



**Intercultural Professional Development in Hospitality
AGREEMENT NUMBER – 2021-1-IE01-KA220-VET-0033351**

R1/A1: Needs Analysis

NATIONAL REPORT

Bulgaria

PART 1: National Socio-Economic Report

Name of the Country:

Bulgaria¹

1. What are the basic pillars of the national economy (References to agriculture, industry, construction, domestic market etc.)?

- ✓ The strongest sectors in the economy: energy, mining, metallurgy, machine building, agriculture & **tourism**. [6]
- ✓ Tourism in Bulgaria has been a large (& before the Covid-19 pandemic – a fast-growing) sector and an important driver of national economy. GDP contribution of the sector accounted for 11.7% of GDP² (11% of jobs) in 2018. Bulgaria is considered a promising market for hoteliers as it offers totally new destinations to both business and leisure travelers. New local and international investors have been supporting projects in the hospitality sector. [1]
- ✓ Just as the tourism industry was starting to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic and before it was able to fully recover, the conflict Russia – Ukraine seems to be the next big blow on the sector. Being amongst the top 25 countries for outbound Russian tourism by flight capacity [11], Bulgaria is likely to be hit seriously in the tourism sector. Another reason to prepare one of the key aspects of the industry – intercultural communication with guests and amongst staff – better by offering tools facilitating the process.

2. What is the situation of the labour market (employment rates, wages and salaries, employment of third country nationals, employment of European migrants etc.)?

- ✓ As of October 2021, the unemployment rate is 5.3% and it's almost the same for male and female. [4]
- ✓ As of December 2021, average salary is the equivalent of 825€ (gross) / 640€ (net). [6]







¹ In this review, latest available data is included. Where available, data provided from sources such as Eurostat, World Data Bank, etc. Links accessed in Jan. – March 2022.

² And 11.6% of GDP in 2019 [12]. This figure shows a relatively stable increase up until the pandemic.

- ✓ The number of immigrants³ of the prime working ages (20-39) has been increasing steadily, implying a less negative net migration balance in the recent years. [17]
- ✓ For the past few years – record low numbers of occupancy of its refugee centres, and yet problems remain with finding and keeping employment of refugees and migrants. One of the main reasons – prejudice and discrimination, as well as discrepancies between the expectations of foreigners and what the labour market has to offer. A number of studies recommend the private sector to take an active role in employing and training refugees, while its efforts should be more visible as way to overcome fear and prejudice. Institutions are recommended to invest in informing firms about employing refugees and collecting systematic information about foreign job seekers. Local authorities offer consultations, programmes for employment and training of refugees, job fairs, etc. [16]
- ✓ In the last 5-6 years 50 to over 70% of refugees who participated in training programmes are reported to have found a job. [19]
- ✓ News from the last days (8/03/2022; BNT – Bulgarian National Television main channel) in the context of Ukrainian refugees: Bulgarian market is ready to accept 200,000 seasonal workers in the following areas: construction work, sewing industry, transportation, **tourism**. Against the fact of nearly 35,000 refugees in Bulgaria at the moment, this will create a lot of situations of intercultural communication relevant for this project.

3. What is the country’s level in terms of economic and financial indicators such as stock exchange, financial results, national debt, and business service? (Where possible, please provide percentages from European or World Bank reports)

- ✓ Stock exchange as of 07/03/22. [10]

Symbol ↕	Last	High	Low	Chg. ↕	Chg. % ↕	Time ↕
 BSE SOFIX	538.96	574.42	529.00	-35.46	-6.17%	07/03 
 BGBX40	127.92	133.66	126.55	-5.74	-4.29%	07/03 
 BGTR30	649.02	668.42	644.15	-19.40	-2.90%	07/03 

³ Nowadays (last update on 12/03/2022) it’s impossible to characterize this index. The number of immigrants is changing by the hour. By today, nearly 60,000 Ukrainians have entered Bulgaria since 24/02 and nearly 34,000 stayed in the country. More detailed statistics about their realization on the labour market not available yet. It is provided based on analyses from before 24/02.

- ✓ Unfortunately, while in January Bulgaria Stock Exchange increased 12 points or 1.84% since the beginning of 2022, in March due to the war crisis the data drastically changed and the above data shows decrease on all points.
- ✓ Last available data shows rising of Economic Activity Indicator in the country thus indicating also the increase of real GDP growth rate. [18]
- ✓ Bulgaria Government debt accounted for 25.3 % of the country's Nominal GDP in Sept. 2020, compared with the ratio of 21.3 % in the previous quarter. In the latest reports, Bulgaria National Government Debt reached 18.4 USD bn in Oct 2021. The country's Nominal GDP reached 20.2 USD bn in Dec. 2020. [2]

4. **What is the country's level in terms of social indicators such as education, health, employment and unemployment rates, participation, safety, and gender equality?** (Where possible, please provide percentages from Eurydice or other European or World Bank reports)

- ✓ Almost 87% of the Bulgarian education system is state funded. [20]
- ✓ Key indicators in education are below the EU average: tertiary educational attainment – 32.5% vs. 40.3%; early leavers from education and training (age 18-24) – 13.9% vs. 10.2%. The biggest disproportion: adult participation in learning – 2.0% vs. 10.8% & credit mobile graduates – 1.4% vs. 9.1%. One indication almost equal – employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment: 80.7% vs. 80.9%. [8]
- ✓ In 2018, health expenditure as a share of GDP for Bulgaria was 7.3 %. Though Bulgaria health expenditure as a share of GDP fluctuated substantially in recent years, it tended to increase through 2004-2018 period. [13]
- ✓ Health expenditure per capita of Bulgaria increased from 94 USD in 2000 to 698 USD in 2019 growing at an average annual rate of 11.69%. [14]
- ✓ For employment and unemployment rates please refer to # 2.
- ✓ With 59.6 out of 100 points for 2020, Bulgaria ranks 19th in the EU on the Gender Equality Index. Bulgaria's score is 8.3 points below the EU's score. [9]

5. Are there any socio-economic threats to the country and its citizens?

- ✓ The results from the last census in 2021 are staggering: current population of Bulgaria is around 6.5 million and has shrunk at an unprecedented rate for the last 10 years – nearly 11%. [3]
- ✓ In 2015, 40.8% of children under the age of 6 were threatened by poverty or social exclusion. This is the second highest rate in the EU28 (EU average = 24.7%) for this age group. This is due mostly to the increasing Roma population in the country. The proportion of all persons in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 41.3%, the highest in the EU28 countries. [20]
- ✓ The modernisation of the education and training system in Bulgaria continues while quality, labour market relevance and inclusiveness remain challenging. Demographic trends and rising skill shortages suggest that the country needs to invest better in the skills of its current and future workforce. The need to upskill and reskill the adult population is high while participation in adult learning is low. Steps have been taken to increase the labour market relevance of VET. [7]

6. What is the level of training of staff working in the tourism industry in terms of intercultural skills?

No statistics about this indicator to be found in reputable data banks at European or Bulgarian level.

Studies confirm the critical need of IC skills in tourism and hospitality but no evidence of taking further steps – no open platforms or materials in Bulgarian for self-study in the field easily available.

Some facts from recent studies:

- ✓ inadequate skills of staff, including foreign language [5] and IC skills which leads to poor customer service;
- ✓ lack of customer service experience with foreign tourists [ibid.];
- ✓ migrant workers have been a convenient solution for many employers [ibid.]; however, the multinational staff not prepared properly for this working environment;
- ✓ need to be aware also of Dunning – Kruger effect (overestimation of own ability of hospitality staff) [15];

- ✓ IC skills not specifically addressed in the curriculum of VET and HEIs; no targeted, purposeful or specially dedicated effort to build such competences [5];
- ✓ intercultural conflict resolution and intercultural negotiation are evaluated as least developed. [5]

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PART 2: Analysis of Questionnaires

Name of the Country: **Bulgaria**

Name of the institution: **University of Plovdiv**

Number of participants (hotel staff): **41**

Number of participants (hotel guests): **61**

Questionnaire of Hotel Staff

Question 1: Country of Origin/Nationality

Q1 – Answer	No	Comment
Bulgarian	31	Nearly 76%
Chinese	4	
Creek	2	
French	1	
Russian	1	
Ukrainian	1	
Hungarian	1	
Total	41	

Question 2: Gender (optional)

Q2 – Answer	No	Comment
Male	25	Nearly 61%
Female	13	Nearly 32%
Blank	3	
Total	41	

Question 3: Age

Q3 – Answer	No	Comment
Under 20 years	4	
20-30 years	16	
30-40 years	15	
40-50 years	4	

Over 50 years	2	
Total	41	

Question 4: Religion (optional)

Q4 – Answer	No	Comment
Christian (not specified)	16	
Muslim	2	
Orthodox	1	
Not religious	4	
Blank	18	
Total	41	

Question 5: Country of employment

Bulgaria

Question 6:

In addition to Bulgaria, one respondent also mentions China

Question 7: Service area

	Q7 – Answer	No	Comment
1	Reception	21	Nearly 52%
2	Food and Beverage	6	
3	Housekeeping	3	
4	Management	9	
5	Other	4	1 – education; 1 – tour guide
	Total	41	One respondent marked both Reception and Food & Beverage. On the other hand, 2 Other didn't specify

Question 8: Frequency of communication

		Not at all	Not very often	Often	Very often	Constantly	Total
1	With colleagues with a different cultural background	2	13	12	5	9	41

2	With customers with a different cultural background	-	5	8	14	14	41
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Self Assessment

Question 9: Competences

		No competence	Limited competence	Sufficient competence	Total competence	Total answers
1	Foreign Language Skills	1	8	21	11	41
2	Maintaining Professional Presentation (i.e. uniform)	2	5	20	14	41
3	Problem Solving Skills	3	5	24	9	41
4	Cross-Cultural Communication	1	7	21	12	41
5	Team Work Skills	-	5	18	18	41
6	Active Listening Skills	-	6	21	14	41
7	Empathy Skills	2	9	15	15	41

Question 10: Situations where respondents encountered communication problems

	Situation	No	Comment
1	Day to day chats	-	
2	Communication about daily tasks	3	
3	When discussing guest's complaints/requirements/requests	1	
4	When communicating with other departments	6 ⁴	

⁴ Highest score in an index marked in green, 2nd place – in yellow, 3rd – in blue.

5	Talking about emotions (e.g. anxiety, stress, depression, worries, dissatisfaction...)	2	
6	Religious differences	4	
7	Language barriers	6	
8	Dress codes	1	
9	Guest refusing/not able to communicate with me due to language/cultural differences	8	This is the higher score here. Still only 20% (nearly) of the respondents marked it
10	Guest refusing/not able to communicate with my colleagues due to language/cultural differences	6	
11	Other	1	When guests communicate with locals
	Total answers		This question requires more than one answer per respondent

Question 11: n/a

Question 12: Situations with communication problems described in more detail

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Chinese	It is a little hard for me to fully understand the emotional changes	
Ukrainian	Bulgarians mostly refused to talk to me and did not want me to serve them as a Ukrainian because they thought I was not competent enough or that I belonged to another nationality. There were cases when Bulgarians called Ukrainians second-class people.	
Bulgarian	Guests of different cultural backgrounds often have different expectations from my daily work and obligations.	

Bulgarian	We have a lot of Chinese, Russian and German guests. A lot of Chinese and Russian guests can't speak English. Chinese guests are too noisy and not willing to accept our rules and culture. It looks like they are cooperating but often it's just to stop the communication.	
Bulgarian	If I know more about guest's cultural specifics, when dealing with special complaints, I will understand the information in advance, and according to the identities of different guests, will communicate properly and solve the problem.	Acknowledging the need to learn about other cultures
Bulgarian	Chinese male guest asked me why we have only female housekeeping and if it is a discrimination. He used to work in hotel in China where a lot of housekeeping personnel was male.	Gender cultural differences
Bulgarian	When I communicate with other departments to collaborating any tasks, they would co-operate well except peak seasons. During that time, problems happened. Everyone was tired and wanted to finish their own work.	

Question 13: Emotional intelligence

		No competence	Limited competence	Sufficient competence	Total competence	Total answers
1	Flexibility in dealing with guests	1	6	24	10	41

2	Flexibility in dealing with colleagues	1	7	23	10	41
3	Coping with negativity in the workplace	-	14	20	7	41
4	Adaptation to new challenges and situations	1	7	25	8	41
5	Flexibility of behaviour (i.e: different cultures/cultural diversity)	1	12	18	10	41
6	Understanding other people's feelings	2	8	24	7	41

Question 14: Situations with emotional intelligence problems while dealing with guests or colleagues

	Situation	No	Comment
1	Difficulties expressing/discussing feelings with colleagues	12	
2	Difficulties understanding someone's feelings	8	
3	Difficulties managing stress during conflict with guests	17	
4	Difficulties managing stress during conflict with colleagues	12	
5	Difficulties dealing with guests and/or colleagues	8	
6	Difficulties adapting to unexpected situations	9	
7	Difficulties in managing discriminative behaviours towards me	15	

8	Difficulties in managing discriminative behaviours towards my colleagues	11	
9	Other	-	
	Total answers		This question requires more than one answer per respondent

Question 15: n/a

Question 16: Situations with emotional intelligence problems described in more detail

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Bulgarian	It's easy for me to start crying after a conflict with guests. Conflicts reflects on my work and my manager's evaluation. It's not my fault that I can't understand reactions of guests with different cultural backgrounds.	
Bulgarian	More people need to learn to communicate effectively, which is not just knowing a language to a high level. Emotional intelligence is a big part of effective communication. You need to be able to read people and read the room. People's body language and facial expressions are also very telling of how they feel.	

Question 17: Understanding other cultures

	No competence	Limited competence	Sufficient competence	Total competence	Total answers
Understanding the different cultural backgrounds of	1	11	21	8	41

colleagues and customers					
Cooperating with colleagues of different cultural backgrounds	1	9	22	9	41
Providing services to customers from different cultural backgrounds	1	7	26	7	41
Openness and acceptance of others	-	7	24	10	41
Knowledge of specific needs of different cultures (i.e: daily religious practices, dietary restrictions, greetings; etc.)	1	17	16	7	41

Question 18: Situations presenting difficulties in understanding other cultures

	Situation	No	Comment
1	Difficulties understanding colleagues' cultural backgrounds	5	
2	Difficulties understanding guests' cultural backgrounds	14	
3	Difficulties understanding and meeting guests' requests/expectations	7	
4	Difficulties responding to cultural differences / cultural diversity	16	

5	Low motivation to deliver service to customer of different cultural backgrounds	7	
6	Low motivation to corporate with colleague of different cultural backgrounds	2	
7	Refusal/Low motivation from customers to be served by me due to cultural differences / cultural diversity	13	
8	Refusal/Low motivation from customers to be served by my colleagues due to cultural differences / cultural diversity	8	
9	Other	1	<i>This question can be subjective and open to interpretation. One does not need to necessarily understand every aspect of other cultures in order to communicate well. What matters is how we conduct ourselves and how respectful we are towards the other person. We may not always fully understand why certain cultures do certain things in certain ways but that is the beauty of diversity. As long as we are respectful and accommodating (within reason) then we should not encounter difficulties communicating with people from different backgrounds.</i>
	Total answers		This question requires more than one answer per respondent

Question 19: n/a

Question 20: Situations presenting difficulties in understanding other cultures described in more detail

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Bulgarian	As a lifeguard I didn't know that the female swimsuit of the Arabian culture is fully dressed one so I denied access to the pool to some ladies as it is forbidden to use it with clothes	
Bulgarian	I don't know how to handle situations when someone complains about problematic guests – mostly big Chinese groups. I can't recognize one Chinese guest from another.	
Bulgarian	During the summer we have a lot of Chinese guests. I don't like to clean their rooms. They have a lot of strange habits but they like chatting with the staff. I'm afraid of possible misunderstanding due to cultural differences or low language skills.	

Question 21: Openness to diversity

		No competence	Limited competence	Sufficient competence	Total competence	Total answers
1	Positive attitude towards guests	1	3	20	17	41
2	Positive attitude towards colleagues	1	6	17	17	41
3	Tolerance of cultural differences/dive	2	5	19	15	41

	rsity and habits/believes/ behaviours/attitudes					
4	Sociability to colleagues from different cultural backgrounds	1	10	17	13	41
5	Sociability to guests from different cultural backgrounds	-	9	19	13	41
6	Providing differentiated service according to diverse cultural and religious backgrounds	1	10	23	7	41
7	Awareness of own cultural background	1	8	19	13	41

Question 22: Maintaining a positive attitude, tolerating or socialising with people from other cultures

	Situation	No	Comment
1	Difficulties maintaining a professional attitude when dealing with different cultural attitudes/habits/beliefs/attitudes of colleagues or guests	8	
2	Difficulties when trying to learn more/understand more about a cultural background	14	
3	Difficulties being social with colleagues/guests from other cultural backgrounds	7	

4	Difficulties maintaining a positive attitude towards different cultural /practises	5	
5	Negative attitude towards me due to cultural differences	20	
6	Negative attitude towards my colleagues to cultural differences	11	
7	Other	1	Negative attitude towards guest due to cultural differences
	Total answers		This question requires more than one answer per respondent

Question 23: More information about Other
During communication with locals and hotel staff

Question 24: Situations connected with Maintaining a positive attitude, tolerating or socialising with people from other cultures – explained with more detail

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Bulgarian	She is with different religion and has different requirements to uniform	
Bulgarian	I find it hard to communicate with people who are rude or disrespectful and I do not think this would be a cultural thing. It is more about manners, how you've been brought up and self-awareness.	

Question 25: Conflict resolution

		No competence	Limited competence	Sufficient competence	Total competence	Total answers
1	Managing Interactions with colleagues of different cultural backgrounds	2	7	27	5	41
2	Managing Interactions with guests with different cultural backgrounds	1	9	26	5	41
3	Adapting to different cultural backgrounds (for both colleagues and guests)	-	11	24	6	41
4	Coping with stress/anxiety/ Maintaining professional attitudes in challenging situations	-	14	21	6	41

Question 26: Situations connected with conflict resolution

	Situation	No	Comment
1	Arguments/Misunderstandings because of a cultural difference with guests	9	
2	Arguments/Misunderstandings because of a cultural difference with colleagues	7	
3	Accidental offence due to lack of cultural knowledge	15	

4	Discrimination from a colleague due to a different cultural background	3	
5	Discrimination towards a colleague due to a different cultural background	9	
6	Discrimination from a guest due to a different cultural background	12	
7	Discrimination towards a guest due a to different cultural background	3	
8	Provocative behaviour towards a colleague due to cultural differences	10	
9	Reacting negatively to a cultural incident / misunderstanding	10	
10	Other	-	
	Total answers		This question requires more than one answer per respondent

Question 27: More information about Other
n/a

Question 28: Situations connected with conflict resolution in more detail

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Ukrainian	There was a situation where a woman (Bulgarian) yelled at me because she didn't want me to serve her. She was not satisfied with the fact that 70% of the staff in the hotel were not of Bulgarian nationality, despite the fact that all the employees spoke sufficient Bulgarian. Even after her conversation with the manager, she demanded to be served by a person of Bulgarian nationality.	

Chinese	My colleague reacted negatively when I was setting off firecrackers at work during the Spring festival.	
Bulgarian	A guest refused to live in the room next to another guest because of his nationality and cultural specifics. We had to find a new room for guest 1.	

Question 29: Uncertainty Management

		No competence	Limited competence	Sufficient competence	Total competence	Total answers
1	Establishing Interpersonal relations	2	15	19	5	41
2	Self-awareness of other people and their cultures	3	12	20	6	41
3	Commitment to providing the best service	-	5	25	11	41
4	Commitment to maintaining good relations with colleagues of different cultures	-	9	20	12	41
5	Commitment to maintaining good relations with guests of different cultures	1	6	22	12	41

Question 30: Situations with uncertainty management

	Situation	No	Comment
1	Uncertainty when engaging with colleagues due to cultural differences	6	
2	Uncertainty when engaging with guests due to cultural differences	16	
3	Uncertainty on how to maintain good relations with colleagues from other cultural backgrounds	11	
4	Uncertainty on how to maintain good relations with guests from other cultural backgrounds	15	
5	High stress when building good relations with colleagues	7	
6	High stress when building good relations with guests	6	
7	Low motivation to commit to provide the best service possible	9	
8	Low motivation from customers to engage with me	7	
10	Other	-	
	Total answers		This question requires more than one answer per respondent

Question 31: More information about Other

n/a

Question 32: Situations with uncertainty management in more detail

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Bulgarian	I guess you have to be mindful about what you say to people from different backgrounds. Like for example offering ham for breakfast to a Muslim guest. But then on the other hand, you should not assume that someone would not eat pork just because they're Muslim. Or also you shouldn't assume they're Muslim if they look a certain way. So yes, it can be tricky sometimes.	

Question 33: Does your organisation support the Intercultural Development/Awareness/Sensitivity of the workplace

Yes	26
No	15
Total	41

Question 34: Forms of IC training the employer supports

Team building	6
Trainings	5
Coaching	2
Workshops	1

Question 35: Participation of respondents in IC training courses

Yes	9	22%
No	32	over 78%
Total	41	

Question 36: Frequency of participation of respondents in IC training courses

Frequency	No	Comment
Once	3	1) When I started working. It was seminar on working with foreign guests; 2) 2 hours. Presentation “How to cooperate with team members and do not allow any inappropriate ways of working”; 3) Not specifically connected with the Hospitality Industry, it was a general cross-culture communication seminar.
Once a year	2	
Once in a while	1	

Question 37: Topics that respondents show interest to during potential training Seminars/Courses/Programmes on Intercultural Development of the Hospitality Industry

Topics	No	Comment
More information about the country; customs; different cultural backgrounds – traditions, habits, beliefs; folklore; religion (taboos); typical behavior (what to expect from guests); interests; learning about hospitality in different countries and cultures	8	
Basic communication skills (ways to interact/work); communication with guests from different cultural backgrounds; polite conversation	7	Specifically with non-European customers
Foreign language skills/courses	4	
Coping with stress (in challenging situations; when building good relationships with guests)	4	
Appropriate manner of speaking; speech patterns; What kind of small talks are	3	

appropriated for guests with different cultural background		
Best practices in approaching guests/ colleagues with different cultural background (do's and don'ts); providing best service to customers from different cultural backgrounds	3	
Cultural Awareness, Cross-cultural communication, Intercultural Communication; Intercultural challenges;	3	
Culture and eating habits; food	2	
Problem solving (intercultural problems)	2	
Overcoming difficulties with colleagues due to cultural differences; managing cultural diversity at the workplace	2	
Celebrating different cultural holidays	1	
Critical thinking	1	
Anthropology	1	
Emotional intelligence	1	
How to make friends with customers from different backgrounds	1	
How to recognise emotions of Chinese guests	1	
Maintaining a positive attitude to cultural differences	1	
Social standards	1	
Salary	1	Not IC
Topics related to the development of the hotel business in Bulgaria	1	
Anything	1	

Question 38: Experience of the respondents with any Desktop/Mobile applications or digital content aimed at the Intercultural Development of the Hospitality Industry

Yes	8	Less than 20%
No	33	Nearly 81%
Total	41	

Question 39: Applications used

	No	Comment
Google	1	
Medallia	1	
Mobile service	1	
WhatsApp	1	

Question 40: Any other comments

n/a

Main findings

Write 300-500 words with the main findings of the data analysis. You can present the main findings in bullet items.

- **Profile of the respondents.** Request to participate was sent to the following categories: our associates from the student council at PU; colleagues and associates with whom we work on various tourism projects such as tour guides, travel agency owners, etc. asking them to distribute the survey among their networks; our contacts in hospitality establishments who work there at various positions or own such an establishment, incl. foreign nationals who either own such businesses in Bulgaria or work there as employees.
- We received answers from people from **7 countries/nationalities**. Nearly 76% of them are Bulgarians.
- **Gender** of respondents: 61% male and 32% female (others didn't specify).
- **Age** of respondents: 2 biggest groups (almost equal):
 - ✓ 20-30 years – 39%
 - ✓ 30-40 years – 37%
- **Religion:** 42% of the respondents are Christians while nearly 44% didn't reply.

- **Service area:** more than half of the respondents – nearly 52% – work at the **reception**. This is a substantial number of answers to provide us with relevant information. Second largest group – nearly 22% – are **managers**.
- **Frequency:** nearly 30% of respondents communicate with **colleagues** from different cultural backgrounds **often** while over 68% communicate with **customers** from different cultural backgrounds **very often or constantly**. So definitely the leader in this index is **communication with customers**, confirmed also directly by own statements (pls see below).
- Self-assessment
 - ✓ **Competences:** biggest part of respondents assess their competences as sufficient or total. The following skills are rated the highest: problem solving (nearly 88%) and active listening (nearly 86%). Just single answers mark some competences as not sufficient or none. Amongst fixed situations where respondents experienced communication problems: **Guest refusing/not able to communicate with me due to language/cultural differences** received the highest rate but still **only 20%** marked it.

Specific observations:

- *Bulgarians mostly refused to talk to me and did not want me to serve them as a Ukrainian because they thought I was not competent enough or that I belonged to another nationality. There were cases when Bulgarians called Ukrainians second-class people.⁵* This is important since there has been substantial number of seasonal workers in Bulgaria from countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, North Macedonia, etc. Although the business needs them, Bulgarian society doesn't seem ready for this. Hopefully the situation changes now that a lot of Ukrainians will be part of the work force in Bulgaria.
- Other observations mention a number of misunderstandings between Bulgarians and Chinese: behaviours, expectations of gender roles... (details in the tables above).
- ✓ **Emotional intelligence.** Nearly 35% (the highest score in this index) rate **Coping with negativity in the workplace** as **limited competence**.
Nearly 42% of respondents marked problems with the following situation: **Difficulties managing stress during conflict with guests**.
- ✓ **Understanding other cultures.** Nearly 42% of respondents (the highest score in this index) rate **Knowledge of specific needs of different cultures** as **limited competence**.
Specific observations: mostly about **lack of knowledge handling complains against Chinese tourists** – big noisy groups, difficulties cleaning after them. This is something we definitely need to address in preparing the materials.
- ✓ **Openness to diversity.** Respondents report sufficient competence but nearly 49% mark difficulties with **Negative attitude towards them due to cultural differences**.

⁵ Replies gathered before thousands of Ukrainian refugees entered Bulgaria due to the Russian invasion on 24/02/2022.

- ✓ **Uncertainty management.** Over 39% mark it in a situation when **engaging with guests due to cultural differences.**
- Over 78% of respondents report **no participation in IC courses.** This is a niche that our planned product can help filling in. Leaders in topics suggested are: **country; customs; different cultural backgrounds – traditions, habits, beliefs; folklore; religion (taboos); typical behavior (what to expect from guests); interests; learning about hospitality in different countries and cultures.** These topics are closely followed by: **basic communication skills** with guests from different cultural backgrounds.

Questionnaire of hotel guests

Question 1: Country of Origin/Nationality

Q1 – Answer	No	Comment
Chinese	22	Over 36%
German	11	Over 18%
Russian	10	Over 16%
Bulgarian	6	
Serbian	4	
Czech	2	
Greek	1	
Cyprus	1	
Italian	1	
Belgium	1	
Portuguese	1	
French	1	
Total	61	

Question 2: Gender (optional)

Q2 – Answer	No	Comment
Male	20	Nearly 33%
Female	28	Nearly 46%
Blank	13	
Total	61	

Question 3: Age

Q3 – Answer	No	Comment
Under 20 years	6	
20-30 years	20	Nearly 33%
30-40 years	25	Nearly 41%
40-50 years	9	
Over 50 years	1	
Total	61	

Question 4: Religion (optional)

Q4 – Answer	No	Comment
Christian (not specified)	10	Christians combined account for nearly 27% of all answers and over 85% of answers with believes specified. But over half of the answers (over 54%) were left blank.
Christian Orthodox	3	
Catholic	3	
Buddhism	1	
Jewish	1	
Atheist	1	
Nothing	9	
Blanks	33	
Total	61	

Question 5: Country the experiences of the hotel guest is related to
Bulgaria**Question 6:**

In addition to Bulgaria, two surveys from Chinese nationalities also mention other countries: one mentions Italy and the other – USA and Thailand

Question 7: Frequency of staying in hotels

Q7 – Answer	No	Comment
Not very often	30	Nearly 50%
Often	20	Nearly 33%
Very often	11	
Total	59	

Degree of agreement with suggested statements

Question 8: Front Desk / Reception

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
1	I have encountered miscommunication at the reception due to different language	12	20	18	11	61
2	I have encountered unprofessional behaviour at the reception	12	29	16	4	61
3	I have experienced a different treatment because of my nationality	23	27	9	2	61
4	I have experienced a different treatment because of my religion and/or cultural background	24	26	8	3	61
5	I have experienced staff with negative attitude and low motivation to interact with me	17	24	14	6	61
6	I felt accepted and understood	2	16	30	13	61
7	Inflexibility in the service to accommodate my needs in a respectful manner	10	25	21	5	61

Question 9: Shared experiences – Reception

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Chinese	Front desk staff didn't recognise me and they gave me the passport of another person :) They used to greet me with "konichiwa". It's Japanese, not Chinese.	

Chinese	My English level is low. They don't speak Chinese. We use Google translate. Translation is not right.	
Chinese	When I stayed in one five-star hotel, I called to Lobby to ask when the spa closed. Staff answered "You could come before 4 pm." My friend and I arrived at 3.40 pm, lobby staff ignored us and kept playing her phone. We said we had a reservation of spa this afternoon, she just said "We closed at 3.30 pm, you cannot order it." with no apologies.	
Chinese	I felt like girls from the reception were mocking us and talking about me and my friend all the time.	

Question 10: Food and Beverage

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
1	I have encountered miscommunication at the food and beverage service areas due to different language	14	23	20	4	61
2	I have encountered unprofessional behaviour at the food and beverage service areas	15	23	20	3	61
3	I have experienced a different treatment because of my nationality	22	29	8	2	61
4	I have experienced a different treatment because	24	28	7	2	61

	of my religion and/or cultural background					
5	I have experienced staff with negative attitude and low motivation to interact with me	15	28	13	5	61
6	I felt accepted and understood	5	8	41	7	61
7	Inflexibility in the service to accommodate my needs in a respectful manner	14	23	18	6	61

Question 9: Shared experiences – Food and Beverage

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Czech	Ones I found ugly worms on my green salad in Pomorie	
Chinese	Chinese need hot water	
Chinese	I asked for a cup of hot water and they told me that is not in their practice to give just hot water. They agreed to give me water, but priced it as tea.	
Chinese	In Bulgaria they say tea, but it is not a real tea. It is with herbs.	

Question 12: Housekeeping

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
1	I have encountered miscommunication during housekeeping due to different language	12	22	18	9	61
2	I have encountered unprofessional behaviour during housekeeping	14	31	12	4	61

3	I have experienced a different treatment because of my nationality	19	30	10	2	61
4	I have experienced a different treatment because of my religion and/or cultural background	24	27	8	2	61
5	I have experienced staff with negative attitude and low motivation to interact with me	20	26	12	3	61
6	I felt accepted and understood	7	6	41	7	61
7	Inflexibility in the service to accommodate my needs in a respectful manner	16	25	17	3	61

Question 13: Shared experiences – Housekeeping

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Chinese	Chinese are not used to give tips	

Question 14: Management

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
1	I have encountered miscommunication	14	29	15	3	61
2	I have encountered unprofessional behaviour	14	32	12	3	61
3	I have experienced a different treatment because of my nationality	20	28	11	2	61
4	I have experienced a different treatment because	22	30	7	2	61

	of my religion and/or cultural background					
5	I have experienced staff with negative attitude and low motivation to interact with me	13	30	15	3	61
6	I felt accepted and understood	3	12	36	10	61
7	Inflexibility in the service to accommodate my needs in a respectful manner	16	23	19	3	61

Question 14: Shared experiences – Management

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Czech	One recent example: a hotel manager called me two days prior to my arrival that they were canceling my reservation because they were not going to turn on a heating because of us. Without apologising, as I should accept that as a matter of fact and as I should not have made the reservation in the first place.	
Chinese	Hotel staff was nice, but when we were leaving manager asked to check if there any problem in our room. In my culture trust is very important. I felt disappointed.	

Question 16: Any other comments

Nationality	Experience	Comments
Serbian	Can't wait to come to Bulgaria again!	

Chinese	Like Bulgaria.	
Chinese	I have been in different hotels in different countries. Most of them were not ready to accept Chinese guest.	
Chinese	Hotel staff didn't know about our National day. I expected some special treatment for such a big holiday.	
Portuguese	Bulgaria is a friendly country	

Main findings

Write 300-500 words with the main findings of the data analysis. You can present the main findings in bullet items.

- **Profile of the respondents.** Request to participate was sent to colleagues and students who visited Bulgaria for various purposes – on Erasmus mobility on other programs, conferences or vacation. Another group – our contacts in hospitality business; we asked them to distribute the survey among their guests.
- We received answers from people from **11 countries/nationalities** (incl. Bulgarians – we were looking for IC experiences they might have had in Bulgaria when they were served by employees from a foreign nationality/culture). The 3 groups we received most answers from:
 - ✓ Chinese (nearly 36%);
 - ✓ German (nearly 19%);
 - ✓ Russian (almost 15%).

This profile is important specifically since the University of Plovdiv (P6 in the project) is responsible for creating teaching materials with basic key words and phrases as well as cultural information about the visitors from China and Russia to be utilised by hotel staff members to provide more personalised services. While respondents from Russian nationality didn't provide any particular incidents or experiences, Chinese guests suggested some valuable ideas about their expectations while traveling abroad which people from other cultures might not be aware of. In addition to the importance of showing trust to your guests as well as tea and hot water issues Chinese guests also mention that they would appreciate showing respect to their national holiday. Another guest with vast travel experience makes a statement that in general *“most foreign countries are not ready to accept Chinese guests”*. Such statements indicate once again that in order to be effective, our materials should show

in the best way the expectations of Chinese visitors and give suggestions how to meet them. Of course, to cover wider range of sensitive areas, we will also be relying on various prestigious sources of academic research and best practices.

Respondents from Czechia specified some important details in the service they weren't happy about (all details provided in the above tables).

- **Gender** of respondents: 46% female and 34% male (other respondents didn't specify).
- **Age** of respondents: 2 biggest groups are
 - ✓ 30-40 years – 41%;
 - ✓ 20-30 years – 32%
- **Religion**: more than half of the respondents didn't reply to this question. 26% of the respondents are Christians.
- **Frequency of staying in hotels**: 48% of the respondents don't travel frequently while 34% (over a third of the respondents) marked their travel frequency as "often". This percent should be reliable enough.
- None of the aspects specified in the 4 chosen fields showed serious problems. Most answers disagree with the statements that outline problems. Still, there are some results almost equal in number of disagreement and agreement (in each table marked in green and the second place marked in yellow) which could be the focus of the situations in the prototypes.
 - ✓ In both Reception and Management the leader is **"Inflexibility in the service to accommodate my needs in a respectful manner"**. In Food & Beverage and Housekeeping the same statement holds the 2nd place. While it's not necessarily an IC issue, it still shows the flaws in the service that disappoint a foreign visitor and could be improved.
 - ✓ In both Food and Beverage and Housekeeping the leaders are **"I have encountered miscommunication at due to different language"** and **"I have encountered unprofessional behaviour"**. What is interesting is that both of them hold 2nd place in Reception and **"Miscommunication"** – 2nd place in Management.