



SEASON READY



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COUNTRY REPORT TEMPLATE FOR STRUCTURED INTERVIEW REPORTING

GREECE

PELOPONNESE TOURISM ORGANIZATION (PTO)



STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Date of the interview	Means of the interview (in person, telephone, Skype etc)	Name of the interviewee	Organisation + role in organisation	Stakeholder role
11/10/2019	telephone	Dr. Akrivos Christodoulos	University of Neapolis Pafos/ visiting staff	training provider
14/10/2019	telephone	Kahrimanis Konstantinos	Vocational Training center for tourism of the Ministry of Tourism/ Director	vocational education and training provider
14/10/2019	telephone	Tassios Grigorios	Hellenic Hoteliers Federation/ President	policy maker
16/10/2019	telephone	Pollali Georgia	Hotel Palazzo /Manager	SMHE manager
16/10/2019	telephone	Karahanidis Iordanis	Vocational Training center for tourism of the Ministry of	vocational education and training provider



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			Tourism/ Trainer	
17/10/2019	telephone	Koutsopoulos Petros	Hellenic Chamber of Hotels/ Member in the Board of Directors	policy maker
17/10/2019	telephone	Pollalis Dimitris	Hellenic Hoteliers Federation/ member of the Board	Tourism and Hospitality association
23/10/2019	telephone	Zacharopoulos Makis	The Hotels Association of Pyrgos/ President	tourism and hospitality association
29/10/2019	telephone	Mpozioi Konstantina	Greek Manpower Employment Organization/ employment counselling	policy maker
31/10/2019	telephone	Vourlakos Georgios	Greek Manpower Employment Organization/ Entrepreneurial counselling	policy maker

INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT

Which steps did you take before conducting the interview?

According to the SeasonReady proposal and the guidelines prepared by HOK the first step was to identify the potential interviewees and the specific target group that they belong to. After the identification and selection of the stakeholders, the second step consisted of their approach by phone in order to get, on one hand their approval for conducting the interview, explaining on the other hand, the means via which the interview could be conducted (e.g. telephone or skype). Consequently, they were sent the invitation that was already prepared by HOK to which they had to send back their feedback indicating the date and time that they were available for the interview. In some cases, follow-up calls had to be done, in order to rearrange the time of the interview due to heavy workload of the interviewees.



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Which materials did you deliver to the interviewees?

The concept note prepared by HOK, the WBL methodology guide, the link to the uploaded training materials and SeasonREADY flyers.

Did you introduce the project to the interviewees before the interview?

They were introduced to the project during the initial call where they were asked if they would be available for and/or interested in the interview. In this way, they were able to realize that the project belongs in their spectrum of activities, to have a better idea of it and to know what it actually concerns when reading the additional materials.

INTERVIEW TOPICS

1. The identification of the issue: the lack of skills and competences of seasonal staff/the lack of training system for seasonal staff in small and medium hospitality enterprises.

The existence of skills and competencies on a specific profession are more than necessary in tourism since most professions in the sector require direct contact with guests and therefore, they affect the quality of the given services and customers' satisfaction.

Apart from this, knowledge, skills and competencies contribute to the recognition of customer's needs. Therefore, the provision of qualitative services is directly connected to the levels of guest's/ customer's satisfaction. In other words, lack of specific skills and competencies when performing a profession in tourism when combined with the lack of experience may have negative consequences in the achievement of customer's satisfaction.

In addition, seasonal staff with the necessary skills and competencies is strongly believed to contribute to the overall growth of the tourism sector in terms of quality. Especially in suburban and provincial areas where the tourist season is specific, skilful seasonal staff that provides qualitative services may lead to the prolongation of season time and consequently, to the expansion of customers' base.

As it is mentioned above, it is strongly believed that a satisfied customer could be the best advertisement for a region, a hotel etc. So, when SMHEs' owners / managers aim in providing qualitative services may affect the profile of customers that will visit their business. For example, touristic regions that aiming in attracting



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massive numbers of visitors without caring whether the level of provided services will remain equally the same for all them, then it is normal to attract people that do not care for obtaining qualitative services and the opposite.

As for the case in Greece, quality consists of a dominant goal of the Greek Ministry of Tourism and therefore different kind of initiatives are adopted at national level such as the “EOT Quality Signs”, the “EOT Greek Cuisine” etc. that indicate quality’s strategic role and its importance as a prerequisite for the growth of the sector. Additionally, the development of tourism at national level depends on the quality of the provided services by SMHEs in total, since each and every hotel unit function as an ambassador of the country towards the foreigner tourists.

The lack of skills and competencies may bring negative consequences at the operation and the business success of the SMHEs since it may cause internal collisions and some kind of internal and external disorganization which may be perceived by the guests. Thus, the bad quality of the provided services leads to the disdain of the touristic product in general.

Apart from these, the lack of knowledge and skills may have a negative impact on the following segments:

- *Misuse of raw materials,*
- *Increase of SMHE’s operation costs*
- *Increase of environmental footprint in a negative way affecting the levels of energy, litter and effluents/ waste water*
- *Decrease of customer’s satisfaction levels which equals to bad service and eventually, to negative interpretation about the SMHE*
- *Dissatisfied customers that will not recommend this specific SMHE to others while at the same time, they spend nothing else apart from the amount that corresponds to their accommodation*
- *Incapacity on behalf of SMHEs owners to increase or to readjust the prices in the sector, so as to enhance not only the general economy in the field but also to maximize their profit.*
- *Increase of accidents during working routine because of ignorance on the dangers that lurk when performing their profession.*

As it can be seen from the above, the consequences that derive from the hiring of unskilled seasonal workers can proved to be catastrophic not only for the success of a SMHE but also, in the long run for the sector in general.



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The Greek National Tourism Organization (EOT) implements short term training programs that are specified in professions such as waiters, chefs and front office. These programs mainly address to seasonal staff in the tourism sector that have a minimum experience in the field.

There is also a training platform which could be provided by the Vocational Training centres for ad hoc, self-financed training programs addressed to interested parties in specific professions, such as cooking.

Furthermore, there are incentives promoted by the Greek Manpower Employment Organization where training programs addressed to employees are organized every year through their associations. Employees can participate once per year and after the successful completion of the program they earn an amount of money ranging from 160€ to 200€.

Finally, the development of a professional outline, in specific professions such as waiters and housekeepers would contribute significantly in the restoration of the prestige of those professions. In this way, potential employees would not cope with these professions as temporary and occasional occupation, but they would be more willing to set a career on it by investing in their training.

2. Solving the issue: implementing WBL training in small and medium enterprises

The training based on WBL methodology could be really useful for all stakeholders. More specific:

- *For employers it could be a way to secure them before hiring seasonal workers and also to gain knowledge about the main objective of the sector in order to exploit the provided tools for resolving certain critical issues (e.g. staff evaluation, organization of work and business's way of operation). Moreover, there are many employers that had no previous entrepreneurial experience in tourism businesses. Therefore, this training could also enlighten them on certain procedures and operations of the business itself.*
- *For seasonal staff this kind of training could lead them to their hiring since they can prove through it their knowledge and skills upon basic operations of the SMHE. It will enable them to gain self-confidence and increase their performance through the upgrade and/or change of their knowledge and skills, or even to take initiatives when performing their profession*



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- *For in-house trainers this kind of training could work as a guide for the preparation and facilitation of teaching these subjects, while it will enable them to enrich their training techniques by providing them with further guidelines and tools.*

As for the promotion of the WBL training methodology itself, stakeholders have expressed the belief that is easier to be promoted since it is available in the internet for free. Training and vocational centres that implement training programs within the tourism and hospitality field would be willing to promote it to their participants as complementary material for further practice.

Additionally, Employee and Entrepreneurial counsellors of the Greek Manpower Organization suggested to introduce this methodology to seasonal workers and SMHE owners/ managers since it is provided for free and does not go against the rules of their organization.

Communication and marketing tools, such as advertisements and other promotion techniques could contribute significantly to the introduction of the WBL methodology to a wider audience having as a main goal the prominence of its value and the benefits it brings in case that SMHEs owners and managers apply it in their businesses.

Another useful way would be for SMHE owners/ managers to recognize the benefits that this methodology could bring in the business in relation to the costs that accompanies its application. This will enable them to understand in other words, what they will give and what they will get when applying it in their businesses. Of course this could be achieved through the organization of training forums where owners and managers can discuss about the benefits of such a training and resolve any questions or objections with their colleagues.

The results of this kind of training could be reinforced when being accompanied by a number of supportive services and interventions that have to do not only with funding of training and opportunities for experiential learning but also with the active involvement of counsellors.

On the other hand, there should be a unified training context which should be obligatory for all SMHEs being either private or public.



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In addition, the relative authorization in different business industries should be given to readjust the training objectives according to their specific needs and not to follow a general training program.

Moreover, the public authorities that are responsible for each business sector should hire executives that would undertake the assessment and update of knowledge and skills of employees, and also to secure that the general tourism policy is being followed.

Finally, the development of a register of excellence for those businessmen that seek for the constant improvement and upskilling of their staff, could lead to the increase of the number of their customers/ visitors and eventually their profit through the provision of high quality services.

3. The long-term measures: recommendations for implementing the training for seasonal workers in small and medium enterprises.

It should be noted that most owners of SMHEs show little interest in training their staff since they are focused only in the reduction of employees cost, which falsely, believe that it could be further raised in case of training their staff.

Therefore, focus should be put on the achievement of the provision of highly qualitative services as a mean of achieving their business goals.

Motives play a significant role when it comes to training. There could be numerous motives that could lead to the adoption of a training “system” in SMHEs, which could include:

- *Subvention of tuition fees*
- *Increase of the star rating system as a result of the participation of a SMHE's seasonal staff in trainings.*
- *The development of a register of excellent SMHEs where trained, qualified and skillful staff could be one of the key criteria for excellence*
- *Tax reliefs and reduction in employers' contributions for SMHEs when they decide to train their seasonal staff*

It is worth noted that, especially in SMHEs, the payroll cost consist of approx. 65% - 80% of their general costs.

Public authorities that are active at local level such as municipalities can play a pivotal role in raising awareness about the training of seasonal workers using tools



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of touristic marketing. Another mean that could encourage employees / seasonal workers in the tourism industry to participate in trainings is the existence of certification that would be recognized by SMHEs owners / managers as an extra feature that has an extra added value in their resume and eventually, in their prospects in the industry.

Once again, the exchange of good practices in the field and the presentation of the results that training produced in certain SMHE seems to be the ideal mean for raising awareness. Especially, when these results are translated in terms of benefit/costs highlighting also, at the same time, the circumstances under which these positive results were achieved.

As for the ways needed to convince about the necessity of investing time and resources on seasonal staff's training, the use of marketing tools proved to be of the most appropriate ones. More specific, face to face sales and personal meetings with SHME owners are of highly importance in moving their interest from employee's working costs to the benefits that their business may gain through qualitative services.

Through this process, business owners will have the opportunity to express their fears, objections about the training methodology and whether it could lead to a success of their business.

Research has shown that the lower the employee's level of knowledge and skills the higher of a SMHE's operational cost is. Therefore, there should be targeted update about the necessity of hiring qualified staff through institutions and public authorities activated in the field such as Hellenic Chamber of Tourism, Panhellenic Federation of Hoteliers, local associations etc. The key would be the presentation and exchange of Good practices in the sector.

Concerning the promotion of the WBL methodology, it is believed that it could be achieved through techniques such as publicity, public relations, the distribution of informative material such as flyers and brochures, the development of links among SMHE's owners that have already applied the WBL Methodology to the their business and other owners, and last but not least, the promotion through social media such as Facebook, twitter and Instagram.

Additionally, the promotion of the WBL methodology could be achieved:

- Through local trade union organizations in the industry cultivating a positive attitude of SMHEs owners/ managers about training.*
- Through the organization of conferences and round tables with the active participation of SMHEs owners and managers.*



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Finally, the Peloponnese Tourism Organization may act as an entity that affects directly its members by encouraging them to adopt the training methodology adjusted to their needs and to proceed afterwards with the training of their seasonal workers. In any case, the constant update on how owners / managers could be benefited by such training activities and the collaboration of different stakeholders seems to be the solution to this issue.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

Additional comments and conclusions.

All stakeholders recognized the significance of the SeasonREADY training methodology and the produced training material, and declared that they are willing to promote it through their networks.

They also expressed the belief that a vast number of SMHE owners and managers have the mentality of training and many of them encourage their employees to participate in trainings organized by public authorities such as local tourism associations and the Hellenic Chamber of Hoteliers. Therefore, the introduction of season READY methodology and tools will be seen positively by the majority of them.