

TINTKO

Team für Internationale Touristische Kommunikation

Speech Mr. Walter Krombach, General Manager Willy Scharnow Foundation, ITB 10.03.2011

Many of you meet with the Willy Scharnow-Foundation only once a year – here in Berlin, on the “gala day” of the annual Awards Ceremony. In the twelve months between these appointments, hence in our daily life, key points of the Foundation’s activities focus on the preparing and conducting of seminars, study tours and further vocational training projects. This also includes specific offers for tour guides.

The **Independent Quality Seal Tour Guide**[®] is therefore a logical extension of this task into the destination countries, offering ambitious Incoming Agencies a strong incentive for own qualification measures. The Seal was co-developed five years ago with the Team for International Touristic Communication (TINTKO).

What does this distinction stand for, what are our expectations of an “outstanding” tour guide?

In the catalogs of tour operators, much is being told about encounters, of meeting the people in the host country, learning about their real life and their view of us, the Central Europeans. So very often, this claim remains reduced to a stroll through a bazaar, a visit to a crocodile farm, always of course accompanied by a professional guide.

From an excellent tour guide however, we expect to experience **these great moments of deeper understanding** while on vacation, – thus to comprehend a foreign country in its full complex and contradictory present. This may well apply to China or to Venezuela and – I say this with caution – Egypt or Tunisia.

In fact, the share of demanding and seasoned travellers is continuously rising and we are not talking only about the segment of study tours. The big tour operators have long since recognized the signs of change: initially in long haul trips and increasingly for round trips in general. More often they cooperate with smaller country specialists to improve their own expertise. They expect therefore a similar level from their partner agencies in the destinations.

This year, the Quality Seal is awarded to Amiel Tours from Israel and to GoVacation from Thailand. Over several months, their tour guides and managerial staff had successfully undergone the exhaustive evaluation process. All Seal Bearers commit themselves bindingly to the sustainability of the adopted measures; once the Seal has been awarded, the compliance with the strict set of criteria will be checked periodically by the TINTKO expert team.

Additionally and for the first time, a special distinction will be awarded today to the agencies Caucasus Travel from Georgia and Solentiname Tours from Nicaragua, Seal Bearers since 2007 and 2008 respectively. In cooperation with national Tourism entities, both agencies are strongly committed to foster general improvement of training conditions and quality standards for tour guides in their countries.