Co-funded by the European Union

Enhancing Wellbeing Through Beauty Care

Needs Analysis Report

June 2023

hbf hair and beauty federation

Confartigianato Imprese Vicenza

LCTS Leadership Consultancy Training Services

Območna obrtno-podjetniška zbornica Krško

MLI Malta Leadership Institute

Part 1 – Qualitative Research Report

As part of the Needs Analysis, the partners in the project agreed to perform a qualitative research analysis. The qualitative research precedes the quantitative research. The objective of the qualitative research is to provide an initial understanding of the complex interaction between hair and beauty professionals and their clients. The target group for the qualitative research is hair and beauty professionals. It was agreed that the focus group technique is the most adequate method of qualitative research given the objective and the limitations in both time and availability of the target group.

It was agreed that all four partners would hold a focus group session with between eight to twelve hair and beauty technicians between March and June 2023. The focus group sessions were recorder and transcripts were provided. A script for the moderator was agreed as follows:

Script for focus group

Good morning/afternoon everyone! I am _____ and I represent _____, a partner in the EU Project called Enhancing Wellbeing Through Beauty Care, a project that aims to create a specialized accredited course that equips hair and beauty professionals with refined skills as a means of caring for their clients in a holistic manner. Thank you for positively answering our call for this consultation meeting.

We have a few guidelines and rules to facilitate our discussion:

1. We want you to do the talking. We would like everyone to participate. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
2. There are no right or wrong answers. All person's experiences and opinions are important. Speak up whether you agree or disagree. We expect and want to hear a wide range of opinions and we do not anticipate consensus, just sharing.
3. We emphasize that what is said in this room should remain here. You should be comfortable to share anything if sensitive issues come up. Please don't' disparage another participant's remarks and let's have just one speaker at a time.
4. The discussion will last for about ninety minutes. Please silence your mobile phones. Please give everyone the chance to express their opinion during the conversation. You can address each other if you like. We are only here to assist in the discussion.
5. We will record this session as we want to capture everything you have to say. We don't identify anyone by name in our findings. When you respond, be sure to not mention your name. You will remain anonymous. Audio recordings will be summarized and the recordings secured. We can provide summary details once the study is complete.

Are there any questions?

Ok, then let's start!

1. So, we are interested in your conversation topics with your clients. What are the usual topics of conversation that come up during their sessions with you? (Everybody answers even if answers get repeated, it's important that all have a chance to speak right from the beginning)
2. Thank you everyone for your answers. Now, could you please share some examples of very weird/unusual conversations that came up? (Some/all answer) Who else can add anything?
3. Did you notice any changes in the conversation topics between and after the lockdowns? How did your clients take the lockdowns?

(This is already at least 30 minutes in the discussion, now is the moment when we change the

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

focus from clients to technicians)

4. How do you react to clients complaining about their issues? What do you talk back? (Everybody has to answer)

5. What if somebody is complaining about sensitive issues like domestic violence, mental issues like depression, loneliness, suicide, how would you react?

6. When you notice that a client has an issue regarding your area of expertise (hair disease or a skin affection), how do you break the "bad news"? How are in general your customer's reaction? (People answer) Please share some unusual reaction to "bad news".

7. To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in _____ (Italy, Malta, Serbia, Slovenia) need to improve their communication skills with their clients? Do you see any trends in this issue like transgenerational change (young technicians doing things differently than old ones)? (People answer)

How do you think technicians will benefit from such a course? (People answer)

How should such a course be marketed?

Thank you very much for your input. This is very valuable for us and I hope you also had a good time!

The focus group sessions took place as follows:

Malta – March 22nd 2023, online, 10 participants, moderator Dr. Ovidiu Tierean, duration 2 hours 20 minutes

Italy – April 3rd 2023, face to face Confartigianato Vicenza headquarters, 10 participants, moderator Gaia Anzolin, duration 2 hours 35 minutes

Slovenia – June 5th 2023, face to face Krsko hair saloon, 10 participants, moderator Janja Starc, duration 3 hours

Serbia – May 24th 2023, online, 8 participants, moderator Zorana Panic, duration 1 hour 45 minutes; May 25th 2023, online, 8 participants, moderator Zorana Panic, duration 1 hour 35 minutes.

Analysis of results

The first question was an introductory question, about what subjects do hair and beauty professionals discuss with their clients. All respondents were required to answer. The objective of this question was to break the ice, to get all respondents to talk for the first time and make sure everybody is comfortable with the subject.

The Maltese respondents divided the answers into returning customers, to whom they talk about weather, chores at home, cooking, family and kids, holidays, topics of the day and new customers to whom they test the waters, what do they do, where they are from, keep it light and safe, get to know them, where did you get the information about me. Maltese respondents also differentiate between young customers to whom they talk about parties and clubs, hobbies, school, exams and old customers to whom they talk about church going, family, and health.

Italian respondents declared they do not engage in talks about football and politics. Several respondents agreed to this. The most approached subjects are family and relationship with partners and children, work-related subjects. Most respondents do not engage in personal and sensitive issues talks with clients and prefer to listen to clients complaining.

Slovenian respondents declared that they engage in the following subjects in decreasing order:

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- Usual conversations (gossip, weather, vacations, cooking and cooking recipes, cleaning and use of cleaning products, use of cosmetic products
- Fashion
- Parenting (talk about children, raising children, childcare, how to help a child in school, what hobbies to choose, where to buy clothes and shoes, children's health, children's nutrition
- Partnership (family relationships; conversation about partners, parents, relatives; conversation about buying an apartment and building a house; conversation about communication with a partner)
- Health
- Recreation and sports
- Travels
- Personal conversations (problems with health, children, partner, psychological problems)

Serbian respondents declared they generally talk about hair and beauty issues, family and children, problems, politics, local events (New Year's Eve, summer holidays), the state of the economy (price increases due to inflation):

- They generally talk about hair, family, problems, politics...
- What did they do during the day/week, weekend outings, sometimes they talk about family problems, finances - how everything has become more expensive, when it's time for the New Year - they talk about the New Year's Eve, when summer comes - they talk about vacations...
- Also, we usually talk about hair, how their day went, what annoyed them, what bothers them, wardrobe, relationships... There's everything, mostly about some life topics.
- They mostly talk about family, children, the state of the country.
- They talk about what happened to them during the day, about work, friends...
- Clients mostly talk about family, who has children, about children, happenings in the city…
- They talk about treatments and prices…
- We talk mostly about some news in town, going out and some light topics.
- Mostly women who are married, talk about children, girls who go to college about college, but we also talk about some news that happened in the past few weeks.
- We mostly talk about male-female relationships.
- I'm a hairdresser, so most of the questions I get are about hair care, mostly from women who chemically treat their hair.
- A standard hairdresser in the Balkans is also a psychotherapist, so they talk about everything, about problems and how to solve those problems.
- Mostly about happenings in the city, work, family.
- Lately, we are mostly talking about price changes in markets, shops and general price increases.
- In general, we spend most of our time talking about cosmetics and what people use for face and skin care... But yes, we also talk about family, politics, education...

One may notice that in all four countries the topics for discussion are similar and may be categorized into two large categories:

- Microtopics – subjects that the individual can influence such as relationship with family, children, relatives and friends; everyday chores (bureaucracy, relationship with public institutions); free time (sports, personal hygiene and health)
- Macrotopics – subjects that the individual cannot influence directly such as national and international politics, public policies (education, health and safety – Covid pandemic), the state of national and international economy, fashion.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

The second question goes more into depth and asks respondents to share some examples of very weird or unusual conversations that came up. The objective of this question was to make respondents feel safe about sharing sensitive information about the relationship they have with their clients, to create that synergy that is specific for successful focus groups, to create the feeling that they are not the only ones that have passed through awkward situations with their clients. Answers are displayed in chronological order for each partner country.

Malta:

- A young girl coming for years asked for a threesome, the respondent felt awkward as she had to do her hair
- Their sex life, their wrongdoings and the respondent has to pretend and look like she is interested
- A client had a fight with her mother, they ended up in court, she kept asking “what would you do”, the respondent wouldn’t know what to answer
- Two mothers whose children were together then separated came at the same time, they almost fought in the respondent’s saloon
- When clients argue it’s best not to give your opinion as one might be bias, especially when is election time and other sensitive issues (abortion, euthanasia)
- A client drank a bottle of wine in a few seconds, she was an alcoholic, she used the service to get drunk behind her partner, the respondent refused further appointments

Italy:

- Discomfort from a young person, an attitude that made the respondent reflect. The conclusion was that the client was a disturbed person, with youth discomfort.
- Requests for medical expertise.
- Girl with aggressive attitudes towards her mother. The girl was supported by her father and grandmother.
- Covid-19 has left its mark. Health problems, now many people are very depressed. Always with a very negative approach, they always see everything in a negative way. Oncological patients, even if cured and in follow-up, always feel sick. There is a great need for psychology.
- The respondent doesn't remember anything particular, but they notice much more discomfort than in previous years.
- A couple of customers tried to convince me not to get vaccinated and even explained how to obtain the green pass illegally.
- Medical expertise. People are increasingly dissatisfied, and there is a need for psychological interventions. The respondent directed them to a doctor.
- The lack of rationality during Covid-19, then people returned to normal. The respondent saw people change a lot, adopting totally irrational behaviours.
- Many people come because they need to talk, sometimes they even ask for banking consultations.

Slovenia:

- The first respondent talked to a client with mental problems - depression (delusions, visions, thoughts of self-harm, suicidal behaviour)
- A conversation with a client who wanted to get information about her partner because she was convinced that her partner was cheating on her
- Talks about cosmetic surgery (breast augmentation)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- Talks about sexuality
- Talks about religion - conversion to another religion
- Prophecy, divination

Serbia:

- Stories about personal illnesses
- Talks about medical examinations in detail, really the worst possible
- A story about a sexual relationship, where the respondent didn't know how to stop the client from talking
- During Covid-19, stories about vaccines and conspiracy theories
- Very often clients asked the respondent how often she has sex with her husband, at least once a week she gets that question and it's something that is quite embarrassing, she doesn't know how to answer it.
- Questions about respondent's personal life, something very intimate, quite know how to answer such questions.
- Why the respondent is single, why doesn't she have a boyfriend, how come she doesn't have a boyfriend, did she have any
- Why does the respondent work with some of the products she work with, as if they know better than her what is better, and they still come to her for treatments.
- Talks about service prices.

One may notice a pattern in the answers, in all four cases there are instances where hair and beauty professionals declared sex talks as unusual or weird conversation topics. Second most prevalent topic was Covid-19 and its aftermath (loneliness, depression). There is a wide array of unusual topics that clients approach, and this makes the soft skills of the hair and beauty profession even more challenging.

The third question is strictly related to the Covid-19 pandemic and asks respondents if they did notice any changes in the conversation topics between and after the lockdowns. The objective of this question is the rationale behind of this whole project – the fact that Covid-19 changed the way clients relate to hair and beauty professionals and the challenges that the pandemic brought to this industry.

Malta:

- After the lockdowns, clients talked about how it was, the disease itself, about what was going on
- Some were still afraid to come over to treatment, to come out of their homes
- Some clients still wear masks, especially those with allergies
- Some clients suffered of loneliness, a respondent said she has clients who died alone in their house. These clients used the service to socialize, to get out more and meet people at the saloon.
- Some showed signs of depression.

Italy:

- Many plans for the future, the respondent managed to direct them towards the positive;
- People who come to service talk twice as much because they don't go out anymore, and when they go out, they talk much more;
- They talk a lot about what they haven't done but would like to do;
- Same thing: they talk a lot about what they want to do: trips, restaurants, etc.
- Appreciate the small pleasures.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- A desire to escape.
- A desire to be together and to be outside.

Slovenia

- Clients' fear of illness and the consequences of COVID-19
- Loneliness, uncertainty
- Depression
- More partner problems and problems with children
- During the lockdown, clients started to engage in hobbies and discovered new talents (e.g. painting, photography, songwriting)
- Health problems - psychological problems
- Dependence on e.g. smoking, alcoholism
- Obesity (more time to cook, less movement)
- Social networks (customers spend too much time on social networks)
- Use of technology (online conversations, especially for the elderly)

Serbia

- The respondent has noticed that clients have become more mentally unstable, more and more women are complaining about their marital status
- Basically, everyone has become impatient, no one can wait for something, everyone has to be the first in line, if something is not to their liking they get angry, whereas before it was not a problem
- Everyone became frustrated, it had a lot of effect on their mental state, on interpersonal relationships, and therefore when they come to the salon, they are more filled with some negative energy, they don't have much patience
- They started to open up more and talk about problems they didn't talk about before
- Before, they had more patience if the respondent told someone that they don't have an appointment for blow-drying, but now if there is no appointment, they ask them to insert them and are surprised that there is none.
- Clients have lost respect for hair and beauty professionals and become selfish, they are not ready for cooperation and tolerance
- Very difficult, they couldn't wait for the hair and beauty professionals to start working, after which they became much more communicative.
- They became eager to socialize.
- They could hardly wait for everything to return to normal.
- They have become more complicated, too demanding.
- Mostly people have become more depressed, their interests have decreased in general, and they even spoil our mood sometimes.
- They are mostly impatient and eager for attention; the consequences of the lockdowns are definitely felt.

One may see the extent to which the Covid-19 pandemic changed the relationship between hair and beauty professionals and their clients. These answers clearly show the need to improve the soft skills of hair and beauty professionals towards dealing with better communication and empathy with clients.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

The forth question was how hair and beauty professionals react to clients complaining about their issues. At this point all respondents had to answer and the research touches its peak moment. The objective of this question is to move the focus from the client to the hair and beauty professionals.

Malta

- Hair and beauty professionals have a way to talk to their clients, if they are regular clients, professionals know them and the topics where they disagree. The respondent doesn't agree to all they say, but she leaves them talking, she doesn't talk back, she is not afraid to lose them
- Everyone has their own opinion, with new clients the respondent tries to avoid disagreements
- There's a difference about complaining about the service and complaining about something else in their lives. If it's about the service the respondent declared she is trying to make it better
- The respondent said the they show the consultation, they show the pictures, and during the service they ask if everything is ok
- So far, the respondent's clients are good, no complaints – in beauty therapy
- In nails, usually complaints come from the customer not understanding the service, they don't take the professionals' recommendations, for example they know sometimes very long nails just don't stick
- The respondent tries to please them, but if they do what they want they complain, if they do not to them what they want, they complain.
- Some clients always complain, the cut is too short, the colour is too dark, whatever professionals do, clients always complain – the respondent kicked one client out twice, but she always comes back
- For events like weddings, professionals do trials, but with everyday service they complain more.
- Some want things that the respondent knows that won't look nice, they try to explain, but clients keep going, they pretend they know more than the professional. Quite a few clients act like the they know better, but professionals need to show them and convince them, because if they do what clients ask, it will look bad and they will complain. Now a days with social media professionals need to be very careful with the service.
- There are times when they want to do and suggest something and stick to it and then the service is stuck.

Italy

- The respondent listens and then explain my point of view.
- The respondent learned to listen and understand what response they want to protect herself.
- The respondent gives their answer, expresses what they think, and don't be ashamed.
- The respondent tries to break the situation with a joke, and then relaxes with the client and works better.
- The respondent brings her experience in freedom. Together with the client they listen, and the respondent tries to understand what the client wants. The respondent expresses her opinion if the respondent agrees, otherwise the respondent changes the subject.
- If they're not delicate issues, the respondent confronts them, but if they're more delicate and could lead to conflict, the respondent say "no comment" or changes the subject.
- The respondent never reveals too much.
- The respondent always tries to tell her clients to see the positive side of the bad things that happen.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Slovenia

- The most important thing is to listen to the customer
- Calm down the client
- Positive talk, positive thoughts and encouragement to be better
- Hair and beauty professionals have to know how to make the customer laugh (joke)
- Positive energy, atmosphere in the salon (good music or soothing music, pleasant fragrances)
- The respondent helps her clients with advice

Serbia

- Everything depends on the mood that day, sometimes the respondent tries to listen, give advice, and sometimes there are days when she can't react in a nice way, she gets fed up, so she tries to ignore
- Clients can sometimes be hard, the respondent gets exhausted when listening to other problems every hour or two, she feels useless at the end of the shift, but it's definitely easier for her when someone comes to the salon and says something happened to them, when she knows they're not in the mood, than to sit and say nothing and be rude.
- There are days when the respondent is not available to listen to the problems, and there are also days when there is communication among all those present in the salon, so they all talk to each other about the problems, and those are some of the best days, when they are all open to each other, because in the end they are all people... And it's important to talk, the respondent likes it when people talk.
- The respondent tries to listen mostly, sometimes she also gives advice if she knows she is going to help.
- Sometimes, the respondent tries to be kind and listen, but sometimes when she is in a bad mood, she focuses on work and tries to ignore it.
- The respondent tries to help, as much as she can, trying to find a solution, because many clients come to the salon so professionals have a lot of information that they hear and with which they can help others.
- The respondent likes to give advice and listen to her clients, because that makes them feel better, and therefore more comfortable in their salon. In addition to trying to provide quality treatment, they also try to keep their clients by listening.
- The respondents listen, but she doesn't delve too deep, because she doesn't want to influence anyone's decisions.
- The respondent listens, but she doesn't share advice.
- The respondent tries to understand their problem, but she can't give her opinion to everyone, because there are different clients. With someone I'm really good with and whom I've known a little longer, she tries to give advice.
- In general, the respondent tries to understand their problem and talk about it, if she can make the hour of the treatment easier, she tries to do it.
- Clients say the respondent is a good listener, so she lets them talk because it's easier for them.
- The respondent usually doesn't give advice, sometimes she might say what she would do if she found herself in that situation.
- Sometimes people are just looking for attention, so the respondent is more of a listener than a helper.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- The respondent used to listen to their problems, even experienced them emotionally, but lately she has been trying to get away from it because it started to affect her life and mood.

As one may notice this is the question that brought the largest amount of information so far. Hair and beauty professionals' answers are complex with a wide array of personal input and fill the whole range from "totally out there for the client" to "I can't hear them talk anymore".

The fifth question is the most sensitive one as hair and beauty professionals are asked to describe their reaction when clients are complaining about sensitive issues like domestic violence, mental issues like depression, loneliness, suicide. The objective of this question is to determine if hair and beauty professionals do have soft skills to communicate with clients, and how can these soft skills be applied in sensitive conversations with clients.

Malta

- It was a very long time ago, the respondent used to work in a hotel as a beauty therapist. In the hotel there were ladies who would entertain men, they would come for treatment and spent thousands. This women in her 20s came down to treatment with sunglasses and when she removed them, she was all bruised up. The respondent asked if she needed help. She answered that this is what she is paid for. The respondent was in an awkward situation, not knowing what to do. She did provide the service.
- The respondents have clients that go through domestic violence and she recognises that because they cover their bruises with makeup. The respondent asks if they need help. And it's always "No, I'm ok", she cannot force them to get help.
- Unless clients ask for help themselves, which is very rare. In the case of domestic violence, we cannot really interfere because the client can tell you "this is none of your own business". You cannot do much about it. The respondent has a sticker with "Domestic violence helpline", I ask if they are ok, they answer yes, nothing else she can do
- There are mentally abused women, who don't have their own money, they always ask how much does it cost, they ask for the receipt, because they need to show everything to their partner.
- They refuse help, they are afraid to seek help.

Italy

- The respondent would be surprised at first, then she tries to ask questions to better understand. She can recommend seeking help or share my point of view, and she tries to understand. I listen and refer them to competent people.
- There are many lonely people, especially men. I recommend volunteering, for example. But a recurring issue is related to eating disorders. Now it's a problem for people of a certain age. I recommend Diego Fortuna, for example, but they don't always accept that they have a problem.
- I haven't had extreme cases.
- Women confide in me about infidelity, but not about domestic violence. I don't know if it's because I'm a man. Among men, many have attempted extreme gestures. I try to bring out the best in them to simplify the situation.
- It blocks me, so I try to brush it off and make it light-hearted.
- It makes me speechless, and I struggle to react.
- I try not to show emotion, but if I can't contain it, I let them vent.

Slovenia

- Listening to the customer and positive interview

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- Advises that it is necessary to say problems out loud, report to the police, social work center, visit a doctor, etc.
- here it is noticeable that hairdressers and beauticians do not have a lot of knowledge, it would be necessary to organize some courses

Serbia

- The respondent personally had the experience when a client complained about domestic violence, for me it is a very personal issue, where I tried to advise her that it must not happen again, that there are people and institutions that deal with these issues, who can to protect her. I'm not sure if she listened to me, but I did what I could.
- We are not yet open to such questions, specifically I did not have that case, but I would definitely try to help and refer them to some institution where they can get help.
- When someone talks to me about such serious things, I try to cheer that person up a bit, and then I try to give advice and share some of my own/someone else's experience, basically so that they can somehow get over it.
- I would offer some solutions that I think might help.
- I would try to encourage them and compare them with some situations that I know, to try to understand that they are not alone in this and that everything will eventually pass and be resolved.
- I had all of that and it was all very difficult and terrible for me. I had a client who was experiencing domestic violence, where she asked for help in terms of bringing her children to my salon, then I also called the police. Unfortunately, I did not help much, because she returned to her husband and was no longer allowed to come to my salon.
- I had a client who was talking about suicide, and I helped her by listening to her and trying to comfort her. After that it was easier for her…
- Until now, I have not had such situations. In general, there are women who experience psychological violence from their husbands, but I have not heard of physical violence until now, thank God. Certainly, if I experienced something like that, I would advise to contact someone who is responsible for it.
- I have had such situations, but what I can do is to calm them down a bit and provide support.
- I tried to help clients in such situations, but it was not always effective.
- I would try to help, refer to some institution or therapy. A lot of people come to the salon and we generally have information where we can refer people who experience some of what you mentioned.

One may notice the abundance of complex answers to the matter. From all four partner countries there is a wide range of sensitive encounters and stories. This means that these things happen at times and hair and beauty professionals have to deal with them in a standardised and professional way.

For **the sixth question**, hair and beauty professionals were asked to discuss how do you break the “bad news” when you notice that a client has an issue regarding their area of expertise (hair disease or a skin affection), how are in general their customer’s reaction. The objective of this question is to further investigate the soft skills of hair and beauty professionals when communicating possibly uncomfortable news to their clients.

Malta

- The respondent tries to be as discrete as possible. It’s their mission to be near the client when we break the news, we never commit ourselves on what disease they have. We send them to

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

skin specialist (dermatologist). It's better to be sure – it might be something or it could be nothing, although we usually know it's something. But it's not our job to tell them something is wrong.

- Our job is to be the first person to put it out there, we may say "I'm concerned with how it looks", "You'd better check it out". We don't break the news we bring client's attention to it. We can refuse treatment if we believe there is something to be concerned of.
- We cannot give a straight answer, we need to send them to a GP (general practitioner)
- At the place where I work there's a doctor than backs us up, we are asked a lot of questions skin related, patients come often to practitioners more than doctors. For example, when I see a mole I tell them "it's probably nothing, but you should consult a dermatologist", I saved some people from skin cancer and was thanked later. You have to be discreet on how you tell people.
- If they have a GP, they go to their GP as they trust them. If it seems more serious I send them to a specialist, but then it's up to them. Now-a-days it's very easy to find the numbers of specialists and make appointments. They also have clinics.
- When we see certain things that look suspicious, we sent them to this specialist who can track it down immediately. Some clients come on a weekly basis so it's easy to keep up with their issues.
- I had to refuse someone who had hair lice. I tried to be as discreet as possible, but this is very contagious and I would contaminate all my tools and endanger all the clients from that day. It was a very uncomfortable position.
- I had clients with different issues and I refused the service, telling them discreetly to check it out and if everything turns out fine, we will do the service. Afterwards they thank you as it might be something they didn't notice.
- In nails, what we see most often is the bacteria called the "green nail". We cannot provide service until the bacteria is gone as it would only cause more damage. Clients do appreciate when we do care for them.
- They know it's for their best.

Italy

- I check the moles, and I refer them for a check-up. Clients' reactions: surprise, but in the end, they all go.
- Three clients said they didn't like a mole. I checked it, and it needed to be removed.
- I didn't like the look of the client's hair. I called her husband, and it turned out to be breast cancer. Now her reaction is positive. I didn't turn a blind eye, even though it could have been frightening
- If I see any problems, I suggest going to at least the general practitioner. They look at me, almost asking if I'm sure of what I'm saying.
- Usually, the reaction is surprise, but then trust.
- Complete trust in me.
- They remain surprised but then go for a check-up. We refer them to either the general practitioner or the dermatologist.
- I try to stay within my area of expertise.

Slovenia

- Customers already know the problems before visiting the salon (e.g. hair loss, ringworm on the face,
- brittle nails)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- if the hairdresser notices, for example, dandruff, trichotillomania, dermatitis... we tell the client this in
- an appropriate way and recommend the use of suitable cosmetic products, a visit to the doctor, a consultation with a psychologist, a visit to bioenergetics
- customer reactions are different (some accept the news without any problems, some are frightened, some are angry...)

Serbia

- I make an assessment first, if I see that someone has come in a bad mood, the least I should tell the problem he has, I wait for some time to pass and tell later during the treatment. They usually accept it well, I haven't had any more difficult cases so far.
- I like to tell my clients about the problem they have in the most subtle possible way and very downplayed, because then they accept it calmly.
- It all depends, if someone comes to my salon for the first time, since we are just getting to know each other, I can't just announce a problem if I notice it, and if we have known each other for a long time, I will be open and the clients accept it, they are definitely scared, but when I tell them that there is a solution be ok with that.
- I am too honest and open, so I communicate directly the problem that clients have. Likewise, I always say any problem they have can be solved. Sometimes they are afraid, and sometimes they accept it, it all depends on the person.
- I try to make it appropriate when I report a problem and immediately propose a solution. Mostly clients accept it.
- I usually immediately refer to a dermatologist if there is a problem with the skin, because they are more expert. Clients get scared if there is a more serious problem.
- I try to be direct, but gentle. Clients don't really like to take advice from us, so I refer them to a dermatologist.
- If I notice, I first say that it is nothing terrible and that everything can be solved. I always advise to take a break from the treatment.
- It depends from person to person, how someone accepts it, it's all individual. If something is urgent, I tell them right away. I'm pretty straight forward when it comes to things like that.
- Clients are usually surprised when we tell them bad news, because until then they don't notice the changes or they are embarrassed to tell us before the treatment.
- I try to be as gentle as possible, because I never know how someone will accept such bad news. I want to avoid inconvenience.
- "Oh, really! Well, I can't believe that this happened to me", are usually such reactions.
- I didn't have anything special, except amazement.
- Since I am a hairdresser, mostly when I need to haircut, clients ask me not to do it, to haircut as little as possible.
- I haven't had any drastic reactions so far.
- Mostly they wonder how it happened to them, there is never a violent reaction. At least it wasn't until now.
- Sometimes they get scared, but they immediately ask for advice on how to proceed.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

One may notice the large number of interventions for this question. Respondents completed each other's sentences and one may say that at this point the focus group reached its peak synergy. The experience of all respondents from all four partner countries is vast so there's a lot of added value in their answers.

The **seventh and last question** approaches the subject improving the communication skills of hair and beauty professionals with their clients. The respondents were asked if they see any trends in this issue like transgenerational change (young technicians doing things differently than old ones), how do they think technicians will benefit from such a course, and how should such a course be marketed. The objective of this question is to wrap up the focus group with the conclusion that after all that was discussed if truly there is a need for a course that would enhance the soft skills (communication skills) and if so how would hair and beauty technicians would benefit from it.

Malta

- Communication is taught is school, but things have changed. Now-a-days the young are too outspoken, and there's a lack of respect from the young ones; they don't show up for appointments, they call to ask for new appointments after they forget.
- Even the young technicians it's as if nothing happens if there is a complaint, they don't go around to see what is the matter and if they want to tell you they just go ahead and tell you.
- This comes from young technicians because they are not business owners, it comes with age and with commitment. For older technicians who own their business, communication is very important as we know how and when to speak, when to be assertive.
- It's all about discipline and this comes from school. Young people don't want to listen and learn. You have to look up to your boss, be your best, listen and take criticism as it takes. I learned a lot from my boss and now it pays off, I have a very good relationship with my clients, it's because I was disciplined.
- Skills, character, and education are different things
- I don't think there's a generational gap, this just comes with experience
- I do believe there's a generational gap, it's just how they are brought up today
- Now-a-days you can reach people through social media. We can target individuals and use segmentation tools. This is the cheapest way. The problem is how to create awareness that beauty technicians need this course, because if you ask them, they would say they don't need it. There should be a campaign to create awareness.
- Most of the professionals would say "I don't need this, I know how to deal with my clients"

Italy

- I have taken more courses than just the one in aesthetics: for me, it's essential to know about skin almost at a medical level.
- Professional growth is essential.
- More skills, yes, then I had to seek them out.
- Having education and knowledge is fundamental and necessary.
- It's important for the future, but only if it's recognized.
- It's fundamental to have training in this field. When you enter the workforce, there are also various events that allow you to learn. Yes, to education.
- Certain skills belong to those who have studied and also to the opinions. I would set up something differentiated in terms of topics.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- Now I want something more. I'll never be a psychologist, but having more tools to give advice or to grasp facets is important.

Slovenia

- There is insufficient knowledge about communicating with customers
- There are no subjects in school that would teach us about this
- Collaboration of different generations (older, younger hairdressers and beauticians) would be necessary
- Courses for communicating with clients with psychological problems would be needed
- Use of technology

Serbia

- To a very small extent. Regarding the second question, I notice that young people are much freer and behave more relaxed with clients compared to older people.
- I think that communication skills should be improved, because it would help us to make our feelings less affected by clients' problems. And trends have definitely changed, older service providers are much more professional.
- They should improve them a lot because it will help everyone and make the customers feel better. Young people may embrace new trends and implement them, while older service providers struggle a bit.
- I think that the communication between the clients and us is at a satisfactory level. Younger service providers should have more respect and a more professional relationship with clients, while older ones should embrace new trends and work tools.
- I believe that we do not need to improve, clients get answers to absolutely everything. We talk about everything… Younger colleagues are mostly uninterested, they do the work and that's it, while the older ones are more dedicated.
- They need to improve a lot, because I believe that clients should feel welcome in the salon while we provide service. With the change of generations, I notice that everyone wants to make money more than to provide a professional service.
- I notice that young people want to earn more than to provide a professional service, as it should be.
- Older colleagues, who have been in the beauty industry for a very long time, are mostly uninterested in education and in terms of work and communication. Some of the middle generation try the hardest. Young people mostly want something quickly. They are not interested in work or clients.
- Yes, there are definitely different attitudes among older service providers compared to the new generation of beauticians. Older colleagues rarely decide on additional education and think that the way they do their work is the best.
- I think the benefit will be mutual, good for us and good for the clients. Everyone will benefit from the course and I think it would be good to organize it live where as many colleagues as possible would be present, so we could also exchange experiences.
- Maybe it will help us to better understand our clients, and thus protect ourselves from negative influences.
- The service we provide could be of better quality. It would be best if the course was presented within some seminars/fairs visited by hairdressers and beauticians.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- To me, that lecture would mean, if psychologists were also involved, so that they could more easily understand and accept what the clients tell us during the treatment. It would be good if it were marketed as a special education and not online.
- I agree with the comment for psychologists.
- I think it will mean, and should it also include, education about the basic culture and way of treating clients, because many colleagues from the branch do not even have the same.
- Exchange of experiences and examples of good practices are certainly welcome.
- Due to the pandemic, we were condemned to online, and I think that is over everyone's head. So, we need face to face education.
- I agree with all the suggestions really. And I think that no additional education, regarding anything, can be out of place.

One may notice again the large number of interventions. Just as with the previous question Serbia delivered most answers, which is not surprising as they had two focus group sessions. Most respondents declare the need for a course for soft skills and acknowledge the generational gap between older and younger professionals. Still they declare is at a lack of experience rather than a poor education. Most respondents agree that online marketing is the best and cheapest way to market such a course.

Limitations of the qualitative research:

- Some of the limitations come from the chosen type of qualitative research. The focus group is a semi structured group research. Some respondents might have refrained from speaking their mind, some may feel embarrassed, and some may just have been not allowed to speak due to others' interventions.
- A second limitation comes from the fact that Malta, Italy and Slovenia all organised only one focus group session. Serbia organised two in consecutive days. The number of respondents is limited and the organisers might have missed important information from more experienced respondents.
- Another limitation comes research undertaken in different languages. The original focus group questions were written in English, each moderator translated them in Italian, Slovenian and Serbian. Then, the answerers were recorded in native language and the report translated back into English. This may have limited the array of attitudes and values expressed during the sessions. Even the session in Malta, hold in English, had moments when respondents felt like speaking in Maltese.
- Lack of video recording is another limitation. With all the sensitive and sometime uncomfortable subjects discussed, the organisers might have missed some added value from nonverbal language, movements among respondents that was not audio recorded.

All in all, the qualitative research was a useful tool to demonstrate the need for a soft skills course focused on communication of hair and beauty professionals of all ages with more sensitive and increasingly demanding clients, that not only look for a good service, but a wholesome and wellbeing experience.

The next step in the needs analysis is the quantitative research. Based on the information reflected from this report, a survey will be developed and sent to hair and beauty professionals in the four partner countries. After the analysis of quantitative data, a research report will be written. Together with this report, they will make the needs analysis.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Part 2 – Quantitative Research

Introduction

The second part of the needs analysis is a short survey that was disseminated in all partner countries to understand better the realities of complaint procedures and botched work from hair and beauty professionals, a fundamental part of the project involves a research element and the development of a questionnaire that will focus on four aspects, namely, the relationship between the client and the hair and beauty professional, frequency of use of service, the reasons clients use hair and beauty services, as well as, the training given to hair and beauty professionals. The questionnaire was disseminated to all partner countries. The questionnaire was translated in the different partner languages in order to be more accessible. The research did bring out the competences that need to be addressed according to the findings, and will be the basis for the course design.

The target group for the needs analysis is both hair and beauty professionals. It is imperative that we understand their perspectives to benefit from the results obtained by the needs analysis, since the analysis will form the basis of the course development. Although the immediate beneficiary will be the hair and beauty professional who will become equipped with refined soft skills with a focus on inter and intra personal skills, the client will benefit in the long term as they will feel more open to talk about life's difficulties with hair and beauty professional who has received formal training on helping skills.

Sample demographics

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	128	85.3	85.3	85.3
	Male	22	14.7	14.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	16-30	19	12.7	13.1	13.1
	31-45	59	39.3	40.7	53.8
	45+	67	44.7	46.2	100.0
	Total	145	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	5	3.3		
Total		150	100.0		

Country					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Malta	34	22.7	22.7	22.7
	Italy	50	33.3	33.3	56.0
	Serbia	36	24.0	24.0	80.0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

	Slovenia	30	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

The sample demographics are as follows:

- Gender distribution is 85.3% females and 14.7% males. We can see from this distribution that the answers are to a very large extent biased towards female respondents.
- Concerning age, the distribution is as follows: the group of individuals between 16- and 30-years old account for 13.1% of the sample, the age group 31 to 45 years old account for 40.7% of the sample and the largest group is 45+ which accounts for 46.2% of the of the sample. We can see that the answers are biased towards adults and 45+ age groups. With the least amount of answers is the 16 to 30 years old.
- When it comes to country of origin there were 34 respondents from Malta which account for 22.7% of the sample, 50 individuals from Italy that account for 33.3% of the sample, 36 individuals from Serbia which account for 24% of the individuals, and 30 individuals from Slovenia which account for 20% of the individuals. We can see that the distribution not biased.

I've been in the hair and beauty industry for....					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 5 years	17	11.3	11.4	11.4
	6-10 years	16	10.7	10.7	22.1
	11-15 years	18	12.0	12.1	34.2
	16-20 years	18	12.0	12.1	46.3
	21+ years	80	53.3	53.7	100.0
	Total	149	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.7		
Total		150	100.0		

The next question was about the experience is the hair and beauty industry and the answers are less than five years 11.4% of the individuals, between 6 and 10 percent 10.7% of the individuals, 11 to 15 years 12.1 percent, 16 to 20 years 12.1 percent, 21+ years 53.7%. One may say that the sample is biased towards hair and beauty professionals with a lot of experience.

Next, some cross tables between country and the main sample variables were done. The first table concerns the gender distribution for each country. We see that the gender distribution in Malta is 76.5% females to 23.5% males. In Italy, the gender distribution is 88% females to 12% males, in Serbia 91.7% females to 8.3% males and in Slovenia 83.3% females to 16.7% males. One may see that the most balanced distribution is from Malta, whereas the least balanced distribution is from Serbia.

Gender						
Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Malta	Valid	Female	26	76.5	76.5	76.5
		Male	8	23.5	23.5	100.0
		Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Italy	Valid	Female	44	88.0	88.0	88.0
		Male	6	12.0	12.0	100.0
		Total	50	100.0	100.0	
Serbia	Valid	Female	33	91.7	91.7	91.7
		Male	3	8.3	8.3	100.0
		Total	36	100.0	100.0	
Slovenia	Valid	Female	25	83.3	83.3	83.3
		Male	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
		Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The next table shows the cross table between age groups and country. The most balanced distribution again comes from Malta, where the age groups 16 to 30 years accounts for 20.6% of the sample, the age group 31 to 45 years accounts for 41.2% of the sample, and the 45+ age group accounts for 38.2% of the sample. The least balanced distribution is Slovenia, where the age group 16 to 30 years accounts for 3.3% of the individuals, the age group 31 to 45 years old accounts for 36.7% and the 45+ years accounts for 43.3% of the individuals.

Age						
Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Malta	Valid	16-30	7	20.6	20.6	20.6
		31-45	14	41.2	41.2	61.8
		45+	13	38.2	38.2	100.0
		Total	34	100.0	100.0	
Italy	Valid	16-30	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
		31-45	12	24.0	24.0	28.0
		45+	36	72.0	72.0	100.0
		Total	50	100.0	100.0	
Serbia	Valid	16-30	9	25.0	25.0	25.0
		31-45	22	61.1	61.1	86.1
		45+	5	13.9	13.9	100.0
		Total	36	100.0	100.0	
Slovenia	Valid	16-30	1	3.3	4.0	4.0
		31-45	11	36.7	44.0	48.0
		45+	13	43.3	52.0	100.0
		Total	25	83.3	100.0	
	Missing	System	5	16.7		
	Total		30	100.0		

The last cross table in this section brings together country versus the experience of hair and beauty professionals. The most balanced distribution comes from Serbia, where the individuals with less than five years of experience account for 25% of the sample, 6 to 10 years of experience account for 25% of the sample 11 to 15 years of experience account for 13.9 percent of the sample, 16 to 20 years of experience account for 13.9%, and 21+ years of experience account for 22.2%. The least balance distribution comes from Italy, where individuals with less than five years of experience

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

accounts for 4% of the sample, 6 to 10 years of experience account for 6% of the sample, 11 to 15 years of experience account for 2% of the sample, 16 to 20 years of experience account for another 2% of the sample and the large chunk is for the 21+ years of experience which account for 86% of the sample.

I've been in the hair and beauty industry for....						
Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Malta	Valid	Less than 5 years	3	8.8	8.8	8.8
		6-10 years	2	5.9	5.9	14.7
		11-15 years	6	17.6	17.6	32.4
		16-20 years	7	20.6	20.6	52.9
		21+ years	16	47.1	47.1	100.0
		Total	34	100.0	100.0	
Italy	Valid	Less than 5 years	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
		6-10 years	3	6.0	6.0	10.0
		11-15 years	1	2.0	2.0	12.0
		16-20 years	1	2.0	2.0	14.0
		21+ years	43	86.0	86.0	100.0
		Total	50	100.0	100.0	
Serbia	Valid	Less than 5 years	9	25.0	25.0	25.0
		6-10 years	9	25.0	25.0	50.0
		11-15 years	5	13.9	13.9	63.9
		16-20 years	5	13.9	13.9	77.8
		21+ years	8	22.2	22.2	100.0
		Total	36	100.0	100.0	
Slovenia	Valid	Less than 5 years	3	10.0	10.3	10.3
		6-10 years	2	6.7	6.9	17.2
		11-15 years	6	20.0	20.7	37.9
		16-20 years	5	16.7	17.2	55.2
		21+ years	13	43.3	44.8	100.0
		Total	29	96.7	100.0	
	Missing	System	1	3.3		
	Total		30	100.0		

Main body of questions

The first question from the body of questions was how much time do you spend with one client. There are 150 answers and the mean is 68.70 minutes. The median is 60 minutes. That means that half of the individuals spend less or 60 minutes with their clients, and the other half 60 minutes or more. The most frequent answer is 60 minutes. There is a high standard deviation of close to 40 minutes. That means that the distribution is skewed to the right, which is confirmed by the positive skewness of

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

more then 3. This is also shown by the minimum and maximum values recorded. The minimum time spent with clients is 15 minutes, whereas the maximum time spent with clients is 360 minutes. If we take each country one by one, we see that for Malta, the mean is close to 70 minutes with a standard deviation of 39 minutes. For Italy, the mean is 57 minutes with a standard deviation of 25 minutes. For Serbia, the mean is 73 minutes with a standard deviation of 30 minutes. And for Slovenia there is the highest mean of 81 minutes, but also the highest standard deviation of close to 60 minutes. These results don't say much, because we do not know what kind of service the individuals provide. It could be the case that this is a sample effect determined by the non-random sample methods applied by each partner.

Statistics		
How much time do you spend with one client?		
N	Valid	150
	Missing	0
Mean		68.70
Median		60.00
Mode		60
Std. Deviation		39.372
Skewness		3.236
Std. Error of Skewness		.198
Kurtosis		19.536
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.394
Minimum		15
Maximum		360

Statistics[a]		
How much time do you spend with one client?		
N	Valid	34
	Missing	0
Mean		69.71
Median		60.00
Std. Deviation		38.885
a. Country = Malta		

Statistics[a]		
How much time do you spend with one client?		
N	Valid	50
	Missing	0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Mean	57.30
Median	60.00
Std. Deviation	25.837
a. Country = Italy	

Statistics[a]		
How much time do you spend with one client?		
N	Valid	36
	Missing	0
Mean		73.33
Median		60.00
Std. Deviation		30.799
a. Country = Serbia		

Statistics[a]		
How much time do you spend with one client?		
N	Valid	30
	Missing	0
Mean		81.00
Median		60.00
Std. Deviation		59.689
a. Country = Slovenia		

The next question was what type of subject do you talk about with your clients. Often the means are recorded in a descriptive statistics table and the lower the mean the most often the subject is being talked about, the higher the mean the less talked about the subject. Overall, we see that the most approached subject is “personal health issues” with a mean of 2.35 from 1 to 5. The second most approached subject is “children issues” with an average of 2.51 and the lowest standard deviation of only 0.84 points. The third most approached subject is “personal hobbies” with an average of 2.84, which is very close to the fourth most approach subject “partners issues” with a average of 2.85. The next on the list is “parents’ issues” with an average of 3.09, “technology” with an average of 3.35, and the last one is “politics” with an average of 3.65. The lowest standard deviation is for “children's issues” with 0.84 points, whereas the highest standard deviation is for the subject “politics” with an standard deviation of 1.07 points.

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal health issues	150	2.35	.955
Children issues	150	2.51	.841
Personal hobbies	150	2.84	1.030
Partners issues	150	2.85	.986

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Parents issues	150	3.09	.934
Technology	150	3.35	1.043
Politics	150	3.65	1.075
Valid N (listwise)	150		

When it comes to which subject is discussed most often per country, we can see that in Malta the first most discussed subject is “personal health issues” with a mean of 2.09. This mean is actually the lowest from all four countries, which means that this subject is the most discussed in Malta. The second most discussed is “children's issues” with the mean of 2.15 again the lowest from all countries, which means that this is among the four partners is most often discussed in in Malta. The third one is “partners issues” with a mean of 2.47, which is actually way smaller than the mean, this subject is talked about more often than in the whole sample, we see that in the whole sample “partners issues” is actually 4th with the mean of 2.85. In Malta is third with a mean of 2.47. Again, the lowest mean of all four partners. Next comes “personal hobbies| with a mean of 2.94 above the mean of the whole sample but still the largest mean from all four partners. Next comes “parents’ issue” with a mean of 2.97 which is slightly below the mean of the whole sample. Actually, is the second mean of all four partners. “Technology” comes second to last with the mean of. 3.12 below the mean of the whole sample and the lowest mean of all four partners, which means is among the four partners technology is discussed most in Malta. “Politics” comes with a mean of 3.35 less than the mean of the whole sample and is the lowest mean of all four partners. The fact that Malta has the lowest means for five out of seven topics of conversation shows the fact that the Maltese hair and beauty professionals approach these subjects most often.

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal health issues	34	2.09	.900
Children issues	34	2.15	.821
Partners issues	34	2.47	.861
Personal hobbies	34	2.94	1.179
Parents issues	34	2.97	.904
Technology	34	3.12	1.274
Politics	34	3.35	1.152
Valid N (listwise)	34		
a. Country = Malta			

The second country that has been analyzed is Italy. The order is very close to the whole sample. The first subject, the most approached subject is “personal health issues” with a mean of 2.28, just a bit less than the mean for the whole sample. The second most approached subject is “children issues” with a mean of 2.60, again just a bit less than the mean of 2.51 recorded for the whole sample. The third most approached subject is “personal hobbies” with a mean of 2.80, just a bit short of the mean for the whole sample of 2.84. The forth subject is partners issue with an average of 3.10 larger than the mean for the for the whole sample. The fifth most approached subject is “technology” with the

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

mean of 3.22 less than the average of 3.35 for the whole sample. Next comes “parents’ issue” with the mean of 3.30 above the mean of the whole sample. And the last one is “politics” with the mean of 3.70, above the average of the of the whole sample. The largest standard deviation, where respondents are polarized on the on the subjects, come from “partners issues” 1.11, and “personal hobbies” 1.05.

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal health issues	50	2.28	1.011
Children issues	50	2.60	.808
Personal hobbies	50	2.80	1.050
Partners issues	50	3.10	1.111
Technology	50	3.22	1.036
Parents issues	50	3.30	.974
Politics	50	3.70	1.055
Valid N (listwise)	50		
a. Country = Italy			

The third analyzed country is Serbia. The ranking of most approached subject is as follows: the first one is “personal health issues” with a mean of 2.56, above the mean of the whole sample. The second most approached subject is “partners issues” with the mean of 2.86, just the same as the mean of the whole sample, but the order is different. For Serbia “partners issues” is second whereas in the whole sample “partners issues” is fourth. The third most approached subject for Serbia is “personal hobbies” with a mean of 2.89, just above the mean of the whole samples. The fourth subject is “children's issues” with a mean of 2.94 above the mean of the sample of 2.51. For Serbia, “children's issues” is fourth in the ranking, whereas for the whole sample “children's issues” is second. The fifth subject is “parents’ issues” with the mean of 3.47, above the mean of the whole sample. The second to last most approach subject is “technology” with a mean of 3.53 above the mean of the whole sample. The least most approached subject is “politics” with a mean of 3.89, above the mean of the whole sample and the lowest mean of the whole four partners. The largest standard deviation is also for politics, with 1.06 points. Serbia has the lowest means for six out of seven topics.

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal health issues	36	2.56	.809
Partners issues	36	2.86	.931
Personal hobbies	36	2.89	.979
Children issues	36	2.94	.826
Parents issues	36	3.47	.878
Technology	36	3.53	.878
Politics	36	3.89	1.063

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Valid N (listwise)	36		
a. Country = Serbia			

Last analyzed country is Slovenia. The rankings for the most approached subjects of hair and beauty professionals with their clients is as follows: the first one is “children's issues” with a mean of 2.27 below the mean of the whole sample. For Slovenia, this is the most approached subject, whereas for the whole sample is the second most approach subject. For Slovenia, the second most approached subject is “parents’ issues”, with the mean of 2.40 less than the mean of the whole samples with 3.09. For Slovenia “parents’ issues” is the second most approached subject, whereas for the whole sample “parents’ issues” is near is the fifth most approach subject. For Slovenia, the third most approved subject is “personal health issues”, with the mean of 2.50 below the mean of the whole sample of 2.35. For Slovenia, “personal health issues” is third, whereas for the whole sample, personal health issue is the most discussed subject. Next comes “personal hobbies” with a mean of 2.73, below the mean of the whole sample of 2.84. Next comes “partners issues” with 2.87just in line with the whole sample mean of 2.85. Next comes “technology” with the mean of 360, below the mean of the whole sample. Slovenia records the lowest mean for “technology” among the four partners. As usually, last comes “politics” with the mean of 3.60 just in line with the mean of the whole samples of 3.65. The highest recorded standard deviations for Slovenia come from “personal health issues” 1.04 points and “politics” 1.00 points.

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Children issues	30	2.27	.691
Parents issues	30	2.40	.498
Personal health issues	30	2.50	1.042
Personal hobbies	30	2.73	.907
Partners issues	30	2.87	.860
Technology	30	3.60	.894
Politics	30	3.60	1.003
Valid N (listwise)	30		
a. Country = Slovenia			

The next analysis is the rankings between female respondents and male respondents. The sample had 128 females and 22 males. The most approached subjects for females are “personal health issues” with the mean of 2.28. For males, personal health issues is only third with a mean of 2.73. The second most approached subjects for females are “children's issues” with a mean of 2.48 less than the mean of males of 2.68. Third, for females comes “partners issues” with the mean of 2.83, less than the mean of males of 3.00. Fourth for females comes “personal hobbies” with a mean of 2.87, more than the mean for males which is 2.64. For females “personal hobbies” is fourth most approached subject whereas for males is the first most approached subject. For females, next comes “parents’ issues” with the mean of 3.05, just in line with the males mean of 3.27. Second to last for females is “technology”, with the mean of 3.37 slightly more than the males mean of 3.23. For both genders “politics” comes last, for females it has a mean of 3.67, less than the mean of males of 3.50.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Let us be clear these are not the actual responses of the individuals, but their perception about what they believe they engage with the clients.

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal health issues	128	2.28	.972
Children issues	128	2.48	.851
Partners issues	128	2.83	.981
Personal hobbies	128	2.87	1.012
Parents issues	128	3.05	.925
Technology	128	3.37	1.056
Politics	128	3.67	1.051
Valid N (listwise)	128		
a. Gender = Female			

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal hobbies	22	2.64	1.136
Children issues	22	2.68	.780
Personal health issues	22	2.73	.767
Partners issues	22	3.00	1.024
Technology	22	3.23	.973
Parents issues	22	3.27	.985
Politics	22	3.50	1.225
Valid N (listwise)	22		
a. Gender = Male			

For the next analysis we crossed the topics that hair and beauty professionals open with clients and age. We wanted to see if different age groups approach differently the subjects that they open with the clients. The first group was 16 to 30 years old, where the most approached subject is “personal health issues” with a mean of 2.16 the lowest of the three age groups. “Personal health issues” was the most approached subject for all three group ages. For 16 to 30 years old, the second most approach approached subject is “personal hobbies” with the mean of 2.58, the lowest of the three groups. For the first age group, “personal hobbies” come first. For the second age group, 31 to 45 years, “personal hobbies” comes fifth, and for the 45+ age group, personal hobbies comes third.

For the first age group, third is “children issues” with a mean of 2.63, the highest of all three age groups. For the 16 to 30 years old “children issues” comes third, whereas for the 31 to 45 years old come second, as well as for the 45+ age group. For the youngest group “partners issues” comes forth with a mean of 2.74. Which is in line with the second age group with the mean of 2.75. The last group, 45+ mean of 2.99, the highest of all three age groups. For the youngest group, “technology” comes next, with an average of 3.00, less than the second age group which has a mean of 3.51, and the third

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

one, the third age group which has a mean of 3.30. The last approached subject for 16 to 30 years is "politics" where of mean of 3.84 is the largest of all three age groups. The lowest mean for "politics" comes for the age group 45+ with a mean of 3.51.

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal health issues	19	2.16	.898
Personal hobbies	19	2.58	.769
Children issues	19	2.63	.955
Partners issues	19	2.74	1.147
Technology	19	3.00	1.155
Parents issues	19	3.58	.961
Politics	19	3.84	1.119
Valid N (listwise)	19		
a. Age = 16-30			

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal health issues	59	2.42	.835
Children issues	59	2.49	.838
Partners issues	59	2.75	.883
Parents issues	59	2.95	.918
Personal hobbies	59	2.98	1.025
Technology	59	3.51	.972
Politics	59	3.69	1.118
Valid N (listwise)	59		
a. Age = 31-45			

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal health issues	67	2.33	1.036
Children issues	67	2.54	.804
Personal hobbies	67	2.81	1.090

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Partners issues	67	2.99	1.007
Parents issues	67	3.10	.923
Technology	67	3.30	1.030
Politics	67	3.51	1.035
Valid N (listwise)	67		
a. Age = 45+			

The next question is about the sensitive topics that clients bring about. The analysis is for the whole sample. Thus, we received 329 answers from 150 individuals, that is an average of 2.36 answers per individual. The Type of scale used is a multiple-choice nominal scale which allows the individuals to provide several answers. The most discussed subject is depression, which was ticked by 81.3% of individuals. The second is loneliness, which accounts for 64.7% of individuals. The third is addiction behaviors with which accounts for 36.7% of individuals. Fourth comes substance abuse which accounts for 29.5% of individuals, next domestic violence with 22.3% of individuals. The last and least brought up sensitive topic is self-harm which was identified by 2.2% of individuals.

$v7 Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Sensitive topics[a]	Domestic violence	31	9.4%	22.3%
	Substance abuse	41	12.5%	29.5%
	Addiction	51	15.5%	36.7%
	Depression	113	34.3%	81.3%
	Loneliness	90	27.4%	64.7%
	Selfharm	3	0.9%	2.2%
Total		329	100.0%	236.7%
a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

Next, the analysis targets sensitive topics and gender. We see that male individuals have exactly the same ranking as female professionals, but with different percentages. This tells us that for clients is not the same to talk of some sensitive subjects with a professional of their own gender. Thus, the most brought up subject is depression 77.8% for males less than the 81.8% for females. The second for males is loneliness, with 61.1% less than the females' loneliness 65.3%. Next come addiction behaviors with 55.6% of individuals for males way less than the females' addiction behavior of 33.9%. Next comes substance abuse with 44.4% of individuals for males, more than the females' substance abuse of 27.3%. Next comes domestic violence with 16.1% for males less than the females' 23.1%. There were no self-harm answers identified for males. Males have on average 2.5 answers, whereas females 2.3 answers.

$v7 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Sensitive topics[b]	Domestic violence	28	9.9%	23.1%

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

	Substance abuse	33	11.7%	27.3%
	Addiction	41	14.5%	33.9%
	Depression	99	35.0%	81.8%
	Loneliness	79	27.9%	65.3%
	Selfharm	3	1.1%	2.5%
Total		283	100.0%	233.9%
a. Gender = Female				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v7 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Sensitive topics[b]	Domestic violence	3	6.5%	16.7%
	Substance abuse	8	17.4%	44.4%
	Addiction	10	21.7%	55.6%
	Depression	14	30.4%	77.8%
	Loneliness	11	23.9%	61.1%
Total		46	100.0%	255.6%
a. Gender = Male				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

For the next analysis, we crossed age with sensitive topics to see if different age groups of hair and beauty professionals report different means of sensitive topics that arrive in conversation. So, the first age group 16 to 30 years, reported 2.6 answers, per individual, the second age group 31 to 45 years, reported 2.3 answers per individual and the last age group 45+ reported 2.2 answers per individual. The most approached sensitive subjects for the first age group is depression and loneliness with 77.8% of individuals, in line with the other two age groups. We see a slight increase in the incidence of depression through age groups from seven 77.8% to 78.2% to 83.9%, and a slight decrease in the incidence of loneliness from 77.8% to 60% to 64.5%. The next most approached sensitive subject for the first age group is a sub stance abuse with 38.9%, more than for the second age group with 25.5% and the last age group with 27.4%. Domestic violence in the first age group accounts for 33.3% of individuals more than in the second age group 21.8% and less than the third age group with 17.77%. Addiction behaviors for the first age group accounts for 27.8% less than in the second age group with 43.6% and less than in the third age group with 32.3%.

$v7 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Sensitive topics[b]	Domestic violence	6	12.5%	33.3%
	Substance abuse	7	14.6%	38.9%
	Addiction	5	10.4%	27.8%
	Depression	14	29.2%	77.8%
	Loneliness	14	29.2%	77.8%

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

	Selfharm	2	4.2%	11.1%
Total		48	100.0%	266.7%
a. Age = 16-30				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v7 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Sensitive topics[b]	Domestic violence	12	9.4%	21.8%
	Substance abuse	14	11.0%	25.5%
	Addiction	24	18.9%	43.6%
	Depression	43	33.9%	78.2%
	Loneliness	33	26.0%	60.0%
	Selfharm	1	0.8%	1.8%
Total		127	100.0%	230.9%
a. Age = 31-45				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v7 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Sensitive topics[b]	Domestic violence	11	7.9%	17.7%
	Substance abuse	17	12.1%	27.4%
	Addiction	20	14.3%	32.3%
	Depression	52	37.1%	83.9%
	Loneliness	40	28.6%	64.5%
Total		140	100.0%	225.8%
a. Age = 45+				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

For the next analysis, we cross tabbed country with sensitive topics that arise in conversation. Domestic violence occurs in 38.2% of individuals in Malta, the highest mean of the four partners, Slovenia in the second place with 25.9%, Serbia in the third place with 15.6%, and Italy with 13%. Substance abuse occurs in 55.6% of individuals in Slovenia, the highest mean of the four partners, second comes Serbia with 31.3%, Malta with 29.4%, and Italy with 13%. Addiction behaviours comes first in Slovenia with 55.6%, second in Serbia with 46.9%, third in Malta with 38.2%, and least in Italy with 17.4%. Depression has the highest incidence in Italy with 89.1%, second comes Malta with 88.2%, Serbia third with 71.9%, and Slovenia last with 70.4%. Loneliness has the highest incidence in Malta, with 76.5% of individuals, next comes Italy with the 63% and then Serbia and Slovenia with 59%. Self-harm was only registered in Malta 5.9% of individuals and Serbia with 3.1%.

Most answers were recorded in Malta 2.7 answers per individual, second comes Slovenia with 2.6 answers per individual, third Serbia with 2.2 answers per individual, and last Italy with 1.9 answers per individual.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

$v7 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Sensitive topics[b]	Domestic violence	13	13.8%	38.2%
	Substance abuse	10	10.6%	29.4%
	Addiction	13	13.8%	38.2%
	Depression	30	31.9%	88.2%
	Loneliness	26	27.7%	76.5%
	Selfharm	2	2.1%	5.9%
Total		94	100.0%	276.5%
a. Country = Malta				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v7 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Sensitive topics[b]	Domestic violence	6	6.7%	13.0%
	Substance abuse	6	6.7%	13.0%
	Addiction	8	8.9%	17.4%
	Depression	41	45.6%	89.1%
	Loneliness	29	32.2%	63.0%
Total		90	100.0%	195.7%
a. Country = Italy				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v7 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Sensitive topics[b]	Domestic violence	5	6.8%	15.6%
	Substance abuse	10	13.7%	31.3%
	Addiction	15	20.5%	46.9%
	Depression	23	31.5%	71.9%
	Loneliness	19	26.0%	59.4%
	Selfharm	1	1.4%	3.1%
Total		73	100.0%	228.1%
a. Country = Serbia				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v7 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Sensitive topics[b]	Domestic violence	7	9.7%	25.9%
	Substance abuse	15	20.8%	55.6%
	Addiction	15	20.8%	55.6%
	Depression	19	26.4%	70.4%
	Loneliness	16	22.2%	59.3%
Total		72	100.0%	266.7%
a. Country = Slovenia				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

The next four questions use a Lickert scale with five levels from 1 - To a very large extent to 5 - To a very small extent, so the lower the mean the greater extent people agree with the question. The first question is to what extent do hair and beauty professionals believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of their clients worsened after COVID-19 lockdowns? The mean of this question is 2.04, that means that hair and beauty professionals believe that the mental health of their clients worsened to a large extent.

The second question is to what extent do hair and beauty professionals believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry need to improve their communication skills with their clients? The mean is 1.89, the lowest of the four questions, that means that although it's close to two, to a large extent, it's actually smaller than two.

The third question is to what extent do hair and beauty professionals believe that the technicians would benefit from improved skills. The mean of this variable is 2.09, which is the highest of the four questions, meaning that there's the lowest degree of agreement with the question. It actually means that the hair beauty professionals would not benefit from improved skills. This variable also has the highest standard deviation, which means that individuals were most polarized by the question itself.

The fourth question is to what extent do hair and beauty professionals believe that they can have long lasting relationship with clients thanks to development of these new skills. The mean of this question is 2.05 with a standard deviation of 0.91 points. This is just in line with the first and the third question just above the level of “to a large extent”.

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your clients worsened after Covid-19 lockdowns?	150	2.04	.933

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Consequently, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in Malta need to improve their communication skills with their clients?	150	1.89	.923
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from such skills?	150	2.09	1.117
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long-lasting relations with clients, thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients with specific problems?	150	2.05	.915
Valid N (listwise)	150		

The next analysis brings together the four questions that were analyzed above, crossed with gender. We wanted to see if males and females respondents think differently when it comes to the four questions. So, for the first question, to what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behavior of your clients worsened after COVID-19 lockdowns, for females, we see a mean of 1.98, whereas males have a mean of 2.36, which shows a statistical difference between males and females, with males agreeing less with the with the with the question. We also see that the standard deviation of males is also lower, that means they're very concentrated on their answers. The second question, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the industry need to improve their communication skills with their clients, both genders agreed to a large extent that they do. There's no statistical difference between the two genders, females have a mean of 1.89, whereas males have a mean of 1.86. Again, males have a lower standard deviation. The third questions, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from improved skills, males have a statistically lower mean of 1.95 compared to females with the mean of 2.11. In this case, females have a larger standard deviation that means their responses are more polarized. The fourth question, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long lasting relationship with clients thanks to develop skills, genders have roughly the same mean. Females have a slightly lower mean of 2.04 versus males with a with a mean of 2.09.

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your clients worsened after Covid-19 lockdowns?	128	1.98	.939

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Consequently, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in Malta need to improve their communication skills with their clients?	128	1.89	.949
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from such skills?	128	2.11	1.131
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long-lasting relations with clients, thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients with specific problems?	128	2.04	.926
Valid N (listwise)	128		
a. Gender = Female			

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your clients worsened after Covid-19 lockdowns?	22	2.36	.848
Consequently, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in Malta need to improve their communication skills with their clients?	22	1.86	.774
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from such skills?	22	1.95	1.046
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long-lasting relations with clients, thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients with specific problems?	22	2.09	.868
Valid N (listwise)	22		
a. Gender = Male			

The next analysis brings together the four questions analyzed above and age groups. Thus, for the first question, to what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your client worsened after COVID-19 lockdowns, the first age group, 16 to 30 years old, they have the lowest mean of the three age groups of 1.89. The second age group, 31 to 45 years old, have the second largest mean of 2.08 and the third age group, 45+ had the largest mean 2.13. We can

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

see a trend here: the older the respondents gets, the less they are agreeing with the question. For the second question, to what extent do you believe that the technicians inherent beauty industry need to improve their communication skills with their clients, we see roughly the same answer across the board for the three age groups, 1.89 for the first age group, 1.93 for the second age group, and 1.91 to the third group. There's no statistical difference between the means of the age groups.

The third question, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from improved skills, we do see a large difference between age groups. The first age group has a mean of 2.16, the second age group has a mean of 2.39, the largest of the of the three age groups, and the third age group 45+ has the lowest mean of 1.85. We see a statistical difference between the second group and the third age group. We also see a quite high standard deviation for the for this question or for the second group 1.27 points. That means individuals in this age groups were very polarized in answering the question. The fourth question, to what extent do you believe that the technicians inherent due to industry can have long lasting relations with their clients thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients, we see no statistical difference between the three age groups. The first age group has a mean of 2.11, the second age group has a mean of 2.03, and the last age group has a mean of 2.07.

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your clients worsened after Covid-19 lockdowns?	19	1.79	.713
Consequently, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in Malta need to improve their communication skills with their clients?	19	1.89	.809
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from such skills?	19	2.16	1.167

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long-lasting relations with clients, thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients with specific problems?	19	2.11	.994
Valid N (listwise)	19		
a. Age = 16-30			

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your clients worsened after Covid-19 lockdowns?	59	2.08	.988
Consequently, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in Malta need to improve their communication skills with their clients?	59	1.93	1.032
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from such skills?	59	2.39	1.273
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long-lasting relations with clients, thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients with specific problems?	59	2.03	.982
Valid N (listwise)	59		
a. Age = 31-45			

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your clients worsened after Covid-19 lockdowns?	67	2.13	.936
Consequently, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in Malta need to improve their communication skills with their clients?	67	1.91	.866

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from such skills?	67	1.85	.909
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long-lasting relations with clients, thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients with specific problems?	67	2.07	.858
Valid N (listwise)	67		
a. Age = 45+			

The last analysis of the four questions brings together a cross tab with country of residence. Thus, for the first question, to what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behavior or your clients worsened after COVID-19 lockdowns, the lowest recorded mean is for the country of Malta with a mean of 1.79. Next comes Italy with a mean of 1.98 and Slovenia with a mean of 2. The largest mean, that is the less agreement with the question comes from Serbia with a mean of 2.39. There are statistical differences between Malta, Slovenia and Italy, and Serbia.

This the second of the four questions, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry need to improve their communication skills with their clients, the lowest mean is recorded in Slovenia 1.60, the second lowest comes from Malta with 1.76, then Italy with 1.82. Again, the largest mean comes from Serbia 2.33. There are no statistical differences between the first three, but Serbia lags behind significantly against the first three.

The third of the fourth question, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from improved skills, the lowest recorded mean comes from Slovenia with 1.77, then Italy with 1.88, then Malta with1.97 and again the largest mean comes from Serbia 2.75. There are no statistical differences between the first three, but Serbia lags behind significantly against the first three.

The last question, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long lasting relations with clients thanks to development of this new skills related to clients with specific problems, the lowest recorded mean comes from Slovenia with 1.80, the second lowest comes from Malta with 1.91, then comes Italy with 2.10 and the last again is Serbia with 2.31. There are significant differences between the first two (Slovenia and Malta), Italy, and Serbia.

It seems that the lowest means come from Slovenia, the second lowest means come from Malta, third lowest means come from Italy, and by far the largest means come from Serbia. This means that this is the order to which they agree with the above questions.

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your clients worsened after Covid-19 lockdowns?	34	1.79	.880

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Consequently, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in Malta need to improve their communication skills with their clients?	34	1.76	.987
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from such skills?	34	1.97	1.114
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long-lasting relations with clients, thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients with specific problems?	34	1.91	.712
Valid N (listwise)	34		
a. Country = Malta			

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your clients worsened after Covid-19 lockdowns?	50	1.98	.958
Consequently, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in Malta need to improve their communication skills with their clients?	50	1.82	.983
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from such skills?	50	1.88	1.100
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long-lasting relations with clients, thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients with specific problems?	50	2.10	1.055
Valid N (listwise)	50		
a. Country = Italy			

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

To what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your clients worsened after Covid-19 lockdowns?	36	2.39	.803
Consequently, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in Malta need to improve their communication skills with their clients?	36	2.33	.756
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from such skills?	36	2.75	1.079
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long-lasting relations with clients, thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients with specific problems?	36	2.31	.856
Valid N (listwise)	36		
a. Country = Serbia			

Descriptive Statistics[a]			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you believe that issues related to mental health and social behaviour of your clients worsened after Covid-19 lockdowns?	30	2.00	1.017
Consequently, to what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry in Malta need to improve their communication skills with their clients?	30	1.60	.770
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry would benefit from such skills?	30	1.77	.898
To what extent do you believe that the technicians in the hair and beauty industry can have long-lasting relations with clients, thanks to the development of these new skills related to clients with specific problems?	30	1.80	.887
Valid N (listwise)	30		
a. Country = Slovenia			

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

The last question analyzes the skills to improve. This was a multiple-choice nominal question. That is, respondents could choose one or more answers from the list. Thus, the most chosen skill to improve was listening, with 82% of respondents choosing this answer. The second most chosen skill to improve is to encourage clients with 69.3% of respondents, the third one is empathy with 54.7%. Close comes providing feedback with 49.3% of respondents and know where to refer a client to with 46.7%. Next comes ask an open-ended question with 24.7% of respondents, probing with 10% and the last one is asking open-ended questions 5.3%. On average each respondent gave 3.4 answers.

$v10 Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Skills to improve[a]	Listening	123	24.0%	82.0%
	Empathy	82	16.0%	54.7%
	Probing	15	2.9%	10.0%
	Ask close-ended questions	8	1.6%	5.3%
	Ask open-ended questions	37	7.2%	24.7%
	Know where to refer	70	13.6%	46.7%
	Encourage client	104	20.3%	69.3%
	Providing feedback	74	14.4%	49.3%
Total		513	100.0%	342.0%
a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

The next analysis is a crosstab between skills to improve and gender. Thus, for both men and females the most chosen skill to improve is listening with 86.4% for males and 81.3% for females. This is a statistical difference between the genders. The second most chosen skill to improve is for both men and females to encourage clients with 69.5% for females and 68.2% for males. There is no statistical difference between the genders. The third skill for females is empathy with 57% and for males empathy also comes third with 40.9%. There is a very large difference between the genders. There is a statistical difference between men and females. Next for females comes providing feedback with 50.8%. Males record a mean of 40.9%, the same as to know where to refer a client and empathy. Again, there is a significant difference between males and females. The last three answers are for females ask open-ended question with 22.7%. The same for men ask open-ended question 36.4%. There is a large statistical difference between males and females. Next comes probing 9.4% of females and 13.6% of males. Ask open-ended question was chosen by 6.3% of females and none of the males. On average, females provided 3.4 answers, whereas males provided on average 3.2 answers.

$v10 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Skills to improve[b]	Listening	104	23.6%	81.3%
	Empathy	73	16.6%	57.0%
	Probing	12	2.7%	9.4%

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

	Ask close-ended questions	8	1.8%	6.3%
	Ask open-ended questions	29	6.6%	22.7%
	Know where to refer	61	13.8%	47.7%
	Encourage client	89	20.2%	69.5%
	Providing feedback	65	14.7%	50.8%
Total		441	100.0%	344.5%
a. Gender = Female				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v10 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Skills to improve[b]	Listening	19	26.4%	86.4%
	Empathy	9	12.5%	40.9%
	Probing	3	4.2%	13.6%
	Ask open-ended questions	8	11.1%	36.4%
	Know where to refer	9	12.5%	40.9%
	Encourage client	15	20.8%	68.2%
	Providing feedback	9	12.5%	40.9%
Total		72	100.0%	327.3%
a. Gender = Male				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

The analysis of skills to improve and age groups does not record too many differences and thus was considered not important for the needs analysis. Nevertheless, the cross tables are below.

$v10 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Skills to improve[b]	Listening	13	20.3%	68.4%
	Empathy	13	20.3%	68.4%
	Probing	2	3.1%	10.5%
	Ask close-ended questions	1	1.6%	5.3%
	Ask open-ended questions	1	1.6%	5.3%
	Know where to refer	12	18.8%	63.2%
	Encourage client	13	20.3%	68.4%
	Providing feedback	9	14.1%	47.4%
Total		64	100.0%	336.8%
a. Age = 16-30				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

$v10 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Skills to improve[b]	Listening	50	24.0%	84.7%
	Empathy	31	14.9%	52.5%
	Probing	9	4.3%	15.3%
	Ask close-ended questions	3	1.4%	5.1%
	Ask open-ended questions	18	8.7%	30.5%
	Know where to refer	26	12.5%	44.1%
	Encourage client	39	18.8%	66.1%
	Providing feedback	32	15.4%	54.2%
Total		208	100.0%	352.5%
a. Age = 31-45				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v10 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Skills to improve[b]	Listening	55	24.8%	82.1%
	Empathy	35	15.8%	52.2%
	Probing	4	1.8%	6.0%
	Ask close-ended questions	4	1.8%	6.0%
	Ask open-ended questions	17	7.7%	25.4%
	Know where to refer	32	14.4%	47.8%
	Encourage client	47	21.2%	70.1%
	Providing feedback	28	12.6%	41.8%
Total		222	100.0%	331.3%
a. Age = 45+				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

The last analysis brings together skills to improve crosstab with country of residence. We wanted to see if there are significant differences between the skills to improve for every country where respondents provided answers. Thus, the most chosen skill to improve is listening. It comes with the largest mean from Slovenia with 90%, second comes Malta with 88.2%, third comes Italy with 82% and the least comes from Serbia with 69.4%. One may say that there are significant differences between the first two, Slovenia and Malta grouped together, Italy as a separate and Serbia as separate. The second most chosen skill to improve was to encourage clients. The largest mean comes from Slovenia with 86.7%, second comes Malta with 73.5%, third comes Serbia with 63.9% and last comes

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Italy with 60% of respondents. The third most chosen skill to improve was know where to refer a client. The largest mean comes from Malta with 73.5%. Next comes Serbia with 50%, third comes Italy with 44% and staggering last comes Slovenia with only 16.7%. It is obvious that there are significant differences between the four countries. Next skill to improve is empathy. The largest mean comes from Slovenia with 70%, second largest from Malta with 55.9%. Third comes Italy with 52%. Last comes Serbia with 44.4%. I would say that there are significant differences between the first group, which is Slovenia, the second group, which is Malta in Italy, and 3rd separate comes Serbia.

$v10 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Skills to improve[b]	Listening	30	22.9%	88.2%
	Empathy	19	14.5%	55.9%
	Probing	6	4.6%	17.6%
	Ask close-ended questions	2	1.5%	5.9%
	Ask open-ended questions	7	5.3%	20.6%
	Know where to refer	25	19.1%	73.5%
	Encourage client	25	19.1%	73.5%
	Providing feedback	17	13.0%	50.0%
Total		131	100.0%	385.3%
a. Country = Malta				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v10 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Skills to improve[b]	Listening	41	27.3%	82.0%
	Empathy	26	17.3%	52.0%
	Probing	3	2.0%	6.0%
	Ask close-ended questions	3	2.0%	6.0%
	Ask open-ended questions	9	6.0%	18.0%
	Know where to refer	22	14.7%	44.0%
	Encourage client	30	20.0%	60.0%
	Providing feedback	16	10.7%	32.0%
Total		150	100.0%	300.0%
a. Country = Italy				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v10 Frequencies[a]		
	Responses	

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

		N	Percent	Percent of Cases
Skills to improve[b]	Listening	25	20.0%	69.4%
	Empathy	16	12.8%	44.4%
	Probing	5	4.0%	13.9%
	Ask close-ended questions	3	2.4%	8.3%
	Ask open-ended questions	12	9.6%	33.3%
	Know where to refer	18	14.4%	50.0%
	Encourage client	23	18.4%	63.9%
	Providing feedback	23	18.4%	63.9%
Total		125	100.0%	347.2%
a. Country = Serbia				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

$v10 Frequencies[a]				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Skills to improve[b]	Listening	27	25.2%	90.0%
	Empathy	21	19.6%	70.0%
	Probing	1	0.9%	3.3%
	Ask open-ended questions	9	8.4%	30.0%
	Know where to refer	5	4.7%	16.7%
	Encourage client	26	24.3%	86.7%
	Providing feedback	18	16.8%	60.0%
Total		107	100.0%	356.7%
a. Country = Slovenia				
b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				

Limitations of the research

- The most important limitation is the sampling method. The sampling method is non-random and yields results that cannot be extrapolated to the whole cohort of hair and beauty technicians in neither of the four countries that were part of the research. The sampling method was snowballing – that means the researcher snowballed the survey in the market through social media and whoever chose to answer were free to answer and share.
- This sampling method also generated a small number of respondents in all four partner countries. The small number of respondents limits the depth of statistical tests that can be incurred on the data.
- Language limitations: the survey was developed in English and translated in Maltese, Italian, Serbian and Slovenian. This may have triggered small interpretation mistakes from partner researchers and population. This may explain some large statistical differences among the answers especially for multiple choice nominal questions (for example Skills to improve)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Conclusions

This quantitative research was part of a Needs Analysis to understand if there is the need for a course/class for developing soft skills of hair and beauty professionals in four partner countries. The Needs Analysis had a first qualitative analysis that demonstrated through a series of focus groups some descriptive topics and needs of hair and beauty professionals.

Next the quantitative research went deeper to quantify the behaviours, topics of conversation, and skills that hair and beauty professionals employ in their interaction with clients.

What have we learned from this quantitative research? On average hair and beauty professionals spend one hour with clients, time in which they engage in conversations about personal health issues, children issues, family and partners issues. These are to be considered very personal topics of conversation and together with what we have learned from the qualitative research, one may conclude that hair and beauty professionals are suppose to act as more that just good professionals, that clients expect a good personal experience more than just good service.

The most cited sensitive issues that were answered in the quantitative research was depression and loneliness. We have learnt from the qualitative research that these issues have become more frequent after the COVID-19 pandemic. For the good of their clients and of the society as a whole, one may conclude that a course/class that can help hair and beauty professionals in identifying these two issues and addressing them through engaging in conversation with clients would bring a lot of added value for the clients.

On average, hair and beauty professionals from the samples of all four partner countries agree (from 1.89 to 2.09 where 2 is the code for “agree”) that a course/class that would teach to improve soft skills and communication skills in relation to clients is a good idea. The skills that should be insisted of should be listening (82% of respondents), encouraging clients (70% of respondents), empathy (55% of respondents), and providing feedback (50% of respondents).

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.