

## Research

# The observance of the criterion “Protecting Children from Sexual Exploitation in Tourism” in selected social and sustainability labels in the tourism sector

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## **Object of investigation**

Subject of this research is the analysis of selected social and sustainability label in the tourism sector regarding to the theme "Protecting Children from Sexual Exploitation in Tourism". This involves the question of whether and how the aspect of "measures of child protection" in the underlying criteria and standards occurs and how it is incorporated into the respective certification, for example, through the signing and implementation of the existing "Tourism Child Protection Code" (<http://www.ecpat.de/index.php?id=88>).

## **Context of the results**

The results of this study are an input of EED Tourism Watch to the monitoring working group for the National Action Plan "Protecting children from sexual violence" at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

The National Action Plan "Protecting children from sexual violence" focuses on the role of the private sector, particularly in tourism and the role of tourism businesses related to child protection and children's rights.

The voluntary commitment of the travel industry is frequently the subject of monitoring. As part of sustainability efforts and concepts of voluntary corporate responsibility in tourism more and more certification systems and sustainability labels arise. There are over 100 labels worldwide. Most of them are concerned purely with environmental issues, but increasingly social aspects also become subject of the certification.

The aim is to promote a proactive child protection policy of tourism businesses in the context of social certification systems and to make sure that child protection is subject of tourism labels in tourism.

Existing approaches to certification and labelling practice will be identified and described in order to make child protection a basic standard for social certification in tourism. In line with implementing the National Action Plan of the Federal Government, this requirement should be formulated and discussed with the providers of certification systems in tourism.

## **Research methodology**

### ***Selection of investigated Labels***

The research focuses on a selection of 20 labels, listed in the brochure "Sustainability in tourism – A guide through the label jungle". From the point of "credible in terms of sustainability", these labels have been chosen from over 100 worldwide existing tourism labels by reputable European tourism organizations.

Two more labels were included in the analysis: the Rainforest Alliance's Standard for Tourism Operations and Sustainable Travel, and the Sustainable Tourism Eco-certification Program (STEP).

### ***Implementation***

The study was realised between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2012. The necessary information has been gathered through extensive research of the relevant label websites, and in addition by telephone and written requests to the responsible authorities of the label.

The investigation was focused on the presentation of the theme child protection on the relevant website, the analysis of the criteria and standard sets, and the consideration of this issue within the certification process. The investigation relates to certified tourism accommodations, tour operators and travel products or offers.

### ***Evaluation***

The results are summarized in a report and a short PowerPoint presentation.

## **Relevance of the topic "Protecting Children from Sexual Exploitation in Tourism"**

In 2010, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) registered 935 million cross-border tourist arrivals. In 2012 the one billion mark will be exceeded. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) refers to a total of approximately 200 million people which are directly or indirectly working in tourism or in the supply markets. Taking into account these people which are working as a souvenir dealer, as travel guide or which are supporting a family business, the number of people working in tourism rises to around 240 million.

Boosted by the growing tourism industry, sexual exploitation of children, child trafficking and child pornography have become a huge industry. This contrasts with the challenges of prosecuting the perpetrators.

According to the UN Children's Fund UNICEF, about 1.5 million minors are victims of sexual exploitation but the estimated number of unreported cases is supposed to be much higher.

To avoid that children carry away unbearable mental and physical damages there must be integrated effective measures to protect children in existing corporate strategies and business policies. Resulting action plans and measures must be implemented.

The inclusion of child protection criteria in the certification of social and sustainability labels in tourism relates also to consumer demand. The results of a representative survey (Reiseanalyse 2010) with more than 7,500 interviewees in Germany show that 80% of all travellers perceive the problem of child sex tourism. It is considered more important than the protection of the environment and 35% of interviewees explicitly call for a greater commitment from the tourism industry.

## ***The Code of Conduct for "protecting children from sexual exploitation in tourism"***

This code of conduct is applied in terms of a commitment by tour operators or tourism businesses. The code requires of the signing companies a clear statement against the sexual exploitation of children in the tourism business establishment and in contracts with business partners, providing information to report suspected cases as well as an active co-operation with authorities and children's rights organizations. The signatories are committed to participate with their activities and measures in assessment and monitoring procedures.

The Child Protection Code is an effective tool to fight for children's rights and against the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in tourism. Socially responsible travel and tourism companies support with its application to stem the sexual exploitation of minors.

The Code has become established quickly. In 2011 it was signed by nearly 1,000 tour operators, associations, ferries and cruise lines, hotels and hotel chains in 37 countries in Africa, Asia, North, Central and South America, Europe and the Middle East.

The Child Protection Code has become within ten years a global standard in tourism.

## **Criteria and Standards**

Most of the investigated labels have been guided by the following internationally accepted criteria and standards:

- Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC)
- Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism Criteria (STC Partnership)
- Criteria of the forum anders reisen
- ISO 9001 / 14001 / 19011
- EMAS

### ***Excuse Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC)***



The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are an effort to come to a common understanding of sustainable tourism and represents the minimum that any tourism business should aspire to reach. They are organized around four main themes: effective sustainability planning, maximizing social and economic benefits for the local community, enhancing cultural heritage, and reducing negative impacts on the environment. Although the criteria are initially intended for use by the accommodation and tour operation sectors, they have applicability to the

entire tourism industry.

The criteria and indicators have been developed on the basis of already recognized criteria and approaches including, for example, the UNWTO indicators for destinations, the GSTC Criteria for

hotels and tour operators, and other recognized principles and guidelines, certification criteria and indicators. They reflect certification standards, indicators, criteria and best practices from different cultural and geopolitical contexts of the world of tourism and possibly other sectors. Potential indicators were examined for their relevance and practicality as well as their applicability in a variety of destinations. The criteria are a reaction of the tourism sector and civil society to the global challenges of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. The most important cross-cutting themes are poverty reduction, gender equality and environmental sustainability, which include climate change.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria try to harmonize the numerous global certification programs that already exist in the market and give the traveller such a clear and trustworthy recommendation ([http://www.umweltdialog.de/umweltdialog/csr\\_news/2012-02-28\\_Rainforest\\_Alliance\\_Verifizierungsstandard\\_jetzt\\_auch\\_im\\_Tourismus\\_anerkannt.php](http://www.umweltdialog.de/umweltdialog/csr_news/2012-02-28_Rainforest_Alliance_Verifizierungsstandard_jetzt_auch_im_Tourismus_anerkannt.php), September 2012).

The child protection issues in the GSTC-criteria: *"The company has implemented a policy against commercial exploitation, particularly of children and adolescents, including sexual exploitation."* (<http://www.gstccouncil.org/sustainable-tourism-gstc-criteria/criteria-for-hotels-and-tour-operators.html>, September 2012).

Currently, 13 international tourism labels are accredited by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.



- Austrian Ministry of Agriculture - Forestry, Environment and Water (BMLFUW)'s Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism <http://www.umweltzeichen.at>
- Costa Rican Tourist Board (ICT)'s Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) <http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr/en/>
- EarthCheck's company standard [www.earthcheck.org](http://www.earthcheck.org)
- Ecotourism Australia's Advanced Ecotourism Standard [www.ecotourism.org.au](http://www.ecotourism.org.au)
- Ecotourism Australia's Ecotourism Standard [www.ecotourism.org.au](http://www.ecotourism.org.au)
- Ecotourism Ireland's Ecotourism Ireland Label <http://www.ecotourismireland.ie/>
- European Ecotourism Knowledge Network's European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS) <http://www.ecotourism-network.eu/en-about-us/en-ecolnet>
- Fair Trade in Tourism for South Africa (FTTSA) [www.fairtourismsa.org.za](http://www.fairtourismsa.org.za)
- Instituto de Turismo Responsable's Biosphere Hotels <http://www.biospheretourism.com/>
- Japan Ecolodge Association's Environmentally sustainable accommodations standard <http://www.japan-ecolodge.org/english/gaiyou.php>
- Malta Tourism Authority's ECO certification scheme <http://www.mta.com.mt/eco-certification>
- Rainforest Alliance's Standard for Tourism Operations <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/tourism/verification>
- Sustainable Travel International's Sustainable Tourism Eco-Certification Program (STEP) <http://sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/sustainabletourismcertification.html>

Other labels are currently in the process of accreditation, for example CSR Tourism TourCert.

## Results

Of the 22 investigated labels 15 take account of social aspects in their underlying criteria and standards. The other 7 labels are based mainly on environmental criteria.

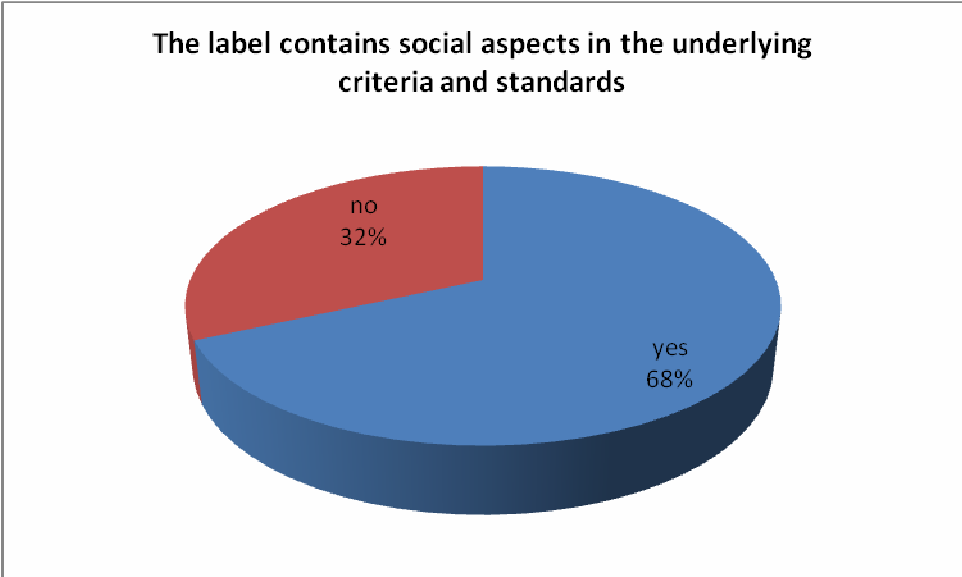


Image 1: Social aspects in the underlying criteria

Here, the term "social aspects" is interpreted broadly. The spectrum ranges from the signing of the internationally recognized Code of Conduct for the "protection of children from sexual exploitation in tourism" as a mandatory criterion for certification (CSR Tourism, Travelife, CST and FTSA) to the note that traveller should disclaim visiting schools (Ecotourism Kenya). Some of the most common criteria under "Social" are:

- Work with local communities (crafts, jobs, delivery of other local products)
- Provide education and training opportunities for local people
- Respect cultural individuality
- Creating an atmosphere that ensures physical and mental well-being of travellers.





The grey marked column in the table shows the labels which do not include social criteria.

The results of the analysis showed that of the 15 investigated labels, which includes social criteria, 10 labels takes into account children protection criteria in the underlying standards. In five labels are no indications about child protection.

### ***In relation to child protection highly recommended label***

Below are the four most compelling label listed:

- Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA),
- CSR Tourism / TourCert,
- Travelife and
- Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST).

These seals are much recommended as mechanisms for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in tourism, because they assigned the Child Protection Code as a required criterion for certification. The tourism businesses are committed to signing this code for maintaining the six criteria established therein.



Most persuading is the website of **Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA)**. There are numerous information, links, and training materials which the site visitor finds easily in the category "Fight Child Exploitation in Tourism".

The initiative "Fight Child Exploitation in Tourism" consists of four areas, one of this is the "Tourism Child Protection Code of Conduct". The other three components of the project are the "Red Card Campaign", public relations and provision of information, training and awareness resources.

The recognition of the „Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Tourism“ is a precondition for successful certification of tourism companies. With signing the code, the certified company bears the responsibility to comply with the six specified criteria of the code:

Suppliers of tourism services adopting the code commit themselves to implement the following six criteria:

1. To establish an ethical policy regarding commercial sexual exploitation of children.
2. To train the personnel in the country of origin and travel destinations.
3. To introduce a clause in contracts with suppliers, stating a common repudiation of commercial sexual exploitation of children.
4. To provide information to travellers by means of catalogues, brochures, in-flight films, ticket-slips, home pages, etc.
5. To provide information to local "key persons" at the destinations.
6. To report annually.

The label **Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST)** treats under the standard point "communication to guests" the theme 'protection of minors from sexual exploitation, pornography and prostitution'. Furthermore, the signing of the Code of Conduct is expected to raise the signatories' awareness and there is also given contact information in the event of relevant observations.

It has not been established clearly whether this is ultimately meant as a mandatory criterion in the certification or as a recommendation.

### ***In relation to child protection recommended labels***

Another eight social and sustainability label clearly committed to protecting children and creating an appropriate corporate policy requirement or having adopted guidelines for child protection at national level.





It is noticeable, that for example on the website of Australia Ecotourism, there is no reference to child protection. Also, none of the 10 categories in the label's criteria set focuses on the issue of child protection. Nevertheless Ecotourism Australia is an accredited member of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) for which - as described above - the aspect of child protection inclusion is mandatory.

The criteria and standards of six of the here listed labels are regarded equivalent to the GSTC criteria because they are accredited by the GSTC. The label's own criteria and standards of the **Rainforest Alliance**, **EarthCheck** and **Sustainable Tourism Eco-certification Program (STEP)** are not specifically been accessible in detail since they are either reserved for members only or were not listed. They could not be tested in the light of the child protection criterion. Because of the accreditation, it can be assumed that they include child protection criteria. On the other hand, there is a clear lack of credibility and transparency if their certification standards, criteria and certification processes are not openly communicated. Concerning the **Green Globe** label, it is difficult to know if the recognition of the criterion is compulsory. Therefore, these labels are only partially being regarded as an effective tool to protect children.

Regarding **Legambiente Turismo** (Italy) and the **Austrian ecolabel**, it can be noted that they focus almost exclusively on environmental criteria. That is why it is worthy of praise that the signing of a codex by, which proves that the certified tourism company adhere national laws to protect minors from sexual exploitation, pornography and prostitution. The signature is a mandatory criterion.

### ***No child protection criteria in the underlying criteria and standards***

In five labels, there are found no indications for integrating child protection criteria into the certification standards, although socio-cultural aspects play a role. This is the case with the **Blue Swallow (Blaue Schwalbe)**, **Ibex fairstay**, **Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS)**, **Ecotourism Kenya / Eco-rating scheme**, and **Smart Voyager**.

However, it is important to keep in mind their focus of certification.

## ***Interest in the results***

As part of making contact with the labels, it became clear that the issue of child protection is partly not a central theme yet. The leaders are very much aware of the central key role of the tourism sector in the fight against sexual exploitation of children. For example the labels Legambiente Turismo, Nordic Swan, Blue Swallow, Green Key and Ecotourism Australia showed interested in the topic and also in the present research results.

Upon interviewing the German branch of the European Ecolabel, Eco Department, Environmental Labelling, the responsible person signalled great interest. Currently, social criteria occupy for that label no role yet. However, they will bring the issue of child protection in the debate on the development of the criteria of the EU Commission as well in a Label working group on social criteria.

The majority of the contacted labels assume an increasing importance of social criteria, in particular child protection, in the coming years. After Sustainability has long been discussed extensively from an ecological perspective, issues of social sustainability appear to be growing widely in importance. The debate about the "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDG) in the wake of the Rio +20 Conference proves this.

## **Recommendations**

The protection of children from sexual exploitation knows no national or corporate boundaries. Sexual exploitation takes place not only in distant tourist regions but just as well in Europe, in our neighbouring countries, and is also not unheard of in Germany. "Look closely, not the other way" is the motto. Guests should not close their eyes if they notice something suspicious. They should be active and talk about it, even though this is difficult. How often child abuse is hushed up although it is known or suspected? We can all do something about it, even in our "best weeks of the year."

Therefore, it is so important to remind the travel industry of its responsibility. By raising the awareness of tourism staff and travellers by promoting a more responsible and more ethical travel comporment, the tourism industry plays a key role as a supporter in the fight against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

### ***Recommendations for the certification of accommodation facilities and tour operators***

- Measures to protect children from sexual exploitation need to be integrated as a required criterion in certification standards
  - introduction and acceptance of the international "Tourism Child Protection Code" or
  - establishment of an appropriate child protection policy.

- Publicity and promotion of the Child Protection Code needs to be increased as a fundamental and indispensable instrument in tourism businesses and tourism destinations at local, regional, national and international levels.
- Improving the representation of this theme on the label websites.
- Suggest to and claim among certification bodies the inclusion of child protection criteria in tourism certification systems.

## Additional material

### *Awareness-raising and training material*

- Video and flyer: „Kleine Seelen, große Gefahr“ (german) and other ECPAT Video Exposing Child Prostitution
- Medium: „Kindersextourismus: 12 weit verbreitete Irrtümer“
- Medium: „Witness – gegen das Wegsehen“

### *Recommendable Websites*

<http://www.thecode.org/>

<http://www.ecpat.de/>

<http://www.fairtourismsa.org.za/>

## Literature and sources

Aktiv zum Schutz der Kinder vor sexueller Ausbeutung - Informationen für die Reisebranche

Fuchs, Heinz, Unterwegs mit Herz und Verstand – „Fair handeln“ ist auch im Tourismus möglich, Tourismus: Begegnungen der anderen Art, INKOTA-Dossier 9 (Juni 2011), S. 3-5.

### Websites (September 2012)

<http://www.thecode.org/>

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<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/tourism/verification>

<http://sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/sustainabletourismcertification.html>

<http://www.biospheretourism.com/www.ecotourism.org.au>

<http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr/en/>

<http://www.umweltzeichen.at>

<http://www.earthcheck.org>

<http://www.fairtourismsa.org.za>

[http://www.umweltdialog.de/umweltdialog/csr\\_news/2012-02-](http://www.umweltdialog.de/umweltdialog/csr_news/2012-02-28)

[28 Rainforest Alliance Verifizierungsstandard jetzt auch im Tourismus anerkannt.php](http://www.umweltdialog.de/umweltdialog/csr_news/2012-02-28)

<http://www.gstcouncil.org/sustainable-tourism-gstc-criteria/criteria-for-hotels-and-tour-operators.html>

<http://www.vertraeglich-reisen.de/bio-urlaub/blaue-schwalbe-kriterien.php>

<http://www.tourcert.org>

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<http://www.ec.europa.eu>

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<http://www.steinbock-label.ch>

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<http://www.greenleafthai.org>

<http://www.ecotourismkenya.org>

<http://www.smartvoyager.org>