

Guide as a profession and considerations for the professional development of a tourist guide

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Abstract

It is widely recognized that the profession of a tour guide is of great importance in promoting the history and culture of the country. The centuries-old culture and cultural heritage of the Georgian people require significant knowledge and skills in order for the tour guide to convey objective and reliable information to tourists, so that they can form an objective view of Georgia, its culture and diverse heritage. Since the Common European Regulation: Tourism services - Requirements for the provision of professional tourist guide training and qualification programmes (2008) has been in force in the EU member states. Accordingly, each member state uses it in practice. This curriculum is approved and shared by UNESCO, WFTGA (World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations) and UNWTO. This article is an attempt to discuss the feasibility of transferring certain experiences in city excursions in European countries, both in terms of new means of transport (bicycle, electric scooter), and in terms of the new offers established in the guide profession in a number of European cities: guide-driver, guide-procurement consultant and guide-lecturer. Moreover, Article 36 of Chapter VII "Regulation of Tourist Guide Activities" of the "Law of Georgia on Tourism" adopted in December 2023 requires changes in the certification of guides and the entry into force of new regulations from June 1, 2025.

Keywords: City excursions; Professional mastery of a guide; Guide certification; Guide training and professional skills.

Introduction

The development of the tour guide profession depends on many factors, the first of which is legislative provision. In the "Law of Georgia on Tourism", adopted in December 2023, Chapter VII " **Regulation of the Activities of a Tourist Guide**", Article 36. Tourist Guide - there is the following entry:

1. Tourist guide services on the territory of Georgia shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of this Chapter.

2. A tourist guide is obliged to register in the Register of Economic Activities.
3. Certification of a tourist guide is voluntary and is carried out by a personnel certification body accredited by the Accreditation Center, a legal entity under public law. (The law provides: Articles 36 and 37 shall enter into force on June 1, 2025.)⁷

This article focuses on two most important issues: 1. How and by what principles should guides be trained in Georgia; 2. How should the effectiveness of the excursion be checked. Accordingly, a tourist satisfaction index should be determined and at the same time, criteria for the level of tourist satisfaction should be established.

The role of tourist guides is crucial for a country, as they simultaneously act as guides, mediators, interpreters and brokers for the country's culture and heritage. A tourist guide can **influence the tourist's perceptions**, facilitate and enhance intercultural communication and understanding of the local population and culture. A guide, during a tour, not only provides information, **but also expresses the official tourism policy of the state**, creating a "tourist image". Therefore, appropriate education and training are important, which will allow him to answer a variety of questions and respond to any challenge. (Mylonopoulos, 2011: 104; Mylonopoulos & Moira, 2011). Greece is one of the best examples of training guides for cultural tourism with modern methods. Therefore, the analysis of their results and conclusions, which are derived from the responses and assessments of the guides participating in the research conducted in Greece. While Georgia does not have a modern system for training and evaluating guides, we should benefit from the experience accumulated in Greece, Turkey, or other advanced tourist countries. The role of a guide is not limited to guiding visitors to archaeological sites and museums (Ministry of Tourism / GNTTO, nd). He revives the history of the place in relation to the present, deals with traditions, interprets the customs and traditions of the locals, promotes Greek products, Greek gastronomy and Greek music and presents folklore, promotes the Greek language, and also explains to visitors that they use many words of Greek origin in their language (Ministry of Tourism / GNTTO, nd). At the same time, a guide should have discretion and diplomacy in approaching historical truth on national issues, as well as in promoting national interests. A tour guide is often called upon to address negative comments and complaints about a country, as he acts as a liaison between foreign visitors to Greece. A tour guide is someone who will provide guests with relevant information about their trip and will take these guests back to their home countries within the framework of their travel experience. Accordingly, the multifaceted role and influence of a tour guide makes them **ambassadors of their country, always trying to protect and promote the interests of their country**. In conclusion, a tour guide is of unequivocally essential importance not only in terms of the professional training that a professional tour guide must have, but also in terms of appropriate training in Greek culture in order to fully and effectively respond to his work, which requires full responsibility. According to the results of the above-mentioned study, it is clear that the changes made to the education of tourist guides in Greece, by changing the study requirements of candidates, which aimed to reduce the teaching time, as well as

⁷ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6012850?publication=2> (Accessed 12 May 2025)

changes in the curriculum, professors, scripts, internships and foreign tours, have limited the possibilities of tours and created two-speed guides, with a corresponding impact on the labor market. This negative situation clearly forced the Ministry to reopen the Athens School of Tourist Guides in 2018 and the Thessaloniki School of Tourist Guides in 2020 (Ministry of Tourism, 2019). It is necessary to conduct a new survey, which equally concerns both graduates of traditional guide schools and fast-track programs, as well as recipients of guide services (tourists and tourist offices), in order to determine their opinion about the level of competence of guides in this important role.

Main part

1. Review of training programs for cultural tour guides in Georgia.

Since the European Union in 2008 Year 7 In February, the European standard EN 15565 "Tourist Services - Requirements Professional Tourist Guide Preparation And Qualification Programs "For ensuring" has proven that the main question has been resolved in European countries: what issues and topics, with what methodology and for how long should we teach? Our goal is to join the countries implementing the CEN/CENELEC standard: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland And United Kingdom.⁸ This is educational. Program Contains **At least 600 Educational Unit** (TU-training units). (Italics mine, N.K.) One training unit Unit Equals 60 A minute and he Maybe include: lectures, lessons, electronic Teaching, practical Studying, private Studying and tasks. At the same time, the European Standard admits, that in some in the situation This In the paragraph specified Deadlines Volumes I must Expand Historical, Cultural, Geographical And Other Opinions Considering. Any In case, **Practical Teaching Minimum Duration I must to be Educational Program Total Duration 40%**. (Italics mine, N.K.) This European standard was shared by UNESCO, WFTGA (Tourism Guides Association World Federation) and UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization). I would like to clarify once again that this is the minimum standard for guide training, which means that the duration of the guide training program should not be less than 600 hours and 40% of the training should be practical. Unfortunately, in Georgia, such the training of guides under the volume program has not been carried out. I think we should realize that it is impossible to correct the past, and now, when new legislation is being created, let's not make mistakes there and correct the existing shortcomings. At the same time, I do not consider it appropriate to discuss the European standard in detail, because it should be studied in detail by both the organizations implementing the program and each active guide, so that we understand the responsibility that this profession imposes on us.

Another issue that tourist guide training programs, in addition to European countries, have in Asia, Africa and Australia, etc.; In this regard, the Indian model is very interesting.⁹ Where the duration of training is

⁸ <https://www.en-standard.eu/une-en-15565-2008-tourism-services-requirements-for-the-provision-of-professional-tourist-guide-training-and-qualification-programmes/?srsltid=AfmBOoq0W7ba38UDyIg0y5Gdklg3YJiad1Wt6zWe7kEf5eS0gTeg7Ws9> (Viewed: 08.05.2025)

⁹ https://dgt.gov.in/sites/default/files/Tourist%20Guide_CTS2.0_NSQF-3%20%282%29.pdf (accessed 09.05.2025)

one year and it is conducted by the Government of India: through the Directorate General of Training of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The training program is allocated 1200 hours, which is twice as long as the European standard and includes: professional skills - 840 hours; professional knowledge – 240 hours. and employment skills - 120 hours. After receiving the certificate, guides undergo mandatory training of 150 hours annually. What is interesting in this program is the fact that training does not end with receiving the certificate, the guide develops at annual trainings, works on updating his own excursion text, makes changes to it and is informed about the news related to his activity.

2. News that has been dead in some European countries since 2008.

In Europe in the city Tours Modern Methods and Guide Competencies and Service Types The analysis was carried out using the data of a professor at the University of Krakow - Armin Miko's Background Rorscheidt 's ideas.¹⁰ He described Three Mixed The form that Years During They were offering North America And Europe Many Big In the city City Guides and Which in Poland, total in small, embryonic form appeared. This Last one in case, their Different Nature Most Often No is Recognized and For them Specific Term No Used; in fact, typical Guides Services Simply With other options is combined to To be satisfied Specific Needs Each Accident According to:

a) **Driver-guide:** is a personalized option designed for individual travelers and combines the services of a hired driver, a tour leader and, in the case of foreign visitors, often a translator and advisor, for example, regarding local food options. This service is used by affluent tourists visiting the city (and often surrounding attractions) individually or in small family groups. It can also be included (as standard in some organizations) in the program of visits organized for VIPs, such as politicians, CEOs, celebrities, famous artists, hosted by municipal or regional institutions or organizations, or those participating in various events or coming to the city as guests of affluent individuals or companies. Increasingly, this service is also included as part of family gifts (for example, as an element of honeymoon or family anniversary packages). Job requirements for a tourist guide-driver:

- High school diploma; Bachelor's degree preferred
- At least 1 year of experience in customer service
- Knowledge of several languages other than English is desirable
- Physically able to walk and stand for long periods of time
- Good communication skills
- Excellent storyteller

¹⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259527382_Modern_methods_of_guiding_city_tours_Analysis_of_guide's_competences_and_types_of_services (accessed 09.05.2025)

- Creative thinker and ability to improvise
- High organization¹¹

b) **Guide-lecturer (GL)** services are intended for groups and are provided upon special request. Traditionally, such a tour guide begins or ends such a tour with a (multimedia) talk, lecture or presentation. The lecture most often focuses on the history of the city or a specific aspect of it or on a particular case. The topics of the excursion may include biographies of famous citizens, specific aspects of the tangible or intangible cultural heritage of the city or region, the origin of a specific work of art or literature, as well as a historical or critical presentation of a collection or exhibition. Potentially, the service may also be requested by organizations that organize tours for representatives of the mass media and aim to promote the city and its tourist attractions on the market; in the latter case, the guide's personal experience in the relevant field, his reputation and the organizer's confidence in his competence are critically important factors when ordering such a service.

Guide duties: In addition to traditional sightseeing (in this case, including sights and more comprehensive information related to the topic specified by the client), the guide prepares and presents a report or lecture, answers questions and possibly participates in discussions. The guide may also be responsible for selecting a suitable venue for the lecture (conveniently located near the first or last attraction on the route and possibly related to the topic of the lecture, for example, due to its history or the nature of its activities) and for carrying out all relevant arrangements, which, depending on the client's expectations, may also require cooperation with the staff of such venue, including, for example, the provision of food or on-site catering. Skills and abilities required of a guide: In addition to regular qualifications, the guide in this case should have an academic education (usually in a specific field of knowledge), experience in lecturing (ideally, several years of relevant practical experience), and be proficient in the use of modern presentation techniques, as well as contacts with educational or cultural institutions that make it possible to provide such services. For this specific purpose, some clients are looking for a guide who has real achievements in research or popularization of a specific field of knowledge (e.g., co-organizing exhibitions, contributing to a joint publication) or at least someone who is passionate about a specific subject and has proven achievements (e.g., a popular publication).

c) **Dramatized tours (Erlebnisführung)**

Definition of the term: The English term is "adventure performance" or "adventure city tour", and in German: "Erlebnisführung" (experience-oriented guide). The previously analyzed variants of the tour described by this term confirm that the necessary components are: 1. a storyline created according to a pre-developed scenario, 2. historical stylization of the characters (their clothing and, most often, language) and often the environment, as well as 3. sightseeing. As a result of the growing popularity of this form of sightseeing and the lack of in-depth knowledge about it, many variants have emerged using this fashionable term, even though they have little in common with the essential characteristics of the

¹¹ <https://www.comeet.com/resources/job-descriptions/tour-guide> (Viewed 09.05.2025)

service.

What is not a dramatized tour?

- This is not a tour led by a guide dressed in historical costume or using a stylized guide method, or rather: it is not limited to this. It is characterized by a guide dressed in the costume of a historical hero, or a representative of a particular group, community or profession in the clothes of that historical period, as well as a first-person narration, which is indeed an integral part of dramatized tours and is widely used. However, this type of guide does not necessarily include a storyline, i.e. a dramatized scenario, according to which visitors also participate in the reported event, according to a precisely defined course of action based on a specific history, legend or fairy tale or a specific aspect of urban life, or with clear references to them. Therefore, the "historical costume guide" or "stylized guide" should be recognized as another genre, which is only partially related to dramatized tours (since it uses selected features of it). This method seems to be used much more often in Poland than a true dramatized tour, although the latter term is almost always used to describe it.

A dramatized tour is not the equivalent of a staged presentation during a living history event. The latter is a performance based on historical records or a presentation that closely relates to the reality of the period in question. Such a stage is set for spectators (visitors), who in some cases are asked to participate in the presentation (by participating or performing simple activities), but are not obliged to simultaneously participate in the sightseeing. Examples include living history presentations in Little Woodham, UK, where, in a location originally set for a historical film, volunteers play the role of "villagers" dressed in period costumes, acting as if they were living in 1642 and talking about the Civil War between King Charles I and Parliament. In this way, they bring to life village life not only in that period, but also on a specific day in history.

A dramatized tour is not the equivalent of a staged presentation during a living history event. The latter is a performance based on historical records or a presentation that closely relates to the reality of a given period. Such a scene is staged for spectators (visitors), who in some cases are asked to participate in the presentation (by participating or performing simple activities), but are not obliged to simultaneously participate in the sightseeing. Examples include living history presentations in Little Woodham, UK, where, in a location originally set for a historical film, volunteers play the role of "villagers" dressed in period costumes, acting as if they were living in 1642 and talking about the Civil War between King Charles I and Parliament. In this way, they bring to life village life not only in that period, but also on a specific day in history.¹²

3. Taking care of the content of the excursion, the presentation and storytelling methodology.

The content of the excursion depends on the collection and selection of materials available at the

¹² https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259527382_Modern_methods_of_guiding_city_tours_Analysis_of_guide's_competences_and_types_of_services p.66 (accessed 09.05.2025)

excursion sites. Then on the transformation of these materials into an excursion text and finally on the art of transferring the material to tourists. It is necessary for every excursion to have a pre-developed plan, or a technological map, or a checklist, the task of which is to briefly answer seven questions necessary for the guide: 1. What route are we taking; 2. Where are we stopping; 3. What is the object to be shown; 4. How much time is devoted to the object; 5. What is the main topic or subtopic of the excursion to be discussed; 6. Organizational instructions for the guide and tourists; 7. Methodological instructions. Schematically, this requirement looks like this:

Possible name of the document: Plan, or technological map, or checklist						
Route	Stop	Demonstration object	Time	Excursion topic, subtopic	Organizational guidelines	Methodical instructions
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Such a plan, drawn up and checked in advance, does not allow for deviations from the excursion route, skipping stops and objects to be shown, or violating time management. Instead, it ensures the correct resolution of the topics to be discussed on the excursion, organizational issues, and the correct use of the necessary methodological methods. Using such a plan, it is also possible to analyze the excursion. The excursion should be evaluated by conducting a tourist satisfaction survey. Unfortunately, no normative document reflects how to evaluate the professionalism of a guide. Who should analyze the excursion conducted by a guide. Specialists do not have the opportunity to do this. Most recently, my attention, as a researcher interested in the art of the guide, was drawn to the author's program "Next Stop" by journalist Tamar Tsagareishvili on the air of Imedi TV, specifically the program broadcast on April 13, 2025. The archive of the program can be listened to on the Imedi TV website <https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/189196/shemdegi-gachereba--guga-sharashenidze> . Accordingly, from 14.23 minutes to -17.00 minutes of the recording, approx. For three minutes, respondent Gigi Sharashenidze - a researcher of geodynamic processes quotes a guide who was conducting an excursion to the Gelati Temple (presumably with foreigners, because Georgians do not need an explanation for this) as saying, "A few years ago, money was allocated for the restoration of Gelati, and these unscrupulous people (probably government structures, N.K.) ate this money." To what extent was this fact verified for the guide to say these words with confidence? After all, this is a verdict that has not been issued by the court! How justified is it to accuse the government in general, or a specific person, in such a form of assertion, and what purpose does it serve? This fact once again shows how important the guide's interpretation is. There should be mechanisms to check and evaluate the information provided by the guide.

Research results

- The study revealed a discrepancy between the training programs for cultural tourism guides in Georgia and the practices in the rest of the world. In particular, Georgia should strive to introduce the European

standard for guides EN 15565 “Tourist guides” in the country. Services - Requirements Professional Tourist Guide Preparation And Qualification Programs "for provision";

- A step forward in tourism legislation was the adoption of the “Law of Georgia on Tourism” in December 2023. Article 36 of Chapter VII of the Law “ Regulation of Tourist Guide Activities” requires changes in guide certification and the entry into force of new regulations from June 1, 2025. This is a good opportunity to improve the legislation in Georgia to bring guide training programs closer to European standards;
- The work of a tourist guide is constantly developing and changing. Guides choose narrow specialties. As a result, they work in a number of countries: guide-drivers; guide-lecturer; urban Quest And Dramatized Tour guides, etc. It is necessary to reflect the relevant requirements of these changes in the legislation;
- The study revealed that in Georgia it is impossible to listen to the text of the guides without the presence of specialists and outsiders; it is not clear what topics and subtopics are covered in a particular excursion; it is also impossible to determine in what form changes are made to the excursion texts; how scientific and reliable the guide text is.

Conclusion

1. Tourist guide is a creative, knowledge- and skill-based profession that requires specialized professional training, and therefore innovative forms of training should be introduced at the country level;
2. The versatility of the tour guide profession should be taken into account when teaching the profession, as the art of a tour guide is a completely real profession that influences the image of the country. Priorities for the training program(s) should be developed;
3. Tourism in general, and the profession of a tour guide in particular, requires orientation towards the tourist, providing him with reliable, verified information. Accordingly, it is unacceptable to demonstrate narrow party interests and political goals during the excursion;
4. The Georgian government should take care of the introduction and implementation of European standards for training as a tourist guide: this refers to the 2008 Guide Training Programs. Year 7 In accordance with the European standard EN 15565 “Tourist Services - Requirements Professional Tourist Guide Preparation And Qualification Programs "For provision" to be brought into compliance.

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