

## PRESS INFORMATION

### **Launch of TUI Academy Sri Lanka – opening up new perspectives for over 150 underprivileged young people through training in hospitality**

- *New initiative of TUI Care Foundation in cooperation with Youth Career Initiative provides hospitality training for vulnerable youth*
- *Integrated life-skills training and a special focus on female empowerment are key elements of the new initiative*
- *First initiative of the TUI Care Foundation in Sri Lanka builds on the potential of international tourism for the country - sixth addition to the international TUI Academy programme*

TUI Care Foundation  
Pariser Platz 6a  
10117 Berlin

[www.tuicarefoundation.com](http://www.tuicarefoundation.com)

**Berlin, 18 December 2019.** *TUI Care Foundation has launched its first TUI Academy in Sri Lanka to provide career opportunities for 150 disadvantaged youths. In partnership with Youth Career Initiative, the three-year project combines classroom training and practical experience to support young people aged 17 to 24 in building a career in the growing Sri Lankan tourism sector. A special focus is on encouraging young women to take part and give them the confidence and independence to get their careers underway.*

Speaking at the launch event in Ahungalla, Sri Lanka, Ms Dagmar Wöhrl, Board Member of the TUI Care Foundation, said: “Young people are an inspiration to all of us. We would like to empower these young women and men to start a career in tourism and pave their way for a successful and self-determined future. To promote female empowerment and gender equality we are aiming to fill at least one third of the roles with female students.”

At the launch ceremony The Hon. Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, Mr Karu Jayasuriya, explained: “Sri Lanka has identified the tourism as an industry with high potential for the country and a strategic field for growth. This valuable initiative will provide education to less privileged children and will give them the chance to start into a better life. On behalf of the Parliament of Sri Lanka I wish this initiative all the best. I am sure it will be successfully contributing to the sustainable development of tourism in our country.”

In the first year of the project, 60 disadvantaged young people will receive a two-month vocational training course on hospitality and life-skills at the Aitken Spence



School of Hospitality followed by a three-month practical training in a luxury hotel or resort.

The project works with SOS Children's Villages to reach vulnerable young people from the local community and support the students during their training. The students are recruited from vulnerable communities and from SOS Children's Villages, and will include people who have grown up without parents, in a difficult family setting or have experienced other challenges in life. While most of these young people find it hard to find access to a professional education - the TUI Academy is now opening opportunities and supporting them in kick-starting their careers.

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20% of the younger generation in Sri Lanka are unemployed but the tourism industry, which accounts for 12% of Sri Lanka's Gross Domestic Product and 11% of its employment, offers them the chance to find a more positive future. At the launch ceremony, Mr Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Foreign Relations and Minister of Skills Development, Employment and Labour Relations of Sri Lanka, stated: "The TUI Care Foundation and its partners are taking an important step to open opportunities in the tourism industry for young people. Skills development and education for the youth are a top priority for our government. We are committed to provide the support of the public institutions to help the initiative thrive."

The two-month vocational training course will cover life skills, hospitality, English lessons and subjects like communication, customer service, health and sustainability. The practical training will take place at key properties of RIU Hotels & Resorts, Aitken Spence Hotels, Hilton and Taj. Upon successful graduation students will be awarded with a certificate recognized by the hospitality industry.

Madhu Rajesh, Director of the International Tourism Partnership, concluded: "We are delighted to be able to use our experience of helping young people in Sri Lanka to support the TUI Academy Sri Lanka, so that even more young people have the chance to start an enjoyable and rewarding career."

The TUI Academy Sri Lanka is part of the TUI Care Foundation's worldwide TUI Academy programme, which provides education and practical training for vulnerable young people and opens up job opportunities in the tourism industry. There are currently six operating projects in four different continents, and the programme focuses on empowering disadvantaged young people through personal development, tourism-related training, internship placement and career guidance.



*You may find pictures of the launching event of our project following [this link!](#)*

### ***About the TUI Care Foundation***

Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates partnerships and projects, which create new opportunities for the young generation and contribute to thriving communities all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, the TUI Care Foundation fosters education and training initiatives to open up new opportunities and perspectives for young people, the protection of the natural environment in holiday destinations and sustainable livelihoods in thriving destinations where local communities can benefit even more from tourism. TUI Care Foundation works global and acts local - it builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting impact. The charitable foundation values transparency and the efficient use of funds. Therefore 100% of the donations go to destination programmes with all administration costs of the foundation covered by TUI. TUI Care Foundation was founded by TUI, the world's leading tourism business, and is based in the Netherlands.

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### ***About Youth Career Initiative***

Youth Career Initiative is a global youth employment programme run by International Tourism Partnership. International Tourism Partnership brings together leading hospitality companies to identify key social and environmental challenges and develop practical solutions for the industry. It is a non-profit membership organisation with a global reach of over 30,000 hotels and 4.5 million rooms (25% of the overall industry by rooms). Working with this engaged membership, Youth Career Initiative offers young people who have faced a range of barriers the opportunity to develop the skills and experience to start their career through hospitality training. The programme currently works with over 125 hotels across 14 countries and has supported over 6,000 young people.

### **Contact:**

TUI Care Foundation  
Christian Rapp, Head of Media Relations  
+49 511 – 566 6028  
[christian.rapp@tui.com](mailto:christian.rapp@tui.com)