

PRESS RELEASE

DER Touristik Group Adopts Group-Wide Child Protection Guideline

New Processes and Strict Regulations Are Being Introduced Worldwide.

Cologne/Frankfurt, 15 November 2022. The DER Touristik travel group is increasing its commitment to the protection of children in tourism, and by 20 November 2022, on World Children's Day, it will adopt its first Group-wide child protection guideline. This applies to all business units, including tour operators, destination agencies, its own hotels and travel agencies. "For many years, we've been involved in several industry initiatives and as part of the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (The Code) for the better protection of children against abuse in tourism", says Sören Hartmann, CEO DER Touristik Group. "Previously, our focus has been on the prevention of sexual exploitation – the new child protection guideline goes far beyond this", according to Hartmann.

The new child protection guideline was preceded by a risk analysis of tourism products, and an assessment of how they impact the protection of children's rights. This includes visits to schools and orphanages during trips. "In many cases, such products have been developed with the best intentions, and are also meant to generate donations. But ultimately, they are more harmful than beneficial to the children", as summarised by Laura Steden, Director Corporate Responsibility at DER Touristik Group. For instance, school visits disrupt protection learning environments, create financial dependencies and disregard the personal rights of children.

With the child protection guideline, the DER Touristik Group provides its global units with clearly defined processes and requirements. These entail requirements on products, help with communicating children's rights and child protection, measures to train and raise awareness of employees at tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, destination agencies, tour guides and partners as well as assistance with educating customers.

Existing reporting mechanisms will also be expanded as part of the new child protection guideline. Until now, the focus has been on the reporting platform www.nicht-wegsehen.net, where suspected cases and indications of sexual exploitation of children can be reported. Internal reporting and escalation mechanisms are being introduced, too, in order detect abuses at an early stage and offer support to those affected.

Measures in the DER Touristik Group's Child Protection Guideline Include:

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- **Visits to schools and orphanages** will be classified as prohibited in future, and replaced in all DER Touristik Group travel programmes with programme items compatible with the child protection guideline.
- Rigorous requirements will be placed on **visits to projects** and **homestay offers**, where travellers live with the locals. Those providing project visits and homestays will be trained and made aware of children's rights and the protection of children. They also need to commit to a zero-tolerance stance towards the sexual exploitation of children. What is more, the two-adult principle applies to any situations involving children, according to which children must never be left alone with adults they do not know. Visits to projects as well as accommodation in homestays are being consciously promoted by DER Touristik Group, as this enables communities to be meaningfully integrated into the added value of tourism while also placing strict requirements on the protection of children's rights.
- In future, there will be no more opportunities for volunteering. This is because it is impossible to guarantee that these offers do not involve children.
- Information awareness raising among stakeholders, such as partners and guests, is being expanded, for example with tips on how to deal with begging children and those working as street vendors.

"The prevention of sexual exploitation of children will continue to be a focus topic for us. However, it is also important for us to raise awareness about other manifestations of child exploitation in tourism. We have laid crucial foundations for this with our child protection guideline. We will continue to refine measures and, above all, consistently follow up on them," says Laura Steden.

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Background

DER Touristik Group has its head office in Cologne, Germany, and is REWE Group's travel and tourism division. As one of Europe's leading travel groups, DER Touristik Group encompasses more than 130 companies and employs more than 8,000 people in 16 European countries. Every year, millions of guests travel with one of the group's tour operators or specialists. DER Touristik Group includes tour operators such as DERTOUR, ITS, Meiers Weltreisen, Kuoni, Helvetic Tours, ITS Coop Travel, Billa Reisen, Koning Aap, Apollo, Exim Tours and Fischer, as well as more than 2,300 travel agencies (such as DERTOUR, DERPART, Kuoni, Exim, and Fischer, as well as franchises and partners),



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the hotel brands Sentido, Aldiana, Calimera and COOEE, and the online travel agency Prijsvrij Vakanties. The DER Touristik Group also offers on-site support: The company runs an agency network with 74 offices in 29 travel destinations. The staff in the destination agencies assist the guests of the DER Touristik Group from their arrival at their holiday destination and until their departure. For more information, go to www.dertouristik.com.