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# **Nature Guides Training Courses**

## **Quality Assurance**

### **REPORT**

WP5: Assessment of the pilot training by existing QA labels

This Nature guides training courses quality assurance Report was developed as part of the Interreg South Baltic (SB) project “Supporting sustainable nature tourism in transboundary coastal areas in the SB Region via establishing a common education scheme for Local Guides” (No STHB.04.01.00-LT-0108/17 according to 2017- 2020 Programme Priority Axis 4 – Boosting human resource capacities for the area’s blue and green economy implementation with Specific Objective 4 – Increase the share of skilled labour force working in blue and green economy sectors of the South Baltic area through joint cross-border actions). The project is financed from the European Union funds and the state budget of the Republic of Lithuania.

The Nature guides training courses quality assurance Report was developed by the leading partner – Klaipeda University (Lithuania) team, in cooperation with the project partners from Environmental Action Germany/DUH (Germany), Directorate of Kursiu Nerija National Park (Lithuania), Transnational Network Oder Delta/HOP (Germany), Association of Friends of the Ina and the Gowienica Rivers/TPRiG (Poland), Northern Chamber of Commerce/NCC (Poland).



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## **Introduction**

Nature Guides training courses quality assurance Report (2021) is prepared in accordance with Quality Assurance Methodology of Nature Guide Training Programme (2020). Both documents are the part of South Baltic Nature Guides Network project. The Quality Assurance Methodology of Nature Guide Training Programme (2020) was prepared according to the notions of the EN 15565:2008 *Standard for the Training and Qualification of Tourist Guides in Europe* with some adjustments from existing practice.

The overarching objective of this report is to provide the analysis of the quality of Nature Guides trainings, completed in the project partners countries – Germany, Poland and Lithuania. Based on the results of surveys and document analysis, this report presents the main quality issues of trainings and recommendations for the quality improvement in future Nature Guides trainings, in correlation with training standards and quality indicators. Furthermore, the report aims to present the best practices, challenges and opportunities in Nature Guides trainings, analysing cases in project partners countries from the Baltic Sea Region.

The present report is divided into 6 sections. After the introduction, Section 1 presents trainings evaluation methodic and demographical data of the participants, Section 2 - overall evaluation of the all courses by countries.

Section 3 provides an overview of the implementation of nature guides pilot training in Lithuania, Germany and Poland in relation to the guidelines offered in “Quality Assurance Methodology of Nature Guide Training Programme” (2020). Quality criteria for applicants and their selection process, curriculum, organization process and management of quality assurance are analysed.

Section 4 presents some essential results from the quality assessment by quantitative survey, completed using the platform Mentimeter.com. The report presents analysis of essential dimensions in training quality: structure and content of the training (scope, theory-practice, etc.), organization, assessment; competencies of the lecturers; course material; course methods and content issues.

Section 5 displays the results of the qualitative data, collected during the pilot trainings of Nature guides in two countries: Lithuania and Germany. The data was collected from the courses’ participants and trainers separately. The analysis of the data represents the general overview of the courses, the evaluation of the trainers’ competences and qualification, training’s methodology, learning environment, strengths and weakness of the trainings. The data analysis can be very helpful to the trainings’ organizers for making the decisions regarding the improvement of the trainings.

The concluding section 6 summarizes the main issues of the report.

All project partners play a significant role in Nature Guides Training Courses Quality Assurance process by close cooperation and organization of timely and planned feedback. The leading position in the quality assurance process, data collection and analysis belongs to Klaipeda University (Lithuania), with participation of project partners: Environmental Action Germany/DUH (Germany), Directorate of Kursiu Nerija National Park (Lithuania), Transnational Network Oder Delta/HOP (Germany), Association of Friends of the Ina and the Gowienica Rivers/TPRliG (Poland), Northern Chamber of Commerce/NCC (Poland).

## I. Trainings Assessment Methodic. Profile of participants

Participants and lecturers were provided with possibilities to participate in the process of trainings assessment by expressing their opinion through surveys and in such way to contribute for improvement of the nature guide training programme. Different quality performance indicators (QPIs) were measured during programme implementation with different methods and tools of evaluation. These methods and instruments were applied in different evaluation phases (see Table 1).

Table 1. Quality performance indicators, methods, tools and phases

QPIs	Quality assessment methods and tools	Phase
Requirements for participants and their selection process	Interview with training organizers Coherence with Quality Assurance Methodology (2020)	After the training programme
Requirements for curriculum	Interview with training organizers, Coherence with Quality Assurance Methodology (2020)	After the training programme
Requirements for trainings organization process	Interview with training organizers, Coherence with Quality Assurance Methodology (2020)	After the training programme
Requirements for management of quality assurance	Interview with training organizers, Coherence with Quality Assurance Methodology (2020)	After the training programme
Training structure and scope	Student's Quantitative Survey Teacher's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Course material / E-learning tools	Student's Quantitative Survey Teacher's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Courses workload/intensiveness	Student's Quantitative Survey Teacher's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme

Balance between theory and practice	Student's Quantitative Survey Teacher's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Course Schedule	Student's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Assessment	Student's Quantitative Survey Teacher's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Teaching Staff Qualification, Competence, Experience	Student's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Teaching/Learning Methods	Student's Quantitative Survey Teacher's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Communication, cooperation and interactivity	Student's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Resource allocation	Student's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Collaboration with local nature areas authorities and organizations in order to keep the quality and balance between theory and practice	Student's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Social responsibility and sustainability	Student's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Programme Management and Administration	Student's Quantitative Survey Teacher's Quantitative Survey Student's Qualitative Survey	After each course After the training programme
Weakness of the training programme	Student's Qualitative Survey	After the training programme
Strengths of the training programme	Student's Qualitative Survey	After the training programme

In order to receive feedback, both quantitative and qualitative surveys were used. The participants anonymously evaluated all the courses of the programme upon its completion by filling the quantitative course evaluation questionnaire in the virtual platform. As a platform for quantitative survey Mentimeter.com online platform was used, which allowed not only to complete a survey, but also to present the survey results visually at the current moment for the surveyed. Different close and open type questions were presented, which were addressed to the evaluation of the courses content and organization (for example, structure, scope of the training, organization, assessment, competencies of the lecturers, course material, course methods and etc.). Feedback about the provided course was collected from lecturers as well, by filling quantitative questionnaire in Mentimeter.com.

After all the courses had finished, the qualitative survey was used and participants had the possibility to provide written recommendations, identify strengths and weaknesses of the whole training programme. The confidentiality was ensured by enabling possibility to send evaluation via an email for the external expert from the quality assurance team.

The results of the surveys provided the main information for the further development and optimization of the courses and the whole programme.

## Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants / Participants profile

Participants of the training were representatives of tourist guides and those, who are interested in development of nature guides competency. A total number of 66 training participants were selected from 3 European countries – Germany, Lithuania and Poland. On the basis of the information, provided by partners the participants’ numbers and profile were determined (see Table 2).

The profile of the participants demonstrates a wide variance in the diversity of guide experience. Almost half of the participants (47%) did not have any guides experience, 19,7% were guiding less than 3 years, 9,1% - guiding from 3 to 5 years and 24% - had more than 5 years guiding experience. The age of participants ranges from 18 to 65, and the majority of participants belong to these age groups: 25-35 years – 32%, 31-45 years – 24% and 46-55 years – 23%. In the training most of the participants had university degree (85%). Gender balance is quite equal: 56% of female and 42% of male.

Table 2. Characteristics of the participants (provided by representatives from project partners)

Characteristic	Country		
	Germany	Lithuania	Poland
<b>Total Number of Courses participants</b>	16	30	20
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	7	18	12
Male	8	12	8
Preferred not to disclose	1	-	-
<b>Age</b>			
18 – 24	1	-	-
25 – 35	2	19	-
36 – 45	4	6	6
46 – 55	4	3	8
56 – 65	3	1	4
>65	2	-	2
<b>Education level</b>			
University degree	8	28	20
High school/College	8	1	-
Other	-	1	-
<b>Guide experience</b>			
Do not have	8	13	10
<=3	4	6	3
3-5	-	4	2
>5	4	7	5

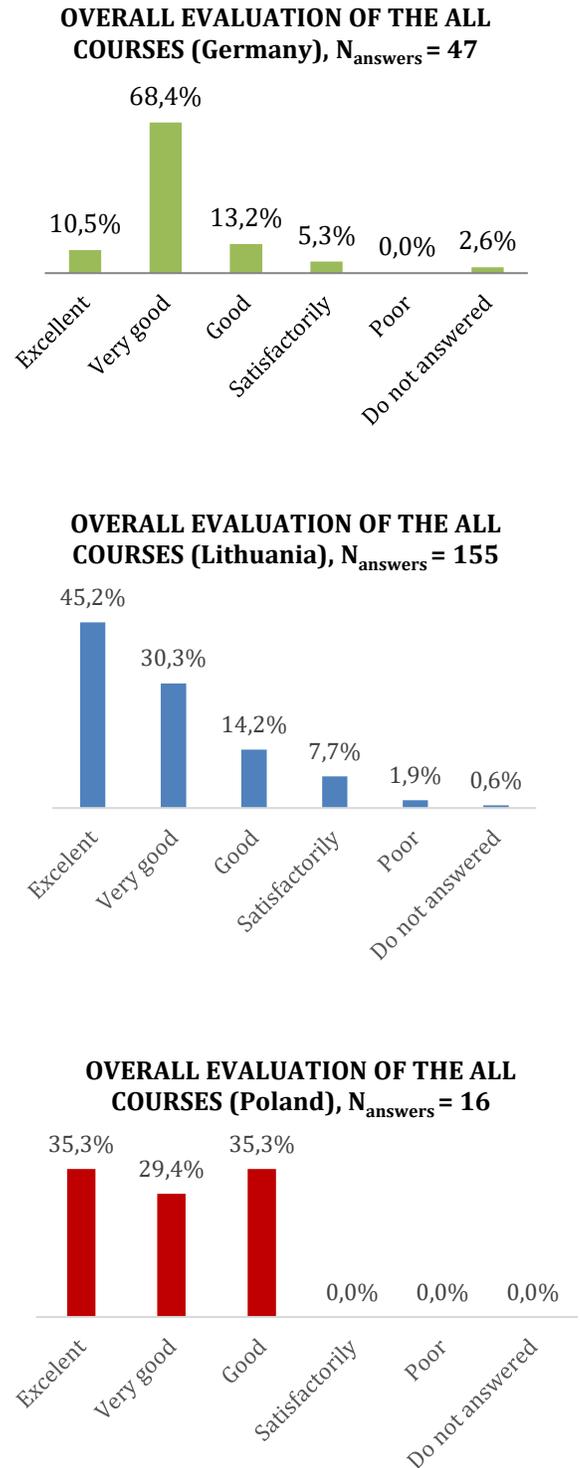
## II. Overall evaluation of the all courses by countries

Of all the items on course evaluation, the one that receives the most attention and consequently has the most weight is the question about overall evaluation of the course. The answer to this question in general is showing the overall satisfaction with the trainings.

The overall evaluation of the single courses was done using quantitative survey in Mentimeter.com. The overall evaluation of whole training programme was done using qualitative survey instrument (more in Section 5).

Summarized data in percentage of the overall evaluation of all courses are presented in the figure 1. In general, the overall evaluation of the courses shows very high values. Excellent and very good voting are seen in Germany (78,9%) and Lithuania (75,5%). Satisfactorily and poor voting's only rarely appear: in Germany (5,3%) and in Lithuania (9,6%).

It is evident, that the total number of answers is corresponding to the number of participants and number of provided courses in countries. However, the number of participants (N=5) in the quantitative survey and the number of evaluated courses (N=4) in Poland during the preparation of the report was very low (in general  $N_{\text{answers}}=16$ ) and creates precondition at the moment for limited interpretations.



**Fig. 1.** Overall evaluation of the courses by countries

### **III. Implementation of Nature Guides pilot trainings in relation to the guidelines offered in Quality assurance methodology**

Quality assurance methodology for nature guide training programme which was previously developed by project partners provided the main requirements and recommendations on how to develop and implement the Nature Guide training programme in the most efficient way on the one hand and to ensure the quality of trainings provided by national guides on the other hand. After the analysis of existing standards and practices of various guide trainings (e.g. Europarc, Arctic Nature Guide, European Standard for the Training and Qualification of Tourist Guides in Europe, see also report on work package 3.1) it was agreed to keep to the recommendations in the following areas:

1. Quality criteria for participants and the selection process of participants
2. Quality criteria for the curriculum
  - a. Structure and scope of the curriculum
  - b. Content of the curriculum
  - c. Assessment of the participants
3. Quality criteria for trainings organization process
4. Criteria for the management of quality assurance

#### **1) Quality criteria for participants and the selection process of participants**

Before the courses started it was agreed to follow these recommendations as the basis for the selection of the applicants in all three countries:

- Participants should be at least 18 years old.
- Knowledge of foreign language not lower than B2 level
- ICT literacy
- First aid certificate before the graduation of the training
- Work experience as a guide or nature guide

However, the experience showed that destinations slightly deviated from the initial plan and took individual approaches which better fit to the actual situation in the specific region during the pilot training. As a result, the participant selection process was implemented as following:

## **GERMANY**

### **Age limit**

All participants admitted to the pilot training were older than 18 years.

### **Knowledge of foreign language**

Foreign language skills was enquired in the registration form, but as the training was held in native language, it was finally not requested. Situation showed that most nature guides in Germany have mostly weak English or other foreign language skills. Participants were advised to take English courses in order to improve their skills and increase the ability to work with foreign tourists. When planning the pilot training, the intention was to talk to and exchange ideas with experienced Polish nature guides in order to both practice the English language and gain an international perspective on nature guiding. Unfortunately, for organizational difficulties Polish guides could not take part in the pilot training.

### **ICT literacy**

No ICT literacy was required. Pilot training course in Germany was done in one week with a minimal use of ICT elements: The focus was clearly on one-to-one exchange among the participants and between lecturers and participants. It was also important to the German team to carry out the practical parts without ICT and to be in direct contact with nature and people. It was agreed that in up-coming further trainings for Nature Guides it would be beneficial to organize workshops on important ICT tools for the participants.

### **First aid certificate.**

The Certificate was not required: It was deemed as an unnecessary requirement for one week further training. In addition, all ZNL have to prove a first aid course before passing their examination, so that this requirement has already been indirectly fulfilled by most of the participants. Nevertheless, it was agreed that an extra outdoor first aid course would be useful for the further qualification of German participants.

### **Working experience**

Working experience was enquired in the registration form, but was not a prerequisite for participating in the one-week training course. As the pilot training was a further training for especially already trained ZNL (certified nature and landscape guides in Germany) people, the German team assumed that participants who wanted to take part already have somehow experiences with guiding groups in nature. However, there were also participants who did not have any guiding experience and were still allowed to participate, because there had been simply not

enough registrations by ZNL people, but still free places that were given to unqualified but suitable and interested parties. Additionally, those participants who did not have any previous experience failed to finish the course successfully and could not get the certificate after the course finished. For some of these non-ZNL people, the pilot training was an occasion to catch up on a corresponding ZNL course in summer 2020.

## **LITHUANIA**

### **Age limit**

All participants admitted to the pilot training were older than 18 years

### **Knowledge of foreign language**

Knowledge of the foreign language at B2 level was an advantage when selecting the participants for the training.

### **ICT literacy**

Participants had to mark in the form whether they have ICT literacy.

### **First aid certificate**

It was not required to have this certificate before the beginning of the courses, but participants had a chance to get it during the courses if they wanted to get a certificate.

### **Working experience**

Participants with previous guiding experience had an advantage in the participants' selection process for the training.

## **POLAND**

### **Age limit**

All participants admitted to the pilot training were older than 18 years.

### **Knowledge of foreign language**

Training was held in Polish language and no knowledge of foreign language was requested. Most of participants used English, some German. Part of them were professional guides and used these languages during their work.

## **ICT literacy**

No ICT literacy was required. Pilot training course in Poland because of Covid-19 did not happen yet, but it will not need ICT tools to much, as big part of it will be organized at fields.

## **First aid certificate.**

The Certificate was not required. However, the three professional guides already had one. It was deemed as an unnecessary requirement for one-week training. However, after the course it was agreed that outdoor first aid course would be useful for the participants.

## **Working experience**

No working experience was required. During one day field training some of the participants showed that they ~~are~~ were experienced in guiding.

## **2) Quality criteria for the curriculum**

### ***2.a) Structure and scope***

Based on the quality assurance methodology for nature guide training programme the following recommendations were set:

- Minimum duration of the training should be 600 hours or 30 ECTS
- Training should keep the balance between general, specific area courses and practical training
- Practical training should be no less than 40 % of the total duration of the training programme (including outdoor activities and integrated practical exercises)

## **Actual situation in the project countries**

### **GERMANY**

Pilot training in Germany was organized as a second part which follows the local ZNL training which covers 70 hours. Additional pilot training courses took 40 hours which were not converted to ECTS. It is planned to increase the number of training hours in the future and possibly adapt it to the ECTS system in order to make it comparable to academic courses.

The 600 training hours according to the EU standard for guest guides are the target value for a fully trained nature guide with several years of practical experience. Like the EU training standard, German side also considers a multi-level qualification to be useful. This begins with a basic training of 135 hours as well as a second and third training level (equivalent to the quality stars of guest guides to be achieved as a quality label), which must be proven through numerous further training courses in specialist areas and a corresponding number of practical hours. The ZNL, with around 70 hours of teaching as well as the supplementary homework, a practical tour and other homework, almost reaches the 135 hours of the basic training. Continuous further training in the course of the guide activities is a prerequisite and contributes to quality assurance.

As pilot training Germany was organized as a further training for already trained ZNL guides, the pilot training was focused on one general topic (NGs in context of nature tourism processes) and two specific topics (“Business / Marketing” and “Outdoor activities”, incl. didactics / methods). Practical training about 40% was planned to be implemented, but due to unfavorable weather conditions, one of the practical training part was converted into a theoretical unit, so only 30% of planned practical training was implemented.

## **LITHUANIA**

Pilot training in Lithuania took 210 contact hours. Hours were not converted into ECTS credits, but it is foreseen if the course will be included in Klaipeda university courses.

Training kept the balance between general, specific area courses and practical training.

Practical training took 40 % of the total duration of the training (including outdoor activities and integrated practical exercises)

## **POLAND**

Pilot training in Poland was planned for 98 hours. Due to COVID-19, complications in refunding process for the implementing project partner and other organizational problems only a small part of the pilot training could be completed so far. Preplanned topics should cover general, specific and practical subjects.

Practical training was planned to make up 60 % of the total duration of the training (including outdoor activities and integrated practical exercises).

## ***2.b) Content of the curriculum***

Based on the quality assurance methodology for nature guide training programme the following recommendations for the content of the curriculum were set:

- Trainings should cover comprehensive and holistic education in nature knowledge
- Trainings should form participants' knowledge and abilities in general aspects of nature, culture and history
- Trainings should cover the topics of legislation and ethics
- The interpretative and didactic competences or 'the art of story-telling' should be taught

## **Actual situation in the project countries**

### **GERMANY**

As the pilot training in Germany was organized as a further training for already trained ZNL guides, the pilot training was focused on in the ZNL training missed teaching units/topics. Knowledge in nature, culture and history is regularly part of ZNL training, so during the pilot training, this topic was left out and instead business and marketing course units had been implemented. Didactic and interpretative topics were covered. Issues related with legislation and ethics were raised in all courses. The lecturers regularly brought in and discussed the items legislation and ethics as a cross-sectoral issue.

After every course, the participants and lecturers gave their feedback – due to connectivity problems in countryside, only some of them used the online tool menti.com for that; others used the analog feedback questionnaire. The Klaipeda university team provided the analysis of the data.

### **LITHUANIA**

Training covered comprehensive and holistic education in nature knowledge. Module I covered the topics of nature, culture and history; II module covered the topics of management, legislation and methodology and the III module covered the topics of interpretation, communication and techniques.

Most of the lectures included assignments which participants had to do after the class.

After every course, the participants and lecturers gave their feedback about the training online in menti.com and Klaipeda university team, working on WP5, who made an analysis of the training. Also, after all courses were over, and at the final tour, participants had to reply to general training evaluation sheet, which was analyzed by KU team.

### **POLAND**

First module was meant to cover the expectations of tourists (photographers, birdwatchers, nature lovers and other potential target groups). Second module should be practical training about the selection of scenery for nature tourism. Third module should be about place and product marketing, storytelling, e-marketing, branding and networking. Last section should be about long-term conditions of natural tourism.

### **3.c) Assessment**

Based on the quality assurance methodology for nature guide training programme the following recommendations for the assessment were set:

- It was recommended that for the assessment of the learning outcomes, the system of cumulative assessment should be applied. The criteria for the total and separate assignment assessment within a study module (or course) should be presented during introductory lectures. Courses may include such methods of assessment: projects, oral presentations, tests, papers, essays, written reports of research works, reflections, assessment of self and peers.
- Studies of each module/course are finished with an exam or test, or an assessment of independent work (e.g. project). In cases when the cumulative system is applied, interim assessment grades can form part of the final mark.
- It was recommended that a final work, which can be prepared during the outdoor practice, should be assessed by a joint defence board (3-5 persons) from a study institution and practitioners. The final work should be prepared as an excursion (written and oral), a report or a project and presented, if wished, in public. It is recommended to present clear assessment criteria.

### **Actual situation in the project countries**

#### **GERMANY**

Since the pilot training was designed as a one-week advanced training course for already certified nature and landscape guides (ZNL) and further, since all ZNL people had already passed different theoretical and practical examinations, the German team decided, that participants need not to be assessed with further single course exams, neither orally nor in written form.

The assessment of the participants therefore took place on the one hand simply through the ZNL status and on the other hand through the creation of a final task - an individually developed business plan for the own nature guide company. By creating the business plan, all relevant content and practical knowledge of the module "Business and Marketing", which were conveyed and discussed during the pilot training, should be individually analyzed again and applied to the own potential company (transfer service). A subsidiary of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WITENO GmbH) was won and commissioned as an independent auditor of the business plan for quality assurance and additionally, to increase the success of the start-up of ZNL. Jan Brockmann,

a trainer for nature guides (Regio-Ranger®) and active nature guide himself was the second controller of the business plan – these both and the German project partners of pilot training had been installed as the “defence board”. Only ZNL trained persons, who have submitted a detailed business plan with a budget calculation and evaluation of their profitability have received a certificate of attendance for the pilot training.

## **LITHUANIA**

Studies of each course finished with an oral or written assignment during the class or had to be done until the assigned deadline after the class. Written assignments took the form of essays, projects or reflections. Most of the lecturers introduced the students with the criteria of evaluation of the course and the methods of assessment were presented.

Final work was prepared as an excursion which was performed live in front of the training group as well as in front of evaluators and even groups of tourists in some cases. Promotional leaflets were designed by each of the participants. Additionally, each of the participants provided a written plan of the excursion.

## **POLAND**

Theory was organized online and also one day of field training. The main practical training was not possible to realize so far. It is still planned for spring 2021 and until the end of project.

### **3) Quality criteria for trainings organization process**

Based on the quality assurance methodology for nature guide training programme the following recommendations were set:

- The minimum number of the participants for a cost-effective running of the training is 10.
- On the basis of each country's practice, based on validation of non-formal or informal learning competencies standards, up to 30 percent of the programme could be validated by acknowledging previously gained experience.
- Information about the curriculum for the participants
  - Detailed description should be provided for each course (title, volume, the objectives, main competencies, content in topics, methods of teaching/learning and assessment, literature for studying, etc.);
  - Written syllabus for each course are recommended.
- Final work should be assessed by a joint defence board, which means a mixed team of academics and practitioners (3-5 persons).
- Learning and teaching strategies and methods
  - Lecturer should provide a variety of active learning methods in order to reach the course objectives;
  - Social responsibility and sustainability skills of the participants should be taught;
  - Collaboration and cooperation skills of the participants should be taught;
  - E-learning tools should be used in order to facilitate the learning process.
- Learning / training environment
  - Prereview of training material should be done;
  - Adequate infrastructure should be provided;
  - Participants should be informed about needed equipment and material.
- Teacher's competence and qualifications
  - At least 50 percent of the volume of the programme must be delivered by those holding a Master degree;
  - At least 30 percent of teaching staff should be practitioners-experts.
- Requirements for certification
  - In order to receive a certificate, graduates need to satisfactorily pass all study modules/courses, fulfil practical assignments, successfully implement outdoor/internship goals in practice, prepare the final practical work for defence, fully complete the requirements of the training programme and achieve the study results.
  - The certification has no expiry of the time limit.

## Actual situation in the project countries

### GERMANY

There had been 25 applications to the pilot training, but the German team decided to take only 16 people as participants in the end, because some of them had no nature or guiding background at all. In case of the pilot training, no minimum number of participants was set before, because it was obligatory to have an implemented pilot training anyway before the background of SB Programme. In a future guide training there will be a minimum number, which lays around 10-15 persons – depends on organization who implements the training. Non-formal or informal learning competencies were queried in the application sheet and most of the participants already could prove it with ZNL certificate. Nonetheless, former non-formal or informal learning competences had not been decisively for participation in training. Information sheets about the course units and trainers were given to the participants in advance (on the day the training started). However, the quality of the information sheets differs in length of content regarding to length and topic of lecture. It was concluded that a further differentiated description, such as a syllabus (in addition to the information sheets about the course unit and the trainer) was not necessary for the course units, which only lasted between 1.5h and 7h.

Participants were assigned to prepare a business plan but since only one business plan was submitted it was decided to skip the complete assessment part and to reduce the defence board to the only assessment of the WITENO GmbH (please compare to 2c).

Diverse learning methods were used, but due to little time resources (only 5 days) a big part of the courses were conducted in standard lecture format. Special methods were used: workshops in smaller groups for joint problem solving in marketing concepts; large and small discussion groups (some participants among themselves, some with invited experts); nature interpreting, artistic design in / with nature, nature education games / units, mindfulness exercises / sensory exercises, sporting activities (bike tour); moderation inquiries and open feedback in the group (via paper cards and orally).

The training focused on good group formation, which was supported by methodological units (warm-up's, moderation in case of conflicts, promoting exchange and discussion among the participants; feedback rules) and supported by informal moments (lunch talks, talks at campfires in the evening, walks, etc.). Cooperation and collaboration skills were being developed during the courses. However, no e-learning tools were used in order to facilitate the direct learning process / direct experiences with people and with nature.

Preview of training material was considered as not necessary therefore, it was decided to waive this recommendation. All necessary materials and infrastructure were provided (toilets, accommodation, seating, tables, projectors, laptops, writing pads, pens, moderation cards, handicraft materials, bicycles, drinks). Participants were mailed in advance on the required materials and needed equipment (weatherproof clothing, sturdy shoes, water bottles etc.)

It was not precisely required that at least 50 percent of the volume of the pilot training would be held by people with Master degrees, but in the end almost every lecturer had a Master degree. The German team considered that a Master's degree is not necessarily related to the trainer's quality and competencies, because at least in Germany many long-year-practitioners know well or even better about subjects than theoretical working people.

Except of one person of Environment State Office in the pool of lecturers, all others should be defined as practitioners. Even the university professor at Eberswalde University is the owner of a tourism consulting company and therefore a practitioner.

No special assignments were planned to complete individual course units or to test the knowledge and skills gained. Instead, a final task was set, which was supposed to serve several teaching contents and learned skills in one: the business plan. It was decided to give the certificate for those who attend 80-90 percent of the courses, submit a business plan and hold a ZNL certificate. The title of handed out certificate was: certificate of attendance.

## **LITHUANIA**

In Lithuania, there were some changes in the planned program due to COVID-19 as gatherings were suspended for almost 2.5 months. Initially, there were 30 participants, but after the prolongation of the training, 26 people remained.

Pilot training took a strict approach where participants were required to attend all the classes. However, some of the participants who were professional in some specific field were allowed not to attend the course. Advance notice was required in such cases.

Every lecturer had to fill a detailed description of each course (title, volume, the objectives, main competencies, content in topics, methods of teaching/learning and assessment, literature for studying, etc.). All participants were able to familiarize with the course at least one week before the beginning. Lecturers created a syllabus for each course that they delivered

Final work was assessed by a joint defence board (2-4 persons) from study institutions and practitioners.

Variety of active learning methods were used. Many field trips were organized (including practical trainings, educational games, etc.).

Programme included courses like sustainable tourism, ethical guiding and nature interpretation which helped to develop social responsibility and sustainability skills. Additionally, other courses included topics related to sustainability and responsibility.

Courses stimulated cooperation and collaboration.

E-learning tools were used: all material were uploaded in Moodle platform by lecturers. Lecturers were using and were rated in Mentimeter application.

A representative from Klaipeda Region Guide Guild reviewed the list of the courses. Programme received a positive feedback and was described as a valuable, interesting and wide programme.

Participants were provided with adequate infrastructure. All participants were informed about the needed equipment (e.g. binoculars, waterproof or warm apparel).

90 percent of the lecturers had a Master degree. At least 50 percent of teaching staff were practitioners-experts.

Participants had to pass all study courses, successfully implement practice outdoor/internship goals, prepare final practical work for defence, and fully complete the requirements of training programme. Certification had no expiration date.

The examination lasted 6 days and 23 participants made their final tours, after which they were rewarded with SB Nature Guide training **certificates**.

## **POLAND**

In Poland there were some changes in the planned program due to COVID-19 as gatherings were suspended for almost several months. The theoretical part was carried out in an online form. In the summer, one fieldwork was carried out. The main activities were planned for November, but there had been problems with refunding in the project and without these funds it was impossible to carry out the main five-day training. It is still planned to be carried out within the project period. The number of participants ranged from 20 in the online classes to 10 who came to the field classes. In the meantime, new interested people have registered, to whom materials have been made available and individual interviews have been held. The examination and the certification will take place at the end of the main classes.

## **Criteria for the management of quality assurance**

Based on the quality assurance methodology for Nature Guide training programme the following recommendations for the **management of quality assurance** set:

- Bodies responsible for the quality assurance management
  - Joint Committee/ Programme Management Committee composed of representatives from protected area parks' directorate together with representatives from academic institution and guide association; Committee should consist of 3-5 persons
  - Chair of the Committee (requirements: higher education qualification; formal cooperation experience with scientists and educators; management or administrative experience)
  - Programme coordinator

## **Actual situation in the project countries**

### **GERMANY**

There was neither an official installation of a Programme management committee for quality assurance nor an official installation of a chair of the committee so far, because of the official quality assurance of state certified ZNL training as a base of pilot training. The German considered no need for such formal institutions in case of pilot training. Nevertheless, the planning and implementation of pilot training was professionally accompanied by the responsible person of ZNL training in the Environmental State Office, the professor for sustainable tourism at University of applied sciences Eberswalde, a private trainer for rangers and different successful / active Nature Guides and environmental educators, which in the end is acts as a kind of committee. One project member was assigned as a programme coordinator in Germany.

### **LITHUANIA**

The Programme Management Committee for the purpose of pilot training was composed of representatives from Curonian Spit National Park (2 representatives), Klaipeda University (2 representatives) and Klaipeda Region Guide Guild (1 person). Chair of the Committee is a representative from Klaipeda university. Programme coordinator is a representative from Curonian Spit National Park Administration.

### **POLAND**

Programme management committee for quality assurance hasn't been formed yet.

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#### IV. Trainings courses evaluation: quantitative survey results analysis

Training was implemented through training courses. The number of training courses and number of answers are presented in the table 2 and figure 1.

Table 2. Number of courses and participants answers

	Germany	Lithuania	Poland
Number of Courses	16	30	20
Participants			
Number of Courses	9	20	4
Number of Participants answers per course	Max answers per course = 14 Min answers per course = 2 Average answers per course = 5,2	Max answers per course = 20 Min answers per course = 1 Average of answers per course = 7,8	Max answers per course = 5 Min answers per course = 1 Average of answers per course = 4
Number (frequency) of participants answers in total	47	155	16
Number of Lecturers answers	7	14	-

Statistic of answers (frequency)

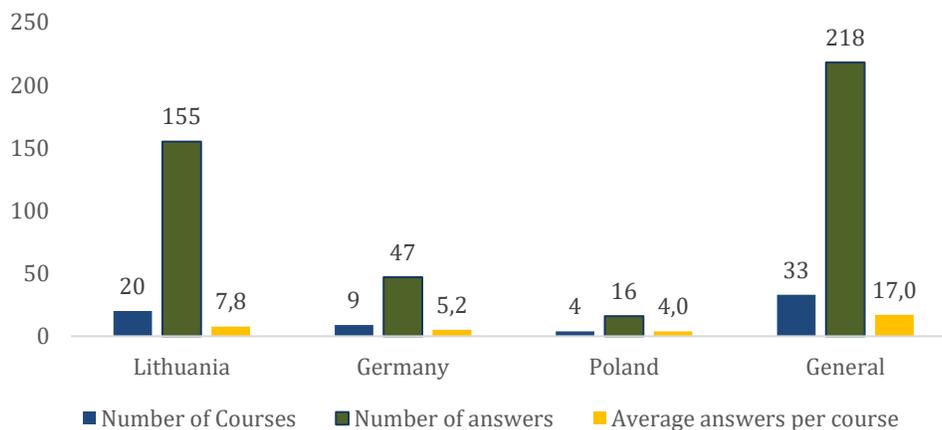


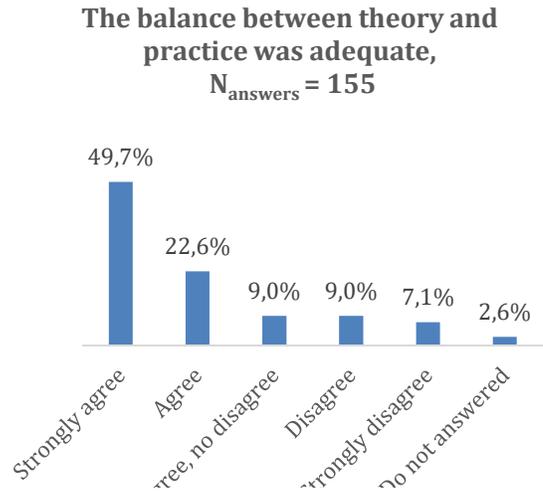
Fig.1 Statistic of all answers by countries

#### 4.1. Structure and scope

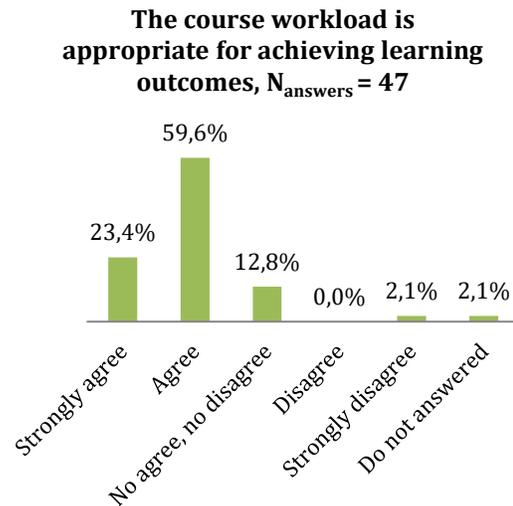
The first part of the survey belongs to the questions regarding the structure and scope of the course. This part helped to evaluate: *was the balance between theory and practice adequate, was the course workload appropriate for achieving learning outcomes, was the study volume appropriate for gaining the theoretical knowledge, was the study volume appropriate for practical works.*

By analysing the survey results by the evaluation of balance between theory and practice, the all programmes were evaluated highly (see Annex 1). Assessing the two positions “strongly agree” and “agree”, the results of Germany and Lithuania are equal to ~ 70%, Poland ~60%. Almost half (49.7%) of the participants from Lithuania “strongly agree” that balance between theory and practice was ensured (see Fig. 2). Among the “disagree” or “strongly disagree” the balance in the countries is similar - in Germany and Lithuania ~ 15%. 29.4% participants from Poland did not answered to this question. Summarizing it can be stated that the balance between theory and practice in the Nature Guide training programme was adequate in the all-countries programmes.

Analysing the course workload appropriateness for achieving learning outcomes, the answers of Lithuanian and German respondents between “strongly agree” and “agree” remain similar to ~ 80%, in the Polish side the balance is ~ 53%. For example, 83% of participants from Germany state, that courses workload was appropriate (see Fig. 3). Among those who did not answer the question, the number of Polish participants is ten times higher in percentage with other countries. Given to the mind situation, that only 5 participants from Poland answered the questions, data analysis and interpretations were not done.



**Fig. 2.** The balance between theory and practice, case of Lithuania



**Fig. 3.** Evaluation of the course workload, case of Germany

In terms of the study volume appropriateness for gaining the theoretical and practical knowledge, the percentage of answers is similar to the previous. Analysing the results of the countries separately, it is necessary to mention that in the German survey predominate the respondents' answers “agree”, in Lithuania - “strongly agree”, in Poland those two answers are similarly distributed.

Structure and scope were evaluated very high (“strongly agree” and “agree”) of these courses:

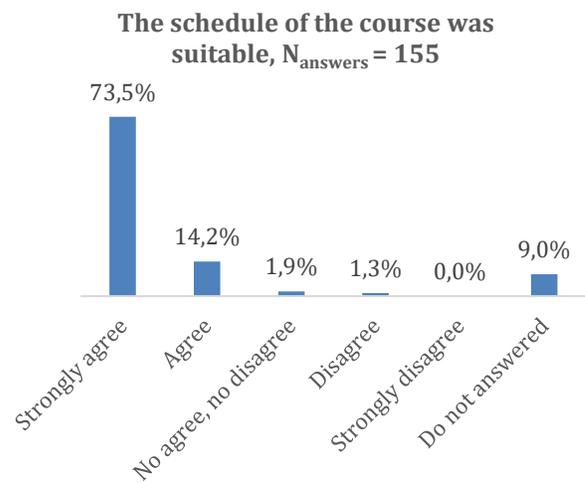
*Lithuania:* 1) Ornithological tourism; 2) Protection of protected area ecosystem and recreational resources; 3) Forest system in Lithuania. Attention needed for the structure and scope (evaluation varies equally from positive to negative) for these courses: 1) Coastal natural habitats, formation principles and rare species; 2) Hydrology of the Nemunas delta.

*Germany:* 1) Nature tourism as an action framework for Nature Guides; 2) Nature Guide offers – Control and booking processes; 3) Self-employment and product development for Nature Guides.

*Poland:* 1) Wybór scenerii dla turystyki przyrodniczej - szkolenie praktyczne.

#### 4.2. Organisation and Assessment

This part of the survey was connected with evaluation of study organization (*course schedule, workload/intensiveness*) and *assessment issues*. Analysing the survey results it can be stated that participants from Lithuania expressed most positive opinion regarding course organisation. For example, almost 90% of participants stated, that course schedule was suitable (see Fig. 4). Course's assessment criteria German and Lithuanian participants evaluated similarly (very positive – about 70%), about 30% of participant from Poland evaluated course assessment criteria positively, 41.2% participants did not answer to this question. The Lithuanian training program is the largest in terms of content and scope (210 hours), with the largest number of respondents participating in the survey. The program of existing training courses in Germany has been supplemented with new modules and its scope and content are smaller (40 hours). But

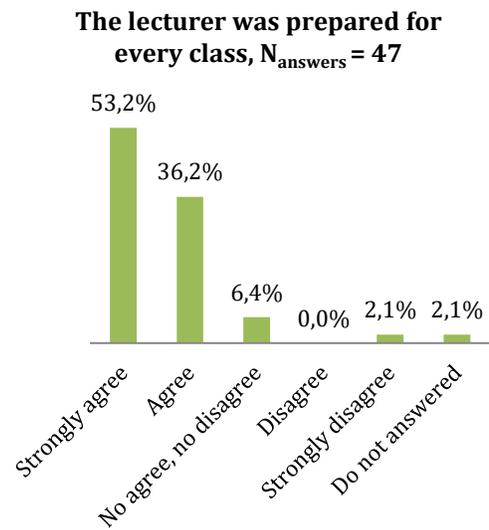


**Fig. 4.** Evaluation of the course schedule, case of Lithuania

summarizing the survey results it can be stated that both in Lithuania and in Germany a lot of attention was paid to the organization and assessment of training courses, in order to meet the expectations of the participants and possibly to achieve the continuity of the programme.

### 4.3. Competencies of the lecturers

A particularly important part of the survey – analysis of the competencies and work of lecturers. Four survey dimensions were selected: *the lecturer was prepared for every class; the lecturer demonstrated in depth knowledge of the course; the lecturer used a variety of study methods to achieve the course objectives; the lecturer stimulated cooperation and collaboration.* Analysing the survey results, the participants from all countries highly evaluated lecturers' competencies and readiness for work: Lithuania ~ 47% -73%, in Germany the highest evaluation is distributed between ~ 20% - 57%, in Poland highest evaluation rated between ~ 18% - 35%. However, it should be noted here that 41.2% of respondents in Poland did not answer these questions. The participants from Germany very highly (almost 90% - “strongly agree” and “agree”) evaluated lecturers' readiness for classes (see Fig. 5).



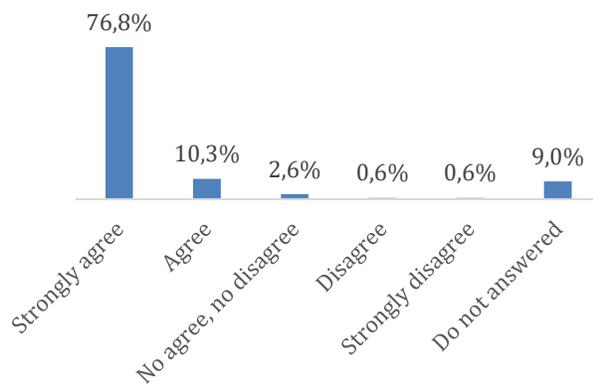
**Fig. 5.** Evaluation of the lecturer's readiness for the lectures, case of Germany

#### 4.4. Course material

The course material consists of both printed and digital material (presented in the Moodle platform). The selection and usage of course material is of major importance to the quality of learning. The fourth part of the Quantitative survey belongs to the evaluation course material. These questions were presented: *the course was supported by adequate material for studies; I was previously informed about the materials / equipment required for the teaching unit; E-learning tools were used appropriately.* The summarized results by countries in figures are presented in the Annex 1.

In general, evaluation of course material is positive and reach about 80% of answers “strongly agree” and “agree” in Lithuania and Germany, about 50% - in Poland. Very highly evaluated in Lithuanian case, answering “I was previously informed about the materials / equipment required for the teaching unit” (about 90% - “strongly agree” and “agree”) (see Fig. 6).

I was previously informed about the materials / equipment required for the teaching unit, N<sub>answers</sub> = 155



**Fig. 6.** Evaluation of information regarding course material, case of Lithuania

#### 4.5. Course methods and content

In the fifth part of the quantitative survey these five indicators were measured: *during the course different teaching and learning methods were used; used methods were helpful to get knowledge and develop skills; much attention was given to development of abilities to act in professional field; social responsibility and sustainability issues were clearly expressed during the lectures; learning activities and assignments encouraged to engage critically with the course.* Survey results confirmed, that different study methods were used. During the research it was found out that this part is traditionally assessed as the best on the Lithuanian side, ~ 37% - 51% answered “strongly agree”; In the German survey, the “agree” answer dominates ~ 42% - 55%, while in Poland again “do not answered” ~ 47% of the respondents chose. It is necessary to mention that even ~ 13% Lithuanian participants do not answer to this question (comparing to other answers, this fact was unexpected). It can be assumed that this part for participants was the hardest to answer.

## V. Training's evaluation: qualitative data analysis

### 5.1. Structure of the training

#### GERMANY CASE

The participants of the training from Germany had evaluated the majority of the courses as **interesting, useful, new and important for NGs**. They appreciated the courses, which had “practical relevance”, were “*practice-oriented*” (“*Nature Guide Angebote -Steuerungs und Buchungsprozesse*”, “*Nature Guide Angebote – Spannungsfelder und Netzwerk*”, “*Selbständigkeit und Produktentwicklung bei Nature Guides*), provided “great ideas for implementation in practice” (*Das Erlebnis „Achtsamkeit – Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion*) and “successful entry into nature tourism” (“*Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides*”).

However, the participants expressed some doubts about the importance of the course “*Landschaftskommunikation - Kommunikation für Nature Guides*”. On the one hand they agree that the landscape communication topic is very interesting; on the other hand, they missed the links between the topic and practical use of the knowledge in NG job. Thus, it is recommended to rethink the importance of this course in NG training programme, or to ask the trainer to present more detailed interrelation between landscape communication and NG job.

Some participants also **missed the practical part of the courses** and would love to have more balance between theory and practise (e.g. “*Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides*”, “*Nature Guide Angebote – Spannungsfelder und Netzwerk*”)

Table 3. The categorization of the training's structure and content

Category	Comments	Courses
<b>New, useful, important</b>	<p>“Many things were new and very interesting”</p> <p>“(…)a very successful entry into nature tourism”</p> <p>“Important information on nature tourism”</p>	<p>“Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides”</p>
<b>Practice orientated and inspiring</b>	<p>„Practical relevance (...)”</p> <p>“Great. Interesting to hear from practice”</p> <p>“(…)great ideas for implementation in practice”</p> <p>“A lot of practice”</p>	<p>“Das Erlebnis „Kanu“ &amp; „Wandern“ -Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion”, “Nature Guide Angebote Steuerungs –und Buchungsprozesse”, “Selbständigkeit und Produktentwicklung bei Nature Guides”, „Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides”</p>

<b>Not related to NG job</b>	<p><i>“I was a little bit confused: how that should help me as a future landscape guide?”</i></p> <p><i>„I missed the connection to the job as a nature guide “</i></p>	<p>“Landschaftskommunikation - Kommunikation für Nature Guides”</p>
<b>More balance between theory and practice is needed</b>	<p><i>“(…) There I would have liked a balanced mix with practice “</i></p> <p><i>“Good lecture, but no practical part”</i></p> <p><i>“I ‘d like to have a little more time for practice”</i></p>	<p>“Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides”, “Nature Guide Angebote – Spannungsfelder und Netzwerk”</p> <p>“Das Erlebnis „Radfahren“ – Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion</p>

## LITHUANIA CASE

In the case of the training in Lithuania, many courses are evaluated positively because of the **combination of theoretical and practical issues**. Such balance enables them to get theoretical knowledge and to use them in practice during the same training course. The content of the courses was usually new and seen as very useful for the participants future job. However, the participants still expressed the strong **needs to have more time for practical situations analysis** (courses: *Sustainable tourism, Saugomos teritorijos ekosistemas apsauga ir rekreaciniai ištekliai*) or even for deeper studies of some courses (e.g. *Ekologijos pagrindai*). And vis versa, some courses are too long (e.g. *Gamtinio turizmo komunikacija ir rinkodara, Ugdymo metodai ir priemonės netradicinėse aplinkose. Grupių dinamikos*)

The participants recommend **dedicating more time to certain courses**: *Ekologijos pagrindai, Lietuvos pajūrio gyvūnų biologinės įvairovės bei paukščių migracijos ypatumai, Ornitologinis turizmas. Praktinis turas gamtoje, Praktika: kaip tinkamai pasiruošti gamtos iššūkiui, Saugomos teritorijos ekosistemas apsauga ir rekreaciniai ištekliai*. Some of them would like to get more **knowledge on tours’ creation and organization, counting issues, related to NG business development**.

### 5.2. Trainer’s competencies and qualification

## GERMANY CASE

The participants from **Germany** emphasised the high competence, diplomacy, good communicative skills and enthusiasm of the trainers, especially the students were excited with trainers practitioners and provided practical information, examples and tasks (courses *Das Erlebnis „Kanu“ & „Wandern“ – Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion; Selbständigkeit und Produktentwicklung bei Nature Guides, Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides, Nature Guide Angebote – Spannungsfelder und Netzwerk*).

## LITHUANIA CASE

Mostly trainers are evaluated as good professionals, enthusiastic, interesting and inspiring persons. According to the participants, some trainers provided already non-used information (*Gamtinio turizmo komunikacija ir rinkodara*), others – very subjective and questionable perspective (*Aktyvus turizmas*); some other trainers - did not orientated their course to NG specific needs (*Ekskursijų rengimas ir gidavimo gamtoje pagrindai, Gamtinio turizmo komunikacija ir rinkodara*).

### 5.3. Training’s methodology

## GERMANY CASE

From the perspective of participants from **Germany**, the trainers had used appropriate methods to provide the information in understandable ways for students with different experience and level of knowledge. The participants indicated the understandable explanations of topics, practical examples. They appreciated the links and recommendations for further studies, interactive communication, enabling to exchange the experiences with the participants (especially the course “*Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides*”). Some trainers had created the “group feeling”, “stimulated the senses”, and empowered the participants to generate the ideas for nature guide professional practise (e.g. *Das Erlebnis „Achtsamkeit“ – Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion, Das Erlebnis „Wildnis“ -Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion*)

For some, the theoretical part of the lectures seems to be too long (“*Nature Guide Angebote - Steuerungs und Buchungsprozesse*”) and might require the more time for studies (e.g. “*Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides*”); some participants would love “to have more time for practice” (“*Das Erlebnis „Radfahren“ - Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion*”), missed the group work and problem or tasks solving methods (“*Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides*”)

Table 4. The categorization of the learning and teaching strategies and methods (Germany case).

Category	Comments	Courses
<b>Practical examples and provision of the information in understandable way</b>	<p>“A lot of practice”</p> <p>“It was easy to understand and provided with practical parts”</p> <p>“Totally transparent, instructive, practice-oriented and understandable”</p>	<p>“Selbständigkeit und Produktentwicklung bei Nature Guides”</p> <p>“Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides”</p> <p>“Nature Guide Angebote – Spannungsfelder und Netzwerk”</p>

<b>Recommendations for further studies</b>	<i>“There is further study of information”  “(…)recommendations for working materials such as books, opportunities for further training”</i>	“Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides”
<b>Interactive communication, and exchange of the experiences</b>	<i>“Exchange with participants (...)”  “The contributions were evaluated and information provided”  “It was very interesting to hear from these two actors - their perception of challenges in the Müritz National Park and how they relate to each other”</i>	“Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides” “Nature Guide Angebote – Spannungsfelder und Netzwerk”
<b>Inspiring and emotionally touching methods</b>	<i>“Versatile stimulation of the senses, great ideas for implementation in practice”  “group feeling”</i>	“Das Erlebnis „Achtsamkeit“ – Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion”; “Das Erlebnis „Wildnis“ - Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion”
<b>Passive methods and long theory</b>	<i>“I wish to make work groups and solve tasks”  “Too much theory on some basic topics.”  “It can also be shorter”  “A somewhat shorter lecture would have been enough”  „I found the lecture very theoretical, philosophical, visionary.”</i>	“Nature Guide Angebote - Steuerungs und Buchungsprozesse”; „Naturtourismus als Aktionsrahmen für Nature Guides” “Landschaftskommunikation - Kommunikation für Nature Guides”

## LITHUANIA CASE

According to the participants, the most valuable methods are practical exercises, excursions, teacher’s practical experience and examples. The participants feel excited because of good balance between lecturing and practical examples, possibilities to investigate nature by themselves. They appreciated well concentrated learning material and group works.

The main weaknesses of the courses are related to **the lack of studying material online or additional theoretical material** (Darnus turizmas; Draugiški savo namams – gamtai, Ekosisteminės paslaugos, Saugomos teritorijos ekosistemos apsauga ir rekreaciniai išteklių: Kuršių Nerija); sometimes the disbalance between trainer’s demands and students’ need or **miscommunication** (mainly because of the heterogenous level of participants’ knowledge, specific language used by the trainer) [course Draugiški savo namams – gamtai, Ornitologinis turizmas. Praktinis turas gamtoje, Potvynio reikšmė Nemuno deltos gyvūnijai, Verslo kūrimas ir gido buhalterija]. The participants emphasised the **disbalance between the course duration and content** (“too much information for short time”), which limits their abilities to use it in practice (Ekologijos pagrindai, Lietuvos pajūrio gyvūnų biologinės įvairovės bei paukščių migracijos

ypatumai). Sometimes they felt the **lack of specific knowledge and examples**, which are more related to NG job (Ekologijos pagrindai, Ekosisteminės paslaugos, Ekskursijų rengimas ir gidavimo gamtoje pagrindai, Miškų sistema Lietuvoje, Pajūrio natūralios buveinės, formavimosi principai ir retos rūšys, Verslo kūrimas ir gido buhalterija) as well as more individual and interactive approach, by providing **more time and space for discussions and reflections** (Ekologijos pagrindai, Lietuvos pajūrio gyvūnų biologinės įvairovės bei paukščių migracijos ypatumai, Miškų sistema Lietuvoje). Too strong theoretical approach without or with very limited practical exercises also decrease their satisfaction (Gamtosaugos motyvacija ir istorinis kontekstas, Nemuno deltos hidrologija, Pajūrio natūralios buveinės, formavimosi principai ir retos rūšys, Potvynio reikšmė Nemuno deltos gyvūnijai, Ugdymo metodai ir priemonės netradicinėse aplinkose. Grupių dinamikos). Some courses were evaluated as **missing links between theory and practise, outdoor activities lacked practical assignments** and were more informative than developing some practical skills (Žvilgsnis į nepakartojamą orą ir klimato pasaulį). It is interesting, that if the course is mainly organised outside, the participants lack theoretical knowledge and assignments (e.g. Aktyvus turizmas).

Table 5. The categorization of the learning and teaching strategies and methods (Lithuanian case)

Category	Subcategory	Comments	Courses
<b>Appropriate methods</b>	<b>Balanced lecturing and practical examples/active assignments</b>	<i>“I like many practical assignments which enabled me to use theoretical knowledge”</i> <i>“I liked the balance between theory and practice”</i>	Gamtinio turizmo komunikacija ir rinkodara Miškų sistema Lietuvoje
	<b>Well concentrated learning material</b>	<i>“I really liked concentrated theoretical studying material”</i>	Darnus turizmas
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Lack of studying material online or additional theoretical material</b>	<i>“I missed the material in moodle after the training’s day”</i> <i>“I would like to have presentation in Moodle environment, so I could use it during the home-work”</i> <i>“I would prefer to get additional literature or the list of sources for further studies”</i>	Darnus turizmas; Draugiški savo namams – gamtai, Ekosisteminės paslaugos, Saugomos teritorijos ekosistemos apsauga ir rekreaciniai išteklių: Kuršių Nerija; Gamtinė etika

<p><b>Specific language of the course, lack of student's knowledge on specific topics</b></p>	<p><i>"I suppose the trainer was not informed about the level of our knowledge"</i>  <i>"I feel the lack of ppt presentation"</i>  <i>"For the beginners it is important to have more information"</i>  <i>"It was difficult to understand for those, who are unfamiliar with advanced terminology"</i>  <i>"Lecturer was using very specific terms"</i></p>	<p>Draugiški savo namams – gamtai, Ornitologinis turizmas. Praktinis turas gamtoje, Potvynio reikšmė Nemuno deltos gyvūnijai, Verslo kūrimas ir gido buhalterija</p>
<p><b>No balance between the course duration and content</b></p>	<p><i>"Too much information for short time"</i></p>	<p>Ekologijos pagrindai, Lietuvos pajūrio gyvūnų biologinės įvairovės bei paukščių migracijos ypatumai</p>
<p><b>Lack of examples, related to NG job</b></p>	<p><i>"The course title did not match the content"</i>   <i>"There was a lack of information about guiding in nature. The trainer focused on general guide's competences"</i></p>	<p>Ekologijos pagrindai, Ekosisteminės paslaugos, Ekskursijų rengimas ir gidavimo gamtoje pagrindai, Miškų sistema Lietuvoje, Pajūrio natūralios buveinės, formavimosi principai ir retos rūšys, Verslo kūrimas ir gido buhalterija</p>
<p><b>Lack of interactive approach and space for discussions and reflections</b></p>	<p><i>„it was a lecture, participants were not involved in the training process"</i>   <i>"too long theoretical part and no time and space for the discussion"</i>  <i>"theory without discussion, the time for questions was at the end of the course, but then you just forgot what you wished to ask about"</i></p>	<p>Ekologijos pagrindai, Lietuvos pajūrio gyvūnų biologinės įvairovės bei paukščių migracijos ypatumai, Miškų sistema Lietuvoje</p>
<p><b>Too strong theoretical approach with limited practical exercises</b></p>	<p><i>"too much theory and it is difficult to understand everything"</i>   <i>"practical part was more interesting than theory"</i>   <i>"dry theory without interesting facts"</i>  <i>"too many details"</i>  <i>"very long theoretical part"</i></p>	<p>Gamtosaugos motyvacija ir istorinis kontekstas, Nemuno deltos hidrologija, Pajūrio natūralios buveinės, formavimosi principai ir retos rūšys, Potvynio reikšmė Nemuno deltos gyvūnijai, Ugdymo metodai ir priemonės netradicinėse aplinkose. Grupių dinamikos</p>

	<b>Lack of theoretical approach and assignments</b>	<i>„just few theoretical knowledge, the lack of information and no exercises“</i>	Aktyvus turizmas
	<b>Outdoor activities are just informative, not developing practical skills</b>	<i>“during the practice we just looked at the equipment, but we did not learned anything new”</i>	Žvilgsnis į nepakartojamą orų ir klimato pasaulį

#### 5.4. Learning environment

##### GERMANY CASE

The participants from Germany did not provide any special comments on the training environment. The only one participant indicated that the pace on the bike was too fast during the course “*Das Erlebnis „Radfahren – Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion“*”.

##### LITHUANIA CASE

The participants from Lithuania provided few negative comments on the training environment, mainly related with some practical aspects, for instance small auditorium, no possibilities to get raincoat during the outdoor activities, no breaks and lunch time during the outdoor activities, lack of information about the excursions goals and place, too quick walking pace, etc. Some respondents mentioned that during one course all necessary equipment was provided.

#### 5.5. Strengths of the trainings

##### GERMANY CASE

Generally, the participants from Germany are satisfied with the content, trainers and training methods of the NG programme. They indicated the following positive aspects of the trainings, which should be continued in the future:

- a) **Programme content:** well-balanced theory and practise, well prepared training material, marketing tips
- b) **Training methods:** possibilities to share the experiences of the participants, develop networks even in leisure time, practical examples
- c) **Trainers’ competences:** active trained ZNLs, experienced trainers.

d) **Training environment:** good location, accommodation and food, family atmosphere, well organised outdoor time.

## LITHUANIA CASE

Generally, the participants of the training are satisfied with the content, the variety of the topics and trainers, the internal combination of the modules, as especially with the coordinator of the training. The participants indicated the following positive aspects of the courses:

A) **Programme content:** Combination and compatibility of the modules; comprehensive content of the trainings; variety of the courses enables to extend the knowledge and get more information about the tools, which can be used in NG job; first aid course.

B) **Training methods:** outdoor activities and excursions organised by experienced guides, study material in Moodle, which enables to study at home.

C) **Trainers' competences:** experienced and inspiring trainers

D) **Training environment:** coordinator Jolanta is the best

### 5.6. Weakness of the trainings

## GERMANY CASE

From the perspective of the trainers, involved in NG trainings in Germany, **the heterogeneity of the participants' knowledge** is seen as a weakness. It requires the trainer “to start with a lower threshold”, while for some participants such information was evaluated as very general and well known. The trainers also indicated such disadvantages as “tight coordination with co-speakers” (*Nature Guide – Netzwerk*), and the lack of time **for indoor and outdoor activities**. The trainers believe that the “the more variety between outdoor and indoor would be beneficial” (*Selbständigkeit und Produktentwicklung bei Nature Guides*), it will enable the trainers to include “more practical elements” (*Das Erlebnis Radfahren*) and the participants to develop their own leadership ideas more actively (*Das Erlebnis "Kanu" und "Wandern" Praxisbeispiele und Reflexion*).

According to the training's participants in Germany, it is necessary to expand the variety of the trainers, by including others, not just “regional rangers and national park employees, who represent just their region”, “resolve the conflict with ZNL”. The participants also expressed some dissatisfaction regarding the methods and content, by suggesting to eliminate the topic on landscape communication and long excursion tours without methodological benefits. They **need more focus on active doing, methodology and didactics**.

The participants from Germany also suggest the following aspects to be improved in the future training:

- a) **Organisation of the training:** to shorter training days and to interlink the theory and practice, longer breaks
- b) **Content of the training:** they would like to get more legal knowledge and information about funding issues, as well as on expenses and prices of the tour counting aspects.
- c) **Methods:** more practical exercises, reflection, and encouragement of the feedback, more detailed description of the methodological options

## LITHUANIA CASE

The **trainers** emphasised the following weakness of their course's organisation: **the lack of time for practical parts and assignments** (*Ekologijos pagrindai, Kuršių nerijos kultūrinis kraštovaizdis, Baltijos jūros, Kuršių marių ir Nemuno deltos hidrologija, Kuršių nerijos kultūrinis kraštovaizdis, Darnus turizmas*), that limited their abilities to organise the training in more interactive way with variety of outdoor activities. Many trainers suggested to divide the course time in the timeline (to have shorter but two days trainings), that will help students to remain interested in the topic and to make some practical tasks (*Ekskursijų rengimas ir gidavimo gamtoje pagrindai, Gamtinio turizmo komunikacija ir rinkodara*).

The specific of the courses might require **changing the time of the course** in the NG training programme (for instance, *Miškų sistema Lietuvoje* „should be organised in early autumn, while it is still light in the evenings“; warmer time for *Metodinės rekomendacijos žygių organizavimui* allows to involve more practical topics in the content of the course.)

Some trainers would love to **know the students' demands before the planning of the course**. It will help them to ensure better quality of the course provision. Others expressed the suggestion to look through their previous courses, which have been provided to the participants.

The **participants** of the training were very open and critical. They suggested making a revision of the trainers, keeping mostly those, who have the practical experience in guiding. Some participants expressed the interest to take part in the international training and meet with the NG trainings' participants.

Actually, the respondents provided a lot suggestion for the training's improvement:

- A) **The content:** first, they would prefer to take part in shorter and more intensive training. It can be achieved if the theoretical part of the program will be published online (Moodle). They would be interested in studying more communication-interpretation courses, topics, related to

rhetoric, psychology and excursion's organisation skills as well as less about the birds and more about other aspects of the nature. Some of them suppose that it might be useful to know more about the cooperation with and activities within the National Parks and other Secured territories. Very interesting suggestion was to include the topic on routes' map visualisation and the use of GIS in NG job.

B) **Training's organisation:** The participants suggested rethinking the general structure of the program, by providing the selection possibility for those, who already have a guide certificate, and others, who have good knowledge in natural science. The very common comment was to pay more attention to the practice and spending time outside. The participants would prefer to have more practical assignments during the training or to organise the outdoor activities as demo-excursions.

C) **Trainers' competences:** they would like to have more foreign experienced trainers and more practical guides to be included in the training.

D) **The environment:** the participants would be more satisfied if the training's organisers could suggest one place for accommodation to all. In their words, they did not like the fact that the issue of accommodation was under their own responsibility.

Some very important aspects, which **should be stopped in these trainings** are:

- Too long theory and practical tours;
- Trainers without guiding experience;
- Domination of ornithology and the course on Accounting;
- Too big group of the participants (the best amount is 15)
- Courses organisation just in Kuršių Nerija because of the limited nature variety and difficulties in logistics.

## CONCLUSIONS

Nature Guides Training courses (named also pilot trainings) within South Baltic INTERREG Programme were implemented in the three partner countries Germany, Lithuania and Poland, in the period from November 2019 till the middle of the 2021. The pilot trainings were realized according to the in this project earlier jointly developed “Nature Guide training curriculum” and “Nature Guide profile” (see also reports in work package 3), which also had been evaluated by “Quality Assurance Methodology of Nature Guide Training Programme” (see also work package 5).

Concluding it can be stated, that:

- 1) Analysis of the implementation of nature guides pilot training in Lithuania, Germany and Poland in comparison with the guidelines offered in “Quality Assurance Methodology of Nature Guide Training Programme” revealed that different countries had slightly different approaches towards the pilot training. The differences were influenced by national peculiarities and challenges occurred due to the restrictions related to COVID-19 pandemic.

Lithuanian team developed a comprehensive pilot training consisting of 210 contact hours well balanced between general, specific area courses and practical training, which were provided by acknowledged experts in the field.

Since pilot training in Germany was organized as a further training for the already trained ZNL persons, it took only 40 hours and with focus on missing or weak pronounced topics in the ZNL training, like business aspects and specific outdoor activities. Practical training was planned to make up 40% of complete training and ended in 30% due to the unfavourable weather conditions, when one practical unit needed to be substituted with a theoretical unit. For future development of ZNL training, it is planned to increase the number of hours.

Pilot training in Poland was planned to fill 98 hours. However, due to the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic, issues with refunding and other organizational problems, only a small part of the course have been completed so far. The originally planned training should focus on practice and also include general and specific areas.

The countries also differed in terms of testing the knowledge, which participants gained during the courses. Each of the course in Lithuanian included a written or oral examination, while in Germany there had been only a final examination for the complete training week

in shape of a self-created business plan (evaluated by experts). In Poland, it was decided that examination is not necessary. In terms of final work, it was required to prepare an excursion in Lithuania for every participant, which was observed and evaluated by the commission.

All countries tried to use a variety of active learning methods, to balance theoretical and practical training, to include general and specific area courses. However, due to the abovementioned reasons there were significant differences in the implementation of pilot training. In order to improve the quality of the trainings in the future, it could be suggested to form Programme Management Committee, which would help to ensure the quality of the trainings and be proactive in the implementation of the necessary changes.

- 2) The results from quantitative survey showed the trends of the trainings quality. The survey of participants in Polish training courses raises the most questions about the survey data representativeness in the context of small number of surveyed participants and the high percentage of non-answers to questions (~ 42%). In the Lithuanian survey, the answers “strongly agree” and in German survey, the answers “agree”, predominates throughout the analysis, which suggests that the expectations of the course participants were met in these countries in all measured areas: courses structure and scope, courses organization and assessment, competencies of lecturers, courses material, courses methods and content.

According to the quantitative survey data, the highest rates were seen evaluating courses organization in Lithuania (almost 90% - “strongly agree” and “agree”) and lecturers’ readiness for classes in Germany (almost 90% - “strongly agree” and “agree”). Generalizing it can be stated that the training courses of nature guides in Lithuania and Germany met the expectations of the course participants, the program was designed taking into account the specifics of nature guides and study requirements.

- 3) Qualitative survey analysis (data from Lithuania and Germany) disclosed important directions for future trainings. Despite the different approach to Nature guide trainings, its structure in Lithuania and Germany is evaluated as new, useful, important for Nature guides and well combined with the practice. However, the participants had critically evaluated some specific courses in each country, expressing some doubts of their relation to the nature guide profession. The main critics in both countries are related to the lack of practice in some courses. While some training’s participants from Germany identified few useless courses, Lithuanian participants suggested having more time for studies in some courses.

Participants from both countries expressed satisfaction with trainers' competences and qualifications: especially the trainers-practitioners, who used active learning methods and practical examples, impressed them.

Despite the different scope and organization of trainings in Germany and Lithuania, the participants emphasized very similar positive and negative evaluations, regarding the methodology. Thus, they appreciate additional learning material (in the case of Germany) and e-learning tools (in the case of Lithuania) as well as practical exercises. Nonetheless, they also expressed some negative feelings regarding traditional lectures forms, which have been missing practical examples and interactive communication. Interestingly, many participants demanded to have more time and space for discussions, reflections and practice. Finally it confirms that the Nature Guide training should be based on interactive, problem solving training and learning strategies, as it was already suggested in "Nature Guide Trainings' Quality Assurance Outline".

Participants, both from Lithuania and Germany, mentioned the well prepared program content, practical examples and tours, active and experienced trainers as the strength of training. The main weaknesses are related to very different level of the participants' knowledge and education (similar for both countries, indicated by the trainers), lack of outdoor practice and active learning strategy.

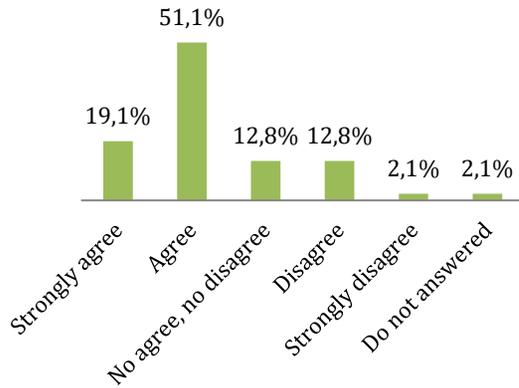
The participants and trainers, taking part in Nature Guides training in Germany recommend having shorter training days as well as raising practical units and emphasizing law and budgeting dimension of the training.

Participants in Nature Guide training, organized in Lithuania, suggest focusing on practical part of the training, while publishing all theory in e-environment, as a way to make the trainings shorter. They would like to study some communication, psychological and tour's organization courses during the training. They also expressed some ideas, regarding the differentiation of the training content according to the level of education of the participants.

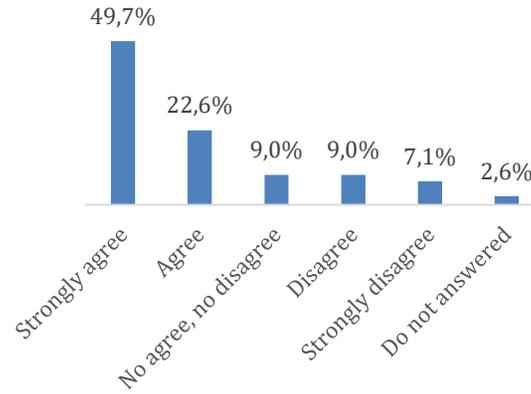
## **ANNEXES**

5.6.1.1. STRUCTURE AND SCOPE

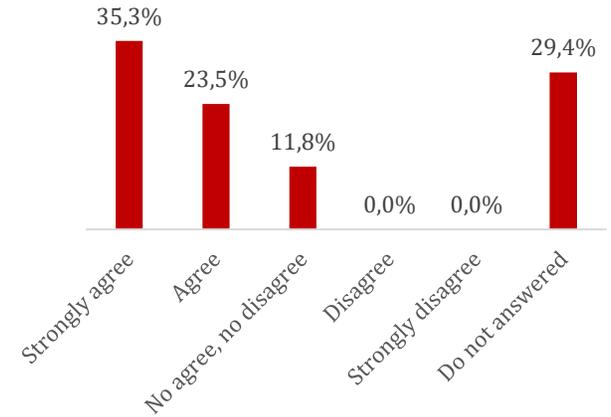
**The balance between theory and practice was adequate(Germany),**  
 N<sub>answers</sub> = 47



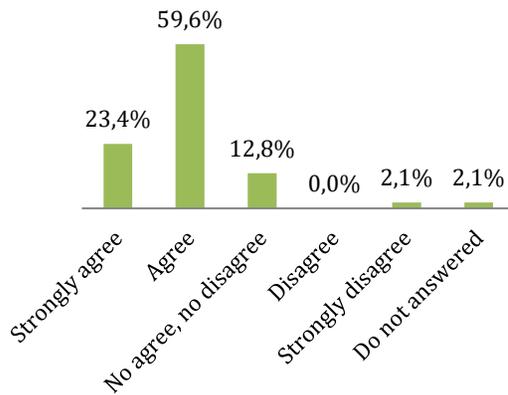
**The balance between theory and practice was adequate (Lithuania),**  
 N<sub>answers</sub> = 155



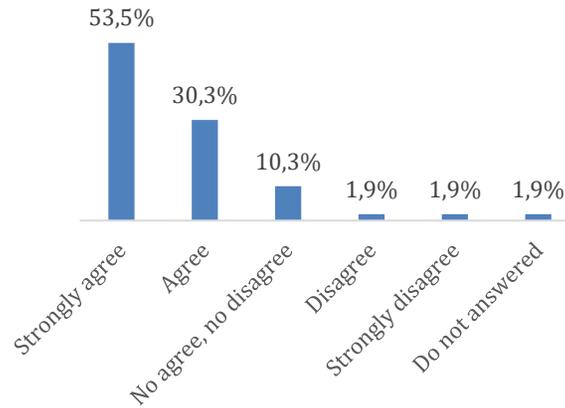
**The balance between theory and practice was adequate(Poland),**  
 N<sub>answers</sub> = 16



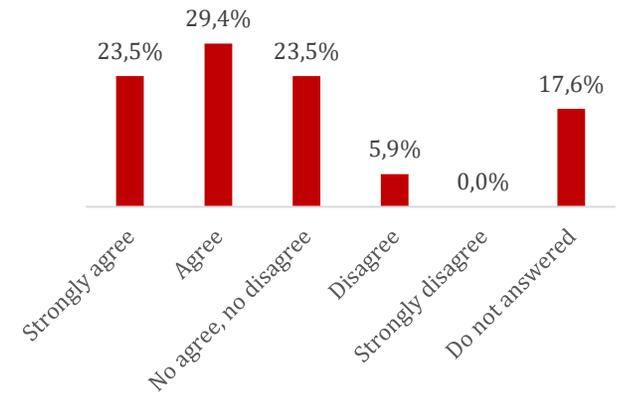
**The course workload is appropriate for achieving learning outcomes (Germany),**  
 N<sub>answers</sub> = 47



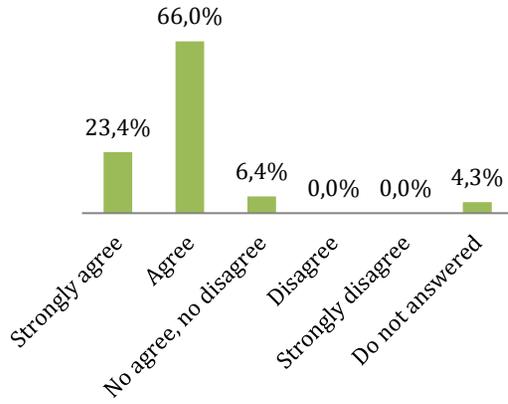
**The course workload is appropriate for achieving learning outcomes (Lithuania),**  
 N<sub>answers</sub> = 155



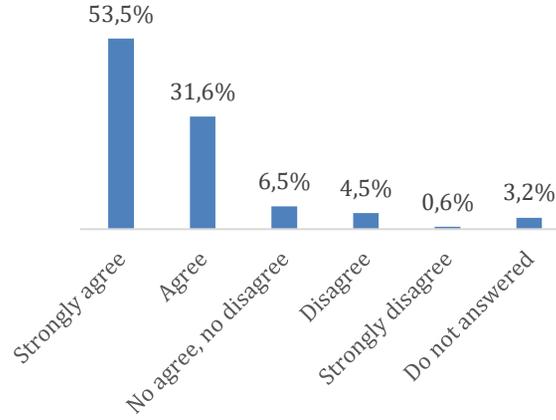
**The course workload is appropriate for achieving learning outcomes (Poland),**  
 N<sub>answers</sub> = 16



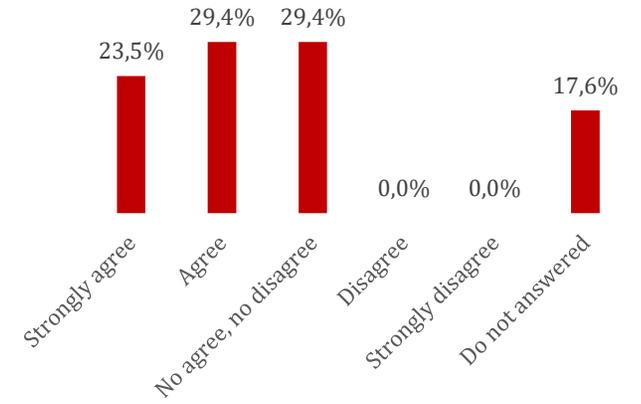
**The study volume was appropriate for gaining the theoretical knowledge (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



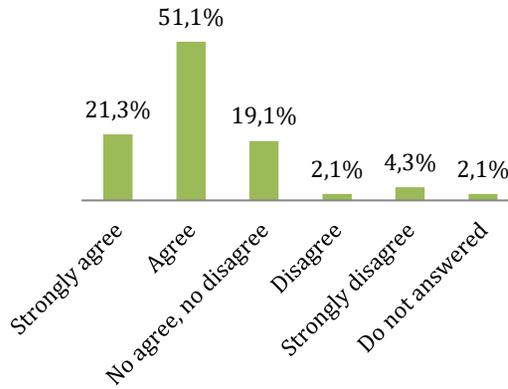
**The study volume was appropriate for gaining the theoretical knowledge (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



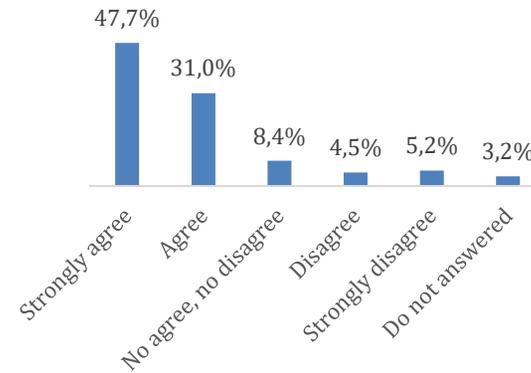
**The study volume was appropriate for gaining the theoretical knowledge (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



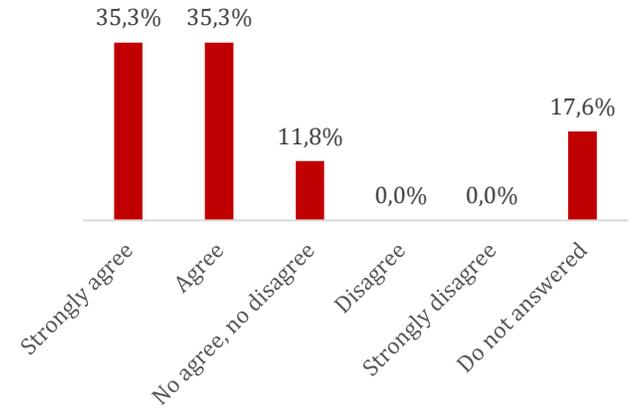
**The study volume was appropriate for practical works (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



**The study volume was appropriate for practical works (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**

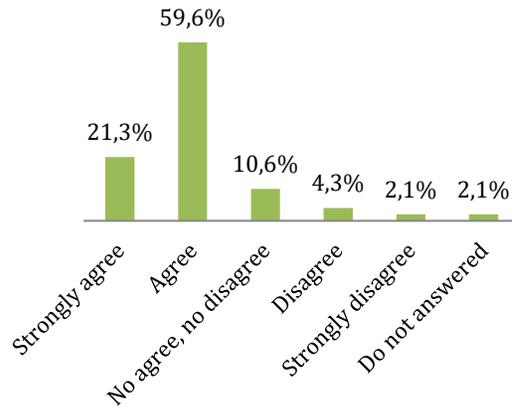


**The study volume was appropriate for practical works (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**

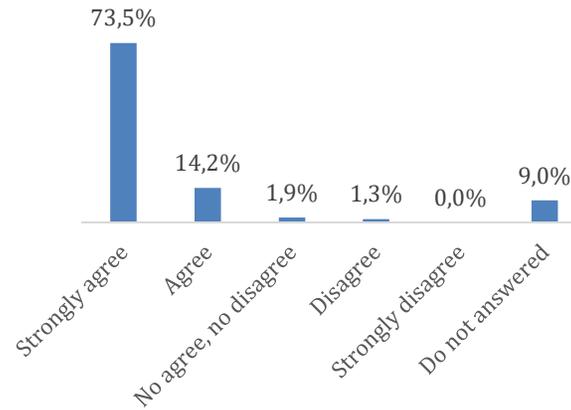


## 5.6.1.2. ORGANIZATION, ASSESSMENT

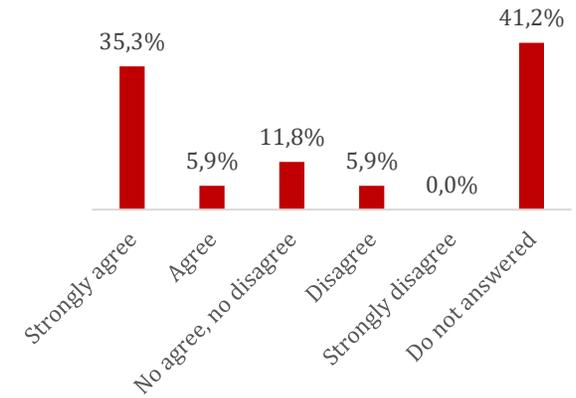
**The schedule of the course was suitable (Germany),  $N_{\text{answers}} = 47$**



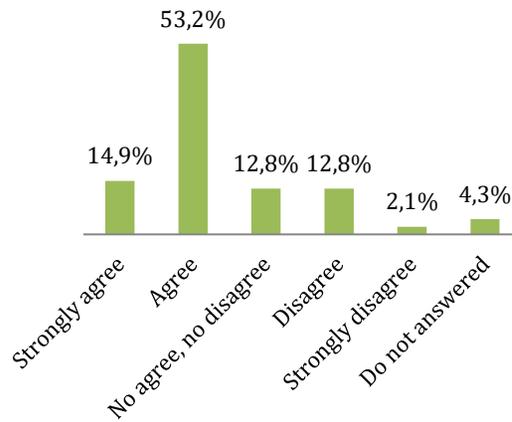
**The schedule of the course was suitable (Lithuania),  $N_{\text{answers}} = 155$**



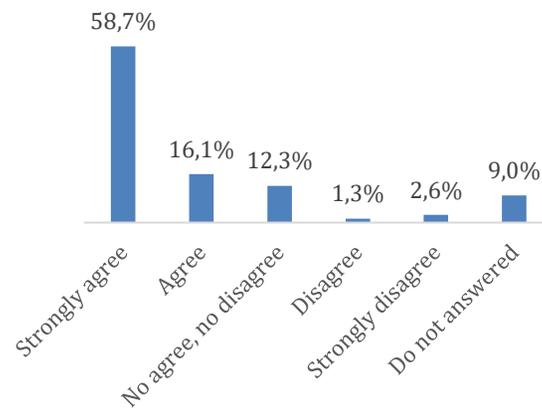
**The schedule of the course was suitable (Poland),  $N_{\text{answers}} = 16$**



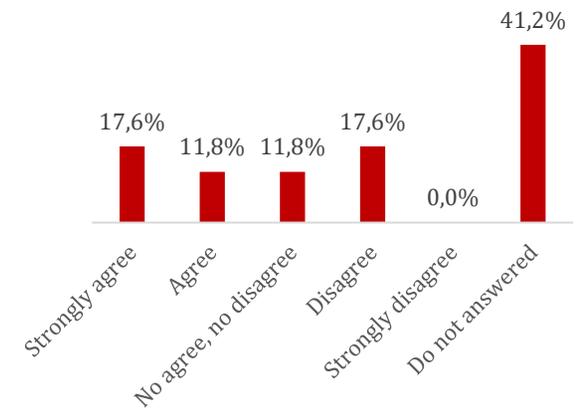
**The assessment criteria of course assignments were presented clearly (Germany),  $N_{\text{answers}} = 47$**



**The assessment criteria of course assignments were presented clearly (Lithuania),  $N_{\text{answers}} = 155$**

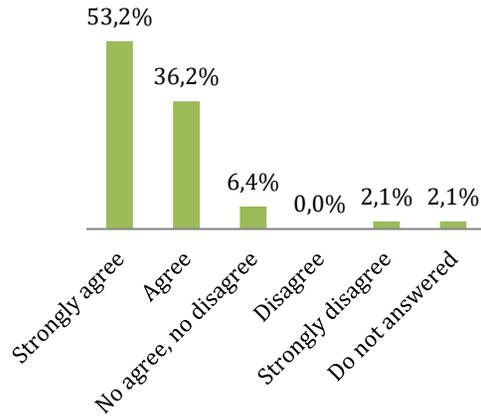


**The assessment criteria of course assignments were presented clearly (Poland),  $N_{\text{answers}} = 16$**

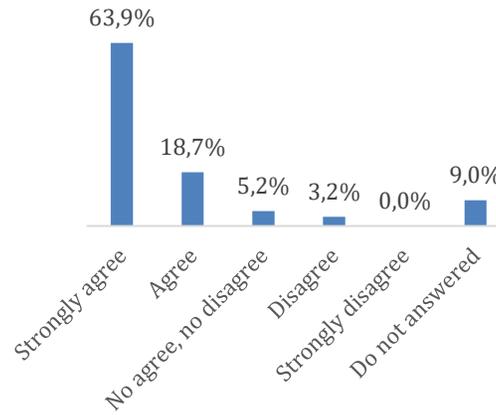


### 5.6.1.3. COMPETENCIES OF THE LECTURERS

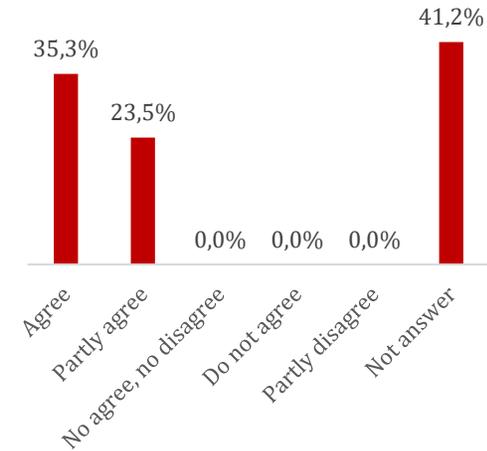
**The lecturer was prepared for every class (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



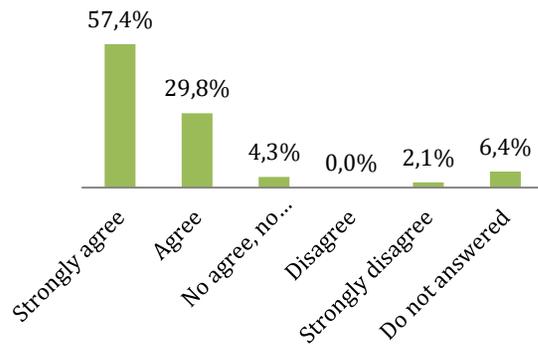
**The lecturer was prepared for every class (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



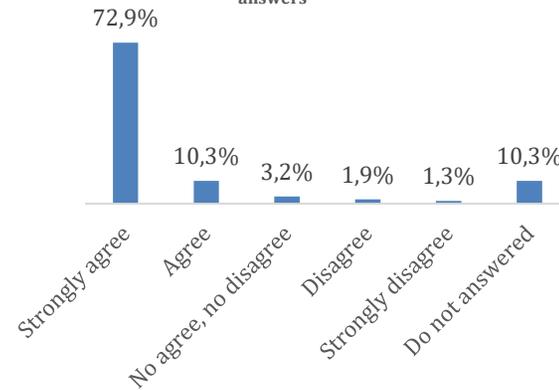
**The lecturer was prepared for every class (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



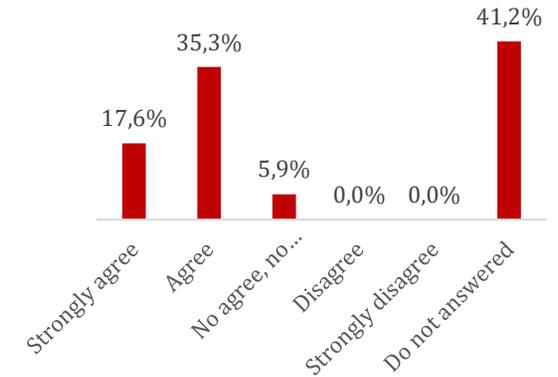
**The lecturer demonstrated in depth knowledge of the course (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



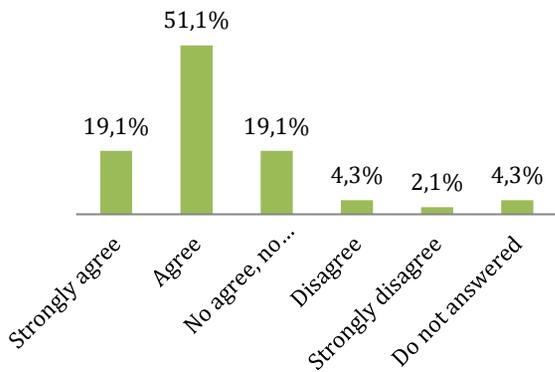
**The lecturer demonstrated in depth knowledge of the course (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



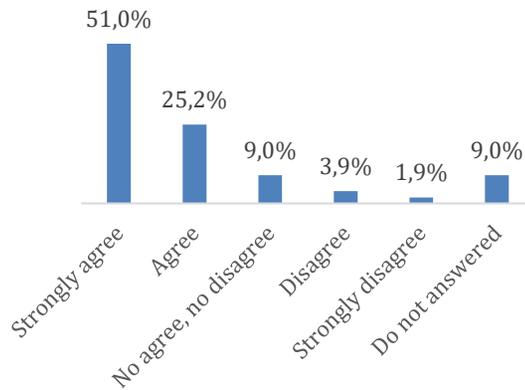
**The lecturer demonstrated in depth knowledge of the course (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



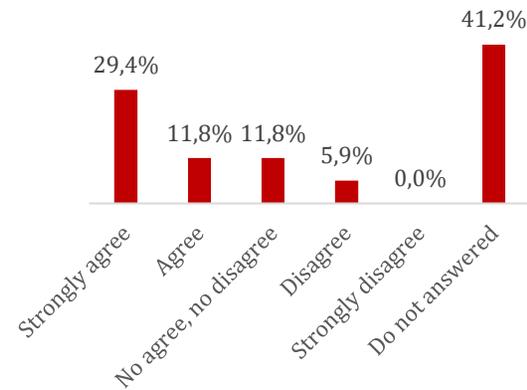
**The lecturer used a variety of study methods to reach the course objectives (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



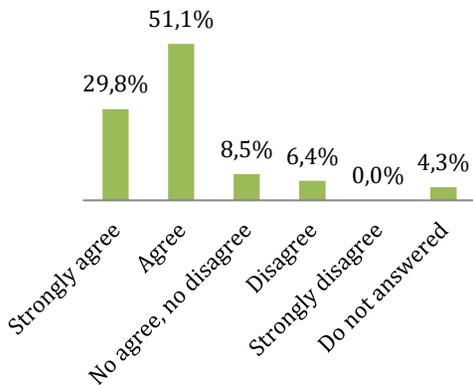
**The lecturer used a variety of study methods to reach the course objectives (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



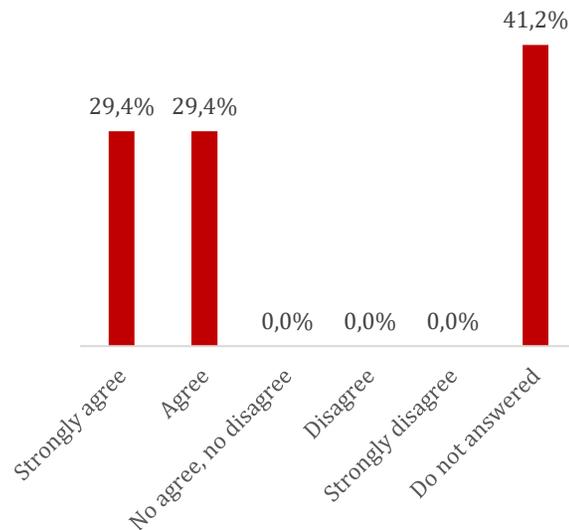
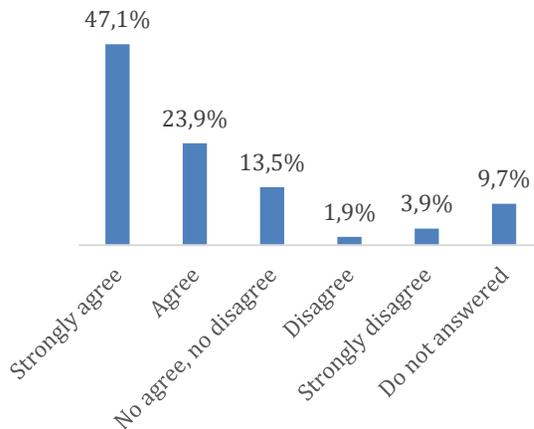
**The lecturer used a variety of study methods to reach the course objectives (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



**The lecturer stimulated cooperation and collaboration (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**

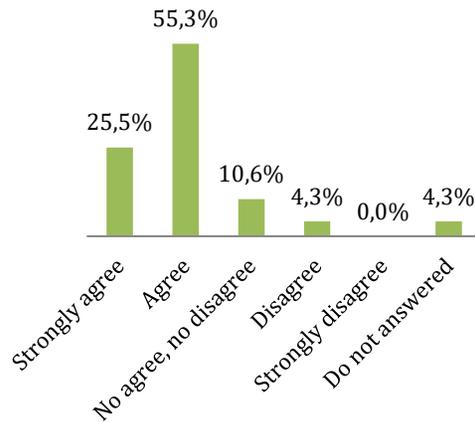


**The lecturer stimulated cooperation and collaboration (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**

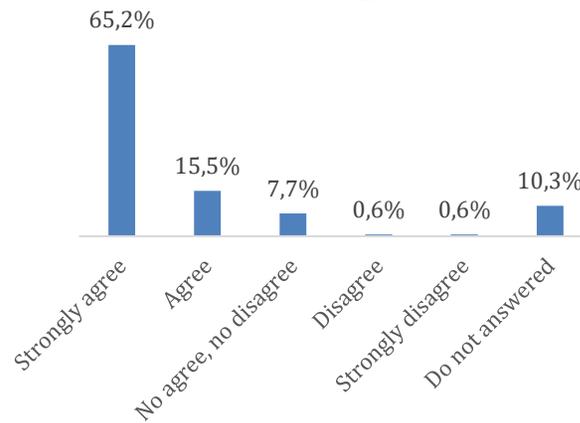


### 5.6.1.4. COURSE MATERIAL

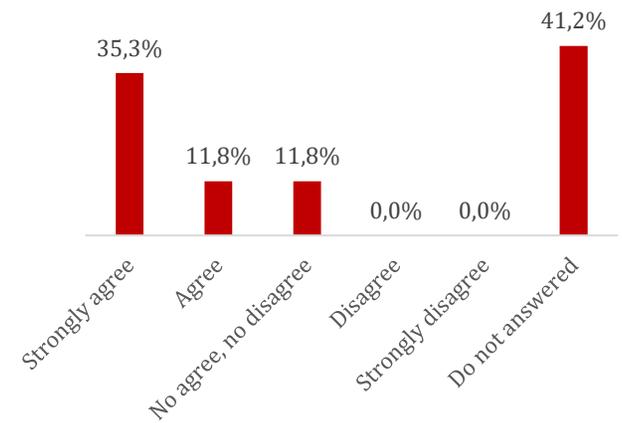
**The course was supported by the adequate material for studies (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



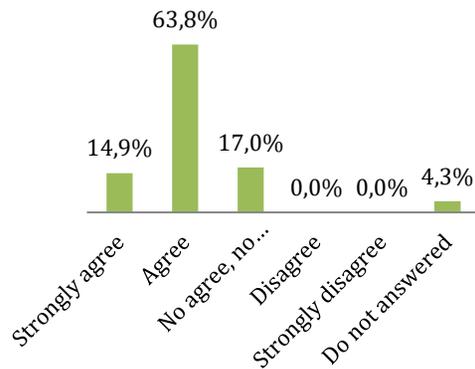
**The course was supported by the adequate material for studies (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



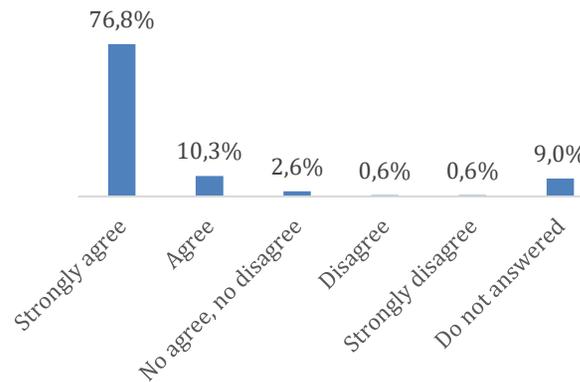
**The course was supported by the adequate material for studies (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



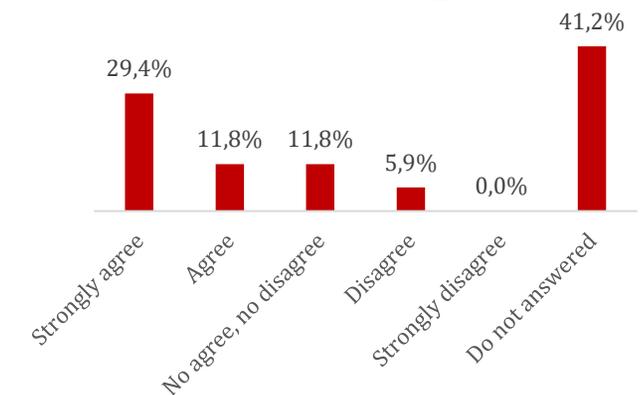
**I was previously informed about the materials / equipment required for the teaching unit (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



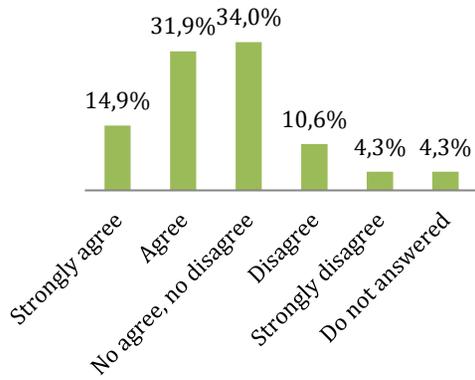
**I was previously informed about the materials / equipment required for the teaching unit (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



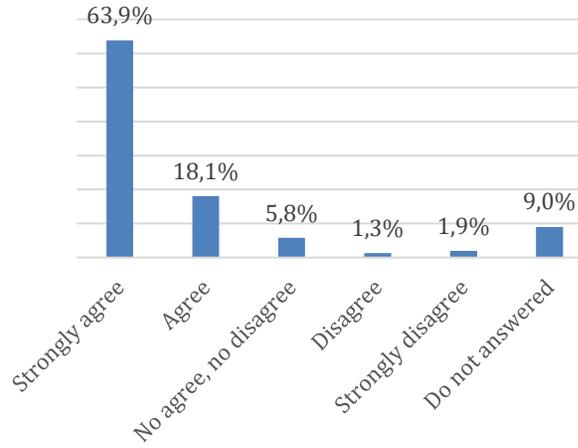
**I was previously informed about the materials / equipment required for the teaching unit (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



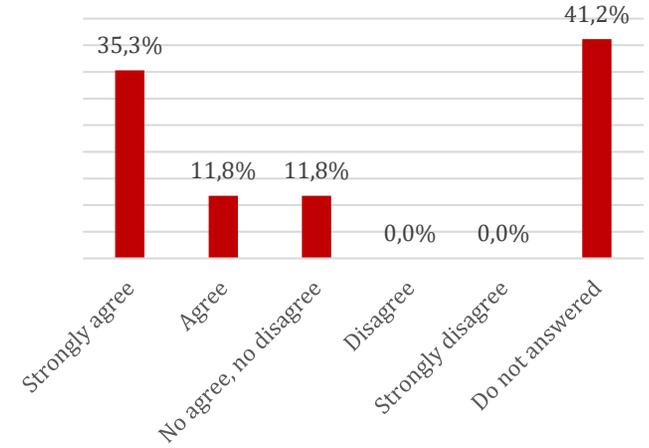
**E-learning tools were used appropriately (Germany),  
N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



**E-learning tools were used appropriately (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**

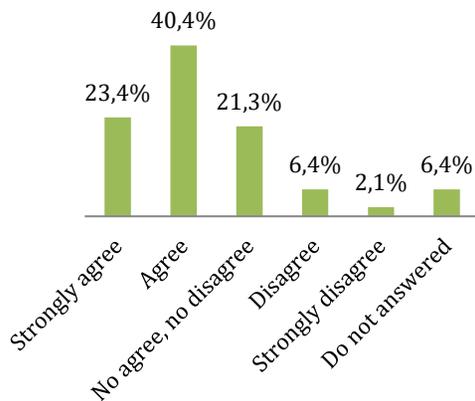


**E-learning tools were used appropriately (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**

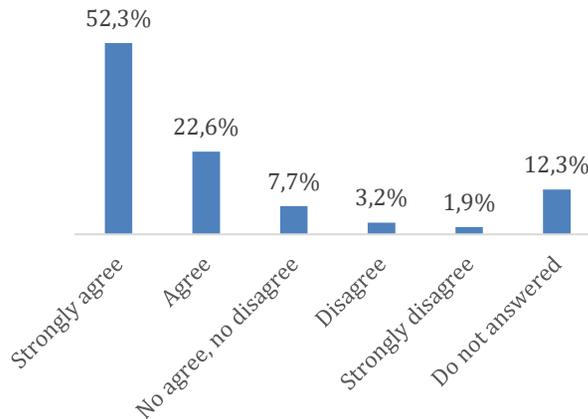


### 5.6.1.5. COURSE METHODS AND CONTENT ISSUES

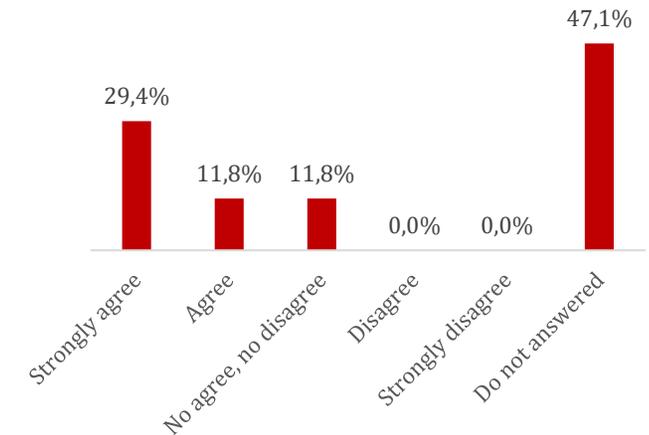
**During the course different teaching and learning methods were used (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



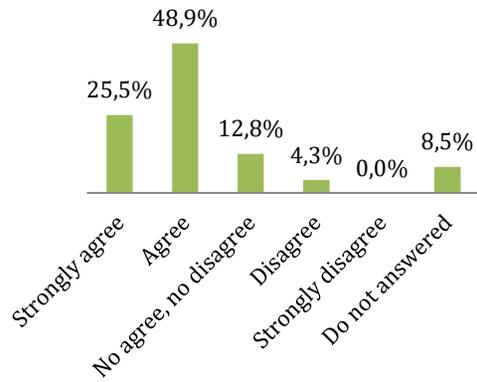
**During the course different teaching and learning methods were used (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



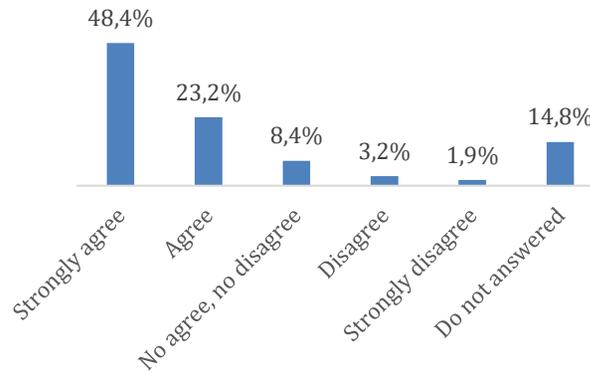
**During the course different teaching and learning methods were used (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



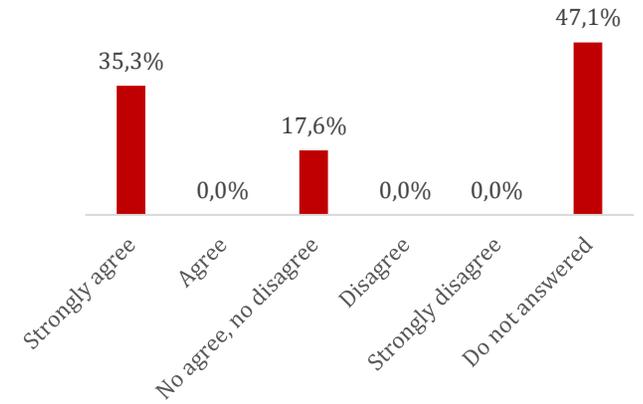
**The used methods were helpful to get knowledge and develop skills (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



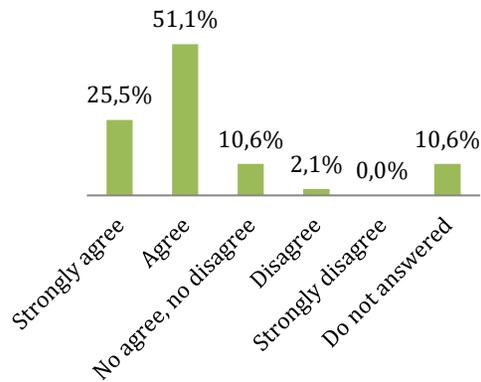
**The used methods were helpful to get knowledge and develop skills (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



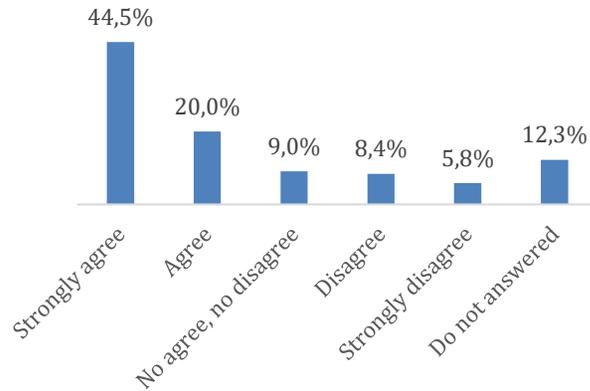
**The used methods were helpful to get knowledge and develop skills (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



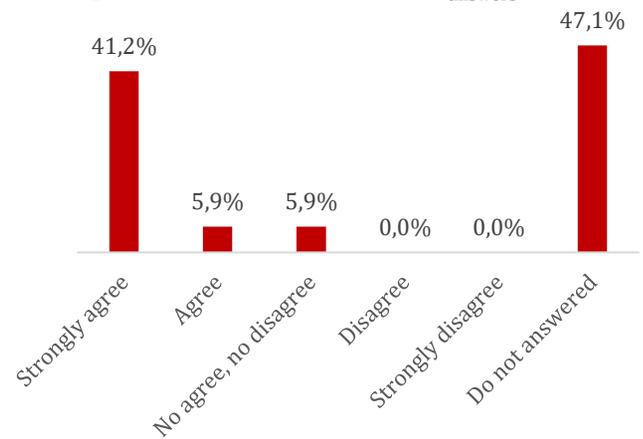
**Much attention was given to the development of abilities to act in professional field (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



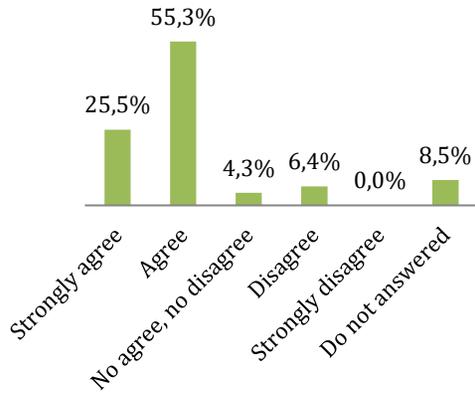
**Much attention was given to the development of abilities to act in professional field (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



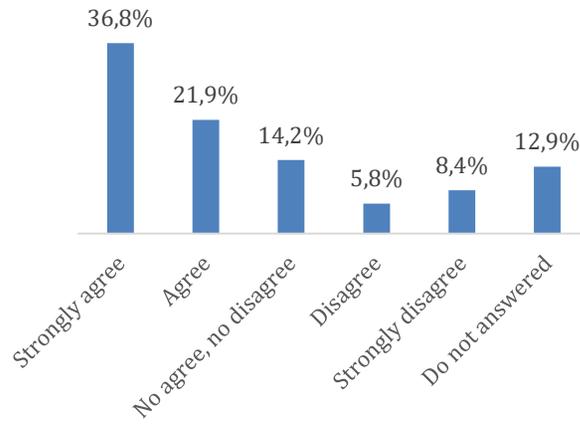
**Much attention was given to the development of abilities to act in professional field (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



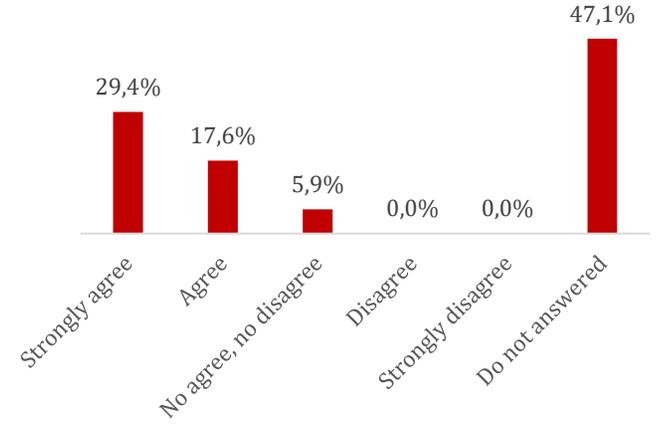
**Social responsibility and sustainability issues were clearly expressed during the lectures (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



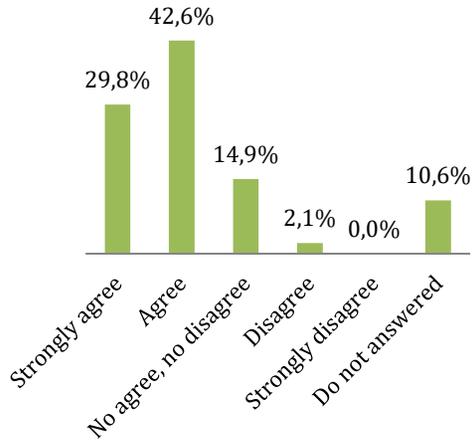
**Social responsibility and sustainability issues were clearly expressed during the lectures (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



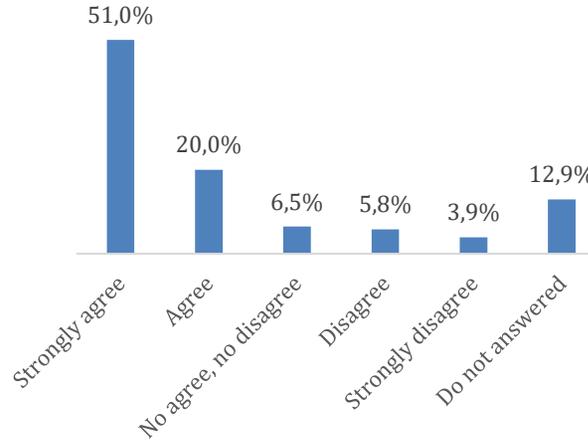
**Social responsibility and sustainability issues were clearly expressed during the lectures (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



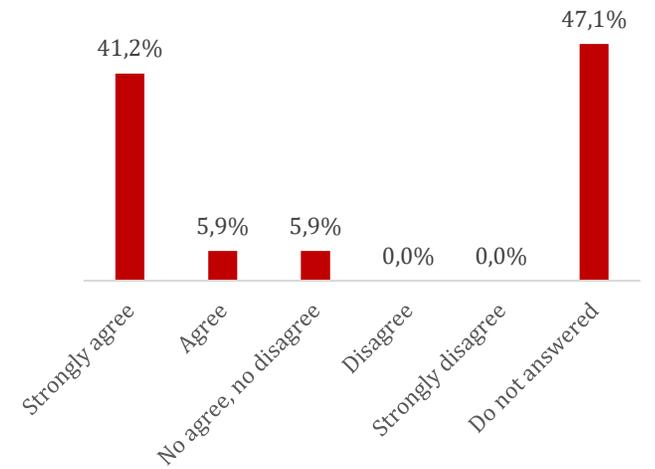
**Learning activities and assignments encouraged to engage critically with the course (Germany), N<sub>answers</sub> = 47**



**Learning activities and assignments encouraged to engage critically with the course (Lithuania), N<sub>answers</sub> = 155**



**Learning activities and assignments encouraged to engage critically with the course (Poland), N<sub>answers</sub> = 16**



**The data from qualitative research**

Table 1. Participants' general evaluation of the courses (Germany)

<b>Category</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Courses</b>
<b>Courses of the trainings</b>	<b>New, useful, important</b>	<i>"Many things were new and very interesting"</i> <i>"(...)a very successful entry into nature tourism"</i> <i>"Important information on nature tourism"</i>	Nature tourism as an action framework for Nature Guides
	<b>Practise orientated and inspiring</b>	<i>„Practical relevance (...)”</i> <i>"Great. Interesting to hear from practice"</i> <i>"(...)great ideas for implementation in practice"</i> <i>"A lot of practice"</i>	The experience of "canoeing" and "hiking" - practical examples and reflection; Nature Guide offers – Control and booking processes; Self-employment and product development for Nature Guides; Nature tourism as an action framework for Nature Guides
	<b>Not related to Nature Guide job</b>	<i>"I was a little bit confused: how that should help me as future landscape guide?"</i> <i>„I missed the connection to the job as a nature guide"</i>	Landscape communication - communication for Nature Guides
	<b>More balance between theory and practice is needed</b>	<i>"(...) There I would have liked a balanced mix with practice"</i> <i>"Good lecture, but no practical part"</i> <i>"I'd like to have a little more time for practice"</i>	Nature tourism as an action framework for Nature Guides; Nature Guide offers – Area of conflicts and networking; The experience of "biking" - practical examples and reflection
<b>Learning and teaching strategies and methods</b>	<b>Practical examples and provision of the information in understandable way</b>	<i>"A lot of practice"</i> <i>"It was easy to understand and provided with practical parts"</i> <i>"Totally transparent, instructive, practice-oriented and understandable"</i>	Self-employment and product development for Nature Guides; Nature tourism as an action framework for Nature Guides; Nature Guide offers – Area of conflicts and networking

	<b>Recommendations for further studies</b>	<p><i>“There is further study of information”</i></p> <p><i>“(…)recommendations for working materials such as books, opportunities for further training”</i></p>	Nature tourism as an action framework for Nature Guides
	<b>Interactive communication, and exchange of the experiences</b>	<p><i>“Exchange with participants (...)”</i></p> <p><i>“The contributions were evaluated and information provided”</i></p> <p><i>“It was very interesting to hear from these two actors - their perception of challenges in the Müritzer National Park and how they relate to each other”</i></p>	Nature tourism as an action framework for Nature Guides; Nature Guide offers – Area of conflicts and networking
	<b>Inspiring and emotionally touching methods</b>	<p><i>“Versatile stimulation of the senses, great ideas for implementation in practice”</i></p> <p><i>“group feeling”</i></p>	The "mindfulness" experience - practical examples and reflection; The "wilderness" experience - practical examples and reflection
	<b>Passive methods and long theory</b>	<p><i>“I wish to make work groups and solve tasks”</i></p> <p><i>“Too much theory on some basic topics. ”It can also be shorter”</i></p> <p><i>“A somewhat shorter lecture would have been enough”</i></p> <p><i>„I found the lecture very theoretical, philosophical, visionary.”</i></p>	Nature Guide offers – Control and booking processes; Nature tourism as an action framework for Nature Guides; Landscape communication - communication for Nature Guides
<b>Trainer’s competence</b>	<b>highly competent, diplomatic, with good communication skills, enthusiastic</b>	<p><i>“(…)enthusiasm of the speaker“</i></p> <p><i>“communicative and diplomatic“</i></p> <p><i>“Super lecturer, technically very competent and very authentic”</i></p> <p><i>“competent, educational”</i></p>	The experience of “canoeing” and “hiking” - practical examples and reflection; Landscape communication - communication for Nature Guides; Self-employment and product development for Nature Guides; Nature tourism as an action framework for Nature Guides
<b>Training environment</b>	<b>Fast pace on the bike</b>	<i>“Too fast pace on the bike”</i>	The experience of “biking” - practical examples and reflection

Table 2. The strengths and weakness of the courses (Germany participants' view)

Nr.	Course title	The strength of the course	The weakness of the course
1	<b>Landscape communication - communication for Nature Guides</b>	<p><i>„I found the lecture very theoretical, philosophical, and visionary. (...) Was a little confused as to how that should help me as a future landscape guide. But the speaker was very competent“</i></p> <p><i>„this was entertaining. also, was this in German? thank you for having me today, y'all have been a blast.“</i></p> <p><i>„Very interesting topic“</i></p> <p><i>„communicate and diplomatically“</i></p>	<p><i>„It took me a long time to understand what landscape communication is and wants and can and what is not“</i></p> <p><i>„I missed the connection to the job as a nature guide“</i></p>
2	<b>The experience of “canoeing” and “hiking” - practical examples and reflection</b>	<p><i>„Practical relevance, enthusiasm of the speaker“</i></p>	
3	<b>Self-employment and product development for Nature Guides</b>	<p><i>“Super lecturer, technically very competent and very authentic”</i></p> <p><i>“A lot of practice”</i></p>	

4	<b>Nature tourism as an action framework for Nature Guides</b>	<p>COURSE ORGANIZATION AND RESOURCES:  <i>“Many things were new and very interesting”</i>  <i>“very rich, competent”</i>  <i>“It was easy to understand and provided with practical parts”</i>  <i>“A lot of content for a short time but a very successful entry into nature tourism”</i>  <i>“Great lecture. Competently”</i>  <i>“simply great”</i>  <i>“The contributions were evaluated and information provided”</i></p> <p>ABOUT METHODS:  <i>“very well presented”</i>  <i>“There is further study of information”</i></p> <p>GENERAL:  <i>“Exchange with participants, recommendations for working materials such as books, opportunities for further training”</i>  <i>“Enormous knowledge of the subject”</i>  <i>“competent, educational”</i>  <i>“The changing world, global development goals”</i>  <i>“Important information on nature tourism”</i></p>	<p>COURSE ORGANIZATION AND RESOURCES:  <i>„Too much theory on some basic topics. That was general knowledge for me. A lot of theory on other topics new to me. There I would have liked a balanced mix with practice:“</i></p> <p>GENERAL:  <i>“I wish to make work groups and solve tasks”</i>  <i>“I'd love that the performance will be shorter”</i></p>
5	<b>Nature Guide offers – Control and booking processes</b>	<p><i>“Great. Interesting to hear from practice”</i>  <i>“Practice-oriented”</i></p>	<p><i>“It can also be shorter”</i>  <i>“A somewhat shorter lecture would have been enough”</i></p>
6	<b>Nature Guide offers – Area of conflicts and networking</b>	<p><i>“It was very interesting to hear from these two actors - their perception of challenges in the Müritz National Park and how they relate to each other”</i>  <i>“Totally transparent, instructive, practice-oriented and understandable”</i></p>	<p><i>“good lecture, no practical part”</i></p>

7	<b>The "wilderness" experience - practical examples and reflection</b>	<i>"Clarity, competence, versatility, group feeling"</i>	
8	<b>The experience of "biking" - practical examples and reflection</b>	<i>"I was very pleased!" "Fresh air, exercise" "Understand the landscape"</i>	<i>"a little more time would be great" "Too fast pace on the bike" "I'd like to have a little more time for practice"</i>
9	<b>The "mindfulness" experience - practical examples and reflection</b>	<i>"Versatile stimulation of the senses, great ideas for implementation in practice"</i>	

Table 3. The trainer's evaluation of the course (Germany case)

<b>Category</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Courses</b>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>heterogeneity of the participants' knowledge</b>	<i>"The target group was very heterogeneous with regard to previous knowledge, in some cases it might have been necessary to start with a lower threshold"</i>	Self-employment and product development for Nature Guides
	<b>tight communication with other speakers</b>	<i>"Coordination with co-speakers was too tight"</i>	Nature Guide offers – Area of conflicts and networking
	<b>lack of time for indoor and outdoor activities</b>	<i>"the more variety between outdoor and indoor would be beneficial"</i>	Self-employment and product development for Nature Guides
<b>Recommendations for improvement</b>	<b>more time for practice and ideas development</b>	<i>"I need a little more time for the practical elements"  "If I have more time, the participants could be able to actively develop their own leadership ideas".</i>	The experience of "biking" - practical examples and reflection;  The experience of "canoeing" and "hiking" - practical examples and reflection
	<b>more information on the requirements</b>	<i>"Precise preliminary agreements on the requirements"</i>	Landscape communication - communication for Nature Guides

Table 4. Participants review of the trainings (Germany case)

<b>Category</b>	<b>Positive aspects, which should be continued</b>	<b>Aspects, which should be improved</b>	<b>What should be stopped?</b>
<b>Training's content</b>	well-balanced theory and practise, well prepared training material, marketing tips	more legal knowledge and information about funding issues, as well as on expenses and prices of the tour counting aspects.	the topic on landscape communication
<b>Training's organisation (methods, speakers, etc.)</b>	possibilities to share the experiences of the participants, to develop networks even in leisure time, many practical examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- shorter training days and to interlink the theory and practice, longer brakes;</li> <li>- more practical exercises, reflection, and encouragement of the feedback, more detailed description of the methodological options;</li> <li>- expand the variety of the trainers, by including others, not just "regional rangers and national part employees, who represents just their region", "resolve the conflict with ZNL"</li> <li>- more focus on active doing, methodology and didactics during the outdoor activities</li> </ul>	long excursion tour without methodological benefits
<b>Training's environment</b>	good location, accommodation and food, family atmosphere, well organised outdoor time	None	None

Table 5. Participants review of the trainings (Lithuania case)

Category	Positive aspects, which should be continued	Aspects, which should be improved	What should be stopped
<b>Training's content</b>	<p>Combination and compatibility of the modules;</p> <p>Comprehensive content of the trainings;</p> <p>Variety of the courses enables to extend the knowledge and get more information about the tools, which can be used in Nature Guide job.</p> <p>Last module is the most useful</p> <p>First aid course is important</p>	<p>Training might be shorter and more intensive.</p> <p>Theory might be published in Moodle. It will decrease the costs of the program.</p> <p>More attention to communication-interpretation courses. It will develop better excursion organisation skills.</p> <p>Add topics of rhetoric, psychology – for those, who have no guiding experience.</p> <p>Integrate other aspects of nature (these trainings were strongly focused on the birds)</p> <p>Provide more information about the system of secured territories in LT: how Nature Guide should communicate, cooperate and coordinate his/her activities with the National parks, etc.</p> <p>Keep attention to the routes' maps visualization and creation, how to use GIS in Nature Guide job</p>	<p>Course on Accounting</p> <p>Domination of ornithology</p> <p>Long courses</p> <p>University structure and level, intermediate assignments and fins.</p> <p>Too many different courses, practice only at the end of the training.</p>

<p><b>Training's organisation (methods, speakers, etc.)</b></p>	<p>The variety of experienced trainers and their advises, outdoor tours;</p> <p>Excursions organised by experienced guides;</p> <p>Many practical assignments</p> <p>Study material in Moodle enables to study if you miss the course.</p>	<p>Less time inside, more outside</p> <p>Less theoretical trainers, more practical guides</p> <p>More nature guides from abroad</p> <p>To make the program part of continued guide training system in LT. OR suggest as separate courses (with fee): for instance, for those, who have guide certificate, some nature courses; and for certificated nature specialists – guide courses.</p> <p>Make a revision of the trainers, by keeping high competence and experienced trainers</p> <p>Practical parts of the trainings might be organised as demo excursions</p> <p>To organise international meeting with participants of the courses from the other countries.</p>	<p>Too long practical tours</p> <p>Trainers without guiding, especially in nature, experience</p>
<p><b>Training's environment</b></p>	<p>Keep Jolanta as coordinator of the trainings</p>	<p>The accommodation service might be solved by organisers (suggest one place for all participants)</p>	<p>Courses should not be organised just in Kuršių Nerija because of limited nature variety and difficulties in logistics.</p> <p>Big group of participants, especially during the outdoor activities. The best number is 15.</p>