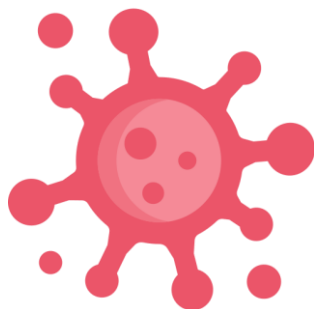




INCOME Tourism

Newsletter
April 2020



Due to the continued uncertainties surrounding coronavirus (COVID-19) and its potential impact on people's health, combined with travel restrictions, changes to academic workloads, etc. there is also a lot of uncertainty around the INCOME Tourism project.

All partner universities have been closed and staff are forced to work from home. The students are not allowed to do any practical placement. Tourism businesses, including the INCOME Tourism associated partners, are closed and it is unclear when they will be able to open again. Businesses are struggling with how to face the high season: can they reopen and if so, how can this be done safe. The INCOME Tourism project is not on top of their list of their challenges.

The pilot test, which involves students going to the businesses for a work-based learning experience, cannot take place at this moment. The project needs to adapt to the new circumstances. Soon we will update you on this!

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"Difficult and meaningful will always bring more satisfaction than easy and meaningless". Now it's time to stop and think, after I'm sure we will overcome the situation. (Maxime Lagacé)

*"This is the time for facts, not fear.
This is the time for science, not rumours.
This is the time for solidarity, not stigma.
We are all in this together".*

Dr. Tedros, DG Organização Mundial de Saúde

"The worldwide coronavirus pandemic is a challenge we must face together. Our response must be calm, consistent, and collective. Tourism will once again be there to help people and communities recover from this setback." (Secretary-General of the UNWTO)

*It is the moment for the INCOME Tourism project to stop and for its partners to stay at home, but also to be resilient and prepare for the recovery. The return to normality will be gradual and emotionally challenging, and **SOFT SKILLS** will be more important than ever...*



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Iva Bahunek
INCOME Tourism Ambassador
Croatia



One of the Croatian project Ambassadors, Mrs. Iva Bahunek, PhD, has a vast experience in human resources in the hospitality industry and is an Assessment and Development Centre expert. From 2003-2010 she worked in the leading consulting and headhunting agency in the region and from 2010 till 2019 she served as the CEO of Croatian National Association of Hoteliers (UPUHH). Currently, she is the CEO of the Croatian Tourism Board office in Los Angeles, USA. Throughout her career, Mrs. Bahunek worked on diverse projects in the hospitality industry including the ones related directly to professional development of hospitality staff. Furthermore, she has continuously mentored novices in her office. Iva Bahunek is one of the founders of the Mediterranean forum and holds numerous functions within key associations in the tourism industry (HOTREC, IH&RA, MHRA, SKALL). In the last seven years, she has given lectures at numerous universities in Croatia and worldwide on topics related to sustainable tourism growth, business ethics in hotels and governmental bodies and human capital management.

Please find below the interview with Iva Bahunek

More info at: www.income-tourism-project.eu

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What is your opinion on the importance of soft skills in the tourism and hospitality sector? Which soft skills do you find the most important ones in these sectors?

Soft skills remain the most important asset any person working in the hospitality industry needs to develop and nurture. The hospitality industry is about experience, pampering and emotions. Therefore, constantly working on improving one's soft skills and setting a higher leverage year after year in our industry is a must. The hospitality industry is quite a powerful predictor, creator and manipulator of new standards in hospitality. Or is it the other way around? Pretty much the egg-chicken thing.

What are, in your view, possible and desired ways of improving student soft skills during their University education?

Students need to experience "real business life" more. In other words, we need more practical work for students during their time at the University. They need to experience exact needs of the sector and employers, get a feeling of belonging within a certain company and get a grip on what is really needed from them. Hospitality is a living organism and the best way possible is to learn while working.

How do you plan to contribute to visibility and dissemination of the project's core idea and results?

Through my respectable network of colleagues and professionals in the tourism industry, I will surely be able to promote values of the project itself as well as being able to mentor younger generations.

In your experience working in the industry and with industry employers in Croatia, how do you evaluate the soft skills of Croatian students? In other words, is there a gap between the soft skills students have and what employers need/expect from them? In which soft skills is this gap most evident?

I've been writing about this topic for the past 15 years. I've started with my master's thesis where I was actually doing a research on the gap between soft skills students get at the university versus skills that are demanded in reality-workplace. Up until now, we have been talking constantly about the same topic. Namely, the college curriculum is not tracking the actual needs of the market in real time. When that actually becomes regulatory, we will be able to say that the schooling system correlates with the needs of the industry. Until then, we have the usual gap in communication skills, foreign languages other than English, and IT skills.

What encouraged you to take the role of the Ambassador of this project?

In a country like Croatia (but also on the Mediterranean as a whole), where tourism is our forte, it is crucial to develop the industry as much as possible in order to be the best we can. Also, I have been active in every aspect of tourism for the past 15 years. To name key activities - finding right candidates for high-end positions within hospitality industry, lecturing on tourism at Universities in Croatia and worldwide, creating tools and projects that enabled Croatian tourism to flourish through different sustainable certificates, creating IT platforms for tourism businesses, connecting the Croatian tourism sector as a whole through projects of social dialogue sponsored by EU funds. As the main point, as the director of the Croatian National Association of Hoteliers, I have connected the Croatian hospitality industry with our colleagues worldwide. Therefore, when professor Pivcevic from Split University asked me to join the project as its ambassador, I didn't hesitate to agree.