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## The Need of Producing of Professional Code of Ethics for Guides in Lithuania

**Abstract**

Research problem: Ethical issues is not a much studied topic in the field of guides' professional activity. Lithuanian guides do not have an established Professional Code of Ethics for Guides. The topic of Guide Ethics depends on the personal responsibility of a guide. What ethical principles and values should guide the Guide in professional activities? How can guides agree on unified ethical requirements for professional activity? Research object: the Need of Producing of Professional Code of Ethics for Guides in Lithuania. Research aim: to analyse the Need of Producing of Professional Code of Ethics for Guides in Lithuania. Research methods: analysis of scientific literature and documents, qualitative research – interviews, quantitative research – survey, systematization of databases. Conclusions. It is important to have a Code of Ethics for every organisation striving for effective communication. In addition to other knowledge, a Guide must know professional ethics, represent the country professionally and responsibly. The results of quantitative and qualitative research substantiate the Need of Producing for a Professional Code of Ethics for Guides in Lithuania. The quality of services provided by the tour guide, impeccable preparation and conduct of the tour, the visual image of the tour leader, and cultural behaviour are important for those who book tours. Most of the guides who took part in the study are in favour of Producing the Professional Code of Ethics for Guides in Lithuania. Based on the results of the conducted research, the main ethical principles of the guide's professional activity were highlighted. It is recommended to organize trainings for guides on the topic of professional ethics, to prepare a draft of Professional Code of Ethics for Guides and to present the draft of the Professional Code of Ethics for Guides to Lithuanian guides; to initiate Producing and Implementation of the Professional Code of Ethics for Guides in Lithuanian guide associations.

**Keywords**

professional ethics, tourist guide, excursion, codes of ethics, producing

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**1 Introduction**

**Relevance of the study.** Numerous organizations are increasingly investing in ethics programs, developing codes of ethics, and establishing ethics committees (Gomez-Alatorre, Cuñado & Ferrero, 2022). Academic literature frequently addresses ethics across various professions, underscoring the importance and significance of a code of ethics. However, there is a noticeable gap in literature concerning the ethics of guides, despite their critical role as ambassadors of the country. Guides represent the nation not only to domestic tourists but also to international visitors during tours. A tour involves more than just presenting historical

facts and events; it also requires the guide to address current affairs, respond to tourists' questions, and manage comments, which may not always be tactful or polite. Constant communication occurs between the guide and tour participants, the guide and the person accompanying or serving the tour, and among the guide's colleagues. These interactions involve clients and colleagues from diverse cultures, nationalities, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, political beliefs, or disabilities. Each guide is a unique communicator, handling ethical issues that arise based on their individual experiences, subjective moral beliefs, intuition, and perceptions. The absence of a professional code of ethics for guides in Lithuania

leaves behavior, communication, and the positive representation of the country unregulated.

**Research problem.** The Model Programme for Guide Training specifies that future guides must be familiar with the professional ethical norms for guiding (Order of the Director of the State Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Economy on the Approval of the Model Programme for Guide Training, 2018). However, the training course only allocates a few academic hours to the topic of professional ethics in guiding. Barauskaitė (2012) emphasizes that a deep understanding of professional ethics contributes to effectively representing the country, building a positive image and prestige, appropriately valuing one's profession and quality of work, and fostering tolerance and self-discipline. Yet, considering the limited time dedicated to guide ethics in the training program, and the cursory mention of ethics in guide training materials, it can be argued that the ethical responsibilities of guides are largely left to individual discretion and self-regulation. This raises important questions about which ethical principles and values should underpin a guide's professional activities, and how guides can establish common ethical standards for their profession.

**The object of the study:** the Need of Producing of Professional Code of Ethics for Guides in Lithuania.

**Aim of the study:** To analyze the Need of Producing of Professional Code of Ethics for tour guides in Lithuania.

**Study objectives:**

1. Review the ethical considerations for tour guides in Lithuania and abroad.

1. Determine the need for a professional code of ethics for tour guides in Lithuania.

2. Identify the key principles of professional ethics for tour guides.

**Research methods:** Analysis of scientific literature and documents, qualitative research through interviews, quantitative research via written surveys, and data systematization.

## 2 Ethical Aspects of Guiding in Lithuania and Abroad

In Lithuania, the activities of tour guides are regulated by the Law on Tourism of the Republic of Lithuania (2024), which stipulates that only individuals holding a guide's certificate are authorized to work as tour guides. This certificate is issued to those who have completed a guide training course and possess a higher education degree. The guide training course must adhere to the Model Programme for Guide Training, which includes an introduction to the professional ethics of guiding. Specifically, the course contains a subject titled „Fundamentals of Lithuanian Tourism Law, Legal Regulation of Guides' Activities, and the Professional Ethics and

Professional Aspects (Legal and Commercial) of Guides' Activities“, which is allocated 8 academic hours (Order of the Director of the State Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Economy on the Approval of the Model Programme for the Preparation of Guides, 2018). This means that within those 8 academic hours, aspiring tour guides must familiarize themselves not only with the basics of Lithuanian tourism law and the legal regulations of guiding but also with the professional ethics and aspects of tour guiding. However, this limited time allows for only a brief introduction to the ethical aspects of the profession, which is insufficient for a thorough discussion of ethical behavior, challenges, and solutions in guiding. Furthermore, there is a lack of ongoing training focused on guiding ethics. As a result, many guides rely on universal ethical principles and moral attitudes developed through socialization or habit. According to Misevičius (2009), universal ethical principles alone are inadequate in professional activities because individual moral attitudes vary. This discrepancy means that personal and organizational ethics may not align, making it essential for organizations to establish consistent rules of conduct for all members (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016). This is typically achieved through the creation of a written document – a code of ethics. A code of ethics is the most common organizational tool used to build trust in the profession and shape the ethical thinking and behavior of its members (Gonçalves & Ruiz-Mora, 2020; Ruiz, Martinez, Rodrigo & Diaz, 2015).

In Lithuania, there is no established ethical framework for guiding – guides do not have a professional code of ethics. Despite this, both guides and tour operators acknowledge the ethical challenges that arise in the profession. These challenges often emerge when guides interact with clients, customers, colleagues, or other staff involved in serving tourists. Guides come from diverse age groups, backgrounds, beliefs, nationalities, and races. It is also crucial for guides to recognize that behaviors considered acceptable and polite in one culture may be unacceptable in another.

Lithuania has been a member of the United Nations World Tourism Organization since 2003 (Ministry of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023), signifying its endorsement of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. Lithuanian guides should be well-versed in this Global Code and, in alignment with its principles, should conduct themselves responsibly, exhibit tolerance and hospitality, provide honest and objective information, respect the rights of all individuals – especially vulnerable groups – maintain confidentiality, encourage tourists to respect local customs, preserve the natural environment, and adhere to the restrictions within protected areas. However, due to the specific nature and functions of a tour

guide's work, not all aspects of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism are directly applicable to guiding. Therefore, there is a need for a dedicated document that addresses the unique aspects of the guide's profession – a code of ethics specifically for guides.

In some countries, guides or their organizations are members of the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations or the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations and adhere to their established ethical guidelines. The World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations aims to build connections with tourist guide associations worldwide, strengthen professional cooperation, advocate for the interests of professional guides, represent tourist guide associations on an international level, and elevate the quality and reputation of the guiding profession globally. Additionally, the Federation is committed to promoting high standards of training and ethics within the profession (World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations, 2023a). The World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations is also a signatory to the United Nations World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics (World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations, 2023b).

The European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations collaborates with the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations to promote a positive image of guides across Europe (European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations, 2023). Guides affiliated with both federations adhere to the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations' Code of Conduct. This Code emphasizes the provision of professional guiding services, objectivity, accurate and factual information, honest conduct, the preservation of the country's tourism reputation, respect for local customs, responsible environmental practices, inclusive language, and delivering a positive experience for tourists (World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations, 2023b).

Guide services are available in all European Union (EU) countries. However, not all EU countries have guides who are members of the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations or the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations. Among the 27 EU countries, 21 are members of the European Federation, and 21 are also members of the World Federation. In some EU countries, guides are affiliated with both federations. While some EU countries are not members of either federation, they have established a national professional code of ethics or conduct for their guides. In contrast, guides in Lithuania and Luxembourg are not members of either federation and do not have a code of ethics for guides in their respective countries.

In summary, universal ethical principles alone are insufficient for professional practice. A dedicated code of ethics with clearly defined moral principles, tailored to the specific profession, its goals, and

values, is essential. The European and World Federations of Tourist Guide Associations have been established to promote a high level of professionalism in guiding services. Members of both federations adhere to the World Federation's Code of Conduct. In some European Union countries, even those affiliated with a federation of tourist guide associations, national guide associations have their own code of ethics or conduct, or an approved policy statement on guide behavior. However, guides in the Republic of Lithuania are not members of these federations and have not established or approved a code of ethics for their profession. While Lithuanian guides may refer to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, not all its provisions are directly applicable to guiding. Therefore, there is a need to develop and implement a separate professional code of ethics specifically for guides in Lithuania.

### 3 The Need for a Professional Code of Ethics for Guides in Lithuania

To analyze the need for producing a professional code of ethics for guides in Lithuania, two studies were conducted: a qualitative study through interviews and a quantitative study via written surveys. Participants for the quantitative survey were recruited by reaching out to the eight guide associations operating in Lithuania, as well as through formal and informal social networks for guides.

5 individuals from various regions of Lithuania were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. The selection criteria included: professional involvement in booking or observing guided tours, receiving feedback from tourists on guided tours, knowledge of guiding ethics, and potential personal experience as a guide.

The sample size for the quantitative study was calculated using the Paniotto formula, where \*n\* represents the required number of participants,  $\Delta$  is the margin of error, and \*N\* is the total population (Kasnauskienė, 2010):

$$n = \frac{1}{\Delta^2 + \frac{1}{N}} .$$

Using Paniotto's formula, with a total population of 5,547 guides in Lithuania (State Consumer Rights Protection Service, 2023) and a margin of error of 10%, the required sample size for the study is 98 participants.

The quantitative and qualitative research was conducted between October 30, 2023, and November 15, 2023. A total of 104 guides responded during this period.

**Research ethics.** The research will adhere to the principles of voluntariness, anonymity, confidentiality, objectivity, fairness, and honesty. Participants will be informed about the purpose



of the study, how the data will be used, and will be asked to provide their consent to participate.

### 3.1 The Importance of a Professional Code of Ethics for Guides from the Perspective of Lithuanian Guides

104 guides responded to the quantitative survey: 17 men (16.3%) and 87 women (83.7%). The age distribution of the respondents was as follows: 20-29 years old: 1%, 30-39 years old: 10.6%, 40-49 years old: 26.9%, 50-59 years old: 28.8%, 60-69 years old: 26%, 70+ years old: 6.7%. 2.9% of the respondents have been guiding for up to 1 year, 11.5% for 1-5 years, 25.9% for 6-10 years, 28.9% for 11-20 years, and 30.8% for 21 years or more.

The success of a tour largely depends on the guide's communication skills, mastery of group-specific methods for preparing and conducting the tour, and their impeccable behavior. To assess whether tour operators provide guides with guidelines for appropriate conduct during tours, respondents were asked about their experiences. The survey results revealed that the majority (70.2%) of respondents do not receive any conduct guidelines from tour operators. Nearly a third of the respondents reported that they either regularly (3.8%) or occasionally (26%) receive instructions on how to behave during excursions. An analysis of the experiences of those who do receive or sometimes receive conduct guidelines shows that instructions are provided to guides across varying levels of experience, from beginners to those with over 21 years in the field. These guidelines most commonly include dress code requirements, discussion on guiding, timing considerations, reminders not to smoke in front of tourists, adherence to the tour plan, compliance with contract terms and confidentiality, maintaining cultured and respectful behavior, acting responsibly and positively, performing duties professionally,

avoiding discrimination, steering clear of controversial topics.

The survey results indicate that many Lithuanian guides are concerned with the proper representation of their country or region and the establishment of common ethical standards among their peers. A majority of respondents (67.3%) believe that a code of ethics is necessary for guides, while one-third (32.7%) hold the opposite view. Participants were asked to elaborate on the reasons behind their positive or negative attitudes towards the need for a professional code of ethics for guides in Lithuania. As shown in Table 1, respondents who support the introduction of a professional code of ethics for guides present compelling arguments for its importance. They believe that establishing ethical standards in guiding would enhance the quality of work, bring clarity and prestige to the profession, introduce greater order and responsibility, and serve as an effective tool for conflict prevention. Conversely, those opposed to the code argue that universal ethical principles, already followed by university-educated guides, are sufficient. Their negative stance is often rooted in a deep-seated belief that such a document would be ineffective, the notion that ethical behavior is inherent, and the idea that the market itself will regulate ethical conduct (i.e., unethical guides will simply not be hired). Additionally, they cite the existing ethics training provided during guide preparation and express concern over the lack of an authority to enforce the code, questioning what would make adherence mandatory (Table 1).

The survey also revealed that older participants, particularly those aged 50-59 (50% of this age group) and 60-69 (33.3% of this age group), are more likely to view the creation of a code of ethics as unnecessary bureaucracy.

The quantitative research revealed that one-third of the participants believe that Lithuanian guides do not need a professional code of ethics. Those opposed

TABLE 1 Arguments for and against the introduction of a professional code of ethics for guides in Lithuania

Pros (total: 70 respondents)	Arguments against (total: 34 respondents)
Ensuring the presence of a qualified guide (40%)	Guides are individuals with a high level of education; therefore, overarching ethical standards are adequate (38.2%)
Establishing a shared comprehension of the ethical considerations inherent in the practice of guidance (27.1%)	Doubts about whether the document will make a difference; unnecessary bureaucracy (35.2%)
Importance and prestige of the profession (22.9%)	The lack of an institution to evaluate the guiding profession, the lack of clarity about who will oblige guides to comply with it (8.8%)
Discipline and conflict prevention (20%)	The market selects the right people through natural competition and selection (8.8%)
A tool for respectful, formal communication (5.7%)	No opinion (6%)
Providing correct information (4.2%)	Guides receive ethics training by attending guide courses (5.9%)
Higher education does not guarantee ethical behaviour (4%)	The document will not work (2.9%)
Responsible public opinion-forming, public education (2.6%)	Confidence that in the future everyone will be able to do this work without special accreditation (2.9%)
A way to reduce competition (1.4%)	

Source: compiled by the author based on quantitative survey data, 2023

to its introduction argue that since all guides hold higher education degrees, following universal ethical principles is sufficient. They also note that guides are introduced to professional ethics during their training courses, and that the market naturally selects the best guides. The survey indicated that the older generation is the most skeptical about the effectiveness and relevance of such a document. However, the majority of survey respondents support the introduction of a Professional Code of Ethics for Guides in Lithuania. They believe that this document would enhance the quality of professional guide services, establish a unified understanding of ethical standards, develop guides' moral competence and awareness, strengthen collegiality and trust in the profession, serve as a disciplinary tool, and help prevent conflicts.

The importance of a professional code of ethics for guides from the perspective of tour operators

In order to augment the quantitative investigation, a qualitative analysis was conducted through interviews with five meticulously chosen informants. The data obtained from these interviews has been anonymized to ensure confidentiality. The actions of the interview participants are delineated in Table 2.

Informants were inquired about their engagement in discussions pertaining to ethical conduct with the guide and whether they furnish the guides with a

comprehensive booklet detailing ethical standards (Table 3).

The information presented in Table 3 indicates that three organizations (M, CS, IT) provide guides with instructions on proper conduct during tours. For example, during museum training sessions, guides receive verbal instructions on appropriate behavior within the museum premises. A cruise ship company with years of experience relies on its familiarity with the guides it hires and their established behavioral standards, so it only sends behavioral guidelines and ethical advice via email to new guides. However, another informant (IT), also with extensive experience in the tourism sector, emphasizes that ethical behavior memos are issued to all guides, regardless of experience. This is due to recurring issues even among seasoned guides, such as inappropriate attire, poor hygiene, alcohol consumption, engaging in disputes with clients, breaching confidentiality, and demonstrating a lack of loyalty to their employer. These memos are annexed to the guide's employment contract and are subject to updates and revisions. A representative from the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) shared that while their institution does not currently provide guides with formal ethical behavior guidelines, they believe such guidelines would be beneficial as a preventive measure. Even experienced guides sometimes need reminders and

TABLE 2 Presentation of participants in the qualitative research

Institution	Code	Experience working with guides	Description of activities related to guides
"X" City Tourism Information Centre	TIC	21 years	Organising excursions, creating itineraries, working with guides
"X" Museum	M	12 years	Guide supervision, guide accreditation
Cruise ship service company	CS	More than 20 years	Cruise ship excursion itineraries, booking of guides, organisation of excursions
Inbound tourism travel agency	IT	Personal experience – 10 years, 30 years in a travel agency	Finding guides for organised excursions
Outbound tourism travel agency	OT	Personal experience – 6-7 years, 5 years in a travel agency	Organising excursions, designing itineraries, hiring guides

Source: compiled by the author based on qualitative survey data, 2023

TABLE 3 Importance of guides' ethical behaviour memos for a tourism organisation

Category	Subcategory	Confirmatory statement
The need and importance of ethical rules of conduct for guides – ethical behaviour memos for the organisation	Guides don't need a guidebook on ethical behaviour	"I consider the guide an equal partner. I talk to the guide and if I don't like something, I don't give him a booking" (OT)
	We do not have a guidebook on ethical behaviour ready, but should	"We don't have any rules, but I really think it would be necessary for us" (TIC)
	Guidelines for ethical behaviour are presented orally to guides	"We don't have a written memo, but when we have guide training we discuss it verbally" (M)
	Ethical behaviour memos in writing for new tour guides	"We provide instructions to new guides. Long-timers already know the rules" (CS)
	Rules of ethical behaviour – written memos – given to all guides	"We have prepared memos for tour guides because we have encountered inappropriate behaviour on several occasions" (IT)

Source: compiled by the author based on qualitative research data, 2023

reinforcement of proper conduct. Conversely, the informant with the least practical experience working with guides (OT) expressed that issuing ethical behavior memos might be seen as undermining the guide’s professionalism, potentially treating them as less than equal partners. This informant (OT) also added that meeting and conversing with a guide before booking a tour provides enough insight to make an informed decision on whether to hire them.

Respondents were inquired about the necessity of producing a professional code of ethics for tour guides in Lithuania. As illustrated in Table 4, the opinions of four informants (CS, M, TIC, IT) align on the need for a professional code of ethics for tour guides in Lithuania. They agree that such a document is essential, as tour guides are representatives of the country and serve as its face to visitors. However, one respondent (OT) expressed reservations, believing that codes of ethics can be restrictive and overly rigid (Table 4).

As shown in Table 4, one informant (OT) remains uncertain about the necessity of a professional code of ethics for guides in Lithuania and does not perceive any potential benefits for his organization. On the other hand, the other participants (CS, M, TIC, IT) see clear advantages in developing and adopting a code of ethics for guides. They suggest that it could be a valuable addition to tourism organizations, potentially becoming an integral part of tour booking contracts to ensure service quality and ethical communication. According to an employee of a travel agency (IT), having such a code could eliminate the need for additional ethical briefings for guides.

The analysis of the qualitative research revealed that most tourism establishments involved in booking and providing guiding services offer oral or written ethical briefings to their guides. Nearly all participants in the study believe that developing and effectively implementing a code of ethics for guides would benefit not only the guides themselves but also tourism organizations. The informants emphasized that even guides with extensive experience need occasional reminders about ethical communication. A code of ethics for

guides could serve as an annex to tour booking contracts, reinforcing the importance of maintaining a good reputation and impeccable behavior for all establishments that hire guides.

#### 4 Basic Ethical Principles for Guides

A tour guide must be well-versed in professional ethics, represent the country responsibly, disseminate accurate information, and maintain a presentable appearance and demeanor. The content of publicly available codes of ethics for guides in various EU countries (e.g., Bulgaria, Estonia, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia) emphasizes core values such as responsibility, professionalism, respect, a positive image of the country, and collegiality. These values are equally important for Lithuanian guides in their professional activities.

The survey results indicated that 86.5% of guides view professionalism as the most crucial value in their work. Respect for others was the second most important value, cited by 84.6% of respondents, followed by responsibility (76.9%), respect for the country (63.4%), and reliability (45.1%). Other significant values identified by guides include honesty (41.3%), truthfulness (36.5%), decency (32.6%), professional solidarity (22.1%), loyalty (15.3%), and confidentiality (15.3%).

According to the informants, the most important values in the professional activity of guides include responsibility, professionalism, continuous professional development, awareness, businesslike conduct, respect, confidentiality, and knowledge of etiquette. A responsible and professional guide is well-prepared, creates itineraries tailored to the needs of the group, prioritizes their professional growth, maintains confidentiality, and demonstrates loyalty, objectivity, courtesy, respect, and an understanding of etiquette. The informants noted that some guides fail to maintain a businesslike approach, burdening tourists with personal concerns or unnecessary details about their arrangements with the agency. Inappropriate language or conflicts with other staff members can damage both the guide’s reputation and that of the organization they represent. Therefore,

TABLE 4 The need for a professional code of ethics for guides in Lithuania

Category	Subcategory	Confirmatory statement
The need for a professional code of ethics for guides in Lithuania	Required	"Yes, 100 percent" (IT) "Yes" (CS) "I think so. It has to be necessary and simply obligatory" (M) "Absolutely necessary. Because guides are the face of the country and the city. We need it very much" (TIC)
	Doubt, no certainty	"My guides are all good. What will it say? I can't answer that until I've seen the code of ethics. Maybe it will have strict functions? Give me a look and I'll give you the answer" (OT)

Source: compiled by the author based on qualitative research data, 2023



the informants suggest that a code of ethics for tour guides should emphasize the importance of responsible and professional service, thorough knowledge of etiquette, commitment to professional development, awareness of the guide's duties, respect for clients and colleagues, and the protection of confidential information.

In the survey, 84.2% of guides expressed their expectations and suggestions for what should be emphasized in a professional code of ethics for guides. Key points included professionalism and service quality, regulation of ethical conduct, tolerance and respect for individuals, nations, other cultures, and the organization represented. Other suggestions highlighted the importance of professional solidarity, respect and support for colleagues, fair treatment of routes created by others, sincere attention to tourists, and maintaining appropriate boundaries between guides and tourists. Additionally, the guides emphasized the need to prevent the spread of misinformation, raise awareness of ethical issues within guiding communities, uphold truthfulness and objectivity, avoid personal judgments and taboo topics, and establish rules to ensure client safety and respect for culture.

In conclusion, the key values that guides consider most important in their work are professionalism, respect for individuals and the state, responsibility, and reliability. Tour customers particularly emphasize the guide's responsibility, professionalism, commitment to professional development, awareness, businesslike attitude, respectful and ethical communication, and confidentiality. The codes of ethics for foreign guides highlight similar values, including responsibility, professionalism, respectful communication, the promotion of a positive national image, and collegiality. Based on the research findings and the suggestions for a code of ethics for guides, the following core ethical principles can be identified: professionalism, reliability, integrity, responsibility, professional solidarity, confidentiality, and respect for people and the state. These principles could serve as the foundation for a professional code of ethics for Lithuanian guides.

## 5 Conclusions

1. In Lithuania, guiding is accessible to individuals who have completed a guide training course and obtained a guide certificate. Although the training includes a module on professional ethics, its scope is limited and insufficient for providing future guides with a thorough understanding of the ethical dimensions of their profession. In various countries, guides and guiding organizations form federations of tourist guide associations that operate on a broader geographical scale, striving

for high professionalism in guiding services. These associations adhere to established ethical policies and/or develop national codes of ethics for guiding. Lithuanian guides currently lack a professional code of ethics and are not affiliated with any international federation of tourist guide associations. Consequently, ethical issues in the guiding profession are addressed individually, based on each guide's personal sense of ethical responsibility. While Lithuanian guides can refer to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, the specific nature of their work requires a dedicated document – a professional code of ethics for guides.

2. The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative research strongly indicate the need for a professional code of ethics for guides in Lithuania. The majority of guides surveyed recognize the importance of establishing unified ethical standards within the profession and support the introduction of such a code. A standardized document governing the ethical conduct of guides is essential for the harmonious functioning of guiding communities, the delivery of professional services, and the maintenance of the reputation and image of guides. Tour operators also place high importance on the quality of service provided by guides, including the guide's preparation and conduct during tours, professional appearance, businesslike demeanor, awareness, confidentiality, and adherence to etiquette. Most tour operators, regardless of the guide's age or experience level, provide oral or written instructions on ethical issues. A code of ethics for tour guides could effectively replace the individual ethical behavior memos currently issued by tour operators, becoming an integral part of the tour booking process.

3. A guide integrates both personal and professional values, all of which are essential in their work. The findings from the research highlight key ethical principles that are central to a guide's professional conduct: professionalism and trustworthiness, decency, responsibility, professional solidarity, confidentiality, and respect for individuals and the state. These principles could serve as the foundation for a Code of Professional Ethics for Lithuanian Guides. Drafting and presenting this Code to Lithuanian guides and guide organizations would be the first step toward establishing consistent ethical standards across the profession in Lithuania. The development and implementation of a Code of Ethics for Guides would help to standardize high professional standards for all guides, foster responsibility and awareness, encourage reflection and discussion on guide conduct, and provide a framework for resolving ethical issues. Additionally, it would establish standards for fair competition, protect against unqualified, self-taught guides, strengthen the authority of the profession, and

uphold the highest standards of professionalism and ethics in Lithuania.

### Recommendations

1. Conduct training sessions on professional ethics for guides. Using the research findings, develop and present a draft Code of Professional Ethics for Lithuanian Guides. Engage guides in discussions to

refine the document, and initiate its adoption and implementation within Lithuanian guide associations.

2. Adopt the best practices from other countries by encouraging Lithuanian guide associations to join the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations and/or the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations.

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