

The Czech service quality system

With support of the EU Structural Funds the Ministry for Regional Development creates the Czech service quality system (CSQS) as a system instrument of state policy tourism. The aim of the CSQS is to improve the quality of tourism services in the Czech Republic, whose level has been perceived as inadequate for a long period. The CSQS provides voluntary access, particularly for small and medium-sized entrepreneurs (organizations) in the field of tourism and services. The system will systematically assist in improving the quality of services and acquire further specialist knowledge. In case the engaged organization meets the requirements of the system, it will be awarded the quality mark. The quality mark can be then used for marketing purposes. Abroad similar systems have successfully strengthened the quality of services for many years and customers have been thoroughly acquainted with the market.

Currently, the basic components of the CSQS are being established. Firstly, the visual style of the system was designed, including the communication strategy whose activities will be launched this year. To create the identity of the system, several market research has been used to map the potential of the system.

At the same time the complete methodology of the system was set and called as the standard of the CSQS. The standard can be applied to a diverse range of service providers in the tourism industry - from the smallest to the largest hotel chains, from private to public organizations. Besides hotels and restaurants, the target group is a ski resort, technical monument, museum, or a private water park. The aim of the standard is to teach entrepreneurs how to systematically measure and improve customer satisfaction.

The standard is not an instruction manual how specifically the service should look like. However, the standard wants to assist organizations to realize what the quality and customer satisfaction is. Many entrepreneurs or managers think that they know customers' needs and expectations and they know how to treat them. But the true is somewhere else. To avoid this prejudice, the standard is a source of inspiration how to treat and take care of customers. The simple quality management tools helps to eliminate weaknesses and highlight strengths so that customers feel that their needs are the focus of the service provider.

Each organization applying for the certification (quality mark) must have its own quality coach. The quality coach is trained to know how to deal with simple tools of quality improvement. After training the coach applies the acquired knowledge and skills in his/her company. Together with colleagues the coach thinks about one or two key processes, writes a simple action plan and begin to implement it. Then the coach reports about the progress in meeting customers' needs to the certification body. The competent certification body decides on the certification which is valid for three years. Nevertheless, each year the certificated organization must prove further progress in the implementation of the action plan. It is therefore a certification based on self-assessment.

One of the key requirements was that the standard must be simple (easy to understand) to be immediately implemented. Therefore, the standard was divided into stage I and stage II. These grades are not distinct from the quality of service, but differ in the intensity of quality management tools. In both grades the organization gets feedback from the certification body about meeting the requirements of the standard. The organization in stage II receives



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as well the report based on a questionnaire survey and mystery shopping.

The standard of the CSQS also covers requirements for selected sectors of tourism. On the basis of the agreement with professional associations, it was determined that hotel sector, camps, cable cars and lifts service, and tourist information centres must fulfil the technical requirements of quality. These requirements go hand in hand with guild standards of professional associations, e.g. Official standard classification of accommodation facilities and other classification systems. In this connection the development of the technical requirements of quality is supported from this project.

Last year the system was secured in terms of organization. Thus, the Certification body (specialized unit within the Ministry for regional development, the Evaluation Centre and Certification Board) and the Centre for training and regional coordination were established. The activities of all units of the system will start step by step in order to launch the certification of various organizations within this year.

The aim of the Ministry for regional development is to include the Czech service quality system (CSQS) into the program Czech quality as one of the quality mark focused on service quality. The European Commission initiated a project which endeavours to establish uniform quality mark in the EU based on the national systems of quality services. And therefore the ministry effort is to develop the Czech service quality system so that it can automatically acquire the European quality mark.

Radek Chaloupka
*Ministry for Regional Development
 of the Czech Republic*

Forthcoming conference

4th International Colloquium on Tourism

The Department of Regional Economics and Administration Faculty of Economics and Administration at Masaryk University in Brno organises in collaboration with the Association of scientific experts in tourism the **fourth annual international colloquium on tourism**. The aim of the conference is to bring together experts from the academic and professional spheres and discuss the current issues in tourism and thus share experience.

The colloquium takes place from 12th to 13th September 2013 at Hotel IRIS in the small wine village of Pavlov (near Mikulov) in South Moravia.

The invitation to the colloquium has accepted guests from the Ministry for Regional Development, CzechTourism and academics from different Czech and Slovak universities who were asked to contribute to the open discussion about issues: new tourism policy in period 2014-2020, marketing strategy of tourism, and research in tourism.

Further information is available at <http://www.econ.muni.cz/udalosti/vedeckovyzkumne/4-mezinarodni-kolokvium-o-cestovnim-ruchu/>.

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