

HOST Project

PR4: HOST VET Methodology

Hospitality Management VET Methodology

coordinated by:



**BEST Institut für berufsbezogene Weiterbildung
und Personaltraining GmbH**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Project n° 2022-1-CY01-KA220-VET-000086365



For finding out details like the opinion, social inclusion activities, and knowledge gaps managers in the hospitality sector have towards the involvement of people with autism in the workplace environment of the hospitality sector, interviews were organised in partner countries (i.e. Cyprus, Latvia, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Austria) beginning of 2023.

BEST as the leading partner organisation of this task had elaborated questionnaires and guidelines for partners in the preparation phase. All partners selected and involved managers in the hospitality sector, implemented the interviews (in total 78) with the target audience, and collated and summarised results then which were summarised in one joint report by BEST. The result was taken as a basis to suggest the modules the HOST course should cover.

In sum, the report suggests from our interviewee sample that the majority (82%) is aware of and "familiar" with autism in some way and more organisations have already implemented some social responsibility policy (47%) or are considering their implementation (24%), than the ones who have not done so yet. The involvement of workers with disabilities in the hospitality labour market of our sample is divided into three parties – the ones who have not, the ones who want to, and 30% who already have included employees with disabilities in the workplace. Reasons for more than half of the interviewed employers (namely 58%) for not having involved autists in their staff range from additional responsibility and resource needs (including e.g. restructuring the workflow and adaptations to the work environment and communication) to lack of specific knowledge regarding impact and consequences for such inclusion. When looking into the interviewees' individually self-assessed capacities in this question, we can see the picture confirmed: the majority found it somewhat or very challenging dealing with their involvement in specific aspects.

Looking into specific activities aimed at the inclusion or skills development of staff with disabilities, we find training and reflection measures, as well as other social inclusion measures listed. Examples given for

team building activities vary in frequency, importance, timing, type, and concept, as well as by whom they were initiated or organised.

Having had as objective to find out managers' training needs, the questionnaire replies also show that some of the interviewees would not see a need for such training while some were not aware of any training opportunity/programme on the topic.

2) Identified training needs

With the planning of the HOST VET course awareness-raising measures are an important element. It is also important to include in the course some information on potential impact and benefits of the suggested social inclusion, because there is a rather low rate of organisations that have involved staff with autism in the hospitality sector and interviewees' view show their "reservations" regarding any responsibility they might have to take.

Another aspect to take into consideration is that managers in the hospitality sector have limited possibilities for external training attendance. They are limited in time resources they can spend; and, they are limited in time allocated to a course during a work day and the week.

Based on interview replies, in general, we suggest in the VET methodology that the **core HOST VET topics focus on aspects that refer to a manager's interactions with staff, to adapted managing and leading behaviour and skills, as well as to support and evaluation aspects**. In the following table, the project partners cluster the suggested interview data and bring them together into five HOST VET topics.

Suggested chapters in the HOST Training

General information about Autism Spectrum

- About the Autism Spectrum
- What typical needs can staff with autism have towards the workplace, colleagues, employers, others
- What legal and/ or social responsibilities do employers have involving staff with autism
- How to include / adapt the Social Responsibility Policy

Interactions with and among all staff

- Managers' communication behaviour and skills aimed at motivating others and giving feedback to staff with autism
- Describing and communicating job profiles, work, and tasks, as well as responsibilities towards staff with autism
- Agreeing and communicating goals with them
- Communicating change and responsibilities regarding social inclusion towards others (other staff and external stakeholders)
- Promoting impact and benefits (internal and external awareness raising)

Change Management

- Planning, Managing, and Leading change in work procedures, infrastructure, and environment
- Implementing and supervising adaptations to collaboration
- Finding and allocating resources needed for the change to involve staff with autism in the team

Support management

- Concept development and implementation of training measures for specific staff groups (i.e. with autism syndromes) and/ or all staff
- Adaptation and implementation of specific social inclusion measures
- Providing other support measures
- Support, Development, and Education of neuro-diverse teams through gamification

Evaluation and monitoring

- Evaluating change needs (e.g. tasks, work environments, teams for the inclusion of staff with autism)
- Evaluating career pathways based on new job profiles for staff with autism and new staff inclusion
- Evaluating and monitoring impact (e.g. performance, well-being, knowledge and skills improvement, etc.)
- Reporting to stakeholders (based on SDGs and/ or existing Social Responsibility Policy)

3) About the VET methodology applied in HOST

When it comes to any supporting training material, it would be important to develop them following a nano-learning approach.

About nano-learning – definition, key principles

The National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) has defined nano-Learning as **a tutorial programme designed to allow a participant to learn a given topic in (max.) ten minutes through the use of electronic media and without interaction with a real-time system**. However, no standardisation regarding the duration has been found. In general, however, nano-learning is suggested to be shorter than e.g. micro-learning. **In example project references, nano-learning sequences were suggested to last one to two minutes or less** while micro-learning sequences may last three to five minutes. Micro-learning and nano-learning offer learners some learning experience in a short period.

The objective of nano-learning is to be able to access ultra-short content when needed. The content is / can be relearned "at the spot". It is not necessarily memorised. It can be reused at will when the need arises. Nano-learning caters to a teaching programme as condensed learning. It allows learners to access information more quickly, repeatedly, and without further needed support for understanding the lesson. Nano-learning techniques should allow learners to retain only the information they need, easily skip the parts they already know, and move forward in a training programme. When it comes to reinforcing concepts or providing support at the exact moment learners need it, nano-learning is powerful as bite-sized learning pieces guarantee higher learning retention rates, and it helps avoid cognitive overload. This can also reinforce success and therefore self-confidence.

Keys:
relearned "at the spot"
not necessarily memorised
reused at will when needed
condensed learning
repeatedly quick access to
information
works without further support
fine to skip parts in information

However, there are also considerations when nano-learning might not be the best option. Nano-learning is not the best fit for comprehensive training. It should not be used with learners who learn course contents for the first time. Furthermore, nano-learning is not an ideal group-learning programme. As a consequence, nano-learning is not a good solution for comprehensive training programmes that deal with complex problems.

In comparison to a commonly known self-study programme, a nano-learning programme is usually focused on a single learning objective and does not use the medium paper. It makes it a more environmentally friendly training offer.

Nano-learning is learner-centric. It allows learners to organise themselves as they wish and customise their learning plans. It is a granular solution in the sense that it does not follow a strict learning pathway from one to the other learning topic or module.

Regarding the duration of nano-learning

In sum, the essence of nano-learning is to break down an hour of content into two minutes or less. It covers only one learning objective and provides focused learning on a single topic. Where implemented along a course, nano-learning courses last from five to 30 days.

Nano-learning is a very good solution for busy learners who have very little time to devote to continuous learning.

With the suggested modular and **nano-learning approach, learners can select the topics** (i.e. modules) they feel they need to explore. There is the option to learn in smaller, "**bite-sized**" lessons or in one bigger "**learning nugget**" at a certain moment.

Implementing modules does not necessarily mean that a strict learning path has to be offered/followed. In HOST, we are dealing with **experienced adults who should be addressed in the best way regarding adult learning principles**. We should for this reason offer flexibility in the access, include motivational contents, and formats, some hands-on and reflection possibilities. These suggestions are even more important when the course is implemented online and as a self-guided learning option.

Considerations for the training design

Nano-learning, due to the short duration, shall capture a learner's attention through rich multimedia features such as text, video, images, illustrations, and sound. It should be designed to be reusable (very little is retained of what we learn unless repetition is done). Various ways of organising the content, using several media to explain the same concept. The designer will choose these associations according to the objective assigned to each nano-learning sequence. For a full training programme, there is no need to follow a strict allocation nor order. However, implementing the same look & feel would be important to

understand that programme content belong together. Also, structuring one nano-learning "bite" should first provide a short introduction highlighting benefits/ advantages/ added values for the learners, followed by the main objectives, with examples or step-to-step guidelines, and a summary with the call to action.

Principles to remember when designing training content are to cater to **repetition, reflection, and reinforcement**. When designing a nano-learning solution, one should consider it as an ongoing process: Do not consider it as a stand-alone event. No nano-learning sequence should require any prerequisites. Each sequence should be self-sufficient. However, in a course, it might be of benefit to offer links to related training material, practice aids, or other additional resources to expand the learner's knowledge base; and for repetition, to offer in a course some suggestions on how to implement the lessons learned into a workplace, and give time for the implementation till the next topic is suggested. Repetitions help us to effectively store information and prevent memory loss which is caused by the forgetting curve. The more a piece of information is repeated over time, the more it becomes ingrained in our memory.

An adaptive learning strategy that is supported by a learning platform or adaptive learning content would best fit and support learners. Nano-learning works well with Learning Management System (LMS) software applications.

Also, **gamification is part of the nano-learning strategy**. It is a method that consists of applying the codes and mechanisms of games to sectors for which they were not intended, notably learning. Further details on the gamification in this project will follow in a later chapter.

Research shows that learners need cognitive support to help them learn. Showing how to solve a problem by illustrating each step helps them focus on each step and reduces cognitive load. To be able to apply what has been learned, it is useful to rely on concrete examples (film sequence, known story, famous reference, use cases). As an alternative, embedding training into real-life inspired working examples – from the hospitality sector in our case – is helpful for learners. This method may make it easier to understand behaviors, skills, and attitudes the content might target at.

"Call to action": Sequences of viewing/ reading without any action on the part of the learner lead to higher dropout rates. Integrating activities during and at the end of the training module helps to maintain a high

level of rhythm and attention. Regarding reflection and reinforcement, besides assignments that could help in skills improvement, quizzes could be offered for verifying knowledge-related key details. When implemented in a fun way, where they give valuable feedback, they can also help remembering the content.

When creating the nano-learning content, the following guidelines can help:

- List each step of the learning process (even the simple ones).
- Break down each step into micro-actions without omitting the difficulties that learners may face.
- Add a narrative to clarify what is being shown (avoid anything that distracts from your topic), if necessary add captions.
- Transform raw content into engaging, effective, and stimulating learning devices to match the educational objectives and needs of the target audience, using the various media available (video vignette, infographic, whiteboard animations, quiz).
- Define what information is "good to know" and what is "necessary to know" to eliminate the superfluous and leave only the essential. (Neuroscience has shown that people retain mostly what they have identified as necessary).
- Before proceeding to divide the training into several items, it is necessary to classify and priorities the information to be disseminated in order of importance. All information deemed unnecessary should be removed from the training materials.
- It is necessary not to offer content in bulk or one block. The breakdown of a module is essential for reading and re-reading. It is essential to follow a coherent and understandable breakdown plan.
- Offer a quantity of information that can be assimilated. The tension, the balance between difficulty and feasibility of the content keeps the learners motivated and ensures that they learn.
- Structure the selected information in modules and then in several sequences. All the contents within a module must have a common basis and form a coherent whole.

About gamification and serious gaming in the HOST project

As described earlier, gamification and serious gaming are integral parts of the learning strategy for the HOST project. Gamification is the method of taking mechanisms found in gaming, such as high scores, competition, and rewards, and applying these in different activities, often to improve motivation. The most common applications are in the health sector (therapy adherence), and education.



Serious gaming takes this idea a step further. Instead of taking an activity and applying game elements (gamification), a complete game is designed from the ground up, which has a different outcome than just 'entertainment'. In the context of the HOST project that means a serious game is designed which will lead players to better reflect on their team's strengths and areas of improvement, and learn how to utilise unique talents within their team most effectively.

The primary benefit of a serious game is the ability to try things without severe consequences. For example, if I assign a character in the game to the wrong position, the worst thing that could happen is that we lose the game. If someone would experiment with this in real life, it could lead to an employee becoming distressed in their position or customers having an unsatisfactory experience at our hotel. Serious gaming gives us the ability to practice in a safe environment, where experimentation and failure are promoted, as a means to improve quicker and become confident in our ability.

The secondary benefit is that it can lower a player's mental resistance to a certain concept. Within the context of the HOST project, there could be employees that feel like performing a reflection is a waste of time. 'Why change something when everything is going okay?' they might think. Serious games are designed to be appealing to play in the first place so that players will engage with the educational content even when they don't feel change is needed in the work environment. Through an effective serious game design and a good evaluation, players should understand the importance of the experience they just went through, and feel motivated to apply their learnings to their daily work after playing. Serious gaming allows us to intentionally present employees for important subjects and let them reflect on the importance of the subjects **after** they have experienced the gamified scenarios, rather than before.

About evaluation of lessons learned

Nano-learning sequences do not call for specific assessment. However, alternative memorisation offered in the form of evaluating one's knowledge and skills can be beneficial to learners. In suggested HOST VET course modules, knowledge bites can be evaluated by self-assessment at the end of each section, while assignments (tasks implemented into a learner's real life) for evaluating skills improvement can be used at the end of each section, e.g. based on self-assessment questions that simply reflect on one's improvement.

When implementing a course in a Learning Management System, a large variety of self-assessment types could be considered. These could range from quizzes to scenario techniques or simple questions (Multiple Choice, Yes/ No, True/ False, etc.). Which type one can embed may also depend on the selected virtual learning environment.

HOST WP4 Chapter Descriptions and Indicative Content

About the contents

In total, there are five modules as shown in the graphic on the previous page. The VET methodology for each of the modules the partners elaborated provides in the next steps details on

- The aims of each module
- An abstract to the module
- The suggested units with a concise content description
- The recommended duration of the overall module implementation (in hours)
- And some specific considerations regarding the training implementation, and suggested assessment

The learning time in total is suggested to last 15 hours.

General information about Autism Spectrum

- About the Autism Spectrum
- What typical needs do staff with autism have towards the workplace, colleagues, employers, others
- What legal and/ or social responsibilities do employers have involving staff with autism
- How to include / adapt the Social Responsibility Policy

Module 1:

- The aims of the module:

The first module aims at informing learners about autism and to help identify the typical needs of staff with autism, and promote understanding and effective support among colleagues and employees. Another objective is to clarify any legal and social responsibilities of the employers in accommodating staff with autism. This module also aims to help organizations learn how to adapt and incorporate social responsibility policies aimed at creating a more inclusive work environment for staff with autism.

- The abstract to the module:

The module explores the typical needs of staff with autism, emphasizing the importance of empathy, support, and effective communication. It also discusses employers' legal and social responsibilities when involving staff with autism and provides practical recommendations for integrating these considerations into the company's social responsibility policy.

- The suggested units and content description:

Unit 1: Understanding Autism, Definition and Characteristics of Autism, Common Misconceptions, and Myths

Unit 2: Identifying, Communication and social interaction challenges, Sensory sensitivities and environmental considerations, Consistency, routine, and clear expectations

Unit 3: Legal and Social Responsibilities of Employers, Anti-discrimination laws and reasonable accommodations, Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, Benefits of employing staff with autism

Unit 4: Adapting Social Responsibility Policy, Assessing current workplace policies and identifying areas for improvement, Strategies for fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment, Incorporating feedback and ongoing evaluation

- Duration: 3 hours

- Suggested training implementation, with any specific considerations regarding assessment:

Utilise a multimedia approach by including short videos, interactive quizzes, and infographics to facilitate engagement and understanding.

Offer real-life examples and case studies to illustrate the concepts and strategies discussed in the course.

Use a mix of multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions to assess participants' understanding of the course content.

Include scenario-based questions that require participants to apply their knowledge to hypothetical situations.

Encourage reflection and self-assessment by having participants consider how they can contribute to a more inclusive work environment.

Provide opportunities for participants to ask questions and engage in discussions to clarify any doubts or concerns.

Interactions with and among all staff

- Managers' communication behaviour and skills aimed at motivating others and giving feedback to staff with autism
- Describing and communicating job profiles, work and tasks, as well as responsibilities towards staff with autism
- Agreeing and communicating goals with them
- Communicating change and responsibilities regarding social inclusion towards others (other staff and external stakeholders)
- Promoting impact and benefits (internal and external awareness raising)

Module 2:

- The aims of the module:

This module deals with the manager's communication behavior and skills necessary for motivating others and giving feedback to autistic staff. One main aim is to describe and communicate job profiles, work, and tasks, as well as responsibilities towards staff with autism, as well as to help managers learn setting, agreeing, and communicating job goals. Another objective is to explore social inclusion and to educate hospitality managers about promoting impact and benefits.

- The abstract to the module:

The successful inclusion of staff with autism in hospitality requires special knowledge and insights about how to meet the staff how to include them in the job process, and together setting appropriate goals and work objectives.

- The suggested units and content description:

Unit 1: Understanding communication behavior and skills for motivating others and giving feedback to autistic staff

Unit 2: Job Planning: job profiles, work, tasks, and responsibilities towards staff with autism.

Unit 3: Goal Setting: Set, agree, and communicate job goals with them.

Unit 4: Social Inclusion for Managers

- Duration: 3 hours

- Suggested Training implementation, with any specific considerations regarding assessment:

a) Theoretical part:

Use e.g. Powerpoint presentations to clarify and enlighten all aspects of this module.



b) Practical Exercises

Setting targets, monitoring progress, and KPIs.

Present and further explore study cases from the industry.

c) Self-assessment that will enable learners prioritise modules for self-directed study at their own pace

Change Management

- Planning, Managing and Leading change in work procedures, infrastructure and environment
- Implementing and supervising adaptations to collaboration
- Finding and allocating resources needed for the change to involve staff with autism in the team

Module 3:

- The aims of the module:

Module 3 aims at training hospitality managers in planning, managing, and leading change in their organisation.

- The abstract to the module:

The inclusion of neurodivergent staff in an organisation and especially in the sector of Hospitality often calls for changes in the work environment that can only be overcome with some collective effort, teamwork, appropriate communication, and set targets. To successfully include autistic staff in neuro-diverse teams in hospitality, managers need to develop soft skills, and knowledge and learn about the practices that will allow them to manage the change toward a new environment that will create numerous new opportunities.

- The suggested units and content description:

Unit 1: The definition of Change Management

Unit 2: Planning, Managing, and Leading change in work procedures, infrastructure, and environment

Unit 3: Implementing and supervising adaptations

Unit 4: Teamwork and collaboration

Unit 5: Transferring knowledge to peers, colleagues, and subordinates

Unit 6: Resource Management toward Change

- Duration: 3 hours

- Suggested Training implementation, particularly any specific considerations regarding assessment:

a) Theoretical resources could be presented in the form of a text.

b) Practical Exercises (setting targets, monitoring progress and KPIs)

c) Self-assessment that will enable learners to prioritise modules for self-directed study at their own pace

Support management

- Concept development and implementation of training measures for specific staff groups (i.e. with autism syndromes) and/ or all staff
- Adaptation and implementation of specific social inclusion measures
- Providing other support measures
- Support, Development and Education of neuro-diverse teams through gamification

Module 4:

- The aims of the module:

This module aims at introducing learners to the concept of planning, developing, and implementing actions and activities that will support the employment and development of autistic employees in the EU Hospitality Sector.

- The abstract to the module:

Providing effective support for the personal and professional development of staff with autism is vital for a successful career path. It can help all members of a neuro-diverse team become more productive and social within their Hospitality teams. To provide effective support, hospitality managers need to be trained to develop knowledge, skills, and competences in a series of related topics.

- The suggested units and content description:

Unit 1: Concept development and implementation of training measures for specific staff groups (i.e. with autism syndromes) and/ or all staff

Unit 2: Adaptation and implementation of specific social inclusion measures

Unit 3: The definition of an Autism-friendly Work and Training Environment

Unit 4: Evaluation and Adaptation of an Autism-friendly Work and Training Environment

Unit 5: Team Management Skills (in Autism-friendly Teams)

Unit 6: Designing and Establishing internal Support Mechanisms, aimed at the long-term support of Autistic Staff

Unit 7: The concept of Gamification

Unit 8: Support and Development through Gamification

Unit 9: Best Practices in Gamification

- Duration: 3 hours

- Suggested Training implementation, with any specific considerations regarding assessment:
 - a) Theoretical resources (text)
 - b) Practical Exercises (setting targets, monitoring progress and KPIs)
 - c) Self-assessment that will enable learners to prioritise modules for self-directed study at their own pace

Evaluation and monitoring

- Evaluating change needs (e.g. tasks, work environments, teams for the inclusion of staff with autism)
- Evaluating career pathways based on new job profiles for staff with autism and new staff inclusion
- Evaluating and monitoring impact (e.g. performance, well-being, knowledge and skills improvement etc.)
- Reporting towards stakeholders (based on SDGs and/ or existing Social Responsibility Policy)

Module 5:

- The aims of the module:

Module 5 will provide practical guidance to hospitality managers in supporting autistic staff throughout the entire employment process/cycle. This support can either be in the form of career guidance, evaluation of individual needs, or transfer of knowledge amongst a neuro-diverse team.

- The abstract to the module:

Providing effective support to autistic staff is critical for their well-being both as professionals and as individuals. Autistic staff in Hospitality can experience social isolation, stress, and marginalisation if the right support are not taken into consideration. Dissatisfaction in work life can be mitigated through appropriate support by their supervisors/ managers, who are in a prime position to affect and benefit from their inclusion and development in the workplace.

- The suggested units and content description:

Unit 1: The utilisation of tools for performance appraisal and identification of needs

Unit 2: The utilisation of tools for job satisfaction and identification of needs

Unit 3: Evaluation and analysis of appraisals and needs

Unit 4: How to implement action plans for further development

Unit 5: Best practices in appraisal and action planning for autistic people

Unit 6: Involvement of and information sharing among stakeholders

- Duration: 3 hours

- Suggested Training implementation, with any specific considerations regarding assessment:

a) Theoretical resources (text)

b) Practical Exercises (setting targets, monitoring progress and KPIs)

c) Self-assessment that will enable learners to prioritise modules for self-directed study at their own pace

