

Successful „Fair Trade on Holidays“ Campaign by the Swiss Working Group on Tourism & Development (akte)

The presentation of "Fair Trade in Tourism" caught on among visitors of Swiss holiday fairs in 2003

More than 800 trade fair visitors signed postcards in support of the campaign for "Fair Trade on Holidays". The campaign was conducted by the Swiss Working Group on Tourism & Development (akte) at holiday fairs that took place in January and February in Berne, Zurich, St. Gallen and Basle. The visitors committed themselves to observing five main principles that affect the preparation of their holiday and their conduct in the host country in order to contribute, as tourists, to Fair Trade in Tourism. About 95 percent of the visitors who signed the postcards also took the opportunity to call upon the tour operators to introduce clear product information to assist them to make an informed decision when booking their holidays. For instance, they expect clear information on how the population in the host country participates in tourism. They also want to know whether the business partners in the destination and the information provided will allow them to get to know the various facets of the host country and the lifestyles of the people, and the actual measures taken to protect the environment in the destination and in transit.

A detailed evaluation of this first large-scale awareness campaign for "Fair Trade on Holidays" in Switzerland showed favourable reactions from trade fair visitors. Every second visitor who stopped at the stall of **akte** for further discussion signed the postcard attached to the information folder which illustrates the criteria for Fair Trade in Tourism. 40 percent of the visitors to the stall preferred to study the folder in detail before signing. Only nine percent were not interested. About 9,000 folders and postcards have been distributed so far. Signed postcards continue to be received by the **akte** office, where more than 1,000 postcards have accumulated in the meantime. This means quite a respectable response rate of far more than ten percent.

More than 36 percent of those who signed the postcards took the opportunity to formulate their own statements in the category "Other aspects that matter to me regarding my holiday". This further illustrates the willingness of travellers to act fairly themselves. The vast majority of the remarks referred to people's own conduct, a fair encounter with local people in the destination, a fair exchange that will benefit the hosts and to environmentally sustainable ways of travelling, including the choice of respective modes of transport. Discussions at the stall also revealed that the Swiss, who in general are quite experienced travellers, are aware of the problems associated with tourism particularly for the population in distant countries, and that they are willing to contribute to putting things right. This openness is certainly also due to a current feeling of insecurity on the side of tourists due to attacks by terrorists and other threats, as expressed by many visitors in discussions at the stall. The evaluation of the **akte** campaign "Fair Trade on Holidays" also confirms and specifies former surveys conducted in Switzerland and other European countries regarding the openness of tourists to environmentally friendly and socially responsible tourism.

80 percent of the potential tourists in the survey at the **akte** stalls expressed a need or a strong need for information on Fair Trade in Tourism. Questions such as "How do I identify a fair

product?" – "What is a fair price?" – "Is there going to be a label such as Max Havelaar in tourism in the near future?", addressed to the **akte** staff at the stall, point to existing deficits and future challenges. These challenges call for a more comprehensive campaign on Fair Trade in Tourism. Tourists need specific assistance to put into practice the good intentions they expressed with regard to more sustainable holidays.

A label for "fair tourism", which would be similar to the credible and independently monitored label introduced by the Swiss Fair Trade Labelling Organisation Max Havelaar Foundation, might facilitate orientation for the customers of tourist products. However, as tourism is a rather complex service sector, such a label is not in sight. This also became clear at the panel discussions organised by **akte** in cooperation with EED-Tourism Watch at the German travel trade fair "Reisepavillon" in Hanover and at the International Tourism Exchange (ITB) in Berlin, as well as at a roundtable discussion with Max Havelaar and "claro fair trade ag" in Basle in early June 2003.

Based on the criteria and the tried and tested instruments of the fair trade movement, efforts should now be made to carefully introduce fair trade principles in tourism. The objective must be to make trade relations in tourism fairer and socially more equitable. The various actors in tourism should be involved in these efforts. This applies particularly to communities in the destinations who should be the primary beneficiaries of Fair Trade in Tourism. There is also a need for consistent lobbying to promote a more equitable framework for international finance and trade policies.

The results of this first awareness campaign on Fair Trade in Tourism are encouraging:

- The tourism industry is getting a chance to develop new products to find a way out of the crisis. Fair Trade is a current trend, which the tourism industry can work towards by assuming social responsibility for the population in the destinations and for the employees in tourism. Responses to these challenges include adequate product design and the introduction of consistent social standards. Clear product declaration, providing customers with adequate information to assist them in booking their holidays, contributes to improving the way in which social and environmental measures are communicated.
- The Working Group on Tourism & Development will continue its programme on "Fair Trade on Holidays" with new projects. This will include a series of consultations with partners from the North and South, a new web-site for tourists with information on Fair Trade in Tourism and extended educational measures in this field. /plus

The campaign "Fair Trade on Holidays" at Swiss holiday fairs in 2003 was conducted and evaluated in cooperation with final year students of the International School of Tourism Management (IST), Zurich. The representation at the Reisepavillon in Hanover and at the International Tourism Exchange (ITB) in Berlin was organised in cooperation with tourism NGOs in Germany and Austria as part of the work of DANTE, the NGO Network for Sustainable Tourism Development. The evaluation report of the campaign "Fair Trade on Holidays" is available in German at www.akte.ch or can be ordered at the office of the Working Group on Tourism & Development (Arbeitskreis Tourismus & Entwicklung - akte), Missionsstr. 21, CH-4003 Basel, Phone +41 61 261 47 42, Fax +41 61 261 47 21, info@akte.ch.

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