



COSTA RICA CASE STUDY

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TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING (TVET)



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This project is an initiative of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in collaboration with the French Development Agency (AFD), and is designed as a proactive approach to produce documentation and provide recommendations for strategies and procedures to strengthen human resource capacities in cross-cutting areas necessary for a sustainable and competitive Regional Tourism Industry.



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EDITORIAL NOTE

Documents that are part of this study on "Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in tourism in the Greater Caribbean" were made between October 2014 and April 2015, on the basis of various documents made under the auspices of national, regional and international organizations since the themes, which form the central part of this consultancy, have been addressed extensively for more than fifteen years. Used as reference documents and dating from 1995 to 2015, those are the work of professionals of various nationalities.

When these authors are cited in our texts, it means having used the style of writing, vocabulary and terminology used originally; so, there is not a precise or rigorous homogeneity in the texts that make up this study with respect to the use of the languages (Spanish, English and French). Additionally, the final documents that compose this study were originally written in, either French, or Spanish or English. The translations of these documents are free-lance translations.

PRESENTATION

The following Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Costa Rica Case Study was developed to provide information regarding the status of the technical, vocational and training programs related to the tourism industry of the country. It starts with an overview of the economy and the tourism industry to put into context the importance of tourism in the country.

It is not the purpose of this document to rewrite all the information that is available from several authors and/or publications, but instead to complement, amplify and supplement this report. Every effort has been made to make this Case Study as accurate as possible. However, there might be some slight differences due to the fact that there are not accurate or actual statistics on all topics. Although, several international and national organizations have carried out researches that include not only statistics but some projections on the topics and some of that information is included in this document.

Therefore, this Case Study should be used only as a general information and general reference and not as the ultimate source on TVET in general and TVET for the tourism sector.

This TVET Case Study on Costa Rica was developed by CERTIFICACIONES DE CENTROAMÉRICA, S.A. (CERTIFICA) under the consultancy “Training for Careers in Sustainable Tourism” of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) with the support of the French Development Agency (AFD). The CERTIFICA team member that contributed to this Case Study was Denia Del Valle, Sustainable Tourism and Human Resources Development Specialist.

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I. OVERVIEW OF THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

A. OVERALL COUNTRY PROFILE

Costa Rica is located in Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama. It has a total area of 51,100 square kilometers, including Isla del Coco. Although the country is small and it covers only 0.03 % of the surface of the globe, it proudly shelters 5% of the existing biodiversity in the entire world. 25.58 % of the country is composed of conservation and natural protected territory. Costa Rica is a democratic and peaceful country, and it has not had an army since the year 1949.

Costa Rica is also an attractive country for investment and it offers great potential for the establishment of important multinational companies, thanks to the outstanding academic level of its population, as well as the high standard of modern services and social and political stability.

Costa Rica is a democratic republic; its administrative division is comprised of seven provinces: Alajuela, Cartago, Guanacaste, Heredia, Limon, Puntarenas, and San José. The legal system is based on Spanish laws. The political system has steadily developed, maintaining democratic institutions and an orderly constitutional scheme for government succession. The country has avoided military involvement in political affairs and has no armed forces.

Costa Rica's political stability, high standard of living, and well-developed social benefits system sets it apart from its Central American neighbors. Through the government's sustained social spending - almost 20% of GDP annually - Costa Rica has made tremendous progress toward achieving its goal of providing universal access to education, healthcare, clean water, sanitation, and electricity. Since the 1970s, expansion of these services has led to a rapid decline in infant mortality, an increase in life expectancy at birth, and a sharp decrease in the birth rate. The average number of children born per women has fallen from about 7 in the 1960s to 3.5 in the early 1980s to below replacement level today. Costa Rica's poverty rate is lower than in most Latin American countries, but it has stalled at around 20% for almost two decades.¹

The population is estimated around 5 million people, with an assortment of origins. Costa Rica is a popular regional immigration destination because of its job opportunities and social programs. Almost 9% of the population is foreign-born, with Nicaraguans comprising nearly three-quarters of the foreign population. Many Nicaraguans who perform unskilled seasonal labor enter Costa Rica illegally or overstay their visas, which continue to be a source of tension. Less than 3% of Costa Rica's population lives abroad. The overwhelming majority of expatriates have settled in the United States after completing a university degree or in order to work in a highly skilled field¹.

¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cs.html>

Prior to the global economic crisis, Costa Rica enjoyed stable economic growth. The economy contracted 1.3% in 2009 but resumed growth at about 4% per year in the period 2010-14. While the traditional agricultural exports of bananas, coffee, sugar, and beef are still the backbone of commodity export trade, a variety of industrial and specialized agricultural products have broadened export trade in recent years. High value-added goods and services, including microchips, have further bolstered exports. However, many business impediments remain, such as high levels of bureaucracy, legal uncertainty due to overlapping and at times conflicting responsibilities between agencies, difficulty of enforcing contracts, and weak investor protection. Poverty has remained around 20-25% for nearly 20 years, and the strong social safety net that had been put into place by the government has eroded due to increased financial constraints on government expenditures. Unlike the rest of Central America, Costa Rica is not highly dependent on remittances as they only represent about 2% of GDP. Immigration from Nicaragua has increasingly become a concern for the government. The estimated 300,000-500,000 Nicaraguans in Costa Rica, legally and illegally, are an important source of mostly unskilled labor but also place heavy demands on the social welfare system. The US-Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) entered into force in 1 January 2009 after significant delays within the Costa Rican legislature. CAFTA-DR has increased foreign direct investment in key sectors of the economy, including the insurance and telecommunications sectors recently opened to private investors.²

B. TOURISM PROFILE

The state's participation in tourism development begins on the year of 1930, with the creation of the first private hotel called "Gran Hotel Costa Rica", as a first class hotel; it was built with the private sector's support, and promoted by the government. Tourists tended to come from overseas, entering the country via the Port of Limón, where they commuted to *San Jose* by train on the railroad owned by the "Northern Railway Company". In 1931, the first normative regulating tourism activity was decreed, by the Law 91, of June 16, 1931, when the "National Tourism Board" is created, which operated until August 9 of 1955, date when the entity we know now as "*Instituto Costarricense de Turismo*", was created by Law 1917.³

Costa Rica unlimited tourist potential is well known regionally and internationally. Its tropical forests are home to a wealth of flora and fauna, including 1,000 species of orchid and 850 species of birds, such as macaws and toucans.

The country is famous for its fertile land, frequent rainfall, its well-educated population and its location. One quarter of Costa Rica's land is dedicated to national forests, often adjoining picturesque beaches, which has made the country a popular destination for affluent retirees and tourists.⁴

In the 1960's Costa Rica warily became aware that tourism could be an important source of income. The slogan of that time "The Garden of the Americas" already demonstrated a willingness to develop ecological tourism. Back then, only San José had a hotel deserving this

² <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cs.html>

³ History and Institutional Legal Framework. <http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/TourismBoard.asp>

⁴ <http://www.om.org/en/country-profile/costa-rica>

name, the Gran Hotel Costa Rica, located on the Plaza de la Cultura. There were few paved roads definitely, some things have changed since.

The country was connected with the rest of the world by the national airline LACSA, departing from an airport located in the place of the current La Sabana Park, at the beginning of Paseo Colon. The international airport, Juan Santamaria, named after the national hero, is now in Alajuela 18 kilometers from the capital. Some flights operate from small Pavas airport, located 4 kilometers from downtown.⁵

The economic sector of tourism began to develop in the 1980's and is now the country's main source of revenue. In 1955, a law passed that declared areas within a radius of 2 kilometers of volcanic craters to be national parks. In the same year, the Costa Rican Institute of Tourism (ICT) was founded. In 1977 the National Park Services (SPN) was created and in 1998 the organization of all natural reservations was reorganized under the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC – Sistema Nacional de Areas de Conservación). Slowly, Costa Rica's rich biodiversity was being discovered as an important asset and plans for its protection were compiled.

In the 1990's everything accelerated and the government promoted tourism development at a large scale. To date, tourism continues to bring in foreign exchange earnings, as Costa Rica's impressive biodiversity makes it a key destination for ecotourism. Foreign investors remain attracted by the country's political stability and relatively high education levels, as well as the incentives offered in the free-trade zones; and Costa Rica has attracted one of the highest levels of foreign direct investment per capita in Latin America.

According to Costa Rica Tourism Institute (ICT) Statistical Yearbook 2013⁶, Costa Rica is in demand. In 2013 alone Costa Rica received 2,427,941 million tourists, including cruise ships arrivals, which generated just over USD \$2,264.8 million in revenue, being the number one in the Central America region.

Costa Rica's geographic position as a bridge between North and South America allows which allows possessing coasts in the Atlantic & Pacific Oceans, variable topography, diverse soil combinations, and climatic variations. Therefore, Costa Rica is an eco-tourist paradise. Costa Rica has more species of butterflies than the whole continent of Africa does. Over 25% of its national territory is dedicated to conservation with over 20 national parks, 8 biological reserves, animal refuges, and several protected areas.

⁵ <http://www.travelcostarica.nu/tourism-in-costa-rica>

⁶ Banco Central de Costa Rica, Departamento de Estadística Macroeconómica.

1. TRENDS IN NICHE MARKETS⁷

Costa Rica occupies a privileged spot in the heart of Central America. While its territory of 19,652 square miles touches both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, the country is surprisingly accessible –one can travel from coast to coast in just three hours by car (or 45 minutes by plane).

The country has become positioned in the world tourism market as a nature-based and ecotourism destination, with a large component of complimentary offerings in beaches and adventure tourism (canopy activities, rafting, surfing, etc.). There is an additional component of all-inclusive beach resorts, golf, and congresses & conventions.⁸

The country has seven “Tourism Planning Units”, which represent a tourism geographic classification:

- Central Valley
- Mid-Pacific
- South Pacific
- Puntarenas and Nicoya Gulf Islands
- Northern Plains
- Guanacaste
- Caribbean

Ecotourism

For the past 30 years, Costa Rica’s tourism comparative advantage has been ecotourism, considered one of the most bio-diverse regions in the world. In 1969 Costa Rica began creating a network of national parks that nowadays is divided in 20 natural parks, 8 biological reserves, and a series of protected areas –both governmental and private, that captivate ecotourism lovers.

Costa Rica has a lot to offer. It is beautiful, it is close to large tourist markets in the U.S. and Canada, and it has a glowing outward reputation. However, Costa is not the only regional travel hotspot. Mexico, the Caribbean islands and other Central and South American countries all offer the allure of tropical paradise, sunshine, clear waters and balmy weather. To stand out from the crowd, Costa Rica has transformed its tourism image from simply “Pura Vida,” to a model of harmony with nature. Last decade, the ICT changed the tourism slogan to “No Artificial Ingredients” and more recently to “Essential Costa Rica” to illustrate its green movement.⁹

⁷ <http://www.visitcostarica.com>. Official web site of the Costa Rica Tourism Institute (ICT)

⁸ Analyzing Costa Rica as a Model for the Implementation of Marketing Certification in Five Target Countries. Martha Honey and Amos Bien. A publication of the Center on Education and Sustainable Development (CESD) and The International Ecotourism Society for the Rainforest Alliance. February 2005.

⁹ Costa Rica’s Green Niche. Nature Blog (August 9, 2012). <http://blog.natureair.com/index.php/2012/08/costa-ricas-green-niche/>

Adventure

Costa Rica is a land of volcanoes, rainforest, waterfalls and rivers. Visitors can choose from a variety of activities such as rafting, snorkeling, kayaking, sport fishing, surfing, windsurf, bird watching, horseback riding, diving, biking, climbing, zip line, cable car & walkways, hot air ballooning, four wheel tours, among others.

Beaches

The Caribbean region of Costa Rica stands out for its variety of aquatic ecosystems and its beautiful white and black sand beaches, providing an ideal setting for activities such as sport fishing, snorkeling, and sun bathing. The Pacific coast concentrates big tourist centers and its beaches are very popular for surfing.

Rural Tourism

Costa Rica has invested more than 50 years in rural development, as well as the rural communities have struggled more than 500 years in order to defend their identity and claim the right to development and equity. All these years of efforts are capitalized today into new initiatives for the endogenous enhancement of the local economies.

Community Rural Tourism is one of the initiatives that, little by little, have represented an important means of development for those rural communities potentially capable of competing with other high quality attraction sites. The rural world is therefore kaleidoscopically unique as for assets, history, nature, talents, and hopes. This is the meaning of community rural tourism, an authentic tourist product impossible to imitate, an important tool for the development of the communities and the enhancement of the Costa Rican identity.

Honey Moon

ICT promotes three different concepts for honey moons in Costa Rica, taking advantage of all tourism destinations and attractions that the country offers:

- A Unique “Love Nest”
- Romance in the Mountains
- Total Happiness, Right from the Start

Cruises

The country’s port industry honors the name of “Costa Rica” which in English means “rich coast”. The cruise industry has been increasing slowly in the country; however, each cruise ship that comes to its coasts can find optimum conditions for disembarkation: specialized operators, excellent flotilla, surveillance and security.

Wellness

This type of offer is included in the promotion of vacations, recreation and leisure. It is related to services especially designed to fight stress and fatigue. It includes services such as massage, spa, relaxing wraps, chiropractor, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, hot springs, relaxation and resting in nature and quiet environments; contact with the environment,

naturalistic food, among others.¹⁰

Events and Conventions

The E&C product covers activities related to the organization promotion, sale, and distribution of meetings and events; products and services that include governmental, companies and associations meetings; business incentive trips, seminars, congress, conferences, conventions, exhibitions and fairs. This niche market will be strongly promoted with the future ***Centro Nacional de Congresos y Convenciones de Costa Rica*** (National Center of Congress and Conventions of Costa Rica); which will fulfill the demand of the meetings, incentives, congresses and exhibitions (MICE) segments by incorporating a sustainable design and state-of-the art technology to maximize Costa Rican business strengths.

2. IMPACT ON ECONOMY

Traditionally dependent on coffee, banana and beef exports, Costa Rica has diversified its economy. Tourism is Costa Rica's main source of foreign exchange.

2015 ANNUAL RESEARCH: KEY FACTS¹¹

GDP DIRECT CONTRIBUTION	The direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was CR¢1,282.4 billion (4.8%) of total GDP in 2014.
GDP TOTAL CONTRIBUTION	The total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was CR¢3,359.8 billion (12.5% of GDP) in 2014.
EMPLOYMENT DIRECT CONTRIBUTION	In 2014, travel and tourism directly supported 98,500 jobs (4.8% of total employment).
EMPLOYMENT TOTAL CONTRIBUTION	In 2014, the total contribution of travel and tourism to employment including jobs indirectly supported by the industry was 12.0% of total employment (247,500 jobs).
VISITORS EXPORTS	Generated CR¢1,486.6 billion (15.4% of total exports) in 2014.
INVESTMET	Travel and tourism investment in 2014 was CR¢203.8 billion or 3.6% of total investment.

¹⁰ Costa Rica Institutional Press Kit. ICT 2015

¹¹ Travel and Tourism Economic Impact: Costa Rica 2014. World Travel and Tourism Council.

Direct Contribution¹²

The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP reflects the 'internal' spending on Travel & Tourism (total spending within a particular country on Travel & Tourism by residents and non-residents for business and leisure purposes) as well as government 'individual' spending - spending by government on Travel & Tourism services directly linked to visitors, such as cultural (e.g. museums) or recreational (e.g. national parks).

The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is calculated to be consistent with the output, as expressed in National Accounting, of tourism-characteristic sectors such as hotels, airlines, airports, travel agents and leisure and recreation services that deal directly with tourists. The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is calculated from total internal spending by 'netting out' the purchases made by the different tourism sectors. This measure is consistent with the definition of Tourism GDP, specified in the 2008 Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework (TSA: RMF 2008).

Total Contribution

The total contribution of Travel & Tourism includes its 'wider impacts' (e.g. the indirect and induced impacts) on the economy. The 'indirect' contribution includes the GDP and jobs supported by:

- Travel & Tourism investment spending – an important aspect of both current and future activity that includes investment activity such as the purchase of new aircrafts and construction of new hotels;
- Government 'collective' spending, which helps Travel & Tourism activity in many different ways as it is made on behalf of the 'community at large' – e.g. tourism marketing and promotion, aviation, administration, security services, resort area security services, resort area sanitation services, etc.;
- Domestic purchases of goods and services by the sectors dealing directly with tourists - including, for example, purchases of food and cleaning services by hotels, of fuel and catering services by airlines, and IT services by travel agents.

The 'induced' contribution measures the GDP and jobs supported by the spending of those who are directly or indirectly employed by the Travel & Tourism industry.¹³

The direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in 2014 was CR¢ 1,282.4 billion (4.8% of GDP). This is forecasted to rise by 2.8% to CR¢1,318.8 billion in 2015. This primarily reflects the economic activity generated by industries such as hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services (excluding commuter services). However, it

¹² Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2014: Costa Rica. World Tourism and Travel Council

¹³ Due to changes in methodology between 2010 and 2011, it is not possible to compare figures published by the WTTC from 2011 onwards with the series published in previous years.

also includes the activities of the restaurant and leisure industries directly supported by tourism.

The direct contribution of tourism and travel to GDP is expected to grow by 4.7% per annum to CR¢ 2,084.0 billion (5.1% of GDP) by 2025.

Total contribution to GDP (including wider effects from investment, the supply chain and induced income impacts) was CR¢ 3,359.8 billion (12.5%) of GDP and it is expected to grow by 2.8% to CR¢ 3,455.2 billion (12.3% of GDP in 2015). It is forecasted to rise by 4.5% per annum to CR¢ 5,378.9 billion by 2025 (13.2% of GDP).

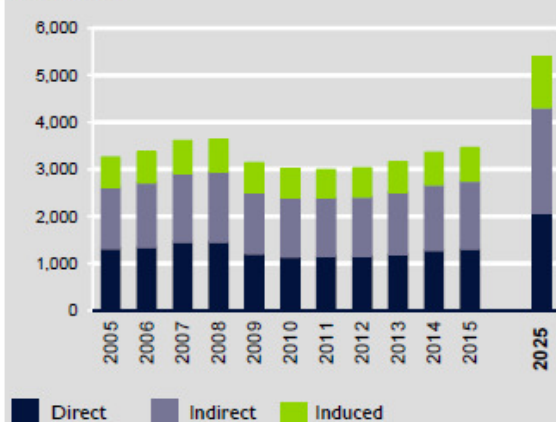
WORLD RANKING (OUT OF 184 COUNTRIES):

Relative importance of Travel & Tourism's total contribution to GDP

77 ABSOLUTE Size in 2014	64 RELATIVE SIZE Contribution to GDP in 2014	109 GROWTH 2015 forecast	69 LONG-TERM GROWTH Forecast 2015-2025
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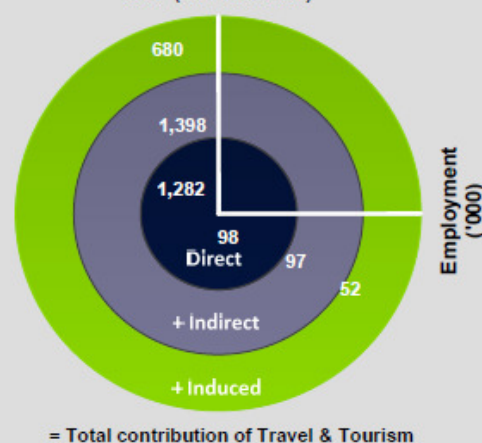
Total Contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP

2014 CRCbn



Breakdown of Travel & Tourism's Total Contribution to GDP and Employment 2014

GDP (2014 CRCbn)



WTTC Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015

Visitors Exports

Money spent by foreign visitors to a country (or visitor exports) is a key component of the direct contribution of travel and tourism. In 2014, Costa Rica generated CR¢ 1,436.6 billion in visitor exports. It is expected to grow approximately 1.5% and the country is expected to attract over 2,611 million international tourist arrivals in 2015.

By 2025, international tourist arrivals are forecast to total 4,077 million generating expenditure of CR¢ 2,486.4 billion (an increase of 5.1%) per annum.

Investment

Tourism is expected to have attracted investment of CR¢ 203.8 billion in 2014. This is expected to rise by 4.3% in 2015, and rise by 5.9% per annum over the next ten years to CR¢ 377.1 billion in 2015.

Travel and tourism share of total nation investment will rise from 3.6% in 2015 to 4.2% in 2025.

3. EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM¹⁴

Travel and tourism generated 98,500 jobs directly in 2014 (4.8% of total employment) and this is forecasted to grow by 2.5% in 2015 to 101,000 (4.8% of total employment). This includes employment by hotels, travel agents, airlines, and other passenger transportation services (excluding commuter services). It also includes the activities of restaurant and leisure industries directly supported by tourists.

By 2015, tourism will account for 136 thousand jobs directly, and increase 3% per annum over the next ten years.

The total contribution of travel and tourism to employment (including wider effects from investment, the supply chain and induced income impacts) was 247,500 jobs in 2014 (12% of total employment). This is estimated to rise by 1.9% in 2015 to 252 thousand jobs (11.9% of total employment).

By 2025, tourism and travel industry estimate to support 330 thousand jobs (13% of total employment) an increase 2.8% per annum over the period.

4. COMPETITIVENESS¹⁵

Costa Rica is ranked 6th in the Americas region and 47th overall. The country gets excellent marks for its natural resources (ranked 7th), with several World Heritage sites, a high percentage of nationally protected areas, and very diverse fauna.

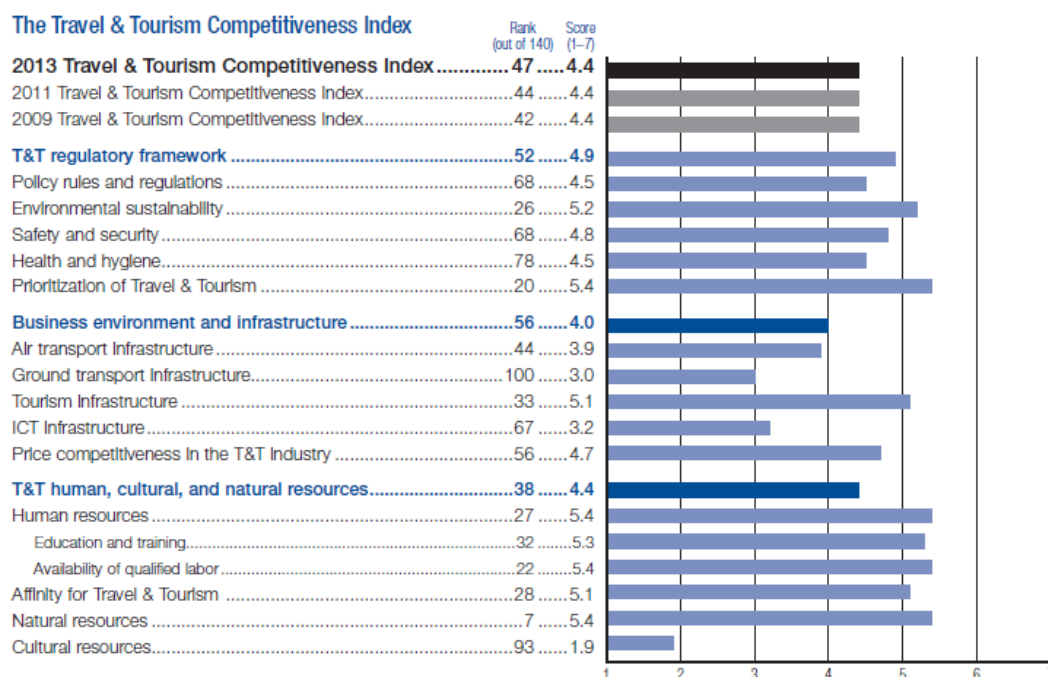
Given the importance of the natural environment for the country's tourism industry, it is notable that it ranks a high 26th overall for environmental sustainability, an area where it has continued to improve slightly over the past few years. However, health and hygiene remains a concern (78th).

Furthermore, although its tourism infrastructure is relatively well developed (33rd), with a strong presence of major car rental companies and abundant hotel rooms, ground

¹⁴ Travel & Tourism. Economic Impact 2015. Costa Rica. Global Travel & Tourism Council.

¹⁵ Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013. World Economic Forum

transport infrastructure requires significant upgrading (100th) particularly roads and ports, making travel within the country somewhat difficult.



II. EDUCATION IN COUNTRY

In 1948, Costa Rica dissolved the army; since then, the resources of the nation, once used to have arms, were redirected towards education and other important development issues. Today, the government annually allocates a minimum of 6% of GDP for education. This is one of the reasons why literacy is one of the highest in Latin America (98%)

A. PRINCIPLES AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF EDUCATION¹⁶

The fundamentals of Costa Rica educational system have their foundation in the Political Constitution of 1949. The political constitutional system of the country is based on values of representative democracy, the division of state powers, the individual, political and social rights guarantee, universal and secret vote, and the respect to human dignity, among others. Therefore, the education system is a guarantor of freedom of thoughts, teaching, association, religion, respect for human rights and democratically constitutional regimen, which strengthen the rule of law.

The fundamental pillar of the education system in Costa Rica is the freedom of teaching, which is supervised by the central government and with wide participation of the private sector (Political Constitution, articles 79 and 80). The education is compulsory for nine years (Article 78, Political Constitution) and is free in government schools and institutes. The Government is also obligated to facilitate higher education to those who have limited economic resources.

¹⁶ Translated from the 2010/2011 Costa Rica World Data on Education. UNESCO-IBE

B. EDUCATION LAWS

- *Constitución política de la República de Costa Rica* - Political Constitution, Title VII. Education and Culture (Articles 76 to 89).
 - Article 78: Pre-scholar and the General Basic Education are compulsory. These and the Diversified Education in the public systems are free and financed by the State. In the public education system, included high education (college and university) the government expenditure is not be inferior to 6% of the Gross Domestic Product per year. In accordance with the law.... The government will facilitate the prosecution of superior studies to those who lack pecuniary resources. The Ministry of Education is in charge of awarding scholarships and the assistance.
- *Ley Fundamental de Educación* – Fundamental Law of Education. This act contains the values, purposes, principles and the philosophical political decision of the education system. (Article 2).
- *Ley Orgánica del Ministerio de Educación Pública* - Structural Law of the Ministry of Public Education

C. EDUCATION LEVELS

Costa Rica divides this education into Cycles, from I to IV. Cycle I encompasses grades 1-4. Cycle II are grades 5 and 6. Cycle III are grades 7-9 and Cycle IV is grades 10-12. At the end of cycles I and II, the child will receive a diploma for the conclusion of Elementary Education. Children then move to the Cycle III, which is the equivalent of High School, where they must complete Cycles III and IV in order to receive their Secondary Education diploma¹⁷. Article seven of the Fundamental Law of Education includes the following levels:

1. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Pre-school (kindergarten) education in Costa Rica accepts children between ages from 5 years 6 months old up to 6 years and 6 months old. This level is based on a series of foundations (philosophical, psychological, social, cultural, ecological, biological and pedagogic), on principles of children development.

Its purpose is to provide integral attention to children from their birth to the entrance of the first education cycle of basic education (EGB for its Spanish acronym). It comprises two cycles Maternal-Infant Cycle and Transition Cycle. The maternal-infant cycle, that takes care of the

¹⁷ <http://www.costaricalaw.com/Educational-System/the-structure-of-the-educational-system-in-costa-rica.html> . Retrieved on March, 2015.

children from their birth up to their entrance to the transition cycle. The transition cycle accepts children under 5 years and six months old before their entrance to the EGB.

The curriculum is defined like an investigation process that understands the individual (integral formation) her/his context (integrated formation) and the relationship between both (integrative formation) to improve the processes of construction of knowledge in the person's formation and improvement of her/his quality of life, as well as the functioning of education institutions and the community¹⁸.

2. PRIMARY EDUCATION

Primary education is mandatory, compulsory and free for all children without restrictions. To begin, the student must be at least 6 years and 6 months old. It comprises two first cycles of 3 years each as per the EGB.

3. SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education is mandatory, compulsory and free. It begins at the cycle III of traditional secondary education lasting 3 years (7th to 9th). Post-secondary education is mandatory and also free, comprises the single cycle of diversified education (*Ciclo Único de Educación Diversificada*), and the period varies from two (academic and artistic related education) to three (technical related education) years.

At the end of the academic and artistic education (two years length), students who approved final exams obtain the Baccalaureate diploma (*Diploma de Bachiller*). The technical education (three years length), offers industrial, commercial and agricultural specialties through technical institutes (*colegios técnicos*). Students of all technical modalities can obtain the baccalaureate diploma by taking the exam in 10th or 11th grade; or obtain a Middle-Technician Title at the end of their studies (grade 12th) with no need to obtain the baccalaureate diploma.

4. HIGHER EDUCATION

It is offered in colleges, universities and higher education institutes. In higher non-university professional training programs are offered for commerce and industry with a two to three -year length, and a Diploma can be awarded, upon completion of the training, by obtaining 60 to 90 credits.

Several universities offer Associate Degrees that vary from two to three-year length according to the area of study. The University Baccalaureate (*Licenciatura*) is obtained after four years of studies and by obtaining 120 to 144 credits; it has a five to six year length for Medicine studies with 30 to 36 credits over the average baccalaureate.

¹⁸ National Inform, The Development of Education in Costa Rica. Ministry of Public Education, Planning and Educational Development Division, Plans and Program Department.2013.

III. NATIONAL TVET LEGISLATION, POLICY, STRATEGY, STRUCTURE AND STATUS¹⁹

A. TVET STRATEGY

According to the Institutional Strategic Plan 2011-2016 of the National Institute of Apprenticeship (*Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje – INA*) that acts as one of the main TVET bodies in Costa Rica, the objectives of national TVET development are:

- To achieve economic, technical and academic recognition of INA graduated by the business and the education sectors.
- To strengthen the processes of research and survey from the design and innovation of the training programs.
- To strengthen sustainable development within institutional activities.
- To speed up the design process of innovative training programs according to the market demands.
- To plan the investment for the infrastructure and technological equipment provision and improvement.
- To maximize partnerships with national and international bodies.
- To update and strengthen the competencies of teaching and administrative human capital in strategic areas according to the different productive sector demands.

B. TVET LEGISLATION

Costa Rica has established a set of regulations for TVET over the years to govern its operations. Among the most important and mandatory:

- Fundamental Law on Education
- The Law No. 3506 of 21 May 1965, which created the INA and was later, amended by Law No 6868 of 6 May 1983.
- Law on Financing and Development of Technical and Professional Education (Ley No. 7372) of November 22, 1993.

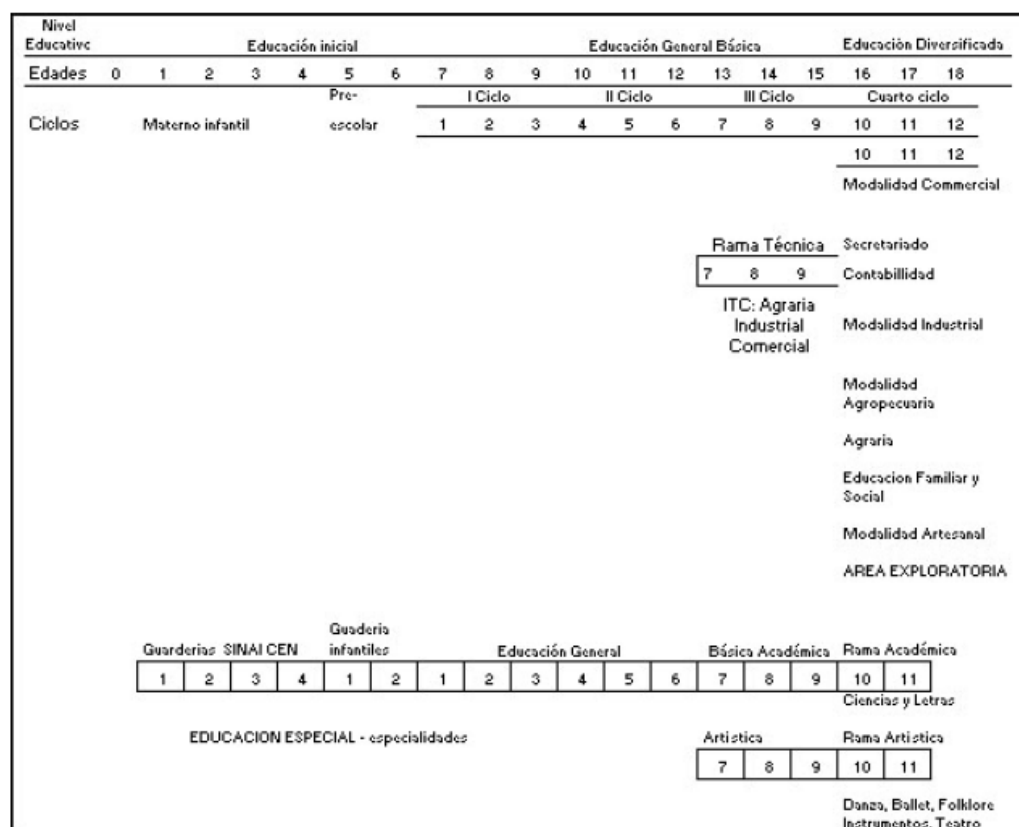
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¹⁹ World TVET Database. Costa Rica, August 2012. UNESCO-UNEVOC

C. TVET FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL SYSTEMS

NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM STRUCTURE²⁰



1. FORMAL TVET SYSTEM

Format TVET in Costa Rica is embedded in the education system and controlled by Secondary Academic Colleges (academic study centers for advancement within the formal system) and Professional Technical Colleges, which offer the chance to get a diploma as a Medium Technician with mention of the specialty followed. This is called third cycle and diversified education (*Tercer ciclo y educación diversificada*) and is comprised of different specialties such as agricultural, industrial, commercial, secretarial, accounting crafts, family and social education.

2. NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL TVET SYSTEMS

It is developed at a national level through the INA in its regional centers, which is divided into the following sectors: Agricultural, Food Industry, Crafts Processes, Graphic Industry, Fisheries, Textile and Industrial Clothing, Materials Technology, Car Mechanics, Electricity, Metal, and Trade 6 Services (Tourism in part of this once called Tertiary Sector).

²⁰ World Data on Education 2010/2011. Costa Rica, UNESCO-IBE

The INA Certification Service recognizes the knowledge and skills acquired by the students and to receive this recognition, the participant must perform tests and test related to the technical professional specialty to be certified.

No information has been found about informal technical education in Costa Rica.

Sources:

INA web page accessed February 28, 2012

UNESCO-IBE (2011). World Data on Education VII. Ed.: Costa Rica.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE FOR LABOR COMPETENCIES MANAGEMENT (ACCREDITATION ON COMPETENCIES FOR WORK) AT NATIONAL LEVEL

A. GOVERNANCE

Ministry of Public Education, through the Directorate of Technical Education and Entrepreneurship Capacities (*Dirección de Educación Técnica y Capacidades Emprendedoras*) is in charge of the governance of the formal TVET system in Costa Rica. Its task is to “analyze, study, formulate, plan, advise, investigate, assess and report all aspects of technical education in Costa Rica third cycle and diversified education and to promote programs and projects to strengthen its links with the labor market”.²¹

On the non-formal side, the main governing body is the National Institute of Apprenticeship (*Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje – INA*) as a “training entity, independent from the formal education system and endowed with autonomy and fast communicative mechanisms with the labor markets. The INA is managed by a cross-sectorial team consisting of groups directly involved: the labor sector, the employer sector and the government²².”

B. FINANCING

According to the Law on Financing and Development of Technical and Professional Education in Costa Rica adopted in 1993, financing of technical and professional education is distributed to administrative boards of TVET institutions and amounts to 5% of the annual budget of the INA. The funds are taken from the accumulated budget surplus of INA or, when it is not available, from the INA’s annual income.

The Ministry of Public Education, together with the Ministry of Finance, jointly decided before July of the current year at the latest or whether the 5% will be taken from the surplus or annual budget.

²¹ MEP web page accessed February 28th, 2014.

²² Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2015-2018 “Alberto Cañas Escalante”. Noviembre 2014

Available funds are spent on the purchasing of didactic materials, equipment tools and machinery, the maintenance and reparation of tools, equipment and machinery; and, the financing and development of projects, educational initiatives on institutional at regional levels.

Under the same law, the Ministry of Public Education has established a Commission consisting of the Minister of Public Education (or his/her representative), the Director of the Finance Department of the Ministry of Public Education, the Director of Planning and Educational Development Division, three representatives of the boards of TVET institutions and the Executive President of INA (or his/her representative).

The Commission is responsible for the distribution of funds among TVET institutions. The Ministry of Public Education conducts the audit of the rightful implementation of resources of each beneficiary. It also reviews the suitability of the programs developed and implemented by institutions.

According to the Law 1965 on the creation of the INA, financing of the institute is conducted in the following way:

- All companies engaged in industrial, commercial, mining or service activities that have the capital of no less than fifty thousand Costa Rican Colones and employ at least 10 workers pay 1% of their total payroll to the budget of the INA.
- The government contributes with one million Colones annually to the budget of the INA.
- The government contributes an annual amount of five hundred thousand Colones intended for the needs of Vocational Colleges under the Ministry of Public Education.
- Any other additional income may come from donations, subsidies, service charges, etc.

Source

Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje INA (2011). Institutional Strategic Plan 2011-2016
Law for the Creation of the National Institute of Apprenticeship
Law on Financing and Development of Technical and Professional Education.

C. TVET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS²³

The National Technical University and its member institutions are in charge of the training of teachers for technical education.

In addition, the Centre for Research and Advancement of Technical Education (*Centro de Investigación y Perfeccionamiento para la Educación Técnica*) has the task of providing the

²³ UNESCO-IBE (2011) World Data on Education VII Edition 2010/2011. Costa Rica.

training of human resources for the Technical Education System supported by educational research, new methodologies, pedagogical techniques, and guided by labor-market demands.

Teacher training is also developed in Costa Rican public universities like the University of Costa Rica (UCR), the National University (UNA) the State Distance Learning University (*Universidad Estatal a Distancia* – UNED), and the Technological Institute of Costa Rica (*Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica* - ITCR).

V. NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM –SINAFOR

Through the National Professional Education and Training System (*Sistema Nacional de Capacitación y Formación Profesional* – SINAFOR)²⁴. SINAFOR establishes the guideline and regulations and serves as liaison between private and public sector, in order to promote the participation of both in the professional education and training, by responding to quality requirements in the teaching processes characterized by INA.

SINAFOR main objective is to establish the mechanisms for the standardization of professional education and training, through the administration of the systems for: a) accreditation, b) articulation of professional education and training, c) collaboration centers, and d) certification.

1. ACCREDITATION UNIT

This unit defines and verifies the quality assurance standards of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

Accreditation is a technical, technological and methodological service used to recognize the training and education services performed by private, public, individuals or NGOs, following INA's standards. Accreditation is granted for a specific period in order to control the quality assurance. The accreditation process has seven stages:

1. Review of requirements
2. Accreditation application
3. Technical assistance to develop documentation
4. Specialized technical panel integration
5. Evaluation of technical and methodological conditions developed (Assessment Guide)
6. Accreditation Panel approval
7. Audit and verification process

²⁴ <http://www.ina.ac.cr/Gestion%20Rectora%20SINAFOR/Que%20es%20la%20Gestion%20Rectora%20SINAFOR.pdf>. Retrieved on March, 2015

2. ARTICULATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING UNIT

This unit is in charge to establish the coordination among programs, plans modules and any other type of curricular development activity. It serves as liaison for TVET and higher education, as well as to promote the lifelong learning. All those training and educational services providers, as well as secondary and post-secondary institutions that voluntarily sign an agreement with INA.

3. COLLABORATION CENTERS UNIT

This unit manages the Collaboration Centers System with the design and implementation methodology for the TVET services performed by public and private organizations that have signed an agreement with INA under the umbrella of SINAFOR.

INA is in charge of developing the curriculum, brings technical assistance to ensure certification of the training services, while the Collaboration Centers are in charge of providing the training services to private sector enterprises or individuals.

4. CERTIFICATION UNIT

This unit manages the Certification System, by applying the design and implementation methodology of the competences certification assessments.

A) CERTIFICATION PROCESS²⁵

Requirements: Minimum age of 15 years old. Costa Rican nationality, whether is by born, naturalized or foreign with refugee, political asylum or permanent resident; to have previous knowledge (theoretical and/or practical) in the activity for certification. Preferably, be working in the area to be certified. Participate in an interview or technical assessment.

Pre-registration: It is the first step to be taken by the person interested in becoming certified in some area. It can be done in person at the nearest INA, by telephone call or by sending the pre-registration form via e-mail.

Technical Interview: Once registered the person concerned must undergo an interview or technical assessment in order to verify the level of knowledge obtained in the area that he/she wishes to get certified, this interview allows determine whether he/she complies with the competencies prior to testing.

Application testing: The theoretical and practical test is applied in the workplace of the candidate, in coordination with the company or institution where he/she works. It can also be applied at any of INA's installations or in another place where the teacher provides its services.

²⁵ http://www.ina.ac.cr/gestion%20rectora%20sinafor/certificacion/proceso_de_certificacion.html. Accessed March 19, 2015.

Certificate: It is awarded to individuals who successfully complete the process, demonstrating the mastery of knowledge, skills and attitudes of competition evaluated.

5. CERTIFICABLE OCCUPATIONS²⁶

INA provides a wide range of certifiable occupations, those related with tourism are:

COMMERCE AND SERVICES
LANGUAGE LITERACY/PROFICIENCY SUB-SECTOR
Basic English (PC-CSID4000)
Intermediate English II (PC-CSID4001)
Intermediate English I (PC-CSID4002)
English Pronunciation I (PC-CSID4003)
English Pronunciation II (PC-CSID4004)
Techniques for Reading Comprehension in English (PC-CSID4005)
Comprensión de lectura en inglés (PC-CSID4006)
English Written Expression (PC-CSID4007)
Advanced English (PC-CSID4008)
ADMINISTRATION SUB-SECTOR
Client Service Management Techniques (PC-CSAD4014)
Management Information Competencies (PC-CSAD4016)
FOOD INDUSTRY
Food Handling (PC-IAEA4003)
Pastry Baker (PC-IAEA4008)
Bread Baker (PC-IAEA4009)
Pastry Decoration (PC-IAEA4010)
Boning (PC-IAEA4013)
Butcher (IAEA4014)
TOURISM
LODGING SUB-SECTOR
Housekeeper (PC-TUAL4002)
Hotel Maid (PC-TUAL 403)
Hotel receptionist (PC-TUAL 4004)
GASTRONOMY SUB-SECTOR
Cook A (PC-TUGT4005)
Bartender (PC-TUGT4006)
Waiter/Waitress (PC-TUGT4007)
Cook B (PC-TUGT4008)
Cook C (PC-TUGT4009)

²⁶ http://www.ina.ac.cr/gestion%20rectora%20sinafor/certificacion/ocupaciones_certificables.html. Information Updated on March 4th, 2015.

TOURISM SERVICES SUB-SECTOR

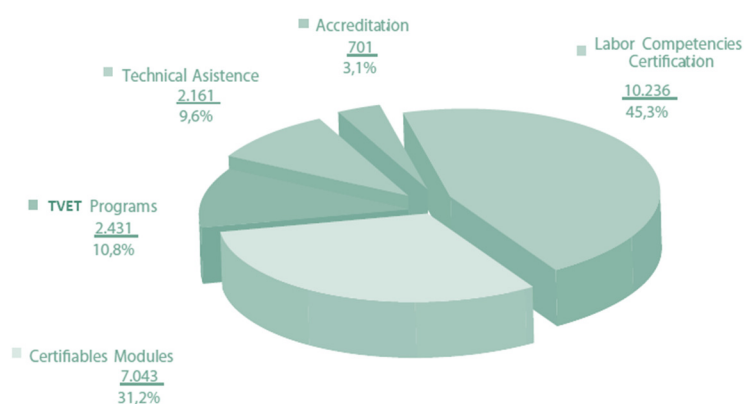
Water rescue techniques for rafting tourist guides (PC-TUSE 4026)
 Attention and guidance for rafting guides (PC-TUSE4027)
 Elements of Tourism (PC-TUSE 4028)
 Techniques attention and guidance for tourist guides (PC-TUSE4031)
 Natural History of Costa Rica (PC-TUS4032)
 Physical Geography of Costa Rica (PC-TUSE 4033)
 Tourism Ethics (PC-TUSE 4034)
 Legislation for tourist activities (PC-TUSE 4035)
 Ancient and contemporary history of Costa Rica (PC-TUSE 4036)
 Cultural Tourism of Costa Rica (PC-TUSE4037)
 Rescue and Maintenance of Zip lines and Canopy Cables (PC-TUSE 4038)
 Care and guidance in Canopy and Zip lines Tourist (PC-TUSE4039)

VI. RESULTS TO DATE

Poverty reduction and reduce of social and regional gaps is one of the main objectives on current INA administration, based on the National Development Plan.

During 2013²⁷ 10,236 (3.3%) people enrolled in the Labor Competency Certification. The following chart summarizes the services provided according to the enrollment registry:

TYPE OF SERVICE	No. OF SERVICES	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Technical and vocation education and training	2,431	151,993	66,161	86,832
Technical and vocational education and training certifiable modules	7,043	130,867	55,186	74,681
Technical Assistance	2,161	13,486	8,057	5,429
Labor Competencies Certification	10,236	10,236	6,007	4,229
Accreditation	701	Non applicable		



²⁷INA en Cifras (INA in numbers). 2013.

VII. OPPORTUNITIES

INA is implementing the following innovative programs:

1. New Life Program (*Plan Vida Nueva*), based on three strategies:
 - a. Creation of opportunity of employment or entrepreneurship
 - b. Capacity building
 - c. Social welfare and protection network
2. Work, Productivity and Competitiveness (*Trabajo, Productividad y Competitividad*)
 - a. University for Work Program (UTRA for its Spanish acronym)
 - b. Information and communication technologies training
 - c. Small and medium enterprises (SME) attention
 - d. Quality management
 - e. Collaboration Centers
3. Equity and social equality
 - a. Scholarship Program
 - b. “Closing the gaps among young people” Program
4. Investment
 - a. Infrastructure Investment
 - b. Investment in equipment

As of March 2015, three international cooperation projects were identified, but there is no in depth information about them:

1. Sweden Cooperation
2. Spanish Agency for International Development and Cooperation (AECID for its Spanish acronym)
3. Korean Cooperation

VIII. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAFTA-DR	US-Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement
CR₡	Costa Rica Colones (Colones) Local Currency
EGB	Educación General Básica (Basic General Education)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (Costa Rica Tourism Institute)
INA	Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje (National Training Institute)
ITCR	Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica (Technological Institute of Costa Rica)
NAS	National Accounting System
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
SINAC	Sistema Nacional de Áreas de Conservación (National System of Protected Areas)
SINAFOR	Sistema Nacional de Capacitación y Formación Profesional (National Professional Education and Training System)
SPN	Servicio de Parques Nacionales (National Park Services)
T&T	Tourism and Travel
TSA -RMF	Tourism Satellite Account - Recommended Methodological Framework
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCR	Universidad de Costa Rica (University of Costa Rica)
UNA	Universidad Nacional (National University)
UNED	Universidad Estatal a Distancia (State Distance Learning University)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

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