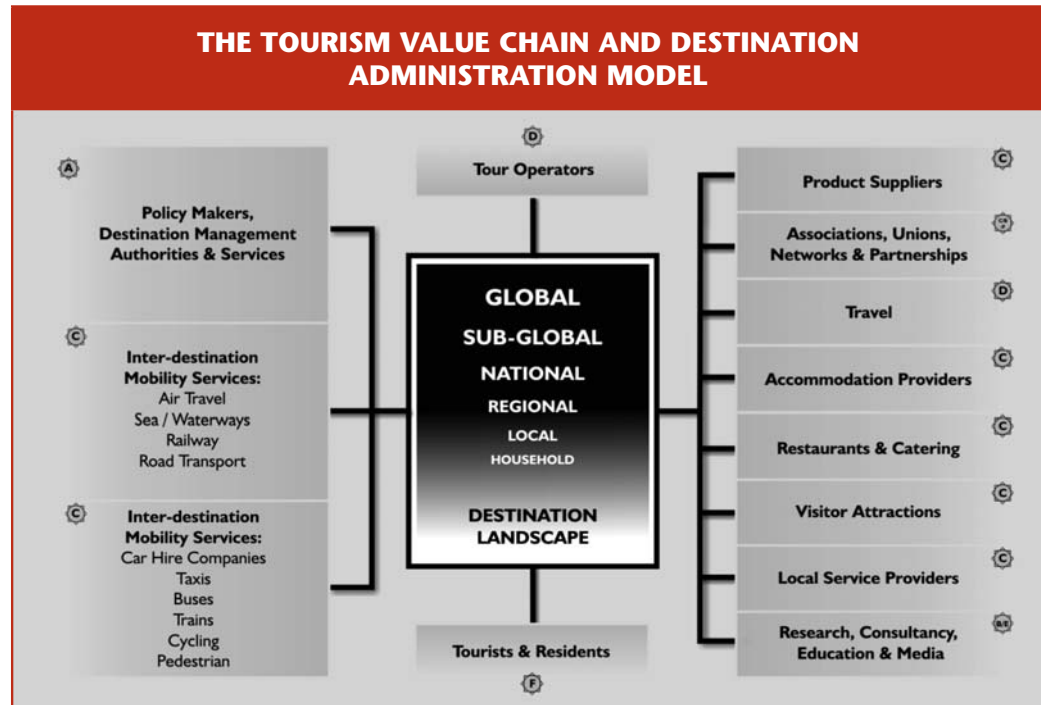
The categorisation of stakeholders and the links between them in this form provides a structure to determine:

- where in the value-chain learning experiences need to be improved;
- who may support these improvements as learning-experience providers/supporters;
- the demand-side framework for learning experiences that clients may require.

A tourism learning area will encompass all the segments of the tourism value chain shown above. A functional learning area needs to develop a complex set of partnerships and networks between the stakeholders in each segment to make it work. A learning area can provide order and access to the information, training and learning processes necessary for stakeholders to be competitive in the global economy. Furthermore, tourism learning areas are of concern to all the abovementioned stakeholders in the tourism industry, and also to stakeholders from related sectors interacting with this chain.

⁽¹⁾ A concise definition of innovation is ‘the successful production, assimilation and exploitation of novelty in the economic and social spheres’.

⁽²⁾ Adapted from ‘The tourism sustainability supply chain model 2002’, © in the *STOA report — Improving support measures for sustainable tourism*, Ecotrans, 2002.



In fact, it may be that many learning areas will initially only be capable of establishing the educational governance structures that **enable** learning experiences to be more fully developed, rather than developing and improving on the range of learning experiences themselves. This would be a major achievement in itself and pave the way for the market to provide improvements in the quality and quantity of learning experiences and innovative business processes.

This focus on governance **structures** (in both private and public organisations) should be clearly in the mind of learning-area participants, since it is one way to make meaningful, and then influence, the vast and diverse range of topical learning experiences that occur in any given area. Therefore the **form** of a learning area becomes more important than its **content** when examining the work needed to be done in the early days of establishing a tourism learning area; hence, the area's focus on the dynamic wheel of stakeholders and their coordination in a tourism knowledge network.

Furthermore, the focus of the educational governance structures on human resources development should be to clearly state that the primary intention of a learning area is to improve human potential to support SMEs and micro-enterprises in order to develop their innovative and competitive capacities. Therefore both performance of small firms and individuals in the workforce (or in the destination) provide the focal point of the scope of governance actions. Corporate entities are considered to have their learning requirements systems in good order and to have resources to implement their own learning-experience programmes. SMEs and micro-enterprises will not have these structures and resources at their disposal. Hence, both the State and the market provide a patchwork of training and education to meet their needs. In a tourism learning area, this patchwork would be brought to a greater level of coherence via the **formation of regionally scaled public-private networks and clusters to deliver improved learning offers and an increase in learning opportunities to suit regional conditions.**

Matching tourism stakeholder activity to policy fields

The aim of the learning-area approach to make tourism education a 'lifelong' and 'life-wide' regional process offers the broadest possible scope for intervention in the formal and informal provision of learning experiences. Adult education is a focal point for learning-area intervention in the education field, as is the use of schools for training in entrepreneurship. Strategic learning linking planners, researchers and the business community is another key learning-area focal point, as is the initiation of information and awareness campaigns on regional sustainability, global opportunities, improved marketing techniques, etc.

Given the wide definition of the subject of learning, an understanding of the approach that purely focuses on tourism training and education will not conform to the broad context addressed by the learning-area concept. To determine the full scope of the activities of a tourism learning area, a range of policy fields should be examined as to how they impact on the sector itself. These fields include:

The **scale of activities** is an important consideration when setting up a tourism learning area. Many examples of innovative regions and learning regions are large-scale initiatives involving regional partnerships and several millions of euros of funding for broad multiannual programmes. Tourism learning areas can be destination level initiatives of a smaller scale, especially when starting off. However, the regional level of activity is recognised as giving the appropriate scale for intervention in learning processes, and must be addressed by the destinations wishing to set up learning areas.

- tourism,
- environment,
- education,
- information technology,
- employment,
- regional development.

By drawing out key themes common to these sectoral departmental divisions, a policy grid can be elaborated in further detail. This will characterise what specific issues are contained within the above fields, and define those policy processes that are relevant to tourism learning areas in order to help improve human potential for the benefit of the tourism sector.

TOURISM LEARNING AREA — GOVERNANCE POLICY GRID												
Policy document name	Target group — SMEs/micro-enterprises					Coordination		Target group — workforce individuals				
Policy documents: administrative/geographical level	Entrepreneurship	Innovation and IT	Competitiveness	Sustainable production and consumption	Cohesion and regional development	Good governance	Tourism-specific	HRD	Employment	Lifelong learning	Education	Training

Often presented as general policies, these governance processes are integral to the specific resourcing and development of the sector. Part of the strategic advantage of developing a tourism learning area is that it can deliver such a clear policy map for all stakeholders, who in turn can see how they can use this knowledge to their individual and collective advantage.

The section on **further support** develops the use of this policy matrix further, so that the scoping exercise will lead you directly to funding and resourcing opportunities.

Developing a policy road map to guide learning-area decision-making

As a learning area grows and matures, its coordinators should clearly elaborate a road map of increasingly coherent policy-making for the tourism sector. More coherent funding and resourcing decisions will naturally follow. In this way, the scope of learning-area activities will match the growth in the organisation of the learning area itself, making it more capable of taking on the wide range of issues entailed in delivering improved learning experiences for sectoral success.

Therefore, a scoping exercise of the type of work to be undertaken in the first steps of developing learning-area activities involves:

- SME capacity building,
- good governance focus,
- entrepreneurial skills focus.

The road map to achieve these three objectives should be defined as a collective exercise between stakeholders (see phase III of the implementation section). This will demand a great deal of cooperation between local stakeholders, so it is worth examining how a learning area will help form the strategic alliances that enable learning opportunities for innovative actions.

Modelling inter-organisational cooperation

Organisations do not exist in a vacuum. Even though the ‘free marketplace’ is conceived as being composed of individually competing firms requiring a minimum of public regulation, the reality is that there is a very complex set of relationships between private firms themselves, as well as between private firms, public administrations and civil society organisations. Whether it is considering competition or cooperation, an organisation must take into account its potential to relate to other entities.

The following forms of inter-organisational cooperation are considered important in a tourism learning area:

- partnerships,
- networks,
- clusters.

These concepts are not necessarily new to the tourism world, but they have become an essential means for doing business in the global economy. Strategic alliances via partnership agreements have been part of the history of human commerce; networks and clusters are more recent phenomena, in which groups of organisations find virtual and physical proximity along the supply chain and within a given spatial area. It is important that such links are developed to maximise the qualities of each participating entity. In this way, the alliance will achieve added value to each participant.

Qualities of model strategic alliances

- Participants prepare a **clear profile** of themselves for external assessment.
- A clear **memorandum of understanding** needs to be developed at the outset.
- **Objectives** of the alliance should be clear and kept up to date.
- The organic **growth potential** of cooperation agreements should be understood.

- **Formal and informal agreements** should be assessed for their suitability at each stage.
- A **coordination process** or **body** should be identified at an early stage.

The **work programme** of the alliance should be commonly agreed.

- **Resourcing** the work programme should be transparent.
- **Cooperation agreements** should be defined in terms of both content and timetables.
- The responsibility of each participant should be clearly defined and agreed.
- A **mechanism** for **discussion**, **negotiation** and **agreement** should be transparent.
- A **mechanism** for **mediating differences** should be in place.
- A **reporting system** should be put in place to provide participants with a regular overview of the alliances' achievements and impact.
- Well-managed **information flows using ITC** between participants should be given high priority.
- **Implementation of ITC infrastructure** systems should be given priority.
- **Growth of the alliance** should be managed in line with existing objectives, allocated resources, expertise and time.
- **Alliances** should be **open to change and transformation**.
- Face-to-face contact is important.

Partnerships, networks and clusters are at the heart of the tourism learning-area approach. Their development in a given geographical area, or in a specific thematic area, allows for economies of scale — and '**economies of scope**' — to develop for smaller units of production. Sharing of resources, skills and information can make the crucial difference between successful and unsuccessful businesses and projects.

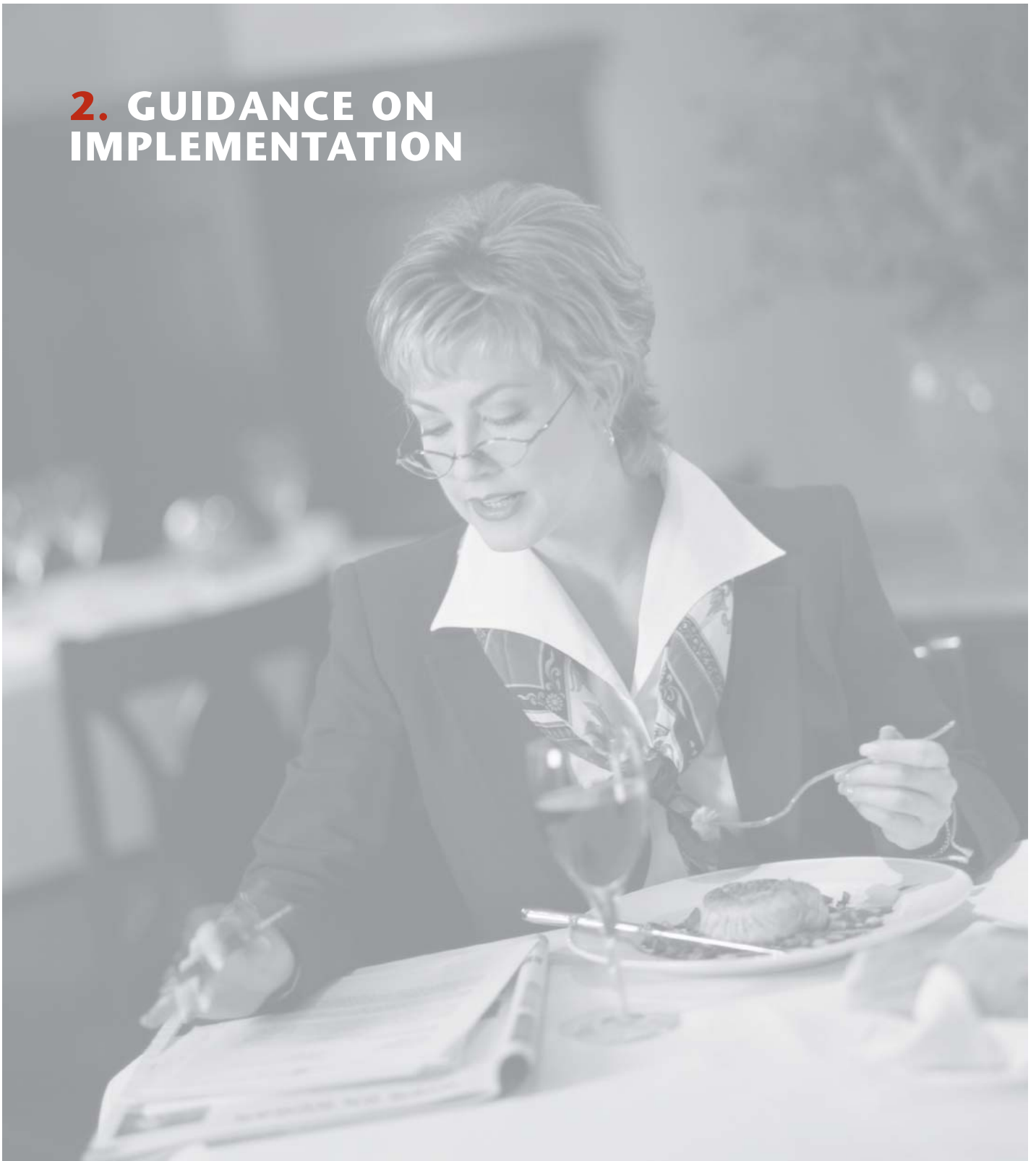
In a global economy, regional cooperation is proving to be a useful model for firms and public administrations to meet their goals. A strong regional administration will support the development of the partnerships and networks that may not necessarily form by themselves, and help link businesses to learning centres when those links may not be so easy to make. This enabling role of coordination bodies is particularly important in the development of networks and network clusters, where the scale of interaction and the necessary infrastructure may require planning and resourcing levels beyond the reach of the entities in question.

In conclusion to this section it should be said that **the vision that stakeholders have of the learning-area process is a major determinant of the scope of activities, and this vision should be based on a sound awareness of learning-area background, theory and concepts**. Remember, to achieve the objectives of a learning area in practice, it is clear that the awareness-raising and implementation phase and **coordination** of a tourism learning area are to be given first priority. These actions alone will generate a sufficient framework of activities to keep busy. As stakeholders learn more about each other and new economic possibilities, there is then further scope for action on tourism **learning content and the development of innovative capacity**.

For the technically minded, the full tourism learning-area model of excellence is detailed in Technical Annex 1



2. GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTATION



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GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing a learning area — three steps to making the model a reality

From the theoretical section, we can see how the learning-area approach needs to be supported by **all** stakeholders concerned, with public authorities playing a critical role in its implementation through political and economic support for initiatives by business and other social partners. Also, for the most part, public authorities and learning centres are expected to play a steering role in the complex partnerships required in the coordination and operation of tourism learning areas.

‘Complex partnerships’ do not form by themselves. The multi-sector, multi-thematic and multi-level networking and coordination that is required is a time-consuming process. The right organisations need to be involved, and individuals in these organisations need to understand the concept. Take-up of the concept will be facilitated if regional organisations can adapt their own ongoing initiatives to the learning area’s framework. Human, financial and technical resources are also needed to achieve this. Someone has to take on the job of initiating this process, and along the way someone (perhaps an organisation other than the initiator) will have to coordinate it.

Individuals in these partnerships need the vision to see the links between networking and learning, and then how to turn that new knowledge into innovative actions. Innovative actions enable the objectives of competitiveness and sustainability to be reconciled in a pragmatic problem-solving approach. Tourism businesses should be the first to understand how important economic, environmental and social factors are in terms of doing good business. As the global economy shapes up, this understanding will be of paramount importance.

Public administrations, learning centres, business associations and trade unions will need to come together to design, develop and manage a tourism learning area. Each stakeholder grouping has various strengths which should be used synergistically, and various weaknesses, which should be overcome collectively. From the outset there is a need for ambassadors of the concept. Such ambassadors will need good organisational and networking skills to bring players to the table. They will also need a clear understanding of the concept to present it in such away as to appeal to all stakeholders. This section of the handbook provides guidance for those who will take the learning-area approach from a theoretical concept and transform it into a practical working reality.

General view of the TLA implementation process

The overall process of setting up a learning area involves three main steps (namely **initiation, coordination** and **development**). This will involve:

- an initiator to get the ball rolling;
- identification of stakeholders who have an interest in developing learning and networking mechanisms;
- raising awareness of needs and challenges, and forming goals and possibilities;
- establishing a coordination process for stakeholders to act collectively;
- profiling the TLA learning offers and requirements;
- developing a work programme that involves designing and constructing a web portal to bring stakeholder networks together;
- implementing learning opportunity improvement projects and processes;
- monitoring your progress.

Each tourism learning area will start with someone or some organisation acting as the **initiator of the process**. The initiator first of all identifies his or her potential learning area's:

- level of territorial or thematic interest (i.e. a local destination, region, subject matter);
- range of stakeholders who could be interested (cross-sector, multi-level, multi-stakeholder);
- potential ambassador of the approach;
- existing learning-experience marketplaces (learning centres, information distribution systems).

This will constitute the first **informal profiling** of the tourism learning area. The initiator will develop this profile in a presentable format, and **disseminate the information widely**.

Once a number of key stakeholders have been made aware of the process and its potential, the initiator will need to call a **stakeholder working meeting** to define the existing situation in order to arrive at a loose **network of cooperating organisations**. **At this stage, the initiator can register his or her interest in setting up a learning area with the Enterprise and Industry DG. A coordination process** should be defined at this point, with the development of **an initial working programme with specific common goals**.

It will also be necessary for stakeholders to conceptualise how all the local links can then be made between all the theoretical elements of the learning-area approach, using the **tourism learning-area model of excellence**. This will demonstrate the potential connectivity between stakeholders from a previously random set of interactions. A **questionnaire** can be used either formally or informally to develop this information. The coordinator then maps these elements as networks. This will produce a complex matrix of interactions that require coherent linkages. This can be done by developing a common practical and functional **tourism learning-area network portal**. This will provide a visual map of the tourism learning area in question, displaying a marketing place for learning experiences as well as defining a knowledge network for information exchange.

A planning and reporting process on how the **public and private governance of the system** can be reorganised to optimise human resource potential development for the learning area can be managed by the coordination body. This will lead to **evaluation and development** of the area's **learning-experience resource base and its learning offers**. Progress of the development of the learning area should then be continually **monitored through a series of process and performance indicators**.

All the points in the example checklist are then elaborated in further detail. Although they are presented sequentially, certain tasks run parallel to each other. In particular, the development of the web portal will overlap many of the latter stages of work, so in many cases there is no need to wait for each stage to be completed before starting the next step.

A CHECKLIST OF HOW TO SET UP A TOURISM LEARNING AREA

Please use this list literally as a checklist to keep you on track with the process. Tick the boxes as you complete each activity.

Phase I (initiation)

- ☐ Understand the concept and definition
- ☐ Consider your needs, potential goals and the possibilities of how to apply the TLA concept to meet the challenges facing your destination or subject area
- ☐ Do a brief informal survey to gain a preliminary profile of stakeholders, existing activities and identify the PLA boundaries (geographical area or thematic area)
- ☐ Prepare explanatory material to disseminate the learning-area concept in your own language (stating the concept, business case, needs, etc.)
- ☐ Develop multi-level contact lists and identify key stakeholders and potential ambassadors of the approach
- ☐ Create awareness and interest, make contacts, disseminate material calling for a working meeting (NB: timing is important!)

This marks the end of the initiation phase.

Now the process moves towards a more collective framework, where several organisations need to cooperate.

Phase II (coordination)

(At the working meeting) Identify and agree on some common goals and a coordinating body or partnership from key stakeholders

- ☐ **At this stage the initiator can register their interest in setting up a learning area with the Enterprise and Industry DG (see Technical Annex 19)**
- ☐ Establish a working group
- ☐ Develop a work plan, identify resources and support
- ☐ Draw up a comprehensive stakeholder list of learning-experience providers
- ☐ Draw up a comprehensive stakeholder list of potential learning-experience clients
- ☐ Draw up list of examples of learning experiences relevant to region (gap analysis, best practice)
- ☐ Develop a website as an information exchange forum and multiple marketplace central information point
- ☐ Develop, agree and sign a simple protocol of collaboration (open access/participation)

You will by this stage have set up your tourism learning-area coordination structure.

The next phase involves using this structure to execute specific actions

Phase III (development)

- ☐ Draw up an in-depth regional profile
- ☐ Develop an operational framework (goals, partnership commitments, meeting schedules, events) including a list of practical activities
- ☐ **At this stage the initiative can receive full recognition from the Enterprise and Industry DG as being a full tourism learning area (see Technical Annex 19)**
- ☐ Monitor learning-area progress

CONGRATULATIONS! ... YOUR LEARNING AREA IS UP AND RUNNING ...

Three steps to setting up a tourism learning area

This section takes you through the steps of how to **apply** the learning-area theory by using theoretical concepts and the **model of excellence** (see Technical Annex 1) in a three-stage process designed to establish a tourism learning area in reality. In the initiation phase you will develop an understanding of the concept, prepare its presentation and establish who is to be involved in a defined area. In the coordination phase you will develop a coherent work structure to coordinate existing activities and set initial goals and priorities. In the **development stage** you will develop these activities to match your destination's learning needs to improve the region's human potential and SME performance.

Phase I — initiation

'How can I set one up if I don't know what it is?'

A **key task list** highlights what you should do at each stage. You will also find either an explanatory document or a report form attached to each step in the **technical annexes**.

Part I of this handbook elaborates the theory of learning areas, and this provides the foundation for learning about the development, structure and functions of learning areas. More in-depth background information is available in the technical annexes, and on the learning-area CD-ROM accompanying this book.

Key points in applying the theory and the concepts behind the definition

A tourism learning area above all seeks to match the human resource potential of a given region to the demands of the modern tourism sector in that area, in order to improve SME competitiveness and sustainability.

A tourism learning area is initially focused on developing **the dynamic wheel of stakeholders** (p. 39), i.e. developing a multi-stakeholder process — multi-stakeholder means that all actors in the tourism supply chain should be considered in the coordination and networking process. This means ensuring that the public sector, private sector and civil society/social partners are sitting at the discussion table.

Specifically, business associations, education and learning centres, trade unions and NGOs, should be brought together along with public-sector representatives from tourism employment, environment and information technology departments. Regional coordination bodies and local councils complete the 'core area' of the stakeholder learning network. The coordination of these public actors (those responsible for the policy lines, budgets and projects) in an open, participative manner is a practical requirement for improving SME performance.

It should be a cross-sectoral approach, using tourism as a cross-cutting theme to involve the energy, technology, industry, environmental, agro-forestry and transport sectors.

The concept of the **dynamic wheel of learning** (p. 16), i.e. developing a series of activities, 'formed by the combination of strategic information, formal to informal learning, consultancy, guidance and support' is brought into play as an equal to the concept of marketing activities. (We are all familiar with the idea of increasing the marketing potential of a destination to benefit local SMEs, but it is new — yet very logical — to think about the idea of how to increase the **learning potential** of a destination to improve sectoral performance.)

Clearly, the higher the learning potential achieved, the higher the quality of human participation in the tourism value chain. Businesses with this '**learning edge**' should prove to be more competitive, flexible and sustainable. Administrations which are following a **learning region** approach will be able to be more responsive to SME needs or destination development issues.

The stimulation of these learning activities is directed by learning centres, business associations and public administrations that already have an interest in the relevant policy areas, such as competi-

tiveness, innovation, sustainable production and consumption, human resource development, and regional development (see the dynamic wheel of competitiveness p. 16).

A closer look at that technical definition

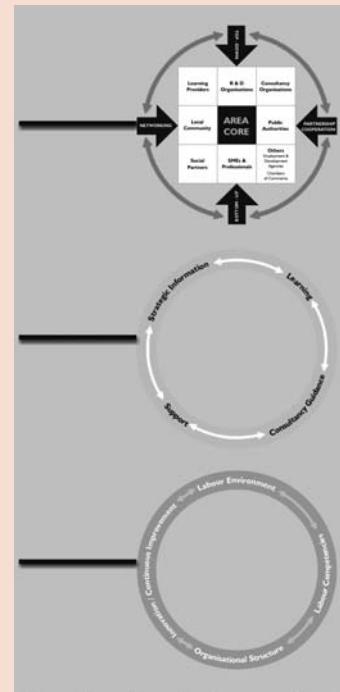
A tourism learning area (TLA) is a concept of a multi-stakeholder, inter-sectoral, problem-solving approach aimed at improving SME performance and human potential in the tourism sector at the destination level.

The TLA approach engages a broad range of regionally based stakeholders, bringing them together in a top-down/bottom-up process to form coherent information and cooperation networks (**dynamic wheel of stakeholders**).

When structured as the primary regional tourism-sector knowledge network, a TLA can address contemporary tourism-sector challenges by developing inter- and intra-organisational collaboration alongside a set of holistic learning opportunities (**dynamic wheel of learning**).

These are aimed at continuous improvements in labour competences and organisational management, in order to foster better entrepreneurial quality, innovation, competitiveness and sustainability (**dynamic wheel of labour factors for competitiveness**).

N.B. Refer additionally to the diagrams within the subsection *The Three Dynamic Wheels of a Tourism Learning Area* in Section 1.



Potential networks, partnerships, and **clusters** (i.e. strategically aligned networks in a given geographical area or along the tourism supply chain) need mapping and then modelling for development of a common vision, manifested in a learning-area regional portal (to activate all three dynamic wheels, see the theory section on p. 16 and Technical Annex 1 on the TLA model of excellence).

Understand that the implementation of this concept requires a strategy, resources, good communication, leadership and mediation skills. Timing is important.

If you choose to implement this concept, or know the organisation and the person who could act as an ambassador, then be prepared to explain the concept to other people clearly and simply.

This portal will reflect the reality of regional cooperation and networking arrangements, showing just how much the learning region concept is actually being applied in practice.

The creation of this site for information exchange and marketplace activities is the practical result of the coordinated action to establish the learning area.

Initially, existing business networks, public services and formal **learning-experience providers** such as schools, universities and training institutes will be listed, with more informal sources of learning being identified as regional information channels are integrated into the portal.

Clients of these experiences will be drawn from the tourism destination supply chain and destination management organisations. SMEs and micro-enterprises are key targets for this action, as they have difficulty in benefiting from current education and training systems.

The improvement in delivery and quality of learning experiences should be quantified and monitored by the coordinating group, to ensure the learning area is truly functioning.

Needs and possibilities

Consider your needs, what goals you could have, and the possibilities of how to apply the TLA concept to meet these challenges in your destination or subject area

What are the goals and challenges, problems and possibilities relevant to your destination? A clear concept of the European and global dimensions and trends of the tourism sector is necessary to answer this. In an era of short-haul flights and long-distance bargain competition, traditional tourism patterns are sure to be changing. Your destination needs to learn to adapt to this new global reality, and you will have to determine what issues are most important to you.

There will be, in most cases, several studies already available to a destination which show different aspects of educational training needs and requirements. SWOT analyses and structural environmental assess-

Learning to read the weather forecast

For example, extreme weather events are reported with greater frequency, and most destinations may like to know how to prepare and adapt to these new scenarios. Important and costly decisions, such as investing in sea defences, conserving freshwater supplies, spatial planning, population safety and security measures and a host of other subjects, need to be brought to people's attention and understood. What is the quickest and most cost-effective way to do this? Is there a European-level source of information giving examples of how other destinations have managed this process? Here, the learning area can fill the knowledge gap efficiently, with network contacts and specialist learning providers partnering decision-makers and commercial entities to reach synergistic solutions. Perhaps the outcome of such an investigation into how global change affects a destination may lead to the conclusion that a competitive advantage would be found by offering energy-efficient, pollution-conscious services within a longer-term conservation-based planning framework that improved the destination's environment so that businesses could take advantage of both the transformation process and any potential new customers. The learning strategy for such an area would then attempt to ensure that:

- (a) cross-sector public administrations were acting coherently towards an overall destination development concept;
- (b) the learning area's businesses and residents were well informed of the problems and potentials;
- (c) learning institutions would be asked to develop human resources to match the new needs of an adaptive, more sustainable destination.

ments have been a common means of delivering such information, and it is worth knowing what has been done on this front. Here, the regional coordination agency would be a good starting point to assess your destination's situation, as would institutes such as universities and tourism training organisations.

Key tasks

1. Read this handbook thoroughly.
2. Be clear about the theoretical section.
3. Be aware of the human resources/human potential debate that provides the background to the learning-area approach.
4. Be aware of the learning regions process.
5. Look at the PowerPoint® tutorial on how to set up a tourism learning-area website portal.
6. Review the contents of the learning-area CD-ROM to examine policy agendas, research findings and good practice examples in detail.
7. Test out your explanation of what a learning area is on friends and colleagues, seeing how simple you can make it.

See Technical Annex 1 — Designing a learning-area model of excellence.

See Technical Annex 2 — Background to the learning-area process.

Similarly, the possibilities of the new global marketplace are equally endless. Preparing destination stakeholders for the online marketplace or to even understanding how IT opens up this world are learning-area activities. Many destinations have 'converted' to tourism from other sectoral activities, and may be already aware of the need for continual adaptation. But the pace of modern change can be difficult even for the best organisations. A learning area is a useful means of keeping up with economic, environmental and social developments. How can you make this happen with the stakeholders in your region?

Well-being cluster

Health tourism is one of the main businesses in Lower Austria, with 1.5 million overnight stays and 10 % of the regional tourism on offer. Since October 2002, the Lower Austria well-being cluster has been building a network of dynamic businesses and service providers in the core sectors of wellness tourism, preventive medicine and natural products, as well as related fields such as research and development, qualification training, fitness and sports, nutrition and equipment. Under the umbrella of the Ecoplus — Lower Austrian Regional Development Agency, these institutions and organisations cooperate in building up an inter-sectoral network where learning does not 'just happen' but is a strategically managed process.

The cluster management provides different services: information, marketing and knowledge management.

www.wellbeingcluster.at

Alternatively, you may be interested in setting up a learning area for a particular issue, for example a learning area on transport and mobility. Again, you will still have to define your needs, and to assess what the future may hold for the particular theme or subject. Learning centres should be an early port of call on thematic areas, as several knowledge networks are already in place.

Key tasks

- Find out what documents exist that describe your area in terms of challenges and problems.
- From your understanding of the concept make a shortlist of potential goals and possibilities.
- Ensure these relate to tourism learning and innovation potential.

See Technical Annex 3 — What's so good about a tourism learning area?

Making an informal preliminary profile

Do a brief informal survey to obtain a preliminary profile of stakeholders and their existing relationships to learning activities. Identify the PLA boundaries (geographical area or thematic area).

Remember that the scoping exercise for type of work to be undertaken in the first steps of learning area activities involves:

- SME capacity building,
- good governance focus,
- entrepreneurial skills focus.

A preliminary overview of your potential learning area can be put down in a short (5–10 page) document, based on your existing knowledge and a few website visits or phone calls. **Note that this is not a major information gathering exercise, nor a detailed and exhaustive study phase. Later, a more formal tourism learning-area profiling activity will be conducted to give an accurate and detailed picture.**

A tourism learning area may refer to a specific place, or a specific subject matter, or a mixture of both. The place can be a region, or a local destination. The subject area can be any theme relevant to the tourism sector. In this handbook, there are several destinations given as examples of learning areas which have a geographical basis, such as the Algarve or Lake Constance. The European learning area on sustainable production and consumption, the national agro-tourism learning area in the Netherlands and the regional spa-tourism learning area in Hungary are examples of thematic tourism learning areas.

Key tasks

Use the knowledge of your needs and possibilities to prepare a short introductory document that provides brief information on:

1. what would be the potential geographical coverage (or thematic coverage);
2. who could be the local stakeholders in your TLA;
3. what activities and projects are currently under way that relate to the TLA process.

(Your TLA road map could be used as a tool to do this now.)

See Technical Annex 4 — Stakeholders in the tourism learning-area process.

The stakeholders you identify at this stage should be able to perform this as a collective exercise at a specific stage of the learning-area building process. You will need to develop a road map to achieve this at this time, so start thinking now about what different organisations are doing that might be brought into a 'cluster' of activities to achieve the above. Once again, the coordination body of the region or specialist learning centres will have the overview information at hand to relate the **general** economic, environmental and social activities occurring in or affecting the region to the **specific** needs of the tourism sector (and its improvement).

Preparation of explanatory material

Prepare explanatory material to disseminate the learning-area concept in your own language.

In the technical annexes you will find a sample leaflet which can be used to introduce and describe the learning-area process to other stakeholders. If it is not already in your own language, you should translate and redraft where necessary to suit your local circumstances.

This stage of the work of setting up a learning area is about preparing material to broadcast the idea. The positive gains of a tourism learning area for your regional situation should be given, ensuring the following topics are covered by your explanatory material:

- the background and concept of a tourism learning area;
- the needs, problems and opportunities your area may have that can be addressed by the concept;
- what steps are involved in setting up a learning area;
- making the business case for implementing a tourism learning-area process;
- which organisations may be interested in being involved in your region.

Key tasks

Prepare an introductory leaflet explaining what a TLA is, suited to your target group and based on the above points.

See Technical Annex 5 — Introductory leaflet describing the learning-area process.

You should be careful to use the right approach to each stakeholder. Public administrations, businesses and social partners will respond differently to the information. The more you can target the concept specifically for each audience the better. On the other hand, you need to contact a wide variety of stakeholders, and your original approach is likely to be made with information that has as broad a reach as

TOURISM-SECTOR STAKEHOLDER CLASSIFICATION

A Policy Makers - the administration EC, national, regional and local administrations National, Regional and local tourism information offices Tourism agencies	D Commercial Intermediaries in Tourism Industry Tour operators Travel agents / retailers
B Social Partners Federations representing tourist industry sectors Trade Unions Media Non government organisations	E Academic and Scientific Bodies Education and training establishments Research and consultancy bodies
C Business and Industry Tourism Suppliers Accommodation industry Catering sector (restaurant, café, bar etc...) Transportation sector Construction sector Attractions and activities Tourist guide services	F Public, Private, Public-private Partnerships, Civil Society and NGOs Women Youth Indigenous people Farmers Residents Visitors Multi-stakeholder Networks

possible. **To balance these situations, be prepared to follow up general material with more specifically tailored information. Use the technical annexes for this purpose.**

The generic information provided in Technical Annex 5 (Introductory leaflet describing the learning-area process) is of this broad nature, and you should try and integrate regional considerations into the information.

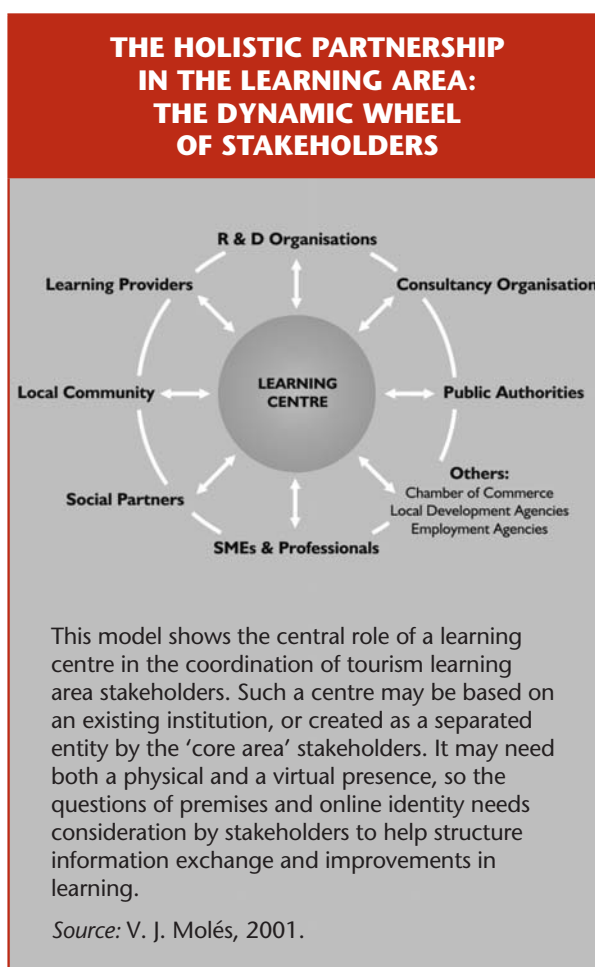
Identifying and listing key stakeholders

Develop multi-level contact lists of key stakeholders.

The 'open coordination' method of the European Commission ⁽¹⁾ requires the broad participation of all interested parties in policy development and execution. Openness and participation are key governance principles that should be put into practice when establishing a tourism learning area. That means making the concept widely accessible and trying to include as many different types of stakeholders as possible in the process. The multi-stakeholder classification found here is in the main part a synthesis of the European Commission classification with the UN Agenda 21 major groups classification systems ⁽²⁾. It provides a comprehensive classification of tourism actors. **Later, this list will be used to develop a learning-area stakeholder grid, which you can then fill in with your regional organisations (see Technical Annex 6). In practice, the area's core members are crucial to the learning area's functionality. Key organisations can be identified from this classification.**

Learning-experience clients and providers

As this is a very broad and inclusive list of stakeholders, the interest of each stakeholder in the learning area will differ according to their roles as either tourism learning-experience **providers**, or tourism learning-experience **clients**. **Normally, a stakeholder is both a provider and a client of learning experiences** ⁽³⁾. In the dynamic flow of strategic information, consultancy guidance and support, information usually comes at a price, and therefore the provider-client interface in a learning area makes these learning activities transparent. A learning



⁽¹⁾ ec.europa.eu/education/policies/pol/policy_en.htm

⁽²⁾ See the complete tourism-sector model of excellence in Technical Annex 16.

⁽³⁾ A university for example may well provide a range of courses, making it a key learning-experience provider. Yet, at the same time, it needs large quantities of incoming information, has external consultants doing studies and is seen by lecturers as a market for their services etc., making it in part a learning-experience client as well.



area will establish stakeholder forums for information which is exchanged on a non-market basis and, in parallel, create a range of commercial marketplaces in which providers and clients can 'trade' information. In reality these lines can be blurred, but the more clarity that is achieved the more likely the learning opportunities will be successful for both providers and clients.

Learning experiences can range from a small-business manager receiving information on market trends, to a school leaver requiring communication skills, to training for catering staff, to a public official researching destination monitoring and indicator systems. Therefore a learning area must be designed as a broad framework in which a variety of learning opportunities can exist simultaneously, and be structured so that providers and clients of learning experiences have access to each other in an easily understandable marketplace of teaching-learning transactions.

A tourism stakeholder grid is presented in the technical annexes (see Technical Annex 6). It is a useful tool to use when you start to put together lists of organisations that need to be contacted by you. It has been derived from the classification elaborated above. It also includes a further refinement inasmuch as sectoral and thematic processes managed by specific government departments have been highlighted to make it easier to pinpoint the right stakeholders. Therefore you will find in the policy-maker's classification, a list of departments that deal with tourism, employment, regional development, etc. Within these departments, your task is to find out who may have an interest in either the tourism sector or in education, training and information exchange.

At first it is worth focusing on tourism-specific strategic information providers, learning providers, consultancy providers, mentoring professionals, labour specialists/entities, etc., who will be more disposed to putting time and effort into the learning-area process.

Keep it small and simple, then grow!

Key stakeholders

In theoretical terms, this stage involves setting the dynamic wheel of stakeholders in motion and will provide the basic ingredient of a successful learning area, i.e. the people who can make it happen. The grid will quickly lead to a clear picture of who's who in your area once you start filling it in. From that point you will be able to identify and select suitable organisations as lead or key players.

Remember, the organisations which you should target are:

- (a) business associations;
- (b) regional development organisations (coordinating bodies, sectoral departments, public-private partnerships);
- (c) local/regional authorities (councils, NUTS III-V);
- (d) learning centres (educational or training institutes, consultancies, R & D organisations).

The key sectors that should be brought into the collaborative process are:

- tourism,
- employment,
- environment,
- education, and
- information technology.

In this target group, the handbook is aimed at two types of **individuals** in such organisations:

- individuals with policy-level decision-making capability who can undertake an action to ensure a learning-area policy is developed at destination level (or for a thematic area);
- individuals whose job will be to implement, manage and advise on that policy as it unfolds as a networking/partnership/IT exercise.

Dealing with multi-sectoral, multi-level governance issues

Holistic, integrated projects always create the difficulty of having to deal with the whole, as well as the parts. Your stakeholder grid will identify the components of the whole, i.e. stakeholders active in all areas of the tourism value chain. However, you should prioritise those stakeholders who are likely to be able to play a proactive role in establishing the learning area at first, drawing a leading entity from each administrative sector to ensure that a working group has a good mix of competent bodies. **Check if such a forum or something similar already exists, as this may save a great deal of work.**

Even though a learning area requires multi-level input, it may be best to initiate a horizontal action in the start-up phase. Often, when involving national-level entities in regional activities, or regional bodies in local affairs, there may be lack of commitment, lack of communication, conflict of interest, issues of power relationships, etc., which may impede the development of the initiative. A useful strategy to deal with this issue is to inform the national agencies that a regional initiative is to take place (or if you are developing a learning area at the local level, inform the regional authorities) and tell them you will keep them aware of its progress. As the learning area matures, it can add vertical network structures which will help its development.

It is important to see that the tourism learning-area process is a local/regional approach which facilitates the clustering of stakeholders on a geographical basis; thus, take-up of the concept should be at this level.

Latvian Country Tourism Association

The Latvian Country Tourism Association united 300 rural tourism enterprises, plus rural entrepreneurs, local governments, tourist information centres, agricultural organisations and educational institutions. So far, 1 200 people have participated at the 10 annual regional training courses, national workshops and conferences, receiving individual advice and making onsite trips. Rural tourism quality, sustainability and diversity has been continuously improving (e.g. wellness holidays, family holidays, green certification). The learning opportunities for professionals and the quality products for tourists are published online (www.celotajs.lv).

Key tasks

- Draw up a list of potential learning-area stakeholders.
- Focus on the destination/regional level first (thematic areas should start with key organisations).
- Involve all main stakeholders from businesses, learning institutes and public administrations.
- Maintain a tourism focus.

See Technical Annex 6 — Developing a stakeholder grid.

Calling a working seminar

Basic guidance for the orientation of sustainable tourism in Europe

'Policy fields relating to entrepreneurship and competitiveness, employment, learning and a skilled workforce, good environmental performance as well as natural resources and cultural heritage, are examples of subjects that require special attention.'

Source: European Commission, COM(2003) 716.

Create awareness and interest, make contacts, disseminate material, call a working meeting (NB: timing is important at this stage).

Face-to-face informal contact with a few well-placed individuals will always be a useful way of starting to create awareness of the tourism learning-area concept and its potential. This will help you to:

- establish the facts, their relevance and the suitability of their presentation to your particular audience;
- receive valuable feedback from a third-party source;
- provide you with initial experience of transmitting the concept.

Using existing processes to develop the TLA

There may be the opportunity to present the case of the tourism learning area at a public meeting. In this case, it is useful to invite key organisations to hear your presentation, which will save you valuable time. If there are other ongoing processes that touch upon learning-area issues, then you can use these as an entry point. Every destination is likely to have a calendar of various events of this nature, so make sure you find out from stakeholders what is going on at the time you decide to launch the process.

The working meeting preparation

Preparation before the working meeting should involve the following steps.

1. Defining your initial stakeholder lists (you have the stakeholder grid to guide you). Local organisations will already hold useful lists and have dissemination channels. It is advisable to make use of these to ensure key stakeholders attend the meeting.
2. Preparing leaflets and information packs for general awareness raising.
3. Adapting the PowerPoint® presentation 'An Introduction to tourism learning areas'.
4. Familiarising yourself with the PowerPoint® presentation 'How to set up a tourism learning-area website portal'.
5. Having material ready to discuss specific stakeholder issues, especially with good-practice examples in mind.
6. Ensuring the timing of your meeting is in line with the overall activities of the destination or stakeholder networks.
7. Locating the meeting at the premises of a credible host, who is a key stakeholder.

Warning!

The summer months are traditionally the tourist season's busiest times, with businesses ensuring that they take advantage of the higher demand, and public administrations either at full stretch or on traditional summer breaks. This is **not** the time to initiate a new process.

Wait until the destination rhythm has returned to its working pace.

Examine this sample letter below:

INTRODUCTORY ANNOUNCEMENT

(To accompany short introduction to the learning area's project leaflet)

Dear _____

Subject: Establishing a tourism learning area

There will be a working meeting on the subject of setting up a tourism learning area for the _____ *(name of destination or theme)* on

from _____ to _____. The meeting will introduce the subject of setting up a tourism learning area, and its relevance to _____ *(name of destination or theme)*.

A tourism learning area is a multi-stakeholder problem-solving approach that will address challenges of improving SME performance, educational governance, tourism-sector skills and qualifications by optimising communications and learning opportunities in the region.

Its initial objective will be to formulate an improved practical collaboration process between key stakeholders in the regional tourism process. It will achieve this in measurable terms through the development of a structure for a website that will link all tourism informal and formal learning processes into a regional knowledge network.

This European-level action is aimed at professional administrators whose work involves tourism, employment, education SME and IT issues. The meeting will enable the constitution of an information base for your work (or your staff) as either a provider or user of information related to any aspect of the tourism sector.

The event is being hosted by the _____ *(identify a local key actor)*.

Please inform us in advance of your attendance. Please reply by e-mail, fax or phone to:

(your contact details)

Note that the invitation has a practical element, i.e. the preparation of a collective website. This is to avoid the impression that the process will be just another ‘talking shop’.

Approaching the right person at the right level in key organisations

The relatively hierarchical and inflexible structure of many public administrations means that you have to make sure this concept reaches the right person’s desk in each key stakeholder organisation. Here you will be targeting both decision-makers and technicians. The higher the decision-maker, the less likely they are to have time to really get to understand the concept. They need to see a short elaboration of the idea that is coherent and well presented, with regional relevance and a certain potential. Often the idea needs to fit into an existing development agenda, so you can use the policy grid (see Technical Annex 15) to show how a tourism learning area can be easily integrated into existing policy developments. Emphasise that this is part of a European approach that will receive high-level support.

Technical-level administrative staff will also need to be convinced of the utility of this idea, especially as they will be putting in the work to realise the concept. For this audience, you must have clear, convincing and simple renditions of concept, and a step-by-step elaboration of the implementation approach, so they can understand and accept the idea and relate it positively to their organisations. They will need to see how the learning area would function on a day-to-day basis, how much work it would involve, and how useful and productive this would be. Often their opinions will be crucial in convincing decision-makers to follow up the process.

A learning area ‘champion’

Is your organisation capable of being seen as a competent champion of the concept? If not, is there another organisation who could take on the role of being enthusiastic and positive about becoming a learning area? It will be helpful if you can identify and cultivate a good working relationship with potential ambassadors, which will make it easier to bring all stakeholders on board.

This marks the end of the initiation phase. Now the process moves towards a more collective framework, where several organisations need to cooperate.

Key tasks

1. Make sure you are familiar with the TLA concept.
2. Contact the key stakeholders in advance to interest them in the idea personally.
3. Ensure the material is suited to your local area.
4. Distribute widely using existing channels.

See Technical Annex 7 — Working meeting preparation material.

Phase II — coordination

At the working meeting, identify and agree on basic goals, and a coordinating body or partner from key stakeholders

The following example of an initial working seminar is given as a guide to how you can structure your event.

10.00 a.m. Start of meeting

Welcome and introduction

Address by hosting organisation

Self introductions

Learning areas introduction (TLA initiator — PowerPoint® presentation)

Discussion — Goals and targets for your tourism learning area

Setting up a TLA website (TLA initiator — PowerPoint® presentation)

Discussion — organisational structure, resources and funding

Meeting task: building the coordination network — making connections etc.

Meeting reflection: the tourism learning area knowledge network — where do I fit in?

Meeting outcome: identification of coordinating entity, establishment of a working group, registration of interest with the Enterprise and Industry DG.

Summary and conclusions

1.00 p.m. Lunch

Introducing the meeting

A learning areas introductory PowerPoint® presentation is provided as guidance on the CD-ROM accompanying this handbook. 'An Introduction to tourism learning areas' is a generic presentation that can be adapted to your particular destination. It will save you time and effort to follow the presentation, and will provide the audience with a clear overall first impression of the subject matter.

Managing the initial discussion

As a holistic approach, the learning-area concept often appears daunting to those not used to inter-sectoral, multi-thematic networking. Many people still are unaware of, or unable to adapt to, the new ITC opportunities and the complex partnership and networking arrangements that are possible, so this is unfamiliar territory. Be prepared to explain the reasons behind the concept by reference to its theoretical foundation. Use good-practice examples to back-up your answers. Lead the participants to the issue of the portal and knowledge network, as this is a very practical arena to build awareness of what a tourism learning area is about.

Establishing an organisational structure

The aim is to build a 'core area' partnership that can focus on improving the region's learning potential in a cooperative manner. This will require the business associations, public administrative departments and learning centres to form a working group. A learning centre involved in tourism training may become the focal point of such a working group, which will allow access to personnel time, premises and web-based information exchange to create an operational environment. Other stakeholders will need to support this coordination work with offers of resources in the form of contacts, expertise and finance.

Demonstrating the website portal

Familiarise yourself with the PowerPoint® presentation 'How to set up a tourism learning area's regional portal', which is also on the CD-ROM. Taking your audience through this presentation should

be done after a brief discussion of the challenges and possibilities. Here, it is possible to get across the idea that the work of agreeing on the structure and content of setting-up a learning area can be done through the development of a common website portal, as this requires active participation by and communication between the stakeholders. This, in turn, requires a coordinating entity, which may be a single organisation or a working group composed of different stakeholders. Emphasise that the portal is a means to an end — both a practical task with a visible ‘product’, and a means of reflecting the progress of regional tourism cooperation and communication practices.

The stakeholder questionnaire

At some point of the meeting it is useful to introduce the idea that a learning-area stakeholder questionnaire will be circulated to profile members. This will provide key information on the region’s learning offers, as well as developing communications channels. The questionnaire is dealt with more specifically later. At the meeting, it should be flagged up to show how learning experiences will be identified and harmonised by stakeholder information sharing and cooperation.

Questions to ask during the meeting

1. What are the priority learning issues facing your potential learning area?
2. Who are the principal actors and coordinators?
3. Does any one have a vision of the learning-area issues?
4. Is there a common vision shared by stakeholders?
5. What sort of knowledge is necessary to enable innovation among local businesses?
6. Is there a well-known information vehicle for all stakeholders?
7. What would a SWOT analysis reveal about the local learning area?
8. How can the stakeholders use their interaction to improve on innovation?
9. What capacity-building measures are necessary for the PLA to function effectively?
10. Who can resource this development?

You should prompt stakeholders to answer these questions themselves, looking wherever possible for clear offers of action and partnership solutions.

The registration process

Registration is a two-stage process. The first stage is a simple registration of interest to set up a learning area. The second is a more detailed registration of establishment of the process in practice. You can find out how to complete the registration process in Technical Annex 19. **Use this process to obtain a simple commitment and common activity for interested stakeholders.**

ADEDY

ADEDY, the Greek national federation of trades unions representing public employees, is carrying out an action project funded by Socrates II to support the establishment of local and regional partnerships for lifelong learning. Three partnerships (in Kozani, Kalamata and Xalxida) were initiated in 2003 with the aim of developing multifunctional learning centres that can respond to the economic and social circumstances of the locality. The first to be drawn up, Kozani's action plan, is based on the assumption that community interests are best served by working together and by developing a lifelong learning community for all. The Kozani region has been relatively isolated until very recently, its local economy needs an upswing and participation rates in education and training are below average. The aim is that by 2010, Kozani will be a top-ranking prefecture for IT, languages, innovation, entrepreneurship and cultural capacities amongst citizens and in the community as a whole. The development hub will be the learning centre itself, the joint project of a broad-based body made up of representatives of civil society organisations and of the local and regional administration. The intention is to create synergy between existing regional structures, infrastructures and services in order to help the community to help itself — in other words, to generate sustainable development by using existing resources more efficiently and by forging strong partnerships between local government, education and training authorities, industry and commerce and local NGOs.

Source: ADEDY European Affairs Section and European Economic and Social Committee

Extract: Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), 'Getting to work on lifelong learning: policy, practice and partnership — Summary conference report', Luxembourg, 2003.

www.cedefop.gr/index.asp

Concluding the meeting

You should aim to finish off the meeting with some positive next steps. These involve:

- (a) confirming registration of interest of setting up a TLA with the Tourism Unit of the Enterprise and Industry DG;
- (b) ensuring awareness of key concepts and potential utility of the learning-area approach;
- (c) ensuring informal commitment from organisations of their continued interest;
- (d) ascertaining who may become part of the working group to set up the learning area.

Establish a working group

You are about to initiate the process of setting up an administrative centre for your learning area. Starting small, working with willing partners will help the process get off on the right foot.

Stimulating the development of a working group

In the busy world of tourism destinations, new ideas and projects that require stakeholder participation compete with many existing processes. **There are many tendencies among stakeholder relationships which should be recognised from the outset, and used to power the development of your learning area.** Businesses are constantly on the lookout for new markets, new products, different supply sources and useful information. They have their own networks, informal meetings, particular meeting places, and specific magazines, web channels and conferences. Natural alliances already exist at different levels of public administration. Horizontal links are becoming more frequent between different regional sectors. A range of formal and non-formal partnerships may have developed historically which can facilitate the new type of networks based on broadband e-government, e-commerce and e-mail communication.

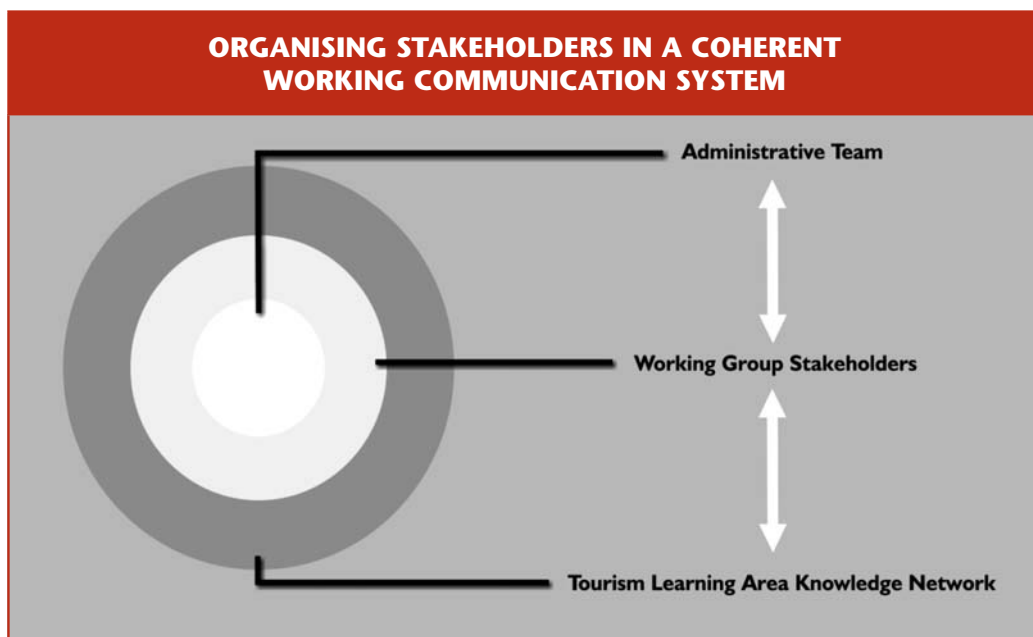
Key tasks

1. Ensure a broad range of participation.
2. Explain the concept clearly and concisely using material and information already prepared.
3. Involve stakeholders in the discussion; follow the meeting agenda.
4. Achieve a consensus by checking stakeholder understanding of the concept.

Establish a set of preliminary goals

1. Establish who would be interested in becoming part of the working group.
2. Make clear follow-up proposals including the registration of interest as a collective task.

See Technical Annex 8 — Working meeting presentation material.



The TLA model of excellence

At this stage the tourism learning-area model of excellence (see Technical Annex 1) can be elaborated in order for you to match the learning area theory to a practical implementation approach for your area. You can examine this model by either using the PowerPoint® presentation or having a more technical discussion based on the preceding chapter in this handbook and the section in the technical annexes.

Algarve provisional learning-area working group process

The following example shows how a working group may evolve from the process described here. In Portugal, the Escola de Formação Profissional do Algarve and Algarve Euro Info Centre were key actors in developing the provisional learning-area process in this 300-km coastal destination which hosts 4.5 million tourists. The training school provided help with developing stakeholder lists and hosted the first seminar in conjunction with the Algarve Euro Info Centre.

All key stakeholders were present — tourism, education, employment, business associations and some learning centres — with the exception of the Regional Coordination Committee (CCDR), who would be the obvious entity to coordinate the process. Here, as everywhere, the speed of local politics is an issue, and the learning-area approach will take some time to reach the busy and broad regional policy agenda of the CCDR.

Meanwhile, in their absence, a working group has been established among the key sectoral stakeholders from tourism, education, employment and some learning centres. This development provides a useful platform from which to launch a joint funding application to implement the approach. The result would be the regional portal, up and running, which gives the group something practical to work for and which could bring clear benefits to their individual workloads.

www.ecotrans.org/

Business owners or managers and public-administration employees may already want to take advantage of the new communication possibilities, and merely require their organisation's support. Initiatives to develop portals, to form networks and to be more inclusive are all part of Cohesion and Structural Fund requirements in the current period of economic development, and regional stakeholders are being actively requested to develop along these lines (e.g. eEurope, the new partnership for cohesion and other Commission ITC programmes).

Skilful facilitation of the discussion will elucidate possibilities of improving innovation and competitiveness in the tourism supply chain. Participants may either arrive at this conclusion for themselves, or can be guided towards discussing the need for a collaborative working process.

Ideally those taking part in the working group would be from:

- (a) business associations and individual businesses;
- (b) local/regional authorities (councils, NUTS III–V);
- (c) learning centres (educational or training institutes);
- (d) regional development organisations (coordinating bodies, sectoral departments, public-private partnerships);
- (e) trade unions, NGOs and community associations.

The key regional departments that should be brought together in a collaborative working process are:

- tourism,
- employment,
- education,
- environment, and
- information technology.

Note that this working group will at some stage form the basis of a coordination forum.

When and how this happens depends on the structure of the coordination body. It may be a single entity, in which case it will need a forum to receive continual feedback. Alternatively it may be a collaborative effort, in which case it will need to formalise its status as the official tourism learning-area coordination body.

Using the portal concept to organise the working group

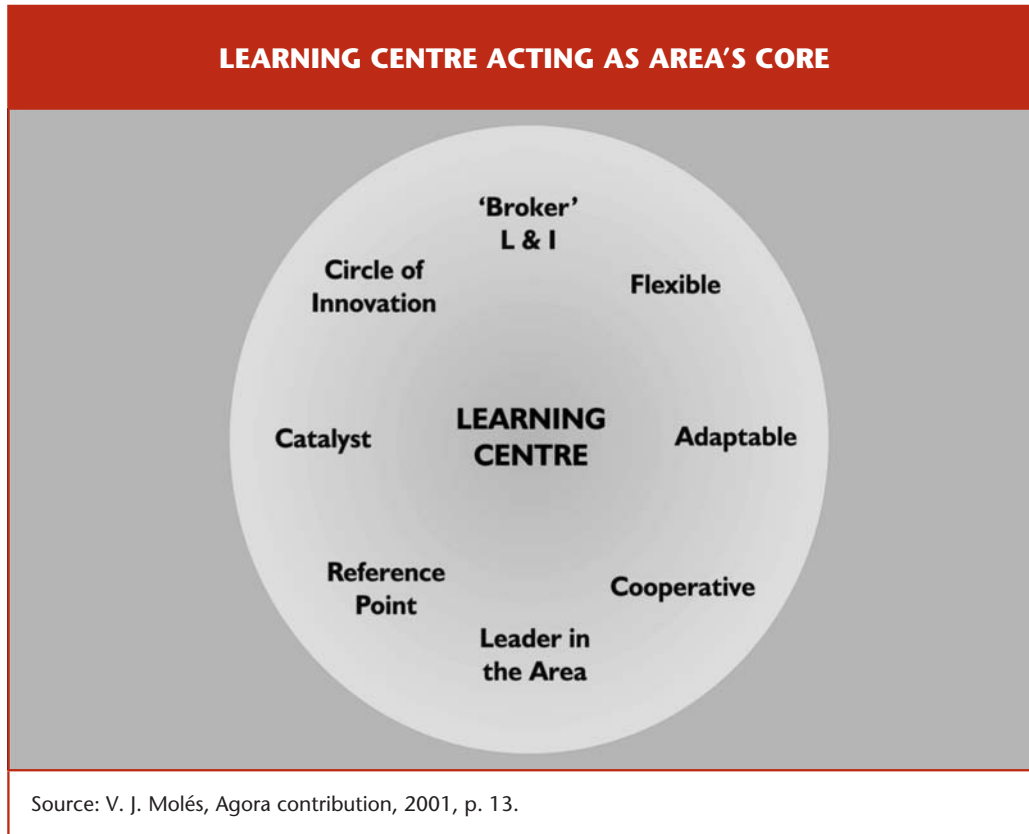
What if stakeholders are sceptical, negative or apathetic? In many overworked, poorly resourced or rapidly expanding administrations and, in stressful business circles, both decision-makers and technical employees can be unhappy about taking on anything new. Furthermore, the tourism learning-area approach is as complex as it is innovative, so it doubly qualifies for filing in the 'pending' tray, whilst daily business is given priority.

However, to overcome any negative responses to the concept, you should stress the simple fact of the website portal's functionality and its potential to improve learning and innovation opportunities. Showing this as **a positive and practical step** towards a coherent information flow throughout the sector within the destination will help stakeholders to see themselves as part of the common and integrated tourism information service which they can use for their daily work. A learning area will save them time, make their work more efficient, and lead to new opportunities.

The establishment of a working group marks the stage of having brought the kernel of your learning area into being. The rest of the learning-area implementation process involves nurturing the development of the work of these stakeholders towards increasing degrees of detail, cooperation and effectiveness. At this point, the work of setting up a learning area is transferred from the initiator to the coordination group. If the initiator is not already the coordinator, then it is helpful if he remains part of the working process.

From this stage onwards, a continual capacity-building process should be set in motion, focusing on developing a regional learning centre based on existing institutions and broad enough to cover the range of issues with which a learning area has to contend. This may be via a specific, high-profile, well-resourced institute such as a local university or a collection of tourism training colleges, or a body specifically established in the absence of anything local. Whatever the entity, it will need the multi-stakeholder support and dialogue that will be characteristic of a tourism learning-area partnership.

Once the working group is formed from these stakeholders, it will need an administrative entity to coordinate day-to-day business and overall communications.



This centre is expected to have the following qualities if it is to be the area's core.

The portal will be the tool that will enable the learning centre core partnership that is at the heart of the work group to develop these qualities and abilities.

Developing a work plan

Develop a work plan, identify resources and support that will link stakeholders together in a creative learning–innovation–competitiveness–sustainability quality cycle.

Once a working group has been established, there is a need to discuss a course of actions that should be undertaken to develop the process further. The work plan should have the following practical objectives:

1. SME capacity building,
2. good governance focus,
3. entrepreneurial skills focus.

When discussing learning-area resources, it should be made clear that two different types of resources will come under discussion:

1. working group start-up resources
2. tourism learning-area physical, technical and financial resources

The start-up resources are discussed in this section. More detailed resource profiling occurs **at a later stage in phase III.**

Gallu — south-west Wales, UK

‘Gallu — Developing people in tourism’ is a programme developed in 2004 in response to demand from local tourism associations. The programme is available to all tourism-related businesses in four areas of south-west Wales, with the support of the South West Wales Tourism Partnership, ELWA and ESF Objective 1 funding. Three facilitators cover the areas, conducting a training needs analysis, listening to businesses and helping them to up-skill the workforce, improve the quality of visitor experience and increase competitiveness by increasing knowledge, sharing best practice and providing subsidised non-statutory training.

Courses to date have included staff retention, advert and brochure design, e-commerce seminars, making heritage work for tourism, beating seasonality, housekeeping, menu design and silver-service training. Special trade day visits to enterprises have been arranged by tourism association members. Businesses agree that they are finding all these opportunities beneficial to the development of their establishments.

www.gallu.org.uk

Key tasks

1. Make sure the working group understands the concept.
2. Strengthen the vision of the TLA with further guidance and information.
3. Check on the preliminary goals and match them to the stakeholders involved.
4. Define tasks and allocate roles.
5. Ensure stakeholders complete formal paperwork.
6. Elaborate a timetable.

See Technical Annex 9 — Learning-area coordination process.

To put these objectives into a practical programme, the working group will need to:

1. develop a problem-centred dialogue to establish a clear common vision and prioritise areas of activity;
2. establish simple yet formal protocols of collaboration and common general objectives;
3. look for additional stakeholders who may not yet be aware of the concept to harness all potential stakeholder contributions;
4. develop the regional web portal as a common practical activity that reflects the shape and growth of the learning area;
5. target SMEs and learning centres to match business needs to research and development (and vice versa);
6. plan a series of working events and a timetable of implementation, aiming to improve learning opportunities and encourage stakeholder networking;
7. look at how you will monitor and report on your progress, bearing in mind the web-portal communication tool.

These steps are elaborated in each section of this implementation guide. Remember to keep things simple in the beginning, and progress towards bigger targets and timetables as and when the capacity of the working group allows.

What about costs?

When speaking about funding it is important to have an overview of all the activities embraced by the TLA concept and implementation process: i.e. learning, consultancy, information, meetings, structures, infrastructures, support to SMEs and professionals, etc. Each activity should be seen on a case-by-case basis when it comes to deciding how to fund the activities — some could be funded 'in kind' via stakeholders offering resources to do the tasks; others could be funded with grants or funding applications. It is critical to sign agreements among stakeholders to clarify those aspects (see the protocol on collaboration steps, Technical Annex 14, and the section on further support). At some stage, a funding application may be appropriate, so this can be factored into the work plan. Much will depend on the resources of the group's members. Funding applications to manage tourism learning areas will certainly be part of the stakeholders' expectations. Public-private partnerships may be the best means of making such applications.

To develop your work plan, examine the stage you have reached and prepare a programme that can be used for funding applications in order to invest more personnel, time and material resources into your work. Many of the steps, such as the process to develop the website, **will** need resources, so the group should look at how that can be achieved without lengthy waits for funding to materialise.

Basic guidance for the orientation of sustainable tourism in Europe

'Multi-partnership solutions and good governance, which improve the participation of all stakeholders, offer the possibility of moving the industry forward and of overcoming lack of coherence between the practices of these stakeholders.'

Source: European Commission communication entitled 'Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism'. COM (2003) 716

Working group start-up resource assessment

In the implementation stage, an informal assessment of what resources will be dedicated to the initiation process should be made among stakeholders. This will involve knowing:

1. the level of commitment of the initiator/ambassador;
2. the level of commitment of coordinating partners;
3. the funding applications in process.

Leipzig Lernt — Germany (learning region)

Background and objectives

The region of Leipzig is one of the regions that lies in the eastern part of Germany. The region is going through many changes, which are experienced as challenging by its inhabitants. These challenges lie mostly in the fields of education and learning and in daily life. The aim of this project is to identify the challenges and develop learning facilities that match the needs.

Activities

The project is derived from four smaller projects — all aimed at improving cooperation and transmission of knowledge. All projects have similar target groups, namely students, young people at the beginning of their career, adults, seniors citizens and entrepreneurs. The projects are:

- tourism academy: development, testing and evaluation of a modular system for further education for actors in the field of tourism (especially SMEs);
- learning in the Obstland region: preparing the convent of Sornzig to become an adventurous learning environment;
- environmental education and sustainable development;
- development of a network of 'I points' for counselling.

Achievements

Leipzig Lernt is one of the 'Lernende Regionen' (learning regions) funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the European Social Fund. The project started on 1 January 2003 and will run until the end of July 2006. The partners in the network have formed working groups. The following are some of the achievements of the first phase.

- i-Punkte have been set up for information supply (on learning, working, etc. in the region) to the inhabitants of the region.
- The regional agency for education, counselling and project development in the administrative district of Delitzsch has been established. It runs on with the money invested by local stakeholders.
- The first modules of the further education for tourism actors have been developed.
- A handbook *Learning strategies and presentation techniques for pupils* was developed.

(www.leipzig-lernt.de)

You will not need a great deal of resources to set up the core of a learning area, so aim to keep things simple and small-scale at first. However, the success of the implementation phase, and of a learning area's future ability to generate learning opportunities for SMEs to develop partnerships and clusters, or to improve regional educational governance when it is up and running, will depend on the resources dedicated to these tasks. Other innovation networks or clustering initiatives have involved large-scale resourcing of entire teams of people to get the job done (¹).

Whatever path your destination chooses, you should ensure that **a minimum and maximum framework of activities is established** in order to make progress with or without major funding and resources. In the long run, a learning area will save on information processing time, enable other cost-cutting processes through partnership and networking economies of scale, and bring in greater revenue through increased performance of its component businesses, thus allowing administrative savings.

(¹) Regional Policy DG innovation networks have been granted up to EUR 1 million or more in many cases.

Finally, a timetable mapping out a series of meetings, events and actions will be useful, achieving specific milestones on the way to becoming a learning area. A learning area may take some years before it is fully functional, so you need to be sure that there is a clear timetable linked to stakeholder participation.

Developing lists of learning-experience providers and clients

Draw up comprehensive stakeholder lists of learning-experience providers and clients, bearing in mind the need to link strategic information to SME innovation.

Initially, use the stakeholder grid (see Technical Annex 6) to identify the full range of stakeholders in your region. By this stage you should have a useful starting list, developed in the process of setting up the core group. This list will now consist of those who have taken an active interest, and those who have not yet responded to your initiatives. The working group should collectively review this list to see how to build up the number of learning-area participants.

Clearly, the key learning institutions will form the central pillar of the learning providers, with business associations, consultancies and public authorities forming the next sources of strategic information delivery. The media and informal local communications network complete the learning opportunities available to the workforce and SMEs in the region.

Key tasks

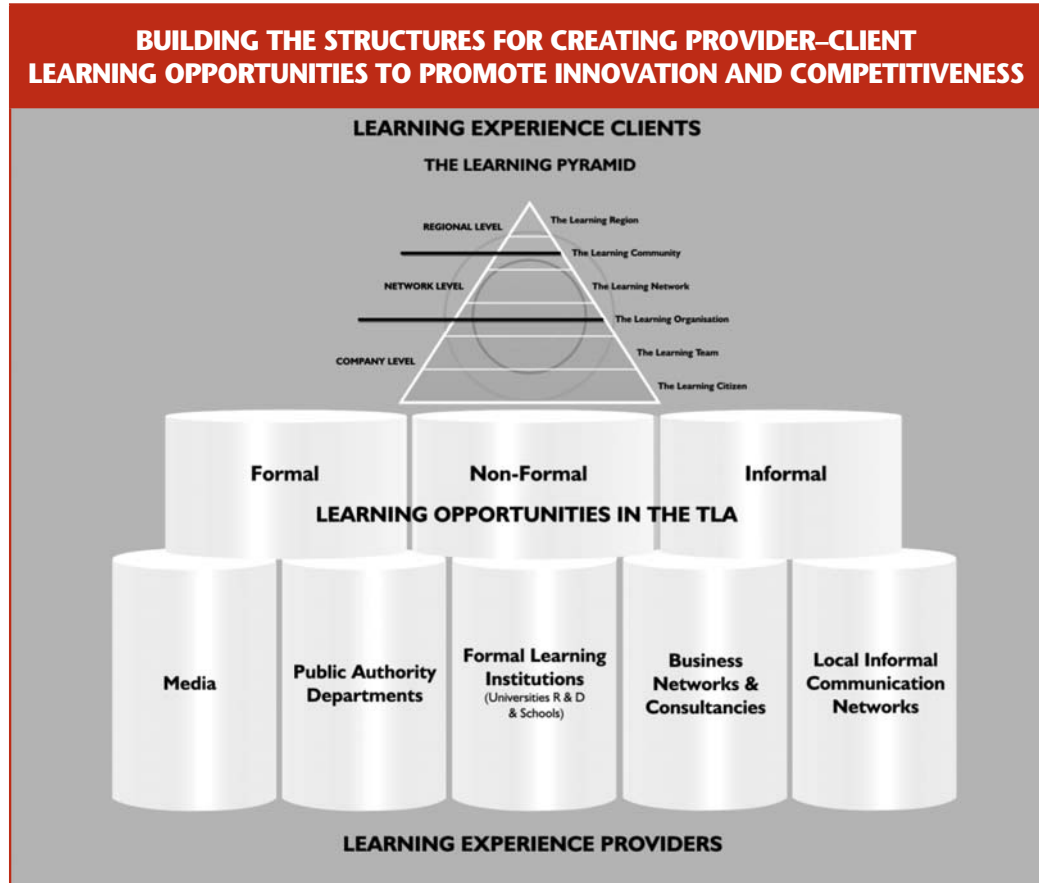
1. Make sure your work plan matches the tourism learning-area objectives.
2. Go through the checklist with the stakeholders to arrive at a simple but structured programme of activities.
3. Place a timetable on the programme.

See Technical Annex 10 — Learning-area work plan.

Secondly, it becomes a question of profiling each organisation. A stakeholder questionnaire is provided in Technical Annex 11. The questionnaire is designed to profile the stakeholders' learning offers and requirements in your area. It will determine the learning experiences they use or need as either providers or clients.

This questionnaire should be used with care. It may simply be used as a guide for questioning stakeholders verbally (by telephone, meeting), with the interviewer actually filling in the form. Alternatively, it can be a full investigative survey, with e-mail and paper-based versions of the questionnaire sent to the stakeholders for them to complete and return. If you do use it like this, then be prepared for extensive telephone follow-up work. You will need to adapt the generic questionnaire provided to your own regional circumstances. Be prepared to explain some of the concepts in the questionnaire, so have back-up material ready for this exercise.

Questionnaires are often time consuming and not necessarily immediately relevant to many people's daily jobs. They are currently also an overused tool, with the result that an administrative officer could spend too much time filling in such requests. Bear this in mind. Remember the end result is to profile the entity and understand their learning offers and requirements to some degree. At this stage the basic contact details and their websites are a sufficient starting point to build up the portal information, so you can concentrate on this. The more detailed profiling information can be used later for developing collaborative efforts and partnerships.



Key tasks

1. Decide whether you will use the questionnaire formally or informally.
2. Ensure that all key stakeholders receive a copy.
3. Follow up the process with a report and share the results.

See Technical Annex 11 — Learning-experience questionnaire.

Regional learning-experience offers

Draw up a list of examples of learning experiences and resources relevant to your region. Focus on R & D centres, universities, business innovation networks and entrepreneurial education programmes.

Always look for studies that have been undertaken already. Go to the specialist stakeholders in your area to compile this information efficiently.

North West Tourism Skills and Employment Network, UK

The network was established during 2000 with the aim of enhancing the competitiveness of tourism businesses via the development of a skilled and motivated workforce. It has been funded via the regional development agency (RDA).

The starting point was a comprehensive research programme that included tourism enterprises (especially SMEs) and key national and regional agencies. This identified current and anticipated skills shortages and gaps. The research helped inform the tourism workforce development plan.

Since then, the network has:

- established a regional skills forum,
- set up a website,
- disseminated good practice,
- promoted training and skills development opportunities,
- sought to enhance the image of tourism as a career,
- used various means to engage the sector: conferences, networking events, awards ceremonies, newsletters, skills information fact-file, training events.

The network has demonstrated how subregional, regional and national partners can work together with industry to address a regional priority. Although engaging SMEs was challenging initially, evaluation of the project so far has revealed significant improvements to: the development of demand-led training provision; employment practices and training provision; getting a positive response from industry.

(www.nwtourism.net)

The best-practice section in this handbook and on the CD-ROM provides European-wide examples of how learning regions, innovative regions and provisional learning areas have been developed by their stakeholders. Their governance structures, programmes and projects may be of relevance to your area. It is worth making a selection of such examples as they are useful to communicate the idea to the wider audience of stakeholders.

This will also help identify the learning resources and experiences found in your area.

- Do you already have examples of good practice to follow?
- What are your regional learning abilities that could promote innovation, competitiveness and sustainability?
- Where are the gaps in the provision of learning (in communication, in proficiency, in quantity, in quality)?
- What is the extent and condition of your learning infrastructure?
- What information networks exist that can help develop human potential for the benefit of the destination and its SMEs?
- What is going on in your region to improve education, training and information access/distribution?
- What networking capacity building is necessary to develop a functional tourism knowledge network?

The answers to such questions will start to build up a profile of just what your region collectively manages. Review the section on profiling tourism learning experiences (also in Technical Annex 15) and the following section on learning-area resources to gain a more detailed idea of this work.

Developing a website portal

Develop a website portal as a stakeholder forum and multiple marketplace central information point to make the theoretical concept operational.

(Note that it is useful to develop this tool at an early stage to bring stakeholders together in a common practical platform).

The working group should set up an administrative structure to manage destination or value-chain learning activities and stakeholder interactions, which they can do via the development of an information structure centred upon a **coordination portal**. **The portal mirrors the formation of the learning area in reality**, showing stakeholder networking, listings, multiple marketplaces for learning experiences, and a calendar of events. These are not fixed categories, but rather provide general guidance for web developers to have a framework for developing the required information categories.

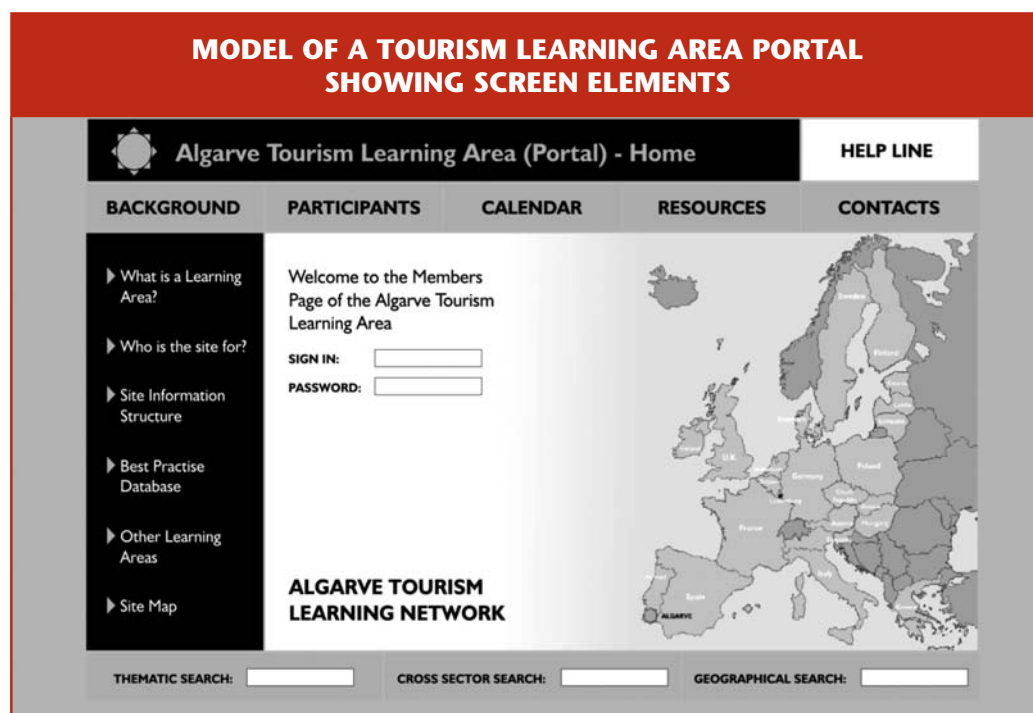
The group should make the work of establishing the website portal the key focus of its initial efforts in the implementation phase. Such a portal serves as a tool to manage the complexity of stakeholder

Key tasks

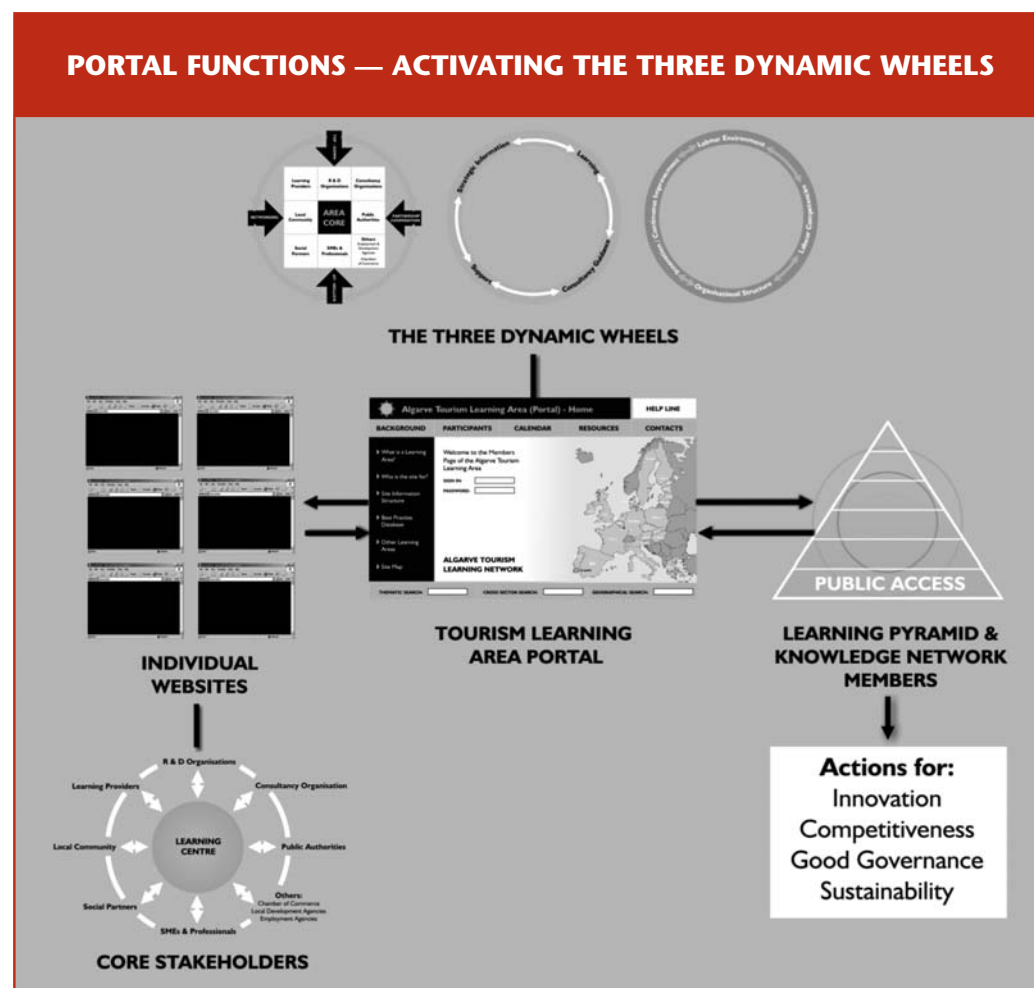
1. Aim to build up a list of your region's learning opportunities.
2. Map these opportunities schematically at first, then physically, across the destination or region.
3. Present the results as an accessible list to be used in the portal development.

See **Technical Annex 12** — Tourism learning-experiences checklist.

See **Technical Annex 15** — Learning area resources profile.



interactions in the tourism sector, giving the destination-level stakeholders a common means of entering into creative business relationships, information programmes and qualifications courses being promoted by the learning area. Without such a tool, the working group members might find it difficult to see practical results of their efforts. And once the tool is functional, it is useful to all regional stakeholders in their daily work, which is a great incentive to develop the learning-area approach.



Developing a destination-level tourism knowledge network

The portal is used to develop the learning-area (regional or thematic) **knowledge network**. The knowledge network uses the portal as its primary source of tourism-sector learning. Members of the network can access the portal data and link to other learning areas. The knowledge network is managed by the coordination body via the portal. In this way, coherent governance of the sector is possible, leading to a greater degree of clarity for the destination managers and SMEs. Currently, most destinations are characterised by the development of a wide range of information sources that are difficult to locate and link up. The TLA portal is designed to improve access to strategic information, formal and non-formal tourism skills courses, advice, R & D findings, thematic networks and tourism stakeholder listings. **Once established, the site can be seen as a gateway for self-initiated innovative actions by all types of tourism stakeholders.**

Linking stakeholders to learning opportunities through a tourism knowledge network portal to stimulate innovative actions

The initial development of a tourism learning-area portal as a communications tool for the tourism knowledge network is described in Technical Annex 13 and in a PowerPoint® presentation on the accompanying CD-ROM, offering a model to structure its component features. The tourism learning-area portal is designed to reflect the reality of progress on development of a functional learning area and will develop and change over time. Its use starts with the core area stakeholders and broadens out to include the entire range of stakeholders in a destination. In a sector characterised by face-to-face communication, it must be seen as a support tool for building the communications systems that underlie the full range of stakeholder learning processes. Over time the utility of the portal will extend from public-sector and business association professionals to the small restaurant owner looking for new products or customers, or tourism employees looking for new skills and job opportunities.

Filling in the portal information

NB: The learning-area profiling form (see Technical Annex 15) is designed to match the website portal information categories.

This can be filled in by the coordinator or working group, who in turn should involve stakeholders in the information checking process. The administration body of the working group should collate information from the working group members, and others who have expressed an interest in being part of the learning area. This information should initially just be the contact information and website details, nothing more. The idea is to achieve a small and practical successful collaboration, on which further and deeper cooperation levels can be achieved in the course of time. As the TLA grows and matures, the web portal can become increasingly sophisticated, reflecting greater coordination and users needs.

Key tasks

1. Ensure stakeholders are aware of how the portal will function as a communication tool to enable the links between learning opportunities, governance and business innovation.
2. Ascertain that the practical task of developing the stakeholders' portal is acting as a tangible outcome for this stage of the work.
3. Involve technical support from within the stakeholder network.
4. Establish links between the portal development and individual stakeholder websites

See Technical Annex 13 — Website portal development and the section on e-learning.

The portal development is further explained in a PowerPoint® presentation on the CD-ROM.

The web portal and the tourism regional knowledge network

The development of the web portal is in fact the start of **mapping the information and communications system of the tourism learning-area knowledge network**. The portal is the key tool to establish links between those who are interested in exchanging information to do with tourism issues. A members' section is included in the web design to act as a means of developing the knowledge network's core. Membership of the core network will allow organisations and individuals to place their information on the portal and to develop coherent regional information channels.

If such a portal already appears to exist, is it functioning smoothly, with full stakeholder involvement? Does it have a tourism knowledge network systematically keeping information up to date, and ensuring tourism stakeholders are using it regularly? Can you link into it to facilitate the development of this stage of your learning area?

A portal does not compete with local organisations, but instead is an opportunity for potential collaborative actions. The only additional work for stakeholders will be ensuring improved compatibility of information with others, which can easily be perceived as a good thing in terms of cost and time. This is often clear for people to see, but difficult to know how to achieve. Yet here is a systematic approach which can deliver that elusive horizontal coherence.

The proposed use of a common European structure for regional portals is also a way of making the horizontal exchange of information possible. Exchange of information between tourism destinations is an important part of creating improvements in learning opportunities and innovative actions. Alongside learning about best practice, this transversal linkage between learning areas will create new market opportunities and also improve the chances of employee mobility. The Enterprise and Industry DG website will list which destinations are taking up the learning-areas approach in order to facilitate this horizontal information exchange.

Formalising collaboration

Develop a mission statement and sign a letter of commitment

One phase of work involves defining the level of commitment by each organisation in a more formal manner. To avoid this phase being slowed down in each bureaucracy, a simple letter of commitment requiring participant organisations to delegate a technical officer to follow the issue should be sufficient at this stage. A sample letter is set out below. At this stage a brief mission statement can also be prepared, to give participants a common vision of the overall process. The mission statement should be presented from the point of view of the coordination body, and include references to:

1. the area in question;
2. the establishment of a coordination partnership;
3. the goal of improving the learning offer available for tourism stakeholders;
4. the means of delivering this objective.

Here is a sample text for a mission statement suited to this stage of learning-area development.

The _____ tourism learning area has been established as an open access partnership to implement a multi-stakeholder, problem-solving approach aimed at improving labour competences, entrepreneurial quality and educational governance systems to promote innovation, competitiveness and sustainability.

The _____ tourism learning area will engage a broad range of regionally based stakeholders, bringing us together as the primary regional tourism-sector knowledge network to address contemporary tourism-sector challenges by developing inter- and intra-organisational collaboration through the creation of a structured set of holistic learning opportunities available to tourism stakeholders in the area.

Here is a sample text for a letter of commitment (to be used with the mission statement).

Dear *(tourism learning area stakeholders)*

Re: Learning area — letter of commitment

(Insert mission statement)

We are writing to confirm participation in the _____ learning area working group process. We understand that this involves no formal commitment of money or resources at this stage. We further understand that this initiative will lead to the formation of a partnership to manage tourism learning issues in the _____

(name of destination) with the potential of developing joint funding applications and projects with local partners, and other learning areas elsewhere in Europe.

Organisation:

Department:

Signed: *(name of the person in charge)*

Date:

By this stage you will have set up your tourism learning-area coordination structure. The next phase involves using this structure to execute specific actions.

Key tasks

1. Reinforce the vision of the TLA with work on a mission statement.
2. Reinforce the need for stakeholders to support the process with written commitments.
3. Follow up the paperwork.

See **Technical Annex 14** — Sample protocol of collaboration.

Skillnets



Skillnets facilitates an enterprise-led approach to training and development through supporting the implementation of flexible and effective training delivery methods amongst those enterprises that previously had difficulty in accessing or benefiting from training. In each training network, companies come together to decide what training they need, and how, where and when it will be delivered.

Skillnets is responsible for the operation of the training networks programme. The first programme took place from 1999 to 2002 and as a result of the success of this initiative, Skillnets was given a further mandate to continue the programme for the period 2002–05. Its approach is particularly appropriate for small and medium-sized businesses that may lack the time, expertise or money to develop training customised to their specific needs and directly relevant to their size and industry sector. In the first round of the training networks programmes 1999–2001, over 75 % of companies participating were SMEs. In the second round of the programme, over 83 % of participating companies were SMEs.

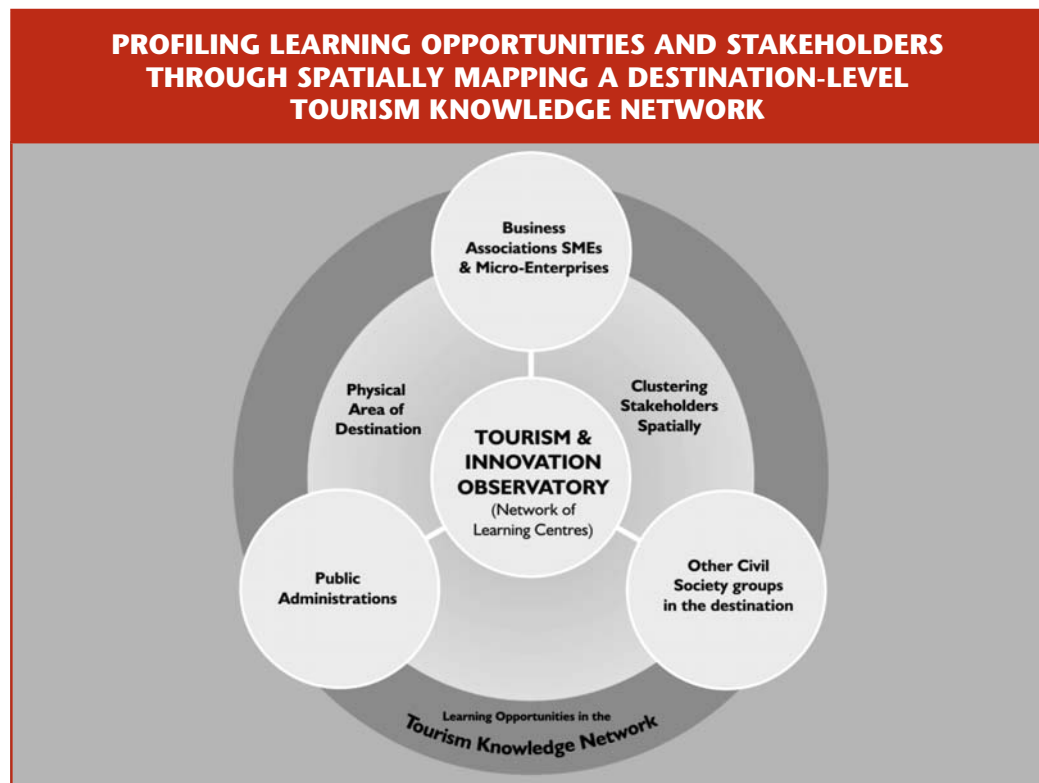
Between 1999 and 2001 a total of 58 networks were supported with funding of over EUR 11 million, involving 4 000 companies and 13 000 employees. The key difference in the Skillnets approach is that companies have total decision-making power and can customise training to their specific needs. Skillnets does not specify the type or scope of training — its role is to support the networks with resources and expertise.

The second round, 2002–05, saw EUR 15 million being invested in Skillnets. In this round, 55 networks were funded and 2 400 companies were involved. It is projected that more than 14 000 people will have received training by the end of the programme. More than 80 % of the companies involved employ fewer than 50 people.

(www.skillnets.com)

Phase III — development

Note that this is an ongoing process which will acquire greater degrees of depth and sophistication. Implementation and elaboration of the basic work plan is now the focus. The idea is to create a common **regional sectoral identity** that enables the formation of several learning networks by stakeholders interacting through the website portal. **Once the portal is under construction, the coherence in actual regional governance processes can be mirrored in the levels of coherence attained and made transparent in the website.** The website should promote stakeholder interaction, stimulating the growth of a variety of partnership and networks that were not possible or so obvious beforehand.



Profiling your learning area in more depth at this stage is important. It will provide baseline information from which to develop and monitor your area. Remember that the learning-area concept is attempting to stimulate local-level expertise and resources by linking and physically clustering stakeholders who provide learning opportunities with those who use them. The knowledge network is the framework that will contain:

- the stakeholders you want to link;
- the learning experiences you start to list;
- projects and processes to develop the learning area; and
- the innovative actions that arise from these linkages.

This stage of profiling could be done by linking available regional map-based information to the stakeholder listing in the TLA portal. The user could then perform a map-based search to locate potential cooperation partners or local learning opportunities. The diagram on the previous page

shows this potential schematically, highlighting the role of the tourism observatory in maintaining this information on resources for the tourism knowledge network.

Implementing an operational framework

Develop and implement an operational framework (goals, partnership commitments, meeting schedules) including a list of practical activities.

Full-scale tourism learning-area resource assessment form

Measuring, managing and improving on the resources a TLA has at its disposal are necessary tasks of a coordination body. Human, physical, technical and financial resources need to be quantified and qualified, and kept up to date. Components of a tourism learning-area resources profile are described in Technical Annex 15.

A programme of regional activities should be developed within an operational framework. This should be seen as part of the process of considering and applying for funding allocations, in particular when dealing with the European Cohesion and Structural Fund framework from 2007 onwards. Programme considerations that utilise the learning-area approach are fully in line with the overall European rationale behind the funding allocation process of this phase of EU structural development, currently labelled 'A new partnership for cohesion' ⁽¹⁾, and the forthcoming **competition and innovation programme** ⁽²⁾.

Key tasks

1. Map your tourism learning area physically.
2. Match the knowledge network to this spatial map.
3. Establish links between stakeholders and the learning offer on these maps.
4. Present this via the communications portal.

See **Technical Annex 15** — Learning-area resources profile.

In developing an operational framework, the coordinating body has essentially a management, capacity-building and facilitating role, focused on broadening and deepening the initial work plan elements, namely:

1. SME capacity building,
2. good governance focus,
3. entrepreneurial skills focus.

This will now involve a dedicated team of personnel, either drawn from different stakeholders or belonging to a funded core team, depending on how the coordination body and its administrative core has matured since its inception. In either case there are three key areas for the coordination body to develop:

- (a) operational management tasks;
- (b) learning offers and knowledge management;
- (c) networking and cooperation for innovation, competitiveness and sustainability.

⁽¹⁾ *A new partnership for cohesion*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004.

⁽²⁾ Competition and innovation programme of the Enterprise and Industry DG.



Operational management tasks

1. Clarifying the goals and values that underlie the learning-area approach, and communicating these to stakeholders.
2. Ensuring a structured and timetabled coordination process based on a realistic strategic framework document.
3. Profiling the learning-area relevant stakeholders and their activities.
4. Profiling regional characteristics and resources.
5. Improving all communications channels both horizontally and vertically throughout the region's tourism stakeholder value chain.
6. Fundraising for core activities.
7. Establishing a monitoring system.

Learning offers and knowledge management

1. Diagnosing destination-specific tourism-sector problems and opportunities.
2. Improving stakeholder IT capacities to take advantage of the e-European knowledge-based economy.
3. Cataloguing and marketing the various formal and non-formal learning offers on the portal.
4. Recognising and strengthening the region's informal learning-experience media.
5. Establishing creative marketplaces for learning experiences.
6. Improving the regional physical education and training infrastructure.
7. Programming resource allocation for education and training courses to bridge skills gaps.
8. Supporting and developing specific programmes for managers in SMEs and micro-enterprises focusing on human resource management.
9. Providing training and support for improved public administration of the destination.
10. Promoting education material for the development of:
 - the learning citizen,
 - the learning organisation,
 - the learning network,
 - the learning region.

Networking and cooperation for innovation, competitiveness and sustainability

1. Researching and raising awareness on regional tourism products and services.
2. Identifying potential new markets on a local to global basis.
3. Ensuring support and catalyst actions for innovation and continuous improvement in the region.
4. Identifying and encouraging partnerships, networks and clustering.
5. Linking R & D and other strategic information to SME and micro-enterprises.
6. Identifying and accessing investment/funding sources for tourism economy stakeholders.
7. Dynamically supporting the placement of skilled people in the sector (attracting workers, training staff and securing jobs).
8. Implementing an ITC infrastructure and develop stakeholder use of IT tools to realise the operational programme objectives.

Development of physical infrastructure

The working group, as part of the operational procedure, should define a specific learning centre structure as a central focal point in order to:

- enhance sector awareness (enterprises and professionals) on the need to receive training (promote the message that learning should be seen more as an investment than as a cost);
- offer high-quality learning/strategic information for coping with the real needs of the sector;
- act as a bridge between the strategic public bodies and the sector.

Remember, too, that the working group is aiming to implement a physical structure — a network of learning centres geographically very close to the sector, as well as the virtual link between stakeholders provided by the web portal. This approach embraces the clustering concept, giving the tourism knowledge network its regionally based learning resource. As the physical core of a learning network, the work of the learning centres is not seen as simply providing conventional training, but as a central point from which the wheels of stakeholder learning, organisation and innovation can be turned in synchrony.

At this stage, it is useful to think in terms of establishing a regional tourism observatory and innovation centre. This would be able to manage information circulating in the tourism knowledge network.

The objective of such a centre would be to offer key information on the reality in the area to the TLA's target groups, including:

- existing studies,
- new research,
- permanent feedback from the business sector and other target groups,
- learning needs,
- innovative ways to provide learning,
- innovative issues/themes,
- the labour situation and innovative solutions to its challenges,
- research and consultancy possibilities,
- networking opportunities.

The centre can help cope with coordination efforts among learning providers to avoid negative competition, showing for example how it could be a good idea for the learning providers to undertake some specialisation (e.g. a thematic area or subsector) or to be responsible for some regional area, etc.

Finally, the centre would have a key role in transforming learning into innovation and excellence. It could help organise learning providers (the institutes, the consultants, mentors and other supporters/providers) in order to transform learning into real innovation inside the SMEs/micro-enterprises. There are possibilities of offering support to SMEs/professionals through practical learning, in-house consultancy (applying theory in practice in the actual workplace), establishing mentoring systems, etc.

Key tasks

1. Produce a strategic document containing the theory, vision, goals and implementation programme.
2. Clarify stakeholder roles and responsibilities.
3. Match resources to the overall programme on a step-by-step basis.

See Technical Annex 16 — Learning-area operational profile.

Key tasks

1. Benchmark your tourism learning area with an initial report that matches the vision and process to a set of monitoring criteria.
2. Establish a permanent monitoring and feedback system in the form of an observatory.
3. Verify that this system can measure the link between stakeholder learning improvements and SME/micro-enterprise performance.

See Technical Annex 17 — Monitoring a tourism learning area.

See Technical Annex 18 — Quality checks in the learning area.

Monitoring learning-area progress

Monitoring of the progress of a tourism learning area should consider (a) the inception and organisation of the learning area coordination **process**, and (b) the **performance** results of that coordination process. These process and performance categories can show exactly how each learning area is developing in an objective manner, and will be a useful part of the coordinating body's decision support system for monitoring the operational framework.

This handbook offers a starting point for this area of work by suggesting that monitoring of learning area performance is established with the reporting information listed in Technical Annex 17, which provides a recommended initial list of indicators. The learning-area coordinating body will need to work closely with regional and national statistical departments in order to collate this information.

This marks the end of the section on guidance for implementing a tourism learning area.

Up and running and delivering learning experiences

It is clear from the elaboration of the tourism learning-area approach and the learning-area model of excellence that all stakeholders are clients (even the learning-experience providers!) of learning opportunities, which leads to the obvious conclusion that to identify the learning needs of stakeholders is to list all learning requirements that exist. Narrowing down the perception of client needs to the pragmatic reality of running a tourism destination or business is an important task, in part performed by market forces (demand for learning experiences generated by value-chain activities) and in part constructed by administrative decisions (supply of learning experiences to meet perceived gaps in market provision).

Demand-side management — identifying client needs

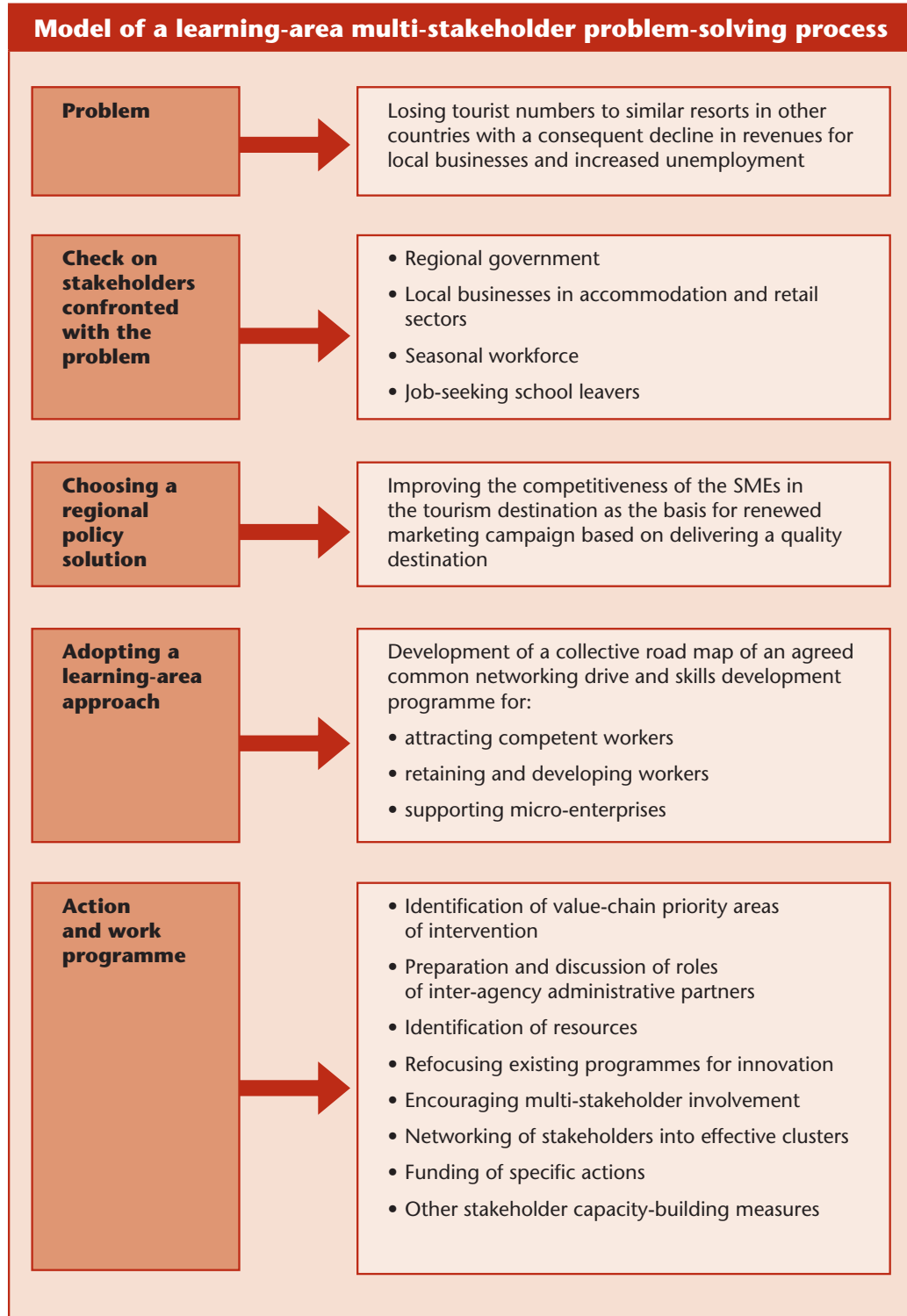
The following points can help as guidance for understanding and managing the demand for learning in your area.

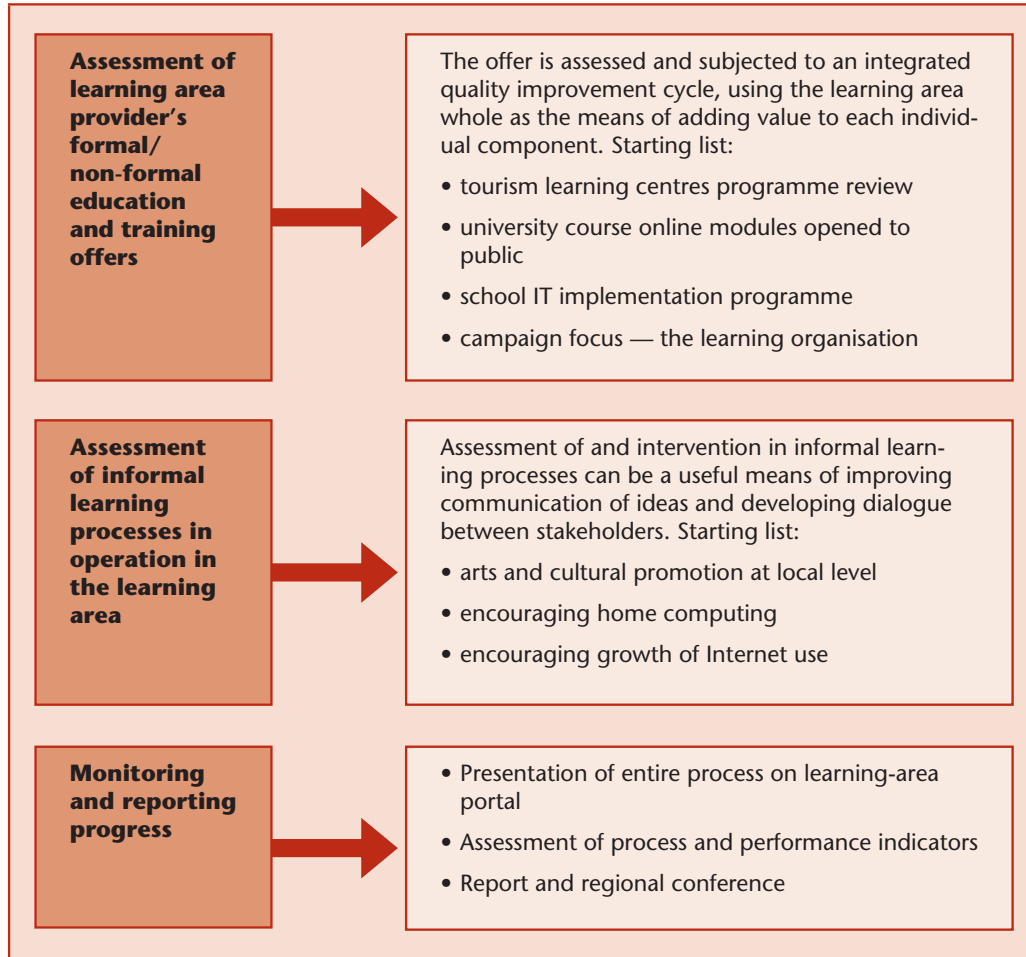
- A profile of the existing learning offer in your destination is a good starting point. It is often surprising to see how many initiatives already exist.
- The direction in which your region may be developing will also influence the demand for learning experiences. What stage is your destination currently at?
- What type of strategic information would be useful for the stakeholders in your region if they are to enhance their innovative and competitive capabilities?
- Do locally based learning centres link up with business associations in a practical way? What support do public administrations provide for this type of cooperation?
- An overview of the supply chain and destination management processes in your area will provide you with an idea of what type of demand exists. This will give an idea of which stakeholders need prioritisation when it comes to designing the learning offer.
- The natural characteristics of a destination will also provide an indication of what learning experiences will be necessary. Coastal resorts based on a sun-sea-sand offer will have different learning requirements from urban centres delivering cultural and historical visitor experience.
- 'Where is the demand for learning experiences coming from?' is also a question to be asked, which might be a more practical way of determining the real demand for learning experiences in a destination.

The TLA problem-solving process

Once a tourism learning area is up and running it should **remember to operate from a problem-solving point of view**. A generic methodology to achieve this is presented below, and the reader can find a further example in the TLA model of excellence (see Technical Annex 1) to see the logical process applied to another situation (¹).

(¹) The model of excellence in Technical Annex 16 shows the same process applied to a different situation.





Structuring work in a tourism learning area

It has already been stated that the type of work to be undertaken in the first steps of an established learning area involves:

- SME capacity-building,
- an entrepreneurial skills focus,
- promotion of partnership and networking possibilities in the regional (or thematic) knowledge network,
- a good governance focus.

This handbook recommends that the coordination body should take as its starting point the identification of client needs, in which case the above processes will mean focusing on the client needs of three particular groups of stakeholders:

- SMEs and micro-enterprises (SME capacity building),
- individuals in the tourism workforce (entrepreneurial skills focus),
- public administrations (good governance focus).

Targeting SMEs and micro-enterprises

Micro-enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a critical role in developing competitive destinations. Given their numerical dominance of the sector across Europe, it is hard to imagine how a tourist could visit an emerging or established destination without encountering the services of a small business. Yet, encouraging and enabling SMEs, especially micro-businesses, to respond positively to the imperative of improving their competitiveness, being innovative or becoming more 'sustainable' is a challenging process. Following a review of the characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of small firms in tourism — particularly in relation to learning and development — this section suggests how these enterprises might be engaged in the dynamics of a tourism learning area. It concludes by providing good-practice case studies and a checklist of points to consider when establishing a framework for supporting SME learning in particular areas.

Education and training for entrepreneurship

'Making progress in promoting entrepreneurial attitudes and skills through primary and secondary education' (follow-up to the best procedure project on 'Education and training for entrepreneurship').

Final report of the Expert Group, March 2004

Annex to the report: The education systems in Europe, structure of mainstream school and tertiary education (*source*: Eurydice).

This report by a group of national experts of 26 European countries, coordinated by the Commission under the multiannual programme for enterprise and entrepreneurship (2001–05), is the follow-up of a previous 'best procedure' project (see information provided below). Coherently with priorities identified by the entrepreneurship action plan, it aims to strengthen and focus current efforts at all levels to foster an entrepreneurial culture in Europe, starting from school.

In particular, the objective of this report is to identify useful policies and strategies that could be developed at national or regional level, and that will make it possible to achieve progress in promoting the teaching of entrepreneurship within primary and secondary education, as well as to propose instruments that would help monitoring such progress.

Extract from the Enterprise and Industry DG website
ec.europa.eu/comm/enterprise/services/tourism/index_en.htm

The European Social Fund (ESF) programmes have strengthened their focus on supporting human resource development in SMEs. During 2000–06, the ESF will contribute just under EUR 8 000 million to promote entrepreneurship across the EU. Activities will include the development of entrepreneurial skills, business start-ups and the establishment of networks to support entrepreneurship. The ESF will also allocate EUR 11 000 million of Community support to promote greater adaptability through, for example, more effective transfer of technology to SMEs and employee training.

'Report on the implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises', COM (2002) 68 final, 6 February 2002, Brussels.

Knowing tourism SMEs

SMEs in tourism are not homogenous. As will be discussed later, they vary in structure, motivation and practice. Nevertheless, a useful starting point is to recognise their distinctive features compared with their larger counterparts in the sector. The table below shows that smaller enterprises in tourism are characterised by their personalised management, by operators who have limited engagement with professional development agencies, and usually learn in an action-based, problem-solving manner.

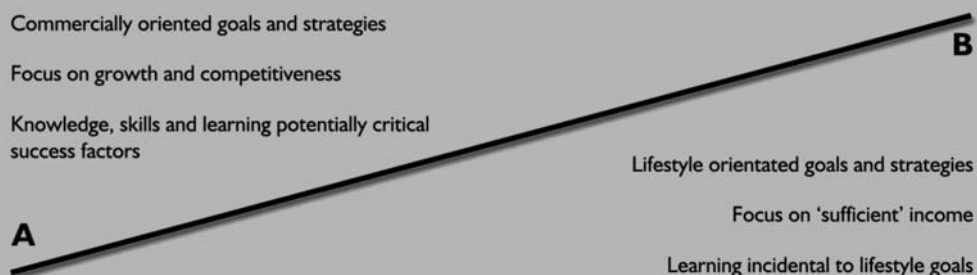
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF TOURISM SMEs	
General	Particularly relevant to Learning Areas
Capital investment is usually funded personally (or by family)	Learning is usually based on experience and often problem solving
Decision-making is personalised; all major issues involve the owner/managers	Formal training levels are low
There is an absence (or limited number) of specialist functional managers	Personal skill deficiencies are not necessarily recognised
Procedures such as recruitment are generally informal	Training is usually undertaken at the workplace
Motivations are not necessarily (indeed, not usually) linked to growth	Knowledge of, and engagement with, training or wider economic development agencies is limited
Limited sense of being part of a wider tourism sector	Social and professional networks represent an important source of learning and support
Sources: Bridge et al. (2003); Greve and Salaff (2003); Nickson et al. (2002).	

In addition to these defining characteristics, the motivation for business ownership is also likely to influence an owner-manager's attitude towards learning, competitiveness and participation in learning-area initiatives. Several commentators have provided typologies of small businesses. Generally these draw attention to particular characteristics that may influence business decision-making (such as gender or ethnicity), their stage of development (perhaps start-up, or other stages of maturity/life cycle) or business motivation (for example whether they display an orientation towards business growth). All of these are potentially valuable ways of distinguishing between the small firms in a particular area. However, it is suggested that in the context of developing learning areas, appreciating the diversity of motivations is particularly relevant.

As the diagram overleaf shows, in tourism it is possible to identify owner-operators who are driven by commercial considerations and those who have strong lifestyle goals. The latter may simply be indicative of a desire to be working independently in a particularly appealing location, such as an area of natural beauty or a resort.

The value of the figure above is that it not only highlights the extreme positions (i.e. A and B) that may be adopted by owner-managers, but also shows the multiple points where entrepreneurs might be located. Recognising these positions has two immediate implications. First, it is likely that commercially orientated enterprises are more likely to participate in learning-area initiatives. They will only do so, however, if commercial benefits from participation are acknowledged. Secondly, lifestyle-orientated businesses will require greater persuasion to engage. This may involve resource-intensive means of contact but should certainly appeal to their need for survival — a condition which may ultimately require an enhanced skills and knowledge base.

BUSINESS ORIENTATION OF SMALL TOURISM FIRMS



Source: adapted from Dewhurst and Horobin (1998, p. 32)

Learning in tourism SMEs

It is clear that learning does not take place exclusively by means of training programmes, regardless of how well they are designed and delivered (Taylor and Thorpe, 2004). Indeed, although the notoriously low take-up of training initiatives in tourism undoubtedly reflects an under-valuing of skills, there is also evidence of widespread informal approaches to learning and development. Care must be taken, therefore, not to assume that an absence of formal training necessarily implies a lack of concern with learning, training and development. As the following diagram indicates, learning in tourism SMEs may occur via formal or informal means.

THE LEARNING CONTINUUM



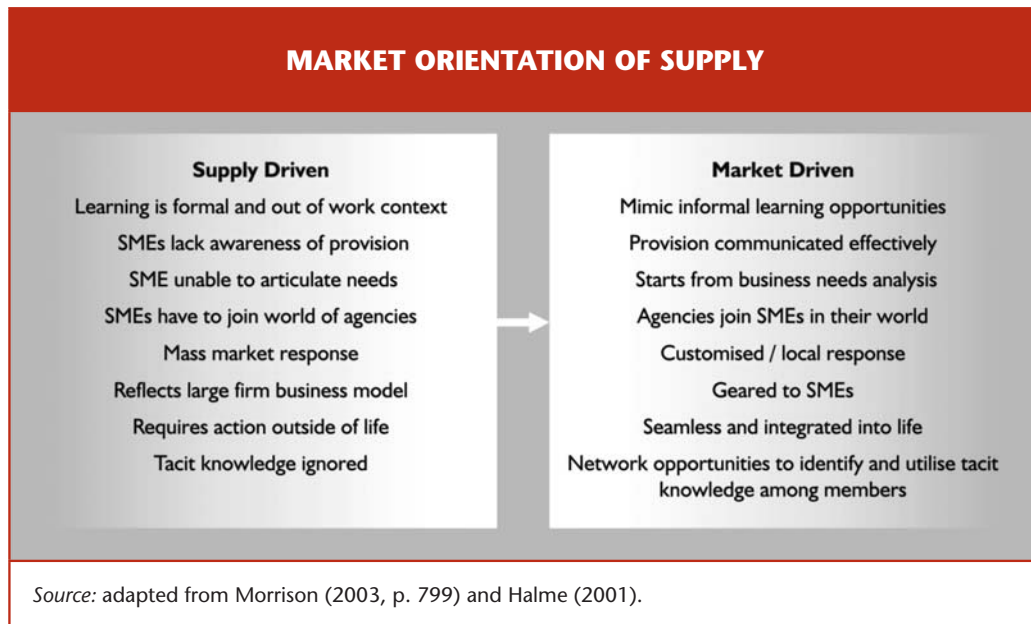
Source: SFEDI (2004a, p. 33).

In the education and training action area of the IST (information society technology) programme, there is a cluster of projects that pilot and develop best practice for advanced on-the-job training solutions in SMEs. The objective is to foster the adoption of technology-based solutions and services that enable a complete life cycle of on-the-job training in SMEs, including the development of sustainable business models.

'Report on the implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises', COM (2002) 68 final, 6 February 2002, Brussels.

From supply to a demand-led focus

A review of various evaluations of SME support provision offers a valuable starting point for developing SME engagement in learning areas. The box below highlights some of the key findings.



In spite of the observations above, Morrison (2003, p. 797) has noted that the more professional and visionary operators are increasingly recognising the benefits of adopting a proactive, planned and structured approach to the maintenance and upgrading of their learning. Such individuals see this as a means of gaining competitive advantage within national and international marketplaces. However, they are in the minority. Clearly, the challenge is to demonstrate the benefits of enhancing skills and knowledge, and the means of doing so, to a wider proportion of tourism SMEs in the learning areas.

Identifying client needs: tourism SMEs

While the supply of training programmes may have a role to play in enabling entrepreneurial learning, they are not likely to meet the needs of the majority of SMEs because of their generic approach. This observation is particularly pertinent in the context of micro-enterprises. As has been discussed elsewhere in this handbook, SMEs require variety and flexibility of provision. One of the challenging issues is how to bring this about. Perren and Grant's work (cited in Morrison, 2003, 798) is valuable in this regard, and it is worth quoting the following passage in full.

'The key to supporting entrepreneurs (SMEs) is to join them in their world and to tap seamlessly into the activities that they would be undertaking as a normal part of running their business. Management and leadership development needs to become an integral part of the entrepreneur's life and it needs to mimic the informal opportunities that many successful entrepreneurs experience. The problem with most schemes in the past has been that they require the entrepreneur to take the initiative and take actions outside their worlds.' (Perren and Grant, 2001, p. 16)

In the light of the above, Morrison (2003) advocates the development and use of business (learning) networks, whereby owner-managers see such networks as important business resources. Within such an approach, different means of delivering learning may be considered useful. These include: coaching, mentoring, opportunities for meeting other entrepreneurs, information on examples of good practice, or other means revealed by the continuum of learning or elsewhere. A vital feature of this approach is that it emphasises experiential (or action) learning, and places peers at centre-stage.

Key lessons from evaluation of SME-support provision

- Most SMEs lack knowledge of local supply.
- SMEs do not necessarily recognise their own development needs and/or how to meet them.
- The availability of (or market for) business advice varies from place to place (may be particularly weak in some rural locations) and this influences the impact on business performance.
- Supply-side services are generally stimulating or meeting the actual or latent demand for owner-manager development in SMEs.
- There are various barriers to take-up, including those relating to the resources of the enterprise, the availability of information, and the quality of content.
- There is limited evidence of advisory services enhancing small business survival rates. A lack of evidence does not, of course, necessarily mean a lack of impact, but simply that it has not yet been demonstrated.
- Localised and customised responses are required by most SMEs, especially micro-enterprises.

Sources: Bridge et al. (2003); CfE (2001); Halme (2001); SFEDI (2004a, 2004b); Thomas et al. (2000).

This is necessary because owner-managers often relate more easily to — or have a greater respect for — others who are also operating their own business. The table above summarises key differences between supply-driven and market-driven (or user-driven) approaches.

The move from a supply-driven approach to a market orientation suggests a need to conceptualise the small tourism businesses in the locality (via discussion groups) and to target their engagement accordingly. This might be undertaken in a variety of ways but is likely to result in identification of at least three broad categories of business. These will probably broadly reflect the commercial/lifestyle orientation discussed earlier. Three indicative categories might be as listed below.

Professionally managed, growth-oriented, learning enterprises

Such businesses would be exemplars to others. They will be responsible for local learning opportunities, recognise their role within the sector and participate in local initiatives. They will be relatively few in number.

Enterprises that are open to persuasion but poorly informed

These will be susceptible to improving their practice but require inspiration and knowledge of opportunities. Minimum disruption to routine business operation is a pre-requisite to participation.

Unconvinced lifestyle businesses

Such businesses are the most challenging in terms of changing their practice. Individual contact is required, as is active use of peer networks as a means of gaining access, credibility and ongoing commitment.

European Charter for Small Enterprises

The follow-up to the European Charter for Small Enterprises has generated a valuable stock of good practices which can help improve the environment for small businesses throughout Europe. The charter has become a key instrument in promoting the interests of small businesses in Europe and a core document of European policy, both at EU and national levels, committing public authorities to 'think small first'.

The three charter areas highlighted as priorities are: (1) access to finance, in particular venture capital and micro loans; (2) innovation and technology transfer; and (3) consultation of small businesses. There are also three new priority areas selected for the follow-up exercise: (1) education for entrepreneurship, especially secondary education; (2) better regulation, especially bankruptcy law and impact assessment; and (3) skills shortages, especially measures to overcome the lack of skilled technicians and engineers. Further topics are the orchestration of small business policy and the regional dimension of charter implementation.

You can find background information in:

European Charter for Small Enterprises
latest implementation reports.

Targeting individuals in the tourism workforce

There is a plethora of mechanisms to ensure individuals are prepared for working life. Schools, technical colleges, universities, training courses, apprenticeships, work placements, etc. are all means of developing the competence of individuals for the purpose of work. Very often these will be general processes, and may only include a passing reference to the tourism sector, unless tourism is a dominant force in the local economy. It is up to the tourism learning-area coordinators to make these general processes relevant and accessible to members (or potential members) of the tourism workforce.

Key steps to engaging SMEs in tourism learning areas

In the light of the foregoing discussion, the following checklist summarises the key steps to delivering learning experiences for tourism SMEs.

- Understand the nature and diversity of tourism SMEs in the locality and work with them to identify learning needs.
- Recognise that learning may take place in different ways and in different contexts.
- Devise a strategy that develops an effective means of communicating with the sector, develops initiatives that do not require extensive periods away from the business, provides resources and activities where and when they are needed and relevant to the enterprises and the contrasting challenges that they face, differentiates supply (not 'one size fits all'), and is delivered by personnel that are credible, having the relevant experience and expertise.
 1. Network with other learning areas and the research community with a view to enhancing good practice.
 2. Evaluate delivery of learning and consequences, and revise strategy accordingly.

Modelling the learning individual

Learning individuals are the building blocks of a tourism learning area. They can be categorised as:

- private-business owners/managers,
- private-business employees,
- public-administration employees,
- residents, or
- visitors.

Tourism learning areas can support the development of such individuals by:

- encouraging the desire to learn,
- improving the quantity and quality of learning experiences,
- ensuring access to learning experiences, and
- targeting learning experiences to specific stakeholders.

Qualities of the model-learning individual include:

- achieving basic educational standards according to circumstances,
- willingness to be involved in lifelong, life-wide learning processes,
- participation in education for entrepreneurship programmes,
- participation in ongoing technological competence programmes (IT training),
- awareness of local–global sustainable development issues,
- flexibility in terms of employment possibilities,
- capacity to develop multi-tasking abilities,
- being open to multi-cultural influences, and
- ability to work in team situations.

The development of the learning individual can be placed in the context of **active or responsible citizenship**. The socialisation and education of current generations has to adapt to the new conditions of mass culture, urban living and global production. Societal problems of delinquency and criminality are the most negative aspects of a lack of ‘citizenship’. On the other hand, exemplary citizens’ behaviour is often based on high levels of selfless personal achievement and supportive actions towards other people and the environment.

Public-administration employees could be seen as leading the way in this respect. Traditionally, such employees have a code of public service that includes model behaviour at work and in their private life. The formation of **learning teams** of individuals is a key aspect of improving learning structures.

We have seen how a learning area moves the education focus from formal schooling to lifelong learning. To meet the needs of individuals who wish to work in the tourism industry, a learning area must ensure its **learning-experience providers** are fully aware both of the demands of the individuals looking for jobs and of the needs of the businesses who will be employing them. Improved matching of supply and demand is one benefit of a learning area.

The learning-area portal needs to be designed in such a way that individuals will be able to have greater access to learning offers. Initially, the development of the portal will provide an entry point to those entities that provide learning experiences. Individuals will be directed to the individual web-sites of each provider. As the portal becomes more sophisticated, collective learning offers will become available on the learning-area calendar function.

However, the point of the tourism learning-area portal is not only to function as a type of shopping mall for different learning experiences but also to encourage learning-experience providers to improve their own offers in the light of information exchange, partnerships and networking with other stakeholders in the region. In this way, a learning area can encourage providers to gain knowledge of the type of demand and to match the demand by developing their own services and marketing strategies. Here, learning-experience providers can make contact with individual types of workers via the stakeholder classification listings, for example targeting women, or young people, or farmers, and finding out what their needs may be.

The development of entrepreneurial skills

The development of entrepreneurial skills at the individual level is one of the most important ways of ensuring local populations adapt to the new economy. As jobs for life disappear, and subcontracting, short-term contracts, piecework or project-based employment become the norm, individuals increasingly need to operate as 'one person' businesses. They need a rounded set of basic business skills which up to now has not been taught as part of the typical schooling process. The entrepreneurship in the schools programme (multiannual programme for enterprise and entrepreneurship (2001–05) of the Enterprise and Industry DG) is a response to this. It promotes the idea that enterprise education should be an essential part of a lifelong learning approach, with the development of entrepreneurial attitudes and skills being encouraged in people of all ages, starting in school.

Within the annual European employment strategy (EES), the common guidelines on employment policy require Member States to promote education for entrepreneurship as well as training for entrepreneurs.

'Report on the implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises', COM(2002) 68 final, 6 February 2002, Brussels.

In most EU countries, initiatives already exist to tackle this issue. A 'best procedure' project on education and training for entrepreneurship was launched to identify and compare initiatives from across Europe that aim to promote the teaching of entrepreneurship in the education systems, from primary school to university. A guide to good practices in promoting entrepreneurial attitudes and skills through education also exists (see 'Helping to create an entrepreneurial culture') ⁽¹⁾.

Targeting public administrations

Improving the delivery of learning experiences to public administrations is a cornerstone of tourism learning-area activity. The good governance of the sector is essential to its performance. Good governance comes from improved awareness and abilities of public staff.

Governance has been defined as:

'The framework of social and economic systems and legal and political structures through which humanity manages itself' ⁽²⁾.

The European Commission's 'Better regulation package' of June 2002 called for **openness, participation, coherence, accountability** and **effectiveness** in public administration. These five qualities ensure that public entities govern their respective sectors in collaboration with their stakeholders, with awareness of other sectoral activity, and in a responsible manner. Regulation at all levels of administration needs to adapt to the changing marketplace. Regulatory burdens and poor-quality regulations damage prospects for competitiveness, sustainable growth and employment. Regulatory quality is recognised as essential for economic growth, competitiveness and innovation in the internal market.

⁽¹⁾ Available from European Commission Enterprise and Industry DG.

⁽²⁾ 'Governance for a sustainable future', World Humanity Action Trust; cf. R. Gardiner, 'The summit process', Moving towards sustainable development governance stakeholder forum 2002.



Alongside the key coordination, facilitation and resourcing roles of public administrations, one of the specific ways of helping the situation is for them to improve their online services for better and more accessible information provision to the busy SME owner/manager. The establishment of a tourism learning area provides the ideal opportunity for this to happen in the tourism sector. In its communication of November 2001 entitled 'The impact of the e-economy on European enterprises: economic analysis and policy implications' ⁽¹⁾, the Commission stressed the need for public administrations to be at the forefront of online service delivery and to provide incentives for SMEs to access such services. This is now part of the eEurope 2005 drive. All Member State governments have demonstrated an awareness of the need to make their services as accessible as possible, mainly through online access, and to reduce the number of times businesses have to submit the same information to different authorities. Many now have Internet sites that provide information and offer advice on administrative procedures, financing opportunities and other start-up and management issues.

The following section develops the responsibilities of public stakeholders in more detail, focusing on specific needs of the tourism sector and public-private cooperation approaches.

Public authorities should be urged to increase their electronic communication with the small business sector. Thus, companies will be able to receive advice, make applications, file tax returns or obtain simple information online, therefore faster and more cheaply. The Commission must lead by example in this area.

Electronic communication between public authorities and business can bring benefits to both sides in terms of speed, cost, efficiency and transparency. E-government initiatives can also add an incentive for SMEs to go digital.

'Report on the implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises', COM(2002) 68 final, 6 February 2002, Brussels.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2001) 711 final, 29 November 2001.

Issues for key stakeholders — roles and responsibilities

In the implementation phase of a learning area, public administrative and educational bodies are expected to play a leading role, with the support and involvement of business associations and other social partners. This section describes just what is expected of the respective stakeholders if a tourism learning area is to become a functional reality.

Identification of key stakeholder organisations

In scoping the activities of a tourism learning area, a wide range of policy fields were identified as impacting on the sector itself. These policies are mainly regulated by public administrative departments dealing with:

- tourism,
- education,
- employment,
- environment,
- information technology, or
- regional development.

Pinpointing specific actors responsible for participating in the administration of these policies at regional or destination level leads to the following list:

- business associations (SMEs, managers, owners, employees),
- local/regional coordinating body,
- local/regional education department,
- local/regional employment body,
- local/regional environment department,
- local/regional IT department,
- local/regional authorities (councils, NUTS III–V),
- learning centres (educational or training institutes),
- other local social partners (trade unions, NGOs).

Each stakeholder is expected to inform itself fully of the tourism learning-area process. Each department or organisation has a specific contribution to make in the cooperation and networking approach required in the learning-area process. Most importantly, each entity should be aware that its main contribution is to ensure the overall coherence in the management of learning-area activities. Active participation in collaborative processes is an essential part of the new governance styles characteristic of the modern regional economy.

Although this is often seen as adding a level of extra work that eats into already busy schedules, inter-sectoral, multi-stakeholder cooperation can, over time, ensure that individuals' agendas can be carried through in the face of complexity. Finally, each stakeholder should be prepared to apportion human and financial resources to develop the approach. In practical terms this may mean writing up a funding proposal or sanctioning such a proposal.

Modelling the learning organisation

The learning organisation has been cited as a key component of learning-area activity. Learning organisations can be:

- private enterprises,
- public administrations,

- NGOs, or
- associations.

It has been said that large corporations already account for this aspect of their development, with human resources departments, training courses and other incentives for their workforces to improve their competence. The same is true of many public administrations. SMEs and NGOs, however, do not have such resources at their disposal.

A number of obstacles have been identified that affect SMEs' attempts to maintain competent staff through levels of training and learning aimed at increasing the firm's performance ⁽¹⁾:

- lack of funding for training,
- lack of suitable courses relevant to the grade of staff,
- lack of suitable courses in the area,
- unwillingness of staff to undertake training,
- high labour turnover,
- lack of time for training, and
- lack of cover for training.

Furthermore, a learning organisation implies that the company itself as a whole is engaged in processes of learning about its economic, environmental and social operational framework.

A learning organisation needs to address such problems. However, experience suggests that SMEs will not be able to do this on their own. A whole section of this handbook is dedicated to assessing the SME/micro-enterprise situation. Here, we can confine ourselves to building a model of what a learning organisation may look like, prior to understanding how this might be achieved in practice.

Qualities of a model learning organisation

Human resource development

- Encouragement of staff to pursue personal development
- Investment in staff training
- Provision of knowledge of and access to skills development programmes for employees
- Provision of possibilities for further training during working time
- Linking of higher skills to increased rewards
- Provision of informal learning experience
- Development of teambuilding and networking skills

Institutional/organisational development

- Development of responsible governance structures
- Improvement to information flows within the company
- Improvement to information flows with external entities
- Participation in information and knowledge networks
- Openness to innovative concepts and processes

⁽¹⁾ 'Training and development under construction — Hospitality and the changing environment', Hotel School, Den Haag, 2004, p. 15.

- Implementation of continuous improvements in quality
- Development of both long- and short-term planning for marketplace competitiveness
- Adoption of triple bottom line accounting systems to ensure sustainability

The concept of the responsible business can be used as the context for developing learning organisations. **Corporate social responsibility** has started to become an acceptable concept, allowing the private sector to operate voluntary codes of practice with regard to a range of economic, environmental and social issues. Public administrations have also shown themselves capable of taking on the ethos of increased environment and social responsibility. Small businesses, too, need to develop responsibly, but may not be able to be so formal in their arrangements. Whatever their scale or purpose, each organisation needs to become a learning organisation to survive and function effectively in a knowledge-based economy.

Learning centres (educational or training institutes)

Learning centres such as universities and higher education colleges should be considered to be the heart of the learning area's core group, **particularly if they are given the resources to achieve the necessary scale of intervention to coordinate their tourism learning area**. They can easily be initiators of the process, and should have a strong role in the overall coordination body.

Their closeness to the subject matter of tourism learning is an important feature in determining the way they can contribute. Their role in provision of formal learning makes them the starting point of improvements to the practical learning offer. Their information provision, courses and training events need to be pooled within a single access point so that, if there are several learning centres in an area, they are required to cooperate with each other to achieve this.

Bearing in mind this overarching need to bring coherence to the local and regional area through active cooperation, the following section identifies the roles and responsibilities of each key stakeholder.

They should also aim to use the learning area to achieve closer links to key tourism stakeholders, in particular for working with public administrations to ensure they exchange the expertise and data that links research and policy, and to **link directly with businesses, in order to develop innovative enterprise strategies through closer research cooperation**. Geographical proximity is particularly useful in the development of strong learning-to-innovation processes between learning centres and SMEs.

Business associations (SMEs, managers, owners, employees)

Businesses in a learning area are considered to be beneficiaries of the approach, but are still required to play an active part in its development. SME and micro-enterprise associations should see the value of a tourism learning area for their members. Converting learning opportunities into innovative and competitive business activities means that chambers of commerce and other associations should value the learning-area approach as a source of profitability for their members. Although in the past the business sector has left the provision of mainstream school-based education to State institutions, the new economy requires that responsible businesses proactively involve themselves with learning-experience providers to develop themselves as learning organisations. Business associations should continue and expand their encouragement of this approach among their members.

Furthermore, the associations are there to represent the interests of organisations who do not have the time to develop learning offers, so the associations should use the learning area to work with administrations and learning-experience providers to develop learning experiences that their members both want and can use.

Business associations should be an active part of the learning-area coordination process, bringing their support to learning initiatives and providing guidance and feedback for the learning centres operating in their area, and with whom they should be in contact.

Innovation networks set up by businesses can be developed with tourism-sector issues in mind. In fact, the business networks that run throughout a region can be incorporated into the learning area on a more transparent basis. This will enable business networks to cluster effectively in the light of the new information revealed within the learning-area knowledge network. A learning area should help business associations to identify both regional geographical clustering potential and also tourism supply chain clustering. Members may find it difficult to see these opportunities from within their busy individual and daily routines.

Businesses associations can play an active role in partnering funding applications, using formal and informal partnership protocols to support the development of learning area initiatives. In the implementation stage, businesses may leave developments to public administrations, but will need to play a supportive and participative role in working groups and at learning-area development events.

Local/regional coordinating body

A regional coordination authority can play the **central role** in establishing and running a tourism learning area. It is clear that such organisations already have the remit to deal with such a diverse range of subjects. They are in a position to have a clear overview of the local situation and will often have the competence and capacity to manage the diversity of issues and actors involved with multi-thematic learning processes. **They need to make it possible for other key stakeholders to play a full and active part in the learning area's core, using the region's existing learning centres as a hub for the coordination structure.**

'Regional authorities must be sensitised to the increasing importance of regional policies for promoting innovation. When designing and implementing regional innovation policies, regional authorities must fully take into account the distinctiveness and the social and economic characteristics of the region. They must learn from what others are doing, but avoid simple duplication — they must each develop their own specific route to improved innovation capacity, depending on their own unique set of circumstances.

The development of clusters of excellence, when there is a conjunction of factors such as infrastructures, availability of skills and expertise, research and technology centres, and enterprises with innovation potential, is of paramount importance for innovation performance'.

Examples of learning regions and innovative regions show that it is these bodies that have taken on board European Commission initiatives to promote the concept of networked regional cooperation. The difference here is that a tourism learning area is a sectoral rather than a thematic initiative, in which case the coordination body may expect or prefer to see the local tourism authority or a prominent learning centre dealing with the issue. However, a tourism authority does not have a multi-thematic remit and may have difficulties in bringing on board the wide range of partners necessary in a learning area without support from the coordination body. A learning centre may be willing to bring the learning-area approach to the destination, but it may lack the resources and capacity to bridge the gap between its research and teaching role and its potential as an SME- and micro-enterprise innovation resource.

However, tourism is generally acknowledged as a cross-cutting sector and one which is also currently seen as a potential growth area at all administrative levels. A regional authority can use the tourism sector to lead the overall move to-

wards a learning region, linking it to the development of the new knowledge economy. Those areas which have established themselves as learning regions or innovative regions have not necessarily shown a clear awareness of issues specific to tourism, so regional authorities should become aware of this.

The regional authority will be expected to participate actively in the formation and facilitation of the various partnerships and networks necessary to improve tourism learning and SME cooperation. It should be able to cluster the stakeholders within the region by forming links between networks and creating either physical or virtual common spaces for their interaction. In this respect, their involvement in the establishment of the web-based learning-area portal is very important.

Local/regional tourism authority

The local tourism authority focuses on the sectoral activity that is the subject of a tourism learning area. Its knowledge of local stakeholders and their activities and its remit to develop the sector make it the primary entity for initiating and leading the process. However, it will not have an overall picture of the regional innovation and enterprise development, issues of destination sustainability, regional educational offers and relevant information technology developments. For this reason it has to work in partnership with other agencies to deliver the learning-area approach, particularly with learning centres and business associations.

It is likely that tourism authorities will be the first to hear about the tourism learning area's approach. Therefore they will have the responsibility to promote the concept at the destination level, hence becoming the initiators of the concept. It is important that they show the vision to take this concept further. Frequently, such organisations are overworked and very marketing-focused, in which case they may not give the concept the time it deserves.

As has been said elsewhere, regional tourism authorities need to give as much attention to the issue of learning as they give to marketing. Both are equally important to the destination's future well-being. **They are the public stakeholders with the greatest interest in establishing a tourism knowledge network.**

Also, marketing is a form of learning, and the regional tourism authority is likely to be the main learning-experience provider of this information. The learning area will improve on the quality of the destination that is being marketed as the conditions for continuous learning and skills levels start to develop. It will also improve the way the destination can be marketed, attracting a different workforce and different clientele.

The regional tourism authority can use the cross-cutting sectoral nature of the tourism economy to reach out through the learning area to other economic sectors. This may be a practical means of dealing with issues of seasonality, especially if innovation is regarded as a further tool to deal with this problem.

In practical terms, however, the capacity of the regional tourism authority to act might be limited, and it should look at the issue of competence of its technical staff to comprehend and then implement the process. Training may be necessary.

Finally, it should look into the resources that it needs to put into the process. The implementation phase will require a local champion, and the tourism authority can lead the way in giving others support while the initiative gathers momentum. Judicious allocation of (naturally, hard won and scarce) human and financial capital, i.e. making better use of staff time, covering basic meetings and communications expenses, seed funding and developing funding applications, would be part of this organisation's role in the learning area.

Local/regional education department

Active participation of the regional education body in the tourism learning-area coordination process is essential if the cooperation process to develop an improved learning offer is to be effective. In fact, a regional education authority could be the leading partner, as it has a central role in the develop-

ment of learning experiences in a given area. Other stakeholders will view the education authority as a natural leader in this field, although it must bear in mind the need to build effective learning for innovation structures as its principal remit in the learning-area approach.

The coordination of the various learning centres in the region by the education authorities is an important first step towards bringing a more coherent formal and non-formal learning offer. It is unlikely that there will be a one-stop or single entry point to the formal learning offer in the region, and the education authority can use the portal to ensure that the offer becomes available; it will be the key player in quantifying and qualifying what is available.

Education systems differ widely across Europe, with either national or regional authorities controlling the development of formal education programmes. However, the role of regional education authorities in the day-to-day management of schools in their area gives them the possibility to strongly influence which initiatives are taken up by the schools. The education authority can act as a bridge between their schools and the wider community, in particular as a link to the region's business community.

The education authority can use the tourism learning area as this bridge. To keep in line with the Lisbon agreement, it has the responsibility to promote lifelong learning, e-learning and entrepreneurial skills in schools and among the communities it serves. The learning area is an ideal tool to do this, and the education authority can use the links created in the cooperation approach to open up schools to these issues in partnership with other entities.

There are likely to be many existing initiatives which already do this in the region, for example adult education courses, business in the community programmes, holiday schemes, etc. From this general offer, the education body operating in a tourism learning area will be expected to highlight what courses are of interest to the tourism sector and to build up the offer in conjunction with other stakeholders.

Entrepreneurial skills in education and the development of basic ITC skills and languages are perhaps the most important contributions to the learning offer that the regional education authority can promote. To make specific links to tourism-sector activity via these processes would also be part of a regional education authority's agenda in this respect.

Addressing the issue of qualification standards in a learning area could also be part of the role of an educational body. In order to ensure the quality of the learning offer, the education body should encourage the implementation of verifiable outcomes of learning experiences. This might be in line with formal international and national qualifications, standards, or national vocational schemes (¹).

Local/regional employment body

The regional employment department is chiefly concerned with ensuring that jobs are being created in the area and that people are filling the vacant positions. It also deals with those people who are unemployed. The employment authority will therefore have an active interest in seeing the development of the competence levels of the regional workforce. It will be inclined to encourage sectoral development and is therefore likely to play an active part in the learning-area implementation process.

Again, a regional employment body can be considered as a candidate for leading the learning-area approach. Its ability to relate to all sectors and to address the development of skills levels should be translated into a specific programme for tourism-sector information exchange and skills development. Building up a learning area would be a means of achieving this.

Importantly, the employment department will be able to link businesses to the learning-area process. It can target tourism businesses as part of its measures to manage the flow of the workforce between sectors. This is particularly important for the tourism sector, which is characterised by its seasonal nature. The employment department can match businesses in different sectors to annual fluctuations of the tourism workforce.

(¹) The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) is an important source of information on this subject (www.world-tourism.org).

It will also be able to devolve the learning-area structure across its various local offices. In this way, the learning area will reach the sectors of the workforce and community at the local level, reaching out to disadvantaged social groups. It can use the web portal to bring the various skills offers and job opportunities to such groups.

Local/regional environment department (including agricultural and forestry departments)

A local or regional environment authority has less of a central role to play in establishing a tourism learning area, but its inclusion as a key stakeholder reflects the importance of environmental issues for the tourism sector, as well as conforming to the EU's Cardiff process of integrating the environment into all policy levels. Most importantly, an environmental authority would be expected to provide a clear and informative picture of the geographical area. Like having a weather forecast, a destination can expect an environmental authority to quantify and qualify the environmental resource base of the region in order to guide potential courses of action.

In an era of adaptation to global change, an environmental authority is likely to be responsible for dealing with issues of sustainability, and can therefore bring crucial information to the learning-area process in terms of sustainable production and consumption patterns. An environmental agency will be able to set the parameters of ecosystem security, which will make it possible to determine the carrying capacity of the destination to be determined more transparently and accurately.

Informed environmental awareness of stakeholders is seen as a paramount concern, and a tourism learning area is the ideal medium for stakeholders to learn about what is happening to their landscape. The Aarhus convention ⁽¹⁾ has been ratified by the EU, and local authorities are obliged to provide such information to stakeholders. This increased access to information will place demands on the authorities, yet also improve the value system and awareness of stakeholders so that they can act more efficiently and sustainably.

A regional environmental authority will see what regional tourism business can do in terms of making a positive contribution to the area's environmental security. It can also highlight the business opportunities that arise from the innovative processes that are part of the adaptation to global change. New technical solutions to destination development issues are of key interest to local businesses, which will be in competition with global business for delivering such solutions to environmental problems.

In a tourism learning area, therefore, an environmental authority will have the role and responsibility of providing the web portal with the area's ecosystem profile, and managing the flow of information on sustainable production and consumption for tourism stakeholders.

Local/regional IT department

A regional department with specific responsibility for managing regional information technology may not exist as a separate regional entity. It may be part of the regional coordination body or a project-based unit set up specifically for the purpose of implementing a regional IT programme. There may even be more than one such initiative in a given area. However, the identification of such an entity is an essential part of the learning-area coordination process, as it will help provide the technical expertise to facilitate the information-sharing cooperation and networking process between learning-area stakeholders.

A regional portal development may already be under way, or a key stakeholder might be seen as the main point of reference for tourism education and information. What is important is that the stakeholders responsible for ITC should grasp the potential of the learning area concept to bring stakeholders into a constructive and ongoing portal development process.

⁽¹⁾ Directive on public access to environmental information (2003/4/EC) taking effect from 15 February 2005 (ec.europa.eu/environment/index_en.htm).



Such IT organisations will normally lack a clear picture of the type of information that stakeholders access and exchange. They can use the learning-area approach to ensure that stakeholders provide the input into their technical systems.

Taking on a technical development role in the learning area is what is required from the regional IT department. They will have a clear picture of regional IT developments and have the technical capacity to physically develop the portal.

Furthermore, they are likely to be aware of e-society developments, with detailed knowledge of funding processes and the direction of current developments. They should see themselves as providing the technical means for the tourism knowledge network to function effectively.

Local authorities (councils, NUTS III–V)

This section refers to local councils who may manage tourism destinations. For the larger local councils, especially large metropolitan areas, what has been said about the regional coordination authority also applies to the role and responsibility of a local council. There are many different scenarios that can be encountered when looking at what a local council needs in order to contribute to the learning-area approach.

This type of stakeholder is of particular importance, since a destination is often thought of as existing and being managed at this local level. In this case, the council is closely tied in with the image and well-being of the destination, and therefore will be well placed to be a coordination body. At this scale, the council can still run through all the steps to set up a learning area, as all stakeholders will have representation in some local form.

Alternatively, a local council might find itself part of an overall tourism learning area or learning region, in which case it can participate as part of a devolved system, taking on the ethos of a learning community and applying this approach to its local governance bodies and learning centres. Again, it can mirror the overall process to ensure it contributes to the learning-area development holistically and effectively. Hence, one could imagine a region possessing a series of autonomous tourism learning areas, each running its own mini-portal, linked to the regional portal.

Other local social partners (trade unions, NGOs)

Trade unions representing individual members of the regional workforce, and NGOs representing various thematic issues in the region, will be able to play a constructive role by making sure to inform their members of the learning-area development so that they can take advantage of improved information flows and educational/training offers. Trade unions often have a key role to play in the provision of training for qualifications, and should be encouraged to enhance their capacity to deliver flexible and transferable skills to their members. The awareness and use of IT or the development of language and communication skills are prime examples of this potential.

They can also help determine tourism learning-area content to ensure that their members can access the information and offers that they need. The regional web portal will be a useful means of finding out about jobs, courses and a wide range of information about the local tourism sector, so social partners should make sure that the implementation and coordination process has the benefit of their experience, knowledge and point of view.

Focus on e-learning

E-learning is currently one of the fastest growing fields in socioeconomic development. In its broadest sense it ranges from basic computer use through Internet surfing to formal education delivery and virtual conferencing. It encapsulates the concept that informal learning opportunities often provide the best source of knowledge for ideas and innovative actions. E-learning opportunities can bring tailored information closer to the busy routines of business managers and enable the user to determine when and how to take up learning opportunities.

Such unparalleled freedom for accessing information has never before been present on the planet — indeed, it is still not open to everyone, as computers and broadband usage remain within reach of a minority of the world's citizens, mainly in the developed countries. However, the move towards the knowledge economy is enabling European businesses, employees and consumers to make use of this technical advantage, which in turn should be seen as fundamental to supporting stakeholder communications and interaction in a tourism learning area. The competitive and innovative cutting edge of tourism-sector SMEs may well depend on how they can adapt to the global e-economy.

The range of e-learning possibilities of interest in a tourism learning-area development programme can be divided into:

- improving e-communication between stakeholders,
- information and marketing of learning opportunities,
- information and marketing on products and services,
- online education and training modules,
- public procurement procedures, and
- online business administration.

The eEurope 2005 communication specifically singled out culture and tourism, stating that the Commission, in cooperation with Member States, the private sector and regional authorities, should define e-services to promote Europe and to offer user-friendly public information. These e-services should be in place by 2005, building on 'interoperable interfaces, using broadband communication, and being accessible from a range of digital appliances'. Here, the information superhighway arrives at the door of every tourist destination.

'The information society has much untapped potential to improve productivity and the quality of life. This potential is growing due to the technological developments of broadband and multi-platform access, i.e. the possibility to connect to the Internet via other means than the PC, such as digital TV and 3G. These developments are opening up significant economic and social opportunities. New services, applications and content will create new markets and provide the means to increase productivity and hence growth and employment throughout the economy. They will also provide citizens with more convenient access to information and communication tools' ⁽¹⁾.

Tourism learning areas need to be fully involved in the eEurope process for the benefit of the area's resident communities, workforce and small businesses. In March 2001, the Commission adopted a communication entitled 'Helping SMEs to go digital' ⁽²⁾. The 'Go digital' initiative followed up the eEurope action plan, identifying SMEs as being critically important for promoting eEurope. Member States were invited to encourage SMEs to go digital through 'coordinated networking activities for the exchange of best practices, e-commerce readiness and benchmarking'. 'Reference centres' such as the Euro Info Centres network were highlighted to help SMEs to introduce e-commerce into their business strategies. Five years on, almost all Member States have made progress, to varying degrees, on this front. Now, the tourism learning-areas initiative is set to continue this move towards developing the European knowledge-based economy by ensuring that the tourism sector fully utilises the potential of the Internet and World Wide Web.

⁽¹⁾ 'eEurope 2005: an information society for all', COM(2002) 263 final, 28 May 2002, Brussels, p. 2.

⁽²⁾ COM(2001) 136 final, 13 March 2001.

It is important that the legal and technical means for e-learning and e-commerce are in place. Strengthening of the legal framework for e-commerce and infrastructural improvements are often national decisions that learning areas should ensure are being implemented to benefit their regional situations. Tourism-sector activities are particularly suited to this new medium, which provides both businesses and destinations with a significant advantage over the areas that do not have such infrastructure.

This needs to be combined with awareness-raising measures and training in ICT skills to convince more businesses of the benefits of e-commerce. The idea of 'top-class business support' has been packaged ⁽¹⁾ as a means of improving the day-to-day practice of thousands of business advisers, operating mainly at local level, across the EU. A learning area should ensure that the advisors to tourism businesses are fully aware of the learning-area regional portal approach, so that businesses can see a practical web-based development that makes eEurope a working reality for them. eEurope 2005 had ambitious targets, stating that ⁽²⁾, by 2005, Europe should have:

- modern online public services,
- e-government,
- e-learning services,
- e-health services,
- a dynamic e-business environment, and

as an enabler for these:

- widespread availability of broadband access at competitive prices,
- a secure information infrastructure.

The tourism learning area should ensure that the destination or region is well placed to benefit from e-society actions taken by the Commission. Specific aspects of eEurope should be particularly followed, including those listed below.

Interactive public services

Member States were required to have ensured by the end of 2004 that basic public services are interactive and accessible. This also involves looking into access for people with special needs, such as persons with disabilities or the elderly. The tourism learning-area administrative bodies should ensure that their area is in compliance with this process.

Public procurement

Member States were required to carry out 'a significant part' of public procurement electronically by the end of 2005. The working paper stated that the experience of the private sector showed that costs reductions were most efficiently achieved through the use of the Internet in supply-chain management, including e-procurement. Regional tourism value-chain businesses should be made fully aware of these processes so that they can use their physical proximity to government departments to their advantage.

Public Internet access points (PIAPs)

All citizens should have easy access to PIAPs, preferably with broadband connections, at the municipal level. In establishing PIAPs, Member States were asked to spend Structural Funds and work in collaboration with the private and/or voluntary sector, where necessary. It is essential that a tourism learning area should have this broad-based, local-level access to take full advantage of the regional learning-area portal.

⁽¹⁾ 'Creating top-class business support services', SEC(2001) 1937, 28 November 2001, a Commission staff working paper that characterises this practice and provides guidelines for achieving top-class support services.

⁽²⁾ 'eEurope 2005: an information society for all', COM(2002) 263 final, 28 May 2002, p. 3.

eEurope and the tourism-sector knowledge portal

Learning areas for the European tourism industry are part of the further development of eEurope and its knowledge-based economy. In practical terms, learning and information technology are inseparable in modern society. This reflects many issues, such as volume of information, speed of information exchange, compatibility between stakeholders, common information needs, etc. This is why within the learning-areas approach, a tourism learning portal system has been created as a tool to:

- further the coherence of public and private-sector administration of the learning requirements of the tourism sector,
- improve stakeholder networking and coordination,
- provide easily accessible information on the tourism sector,
- bridge the gaps between R & D results and SME innovative capacity, and
- market formal and non-formal education and training.

In itself a TLA portal contains only a minimum of information, but it provides the possibility for a coherent vertical **local to national to European level** information flow. Also, the same system enables a horizontal **destination to destination** information flow to take place. The e-European construction of the **Visit Europe** portal ⁽¹⁾ reflects the process in which marketing of tourism destinations is linked to making the best use of ITC in order to coherently promote the tourism offers of Europe's Member States. Learning issues can be similarly brought together as one European family in which one learning area can communicate with other tourism learning areas and with the wide range of European stakeholders in the tourism value chain ⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ The European Travel Commission is developing this initiative in collaboration with the European Commission (www.visit europe.com/).

⁽²⁾ The Ploteus education platform run by the Commission already allows access to a range of course opportunities across Europe (ec.europa.eu/ploteus/portal/home.jsp).

Further support

A learning area, once up and running, is considered to be a zero-cost process, inasmuch as it does not involve extra work to ensure that organisations and their employees are doing their jobs properly. It may well prove to be a public-sector cost-cutting exercise in the medium and long term, as well as a means of improving business revenues. However, the reality is that there are likely to be initial costs in the start-up process, such as meeting expenses, portal design, communications, etc. Moreover, it is unrealistic to see the scale of organisation required as something that will not incur costs. It is also difficult to predict the cost of setting up a learning area, as individual regions will have different starting points, needs, approaches, resources, etc.

For these reasons, it is best to understand the **policy processes** that can support learning areas in their attempts to meet their key objectives, i.e. unifying stakeholders, improving learning opportunities and facilitating micro-enterprise and SME innovation to develop competitiveness and sustainability. Additionally, there are logistical support mechanisms that can be used to ensure that the concept is understood and taken up in a practical manner. This section should help you become aware of both of these types of support for implementing your learning area.

A European tourism learning-areas network

The establishment of a European tourism learning-areas network can play a vital role in promoting the learning-areas concept. The network is likely to have two categories of members: those who are **interested** in being learning areas and those who have **fulfilled** the criteria. The whole process will be conducted on a voluntary registration basis to be as inclusive as possible. This process requires those areas that are interested in becoming a learning area to fill in a profiling form (see Technical Annexes 17-19). In this network, members would benefit from an increased flow of European to regional to European information, thereby improving destination competitiveness and sustainability. This closer and participative feedback structure will improve the type of support given to learning areas.

It is also important to increase destination-level opportunities to link with other networks that are working on similar themes, but perhaps at a broader level, such as:

- learning regions,
- learning cities,
- innovative regions,
- sustainable cities,
- local Agenda 21 destinations.

These initiatives and networks can also benefit from the learning-areas approach, and synergy should be sought wherever possible.

Linking with other learning areas

Learning areas are encouraged to exchange ideas and information on their work, allowing the direct transfer of good practice. Moreover, the links between learning areas will enable businesses and the workforce to access different areas to see what learning opportunities exist elsewhere. This will help promote the development of both the quantity and quality of learning opportunities in each destination, as stakeholders compare what is available, and how different destinations prepare their learning offer. The portal interface is designed to facilitate this horizontal networking.

Sources of financial support

It is clear that setting up a tourism learning area will require the allocation of human and financial resources, as well as technical expertise. Although a learning area may produce further investment, cost savings and improved profitability, there will be a stage in which leading organisations will have to invest their own resources. Fortunately, there are several support mechanisms to help such organisations realise their ambitions.

To identify these, it is useful to understand the policies that have been created by various levels of administration throughout Europe to support such initiatives. Because a tourism learning area cuts across so many policy themes, this handbook has developed a policy grid to enable learning-area initiators and coordinators to access the funds that accompany the policy decisions.

The following table indicates the different types of policies that are covered within the tourism learning-area framework.

Policy document name	Administrative/ geographical level					Target group — SMEs/micro-enterprises					Coordination	Target group — workforce individuals				
	Global	European	National	Regional	Local	Entrepreneurship	Innovation and IT	Competitiveness	Sustainable production and consumption	Cohesion and regional development		HRD	Employment	Lifelong learning	Education	Training
Long-term programme for enterprises and entrepreneurship		X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
European Investment Fund (EIF)		X	X	X	X	X										
Euro Info Centres			X	X	X	X										
Innovation relay centres (IRC)			X	X	X		X	X								
European network of enterprise and innovation centres (EBN/BIC network)			X	X	X	X	X	X					X			X
Databank for the search of partners (cooperation network among enterprises and BC-NET)																
Gate2growth 'access to financing'		X				X	X	X								
Support measures and initiatives for the enterprise (SMIE)		X				X										
Eureka (Eurotourism)		X				X	X	X				X				

Policy document name	Administrative/ geographical level					Target group — SMEs/micro-enterprises					Coord- ination		Target group — workforce individuals				
	Global	European	National	Regional	Local	Entrepreneurship	Innovation and IT	Competitiveness	Sustainable production and consumption	Cohesion and regional development	Good governance	Tourism specific	HRD	Employment	Lifelong learning	Education	Training
European venture capital		X				X	X										
Mutual guarantee society		X				X											
Structural Funds — Objective 2 (EAGGF)		X	X	X	X	X		X									
Structural Funds — Objective 2 (ERDF)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X									
Structural Funds — Objectives 2 and 3 (ESF)		X	X	X	X			X					X	X	X	X	X
Structural Funds — Innovative measures		X	X		X	X	X						X	X	X	X	X
Community initiatives (Leader)		X	X	X	X				X								
Community initiatives (Interreg)		X	X	X	X	X		X		X			X	X	X	X	X
Community initiatives (Urban)		X	X	X	X					X							
Community initiatives (Equal)		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Sixth framework programme		X				X	X	X		X					X		X
LIFE programme		X							X								
eContent programme		X				X	X								X		
eTEN programme		X					X				X						
Socrates programme		X	X												X	X	X
Leonardo da Vinci programme		X	X											X		X	X
Culture 2000 programme		X					X										X
MEDA programme		X		X	X		X			X							

This policy grid will be helpful in identifying sources of support. Stakeholders in your learning-area working group can identify the policies that guide their own particular fields, using the local-to-global administrative tiers to classify and recognise the policy lines that have been articulated at each level. At each level, a funding mechanism is likely to exist, and should be explored for its relevance to your learning area.

The *Internet guide to tourism-sector funding*, available on the Enterprise and Industry DG website, is a useful starting point that approaches this issue from the point of view of the tourism-sector interests.

However, as education, regional development, sustainability, entrepreneurship, etc., are all legitimate areas of interest for a learning area, you should not limit yourself to funds dedicated to tourism development alone.

In particular, look for funds on the local and regional level that are distributed as part of European Structural Fund allocations. The innovative actions funding mechanism of the Regional Policy DG, through which several regions are able to fund a variety of innovative solutions, is one example. This scale of funding suits regional level multi-programme projects.

You may have a smaller funding project in mind, in which case regional and national sources of funding may be more suitable. Most Structural Fund allocations come through national channels, so it is important to know about the relevant policy lines described above, and their national-to-regional funding implications.

Furthermore, the ability of your area to network with other areas increases your chances of accessing European funds, many of which are dependent on projects taking place in a variety of different countries.

Specific types of policies and programmes

At Community level there are several tools to be used directly or indirectly as supports for a tourism learning area, or for participating subjects.

Typically, the types of support fall into the following categories.

EU support for tourism enterprises and tourist destinations — An Internet guide

The Internet guide contains information on various EU programmes, schemes, funds, initiatives and actions of interest to the tourism sector and establishes Internet links to the homepages of the relevant programmes (see ec.europa.eu/enterprise/services/tourism/index_en.htm).

- *Funding programmes*: co-funding (part in advance, part granted after the statement of expenditure) falls within the competence of the relevant Community DG (or of national and local bodies) in connection with a project proposal following a specific call for tender.
- *Funds*: these encompass all forms of grants and loans directly or indirectly issued to the relevant bodies, on presentation of a business plan.
- *Counters*: these are all the information points, consultancy centres, incubators that can assist specific subjects and partnerships in accessing Community funds and/or consolidation and development consultancy.
- *Technological tools*: these are portals, data banks, websites, supporting partnerships and funding research.

Programmes	Funds	Counters	Technological tools
Long-term programme for enterprise and entrepreneurship 2001–05	European Investment Fund (EIF)	Euro Info Centres	Databank for the search of partners (cooperation network among enterprises and BC-Net)
Structural Funds — Objective 2 (EAGGF)	European venture capital	Innovation diffusion centres (IRC)	Gate2growth 'access to financing'
Structural Funds — Objective 2 (ERDF)	Mutual guarantee society	European network of enterprise and innovation centres (EBN/BIC network)	Support measures and initiatives for the enterprise (SMIE)
Structural Funds — Objectives 2 and 3 (ESF)			Eureka (Eurotourism)
Structural Funds — innovative measures			
Community initiative (Leader)			
Community initiative (Interreg)			
Community initiative (URBAN)			
Community initiative (EQUAL)			
PROGR. QUADRO R & T			
Life			
eContent			
eTEN			
Socrates			
Leonardo da Vinci			
Cultura 2000			
MEDA programme			

Areas of intervention

At the time of writing, the following policy lines have been singled out and related to the types of support available:

- A. Enterprise, competitiveness, local development,
- B. Innovation, technological development,
- C. Natural and rural environment, sustainable development,
- D. Learning, training, employment.

(Please note that these will change as a result of the new round of Community support measures that come into effect between 2007 and 2013) ⁽¹⁾. In particular, the competitiveness and innovation programme of the Enterprise and Industry DG and the Regional Policy Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds DG will be especially relevant to finding support for the learning area approach.

⁽¹⁾ Use the Commission website (ec.europa.eu) to locate the new follow-up programmes to those listed here.

A	B	C	D
Long-term programme for enterprises and entrepreneurship	Long-term programme for enterprise and entrepreneurship 2001–05	Structural Funds — Objective 2 (EAGGF)	Structural Funds — Objectives 2 and 3 (ESF)
European Investment Fund (EIF)	European network of enterprise and innovation centres (EBN/BIC network)	Community initiatives (Leader)	Community initiatives (Equal)
Euro Info Centres	Eureka (Eurotourism)	LIFE programme	Socrates programme
Innovation relay centres (IRC)	Structural Funds innovative measures		Leonardo da Vinci programme
European network of enterprise and innovation centres (EBN/BIC network)	Sixth framework programme		Culture 2000 programme
Databank for the search of partners (cooperation network among enterprises and BC-NET)	eContent programme		
Gate2growth 'access to financing'	eTEN programme		
Support measures and initiatives for the enterprise (SMIE)			
Eureka (Eurotourism)			
European venture capital			
Mutual guarantee society			
Structural Funds — Objective 2 (ERDF)			
Structural Funds — innovative measures			
Community initiatives (Interreg)			
Community initiatives (URBAN)			
Community initiatives — (EQUAL)			
MEDA programme			

Good practices: different models for different realities

As the tourism learning-area concept is very new, it is difficult to find exact models of the approach in reality. Scale and subject matter differ between each implementation scenario and the vision of one set of stakeholders in one part of Europe about what needs to be done may not be the same as the vision of other stakeholders elsewhere.

PROVISIONAL LEARNING-AREA SITES USED TO DEVELOP THE HANDBOOK



See www.ecotrans.org/learning-areas

However, there are several examples of good practice in setting up innovative regions, learning regions and other lifelong learning projects, which can act as clear guidance for partnership, coordination and IT development strategies. Furthermore, in the course of researching this handbook, eight provisional learning areas were established, each of which contains valuable experience of how to establish the process on the ground. Finally, there are several good-practice examples which refer to the various **stages** of setting up a tourism learning area.

It is important to know of good-practice examples of setting up networks in themes that are congruent with the tourism learning-area approach. The examples shown here demonstrate good practice in the art of setting up multi-stakeholder, inter-sectoral partnerships and cooperation projects. This type of activity is at the heart of a tourism learning area's development and, consequently, much is to be gained from understanding how these examples have come into being.

The printed version of the handbook confines itself to the experiences of the eight provisional learning areas ⁽¹⁾. It should be remembered that these examples only cover the very first stages of the learning-area development process, as it takes time for the overall concept to be realised in terms of concrete improvement in governance learning opportunities and innovation results.

Destination-level and regional (provisional) learning areas

Bergamo (IT)

Background and context

The learning area in the Province of Bergamo is taking shape as a network of actors, coordinated by ACTA and the University of Bergamo, who are involved in the fields of education/training on tourism. They operate at a provincial and local level, influencing a territorial system with at least two

⁽¹⁾ See www.ecotrans.org for a current overview of these areas

geographical points of intervention: the town (City of Bergamo) and piedmont/mountain areas (in particular Val Brembana and Val Seriana). These two systems, even though they are distinguished by different social, cultural and environmental features, are in search of synergies and opportunities to bring about an integrated, quality and innovative tourist system for Bergamo.

On 11 May 2004, ACTA and the University of Bergamo drew up an agreement for the provisional learning-area process. According to this agreement, the University of Bergamo is the promoter and ACTA is the technical consultant in supporting organisational aspects and transfer of content. The two parties agreed to exchange all useful information, mainly regarding the involvement of stakeholders, and to designate a legal representative.

In September 2004, the Province Administration of Bergamo (President, Culture, Sport and Tourism Department, and Training Department) granted sponsorship/legal aid to the project promoters and its cooperation for the further activities.

Objectives

The objectives of the provisional learning area in the Province of Bergamo are to unify the paradigm of territorial quality with the sectoral paradigm of system integration, i.e.:

- identify the vocational training and education needs in the province of Bergamo,
- identify the shared objectives to make the tourism industry of Bergamo more competitive and innovative through the qualification of skills,
- plan the conditions to promote the shift from training to learning,
- acknowledge the contribution of each actor according to his/her role,
- raise awareness of the training and professional needs of the territory,
- define a calendar of short- to medium-term activities shared by the actors,
- guarantee an ongoing stakeholder information and communication system able to redirect their actions.

Activities

To implement the learning area, the team has found the official involvement of the Bergamo Provincial Administration useful, in particular of the two departments responsible for assessing tourism and training respectively. In fact, the project is part of the objectives of the Province of Bergamo government in employment policies and in education/training activities. Moreover, the spirit of the learning area coincides with the statutory aims of the territorial agencies of tourist development. For these reasons, the team, via a number of working meetings, has requested the collaboration of the two assessment departments and of the tourist agency for promotion of Bergamo. The former have granted the sponsorship for the workshop and has shown its interest in the follow-up of the process. The latter has offered important information to guide the selection of actors, to identify the most appropriate actors and to encourage their participation in the workshop.

A qualified and diversified audience (of 25 delegates) attended the workshop, which was structured in two parts:

- the first part related to the transfer of important information on the concept of the learning area;
- the second part developed interactivity to stimulate the exchange of information, perceptions and expectations concerning the implementation of a tourism learning area in the Province of Bergamo.

The stakeholders expressed their appreciation of the project and their availability to collaborate. The feedback received was encouraging. Those involved acknowledged the opportunities offered by the project, but felt that further meetings need to be held. These meetings should identify the procedures and activities for the development of future activities. The following themes will be investigated:

- how to make the tourism industry in Bergamo more competitive and innovative;
- how to make the partnership efficient;
- how to promote the shift from training to learning.

A final meeting will be held to collect and summarise the results of the meetings and, in cooperation with the actors, to define the content of the protocol of collaboration to be sent in the Province Administration of Bergamo for signature. The protocol, which should specify a timetable of short- to medium-term activities, will therefore be the first step in making the learning area an official activity.

Algarve (PT)

Background

The regional project to improve the formal and informal education and awareness levels of all concerned with the tourism sector in the Algarve was launched in May 2004. The Algarve, with 5 million visitors to its 300 km coastline every year, is the only area to have been chosen to represent the southern European-style coastal tourism destinations in the developmental phase of this handbook.

Aims

The Algarve tourism learning-area project aims to use the work of the Enterprise and Industry DG at European level to establish coherent regional-level development of the tourism sector's learning needs. The end result of the regional project will be to have a genuine stakeholder forum that will enable improved knowledge exchange in general and act as a specific one-stop system for tourism learning-experience providers to collectively organise and market their work, with SMEs and the regional tourism workforce as key focal points. To achieve this, a coordination process needs to be developed in order to set up a regional knowledge network for the tourism sector. It will use a web portal to bring the partners in the network together, so that people wishing to improve their skills and knowledge about everything to do with tourism can have a single point of contact to lead them to the information they need.

Progress so far

In June 2004, 25 representatives of the leading regional administrative and private-sector bodies attended a working seminar hosted by the regional tourism hospitality college, including the key organisations related to the sectors of employment, tourism, education and information technology. At the meeting, participants agreed to establish a working group to coordinate the project. The Euro Info Centre agreed to provide the administrative support for this phase. It was also agreed that the existing Algarve digital portal should be the natural home of the tourism learning-area knowledge base, and that organisations present at the meeting would make the first small step by listing their websites in a unified webpage. A proposed mission statement reads:

'The Algarve tourism learning area has been established as an open access partnership to implement a multi-stakeholder, problem-solving approach aimed at improving labour competences, entrepreneurial quality and educational governance systems to promote innovation, competitiveness and sustainability. The Algarve tourism learning area will engage a broad range of regionally based stakeholders, bringing us together as the primary regional tourism-sector knowledge network to address contemporary tourism-sector challenges by developing inter- and intra-organisational collaboration through the creation of a structured set of holistic learning opportunities available to tourism stakeholders in the area.'

Further development

Interestingly, this region is also a recipient of innovating regions grants from the Regional Policy DG; yet it is clear that the links being made between the various stakeholders lack a coherent approach, despite involvement of key stakeholders. The approach of how to link tourism learning and innovation developed in a TLA would be a useful component of regional activity. A small-scale funding application is under way to develop the coordination phase, centring on specific development of the learning-area portal. In this project, there is clearly a need for time to be spent on developing

awareness, understanding, commitment and organisation of the learning-area process. The working group aims to manage a technical worker who will execute and facilitate the necessary developmental steps involved in the project. A consultant from the Ecotrans network involved in the European level learning-area process will provide guidance, advice and monitoring throughout the work.

Lake Constance (DE)

There is an increasing interest in the 'learning area' concept on the part of providers and potential customers in the region, mainly regarding informal and formal exchange. However, the general worry is that there is a lack of financial resources and, therefore, not enough personnel capacity to coordinate this exchange and other elements of the learning area. All stakeholders agree that it is not possible to coordinate a learning area with the existing resources. Day-to-day business has priority!

The results of the first workshop underline that there is often a big gap between supply and demand. There is no clear and easy structure in place to bring them together. More intensive cooperation is needed on the design (structure, content) of the offers and also on information/promotion of formal and informal learning offers. The impression is that certain working methods have been established for years and have not been evaluated and reflected upon until now. Initially, learning providers or coordinators in particular put in a lot of effort and are now frustrated, because it is very difficult to motivate the sector. It is always the same hoteliers, restaurant owners, tourist information counter staff or campsite owners who attend the formal and informal offers. But how does one motivate the others — especially the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The website would be an important part of the learning-area opportunities, but of even more importance are the contacts on a personal level and the opportunities for people to meet each other. Learning offers should focus on practical experiences and should have a clear and measurable aim. A lot of time for exchanges is needed. There is no content that is specifically relevant to sustainable tourism. Up to now, no evaluation has been made of the current learning offers.

The following organisations are potential coordinators of the learning area or could act as a team: Internationale Bodensee-Tourismus GmbH (IBT), the main tourism federation of the Lake Constance region; Tourismus Untersee e.V., the tourism federation of the Tourismus Untersee destination; Deutscher Hotel- und Gaststättenverband (DEHOGA), the German hotel and gastronomy federation of Baden-Württemberg; Insel Mainau (Island of Mainau), the most important tourism destination at Lake Constance; and Regionalbüro der Arbeitsgemeinschaften für berufliche Fortbildung of Baden Württemberg (regional office for professional on-the-job training) have offered their cooperation to support the Lake Constance learning area.

Importantly, this area is also part of the learning regions R3L initiative. Although this way not apparent to key tourism personnel in the beginning, a link has been made with the learning region process in the area. The process of making this link has provided evidence that tourism is not immediately and naturally linked to the educational networking processes of the R3L initiative, but in fact requires an active effort by the sector to involve itself in this type of activity.

A further workshop took place at the end of November 2004. The participants were informed of the results of the EU study and the draft of the learning-area handbook. They agreed on intense cooperation between tourism and education regarding the development of new learning offers, the implementation of the learning-area website as a part of the Lernende Region (learning region) website, and measures to promote and to motivate the target groups. The participants agreed on a concrete working plan for 2005 and they are looking forward to further steps by the European Commission to promote and implement learning areas in tourism destinations.

East Riding (UK)

The process of setting up the East Riding of Yorkshire tourism learning area was initiated through meetings and telephone interviews with various parties who were likely to be of central interest to the TLA. This included the East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Yorkshire Forward (the regional develop-



ment agency), Leader+, The Tourism Society (a private-sector association representing the industry) and the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Hull. A relevant sector-skills agency, People 1st, was only set up nationally during the course of the project and has not yet established a strong regional presence, but is expected to do so soon.

Additional meetings and telephone interviews were conducted with other agencies and individuals able to give further background information or who had an interest in the project. These included marketing consultants, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, individuals working for other tourism development and rural regeneration schemes such as the 'Market towns' initiative, and owners of accommodation and attractions in the target area.

At the same time, an overview of the East Riding of Yorkshire in terms of its demographic, geographical, agricultural and industrial characteristics was researched, and an inventory of tourism provision in the county was carried out. Tourism market research relating to the target area was also assessed. Based on this information, a gap analysis of current and potential tourism provision was made. It was clear that, while considerable inputs had been devoted to regenerating tourism in coastal parts of East Riding, tourism in the inland areas had received less attention and, as a result, was failing to fulfil its potential.

It was therefore concluded that the most appropriate way forward for the East Yorkshire TLA would be to focus on creating an improved network for rural tourism. The TLA intends to provide better links and development structures for elements of the tourism product, such as accommodation, food providers, attractions and activities. There is good support from the East Riding of Yorkshire Council — the principal agency concerned with the delivery of tourism services in the East Riding — and from the Yorkshire Tourist Board.

Once developed, the East Yorkshire TLA will provide strong linkages between different elements of a significant tourism product, covering providers of accommodation, food, attractions and activities, and including capacity building and promotional resources. This process has already received further interest with a cluster of tourism services now being identified and brought into a common information, support and marketing programme. Where practicable, links with wider European networks will also be included.

Pongau (AT)

The Pongau region has 9 million overnight stays and is one of the most tourism-intensive regions in Austria. The region is divided in smaller administrative regions and valleys. In 1996 — with the accession of Austria to the EU — the **Regionalforum Pongau** was established as a non-profit association and consists of representatives of 20 municipalities of the district of Pongau. The goals of the Regionalforum are:

- the promotion of quality regional development, based on the aid schemes and initiatives of the district, the Province Salzburg, the State and the EU;
- to set priorities for development and future-oriented steering of planning;
- to support local residents, project promoters and regional implementers in their projects.

Pongau was declared a Leader+ region in spring 2002. The mission statement for the Pongau is *Lebens.Wert.Pongau* (Amenity in Pongau). The Leader programme highlights the topics of 'quality development' and 'knowledge networks' as key projects.

The *Regionalforum* has participated as a 'provisional learning area' in the handbook project, which aims to increase the competitiveness of the European tourism industry. It aims to achieve the same goals by improved and more efficient training of all actors and suppliers. The first step is to find all providers of training and education and to screen the demand for and interest in a common learning region and a regional knowledge network.

In 2004 the *Regionalforum* started the 'Initiative for service quality in tourism'. The regional manager sees this participation as a further opportunity to improve regional competitiveness.

On 29 June 2004, an information event and workshop was held in the Chamber of Commerce in St Johann. It addressed all potential actors of a regional knowledge network. Learning needs and qualification were discussed from the point of view of their potential as well as their weaknesses. Initial ideas and projects were developed. As a result, a diploma thesis in tourism will be announced, in cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences. The thesis will look for better ways to approach micro-enterprises in tourism for tailor-made qualifications. The establishment of a knowledge network is under discussion. The handbook for learning areas is seen as a very supportive tool to achieve this objective.

One of the features of the Pongau experience was the concerted effort in the 1990s to develop innovation clusters in SMEs. However, this was seen as more of a passing fashion than a durable process. It involved a well-resourced central team in the regional authority that promoted the idea of linking businesses. However, despite some small successes, it proved to be an expensive system that did not survive regional cost-cutting exercises. The Pongau region will learn from this experience to avoid a similar fate for the tourism learning-area approach. More targeted actions to produce ongoing cooperation structures between tourism-sector SMEs and learning centres may prove a slower but more enduring way forward.

Thematic (PLAs)

Agro-tourism (NL)

Tourism is of growing importance for rural areas in the Netherlands as it contributes to alternative income for local communities and supports the conservation of nature and cultural heritage. Rural tourism businesses (more than 5 000 across the Netherlands) are mostly managed by small and micro family enterprises, often on a seasonal occupation basis. In order to achieve long-term business success and economic regeneration benefits from tourism, training and education are of the utmost importance for these target groups. In the Netherlands, an estimated 30 institutions are involved in rural tourism training and education. They have different backgrounds, such as educational institutes, farmers associations, marketing organisations and individual consultants.

So far, the development and publication of courses and training material for both students and professionals, has mainly taken place on an ad hoc and local basis. Too often the wheel has been reinvented. As a result, available resources have not been used effectively, and this has had a serious impact on the quality and availability of training and education. In order to foster national cooperation and coordination, a thematic learning area was established in the framework of the EU learning-areas handbook. The objectives of the rural tourism learning area are to:

- support cooperation between trainers and training organisations;
- learn from and disseminate best practices;
- exchange and jointly develop training materials;
- support the trainer programmes internationally;
- support cooperation between training institutes and associations of professionals;
- foster the effective use of the financial, infrastructure and human resources available;
- create a better match between government educational policies and the training needs of SMEs.

In order to initiate the learning area, main stakeholders were contacted and a detailed profile was made of their present and planned activities in the field of rural tourism training. The various existing activities were presented in a status report which was distributed among the invited stakeholders. A first meeting was held with the AOC Raad (AOC Council), which was to be the learning area's coordinator, in its premises. At that first meeting, each organisation briefly presented their activities, and questions were put by the other participants. This process highlighted the areas for potential co-



ordination and cooperation. At the second meeting, a SWOT analysis was made, based on a strategy for cooperation. The various responsibilities were defined. As national coordination of rural training belongs to the competencies of the AOC Raad, the participants (some of them representing local AOCs) decided to send a formal letter to the AOC Raad requesting it to assume a leading and coordinating role. The letter was co-signed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Nature Protection (the main financing institution of the AOC Raad). The responsible Ministry noted that enough finances were available, but that they should be used more efficiently. In this regard, the Ministry supported the learning area, which it sees as an important tool to create a sense of self-coordination within the sector.

For the future, there are plans for the learning area to be the coordinating body for rural tourism training in the Netherlands.

Spa rural tourism (HU)

Hungary was selected as one of the provisional learning areas and, subsequently, spa tourism was chosen as one of the most relevant areas, representing the unique 'traditional yet modern' tourism profile of the country. Tourism-sector specialists, entrepreneurs and spa-tourism clients are all aware that Hungary has a treasure trove of thermal springs, discovered during Roman times over 2 000 years ago. These thermal and medicinal waters have been gradually developed by Hungarians and foreigners (e.g. spa development during the Turkish occupation). Hungary's thermal water stock is significant even at world level, and it is certainly unique in Europe. Most of its mineral and thermal waters also contain dissolved minerals, which give them medicinal properties, i.e. they are suitable for bathing and drinking cures. At the moment, Hungary has more than 1 000 wells producing thermal water over 30 °C, and most produce water with medicinal properties.

Although stakeholders realise the importance of spa tourism in Hungary, their approach is still somewhat polarised. Besides the large spa hotels and major spa complexes, most of the nation's SMEs launched their spa services after the completion of the privatisation process, i.e. from 1992 onwards, which was followed by a successful spa-facility development programme during the Széchenyi Terv period from 1998.

While it was agreed that such an important subsector needs well-trained personnel at entrepreneurial, managerial and employee levels, it has been extremely difficult to get spa-sector stakeholders to accept the learning-area idea. Probably the lack of foreign language knowledge, in particular the lack of English language skill is one of the major obstacles standing in the way of rapid acceptance of a lifelong learning concept and other similar learning ideas and practices.

This is a rather alarming lesson learned during the preparatory phase of the provisional learning area, which further justifies the establishment and full introduction of a spa-tourism learning area. There is clearly a need to set up a website, coupled with active promotion of LA activities. A useful method would be to organise regional familiarisation workshops throughout the selected geographical area, and to produce bilingual printed materials to improve the understanding of PLAs. Spa-tourism stakeholders should coordinate their efforts in order to service tourists to their satisfaction; that is another valid reason for setting up a learning area in spa tourism. It is hoped that spa-tourism stakeholders, SME representatives, employees and new entrepreneurs will find this initiative interesting and useful in contributing to sustainable spa-tourism development.

In this case, an introductory working seminar was held, which used external consultants with great success and brought together tertiary education providers, tourism marketing departments, local authorities representatives, spa associations and spa businesses. The links between research, education and innovation that were clearly possible between these stakeholders prior to the seminar were made part of a unified process that was seen as both feasible and pragmatic by the stakeholders who attended the seminar. **A practical case for using the educational system's production of quality healthcare staff to work in the private spas in the region, targeting the Swedish tourist market, is now under development.** The eventual aim is for the Hungarian spa-tourism learning area to be established in order to provide adequate guidance and information to not only Hungarian, but also other spa-tourism providers in Europe.

DestiNet sustainable production and consumption (EU)

In producing this handbook, a trial development was initiated to look at setting up a tourism e-learning area. This process developed into a strategy to use the European Environment Agency's (EEA) tourism portal, DestiNet (destinet.ewindows.eu.org), as an **e-learning area for tourism and sustainable consumption and production (SCP)**. The EEA's DestiNet portal has been structured as a UN Type II partnership, and therefore has the potential to match the learning-area model of excellence from the point of view of stakeholder involvement. The e-learning area is focused on the WSSD 10-year framework for achieving sustainable patterns of consumption and production (SPC). In this way, the EEA portal with its current information content fulfils the criterion of being a relevant platform to focus the development of a knowledge network. This would also be consistent with the Enterprise and Industry DG's focus on the economic implications of the Lisbon Agreement and would deal with issues surrounding the processes for ensuring the sustainability of quality, innovation and competitiveness.

With regard to the virtual provisional learning-area development strategy, the feasibility of this approach was tested by approaching the steering group and other organisations who may act as learning-experience providers or clients. In practical terms, this would mean that the steering group and other partners would be asked to provide links to the portal as tourism stakeholders interested in sustainable patterns of production and consumption. These links would initially be a site link, and lead on to advanced user status as the partnership developed.

A learning-area forum could be launched, with a bulletin-board style that provides:

- a place to talk,
- a common bibliography (referring to the learning-area value system),
- a marketplace structure.

The test-phase stage reached by the time the handbook was produced showed a low level of stakeholder involvement. However, the EEA and the Commission gave their clear support to such an idea. Despite several e-mails and calls for participation, the key European tourism stakeholders did not make time to participate in this project. There are various reasons for this, ranging from the lack of time people have to deal with new issues, the short duration of the test phase, its lack of status after the pilot phase, lack of interest in and ignorance of the subject matter and the novelty of the learning-area concept. It is obvious that, in order for such initiatives to work, these points have to be understood and addressed. Having said that, however, the DestiNet initiative will go ahead, and the structure of the learning area will be in place for stakeholders to participate over a more extended period. A follow-up phase focusing on project promotion will be implemented to ensure stakeholder participation.

Conclusion

In conclusion to this handbook, it should be stated that the subject of tourism learning areas holds the key to **a coherent methodology of delivering the sort of learning opportunities** that tourism stakeholders need in order to operate innovatively, competitively and sustainably in the modern global economy. This approach can only become more rather than less important as society, business markets and environmental issues become more complex.

The Commission communication on basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism, COM(2003) 716, called for special attention to be paid to policy fields relating to:

- entrepreneurship and competitiveness,
- employment,
- learning and a skilled workforce,
- good environmental performance, and
- natural resources and cultural heritage.

The tourism learning-area approach is one method of ensuring coherence in the individual and integrated development of such policies. Furthermore, the translation of policies into programmes and then into successful projects can be further improved by implementing the learning-area approach. The communication accepts that, although policy is made mainly at the European and national levels of administration, it is implemented by regional and local levels of action.

There is a constant need for programme managers, project managers and SME and micro-enterprise owner/managers to have access to the right information, and also to the organisations that deliver the goods and services needed in each destination or at different points of the tourism value chain. A learning area helps integrate the research–policy–programme–project cycle, bringing immediate savings or improved results to each phase.

At the moment, a tremendous sense of ‘information overload’ pervades the sector; this can be due to too many e-mails to read, an endless stream of product advertising information, reams of bureaucratic paperwork, a hundred TV channels to watch or a thousand places to visit. The information explosion that accompanies the development of the knowledge-based economy needs to be managed efficiently.

This handbook has shown how a tourism learning area contributes to that information management process. In an era of intense competition, lack of collaboration and single interests, it is clear that a unifying concept will improve both the overall tourism-sector contribution and the particular situations of its stakeholders. ‘Co-petition’ is a term that has been coined to reflect how competing entities can find common ground to improve their individual performance. The tourism industry itself provides examples of this in the collective marketing of destination accommodation, in which individual hotels collaborate to jointly publicise their competing services. When that mentality infuses inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary thinking, then there is a good chance that problems of seasonality, transport and sustainable production and consumption can also be resolved through increased stakeholder collaboration.

The Commission sees this as the means to meet the global challenges of the 21st century, where growth, complexity and speed are additional dimensions to the traditional problems of managing natural and human resources.

‘In order to respond to these economic and political challenges, the Commission proposes a new cohesion policy for the period 2007–13, one that allows all Member States and regions to act as partners for growth that is sustainable, and for greater competitiveness...

The new generation of cohesion policies should be implemented through a more simplified and decentralised management system.

Only by bringing all on board, and by mobilising the talents and resources of all its regions and citizens, can Europe succeed. It is this that is the aim of the proposed new partnership for cohesion.'

A new partnership for cohesion, 2004, foreword (1)

To underline this, in the new round of Structural Fund expenditure, the Commission has proposed that actions supported by cohesion policy should focus on investment in a limited number of Community priorities, reflecting the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas. The new regional programmes will have a limited number of key themes, namely:

- innovation and the knowledge economy,
- environment and risk protection,
- accessibility, and
- services of general economic interest.

The action on these priority themes would be organised around a simplified and more transparent framework, with the future generation of programmes grouped under three headings:

- convergence,
- regional competitiveness and employment, and
- territorial cooperation.

This territorial approach of the Commission is complemented by the proposed **competitiveness and innovation framework programme** (CIP) of the Enterprise and Industry DG, which targets the business dimension and will also come into effect in the 2007 round of expenditures.

'The programme would integrate a number of existing and planned Community programmes in the very fields that have been identified as most critical to boosting European productivity and sustainable growth. The CIP would encompass actions to:

- encourage innovation and the sustainable use of resources;
- ensure the mastery and best use of information and communication technology (ICT);
- improve the access of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to finance; and
- foster economic and administrative reform for more entrepreneurship and a better business environment.'

It is clear to see how the tourism learning-area approach can make operational both the **new partnership for cohesion** and the **competitiveness and innovation framework programme**, providing the conjunction of territorial and sectoral activity that is a characteristic of tourism-sector activity. In return, these European-level programmes will provide the support for the destination-level stakeholders who take up the Commission's recommendations. Bringing these top-down and bottom-up processes together provides the means for Europe to meet its economic, environmental and social goals laid out in the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies. In doing so, tourism businesses will ensure their competitiveness, and destinations will improve their sustainability.

With such policies in place, it remains up to the industry stakeholders to take advantage of the governance structures and physical infrastructures that come with such policy development. The interconnected nature of the European transport system, the European information superhighway, the expansion of the common European market to 25 plus 2 Member States, European deregulation of borders — these are just a few of the areas of major change in which the tourism sector operates. A learning area bridges many of the policy developments, bringing destinations closer to the wider governance process. This in turn enables the realisation of projects that reflect the new conditions and optimise advantages for stakeholders 'in the know'.

(1) *A new partnership for cohesion* (ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion3/cohesion3_en.htm).

(2) CIP consultation document, Enterprise and Industry DG, February 2005.



It is **access** to such knowledge — and other types of business, social and environmental information — that the tourism learning-area approach is ultimately about. Well-informed stakeholders acting with a clear overview of their situation definitely are the basis for a sound economy, good social conditions and a healthy environmental resource base. The knowledge networks that are born out of the development of a tourism learning area are crucial to the process of directing stakeholders towards innovative, profitable and sustainable action. They are only made possible by the current state of information technology development. And their possibilities are only limited by the visions of the stakeholders in such networks.

Therefore the learning-area communications and learning framework can be seen as being of considerable importance to all tourism-sector stakeholders. Public officials, business managers, employees, visitors and residents alike have a stake in the learning-area approach. This handbook has shown how these stakeholders are at the heart of the concept, literally providing the theoretical starting point for the whole idea, and then becoming the engine of tourism learning and innovation. The improved networking of such stakeholders is the key to improved economic, environmental and social performance.

Innovative action in the tourism sector is the fruit of the learning-area approach, and must be regarded as the European path to **both** competitiveness and sustainability. These are not seen as separate or contradictory aspirations; it is more a case of the one influencing the form of the other. **Furthermore, the environmental resource base of each tourism destination provides both a regional identity and a unique set of challenges/opportunities of which all stakeholders need to be aware.** In this respect, a tourism learning area needs to understand the relationship of the regional resource base to the process of European enlargement and globalisation, so that the widest range of innovation opportunities is made possible for all learning-area stakeholders without compromising the region's continued ability to deliver competitive products and services, both in the short term and — equally important — over a period of several generations.

How can we arrive at that cutting edge of innovative action? From **learning individuals** (employees or citizens) to **learning teams** and **learning organisations** (public administrations and private companies) in **learning networks** operating in **learning regions** — a holistic view of the sector is presented that has both horizontal and vertical coherence. This improves the chances of developing targeted learning opportunities that are relevant to each level of the learning pyramid. The whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning can be developed for such audiences and delivered in lifelong, life-wide learning processes.

Gains in competitiveness, innovation, quality and sustainability are to be expected from the development of an improved learning offer, so the delivery of this offer is an important consideration. Here the tourism learning-area portal is the administrative communication tool that can underpin the networking and learning activities of the stakeholders. It functions as a transparent information exchange forum and as a marketplace for learning opportunities. Knowledge network members can use the area portal as their means of being 'plugged into' the information flow.

Connectivity of destination-level or regional learning-area portals to thematic subject areas and to a European-level network provides a European framework, giving substance to the holistic approach that runs throughout the rest of the concept. This approach ensures that the transfer of good practice, which is so important to cost cutting and innovation, can take place across the length and breadth of Europe's tourism destinations. It ensures that stakeholders in one part of Europe can act and react as quickly as those in other (perhaps less favourable) regions.

To establish this concept on the ground requires the active effort of a well-coordinated group of stakeholders. As much as the concept reveals a new paradigm of activity for the sector as a whole, the inter-sectoral and multi-thematic integration that stakeholders must bring about is also a 'great leap' rather than timid footsteps. Investment in human resources, in IT and in political commitment has to go forward as a harmonious process. Therefore, the coordination body itself is faced with a steep learning curve.

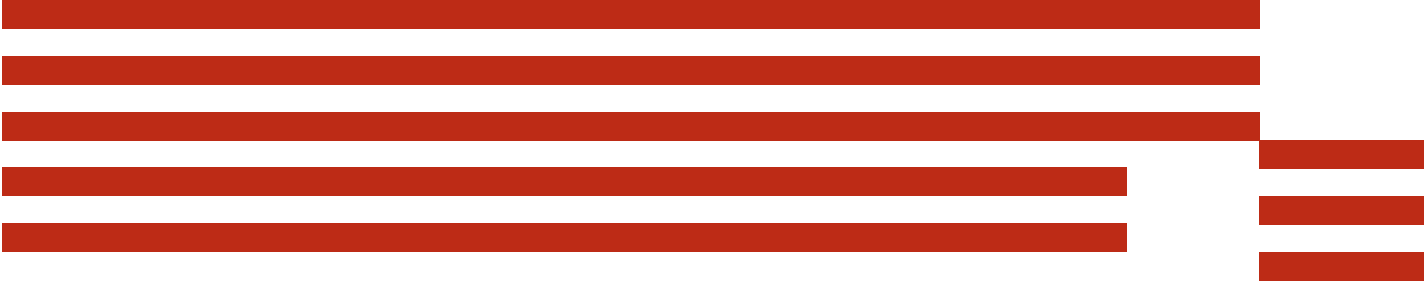
With this in mind, this handbook has presented a clear model of how to set up a tourism learning area, and established a three-stage implementation process to ensure that practitioners do not have

to stumble across the idea or work individually to bring about a tourism learning area in reality. The model-building process takes the user through a series of methodological steps that build both theory and practice into a common visible structure. The three-stage implementation process then guides the user in how to recreate the model in reality.

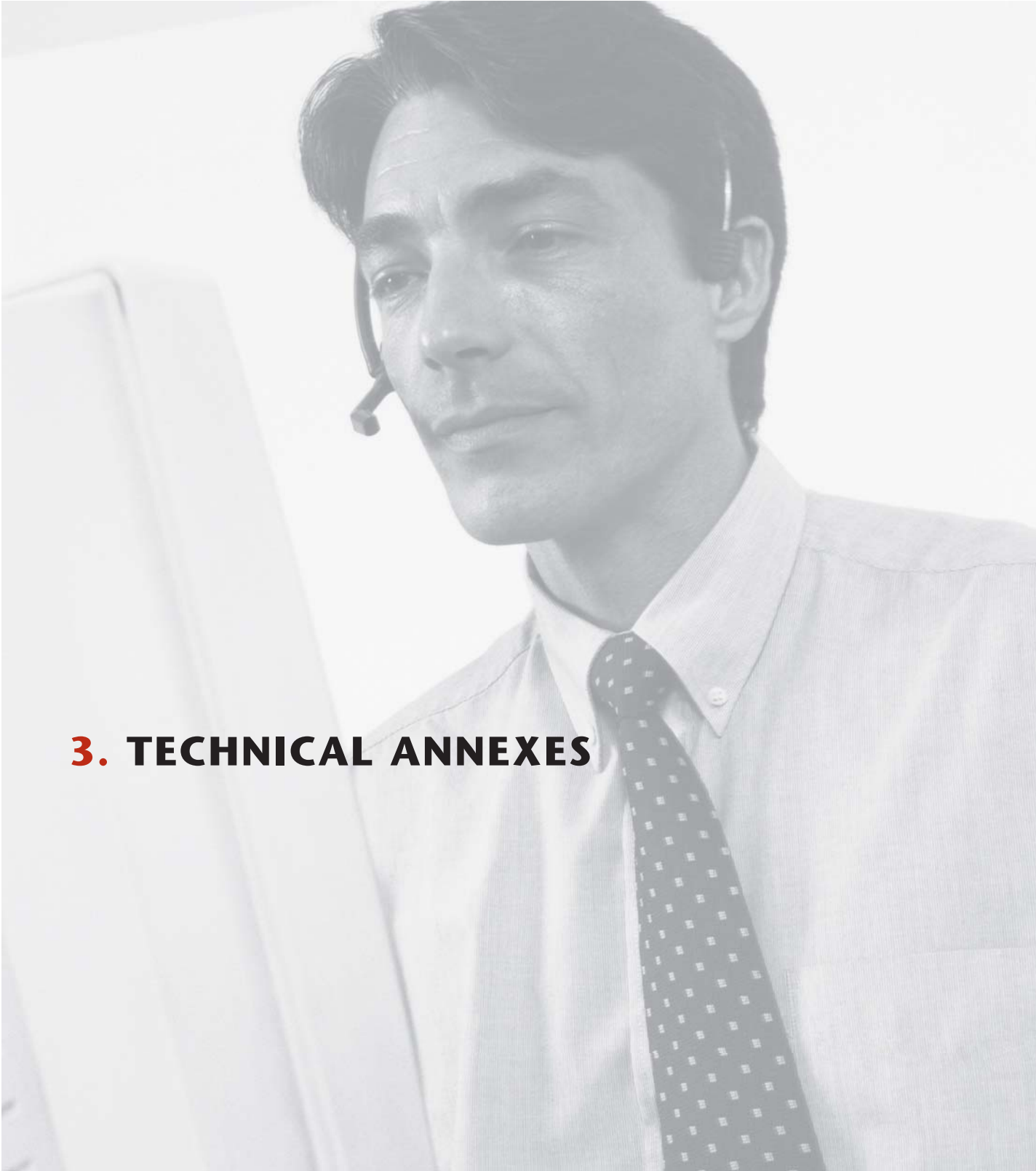
There are many good practices of regions and stakeholders who have trodden such a path, and these are all used to light the way for prospective learning-area initiators and coordinators who wish to learn from other people's experience of doing something similar. In particular, the lifelong learning and innovation networks developed with Commission support provide useful material to establish a sectoral model. In fact, the tourism learning-area approach may well be the tool to galvanise these initiatives, given the cross-cutting nature of tourism itself.

In conclusion, the tourism learning-areas handbook offers tourism stakeholders a useful tool to build their capacity for forming partnerships, networking and developing learning opportunities, and for creating innovative solutions in their destinations, regions or thematic interests. In this global economy, knowledge is power, and the tourism sector is well placed to be a leading economic force. Not so long ago, being part of a global knowledge network and enjoying the resulting business and cultural learning opportunities was the prerogative of only the most advanced and adequately resourced citizens and businesses. Now, such networks are within the reach of every region, destination and tourism stakeholder. It will be up to the public administrators and tourism businesses to see that this 'European advantage' is taken and turned into a practical working reality.





3. TECHNICAL ANNEXES



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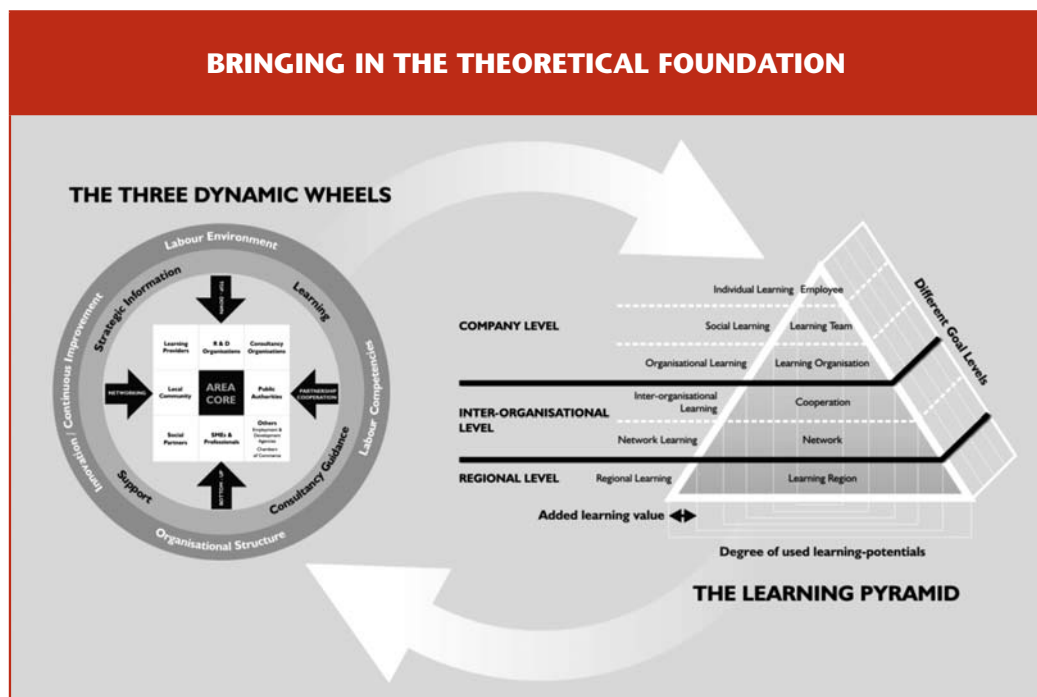
1. Designing a learning-area model of excellence

It is common practice in the field of architecture to produce a plan drawing, or build a scale model of a building or a development project, prior to executing the project in reality. In this way the architect, the planning authorities, the builders, the financiers and the prospective residents can share a common vision of what is to be done, and what the result will be.

To make operational the learning-area approach, this handbook develops a tourism learning-area model of excellence in order that the diverse range of stakeholders involved can create their own learning area conceptually, prior to developing it in the real world. The re-creation of this model at the destination level (or in thematic areas) acts as a guide for implementation of the overall theoretical concept outlined in the previous section.

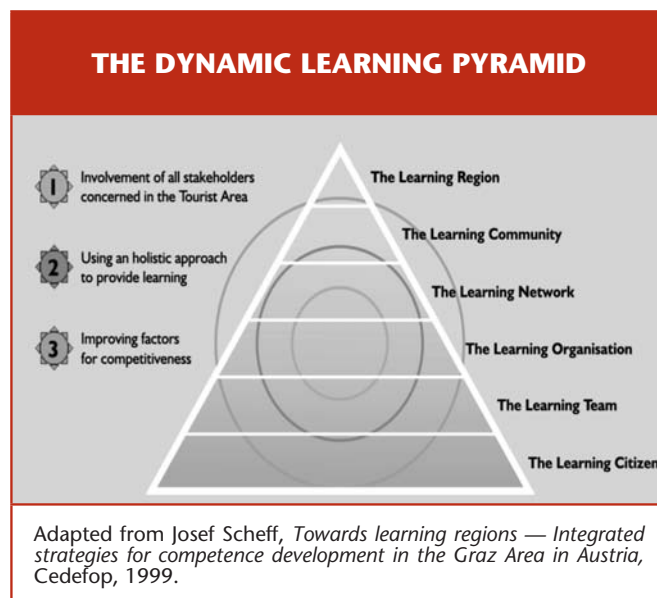
The basic elements of a learning area: 'the three dynamic wheels'

The model starts from the theoretical foundation of the **learning pyramid** and the **three dynamic wheels** of a learning area. This foundation allows for the emergence of a **generic learning-experience 'marketplace'** structure, which in turn is elaborated in more detail by identification of specific processes that create this structure. The model has three levels of conceptual resolution, followed by its concrete expression as a website portal. A model problem-solving process is also demonstrated to show how a learning area would be used to deal with a specific tourism-sector issues.



Theoretical foundation of the tourism learning-area model of excellence

In this foundation, the active processes of the three dynamic wheels generate the structural form of the learning pyramid.



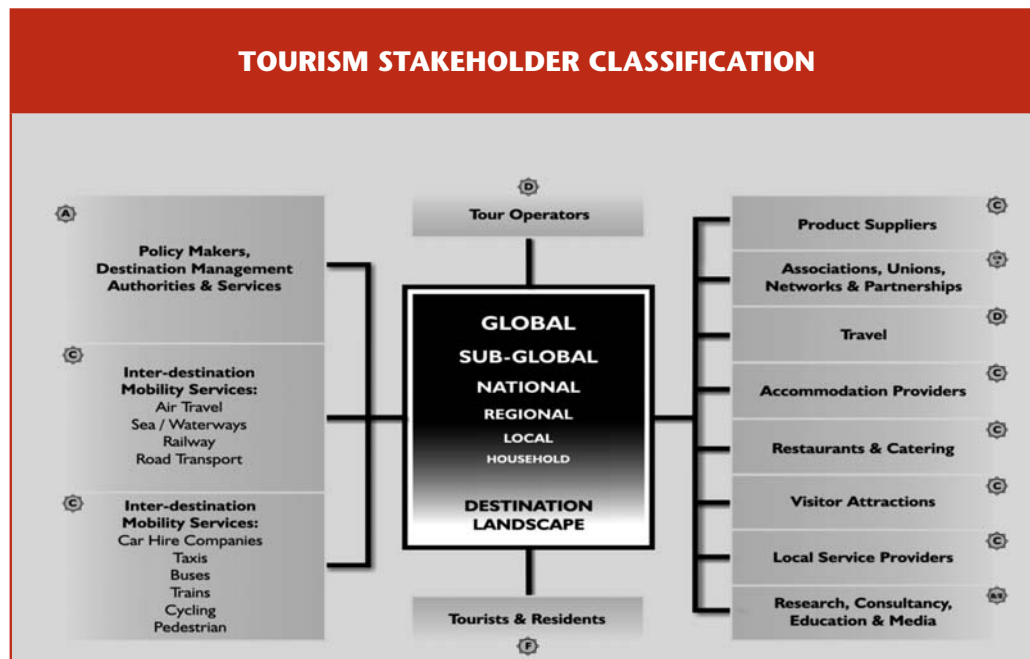
From these preliminary ideas and the good practices analysed in the WGB, it seems that there is a common philosophy on learning for developing the learning-area philosophy, which can be summarised by three complementary critical elements:

- involvement of all stakeholders,
- holistic way to provide learning, and
- improvement of factors for competitiveness.

To finalise the theoretical foundation of the model of excellence and bring it to practical application, we can use the tourism value chain to see the market interactions of stakeholders at various destination levels. This will give us

a realistic base from which to build up improved delivery of formal and informal learning to tourism stakeholders.

See the grid version to use this for practical identification and listing of stakeholders.

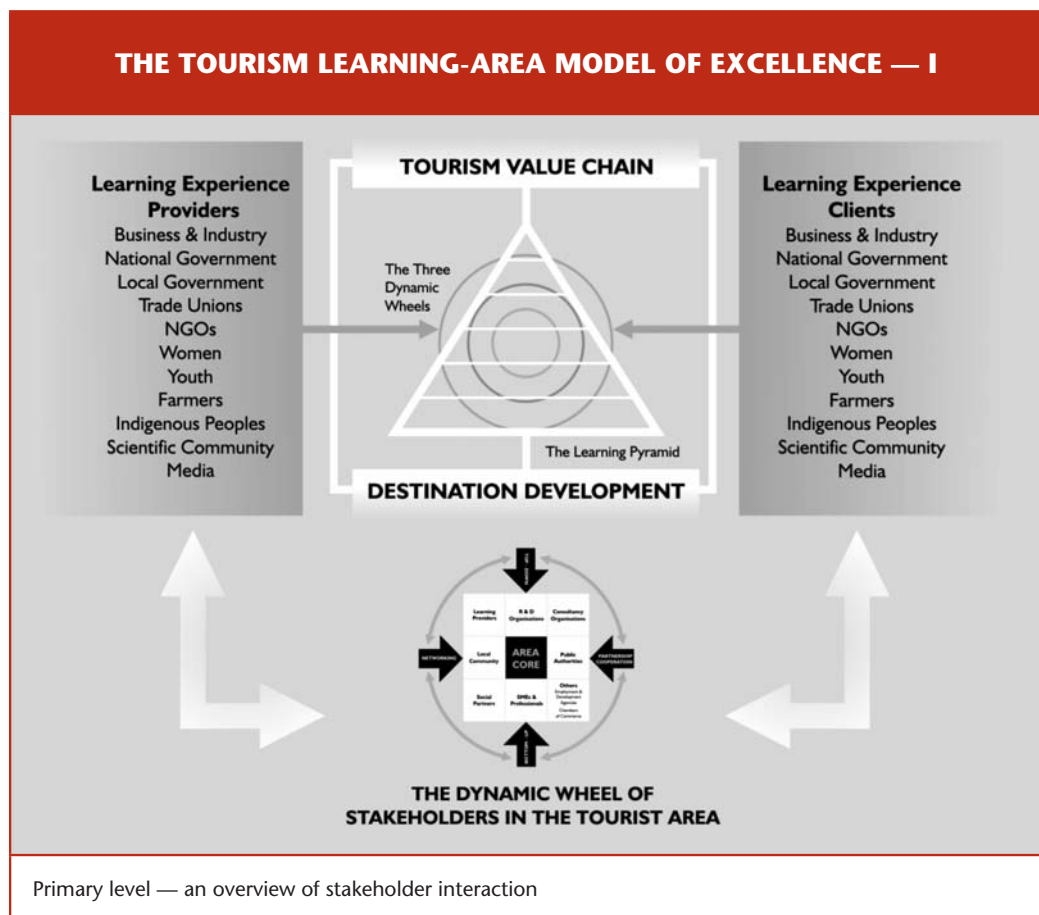


Learning-area stakeholders classification value chain and destination administration model

The value chain and the destination development processes provide the starting point of developing the networking structure of a tourism learning area.

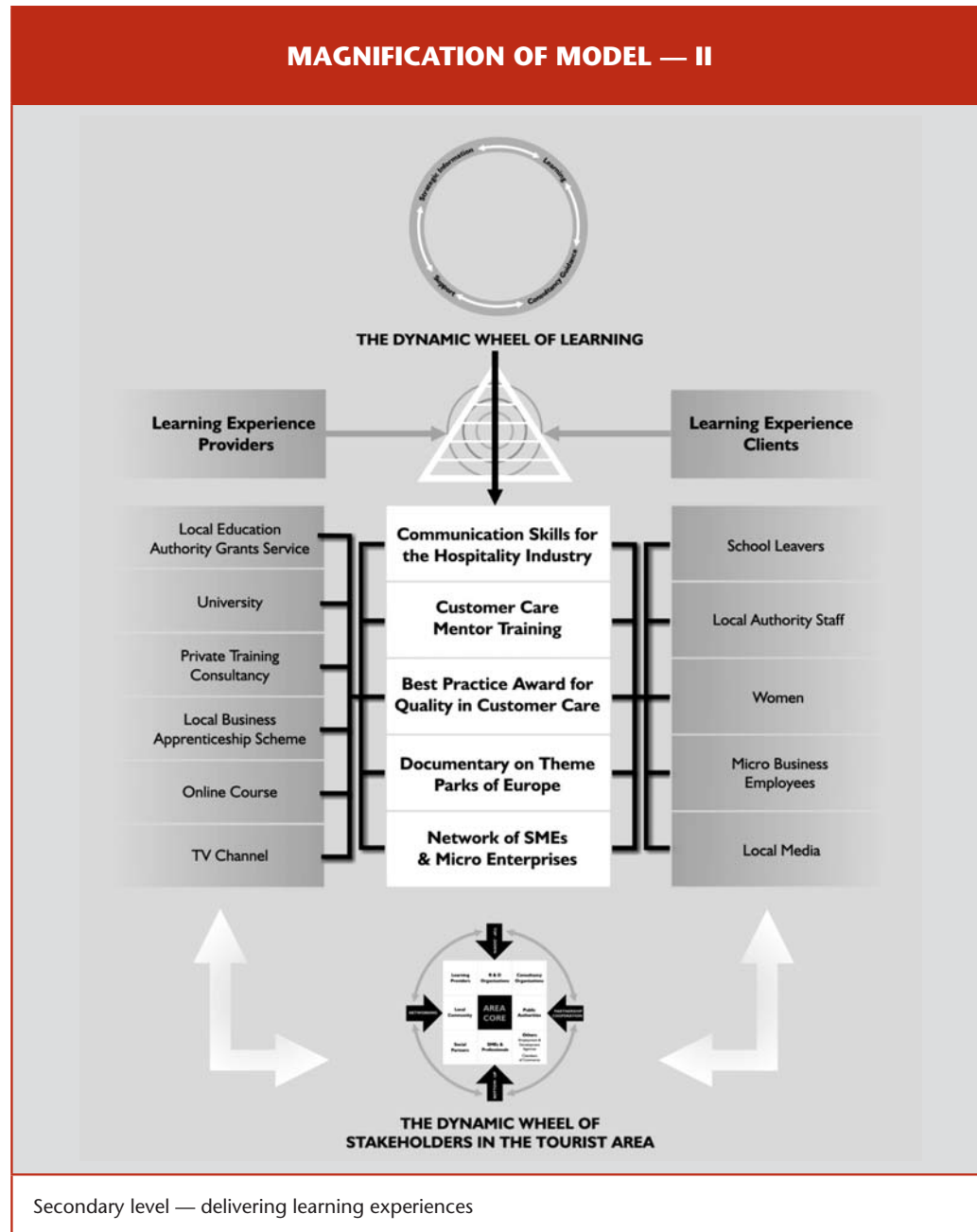
The tourism learning-area model of excellence — primary level

The diagram below shows the axis of destination-level development and supply (value) chain activity centred on delivering learning experiences to tourism stakeholders. (As has been said above, these learning experiences could range from something as simple as a weather forecast to a complex sustainability impact assessment process.) There are **providers** of such experiences, as well as **clients**, both of which at this level can come from any sector or grouping in society (here the UN major groups classification serves to encompass all societal actors). **Implicit in this stage of the model is that the tourism-sector stakeholders can learn from all other sectors and actors, and vice versa.**



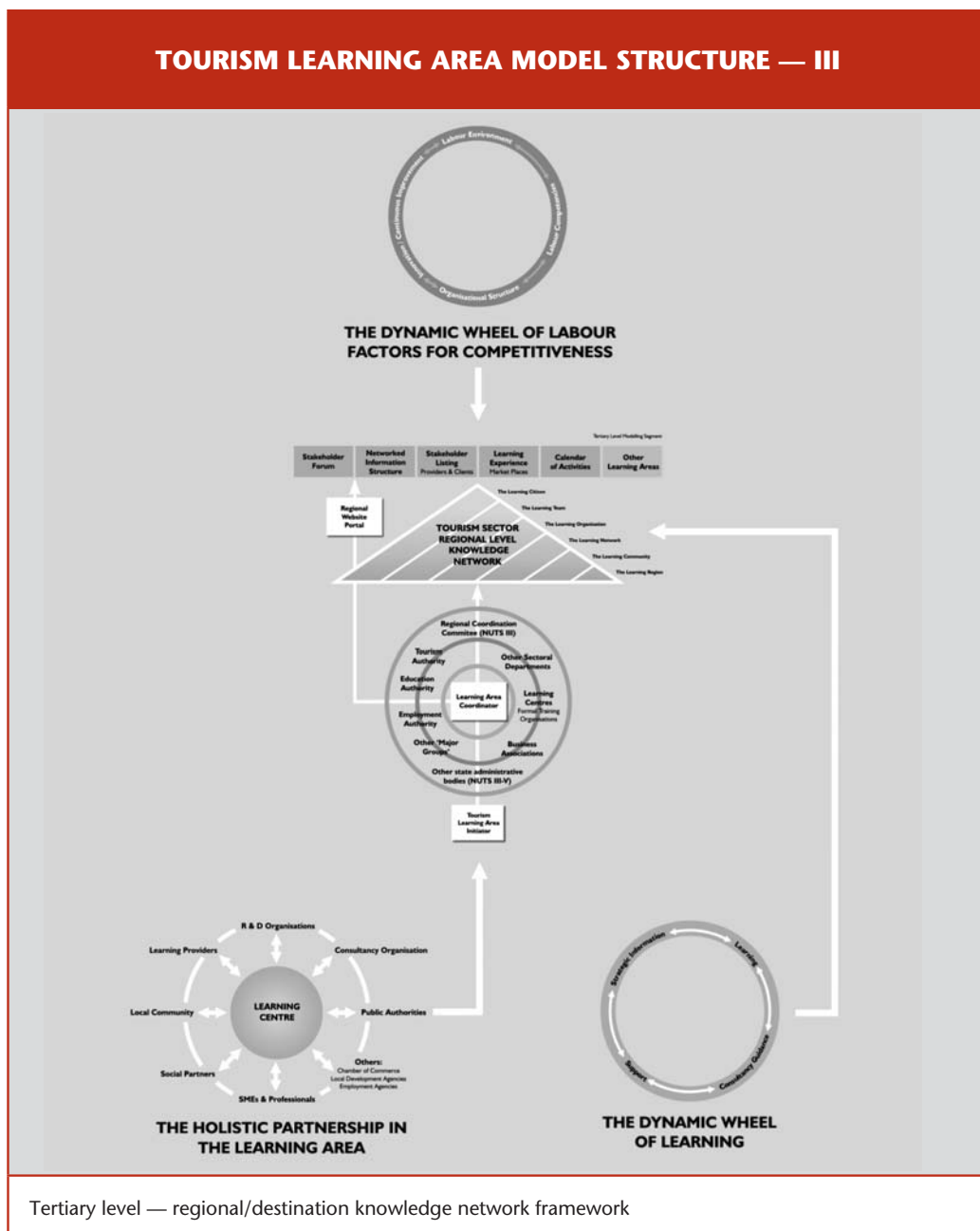
The tourism learning-area model of excellence — secondary level

When the model is magnified, we can see just what types of learning experiences are offered along the supply chain-destination level axis. From a formal qualification offered in an educational establishment, to a casual awareness-raising documentary, we find learning experiences offered by specialist providers, taken up by specific subgroups.



The tourism learning-area model of excellence — tertiary level

In the third-level magnification, the model shows the role of a tourism learning-area initiator and a learning-area coordinator, working with key stakeholders. The stakeholders who have developed this are also interacting in a coherent organisational structure. This is the component structure of the coordinating body. Stakeholders in this coherent structure are drawn from different sectors, cover different thematic issues, and may belong to different administrative levels.



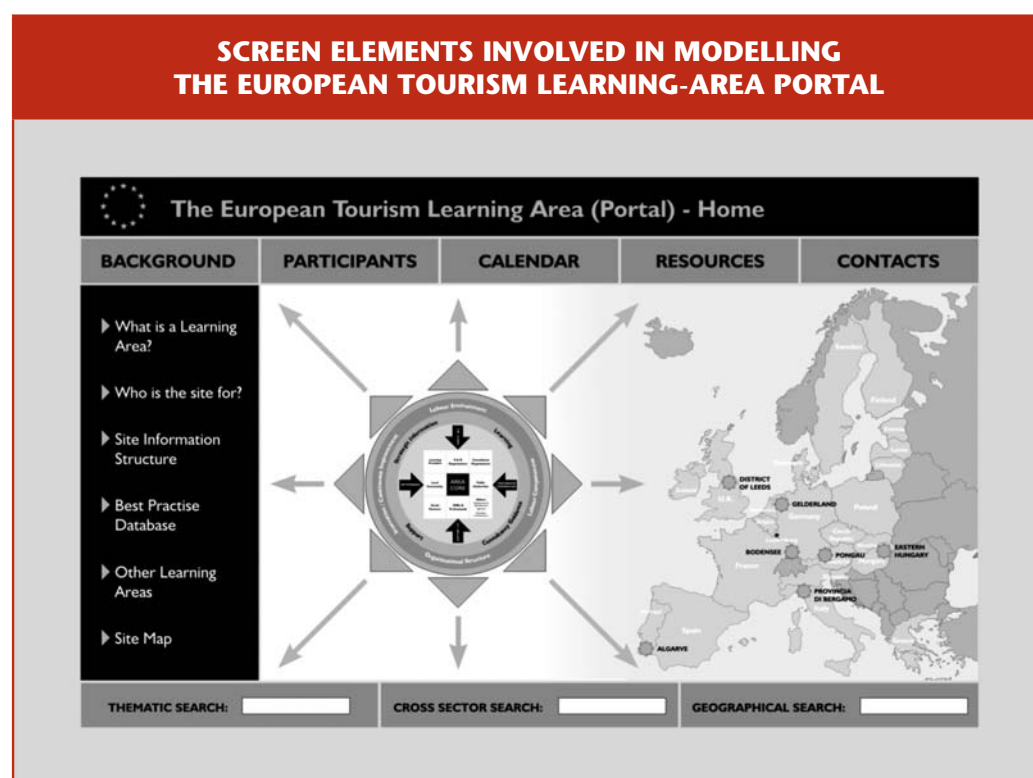
Their interest is to manage destination or value chain learning activities and stakeholder interactions, which they do via the development of an information structure centred upon a **co-ordination portal**. **The portal mirrors the formation of the learning area in reality**, showing stakeholder networking, listings, multiple marketplaces for learning experiences, and a calendar of events.

The portal is used to develop the learning-area (regional or thematic) **knowledge network**. The knowledge network uses the portal as its primary source of tourism-sector learning. Members of the network can access the portal data and link to other learning areas. The knowledge network is managed by the coordination body via the portal.

Modelling the tourism learning-area portal

The development of a tourism learning-area website can use the above modelling stages to structure its component features. Lists of stakeholders, lists of learning experiences, calendars of activities, useful sources of information, etc. can be defined and linked together to form a visual representation of the tourism learning area in question. These are not fixed categories, but rather provide general guidance for web developers to have a framework for developing the required information categories.

(Note that it is useful to develop this tool at an early stage to bring stakeholders together in a common practical platform.)



The above example of European learning-area portal contains all the elements a tourism learning area's needs. Note that the portal can have the same interface at whatever administrative level of use, as is shown by comparing the example of the screen components of the Algarve regional portal to those of the European level.

MODELLING THE TOURISM LEARNING-AREA PORTAL — DESTINATION LEVEL SCREEN ELEMENTS

Algarve Tourism Learning Area (Portal) - Home

HELP LINE

BACKGROUND PARTICIPANTS CALENDAR RESOURCES CONTACTS

▶ What is a Learning Area?

▶ Who is the site for?

▶ Site Information Structure

▶ Best Practise Database

▶ Other Learning Areas

▶ Site Map

Welcome to the Members Page of the Algarve Tourism Learning Area

SIGN IN:

PASSWORD:

ALGARVE TOURISM LEARNING NETWORK

THEMATIC SEARCH:

CROSS SECTOR SEARCH:

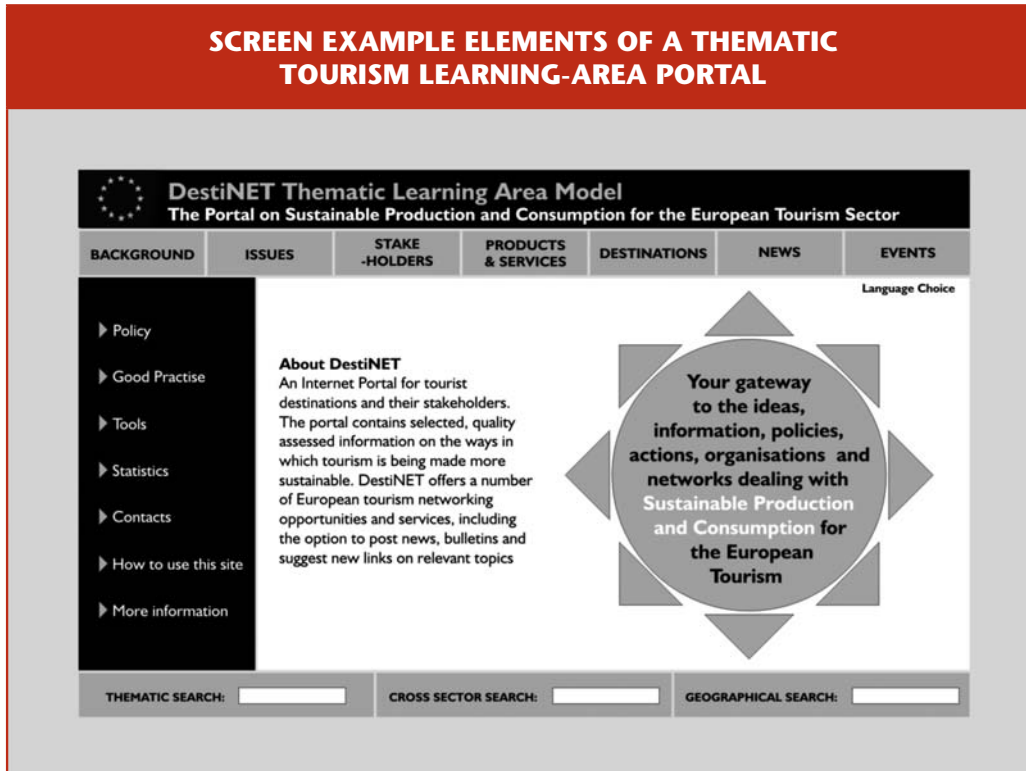
GEOGRAPHICAL SEARCH:

Similarly, a thematic learning-area portal can have the same structural elements, as illustrated by the DestiNet model form of a thematic area on **sustainable consumption and production**.

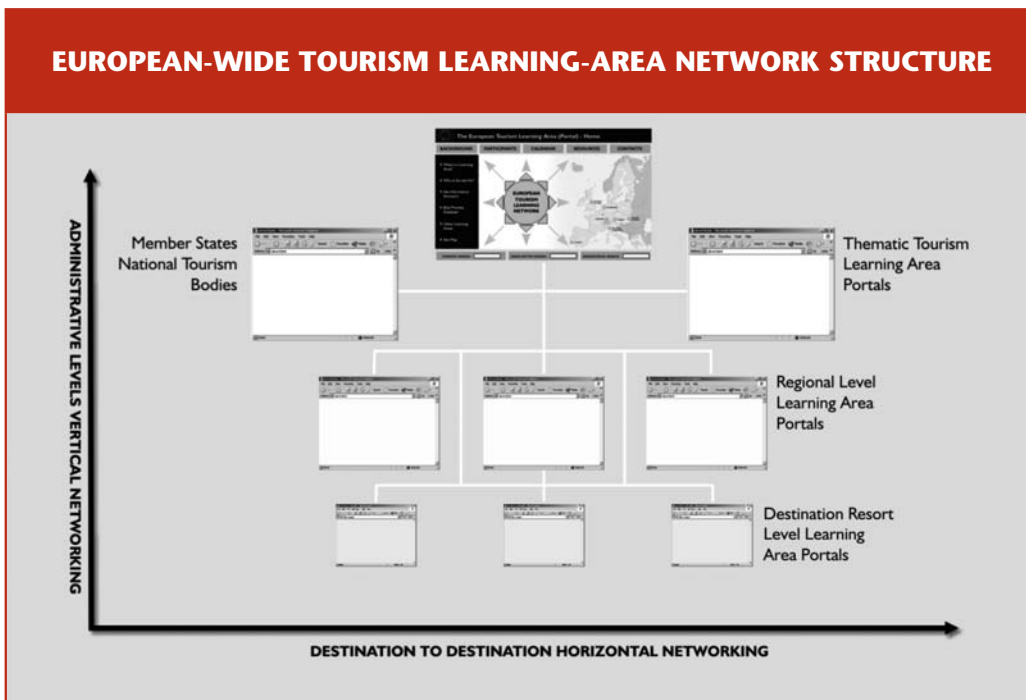
How these fit together is equally important. The current ad hoc interaction patterns and incoherent dissemination of tourism information is an ever-increasing stressful reality for thousands of administrators, researchers and business people. With the explosion in access to information in the eEurope knowledge economy, the time has come to clarify administrative information links both vertically and horizontally. This means that a European-wide information framework can be established to improve stakeholder communication by networking the different learning areas. This networked information structure of the learning-area approach has the following integrated form.

The following diagrams describe the regional and destination level in more detail. The regional-to-local destination devolved structure is likely to be formed where whole tourism regions link with large metropolitan areas or large tourism destinations.

SCREEN EXAMPLE ELEMENTS OF A THEMATIC TOURISM LEARNING-AREA PORTAL



EUROPEAN-WIDE TOURISM LEARNING-AREA NETWORK STRUCTURE



Again, the portals have the same interface elements that are outlined in the handbook.

It should be emphasised that **any area** that considers itself to be a destination along the whole spectrum of destination classifications ⁽¹⁾ can become a tourism learning area, and use this web-portal approach.

This will enable learning areas to really deliver the specialist sector knowledge that stakeholders will increasingly require. The structure enables easier contact between stakeholders with the aim of improving both formal and informal learning opportunities.

SCREEN EXAMPLE ELEMENTS OF A THEMATIC TOURISM LEARNING-AREA PORTAL



This structure gives guidance to the regional **GoDigital** programmes, and other **e-society, innovation or learning regions** initiatives that wish to embrace tourism-sector learning content.

Modelling tourism learning-experience content

This section provides model content of formal and non-formal education and training, and lists the media that offer informal learning experiences.

1. Formal and non-formal courses and seminars

This table provides an overview of the range of learning experiences necessary to ensure the competence of tourism professionals.

General skills	Written communication skills Interpersonal relation skills Critical thinking Problem identification and problem-solving skills Computer literacy Foreign languages
Business skills	Management Marketing Accounting Finance Law Economics
Core courses	Development of planning skills, especially tourism research methodologies and information technology Provision of technical knowledge and understanding of the distribution system, geography, and other peculiarities of the travel industry and its many components, especially in the hotel and hospitality aspects

⁽¹⁾ NUTS I-V; ESPD; EEA landscape character assessment classifications, etc.

Experiential education	Development of reality skills through apprenticeships or practice by both industry and students. Use of problem-based learning used to bridge the gap between the classroom and the field.
Interdisciplinary learning approach	Recognition of the importance of diversity, cultural values and ethics, cross-cultural understanding, environmental and social responsibilities, international and global perspectives, local sense of place and lifelong learning are needed to round out the training of future tourism professionals.
<i>Source: Adapted from Human capital in the tourism industry of the 21st century, WTO tourism and training series (1).</i>	

It is clear that not all members of the tourism workforce will require all these skills, and not all workers will require the skills to the same degree or depth. Therefore the following table can be used to identify more specific skills per category of worker.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING NEEDS IN THE TOURIST INDUSTRY PER CATEGORY				
All categories	Managers	Supervisors	Skilled craft workforce	Semi-skilled
Training needs all categories				
Tourism New technologies Quality Customer care Reception skills Communications Languages Team work Project work Sustainable development Entrepreneurship Safety and security within tourism enterprises First aid	Basic computer skills Business planning/strategic planning Strategic management Management skills Networking skills Management through vision and values Yield management Accounting Product development, innovation Marketing Sales Human resource management Planning resources, guidance and advice at regional/local level Project management Management skills to cope with the globalisation reality Train the trainer Hygiene	Basic computer skills Human resource management Hygiene Accounting Supervision skills Training skills	Personal skills Problem solving Basic computer skills Induction training	Personal skills Technical skills (bar, kitchen, restaurant, cleaning) In-house training Housekeeping training Induction training
<i>Source: Partially adapted from final report of working group B's elaboration from the country reports as part of 'Working together for the future of European tourism' 2001.</i>				

(1) Chuck Y. Gee, 'In search of professionalism for the 21st century: the need for standards in tourism education in a changing marketplace', *Human capital in the tourism industry of the 21st century*, WTO tourism and training series, 1997, p. 186.

2. *Informal learning experiences*

It is virtually impossible to quantify informal learning experiences. However, it is possible to identify situations and processes in which informal learning occurs. The following list of categories classifies informal learning experiences by media formats:

- newspapers,
- television,
- magazines,
- regional online information,
- socio-cultural events,
- word-of-mouth communication (conversations, phone, Internet),
- other.

It should be stressed that it is not just the content of tourism learning that needs clarification and development, but also the way in which it is delivered to the different types of stakeholders. The lifelong, life-wide learning approach seeks to de-construct the rigid structures of formal education. In this approach, the entire spectrum of formal-to-informal learning can be used to develop workforce competence.

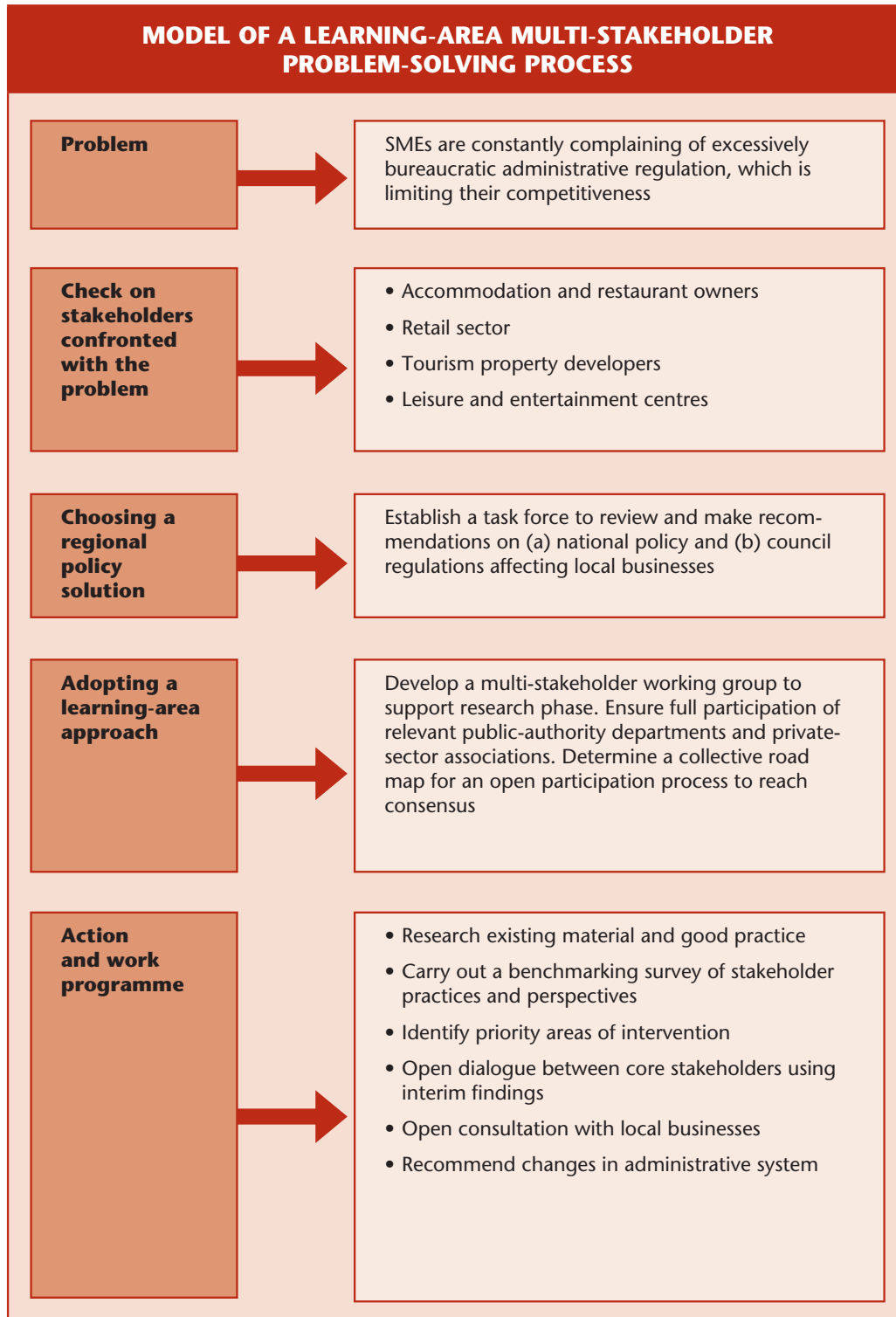
The Hotrec publication 'Training and development under construction — Hospitality and the changing environment' ⁽¹⁾ cites the mentoring programme of the multinational firm, Mövenpick, as an example of how to deliver certain types of training to SMEs. In this approach, one element of the mentoring programme involved innovative 15-minute training modules delivered during company hours, enabling a high take-up of on-the-job training. In order to replicate this type of approach in smaller companies, SME associations will have to help in developing learning structures in which their members can take advantage of these more modern forms of in-house human resource development emerging in companies such as Mövenpick.

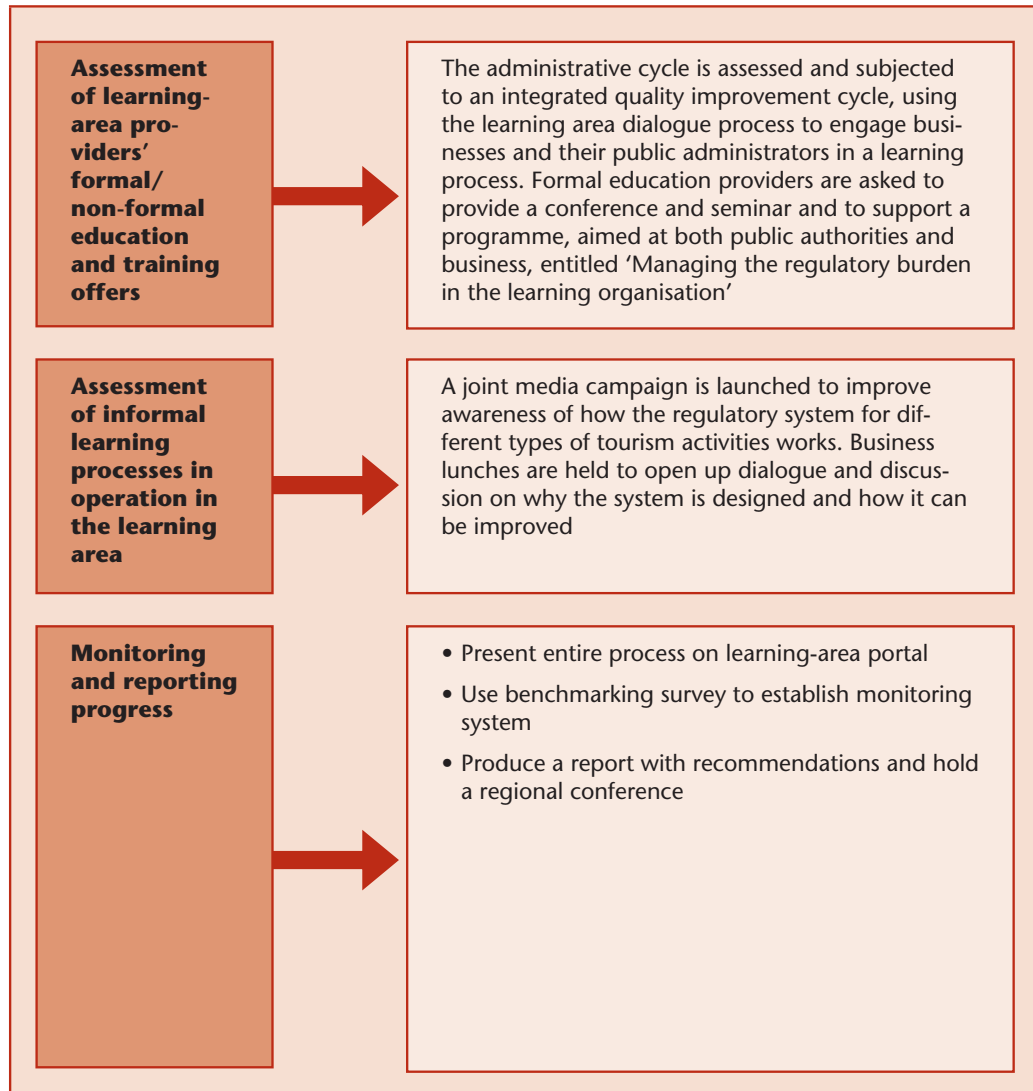
Model of a learning-area multi-stakeholder problem-solving process

A model of how to use the learning-area approach to solve value chain-specific and destination-specific problems is presented below. It takes a typical destination problem and shows how this would be dealt with by stakeholders using good governance processes in a tourism learning area.

The series of steps that the stakeholders take are highlighted, to be used when actually programming the activities of learning areas in reality (see Technical Annex 10 — Learning-area work plan).

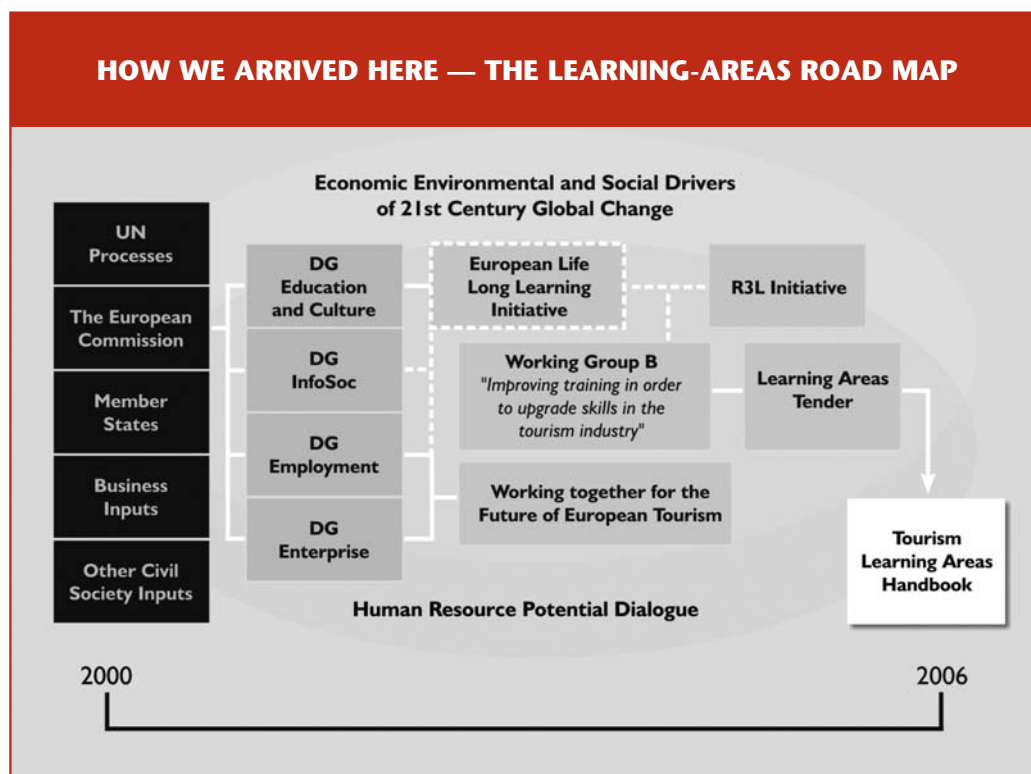
⁽¹⁾ 'Training and development under construction — Hospitality and the changing environment', Hotel School, Den Haag, 2004.





2. Background to the learning-area process

Through the Lisbon Agreement, the European Union has declared its intent to establish itself as a 'knowledge-based' economy, looking to develop information technology communications (ITC) throughout its Member States as a means of delivering a competitive edge to its businesses and workforce. Information has become the principal ingredient of every successful economic endeavour, and the means and media in which information is exchanged are of paramount importance.



Furthermore, the EU sustainable development strategy, the Cardiff process of environmental integration, and the 'Europe of the regions' of the European cohesion process, are used as policy guidance for Structural Fund investment to leverage increased regional development in order to promote an e-European economy capable of counter-balancing its global partners.

In these approaches, it is widely recognised that, at the regional and destination level, both natural and human resources can be more effectively managed through partnerships between public administrations, businesses and local communities. Increasingly, with the awareness that careful use of natural resources is only one part of the story of economic success, in the 21st century attention has turned to the management of 'human capital' or human potential.

In order to cope with or take advantage of these fundamental changes, the traditional economies of national States are now restructuring themselves in order to ensure their survival in the face of global marketplace competition. In a post-modern, high-technology era, knowledge and information are the currency of global business and quality of life. The USA has led the way in the development of the information economy, but information technology alone has not delivered guaranteed success.

In synergy with the work being done on US metropolitan regional development, the Education and Culture DG developed the idea — via the European Centre for the Development of Vocational

Training (Cedefop) — of **learning regions or learning communities**. These regions are now being established through the R3L (regional lifelong learning) initiative.

Working group B was set up to focus on **improving training in order to upgrade skills in the tourism industry**. It recommended the development of a *Handbook for learning areas in the tourism industry*, to be a practical guide for action to transform learning into innovation, taking into account the 'fragile' reality regarding human resources (economic and social dimensions), considering a method of learning (a mixture of strategic information, learning and advice/guidance) which is more complex than conventional training, and using bottom-up/top-down approaches, partnerships and cooperation between all the stakeholders concerned.

'The good practices of strategies and measures identified in the Member States, show a trend towards more holistic solutions based on partnerships and dialogue between training institutions, the tourism industry and other major stakeholders, like public authorities. This led the experts to a common philosophy on learning — the learning area — which should ensure involvement of all tourism and training stakeholders in the learning and innovation process through active practical cooperation and networking, resulting in improved competitiveness.'

In 2001, the Commission communication 'Working together for the future of European tourism' (developed by the Employment DG and the Enterprise and Industry DG) focused on how to improve training in order to upgrade skills in the tourism industry, where the issues of:

- (a) attracting, retaining and developing skilled labour,
- (b) supporting micro-enterprises to improve competitiveness, and
- (c) ensuring destination quality in an expanding and global market

were seen as causing difficulties for tourism stability and growth throughout Europe.

Currently, in the course of developing the handbook, tourism learning areas have been piloted in seven different countries. Also, many examples of good practice exist from similar initiatives in which partnerships and networks have been created, in particular within the framework of the R3L initiative, the innovative regions network, and the multitude of regional sectoral entrepreneurial and educational developments that seek to coordinate different actors towards meeting common goals through information exchange and networking.

3. What's so good about a tourism learning area?

Benefits of a tourism learning area

A tourism learning area aims to assist stakeholders in:

- forming partnerships, networks and clusters
- creating quality products and services
- demonstrating innovative capability
- increasing performance and outputs
- being more autonomous
- displaying greater work flexibility
- operating in an entrepreneurial context
- working with changing technology
- developing adaptive strategies in the face of globalisation and global change
- understanding how to work in a more sustainable way
- enjoying an increase in quality of life, based on fuller access to information

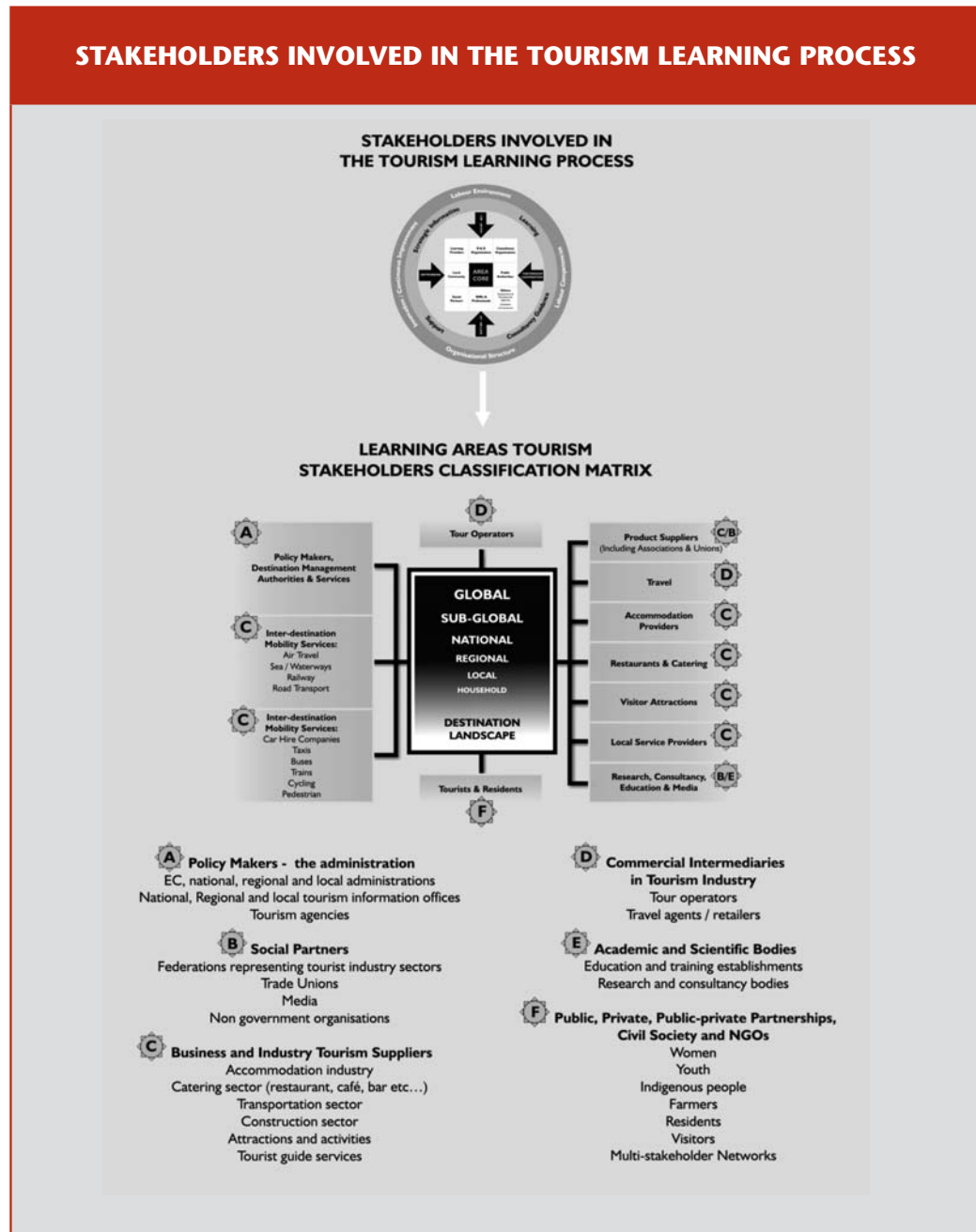
The World Tourism Organisation has frequently referred to the establishment of '**a new paradigm of tourism education**', which is about seeing what skills the tourism sector needs, and how regions and destinations can govern this process more effectively. The learning-area approach creates the focus, not on formal education as the single solution to the training and skills problems, but on the capability of the enterprise to develop the existing workforce — in cooperation with training institutions, local/regional authorities, the social partners and other relevant stakeholders. This partnership and networking approach to the development of human resources offers SMEs the opportunity to gain sustainable and competitive advantages alongside other businesses, and ensures coherent public governance of this process.

In particular, a tourism learning area can help to improve general management skills, skills needed to deal with the impact and potential use of information technology, and the overall development of human resources in a given destination or region. For decision-makers and supervisors, this means improved management, networking and training skills. For the skilled (and semi-skilled) workforce, a learning area will help improve the integration of traditional technical skills with the skills appropriate to emerging new job profiles.

The innovative benefits of a tourism learning area are an important end product of the work of building stakeholder relationships, combined with improvements in the educational training and information offers. At the destination level, this spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation developed by the tourism learning-area stakeholders will lead to positive economic, environmental and social results.

4. Stakeholders in the tourism learning-area process

The diagram below shows the link between the dynamic wheel of stakeholders in a TLA and the tourism supply chain. It should give you an overview of the wide variety of economic activities that are taking place in your destination.



See also Technical Annex 5, which translates these concepts into an administrative tool.

5. Introductory leaflet describing the learning-area process

AN INTRODUCTION TO TOURISM LEARNING AREAS

A European Commission Enterprise and Industry DG Tourism Unit initiative

The tourism learning-area process is the result of an action of the European Commission's Enterprise and Industry DG Tourism Unit. It is aimed at professional administrators whose work involves either tourism, employment, training, education, environment or IT-sector issues.

'A tourism learning area (TLA) is a concept of a multi-stakeholder, inter-sectoral, problem-solving approach aimed at improving SME/micro-enterprise performance and human potential in the tourism sector at the destination level.

The TLA approach engages a broad range of regionally based stakeholders, bringing them together in a top-down/bottom-up process to form coherent information and cooperation networks.

When structured as the primary regional tourism-sector knowledge network, a TLA can address contemporary tourism-sector challenges by developing inter- and intra-organisational collaboration alongside a set of holistic learning opportunities.

These are aimed at continuous improvements in labour competences and organisational management, in order to foster better entrepreneurial quality, innovation, competitiveness and sustainability.'

When applied to the tourism sector, a learning area should assist stakeholders in:

- developing partnerships and networks,
- developing and accessing a higher level of learning experiences,
- creating quality products and services,
- demonstrating innovative capability,
- increasing performance and outputs,
- being more autonomous,
- displaying greater workplace flexibility,
- operating in an entrepreneurial context,
- working with rapidly changing technology,
- developing adaptive sustainability strategies in the face of globalisation and global change.

European to local-level good governance of the tourism, training and education sectors

Over the past few years, the European Commission has gathered valuable information from all over Europe on how to improve the performance of the small business, tourism and education sectors, bearing in mind the overall objective of developing a modern knowledge-based economy by the year 2010. The *Tourism learning-areas handbook* produced by the Enterprise and industry DG describes a stakeholder-centred approach that together with the broad processes of good governance, entrepreneurship, education and tourism, uses the concept they have called a learning area.

To fully appreciate the subject matter involved in a tourism learning area, it is essential to understand many new and complex issues, such as the concept of **lifelong learning**, the development of **learning regions**, the idea of **knowledge networks**, and the formation of **network clusters**.

Additionally, themes such as **human capital**, **complex systems**, **innovation**, **entrepreneurship**, **information technology** and **sustainability** need consideration.

Destination learning strategies

The learning-area idea, originating from the fast-evolving field of education, is being applied to the tourism sector. Its aim is to improve the quantitative and qualitative development of stakeholder performance by structuring more coherent and effective **sectoral networking and management processes**. Improved coordination of all learning processes — either at the destination level, or across networks of stakeholders involved in a thematic issue — is seen as being increasingly important in the ever-changing, technically oriented, globalised economy, where markets move, skills change, and problems or opportunities arise faster than ever.

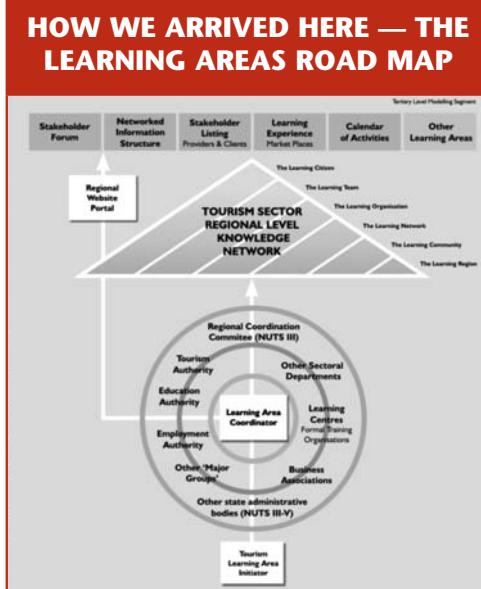
Tourism learning areas set out to enable stakeholders to keep up with this busy pace and, through improved regional or thematic coherence, will give destinations and supply chain stakeholders the innovative capacity to achieve an added market advantage, better managed resources and improved social interaction. However, this will only be achieved by well-informed and motivated people, working together within **coherent educational and sectoral governance processes**.

For this purpose, a network of tourism learning areas is being developed throughout Europe. The _____ (insert your TLA name) is one of these areas.

Are you aware of the background to this concept?

The move to implement the concept of **learning areas for the tourism sector** stems from the human potential debate, in which the **process of learning** is seen as the key to improving our individual and collective performance, especially at work, but also with regard to social and environmental issues. The Education and Culture DG developed the idea through Cedefop as **learning regions or learning communities**, which are now being disseminated through the R3L (regional lifelong learning) initiative.

In 2001, the Commission communication 'Working together for the future of European tourism' focused part of its attention on how to improve training in order to upgrade skills in the tourism industry, where the twin issues of attracting, retaining and developing skilled labour to the sector and supporting micro-enterprises at regional and local level to improve competitiveness were both seen as causing difficulties for tourism-sector stability and growth throughout Europe.



So what is a tourism learning area?

Learning occurs in a range of **formal and informal learning experiences** that can be accessed for any purpose (job-specific or thematic learning), by any age group (lifelong learning), in a variety of settings (**learning-experience marketplaces** — in schools, colleges, the cinema, at home, on computers, word of mouth, newspapers, etc.), by anyone (across a range of stakeholder interrelationships).

The tourism learning-area concept is really quite simple — **stakeholder partnerships and networks**, and '**learning-experience marketplaces**' are identified so that **learning-experience providers** and **learning-experience clients** can meet up efficiently, either formally or informally. This is done to strengthen the educational, training and information dissemination processes needed to improve innovative capacity in a modern, globally oriented tourism sector.

In this way a learning area creates a regional **knowledge** network around a given tourism theme. In practice, this will be materialised in the form of a regional tourism learning Internet portal, so that each destination can take advantage of the eEurope infrastructure and knowledge base. The knowledge network underpins the innovative and competitive abilities of SMEs and micro-enterprises.

For further information please contact _____ (*tourism learning area initiator*).

How will a learning area benefit my work?

If you are reading this then it is likely that you or a colleague in your area has read the handbook on learning areas, or your region is starting to develop a tourism learning area. **These areas may benefit from networking possibilities with other learning areas throughout Europe.** This will help the process of moving your destination towards a model of good governance and best practice in destination learning strategies. As a result, participants will have a clear idea of how to improve both formal and informal education and training for the tourism sector, and how the improvements can be systematically delivered in an inclusive, participative and cooperative process. The gains of making this type of intervention are improved communications, effectiveness and streamlining of resources, and increased chances of investment and funding possibilities through partnerships, networks and clustering.

Making the benefits happen — How can I be involved?

The establishment of a tourism learning area helps everybody who has an interest in tourism and educational processes. If you are involved in the tourism business, your learning and training needs will be better covered by more accessible and more effective learning-experience opportunities, helping you find innovative problem-solving solutions. If you are in government administration, then it is a means of developing good governance procedures in your work. If you are in the educational sector, a learning area enable you to open up the potential of the tourism-sector overall marketplace in a structured manner.

There will be a working meeting on the subject of setting up a tourism learning area for the _____ on _____ from _____ a.m./p.m. to _____ p.m.

The meeting will introduce the subject of setting up the _____ tourism learning area. Its output will be the structure of a website that will link all informal and formal learning processes relating to tourism into a regional knowledge network. The meeting will enable an information base to be set up for your work (or your staff) as either a provider or user of information related to any aspect of the tourism sector.

For further information please contact _____
(*tourism learning-area initiator*).

6. Developing a stakeholder grid

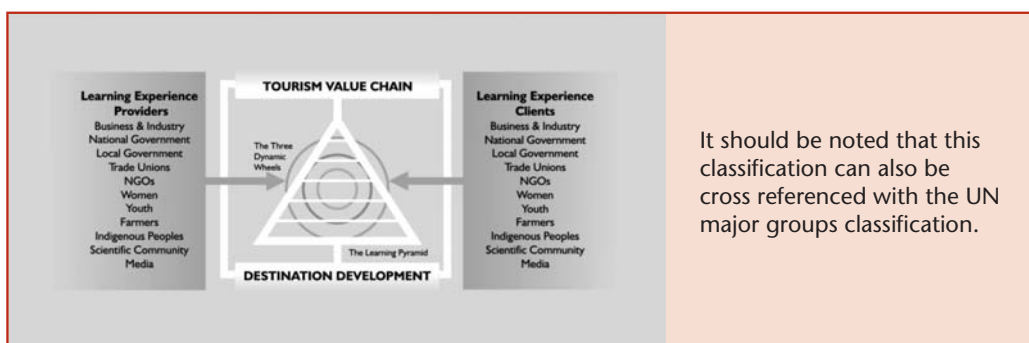


Fill in each cell with the names and contact details of each stakeholder in your TLA

Learning-area stakeholders' classification	Global	European	National	Regional	Local
A. Policy-makers — the administration					
1. EC, national, regional and local administration					
General					
Tourism					
Employment					
Education					
Environment					
IT development					
Regional development					
Transport					
2. National, regional and local tourism information offices					
3. Tourism agencies					
B. Social partners					
1. Federations representing tourist-industry sectors					
2. Trade unions					
3. Media					
4. Non-governmental organisations/associations					

Learning-area stakeholders' classification	Global	European	National	Regional	Local
C. Business and industry — tourism suppliers					
1. Attractions and activities					
2. Catering sector (restaurant, cafe, bar, etc.)					
3. Accommodation industry					
4. Construction sector					
5. Transportation sector					
6. Tourist guide services					
D. Commercial intermediaries in tourism industry					
1. Tour operators					
2. Travel agents/retailers					
3. IT and media companies					
E. Academic and scientific bodies					
1. Education and training establishments					
2. Research and consultancy bodies					
F. Public, private, public-private partnerships, other civil society members					
1. Women					
2. Youth					
3. Indigenous people					
4. Farmers					
5. Residents					
6. Visitors					
7. Multi-stakeholder networks					

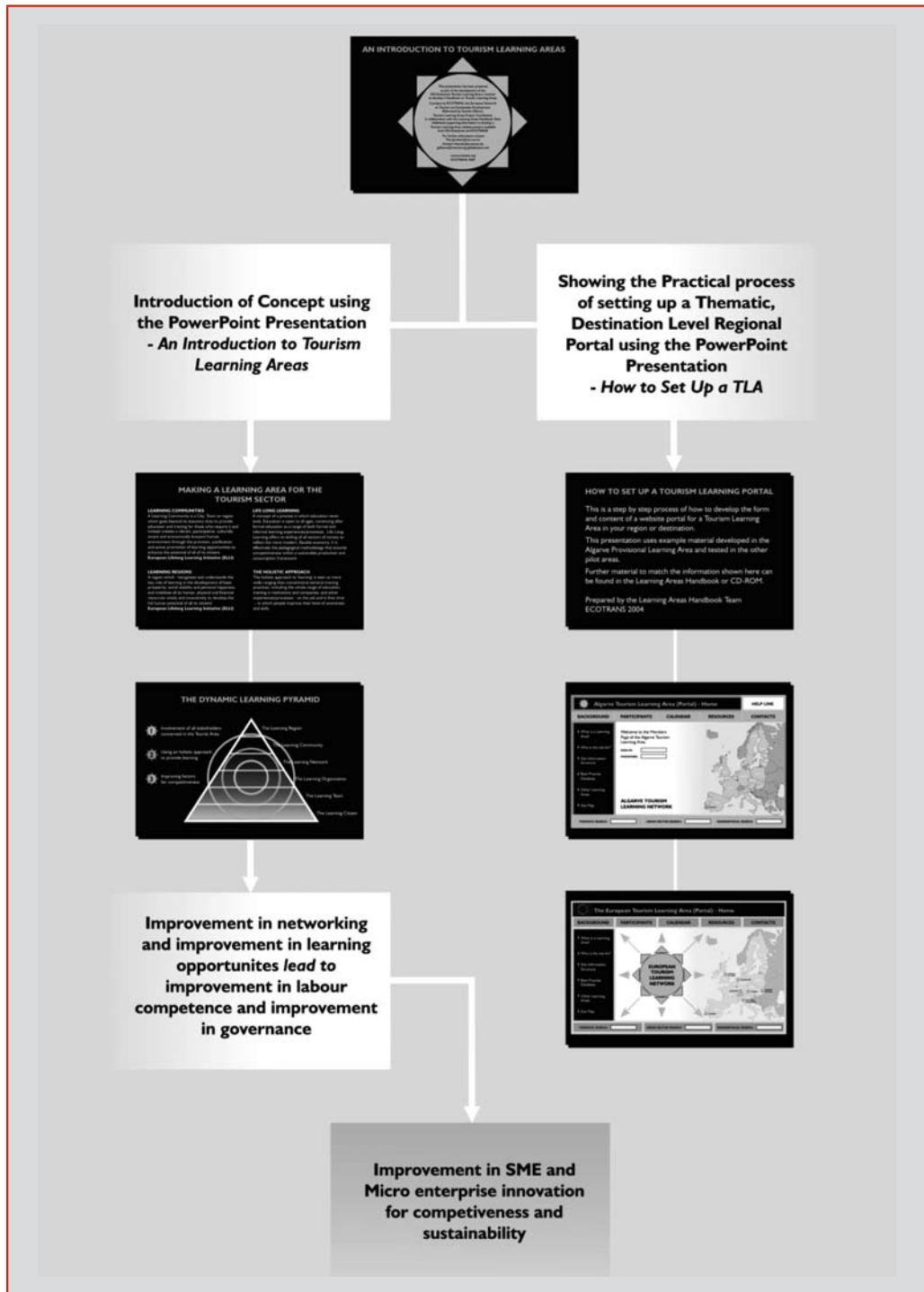
Link the information on this form to the TLA portal (see page 149).



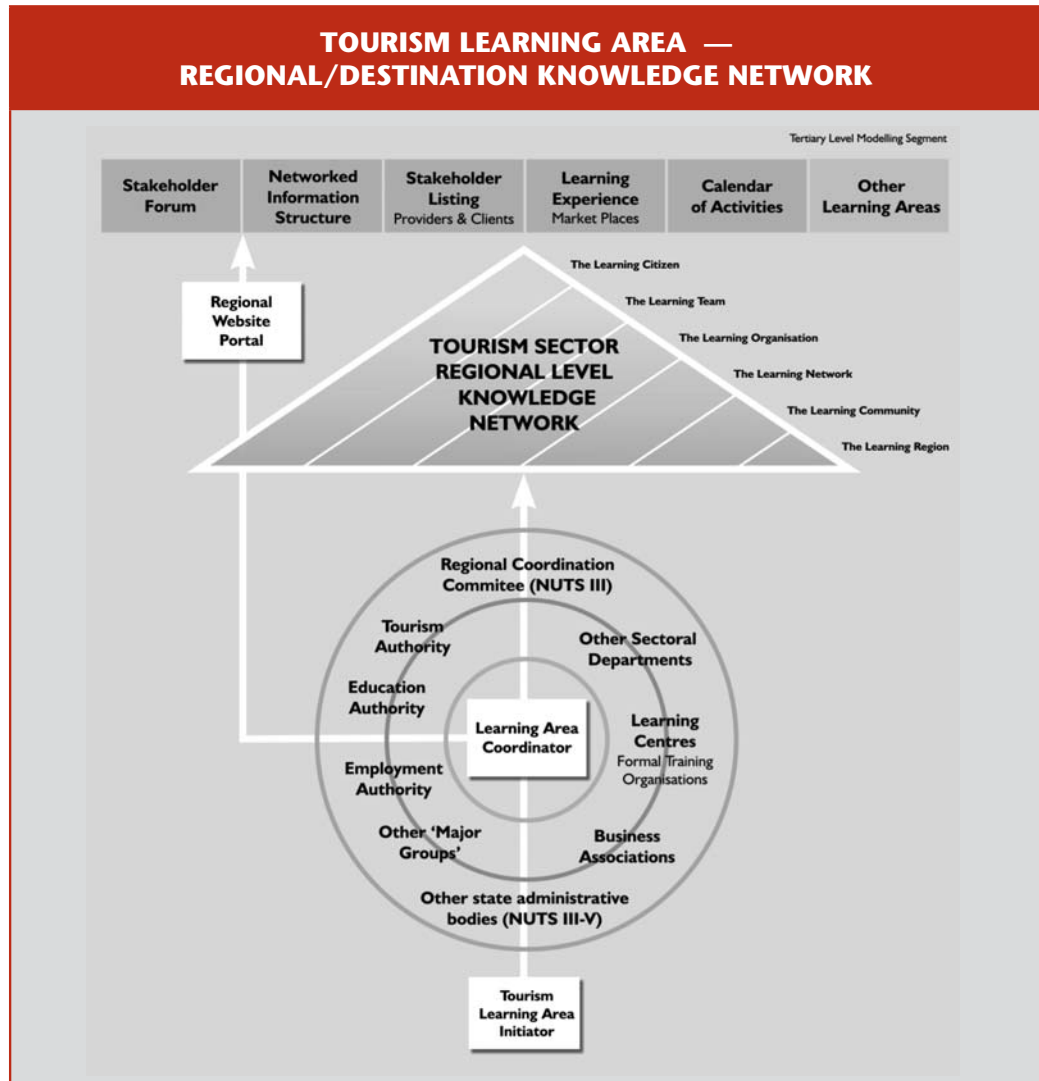
7. Working meeting preparation material

WORKING MEETING PREPARATION CHECKLIST	
Task	Notes
Define your initial stakeholder lists (you have the stakeholder grid to guide you) <i>Local organisations will already have useful lists and have dissemination channels</i>	
Prepare leaflets and information packs for general awareness raising <i>Use Technical Annexes 2, 3 and 5</i>	
Prepare your PowerPoint®/visual material <i>Adapt the PowerPoint® presentation 'An introduction to tourism learning areas' (on the CD-ROM)</i>	
Clearly understand the issues involved in developing a thematic, destination-level or regional portal <i>Familiarise yourself with the PowerPoint® presentation 'How to set up a tourism learning area's website' (on the CD-ROM)</i>	
Have material ready to discuss specific stakeholder issues, especially with good-practice examples in mind <i>Use the handbook to support your local interpretations</i>	
Ensure the timing of your meeting is in line with the overall activities of the destination or stakeholder networks <i>Check your key stakeholder calendars</i>	
Hold the meeting at the premises of a credible host who is a key stakeholder <i>Make sure the seminar setting is attractive and welcoming</i>	

8. Working meeting presentation material



9. Learning-area coordination process



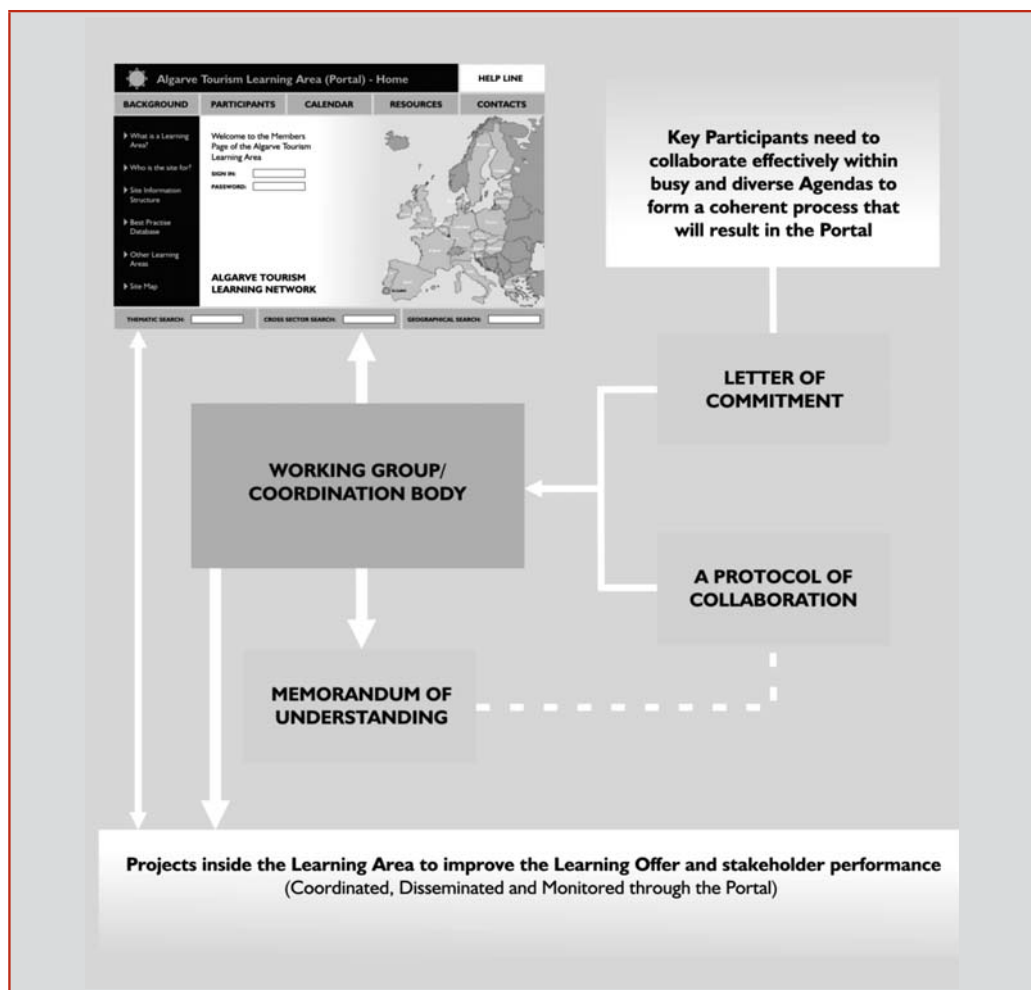
Ideal elements of the working group are considered to be from:

- regional development organisations (coordinating bodies, sectoral departments, public-private partnerships)
- local/regional authorities (councils, NUTS III-V)
- learning centres (educational or training institutes)
- business associations and individual businesses
- trade unions, NGOs and community associations

Once the working group is formed from these stakeholders it requires an administrative entity, which will coordinate day-to-day business and overall communications. The process of developing the website portal will be the key focus of this stage of the process, bringing the participants into a knowledge network.

Key regional departments that should be brought together in a collaborative working process are:

- employment
- education
- environment
- information technology
- tourism



10. Learning-area work plan

These steps are elaborated at each stage of this implementation guide. This checklist will help prepare the course of actions that should be undertaken to develop your learning-area process further. To develop your work plan, examine the stage you are at and prepare a programme that can be used for funding applications.

Many of the steps, such as the process to develop the website, will need resources, so the group should look at how that can be achieved without lengthy waiting processes. The work plan will depend on the resources of the group's members. At some stage a funding application may be appropriate, so this can be factored into the work plan.

LEARNING-AREA PRELIMINARY WORK PLAN CHECKLIST	
Working group task	Notes
See the protocol draft in Technical Annex 14 and the operational framework in Technical Annex 15.	Targeting busy stakeholders when your time is short can be frustrating. Use their processes and events to bring them into the partnerships, or create a high-profile event which many of them can attend.
▼ 1. Ensure that the working group establishes simple yet formal protocols of collaboration and common general objectives	
2. Look for additional stakeholders who may not yet be aware of the concept	▼
3. Develop the regional web portal as a common practical activity that reflects the shape and growth of the learning area	↗
▲ 4. Establish core of knowledge network with the concept of a tourism observatory that will help transform knowledge into innovation	
5. Plan a series of working events and a timetable of implementation	
Make sure the work plan involves building a practical knowledge network that will improve learning opportunities to stimulate innovation	Can an existing organisation take this on, or is a small-scale project application required?

11. Learning-experience questionnaire

An introduction to the learning-area concept should accompany this questionnaire.

The questionnaire can be used either as guidance for telephone or interview situations, or as a formal mailed copy.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON LEARNING AREAS FOR THE TOURISM SECTOR												
This questionnaire has been targeted at the following groups: thematic destination-level or regional learning-area stakeholders involved in tourism, employment, education and IT issues. <i>We would very much appreciate your help in providing this information. It should only take up to 20 minutes of your time. All contributions will be made public during the course of this project. Your contact with us will provide valuable details for future collaboration, and you will be sent the results of our work.</i>												
Your contact details												
Name of organisation:												
Contact person:												
Department/ position:												
Address:												
Telephone:												
E-mail:												
<i>Please pass over any sections you feel are not relevant to your organisation(s).</i>												
Part I — Governance issues												
Each level of governance will have specific policy papers and programmes that are of relevance to tourism learning areas. It is our job to identify these papers in order to develop policy coherence. Initially, this will produce a coherent vertical governance link between Commission communications, national government policies and regional plans. <i>Please fill in the part of the following grid, relevant to your own organisation/department, listing policy documents and programmes relevant to tourism learning.</i> <i>Note the examples provided at the European level, and assess which national and regional policies and programmes are related to these.</i>												
TOURISM LEARNING AREA — GOVERNANCE POLICY GRID												
Policy document name	Target group — SMEs/micro-enterprises					Coordination		Target group — Workforce individuals				
Policy documents: administrative/ geographical level	Entrepreneurship	Innovation and IT	Competitiveness	Sustainable production and consumption	Cohesion and regional development	Good governance	Tourism specific	HRD	Employment	Lifelong learning	Education	Training
Global												

European													
National													
Regional													
Local													
NB: Please state which governance structure (ministry, institute, department) is responsible for the policies and programmes (see the dark highlights in the grid).													
Part II — Your organisation's own learning experiences													
1. Do you provide information, educational and training services? If so, please list (you can refer to a website or e-brochure if you wish).													
(a) Formal:													
(b) Informal:													
Please also list here in-house educational, training or awareness-raising programmes:													
2. Do you usually require any information, educational or training services? Please list.													
(a) Formal:													
(b) Informal:													
3. Do you know of good examples of well-organised learning partnerships or networks? Please list.													
4. Do you have relevant training/educational/information material for formal or informal learning that you would be able to supply? (Please list up to three examples.)													
(a) Online:													
(b) As hard copy:													
5. Do you currently use:													
☐ e-learning facilities?													
☐ Internet information?													
☐ e-mail?													
☐ video conferencing?													
6. Are you involved in any joint activities or networking that involve learning processes? Please list.													

Part III — Learning to face the future

Please define your organisation according to the following categories:

TOURISM-SECTOR STAKEHOLDER CLASSIFICATION

A Policy Makers - the administration EC, national, regional and local administrations National, Regional and local tourism information offices Tourism agencies B Social Partners Federations representing tourist industry sectors Trade Unions Media Non government organisations C Business and Industry Tourism Suppliers Accommodation industry Catering sector (restaurant, café, bar etc...) Transportation sector Construction sector Attractions and activities Tourist guide services	D Commercial Intermediaries in Tourism Industry Tour operators Travel agents / retailers E Academic and Scientific Bodies Education and training establishments Research and consultancy bodies F Public, Private, Public-private Partnerships, Civil Society and NGOs Women Youth Indigenous people Farmers Residents Visitors Multi-stakeholder Networks
Enter your classification here:	
If applicable, how many members?	
Please list all networks in which you participate:	
Innovation and adaptation strategies/sustainable development issues Are you involved in any innovation processes at the moment? ☐ Yes ☐ No Do you know of any support SMEs and micro-enterprises can get to enable innovation? ☐ Yes ☐ No Are you aware of any innovation networks in your area? ☐ Yes ☐ No Do you have a sustainable development strategy or sustainable patterns of production and consumption strategy for your organisation? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please give details (or a reference).	
Does the strategy have an implementation timetable? Please state.	
Is it linked to your country's national sustainable development plan?	
☐ Yes ☐ No	

Please list any certification or accreditation schemes you belong to, or to which any of your products/services are connected.																			
Do you operate a carbon offset policy? ☐ Yes ☐ No Do you operate a sustainable transport policy? ☐ Yes ☐ No If you are an SME or micro-enterprise interested in both competitiveness and sustainability, what would help you to change to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption? Please comment briefly:																			
Part IV — Making use of learning areas Learning experiences occur in a variety of settings. 'Multiple marketplaces' have been identified to demonstrate this below. What are your preferred marketplaces for learning experiences? <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Fixed location marketplaces:</td> <td>Media-device marketplaces:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ University</td> <td>☐ Paper-based publishing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ School</td> <td>☐ TV</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ College</td> <td>☐ Audio-video-film</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Office</td> <td>☐ CD-ROM/DVD/computer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Cinema</td> <td>☐ Internet</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Home</td> <td>☐ Mobile communicators</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Outdoors</td> <td>☐ Other</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Other</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> Do you have a specific target group you wish to reach with your information? If so, please list: <i>Thank you for taking the time to fill this in.</i> Please fill in (as a Word document) and send to:		Fixed location marketplaces:	Media-device marketplaces:	☐ University	☐ Paper-based publishing	☐ School	☐ TV	☐ College	☐ Audio-video-film	☐ Office	☐ CD-ROM/DVD/computer	☐ Cinema	☐ Internet	☐ Home	☐ Mobile communicators	☐ Outdoors	☐ Other	☐ Other	
Fixed location marketplaces:	Media-device marketplaces:																		
☐ University	☐ Paper-based publishing																		
☐ School	☐ TV																		
☐ College	☐ Audio-video-film																		
☐ Office	☐ CD-ROM/DVD/computer																		
☐ Cinema	☐ Internet																		
☐ Home	☐ Mobile communicators																		
☐ Outdoors	☐ Other																		
☐ Other																			

Link the information on this form to the TLA portal.

12. Tourism learning-experiences checklist

Stakeholders should be made familiar with the general types of learning experiences that the tourism sector requires. The key learning centres in your area will have first-hand knowledge of the specific courses and other learning opportunities available, but may not necessarily collaborate to provide a single entry point for users.

General skills	Written communication skills Interpersonal relation skills Critical thinking Problem identification and problem-solving skills Computer literacy Foreign languages
Business skills	Management Marketing Accounting Finance Law Economics
Core courses	Development of planning skills, especially tourism research methodologies and information technology. Provision of technical knowledge and understanding of the distribution system, geography and other peculiarities of the travel industry and its many components, especially the hotel and hospitality aspects.
Experiential education	Development of <i>reality skills</i> through apprenticeships or practice by both industry and students. Use of problem-based learning used to bridge the gap between the classroom and the field.
Interdisciplinary learning approach	Recognition of the importance of diversity, cultural values and ethics, cross-cultural understanding, environmental and social responsibilities, international and global perspectives, local sense of place and lifelong learning are needed to round out the training of future tourism professionals.
<i>Source:</i> Adapted from <i>Human capital in the tourism industry of the 21st century</i> , WTO tourism and training series (1).	

When developing your learning-experience marketplace, you can use these tables to formulate and present the offer to stakeholders.

The following table defines the formal and non-formal offers in more detail. Use this as a means of categorising the learning offer on the portal.

¹ Chuck Y. Gee, 'In search of professionalism for the 21st century: the need for standards in tourism education in a changing marketplace', *Human capital in the tourism industry of the 21st century*, WTO tourism and training series, 1997, p. 186.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING NEEDS IN THE TOURIST INDUSTRY PER CATEGORY

All categories	Managers	Supervisors	Skilled craft workforce	Semi-skilled
Training needs all categories				
Tourism New technologies Quality Customer care Reception skills Communications Languages Team work Project work Sustainable development Entrepreneurship Safety and security within tourism enterprises First aid	Basic computer skills Business planning/strategic planning Strategic management Management skills Networking skills Management through vision and values Yield management Accounting Product development, innovation Marketing Sales Human resource management Planning resources, guidance and advice at regional/local level Project management Management skills to cope with the globalisation reality Train the trainer Hygiene	Basic computer skills Human resource management Hygiene Accounting Supervision skills Training skills	Personal skills Problem solving Basic computer skills Induction training	Personal skills Technical skills (bar, kitchen, restaurant, cleaning) In-house training Housekeeping training Induction training
Source: Partially adapted from final report of working group B's elaboration from the country reports as part of 'Working together for the future of European tourism' 2001.				

Informal learning experiences

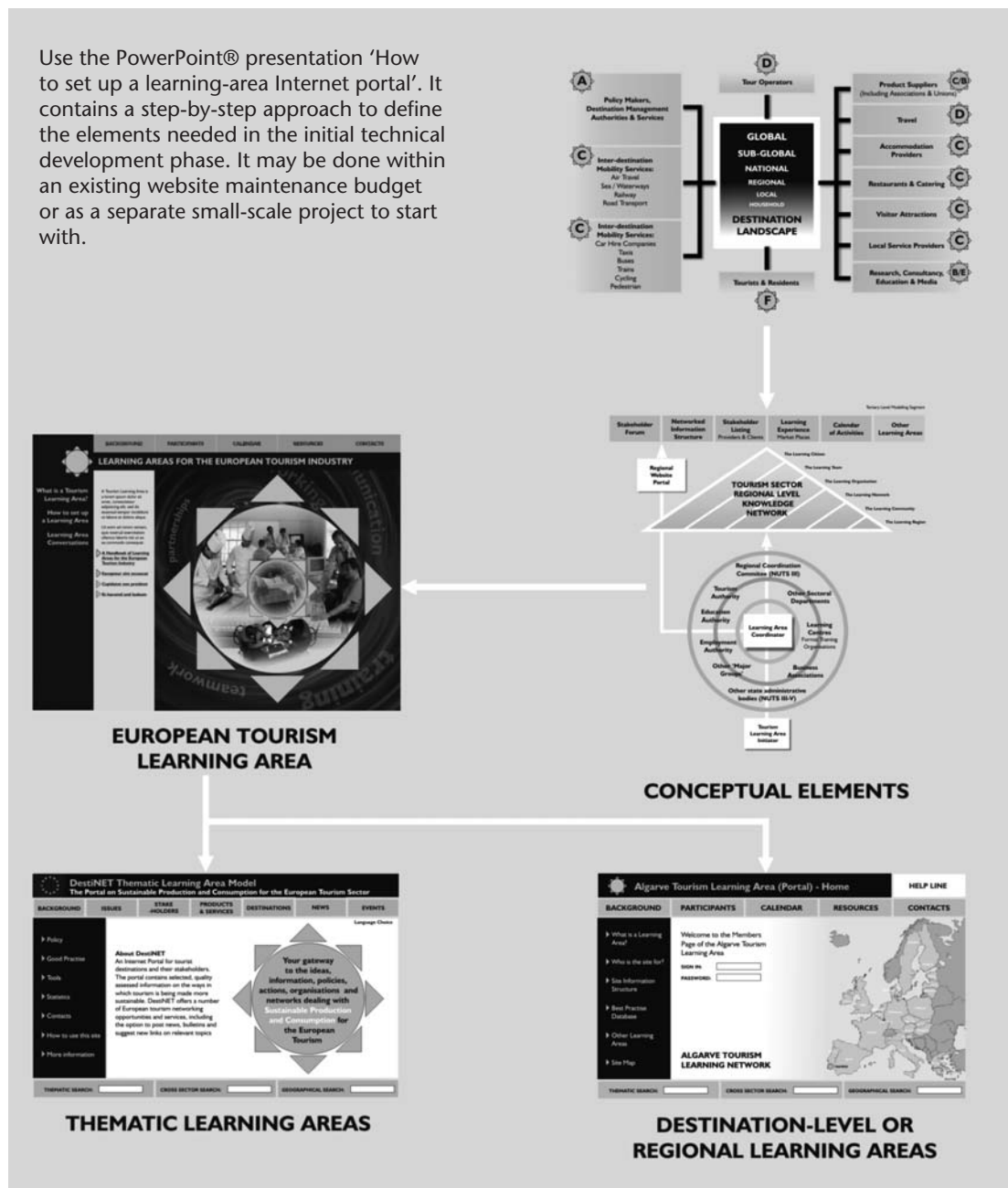
It is virtually impossible to quantify informal learning experiences. However, it is possible to identify situations and processes in which informal learning occurs. The following list of categories classifies informal learning experiences by a listing of media formats:

- newspapers,
- television,
- magazines,
- regional online information,
- socio-cultural events,
- word-of-mouth communications (conversations, phone, Internet),
- other.

13. Website portal development

This element of the work is an important way of structuring the coordination. It brings concept and practice together, starting with the means to profile the stakeholders and then unifying them into a knowledge network with a common information strategy. You should see the development of your destination level, regional or thematic portal in relation to the overall tourism learning-area system.

Use the PowerPoint® presentation 'How to set up a learning-area Internet portal'. It contains a step-by-step approach to define the elements needed in the initial technical development phase. It may be done within an existing website maintenance budget or as a separate small-scale project to start with.



Filling in the website information

The following headings for the portal are matched to the technical annexes so that you can see how the information you have collected can be related to a tourism learning-area portal.

A Word format version of the annexes on the CD-ROM contains an example form.

Background

- Technical Annex 2 — Background to the learning-area process
- Technical Annex 3 — What's so good about a tourism learning area?

Participants

- Technical Annex 4 — Stakeholders in the tourism learning-area process
- Technical Annex 6 — Developing a stakeholder grid

Calendar

This needs to be linked to the participants' list, using automatic protocols to update the portal if possible by creating a link to the participants' own site calendars.

Resources

This section can be used to list courses and support information.

- Technical Annex 11 — Learning-experience questionnaire
- Technical Annex 12 — Tourism learning-experiences checklist
- Technical Annex 15 — Learning-area resources profile

Data collected for the forms in Annexes 11, 15, 17, 18 and 19 should be linked into a user-friendly, horizontally- and vertically-compatible reporting system, preferably using a GIS, web-based landscape mapping system. The mapping system should be locally, regionally and nationally standardised in accordance with European-level NUTS, Eurostat and EEA data where possible.

Contacts

Address of administrative entity

How do I set up a learning area?

- Technical Annex 5 — Introductory leaflet describing the learning-area process

14. Sample protocol of collaboration

The following tools have already been mentioned as part of the implementation strategy to bring stakeholders into learning networks:

- mission statement,
- letter of commitment,
- protocol of collaboration, and
- memorandum of understanding.

The protocol is an important aspect to formalise the learning-area coordination partnership in order to prepare funding applications. It can be based on the mission statement and the letter of intent that the key stakeholders will have already agreed. In turn, it will form the basis of the memorandum of understanding between stakeholders to illustrate how they have arrived at the learning-area process.

Below is a sample text for an initial basic protocol of collaboration suitable for this stage of learning-area development. Later on, more formal protocols can be developed between the partners.

Learning-area stakeholders' protocol of collaboration

'The _____ tourism learning area has been established as an open access partnership to improve tourism stakeholder collaboration and learning opportunities in the _____ (*name of geographical area*) through the development of improved regional-level educational governance, networking of key stakeholders and ongoing quality development of tourism-sector learning experiences in order to create innovative tourism business products and services.

'We _____ (*name of organisation*) confirm participation in the _____ learning-area working group process. We understand this involves no formal commitment of money or resources at this stage. We further understand that this initiative will lead to the formation of a partnership to manage tourism learning issues in the _____ (*name of destination*) with the potential of developing joint funding applications with local partners, and other learning areas elsewhere in Europe.'

Organisation:

Department:

Signed: _____ (*name of person in charge*)

Date:

15. Learning-area resources profile

Use this form to gather information for the web portal. Information gathering should be seen as an ongoing process. It may be necessary to take one issue at a time, working with the competent stakeholders to access the data.

LEARNING-AREA RESOURCES PROFILE FORM	
Tourism learning area: human, physical, technical, financial and natural resources	
The approach to filling in this form is to start to list all the fixed premises where formal learning experiences occur, then expand on the sources of more mobile and informal learning experiences (NB: to be done as a working group).	
1. Human resources — Population demographic description	
Numbers:	
Level of education:	
Economic classifications:	
2. Physical resources — General description of built infrastructure	
Access routes:	
Premises (number of fixed educational locations, educational facilities, R & D establishments):	
Technical infrastructure (broadband):	
Fixed location marketplaces:	
University	
School	
College	
Office	
Cinema	
Home	
Outdoors	
Other	
Media-device marketplaces:	
Paper-based publishing	
TV	
Audio–video–film	
CD-ROM/DVD/computer	
Internet	
Mobile communicators	
Other	

3. Financial resource potential

The governance policy matrix can again be used to map the financial resources available for tourism learning-area development:

TOURISM LEARNING AREA — GOVERNANCE POLICY GRID

Policy document name	Target group — SMEs/micro-enterprises						Coordination	Target group — workforce individuals				
Policy documents: administrative/geographical level	Entrepreneurship	Innovation & IT	Competitiveness	Sustainable production and consumption	Cohesion and regional development	Good governance	Tourism specific	HRD	Employment	Lifelong learning	Education	Training
Global												
European												
National												
Regional												
Local												

4. Overview of formal learning offer

Number of formal tourism education courses in region:

Number of formal tourism training courses in region:

5. Natural resources

Structural environmental assessment:

Environmental impact assessments:

Sustainability monitoring systems:

Ecosystem inventory:

Biodiversity action plans:

Link the information on this form to the TLA portal.

16. Learning-area operational profile

At the operational stage, the coordination body can use this list to guide the programming of activities.

CHECKLIST FOR A LEARNING-AREA OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

In developing an operational framework, work can be done on the governance of learning experiences themselves.

Delivering good governance

- ☐ Clarifying the goals and values that underlie the learning-area approach, and communicating these to stakeholders as a common vision
- ☐ Improving all communications channels both horizontally and vertically throughout the region's tourism stakeholder value chain
- ☐ Ensuring a structured and timetabled coordination process

Delivering effective learning networks

- ☐ University identifying and encouraging partnerships, networks and clustering
- ☐ Cataloguing and marketing the various formal and non-formal learning offers on the regional portal
- ☐ Recognising and strengthening the region's informal learning-experience media
- ☐ Establishing creative marketplaces for learning experiences
- ☐ Promoting the development of:
 - the learning citizen
 - the learning organisation
 - the learning region

17. Monitoring a tourism learning area

Monitoring the progress of a tourism learning area should consider (a) the inception and organisation of the learning-area coordination **process** and (b) the **performance** results of that coordination process. These process and performance categories can show just how each learning area is developing in an objective manner, and will be a useful part of the coordinating body's decision support system.

This reporting process needs to be aligned with and built into the regional data gathering and reporting structure.

This handbook offers a starting point for this area of work by suggesting that monitoring of learning area performance is established with the following reporting information.

MONITORING THE PROGRESS OF A TOURISM LEARNING AREA'S PROCESS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS			
Process indicators		(tick level of attainment)	
Task	No	Under construction	Yes
Existence of a functional coordinating body			
Multi-sectoral participation in coordinating process			
Multi-stakeholder participation in coordination process			
Listing of tourism stakeholders			
Listing of learning-experience providers			
Listing of key learning-experience clients			
Listing of stakeholder networks in region			
Listing of learning-experience marketplaces			
Existence of a strategic framework document			
Existence of a timetabled work programme			
Development of IT and tourism learning strategy			
Development of funding applications for learning-area activities			
Performance indicators			Total
Achievement of strategic framework and work programme specific goals (report)			
Resource allocation to education and training			
Regional physical education and training infrastructure (report)			
ITC regional infrastructure (report)			
Number of projects related to learning-area development			
Type of projects related to learning-area development (report)			
Use levels of learning-experience marketplaces			
Number of formal tourism education courses in region			
Number of formal tourism training courses in region			
Formal education levels attained by resident population (report)			
Non-formal qualifications attained by resident population (report)			
Take-up of learning experiences by stakeholder group (report)			

Technical annexes

Number of jobs in tourism industry (+ or – benchmark) Number of SMEs in tourism industry (+ or – benchmark) Profitability of tourism industry (report) Investment levels in tourism industry	
Number of jobs in tourism economy (*) Number of SMEs in tourism economy (*) Profitability of tourism economy (*) (report) Investment levels in tourism economy (*)	
Use of QualiTest indicators to assess destination quality (**) (report)	
(*) It is necessary to refer to the tourism satellite accounts system developed by the WTO and the European Commission in order that these figures can be generated at the regional level for monitoring purposes. This system distinguishes between core tourism activities (the tourism industry) and its interaction with other sectors that benefit from tourism activities (the tourism economy) (see the Enterprise and Industry DG website for further information).	
(**) The QualiTest System provides a tool to facilitate measuring, monitoring and benchmarking the quality performance of a given tourist destination and services. The core of the tool is a set of 16 headline indicators for use in quality performance evaluation of tourist destinations and services. They are presented in a manual, that contains a set of chosen indicators that measure destination quality and provides detailed instructions for their use.	

Link the information on this form to the TLA portal.

18. Quality checks in the learning area

The following list is an ad hoc sample of quality checks enabling a learning area to gauge how many of its processes are developing destination sustainability. Increasing the number of such processes in operation will create a synergistic value, leading to enhanced destination quality. Competence developed with regard to quality checks provides a learning area with high-status mentoring skills. A learning area's progress towards quality destination development can be evaluated by the number of these checks in operation and their results once they are up and running.

Starting list

- Local Agenda 21
- EMAS II
- ISO 9000
- ISO 14001
- VIST certification systems and ecolabels
- VISIT certification systems and ecolabels
- EU flower ecolabel
- Fair-trade labels
- Integrated quality management (IQM)
- QualiTest destination management indicators
- Sustainable cities indicators
- Landscape character assessment process
- Natura 2000 management planning
- Aarhus Convention on Participation and Access to Environmental Information
- Better regulation package implementation reporting system
- Global reporting initiative (GRI) verified responsible business accounting systems
- Tour operators' initiative reporting system implementation check
- Charter for Small Businesses implementation check
- Education for entrepreneurship programme check
- Tourism satellite accounting system implementation
- Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (if applicable)
- Integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) process check (if applicable)

19. The TLA registration process

This annex describes the two-stage registration process. The first stage is a simple registration of interest to set up a learning area. The second is a more detailed registration of establishment of the process in practice. Interested parties are requested to compile the following two forms which will thereafter be placed on DG Enterprise and Industry's (Tourism Unit) web site. The availability of such data should facilitate vertical and horizontal information exchange between tourism learning areas and encourage interested parties to set up a European tourism learning-areas network.

Stage 1 — Registration of interest

Fill in the following form in order to notify the Enterprise and Industry DG of your interest in setting up a tourism learning area.

ESTABLISHING A TOURISM LEARNING AREA — REGISTRATION OF INTEREST	
Name of organisation initiating a tourism learning area:	
Person in charge:	
Contact details:	
Provisional name of proposed tourism learning area:	
Geographical coverage/location: (If this is a thematic learning area, please state subject matter)	
Date of initial stakeholder working meeting:	
Please send this form to Entr-Tourism@ec.europa.eu	

If you have registered your initial interest to become a tourism learning area in Phase II, you can record the progress you have made by completing the full tourism learning-area registration form at the end of phase III. The form below reflects the steps you have gone through in the implementation process, and acts as a checklist to ensure you have covered all the main aspects of the tourism learning-area approach.

TOURISM LEARNING-AREA CHECKLIST AND REGISTRATION FORM	
Name of tourism learning area :	
Contact organisation:	
Person in charge:	
Contact details:	
Geographical location/area covered: (If this is a thematic learning area, please state subject matter)	
Date of establishment of coordinating body:	
Multi-sectoral participation in coordinating process	
Does your coordination initiative include:	
☐ private-sector associations? ☐ public-administration departments? ☐ trade unions/NGOs? ☐ other civil society groups?	
Does your initiative include public-administration stakeholders representing:	
☐ employment issues? ☐ education issues? ☐ environment issues? ☐ tourism issues? ☐ information technology issues? ☐ other relevant administrations?	
Have you developed the following listings?	
☐ Tourism stakeholders ☐ Key learning-experience providers ☐ Learning-experience clients ☐ Existing stakeholder networks in the region ☐ Learning-experience marketplaces and information forums	

Information on the tourism learning-area governance process:

Have you developed:

- ☐ a regional web portal?
- ☐ a map of learning resources?
- ☐ a tourism-sector knowledge network structure?
- ☐ a strategic planning framework document for learning and innovation actions?
- ☐ a timetabled work programme?
- ☐ funding applications for learning area activities?
- ☐ a monitoring system for learning-area activities?

Information on actions in your tourism learning area

Do you have:

- ☐ a destination-level tourism stakeholder network capacity-building programme?
- ☐ an IT and tourism learning strategy?
- ☐ an SME innovation programme?
- ☐ an entrepreneurship in schools programme?
- ☐ tourism SME support for a learning programme?
- ☐ a sustainable development (Agenda 21) awareness programme?
- ☐ a 'lifelong-learning for tourism-sector stakeholders' programme?

Please send this form to Entr-Tourism@ec.europa.eu

See http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/services/tourism/index_en.htm

The European Commission is not responsible for the information provided.

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