

NEW COMPETENCIES FOR ACCESIBLE TOURISM IN V4 COUNTRIES

TRAINING MODULE FOR PROVIDERS OF TOURIST INFORMATION SERVICES WITHIN THE ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

The main target group of this module in general are Tourist Information Centres or Tourist Information Offices, in short TICs. These subjects can be defined as a physical location that provides tourist information to the visitors who tour the place or area locally, such as a landmark, national park, national forest, or state park. (e. g. trail maps, about camp sites, staff contacts, restrooms, etc.). TICs operate in towns, villages, and holiday resorts; overall they are a tool to promote the development of tourism in particular destination.

List of typical Information Centre activities:
• providing tourist information about the locality and its surroundings
• providing information directly, either face to face or via phone, e-mail and fax
• ensure the guide service in town and its surroundings through qualified multi-language traveller's guides
• Accommodation services in town and close surroundings
• Trip tips, tourist opportunities and leisure activities possibilities
• Town and region propagation at the local as well as foreign tourist exhibitions and in specialized publications
• Regular webpage updates
• Tickets advance sale
• Point of sale for propagation materials, representative publications, tourist maps and guides, postcards and gifts focused exclusively on locality and destination propagation
• Cooperation with the local tourist units and cultural institutions presenting the town, locality and country itself

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Typical Work Positions of Employees of Tourist Information Centres

This chapter presents a brief description of typical work positions of TICs, e. g.:

- Tourist Information Centre Manager
- Information Officer
- Tourist information Centre Assistant

Tourist Information Centre Manager

Tourist information centre managers oversee services that provide information and advice on what to see and do in a particular town, destination or country. They are involved in booking accommodation, making reservations and selling related gifts and souvenirs; they are also responsible for running special events and generating marketing opportunities.

Their tasks typically include some or all of the following:

- identifying, implementing and monitoring commercial opportunities and additional services to raise revenue;
- recruiting, training, managing, appraising and motivating staff;
- preparing reports for senior management and attending meetings with a variety of people, including senior managers, and tourism businesses.
- controlling and monitoring the TIC budget to ensure the achievement of its objectives in the most cost-effective way;
- publicising the centre's services and assisting with the marketing of other local amenities;
- gathering information about and working with local businesses and visitor attractions;
- event planning and organisation;
- producing guides and other marketing literature;
- researching and visiting attractions and accommodation;
- keeping up to date with changes in tourist activities and events;
- ICT work, including managing destination management systems, website development, e-commerce and online booking;
- supplying and interpreting TIC data, as well as working closely with the national tourism organisation;

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- implementing health and safety regulations and monitoring work practices, ensuring that the centre is run in accordance with policies and guidelines;
- ensuring that the centre is well presented, efficiently organised, easy to use and accessible;
- communicating information to members of the public;
- dealing with enquiries in person and by post, email and phone;
- operating accommodation and other booking services, selling tickets for travel and local events.

Tourist Information Centre Officer

Information officers manage and develop the procurement, supply and distribution of information for an organisation or client to support their needs and objectives. They work with electronic information, especially online databases, content management systems and internet resources, as well as traditional library materials. Information officers play a key role in a wide range of organisations and handle all types of information, including:

- scientific;
- technical;
- legal;
- commercial;
- financial;
- medical;
- educational.

Information officers are concerned with managing information to make it easily accessible. Work activities vary, depending on the needs of the organisation or client, but typically include:

- selecting, managing and acquiring resources - both hard copy and electronic - to meet an organisation's current and anticipated needs;
- classifying, collating and storing information, usually using special computer applications, for easy access and retrieval;
- creating and searching databases;
- cataloguing and indexing materials;
- scanning and abstracting materials;
- conducting information audits;

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- developing and managing electronic resources using, for example, online databases and content management systems;
- writing and editing reports, publications and website content;
- developing and managing internal information resources and networks via intranet sites;
- designing for the web;
- overseeing the development of new information systems;
- responding to enquirers' requests using electronic and printed resources;
- providing user education via leaflets, websites and tours of the library/information room;
- publicising and marketing services, internally and externally, through publicity material, demonstrations, presentations and/or social media;
- providing training and advice to colleagues and sometimes clients on the use of electronic information services;
- managing a range of projects;
- developing and exploiting multimedia information;
- giving presentations and individual consultations.

Staff may also be involved in supervising and training other information staff and budget management.

Tourist Information Centre Assistant

Work of TIC assistant include:

This person is responsible also for selling goods like guidebooks, postcards and stamps, local craft items, gifts and souvenirs.

- answering customer queries in person, and by phone and email
- giving information, using computer systems, leaflets, timetables, guidebooks and national TIC reference kits
- making bookings, for example coach travel, theatre performances and accommodation
- setting up displays within the centre, and keeping the place tidy
- keeping up to date with local accommodation, places to visit, activities and events
- re-stocking literature.

All tourist products must be designed with accent on the accessibility.

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What is accessibility?

Access is not just about wheelchairs. Accessibility refers to how easy it is for everybody to approach, enter and use buildings, outdoor areas and other facilities, independently, without the need for special arrangements. Providing information on accessibility and improving access benefits a wide range of people who want to travel, but who may find it difficult.

Access is about the absence of barriers to the use of facilities. Although this is usually seen in terms of physical access or access to information and communication, poorly trained staff can represent a serious barrier for disabled people if they are unable to provide services in an appropriate, non-discriminatory way. The key to providing good service is to understand that disabled people are like any customer, wanting to be treated with respect.

The special vulnerable group of tourists are seniors.

Unnecessary barriers in the tourism sector

Unnecessary barriers should be the starting point for thinking about access. Instead of concentrating on an individual's impairment, tourist facilities and destinations should focus on the barriers to access created by for example poor physical layout; architectural barriers, such as narrow doors and stairs; the lack of basic equipment, such as induction loops; and the way in which services are delivered. To be accessible for all, many facilities and destinations may need to make various physical changes.

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STRUCTURE OF TRAINING COURSE FOR EMPLOYEES OF SUBJECTS PROVIDING THE TOURIST INFORMATION SERVICES – PROPOSAL

NAME OF TRAINING COURSE:

**“PROVISION OF TOURIST INFORMATION SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH
IMPAIRMENTS AND DISABILITIES”**

Duration of Training in total: 18 h

1. MODUL - ACCESSIBILITY AND BARRIERS

Training Methods: lecturing, practical training in pairs, discussion

- 1.1. Unnecessary barriers in the tourism sector**
- 1.2. Communication with disabled people**
- 1.3. Communication with disabled people**
- 1.4. Tasks and Duties of Tourist Information Centres**
- 1.5. Categories of TIC Employees**

2. MODUL - IMPAIRMENT AND DISABILITY

**Training Methods: lecturing, presentation, active learning approach, roles playing,
expression of emotions, work in groups of 3 people, discussion)**

In this part lecturer uses firstly oral presentation intended to present all relevant information about particular topic; as it is mainly a one-way method of communication that does not involve the audience participation, the lecturing here is contrasted to active learning approach using the active listening lecture where students just listen to a lecture without writing notes and then, after ten to twenty minutes, the student works in a small group of 3 people to recall, clarify, and elaborate on the lecture's content. Role Playing: "each student takes the role of a person affected by discussed problem" from the perspective of that person. There is also used the psychosocial approach called "expression of emotions" to help students to recognize, verbalize and assess the feelings and thoughts of disabled people and also to help them develop understanding and empathy towards disabled people.

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- 2.1. Basic categories of impairments**
- 2.2. Providing information to people with visual and hearing impairments**
- 2.3. Wheelchair users and people with learning difficulties**
- 2.4. Work with special vulnerable group of tourists – seniors**

3. MODUL - CONCLUSION

Training Methods: presentations, discussion, good practice examples

Lecturer uses presentation ranging from straight lecture to direct involvement of the learners through questions and discussion related to studied topics. In this final part of the training participants with their trainer are summing up all arguments and drawing a conclusion about what they've been speaking about.

Participants of training are presenting „Good practice examples” documenting the practice that is good, but also the practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results, and therefore it is recommended as a model. It is a successful experience, which has been tested and validated and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of people can adopt it.

- 3.1. Conclusion of provided information during the training**
- 3.2. Presentations of communication with target groups of this module**
- 3.3. Good Practice Story - Accessible High Tatras and others**
- 3.4. Suggestions and recommendations from abroad**