

GUIDELINES FOR TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES



VISIT ŠIAULIAI



BAUSKAS
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INTRODUCTION

The guidelines were written by Latvia expert Līga Orupa and Lithuania expert Lauras Balaiša as part of the implementation of the INTERREG VI-A LATVIA-LITHUANIA2021-2027 project “Capacity building of public sector professionals to improve the quality of provided services in local and regional authorities of Siauliai and Bauska regions” No.LL-00141; “Quality under control”.

This document is prepared by two different countries, each with its own tourism management system. It reflects the collaborative efforts of both countries, acknowledging the differences in their tourism management systems while highlighting shared goals and best practices in the field.

The aim of these guidelines is to summarize criteria in one place and provide a set of recommendations for the further development of tourism information providers (mostly TIC) in every municipality as destination marketing and management organization (DMO) in Latvia and Lithuania in order to improve their planning, management and the quality of services provided in different levels (local, regional/government or private) and in different sizes of administration for information provision. Given the diversity of contexts, these guidelines are intended as recommendations rather than mandatory standards. Users of the document are encouraged to adapt the content according to their local needs, organizational goals and national regulations.

In mean time the purpose of this document is to support the development and delivery of high-quality tourism services from tourism information providers by offering clear, practical and adaptable recommendations. It covers a wide range of topics essential for ensuring professional, consistent and visitor-focused service across TICs, including staff competencies, customer service standards, communication practices and environmental and workplace requirements.

Also, this document is prepared as guidelines for different level employees in the organization of TIC: top-level management, mid-level management and first-line management.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS¹²³

Tourist information service – TIS - activities carried out by a management organization at the destination aimed at promoting its tourist offer and providing information; tourist information services can be offered on physical facilities (tourist information offices) or online.

Tourist information office – TIO – physical facility where tourist information services (TIS (mainly tourism information centres in Latvia and Lithuania)) are provided either onsite or online with the aim of meeting and improving the tourists' expectations once they are at the destination. Tourist information offices can be grouped into the following major categories:

- **Tourist information point – TIP** - a place providing tourist information, located in a place with a constant tourists' flow, usually in another company directly or indirectly related to tourism - in a tourist attraction, for example, a museum, or tourism service, for example, accommodation, etc., and provides information about the relevant tourist destination, as well as about tourism opportunities in the immediate vicinity. A TIP usually operates during the active tourist season as a branch of a destination's tourist information office or as a part of the visitor centre of the relevant tourist attraction.
- **Tourist information centre and bureau – TIC and TIB** – a year-round service point for foreign and local travellers, as well as local residents, which provides information about tourist attractions, services and assistance in using tourist services at a local or regional destination or country.

Impersonal tourist information places – a physical, impersonal place to obtain information about the location of tourist attractions or information about tourist attractions in the area:

- **Tourist information signs** - road signs or other types of signs placed on roads or at road intersections to provide information about the direction or distance to a tourist attraction or the service to be received at a tourist attraction.
- **Tourist information stand** - an information display device located in tourist concentration areas, most often in parking places, along tourist highways and in the service area of a tourist information office. Information stands can be both classic and electronic (digital).

¹ International Organization for Standardization (Edition 2, 2024) ISO 14785:2024: Tourism and related services —Tourist information services — Requirements and recommendations.

² World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2019) UNWTO Guidelines for Institutional Strengthening of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs).

³ Latvian Standard (2000) Latvian State Standard LVS 200-7:2000 Tourism Services. Tourism Information Providers (Tourism Information Points. Tourism Information Centers. Tourism Information Bureaus),

Tourist information services management organization – (MO) – organization responsible for defining and implementing the tourist information services and the promotion strategy of the destination.

Destination management organization – DMO – the leading organizational entity which may encompass the various authorities, stakeholders and professionals and facilitates partnerships towards a collective destination vision. *Note! At the moment in Latvia, DMO function at the municipal level is performed by TICs, at the regional level - by regional associations.*

Tourist - user person who uses the different facilities and services provided by a tourist information service or management organization; a physical person who travels outside their permanent place of residence for no longer than one year, stays in public or private accommodation for no less than one night and does not perform paid work in the place visited.

Tourism stakeholder - individual, group, organization or authority involved in the tourist information service (TIC) value chain (*see Chapter 2*).

Accessibility – provision of conditions that enable products, systems, services, environments and facilities to be used everywhere by people from a population with the widest range of user needs, characteristics and capabilities, with safety, comfort and autonomy.

Accessible tourism - a form of tourism that involves a collaborative process with stakeholders that enables people with access requirements including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access to function independently and with equity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments.

Tourism destination - a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. A destination incorporates various stakeholders and can network to form larger destinations. It is also intangible with its image and identity which may influence its market competitiveness.

Tourism destination management – the coordinated management of all the elements that make up a tourism destination (attractions, amenities, access, marketing and pricing).

1. TOURISM SYSTEMS IN LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

In Latvia and in Lithuania, the Tourism Law and other regulatory acts determine the goals and objectives that each institution must develop and implement in the development of tourism. The tourism industry is made up of both the private and public sectors, which can be directly involved in the sector or only perform support functions. When starting to develop tourism planning or in a specific region, employees of tourism information providers should know exactly who is responsible for what in the country and what cooperation opportunities are available.

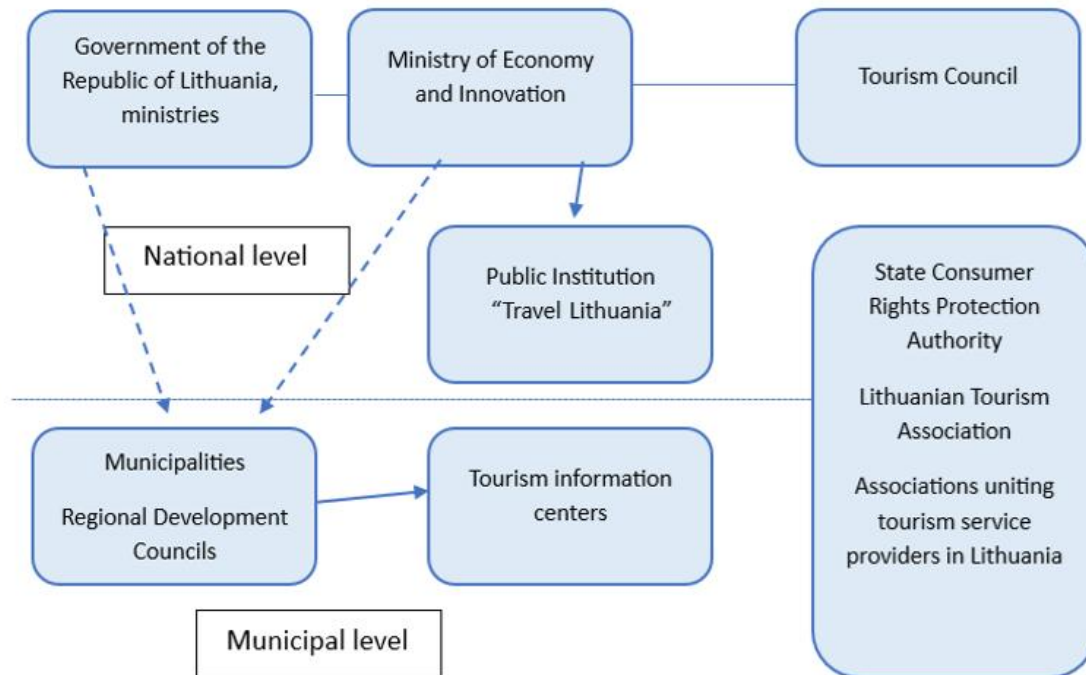


Figure 1. The governance scheme of the public part of the tourism ecosystem in Lithuania, prepared by the Ministry of Economy and Innovation.

Contribution of Institutions to Tourism Management of the Republic of Lithuania:

- The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania approves the national budget, exercises parliamentary control, deliberates and adopts laws affecting the tourism ecosystem, and approves the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.
- The Government of the Republic of Lithuania approves the implementation plan for the provisions of the Government Programme, and considers tourism-related documents and the budget.
- The Ministry of Economy and Innovation shapes policy in the areas of tourism, resorts, and resort areas, and administers the public institution "Keliauk Lietuvoje" (Travel Lithuania).
- The Ministry of Finance prepares the draft budget and forms appropriations.

- The Ministry of Justice shapes consumer rights protection policy, strengthening consumer protection.
- The Ministry of Environment shapes construction and territorial planning policy; it protects, maintains, and ensures access to the most precious, beautiful, and interesting corners of Lithuania.
- The Ministry of Culture shapes cultural and cultural heritage protection policy, ensuring the development and dissemination of the activities of cultural institutions and creators.
- The Ministry of Transport and Communications manages the diverse accessibility of Lithuania (by air, land, and water) as well as mobility and communication options within the country.
- The Ministry of the Interior shapes state policy in the field of local self-government, organizes, coordinates, and controls its implementation, as well as regional development policy and migration policy.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintains international relations with other countries and, through its diplomatic network, promotes inbound tourism and the formation of Lithuania's image.
- The Ministry of Health regulates public health safety requirements for accommodation, sports clubs, swimming pools, and saunas; it ensures the proper provision of medical rehabilitation and/or sanatorium (anti-relapse) treatment services, and the use of natural healing factors in resorts and resort areas.
- The Ministry of Social Security and Labour shapes employment policy and is responsible for the quantitative and qualitative development of the labor market.
- The State Consumer Rights Protection Authority supervises tourism service providers and ensures the protection of tourists.
- The public institution "Keliauk Lietuvoje" (Travel Lithuania) conducts national tourism marketing, cooperates with municipalities, implements projects to increase the country's visibility and attractiveness, and conducts market research.
- Other institutions – The State Service for Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment and the directorates of protected areas, the Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture, the State Territorial Planning and Construction Inspectorate under the Ministry of Environment – perform functions related to nature protection, building adaptation, and the utilization of heritage sites as stipulated by law.
- The Tourism Council participates in the deliberation of the most important tourism-related projects and documents, and provides proposals and ideas for policy formation.
- Municipalities develop local tourism appeal measures, invest in infrastructure, establish tourist information centers, and create conditions for and promote tourism development.
- Tourist Information Centers implement local awareness projects and develop regional tourism products by collaborating with each other and with the public and private sectors.

- Tourism Business Associations represent their members (tourism service providers), contribute to legislative processes, provide suggestions to policymakers, and mediate between the public and private sectors.⁴

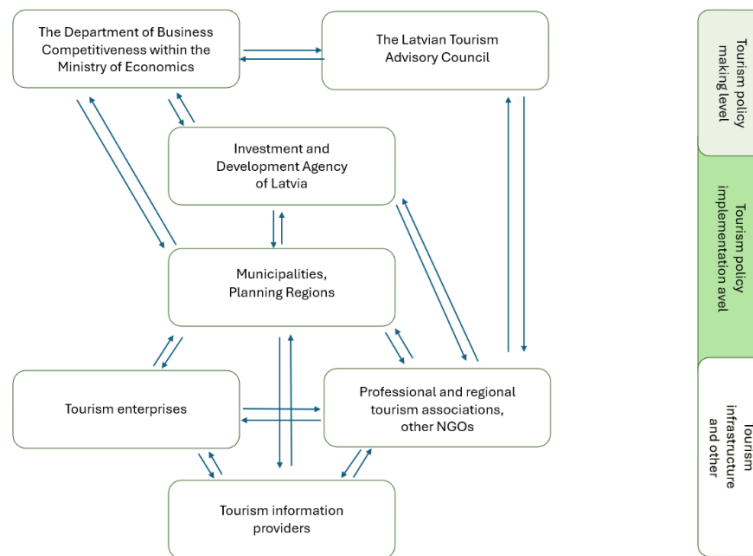


Figure 2. Organizational system of tourism in Latvia, prepared by the Latvian Association of Tourism Information Organizations LATTŪRINFO.

2. MAIN ASPECTS OF TOURISM INFORMATION PROVIDERS ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEM

In smaller municipalities where tourism is not a primary source of income and does not influence destination branding noticeably, TICs — which in Latvia may also be referred to as TIPs and can be part of a larger tourism information structure within the municipality — carry out their main functions: collecting and providing information.

In these TIC shall have a database of the main sources considered to be legal, reliable sources of tourist information. This database can be internal or shared with other public or private bodies. It shall be updated regularly.

The TIC shall provide general and specific information, considering the interest and needs of its different tourist target groups. The information shall not be based by private interest and shall be offered in an impartial way.

The information shall cover the following:

- contact details of the destination tourist offices. The location of the TICs in the destination shall be clearly and visibly indicated on the tourist map(s), website and

⁴ Order No. 4-325 of the Minister of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania (2024) Tourism management in Lithuania. LITHUANIAN TOURISM ROADMAP.

printed TIC information, if available. In the case of online TIS with or without infrastructure at the destination, means to interact with the tourists shall be ensured (e.g. through contact email);

- the destination, including location (map), description, features, opening hours and accessibility conditions services (e.g. accessible accommodation, restaurants, transport, tours and activities) and tourist attractions (e.g. accommodation, transport, restaurants, museums, heritage sites and shopping areas);
- tourist routes (e.g. art or crafts route, luxury shopping etc.) at the destination;
- transportation terminals, routes and active link to timetables (arrivals and departures), and information related to transportation;
- parking areas nearby the tourist attractions at the destinations (e.g. website, social media);
- events calendar (e.g. recreational, cultural, festival, sporting or leisure business events), including date, venues and contents for each event;
- tourist service providers: accommodation, restaurants, tourist guides, rental services, travel agencies, etc. and their contact details;
- safety, security, environmental and other relevant recommendations and regulations at the destination (e.g. presence of poisonous plants/wild animals, precaution for solo travellers, presence of pickpockets);
- emergency/health services contact details (e.g. hospitals, pharmacies, ambulances, fire services, police, safety and health issues, insurance services);
- contact details of other services that might be relevant for the tourist (e.g. banks, lockers, lost and found);
- frequently asked questions (FAQ);
- other relevant services: charging services (e.g. mobile, cars, transport cards), parcel storage and other services.

The TIC shall provide information about legal tourist providers only. The TIC can provide information about certification(s) (e.g. quality, sustainability, environmental, safety and/or security certifications) of tourist resources or organizations.

The TIC shall be able to offer different formats if requested (e.g. digital documents, online information on screen readers, paper, etc.) and offer printable digital contents on the website with regards to sustainable practices.

The TIC shall define the information to provide, the promotional activities to carry out and the channels to communicate with each target group, for example, through communication guidelines (attached in Annex C).

In larger municipalities where tourism is a primary source of income and influence destination branding, TICs (and TIBs in Latvia) works as DMO.

DMO's should think about various functions. Fundamental DMO's functions include:

- strategic planning,
- formulation (or participation in the formulation process) and implementation of the destination's tourism policy,
- market intelligence (data gathering and analysis, market research, etc.),
- tourism product and tourism business development,
- digitalization and innovation,
- monitoring,
- crisis management,
- training and capacity building (not only of its human resources but also facilitate training and capacity building activities for local tourism professionals),
- promotion, marketing and branding,
- funding and fostering investments.

This includes working and coordinating with various authorities, stakeholders and professionals in order to facilitate and support the industry itself and engage all relevant public and private stakeholders – as well as the residents and local communities – in the design and implementation of a wider strategic thinking with a final goal: to ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination in the short, medium and long terms.

Tourism stakeholders who can be grouped into the following major categories:

- national or regional public administrations, including national tourism administrations, national or regional tourism promotion boards, destination management organizations (DMOs), municipalities, public entities in charge of infrastructure policies, development and legislative or regulatory frameworks, organizations or professionals working in the field of cultural heritage management and protection;
- travel and tourism industry stakeholders - investors in destinations and tourism industry, travel and tourism businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across the tourism sector: transportation, accommodation, tour operators and travel agencies, hospitality and catering, other tourism providers and trade associations;
- enterprises and organizations from the support sectors, for example, companies entrusted with the execution of construction works within destinations, architects, developers and promoters of support tools and services for people with specific access requirements, and companies or professionals operating in the area of information and communication technology (ICT);

- users – tourists and the local population with or without specific access requirements.

3. PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYEES (KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES)

In TIC (also as municipality DMO) specialists from various fields can work: tourism information providers, destination management specialists, tourism entrepreneurship professionals, etc., it is possible that the tourism information provider in smaller destinations must be able to gather the competencies of specialists from all fields in order to qualitatively perform the main task - to promote the development and recognition of the destination.

A tourism information provider in TIC is a specialist in the tourism industry who works in a tourism bureau, information center or point and is engaged in collecting and compiling tourism information, provides tourism information to tourists and customers in accordance with the Tourism Law and other legal acts of the Republic of Latvia (and the Republic of Lithuania), plans and executes orders from the municipality and the customer, is responsible for the results of work, communicates in the official language and at least two foreign languages. These responsibilities, skills, knowledge's and abilities are the basics for all employees working in TIC (also for specialists in TIC as municipality DMO). The requirements are general (basic level of everything), but depending on the position they may be required at a higher level.

Responsibilities:

- Understand the tourism offer of the region
- Collection and compilation of information (develop and keep updated a comprehensive database of the region's tourism products and offer)
- Providing information to tourists
- Encourage collaboration with local service providers and entrepreneurs (informing and educating, promoting mutual cooperation, creating tourism products and clusters – local, thematic)
- Encourage cooperation with regional and professional tourism associations, state and local government institutions (tourism development and marketing, development and offer of niche products, building and maintaining infrastructure, tourism policy etc.)
- Territory (as destination) marketing
- Support and promote the activities of the TIC
- Municipal work (territory and tourism planning, infrastructure, business, public relations, etc.)
- Communicate effectively in both the official language and foreign languages
- Adhere to all relevant safety standards and regulations
- Follow professional standards in business communication and correspondence
- Recognize and satisfy the needs and expectations of customers

- Manage and organize the sales process efficiently
- Provide high-quality services to clients

Knowledges:

- Be familiar with the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia or the Republic of Lithuania)
- Understand the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Know the functional design and layout of TIC environment
- Have knowledge of the geography of Latvia/Lithuania as well as global tourism
- Be aware of the tourism products and partnership opportunities available in region and it`s promotion
- Understand the purpose of tourism, key definitions and professional terminology
- Have a basic understanding of tourism management and business principles
- Know the categories and classification of tourism services
- Understand the basics of hospitality and customer care
- Be knowledgeable about different payment methods
- Understand accounting principles and basic calculations
- Know the essential principles of planning
- Know basics of usage for popular searching channels (Google Maps, for example) and generative artificial intelligence
- To know digital tools
- Have a foundational knowledge of destination marketing – strategies, channels (for example, social networks, websites – to be able to publish information, create interesting content in various formats) and branding
- Be aware of sanitation and hygiene standards
- Master the official state language at an advanced level
- Have proficiency in English and other foreign language
- Knowledges in meaningful usage of information and communication technologies

Skills:

- Comply with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia or the Republic of Lithuania
- Comply with the principles of sustainable tourism development
- Comply with the rights and obligations of tourism stakeholders
- Comply with labor, fire, electrical safety regulations
- Comply with sanitation and hygiene
- Comply with the internal rules of the workplace
- Maintain a positive psychological climate in the team
- Research, compile and analyse the offer, apply this information

- Use information and communication technologies
- Communicate with the customer in the national language - at a higher level
- Communicate with the customer in English and other language
- Be familiar with the tourism offer of the region
- Be able to provide information correctly
- Use international tourism terminology and concepts
- Be able to create and manage databases
- Be able to work with cartographic materials
- Be able to create advertising and information materials
- Be able to use the Internet and search engines for professional purposes

Abilities:

- Understand the meaning of teamwork
- Be able to work in a team
- Curiosity and interest in the area, territory, destination
- Know how to provide oral and written information
- Solve problem situations
- Plan professional activities and set priorities
- Formulate and argue your opinion
- Make decisions and accept the consequences
- Apply the principles of work ethics
- Be able to listen
- Apply logical thinking
- Develop empathy skills
- Improve professional qualifications
- Attention to details
- Accuracy
- Punctuality
- Tolerance

For successful work in a TIC, its employees – both managers and specialists – must continuously improve their skills, knowledge and abilities. The areas of improvement are very wide:

- Marketing and social media
- Public relation and communication
- Information and communication technology knowledges
- Planning
- Entrepreneurship promotion and entrepreneur education

- Finances
- Quality issues
- Social issues (in order to be able to create a sustainable offer for everyone)
- Cultural heritage management

4. STAFF COCPETENCE AND WORKPLACE BEHAVIOR

To provide exceptional service, employees must possess the knowledge, skills, and interpersonal abilities to effectively assist visitors and partners and collaborate with colleagues. Continuous learning and a positive attitude are vital.

4.1 BEHAVIOR IN THE WORKPLACE AND PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

A professional image in the tourism industry is how you carry yourself through your dress, communication style, actions and mindset. These factors show how co-workers, customers, and other stakeholders view you and they serve as a reflection of your skills, dependability, and regard for a professional setting. By consistently applying these elements you build trust, establish credibility and build a strong professional reputation that supports career growth and successful workplace relationships.

Essential elements of professional image in the workplace:

- Communication skills:
 - respectful language both in speaking and writing.
 - active listening.
- Attitude and behaviour:
 - demonstrate responsibility.
 - take initiative.
 - maintain a positive mindset.
 - be tolerant and empathizing
 - being respectful, polite and cooperative.
- Body language:
 - good posture.
 - steady eye contact.
- Dress code and personal care:
 - clothing that aligns with workplace norms.
 - personal hygiene and grooming.
- Punctuality and time management:
 - be punctual and effectively organise your time.
- Digital professionalism:
 - manage your online image carefully as social media and electronic communications contribute to your overall professional reputation. These are things we don't tolerate (post): alcohol, drugs, violence, nudity.
 - When my posts are criticized – I discuss possible response with my manager. Generally – I respond with stating TIC values, thanking for open critique, suggesting ways to formally submit a complaint. I don't get into arguing on social media.

4.2 COMMUNICATION WITH COLLEAGUES AND TEAM DYNAMICS

Note! In this document, authors in some sections prefer using the first-person language, such as "I greet visitors warmly", to foster a powerful sense of personal ownership and accountability for each standard. It reframes the document from a list of external rules into an internal, professional mindset that each employee can personally adopt. This approach makes the ideal behaviours more relatable and easier to internalize, encouraging staff to see these standards as their own commitment to excellence.

- I communicate clearly and respectfully with my colleagues, fostering a positive and collaborative work environment. I am helpful and polite.

Example: I actively listen to my colleagues' suggestions and concerns and offer my assistance whenever possible. We are one team.

- I share relevant information with my colleagues promptly, ensuring that everyone is well-informed and can provide consistent service to visitors.

Example: If I learn about a road closure or a special event that may affect visitors, I immediately notify my colleagues. You never know when customers will ask about that.

- I refrain from gossiping or engaging in negative conversations about colleagues or visitors. I focus on improving the TIC and don't participate in pointless discussions.
- If my colleague is missing – I contact him to know if he's OK and if he needs something.
- I always speak well about our superiors, colleagues and founders.

4.3 TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT, AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING

- I actively participate in training sessions and workshops to enhance my knowledge of local attractions, services, and tourism trends. This allows everyone to be better at service.
- I stay up to date on the latest tourism information, including new attractions, events, and transportation options. Have all contacts, links.

Example: I regularly check the local, regional and state tourism website and subscribe to relevant newsletters.

- I regularly read tourist articles.

5. TOURISM INFORMATION CENTER ENVIRONMENT

The TIC environment is a crucial first impression for visitors, conveying our commitment to providing a welcoming and helpful experience. I am committed to maintaining a safe, clean, and functional space that shows the best of our TIC.

5.1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PREMISES

- I understand that the TIC is often the first physical point of contact for visitors, and I take ownership in ensuring it presents a professional and welcoming image. I am the face of our city, region, country. So, it depends on me how tourists will value us.
- I ensure, that all materials are visually clear and accurate, in line with the institution's style (brand guidelines).
- The TIC is clearly identifiable with appropriate and well-maintained signage, displaying the official Tourism Information symbol, contact details, and operating hours.

Example: I always make sure that there is no mistake on the name of the office or working hours. No hand-written notes/signs.

- I ensure that the entrance area is free of obstructions (e.g., snow, ice, debris) and is accessible to individuals with mobility challenges (e.g., ramps, wide doorways).

Example: If there is some issue that prevents access – I report as soon as possible.

- I ensure the premises have adequate lighting, both inside and outside, to create a safe and inviting atmosphere, especially during evening hours.

Example: I make sure that lamps are working, if not – report or change myself.

- If there is no free parking spot near my TIC – I provide instructions to our visitors on how and where they can park.
- I ensure that there is free WIFI. This will allow customers to be happy with our TIC. If it is not working – I report ASAP.

5.2 CLEANLINESS, MAINTENANCE, AND SAFETY STANDARDS

- I ensure that the TIC is always clean and free of clutter. This includes regular dusting, vacuuming, mopping, and emptying of trash bins.

Example: If I see a visitor drop a piece of litter, I will discreetly pick it up.

- I will regularly inspect the premises for any maintenance issues (e.g., leaky faucets, misplaced rug, empty toilet paper dispenser, burned-out light bulbs) and report them promptly to the appropriate authority or maintenance personnel.

Example: If I notice a flickering light, I immediately report it to the building manager to ensure visitor safety and comfort.

- I pay attention to the smell - the premise has to smell good (fresh flowers, a subtle air freshener) but avoids strong or artificial scents that may trigger allergies or sensitivities. I remember to open windows to let fresh air come in.
- I understand fire safety regulations and ensure fire escape passages are clear and unobstructed. I am familiar with the location of fire extinguishers and know how to use them.
- I am aware of emergency procedures (e.g., evacuation plan, first aid) and ensure the first aid kit is well-stocked and accessible. I know how to use them or how to call an appropriate specialist.
- I maintain a visitor journal, to analyse visit intensity and visitor location. This ensures that we collect vital information and can analyse our activities.

5.3 SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES IN TIC

Environmental sustainability is not just a trend; it has become a global issue that demands attention and we can act in many ways, for example, create sustainable practices at the TIC office. Go *green* and make initiative to change your office:

- Energy efficiency:
 - implement energy-efficient practices such as LED lighting, smart thermostats, and power-saving settings on office equipment:
 - turn off lights.
 - unplugging devices.
 - use the stairs instead of elevators.
 - power off computers when not in use.
- Waste reduction:

- pinpoint opportunities to reduce or eliminate waste — for example, by switching to electronic workflows and digital record-keeping, which helps decrease paper consumption.
- workplaces can also encourage employees to opt for reusable items such as cutlery, drink bottles and mugs, bags, thereby lessening dependence on single use products;
- print in black and white and double-sided (if printing is necessary);
- go paperless where possible: digital brochures, QR codes for maps.
- Recycling:
 - collect, sort and properly dispose or recycle various types of waste generated within the workplace.
- Eco friendly environment:
 - choose eco-friendly materials.
 - furnish the office with sustainable or recycled materials.
 - use non-toxic cleaning products (choose certified eco-friendly cleaning products, make a healthier office environment and reduce environmental impact by minimizing harmful chemicals and toxins) and biodegradable products.
- Water conservation:
 - install low-flow taps and toilets or turn off the faucet while soaping up.
 - monitor and maintain water usage efficiency.
- Implement digital systems to reduce operating costs.
- Put plants into office spaces.
- Purchase second-hand office equipment when possible.
- Make signs and put them in visible places in your office which reminds us to keep our planet green by saving water and electricity etc.
- Take part in different certification activities in national and international levels for sustainability.

6. STAFF APPEARANCE AND PROFESSIONALISM

My appearance and professional conduct are essential in conveying trust, competence, and respect to our visitors. I always strive to present a polished and approachable image, reflecting positively on our organization and the tourism industry.

6.1 DRESS CODE AND UNIFORM STANDARDS

- I keep my clothes clean and well-groomed (ironed, the right size, etc.).
- I keep my shoes clean.
- My appearance is not too flashy (no miniskirts, exposed midriffs or deep necklines, visible tattoos, ear gauges, plugs, tunnels, facial piercings etc.).
- My accessories are elegant and simple (not more than 3 pieces).
- Nails must be clean and aesthetic (length up to 2 centimetres).

6.2 NAME BADGES AND IDENTIFICATION

- I always wear my name badge while on duty, ensuring it is visible and easy to read. I say my name if a customer asks for it.

Example: I make sure my name badge is pinned straight and is not obscured by clothing or accessories.

- I understand name badges help visitors to identify me as a TIC employee and encourage them to approach me with questions.
- I have enough of my business cards and can present them to our customers.

6.3 PERSONAL HYGIENE AND WORKPLACE ETIQUETTE

- I maintain a high standard of personal hygiene, including showering or bathing daily, wearing clean and pressed clothing, and practicing good oral hygiene.
- I avoid using strong smelling perfumes, as some visitors may be sensitive to strong scents.
- I avoid eating or drinking, chewing gum, or speaking loudly with colleagues in the presence of visitors. It is unpleasant and unprofessional.

Example: I will take my coffee break in the designated staff area, away from the public service counter.

- I don't show my bad mood.
- If I am late – I inform my colleagues and superiors if needed.

6.4 WORKSPACE ORGANIZATION AND CLEANLINESS

- I keep my workspace tidy and organized, ensuring that brochures, maps, and other materials are readily accessible to visitors. I make sure that I know about all of the materials.

Example: I replenish brochure racks regularly and discard any outdated or damaged materials. It has to be organized and easy to select for tourists.

- I ensure that my computer screen is clean and free of any inappropriate or distracting content visible to visitors. I log out from Windows before leaving my PC unattended.
- I keep personal items (e.g., drinks, purse, clothing) to a minimum and out of sight of visitors. I can have 1 personal item (e.g., family photo) on my desk.
- I ensure that my workstation and desk is kept clean and tidy. It is organized in a way that does not give visitors the impression of a chaotic work style, negligence towards duties, or lack of care for the workplace.
- I organize cables, wires, as this prevents accidents.
- I keep all things well managed.

7. CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

I am committed to consistently providing exceptional service that creates positive memories and builds lasting relationships with our visitors and partners. From the initial greeting to the final farewell, I will provide personalized assistance, accurate information, and efficient service.

7.1 FACE-TO-FACE CUSTOMER INTERACTION

7.1.1 GREETING AND WELCOMING VISITORS

- I greet visitors with a warm and genuine smile, making eye contact and using a friendly tone of voice. I speak the local language, but if I see a visitor that speaks another language - change to his language if I know it.

Example: "Hello! Welcome to [Town/Region]! I'm [Your Name], how can I help you today?"

- I offer assistance proactively, rather than waiting for visitors to approach me, looking lost or confused. I will approach them and ask, "Are you looking for something special today?" and be helpful.
- I greet all visitors regardless of age, origin, or style.

7.1.2 ACTIVE LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING NEEDS

- I listen attentively to visitors' requests and questions, avoiding interruptions and showing genuine interest in their needs.
- I ask open-ended questions to clarify what visitors are looking for, encouraging them to elaborate on their interests and preferences. Ask also follow up questions.

Example: "What kind of experience are you hoping to have in [Town/Region]? Are you interested in history, nature, outdoor activities, or something else? Will you have transportation by your own or do you need catering or transport? Do you know where you will stay?"

- I avoid using jargon or slang during conversation. This helps visitors and also shows that I am a good specialist.

7.1.3 PROVIDING ACCURATE, CLEAR, AND COMPLETE INFORMATION

- I provide accurate and up-to-date information about local attractions, services, transportation, and events, verifying details whenever possible. I verify information by phone if I am not sure.

- I present information in a clear and concise manner, avoiding technical jargon or complicated language. Give multiple details instead of just saying "read in brochure". Try to explain so everyone can understand.

Example: I will explain the best times for visiting a tourist location, price to visit, ticket buying procedure, where they can stay, what restaurants are nearby, transportation. Also tell about special events, historical data and everything that might be relevant. I also show photos.

- I offer additional information and recommendations based on visitors' interests and preferences. Offer them to use our services.

Example: "Since you're interested in local cuisine, I highly recommend trying the [Local Dish] at [Restaurant Name]. It's a local favorite and they have a great view".

7.1.4 HANDLING SPECIAL NEEDS AND DIVERSE VISITORS

- I am sensitive to the needs of visitors with disabilities, helping and providing information about accessible attractions and services.
- I am respectful of cultural differences and adapt my communication style accordingly. I avoid discussing sensitive matters like religion and politics.
- I am patient and understanding with visitors who may have language barriers, using simple language, visual aids, and translation tools when necessary.
- I speak the language that visitors understand.

7.1.5 CLOSING INTERACTIONS: THANKING AND FAREWELL

- I thank visitors for choosing to visit our TIC and express my appreciation for their business. I offer them a gift to remember our place!

Example: "Thank you for stopping by today. We hope you have a wonderful time in [Town/Region]! Please visit our social media and leave recommendations about your visit - this helps us a lot. Please take local cookie as gift from us!"

- I offer a warm farewell, inviting visitors to return in the future.
- I confirm that the visitor does not have any more questions.

7.2 REMOTE CUSTOMER SERVICE (PHONE, E-MAIL)

7.2.1 TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

- Customer service over the phone starts from the moment I pick up the phone.
- I observe all the norms of politeness, because I'm presenting the company in this conversation.
- I pick up the phone no later than after 3 signals.
- I call back right after I am finished with the last call. Best practice – the same day.
- I start the conversation with a greeting and end with a farewell:

Step 1: Start with a greeting or some polite phrase

Step 2: State the name of the company

Step 3: State your name (pseudonym) or your position

Example: Good afternoon! X Tourism information center. Tourism information specialist X is listening. How may I help you?

You should state your name and/or position at the beginning of a telephone conversation because:

- People feel more secure when they know who they are talking to
 - It shows that you are proud of the company you work for
 - It makes the customer understand that you take responsibility for this telephone conversation
 - This helps to make a good first impression and encourages positive communication
- Tips I follow during conversation:
 - Smile
 - Speak clearly and pronounce each letter (word)
 - Speak fluently
 - Don't speak in a monotone. Change your intonation.
 - During a telephone conversation I listen actively:
 - I use short phrases to show that the conversation partner is being heard

- During the conversation I ask clarifying questions if something is not understood or not heard
- It is unacceptable for an employee of a tourist information provider to answer a client's question with the phrases "I don't know!", "We can't do that!", "I can't!" etc.
- I always ask permission before placing the phone on hold.
- If I do not know the answer I give the customer, the exact time for call back.

Example: "I will call you back in ten minutes (or at three o'clock, etc.)."

The form "I will call you back later!" should not be used. If the caller has to wait, you should ask if the caller has time to do so and state exactly how long he will have to wait and explain the reason for the wait.

- If it is necessary to wait, I explain to the customer why he will have to wait:

Example: "Could you please wait a minute (or two) while I'm checking for the information?", let him give the opportunity to choose and wait for the answer.

- If a customer asks something over the phone that TIC does not offer, then after providing negative/denying information I try to provide a positive answer.

Example: "We do not provide guide services at the tourism information center, but we can offer you to contact the guides in our database who offer city tours in (or the language the client wants)."

- If necessary – I take notes and make sure that the information is understood: If I provide any information, such as the time, date or the address, I repeat it to make sure that the customer has understood it correctly.
- I pay attention to details:
 - If a guest is not satisfied with the situation or has a problem, I keep calm and polite.
 - I offer a solution or offer the opportunity to speak to someone else who can help better.

Example: "I understand your situation and I would like to help you. If necessary, I can refer your question to another colleague."

- I'm ending the conversation by thanking the person for calling and saying goodbye to them by name.

Tip: It is important to make a good impression about the company at the end of a telephone conversation, even if the conversation was unsuccessful. People usually remember the end of the conversation best, so the last sentences of your conversation will be the ones that will be most memorable to the client.

- I let the caller first hang up the phone.
- I call back all missed calls.

In Appendix H of this document, you will find phone conversation templates for a TIC employee.

7.2.2 WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS (E-MAIL ETIQUETTE)

- I do not use email lists to avoid phone calls or face-to-face meetings. Email is for short, constructive communication.

E-mail address

- Use the fields "to", "cc" (*carbon copy*) and "bcc" (*blind carbon copy*) appropriately.
- Use the field "to" to indicate the recipients from whom you want to receive replies.
- Use "cc" if the letter is of an informative nature to the recipient.
- Use "bcc" if you are sending a letter to a large number of recipients.
- Use "reply all" only in cases where a reply is required for all recipients or the problem can be solved collectively.

Tips: It is considered more correct to use the "bcc", because by entering all addresses in the "cc" field, it is clearly visible that the email is sent to many addresses. In addition, by revealing all addresses to all recipients, the principle of confidentiality of unauthorized publication of other people's email addresses are violated. According to netiquette, disclosing email addresses without the consent of their owners is unacceptable. The use of the "cc" field is permissible only if all recipients are aware that the e-mail is also received by others.

Subject

- Do not send emails without a subject. They can end up in the SPAM/JUNK folder and make it difficult to search for emails.
- The subject should be a short and specific summary of the email's content. This helps the recipient quickly understand the purpose of the email.
- An acceptable subject: "Information about the quarterly report", a not acceptable subject: "Fw: Re: Fw: Fw: Hello, Anna".
- Check the spelling.
- The subject and the email address are the first things that make a first impression of the sender.

Greeting

- Polite greeting is important to create a professional and positive first impression.

Content

- **Introduction:** Briefly explain main reason for e-mail you are writing. The main idea of the letter should be revealed in the first paragraph.
- **Main content:** State your main message. It can be an answer to a question, information, instructions or a request.
- **Conclusion:** Make a request or offer for next steps and if necessary, state what you expect from the recipient.

Notes!

- *Always provide at least 3 offers (if possible), for example, if a tourist asks for a hotel in the city center, recommend 3 hotels that are located centrally and match the price range or preference and keep recommendations objective, for example, use neutral, factual descriptions (e.g., location, price range, facilities) and do not accept gifts/commissions from providers. If only 1 or 2 providers are available, state this transparently, for example: "Currently, only two providers offer this service in the area." Avoid making subjective judgments like "This is the best one."*
- *Write negative or unpleasant emails according to the principle: positive - negative - positive.*
- *Do not use CAPITAL LETTERS, a lot of exclamation marks (!!!), **RED COLOURED TEXT** and TEXT IN ENLARGED SIZE! It is recommended to use capital letters in titles or to highlight individual words, the main text of the*

email should be written in lowercase. Text written in CAPITAL LETTERS in the email means SHOUTING. Many people consider such texts written in capital letters to be offensive and aggressive.

- *Use paragraph`s for structuring. The division into paragraphs makes it easier for the recipient of the e-mail to perceive the information correctly. Each new paragraph reflects a new idea, but this can be disregarded in an email. As soon as there are 5-6 sentences in a paragraph, it is recommended to start a new one, even if the topic is still ongoing. Indents and clear bullet points make even a longer letter easier to read.*
- *It is recommended to write business letters in black letters on a white background, refraining from any decorations. It is not recommended to use complex, artistic, difficult-to-read fonts, bright colors, mottled backgrounds, etc. This may make the text difficult to read due to program incompatibility.*
- *Do not include tables, diagrams, maps, or other types of drawings, images, or graphs in the main content of your email, as the recipient will likely not be able to view this information or their e-mail system will block it. It is better to deliver this information to the recipient in the form of an attachment.*
- *Avoid forwarding correspondence (use it responsibly), as this can easily spread confidential information.*
- *Read the content of the email before sending, check its structure and purpose.*
- *Check whether the names, surnames of the recipients are spelled correctly and with a capital letter.*
- *It is accepted to respond to an email within **24-48 hours**. If it is not possible to respond to the email immediately, the right tone is to reply with "I received your email, I will respond within X days." It is not appropriate to respond with a monosyllabic "Yes", "No" or "Ok". This, as the only content of the email, can give the impression that the recipient is not worth the sender`s time.*
- *Language errors can cause various misunderstandings, for example, incorrectly placed punctuation marks and other errors can hinder the perception of the text and even completely change its meaning.*
- *If you are not confident in your grammar knowledge, spell checking programs are a great help in correcting the text.*
- *There is no need to overdo the use of punctuation to attract attention: one question or exclamation mark is quite enough.*
- *In business email, smileys and chat abbreviations (lol, rofl, omg) are usually not used.*
- *Abbreviations that are often used: ASAP (as soon as possible), RSVP (reply please), FYI (for your information).*

- *You can (and sometimes you should) use emoticons, but it is advisable to use them in such a way that there is no misunderstanding.*
- *Emoticons add emotional nuances to the text and brighten it up, but if the letter is serious and the contact person is less well-known, it is better not to use them.*
- *The principle of «less is more» works in e-mail - black letters on a white background, solid font size.*
- *Fonts suitable for printed letters (can be added in attachment) - Times New Roman, Serif family fonts.*
- *Fonts suitable for e-mail - Verdana, Calibri, Arial, Sans family fonts.*

Conclusion

- In the closing, express your gratitude, confirm your readiness to continue the conversation or indicate what you expect from the recipient. Examples: “Sincerely”, “Thank you for your attention”, “I look forward to your response”.

Signature

- E-mails should be signed.
- If the email is official, include your name, position, company and phone number. Social media links can be added if necessary.
- TIC often has a specific signature template that all employees of that organization must use.

Example:

Best regards

Name Surname

Tourism information specialist

X Tourism Information Centre

Address

Phone | Mobile phone

tic@xxxxxxxx.lv

www.visit.xxxxxxx.lv

<https://www.facebook.com/visitxxxxxxx>

Attachments

- The attachments must be described in the email (for example: “I am attaching my CV and motivation letter”).
- It is not acceptable to attach more than 2-4 attachments.
- If there are more attachments, they must be placed in an archive (.zip) file.

- Use the .pdf format when sending textual information in the attachment.
- Attachment files should be named correctly, for example, not image1245.jpg but X_Castle.jpg or press releases should not be named with the first sentence in the document, but, for example, PR_date_X_festival.

Tips:

- *Email should not be used to discuss personal, confidential or intimate information, because each recipient can knowingly or unintentionally forward a message to other recipients.*
- *Emails are not allowed to contain rude jokes, racist and nationalistic remarks, even if they are intended as a joke.*
- *It should be noted that some organizations and institutions often monitor employee email.*
- *According to netiquette, work email should be used only for work purposes*
- *Business emails show the culture of the company and the personal image of the employee.*
- *Both the organization and the staff are equally responsible for quality electronic correspondence.*
- *The email should be clear and understandable. The client should know exactly what you are offering or what the requirement is that you want to express. Avoid complicated sentences and unnecessary details.*
- *The email should be polite, professional and friendly.*
- *Make sure that your language matches your company image and is adapted to the specific client or situation.*
- *If the client has asked a question or request, it is important to respond quickly and in a timely manner. Even if you do not have a complete answer, it is worth giving the client information that you are working on a solution.*
- *It is important to indicate the client's name and adapt the content of the e-mail to the specific client so that he feels important and appreciated. This creates trust.*
- *If the email is a response to a customer complaint or problem, it is very important to offer a solution or at least inform them of the actions being taken to resolve the situation.*
- *Never forget to thank the customer for their time, contribution or choice to work with you. This promotes good relationships.*
- *The email should be free of grammatical errors, as this shows your professionalism and care for communication.*
- *In a situation when you are going on vacation and have decided not to use the computer, there are two ways to proceed:*

- *write a message stating from what date until what date you will be out of offices and add contacts to those colleagues who can help (if possible)*
- *send an apology letter when you return and explain why you did not respond on time or did not show up for an invited event, etc.*

In Appendix G of this document you will find e-mail templates for a TIC employee to be sent, designed to be professional, helpful, and easy to customize, including all the sections – greeting and salutation, a thank-you paragraph for the received email, the explanation of the question, a proposal or suggestion section, closing remarks and signature.

7.2.3 SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTION GUIDELINES

- Social media is an integral part of the media “world”, including in the business tourism sector.
- When planning social media strategy (apart from communication strategy), it’s important that you consider how your different audiences engage with each platform and tailor your content accordingly.
- Only when this strategy is developed you can start creating social media accounts in the selected information channels.
- When creating a strategy, it is important to **set a goal** and understand what the tourism information provider wants to achieve by communicating via social media: is it attracting new followers, providing information, more convenient communication with followers or something else. The future method of communication depends on identifying this goal.
- It is important to analyse and **define the main target audience**. Who is the target audience? What countries do followers come from, what language do they speak? It is important to listen to them and understand what they like, what kind of discussions they engage in, and what kind of information they share. The answers to these questions will be found by observing and analysing the profile’s activity on social media. This will help to create more successful communication with existing and potential followers and **measure results**.
- When strategy is clear (see Appendix F) – each tourism information provider should create instructions (communication guidelines) for tourism provide organization staff for communication (see Chapter 8).
- Before creating strategy there are some general elements you should use regarding communication in social media and chat communication (as it is in communication by phone, as in written communication), for example, WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, TikTok, X, Threads etc.:
 - Be polite and courteous:

- use greetings and closings (example: “Hello”, “Thank you”, “Best regards”);
- say “please” and “thank you” where appropriate;
- maintain a respectful and friendly tone.
- Be clear and concise:
 - keep messages brief and to the point;
 - avoid unnecessary jargon or overly complex language;
 - structure messages logically (use bullet points or short paragraphs when needed).
- Use proper grammar and spelling:
 - avoid text slang (example: “u” instead of “you”);
 - proofread messages before sending to avoid misunderstandings.
- Stay professional
 - avoid using emojis or GIFs in formal conversations;
 - don’t share personal opinions unless relevant and appropriate;
 - use professional language at all times.
- Respond promptly:
 - aim to reply within a reasonable time (usually within a few hours or same day);
 - If more time is needed, acknowledge the message and indicate when you’ll respond.
- Respect boundaries:
 - don’t send messages outside of business hours unless it's urgent and expected;
 - avoid sending multiple follow-ups in a short period.
- Stay on topic:
 - stick to the subject being discussed;
 - if changing the topic, clearly indicate the shift.
- Handle conflicts calmly:
 - stay polite and solution-focused, even if you disagree;
 - avoid sarcasm or emotional language in professional chats.
- Respect confidentiality
 - don’t share sensitive or private information in public or group chats;
 - know your organization's policy on data and information sharing.

7.3 CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COMPLAINT HANDLING

I understand that even with the best intentions, complaints and conflicts can arise. I embrace these situations as opportunities to demonstrate our commitment to customer

satisfaction and to improve our services. My aim is not just to resolve the immediate issue but to leave the customer with a positive and lasting impression of our dedication to their well-being.

7.3.1 IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

1. I am highly attuned to both verbal and non-verbal cues that indicate a customer is dissatisfied, frustrated, or upset.

Example: I pay attention not only to what the customer is saying but also to their body language, such as a furrowed brow, tense posture, crossed arms, avoiding eye contact, or a raised or shaky tone of voice. These are signs of hidden issues that I need to uncover.

2. I actively listen to the customer's complaint without interruption (unless the customer becomes abusive, uses inappropriate language, or makes threats). Let them vent completely, and make sure I do not put blame on them. Allowing them to fully express their concerns demonstrates respect and helps de-escalate the situation.

Example: Instead of interrupting to defend our policies, I will listen patiently, taking notes and asking clarifying questions to ensure I understand the full scope of the problem.

3. I acknowledge the customer's feelings and express sincere empathy for their situation. I use phrases that validate their emotions and show that I understand their perspective.

Example: "I understand how frustrating this must be for you, especially when you were expecting [Something]. I'm truly sorry you've had this experience, and I want to do everything I can to make it right."

4. I avoid trying to put blame for error on other people, but take responsibility for finding a solution.

5. I summarize the customer's complaint to ensure I understand the issue correctly. This helps to avoid misunderstandings and demonstrates that I am actively listening. Paraphrase back the main points.

Example: "So, if I understand correctly, you are unhappy with [Specific Issue] because [Reason], and this has resulted in [Negative Consequence] for you?"

7.3.2 CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

1. I remain calm and professional throughout the interaction, even if the customer is angry or upset. I maintain a composed demeanor and avoid defensive language or escalating the situation.

Example: If a customer starts shouting, I will lower my own voice and speak slowly and deliberately, maintaining a respectful tone.

2. I offer a sincere apology for the inconvenience or problem the customer has experienced, regardless of whether the TIC was directly at fault.

Example: "Please accept my sincere apologies for the trouble you've experienced. Even though it might not have been directly our fault, I feel terrible that this happened to you."

3. I take ownership of the problem and assure the customer that I will do my best to find a resolution that is fair and satisfactory. I also provide alternatives to the primary solution.

Example: "I'm going to work to resolve this for you right away. Let me explore some options and see what we can do to make this right. Everything will be fine - just let me help you."

4. I explore possible solutions with the customer, offering choices where appropriate and seeking their input on the best course of action. Involve the customer and say what they want. Give them options.

Example: "We can offer you a full refund, a discount on your next purchase, a complimentary service, or a replacement ticket. Which of these options would you prefer?"

7.3.3 FEEDBACK COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

1. I inform the customer about our feedback mechanisms (e.g., comment cards, online surveys, direct email to the manager) and encourage them to share their thoughts on their experience, both positive and negative. Provide easy ways to contact and leave feedback.

Example: "We value your feedback. You can share your thoughts on our website, fill out a comment card before you leave, or even email our manager directly at [Email Address]. We use every piece of advice."

2. I record all complaints and resolutions accurately, documenting the nature of the complaint, the steps taken to resolve it, and the outcome.
3. I share complaint data and trends with management and colleagues to identify areas for improvement in our services and procedures, and participate in brainstorming sessions to develop solutions.

8. INFORMATION PROVISION AND COMMUNICATION

As you can see in previous chapters, there are many channels on how to deliver information and also – and apart from customers there are many stakeholders in the tourism industry with whom to communicate - local government, NGOs, media, tour operators, guides, entrepreneurs, etc.

Digital and remote channels are one of the communication tools of the 21st century that arise as communication in the virtual environment of the global web, interacting with people, creating, sharing and exchanging information, opinions and ideas. Digital technologies have various forms, they are widely available to modern users, starting from social media up to different kinds of digital solutions for information displaying. It is important to understand how to communicate with each of these stakeholders and decide which digital and remote channels to use. Equally important is to create instructions (communication guidelines) for TIC staff for communication face to face, in the digital environment, including websites, mobile applications, social media, audio (including audio guides) and video content and other web resources that provide social interaction with customers and all stakeholders etc.

8.1 CHANNELS OF INFORMATION DELIVERY

8.1.1 FACE-TO-FACE SERVICES

As it was already described in Chapter 4 & 6, appearance, professional conduct, communication is essential in conveying trust, competence, and respect with visitors, but – not only, it's equally important in cooperation with all stakeholders (local government, NGOs, media, tour operators, guides, entrepreneurs, etc.) you are work with. And a polished and approachable image, positive reflection will show organizations approach and image.

Face-to-face information delivery involves sharing information in person through direct communication. It is one of the most effective methods of communication in business communication, allowing for clarity, immediate feedback, and the ability to build rapport.

- Clarity and understanding:
 - visual cues like facial expressions and body language support verbal messages;
 - misunderstandings can be addressed instantly.
- Immediate feedback:
 - questions and concerns can be answered on the spot;
 - encourages two-way communication and active engagement.
- Stronger relationships:
 - builds trust and rapport between colleagues, customers, and stakeholders;
 - avoids expressing personal opinions when recommending an object;

- human connection enhances collaboration and loyalty.
- Professional presence:
 - your tone, confidence, posture, and appearance influence how your message is received;
 - Being well-prepared and respectful boosts credibility.
- Better handling of sensitive topics:
 - in-person conversations are ideal for delivering important, complex, or emotional information;
 - helps manage reactions and show empathy.

For example, one of the activities for face-to-face communication with all stakeholders (and also customers) can be tourism trade fairs and contact exchange events. When creating communication guidelines of TIC (see Appendix C), you can add guidelines for that.

Example:

- *Depending on the type of fair, the TIC evaluates whether to represent all tourism service providers itself or to invite tourism entrepreneurs and service providers.*
- *TIC ensures that at the fair there is enough informative materials about the region (tourism maps, routes, brochures, event plans of the region) as well as separate informative materials for major tourist attractions.*
- *Entrepreneurs can participate in a fair and promote their services, but in case of participation, entrepreneurs have to know the tourism offer of the region, planned events, etc. and advertises their offer correctly, follows internal rules, etc.*

8.1.2 DIGITAL AND REMOTE CHANNELS (WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA, OTHERS)

WEBSITE

One of the most popular information search tools today is the world wide web. A tourism information provider is the one that is unthinkable on the world wide web without a website. We use global search engines such as Google, artificial intelligence (AI) and they are the most popular sources of information search, but the websites of tourism information providers are where potential tourists look for information, because they recognize it as a reliable and accurate source of information, which “imposes” responsibility on the developers and maintainers of the website. The website, created and maintained by a tourism information provider, is a business card of a specific destination that a potential tourist encounters in the information search process. Therefore, several important factors must be considered in the process of creating and administering a

website, as well as usability and user experience (User Interface Design - UI/User Experience - UX) are important too. For a website to be successful, its design must be appealing, effective, user-engaging, efficient, easy to understand and perceive. The most important thing is that the visitor should find it convenient and enjoyable to use the particular website and that it should provide an exciting user experience. How to achieve this? This information you will find in Appendix B, here you will find information what kind of information should be included in a TIC website:

- Information about cultural and historical and other sightseeing objects, tourist attractions;
- Information about the TOP destinations and tourism offer in the region;
- Contact information should be easily visible and accessible and should be in a visible place. You can add a map with the office location (map), description, features, opening hours and accessibility conditions services.
- Tourist itineraries, maps etc.
- Transportation terminals, routes, timetables and information related to transportation.
- Parking areas nearby tourist attractions at the destination.
- News/current events.
- Event calendar.
- Tourist service providers: accommodations, catering options, tourist guides, rental services, travel agencies, etc. and their contact details.
- Photo and video galleries.
- Useful information: printable information materials in electronic format, information about getting to the destination, assistance in emergencies, etc.
- Emergency/health services contact details.
- Information about the tourism information provider: history, successes, employees, guest statistics, press information, etc.
- Possibility to subscribe to news.
- Integration of social networks on the website
- It is also possible to add other sections and tools that will make it easier for the client to receive / perceive / submit the necessary information.

When creating communication guidelines of TIC (see Appendix C), it is worth it to include exact information on how you choose which local service providers and entrepreneurs to include in a website (for example, before you place information in a website, you should inspect this object).

Example:

Place information about an object as per one template:

- *Contact information - service provision address, one or two phones, e-mail, website, sites to main social networks;*
- *Working hours (within weekdays, weekends, season and off-season, also must indicate if pre-booking is required);*
- *Photos, for example, one profile picture and 3 to 5 images characterizing the object or service are posted for the company in sufficient quality.*
- *Description of the object (The description of the offer must include all essential information about the object, if information about it can be found in several sections.*
- *Use similar pictograms which can show additional services available at the object.*

SOCIAL MEDIA

To increase the visibility of social media, for example, Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, YouTube, account/profile and increase the number of followers, it is important to consider recommendations that promote high-quality, visually attractive and effective two-way communication with followers.

- Create a tourism information provider account profile and improve it! A tourism information provider account should look professional, polite and individual. Personalize it by choosing a profile picture (e.g. a logo or employee photo) and a background image that characterizes the region/city (e.g. a landscape, city or nature view, which can be changed according to the seasons, events, etc.). The profile can also be personalized by designing it in appropriate colours. The description of the tourism information provider is important, which should be short, focused and attention-grabbing. Add company contacts.
- When creating a story, real or post, ask yourself: “What benefit will the message provide to the follower?” For a message to be effective, it must be rational, social and emotional. It is great if the message includes all three factors. If that fails, it is desirable to include at least two of these aspects.
- Publish quality news! Published news must be grammatically and stylistically accurate, and the language must be well-developed. Maintain an unobtrusive and simple communication style, creating short and concise news. Carefully read each news item you publish and only then publish it. The published news must be clearly understandable and perceptible.
- Create content that followers will want to share. Communication methods and message content should be diverse. Post videos, publish photos, ask questions, create event calendars, conduct surveys, announce contests etc. Also, don't be

afraid to be witty and have a good sense of humour. Create a message so that it is creative, attractive, relevant, creates a sense of presence and is alive. It is relevant to “grow” the number of followers organically not artificially. This helps to create a more loyal and high-quality audience of followers.

- Publish posts at the “right time”! Followers get used to consistency (even on weekends). It is also recommended to engage in discussions and provide advice when asked. It is important to find a balance between “writing too often” and “writing too rarely”. If you write too often, followers may stop following you, if you write too rarely, it will be an unproductive waste of resources. There is no single formula for how often you should publish posts. It is important to take into action the scope of your activity and the internet browsing habits of your target audience. When creating communication on a global scale, time zone differences should be considered.
- Be active in feedback with followers, promote audience engagement, and involve cooperation partners! The audience expects and even demands a personal attitude and quick response. To maintain audience loyalty and interest, it is necessary to involve them. Share news, respond to comments, letters, especially to criticism and crisis situations. Mention followers and partners in your posts. Say – THANK YOU!
- It is also recommended to engage in discussions and provide advice if asked. Engaging in conversations and discussions shows that the profile is actively managed and that you can be contacted every day. The optimal time for a response on social networks is one hour. Tag your followers in pictures that tell about public events. This way you will “grow” your audience. If the target audience of the tourism information provider is international, you can create your own profile account for each language so that the follower feels that the message is addressed specifically to them. However, it should be remembered that each of these profiles must be given sufficient attention and these accounts must also be updated regularly. Create a human and positive image.
- Use tools that promote profile recognition among followers and potential followers on social media – location or mention (@), thematic hashtags (#), retweeting (RT) including the source of information (URL) etc.
- Inform the website about the existence of social accounts. Insert shortcuts that lead to profiles on social networks, this way you inform website visitors about your existence on social networks and make it easier to find your profile. Also, add social media icons to the latest articles (and offers) on your website. If the article they read is of interest, there is a high probability that the follower will share it with their followers, and this will increase the audience of the message. Also, inform about the existence of social network accounts on other social networks and invite them to follow.

- Research other pages that you think are good examples of. Research what other strategies are being used and integrate successful ideas into your own profile. Also, keep an eye on your competitors` activities and learn from their experiences.
- Follow pages that are strategically important to the industry by clicking "Like", follow leading industry companies, opinion leaders and media profiles! Don't be afraid to comment on news related to the tourism industry or other related fields. If the comment is provided professionally, based on verified facts and information, then it is a great opportunity to show your expertise and promote the recognition of your profile.
- Monitor social media regularly. Keep track of what is being written about you on social media and respond accordingly.
- Don't publish long texts, no one will read them anyway. The purpose of social networks is to communicate with the goal - to reach out and create interest.
- Don't leave your followers without answers. Respond even if it's uncomfortable for you, such as admitting your mistake.
- Don't praise yourself too much. Others will do that for you if you deserve it.
- Don't lie.
- Don't try to actively "push" your offer.
- Don't overdo it by retweeting people's news. It is better to choose to be news creators.
- Don't duplicate identical messages on all profiles. Don't repost information from one social network to another. Remember that each social network has its own specifics. Since a large part of your followers use several social networks, they don't want to read the same information repeatedly.
- Don't publish news that is not relevant to your field of activity.
- Remember, you are employees of a specific tourism information provider. You and the information published on your personal profiles are also being watched. Don't express personal and thoughtless opinions on social networks that are not relevant to the matter.

When creating communication guidelines of TIC, it is worth to include exact information which social media channels will be used as main for communication with customers (for example, Facebook and Instagram) and what kind of information you are planning to publish:

Example (if TIC administers Instagram page):

- *Only photos and photo galleries are published in the Instagram posts.*

- *Information about service providers and entrepreneurs from the last week or information that is only relevant for the week - is published only in Instagram Stories.*
- *Repost photos, stories, reels of other authors (from a tour in region, tourism attraction or service experienced in the region) and share content created by your followers, if # or @ are used, for example, #VisitDestination #Destination #VisitLatvia #VisitLithuania e also published in IG Stories*

OTHER

In communication guidelines of TIC it is possible to include other digital and remote channels and how to make successful communication through them, for example, mobile applications, photos/videos, social network communities, digital displays, audio guides etc.) and here you can find what you should observe and take in consideration when creating guidelines:

- **Mobile applications**
 - Tone: direct, helpful and concise.
 - User experience: ensure intuitive navigation and fast load times.
 - Content: real-time info (example, ticketing, maps), push notifications, loyalty features.
 - Tips: personalize content based on user preferences or location.
- **Social network communities** (WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.)
 - Tone: friendly, interactive and brand-consistent.
 - Engagement: respond to comments, create polls, host Q&As.
 - Content: share user-generated content, updates, events and tips.
 - Tips: host two-way conversations—don't just broadcast.
- **Photos/Videos**
 - Tone: visual storytelling - emotionally engaging and authentic.
 - Format: short-form videos (reels, stories), high-quality images.
 - Content: highlight experiences, behind-the-scenes, testimonials, local culture.
 - Tips: use captions, subtitles and branding; keep visuals mobile-friendly, respect copyright.
- **Digital displays**
 - Tone: bold, clear and visually appealing.
 - Format: rotating screens, touch displays, interactive kiosks.
 - Content: maps, event highlights, local attractions, weather, QR codes.
 - Tips: prioritize readability from a distance; update content regularly.
- **Audio guides**

- Tone: informative, clear, and engaging.
- Style: conversational or narrative-based to hold attention.
- Content: cultural context, historical facts, route instructions, fun facts.
- Tips: include multiple language options and accessible formats, increase the visibility of the audio guide, TIC can mark the audio guide route with signs and stickers.
- **Environmental ads (banners, maps, etc.)**
 - Tone: simple, eye-catching and informative.
 - Design: use icons, bold colours, and minimal text.
 - Content: directions, points of interest, local tips, sustainable practices.
 - Tips: ensure weatherproofing, strategic placement (cooperate with stall owners) and clear call-to-action (example, “Scan for more info”).
- **Chatbots**
 - Tone: polite, concise, and helpful.
 - Functionality: 24/7 responses to FAQs, bookings and support.
 - Content: quick answers, guided choices, links to resources.
 - Tips: include a “talk to a real person” option and personalize where possible.
- **Augmented reality (AR)**
 - Tone: innovative, interactive, and immersive.
 - Experience: virtual tours, information overlays, gamification.
 - Content: historical re-enactments, 3D models, local guides.
 - Tips: make it intuitive, accessible on common devices and enrich real-world experiences rather than distract.

8.2 CONTENT MANAGEMENT: UPDATING AND ACCURACY

Essential part of communication in digital and remote channels is what kind of information TIC shares/publishes and how to keep its quality (improve it), accuracy, regularity at the highest level, as obvious lobbying of a specific company/entrepreneur should be avoided. To avoid this, all entrepreneur information can be checked and published according to communication guidelines (Appendix C) which TIC can create and use template for evaluation. In Appendix E you will find templates as examples how to check (evaluate) information quality of tourism services.

8.3 MULTILINGUAL SERVICE PROVISION

- Website should be at least in English, and main target languages (Lithuanian, Estonian, Polish, German etc.)
- It must be certain that it will be possible to provide a potential tourist with an answer to information requests in the language in which the website/profile/post is created, or in one of the closest languages that the client understands.

- It is necessary to consider whether, when in communication or creating any website/profile/post, employees know the language of the specific target audience in which the information is to be maintained or whether it will be necessary to request an external service which requires additional costs.
- It is necessary to consider how to indicate the languages used - with the help of flags or letters, because it must be remembered that not everyone recognizes the flags of different countries, and at the same time does not know the abbreviations of countries.
- The published information must be grammatically and stylistically accurate in any language.
- The language must be well-developed and literary correct.
- The published information must be clearly understandable and perceptible, short and meaningful, but it must also be intriguing in order to create a desire for the traveller to experience something new.
- If the website/profile/post is in different languages, according to the target audience, then it is important to remember that each language requires its own renewal time. It is necessary to consider whether all the information, for example, in English, requires a translation from Latvian, perhaps more concise information is sufficient.

9. COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES AND SALES

Recommending and selling local services, selling maps or tickets helps to sustain our TIC, provide greater value to the visitor, and contribute to the local economy. I am committed to offering relevant and valuable products and services in a professional and ethical manner.

9.1 RANGE OF PAID SERVICES OFFERED

Depends of country form of institution, but may be:

- Excursions, tours and activities bookings
- Accommodation booking
- Ticket sales
- Luggage services
- Retail and souvenir sales
- Transportation services
- Digital and printing services
- Custom itinerary planning
- Multilingual guided services
- Selling of local products
- Other upon request

9.2 SALES TECHNIQUES AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

- I have a sales strategy to increase revenue - learn from other TICs, countries and businesses and implement great sales ideas.
- I understand the budget of the customer and offer something interesting for his money. First offer the most valuable products, then - cheaper.
- I am knowledgeable about the products and services that the TIC offers for sale (e.g., souvenirs, maps, books, tickets, local experiences).

Example: I know the prices, features, and benefits of each item. What makes them interesting, special, and why customer has to buy them.

- I present sales offers in a clear and enthusiastic manner, highlighting the value and benefits for the visitor. Try to make the product interesting.

Example: "This hand-crafted souvenir is made by a local artisan and is a unique reminder of your visit.

- I avoid being pushy or aggressive in my sales approach, respecting visitors' decisions and preferences.

- I ensure that all transactions are handled accurately, providing receipts and thanking visitors for their purchases. I also say what to do if service is not perfect.

9.3 PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

Entrepreneurs and service providers are those people in regions who are active in their enterprises and are ready to engage in activities that benefit not only themselves, but also the region as a whole. When planning tourism development in a region, the interests of entrepreneurs must be considered. Involving them in the planning process can provide confidence that the prepared plan or strategy is significant and directed towards the development of the sector and solving important issues for it. It should be considered that no entrepreneur will waste their time on events or activities if they are not confident that their thoughts are being heard.

How to work with local business and service providers?

- Regular visits to tourism enterprises/services providers - assess their quality and provide recommendations for improving their services, consultation in the creation of services and offers.
- Provide information on tourism development issues and trends, potential sources of finance.
- Involve entrepreneurs in promoting the development of a DMO (planning and strategy development and implementation).
- Promote cooperation between entrepreneurs in the creation of joint tourism products, routes, offers, mutual cooperation and communication.
- Inform about various opportunities for improving professional skills and abilities, organize experience exchange events - training, lectures, seminars, courses, regular informative meetings for various target audiences involved in tourism development (entrepreneurs, local government specialists and managers).

Entrepreneur/service provider may have a wide variety of tourism attractions or a comprehensive range of activities in its territory. Therefore, the suitability assessment (check for Appendix E) to be carried out - which target audience should be the most suitable type of tourism. When evaluating entrepreneurial/service provider, important characteristics include:

- attractiveness – how lively, interesting, engaging, unforgettable the service provider or event is;
- appeal – what the object looks like from the outside and inside, how it is designed, what is the attitude of the employees;
- uniqueness – is this object unique on a global, national, regional, or local scale

- comfort – how easy it is to get to the object, wishes of customers, how easy it is to reach and explore what is offered, etc.;
 - relevance to the needs of the target audience.
-
- I actively promote local businesses and partner organizations, highlighting their contributions to the tourism industry and the community.
 - I recommend businesses that are reliable, value customers and guarantee highest quality. I should check them before recommending them.

10. DATA PROTECTION AND SECURITY

Data protection is a process that supports the security of a person's private data and restricts the collection and further dissemination of this data for purposes that are detrimental to the person. As on daily bases TIC works with different databases, must note that data protection and security is under government laws and regulations. Data protection refers to security strategies and processes that help secure sensitive data against corruption, compromise and loss.

10.1 PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION POLICIES

Personal data includes any information that can identify an individual such as name, e-mail, phone number, photos, location, address, passport or ID details, payment information, travel preferences or booking history, etc.

In Latvia, the Personal Data Processing Law and in Lithuania, the Law on Legal Protection of Personal Data, determines what information is not permitted for publication and distribution.

Personal data protection policies ensure that customer information is handled ethically, securely and in compliance with legal standards. These policies guide how staff collect, store, use and share personal data during customer interactions.

10.2 COMMERCIAL INFORMATION SECURITY

Commercial information security refers to the strategies, technologies and practices used to protect business-related data from unauthorized access, theft, alteration or destruction, for example, customer data, employee records, partner contacts, software and systems etc. This includes both digital and physical measures aimed at safeguarding sensitive commercial information, ensuring business continuity and maintaining trust with customers, partners and stakeholders:

- Separate private needs from work.
- Use only your access data and create strong password:
 - Password is the key, a memorized secret;
 - Remember, there are no uncrackable passwords;
 - Use password generator (for example, <https://passwordsgenerator.net/>);
 - Do not share passwords;
 - Do not use the same password everywhere;
 - Renew password regularly.
- Always log out (PROPERLY) of systems.
- If you leave your workplace, do not leave the system accessible (for example, the computer lock screen).

- Report to your administrator if there is any suspicious activity.

10.3 GDPR COMPLIANCE AND PRIVACY GUIDELINES⁵

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a European Union (EU) law designed to protect personal data and privacy of individuals. It applies to all businesses that handle personal data of EU residents - regardless of the company's location.

The processing of personal data must comply with certain standards:

- Data collection. It must only be carried out in accordance with the law, data cannot be collected for other purposes than those provided for by law.
- Data storage. It is only allowed for legitimate purposes. The data must be deleted if the purpose for which they were collected has been achieved.
- Data quality. The data must be accurate, relevant, up-to-date and limited to the area for which they are intended, poor-quality data must either be corrected or deleted.
- Identification of persons. Identification occurs only when necessary. If the identification of a specific person is not required (for example, when collecting information for statistics), identifying information must not be transferred or must be deleted.
- Personal data relating to, for example, religious beliefs and health conditions (sensitive/sensitive information) are particularly protected by specific national legislation.
- Data security against unauthorized access must be ensured.
- Every person has the right to receive information registered about him/her free of charge, allow customers to view, update or request deletion of their personal data.

Important!

- Tourism information providers must always carefully identify how reliable and trustful the information they publish is.
- Check the terms of use for personal data (and not share it with third parties) as TIC employees sometimes collect personal data – tourist contact, list of event participants, list of project participants, etc.:

COLLECTING:

- Only collect what is necessary for a clear, specific purpose.
- Avoid data collection when:

⁵ General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018).

- The service can be provided anonymously (e.g., giving directions or maps)
- You don't have a clear reason for needing it
- You're not equipped to store or protect it safely
- You don't inform the visitor how their data will be used

STORING:

- Only store what's essential (e.g., name & email, not passport number unless truly required). Minimize data.
- Store data in encrypted databases or files. U
- Only authorized personnel should access sensitive data. Limit access.
- Use secure, GDPR-compliant cloud services or encrypted backups.
- Keep records of what data you collect, why, how it's stored and who has access.
- Create a privacy policy explaining this to tourists/visitors in clear language if necessary.

DELETING:

When to delete:

- When the data is no longer needed for its original purpose
- When the user requests deletion (Right to be Forgotten, per GDPR).
- After a set retention period (e.g., delete feedback forms after 12 months).

How to delete properly:

- Don't just move files to trash—use secure erasure tools.
- Wipe backups if they contain deleted personal data (where possible).
- Log the deletion (e.g., date, data type, by whom).
- Ensure they respect copyright rules for visual materials such as visualizations, images and maps (including the terms and conditions for publishing them).

11. DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AND AWARENESS PROMOTION

Destination development can be divided into 3 stages:

1. situation analysis;
2. defining of goals, process planning or plan development;
3. further cooperation.

In the stage of situation analysis the tasks are to analyse and understand the background in which the destination operates and identify the main factors that affect it.

A comprehensive situation analysis predicts:

- exploring and defining the aspirations and values of the destination community;
- identifying and analysing the current visitor market;

- understanding visitor behaviour and expressed desires, to determine the desired target market in the future;
- reviewing and analysing the destination's operating background, including internal and external factors that may affect its planning and development;
- conducting an infrastructure, product and experience analysis in conjunction with a visitor demand analysis to identify key gaps in the destination's product offering and capture opportunities for enriching the visitor experience and positive feedback;
- measure feedback from tourism, recording both economic and social benefits, providing an understanding of the true impact of tourism on the local community and social economy;
- plan in detail the flow of visitors in the future, to promote an understanding of potential demand;
- record the impact of existing and future resources on the development of the destination, identify strategies that would ensure the development of sustainable and accessible tourism;
- confirm that the vision of a tourism is aligned with the government, local community, tourism industry and other stakeholders;
- overview of the most important issues, problems and opportunities that the destination has faced and may face in the short term as well as in the mid and long term;
- analysis of existing regulations and planning documents at different levels that may affect tourism development;
- summarize the experiences of other destinations – positive and unsuccessful examples that help to understand the situation.

It is important to remember that not only statistical data is useful in the analysis of the situation, but all stakeholders in tourism development must be involved in it. They can provide useful information that can help interpret statistical data as well as help strengthen contacts and be the basis for establishing and strengthening successful cooperation in order to work together on planning and implementing the plan. By involving all stakeholders in destination planning, it is possible to formulate strategic development directions and develop a program of events more successfully. The involvement of comprehensive stakeholders in this process provides everyone with information about the development of the process and determines the role and responsibility of each involved person in the development of tourism and the destination, ensures the availability of information about the progress and management of the planning process. Such action allows for the development of a common vision of stakeholders on the management of the tourism destination, agreeing on common directions and values.

Strategic planning documents:

1. Long-term strategic plan, which identifies strategic priorities and direction for the destination, including priority measures
2. Tourism data research plan, which determines the collection and analysis of data to be collected in order to make strategic decisions
3. Risk management plan, which outlines the system and processes to identify and respond to risks and crises in tourism that may affect the development of the destination
4. Marketing plan/strategy, which includes marketing strategies and activities to successfully attract target visitors and influence their choice in favour of the destination and its products.
5. Event (holiday and festival) plan, which can unite locals and tourists in a common goal - to highlight the unique characteristics of the destination

All of the above documents can be created as separate documents or summarized in one document. It is important to think about them and plan them, that the planning and development of the destination proceeds successfully, based on reliable, purposefully collected data and the mutual interest of all stakeholders.

Components of a tourism strategy or long-term plan:

- analysis of the current situation;
- clearly defined target audience;
- definition of mission and vision setting goals and objectives in priority order;
- identification of all persons involved in tourism, deciding on the tasks to be performed by each;
- activities to be implemented and deadlines for work;
- definition of indicators for determining the results of the plan;
- regular control and monitoring of the plan and results.

It is important to remember that the tourism strategy is created for your daily work. It is a document that you have to work with every day. Based on it, the annual and long-term budget is planned and opportunities for attracting additional funding are sought. The tourism data research plan provides for the creation of a data collection system. Such a data collection plan should record what data and information will be needed to make decisions in destination development, what the sources and methods of obtaining them will be, what the frequency of data collection will be (how often, regularly), what the necessary resource provision will be for data collection, compilation and analysis, and how the obtained data will be distributed or used. The marketing plan determines the framework and directions for all destination marketing activities, including market

research, brand development and management; advertising and promotion, sales, distribution and collaborative marketing opportunities.

11.1 DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AND BRANDING INITIATIVES

For a marketing plan to be successful, it should:

1. determine the characteristics of the existing and planned target market, including the visitor market and operating environment;
2. identify trends and factors that may influence the destination target market in terms of their preferences and travel choices;
3. record how visitors search for information and make decisions when choosing their destination, as well as factors that influence the choice of destination and products
4. involve tourism stakeholders in the planning process in order to develop a unified strategic direction and vision for the region
5. determine and segment the target audience and based on this, identify marketing strategies and methods;
6. include e-commerce and technologies in the promotion and sale of the destination as one of the marketing channels in the strategy
7. create a plan that is targeted – clear tasks and results, specific time frames
8. develop key performance indicators to monitor and review the progress of the plan's implementation;
9. link the destination marketing plan with other regional strategies and national plans;
10. must identify sources of co-financing.

Example of tasks:

- *planning and organizing tourism advertising of the region;*
- *planning, preparing, publishing and distributing information (participation in fairs, presentations, workshops, conferences, etc.) publications about tourism services (objects, services, routes, etc.);*
- *organizing industry-promoting and professional events – conferences, competitions, etc.;*
- *creating and distributing press releases (on seasonal offers, events, news, etc.) to the mass media and industry representatives;*
- *planning and organizing the installation of information signs and stands;*
- *maintenance of the official tourism website (separate tourism website or integrated into the website of the municipality or region) of the municipality or territory, updating information, improving it to current tourist requirements, industry development trends, etc. factors;*

- *monitoring / checking information offers of the territory on the Internet and organizing the elimination of inaccuracies;*
- *working with the target audience, participating in tourism fairs, contact exchange and preparing tourism offers (routes, products, offers) that correspond to it.*

11.2 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE AND FORMS OF COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Vital and important is to create successful cooperation between all stakeholders and TIC can encourage this cooperation:

- between target audiences involved in the development of tourism in the region (entrepreneurs, local government specialists and managers);
- between local government specialists involved in various issues related to the development of the tourism sector (development planners, project managers, architects and the construction board, cultural institutions, etc.) in territorial and tourism planning, solving infrastructure, entrepreneurship, public relations, etc. issues;
- between local entrepreneurs and professional and regional tourism associations (for example, the rural traveller association in Latvia "Lauku Ceļotājs", Kurzeme, Vidzeme, Latgale or Zemgale Tourism Associations and in Lithuania - Travel Lithuania, We love Lithuania, Tourism centres association, etc.);
- between local entrepreneurs and tourism state institutions (The Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA), Ministry of Economics in Latvia and Ministry of Economics and Innovation in Lithuania, Tourism Council), as well as control services (SFRS, State Revenue Service, Food and Veterinary Service, etc.);
- with other tourism information providers in the region of the territory (neighbouring TICs, regional representatives) for mutual support, creation of joint offers and coordination of work;
- initiating cooperation between potential and existing tourism product creators - tourism entrepreneurs in the creation of new products and offers;
- between local tourism product creators - tourism entrepreneurs and tourism agencies and operators;
- with mass media, etc.

To ensure that all stakeholders are not involved only in the tourism planning stage or in the situation analysis, tourism planners must continuously work on uniting all stakeholders in tourism. To do this, the destination tourism planner must create a sense in all stakeholders that they are special and important partners in the planning, decision-making and tourism development process. For this purpose, a formal or informal organization can be created (for example, a tourism forum, a regional tourism development association or a cluster),

the members of which regularly meet and discuss tourism problems, progress of development, search for funding, identification of project ideas, etc. Conclusion of partnership agreements can help to permanently involve partners in tourism development work, also increasing their responsibility for the initiated activities.

How TIC cooperate with mass media, for example, you can include in communication guidelines and mark main tasks. Below – few ideas:

- TIC creates press releases about current events and news in the territory - new routes, thematic offers, tourism promotions, tourism trends in the region and sends them to its media database contacts.
- TIC does not create press releases about individual tourism objects, entrepreneurs and tourism service providers.
- TIC is authorized to publicly provide information (for example, TV, radio) to the mass media (observing all ethical principles and norms) about tourism current events and trends in the territory with the aim of popularizing the tourism offer of the region.
- In order to promote the offer of the area, TIC hosts visits from guides and journalists.
- The itinerary of visits organized by TIC includes a versatile offer - sightseeing objects, services and activities.
- Before the visit, TIC contacts the entrepreneurs (included in the itinerary), instructs on what information and how to provide information about their company during the visit.

CONCLUSION

Tourism information providers - tourism centres, points and bureaus in Latvia and Lithuania were initially established in 1990s not only as places to receive tourism information, but also as DMOs, which, as recognized by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), are increasingly expanding their scope of activity, becoming comprehensive DMOs, aiming to improve the competitiveness of destinations and the sustainability of tourism and places in harmonious relations between residents and visitors. Today tourism information providers are considered leading organizations among tourism entrepreneurs in destinations of various sizes.

As already recorded by UNWTO in 2019 in recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the need for sound and planned management of tourism destinations. Faced with several challenges and paradigm changes – digital transformation, emerging ‘disruptors’ such as new platform tourism services or managing visitors’ growth, just to mention a few – and increasingly aware of the need to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of destinations, many destination marketing organizations, including tourist information providers, are faced with the pressing need to enlarge their scope to become all embracing DMOs.

DMOs become leading organizations with a broader mandate which includes strategic planning, coordination and management of a full range of activities within an adequate governance structure with the integration of different stakeholders operating in the destination under common goals in all municipalities. Destinations where such an organization is not still in place are increasingly creating or plan to create a DMO as the organizational entity. More and more tourist information providers are officially to be DMOs.

A. PRINTED AND DIGITAL MATERIALS (MAPS, BROCHURES, GUIDES)

What to consider when creating tourist guides and maps TICs publishes several types of printed materials:

- travel brochures – a kind of invitation to an area; introduces tourists to places of interest and attractions located in the area;
- thematic brochures – provide the most complete information on a specific topic;
- program brochures – programs, routes and activities for a certain period of time, in a certain area
- presentation brochures – introduce an object or organization and its services/offers;
- maps – help travellers navigate the area.

When creating printed and digital materials, there must be a clear purpose – why it is being created, and the target group – to whom this publication is addressed. When preparing printed material, the following should be considered:

- the content should be grouped in such a way that the reader is not confused by the information;
- only high-quality illustrations/photographs should be used (their author should be indicated);
- the publisher and contact information should be indicated;
- the scale should be indicated on maps;
- all symbols and pictograms should be explained;
- use universal design methods;
- remember about copyrights for maps and photos.

Tips:

- When creating thematic brochures, the principle of demand and supply must be considered.
- TIC does not publish brochures for individual tourism attractions or service providers, entrepreneurs.
- Create a working group (specialists) who creates criteria to select objects, information, and images to be included in the material.
- TIC is not responsible for changes made by the service providers/entrepreneurs that occurred shortly after (or during) the publication of the printed material and that were not reported to TIC.
- TIC promotes and organizes the exchange of information materials between service providers and entrepreneurs.

B. VIRTUAL INFORMATION CHANNELS (REQUIREMENTS FOR THEIR CREATION)

B.1 WEBSITE:

- The website must be visual, it must contain many high-quality (!) images of the destination of the tourism object. Often, one picture is worth 1000 words! Texts and images must create an inviting impression. Do not use too much “mood” images, it helps make atmosphere, but do not show your main product.
- All sections on the website must have a uniform style, which could also be coordinated with other advertising materials.
- The home page should be designed to entice the reader deeper into the page to explore as much available information about the destination as possible.
- The page should be easy to navigate, with clear navigation.
- **Three-click rule** - according to this rule the user can access the necessary information or the service offered by the website with three mouse clicks, if this is not possible, then the user leaves the page. However, the rule is more to emphasize the need for clear navigation, a logical structure and easy-to-follow website content. The number of clicks is not so important, it is more important to provide the user with the feeling that he is well-oriented on the website. Information on the website should be specific and easy to find, in a clearly formulated “table of contents”.

Example for website content structure

- **Home**
 - **Discover destination**
 - Popular attractions (TOP 10, for example)
 - Hidden gems
 - Nature
 - Culture & Heritage
 - Festivals & Events
 - Interactive map
 - **Plan your trip**
 - Itineraries
 - 1-Day Trips
 - Weekend getaways
 - Custom trip planner
 - Where to stay
 - Where to eat
 - Getting around
 - Tours & Packages

- *Travel tips*
- **Visitor Services**
 - *Info centres & working hours*
 - *Local guides*
 - *Emergency contacts*
 - *Accessibility services*
 - *Downloadable brochures and maps*
- **Events calendar**
 - *Upcoming events*
 - *Local festivals*
- **News & updates**
 - *Travel alerts*
 - *New attractions*
 - *Blog/Stories*
- **About us**
 - *Mission & Vision*
 - *Our team*
 - *Contact information*
- **Contact Us**
 - *Inquiry form*
 - *Location map*
 - *Social media links*
- **FAQs**

- Use of whitespace or free space (the page should not be cluttered with images and content elements, there should be a place to “rest the eyes”)
- It is preferable to apply the basic principles of eye-tracking (eye/gaze movements) or how a website visitor "reads" the most important information.
- Responsive design allows a website visitor to view it from different types of devices - mobile phone, tablet, computer, no zooming in or out is required - the elements are arranged in a transparent manner.
- It is essential to make sure that the website works and is visible in its original appearance in global web browsers.
- Easy-to-read font designed for a specific target audience (for people under 30 years old – Sans Serif, over 30 years old – Serif, the ability to change the text size).
- The page should not contain unfinished content.
- If the site has a lot of sightseeing objects or some other database, it is advisable to use a filter and search tool.

- Web pages should be user friendly (provide enough color contrast, create subtitles and transcripts, use larger text and simpler fonts, create keyboard-accessible navigation, use image alt text, clear language etc.).
- It is not recommended to place advertisements on external resources/adjacent businesses that are not related to the main activity of the tourism information provider or the information provided. However, exceptions are allowed if these pages contain an informative meaning, covering various sectors and areas (news, list of tourist attractions in the region, restaurants, travel, accommodation, cooperation partners, etc.).
- The website should not look visually outdated as this can repel potential visitors to the destination.
- As for the design of the website it is possible to make the website relevant, interesting and appealing to its users by using various game elements. However, it is important to remember that when including such elements, the main function of the website – providing information – should not be lost.
- In order to make websites more easily found on the global web, various content optimization methods are used. To the extent possible, cooperation partners should be invited to place the website addresses of tourism information providers on their websites in order to promote wider availability of tourism information and the development of marketing of the territory's tourism offer.
- For more effective monitoring of websites, it is important to see the statistical indicators of their attendance, how many internet users visit the website in a certain period of time, which are the most popular sections of the website, from which countries the website visits are recorded, in which languages the information is viewed or read, etc. This makes it possible to identify and monitor the target audience and their interests, responding and providing information accordingly. There are several website statistical indicator programs, such as Google Analytics, however, it is better to find out which website statistical program the developer recommends using. It is important to remember that the more time and money invested in website marketing (banners, advertisements, publications, etc.), the more important it is to check the results to determine whether the resources invested in the website have paid off.
- Not well-designed websites do not attract customers, but repel them.
- Outdated information, poor quality and slow communication between the information holder and the customer increase the risk of losing potential travellers forever.
- Be careful of sound banners, images sliding across the screen effects, which often become distracting for website visitors. For example, the sound of the sea can cause seasickness in those with problems with the vestibular apparatus.

- Too slow opening of the website and its sections can result in customers losing patience and moving on to other pages.

B.2 APPLICATIONS:

Mobile applications are special software developed for mobile platforms, with whom you can provide information, promote the offer, communicate with customers, offer additional services to customers all over the world.

Mobile applications are designed to provide information as conveniently, efficiently and as purposefully as possible, in accordance with their lifestyle, adapting the application to the client of the tourism information provider, as well as to their wishes and needs.

Creating a mobile application is relatively expensive, but mobile applications can also be successfully used by tourism information providers. In the long run their creation pays off.

Basically, mobile applications are developed on the most popular platforms - Apple iOS (iPhone smartphones and iPad tablets) and Android (for example, Samsung smartphones and tablets). Smartphone and tablet users can obtain applications from application "repositories" - Apple App Store or Android GooglePlay.

Nowadays mobile applications are not so important, if web page design is responsive and we can get all information in good quality as in smartphones, as in tablets.

There can be different kind of mobile applications:

- classic destination app
- thematic or special-purpose app (without duplicating the homepage)
- combined destination app - contains specific features that allow you to experience the destination in a more unusual way than anywhere else or offers easy up-sell opportunities - buy tickets to destination events, book services, etc.

Recommended information in mobile applications:

- About tourist attractions, service providers (places of interest, catering options, accommodation, entertainment options etc.).
- About travel routes that have already been prepared as well as route planning options based on traveller's wishes.
- Opening hours, locations of tourist attractions - with the ability to rate and comment on a tourist attraction/service provider.
- Event calendar.
- As a loyalty building tool – loyalty cards, city passes/cards etc.

- Maps or navigation should be available, which is also available when offline.
- The ability to find a street, building, as well as an object of interest on the map, using a search engine, using augmented reality with the ability to rate and comment on a tourist attraction, accommodation.

C. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Communication Guidelines for Destination X Tourism Information Centre (TIC) providers

Template for Developing Local or Regional Tourism Communication Guidelines

1. Purpose and Scope

This section explains why the guidelines exist and who they apply to.

Describe the overarching goal of the guidelines: to promote a positive and consistent image of the destination, guide all communication efforts, and support stakeholder collaboration. Clarify the intended users (e.g., TIC staff, tourism partners, municipal departments) and the communication types covered (online, print, media, in-person).

2. Core Communication Principles

Outline the essential values and standards TIC communication must reflect.

Include key principles such as objectivity, neutrality in recommendations, respectful behavior, alignment with municipal or national tourism policy, and sensitivity when handling complaints or misunderstandings.

3. Key Communication Channels

3.1 Website – [www....]

Specify how tourism objects, services, and attractions are added, what info to collect, how often it's reviewed, what languages are required, and what quality criteria (e.g. photos, descriptions) must be met.

3.2 Events and Offers Section

Clarify the inclusion criteria (e.g., minimum scale, appeal to tourists), deadlines, and required formats (date, description, contact info, images). Recommend using templates and submission forms.

4. Social Media Strategy

Define how TIC uses social media to promote the destination and inform the public.

Include platform-specific instructions, content tone, image and hashtag usage, tagging rules, and how user-generated content is handled.

5. Visual and Multimedia Content

Set the standards for imagery, videos, and graphic materials shared by TIC.

Describe acceptable formats, ownership requirements, minimum quality, and attribution rules.

6. Printed Materials

Explain how brochures, maps, and other print media are developed and managed.

Detail how themes are selected, partners involved, inclusion criteria, layout/design standards, translation processes, and distribution points.

7. Media and Public Relations

7.1 Press Communication

Clarify what newsworthy content TIC shares with the media and how mass media requests are handled.

7.2 Press and Tour Guide Visits

Explain how to organize and prepare for visits from journalists and tour guides, including collaboration with hosts and follow-up.

8. Event Participation and Tourism Promotion

8.1 Thematic Events

Describe how events are coordinated with stakeholders, how working groups operate, and the role of TIC in promotion.

8.2 Tourism Fairs and B2B Contact Events

Explain representation principles, required materials, and expected qualifications for participants.

8.3 Cross-border or Regional Campaigns

Provide guidance on branding, translation, and partner balance in joint campaigns.

9. Handling Feedback and Complaints

Provide a clear process for managing both positive and negative feedback.

Describe how to log complaints, follow up with stakeholders, and the conditions for removing or updating listings.

10. Audio Guide and On-site Signage

Explain the development and maintenance of on-site interpretive tools.

Describe the content development process, signage installation, and partner responsibilities.

11. Annex Structure (Supporting Materials and Templates)

List annexes such as event submission criteria, social media standards, and hosting protocols.

12. Brand Identity and Visual Guidelines

Ensure visual consistency across all communication materials.

Include logo usage rules, color palettes, typography, templates, and asset usage by partners.

13. Stakeholder Communication and Partner Relations

Support long-term collaboration with local tourism service providers, institutions, and event organizers.

Include principles of communication, submission processes, expectations, and stakeholder engagement methods.

14. Updates and Revisions

State how often the guidelines are reviewed, who is responsible, and how updates are shared with stakeholders

Prepared by:

Tourism Information Centre – Destination X

[Name], [Position]

[Contact Info]

[Date]

D. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

To ensure consistent high-quality service and continuous improvement, we implement a system of quality assurance and performance monitoring. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms help us identify areas for improvement.

D.1 Internal and External Audits

- The TIC will conduct regular internal audits to assess compliance with these Customer Service Standards.
- **How to Perform Internal Audits:**
 - Use a checklist based on these Customer Service Standards to assess key aspects of the TIC's operation.
 - Observe staff interactions with visitors, noting their adherence to the standards.
 - Review the cleanliness and organization of the premises, as well as the availability of materials.
 - Check for any maintenance or safety issues.
- **How to Evaluate Employees:**

Conduct a mock interaction to see how employees will act.
- External audits may be conducted by tourism organizations or external agencies to evaluate the TIC's performance.
 - External auditors will use similar methods as internal auditors but may also interview visitors to gather feedback.

D.2 Staff Performance Evaluations

- Staff performance evaluations will include an assessment of customer service skills and adherence to these standards. Conduct them each 3 months to see improvement.
- Feedback from visitors may be incorporated into performance evaluations. Ask for their feedback about certain employees.
- **How to Perform the Evaluation:**

- Use a standardized evaluation form that assesses the following criteria:
 - Adherence to Customer Service Standards
 - Communication Skills (verbal and written)
 - Knowledge of Local Attractions and Services
 - Problem-Solving Abilities
 - Teamwork and Collaboration
 - Initiative and Proactivity
 - Professionalism and Appearance
- Provide constructive feedback and set goals for future development.
- **Ranking System:** Use a rating scale (e.g., 1-5 or Excellent-Poor) for each criterion.
 - 5 - Excellent: Consistently exceeds expectations and serves as a role model.
 - 4 - Good: Meets expectations and demonstrates strong performance.
 - 3 - Satisfactory: Generally meets expectations but may have some inconsistencies.
 - 2 - Needs Improvement: Requires further development to meet expectations.
 - 1 - Poor: Consistently fails to meet expectations.

D.3 Customer Satisfaction Metrics

- The TIC will track customer satisfaction metrics, such as the number of complaints received and the results of customer surveys. If metrics fall - take action and improve what we do.

- This data will be used to identify areas for improvement and to measure the effectiveness of our customer service initiatives. Recommendations from surveys will be evaluated and implemented as soon as possible.
- **Which Metrics to Use:**
 - **Customer Satisfaction Surveys:** Distribute surveys to visitors after their interaction with the TIC, asking them to rate their overall experience, the helpfulness of the staff, the accuracy of the information provided, and the cleanliness of the premises.
 - *How to Use Them:* Analyze survey responses to identify trends and patterns in customer satisfaction. Use this data to identify areas for improvement.
 - **Number of Complaints Received:** Track the number of complaints received through various channels (e.g., phone, email, in-person).
 - *How to Use Them:* Categorize complaints to identify common issues and prioritize efforts to address them.
 - **Website Analytics:** Monitor website traffic, bounce rate, and time spent on pages to assess the website's effectiveness in providing information.
 - *How to Use Them:* Use website analytics to identify areas where the website can be improved to better meet visitors' needs.
 - **Social Media Monitoring:** Track mentions of the TIC on social media to collect public opinion and identify any emerging issues. Monitor public data.
 - *How to Use Them:* Respond to comments and reviews promptly and professionally, and use social media feedback to improve the TIC's services.

- **Use of Metrics:** All of these actions help to understand if there has to be a change.

E. CHECKLISTS AND TEMPLATES

E.1. Check list for quality standards of physical infrastructure of TIC. Example from Travel Lithuania (2024) [Study of the Infrastructure of Tourist Attractions in Lithuania 2024: Assessment Criteria](#).

In order to improve tourism infrastructure and enhance the tourist experience by more accurately meeting their expectations and needs, assessments of Lithuanian tourist area infrastructure were commissioned by the national tourism promotion agency "Keliauk Lietuvoje" (Travel Lithuania) in 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2024.

The objective of the 2024 Study of Lithuanian Tourist Site Infrastructure is to assess the suitability of physical and digital infrastructure in tourist areas for the needs of tourists, combining an evaluation of quantitative and qualitative criteria.

Study result: The suitability level of the physical and digital infrastructure in tourist areas was assessed using internationally recognized methods and best practices.

In this study, the general methodological requirements were further broken down and adapted for each type of site. The table below provides information on which criteria were evaluated in the Tourist Information Centers category. In this category, the Šiauliai Tourist Information Center / "The Balts' Road" Center for Baltic Culture received the highest score of 99%.

Tourist Information Center

- Wayfinding
- Accessibility / Transportation
- Parking
- Recreational opportunities near the site
- Condition of the site
- Accessibility for people with disabilities
- Suitability for families with children
- Opening hours
- Information and education about the site
- Payment options
- Rest facilities inside the site

Wayfinding	Yes/No/Comment
Signage from the main road.	
Signage from side roads (at least one side road; if the site is on a main road, this is evaluated as YES).	
Site identification (a sign with the name is present).	
Accessibility & Transportation	Yes/No/Comment
Public transport stop (within 300 m).	
Bench at the stop.	
Shelter/roof at the stop.	

Timetable at the stop.	
Trash can at the stop.	
Vehicle access (no more than 200 m to the site).	
Road type: asphalt.	
Road quality: smooth (not potholed).	
Road width: two or more lanes.	
Pedestrian pathways to the site.	
Pedestrian pathways are well-maintained and smooth.	
Bicycle paths.	
Bicycle path surface is smooth.	
Parking	Yes/No/Comment
Parking for cars.	
Parking for buses.	
Electric vehicle charging station (within 300 m).	
Bicycle parking (dedicated racks installed).	
Parking area surface is well-maintained, not potholed.	
At least 2 different payment methods are available (Note: If parking is free, this criterion and the following related criteria are considered met/YES).	
Payment information is provided in native language.	
Payment information is provided in a foreign language.	
Amenities for Rest/Refreshment Nearby	Yes/No/Comment
Outdoor seating is available.	
Option to purchase beverages near the site (within 300 m).	
Option to purchase food near the site (within 300 m).	
Condition of the Site	Yes/No/Comment
Surroundings are tidy (no litter).	
Surroundings are maintained: flowers, decorations.	
Surroundings are maintained: manicured lawn, park.	
Outdoor trash cans are available.	
Exterior appearance: the site is maintained and tidy.	
Exterior appearance: no visible defects (stains, crumbling).	
Interior appearance: the building is maintained and tidy (Not applicable to sites that cannot be entered).	
Interior appearance: no visible defects (stains, crumbling) (Not applicable to sites that cannot be entered).	
Indoor trash cans are available (Not applicable to sites that cannot be entered).	
Accessibility for People with Disabilities	Yes/No/Comment
Accessible restroom (WC) within 300 m.	
Suitable pathways for people with disabilities around the site.	
Accessible entrance to the site.	
Unobstructed movement is ensured inside the site.	
Designated parking spaces.	

Family & Child Friendliness	Yes/No/Comment
Unrestricted movement with a stroller is possible around the site.	
Playground (within 300 m of the site).	
Children's restroom (WC) (within 300 m) (e.g., lower toilet, special seat, potty).	
Unrestricted movement with a stroller is possible inside the site.	
Activities for children (e.g., coloring, puzzles, play corner, etc.) (For sites designated for families/children, mark as YES).	
Baby changing table (within 300 m).	
Mother and child room (within 300 m).	
Family ticket option (if not free, evaluated as YES).	
Operating Hours	Yes/No/Comment
Open on weekdays (at least 3 workdays).	
Open on Saturdays.	
Open on Sundays.	
Information provided in Lithuanian.	
Information provided universally / with numbers.	
Information and Education at the Site	Yes/No/Comment
Information boards / outdoor exhibits - stands about the site.	
Information stand about the site in a foreign language (can be on the same stand in multiple languages).	
Brochures/leaflets.	
Guided tour (excursion).	
Guided tour in English.	
Guided tour in other languages (at least three languages in total).	
Audio guide.	
Audio guide in English.	
Audio guide in other languages (at least three languages in total).	
Educational activities.	
Payment Options (if not free, evaluated as YES)	Yes/No/Comment
Different payment methods.	
Information provided on payment methods.	
Payment information provided in Lithuanian.	
Payment information provided in a foreign language/universally.	
Amenities Inside the Site	Yes/No/Comment
Seating available inside the site.	
Option to purchase beverages inside the site.	
Option to purchase food inside the site.	
Restrooms (WC)	Yes/No/Comment
On-site or within 300 m.	
Signage/directions.	
Lock (working).	
Clean.	

Dry.	
No unpleasant odor.	
Lighting.	
Water for hand washing.	
Soap.	
Toilet paper.	
Hand towels / paper towels / hand dryer.	
Digital Infrastructure	Yes/No/Comment
Site website or a sub-page on an official website.	
Operating hours on the website.	
Address on the website.	
Contact information on the website.	
Website available in at least one foreign language.	
Mobile-friendly version of the website (or adapted for phone use).	
Price information (if not free, evaluated as YES).	
Option to buy tickets online (if not free, evaluated as YES).	
The site is present on social networks (Facebook and/or Instagram, etc.).	
Information on social networks is updated (e.g., Facebook/Instagram posts no older than 2 months at the time of evaluation).	
Google search: found within the top ten results.	
Completed "Google Business" profile.	
The site (by name) is listed on Google Maps.	
Added Value (Not included in the main evaluation)	Yes/No/Comment
Free WiFi.	
Charging station for mobile phones.	
Recycling bins.	
Audio-visual innovations (e.g., VR glasses, etc.).	
Interactive activities, stands.	
Sun loungers.	
Umbrellas.	
Changing cabins.	
Picnic area.	
Pet-friendly access (option to visit inside, provide water).	
Signage indicating the site is pet-friendly.	
Option to purchase souvenirs.	
Visitor discount card.	
Water station/fountain.	
Parking for families.	
Space for events, conferences, parties.	

E.2. Check list for service provision by phone and e-mail. Example.

Phone	Yes/No/Comment	E-mail	Yes/No/Comment
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Waiting time when picking up the phone, <i>waiting time until the phone is picked up (number of rings (up to 3))</i> .		The letter begins with a polite salutation	
When picking up the phone - the company, the employee's name and the position are mentioned		The email provides answers to the client's questions	
The employee greets the customer		The email concludes with a polite farewell	
The employee is positive, kind, polite		The email includes the name, surname, position, and contact information of the person preparing the response	
The employee is familiar with the services offered, is competent, knowledgeable		...	
The employee says goodbye to the customer		...	
...		...	

E.3. Check list for the service during the visit. Example.

Service provision during the visit	Yes/No/Comment
Greeting at the beginning/end *ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY*	
Kindness and politeness	
Assessing (learn) needs	
Empathy/discretion/tactfulness	
Professional knowledges	
Knowledge of the surroundings and events	
Knowledge of languages	
Cleanliness of clothing *THE EMPLOYEE UNIFORM NOT ONLY HELPS THE GUEST TO ORIENT IN UNKNOWN PLACE, BUT ALSO CREATES SAFETY AND DISCIPLINES THE EMPLOYEE *	
Use name card	
Attention to the customer	
Employee behavior during service (no eating, drinking, other parallel and irrelevant activities, etc.)	
Issuing/processing the bill	
Conclusion of service (whether everything is clear to the guest, summary of conversation, reminder of the most important things)	
...	

E.4. Check list for the evaluation of service provider. Family friendly. Example.

GENERAL CRITERIA	Yes/No/Comment
Families with children are one of the target groups of the entrepreneur support policy, as evidenced by specific measures and initiatives.	
A safe room or play corner has been set up for visitors` children.	
There is a safe and suitable place for changing and feeding the child, including breastfeeding, there is a toilet room that is accessible to people with disabilities (used for families with children).	
The customer rooms are accessible by stroller or wheelchair.	
Family-oriented service provision.	
There are special services, discounts or other benefits for one of the types of families that require special support (large families (with three or more children), families in which a child or parent has a disability, and similar)	
Specific criteria for catering services: children's corner or play ground; menu for children, children's chairs, baby changing surface, room for breastfeeding. Specific criteria for accommodations services: baby beds available (included in price), children's corner or play ground, children's books available, games.	

E.5. Check list for the evaluation of service provider. Pets friendly. Example.

GENERAL CRITERIA	Yes/No/Comment
Clear pet policy (allowed species, size/weight limits, breed restrictions if any) publicly available. Clear information on web, reservation platforms. et-friendly signs on tables or entrances	
Pets allowed in rooms (in accommodations), allowed in café, restaurant (clear info if allowed only on terrace), entrance in tourism object, museum,	
There are special services, or other benefits (Water bowls available for pets, Optional: pet menu or treats, signing	

E.6. Check list for the evaluation of service provider. Hiking friendly. Example.

GENERAL CRITERIA	Yes/No/Comment
The topic of hiking is included in the service provider's advertising, with links to hiking routes that are in the neighbourhood.	
There is visible and full information about the route (a map if it is a long distance, or a map of a specific part of the trail. The information should include the length of the route, the level of difficulty, the approximate time to cover the route, the road cover, starting and finishing points, obstacles, dangerous places, alternative phases, etc. There should also be information about available services such as accommodations, dining facilities, stores, rest areas, lavatories and tourism information centres). PS! If any of the trails is passing the protected area, where various restrictions may be present, there should be information available about this (both that there is protected area and that there are restrictions).	
Information about routes and services is available in at least one foreign language (recommended in English).	

If the service provider has a dog, the dog must be kept behind a fence or kennel so that it does not threaten tourists (there should be a sign to say that there is a dog).	
The topic of hiking is included in the service provider's advertising, with links to hiking routes that are in the neighbourhood.	
There is information about what to do if there are health problems (the closest medical institution, the closest pharmacy, etc.).	
There is information about public transportation.	
There is drinking water or a chance to purchase water or fill up existing water bottles.	
There is an opportunity to charge up electronic devices.	
...	
Specific criteria for accommodations services: The accommodation is available for hikers during the active tourism season (May to October) and during the weekends despite other possible events, there is an opportunity to spend just one night at the accommodation, there is an opportunity to spend just one night at the accommodation, etc.	

Source: [Hiker Friendly](#)

E.7. Check list for the evaluation of service provider. Eco tourism. Example.

GENERAL CRITERIA	Yes/No/Comment
Minimal environmental impact and efficient resource management which includes saving water, energy and raw materials (waste reduction, sorting, availability of compost containers, energy efficiency savings (use of energy-efficient technologies (solar panels, LED lighting, wind generators)), conservation and protection of natural resources, availability of ecological toilets (biotoilets), reduction of water consumption, use of rainwater collection systems, availability of irrigation, drinking water).	
Tourists/travelers are educated about the importance of local nature, culture and traditions (example, information stands on flora/fauna, information on ecological initiatives, etc.).	
Provides activities that do not threaten local biodiversity, such as educational tours that respect nature.	
Offers and services are authentic and based on local resources, values, and knowledge (authentic experiences that reveal a real connection with nature/culture).	
Nature conservation – promotes the protection of local natural resources and biodiversity.	
Promotes the development of sustainable practices and long-term tourism that ensures the preservation of resources for future generations.	
Walking/hiking trails marked with minimal environmental impact are included.	

Organized tourism activities not only educates, but also offer practical advice on how to live more environmentally friendly.	
Providing information about local nature parks, protected areas and their rules of visiting.	
The principle of silence and harmony is observed in tourist areas and sightseeing attractions, avoiding loud and environmentally harmful entertainment events.	
Control of the number/flow of tourists/travelers (to reduce the potential for harm to nature).	
Seasonality of the tourism product/service offer (to reduce activities during periods of high activity, such as bird nesting, soil erosion, etc.)	
...	

F. SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Tourism Development and Marketing Strategy for Destination X

Table of Contents with Chapter Descriptions

1. Executive Summary

Summarizes the purpose, goals, and key actions of the strategy.

Include a concise overview of the strategic vision, development priorities, key markets, and major initiatives. Intended for decision-makers and stakeholders who need a high-level understanding.

2. Introduction and Background

Outlines the strategic context and need for the plan.

Describe the motivation behind the strategy, how it was developed (e.g. workshops, consultations), and the challenges or opportunities it addresses.

3. Strategic Coherence with National and Regional Tourism Policies

Demonstrates alignment with higher-level planning documents and priorities.

Explain how this strategy supports or complements:

- Latvia's National Tourism Development Guidelines
- Regional Development Plans (e.g., Zemgale Planning Region)
- Relevant EU, Baltic, or cross-border tourism programs

Include citations and reference how Destination X contributes to broader goals such as rural development, sustainability, export capacity, or seasonality reduction.

4. Situation Analysis

Provides an assessment of the current tourism environment in Destination X.

4.1 Internal Environment

Inventory of attractions, infrastructure, services, human capital, digital capacity.

4.2 External Environment

Trends, visitor behavior, market expectations, competitor benchmarking.

4.3 SWOT Analysis

Concise overview of internal strengths/weaknesses and external opportunities/threats.

5. Vision, Mission, and Strategic Objectives

Defines the long-term aspirations and actionable goals for tourism in Destination X.

Use SMART objectives that connect to visitor experience, regional growth, quality, or sustainability.

6. Target Markets and Audience Segmentation

Identifies and profiles the main visitor types Destination X aims to attract.

Include domestic and international segments, their motivations, trip styles, and seasonality.

7. Destination Development Strategy

Outlines how to improve, diversify, and sustain the tourism offer.

7.1 Product Development

Nature, heritage, cultural, active, and thematic experiences.

7.2 Infrastructure and Accessibility

Transport, signage, digital tools, and inclusive access.

7.3 Quality and Sustainability

Environmental, service quality, and community-based standards.

8. Marketing and Communication Strategy

Describes how to promote Destination X to target audiences.

8.1 Branding and Positioning

Unique identity, key messages, tone of voice, tagline.

8.2 Marketing Channels and Tactics

Digital, traditional, PR, media, and trade marketing tools.

8.3 Events and Experience Marketing

Signature events, themed weeks, and interactive visitor promotions.

9. Stakeholder Engagement and Governance

Describes how TIC and partners collaborate to implement the strategy.

Map roles across public, private, and NGO sectors. Define decision-making structures and coordination formats.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation, and KPIs

Defines how success will be measured and strategy performance assessed.

Include visitor data, campaign metrics, satisfaction rates, and reporting tools.

11. Action Plan and Budget

Provides a timeline and task list to execute the strategy.

Break into short-, medium-, and long-term priorities. Assign responsibilities and expected outcomes. Estimates required funding and outlines potential sources.

Summarize operating, marketing, and investment costs. Mention co-funding, grants, or partner contributions.

12. Annexes

Contains supporting data.

Examples: stakeholder lists, consultation notes, visitor surveys, inventory maps, brand guides, template documents etc.

G. EMAIL TEMPLATES

1. For a Tourist: Responding to a Pre-Trip Planning Inquiry

Subject: Your upcoming trip to [Our City/Region Name]!

Dear [Tourist's Name],

Thank you for contacting the [Our City/Region Name] Tourism Information Center! We are thrilled you are planning a visit and I am happy to help you with your questions.

Based on your interest in [mention their specific interests, e.g., "family-friendly activities and local food"], here are a few recommendations and resources to get you started:

- **[Recommendation 1 with a brief description and link]:** E.g., The City Science Museum is fantastic for kids and has an interactive exhibit until May. You can find tickets here: [Link]
- **[Recommendation 2 with a brief description and link]:** E.g., For authentic local cuisine, I suggest exploring the restaurants in the historic Old Town district. Here's a guide: [Link]
- **[Resource 3]:** E.g., I have also attached a digital copy of our city map and a guide to public transportation.

Please let me know if you have any more questions as you continue planning. We look forward to welcoming you!

Warmly,

[Your Name]

[Your Title], [Name of Tourism Information Center]

[Phone Number] | [Website]

2. For a Tourist: Follow-Up After an In-Person Visit

Subject: Following up on your visit to the [Our City] Info Center

Hello [Tourist's Name],

It was a pleasure meeting you at the Information Center today. As we discussed, I wanted to send you the links and information you requested about [topic of discussion, e.g., "local hiking trails"]. Here is the information we talked about:

- **[Link/Information 1]:** Trail map for the [Name] National Park: [Link]
- **[Link/Information 2]:** A list of tour operators that offer guided hikes: [Link]
- **[Attached Document]:** I've attached the brochure on "Day Hikes for All Skill Levels."

I hope this helps you have a fantastic adventure! Enjoy the rest of your time in [Our City/Region Name].

Best regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Title], [Name of Tourism Information Center]
[Phone Number] | [Website]

3. For a Local Business Partner: Requesting Updated Information/Brochures

Subject: Request for Updated Materials for the [Name of TIC]

Dear [Partner's Name / Manager],

I hope this email finds you well. I'm writing from the [Name of Tourism Information Center] to ensure we have the most current information for our visitors regarding your business, [Business Name].

To provide our tourists with the best and most accurate recommendations, could you please:

1. Confirm if your current opening hours and contact details on your website are correct?
2. Let us know if you have any new special offers, events, or menu changes we should be aware of?
3. Arrange for us to receive a new batch of your latest brochures/flyers? We can pick them up, or you can drop them off at your convenience.

Thank you for your partnership in making [Our City/Region Name] a great place to visit.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Title], [Name of Tourism Information Center]
[Phone Number] | [Website]

4. For a Local Business Partner: Sharing Positive Visitor Feedback

Subject: Great feedback from a recent visitor about [Business Name]!

Hello [Partner's Name],

I wanted to share some wonderful feedback we received today at the Tourism Information Center. A visitor I was assisting, [mention "a family from..." or "a couple visiting from..." to give context], specifically mentioned what a fantastic experience they had at [Business Name].

They were particularly impressed with [mention specific compliment, e.g., "the friendly service from your staff," "how delicious the food was," or "the quality of your tour"].

We love hearing such positive stories, and it's a pleasure to recommend your business to our visitors. Keep up the excellent work!

All the best,

[Your Name]

[Your Title], [Name of Tourism Information Center]

[Phone Number] | [Website]

5. For Various Partners: Invitation to a Networking or Industry Event

Subject: You're Invited: [Name of Event] for Tourism Partners

Dear [Partner's Name],

On behalf of the [Name of Tourism Information Center], I am delighted to invite you to our upcoming [Event Name, e.g., "Summer Season Tourism Briefing"]. This event is an opportunity for our valued local partners to connect, share insights, and prepare for the upcoming season.

Date: [Date]

Time: [Time]

Location: [Location]

During the event, we will be [mention key activities, e.g., "sharing recent visitor trend data, unveiling our new marketing campaign, and providing a networking session"].

Please RSVP by [Date] so we can finalize the arrangements. We sincerely hope you can join us.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Title], [Name of Tourism Information Center]

[Phone Number] | [Website]

6. For a Government Agency: Requesting Information (e.g., about an event, road closure)

Subject: Information Request: [Specific Topic, e.g., Road Closures for Marathon on Date]

Dear [Contact Person's Name or Department Title],

I am writing from the [Name of Tourism Information Center]. We are seeking clarification on [Specific Topic] to ensure we can provide accurate and timely information to visitors and residents.

Could you please provide us with details regarding the upcoming [Event Name]? We are specifically looking for:

- A map of the affected streets and closure times.
- Information on public transport diversions.
- The best viewing spots for the public.

Any official documentation or a link to a public notice page would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title], [Name of Tourism Information Center]

[Phone Number] | [Website]

7. For a Media Contact: Responding to an Inquiry

Subject: Re: Your inquiry about [Topic]

Dear [Journalist's Name],

Thank you for reaching out to the [Name of Tourism Information Center] for your story on [Topic of their story].

I am happy to provide the information you requested.

- **[Answer to Question 1]:** E.g., Last year, our region saw approximately 5 thousand overnight visitors.
- **[Answer to Question 2]:** E.g., The most popular attractions based on our visitor data are the [Attraction 1] and the [Attraction 2].
- **[Additional Resource]:** You may find our annual tourism report helpful, which is available here: [Link]

If you would like to schedule an interview with our Director, [Director's Name], or need any high-resolution images, please let me know. I'm happy to help coordinate.

Best,

[Your Name]

[Your Title], [Name of Tourism Information Center]

[Phone Number] | [Website]

8. For a Stakeholder (e.g., City Council, Tourism Board): Submitting a Report

Subject: [Monthly/Quarterly] Visitor Report from the [Name of TIC] - [Month/Quarter, Year]

Dear [Contact Person's Name],

Please find attached the visitor report from the [Name of Tourism Information Center] for [Month/Quarter, Year].

This report includes key data on:

- Visitor numbers and origins.
- The most common inquiries and requests.
- Trends observed during this period.
- A summary of our recent activities and initiatives.

We believe these insights are valuable for our shared goal of enhancing the tourism landscape in [Our City/Region Name]. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or require further details.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title], [Name of Tourism Information Center]

[Phone Number] | [Website]

9. For a Tourist: Handling a Complaint or Negative Feedback

Subject: Regarding your experience in [Our City/Region Name]

Dear [Tourist's Name],

Thank you for taking the time to share your feedback with us regarding your experience with [Business/Situation where issue occurred]. I am very sorry to hear that it did not meet your expectations. We take this kind of feedback seriously, as we want every visitor to have a positive experience in our city.

I have listened carefully to your concerns about [briefly and neutrally summarize the issue, e.g., "the service you received at the restaurant" or "the difficulty you had with the bus tour booking"].

I have already forwarded your feedback to the management of [Business Name] for their review and direct attention.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Your Title], [Name of Tourism Information Center]
[Phone Number] | [Website]

10. For a Potential Partner: Proposing a Collaboration

Subject: Collaboration Idea: [Your TIC] & [Potential Partner's Name]

Dear [Contact Person's Name],

I hope this email finds you well. My name is [Your Name], and I work at the [Name of Tourism Information Center]. I'm a great admirer of the work you do at [Partner's Business Name], especially your [mention something specific you like, e.g., "fantastic guided food tours"].

I am writing to you today with an idea for a potential collaboration. We frequently get requests from visitors for [mention a specific need, e.g., "unique, hands-on culinary experiences"], and I believe a partnership could be highly beneficial for both of us. We could, for example, [propose a simple, clear idea, e.g., "feature your tour as our 'Experience of the Month' on our website and in-center displays," or "develop a special package for our visitors"].

Would you be open to a brief 15-minute call next week to explore this further?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Title], [Name of Tourism Information Center]
[Phone Number] | [Website]

H. EXAMPLE FOR SUCCESSFUL PHONE CONVERSATION

TIC employee:

"Good [morning/afternoon], thank you for calling the [City Name] Tourism information centre. Tourism information specialist [Your Name] is listening. How may I help you?"

Visitor:

"I'm planning a trip to [City/Region]. Just looking for some help."

TIC employee:

"Before I continue our conversation, may I know who is on the line?"

Visitor:

[Visitors Name/Surname]

TIC employee:

"Wonderful! I would be happy to help with that. May I ask a few quick questions to better assist you?"

Questions may include:

- When are you planning to visit [City/Region]?
- How long you are planning to stay?
- Are there any specific interests—nature, culture, events, food, etc.?
- Are you looking for accommodation, transportation or guided tours?

TIC employee:

"Based on what you have shared, here are a few recommendations:"

Examples:

- "For outdoor experiences, is a must-see."
- "For museum experiences, I suggest you to visit..."
- "We have a local food festival happening during your visit."

TIC employee:

"I can send you additional information [travel guide, map or itinerary suggestions by email, etc.]. Would you like me to do that?"

Visitor:

"Yes, that would be great."

TIC employee:

"Great. May I have your e-mail address?"

Visitor:

[.....@.....]

TIC employee:

"Thank you for calling, [Visitor's Name/Surname]! If you need help while you are here, do not hesitate and feel free to stop by our centre or call anytime. Have a nice journey to [City/Region]!"

RESOURCE REFERENCES

Bauska Regional Tourism Centre (2023) Communication Guidelines.

Baltic Country Holidays (Lauku celotajs) (2024) Hiker-friendly. Criteria for Tourism Service Providers.

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Latvian Association of Tourism Information Organizations LATTŪRINFO (2014) Handbook for tourism information providers.

Law on Tourism of the Republic of Lithuania (1998).

Ministry of Education and Science Republic of Latvia (2004). Professional standard for Tourism information consultant in Latvia.

Order No. 4-325 of the Minister of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania (2024) Tourism management in Lithuania. LITHUANIAN TOURISM ROADMAP.

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Travel Lithuania (2024) A study of the infrastructure of Lithuanian tourist sites.

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World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2019) UNWTO Guidelines for Institutional Strengthening of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs).