



SEASON READY



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## COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

ITALY

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CESIE

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Please have in mind that the Country Specific recommendations are not a separate document but are a part of the Guide with recommendations for adoption of WBL in SMHE. HOK is currently working on developing the Guide, which will have the following structure:

1. Introduction (why was this project necessary, which are the problems it aims to solve)- HOK
2. WBL for the training of seasonal staff in SMHE (short description of project results)- HOK
3. **Country Specific Recommendations- HOK, PTO, Cesie/ Confesercenti**
4. General recommendations- conclusions on transferability, sustainability and systemic interventions- HOK

Please answer to all proposed questions below. When starting each answer note for which country you're writing. For example: *In Italy, current offer of WBL is...*

When formulating recommendations use bullet points and try to make them concise and relevant to the topic.



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## Country Specific Recommendations

### Introduction / Compare current WBL training offer to the proposed SeasonReady WBL training

#### What kind of training for seasonal workers is there currently in your country?

In Italy, the current training offer in the tourism and hospitality sector is dedicated to companies of all sizes, organised by professional associations – which are public agencies - and available for free.

Specifically, the professional training offered by the Sicily regional administration covers the following relevant topics:

- Foreign languages;
- Customer care;
- Web marketing & Digital strategy;
- Social and accessible tourism;
- Ecology and environment protection in hotels.

Besides, professional trainings are also offered by private agencies which, however, SMHEs rarely refer to given the higher costs they may have. Although these training courses can be tailored to the specific needs of companies and their employees, potentially bridging the existing educational/professional gaps that come with seasonality, investing in this type of training is largely seen as a waste of time and resources. Efforts are mostly put into the development and professional training of permanent employees instead.

#### What does the training we developed within this project offer to SMHE in your country, which didn't exist before?

Overall, project's objectives and results were very positively evaluated by SMHEs involved in the different implementation phases in Italy. They argued such materials can strongly support the development of seasonal staff and internal training by partially complementing the existing training offer at the regional level. Specifically, training gaps the SeasonReady project appears to adequately filled relate to:

- Intercultural understanding (intended as the interaction with and services to guests and clients coming from different cultures);
- Standard operating procedures (crucial to make hotels and accommodation facilities function at maximum efficiency. A lack of structure results in chaos, which stresses out team members who, in turn, lose motivation at work, eventually performing at suboptimal levels);
- Housekeeping, which is often underrated as it does not require specific competencies while it is at the core of the hospitality industry.



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### **How does the WBL training respond to needs of seasonal staff identified in IO1?**

In general, WBL training is deemed to be particularly effective in the tourism and hospitality sector which, compared to most other industries, has more real-life variables that can only be felt and dealt with in real-life experience.

WBL training responds to most of the needs of seasonal staff regardless of the occupation.

- **PROFESSIONALISM:** seasonal workers are often students who just finished their studies or are about to complete them, which mean they only have theoretical knowledge. Exposure to the workplace is therefore necessary to 'bring that theory to life', enabling them to have a direct experience of **working under pressure**, improve their **work ethics** by measuring their own performance against other colleagues' ones, and increase individual **flexibility** and **adaptability** thanks to the work environment and the need to compromise while working in a team;
- **COMMUNICATION:** WBL training provides seasonal workers with the opportunity to develop communication skills through their involvement in actual production, their informal and formal interaction with colleagues, management and customers, and through resolving the real-life challenges they encounter every day at work. On-the-job experiences give them the chance to effectively practice a **foreign language** through the repetition of new words in different contexts and in different meaning packed sentences, which is constantly required in hotels. It also helps learners understand the effects of hotel employees' **non-verbal communication** on the emotional responses of guests and, thus, the importance of a friendly and polite attitude towards customers;
- **CUSTOMER SERVICE:** Interaction and communication with guests and customers have some rules which should be respected in order to ensure professional and quality service, such as etiquette and courtesy. WBL training streamlines the process of learning how to comply with these rules, facilitating the interiorization of specific attitudes that relate to posture, speech, walking and anticipation through **peer observation**.



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### **Developing and introducing SeasonReady WBL training**

**Please give short general information on when and how the piloting was conducted and how many trainers/staff participated (a couple of sentences)**

CESIE, in collaboration with Confesercenti, held 3 face-to-face piloting sessions in Palermo from the 14<sup>th</sup> May to the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2019.

The piloting was conducted by 2 qualified trainers from CESIE and reached a total number of 10 participants with different backgrounds and training needs, representing part of the seasonal staff of the 3 SMHEs that participated in the whole piloting programme.

**Based on the evaluation results of the piloting carried out in your country, point out key benefits of this training for both trainers and seasonal staff**

Key benefits for TRAINERS:

Trainers got acquainted with new methods they never applied before in their daily practice, and finally were convinced providing a structured training at their workplace will increase effectiveness and efficiency of their job. They also found the demonstration and 4-step method most relevant and useful for their practical application.

Key benefits for SEASONAL STAFF:

Seasonal staff involved learned for the first time different techniques to handle difficult situations, dealing with complaints and stress management at their work. They also practiced and learned how to individually use the LAST approach, and did easy-to-replicate breathing and meditation exercises to calm stress.

It is worth mentioning that based on the participants' feedback and needs emerged during the face-to-face sessions, CESIE prepared an additional material focused on how to solve common situations in customer service using the English language.

### **Next steps / Promoting the implementation of SeasonReady WBL training**

**Please give short general information on the organisation of the focus group/ structured interviews- how many participants, their role (a couple of sentences)**

The focus group took place the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2019 at Confesercenti's office with the participation of 8 stakeholders representing regional policy makers, professional associations, VET providers, job agencies and public and private bodies. The organisation of the focus group was successful thanks to the smooth collaboration between CESIE and Confesercenti.



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### **Based on the focus group discussion/ structured interview point out key benefits of SeasonReady WBL training that the participants recognized (referring to 2<sup>nd</sup> question from the IO4 Focus Group Guidelines)**

The stakeholders consider crucial training in: foreign languages, customer care and customer relations, intercultural understanding and standard procedures. They think real-life experience and simulation of typical situations on the job should be included in an efficient training course. Some employers also find extremely useful manuals of standard procedures in different hospitality jobs.

SeasonReady training modules (O3) are exactly the kind of manual the stakeholders mentioned and, in their opinion, should be given to all new employees (permanent and seasonal) to ensure that they will follow them. Participants to the focus group who didn't know the project were very interested in seeing and eventually using the SeasonReady materials.

### **Based on the focus group discussion/ structured interview point out key recommendations for both implementing this WBL training and promoting it (referring to 3<sup>rd</sup> question from the IO4 Focus Group Guidelines)- if possible when formulating recommendations try to think which could be short-term and which long-term recommendations**

#### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS:

- WBL training and professional development should be supported on the public level via funding, tax reliefs and other incentives. For example, part of the city and tourist taxes could be used to fund professional training, upskilling and requalification of people working in tourism and hospitality. (Considering that SMHEs contribute significantly to income and overall development of the territory);
- Providing incentives to employers who train their seasonal workers and thus support the development of local human resources, facilitate their future employment and enhance the quality and potential of the whole sector. Such efforts should be better recognised and appreciated by the local public bodies.

#### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Collaboration between employers, professional training centres, schools and public authorities must be improved. There is divergence between different public and private entities that makes their collaboration difficult. Local public bodies are not well informed about the real problems and needs of employers, while the latter find it difficult to gain relevant and accurate information from public bodies. As a result, public authorities don't offer adequate support to the local employers and employers can't reach all the services possibly available. Improving interaction between public bodies and employers can, therefore, solve the lack of information on both sides.