COMPETENCES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SAFETY OF TOURIST TRAFFIC

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Abstract:

The publication has been devoted to the problem of security of tourist traffic. Article aims to: overview and description of the major tasks incumbent on Local Government to ensure the safety of tourism in the municipal area. Article Summary conclusions and observations are on the recommendations of appropriate procedures covering activities in the field to ensure a high level of security for tourists.

INTRODUCTION

Safety of any community, and even every person is very important; it is security and development that are essential dimensions of the existence of individuals and entire communities, including communities organised in states or international organisations. Currently, safety has social, civilizational, cultural, political, economic, as well as moral and spiritual value. According to the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the sense of safety is one of the most important human needs, notwithstanding where the individual resides, what is his or her age or sex, or what is his or her social position. It is no different for the tourists, who visit the region, the place; they expect providing a sense of security. An important task and duty of local governments is to ensure the safety of people residing in the municipality. This task should be implemented by local governments in cooperation with administration authorities, the tourism industry, as well as legal and natural persons. In addition, the local governments, completing these tasks, must work closely with specialised units, including the emergency ambulance service, fire brigades, Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue, and Volunteer Water Rescue Organisation. It is also important to work closely with the police and municipal guard, Road Transport Inspectorate; i.e., the services aimed at policing and keeping safety of people and properties. The task of each municipality to take action in the field of physical culture and tourism. Each municipality has not only the right, but also a legal obligation to maintain tourist facilities, develop the tourism infrastructure and ensure the safety of visitors to the municipality. Tasks of the municipalities boil down to coordinating activities undertaken by private entities operating in the tourism industry, so they do not violate the law. Implementation of tasks in the field of tourism often involves also a close cooperation with private entrepreneurs and supporting them. The municipalities may, e.g., share their land for the construction of tourism facilities or allocate additional funds for the development of the necessary infrastructure for tourists. The municipalities, supporting those who wish to run a tourism business, can also facilitate registration of the economic activity.

SAFETY OF THE TOURISTS

Safety in tourism is a very comprehensive, multi-layered and very complex topic. Assuming the dictionary definition of safety, one can learn that "safe" means "threatened by nothing", but also "protecting against danger", "sheltering" [2]. And a "tourist" is "a person travelling to another place (...), using the accommodation for at least one night." Tourist

visiting the municipality is a guest, an individual, which, provided with shelter and treated in the area, should also be secured with safe and enjoyable stay by the tourism industry, offices, institutions, organisations, companies and even residents. Leaving aside questions of culture, good manners, hospitality, tolerance; the tourist as a guest; his or her stay in the municipality is seen as a business [4]. The issue of safety in tourism can and should be considered multi-dimensionally. Because the safety of tourists includes:

- **tourist safety before leaving** – credibility of the organiser, relevant service contracts, offer of insurance companies, certain and reliable information about the travel destination, etc.
- **tourist safety during the trip** – proper care of a well-trained pilot, local conditions in the field of safety, consular care, etc.
- **tourist safety during the transport** – attacks threat, road conditions, condition of the means of transport, road crime, transport regulations in the country and state of compliance, signposting, etc.
- **safety of children and young people during the tourist events** and the rest – the issue is very complex in itself, regulated by a number of laws by various ministries.
- **safety during the stay** – fire state of lodging facilities, hygiene and quality of served food, and the state and security of bodies of water, perception of visitors by the local population, etc.

European Travel Commission based in Brussels, in the "Future Trends in Tourism" study, says: "Social changes occur continuously, and trends, whether economic, social or lifestyle-related impact on tourism, since it is an integral part of the social life. Demographic changes will cause in the near future:

- increase in demand for quality, convenience and **safety;**
- increase in demand for **more quiet** entertainment and leisure facilities;
- increase in demand for tourism products for solo travellers, and tourists will prefer places where the locals will be happy to have a growing number of visitors."

Given the importance and influence of the local safety situation and the level of tolerance for sightseers, it appears obvious that in tourism, this translates into an increased need for safety and causes that tourists avoid places perceived as dangerous. This, in turn, has repercussions for the economy of the region [6].

SPECIFICITY OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY
Establishment and implementation of tasks relating to the safety of tourists cannot do without a prior detailed analysis of security, because it is what should be the basis for developing the conclusions and projects, as well as planning individual actions. A very important element determining the validity of the analysis of local safety and public order is giving the local community a possibility to express its views and needs regarding safety issues. This ensures accurate analysis of current problems and threats, and excludes the possibility of imposing proposals for their solution from the outside, which may not be acceptable by the local community. If the desired effect is to be achieved, the most active individuals should be engaged, and local authorities ought to cooperate with them to develop goals and identify the tasks and functions.
Essential local security conditions include [3]:

- **geographical conditions** – climate, water, terrain, natural resources; threats: floods, extreme temperatures, urbanisation, etc.
- **economic conditions** – local budget, economic development or lack of it, financial support from the central budget; threats: low local budget, lack of sufficient financial resources for scheduled tasks, etc.

- **political conditions –** ability to work together for the good of the local population, approach of the centre of the state to local aspirations and needs, rationality and predictability of local political systems, etc.
- **social conditions –** degree of identification with the local community, level of tension and conflict, local elites, active citizenship, range of social pathologies, the degree of self-organisation, etc.
- **cultural conditions –** local traditions, attitude to minority cultures, level of tolerance, political culture, extent of openness to new cultural trends, lifestyle, cultural habits, level of self-discipline, etc.

Collection of data on local safety and public order analysis should be based on:
- **environmental study –** living, environmental, social, cultural, and technological conditions,
- **analysis of crime and threats,**
- **consultation –** collaboration of services with organisations and the local community,
- **identification of other factors –** which may have a significant impact on the situation, nature of safety in the region.

The most important sources of data for the analysis of safety include:
- ➢ **Police sources:** – RSD – register of investigative matters, RSOW – register of cases of misconduct, reconnaissances of community policemen, reconnaissances of Juveniles units, police statistics
- ➢ **Non-police sources:** local media, information gathered by: Municipal Guard, social workers, public opinion research, information obtained from other institutions, organisations, individuals

The end result of the correctly performed analysis of local security and public order will be the ability to identify the threats affecting the region and tourists visiting it.
Analysis of existing threats is a basis for planning preventive measures; it allows to define areas (fields) that are associated with the greatest risk of natural disasters or technical failures. A detailed evaluation with clearly articulated conclusions can be the basis for creating safety improvement programs. Threats with which we have to deal in the modern world are very dynamic. This means that they must be systematically monitored and analysed.
Threat assessment and evaluation of the risk to the local safety and tourist traffic should be based on identifying:
1) Existing threats to the tourist traffic,
2) Relations between various threats,
3) Hierarchy of existing threats,
4) Characteristics of the environment of local community, tourism in the region,
5) Entities having an impact on the prevention and elimination of threats,
6) Forms and methods, which can counteract threats
7) Estimated costs of reducing the incidence of threats.

The term of *risk* is derived from the Italian word*risico* , which primarily means an operation whose outcome is unknown or uncertain, or the possibility that something will succeed or fail, or a condition in which the result to be achieved is unknown, but its future alternatives can be identified, on the assumption that the chances of possible alternatives are known [5]. Risk is associated with all human activities and all forms of existence. Risk management is understood as taking measures aimed at: diagnosis, evaluation, and control of supervision of measures taken. The aim of management is to reduce risk and protection against it. The aim of diagnosis – identification is to define risks; their correct diagnosis is important as it allows to take measures to provide protection against them or their overcoming. In the natural language it means a measure/assessment of a threat or danger arising either from probable events

beyond control, or from possible consequences of decisions undertaken. Generally, risk is an indicator of the condition or event that may lead to losses. It is proportional to the probability that this event occurs and the size of losses that may result from the event. Risk assessment is performed using different rates. The choice of them depends on the type of risk to be assessed. Thanks to the quantification it is possible to identify the risk factors that should be paid a special attention.

Assessment of the threats as well as risk assessment of local safety and tourist traffic can be made by a process comprised of: a multi-faceted collection of information, analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), analysis of an impact of the environment on the community (environmental analysis – PEST), identification of the causes of existing threats for local communities and forecasting and estimating of the likelihood that the threat occurs and its scale.

SENSE OF SAFETY AS A PRIORITY FOUR TOURISTS

Tourists around the world are most concerned about their safety on their journey and thoroughly check the reputation of places to which they go. Nowadays, it is not only a book or map, but also the Internet and travel portals that for them, are often the primary source of information about particular places, regions or countries to which want to go. A global study on behaviours and trends among tourists conducted by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) showed that safety is the most important factor in choosing the destination for more than 2/3 of respondents [7]:

- 67% of respondents indicated "safety" as the most important determinant of the destination,
- 60% of respondents point to the "reputation",
- 48% of respondents admit that information from other tourists (about their sense of safety during the visit a particular locality or region) is very important to them,
- for 35% of them, "knowledge and availability of information" about the destination is important.

The international research has been carried out among respondents in more than 70 countries through a website. Its aim was to identify the key factors influencing the decision-making process of travellers, both during recreational and business trips. The most important conclusion from these studies is the fact that: despite the pervasive financial crisis, for the respondents, safety is much more important than the cost of the trip. This means, e.g., that local disturbance holds the tourists back from choosing the location as a destination. Reputation is another key factor: it is the second factor taken into account by respondents considering a trip.

In Poland, there has been carried out a similar research: The Polish Tourism Organisation (POT) asked foreign tourists visiting Poland, how important and essential is for them the safety aspect when choosing the direction of travel. *45% of foreign tourists indicated that safety was very important for them when planning travel to another country and 42% said it was rather important. Only 4% said they had not taken that aspect into account.* What is important, *it is not just about a direct threat to life or health, but also a sense of safety arising from the certainty that in case of health problems, loss of documents, theft, etc., the tourist will get immediate assistance or will be redirected to appropriate services.*

Social changes occur continuously, and trends – whether economic, social or lifestyle-related – impact on tourism, since it represents an integral part of the social life. It is important for the tourism sector to recognise these changes in advance. Current strategies related to products, services, marketing and investments require appropriate adjustments in cases where preferences or customer behaviour develop differently than before. In the past, the supply always dictated the demand, but now, the situation is reversed. The increasing

market saturation and more confident consumers with higher disposable income and leisure time shape the profitability of service providers in the tourism sector. The competition becomes more and more volatile. Although some trends are created by the supply, forecasting trends in the demand should not be ignored, because it is they that are the basis to determine the time and resources necessary to make appropriate adjustments.

Acts of terrorism, regional wars, pollution and other crises have become, unfortunately, a part of our reality and create our need for safety. In tourism, this translates into an increased need for safety and causes tourists avoid destinations that are perceived as dangerous.

COMPETENCES OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM

The tasks of municipal government in the field of improving the safety include [1]:

➢ analysis of safety and public order on the basis of identification and assessment of threats with risk evaluation, and then creation of effective local safety policy and strategy;

➢ cooperation with residents, associations, organisations and business entities related to tourism and leisure,

➢ performance of duties and conduction of matters in the field of the tourist information of the municipality,

➢ keeping records of accommodation, (registry of hotel and half-camp facilities should be updated regularly, so that interested tourists are sure that the service, which they want to use, is still carried out in a given place by the operator.

➢ maintaining trails through the municipality and tourist base

➢ keeping records of business and registration of all people who wish to run a business in the field of tourism services.

Improving the safety of tourists staying on the territory of a municipality will automatically increase the assessment of attractiveness of the region. A sightseer who is disoriented is an easy prey for thieves and frauds. Therefore, it is worth remembering that the basic form of guarantee safety for tourists is to provide comprehensive information that helps travellers get around the area, and warn them of threats and risks, introduce to local laws, customs, cultural and religious differences.

Specific tasks of local government in the field of raising the level of safety for tourists should involve:

➢ ordering of road signs;

➢ design and execution of tourist markings in the region,

➢ execution of maps, information boards at all railway stations and special places for visitors;

➢ running tourist information points,

➢ designation of secure parking places for tourist coaches and planning expansions of guarded car parks;

➢ ordering and renewal of marked trails (an educational action for pedestrians and cyclists) and supervision of compliance with the relevant provisions, on-going control and maintenance of marked trails (hiking, biking, canoeing and horse trails) and supervision of compliance with the relevant provisions by entities involved in marking.

➢ running a toll-free, permanent telephone number,

➢ launching of a web site for tourists,

➢ installation of video surveillance at critical points – railway stations, hotels and selected tourist facilities;

➢ commencement of educational action (media) on raising the importance and significance of the problem among inhabitants.

In addition – introduction of new safety-related topics to training programs for tour guides and tourism industry workers. The training should give a basic information about the town, region, its buildings, offices, institutions and places that are significant for tourists, but also equip with the skills to help in emergency, for example to deal with theft. This training should urgently involve: Municipal Police, Police (competent services), tourist information points, reception staff, taxi drivers, as well as other professional groups.

CONCLUSION
The tourist traffic safety is directly related to responsibility and competence. This analysis allows to draw the following conclusions about the opportunities in ensuring safety for municipal local government units in Poland. It should be an arduously worked out state of cooperation between different entities, where the primary goal is to analyse the tourist traffic safety based on the identification and assessment of threats and risk evaluation, and then create the effective local security policy and strategy. All entities involved in creating goals and tasks related to the safety of tourists should interact with each other, based on a shared objective. The group of these entities can include, in particular, in groups of specialised guards: Border Guard, Municipal Guard, ambulance services, as well as institutions and governmental and non-governmental organisations. Specific provisions and guidelines also indicate citizens as partners in the planned activities. The most common methods of cooperation include: the exchange of information, joint services and training, taking action at the request of interacting partners, the transfer of documentation, assistance, sharing resources and measures.

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