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“HAXHI ZEKA”



DISCUSSION ROUNDTABLE

IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE HOTEL MANAGEMENT COMPONENT

AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE HOTEL SECTOR IN KOSOVO



AGENDA



10:30 – 10:45

Opening of the Roundtable –
Welcome Remarks
Rector of UHZ



10:45 – 11:15

Presentation of the Empirical
Research Findings
*University “Haxhi Zeka” – Faculty of
Tourism Management, Hospitality
and Environment (UHZ-FMTHE)*



11:15 – 11:45

Panel Discussion
*Representatives of public institutions
and the hospitality sector*



11:45 – 12:15

Open Discussion
*Questions and comments
from participants*



12:15 – 12:30

Closing Remarks and Conclusions
UHZ & FMTHE



08.07.2026



10:00



HOTEL DUKAGJINI,
PEJA



Together, we build
the professional workforce
for the hospitality industry
of tomorrow.





Entrance

In an economic and social environment characterized by constant change, universities face the responsibility to develop study programs that not only transmit knowledge but also prepare professionals capable of responding to the real demands of the labor market. This responsibility is especially important in rapidly developing sectors, such as hospitality, where the quality of human resources remains one of the key factors for success and competitiveness.

In this context, identifying the needs of the industry and involving them in the development process of study programs is not only a good academic practice but also a necessity for higher education institutions. Dialogue with employers, analysis of sector developments, and support for evidence-based decision-making create opportunities for the university to build sustainable, relevant, and professionally competency-oriented study programs.

It was precisely on this approach that the initiative of the Faculty of Tourism Management, Hospitality and Environment at "Haxhi Zeka" University was based, which undertook a study aimed at identifying the current needs of the hotel sector and assessing the alignment of study programs with labor market demands. Through the involvement of industry representatives, the

research created a reliable information base on the professional competencies required by employers, the challenges faced by the sector, and expectations for the development of future workforce.

The results of this research served as a starting point for organizing the roundtable discussion **"Empowering Hotel Management in Higher Education – Development of Professional Competencies and Harmonization of Curricula with the Labor Market,"** held on July 8, 2026, organized by the Faculty of Tourism Management, Hospitality and Environment at "Haxhi Zeka" University. The event brought together representatives of public institutions, the academic community, professional organizations, and the hospitality industry in a joint forum, creating a space for open discussion on the challenges, opportunities, and directions for the development of university education in this field.

Unlike activities limited to presenting institutional positions, this roundtable was built on the results of an empirical analysis, directing the debate towards concrete issues that affect the development of study programs and the preparation of professional staff. The research findings served as a basis for discussion, while the panelists' contributions, coming from various institutions and the industry itself, enriched the analysis with practical experiences and professional perspectives on the sector's challenges and priorities.

This report chronologically presents the development of the activity, summarizes the main issues addressed during the discussions, and highlights the conclusions drawn from the dialogue between academia, public institutions, and industry. At the same time, it documents an initiative aimed at strengthening the culture of evidence-based decision-making and contributing to the development of study programs that respond to the needs of society and the labor market.

Purpose of the activity

The roundtable discussion was organized with the aim of creating a joint cooperation platform between the university, public institutions, and the hotel industry to analyze the current needs of the sector and to discuss ways to advance study programs in the field of hotel management. The activity aimed to encourage evidence-based dialogue among the main sector actors, placing the training of professional staff and harmonizing students' competencies with the real demands of the labor market at the center of the discussion.

At the same time, the roundtable aimed to present the results of research conducted by the Faculty of Tourism, Hospitality, and Environment Management, turning the empirical findings into a basis for professional discussions and for formulating concrete recommendations that can serve in the process of developing study programs and strengthening university–industry cooperation.

Through this event, "Haxhi Zeka" University aimed to reaffirm its role as an institution that not only prepares professional staff but also creates spaces for dialogue between academia and the private sector to address challenges affecting the development of higher education and the hospitality industry in Kosovo.

Main objectives

The organization of the roundtable was aimed at achieving several concrete objectives, which also guided the development of discussions during the event:

1. Presentation of the research results **"Identifying the needs for strengthening the hotel management component"** as a basis for academic discussion and decision-making.
2. Analyzing the professional competencies currently required by the hotel industry and identifying the profiles most needed for the labor market.
3. Assessment of the compatibility of existing study programs with contemporary developments in the hospitality sector and with employer requirements.
4. Discussion on the importance of professional internships as an essential component in student preparation and identifying mechanisms to expand cooperation with businesses.
5. Promoting dialogue between the university, public institutions, professional organizations, and industry, with the aim of creating sustainable partnerships for the development of higher education.
6. The formulation of recommendations for improving curricula, developing specialized profiles in hotel management, and strengthening university–industry cooperation as one of the main mechanisms to enhance the quality of education and the employability of graduates.

Organization of the event

The roundtable discussion **"Empowering Hotel Management in Higher Education – Development of Professional Competencies and Harmonization of Curricula with the Labor Market"** was organized on **July 8, 2026**, at the **"Dukagjini" Hotel** premises in Peja, organized by the Faculty of Tourism Management, Hotel Management, and Environment of "Haxhi Zeka" University. The event began with the reception and registration of participants, creating opportunities for communication and exchange of experiences between representatives of public institutions, the hotel industry, and the academic community.

The event was attended by leaders of "Haxhi Zeka" University, representatives from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, representatives of professional hospitality and tourism organizations, hotel and sector business managers, heads of educational institutions, industry experts, university professors, and representatives of the private sector. This multisectoral composition created the opportunity for the issues addressed to be analyzed from academic, institutional, and professional perspectives, enriching the discussion with concrete experiences from practice.

From the very beginning of the activity, it was evident that the challenges related to the training of professional staff cannot be addressed solely by the university or only by industry. For this reason, the roundtable was designed as a collaborative forum, where each participant shared their experience and perspective on developing professional competencies, improving student internships, and harmonizing study programs with labor market demands.

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TABLE

A dialogue between academia and industry

After welcoming and registering the participants, the roundtable officially began at 10:00, marking the start of a discussion centered on one of the most current topics for higher education in Kosovo, the preparation of professional staff for the hospitality sector, and the need to harmonize study programs with labor market developments. From the very beginning, it was emphasized that the development of the hospitality sector cannot be treated solely as an economic or tourism issue, but also as an educational challenge, which requires continuous cooperation between universities, public institutions, and industry.

The activity program was designed so that discussions would be based on the research results conducted by the Faculty of Tourism, Hospitality, and Environment Management, while the panelists' contributions offered different perspectives on how university education can better meet the needs of the hospitality sector. This approach created a natural link between empirical evidence, institutional experience, and professional practice, steering the discussion towards identifying concrete solutions.

Discussion panel

The discussion panel was designed to represent all parties contributing to the development of the hospitality sector, including public institutions, professional organizations, businesses, vocational education, and the university. This composition enabled the treatment of the topic from different perspectives and created a balanced debate on the challenges and prospects for the development of hotel management in higher education.

Prof. dr. Armand Krasniqi

Prof. Dr. Armand Krasniqi serves as Rector of "Haxhi Zeka" University and is a full professor in the field of business law. With extensive academic and leadership experience, he has made a significant contribution to the institutional building and development of the university, having previously held the position of Dean of the Faculty of Applied Business Sciences and Chairman of the Interim Governing Council. During his term as rector, the university has made progress in improving academic quality, internationalization, expanding cooperation with local and international partners, as well as developing study programs in accordance with European higher education standards.

The university as a partner in the development of the hospitality sector

The roundtable was opened by the Rector of "Haxhi Zeka" University, **Prof. Dr. Armand Krasniqi**, who, in his welcoming speech, focused on the responsibility that public universities have in relation to the economic and social development of the country. He emphasized that the role of the university does not end with the graduation of the students, but continues through the

creation of study programs that respond to the transformations of the labor market and the needs of the strategic sectors of the economy.

In this context, the Rector valued the organization of the roundtable as an important step towards strengthening the dialogue between the university and the hospitality industry. According to him, the development of study programs should be supported by continuous communication with employers so that students acquire competencies that enable quick and successful integration into the labor market.

He underlined that the Faculty of Tourism Management, Hospitality, and Environment has built over the years a tradition of cooperation with the private sector and that activities like this roundtable demonstrate the institutional orientation of "Haxhi Zeka" University towards developing education based on partnership, innovation, and social responsibility. In this regard, the research results presented during the event were considered an important source of information for the further development of study programs and for strengthening the hotel management component within the faculty.



Muhedin Nushi

Muhedin Nushi is a Senior Advisor at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Kosovo. With extensive experience in public administration and institutional management, he has contributed to the drafting and implementation of public policies, institutional development, and the promotion of the tourism sector. During his career, he has held important leadership roles at both local and central levels, being involved in modernizing public administration, developing strategic projects, and strengthening inter-institutional cooperation. In his current role, he contributes to advancing policies for tourism development and promoting Kosovo as a tourist destination through cooperation with local institutions and international partners.

Public policies and human capital development

Following the program, participants were greeted by **Muhedin Nushi**, Senior Advisor at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, who presented the institutional perspective on the development of human capital in the hospitality and tourism sector. He pointed out that the sustainable development of this sector cannot rely solely on infrastructure investments or the promotion of tourist destinations, but also requires systematic investment in the professional training of human resources.

In his discussion, it was emphasized that public policies should be developed in close cooperation with higher education institutions and industry, so that the development of university curricula reflects the changes occurring in the labor market. He emphasized the importance of initiatives based on empirical research, emphasizing that institutional decision-making is more sustainable when it relies on evidence and dialogue with sector stakeholders.

In this spirit, he congratulated "Haxhi Zeka" University and the Faculty of Tourism Management, Hospitality, and Environment for organizing the roundtable and conducting the research, considering it a valuable contribution to discussions related to the development of vocational and university education in the field of hospitality.



Prof. dr. Afrim Selimi

Prof. dr. Afrim Selimaj is the Dean of the Faculty of Management in Tourism, Hospitality, and Environment at "Haxhi Zeka" University and a full professor in the field of economics. With extensive academic, scientific, and managerial experience, he has made a significant contribution to the development of higher education and the advancement of study programs. His activities include teaching, scientific research, and participation in development projects, focusing on economics, marketing, and management. As dean, he is dedicated to improving academic quality, strengthening cooperation with institutions and industry, as well as preparing professional staff in accordance with contemporary higher education standards.

University, industry cooperation as a foundation for curriculum development

Speaking as Dean of the Faculty of Tourism Management, Hospitality, and Environment, **Prof. dr. Afrim Selimi** directed the discussion towards the role the faculty plays in preparing professional staff for the hotel sector. He emphasized that the development of study programs cannot be an isolated academic process but must be built in continuous cooperation with industry and institutions operating in this sector.

In his speech, the Dean emphasized that the research results clearly demonstrate the need to advance the hotel management component, increase the weight of professional internships, and

involve the industry more strongly in the curriculum development process. According to him, precisely these elements form the foundation on which the faculty will continue to develop its study programs in the future.

He also expressed the faculty's readiness to expand forms of cooperation with businesses by creating partnerships that enable students to gain practical experience during their studies and develop competencies demanded by the labor market.



Research methodology

To ensure that the roundtable discussions were based on empirical data, the Faculty of Tourism Management, Hospitality, and Environment conducted a quantitative study, which was developed through a structured questionnaire. The study involved 124 entities from the hospitality, gastronomy, and tourism sectors in Kosovo. The collected data was analyzed descriptively, and their results were used as a basis for discussions and recommendations presented during the roundtable.

Introduction of the research

Research as a basis for discussion on the development of hotel management

After the opening remarks by the panelists, the roundtable program continued with the presentation of the research **"Identifying the needs for strengthening the hotel management component,"** conducted by the Faculty of Tourism, Hospitality, and Environment Management at "Haxhi Zeka" University. The presentation was given by **MSc. Edlira Juniku**, executive assistant to the Rector, who presented the main results of the analysis conducted with representatives from the hotel, gastronomy, and tourism sectors in Kosovo.

From the very beginning of the presentation, it was emphasized that the research was designed as an instrument to hear the voice of the industry and to involve it in the process of developing study programs. Instead of the discussions being based solely on individual perceptions or experiences, the activity was focused on empirical data collected from the businesses operating in this sector themselves. This approach gave the table an analytical character and created the opportunity for the recommendations arising from the discussion to be supported by concrete evidence.

Next, the research methodology was presented, which was carried out through a structured questionnaire distributed to entities operating in the fields of hospitality, gastronomy, and tourism across all regions of Kosovo. The study involved **124 entities**, providing a broad information base on the current needs of the labor market and employers' expectations of higher education institutions.

During the presentation, it became clear that the development of the hospitality industry is progressing faster than the transformation of study programs, which creates the need for continuous dialogue between the university and the private sector. For this reason, the analysis was not limited only to identifying problems but also focused on identifying opportunities to advance the hotel management component within existing study programs.

One of the most significant findings presented was the almost unanimous support of employers for creating more specialized profiles in hotel management. The results showed that the industry considers it essential to develop programs that pay more attention to professional competencies, internship organization, and student preparation for real work situations. At the same time, it was noted that existing programs provide a solid foundation but require continuous updating to reflect industry developments and market demands.

Special attention was also given to the role of professional practice. The analysis showed that businesses in the sector consider practical experience as one of the most important elements in preparing students, noting that greater integration of internships during studies directly impacts the increase of professional competencies and facilitates the transition from university to the labor market. This finding became one of the topics that repeatedly resurfaced during the panelists' discussions.

Another aspect that attracted the participants' interest was the industry's willingness to collaborate more closely with the university. The research revealed that businesses express interest in

expanding professional internships, organizing lectures by industry experts, conducting study visits, and creating more structured cooperation agreements. These results demonstrated that there is a solid foundation for building long-term partnerships between the university and the hospitality sector.

At the conclusion of the presentation, it was emphasized that the research results should not be viewed merely as an analysis of the current situation, but as a guide for the future development of study programs. In this regard, it was emphasized that strengthening the hotel management component requires an integrated approach, where the university, industry, and public institutions share the responsibility for preparing professional staff who will contribute to the development of the hospitality sector in Kosovo.



Panelists

Hysen Sogojeva

Hysen Sogojeva is the President of the Kosovo Chamber of Hospitality and Tourism and one of the representatives of the tourism and hospitality sector in the country. He is committed to promoting policies and initiatives that contribute to the sustainable development of tourism. Through his role, he has contributed to strengthening cooperation between public institutions and businesses in the tourism sector. His commitment aims to improve the quality of tourism services and strengthen the role of tourism in Kosovo's economic development.

Professional competencies from the perspective of the hospitality industry

The discussion took on a practical dimension with the contribution of **Hysen Sogojeva**, President of the Kosovo Chamber of Hospitality and Tourism, who addressed the issue of professional competencies from the employers' perspective. Relying on the experience of the private sector, he highlighted the changes that have occurred in the hospitality industry and the expectations businesses have today towards graduates.

In his speech, it was emphasized that the market does not only require theoretical knowledge but professionals who are ready to immediately face the responsibilities of their work. According to him, skills in communication, organization, service management, problem-solving, and adaptability to industry standards have become just as important as academic training.

He assessed that the research results realistically reflect the sector's needs, especially regarding the lack of specialized profiles in hotel management and the importance of professional internships. In this regard, he expressed the readiness of the Chamber of Hospitality and Tourism to support initiatives that strengthen cooperation with universities and create greater opportunities for internships and employment for students.



Baki Hoti

Baki Hoti is the Chairman of the Kosovo Tourism Union and an expert on the development of the tourism sector in the country. He has contributed to promoting Kosovo's tourism potentials and strengthening cooperation between tour operators and institutions. Through its engagement, it has supported initiatives aimed at developing sustainable tourism and improving the tourism offer. His contribution has helped increase Kosovo's visibility as a tourist destination.

The labor market and the need for specialized profiles

Continuing the discussion from the perspective of professional organizations, **Baki Hoti**, Chairman of the Kosovo Tourism Union, focused on the changes the labor market is experiencing and their impact on the training of professional staff. He argued that the development of the hospitality industry has created new needs for specialized profiles, which require deeper and more practice-oriented preparation.

In his analysis, he pointed out that businesses are increasingly facing difficulties in finding staff who possess specific competencies in hotel management. According to him, this situation should not only be seen as a challenge for the industry but also as an opportunity for universities to develop study programs better adapted to market realities.

He emphasized that cooperation between academic institutions and the private sector should be an ongoing process, where the industry contributes not only by offering internship positions but also by participating in discussions on curriculum development and identifying the competencies required by employers.



Lulzim Sylja

Lulzim Sylja serves as the Director of the Tourism Department and is engaged in drafting and implementing policies for the development of tourism in Kosovo. It contributes to the promotion of tourist destinations and supports projects that strengthen the sector. His work focuses on the sustainable development of tourism and cooperation with relevant actors at the national and international levels.

Institutional support for the development of professional competencies

The institutional perspective of the sector's development was presented by **Lulzim Sylja, Director of the Tourism Department at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports**, who addressed the role of public institutions in creating policies that support the development of human capital and the improvement of the quality of education in the field of hospitality.

In his address, he emphasized that the sustainable development of tourism and hospitality requires a coordinated approach between public institutions, universities, and the private sector. According to him, investments in infrastructure and the promotion of tourist destinations must be accompanied by continuous investments in the professional training of human resources, as the quality of services remains the main factor affecting the sector's competitiveness.

Referring to the roundtable topic, he assessed that the research results provide an important foundation for drafting policies and initiatives aimed at developing professional competencies in hospitality. He emphasized that cooperation between the ministry, higher education institutions, and industry must be further strengthened so that study programs are developed in line with the real needs of the labor market and the strategic priorities of tourism development in Kosovo.



Xhevdet Hyseni

Xhevdet Hyseni is the Director of the PRO IN Association and has experience in managing and developing projects related to economic and tourism development. He is committed to creating partnerships between institutions and the private sector. Through his work, he has contributed to strengthening initiatives that support local development and the promotion of tourism.

Cooperation with industry as an investment in the quality of education

Following the panel, **Xhevdet Hyseni**, Director of the PRO IN Association, focused the discussion on the importance of professional internships and partnerships between universities and businesses.

He argued that cooperation should not be limited only to organizing professional practice, but should extend to all stages of the educational process. According to him, involving industry experts in lectures, organizing professional mentoring, and developing joint projects create conditions for students to gain real experiences and develop skills that cannot be acquired solely through classroom learning.

Referring to the discussions held during the roundtable, he emphasized that university-industry cooperation should be built on long-term partnerships and mutual responsibilities, so that students are the main beneficiaries of this collaboration.



Teuta Kryeziu

Teuta Kryeziu is a teacher at the Economic High School and contributes to the education and professional preparation of new generations. She is committed to developing students' competencies and linking vocational education with labor market needs. Her commitment to education represents a significant contribution to preparing future personnel for the service and economic sectors.

Linking vocational education with university education

Another important dimension of the discussion was addressed by **Teuta Kryeziu**, a professor at the Economic High School, who presented the perspective of pre-university vocational education and the importance of creating continuity between secondary education and university studies in the field of hospitality.

In her presentation, she emphasized that the preparation of professional staff is a process that begins in secondary education and must continue in a harmonized manner at the university.

According to her, the coordination of curricula between the two levels of education creates opportunities for students to progressively build professional competencies, avoiding overlaps and ensuring a more sustainable development of practical skills.

She also emphasized the importance of continuous communication between educational institutions and the private sector, so that the content of curricula reflects industry developments and the demands it presents for the workforce. In this regard, inter-institutional cooperation was considered a key element in creating an education system that meets the needs of the labor market.



Rudina Efendiu

Rudina Efendiu is a co-founder of GUIDEKS, an initiative that promotes tourism through innovation and technology. She is committed to creating authentic tourist experiences and promoting Kosovo's cultural and natural heritage. Through its work, it contributes to the development of tourism products and the strengthening of local tourism.

Professional competencies in a transforming industry

Continuing the panel, **Rudina Efendiu**, co-founder of **GUIDEKS**, directed the discussion towards the changes the tourism and hospitality industry is experiencing as a result of technological development and digital transformation.

She emphasized that professions related to hospitality and tourism services require new competencies that go beyond traditional professional knowledge. According to her, skills for intercultural communication, the use of digital platforms, destination promotion, and customer experience management have become an integral part of the professional profile required by the contemporary industry.

In this context, she emphasized that study programs should be developed in parallel with technological changes and the best international practices, so that students are prepared for an increasingly competitive and dynamic labor market.



Sadik Maqedonci

Sadik Maqedonci is the Director of the Department for Hotel and Gastronomy and plays an important role in the professional training of personnel in this field. He is committed to advancing vocational education standards and developing students' practical skills. His experience contributes to linking education with the needs of the hospitality and gastronomy industry.

Professional practice as part of the learning process

The discussion on the professional preparation of students was further enriched by **Sadik Maqedonci**, Director of the Department of Hotel and Gastronomy, who addressed the importance of integrating professional practice into the university study process.

He argued that practice should not be perceived as an activity separate from the learning process, but as a component that complements and strengthens the theoretical knowledge acquired during studies. According to him, involving students in real work environments creates opportunities for the development of professional skills, increases self-confidence, and helps them better understand the standards and responsibilities that characterize the hospitality industry.

Continuing the discussion, he emphasized that cooperation between the university and businesses should extend beyond professional practice, including mentoring, joint projects, and the exchange of experiences between academic staff and industry experts. Such an approach, according to him, directly contributes to raising the quality of education and preparing students for the challenges of the profession.



Arlinda Shoshi

Arlinda Shoshi is a manager at ONIX Spa & Resort and has experience in managing hotel operations and providing quality services to guests. It contributes to the implementation of hospitality standards and the development of modern hotel management practices. Her commitment reflects the importance of professional leadership in the hospitality industry.

Industry expectations for graduates

The representative of the hotel sector, **Arlinda Shoshi**, manager at **ONIX Spa & Resort**, presented the experience of one of the businesses directly involved in the employment and professional development of young staff.

In her discussion, she shared industry experiences related to the recruitment and integration process of graduates into the workplace. According to her, businesses value academic training but place special importance on practical skills, professional ethics, communication with clients, teamwork, and willingness to learn continuously.

She emphasized that cooperation with universities creates opportunities for students to become familiar with the reality of the industry during their studies, making it easier to transition from the university classroom to the labor market. In this regard, she expressed the private sector's readiness

to expand forms of cooperation with higher education institutions and to contribute to the preparation of new generations of professionals.



Besnik Bekteshi

Besnik Bekteshi is a trainer in the field of housekeeping and hospitality, with experience in building the professional capacities of hotel staff. He specializes in hospitality standards and hotel service management. Through his trainings, he contributes to improving the quality of services and the professional training of employees in the hospitality sector.

Development of practical skills as a professional standard

Following the panel, **Besnik Bekteshi**, trainer for **Housekeeping** and **Hospitality**, focused the discussion on an aspect that often remains overshadowed during the academic preparation of students, developing practical skills directly related to the daily operation of hotel facilities.

Relying on his professional experience, he argued that the quality of a hotel service is built through work standards applied at every stage of the organization. According to him, professional training should develop not only technical knowledge but also a culture of responsibility, discipline, organization, and communication—elements that directly affect the quality of service and the customer experience.

He emphasized that the industry needs professionals who are willing to work according to contemporary hospitality standards and who understand the importance of details in service delivery. For this reason, according to him, professional practice should take a central place in the study process, offering students the opportunity to become familiar with the real organization of work processes and the demands that characterize the modern hospitality industry.

In conclusion of the presentation, he emphasized that cooperation between the university and industry professionals creates opportunities for transferring practical experience to students and contributes to the formation of personnel who better meet the demands of the labor market.



Prof. asoc.dr. Alberta Tahiri

Associate Prof. dr. Alberta Tahiri is a university professor at the Faculty of Management in Tourism, Hospitality, and Environment at "Haxhi Zeka" University. Her area of expertise includes sustainable tourism, hospitality, cultural heritage, and tourism development. She is the author and co-author of a considerable number of scientific papers published in international journals indexed in the most prestigious scientific databases. She is also the author of university textbooks in the fields of tourism,

hospitality, cultural heritage, and sustainable tourism. Her commitment includes the development of study programs, mentoring students, and active participation in international projects and scientific conferences. Through her work, she contributes to strengthening cooperation between academia and industry, aiming to advance higher education and the sustainable development of the tourism and hospitality sector in Kosovo.

Analysis of industry needs and academic development orientation

The panel concluded with a presentation by **Associate prof.dr Alberta Tahiri**, a professor at the Faculty of Tourism Management, Hospitality, and Environment, who presented an analysis of the implications that the research results have for the development of study programs in the field of hotel management.

In her presentation, she pointed out that the research findings should not be viewed merely as statistical indicators, but as an important source of information for the academic planning process. According to her, the data collected from the hospitality sector provide a clear overview of the competencies required by the industry and the directions in which the development of university curricula should focus in the future.

She particularly emphasized the importance of continuously updating study programs, emphasizing that universities must be able to respond to changes occurring in the labor market. This implies not only the periodic review of course content but also the expansion of the practical component, the involvement of industry experts in the teaching process, and the creation of sustainable cooperation mechanisms with businesses.

At the conclusion of her presentation, Prof. Tahiri emphasized that the development of study programs should be supported by continuous dialogue with the hospitality sector and regular analyses of labor market needs. Only through such an approach can it be ensured that university programs remain relevant, competitive, and oriented towards preparing the professional staff needed by industry.



OPEN DISCUSSION

Panelists' contributions and perspectives for the development of cooperation

After the presentations concluded, the roundtable continued with an open discussion involving panelists, representatives of public institutions, businesses in the hotel sector, academic staff, and other participants. The debate took place in a constructive atmosphere, encouraging the exchange of experiences, ideas, and concrete proposals to strengthen cooperation between the university and industry.

The discussions focused on challenges related to the preparation of professional staff, the organization of student internships, and the need for continuous harmonization of study programs with labor market developments. Participants assessed that the dynamics of industry development require a continuous response from higher education institutions as well, through flexible study programs oriented towards the development of professional competencies.

Special attention was given to cooperation between the university and businesses. Industry representatives expressed their willingness to expand professional internship opportunities, contribute to the organization of academic activities, and support initiatives that impact the improvement of the quality of education in the field of hospitality. On the other hand, university

representatives reaffirmed their commitment to building more structured forms of cooperation that create mutual benefits for students, the institution, and the private sector.

At the conclusion of the discussion, it was assessed that the research results, combined with the contributions of the panelists and participants, created an important foundation for identifying priorities that should guide the further development of study programs in the field of hotel management. At the same time, it was emphasized that the development of the hospitality sector and the training of professional staff require joint commitment and long-term partnership between the university, industry, and public institutions.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE ROUNDTABLE

The discussions held during the roundtable highlighted that the development of the hospitality sector requires a more integrated approach to training professional staff, where the university, industry, and public institutions share common responsibilities. The panelists' contributions and the research results demonstrated that there is broad consensus on the need to develop study programs that reflect changes in the labor market and contemporary industry standards.

One of the main conclusions of the roundtable was that student preparation cannot rely solely on theoretical training. The development of professional competencies requires expanding the practical component, closer cooperation with the hospitality sector, and creating opportunities for students to gain professional experience during their studies. In this regard, the professional internship was recognized as a crucial element for increasing the employability of graduates.

The discussions also highlighted the need for continuous dialogue between the university and industry in the process of developing and reviewing study programs. Representatives of institutions and businesses assessed that institutionalized cooperation, exchange of experiences, and the involvement of industry experts in the academic process would contribute to preparing personnel who better meet the demands of the labor market.

Another important conclusion was the significance of evidence-based decision-making. The research conducted by the Faculty of Tourism Management, Hospitality, and Environment was evaluated as an important tool for identifying the real needs of the sector and for guiding the future development of study programs. It was emphasized that such analyses should become part of regular institutional practice so that academic development is continuously supported by data and in dialogue with industry.

CONCLUSION OF THE DISCUSSION AND MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

At the conclusion of the roundtable, the Rector of "Haxhi Zeka" University, **Prof. Dr. Armand Krasniqi**, summarized the discussions held during the event, highlighting that all the panelists' contributions and research results conveyed a common message: The development of higher

education in the field of hospitality should be supported by sustainable cooperation with industry and continuous adaptation to labor market developments.

He emphasized that the challenges identified during the discussions should not be seen solely as academic issues, but as developmental priorities requiring the joint commitment of the university, public institutions, professional organizations, and the private sector. According to him, only through a coordinated approach can study programs be created that prepare professionals capable of meeting industry demands and contributing to the development of the hotel sector in Kosovo.

At the conclusion of the event, the Rector presented the main findings that emerged from the discussions held during the roundtable, which provide an important guide for the further development of study programs and for strengthening cooperation between the university and industry.

Finals

1. Harmonizing curricula with the highest international standards and with contemporary developments in the hospitality sector.
2. Adapting study programs to the rapid changes occurring in the labor market.
3. Treating human capital as a key factor for the sustainable development of hospitality.
4. A clearer differentiation of hotel and tourism activities, both professionally and academically.
5. Institutionalizing cooperation between the university and businesses through sustainable partnership mechanisms.
6. Creating a clearer link between level IV, V, and VI programs according to the National Qualifications Framework in the field of hospitality.
7. Strengthening the practical component of studies and reducing the gap between academic preparation and professional practice.
8. Clarifying the distinction between the concepts of **qualification** and **certification** in the process of professional development.
9. Further development of digital competencies as an integral part of professional profiles.
10. Creating a database to identify the capacities, knowledge, and competencies that industry can offer in support of study programs.
11. Promoting the concept of lifelong learning as an element of continuous professional development.
12. Increasing the role of public institutions, at both local and central levels, in drafting and implementing policies for the development of the hospitality sector.
13. Development and promotion of the dual learning model.
14. Improving the image of the hospitality sector and increasing the attractiveness of professions in this field for young people.
15. Further development of practical skills in hospitality and their inclusion within the framework of national strategies for economic and tourism development.
16. Greater integration of digital marketing into study programs and professional practice.
17. Improving the mentoring system during professional practice, including the preparation of business mentors and the development of students' soft skills.

The institutional value of the table

Beyond professional discussions and the exchange of experiences among panelists, the roundtable marked an important step in strengthening cooperation between "Haxhi Zeka" University, public institutions, and the hospitality sector. The activity demonstrated the importance of building continuous dialogue between academia and industry, as an essential mechanism for developing study programs that respond to the real needs of the labor market.

The research findings, discussions held, and recommendations presented during the roundtable create a valuable foundation for the further development of study programs, strengthening partnerships with industry, and planning future academic and research activities. At the same time, they constitute an important reference for quality assurance processes, curriculum review, and advancing institutional cooperation aimed at preparing professional staff for the hospitality sector.



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