

The Role of Soft Skills in the Tourism Industry and the Challenges for HEI's: The Case of Portugal

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Instituto Politécnico
de Viana do Castelo



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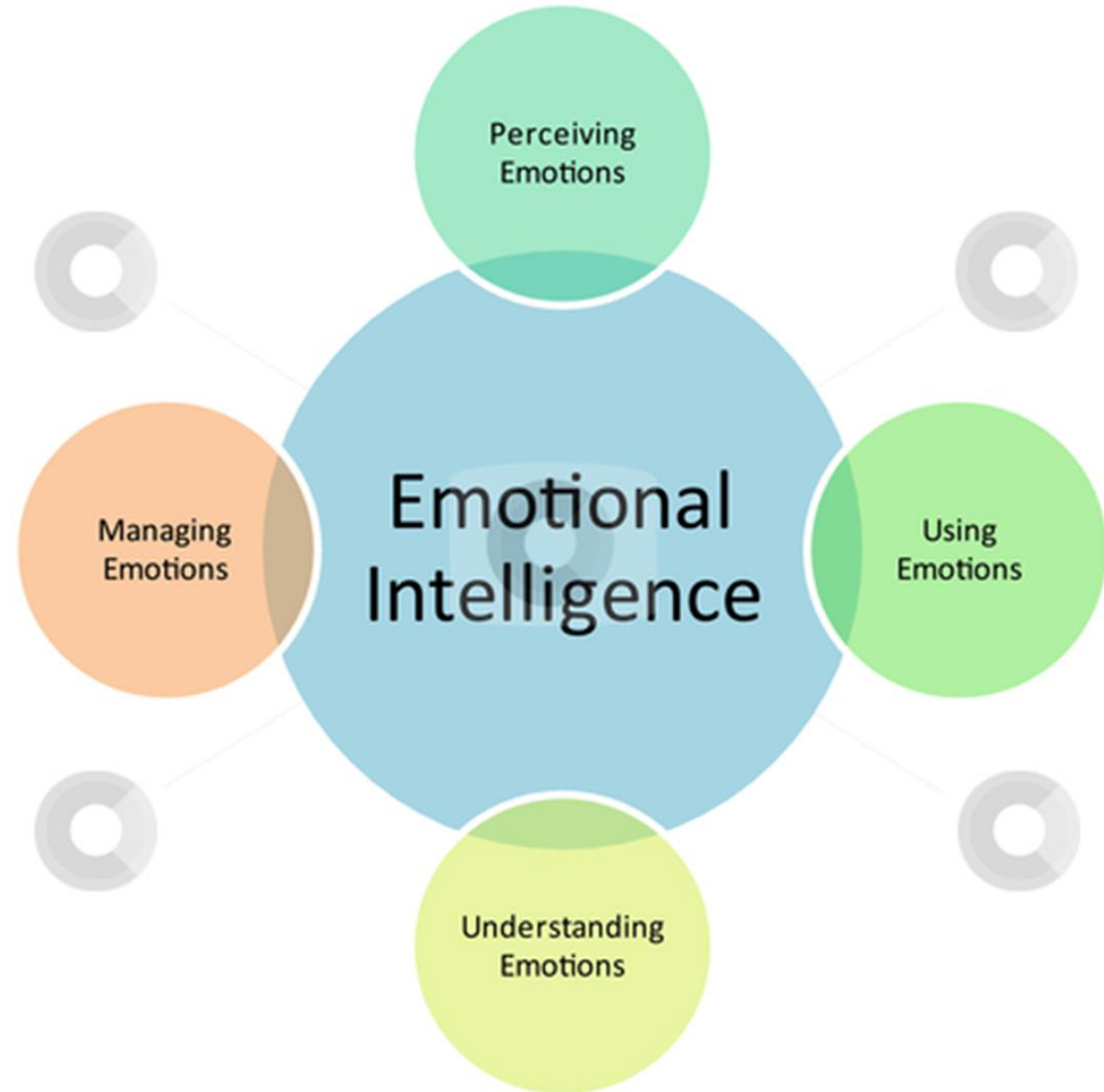
Innovative Cooperation Business-HEI
learning model for Tourism

588476-EPP-1-2017-1-PT-EPPKA2-KA



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WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS ?



Hard Skills



Soft Skills

“If your **emotional abilities** aren’t in hand, if you don’t have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can’t have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.”

Daniel Goleman

SOFT vs HARD SKILLS

HARD SKILLS

Specific and quantifiable knowledge or abilities; usually absolutely necessary for success

Can be demonstrated through tangible evidence such as a degree, certificate or examples of work

SOFT SKILLS

Unquantifiable attributes that cannot be proven but must be demonstrated through work style and approach

Successful demonstration of soft skills is left to subjective opinion



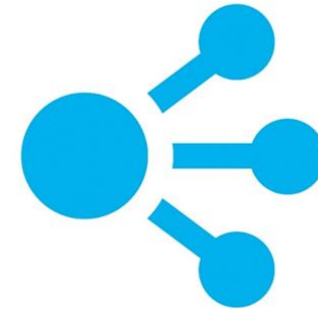
THE ROLE OF SOFT SKILLS IN THE TOURISM CONTEXT

- Tourism sector is about providing **SERVICES**
- **MEMORABLE** experiences
- The excellence of **SERVICE** and focus on **CUSTOMER SERVICE RELATIONSHIP** are of great significance



SOFT SKILLS as EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Tourism employers recognize the relevance of soft skills, on businesses' performance and competitiveness.



PROBLEM ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



PROBLEM ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- Current educational offer shows a **deficit** in what concerns **Soft Skills**
- Education providers have a **limited** understanding of employers requirements and needs
- Mismatch between market needs and students performance



PROBLEM ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

... social and personal key competences
are **hardly to be acquired** in lectures,
frontal teaching and self-learning.



WHAT INCOME PROJEC IS TRYING TO DO...



The INCOME Tourism aims at **developing a new learning approach** based on a **cooperative** learning process **joining** higher education and **tourism businesses/organisations** applied to **soft skills** development, to be incorporated in the last year of the Tourism Bachelor (EQF6).

INCOME Consortium



IPVC

Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo
(Portugal)



University of Girona

(Spain)



GiVi

(Italy)



University of Split

Faculty of Economics, Business and Tourism
(Croatia)



PPLL Consult

(Portugal)



CEVAL

Business Confederation of the Alto Minho
(Portugal)



Central de Reserves de Montserrat

Larsa – Montserrat (Spain)



Malta University Consulting

(Malta)



DHBW

(Germany)



CIM Alto Minho

(Portugal)



University of Bergamo

(Italy)



Malta Business Bureau

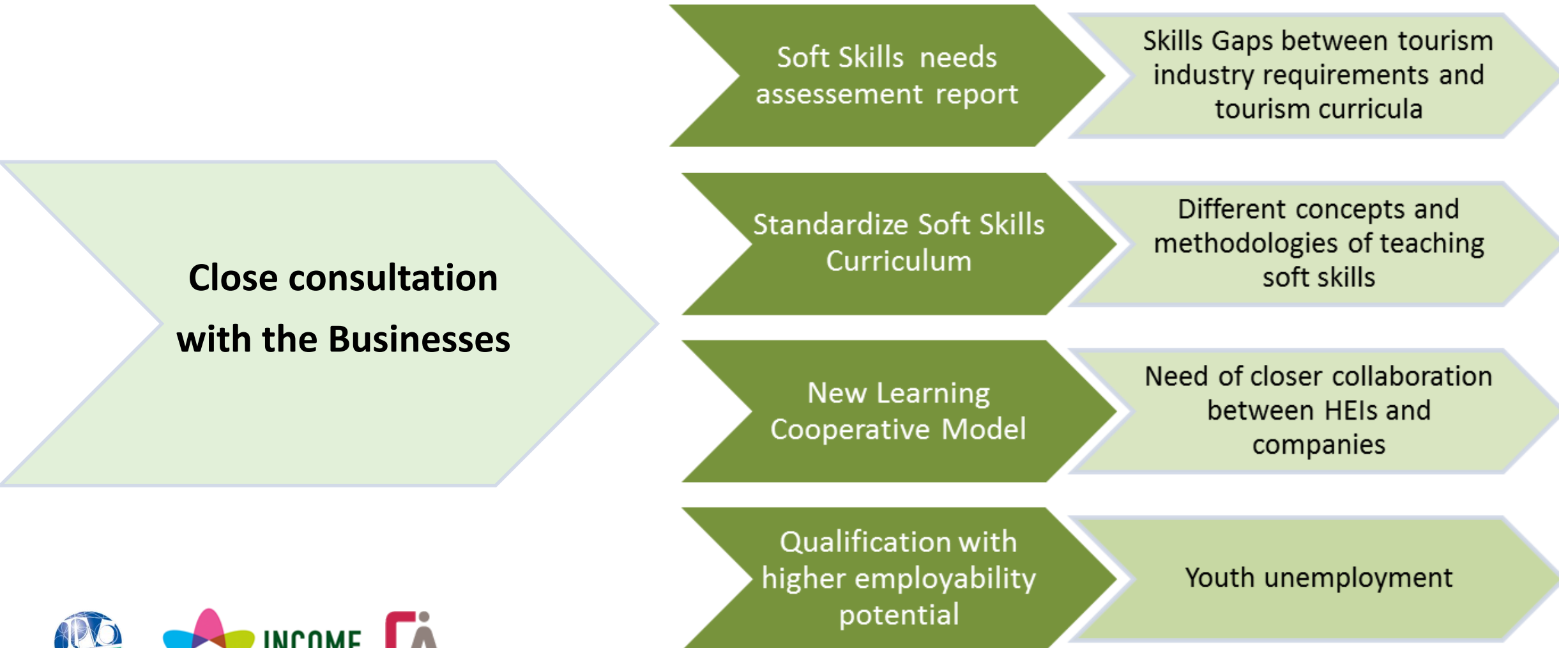
(Malta)



ATLAS

(Holland)

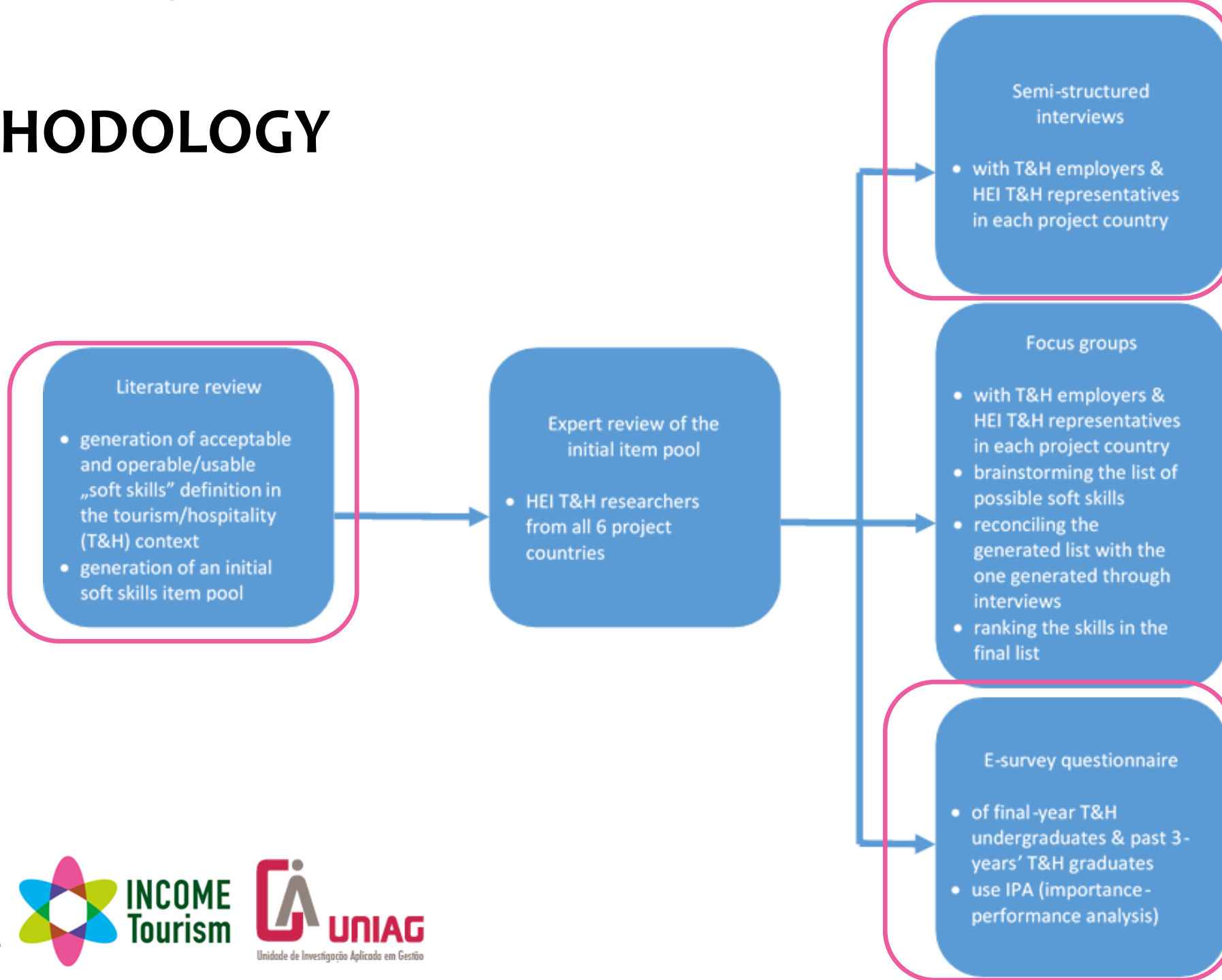
WHAT DOES IT INVOLVES?

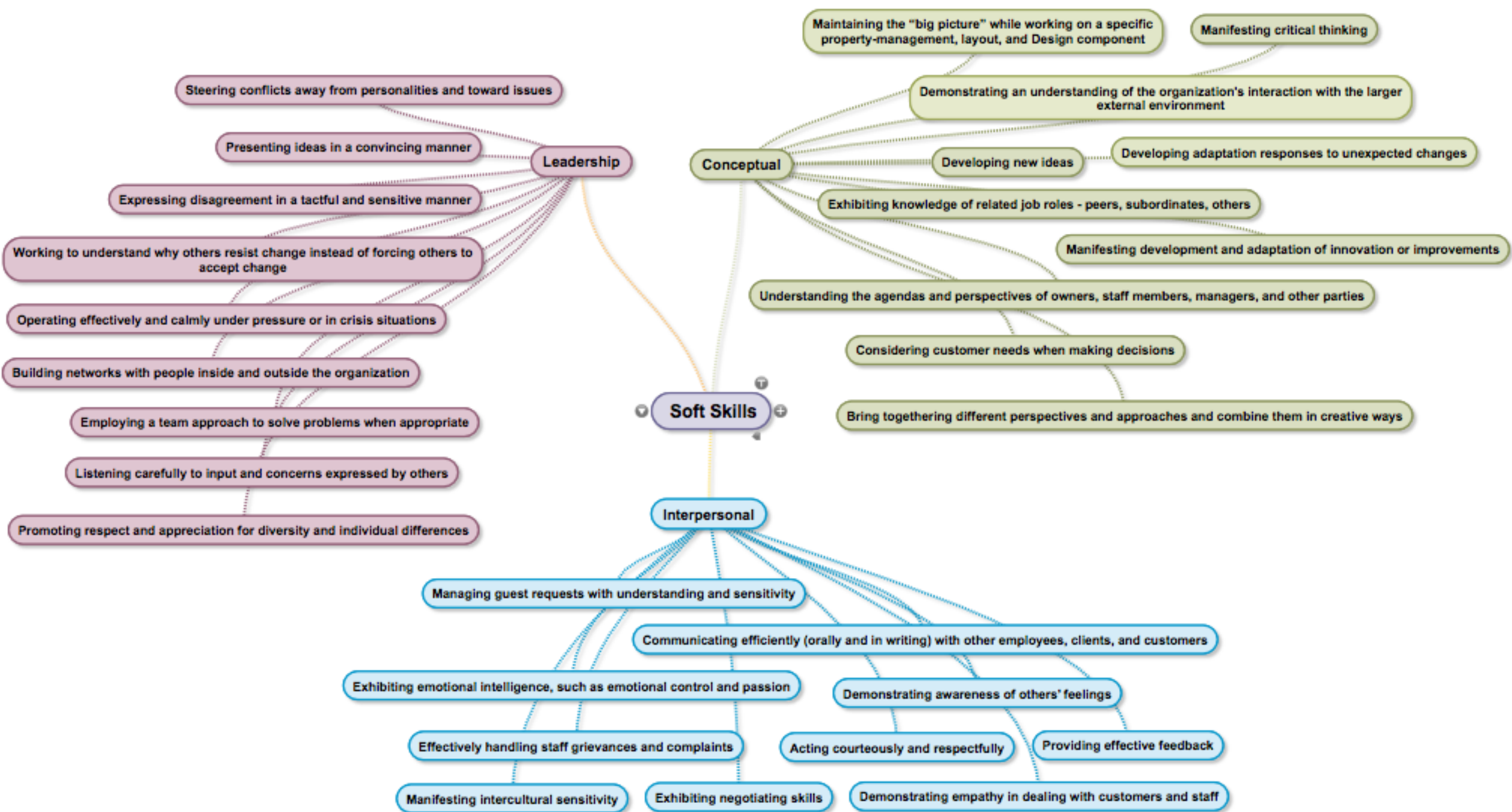


THIS PAPER ADDRESSES...



METHODOLOGY





Steering conflicts away from personalities and toward issues

Presenting ideas in a convincing manner

Expressing disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner

Working to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change

Operating effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations

Building networks with people inside and outside the organization

Employing a team approach to solve problems when appropriate

Listening carefully to input and concerns expressed by others

Promoting respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences

Leadership

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graph LR; A[Steering conflicts away from personalities and toward issues] --- B(Leadership); B --- C[Presenting ideas in a convincing manner]; B --- D[Expressing disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner]; B --- E[Working to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change]; B --- F[Operating effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations]; B --- G[Building networks with people inside and outside the organization]; B --- H[Employing a team approach to solve problems when appropriate]; B --- I[Listening carefully to input and concerns expressed by others]; B --- J[Promoting respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences];
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Interpersonal

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graph TD; Interpersonal[Interpersonal] --- A[Managing guest requests with understanding and sensitivity]; Interpersonal --- B[Communicating efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers]; Interpersonal --- C[Exhibiting emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion]; Interpersonal --- D[Demonstrating awareness of others' feelings]; Interpersonal --- E[Effectively handling staff grievances and complaints]; Interpersonal --- F[Acting courteously and respectfully]; Interpersonal --- G[Providing effective feedback]; Interpersonal --- H[Manifesting intercultural sensitivity]; Interpersonal --- I[Exhibiting negotiating skills]; Interpersonal --- J[Demonstrating empathy in dealing with customers and staff];
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Managing guest requests with understanding and sensitivity

Communicating efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers

Exhibiting emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion

Demonstrating awareness of others' feelings

Effectively handling staff grievances and complaints

Acting courteously and respectfully

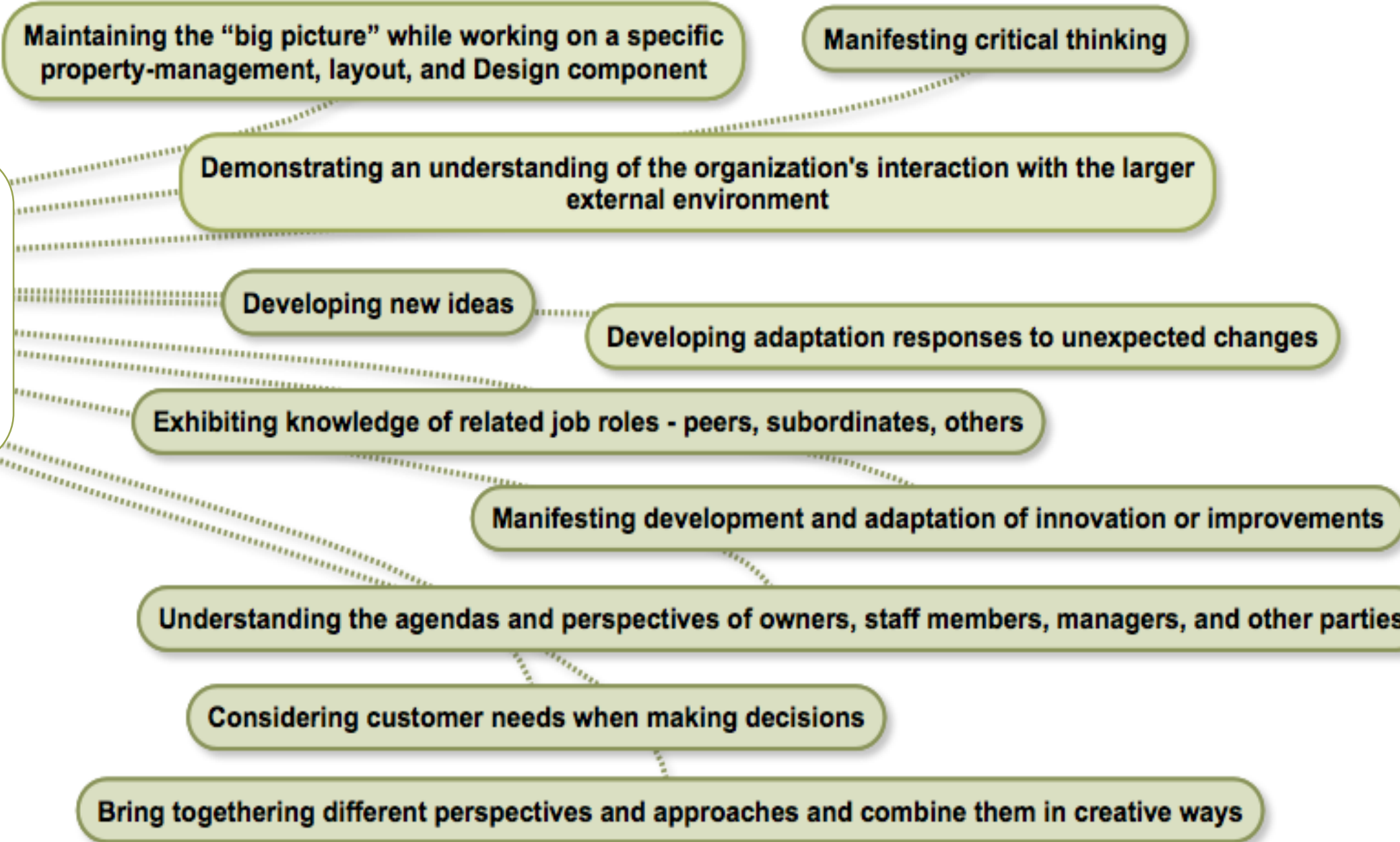
Providing effective feedback

Manifesting intercultural sensitivity

Exhibiting negotiating skills

Demonstrating empathy in dealing with customers and staff

Conceptual



	Interviews	
Target group	HEI representatives	Stakeholders
Professional context	I1, I2 and I3 Tourism Course Coordinators (lecturers) of 3 different HEIs in Portugal covering from north to south, with 20+ years experience	14 manager of 4* hotel with 50 rooms (30+ years experience) 15 owner/manager of Travel agency (15+ years experience in the TA businesses) 16 Owner/manager of boat rental company/ 4* hotel
Gender	2 female 1 male	2 female 1 male
Educational background	All have PHD in Tourism	Degree in Tourism/Hotel management

Q&A

How satisfied are T&H employers with the soft skills that, in their experience, graduate employees have?

Over the years a drop in the level of soft skills university graduates possess.
Graduates seem strong in statistics and numbers but fall short on emotional intelligence
A lot can be done.

What emphasis is given to learning soft skills in the T&H curricula today

Some subjects/courses cover some soft skills;
But bigger efforts could be placed on that.



Q&A

How are soft skills now learned and evaluated in the HEI system/ courses?

Problem Based Learning, oral presentations, internships, field visits, conferences, and inviting guest speakers.

How should soft skills be learned and evaluated in the HEI courses ?

internships, role-playing, simulations, videos, field visits, oral presentations, contact with professionals, conferences, seminars and group works. contact with the industry / market is essential



Q&A

How can T&H
employers facilitate the
process of learning soft
skills by undergraduate
students?

Accepting them for **internships**
Participating in the **definition of the curricula**
Internships
Practical placements / **work based learning**



RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Most of the respondents were female (76%, n=56) and **have already work experience in the industry**, mainly in hotels and restaurants (74%; n= 55).

In general, respondents recognise the importance of the thirty different soft skills that have been grouped into the three **dimensions, namely, 'Conceptual/Creative', 'Leadership', and 'Interpersonal' soft skills'**

'Consider customer needs when making decisions'

'Operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations'

'Act courteously and respectfully'

'Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate'

'Develop adaptation responses to unexpected changes'

'Listen carefully to input and concerns expressed by others'

HOW SATISFIED ARE THE STUDENTS ABOUT THE CONDITIONS COURSES OFFER TO LEARN/AQUIRE SOFT SKILLS ?

Current students are more satisfied than the former students

Overall, students are more satisfied with the following” Consider customer needs when making decisions’, ‘Act courteously and respectfully’, and ‘Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate’

The majority of former and current students acknowledged different opportunities that T&H Courses

In particular, ‘Consider customer needs when making decisions’;

‘Build networks with people inside and outside the company’, and

‘Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate’.

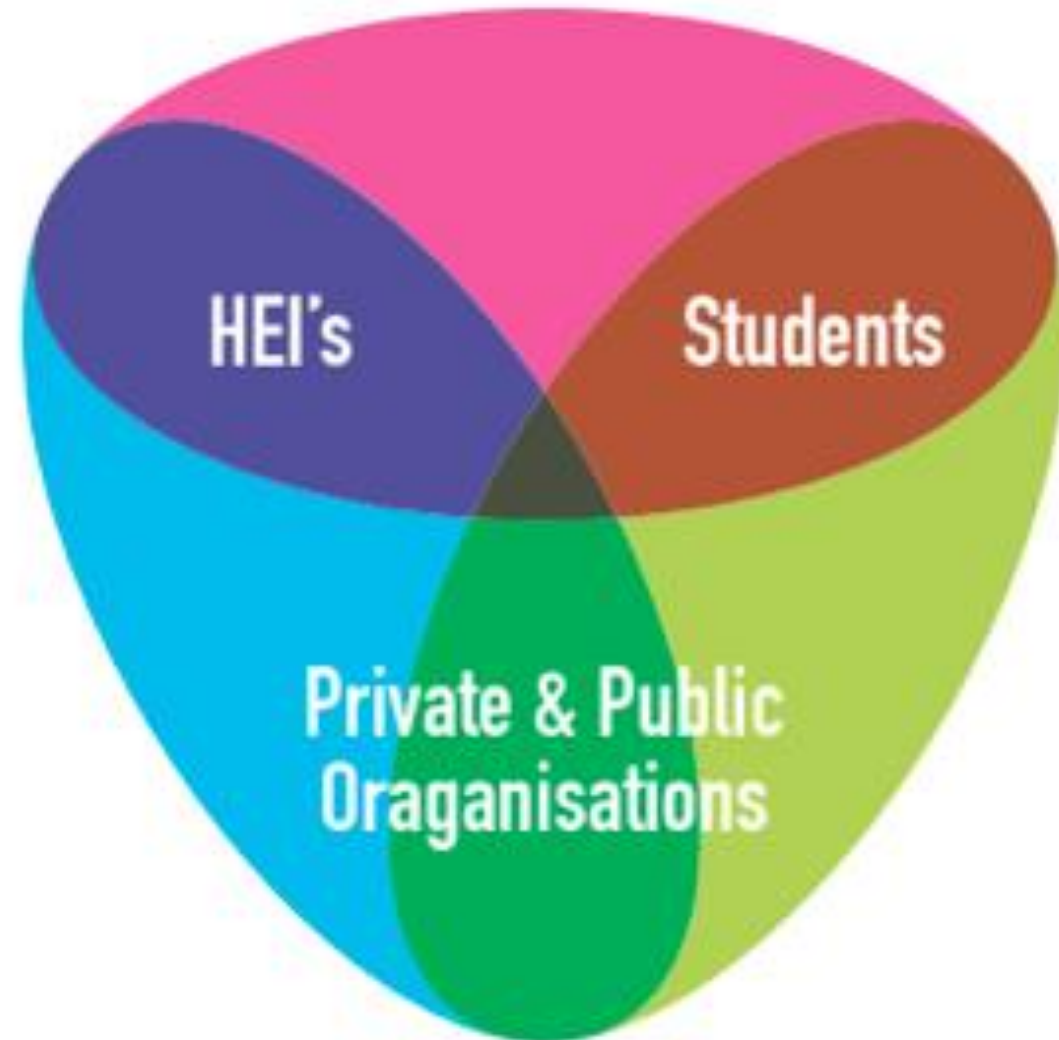
RESULTS POINT TO...

Results highlight the **recognition of soft skills importance** by HEIs' students and by T&H employers, along with the **need of greater focus on soft skills** and on **close collaborative interaction** with stakeholders and community facilitating the entry of students to labour market.



THE KEY WORD...

COOPERATION



Instituto Politécnico
de Viana do Castelo



**INCOME
Tourism**



UNIAG

Unidade de Investigação Aplicada em Gestão

INVOLVEMENT OF BUSINESSES IS A GREAT CHALLENGE...

Tourism Businesses' profile

- **Mainly micro and small businesses**
- **The perception about the “benefits”**
- **Lack of resources (human resources) - often there isn't a Human Resources department or manager**



BUT, IF WE SUCCEEDED, IN THE LONG TERM...

- Qualification with higher employability potential, due to the **matching skills** exercise and the **work based model**
- Greater **integration** of young people into the labour market



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