

## **Why does the tourism industry support this prevention campaign ?**

The **Belgian Federation of the Tourism Industry (F.T.I.)** serves as an umbrella organisation, upholding the interests of associations and individual enterprises that are directly and indirectly involved in the incoming and outgoing tourist trade in Belgium. As such, it assembles the majority of businesses operating in the tourist industry - the hotel and restaurant trade, caravan parks, travel agents, tour operators, holiday resorts, transport, etc. . . .

By actively joining in the support of this prevention campaign, the tourist industry is seeking to make its voice heard in the fight against child prostitution. As an inherent part of the leisure and tourist activities proposed by all of the FTI members, sustained and ethical tourism in the fullest respect of fellow man, the environment and local cultures is a cardinal element. It goes without saying that due respect for fellow human beings, and those who are most vulnerable in society in particular, should and must come first. The abuse and exploitation of others, and children in particular, constitutes a direct violation of the fundamental aims of tourism.

It should be obvious that the tourist industry will not tolerate cases where ties are forged between the travel industry and the sex industry where vulnerable groups such as the under-aged are seen as sex objects, falling prey to perpetrators turning to acts of sexual exploitation, whether this be on an occasional or a more regular basis. As a rule, travel organisers and travel agents are not in a position to fathom let alone ascertain the reasons why their customers travel to certain destinations where some tourists, a long distance away from home and in an overseas environment, find themselves tempted to actively avail themselves of the services of under-age prostitutes, thereby adding to exacerbate what is the unashamed exploitation of minors.

By assisting in this campaign, the tourism industry emphatically wishes to take a stand against the phenomenon of child prostitution and contribute to providing travellers with reliable information. We feel sure that most people would undoubtedly act quite differently if they knew more about this worldwide problem. The distribution of posters and flyers as well the due focus of attention that goes out to this issue as part of the training of travel representatives locally, all fit in with in the preventive steps the travel industry is seeking to launch to offer children better protection against all types of sexual exploitation.

After all, instilling active awareness of the problem and undertaking a joint approach that addresses the issue is a case of all parties involved in the tourist industry, i.e. travellers, the tourism industry as such, as well as all the authorities involved.

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