

**RESEARCH INSTITUTE
FOR TOURISM**
Stadiou 24, 105 33
Tel. 331 2253, 331 0022
Fax: 33 120 33
Email: itep@otenet.gr
URL: <http://www.itep.gr>

Athens, 26 May 2004

PRESS RELEASE

Tourism Education and Training

As it is recognized that proper education and training tends to increase employee's productivity, these practices are spread very rapidly in the tourism market of most countries nowadays.

In our country the recent years the positions and the number of students of the tourism education and training system have increased at a higher rate compared to the growth rate of tourism employment. A shift from lower to higher education has been observed, opportunities for tourism have been created in more cities, the range of specialties offered became wider and significant progress has been made on issues that could help the quality improvement of studies.

Despite the progress, the old problems remained and new problems emerged. The structure of the system has gaps and overlaps, the connection of training programs with the needs of tourism sector is not satisfactory, educational practice has weaknesses, curricula is based on traditional procedures without sufficiently taking into account the changes of the sector and educators' training is not properly organized.

The rapid spread of education and training in tourism professions in recent years tends to lead to an oversupply of graduates in several countries, including Greece. This is partly due to the fact that employers hesitate to hire people with tourism studies and always have a preference for experts. The large variety and relatively low level of tourism study programs contribute to the issue.

A combination of school education and practice is the key for the acquisition of the necessary qualifications i.e. the basic knowledge required, depending on the profession or specialty, technical knowledge such as foreign languages and computer operation and proper behavior such as polite and friendly manners, the ability to handle controversy, flexibility, teamwork, the ability to develop initiatives, etc.

The contribution of school is very important in terms of foreign languages, the ability to formulate and the knowledge of administrative procedures. Practice contributes significantly to all the qualifications except foreign languages, the ability to formulate and computer operation knowledge.

An estimation of the size and composition of employment in tourism sector by profession or specialty for 2002 is presented in the following Table, resulting from a combination of statistical sources.

According to the Table is estimated that from around 250 thousand employees 1/3 have highly specialized duties. While the remaining 2/3 have less complicated duties, which do not require significant education or training.

Total Employment by specialty or profession in tourism sector 2002			
Specialty or Profession	People	Composition	
		%	Cumul.
Waiters	41.656	16,62	16,62
Owners-managers of rooms for rent	40.000	15,96	32,58
Housekeeping	25.896	10,33	42,91
Restaurant managers and restaurant and bar staff	23.000	9,18	52,09
Receptionist and assistants	19.222	7,67	59,75
Travel agency employees	18.568	7,41	67,16
Chefs	18.076	7,21	74,37
Restaurant support staff	9.000	3,59	77,96
Tourist souvenir shopkeepers	7.043	2,81	80,77
Other hotel employees	4.789	1,91	82,69
Hoteliers-businessmen of other hotel categories (except AA and A)	4.298	1,71	84,40
Accountants and assistant accountants	4.181	1,67	86,07
Souvenir shop employees and salesmen	4.173	1,66	87,73
Technicians and maintenance workers	3.887	1,55	89,28
Travel guides and caretakers	3.632	1,45	90,73
Travel agents-businessmen	3.200	1,28	92,01
Dishwasher	2.851	1,14	93,15
Groom	2.762	1,10	94,25
Cleaners	2.015	0,80	95,05
Maitre – sous Maitre	1.974	0,79	95,84
Hotel managers of AA and A category	1.927	0,77	96,61
Office workers and secretaries	1.627	0,65	97,26
Floor managers and assistants	1.328	0,53	97,79
Salesmen	1.221	0,49	98,27
Reception managers and assistants	888	0,35	98,63
Laundrymen	645	0,26	98,89
Pastry chefs	619	0,25	99,13
Restaurant managers and assistants	593	0,24	99,37
Telephonists	590	0,24	99,61
Chefs- sous chefs	531	0,21	99,82
Maintenance managers	461	0,18	100,00
Total	250.653	100,00	

In the study, estimations for the necessary job positions are presented, in total and by specialty, in order to increase the supply of properly educated people to cover for the total demand for specialized employees in the tourism sector.

The required positions, according to the estimations, are more than double compared to the current positions of the system. There is no need for expanding system capacity as the demand for specialized employees is lower compared to system supply. The key issue for the near future is quality improvement and adjustment of system outputs to the needs of the tourism sector.

It is necessary to reconsider the educational programs, supporting practice in terms of educational time compared to theoretical tuition and in terms of quality. Also, practice has to become a significant part of exam procedure, in order to evaluate its results.

The state has to provide education for free and for University students, despite the high demand for this kind of studies compared to the corresponding supply.

However, concerning vocational training, which is very important for productivity, fees are charged even in public institutions, even though the interest of the candidates is not intense. In well-designed vocational training programs, financial treatment of students should be a priority.

All the issues mentioned concern quality of studies. The following measures aim to the improvement of tourism studies' quality.

- ❑ Information on foreign experience and especially of countries with satisfactory quality performance.
- ❑ Cooperation with educational institutions that offer tourism study programs for teachers as well as exchange students.
- ❑ Public resources for tourism education in order to improve the quality of studies in selected units or departments of the system.
- ❑ Evaluation of curricula with educational criteria.

- ❑ Result evaluation by monitoring the satisfaction level of employers regarding the performance of graduates.
- ❑ Constant upgrade of certification procedures in order for the relevant exams to be properly organized in terms of content.
- ❑ Movements to improve the quality of educators, when a significant part of them is not intended for this purpose by the education system.

In a new sector, some institutions or programs could be selected on a pilot basis and given the appropriate resources aiming for a policy of quality and innovation.

Especially concerning tourism sector, the opinion and estimations of employers regarding the results of each curriculum should be taken into consideration

Much more effort is needed in order to succeed effective training and educators' certification. Also, more attention needs to be paid to incentives to attract competent trainers.