

ESTABLISHING A SYSTEM OF QUALIFICATION AND CERTIFICATION FOR TOURIST GUIDES

INTERVENTION BRIEF

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ALBANIA



PARTNERSALBANIA
FOR CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

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1. Understanding the situation of the standard for tourist guides in Albania

As the “ambassadors “of a country, tourist guides play a key role in a country’s tourism industry: they interact closely with visitors and are critical in shaping tourists’ impressions of a country. Indeed, a tourist’s positive experience can attract up to three new tourists – a bad experience can deter eight. High-quality tourist guides have therefore the potential to bring in more tourists, translating into more income for tourism businesses and ultimately job opportunities.

Yet until 2015, being a tourist guide was not considered a formal profession in Albania. This meant that many tourist guides practiced without a recognized certificate or license. Countrywide, there were only around 14 professional tour guides providing good quality services¹.

This changed with a new tourism law in October 2015, which required tourist guides to be properly trained and certified². Moreover, MoEDTTE was designated as the institution to oversee the process of certification, while the certification body would have to fulfil criteria according to the World Federation Tourist Guides Association (WFTGA).

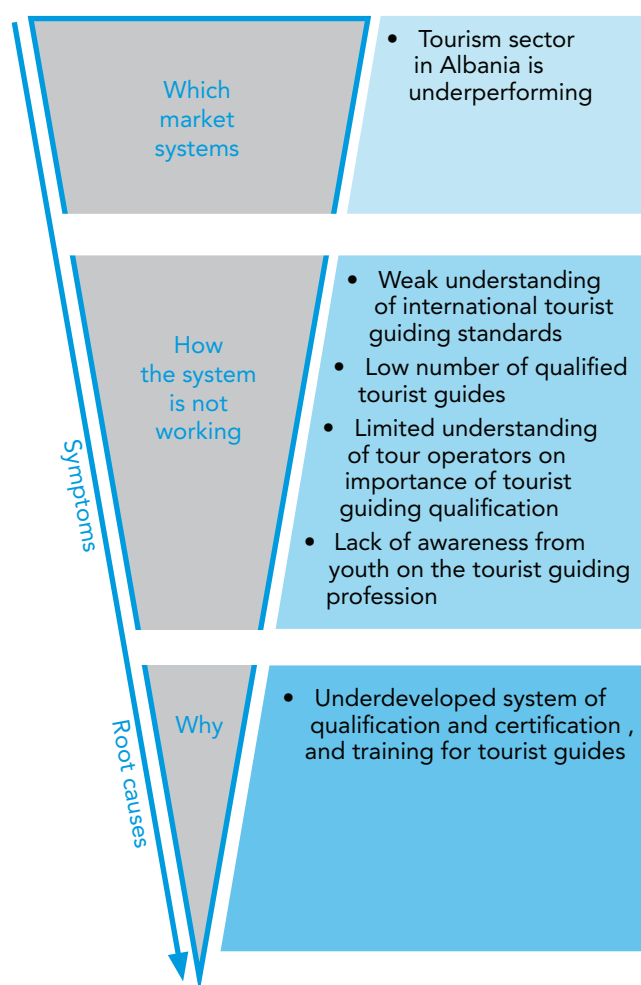


Figure 1: symptoms & root causes

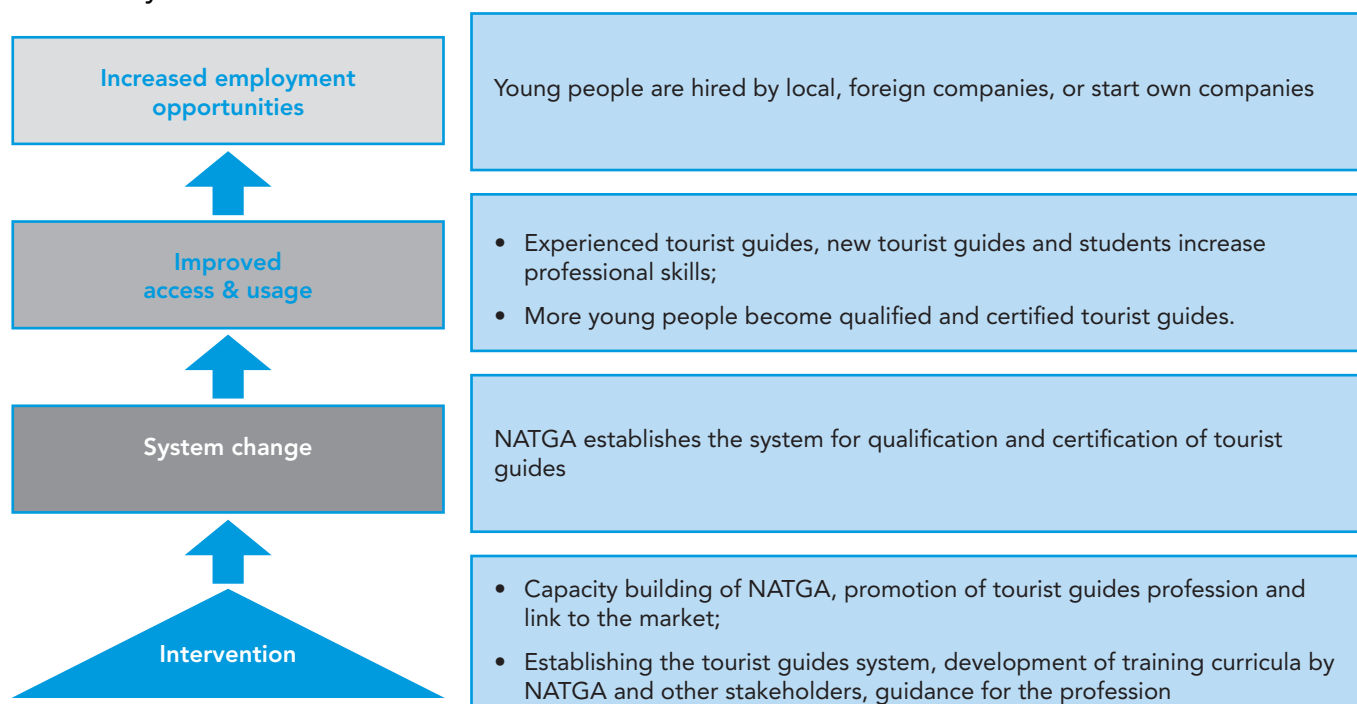
¹ Based on the data given by NATGA and METTE.

² Tourist guide categories according to the new tourism law:
 “National tourist guide,” a person who can guide in the entire territory of the Republic of Albania;
 “Local tourist guide,” a person who can guide in a limited area/locality;
 “Special interest tourist guide,” a person who can guide in specific activities, adventure tourism, and ad hoc interests of select groups of tourists.

2. Strategy and vision

In view of this new law, RisiAlbania's vision was **to establish a system of qualification and certification, so that a) the quality of tour guides in Albania could improve and b) a professional training environment for aspiring tourist guides could be created where particularly young people become aware of employment opportunities as tour guides.** The project, in short, sought to catalyse a vibrant tourism guide ecosystem.

For this purpose, the project partnered with the National Albanian Tourist Guides Association (NATGA). NATGA, as the only Albanian member of WFTGA, was the one actor in Albania that could assume a leadership role in developing a system of qualification and certification for Albania. Beyond increasing the capacity of NATGA in training and certifying tourist guides, the project also sought to help the association become an effective intermediary in connecting tour operators with tourist guides, so that the demand and supply of tourist guides could be effectively matched.



3. Implementation

RisiAlbania focused on helping NATGA to:

- Become a sustainable platform which promotes tourist guiding as a profession;
- Become an effective tool to match supply and demand in the tourist guide market; and
- Uphold international standards for tourist guides.

The project focused particularly on the use of marketing tools to raise the profile of the profession towards young people but also tour operators, so that more tour operators would hire professional tourist guides locally.

The system of qualifications and certifications for tourist guides included:

- Guidelines for each category and subcategory for tourist guides;
- Unified courses for each of the categories and sub categories as provided by the newly approved tourism law;
- Unified texts for each of the theoretical courses; and
- Proposal on who will do what in the qualification and certification system (roles and responsibilities among relevant public institutions, agencies and business associations)

4. Results

With the tourist guides standard system became operational in early 2017, the quality of tourist guides can now be more effectively governed. Since then, NATGA has become an active participant to the four technical working groups of the MEDTTE and has worked closely with the ministry in the evaluation of 246 professionals applying for temporary tourist guides certificate. In spring 2017, 210 tourist guides became officially certified through the new system – a remarkable change for Albania’s tourism landscape.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- Creation of 107 jobs, 40% held by women
- Working hours of the targeted tourist guides have doubled and income has increased by almost 35%, amounting in additional € 128,505 distributed through the tourist guides
- NATGA has strengthened its role as a key player in the Albanian tourism landscape: it has started lobbying more strongly with the government (it played an active role in MEDTTE’s working group on tourist guide certification and ensured the inclusion of the international standard provision in the bylaw for tourist guides), became a member of the European Federation of Tourist Guides Association (FEG), as well as became the organizer of the annual National Tour Guide Conference which boasts more than 120 participants
- NATGA has improved its homepage and introduced a portal connecting freelance tourist guides with companies or individuals requiring a guide, thereby ensuring that the supply and demand for tourist guides is more smoothly managed (www.natga.al).

5. Lessons Learnt

Focusing on the business model is key: RisiAlbania’s work with NATGA primarily focused on developing a strong business plan for the association, emboldening it to strengthen its role in Albania’s tourism landscape. As a result, the association has moved beyond merely providing trainings: it has started lobbying vis-à-vis the government.

Facilitation means being a trust-broker: RisiAlbania’s work with NATGA focused on helping the association network and liaise with other organizations and institutions, helping it to foster key changes in the tourist guide landscape in Albania. This shows that facilitative action rather than mere financial contribution can play an important role in fostering positive changes.

RisiAlbania was established in 2013 to address the problem of youth unemployment in Albania. The project was established by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and is implemented by a consortium of partners consisting of HELVETASSwiss Intercooperation and Partners Albania. The 4 year project has two main pillars. The first focuses on job creation through growth in specific sectors (tourism, agriculture and ICT) and the second focuses on improved labour market information and intermediation services.

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