



RESPONS

Responsible Skills Alliance for Sustainable Management of Small Hotels and Restaurants

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National Field Research Report

Country: Germany

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Chapter 1 The survey base and sample

The major aim of this survey for the RESPONS project was to understand the level of importance and the availability of the company's experiences regarding innovative services, sustainability and social responsibility.

The following keywords (identified through desk research) briefly describe the priorities and trends of the hospitality sector in Germany.

- digitalization is a mega trend in German HORECA¹
- competitive restraints are increased demands from customers on one hand and high price sensitivity on the other hand
- Sustainability, responsibility for our descendants and resources, environmental awareness – are trends that are on the rise in Germany. Conscious consumption and responsibility for a sustainable use of our environment and ecological resources are not contradictory anymore. Fresh and regional products are highly appreciated by most guests. Hotels that are taking these aspects into account are very well prepared for the future.

Overall trends in gastronomy²:

- Regional Cuisine and regional products
- Feel-good- atmosphere (design if restaurants: cool is out – cosy is in)
- Open-air gastronomy (like beer gardens or beach bars)
- System gastronomy (still expanding sector)
- Take-away und Home Delivery (biggest trend in open-air gastronomy)
- Coffee specialties and sweets (no German city can be imagined without coffee bars anymore, still high expansion rates)

¹<http://www.dwif.de/news-events/news/item/digitalisierung-tourismus.html> - Consulted on March, 25th, 2014

²<http://www.dehoga-bundesverband.de/daten-fakten-trends/trends-und-rankings/> - Consulted on March, 25th, 2014



Overall trends in the hotel business³:

- Vacations in Germany (unbroken trend – vacations “at home”)
- Health (Wellness and health are mega trends that are picked up by hotels as well to offer it to their customers)
- Budget Hotels/ Hostels
- City trips (short trips: to see as much as possible in a short time, cheap airlines are supporting this trend)

The industry and service sector in Germany is characterized by the dual VET system. This means that for almost all professions trainees attend vocational school for the theoretical part of the training and for the practical part of the training they usually work in their training company. The same VET procedures apply for the hospitality sector.

Dominant actors in the sector are restaurants and hotels. Their employees are usually very well trained and can develop an international career and reputation in the field, because their VET training is already very professional and there a variety of further/ advanced training options available in Germany.

The following section describes how the survey in Germany was conducted, what hospitality SMEs took part and what challenges were faced during the survey.

Information about the companies involved:

The German sample consists of 23 responses altogether. Unfortunately not all of them were filled in completely. That’s why only 20 of them are considered in this report. We tried to represent Germany as a whole in this sample and considered hotels and restaurants from all over Germany. During the course of the survey we had to shift our focus to Munich and Heidelberg mainly, because we finally went to the places in person to conduct the interview face-to-face. The presented companies are located both in more remote areas and in city centers.

³<http://www.dehoga-bundesverband.de/daten-fakten-trends/trends-und-rankings/> - Consulted on March, 25th, 2014

Managers of the surveyed target group were quite reluctant to participate in the study and to fill in the questionnaire. One reason for this could be that in Germany the hospitality sector is very well developed, the VET trainings are usually considered to be highly professional and especially in SME's time is always tight. Another reason mentioned by a few respondents was that the questionnaire was too complex and difficult to fill in. Regarding the online-based method of gathering the necessary information, one restaurant manager told us that from his experience in the sector, hospitality managers are usually not very familiar with the use of ICT.

From 20 respondents 9 were from restaurants and the remaining 11 were hotels. As far as the location is concerned, the majority of the respondents are based in the south of Germany- Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg (in total 16). The minority can be found in Bremen (1), Brandenburg (1), Rhineland-Pfalz (1) and Sachsen-Anhalt (1).

The following branches are represented in our sample:

Accommodation / Hotel	47,8%
Accommodation / Guest House /Villa	8,7%
Restaurant/ Classic	26,1%
Restaurant/ Specialized	17,4%

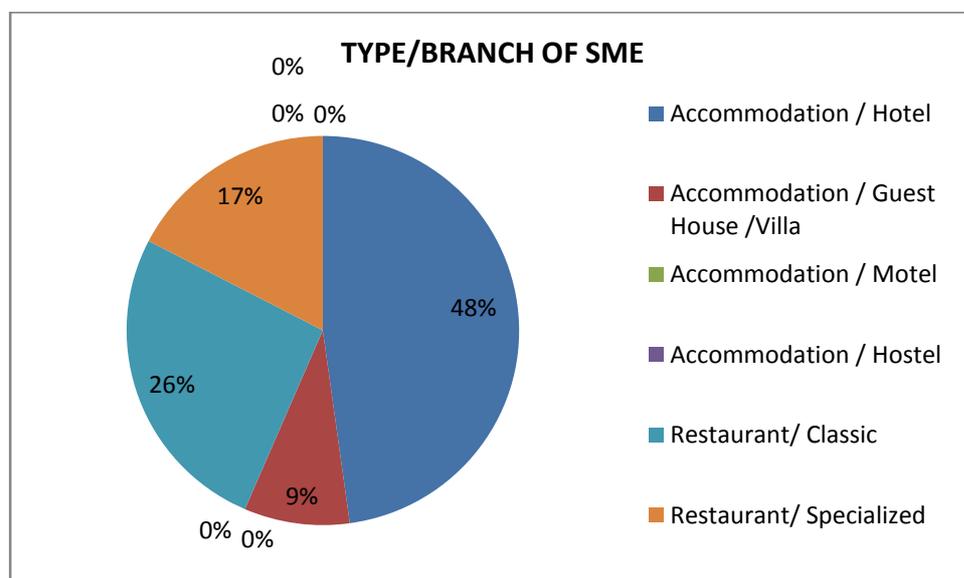


Figure 1

Depending on the annual average staff number, the majority employs less than 10 people throughout the year.

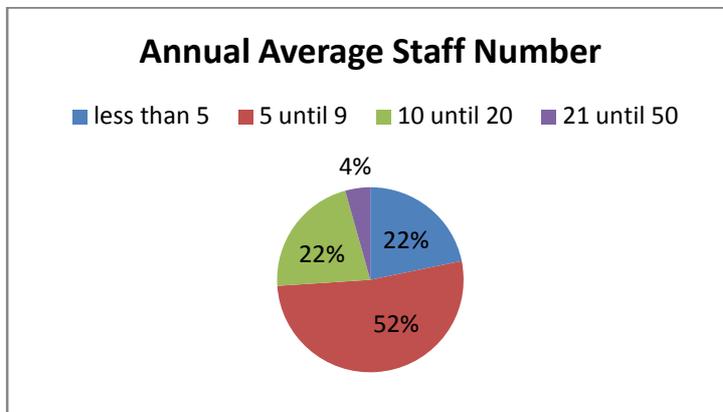


Figure 2

As far as the way of implementing the business is concerned, 17 (73,9 %) out of 23 are family-run businesses.

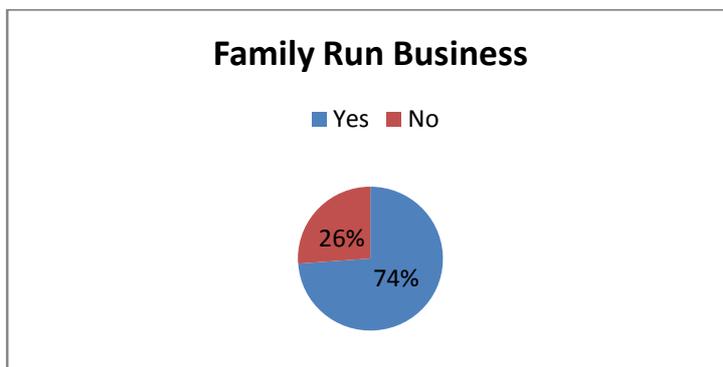


Figure 3

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Chapter 2 Dimensions affecting the HORECA SMEs' performances

The major aim of the survey was to understand the level of importance and the availability of the company's experiences regarding innovative services, sustainability and social responsibility.

Therefore twelve different categories describing daily duties and routines in small restaurants and hotels were specified to evaluate their importance for the HORECA SMEs.

The question regarding the importance of those issues, the answers show the following (see graph below):

- for all respondents the issues addressed by the questionnaire were either “very important” or “important”
- the two most relevant issues for German HORECA SMEs that were considered “very important” are: INDIVIDUALISED HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCES/ MENUS and RESPONSIBLE WORKPLACE
- also considered to be important for the respondents were SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS, EQUAL WORKING CONDITIONS and the WEB 2.0
- “Not important” for the majority of respondents were the subjects SUSTAINABLE RESORTS AND MENUS, WELLNESS BASED OFFER and HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
- there are no significant differences in the responses between hotels and restaurants

In conclusion it can be said that the questionnaire reflects the daily duties and routines of HORECA SMEs in Germany. The issues considered to be most important were the individualised hospitality experiences/menus and a responsible workplace. Especially the importance of the first issue “individualised hospitality experiences/menus” shows that German hotel/ restaurants managers attach great importance to the core competence of the business – the hospitality. Subsequent important issues are mostly related to the working conditions such as safe and equal working conditions and a responsible workplace. Less important are issues like Human Resource Development (due to the size of most of the businesses) and wellness based offers.

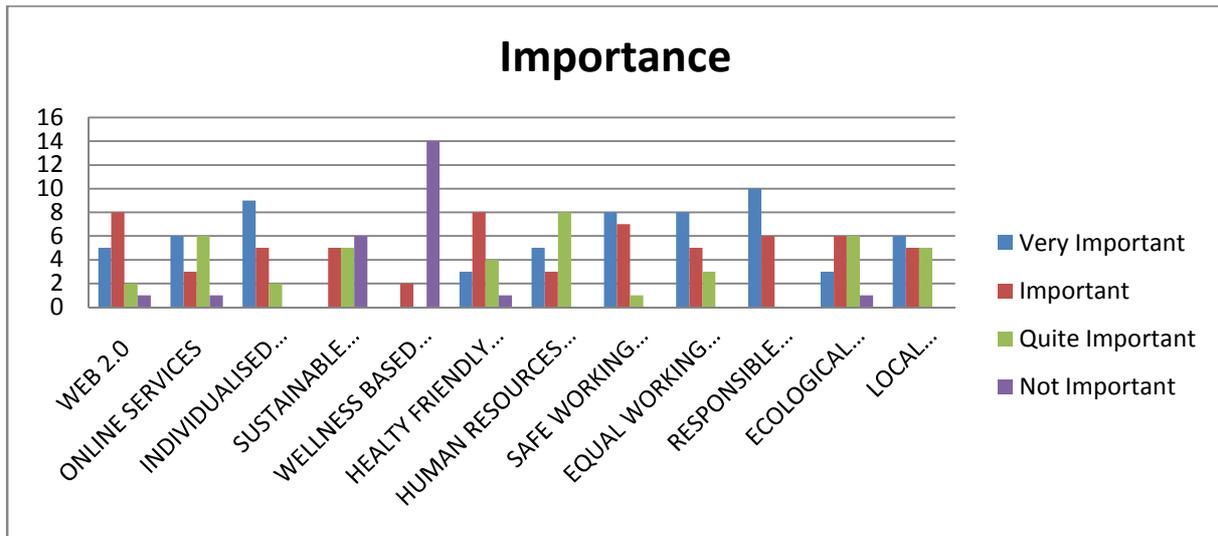


Figure 4

Chapter 3 Dimensions requiring further information/ training

After the respondents gave particulars about the importance of certain issues in their companies, they were when asked to examine how much expert knowledge the company's representatives had with the proposed issues. As in the first part of the questionnaire, respondents were once more addressed with the same issues and were now asked to evaluate their and their company's experience with these.

The answers showed the following:

- hardly any respondent would consider him/herself (and/or the company's experience) as "Expert" in any of the proposed issues
- the overall majority of the respondents would evaluate themselves (and/or the company's experience) as "Competent" in all proposed issues
- especially in working conditions related issues, most of the respondents declared themselves "Competent" for e.g. "Safe" and "Equal Working Conditions" and "Responsible Workplace" – this reflects what was said in the first part of this section on the "Importance" of these issues
- issues like "Wellness based offers" and "Ecological Workplace" were mostly rated being at a "Beginners" and "Inexperienced" level in the experience of the company -

again these findings correspond to what was found out in the first part of this particular section, as these subject were considered the least important by the surveyed sample there are no significant differences in the responses between hotels and restaurants

Consequently, German HORECA SMEs representatives mainly see themselves and their companies as being competent in all addressed issues that they consider important for their businesses, especially in work related topics and in hospitality related questions.

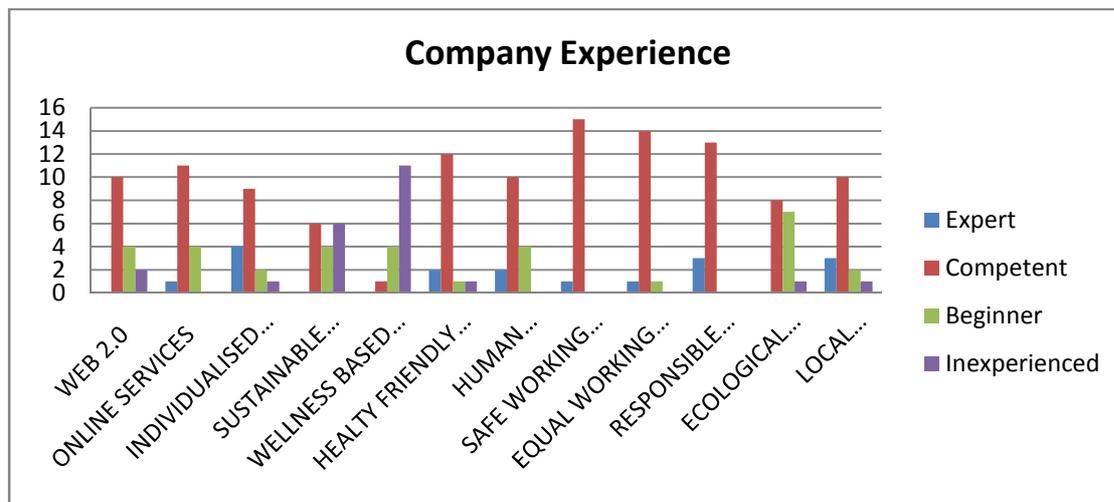


Figure 5

Chapter 4 Innovative skills owned by HORECA managers

Another objective of this survey was to assess the situation of HORECA SMEs in the participating countries and to identify potential training needs.

After respondents evaluated the importance and their company's competences in the above (Chapter 2) mentioned areas; in the following section they had the opportunity to evaluate their managers/ owners innovative skills.

The results are the following:

- the overall majority of the respondents see themselves as "Competent" regarding their or their company's innovative skills

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- “Intercultural Management”, “Cooperative ability/ Team Spirit”, “Adaptation to change” and “problem solving” are the areas where most of the respondents see themselves or their company being “Competent”
- only two respondents considered themselves “Inexperienced” regarding “Intercultural Management” – the residual rest of the respondents didn’t see themselves or their company being “Inexperienced” in any of the proposed categories
- lowest rate of all competences was given to “Computer/ ICT” knowledge – this seems to be the weak part of the German HORECA SME’s and reflects the low participation rate in the online-survey also here, there are no significant differences in the responses between hotels and restaurants

The major conclusion that can be drawn is that German HORECA SME’s consider themselves competent or even experts in these areas that are directly related to hospitality. Again, this reflects the main findings from Chapter 2 and 3.

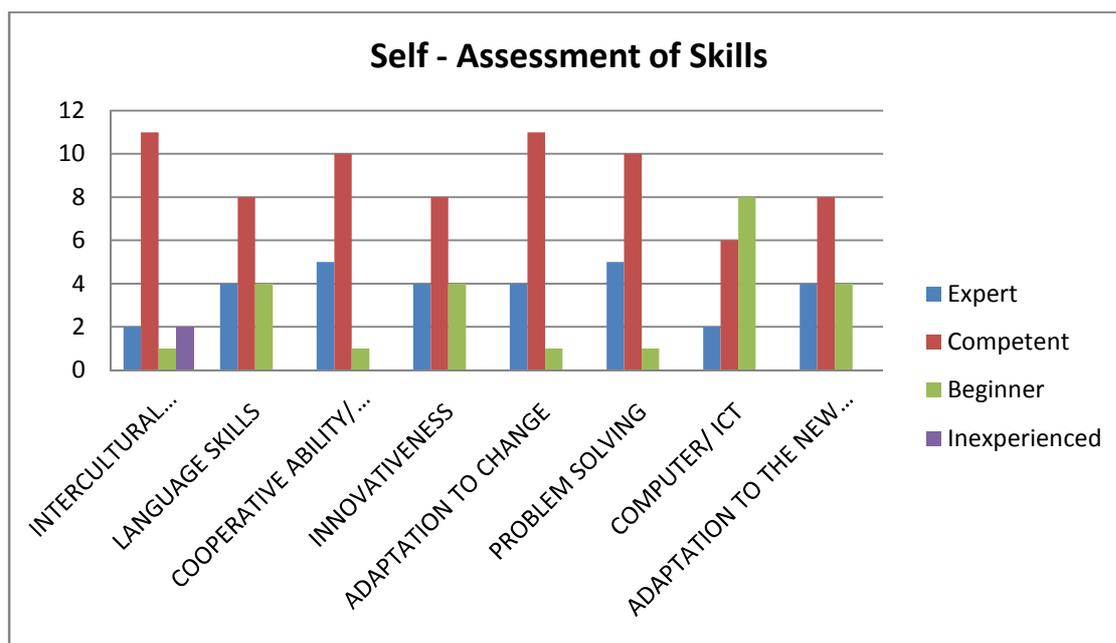


Figure 6

Chapter 5 Learning and training

The last part of the survey dealt with questions regarding the realization of further/ advanced trainings. At first the respondents were asked to specify difficulties in realizing/ taking part in an advanced training. The two main obstacles for participating in trainings that were named were the (inappropriate) “Fit of the available training programs to the organizational needs” and (the lack of) “Available time for training programs”. This ranking applied for both, hotels and restaurants.

Additional reasons for restraining respondents in taking part in further/ advanced trainings are the “Costs of training programs” and “Lack of enough information about the existing training programs”. Both answers got the same rating (43, 8 %).

Figure 7:

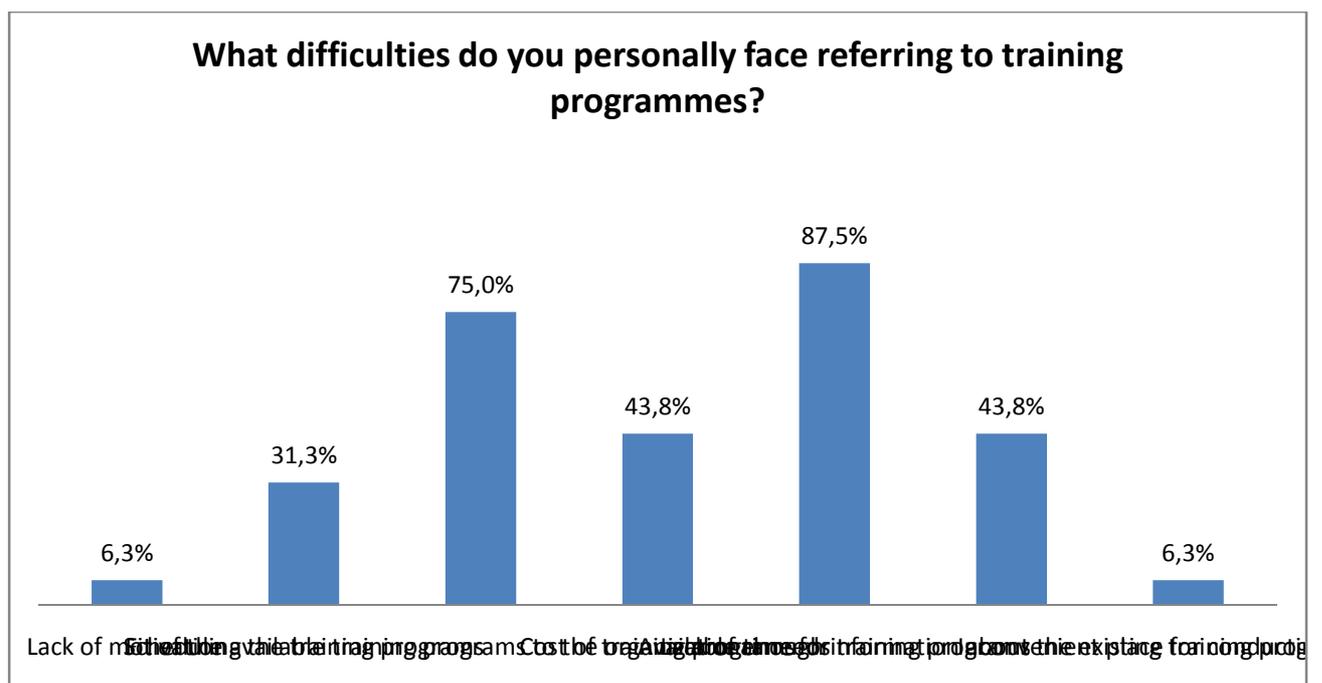
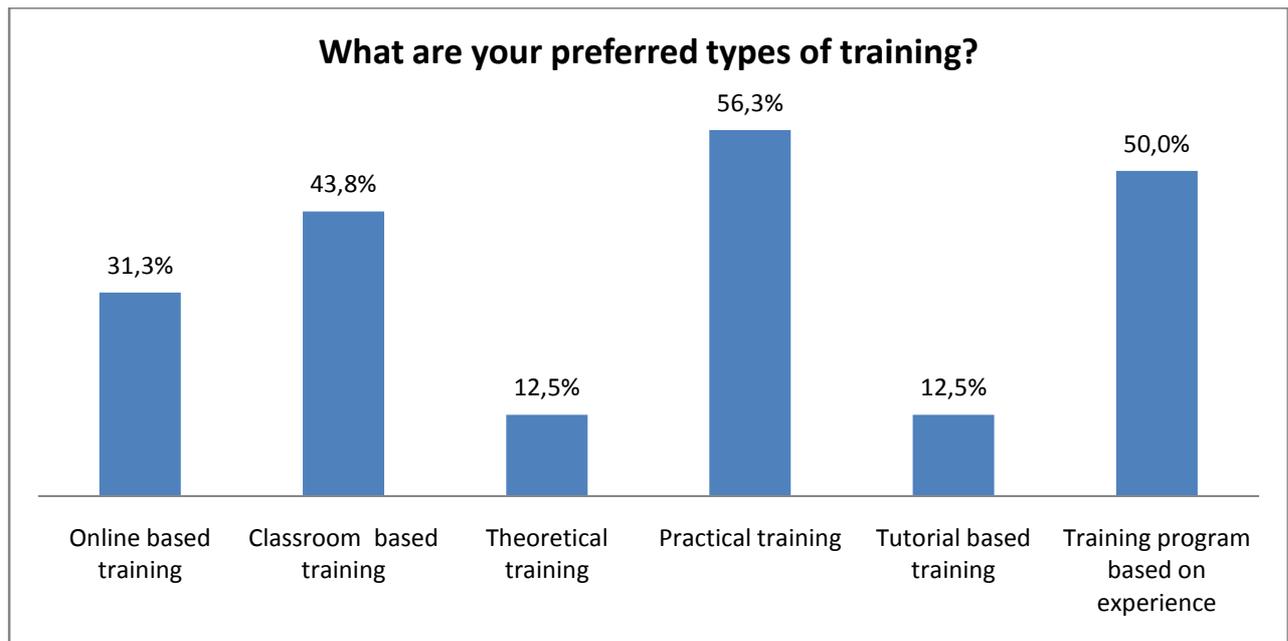


Figure 8:

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The second part of this section of the questionnaire dealt with the preferred types of trainings of the respondents. The results are very clear regarding this issue. German HORECA SMEs seem to be quite “conservative”, because the overall majority prefers a “Classroom based”, “Practical Training” that is “based on already existing experience”. Again, these answers refer to both, hotels and restaurants.

Chapter 6 Final Conclusions

The following main conclusions for Germany for the RESPONS project can be drawn from this survey:

1. There is a potential for further/ advanced training in the field on Computer/ ICT knowledge and Language skills
2. The preferred types of training for these competence gaps are: practical, classroom based and based on already existing experience

In general it should be mentioned that the VET training in Germany for hospitality professions is very well developed and highly professional (due to the German dual VET system). This leads to very well trained employees, even in small and medium sized hotels and restaurants. Only a minority of hospitality employees are trained “on the job.” On the other hand there are already a vast number of different further/ advanced trainings available. These trainings rank from one day seminars regarding a specific topic (for example

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special wine seminars for restaurants employees) to full-time Bachelor and Master course of studies (for example Hotel and Restaurant Management).

Nevertheless our target group, the small, usually family run businesses, still lack core competences regarding interaction with guests from abroad (language skills) and ICT/computer skills. A lack of both can have significant impact to their everyday business, because if English (at least) is not spoken, guests might not come and if the computer cannot be used properly, especially in view of seizing the opportunities of Web 2.0 (social media etc.), guests might also be not even aware of the existence of a particular place.

For the RESPONS project these assumptions mean that training is especially needed in small entities which might also be located in remote areas. These trainings should focus on ICT and language skills and should be executed in a more “conservative” way (practical, classroom based and based on already existing experience). In designing such a training, the chronically lack of time of the target group and organizational restraints in the daily routines of these small business are to be taken into account. Easy access to the Information regarding these trainings is also vital for the success of these trainings, the same goes for the costs of the training.