

Education in the Tourism Industry

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American Chamber of Commerce in Croatia *Američka gospodarska komora u Hrvatskoj*

Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Background information..... | 2 |
| Education..... | 3 |
| Recommendations..... | 5 |
| Conclusion..... | 7 |

Background information

In 2013, 16.5 % of the Croatian GDP was generated by tourism. The total number of jobs in hospitality in Croatia in 2013 (accommodation and F&B) was 84,000 people (6.3 % of total employment in Croatia).¹

According to Eurostat, youth unemployment in Croatia in 2013 (ages 15-24) was 49.7 % of the total unemployed.² The tourism industry can assist in reducing youth unemployment.

The European Commission has recognized the issue of youth unemployment in the European Union and has established a number of initiatives to make funds available to its member states to address youth unemployment. A structured approach to internships has proven to be successful in a number of EU countries to reduce youth unemployment.³

There is a lack of awareness of the importance of tourism in the general population and the need for a consistently high level of services and experiences, to ensure that Croatia remains attractive as a destination for both leisure and business travelers in all segments of the market for instance language and communication skills are still relatively limited in a number of tourism related industries, i.e. taxis, customs, police, shops.

Members of the AmCham Tourism committee, from the hospitality industry, have noticed that young employees, in their first job after secondary or university education, lack practical work during their education and usually need additional effort and training within the industry to be able to complete their tasks.

¹ Ministarstvo turizma, Turizam u brojkama 2013.

² [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Youth_unemployment,_2013Q4_\(%25\).png#](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Youth_unemployment,_2013Q4_(%25).png#)

³ European Commission – Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Working together for Europe's young people, A call to action on youth unemployment, 19.6.2013., COM(2013)447

Education

Tourism is not sufficiently marketed to the young as a desirable career path, with global employment opportunities. It is still mostly regarded as a low entry level industry. The tourism industry is an excellent career choice both for job seekers with limited education, as well as job seekers with university degrees, as it offers a wide range of job opportunities. Moreover, it is an industry where career development is possible relatively quickly for talented individuals.

Educational programs are not sufficiently geared towards the needs of the tourism industry, i.e. there is a lack of focus on generic skills, such as communication, service orientation, flexibility and languages. This leads to employers spending too much time on introducing basic skills during an internship, instead of industry specific skills, which are to the benefit of the intern and make it possible for the intern to work effectively during the internship period. Moreover, teaching basic skills takes up too much of the time of the employer's labor force (generally middle management level).

Practical internships are generally too short to be of value for both the intern and the employer. A 2-week internship does not allow for a sufficient introduction to a role, or give time to gain skills in such a role. In addition, the timing of exams, as well as internships, do not match the needs of the business. Internships can be used by the industry to address peaks and troughs in business patterns, which is not possible with the majority of internship programs in Croatia at the moment.

For a robust internship program the following are necessary:

- A duration of a minimum of 3 months, with the emphasis on the senior years of study, soon after which the intern can enter the workforce

- The appointment of a mentor within the company
- Mentor remuneration

- flexibility in timing to complete internship obligations

It is important to ensure this approach is further developed and given structure across all tourism related educational institutions, throughout the country.

Recommendations

In our opinion a permanent awareness campaign aimed at young people in Croatia should be in place, promoting the tourism industry as a “Great Industry to Work In”. Close cooperation between the ministries, the educational institutions and tourism employers should be established to set up key events to increase awareness of the importance and attractiveness of the industry, i.e. career days, open days.

We recommend the development of curricula with the active participation of the industry, in order to deliver graduates who are better qualified and immediately able to work in the tourism sector.

For high school / vocational level, Croatia should consider introducing curricular programs, such as the “Auszubildende program” in Germany, to combine working and learning during the educational process.

For university level, Croatia should consider introducing a more structured approach to internships, allowing students to gain more work experience, prior to accessing the labor market.

We recommend initiating feasibility studies to develop long-term cooperation between the industry and educational institutions to tailor educational programs to the needs of future employers, i.e. the Hilton Class at Deltion College in The Netherlands.

Internship framework recommendations

| INTERNSHIP TYPE | ENTRY LEVEL | SUPERVISORY LEVEL |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| JOB ROLE SAMPLES | Food & Beverage Waiter Room attendant Receptionist Entertainer Rent-a-car desk officer | Administration Finance Clerk Human Resources Clerk Team Leader / Supervisor Operations |
| EDUCATION LEVEL | Vocational School / High School Year 1-4 | College / University Year 3 & 4 |
| DURATION OF INTERNSHIP | Minimum 4 weeks | Minimum 3 months |
| COMPETENCY REQUIRED | Service / Guest Orientation Extravert One foreign language (English as a requirement) Team player Drive & Resilience Basic computer skills (incl. Excel) Grooming standards | All entry level skills PLUS Microsoft Office + Power point Project planning Presentation skills Communication – verbal & non-verbal & written |

AmCham presented this table for review to the Hospitality and Tourism School Zagreb, VERN University of Applied Sciences and Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija.

Internship process recommendations:

- Candidates to be interviewed by the company
- Evaluation forms should be part of the process
- Remuneration of internship, up to the individual company
- Mentor to be assigned in the company

Conclusion

The Government, educational institutions and the industry have a joint responsibility to address the issue of youth unemployment. The internship educational tool is one of the key areas, where this shared responsibility may be taken. Improving the quality, duration and content of internships will benefit the educational institutions, the students, the employers, as well as the Government because:

- Better employability of graduates benefits the schools, the students, as well as the Government
- The higher quality of internships benefits the employers by pro-actively management of their labor costs, and increasing the pool of talent for future employment
- Higher quality internships will increase the likelihood that the industry will (start) paying salaries for students, creating a business like work environment, where students choose their internship places, and employers choose their interns