

## ECONOMIC RATIONALE FOR LICENSING TOUR GUIDES IN POLAND

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### **Abstract**

Public involvement in tourism industry is seldom criticized (Jeffries, 2001, 280). The crucial question which is discussed in economic literature regarding tourism market is not whether the intervention is necessary but what shape should it have. Tourism en block is promoted as a panacea for all problems, especially for unemployment issue (Baum and Szivas 2009, 783-794). On the other hand very little is written in both academic and popular publications about efficiency of public spending and benefits from withdrawing public intervention.

Most economists agree there are certain areas of tourism economy where public regulation is indispensable such as tourism information or marketing of tourism destinations (Jeffries 2001, 100-150). Licensing of tour guides belongs to areas which are relatively little researched and where proposed solutions are at least ambiguous (Ap and Wong 2001, 551-563).

In different countries tour guiding is a subject to different regulations which change over time. In Poland city tour guides (in biggest cities) need a licence. This should change according to new regulations. Much of the debate is based rather on the emotional arguments rather than on the economic merits.

The study aims to (1) identify usual arguments rationalizing public intervention on the tourism market, (2) show the specificity of market for tour guiding services, (3) investigate whether usual arguments might support enforcing regulation on the tourism market, (4) determine whether arguments used by lobbying bodies base on the economic arguments in Poland. It was found that arguments used base mostly on emotional rather than economic arguments.

**Keywords** tour guide, licensing, Poland, rationale for public intervention, regulation, tourism

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