

Combat human trafficking: integrating a European cooperative project into tourism education

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The EC Directorate of Home Affairs under the Internal Security Fund funded the Combat human trafficking project. The Combat project concerned Trafficking in Human Beings and sought, in full alignment with the legal and policy framework, to involve all the relevant hospitality and tourism stakeholders in the design of a preventive and remedial training toolkit. This will offer unique, practical and systematic guidance for tourism businesses to combat the trafficking of human beings as a phenomenon (THB)¹. The project had partners from three different countries, namely the UK, Romania and Finland.

What is human trafficking and what was the focus of the Combat project?

According to the European commission, people are trafficked for the purpose of sexual and labour exploitation or the removal of organs. Women and children are particularly affected: women and girls represent 56% of the victims of forced economic exploitation and 98% of the victims of forced commercial sexual exploitation. Children are also trafficked to be exploited for begging or illegal activities, such as petty theft². Therefore, human trafficking is the illegal exploitation of human beings, and human traffickers are criminals who implement these activities. In the 21st century, these kinds of activities are particularly attractive because of policies of open borders within the EU and the flows of human beings to the Western world from developing countries. According to the survey implemented in the project, a significant amount of tourism stakeholders recognise trafficking as a problem and, therefore, in the project the international team developed education materials, practical toolkits for the training of the hotel staff, managers as well as the general management level of hotel chains. In focusing the training on all levels of tourism, we see that good results and effective anti-trafficking work can be implemented. This also links with the effective awareness-raising work that was implemented during the project in all partner countries, at the local level with law enforcement, NGOs and companies. As a

result, the international EUROCHRIE³ umbrella organisation and world tourism organisation UNWTO⁴ labelled the project results as good practices.

How are the work and implementation of the Combat project linked to tourism education at MTI?

The Combat human trafficking project integrated into the teaching processes of the Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI). The project activities condensed to the students of tourism education modules regarding Globalisation and Economics. The learning assignment launched by the preparatory lecture was implemented by the project team members Ms Aulikki Laitinen-Tolonen, Dr Pekka Iivari and Mr Niko Niemisalo. After that, the undergraduate students gathered knowledge on the project topic and reflected on the theme. According to the students, reflection was particularly important since the theme was - despite its current nature - strange and unfamiliar. More than 150 undergraduate students of the institute implemented the task. The teaching was implemented in parallel with the project progress; the students were able to obtain the newest knowledge from the international level as part of their studies. The students also gave reflective presentations related to the topic as part of their studies. At MTI, the integration of the project was considered as successful and, therefore, the practices we established can be modified to other spheres of tourism education that links with R&D.

Concluding remarks

Human trafficking is a global challenge, and when linked with terrorism and other inequalities, it causes a severe threat to tourism as a livelihood and leisure. It also challenges the very nature of the European Union, since it exploits both people and open borders. Therefore, tackling human trafficking is important and the Combat project has made small but significant steps in implementing countermeasures.

References

¹ <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/microsites/combat-human-trafficking/>

² https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/organized-crime-and-human-trafficking/trafficking-in-human-beings_en

³ <http://www.eurochrie.org/>

⁴ <http://ethics.unwto.org/content/protection-children-tourism>