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Task-Based Language Learning Toolkit for Tourism
**„TBL 4 TOURISM | Innovative foreign
language teaching methods in VET as
support to tourism sector” Project**

Task 1.2: Focus group summary

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Partners





Contents

Partners	2
Contents	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Focus group preparation	5
3. List of target tasks	6
4. Additional focus group findings	8
5. Summary	9

1. Introduction

Having successfully completed the desk research and the expert interviews phase of the project, the partners produced the following preliminary list of tasks demanding a working knowledge of English was composed:

- Receiving food and drinks orders, providing information about food and drinks in a restaurant
- Receiving guests and seeing guests off (check-in, check-out) providing information about the hotel facilities
- Responding to (typical) complaints and queries in a restaurant and/or hotel
- Answering questions and providing information on different aspects of local tourist offer
- Explaining aspects of local/ national culture, customs and tradition
- Providing information about timetables, public transport routes, taxis, coordination with travel organisers,
- Providing information about prices, currency, methods of payment and local shopping
- Answering telephone queries about local tourist offer, including accommodation, food, local trips
- Participation in tourism fairs and promotional events, B-2-B meetings
- Presenting and selling services and products of local tourism
- Receiving passengers and selling tickets

The preliminary list of task was thereupon used as a base for the final stage of the needs analysis phase, i.e. the Focus Groups.

The analysis of the results from the previous phase of desk research and expert interviews provided the partners with the room and necessary data to engage in careful and comprehensive planning and preparation of the Focus Groups phase, which no doubt had a positive impact on the overall success in this phase of the project.

2. Focus group preparation

The focus groups were organised by all of the partners, using a procedure prepared by the Blackbird school and formulated within the corresponding Focus Groups template. The activities conducted within the Focus Groups phase had the three-fold aim:

1. To define ten tasks performed by the waiters as the key vocation identified in the previous phase;
2. To shed light on the profiles and roles of the key participants in the TBL 4 T training course (waiters as the end users and teachers/trainers as the target group)
3. To outline the path for further development of PR 2 and PR3 in view of the expected institutional support, i.e. stakeholders such as policy-makers, networks of schools and employers, etc.

The direct input for the focus groups phase was the preliminary list of target tasks defined in the previous activities. Based on the joint agreement, the partners used two key instruments for the state-of-the-art needs analysis:

- a) The questionnaire:** as a special tool to reinforce the overall effectiveness of the process, in agreement with project partners, SLB designed a closed option questionnaire to be completed by relevant experts in preparation to the focus group meeting. The questionnaire expanded the list to 22 tasks, and these were assessed from the point of frequency, difficulty and teachability. Interviewees were also invited to contribute additional tasks, as appropriate.
- b) Focus groups :** The focus groups activities were prepared so as to enable an optimum balance of the different perspectives and overall enabled the relevant conclusions for the final stage of Project Result One.

3. List of target tasks

In month five of the project, a total of five focus groups involving 39 participants was organised in accordance with the set procedure.

In addition and based on the previous agreement among the partners that the questionnaire be used as an optional tool, a total of 59 participants took part in the three surveys conducted in this phase, making a significant contribution to the overall result.

One additional activity was also organised by Blackbird – a round table discussion open to public, serving both the objectives of the Focus Groups phase and aiding to the early dissemination of the project.

The following table presents the sum of the needs analysis at the Focus Groups stage – the definition of ten target tasks for further elaboration towards the final list to be taken to Project Result Two – The TBL Pedagogical Syllabus.

	TASK	Overlap ratio*
1	Presenting the menu and providing detailed information upon request	5 : 5
2	Communicating with clients to resolve complaints.	5 : 5
3	Translation of the menu into English	4 : 5
4	Offering menu recommendations upon request	4 : 5
5	Explaining aspects of local/national culture, customs, and traditions	4 : 5
6	Provide information about prices, currency, methods of payment and local shopping	3 : 5
7	Inform customers about day's specials.	3 : 5
8	Provide information about the restaurant/establishment.	3 : 5
9	Schedule dining reservations	3 : 5
10	Take the orders properly and communicate them clearly and effectively to the kitchen and bar	3 : 5

* The overlap ratio indicates the number of Focus Groups that included the task among their respective top ten choices.

The Focus Groups, supported with the Survey findings produced list of tasks for inclusion in the TBL Pedagogical Syllabus and the subsequent training. The analysis of the respective findings showed a significant overlap among the different FG conclusions, as shown in the graph below.

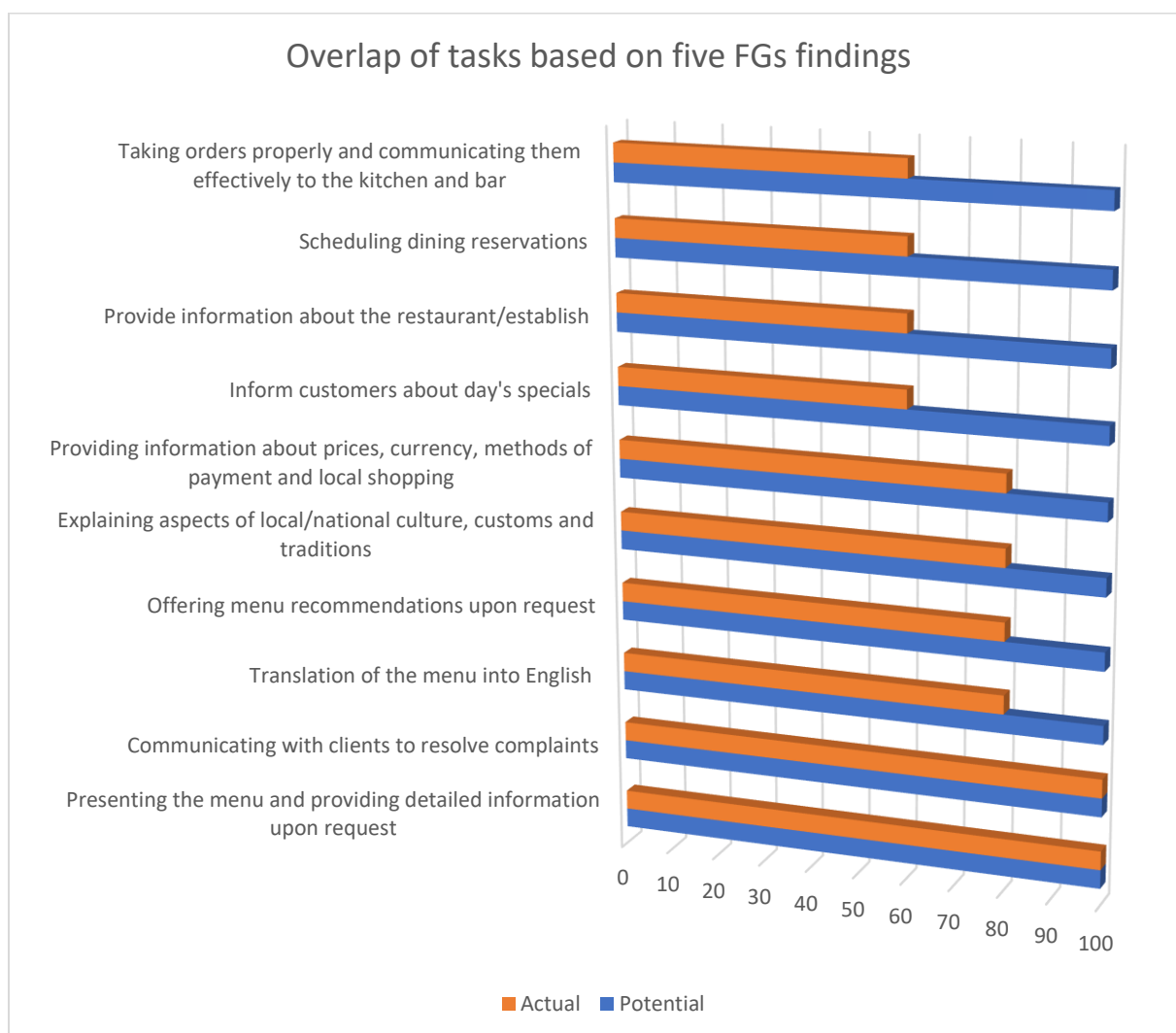


Figure: Overlap among the findings of different partners' Focus Groups elaboration of TBL tasks for tourism

4. Additional focus group findings

In addition to defining the target tasks performed by the waiters as the key vocation identified in the previous phase, the Focus Groups phase also yielded relevant conclusions that help to shed light on the profiles and roles of the key participants in the TBL 4 T training course (waiters as the end users and teachers/trainers as the target group), as well as to outline the path for further development of PR 2 and PR3 in view of the expected institutional support, i.e. stakeholders such as policy-makers, networks of schools and employers, etc.

Some of the key conclusions are given here:

- For staff working in tourism there is a similar set of skills that is a standard requirement irrespective of the country or region.
- A similar gap in staff competences is revealed, including the importance of not just linguistic skills, but also interpersonal skills such as active listening, clarification of meaning etc., which underpin effective international communication.
- The motivation for training is assessed as very high, both among the end users (students/ trainees) and the target groups of teachers.
- In many cases, there are indications of opportunities to secure institutional support for innovative Eft teaching and training models; however, in order to achieve this, a suitable approach will be necessary as it is not expected that the dissemination of the innovative teaching programme will progress along a straight line.
- A lot of material used to help train those working in the sector already seem to focus very heavily on vocabulary and grammar, rather than language in use. As such, there are several target tasks in which modelling needs to be as clear as possible to ensure that key phrases for effective communication are readily identifiable.
- There are non-role-specific functions that need to be fulfilled in these jobs, such as clarifying meaning and checking understanding, but also demonstrating active listening, demonstrating politeness through the use of functional language, etc.
- There are number of factors that impact on the perceived difficulty of the task (e.g. an everyday complaint versus a more unusual case such as an accident, proximity - e.g. directing clients to a nearby location versus a distant one, with multiple steps involved such as different forms of transport, etc.); sSimilar analysis will definitely be useful as the next step in elaborating the nature of the communicative challenges faced by the end users of the TBL 4 Tourism training course.

5. Summary

The results of the needs analysis stage were collected through the respective national reports and summarised for further elaboration at the second Transnational Project Meeting in York, UK.

The Focus Groups phase of the Project Result One – TBL Tasks for Tourism has been successfully completed.

The different activities conducted within this stage have also produced a lot of essential data that will be used in the subsequent development of the main outputs of the TBL 4 Tourism project.