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Adult Learners Ready for Work

IO2: Part II

Situational Cases for Training in Tourism

This document is linked to the methodological Guide (IO2: Part I) produced in the Enterprised project which contains ideas for implementation supporting the delivery of training

Developed by
Education and Training Service Center



November 2021



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

This project (project n° 2019-1-IS01-KA204-051147) has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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Reception

Case 1 – The booking system failure

A happy couple arrives at a hotel where a receptionist welcomes them and starts checking them in. The employee is alone in the lobby at this point and the booking system keeps freezing and the check-in process is taking a long time because of this. Ten minutes go by, and a bus arrives with several guests that all need to check-in and the employee realizes that he will not be able to handle the faults in the booking system by himself. The couple in front of him is starting to show impatience, telling the employee that they are registered for a sightseeing tour that starts soon and they need to check in to change clothes and get ready. Now the guests from the bus have joined the queue and all look towards the employee who is starting to feel uneasy.

Questions for discussion:

- If you were in this situation, how would you react?
- What could the employee have done or told the customers earlier in the process, when he expected not to be able to handle the situation?
- What processes would be optimal to follow in such a situation?
- How can you ensure that guests leave the hotel happy despite such an experience on arrival?



Case 2 – The ticket trouble

A regular customer of a well-known 5-star City Hotel in Vienna is very interested in culture. Whenever he visits Vienna, he stays at the hotel and pre-orders tickets for various cultural events at a booking agency.



This time he has not pre-ordered any tickets or made any reservations at the agency as he had no time to review the schedule of the Vienna culture events.

After staying at the hotel for two days, he discovers that there will be a very special performance at the Vienna Opera the following evening.

He is eager to visit this performance, but the booking agency is closed. He asks the member of the front desk staff, who is new on the job, to organise the ticket for him.

The employee tells the guest that it is far too late; tickets for such events must be ordered a long time in advance. The employee says, “I am not sure how to fulfil your wish because tickets have been sold out for weeks already”.

The front desk employee is asked once again by the guest if there is really no chance to visit the event, but the employee insists that it is too late and there is nothing he can do.

The guest is very disappointed with the situation and tells the front staff member that he would have expected more from a hotel like this.

Questions

1. Should the front staff member have reacted differently in the beginning? Explain why and how.
2. What could the employee have tried to do to help the guest with his concern?
3. Does organising tickets belong to the responsibilities of a front staff member?
4. Why do you think the guest was dissatisfied with the employee’s explanation?
5. Would the management consider the employee’s response adequate to the expectation of this regular guest at the 5-star City Hotel?
6. How would you respond to the complaint, when the guest told the employee that he would have expected more?



Case 3 – The tavern trouble

A group of tourists visits the South of Steiermark, an area in Austria which is famous for its vineyards, as well as for its beautiful landscape. In the brochure they have read about a local tavern where typical food and wines from the region are served. They want to visit it and ask at the reception of their hotel to make a reservation for Sunday, at 7:30 p.m.



After a day of hiking through the hills they look forward to enjoying the typical local food at the tavern. They arrive in time by taxi and are met by the waitress who replies with "What do you want? The kitchen closes already at 7 p.m. on Sundays".

The tourists are then asked to wait a moment and thought there would be a solution offered. The waitress looks in the book to see who took the reservation and leaves them standing in the entrance area without further communication.

The tavern is located on a hill with no other restaurants nearby, so the tourists ask the waitress to call a taxi for them to return to their hotel. She reluctantly does so and reminds them of the tavern's regular opening hours, informing that they can come back on another day.

Questions

1. Should the tourists have asked for a confirmation of the reservation at the front desk?
2. Where could have been lack of communication and between whom?
3. Do you think the waitress has helped to make the situation even more unpleasant? What was her contribution?
4. What solution could the waitress have offered to the tourists?
5. How could the waitress have reacted at first when the tourists were too late for dinner?
6. Can you imagine how the tourists felt being left on their own in this situation by the waitress?



Service in restaurants

Case 1 – The telephone trouble

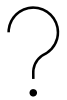
A group of seniors visits a restaurant celebrating a milestone. They have booked a three-course menu and plan to stay for two hours for the meal. They arrive before rush hour, and everything is pre-ordered as a group menu. Three waiters are at work and in addition to the group of seniors there is one family and a couple having a meal already served. A waiter takes the group to their table and brings the menus.



Several minutes later one of the group members asks for water and another one asks for the wine menu. The waiter nods his head, but then turns to his co-worker to talk about his misfortune with his telephone. The conversation goes on for several minutes right in front of the guests. One of the guests has raised his hand to get contact with the waiter, which the co-worker notices and notifies his colleague.

Questions

1. What is your opinion this case? How would you have reacted if you were a guest?
2. Could the table have been prepared in a different way to meet the needs of the group?
3. What aspects of the employee's behavior might provoke the customers?
4. What is it that the employee lacks awareness of with regards to client satisfaction?



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Case 2 – The price problem

A group of people dine at a restaurant in the city centre. It is the first time they are in the country and want to try a wide variety of typical dishes.

They ask the waiter for advice, and he tells them about a few high-quality dishes that are the specialty of the house.

They go along with the recommendations and decide to order them all to share. After eating, the customers, visibly satisfied, ask for the bill.

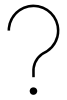
When the waiter brings the bill to the table, they look at it with a surprise and begin to complain about the price of the dishes. The waiter, without paying much attention to them, interrupts their complaints and tells them that the dishes are of first quality, that they should have thought before ordering so much food and that it is evident that they had enjoyed them without worrying about the price.

The customers leave the restaurant feeling upset.



Questions

1. When is the right time to inform the clients about the prices of the dishes?
2. Is it the responsibility of the guests to ask for the prices or is it the waiters responsibility?
3. What do you think of the attitude of the waiter towards the customers?
4. List the faults you observe in the behavior of the waiter when dealing with the complaint.
5. What would have been the ideal response in such a situation?
6. Do you think customers would recommend the restaurant to their acquaintances after the experience?



Case 3 – The Paella problem

A group of tourists arrive in Valencia. They have been advised by friends to go to a certain restaurant, and their friends told them that they cannot leave without tasting the typical Spanish Paella. They are not familiar with the dish, but they still decide to go and try it.



None of the guests speak Spanish and only one of them speaks English. Before ordering the Paella, the group wants to know exactly what is on the plate, as one person is a vegetarian and another has a seafood allergy.

When asking the waiter, he acts surprised and tries to explain to the group in a very basic English what the dish consists of, saying that it has rice and attempts to explain himself with gestures. As the restaurant is very crowded, he does not spend much time to explain the ingredients and without making sure that the diners have understood it well, he orders a large paella for them.

Once the dish is brought to the table, the group is surprised to see that it is not what they expected and ask about ordering other dishes. The guests do not explain about their allergy. The waiter looks at them with disgust and tells them that the kitchen is about to close, and they still have many customers to attend to, so they will have to settle for what they have asked for.

Questions

1. How should the waiter have acted in a situation like this since he does not know the language in which they try to communicate with him?
2. What could have been a hint that the group had special needs?
3. Is the explanation about the paella correct?
4. What questions should the waiter have asked the diners to make sure the dish will meet their needs?
5. What would be the correct reaction when customers wish to order other dishes?
6. Do you think the waiter was offended? If so, why?



Case 4 – The mushroom mistake

A group of clients from a small rural hotel go out into the field to pick mushrooms. On the way back, they ask the hotel cook to prepare the mushrooms for them and serve them at dinner. The cook accepts, thinking they are experts in the field. In the afternoon, some of those clients in the group who have eaten the mushrooms, become ill.



The customers file a complaint to the management of the rural hotel, claiming that the cook should have known if any of the mushrooms that were given to him to cook were not edible.

Questions

1. What do you think of the chef's response to the customers' request?
2. Should the cook have refused to cook the mushrooms?
3. Should the cook have specifically asked if they were expert mushroom pickers?
4. Should the cook have asked permission, to cook those mushrooms for the clients, from the person in charge of the small rural hotel?
5. Detail the chain of errors that have been made by both sides.
6. How would you handle this complaint?



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Case 5 – The misplaced order

(Part 1) An Icelandic family of four arrive at the restaurant around 12:30 pm, having pre-booked in advance. They are greeted by a friendly waitress, who shows them to the table which is already set up for them and hands out the menus. The waitress is all smiles and chats about what a wonderful day it is.

She quickly brings with water and bread to the table and informs the family that the bread is homemade, and the butter is whipped with black lava salt drizzled on top. Meanwhile, the restaurant is very busy, as a large group arrives at the same time which the waitress attends to as well. She comes back to the family to take the drinks and food order, and promptly arrives with the drinks.

Forty minutes go by, and the food is nowhere in sight. The mother decides to ask the waitress about it. The waitress discovers that the order never ended up in the kitchen since she had gotten distracted by the other guests.

Pause here – ask the trainees: How do you react?

(Part 2) The waitress is devastated by this: „I am very sorry that this has happened, the food will be on the house – I have asked the kitchen and they say it will be ready in 15 minutes. I promise that it will even taste better now that you have waited so long for it!“ The family laughs and agrees. Although the family is slightly disappointed, they are happy about the offered resolution. „Can I bring you more bread while you wait? Let me get you some more water“.

When leaving the restaurant, the family thank the waitress for the good service, telling her that she handled the situation very well and they look forward to coming back another time.

Questions

- Imagine that you are the guest. You are very hungry as you arrive. How would you respond if this happened to you in a restaurant?
 - o Has this ever happened to you? As a guest or as a waitress/waiter?
 - How was that handled and what was the outcome?
 - How did it feel?
- The family tells the waitress that she had handled the situation very well
 - o How was it handled well?
 - o How can she have handled it differently? (40 minutes went by before discovering...)
- Reflect on what happened before the the family discovered that their order had not been placed
 - o Do you think the service given might have impacted how they felt afterwards?

Case 6 – The Tripadvisor review

An English couple in their fifties are driving through Borgarfjörður and decide to stop by at the Landnámssetur restaurant. The restaurant is buzzing with life and the couple waits for someone to greet them, in front of the sign that says „wait here until we find a table for you“. Few waiters and waitresses are around but they are on their feet and do not pay attention to the newly arrived guests. The couple quickly become impatient but continue to wait around. They try to make an eye contact with the staff but are not noticed. Meanwhile, few of the staff members see the couple, but hope that someone else will have a chance to greet the guests since they are very busy at that moment.

The guests become impatient and leave few minutes after arrival before the staff has a chance to reach them. They leave a very negative review on Tripadvisor. The owner handles the complaint and apologises.

Questions

- What are your first thoughts when you hear about this example?
- How do you feel about the couple’s reaction?
- How could this have been avoided?
 - o Is there a simple solution or solutions?
- Have you ever been ignored or not noticed by service personnel? If so, give examples
 - o How did you feel?
- Reflect on the importance of reviews for the business – and the ripple effect of negative reviews.

Case 7 – Eggs, bacon, and broken glasses

An employee at a breakfast buffet is experiencing a very difficult shift. Despite trying her best to refill the breakfast buffet, it gets emptied so quickly that she cannot manage to keep up. Hungry hotel guests wait at the buffet and complain about having to wait. Eventually, one of the customers storms into the kitchen where the staff is busy preparing the food and complains about the waiting time. He was already late for a scheduled trip and did not get any eggs or bacon. After apologizing for this inconvenience, the breakfast lady carries a tray of glasses into the hall when she suddenly stumbles, drops the tray and the glasses shatter in front of the hotel guests. She hurries to sweep this up but cuts herself on the glass. Devastated and on the edge of tears she thinks to herself: “when will this horrible shift take end?”.

Questions for discussion

- When you're having a hard day at work, how can you take care of yourself?
 - This applies to both staff and managers
- If you notice your colleagues having difficult client communications or experiencing difficult situations at work, how can you provide support?
 - If you are a manager, how can you provide employee support?
- Is it possible to form a support network in the workplace, where employees can seek support from other colleagues or a manager when needed?



Touristic activities

Case 1 – The Tyrol trouble

A young couple from a country without alpine landscapes spend their summer holidays in a village in Tyrol, an alpine mountain range of Austria. The area is a touristic centre for mountain hiking and climbing, with many tourists coming there for challenging mountaineering tours.



The young couple have no experience with hiking or climbing in high mountain areas and no appropriate equipment. Nevertheless, they decide to go on a tour to one of the areas hardest summits, and the owner of their small hotel recommends them a rather manageable route which would lead them to a rather high altitude.

The weather had been fine for several days and when they are about to leave their small hotel in the early morning, they are wearing light clothing and footwear. The owner stops them in the hallway and tells them that they cannot go on the tour because they have no idea of high-alpine requirements.

The couple does not understand why the owner talks to them this way and feel upset. “So, you want to do mountaineering tours without appropriate equipment? It is a matter of safety, and it is always necessary to be cautious in the high mountain area”, says the owner.

Now the couple wonders why he had recommended the route to them at all. Only then he explains the weather would change fast and even snowfall could be expected within a few hours, even if there were no indications yet, and that could be very dangerous for them. He also complains in general about tourists who are not aware of high mountain conditions and very often need help when they get into difficult or dangerous situations.

Questions

1. Should the owner of the small hotel have informed the young couple about general requirements of a mountaineering route in this area before?
2. Do you think the guests could understand right away why the owner told them they could not go on the tour he had recommended before?
3. What do you think was the reason for the reaction of the hotel owner? Did he think about the couple’s background?
4. What would have been a higher service-orientation of the hotel from the beginning?
5. Do you think the guests felt well advised by the owner?



Case 2 – The boat tour trouble

A family booked planned a trip to Denmark, including a canal tour in Copenhagen at their local tourist bureau in the States. The tourist agency had informed the family that a private boat would be picking the family up at the harbor by their hotel.



On the day of the booked tour, the family awaits excited at the hotel, but no boat is in sight. They decide to walk towards the canal tour company located 2 minutes from the hotel. On arrival, the employee tells the family that they were booked on a public tour which left the harbor after an attempt to wait for the family. The employee informs that they had tried to call a couple of times but did not get through.

The parents become very upset and scream towards the employee “We have booked this tour a long time ago and you were supposed to pick us up at the hotel, this is unacceptable!”

Aware of the awkward children standing next to the parents, the employee tries to calm the situation and explains that their tourist bureau had misinformed them, as four spots were booked on a public boat leaving the company’s harbor at this time, not a private boat picking them up by their hotel. This did not calm the parents and the woman threatened to leave a bad review on their Tripadvisor page and they continued to express their anger in a loud manner.

The employee then replies “Can I ask for one thing “? The parents suddenly stop arguing and agree, so the employee asks if they could speak together in a calm manner to find a solution to this. The parents immediately lower their voices and express their disappointment which the employee can understand from their point of view. Despite being exhausted by this exchange, the employee continues in a polite manner and contacts the owner of the canal tour to seek advice. As all public tours for that day were finished, the owner decides to take the family out on a boat tour himself so everyone would walk away happy. The father of the family later apologized to the employee for their behavior and tipped generously.

Questions

1. From the employee side, is there anything that could have been done differently?
2. What was done well?
3. How would you react and respond in a situation like this?
4. What do you think about the special treatment the family got, a private tour with the owner to settle things down? Why do you think the owner did that?
5. What could the employee have done in the situation if the owner had not been there to take the family on a tour?

Case 3 – The castle tour crisis



A group of 6 tourists go for a guided tour of a very famous castle route on the outskirts of the village. The route is several kilometres long and the tourists must walk between mountain areas to reach each of the castles.

When they reach the information point, they are informed that their guide has become ill and they are offered the possibility to join a large group of 18 people, who will go out to do the same tour accompanied by another guide.

After accepting, they join the group and start walking around the area. The guide goes in front of the whole group and gives them a lot of information as they walk. Each time they arrive at one of the castles the guide allows them 10 minutes to explore on their own and agree on a point to meet and continue.

Upon arrival at the third castle, the group realizes that one of its members is missing. The guide is visibly nervous and begins to blame the visitors for not following the instructions.

Questions

1. What do you think of the behavior of the guide at the time when the tourists inform him that a member of the group is lost?
2. In what other ways could the guide have handled the situation?
3. Is it wise for one guide to take a group of 24 people through a tour like this?
4. How should the guided tour for the group of 6 tourists have been managed once it was clear that their guide became ill?

Case 4 – The emergency response

A group of 12 people take part in a guided tour of an ancient fortress. The guide is in the middle of a story when she sees one of the participants presses his hand against his chest and sits down on a stone bench. She quickly understands that the man is feeling unwell. The husband's wife becomes very scared and worried and the unrest spreads quickly in the group.

When the guide sits down next to the man, she sees that he sweats a lot, and she registers that the man is short of breath.

Questions

1. What do you think is happening to the man on the bench?
2. What do you think should be prioritized first in such a situation?
3. What must the guide do to avoid panic in the group? How should the guide speak and act in this situation?
4. What preparations must be in place before the trip for such situations to have a successful outcome?



Car rental & Taxi services

Case 1 - The angry customer

A customer has waited for 30 minutes in line to pick up their rental car. When called to the desk, the employee walks the customer through the process of renting the car, informing about driving conditions in Iceland, dangers on the road and other important matters to keep in mind. The customer is offered insurances and other additional services to improve their experience. This procedure has taken 10 minutes. After finishing the pick-up process, the customer leaves to go check out the car.

Upon inspection, the customer realizes that the car has a manual transmission instead of automatic as they had originally booked through the website. A booking error has occurred from the broker site, causing this mix up. The customer comes back into the office, walks to the desk, and starts accusing the employee of being unpolite and intentionally not giving him what he had ordered.

As the employee is now assisting another customer, the angry client starts raising their voice and shouts "WHAT ARE YOU DOING??".

Questions

1. What could be the reasons for the customer experiencing that the employee was unpolite?
2. What should the employee do?
3. How could this mix up have been avoided?
4. How do you think the service agent felt in this situation?
5. What is the role of the supervisor on your opinion in this matter?
6. What is the best solution to this incident?



Case 2 - The car chaos

An American couple has booked a Dacia Duster online and are at the airport to pick up the car. After going through an efficient rental procedure with the employee, the couple find their car parked right outside. After driving for few minutes, they notice a warning light in the dashboard. The couple continue driving for few minutes but realize that the engine is not running as it should, so they head back to the airport. When he is back at the office, he asks for a new car so they can continue their journey. At the time the employee realizes that the supervisor is not in house and there is not another car in this category available.

Questions

1. What should the service agent do?
 - a. What is the best solution to this incident?
2. How could this have been avoided?
 - a. What processes can be in place to avoid this?
3. How do you think the service agent felt in this situation?
4. How can the employee exceed the customers expectations or make up for this unfortunate situation?



Case 3 – The taxi ride

Suleiman is originally from Somalia. He has received language training in his new home country (Austria) but finds it challenging to have conversations beyond simple everyday conversation. He has got a job as a taxi driver and mostly enjoys his job. During the day, he experiences that most passengers are polite and pleasant. In the evenings, especially on weekends, it can be more challenging.

One Saturday night, just before midnight, Suleiman gets three passengers into the car. They are clearly intoxicated. They tell Suleiman the address they want to go to, a drive that takes about 20 minutes.

The customers are talkative and ask many questions. They get concerned (annoyed?) with Suleiman's views on life and his political views. They point out to Suleiman that his views can be categorized as misogynistic and intolerable.

Questions

1. What policy do you think the taxi company has when it comes to talking to customers about politics, religion and other sensitive topics?
2. A taxi driver is always alone at work. What challenges might that present?
3. What do you think will be the consequences if Suleiman chooses to participate in the discussion?



Covid-related scenarios

Case 1 – The Covid caution

At a local bar there is usually room for 300 people, and they are open until 02.30 at night. Restrictions imposed in the corona period state that large gatherings are not allowed, and that restaurants and bars can only stay open if they manage to comply with the rules for distance between guests and other infection control measures. Control by local authorities may occur.

Shortly after midnight, there are many guests in the bar. Some meet up with friends and move tables and chairs so that they can sit in larger groups together. More and more people are finding their way to the dance floor. In the bar, people are queueing up for beverages.

1. Who do you think is primarily responsible for ensuring that everyone in the room, staff and guests, is safe from infection this evening?
2. What measures and preparations must be in place for guests to be able to comply with infection control rules?
3. How should guests who break infection control measures be approached?
4. In your opinion, should opening hours be limited in places where alcohol is served when there is a known infection in the community?
5. As an employee at work this evening, how can you best help ensure that you, your colleagues and your guests are safe?

Case 2 – The Covid certificate problem

A customer arrives at a café where it is mandatory to present the Covid certificate to enter.

The customer takes out his smartphone and shows his certificate. However, when the employee uses the QR reader to scan it, the device fails and cannot read the QR code.



The employee refuses to let the customer in, while the customer claims that his certificate is valid since he has used it in other places and asks the employee to scan it again. The employee runs the scanner again, but it still doesn't work and he refuses to let the customer in.

The customer keeps on insisting that his certificate is valid and asks the employee to let him in, but the employee refuses. After several unsuccessful attempts and an argument, the customer ends up leaving.

1. What would be the consequences of not allowing the entry of this customer, despite having a Covid certificate?
2. In your opinion, would you let the customer in by just showing the Covid certificate, even though the QR reader is not working?
3. As an employee at this place, if the device isn't working properly, how can you ensure that the customer's Covid certificate is valid?
4. How could this situation be solved?

Case 3 – The sick guest

A German couple is spending their wedding anniversary in Benidorm at a 3-star hotel next to the beach.

One day, the wife wakes up coughing and is running a temperature. She also feels exhausted.

Afraid of her having caught Covid, the husband calls room service and, after explaining their situation, asks them to buy an antigen test at the nearest pharmacy.



1. According to the Covid protocol, what is the first thing the employee has to do in this type of situation?
2. If you were an employee of this hotel, how would you act to prevent contagion from other guests and staff?
3. In your opinion, do you think that the staff should buy the antigen test at the pharmacy or wait for the health staff to come and follow their instructions? Justify your answer.

Cases & key competencies

Reception

Case 1 – The booking system failure

- Interpersonal skills
- Customer orientation and hospitality
- Awareness of own role in the business

Case 2 – The ticket trouble

- Interpersonal skills
- Customer orientation and hospitality
- Handling customer complaints

Case 3 – The tavern trouble

- Practical knowledge of work processes
- Interpersonal skills
- Customer orientation and hospitality

Service in restaurants

Case 1 – The telephone trouble

- Awareness about the business and own role
- Customer orientation and hospitality
- Practical knowledge of workplace processes

Case 2 – The price problem

- Interpersonal skills
- Handling customer complaints

Case 3 – The Paella problem

- Language skills
- Intercultural and diversity aspects
- Practical knowledge
- Customer orientation and hospitality
- Interpersonal skills

Case 4 – The mushroom mistake

- Food handling
- Practical knowledge
- Handling customer complaints

Case 5 – The misplaced order

- Interpersonal skills
- Practical knowledge
- Customer orientation and hospitality
- Handling customer complaints

Case 6 – The Tripadvisor review

- Customer orientation and hospitality

Case 7 – Eggs, bacon and broken glass

- Leadership skills

Touristic activities

Case 1 – The Tyrol trouble

- Interpersonal and communication skills
- Situational and local knowledge
- Safety awareness

Case 2 - The boat tour trouble

- Interpersonal skills
- Handling customer complaints
- Customer orientation and hospitality

Case 3 – The castle tour crisis

- Safety awareness
- Interpersonal skills
- Practical knowledge

Case 4 – The emergency response

- Interpersonal skills
- Safety awareness

Car rental & Taxi services

Case 1 – The angry customer

- Interpersonal skills
- Handling customer complaints
- Practical knowledge of processes in the workplace

Case 2 - The car chaos

- Practical knowledge of processes in the workplace
- Customer orientation and hospitality

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Case 3 - The taxi ride

- Interpersonal skills
- Intercultural and diversity aspects
- Customer orientation and hospitality
- Awareness about the business and own role

Covid related scenarios

Case 1 - The Covid caution

- Hygiene awareness
- Practical knowledge of processes in the workplace

Case 2 - The Covid certificate problem

- Digital skills (ICT)
- Practical knowledge of processes in the workplace
- Customer orientation and hospitality
- Handling customer complaints

Case 3 - The sick guest

- Entrepreneurial thinking
- Hygiene awareness
- Customer orientation and hospitality
- Practical knowledge of processes in the workplace

References

Situational profiles were gathered through focus groups and meetings with stakeholders, training professionals and leaders in tourism businesses, in each partner country as a part of the Enterprised project. See product IO1 and IO2.

Images retrieved from: <https://www.freepik.com/>.

Case 1 & 2 under Car rentals and taxi services were developed by Blue Car rental in Iceland.