WP2: National Report

[Italy]

Report compiled by

Roberta Garibaldi

Alessia Tonsi

Elena Viani

University of Bergamo

1.0 Introduction

The University of Bergamo undertook a review of national policies in Italy in relation to soft skills in the workplace. Moreover, University of Bergamo content analyzed the curricula of tourism & hospitality (T&H) higher education institutions (HEI) in Italy.

University of Bergamo held in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion during June and July of 2018, respectively. University of Bergamo also administered two survey questionnaires, in June and July of 2018 to former T&H students and to current undergraduate students in T&H.

The in-depth interviews (Appendix 1) in July 2018 involved representatives of two T&H stakeholder groups in Italy – employers and two HEI T&H instructors.

The focus group (Appendix 2) involved representatives of two T&H stakeholder groups in Italy – employers, and HEI educators.

Finally, University of Bergamo surveyed former and current T&H undergraduate students via two e-surveys. Through in-depth interviews, focus group, and two survey questionnaires, the University of Bergamo gathered information to help T&H faculty, administrators, consultants, and industry practitioners in Italy narrow the soft skills gap between the requirements of the T&H Industry and Tourism Curricula adopted by HEI's. The in-depth interviews, focus group, and survey questionnaires were conducted as part of the University of Bergamo involvement in the INCOME Tourism project.

2.0 Findings

2.1 Overview of National Policies on Soft Skills

The Italian education system has undergone several improvements in recent years, with greater proficiency in basic skills and almost universal participation in early childhood education. Since 2003, reforms have been implemented across education and training (upper secondary general education, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education) anticipating the principles of a learning-outcomes-based NQF. Technical work has been carried out in recent years towards a national qualifications framework (NQF). The European qualifications framework (EQF) is seen as a point of reference for indicating the level of learning outcomes related to nationally recognised education and training pathways. In spite of not yet having an NQF, work has been done to reference public national formal qualifications directly to the eight EQF levels. The first Italian referencing report was adopted in December 2012 and presented to the EQF advisory group in May 2013 (Italian technical working group, 2012). The report focuses on describing levels and subsystems of formal education and training, along with the formal qualifications awarded

2

throughout, and those awarded by regions in the framework of the State-regions agreement, and on their referencing to the EQF. The Italian qualifications framework for higher education (Quadro dei Titoli Italiano dell'Istruzione Superiore – QTI) (3) was published in 2010 by the Ministry of Education, University and Research. Self-certification to the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) was completed in 2012 (4) and decisions made for higher education qualifications were taken up in referencing to EQF. Referencing is work in progress towards putting in place an NQF, in dialogue with all national stakeholders. The EQF national coordination point has been mandated to prepare a proposal for a comprehensive national qualifications framework, which has been submitted for approval. A decree for the establishment of an NQF is currently underway.

All institutional, national and regional authorities are aiming towards a NQF and a clearer commitment to the EQF. An important milestone is Law 92/2012 on labour market reform (6), with provisions related to lifelong learning. This aims to set up a national system of certification of competences and services for validation of non-formal and informal learning. In 2015 (7), stakeholders reached agreement on an operational common framework for national recognition of regional qualifications and related skills. For the purposes of matching and recognising regional qualifications across the whole national territory (8), this common framework is seen to represent:

(a) a professional reference in terms of occupational standards;
(b) a reference for the recognition of the regional qualifications and competences at national and European level;
(c) a performance reference for the assessment to be carried out within the services of identification, validation and certification of competences (European Commission et al., forthcoming).

The Italian education and training system has introduced the learning outcomes approach at national and regional levels, with each subsystem having its own characteristics. The debate on using learning outcomes in the country started about a decade ago and it is still going on, along with the gradual reform of the entire education and training system. One of the main fora for this debate was the public consultation that preceded the adoption of the first EQF referencing report. The eight EQF levels and level descriptors have been used directly in the Italian referencing process to link all national qualifications from formal education and training to the EQF. The starting point of the referencing process was analysis of both learning processes and learning outcomes in relation to the EQF levels, including a critical analysis of the EQF level descriptors: knowledge, skills and competence. The 'knowledge' and 'skills' descriptors of the EQF were deemed clear enough to permit correlation with Italian qualifications, while the 'competence' descriptor was divided into three dimensions: work/study context; type of tasks, problems and problem-solving approaches; and autonomy and responsibility. However, despite the move towards a learning outcomes approach, a gap still exists between theory and practice, especially in general school education and higher education. Learning outcomes implementation is mainly part of pilot projects.
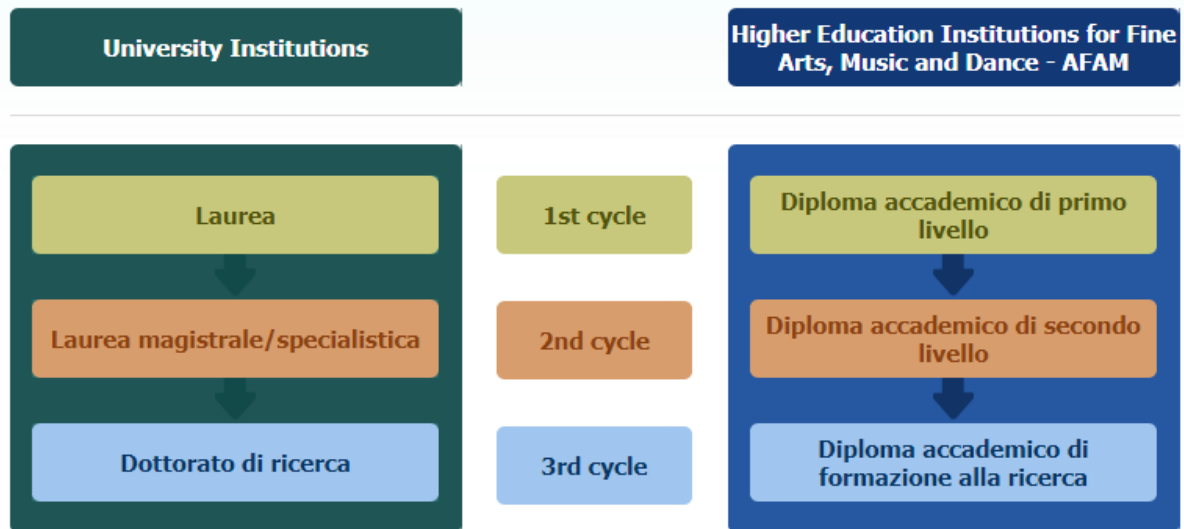
Project No. 588476-EPP-1-2017-1-PT-EPPKA2-KA

In <u>general school education</u>, there has been a shift towards a more student-centred approach and, due to the introduction of ICT tools, teaching is more focused on competences: a combination of competences and knowledge replaces the idea of purely content-based learning (Cedefop, 2016). At <u>upper secondary level</u>, there are three main pathways: general (licei), technical and vocational education. Each pathway lasts five years, leading to a diploma, and learning outcomes are linked to the EQF. In <u>vocational training</u>, where the regions have main responsibility, there is a focus on competences, which are described in terms of learning outcomes. There are two different possibilities for vocational training: a three-year or a four-year pathway. Both lead to a diploma and a qualification acknowledged at national level. The four-year course can open up higher education options, provided the student takes an additional year and sits a State exam. The apprenticeship system has also been reformed in recent years, and the new legislative framework (9) includes important references to the EQF and the use of learning outcomes. It contains the definition of competences as the smallest units for certification defining a professional profile, collected into codified lists based on the relevant EQF level and on clear explanation of learning outcomes (Italian technical working group, 2012).

The <u>higher (non-academic) technical education and training pathway (Istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore) (IFTS)</u> used a national standard system based on competences from 2000; since 2008 the standards have been updated to make them more coherent with the learning outcomes approach. With this 2008 amendment, IFTS was reorganised and higher technical education (istruzione tecnica superior (ITS)) was established (10). IFTS courses last one year, ITS courses two. Both types of curricula are made up of units consistent with the learning outcomes approach. They are linked to EQF levels. <u>In academic education (universities), policy-makers strengthened the need to align diplomas and certificates to commitments of the Bologna process[1]. In the existing framework for higher education (QTI), Dublin descriptors (11) are used nationally for the cycles of higher education agreed within the Bologna process. More specific descriptors are being defined for each programme by universities but, clear evidence on application of the learning outcomes approach is still missing (Cedefop, 2016).</u> Higher education is still under

---

1 *In 2005, the Ministers of Higher Education of the Bologna Process signatory countries decided to develop the* <u>*Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area - QF for the EHEA*</u>*. The Framework comprises the three main cycles of Higher Education, as defined by the Bologna Process, and offers an overview of all qualifications awarded at the end of each cycle, with reference to the number of ECTS credits collected and to the learning outcomes according to the Dublin Descriptors. The Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area is aimed at facilitating the correct understanding and comparability of qualifications in the higher education systems of each country. A further aim of the framework is to offer a comprehensive overview of the European teaching and learning offer, targeted at students coming from all over the world. Each country committed to putting together a National Qualifications Framework – NQF which is compatible with the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. In 2005, the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) started working on the* <u>*Italian Qualifications Framework*</u>*, in compliance with the procedures established at European level. CIMEA was tasked with producing the first prototype model of the National Framework and, after a process of national consultation, the* <u>*Italian Qualifications Framework – QTI*</u> *was published in 2010. Since 2012, CIMEA has been a participant in the work of the* <u>*National Correspondents for Qualifications Frameworks (QF-EHEA)*</u> *group, created at the Council of Europe, representing Italy.*

reform, aiming to move the system closer to the European standards designed by the Bologna process.

Italian Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education

University Institutions		Higher Education Institutions for Fine Arts, Music and Dance - AFAM
Laurea	1st cycle	Diploma accademico di primo livello
Laurea magistrale/specialistica	2nd cycle	Diploma accademico di secondo livello
Dottorato di ricerca	3rd cycle	Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca

2.2 Content Analysis of HEIs' Tourism Curricula

Higher education in Italy is mainly provided by a large and international network of public and state affiliated universities. State-run universities of Italy are under the supervision of Italian's Ministry of Education. There is also a number of private universities and state-run post-secondary educational centers providing a vocational instruction.

Universities in Italy fits the framework of the Bologna Process since the adoption, in 1999, of the so-called 3+2 system. The first level degree is the Laurea triennale that can be achieved after three years of studies. Selected students can then complete their studies in the following step: two additional years of specialization which leads to the Laurea Magistrale.

The "Laurea triennale" corresponds roughly to a Bachelor Degree while the "Laurea Magistrale" corresponds to a Master Degree. Only the Laurea Magistrale grants access to third cycle programmes (Post-MA degrees, Doctorates or Specializing schools), that last 2 to 5 years (usually completing a PhD takes 3 years). However, there is just a unique five-year degree "Laurea Magistrale Quinquennale" (Five-Year Master of Arts) for some programmes such as Law (Facoltà di Giurisprudenza), Arts (Accademia di Belle Arti) and Music (Conservatorio di Musica). Medical schools (Facoltà di Medicina e Chirurgia) are part of some universities and they only offer six-year courses. The title for MA/MFA/MD/MEd graduate students is Dottore (abbreviation in Dott./Dott.ssa or Dr., meaning Doctor). This title is not to be confused with the PhD and Post-MA graduates, whose title is Dottore di Ricerca (Research Doctor or Philosophy Doctor).

The Italian master's degree should not be confused with Italian "Masters" that are one-year specialistic courses which guarantee a more practical education but do not give access to further levels of studies.

The table reports the list of Italian Universities in tourism and hospitality sector (www.miur.it).
All the courses are described with a special session called Quadro A4.b "*Expected results in learning; Knowledge and comprehension; Ability to apply understanding and knowledge*" and here are some examples of skill cited in this part.

University nr. 1:
- critical reading skills of the cultural complexity produced by the globalized world to operational capabilities, adapted to specific professional contexts.
- recognize conflict situations and develop linguistic strategies for mediation
- tackle new language learning opportunities in an efficient and autonomous way to integrate new knowledge and cultural experiences with existing ones
- use language skills to enrich their training
- understand the different discursive contexts related to tourism specialization, showing to be able to critically analyze oral and written texts, conceived for different purposes and for different users (descriptive reports, promotional texts, project documents), even in the two foreign languages chosen for further study
- use the language to carry out specialized mental and practical actions useful to face professional tasks.
- develop analytical skills on environmental resources and on tourist valorization
- reconstruct the dynamics and processes useful to bring out the cultural significance of the landscape as a unit of environmental and tourism planning;
- use an integrated approach to the problems of tourism systems and their solution;
- interact correctly and profitably with public and private organizations, communities and actors in the institutional, cultural, social and environmental contexts in which tourism systems are located;
- recognizing the role and potential of the various stakeholders and defining the conditions for their effective coordination
- manage networks between people and operators
- evaluate the quality of specific tools (typically websites and apps) in communication and marketing of tourism territories
- able to apply the knowledge acquired in the course of studies, creating innovative communication tools
- the ability to interact with tourist organizations and operators
- to acquire knowledge but also a critical look on the activities carried out by them, both to learn innovative management formulas, and to suggest methodologies learned in the course of studies, helping to apply them in specific contexts
- to develop transversal skills and reflect on one's own attitudes and vocations

- to weave knowledge and relationships useful to have an active part in the search for future professional opportunities

University nr.2:
- train professionals with advanced technical and operational skills, critical skills, problem setting and problem solving in the design and management of complex tourism systems.
- provide graduate students with adequate theoretical and methodological knowledge to be applied to the management of tourism and the tourist destination, with particular reference to communication to different types of users in the area of enhancement and promotion of the territory also in its complex and integrated aspects.
- ability to manage methods and operational tools of investigation, typical of the main research techniques in psycho-pedagogical and sociological (quantitative and qualitative), to be able to apply them to the optimization of tourist contexts through use of software and acquiring teamwork skills.

University nr. 3:
- acquisition of knowledge and interpretative skills suitable for the elaboration and implementation of original projects,
- management of complex conditions and contexts, under the aspects territorial, economic-organizational, communicative, above all through the use of multimedia technologies and tools.
- acquisition and the ability to apply analytical, interpersonal and transversal skills that allow the graduate to develop collective responsibility and autonomy in work
- decision-making management skills,
- creativity and innovation skills in the tourist and socio-territorial process.

L15 – SCIENZE DEL TURISMO (Tourism Sciences)
Università della Calabria, Rende
Università degli studi di Catania, Catania
Università degli studi di Ferrara, Ferrara
Università di Genova, Genova
Università degli studi dell'Insubria Varese- Como, Como
Università degli Studi di MACERATA, Macerata
Università degli Studi di MESSINA, Messina
Università degli Studi di MILANO – BICOCCA; Milano
Libera Università di lingue e comunicazione IULM-MI, Milano
Università degli Studi del MOLISE, Termoli
Università degli Studi di NAPOLI "Federico II", Napoli
Università degli Studi della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli", Caserta
Università degli Studi di PADOVA, Padova
Università degli Studi di PALERMO, Palermo
Università per stranieri di Perugia, Perugia
Università degli Studi del PIEMONTE ORIENTALE "Amedeo Avogadro"-Vercelli, Novara
Università di PISA, Pisa

Project No. 588476-EPP-1-2017-1-PT-EPPKA2-KA

Università degli studi europea di Roma, Roma
Università degli Studi di ROMA "La Sapienza", Roma
Università degli Studi di ROMA "Tor Vergata", Roma
Università degli Studi di SALERNO, Fisciano
Università degli Studi di SASSARI, Sassari
Università telematica Pegaso, Napoli
Università Telematica "Universitas MERCATORUM", Roma
Università degli Studi di TORINO, Torino
Università degli Studi di UDINE, Udine
LM 49 – PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF TOURISM SYSTEM
Università degli studi di Bari, Bari
Università degli Studi di BERGAMO; Bergamo
Università della CALABRIA, Rende
Università degli Studi di FIRENZE, Firenze
Università degli Studi di MACERATA, Macerata
Università degli Studi di MESSINA, Messina
Università degli Studi di MILANO – BICOCCA, Milano
Libera Università di lingue e comunicazione IULM, Milano
Università degli Studi del MOLISE, Termoli
Università degli Studi di PALERMO, Palermo
Università degli Studi del PIEMONTE ORIENTALE "Amedeo Avogadro"-Vercelli, Vercelli
Università di PISA, Pisa
Università degli Studi di ROMA "Tor Vergata", Roma
Università del Salento, Lecce
Università degli Studi di TRENTO, Trento
Università degli Studi di UDINE, Udine
Università "Cà Foscari" di VENEZIA, Venezia

2.3 Questionnaire

In July 2018 a total of 17 questionnaire have been administered:

Current Students	24 questionnaires
Graduate Students	12 questionnaires

2.3.1 Current Students

Table 1: Respondent Demographics

Variable	Fr.	%
Gender		
Female	22	91,7%
Male	2	8,3%
Major field of study		
Tourism and/or hospitality	14	58,3%
Hotel/lodging management	0	0

Restaurant management	0	0
Destination management	9	37,5%
Other	1	4,2%
Combined length of any work experience		
Mean	27,58	
Mode	3	
Standard Deviation	30,84	
Highest	114	
Lowest	0	
None	0	0
< 1 year	10	41,7%
1-2 years	7	29,2%
≥ 3 years	7	29,2%
Length of work experience in T&H		
Mean	13,67	
Mode	3	
Standard Deviation	18,27	
Highest	63	
Lowest	0	
None	3	12,5%
< 1 year	11	45,8%
1-2 years	7	29,2%
≥ 3 years	3	12,5%
T&H field(s) in which you worked so far (multiple answers are possible)		
DMO / tourism board (national, regional or local)	5	
Hotel / restaurant (including catering)	12	
Cruising / nautical (including charter)	0	
Travel agency / tour operator	6	
Transportation (air, sea, rent a car, etc.)	0	
Event / congress organization	7	
Marketing / PR	1	
Consulting agency	0	
Other	1	
Job assignment(s) – multiple answers possible		
Waiter / waitress	6	
Kitchen worker	1	
Bar worker	5	
Host / hostess	2	
Social media	4	
Front desk / reception	9	
Housekeeping	0	
Travel agent	5	
Event planner	7	
HR	0	

Project No. 588476-EPP-1-2017-1-PT-EPPKA2-KA

Sales & marketing	0	
Guest relations	8	
Tour guide	1	
Other	2	

Table 2: Importance and satisfaction about soft skills

Conceptual/ Creative soft skills

	importance	satisfaction
Maintain the "big picture" while working on a specific property-management, layout, and design component (1)	4,25	4,09
Manifest critical thinking (2)	4,00	3,96
Demonstrate an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment (3)	4,63	3,87
Develop new ideas (4)	4,60	3,54
Develop adaptation responses to unexpected changes (5)	4,71	3,63
Exhibit knowledge of related job roles - peers, subordinates, others (6)	4,08	3,65
Manifest development and adaptation of innovation or improvements (7)	4,67	4,25
Understand the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties (8)	4,46	3,87
Consider customer needs when making decisions (9)	4,88	3,47
Bring together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways (10)	4,35	4,08

Leadership soft skills

	importance	satisfaction
Steer conflicts away from personalities and toward issues (11)	4,54	3,50
Present ideas in a convincing manner (12)	4,38	3,71

	importance	satisfaction
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner (13)	4,50	3,92
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change (14)	4,08	3,83
Operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations (15)	4,65	3,75
Build networks with people inside and outside the firm (16)	4,58	4,21
Confront problems early before they become unmanageable (17)	4,54	3,74
Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate (18)	4,42	3,88
Listen carefully to input and concerns expressed by others (19)	4,13	3,79
Promote respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences (20)	4,38	4,25

Interpersonal soft skills

	importance	satisfaction
Manage guest requests with understanding and sensitivity (21)	4,70	3,71
Communicate efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers (22)	4,70	3,79
Exhibit emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion (23)	4,17	3,40
Effectively handle staff grievances and complaints (24)	4,29	3,57
Act courteously and respectfully (25)	4,79	4,22
Demonstrate awareness of others' feelings (26)	4,21	3,83
Exhibit negotiating skills (27)	4,42	3,73
Provide effective feedback (28)	4,58	3,96
Demonstrate empathy in dealing with customers and staff (29)	4,48	3,65
Manifest intercultural sensitivity (30)	4,46	4,08

2.3.1 Graduate Students

Table 3: Respondent Demographics

Project No. 588476-EPP-1-2017-1-PT-EPPKA2-KA

Variable	Fr.		%
Gender			
Female	11		91,7%
Male	1		8,3%
Combined length of any work experience (in years)			
Mean			**43,83**
Mode			**6**
Standard Deviation			**39,46**
Highest			120
Lowest			3
< 1 year	3		25,0%
1.3 year	4		33,3%
> 3 years	5		41,7%
Length of work experience in T&H (in years)			
Mean			**26,08**
Mode			**6**
Standard Deviation			**38,81**
Highest			120
lowest			3
< 1 year	7		58,3%
1.3 year	3		25,0%
> 3 years	2		16,7%
Current field of employment			
DMO / tourism board (national, regional or local)	4		
Hotel / restaurant (including catering)	0		
Cruising / nautical (including charter)	0		
Travel agency / tour operator	1		
Transportation (air, sea, rent a car, etc.)	0		
Event / congress organization	2		
Marketing / PR	0		
Consulting agency	1		
Other	4		
Current position			
Entry level	3		25,0%
Assistant manager	1		8,3%
Department manager / supervisor	2		16,7%
Other	6		50,0%

Table 4: Importance and satisfaction about soft skills

Conceptual/ Creative soft skills

	importance	satisfaction
Maintain the "big picture" while working on a specific property-management, layout, and design component (1)	4,42	4,36
Manifest critical thinking (2)	4,30	3,77
Demonstrate an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment (3)	4,75	3,83
Develop new ideas (4)	4,92	4,17
Develop adaptation responses to unexpected changes (5)	4,58	3,70
Exhibit knowledge of related job roles - peers, subordinates, others (6)	3,60	3,36
Manifest development and adaptation of innovation or improvements (7)	4,50	3,82
Understand the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties (8)	4,25	3,33
Consider customer needs when making decisions (9)	4,58	3,75
Bring together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways (10)	4,67	3,17

Leadership soft skills

	importance	satisfaction
Steer conflicts away from personalities and toward issues (11)	4,25	3,17
Present ideas in a convincing manner (12)	4,50	3,92
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner (13)	4,33	3,50
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change (14)	3,58	3,33
Operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations (15)	4,67	3,82
Build networks with people inside and outside the firm (16)	4,58	3,91
Confront problems early before they become unmanageable (17)	4,92	3,45
Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate (18)	4,60	3,82
Listen carefully to input and concerns expressed by others (19)	3,92	3,73

	importance	satisfaction
Promote respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences (20)	4,00	4,08

Interpersonal soft skills

	importance	satisfaction
Manage guest requests with understanding and sensitivity (21)	4,42	4,00
Communicate efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers (22)	4,73	4,00
Exhibit emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion (23)	4,25	3,55
Effectively handle staff grievances and complaints (24)	4,25	4,09
Act courteously and respectfully (25)	4,83	4,27
Demonstrate awareness of others' feelings (26)	4,18	4,00
Exhibit negotiating skills (27)	4,25	3,73
Provide effective feedback (28)	4,58	4,18
Demonstrate empathy in dealing with customers and staff (29)	4,55	3,82
Manifest intercultural sensitivity (30)	4,42	4,17

2.4 In-Depth Interviews

The interviews were designed to gather information from T&H employers and HEI instructors in regard to the following outcomes:

1. To understand how important are soft skills in the modern T&H workplace?
2. To rank the 10 most relevant conceptual/creative skills in the contemporary T&H workplace in order of their perceived importance.
3. To rank the 10 most relevant leadership skills in the contemporary T&H workplace in order of their perceived importance.
4. To rank the 10 most relevant interpersonal skills in the contemporary T&H workplace in order of their perceived importance.
5. To divulge how satisfied are T&H employers with the soft skills that, in their experience, graduate employees have? Which are best & which worse developed?
6. To uncover what emphasis is given to learning these skills in the T&H curricula today? Is it satisfactory and why (not)?
7. To unveil how are soft skills now learned and evaluated in the HEI system (methods, frequency, importance/weight, in which courses)?

8. To propose how should soft skills be learned and evaluated in the HEI system (methods, frequency, importance/weight, in which courses)?
9. To rank the 10 most relevant methods of learning soft skills by T&H undergraduate students in order of their perceived effectiveness.
10. To understand what are the main assumptions/obstacles/challenges in achieving these learning methods?
11. To propose how can these be assured/resolved?

2.4.1 Participant demographics

We conducted interviews to Two T&H employer representatives and two T&H HEI instructors (4 male):

1. **Roberto Peretta**, University of Bergamo, Professor of Digital Humanities and Tourism and Social Media Marketing - IT for Tourism Services. He has published for Rough Guides, Time Out, Mondadori, Hoepli, Zanichelli, De Agostini, the Province of Milan, the Italian Touring Club. He's the director of the ciaomilano.it website. He designed and manages the web communication of the Case Museo network in Italy. Consultant for public administrations in Milan, Como and Bergamo, as well as for publishing houses. From 2000 until 2009 resident consultant at the Italian Touring Club on digital communication, European projects, tourism content management, mobile terminals.

2. **Andrea Macchiavelli**, University of Bergamo, Professor of Tourism Economics and Destination Management. He has directed CeSTIT- Tourism Lab for almost 20 years. He is scientific director of the Clas Group Tourism Department of Milan and is an active member of the AIEST (International Association of Experts Scientifiques du Tourisme). He has published numerous essays in national and international scientific journals and frequently participates in congress activities in Italy and abroad.

3. **Oscar Galeazzi**, Director of Soluzione Lavoro Turismo, research company and selection of personnel for the tourism-hotel-restaurant sector. Administrator of LavoroTurismo.it, an online research site for staff, Teacher (part time) in the lounge-bar, expert in specific training subjects for waiters; Author of professional books for restaurants and hotels, with the Hoepli publishing house; Trainer and consultant for restaurants and bars; Consultant for online recruitment implementation services.

4. **Giorgio Bianchi**, Director/ Head Italia PKF hotelexperts at PKF Consulting; held management roles within leading companies in the tourism & hospitality field; Specialised in marketing and development in the tourism industry, supervising important hotel projects in Italy and abroad and many courses among which a master degree at the Cornell University. As visiting professor, held many lecture courses for prestigious Italian universities and master degrees in tourism.

2.4.2 Results / participant perspectives

15

Outcome 1. Soft skills are really important in tourism sector, even though they are part of a personal education and comes from far away

Question: How important are soft skills the modern tourism and hospitality workplace?

1. Findings from the interviewee no. 1: Says that soft skills are probably the discriminative aspect in a selection process, as these are the first elements that are analyzed in a selection. For this reason, at a University level they need to be already acquired and in this last phase improved. Companies have learned that it's easier to teach hard skills, rather than soft skills as they implies more time and energies.

2. Findings from interviewee no. 2: Says that listening and needs interpretation are of course the most important skills, but at the first stage is the ability to face problems in a soft way, the management of a problem in a positive way, and this could be learned at a university level, even though comes from the experience of each of us, from our old background

3. Findings from the interviewee no. 3: Says that they are very important. It could be useful to study them related to organizational aspects of tourism, and for this reason the professor need to be also a consultant in the professional world in order to have a concrete experience.

4. Finding from the interviewee no. 4: Says that motivation is a strong skill for young employees. They need to be motivated to that that job: if they are motivate, they can learn all other soft skills and motivation comes from other experience, from the school, from the family… so from fare away.

Outcome 2: Difficulties to talk about soft skills in abstract, better to adapt and test on specific cases or real situation

Question: Invite the interviewee to share his or her thoughts on anything noteworthy regarding the questionnaire.

1. Findings from the interviewee no. 1: Says that the list is complex and disputable. For example, if we're talking of a young student at his first experience in tourism doesn't need leadership skills, but probably is better to have others soft skills, so depends on the different situation

2. Findings from the interviewee no. 2: Says that it's important to find a situation in order to answer the questions, as the situation allows to connect a particular behavior. In an abstract way, it's difficult to talk about tourism, as tourism is a wide sector.

3. Findings from the interviewee no. 3: Affirms that it's really difficult to choose and rank in an abstract way among the proposed options. "*All the indicted soft skills could be important in my opinion, as I need some situation to test each of them. For example, if you're in a start up- company probably is very important team working skills, but if you're getting into a multinational corporation, you'll probably need to respect and recognize roles and levels. There are no parameters to answer*"

Project No. 588476-EPP-1-2017-1-PT-EPPKA2-KA

4. Findings from the interviewee no. 4: Doesn't indicate this kind of difficulties in ranking soft skills. He added that the one of the most important things is the origin of the student: for example, it they're coming from an international context (international schools), they are more able to manage conflicts and international issues and of course they speak a language easier and better thank others.

Outcome 3: The emphasis to soft skill is not enough, more tools and other opportunities need to be offered to the students in order to test themselves
Question: What emphasis is given to learning these skills in the T&H curricula today? Is it satisfactory? If the answer is no, then why do you think that is?/ How satisfied are you with the soft skills that, in your experience, graduate employees have? Which are best & which worse developed?

1. Findings from interviewee nr. 1: Says that young employees are aware about soft skills than in the past (e.g. empathy, conflict management, international approach, team working). But they are less likely to linked to the company, they are more focused on themselves, they want to be the first, they want to arrive easily, there is more competition. Soft skills need to be learned softly, take time, during a real experience, that allow to grow together with the company.
2. Findings from interviewee nr. 2: Says that not enough strength is given to soft skills, even though professors of the course are trying different methodologies to teach them. There is not a precise subject, a precise course or a precise method, but it's entrusted to the good will of the teacher. This is not considered a scientific dimension, but comes from personal abilities of each student (and also from education) and depend on the opportunities that you can create for each group of students.
3. Findings from the interviewee no. 3: Says that learning of soft skill is a vital element in tourism course, event though students need to have the opportunity to test themselves in real situation, in workshop, laboratories and so on.. in real situation where they can really test how to manage problems.
4. Findings from interviewee nr. 4: Confirms that depends on the past experience of each person, e.g. students who come from international context are more able to manage complex and international situation.

Outcome 4: Soft skills learning need time and long- term engagement
Question: How are they now learned and evaluated in the HEI system (methods, frequency, importance/weight, in which courses)?/ How can these skills best be learned (methods, frequency, in which courses, in which year of the study, etc.) and evaluated?

1. Findings from the interviewee nr. 1: Say that the process of soft skills learning need to start from the school and from the family and the education need to be less related to the competition or to the grade, but to the learning of new abilities in a cooperative context. The companies need to use time and energies to prepare their

INCOME Tourism

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

new employees, but of course this is also a matter of cost and not always companies understand this added value.

2. Finding from the interviewee nr. 2: Says that the tourism courses have their own structure and teach precise skills is related to the subject itself. Each professor has his/her own methodology but it would need more time, more hours and a common process.

3. Findings form interviewee no. 3: Says that Western Societies are more and more isolated. Interpersonal skills are not only to acquire, but also a meta- learning process (if you're able to reflect on them). A more timing course to acquire interpersonal abilities is the first step to then test and acquire other soft and hard skills.

4. Findings from interviewee no. 4: Says that it's important to work on real and concrete situation, to real case studies and for this reason more time is needed to do that.

Outcome 5: The main challenge is to be open minded and flexible

1. Findings from interviewee no. 1: Says that the company need to be more flexible in driving students to learn soft skills; they need to teach how to work in group, need to patient and open minded in understanding that they have a new role.

2. Findings from interviewee nr. 2: Says "*The main challenge is to be open minded. You can't talk about tourism if you haven't touched the reality and test real situation. And the contact with real contexts can inspire you and teach you to be open minded*"

3. Findings form interviewee no. 3: Says "*We can't teach to have new ideas, but we can teach how to be creative, to manager stress situation and to manage sudden changings*".

4. Findings from interviewee no. 4: Says that international and complex contexts teach the students to be open minded, to be able to manage different and complex situation, to understand how they need to behave.

Note: Only 2 of the interviewees filled in the pre-interview questionnaire. *During the interviews, 2 of our interviees expressed their difficulty in filling in the pre-interview questionnaire and ranking the skills. The difficulty is due to the fact that the soft skills are not referred to a specific job or sector of jobs. Tourism sector is quite wide and this ranking could be misleading if we consider the whole panorama of different professionalities. In one interview is reported that the list is complex and disputable. For example, if we're talking of a young student at his first experience in tourism doesn't need leadership skills, but probably is better to have others soft skills, so depends on the different situation. Moreover, it is declared that "it's important to find a situation in order to answer the questions, as the situation allows to connect a particular behavior. In an abstract way, it's difficult to talk about tourism, as tourism is a wide sector"*

2.5 Focus Groups

The University of Bergamo organized a focus group the 9th of July 2018 at the University, before the first round table thematic discussion, that takes place the same day but with more participants.

It has been foreseen the involvements of:
- 2 representatives of tourism and hospitality (T&H) stakeholder groups
- 1 representative of Planning and Management of Tourism System of the University of Bergamo professors and instructors
- 2 representatives of graduate students
- 2 representative of non graduate students (last year course)

Leading focus group: Roberta Garibaldi

The discussion was designed to gather information from T&H employers and HEI educators in regard to the following outcomes:
1. To understand how important are soft skills in the modern T&H workplace?
2. To generate a list of up to 10 most relevant conceptual/creative skills in the contemporary T&H workplace and to rank them in order of their perceived importance.
3. To generate a list of up to 10 most relevant leadership skills in the contemporary T&H workplace and to rank them in order of their perceived importance.
4. To generate a list of up to 10 most relevant interpersonal skills in the contemporary T&H workplace and to rank them in order of their perceived importance.
5. To propose how should soft skills be learned and evaluated in the HEI system (methods, frequency, importance/weight, in which courses)?
6. To generate a list of up to 10 methods of learning soft skills by T&H undergraduate students and rank them in order of their perceived effectiveness.
7. To understand what are the main assumptions/obstacles/challenges in achieving these learning methods?
8. To propose how can these be assured/resolved?

2.5.1 Participant demographics
- 2 representatives of tourism and hospitality (T&H) stakeholder groups: Chiara Brembilla (Bergamo B&b and Co), Ornella Gamacchio (Tourism Expert Communication)
- 1 representative of Planning and Management of Tourism System of the University of Bergamo professors and instructors: prof. Rossana Bonadei (President of the Course).
- 2 representatives of graduate students: Elena Viani and Andrea Pozzi
- 2 representative of non graduate students (last year course): Elisabetta Cavagnini and Alessia Tonsi.
- Leading focus group: Roberta Garibaldi

2.5.2 Development/ participant perspectives
At the beginning of the focus group session, the participants has been presented by Roberta Garibaldi with a brief definition and general description of soft skills and its three domains (conceptual/creative, leadership, and interpersonal).

Each participant wrote independently down on a piece of paper up to 10 specific conceptual/creative skills that a tourism/hospitality graduate should possess (see list below) and they were transcribed onto a master list and presented to all. The master list has then be scrutinized for relevance, clarity, completeness, and redundancy and the participants ranked the specific conceptual/creative skills in order of their perceived importance. Below the master list of up to 10 most frequently focus-group-cited conceptual/creative skills.

This phase was replicated for leadership skills and then for interpersonal skills.

After the preparation of the list, the definition of the 10 most cited soft skills in each sector, the list was read to the group.

Then Roberta Garibaldi stimulated the group of participants in order to propose a list of 10 methods of teaching soft skills to undergraduate students.

2.4.3 Findings

1. Up to 10 specific conceptual/creative skills that a tourism/hospitality graduate should possess:

- Chiara Brembilla: availability, flexibility, team working
- Ornella Gamacchio: team working, integration, creativity, problem solving, curiosity, long time learning, inspiring
- prof. Rossana Bonadei: group working, self analysis/self discussion, participation
- Elena Viani: creativity, empathy, critical thinking, development of new ideas, respect
- Andrea Pozzi: empathy, developing new ideas, innovative solutions
- Elisabetta Cavagnini: Self-development, such as reading, critical thinking, and career planning, problem definition, development of new ideas, developing adaptation responses to unexpected changes
- Alessia Tonsi: solve problems in creative way, design thinking, find innovative solution to challenges, planning, developing new ideas

Master list of up to 10 most frequently focus-group-cited conceptual/creative skills:

Development of new ideas
Team Working
Creativity
Empathy
Critical thinking
Respect
Find innovative solution

2. Up to 10 specific leadership skills that a tourism/hospitality graduate should possess:

- Chiara Brembilla: teamworking, organization, empathy
- Ornella Gamacchio: teamworking, relation building, empathy, understanding, listening, organization, time management, availability
- prof. Rossana Bonadei: teamworking, group leading, organization
- Elena Viani: teamworking, persuasion, networking, ethical working, propose new ideas
- Andrea Pozzi: flexibility, decision making, managing
- Elisabetta Cavagnini: Motivate employees to achieve desired performance, Team building, Communication and networking, Encouraging and developing subordinates, Treats people with respect, brings together different perspectives and approaches and combines them in creative ways, Views problems as opportunities and mistakes as progress, Listens carefully to the input and concerns expressed by others
- Alessia Tonsi: negotiation, motivation, inspire, clarity, flexibility, decision making, team building

Master list of up to 10 most frequently focus-group-cited leadership skills:

Team working
Organization
Empathy
Relation building
Networking
Flexibility
Decision making

3. Up to 10 specific interpersonal skills that a tourism/hospitality graduate should possess:

- Chiara Brembilla: sensitiveness, patient, communication
- Ornella Gamacchio: understanding, respect, listen the others, negotiation, flexibility, public speaking
- prof. Rossana Bonadei: group creation, relation building
- Elena Viani: sensitiveness, helpfullness, understanding, handling conflicts, negotiation
- Andrea Pozzi: friendly, patient
- Elisabetta Cavagnini: AQ such as positive thinking while facing any difficulty, Manage guest requests with understanding and sensitity, Communicate efficiently (orally and in writing), Cooperates w/ others, Empathy, Managing personal stress, Facilitating teams and teamwork
- Alessia Tonsi: communication, be persuasive, listen, diplomacy, empathy, sensitivity, deal with different cultures

Master list of up to 10 most frequently focus-group-cited interpersonal skills:

Sensitiveness	
Communication	
Understanding	
Negotiation	
Positive thinking	

4. A list of 10 methods of teaching soft skills to undergraduate students.

General findings: it's important that the students can ==experience real context where they can test their knowledge and their skills. The need to be proofed in real situation,== e.g. if we're talking about time management skills, they need to work effectively on a project and then have results to be measured.

1. Role playing/ role games (each student has a different role – e.g. in a precise job – and need to solve a problem, after a discussion with other students, who have other roles)
2. Project with precise object working in group (e.g. give a problem to solve related to job world and try to find a common solution)
3. Cooperative learning (make a group presentation about a topic that is not studied yet)
4. Flipped classroom workshop (give a aim and topic to be solved at home and then presenting solution to the classroom)
5. Concrete workshop by local stakeholder (defining period, aim, objective, and so on…)/ Concrete workshop in real companies where they can test the concrete results of their project or work
6. Case history, real problems or real commitments to be solved

3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations
Recommendations
- Work in group is really important and the organization need to work hard on that, in order to be able to pick up and be aware of the responsibilities of a whole project and not only of a part;
- Relations and empathy in order not only to understand and satisfy your customer, but also support and be helpful with your colleagues and understand the need of the complex organization;
- Keep on learning, as the world is always changing but also because of personal satisfaction and realization.

Pre interview questionnaire – Galeazzi

Interviewee Questionnaire

Importance of **conceptual/creative** skills

Please imagine that you are part of an interview panel/team involved in recruiting a university graduate to fill an entry-level management trainee position at a tourism and hospitality (T&H) firm. Please <u>rank</u> each of the following 10 conceptual/creative skills in order of their importance, with 1 being the most important skill to 10 being the least important skill in a new recruit.

NOTE: You cannot choose the same ranking for multiple skills (for example, you cannot choose two skills to be ranked 1).

Fill in one unique number per row ↱

Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization	7
Manifests critical thinking	9
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	1
Develops new ideas	10
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	6
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	5
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	4
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	2
Considers customer needs when making decisions	3
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	8

Importance of **leadership** skills

Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 leadership skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

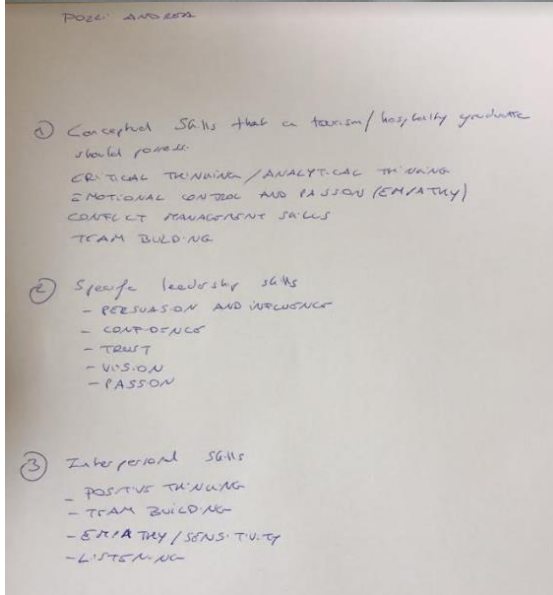|	
Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	5
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	9
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	8
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	6
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	3
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	10
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	4
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	2
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	1
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	7

Importance of **interpersonal** skills

Finally, please rank each of the following 10 interpersonal skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	1
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	2
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	5
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	4
Acts courteously and respectfully	3
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	6
Exhibits negotiating skills	10
Provides effective feedback	9
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	7
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	6

Pre interviewed questionnaire – Macchiavelli

Importance of **conceptual/creative** skills	
Please imagine that you are part of an interview panel/team involved in recruiting a university graduate to fill an entry-level management trainee position at a tourism and hospitality (T&H) firm. Please <u>rank</u> each of the following 10 conceptual/creative skills in order of their importance, with 1 being the most important skill to 10 being the least important skill in a new recruit. **NOTE**: You cannot choose the same ranking for multiple skills (for example, you cannot choose two skills to be ranked 1). Fill in one unique number per row	
Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization	2
Manifests critical thinking	4
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	7
Develops new ideas	5
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	3
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	10
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	8
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	9
Considers customer needs when making decisions	1
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	6

Importance of **leadership** skills
Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 leadership skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	10
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	5
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	9
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	2
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	6
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	3
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	4
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	7
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	1
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	8

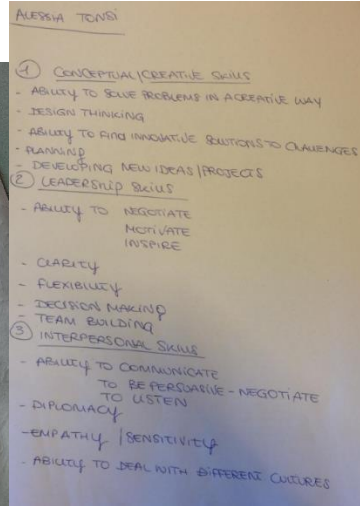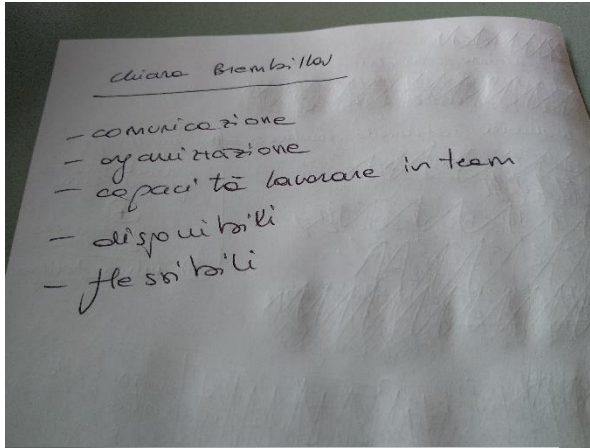| Importance of **interpersonal** skills	
Finally, please rank each of the following 10 interpersonal skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.	
Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	6
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	8
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	10
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	2
Acts courteously and respectfully	3
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	4
Exhibits negotiating skills	7
Provides effective feedback	9
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	1
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	5

Appendix 2: Focus Group Protocol and Supporting Documentation

Some documents used during the focus group

Elisabetta Cavagnini

1. Up to 10 specific conceptual/creative skills that a tourism/hospitality graduate should possess

Self-development, such as reading, critical thinking, and career planning
problem definition,
The development of new ideas
developing adaptation responses to unexpected changes

2. up to 10 specific leadership skills

Motivate employees to achieve desired performance
Team building
Communication and networking
Encouraging and developing subordinates
Treats people with respect
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combines them in creative ways
Views problems as opportunities and mistakes as progress
Listens carefully to the input and concerns expressed by others

3. up to 10 interpersonal skills

AQ such as positive thinking while facing any difficulty
Manage guest requests with understanding and sensitivity
Communicate efficiently (orally and in writing)
Cooperates w/ others
Empathy
Managing personal stress
Facilitating teams and teamwork

Project No. 588476-EPP-1-2017-1-PT-EPPKA2-KA