

SIDE EVENT  
CHILD RIGHTS AND GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS:  
**Understanding the Nexus Between  
Children's Rights and Human Rights  
Due Diligence**

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*1) With ECPAT's focus on child protection in tourism, how do you see the intersection of children's rights and supply chain due diligence in the tourism sector? What initiatives ECPAT is undertaking in this area?*

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ECPAT is an international network which was founded as an initiative to end child prostitution in Asian tourism. Since then we have learned a lot and are now talking about protecting children in travel and tourism. And we need to do it all over the globe and take responsibility.

When we talk about travel and tourism we mostly think about holidays, good times and a little piece of a perfect world. The sad truth is that children are exploited and trafficked all over the world and that tourism infrastructure is used to do that.

When we travel, we will find children in places they do not belong. In the streets or on the beach, when they should be in school. In nightlife areas and bars when they should be home and in orphanages when they could be with their families.

At a side event of the UN General Assembly 2023, UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children [Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh](#) emphasises the urgent need for collective action to regulate harmful forms of voluntourism through due diligence measures and "do no harm" policies and practices so children are not exploited for profit in the travel and tourism industry.

Austria is one of the countries with the highest numbers of outgoing travelers worldwide. We need to take responsibilities there, as companies who create experiences abroad and send people to far away places and as individual travelers – in business and leisure.

ECPAT Austria has been working in the tourism sector for 20 years now, training and consulting hotels, travel agencies as well as volunteer organizations and working with teachers and students in tourism schools to

raise awareness and give them tools to do their part when it comes to contributing their share to protecting children in their daily work.

We are local representatives of the [international child protection codex The Code](#). Code members have fulfilled certain criteria of child protection including the training of staff, information of their customers and clauses in contracts following a zero tolerance policy towards the exploitation of children.

ECPAT Austria also plays an active role when it comes to shaping regulations of sustainability labels for example the Austrian Environment Label (Austrian Umweltzeichen) and Travelife.

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*2) What are some of the key challenges/gaps you've encountered in promoting child-centric due diligence practices within the tourism industry, and what are ECPAT's future plans to further advance these efforts?*

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In tourism we sell lovely experiences and good times. The temptation is great to think that exploitation is far away, does not concern our products or experiences. But how would you know if you haven't done your due diligence? If you have not checked your partners? If you have no mechanisms in place to protect your business, your partners and your travelers?

This is why we work on every level to raise awareness. The argument that the industry has too few big players who are big enough to make a difference is obsolete. We all are part of the supply chain and especially the smaller businesses have a network which provide opportunities to gain leverage. We therefore need to:

- **Work with intermediaries and partners** from the sector developing voluntourism “products” and “packages” to closely regulate their operation and elaborate measures for the prevention of the commodification of children;
- **Create a regulated system of volunteering and conduct** thorough background checks on volunteers and provide training and support to ensure that they understand and respect the rights of children;
- **Strengthen existing laws** to address all forms of exploitation of children, including the sale, sexual abuse and trafficking of children in travel and tourism
- **All stakeholders** – including international and regional bodies, the private sector, civil society, community actors, should work together to address and respond to the phenomena of voluntourism as part of sustainable and responsible tourism development.

If there is no regulated system, the informal sector comes into action and the risks for children and people in vulnerable situations are even higher.

We have heard voices from the volunteer sector, that after COVID the focus has shifted to work participate in environmental programs rather than in programs with children. But the question there is: What happens if voluntourism is unregulated and disconnected from the companies? What happens in the institutions? Who will check criteria for visitors and volunteers? It will all shift to the informal sector, which is a big challenge already.

Though the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights apply to a universe of tens of thousands of transnational corporations, and millions of other businesses, as well as the informal actors, these – the informal sector – to a large extent, remains out of reach. The informal actors of the tourism industry are typically composed of those small-scale businesses and individuals selling tourism-related services without a license. They usually provide unregulated, uncontrolled, and untaxed services such as local transportation, private accommodation, and work as street vendors, local guides, among others and are the most challenging ones to engage throughout the supply chain.

ECPAT Austria has been working with and supported by the Federal Chancellery and the ministries responsible for children, family and tourism for 14 years now on raising awareness. There has been a Round Table on Ethics in Tourism where ECPAT Austria played a leading role and we are hopeful that regular meetings will be reinstated after COVID now. We have a first round table scheduled in May 2024 and will go from there.



**SIDE EVENT**  
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**Objectives**

- Explore the critical intersection of children's rights and human rights due diligence in global supply chains.
- Highlight the importance of integrating child rights considerations in due diligence processes.
- Facilitate the exchange of strategies to identify, prevent, and address child labour and trafficking risks.
- Foster constructive dialogue to strengthen collective efforts in safeguarding children's rights and combating human trafficking.

**Agenda**

Panel discussion:

- **Katherine Chon**, Director, Trafficking in Persons Office, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- **Elisabeth Andvig**, Programme Specialist, Child Labour and Responsible Business Conduct, UNICEF
- **Kerstin Dohnal**, Project Lead for Sustainability and Child Protection in Tourism, ECPAT Austria
- **Marianne Neumüller-Klapper**, Sustainability and Operations Director, Nespresso Austria

Moderation by **Julia Schellhaas**, Senior Adviser Supply Chains, Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for CTHB

#cthb24

**24<sup>th</sup>** CONFERENCE OF THE ALLIANCE AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

**16 April 2024**  
From 14:00 – 14:55 (CET)  
Hofburg, Room 533

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