



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



WP 9: 1st Thematic Discussion Summary Report (Croatia)

Report Compiled by
Faculty of Economics, Business and Tourism
at University of Split



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



1.0 Introduction

The 1st Thematic Discussion was held on Friday, July 13th, 2018, at the Faculty of Economics, Business and Tourism at University of Split, in Split, Croatia.

The aim of the event was to bring together key tourism industry stakeholders, coming from academia, private businesses, business associations, tourism boards, unions, and student representatives to help elucidate the current gap between what soft skills are learned at tourism higher educational institutions (HEI) and the requirements of the tourism industry.

During the introductory part of the discussion, the moderator highlighted the main goals of the project and presented the following discussion points:

- Current state and challenges in the labor market in tourism and hospitality (T&H)
- Current state and challenges in the system of higher education in T&H
- What are soft skills (examples)?
- Soft skills acquired by students vs. soft skills sought after in the T&H labor market
- What have we achieved so far and what is yet to be accomplished in order to advance soft skills?

2.0 Main Outcomes of the Round-table Discussion

A participant representing a regional tourism board emphasized the importance of soft skills in the business environment, highlighted the need to improve on the instructional methods at universities in the context of a more intensive promotion and learning of soft skills, and provided several personal real-life experiences to support the expressed notions.

A representative of a local tourism board argued that students should be better informed about a number of complex (stressful) situations that are commonplace in the work environment. Therefore, such situations need to be both presented and simulated to students during their university studies. A particular prominence was given to the necessity and usefulness of attaining emotional intelligence. Thus, courses' curricula should be amended accordingly.

A workers' union representative stressed that during their studies, students should acquire practical understanding of real working conditions, and that learning of soft skills ought to begin at a high school level. Moreover, young people should be steered towards the labor market and get familiar with its challenges and requirements from a young age. At the same time, they need to grasp the workplace rights afforded under national and international labor laws. Similarly, there is concern that young people often lack knowledge on how to approach their work tasks, thus a systematic effort by both the society at large and the national and



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



local authorities is needed to prepare them in this direction. An important way of thrusting the young people in the desired direction is to get them involved in various practical projects. Another union representative welcomes the German model of dual education presented in the beginning of the thematic discussion.

A student representative praised the quality of education received at a high school specializing in tourism and hospitality. A number of school-sponsored internships and skill competitions allowed her to acquire a range of workplace skills and an overall feeling of self-confidence at work. She further remarked that her current university program could and should do more to advance the skills she acquired in high school.

An owner of a small hotel accentuated the importance of collaboration between higher education institutions and various lodging establishments, especially the small and/or family hotels. Because an employee at a small hotel is typically exposed to a wider range of daily / operational situations and tasks, as compared to its counterpart working at a large hotel, such an employee goes through a significantly richer learning experience. To that effect, an HEI representative pointed to employers frequently reporting insufficient time for training interns and new hires.

Towards the end of the discussion, a representative of the regional chamber of commerce emphasized the timeliness of the overall theme of this discussion. Much to her dismay, many young people exhibit inappropriate approach to work as early as during their job interview. Specifically, she finds that entry-level job candidates often are impolite (e.g., failing to express a greeting at the beginning of the job interview) and all too frequently immediately jump to the question about their salary.

This comment immediately gave rise to a remark by the small hotel owner, who vented his frustration with recently having interviewed at least 70 candidates at a number of job fairs around the country, where in almost all instances the first question he faced was about the pay. Another HEI representative lamented that such unbecoming conduct can be traced, at least in part, to the candidate's family values and/or societal values in general.

3.0 Conclusion

All of the participants commended the host for organizing this thematic discussion. They agreed that the discussion's central theme was not only interesting and relevant, but that it was also long overdue. That is, there was general consensus among all present stakeholders that there is some level of discrepancy between what students learn at HEIs and the actual job market expectations.



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



On a related note, the small hotel owner called upon a similar round-table discussion, however this time with more T&H practitioners and small business owners spanning various sectors of the tourism industry. He argued that the apparent gap between what is learned at tourism HEIs in terms of soft skills and the requirements of the tourism industry could be hammered out in an intense face-to-face discussion between HEI teachers and those with daily, first-hand experiences in the production and delivery of T&H services (i.e., tourism practitioners). The small hotel owner was assured that a focus group discussion on soft skills involving T&H practitioners and HEI representatives is scheduled to take place within two months following this thematic discussion.



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



Appendix 1: Event Program



1. tematska rasprava: Meke vještine u turizmu i ugostiteljstvu

1st Thematic Discussion: Soft Skills in the Tourism Industry

Petak, 13. srpnja 2018.

u 10h

Ekonomski fakultet
Sveučilišta u Splitu
Vijećnica 3
Aneks, 2. kat

10:00h	Uvodno obraćanje i predstavljanje turističkog EU projekta INCOME – <i>Ljudevit Pranić, EFST</i>
10:10h	Rasprava za okruglim stolom: Meke vještine – (ne)suglasje između turističkog uputnika (kurikula) u visokom obrazovanju i potreba turističkog sektora. Voditelj: <i>Ljudevit Pranić, EFST</i>
10:40h	Završno obraćanje



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





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



Appendix 2: Participants List



Događaj: 1. tematska rasprava
Naziv: 1. održavanje. Petak, 13. srpnja 2018.
Lokacija: Ekonomski fakultet Sveučilišta u Splitu

1. tematska rasprava Popis sudionika

Br. ime i prezime	Tvrtka/ustanova/org.	Poslovna adresa	E-adresa	Potpis
1. LAJKO PAVIĆ	HUGELI, BATA VOVA SINJERNA, RIJEČANJE	20150 ŠKO. FERDINANDIĆ 3. ŠK. BATA VOVA	stjke.pavic@net.hr	
2. LOVAG ZAFFANELLI	STUHI IZ BEGIJA	PEKARSKA 5 21300 MACARSKA	lovedsteb.hr	
3. TIJANA CUREBIOVIĆ	TUCIŠĆICA ZABOVIČA GACIJA SPLIT	OBALA HUP 9	info@visit-split.com	
4. MAJKA FRANETIĆ	TR SPLITSKO DALMATINSKA	PELAZ BRATJE KALITERNA 10	info@dalmatia.hr	
5. ANKARA MIKUNIĆ	EFST	Cvite Frlančić 5	ankara.mikunic@efst.hr	
6. DANIELA GABRIJ PRANIČEVIĆ	EFST	Cvite Frlančić 5	Daniela Defst.hr	
7. SLAVAN JELOVAČ	HOTEL VILLA ADRIATICA	Pun Vrh meštri 21400 SUPSTAR, DEČI	info@villadalmatica.com	
8. IVA PAVIĆ	ERASMUSKI FAKULTET U SPLITU	Cvite Frlančić 5	iva.pavic@gmail.com	



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



**INCOME
Tourism**

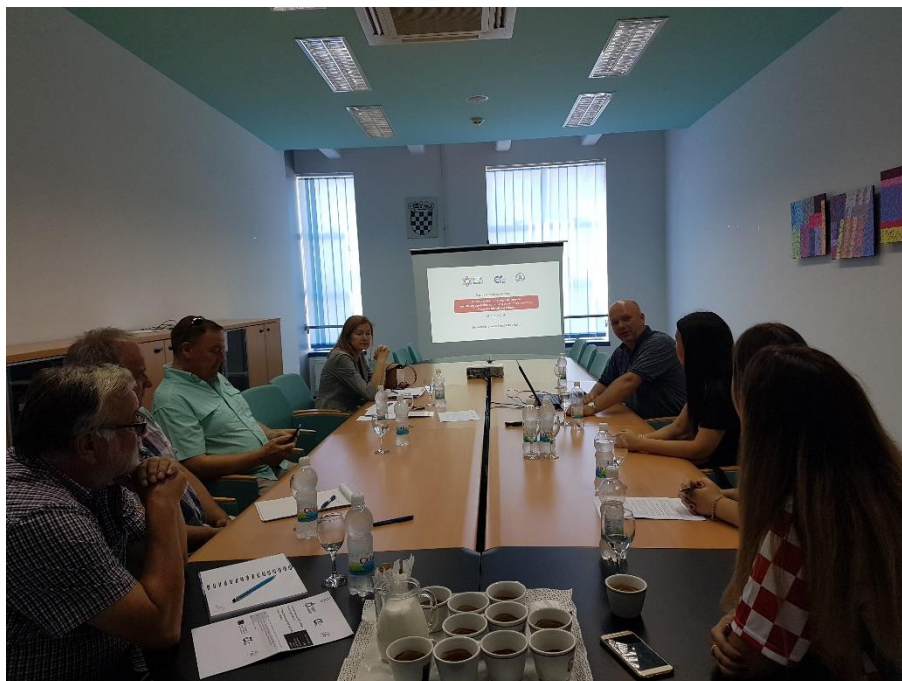
10	MARKET ANALYSIS	HJK ZK Split EFST	O.A. Trumbića 4 CIVILIZACIJSKI 21000 SPLIT	novsic@bigk.hr LJUDVIT. PRAMIC@EFST.CHR	ofus10
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					



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



Appendix 3: Photographs of the meeting and the dissemination/communication of the meeting via social media



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