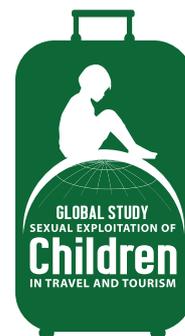


EXPERT PAPER

# WATCH PROGRAMME



## COMBATING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM: A HISTORIC COMMITMENT FROM THE ACCORHOTELS GROUP

Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism (SECTT) is a crucial issue for an international hotel group such as AccorHotels. With over 170 million customers staying in its 3,800 hotels in over 90 countries every year, AccorHotels is determined to combat all forms of sexual abuse of children that could occur on its premises. This is the purpose of the Group's programme called WATCH, We Act Together for CHildren.

This long-standing commitment is the result of the moral responsibility that is intrinsically linked to its work as a hotel operator. It also limits legal and operational risks as well as risks to its reputation.

Protecting underage children against sexual abuse in travel and tourism forms part of the Group's 'Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility Charter', endorsed by the Group's Chairman and CEO and distributed at all levels of internal management as well as, to AccorHotels partners. It is implemented through the 'PLANET 21' programme, AccorHotels' sustainable development strategy. By 2020, the Group aims to have 100 percent of its hotels (including subsidiary, managed and franchised hotels) committed to fighting against child sex abuse in travel and tourism (compared to 88 percent in 2015).

AccorHotels' commitment to fighting the sexual exploitation of children is constantly evolving. Developed at the beginning of the 2000s by general managers of hotels in South East Asia who were directly faced with increasing levels of child sex tourism, the Group has gradually expanded its commitment worldwide. Over a period of more than 10 years, the Group has acquired an increasing level of maturity in understanding local contexts,

awareness and in devising effective measures to address the problem. An awareness of the worldwide dimension of sexual exploitation of children in the travel and tourism sector and the growing danger it can pose to local communities in countries in which the Group operates, has led to AccorHotels' to bolster visibility to its commitment by launching the WATCH programme in 2014.

## **THE NECESSITY OF COLLABORATIVE LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION**

In operational terms, the AccorHotels Group's commitment to combating sexual exploitation of children involves establishing national policies and procedures that are adapted to local issues, providing training to staff and running campaigns to raise awareness among customers.

One of the main difficulties encountered by AccorHotels in the deployment of its WATCH programme is the high level of sensitivity and complexity surrounding the issue of SECTT. The significant variation in contexts between countries and the difficulties in accessing statistical information to better understand the phenomenon, are some of the other challenges. The Group does not always have the resources or expertise it needs within the company to overcome these obstacles.

For this reason, AccorHotels has chosen to take on a partnership-approach to support the development of its child protection programme by establishing close relationships with experts on the issue. Firstly, AccorHotels has long been in partnership with member associations of the End Child Prostitution, Child Phonography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes or the ECPAT network, which can be found in most of the countries in which the Group operates. ECPAT provides an understanding of local issues and realities, networks for looking after victims, and training expertise.

In addition, local and/or international police networks are key partners in developing a procedure at the national level. Regular contact between hotel operators and police forces is a key element in making sexual abuse reporting mechanisms a success.

Finally, AccorHotels is a signatory of the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism initiative. 'The Code', offers a framework that matches the structure of the Group's child protection programme (establishing policies and procedures, training employees, sharing commitments with the value chain and in particular with customers, etc.). By the end of 2015, 38 of the countries in which the Group operates more than 2,700 hotels, signed The Code.

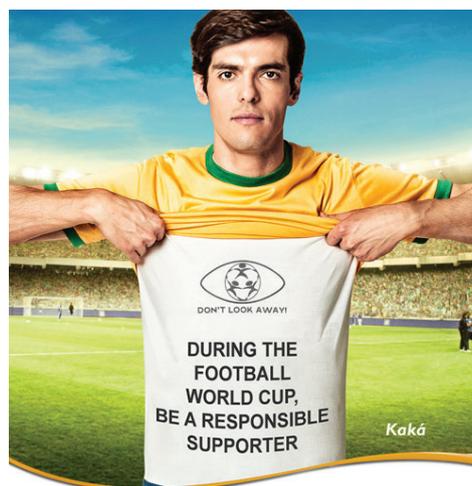
To increase the efficiency of its child protection procedures, AccorHotels has worked in partnership with ECPAT France and French/International Police forces (the Direction de la Coopération Internationale and the Office Central de la Répression des Violences faites aux Personnes). This collaboration has allowed to complete the essential step of awareness raising on SECTT, with the definition of an operational procedure that allows suspected or emergency cases of abuse of minors to be reported. Combining operational experience has made it possible to identify the stakeholders that need to be involved, as well as the information that needs to be shared with these partners to ensure that victims are cared for effectively and that abusers are dealt with by the authorities. This work first led to the production of a 'Reporting Manual' tested in three pilot countries; however, the format proved to lack effectiveness. The working group then developed other formats, such as videos and training documents, which were better suited to the limitations of the field and helped stakeholders take ownership of the content. These tools are now used as part of the WATCH programme.

## THE WATCH PROGRAMME: ACCORHOTELS' OPERATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF SECTT

The launch of the WATCH programme within the AccorHotels network in 2014 was the result of 15 years of commitment to combating sexual exploitation involving children and of lessons learned from a range of local initiatives already carried out throughout the Group. Its purpose is to prevent cases of sexual abuse of minors in the Group's hotels and to react as best as possible in suspected cases or if confirmed cases are detected.

The WATCH programme involves creating a child protection structure at the national level, appointing a WATCH Coordinator who is responsible for coordinating the programme by adapting it to the local context, establishing a method of operation with police forces (local and/or international) and organisations that care for children who have been victims of abuse.

Awareness-raising and training sessions are also organised every year at two levels. Firstly, they target employees who are in direct contact with customers (such as housekeepers and reception staff), who must feel confident and know what is expected of them if they witness situations of abuse. Secondly, they target employees in positions of responsibility (general managers or department heads), who must know their role to take the lead if abuse is detected, acting as a link with the people that care for victims and the authorities. To ensure this training is properly carried out, AccorHotels uses tools developed both within the Group and externally: classroom-based training modules, 'emergency response cards' given to employees, awareness-raising films, e-learning modules, etc.



In Brazil and elsewhere, paying for sex with children is a crime. Together, let's protect them. If you witness a suspicious situation, call 100 in Brazil or report it at [www.reportchildsextourism.eu](http://www.reportchildsextourism.eu)

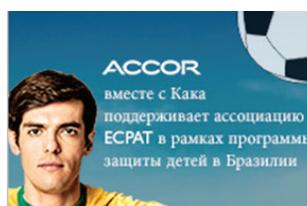
This project is financed by the European Union



Finally, visible communication with customers is a key element in the implementation of the WATCH programme, with a role that prevents potential abuse and supports customers who could also find themselves witnesses to abuse.

This communication can take the form of in-hotel communication (digital displays or posters in common spaces, brochures at receptions, in rooms, etc.) as well as digital communication. For example, before the FIFA World Cup in Brazil in 2014, AccorHotels ran the 'Don't Look Away' campaign, created by ECPAT, on its booking sites.

From mid-2016, the Group will also raise awareness among all customers booking their stay on the Group's booking platforms with a message included in the confirmation email.



### **Examples of detection and reporting of cases of SECTT by AccorHotels/Orbis in Poland**

Thanks to the AccorHotels Poland/Orbis prevention policy and commitment of its employees, in the past three years, several cases were reported to Polish Police as 'suspicious'. Within these situations, two cases (described below) were confirmed, and the offenders were punished in court by the Polish penal code.

#### ***Case no. 1***

1. A man who looks like a regular hotel guest checks-in alone for three nights.
2. What draws the attention of the hotel employees? The man is loud, talking to himself but still – he's alone.
3. What alarmed the receptionist? On the last day of his stay, the suspicious guest enters the hotel with a 10-year-old boy and goes to a room with the boy.
4. The boy escapes the hotel. The hotel manager immediately informs the police.
5. The man returns to the hotel with another boy, but the police are already there.

#### ***Case no. 2***

1. A man who looks like a regular hotel guest checks-in with a boy of approximately 10 years of age.
2. What draws the attention of hotel employees? His relationship with the boy at the swimming pool doesn't appear to be a father and son relationship.
3. The hotel manager immediately informs the police.
4. The situation is fully managed by the police.

## **WIDE-SCALE DEPLOYMENT**

AccorHotels' commitment to combating sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism (SECTT) has enabled over 140,000 employees to receive child protection training since 2002.

In 2015, the involvement of hotels was stepped up further, both in countries that have historically been involved and in those countries across all continents in which little work had been carried out on the issue of child exploitation. In total, 88 percent of AccorHotels network (over 3,000 hotels) have enrolled in the WATCH programme.

The training of employees is a key factor in the actual identification of cases of SECTT. Every year, cases or suspected cases of sexual abuse of minors are detected by AccorHotels teams and reported to the police.

## **15 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AND ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SECTT**

After 15 years of commitment to the fight against SECTT, AccorHotels expertise, involvement and commitment is stronger than ever. Addressing this issue for an international Group as AccorHotels requires a long-term commitment, supported by all levels of management, with regular training updates in collaboration with local partners. AccorHotels has learned from its experience that there are always obstacles to overcome when addressing the issue of SECTT, in particular:

- The attitudes that form part of the hotel profession can sometimes be an obstacle. The traditional 'savoir-faire' of the hoteliers requires attention to the guests needs, the spirit of service and quality, discretion and respect for the guests' privacy; which can

be perceived as challenged by the operational procedures linked to WATCH.

- Preconceived ideas and an under-estimation of the reality of the phenomenon in certain countries (and sometimes the lack of local contacts as a result) remains an important obstacle to the issue being taken up by the largest possible number of people.

To maintain and strengthen the commitment of as many people as possible, it is essential for the Group to communicate even more about the reality of sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism and about levers to encourage action from all parties. The group has also adapted measures to the issues specific to each country, relying on the valuable expertise of relevant partners (NGOs and police forces) and using an appropriate tone and resources to help people to take the message on board.

Once the Group's commitment against SECTT is clearly stated and promoted, the vast majority of employees follow the procedures because it helps give their profession meaning and a shared commitment to a common cause. Experience also shows that guests are truly understanding and grateful for the teams' commitment, even when suspected cases turn out to be false alerts, as it is a demonstration that child protection is seriously addressed in the hotel.

By endorsing its commitment against SECTT in its new Sustainable Development Strategy for the period 2016-2020, AccorHotels demonstrates its intent not only to continue to act within the scope of the company through the most wide-reaching training and awareness-raising measures, but also to act as a leader to encourage the largest possible number of players in the travel and tourism industry to follow suit.

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## ABOUT ACCOR

AccorHotels is a Group united by a shared passion for hospitality and driven by a shared promise to make everyone Feel Welcome.

Over 180,000 women and men in almost 3,800 AccorHotels establishments look after thousands of guests every day in 92 countries.

AccorHotels is the world's leading hotel operator and offers its customers, partners and employees:

- its dual expertise as a hotel operator and franchisor (HotelServices) and a hotel owner and investor (HotellInvest);
- a large portfolio of internationally renowned brands covering the full spectrum, with luxury (Sofitel, Pullman, MGallery, Grand Mercure, The Sebel), midscale (Novotel, Suite Novotel, Mercure, Mama Shelter, Adagio) economy (ibis, ibis Styles, ibis budget, adagio access and hotelF1) establishments;
- a powerful marketplace and loyalty program Le Club AccorHotels
- almost half a century of commitment to corporate citizenship and solidarity with the PLANET 21 program.

*Accor SA shares are listed on the Euronext Paris exchange (ISIN code: FR0000120404) and traded in the USA on the OTC marketplace (Code: ACRFY)*

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Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism  
Email: [globalstudysectt@ecpat.net](mailto:globalstudysectt@ecpat.net)  
Website: [www.globalstudysectt.org](http://www.globalstudysectt.org)