

## Jointly developed job description “Nature Guide” for Germany, Lithuania and Poland

### Process and Methodology

A central result of the project is the creation of a jointly developed job profile for a professional training of nature guides for the three project countries Poland, Lithuania and Germany. The development was preceded by a thorough analysis of various training schemes in Europe, but also in the USA, at the interface between guided tours and nature conservation. All training courses were discussed and compared with regard to their content and framework conditions in order to later focus on best practice variants that best correspond to the framework conditions of the project countries. After this country-specific analysis, an attempt was made to combine a common denominator or common goals and content, add further content and, if necessary, discuss deviations in the countries. The contents shown below represent an ideal image of a job profile for a nature guide and can be understood as a common value system or guidelines of the partner countries. In the course of creating a framework curriculum (see Outcome 2) and planning the pilot training (both also implemented during the project period), appropriate adjustments were made to the respective national and regional conditions.

### Who is a Nature Guide?

A Nature Guide is an enthusiastic and inspiring person who provides tour offers primarily in nature and presents connections and flagship objects of natural and cultural heritage of a certain area. He / she is a professionally trained mediator who interprets links of ecosystem and human interaction, mainly advocating for deep ecology concepts and bridging his clients towards nature conservation. A Nature Guide is a presenter of most attractive nature sights who leads to experience natural sounds, shapes, senses and tastes, and interprets natural heritage in interactive, intriguing and safe way.

### Responsibilities and Duties

A Nature Guide organizes and leads nature exploration and observation tours, field trips, nature education activities, guides people to the nature and provides in-depth knowledge about the region and its natural wonders. Further he / she provides knowledge-specific or more general tours about certain area's natural heritage in different manner e.g. by bike, foot or canoe. A guide person advocates for nature conservation and in some cases participates in nature conservation actions together with protected areas managers of national parks, nature parks or biosphere reserves. He/ she guides through established routes or designs new route offers while ensuring safety and managing risks during the tours. A Nature Guide is managing bookings and administrative side of business, is caring about the enterprise status on the market and invests in market visibility. In order to have a sustainable existence on the market, he / she builds a network with other nature guides and tour operators (locally and beyond) and creates a connection between nature conservation and the local community that promotes sustainable use of nature by nature tourism offers.

### Typical Working Places

Usually, a nature guide is an entrepreneur in nature tourism, nature conservation or nature education, i.e. he acts primarily outdoors as a tour guide, interpreter or trainer. In addition, he / she can work as an employed nature expedition leader for a travel company or another tourism provider (e.g. a hotel). With the appropriate further qualification, a certified nature guide can also take on practical nature conservation tasks in certain protected areas. In addition, he / she can be active as a teacher in NGOs, private or public institutions with a focus on experiential outdoor and nature education.

### Requirements and Personal Skills

People who want to become a nature guide should meet the following requirements and have the following skills:

- Deep interest in and first knowledge of nature, nature conservation and culture of the area (s) in which you want to be active
- Authentic appearance as part of the area / region
- Respect for local protection area regulations and cooperation with local protected area administrations
- Good communication skills (oral/written) and an interest in dealing with people of different ages, levels of educations and origins
- High service orientation and willingness to provide guidance (strong role presence; playfulness in different topics and situations), to interact with the guest and if necessary, moderate conflicts between guests or different interests
- Completed first aid training
- Minimum age: 18 years
- Knowledge of at least one foreign language (ideally English or the language of a neighboring country)
- basic IT skills for business administration
- Physical fitness for longer distances: on foot, by bike, by canoe, etc. (recommendation if these activities are the focus of your own offer).

### Qualifications and Training

The Nature Guide Training is strongly oriented towards a multidisciplinary approach in terms of content and methods and accordingly contains a good mix of theory and practice: almost half of the training time takes place outdoors and includes countless practical exercises for building your own practical experience.

A variety of methods is used to help provide future tour guests with a wide range of interaction, experiences, fun and learning opportunities – these include, for example: observations and research in nature, experiential group work, interpretation workshops, discussions, presentations, practical and methodical work along lectures, analysis of concrete conflict situations, role-play and simulations.

The training conveys content and values in the following three modules:

#### **I – Nature/culture/history of a specific region and country**

- Basics of ecology and ecosystems,
- Natural resources and social uses (flora, fauna, etc.),
- Ecology and recreational resources,
- Geographical characteristics and geology,
- Socioeconomic and natural environment interaction,
- Cultural landscape,
- Wilderness and animal tracing

#### **II – Management/Legislation/Ethics of a specific region and country**

- Nature protection policy, legislation, and ethics
- Ecotourism / nature tourism
- Meaning and responsibility of nature guide as actor in land use (focus on nature protection),
- Guiding opportunities in protected areas,
- Route planning and trip organizing,
- Risk prevention and safe guiding,
- Marketing and Communication,
- Accounting and finance management, sales management

#### **III – Interpretation/didactics/methodology**

- Environmental and nature interpretation and education,
- Different methods of nature guided tours and active trips, e.g. nature photography, canoeing, biking
- Nature guide's profile and responsibilities, especially leadership and rhetoric qualities
- Interpretive strategies and tools,
- Didactics and methodology of running tourist groups, incl. psychology and problem solving in group,
- Design and evaluation of interpretive routes,
- Outdoor techniques and tools,
- Preparing the route

**After completing a Nature Guide training, the trained person has gained the following competences and skills:**

Keen knowledge of methodology for designing and leading an interpretative tour for various target groups having an enjoyable nature experience. Furthermore, he/ she on the one hand is able to adapt rapidly and flexibly to group needs and changing outdoors conditions and on the other hand uses his / her rhetorical, interactive and group dynamic skills for being an appropriate event host, mediator and group leader. As entrepreneur the trained Nature Guide has keen knowledge in sales, business management, time planning and safety rules, as it is customer service. As important actor for a sustainable tourism he / she is able to organize interesting but also appropriate tours in the nature of protected areas and ecologically sensitive places.