

Association of German Language Tour Operators (FDSV)

The language stays offered by every language school and tour operator that is a member of the FDSV satisfy the requirements of the European standard for language-study tour providers (EN 14804) and the even more stringent Quality Guidelines of the FDSV – as independently verified by the FDSV's Scientific Advisory Board.

The language school or tour operator must clearly indicate any of its programmes that are not in compliance with these standards.

The publisher of the European standard for language-study tour providers (EN 14804) in Germany is the German Institute for Standardization (DIN). The standard is copyrighted and available from Beuth Verlag GmbH (www.beuth.de).

1. Voluntary self-evaluation

All FDSV members commit to the ongoing evaluation of their language-stay programmes for the purpose of quality assurance. The individuals, companies and schools tasked with the provision of services must be evaluated on a regular basis. All members are required to ensure that their catalogues and website content are in compliance with these Quality Guidelines.

The independent Scientific Advisory Board of the FDSV reviews members' catalogues to verify the accuracy of the information and ensure compliance with the Quality Guidelines. The FDSV's Scientific Advisory Board also conducts routine on-site school inspections to verify that the catalogue content describing the services of the language schools and tour operators is truthful and accurate.

2. Planning and provision of language-stay programmes

Language schools and tour operators who join the FDSV follow strict Quality Guidelines and commit to exercising extreme care and customer awareness in

- a) the planning and organisation of language stays,
- b) the description of services in their catalogue(s) and other media,
- c) the provision of language-stay services and
- d) the provision of follow-up services.

2.1 Selection and training of employees

The FDSV members work exclusively with selected partner companies in their own countries and abroad whose personnel have been specially trained and qualified in their respective areas of responsibility. All employees must be at least 18 years of age and have not only the respective qualifications, but also the necessary cultural knowledge of the country.

2.2 Supervision of young learners

Language schools and tour operators ensure that high-quality supervision is provided for young learners on their journeys to and from the site and throughout their entire stay. The supervision of young learners must comply with the legal requirements of the respective home and host countries. Both the FDSV Quality Guidelines and the European standard for language-study tour providers (EN 14804) apply.

3. Information prior to conclusion of contract

Programme descriptions (in catalogues, on websites etc.) must include at least the following information:

- a) Detailed contact information for the language school or tour operator:
Company name and structure, all contact information, such as address, telephone number, email address, entry in the business register/company registration number.
- b) Modes of transport:
The modes of transport used (coach, train, aeroplane etc.) must be clearly specified.
- c) Scope of services included in the price of the trip:
Clear description of the scope of services included in the contractually agreed price of the trip, e.g. travel to and from the destination city, local transfers, accommodation, meals, supervision, teaching (see "Organisation of teaching"), any leisure activities included in the price (particularly important in the case of programmes for young learners) etc.
Activities that are available but not included in the price should not be mentioned in potentially misleading statements like "horse riding and golf are available locally", which could give the impression that these activities are included in the price. Optional services must be clearly described as such, specifying the additional costs associated with the use of these services.
- d) Terms of deposit payment (amount and due date):
Information on the amount and due date of the deposit to be paid upon conclusion of the travel contract, along with the due date for the remaining balance. The relevant legal framework is specified in the terms and conditions of the respective company and must comply with the requirements of national travel law.
- e) Date(s) by which the travel documents will be sent:
Clear information must be provided on the date(s) by which the travel documents (tickets, vouchers etc.) will be made available.
- f) Information on the minimum number of participants:
The conditions of participation must specify whether a minimum number of participants is required to enable the course to take place, as well as when the customer would be informed if this number is not reached, whether alternatives would be offered in the case of cancellation and, if so, which.
- g) Information on national public holidays:
Information on the public holidays of the host country, when no classes will be held.
- h) Customs and habits of the host country that differ from those of the traveller's home country:
Information on the fact that the eating, communication and everyday habits of the host country can differ from those of the participant's home country.

4. Booking confirmation and travel documents

The travel contract is not concluded until the seller issues a booking confirmation. Travel documents will be sent or given to the customer no later than one week prior to the date of departure. These include all documents and information required for a problem-free journey:

- a) Travel documents/vouchers:
Airline tickets, train or coach tickets/vouchers including the respective timetables, vouchers for any local transfers that have been booked to/from the airport or

- train/coach station and contact information (including emergency telephone numbers) for the language school and accommodation site.
- b) Transfers and travel accompaniment for young people:
Information on local transfers; information on the accompaniment of school-age children during their trip, all the way to the booked accommodation or, for air travel, at least to/from the destination airport.
 - c) Contact information for the accommodation site:
The address, telephone number and, if applicable, email address of the accommodation site must be made available in a timely manner.
 - d) Contact information for the language school:
Address of the school, telephone number, email address and 24/7 emergency number.
 - e) Information on the first day of classes:
This includes information on the placement test, the schedule of classes and the introduction of contact persons for all relevant areas.
 - f) Information on the destination region:
This includes all information on special characteristics of the host country, cultural customs that should be respected by travellers etc.
 - g) Entry requirements:
If applicable, visa or vaccination requirements, information about cities, city maps.
 - h) General information:
Information must be provided on public transport, the distance/travel time between the accommodation site and the school, local currency, regional climate and any additional costs related to the location.

5. Organisation of teaching

The following minimum requirements must be met:

- a) Training/qualifications of teachers:
Teachers must be at least 18 years of age and have the required native-speaker competence, along with professional qualifications for teaching the respective language as a foreign language and adequate teaching experience.
- b) Classroom equipment and furnishings:
The classrooms must be properly equipped and furnished and have adequate ventilation, as well as heating and/or air conditioning as required. The classrooms should provide a friendly environment that is conducive to learning.
- c) Number and length of lessons:
The number of lessons per week and length of each lesson must be clearly specified in the description of the programme. A minimum of 15 lessons must be offered per week, and each lesson must be at least 45 minutes in length, which is equivalent to a minimum of 11¼ hours of lessons per week. The language school must ensure that all participants (above all participants under the age of 18) attend compulsory classes.
- d) Information on minimum language proficiency level:
The programme description must include information on the minimum language proficiency level for each course.
- e) Special labelling of beginners' courses:
Programmes in which beginners' courses are possible must be specially marked.

- f) Placement test/language proficiency level:
The participant's language proficiency level must be determined through a written placement test prior to the start of the course or no later than the first school day. (Online tests taken prior to arrival are also possible.) The participant must be placed in a learning group with other participants who have the same level of language proficiency.
- g) Maximum number of participants per group:
A learning group should never have more than 15 participants; the maximum number of participants for mini-groups is 8.
- h) Minimum number of participants:
If the booked course appropriate to the participant's level of language proficiency is cancelled owing to an insufficient number of participants, then another course of the same or higher value at the participant's level of language proficiency must be offered at no additional cost.
- i) Teaching young people under the age of 16:
Young people under the age of 16 should not be placed in learning groups with adult participants.
- j) Course contents:
General language courses are focused on building language proficiency and practising listening comprehension. In addition to grammar, vocabulary, text comprehension and topics related to regional and cultural studies, courses should also incorporate the participants' experiences during their stay. This is particularly important for young learners.
For adult programmes, a distinction is made between general language courses and courses that focus on a certain field or profession. The latter cover terminology and topics specific to the respective area of focus.
- k) Certificate of participation:
At the end of the course, each participant receives a certificate of participation that specifies the dates of the course and the level of language proficiency covered by the course based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

6. Accommodation

Depending on the programme, participants can choose between various types of accommodation, such as homestays, boarding schools, shared flats, apartments, student residences, camps, guest houses and hotels. Language schools and tour operators must ensure that all accommodation sites offer the required furnishings and an appropriate level of comfort. Members of the FDSV conduct regular inspections to ensure that the accommodations offered in their catalogues meet the described standards and are in line with the national grading scheme.

6.1 General requirements for accommodation

The furnishings of the accommodation sites, the supervision and support of participants under the age of 18 and the criteria used for selecting accommodation sites must comply with the FDSV Quality Guidelines, the relevant national standards, and the requirements of the European standard for language-study tour providers (EN 14804). The following information must be included in the programme descriptions:

- a) Room category:
The specific room occupancy (e.g. single, double or multi-bed room).

- b) Meals:
Depending on the host country, school, desired level of comfort and price, the customer can choose between several options, from self-catering to full board.
- c) Number of people sharing common areas:
Programme descriptions must specify the number of people who will be sharing common facilities, if applicable (e.g. bathroom, toilet, kitchen, lounge).
- d) Distance between the accommodation site and the language school:
The programme description must specify the distance between the accommodation site and the language school.
- e) Transfer to the accommodation site:
Exact description of services, including how the local transfer to the accommodation site is organised and whether this service is included in the price.
- f) Accommodation for children under the age of 18:
All children under the age of 18 who share a common sleeping area must be of the same gender, and the age difference between the oldest and youngest child can be no greater than three years.
- g) Moving to a different host family:
Upon justified request from a participant, he or she must be moved to a different host family in a timely manner.
- h) Contact person for accommodation:
The organisation must have an accommodation coordinator on site who is responsible for handling all issues related to accommodation.
- i) Supervisors for school-age children and teenagers:
For young-learner programmes, a supervisor must be available for the young people at the accommodation sites.

6.2 Homestays (host families)

- a) Definition of a homestay:
Homestays are single- or multi-person households that offer accommodation to guests. The host provides room and board. The type of board depends on the options booked by the customer based on individual preferences. Homestays can accommodate a maximum of 4 language students at any one time.
- b) Evaluation of the homestay:
Qualified local employees of the tour operator or language school must make personal visits to ensure that the homestays satisfy all requirements in terms of the hospitality of the family and the suitability of the facilities.
- c) Guests of the same native language in a homestay:
If possible, a homestay should never host more than two guests of the same native language at the same time. If for any reason this principle is not followed, the respective information must be included in the programme description.

6.3 Apartments, school residences, hotels etc.

6.3.1 Apartments and school residences

This category includes apartments shared by several people, generally language course participants. The occupants share bathrooms, common areas and cooking facilities.

6.3.2 Student residences, colleges and camps

These types of accommodation are generally only available during the summer holiday months. The occupants share bathrooms, common areas and cooking facilities.

6.3.3 Guest houses and hotels

All standard types of tourist accommodation must comply with the relevant health and safety standards, as well as the national grading scheme for accommodation sites.

7. Leisure programmes

7.1 Leisure programmes for young learners

- a) Definition:
In language stays for young learners, the language courses are complemented by a supervised, age-appropriate leisure programme with excursions, opportunities for relaxation and cultural and sports activities.
- b) Supervision:
The language school and/or tour operator ensures that all leisure activities are supervised by trained instructors or activity leaders and comply with the FDSV Quality Guidelines, as well as the relevant national laws on the protection of children and youth. The following staff-child ratios apply with respect to ages and group size: 1 supervisor per max. 15 participants aged 14 years or older, or 1 supervisor per max. 12 participants under the age of 14.
- c) Services included in price:
The programme descriptions (e.g. in catalogues, on the website) include information specifying which leisure activities are included in the price, as well as the associated admission fees and transport costs, if applicable.
- d) Information on optional activities:
The transport costs and admission fees for leisure activities that are not included in the price of the trip must be mentioned in the catalogues or on the website of the language school or tour operator.

7.2 Leisure programmes for adults

- a) Information on optional, local leisure programmes:
The language school must provide adult participants with information on cultural, social and sports events.
- b) Events/activities that are complementary to the language course:
Every week, group activities and events, such as lectures, study visits or excursions, should be offered.
- c) Deadline for informing participants about leisure activities:
If possible, participants should be given information about upcoming activities one week in advance or at the start of the respective week at the latest.

8. Monitoring participant satisfaction

The language school or tour operator must ensure that data on participant satisfaction is collected and evaluated within the first week of the programme. Any problems must be rectified immediately. After the participant has returned home, another customer-satisfaction survey covering all aspects of the contract services is carried out and evaluated.