

MODULE 1

Women in Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure (THL) Sectors



Co-funded by
the European Union

About this Project & Course...

With gender stereotype at the core of tourism employment across Europe, women are actively discriminated against in terms of job opportunities, wages, working conditions and promotional opportunities afforded to them.

Source. To combat this, update patterns and affect real change we introduce the WE LEAD project

WE LEAD works to break down barriers & enable INCLUSION for all women working in the sector, who are currently unable to advance their education or careers due to these barriers. WE LEAD aims to create inclusive environments that foster equity & equality and are responsive to the needs of the wider community.



Women in the THL sectors

This module provides an exploration of the pivotal role of women like you, in the THL sectors, with a focus on **understanding the challenges you face and strategies for promoting gender diversity and inclusion**. It combines theoretical knowledge with practical application, ensuring you not only understand the importance of gender diversity and inclusion but also have the tools to make meaningful changes in your organisations.

01 Overcoming Challenges & Driving Change

02 Breaking Barriers - Gender Equality in THL Leadership

03 Empowering Women in the THL Sectors

04 Gender Diversity – Promoting Inclusion & Equality

05 Advancing Women’s Careers – Strategies & Best Practice

06 Women’s Role in Sustainable Business

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**





01

Overcoming Challenges & Driving Change



Why we need CHANGE...

Tourism is the 3rd largest socio-economic sector in the EU. In 2011, the EU-28 women's participation in the overall tourism workforce stood at 56% & 46% in the wider EU economy. [Women in Travel & Tourism International](#) are clear, "at the most senior levels women are disproportionately underrepresented."

While they make up 25.5% of executive committee members, most work in HR rather than management roles. [WiHTL](#) highlights how the tourism sector is "failing to promote women to the highest levels of decision-making despite having a larger pool of female talent from which to draw". In hospitality, women are heavily concentrated in low-paid jobs and only 1 in 22 CEOs is a woman.



Addressing Challenges that Women Face...

Overcoming challenges in the THL (Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure) sectors, particularly in the context of advancing women's leadership and gender equality, involves addressing several key issues:

**Balancing
Work &
Personal Life**

**Enhancing Skill
Development**

**Networking and
Visibility**

**Breaking the
Glass Ceiling**

**Addressing
the Gender
Pay Gap**

**Fostering
Inclusive Work
Environments**

**Policy Advocacy
and Support**



Learner Exercise

Time to reflect...

What are some **specific challenges** that you have faced in advancing your career in the THL sectors?

Can you propose **potential solutions** or strategies to address these challenges?



What we need to see happening!

- Recognise and **dismantle systemic biases**, create mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, and ensure fair promotion and hiring practices.
- **Flexible working arrangements**, supportive workplace policies, and family-friendly benefits.
- Address Pay Gaps through **transparent pay practices**, regular pay audits, and advocating for equal pay for equal work.
- **Training programmes** focused on leadership, negotiation, and other key skills to help women advance in their THL careers.
- Create workplace cultures that **value diversity and inclusion**. This includes sensitivity training and creating platforms for women to voice their concerns and ideas.
- Encourage women in THL to **engage in professional networks** and provide platforms to showcase their achievements and increase their visibility.
- Lobby for industry-wide **changes in policies** and practices



USEFUL LINKS



- [WiHTL - Diversity in Hospitality Travel & Leisure](#)
- [Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative | Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative \(we-fi.org\)](#)
- [Witti \(womenintravelandtourism.com\)](#)
- [Women in Tourism \(Australia\)](#)
- [Everything Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion | Diversity for Social Impact™ | Diversity for Social Impact](#)

WOMEN
IN TOURISM



02

Breaking
Barriers- Gender
Equality in THL
Leadership

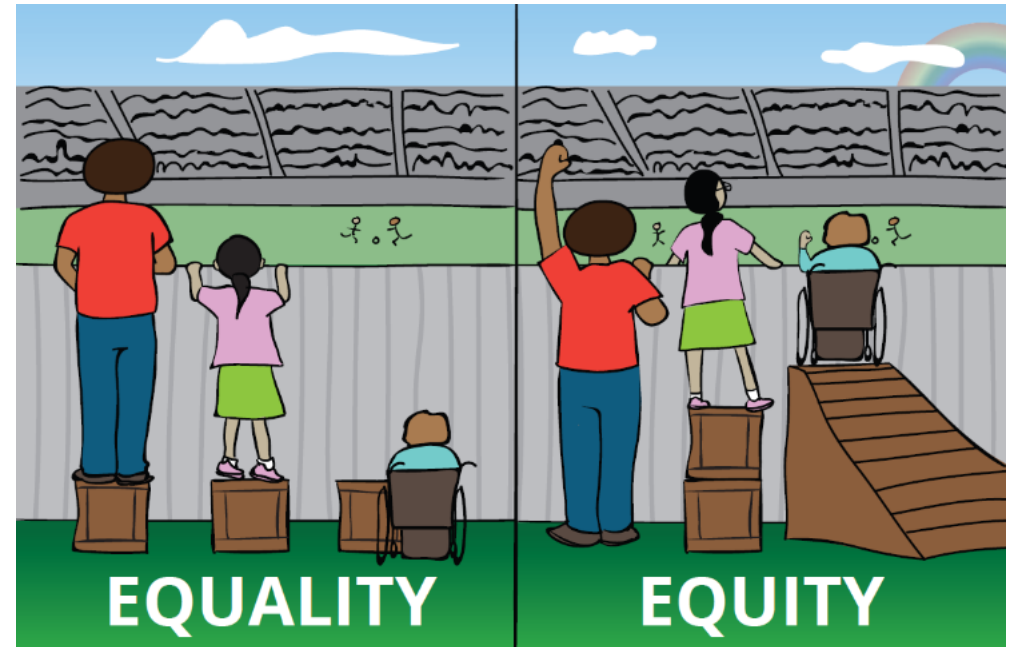


Equality vs. Equity

Equality and equity are two strategies aimed at promoting fairness, but they operate in different ways:

Equality involves treating everyone the same, regardless of need, by ensuring that everyone has access to the same resources.

Equity on the other hand, involves distributing resources based on the needs of the recipients. It recognises that different people have different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.



Women's Initiative



The world's leading Travel & Tourism leaders have pledged to work towards women's equality and boost female representation in leadership roles in an announcement at the WTTTC Global Summit 2021 in Cancun. The announcement led to the signing of the WTTTC Cancun Women's Declaration to support women, which recognised their contribution around the world and the importance of an equal equitable environment to enable them to thrive as leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators.

WTTTC, unveiled the public-private-academic partnership to promote diversity and drive inclusivity which will help lead the way to achieve equality for women throughout Travel & Tourism.

The drive committed signatories to provide equal opportunities for women by removing barriers, ensuring fair treatment, and encouraging greater financial, professional, and social independence.

[Source](#)



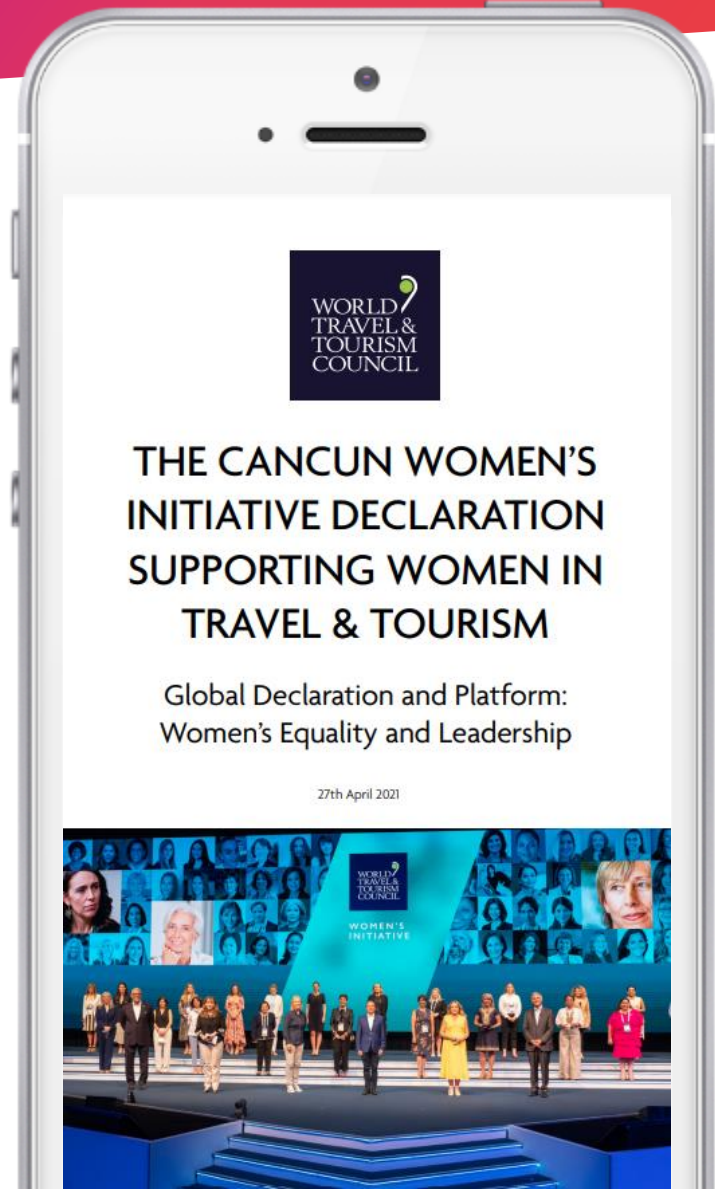
2021 Womens Initiative Declaration (wtcc.org)



Globally, women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. What is more, outside of formal employment, women already did three times more unpaid work than men before the pandemic; a figure which increased significantly in the pandemic. In addition to existing gender inequalities, including the pay gap and disproportionate gender-based violence, we are reminded that we still have work to do to create a more equitable future.

Gender equality and equity are foundational to inclusive growth, and it is a human right.

The public-private-academic partnership is essential to the creation of a path forward to achieving gender equality.



Breaking those Barriers...

While there are promising signs of progress, significant challenges remain in achieving gender equality in THL leadership. There is still a need for continued efforts to break down and remove barriers and increase the representation of women in leadership roles across the THL sectors.

This requires a multifaceted approach:

1. Policies that actively promote gender diversity
2. Commitment from top leadership
3. Leadership development programmes tailored for women.
4. Mentorship & Sponsorship programmes
5. Establishing networks for women to build connections & gain visibility
6. Succession planning that includes the relevant women





03

Empowering Women in the THL sectors



Imbalance...

As mentioned, many advancements have been made in the empowerment of women, but women are still far from enjoying the same basic rights, privileges and benefits that men do. **Women still earn much less than men, have fewer rights, less social mobility, and limited access to resources.** [Source](#)

Achieving greater gender equality is a critical step toward the World Bank Group's (WBG) goals of ending poverty and boosting shared prosperity, and tourism is one pathway towards achieving these goals.



Why We NEED Balance...

A Lack of female tourism leadership leads to:

- few women acting as models and mentors;
- higher staff turnover;
- poor decision-making processes;
- a lack of collaboration and teamwork; and
- old-fashioned work practices.

The business case for more women on boards has four key dimensions:

1. improving performance;
2. accessing the widest talent pool;
3. being more responsive to the market; and
4. achieving better corporate governance.

[Source](#)



The AMBITION:

WE LEAD OERs are grounded in the **advancement of women** in leadership roles in the THL sectors...

- training on **soft skills and awareness-raising** on available training opportunities
- **gender equality** training across the sector....leading to greater outcomes
- We will add **climate action and leadership** together
- We will **elevate the visibility**, leadership and collective impact of women in tourism leading to a more sustainable future
- We will simultaneously **equip and empower VET educators**



How do we EMPOWER women?



Education

Leadership skills,
Communication,
Business skills,
Digital Literacy,
Financial Literacy



Research

Gender dynamics,
Inspirational case
studies,
Policy
recommendations



Awareness

Campaigns raise
awareness about
the importance
of gender
equality & the
benefits of
women leaders
in THL



Networks

Networking
events & forums
allow women to
connect with
mentors, peers,
and industry
leaders

By integrating these approaches, the **We Lead** project can significantly impact women's empowerment and promote gender equality in the THL sectors, leading to more sustainable and equitable growth in these industries.





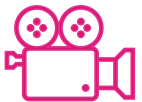
04

Gender Diversity – Promoting Inclusion & Equality

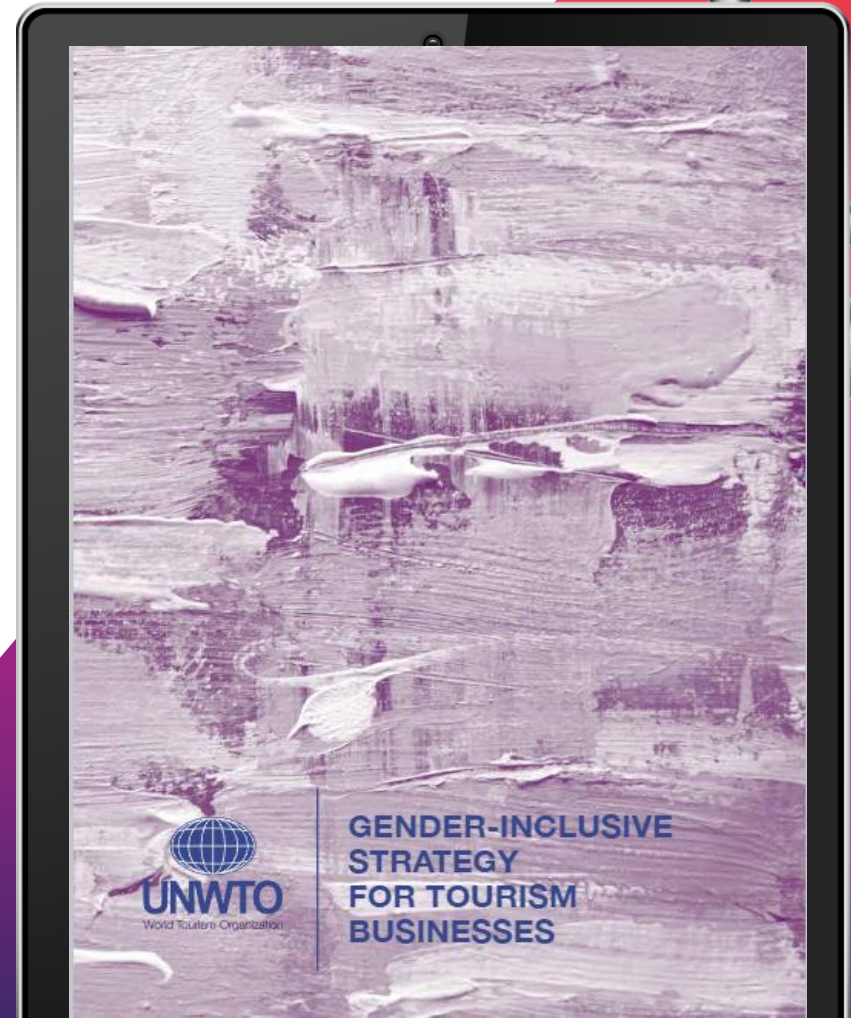


UNWTO – Gender Inclusive Strategy for Tourism Business

The business case for advancing gender equality is well documented. In tourism, the benefits are further amplified due to the high proportion of women working in the sector. The **"Gender Inclusive Strategy for Tourism Businesses"** contains tools to support private sector tourism enterprises of all types and sizes to achieve effective and consistent strategies and programmes for gender equality across their operations.



[GENDER MAINSTREAMING GUIDELINES FOR TOURISM - LAUNCH WEBINAR \(youtube.com\)](#)



Recognising Women's Strengths & Unique Perspectives

The inclusion of women in leadership roles in THL sectors is not just a matter of equality but also a strategic imperative. Their unique strengths and perspectives drive innovation, foster sustainable practices, and enhance decision-making, leading to more successful and resilient businesses.

- Having women in leadership roles introduces improved **collaboration/communication, creativity, empathy, risk awareness & diverse perspectives** in decision-making processes. This leads to more holistic and well-rounded cohesive solutions, benefiting organisations and their stakeholders.
- In sectors like THL where customer experience is key, women leaders can provide **valuable insights into customer preferences & trends**, especially since women make a significant proportion of travel and leisure decisions in families and social groups. [Source](#)
- Women leaders often **prioritise sustainability & ethical considerations** in their decision-making, aligning with the growing consumer preference for responsible and sustainable business practices in tourism and hospitality. [Source](#)



Creating an inclusive culture...

THL Organisations can create a workplace where diversity is not only accepted but celebrated, and where every employee feels empowered and respected. This not only enhances employee satisfaction and retention but also drives innovation and success in a global and diverse marketplace. Here are just a few ways to bring about change...

1

Senior management should visibly and actively commit to diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives, policies and practices (including inclusive recruitment)

**Leadership
Commitment**

2

Regular training on topics like unconscious bias, cultural competency & inclusive communication can raise awareness & equip staff with skills to create inclusive settings

**Training and
Education**

3

The formation of ERGs for minority groups can provide a support network for personnel, offer insights into different markets & result in improved policies/practice

**Employee Resource
Groups (ERGs)**

4

Pairing junior employees (especially underrepresented groups) with senior leaders can aid in career progression and personal development.

**Mentorship and
Development
Programmes**

5

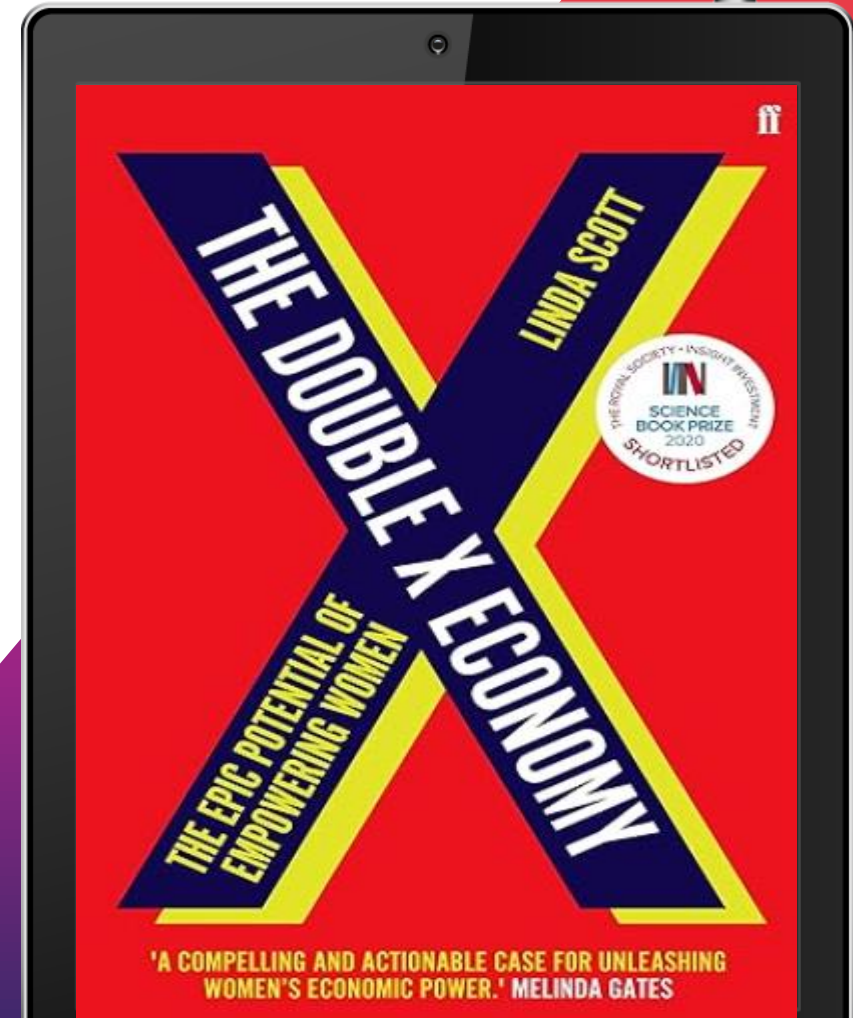
Flexible working options to accommodate different needs can include part-time work, remote working & flexible hours, to allow for varying life commitments

**Flexible Work
Arrangements**

Delve Deeper ...



- [Women's empowerment and tourism \(unwto.org\)](https://unwto.org)
- [About the Book | The Double X Economy](#)
- [Lean In by Sheryl Sandberg](#)
- [Diversity in the Workplace: Eye-Opening Interviews to Jumpstart Conversations about Identity, Privilege, and Bias: Williams, Bärí A.:](#)
- [Sheryl Sandberg: Why We Have Too Few Women Leaders on Vimeo](#)





05

Advancing Women's Careers – Strategies & Best Practice



Climbing the ladder...

Advancing women's careers, particularly in the Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure (THL) sectors, requires a multifaceted approach that involves **organisational commitment, supportive policies, and individual empowerment**. Here are some strategies and best practices on how to commence the journey to advancing your career:

1. Network, Network, Network!
2. Be Confident in Your Abilities
3. Speak Up and Be Visible
4. Seek Out Mentorship and Sponsorship
5. Keep Learning and Growing
6. Find a Work-Life Balance
7. Lean in to Your Goals



SOURCE:

[7 Proven Strategies For Advancing Your Career As A Woman: The Ultimate Guide \(realshepower.in\)](https://realshepower.in)



"Leadership arises through genuine participation in the spectrum of living, in being who you imagine yourself to be. Knowing what is meaningful is foundational to being a leader and to being an engaged person. Leadership is a way of living; it's a lived response."

— Leanne Meyer, faculty lead for Strategies for Advancing Women in Business

WANT TO LEARN MORE → [Leadership & Negotiation Academy: Strategies for Advancing Women in Business - Tepper School of Business - Carnegie Mellon University \(cmu.edu\)](#)





06

Women's Role in Sustainable Business



Linking Women and Sustainability...

As mentioned in Section 4, we must recognise the strengths of women and the importance of their role in Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure (THL) Businesses. Women play a pivotal role in steering the THL sectors towards more sustainable, ethical, and community-oriented practices. Their involvement is not just beneficial but essential for the long-term sustainability of these industries.

On the following slide, we mention just 6 examples of where they make a difference



[Unlocking women's sustainability leadership potential: Perceptions of contributions and challenges for women in sustainable development - ScienceDirect](#)



[Why female leadership is crucial to tackle climate change | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](#)

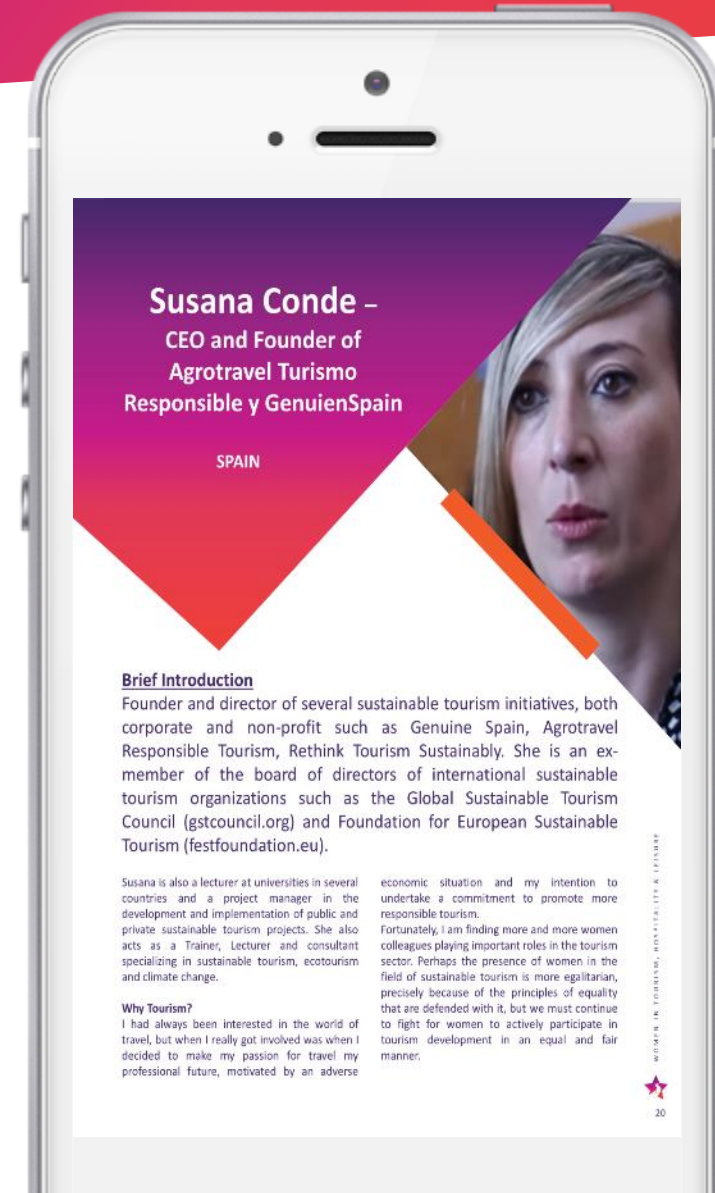
Linking Women and Sustainability...

1. Women bring **UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABILITY** in the THL sectors. Their insights are crucial in developing and implementing sustainable practices that cater to a diverse range of customers.
2. **CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND SATISFACTION**: Women often excel in having empathy and engaging with customers. This skill is vital in promoting sustainable tourism practices, as customer awareness and participation are key to sustainable outcomes.
3. Women's involvement often leads to a stronger focus on community and social aspects of sustainability. They tend to **PRIORITISE LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**, which is a core component of sustainable THL practices.
4. Women have been found to show a **HIGH LEVEL OF CONCERN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND ACT AS STEWARDS**. Their leadership in the THL sectors can drive the adoption of environmentally friendly practices, from waste reduction to sustainable resource management.
5. Women's approach to leadership often involves **LONG-TERM PLANNING AND CAREFUL RISK ASSESSMENT**. This perspective is beneficial for sustainable business practices, ensuring that decisions made today do not adversely affect future generations.
6. Promoting women in the THL sectors **SUPPORTS BROADER ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND EQUALITY GOALS**. When women thrive economically, they invest back into their communities, creating a ripple effect that supports sustainable development.



Be Inspired...

In the [We Lead Good Practice Compendium](#) we highlight Women who are trailblazing the THL sectors in terms of leadership and climate action. Susana Conde is one such case study. She discusses the increase of women in higher management roles in the tourism sector, but she feels there is still progress to be made in promoting women in leadership roles.



Further Reading:

[Empowering Women through Tourism | Women Empowerment Tourism \(worldfootprints.com\)](https://www.worldfootprints.com)



www.welead.eu



Follow our journey



This license enables reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, so long as attribution is given to the creator. The license allows for commercial use. CC BY includes the following elements: BY: credit must be given to the creator.



Co-funded by
the European Union