



EFFAT Position Paper

Fight labour shortages in hospitality-tourism by improving the attractiveness of jobs

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Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the hospitality-tourism sector hard, as hospitality businesses were forced over long periods to close or to allow only limited access, in a joint strive to stop the spread of the Coronavirus, throwing Europe's hotels, restaurants, bars, cafes, pubs and nightclubs into a deep crisis. The contract catering sector has had to cope with plummeting business in many segments, e.g. due to home office, distance schooling, or limited access to public administration, health and care institutions.

All this had a devastating impact on employment, forcing the sector to switch to short-time work, or to temporarily or permanently lay off workers. Many workers left the hospitality sector, as the recovery was uncertain, and often income support schemes did not provide for a decent standard of living, given the low wages they were based on. Having found work in other sectors, many workers learned to appreciate more regular working hours and better work-life balance.

Short term vision and the quest for quick profits of many hospitality-tourism companies have intensified the precariousness of the sector, leading to high staff turnover and lack of skilled staff. Hospitality-tourism has become a transitory sector where workers stay until they find a better job elsewhere. The sector struggles to retain experienced cooks, waiters and other professionals, who have attractive skills for which other sectors are willing to offer better pay and conditions.

The hospitality-tourism sector offers interesting and dynamic job opportunities, but it has to realise that it must provide better social and economic conditions to its workforce, with greater stability and better wages, vocational training, predictable working hours and rest periods that allow reconciliation of professional and private life. It is therefore necessary to value and dignify all occupations in the sub-sectors of the European and global tourism industry.

In Europe, employment in travel and tourism is estimated to have dropped by 9.3%, equating to 3.6 million jobs¹, and since the beginning of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the hospitality sector in many European countries has been facing labour shortages. Just some evidence (end 2/2022):

- In Spain, 296,000 jobs in the hospitality sector were lost in the last year, a reduction of 18.9%, leaving the total number of employed in the sector at 1.27 million people.²
- In Italy, total employment in the hotel industry dropped by roughly 37 percent in 2021 compared to pre-pandemic levels.³

¹ <https://wtcc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/2021/Global%20Economic%20Impact%20and%20Trends%202021.pdf?ver=2021-07-01-114957-177>

² <https://www.businessinsider.com/spain-hospitality-leisure-tourism-job-loss-pandemic-coronavirus-lockdown-economy-2021-3?r=US&IR=T>

³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1127897/percentage-change-in-employment-the-hotel-industry-in-italy/>



- In Belgium, half of hospitality workers in the first quarter of 2020 were no longer active a year later, and the sector employed 40% fewer people at the beginning of 2021.⁴
- In France, 237,000 workers left the hospitality sector between February 2020 and February 2021, and 300,000 job vacancies were to be filled at the start of the 2021 season.⁵
- In Germany, almost every fourth job in the hospitality sector was lost during the pandemic, and the shortage of skilled workers is a problem for almost 80 percent of companies.⁶
- In Austria, the number of employees in tourism fell from 230,000 in 2019 to 132,000 during the pandemic, and around 50,000 employees were missing for the winter season alone.⁷
- In the UK, over 660,000 jobs in the hospitality sector have been lost during the pandemic, and currently there are 400,000 vacancies across the industry.⁸
- In Ireland, 180,000 jobs in the tourism industry were lost during the pandemic, and there are currently 40,000 job vacancies.⁹
- In Hungary, the number of people working in the hospitality sector dropped from 193,000 in 2019 to below 177,000 by the end of 2020, with a current shortage of 40-50,000 professionals.¹⁰
- In Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, the number of workers in hospitality-tourism reached levels of down to 67% during to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the numbers are only slowly getting back to pre-pandemic levels.

Staff shortages occur with varying intensity in the different countries. Difficulties to recruit and retain workers are not new to the hospitality-tourism sector, but the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the phenomenon. The problems in the hospitality-tourism labour market are similar in almost all European countries, it is therefore only logical to propose solutions at cross-border level.

EFFAT and the hospitality-tourism trade unions in Europe are concerned about the future of workers in the sector. This is why EFFAT, in cooperation with its affiliates, elaborated this paper to present proposals how to overcome labour shortages by improving the attractiveness of jobs through better working conditions in the hospitality sector. The proposed measures are based on discussions at meetings, affiliates' papers, and the results of an EFFAT survey amongst member organisations on labour shortages in the hospitality sector in October 2021.

⁴ <https://www.lalibre.be/economie/conjoncture/2021/07/06/lhoreca-employait-404-de-personnes-en-moins-au-debut-de-lannee-OZYQ2Q4PCZFETHGL6HXV3PWRR4/>

⁵ [https://www.latribune.fr/economie/france/face-a-la-penurie-de-main-d-oeuvre-comment-attirer-les-nouvelles-recrues-896524.html#:~:text=Entre%20f%C3%A9vrier%202020%20et%20f%C3%A9vrier,jeudi%20pour%20%C3%A9voquer%20la%20p%C3%A9nurie](https://www.latribune.fr/economie/france/face-a-la-penurie-de-main-d-oeuvre-comment-attirer-les-nouvelles-recrues-896524.html#:~:text=Entre%20f%C3%A9vrier%202020%20et%20f%C3%A9vrier,jeudi%20pour%20%C3%A9voquer%20la%20p%C3%A9nurie;)

⁶ <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/provence-alpes-cote-d-azur/bouches-du-rhone/marseille/penurie-de-main-d-uvre-dans-l-hotellerie-restauration-mais-c-est-quoi-au-juste-un-metier-penible-2270668.html>

⁷ <https://snanews.de/20220114/pandemie-folgen-job-in-der-gastronomie-5010556.html>;

⁸ <https://www.tophotel.de/dehoga-fachkraeftemangel-fuer-fast-80-prozent-ein-problem-114502/>

⁹ <https://kurier.at/wirtschaft/karriere/fachkraeftemangel-fuenf-unternehmer-erzaehlen-wie-sie-damit-umgehen/401810884>

¹⁰ <https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/page/HospitalityEmployment>

¹¹ <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/tourism-recovery-at-risk-as-40000-jobs-go-unfilled-41306862.html>

¹² <https://hungarytoday.hu/labor-shortage-tourism-mandatory-vaccination-worse-hospitality-industry-tourism-hotels-restaurants/>

**EFFAT and its affiliated trade unions are calling for the following measures to make jobs in hospitality-tourism more attractive and to overcome the labour shortages in the sector:****1. Put workers and quality jobs first**

Workers have to be put at the centre of all measures. In a customer-oriented service sector like hospitality, workers are at the frontline, they are the most important asset, and decisive for success and viability of any business. Workers need to be valued and respected and provided with the adequate means and conditions to provide quality services.

2. Improve working conditions and pay

In order to recruit and retain workers, the creation of full-time permanent employment must have priority, and all jobs must provide decent working conditions, wages people can live on, adequate social protection, proper vocational education and training offering personal development and career paths, and the respect of workers' rights.

3. Strengthen collective bargaining

Trade unions and employers' associations, knowing the situation in a sector, and being committed to fair and comprehensive negotiations, are the best situated to find tailor-made solutions for current and future challenges. Sectoral collective bargaining must be strengthened, including capacity building for social partners in countries where collective bargaining is less developed or has been weakened. The application of collective agreements has to be made a prerequisite for subsidies, state aid and participation in public procurement.

4. Give workers a voice

To ensure that the proposed measures are successful, it is of utmost importance to give workers and their representatives a voice. Workplace representation via elected or designated workers representatives and works councils is key. Workers' rights to information, consultation and participation must be ensured at all levels, at company, local, national and European level, e.g. in European Works Councils.

5. Enable workers to have work-life balance

Hospitality-tourism jobs are often carried out at times when others enjoy leisure time or are on holidays. "Unsocial" working hours, such as evenings, nights, weekends, should be kept to a minimum and distributed fairly amongst all staff, respecting as much as possible workers' availabilities and preferences.

6. Ensure regular and predictable working time

Reliable work plans must be drawn up and communicated as early as possible, respecting existing working time legislation and limitation. Short-notice changes should entitle to extra allowances. Hours worked must be recorded comprehensively. Any overtime or extra work must be limited, to protect workers' health and safety, and be compensated with free time as soon as possible.



7. Rethink outsourcing / subcontracting / franchise

Companies should reconsider the core tasks in hospitality and keep as many of them in-house, as own staff is more familiar with and loyal to the company and provides a higher quality of services. Current business models in hospitality-tourism, such as outsourcing, subcontracting or franchising, should be strictly regulated to avoid that they lead to more precarious working conditions and undermine workers' rights.

8. Keep daily room cleaning in hotels

In hotel housekeeping, daily room cleaning should stay the norm, to guarantee hygiene and safety standards, and to make housekeeping jobs stable. Hotels should abstain from giving guests a "green choice" to opt out from daily room cleaning, under the pretext to protect the environment by saving water and detergents, which are actually intended to save costs. Guidelines should be elaborated for affiliates and other organisations to only use hotels for events and travel that respect these principles.

9. Improve vocational education and training

Quality vocational education and training and continuous re- and upskilling are key for a skilled workforce and high-quality services in hospitality-tourism. Ambitious qualification and training strategies should be developed, in close cooperation between companies/employers, trade unions, social partners, governments, and education establishments, anticipating future skills needs. Qualification and training must be made accessible to all hospitality-tourism workers, also those in non-standard forms of employment. Qualification and training measures at company level should be planned, implemented, and evaluated in close cooperation between managements, workers representatives and trade unions, and it should be ensured that acquired qualifications and skills are transferable between companies.

10. Promote apprenticeships

In many countries, dual systems of vocational education and training, combining school education and in-company training, have been successful, giving young people profound vocational qualifications and providing them with an excellent entry into the labour market. Apprenticeships or similar initial vocational training systems should be implemented in countries where they do not exist yet. Full compliance with the "Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships" must be ensured.

11. Ensure the hospitality sector is a safe place to work

The specific physical and psychosocial risk factors of work in the hospitality sector, e.g. repetitive movements, carrying and lifting heavy weights, cuts and burns, trips, slips and falls, hot and cold work environments, dangerous substances (e.g. cleaning agents), high noise levels, stress, long and non-standard working hours, unpredictable working time, etc., have to be addressed with clear health and safety protocols, risk assessment and training, in close cooperation with workers' representatives and trade unions. This should include e.g. the provision of height-adjustable beds to facilitate the work of housekeepers, a study on workload, as well as safe transport between workplace and home, for workers who have to work early or late hours.

**12. Guarantee workplaces free from sexual harassment and violence**

To protect hospitality workers from exposure to sexual harassment and gender-based violence, e.g. by superiors, colleagues or guests, companies have to draw up clear zero tolerance policies, including awareness raising, risk assessment, training, reporting and solution procedures, involving workers' representatives and trade unions.

13. Ensure gender equality and diversity

The hospitality-tourism workforce is made up of people with a vast variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, with a particularly high share of young and female workers in most countries. Women are often concentrated in the lower paid and lower status jobs. It must be ensured that nobody is discriminated against based on gender, race, colour, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, religious belief, political conviction, employment status, etc. Gender equality has to be promoted, and equal opportunities with regard to employment, wages, qualification and training, career perspectives, leadership positions be guaranteed.

14. Protect and organise seasonal and migrant workers

The hospitality-tourism sector provides many job opportunities for seasonal and migrant workers.

Seasonal workers must be given jobs with adequate wages and social security coverage, decent and affordable accommodation, the right to be rehired over successive years, and access to trade union counselling services. The possibility to establish a European social action fund for seasonal workers, with an antenna in each Member State and the joint management by trade unions and employers' organisations should be explored.

To facilitate the integration of migrants into the labour market, specific programmes such as the Swedish "Fast Track" scheme, a cooperation between public employment services, employers and trade unions, training newly arrived immigrants for jobs in hospitality, building on each individual's education and experience, should be promoted.

15. Ensure fair digital and green transitions

The climate crisis and increased automation and digitalisation will continue to fundamentally transform the hospitality-tourism sector. To anticipate changes and to facilitate adaptations, workers representatives and trade unions must be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of all transition measures, to ensure that no one is left behind.

16. Promote social labelling

To enable customers to choose hospitality establishments by assessing social criteria, in particular decent working conditions and respect of workers' rights, social labelling campaigns such as [Fair Hotels and Restaurants](#) should be further developed and promoted. Moreover, efforts should be made that all classification and labelling initiatives (e.g. stars, ecolabels) take the quality of employment into account.

**17. Foster year-round tourism**

Tourism should be developed as a year-round economic activity. A well-functioning, expanded tourism, developed in cooperation with local communities, would reduce the negative impacts of seasonality, facilitate better employment, help reducing labour precarity, and enable recruitment of workers locally and from outside a region/area as well as their retention.

18. Rebuild tourism with a more sustainable and socially responsible vision

For too long, travel and tourism have been pursuing permanent growth, short-term financial interests and maximisation of profits, leading to low-cost models, little investment in the workforce, and growing precarisation of employment. Future tourism must be built on new paradigms, striving for economic, environmental, and social sustainability. Tourism should pursue e.g. more proximity-based tourism, reduction of seasonality, quality of services, employment stability, investments in human capital, qualification and training, reinvestment of profits to ensure sustainable growth, innovation around fair digital and green transitions, and a better share of benefits between tourism businesses, destinations, local communities, tourists and workers.