

EUROPE DEALING WITH SHORTAGE OF TRAVEL AND HOTEL PERSONNEL



Tourism is a part of everyday life as well as one of the leading industries in terms of economic development in Europe. Every year, the demand for travel is increasing, with factors such as flight and accommodation affordability playing a key role. But there is a problem that spreads across the Old Continent, and its name is the lack of travel and hotel personnel in the facilities.

"It is increasingly difficult to find staff for the season and even more trained personnel," says Monica Ciarapica from Confesercenti in Italy. **She underlined how the shortcomings are seen in all types of work, from the staff to the rooms, kitchens and the hall.**

"The lack of overlap between demand and offer is a problem, but not the only one. It is certainly a larger and more complex issue. We have to move as a community. Our association together with others intends to set up new training activities, aimed at unemployed people for the next season," she added.

Salzburg region dealing with similar issues

In Pongau in the Salzburg region there are currently about 1100 free job positions. Only 300 cooks and 300 service staff are missing. One of the reasons for this is the sharp drop in staff and hotel personnel from other European countries like Hungary, Poland or the Czech Republic, who prefer to stay in their countries as the pay has improved.

In order to fight the shortage of staff, a major leading program in the region has been set up. In the project 'Gastronomic work in Pongau', 50 tourism enterprises promote the workforce from the east of Austria. Job fairs take place in Linz, Graz, St. Polten or in Vienna. There are also many incentives for second-chance apprenticeship training, with about a hundred free positions.

Britain with another Brexit issue

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom is currently not facing a similar problem but could soon see an even more drastic fall. The sector says that 60,000 workers per year could be lost from the industry in case of more strict controls of workforce from the European Union after Brexit comes to action.

According to KPMG, three thirds of all waiters, 37% of house-keeping staff and 25% of all chefs are EU nationals. The company also adds that it will take 10 years to erase the gap that could be created with the departure of many workers from the country.

Solution in immigration?

Germany also has a similar problem and is currently unable to fill 1.6 million jobs for skilled workers around the country. But according to experts, immigrants could be a solution. The Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) is counting on controlled immigration promised by Angela Merkel as one of the potential catalysts of an improvement to the situation.

The DIHK is demanding that the government expands the sectors available for immigrants, in order

to include the many fields that are lacking skilled travel and hotel personnel. The problem is that many jobs in the country require training which does not exist in foreign countries. However, this could be solved by the creation of training programs for them to obtain these qualifications.

A similar solution was suggested in Algarve in Portugal, as the region is also dealing with the shortage of well-qualified workers. According to the AHETA association president Eliderico Viegas, the state has a duty "to take measures to improve the business environment in the tourism sector".

In this sense, it is important to provide more legal immigrants to Portugal. The stakeholders in the Algarve hospitality industry want to make the controlled influx of foreign workers more rational and flexible. "For AHETA, labor shortages are one of the most pressing problems facing the Portuguese economy. Especially in the country's largest and most important tourism region, Algarve," Viegas added.

And this solution also seems to have support in France, at least from the UMIH association president Roland Heguy, who admitted that the industry cannot fill more than 150,000 jobs. "Let's develop a genuine training program and welcome migrants to work for us," he said, thus expanding the support of the solution by immigration of labor shortage in Europe.

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