



**Documentation**  
**International Symposium**  
**“Human Rights in Practice: Equality in Tourism”**  
**27 June 2019, 10.30 – 17.30**  
**Social Impact Factory, Utrecht, The Netherlands**

**10:30 Welcome, Introduction, Agenda and Speakers**

After welcoming notes from Gerben Hardeman, Sustainability Manager at ANVR and Antje Monshausen, Chair of the Roundtable Human Rights in Tourism, and a short introduction of the Social Impact Factory concept, the moderator Frank Oostdam, President of ANVR welcomed all **participants** and **speakers** and introduced the **agenda** of the day.



**10:50 Why do equal workers' rights matter for businesses – Keynote by Bert van Son, Founder & CEO, MUD Jeans; cf. presentation**

The symposium started with an inspiring talk from **Bert van Son** who founded MUD Jeans in 2012. MUD Jeans is a sustainable and fairly traded denim brand based in the Netherlands. Bert van Son introduced the concept and **sustainability goals** of the company and shared practical examples how they operate with taking into account the Sustainable Development Goals, using new technologies and trying to create a circular economy:

- *MUD Jeans are made of organic cotton with 40% recycled cotton. The goal is to produce a fully recycled jeans. All jeans are vegan, without any leather badges etc.*
- *The company tries to fulfil the principles of circular economy: The main business concept of the company is to lease its clothing to consumers. The jeans are then recycled and leased again, to avoid and minimise waste.*
- *MUD Jeans denims are produced in Tunisia. The company puts much effort in worker-friendly environments in its factories and the production process is made very transparent.*
- *Clothing production and especially jeans production in general is very polluting (with regard to chemicals, water, CO2, waste). The company invests many resources in new technologies that reduce the use of chemicals and resources in the production process (e.g. creating the washed-look). With this approach, MUD Jeans uses 90% less water and chemicals, and produces 90% less waste and CO2 than a “regular” production.*



**11:20 Gender Equality in Tourism – Keynote by Dr. Angela Kalisch, Chair, Equality in Tourism; cf. presentation**

Equality in Tourism International (EiT) is a UK based organisation aiming at policy change and accountability on gender equality and improvement in the working lives and livelihoods of women and their communities, through empowerment of women, leadership in thought, research and practice, working with all sectors of the industry and through transfer and exchange of knowledge, skills and expertise among tourism and development stakeholders. EiT Chair **Dr. Angela Kalisch** gave an overview

on important topics and the status quo of gender equality in tourism and introduced findings of the study “Sun, Sand and Ceilings – Women in Tourism and Hospitality Boardrooms” that was published in 2013 and updated 2018:

- *The focus of the study lies on representation of women in boards of tourism enterprises as a visible key indicator for a company’s strategic commitment to gender equality in key decision-making and leadership roles. There was hardly any progress among tour operators, with only 1% increase of women on company boards since 2013. Professional associations and hotels were the highest performing tourism sectors, with almost 30% and 27% of women on boards respectively. However, that was still under the government recommended target of 33%, which was mostly met, and in some cases exceeded, in other sectors.*
- *There are some improvements but there is still a vast difference between valiant statements and practice; in some cases, there is even active resistance. The slowest progress could be seen in SMEs (99% of European tourism businesses are SMEs)*
  - ➔ *More research is needed on the challenges and resistance strategies to gender mainstreaming practices in tourism and hospitality sector.*
  - ➔ *There is urgency to speed up the process to bring into line policies at workplace and along the supply chains. A positive regulatory framework can help, also focus on links between sustainable tourism and gender equality (see SDGs).*
  - ➔ *EiT develops a [Gender Equality Policy “EiT Pledge”](#) to put in place by companies as integral part of an overall diversity policy to mainstream gender equality throughout the organisation. EiT is currently conducting consultations on the pledge with sector representatives. If you have any comments on the pledge please [contact Dr. Angela Kalisch](#).*



### **11:50 Approaching issues of equality in business operations**

Representatives from the tourism and garment sector presented different challenges for workers along the supply chain, shared interesting approaches and good practises, and discussed on how to improve the situation in tourism. The panel discussion was later opened to a discussion among all participants.

#### **Femke den Hartog (INRetail):**

- INRetail is the largest trade association regarding non-food retail in the Netherlands.
- Every sector is complaining that the value chains are complex. Compared to other sectors, the tourism value chain is very transparent and straight.
- There is no excuse for any business not to know its value chain beyond the first TIER, every business is responsible for the conditions along the complete value chain.
  - ➔ Know your value chain and check your risks!
  - ➔ Communication on the ground with rights-holders is important – it is mostly well received if NGOs and companies come together, also with government institutions.
  - ➔ Outsourcing is not a problem, as long as you know your contractors and sub-contractors – it is very normal in other sectors, and it is all about the way of your supply chain management and getting a sustainable relationship with all your suppliers (“chain of custody”).
- There are various similar issues of different sectors (e.g. the garment and tourism sector) regarding human rights due diligence, and a lot of support and tools on human rights due diligence exist from various sectors.
  - ➔ Trans-sector collaboration and exchange on similar challenges and solutions would be very helpful and needs to be enforced.
  - ➔ A broader perspective is necessary, beyond sectors, thinking in decades...



### Jamie Sweeting (G Adventures)

- G Adventures is a social enterprise with a strong sustainability strategy and its own foundation (Planeterra Foundation).
- G Adventures closely works with their stakeholders and suppliers along the value chain. The company's focuses on [community development work](#) to uphold visited communities' traditions and customs. It is important to work closely together with local NGOs.
- Without an intrinsic motivation and strong commitment of the company's management human rights due diligence is not possible as long as there are no legal obligations. Voluntary commitments and recommendations have little effects on the operational business level – especially in SMEs.
- A tour operator still has to “follow the money” for creating impact through responsible tourism.



### Jeroen van Vilsteren (Riksja Travel); [cf. presentation](#)



- Riksja Travel offers worldwide tours and actively works on equality along the supply chain. The company closely collaborates with local tour operators and suppliers.
- One approach is to offer travellers the possibility to lend money to entrepreneurs in India, through the microfinance organisation [Wakibi](#). Through this activity Riksja Travel wants to empower women and foster impact for entrepreneurs and their environment who are usually refused loans by traditional banks.

### Massimo Frattini (IUF) [cf. presentation](#)

- IUF is working on [fair working conditions](#), and the elimination of violence and harassment in the tourism and hospitality sector. IUF adopted the [ILO convention and recommendations on workers' rights in the Hospitality and Tourism sector](#).
- IUF is implementing its mandate for [LGBT equality](#) and commits to speak out against injustice against LGBT workers: It supports LGBT workers across the globe and educates their members on the importance of LGBT equality. It provides opportunities for LGBT workers to meet at IUF meetings to discuss how to organise.
- IUF developed an [Action Program for Equality](#) and is actively working on women's equality and equal opportunities for men and women in the hospitality sector. An action plan against gender-based violence and harassment should be negotiated and implemented in all workplaces.



## **14:15 Impulse & Exchange sessions: Approaching issues of equality in business operations**

The afternoon workshop sessions offered a great opportunity to exchange and learn from each other. Experts gave short impulses on four thematic areas to start a discussion on participants' experiences, challenges and questions:

### **1. Massimo Frattini (IUF):**

#### **Workers' rights at risk – how to handle outsourcing challenges**

Participants of this working group took the chance to learn more about the international human rights instruments and ILO conventions. They showed interest to understand them in order to strengthen their capacities to apply existing frameworks and conventions in their operations. A training session on international human rights instruments to make them known, understood, and show cases how to use and apply them as a SME tour operator would be helpful.



### **2. Jamie Sweeting (G Adventures):**

#### **Implementing equality as SME tour operator**



Participants at this table discussed possibilities and challenges for SME tour operators to implement equality along the supply chain. Jamie Sweeting described in more detail G Adventures' activities and approaches, and gave practical examples and learnings from the operational perspective.

#### **Challenges for SME tour operators**

- Lack of leverage/ influence
- Certification does not work for small and tiny suppliers

#### **Learnings/ Ideas**

- Consumers as watchdog? – customer sensitization, customer service
- Tour leader training is crucial
- Try to operationalise the tools/ guidance as much as possible
  - the easier, the likelier it will get transferred and used
  - no patronizing, but educating
- Find local NGO partner for indigenous/ rural community initiatives
  - Create long-term relationships and trust
  - Get deep insights of needs and challenges, to create sensitive and useful products

### **3. Aude Diepenhorst, Zoë Nussy (Plan International Netherlands):**

#### **Ensuring women's empowerment in Tourism**



Focus of this interactive workshop was on decent work and creating social impact in tourism sector for young people/ women while ensuring child safety. The participants shared ideas and experiences on prioritizing risks related to gender and working conditions, brainstorm on the stakeholders to involve, and co-create possible solutions along the value chain for social impact based on a practical example from Nepal. [cf. summary and results of workshop](#)

**4. Rika Jean-Francois (ITB Berlin), Peter Jordan (Toposophy):  
The necessity to include LGBT+ rights in your tourism strategy. Tasks and challenges.**

Rika Jean-Francois and Peter Jordan gave an overview about the relationship between equal rights (with special regard to LGBT+ persons) and the travel industry; highlighting some of the latest developments in terms of national regulation and progress made by companies in giving visibility to their LGBT+ stakeholders. It proved to be a good opportunity for participants to share their experience in dealing with sensitive issues or challenging cases where clients or partner organizations had experienced discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity while travelling:



**Discussion on demands of LGBT+ travellers and tasks for tour operators**

- In recent years many advances have been made in legislation around the world to accord equal rights to LGBT+ people; however, many LGBT+ people continue to suffer from repression and homophobia.
- By reaching out to gay travellers and staff, giving visibility and creating a welcoming infrastructure, tourism businesses can help to combat homophobia. A general interest on the topic in tourism also can help LGBT+ people in the destinations.
  - Add LGBT+ specific traveller advice (as provided e.g. by foreign ministries as US State Department, UK Foreign Office, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in general risk information that is handed out to all travellers.
  - Where tour operators are aware that their customers are LGBT+ travelers, there is a basic responsibility to point these clients towards specific advice e.g. how to follow the cultural aspects, on existing political restrictions or dangers and to get in touch with the local LGBT+ community and include their experience on-site to prepare for the trip.
- Rather than turning backs on more socially conservative destinations, there is often an opportunity for tour operators and travel agents to select 'progressive partners' in these destinations who are willing to welcome LGBT+ clients and ensure that they have a safe and pleasant journey. Many of these are members of IGLTA (International Gay&Lesbian Travel Association) and/or join places such as the ITB Pink Pavilion.
- It is important for tour operators to ensure that they cater also for LGBT+ travelers' needs, helping to smooth the way with hotels and agents to ensure that travelers are properly welcomed, and not rejected (for example, be aware that LGBT+ travellers needs and interests go far beyond sleeping arrangements).

There are a lot of tools and guidance documents regarding LGBT+ travel (from UN, UNWTO, LGBTI associations worldwide) that can be used and are available online. The workshop's participants agreed that it is necessary to include LGBT+ issues and guidance into the Roundtable Get Started Tool.

**17:15 Closing**

Frank Oostdam shortly summarised the day. Together with Antje Monshausen he thanked the speakers and participants for their valuable contributions.