

March 2023

CONCLUSIONS OF CONFERENCE ON CHALLENGES TO NATURISM

Some 40 or so participants took part in a conference on Challenges to Naturism during the weekend of 11-12 March 2023, organised by the International Naturist Federation (INF-FNI).

The event took place in Bonn, at the invitation of the Deutscher Verband für Freikörperkultur (DfK), the German naturist federation, with a number of participants joining by videoconference.

Principal challenges

Sönke Reise, Chair of the organisation *GetNakedGermany*, made a presentation which identified 13 principal obstacles to the practice of naturism.

They included cultural or religious teaching that nudity was shameful. Body shaming, often caused by the way in which the media presents “perfect” bodies, was a common concern. A widespread problem was the false perception that nudity implied sex, made worse by the habit of some pornographic websites to masquerade as naturist or “FKK”.

The approach of social media towards naturism was another major concern; the dependency on unclear community standards and arbitrary algorithms was problematic, and the treatment of the female nipple was obviously discriminatory. Yet being erased from social media for a perceived breach of the standards could have the effect that the person or business effectively disappeared from public awareness.

Some challenges arose from perception of naturists themselves. National naturist federations and naturist clubs are in many cases not sufficiently visible, so that naturists themselves did not know what they were doing.

Images of naturists as principally old and male were unhelpful towards naturism, and the need to attract more women and young people to naturism was clear.

The law and the level of tolerance towards naturism varied widely from country to country. In some places, such as Spain and the UK, the law was relatively permissive; however in other places there remained significant legal restrictions.

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Monday to Friday: 9 - 11.00 / Montag bis Freitag: 9 - 11.00 Uhr / du lundi au vendredi: de 9 à 11.00

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And some challenges were new: for example, the fact that so many people carry smartphones with cameras increases the likelihood of naturists being photographed against their will when naked.

How to address the challenges

The conference split into working groups to consider what action could be taken to address these challenges.

Many diverse points were shared, and the following, in particular, emerged from the discussions:

- To counter these challenges it was important for naturists, naturist clubs, national federations and the International Naturist Federation to be more prominent; to talk to press, politicians and spread the word
- Perhaps the most important challenge is to counter the assumption that nudity = sex – however we should not make the error of suggesting that naturists were people who don't have sex, simply that the two things are not connected
- Naturist organisations must push back against the mis-use of the words “naturist” or “FKK” or similar in relation to pornographic sites, swingers' establishments etc
- Social media messaging and marketing should aim to reach beyond the naturist community, showcasing a range of opportunities and demonstrating the “wow” factor of unusual events: the diversity of naturism
- Better coordination of messaging by the national federations and the INF-FNI would enable naturists worldwide to speak with one voice. A private Facebook group for federations' marketing and social media managers could be created to help with that
- The INF-FNI is in a unique position to speak to a worldwide audience, but it has missed obvious opportunities to do so – for example the recent news about the Facebook oversight board's instruction to review the current discriminatory approach to bare female breasts to bring it into line with international human rights standards was a clear opportunity for a positive news story. In future the organisation should be more proactive in its public communications and grasp obvious opportunities.
- There may be a need to consider bringing in professionals to help the INF-FNI with its marketing and messaging, and although at the moment there is no budget for this, the organisation should seriously consider this for the future.