

***Between the Past and the Uncertain Future: Post-Covid-19 Challenges, Remote Working, Climate Changes and the Development of Sustainable Skills in Tourism in Hospitality in Ireland<sup>1</sup>***

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**Abstract**

The last four years have been redefining the tourism and hospitality industries. The fast-paced changes in life and work brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as increased mobility and changes in work models, urgent climate-changes, and industry-related challenges, such as the increased use of disruptive technologies, bring an urgent need to redefine actions to produce more profound changes in the industry. This paper takes a two-pronged approach to examining training and education needs against the backdrop of this ever-changing environment by taking both a policy and industry perspective.

We first focus on examining important European policies, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015), the European Skills Agenda (2020) and the Transition Pathways for Tourism (European Commission, 2022), to understand how the training and education sector is adapting to those changes. There is a need to promote actions that recognise and balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). Thus, the Pact for Skills (European Commission, 2023) aims to encourage cooperation to support the upskilling and reskilling of workers for the green and digital, looking to produce shifts in attitudes to face future changes in the environment, economy and society.

This paper also presents the analysis of 14 interviews conducted in Ireland with managers in the hospitality and tourism industry in five subsectors: food and beverage, tour operator, visitors' attractions, destination management and accommodation. It brings their reflections on how the industry is coping with challenges, aligned with current national and international political, economic and societal changes, many of which are occurring at a rapid pace. It highlights participants' views on the types of training and education necessary to build a sustainable workforce in challenging times. All interviews were conducted between June and November of 2023 and are part of a European-funded project, Pantour, an Erasmus + funded project, with the collaboration of 13 partners from 10 European countries, that aims to design tools and cooperation solutions and strengthen partnerships in the sector addressing digital, green and social skills.

With the policies and industry feedback in mind, the paper discusses the (uncertain) future of work, focusing on how we can prepare and adapt for future challenges in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Keywords: Sustainability – Resilience – Tourism – Hospitality – Skills Development - Ireland

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