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Articles of your interest

GENERAL POLICY ISSUES

Interview of MEP Claudia Monteiro De Aguiar, Member of the Transport and Tourism Committee



Ms. Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar is Member of the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism. Since she was elected Member of the European Parliament, she has been actively contributing to key discussions around the tourism sector in the European Institutions. MEP Monteiro de Aguiar also participated as a key note speaker to the last HOTREC General Assembly held on 5 and 6 November 2015 in The Hague. HOTREC has asked Ms. Monteiro de Aguiar to present the new European Parliament report on tourism, as well as about her views on how the EU could facilitate travel to Europe for tourism, and how to tackle the sharing/collaborative economy phenomenon affecting tourism.

1- Europe remains world's destination number one. Nevertheless it is losing its market share. As one of the co-authors of the opinion report voted at the TRAN committee (Committee on Transport and Tourism, at the European Parliament), which are, from your point of view, the most important measures the European Union could introduce in order to make the access of legitimate travellers coming to Europe less burdensome, costly and lengthy?

Despite the depth of the economic crisis, the tourist industry has proved resilient with numbers of tourist trips remaining high. In 2014 Europe consolidated its position as the most visited region in the world, with over half of the world's international tourists, reaching a total of 588 million. According to the UNWTO, between January to August 2015, Europe recorded a robust 5% increase in international tourist arrivals, the highest across all regions, compared to the same period of 2014.

Tourism has been instrumental in supporting the economic recovery of many countries and in generating new jobs. To keep this path there is a need to simplify and modernise the Visa Code. Complicated processes, processing times and expenses associated with obtaining a visa can persuade legitimate travellers for applying to a Visa.

I was the responsible at the TRAN Committee to both opinions on the Visa Package: the recast of Visa Code and the Touring Visa. These two opinions were approved at the Committee with a large majority. The points which I would like to underline on both reports are:

- Visa facilitation for regular travels already registered through the VIS system and the possibility of Multiple Entry-Visa for a period between 5 and 10 years;
- Increase the ease of Access by extending the possibility of lodging a Visa application at another Member-State Consulate;
- The set-up of an online pre-registration system for issuing a Visa at the external border;
- The need for implementing a @Visa and digital procedures;
- Extension of visa facilitation for seafarers;
- Less burdensome, such as the end of the obligatory interview, and the revision of the documents needed to apply for a Visa;
- The creation of the new type of visa, Visa Touring, which should allow leisure tourists to travel around Europe during 1 to 2 years.

To conclude if Europe wants to increase its share in global tourism the only correct path is to increase the openness. All these points are crucial to attract more visitors to Europe and this does not mean that Europe should jeopardize national security and immigration concerns.

2- On 29 October 2015, the European Parliament adopted its own-initiative report on "new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe". As the shadow-rapporteur for the EPP group on this report, you played a key role in its drafting. What are the issues raised by this report which you consider the most important for the future of tourism? What are the next steps you consider taking with regard to these issues?

The Report on New Challenges and concepts for the promotion of Tourism in Europe was approved by a large majority of the Members with 485 votes in favour, 120 against and 21 abstentions. This gives us a large legitimacy for asking the European Commission (EC) to act and implement concrete actions. From the above report I would like to point out some important proposals.

On the issue of upgrading skills and competences across the Tourism sector, MEPs ask the Commission to the EC to work with private entities to create a low-season training and internship programmes. This can be done under COSME and the

European Social Funds provisions. This is not going only to increase the mobility and the exchange of best practices but also fight seasonality, another cornerstone to work on. I go further and I challenge the industry to create their own "Erasmus + for Tourism" addressing employees and employers. I also proposed the establishment of a Workforce Development Strategy to answer to the mismatch and shortage of skills.

Regarding the existing funding, Tourism should be better recognised as an individual economic activity in terms of budget. Therefore, the report encourages the creation of a specific Tourism section within the next MFF. I also proposed the translation of the funding support guide into the EU's 24 official languages in order to facilitate access to information on funding possibilities. This is a huge barrier that we need to overcome taking into consideration that 90% of tourism economic operators are familiar businesses.

On the digital era Tourism sector needs to be on board that is why it is express the need for a roadmap on digitalisation and putting in practice the tools already in place. This also follows in the need for an Agenda for the new players of the collaborative economy.

Also from my own initiative I decided to include an entire chapter on the potential of Maritime and Coastal Tourism. The direct and indirect connectivity are crucial to Islands and other coastal regions and because of that I proposed the establishment of an Annual Seminar with the participation of the coastal and maritime Member-States and Regions. The aim is to implement a long-term strategy through promoting a pan-European dialogue and facilitating the sharing of best practices.

The creation of pan-european and transnational tourism products should be also developed by all stakeholders under the umbrella of Destination Europe.

I hope that based on this Report we can create an Action Plan which clearly identifies the annual priorities and canalize the existing EU funding for concrete actions. This Action Plan can also include the 8 actions proposed by the Commissioner in late January, which have not yet been presented.

3- HOTREC was honoured by your presence as a key note speaker at the last General Assembly held on 5 and 6 November 2015. One of the key issues of the meeting was the sharing economy. The HOTREC policy paper on the sharing economy called "levelling the playing field" was made public at the Assembly. As you know, the paper includes the HOTREC Chart Towards a sustainable and responsible "sharing" economy in tourist accommodation. What is your opinion about these 10 principles? Do you agree that legislation should be put in place in order to level the playing field amongst all actors in the tourism sector and ensure fair competition?

We have already had the opportunity to exchange our views at the Joint Hotrec-UEAPME Conference untitled Unlocking SMEs' potential for jobs creation and growth: digital challenges and at HOTREC's General Assembly. I also held at the European Parliament a round-table on Tales from the Sharing-Economy, last May, where we had the chance to listen some main players of the collaborative economy. From the contributions I received from this discussion I am preparing a policy paper with some recommendations which I think should be taken by the EC.

I would take this opportunity to give at the first hand that the Transport and Tourism Committee will have an own-initiative report on collaborative-economy.

The need for an Agenda for the p2p economy is expressed on the INI-Tourism Report. It is also address the need for a clear, stable and consistent regulatory framework. This goes hand with hand with the transformation needed to enable our SMEs and Startups to take profit of the opportunities offered by digitalisation.

First of all it is necessary to know if there is a need for the EU to take any legislative action. What we are seeing within the Union is that our citizens do not enjoy the same rights. Moreover, it should be analyzed the need for specifically tailored legislation. We should have some common standards in all Member-States knowing that some of these p2p platforms are better regulated by the municipalities, regions or Member-States. The rules must be light, simple and appropriate, depending on the scale and nature of the activity.

For this I encourage Member-States, regions, municipalities, the traditional sector and the EC to engage in further dialogue to ensure there is a consistent approach on the sharing-economy.

In an age where youth unemployment is on the rise the sharing-economy models can create a stronger culture of entrepreneurialism and creativity.

INSTITUTIONS

2016 Commission work programme now available

On 27 October, the European Commission published its [2016 work programme](#). The new work programme for 2016 intends to build-on the changes already implemented in the 2015 work programme, by giving priority to legislative changes which can have a direct impact on jobs and growth, and by "being big on the big things (...) and remaining small and modest on small things which do not require EU action".

For this reason, the 2016 Commission work programme only contains some 23 proposals for new initiatives, and proposes to withdraw some 20 legislative proposals. Moreover, the work programme proposes to evaluate in 2016 some 27 existing legislation as part of the REFIT programme and see if they are still fit for today's needs. It also contains a list of 17 legislative proposals which are already pending, and to which a priority will be given for their adoption.

The full list of new initiatives foreseen in the 2016 work programme is available in its [annex I](#). As part of these initiatives, the following will be of interest to the European hospitality industry:

- A new Skills Agenda for Europe package, aimed at promoting skills development;
- A circular economy package (proposal actually released on 2 December 2015), which includes proposals on the reduction of food waste;
- A Labour Mobility Package
- A Communication on copyright and a review of the satellite and cable Directive;
- Legislative proposals on digital contract rights, geo-blocking and VAT for e-commerce;
- A legislative proposal on the free flow of data;
- A guidance document on how EU law applies to collaborative economy business models;
- A legislative initiative to facilitate the cross-border provision of services;
- An action on standardisation, including services standards;
- An action plan on VAT, which includes initiatives on VAT rates, a proposal for VAT for e-commerce, and a Communication setting out the definitive VAT regime;
- A corporate Tax Package, which includes measures to enhance transparency on the corporate tax system, and a staged approach on a mandatory corporate tax base;

The full list of existing legislation that will be reviewed in 2015 as part of the REFIT programme is available in its [annex II](#). As part of these initiatives, the following will be of interest to the European hospitality industry:

- An evaluation of the Council Directive 89/391/EC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work, as well as 23 related Directives;
- Follow-up to the Fitness check of the General Food Law Regulation;

The full list of Commission proposals that will be withdrawn is available in [annex IV](#). The following proposals to be withdrawn are relevant for the European hospitality industry:

- A proposal for a Directive on a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax base (CCCTB);
- A proposal for a regulation establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) to register entry and exit data of third country nationals crossing the external borders of the Member States;
- A proposal for a Regulation establishing a registered traveller programme;
- A proposal of a regulation amending the use of Entry/Exit Systems and the Registered Traveller Programme.

The work programme also contains in [annex VI](#) a list of legislation that will become applicable in 2016.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC welcomes the new approach of the European Commission which might help adopting better regulatory initiatives more focused on achieving the essential goals of the EU.*
- *HOTREC is monitoring closely all proposals which may have an impact on the activities of hospitality businesses and will pursue its dialogue with EU policy makers to transmit the views of its member associations on relevant issues.*

SHADOW HOSPITALITY

HOTREC fosters the debate on the “sharing” economy and unveils its policy paper and 10 steps´ Chart



On 5 November 2015, on the occasion of its General Assembly, HOTREC adopted its [policy paper](#) on the so-called sharing economy, including the HOTREC Chart towards a sustainable and responsible "sharing" economy in tourism accommodation.

The European hospitality industry considers that the current regulatory vacuum is providing ground across Europe for risks in consumer protection and safety, unfair competition, as well as for grey areas of economic activities. For this reason, HOTREC calls for levelling the playing field.

HOTREC unveiled its policy paper and Chart towards a sustainable and responsible "sharing" economy in tourism accommodation at the occasion of a press conference, to which took part Ms. Susanne Kraus Winkler, President of HOTREC, Mr. Ramón Estalella, Chair of the HOTREC Task Force on the "sharing" economy; Mr. Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of UNWTO, MEP Claudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Member of the Transport and Tourism Committee, and Mr. Manolis Psarros, Managing Director of Tophosophy.

Ramón Estalella, presented the 10 steps of the HOTREC Chart to be addressed to ensure a sustainable and responsible sharing economy in tourism accommodation, also enabling a level playing field for all players alike, amongst which: compliance with fiscal obligations, ensure safety and security of guests, protection of employees rights and benefits, quality of life of neighbors, obligation of registration of businesses etc.

UNWTO Secretary General Mr. Taleb Rifai reminded the audience that *"innovation and entrepreneurship are always welcome in the tourism industry as long as a level playing field is ensured for all businesses and destinations, allowing them to adjust their policies and strategies to the changes in the market and thus remain competitive. When hotels started, there were no regulations, no stars, no ranking, etc. Then it became the phenomenon it is today and rules were set up. Regulations never come before the activity. The only difference here is the speed. Internet is fast and we can't wait for the EU to think about it. That's why I believe the 10-point charter created by HOTREC is a very realistic and a balanced way to set down principles. The parameter details will come later country by country, sometimes even city by city. But the urgency here is to identify these platforms as data providers. Data are crucial today. We need to open the black box and start collecting real statistics,"* he said.

MEP Monteiro de Aguiar welcomed the report and its contribution to a better general understanding to set down the principles to deal with the sharing economy.

Actions:

- HOTREC will continue to call on the public authorities to ensure a level playing field for all actors in the tourism sector.

The “sharing” economy: a rising concern which tops authorities’ agenda in most European countries



At the occasion of the 4th Lithuanian Tourism Forum to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Independent Tourism of Lithuania, a one day event took place on 29 October, including a panel discussion on the "sharing" economy, to which participated the CEO of HOTREC Christian de Barrin. Opportunity was also taken to highlight the need to reduce VAT, taxes and levies in order to increase the competitiveness of the country itself. HOTREC also pleasingly participated to the Croatian Tourism Days on the same topic on 13 October in Porek; to the Hotel and Tourism Trends 2015 on 24 November in Warsaw; to the Leaders in HORECA Summit with a specific focus on the rising issue of health and hygiene due to the development of "home restaurants" on 26 November in Prague; and to the Congress of Portuguese Tour Operators and Travel agencies on 4 December. The same concerns were promoted by all countries alike: the rising cost of housing; the lack of fiscal compliances and the necessary enforcements of consumer protection in terms of safety, security, health, hygiene and environment within the so called "sharing economy".

SUSTAINABILITY

Circular Economy Package released – No mandatory food waste reduction targets!

On 2 December 2015, the European Commission released its new Circular Economy Package in order to stimulate Europe's transition towards a circular economy and boost competitiveness, foster sustainable economic growth and generate new jobs. The package is composed of a Communication, which set-out the general strategy, and of several proposal to revise sectorial Directives affecting the issue of waste and recycling. The intention is to tackle all the phases in the lifecycle of a product (from production and consumption to waste management), thus facilitating recycling, repairing and re-using of products in order to move to a stronger circular economy where resources are used in a more sustainable way. The EU will use all available tools to transform its economy opening the way to new business opportunities and boosting competitiveness. Funding of over EUR 650 million under Horizon 2020 and EUR 5.5 Billion under the structural funds will be made available.

Food waste proposal:

Together with the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Commission released a new [legislative proposal](#) on waste. In order to tackle food waste throughout the food chain, the Commission calls on the Member States to "take measures to promote prevention of food waste in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, and in particular its target of halving food waste by 2030. These measures should aim to prevent food waste in primary production, in processing and manufacturing, in retail and other distribution of food, in restaurants and food services as well as in households". However, the proposal does not introduce binding targets for food waste reduction at EU level. However, it fully integrates "bio-waste" in the Waste legislation, therefore obliging Member States to take the issue of food waste into consideration when designing their general waste management strategy.

Moreover, the Commission announces that it will:

- develop a common EU methodology to measure food waste and define relevant indicators;
- create a platform, bringing together Member States and all actors of the food chain, to help define the measures needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on food waste and share best practice and results achieved;
- take measures to clarify EU legislation relating to waste, food and feed, and facilitate food donation as well as the safe use of former foodstuffs and by-products in feed production.

The Commission will also develop, in cooperation with the Member States and stakeholders, EU food donation guidelines for food donors and food banks on how to comply with relevant EU legislation (food safety, traceability, legal liability, VAT etc). For more information on the circular economy follow [link](#).

Next steps:

The legislative proposal on food waste will be discussed under the ordinary legislative procedure by the European Parliament and the Council.

Actions:

HOTREC will gather best practices from its member association as a way of showing the hospitality industry commitment on the reduction of food waste.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC welcomes the Commission action plan to facilitate the transition to a circular economy and the proposed measures to use resources in a more sustainable way;*
 - *HOTREC and its member associations are already committed to reduce waste in hospitality establishments, as shown by the various initiatives taken by national hospitality associations to educate both businesses and consumers on the matter. Such measures already explain why the hospitality industry is not a big waster;*
 - *HOTREC and its member associations will welcome measures to facilitate food donation: reduce administrative burden, clarify the liability issue and foster fiscal incentives;*
 - *HOTREC stresses that the hospitality industry is composed 91% by micro-enterprises. For this reason, any additional administrative burden would be rather counterproductive in the goal to reduce food waste. HOTREC therefore calls on the public authorities to play their role in the fight against food waste by organising themselves the measurement of food waste in hospitality establishments and by supporting schemes aimed at collecting food waste which can be re-used or donated.*
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ACCESSIBILITY

European Commission puts forward the European Accessibility Act



On 2 December 2015, the [European Commission put forward its proposal](#) for a Directive on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States as regards the accessibility requirements for products and services.

In relation to the hospitality sector, the provisions of relevance relate to websites and the built environment. With regard to websites, the proposal stipulates how information should be provided when selling services online. With regard to the built environment, the Directive proposes the requirements to be taken into account, like use of entrances, paths for vertical and horizontal circulation, use of evacuation routes, etc. However, for the provisions on the built environment, the proposal foresees to leave it up to the Member States, whether to include those provisions during the transposition of the Directive into national law or not. Some provisions also relate to automatic check-in machines.

The proposal includes general clauses stating that requirements apply to the extent that they do not introduce a significant change resulting in the alteration of the basic nature of the product or service and that they do not impose a disproportionate burden on the economic operator.

Next steps:

The legislative proposal will be discussed under the ordinary legislative procedure by the European Parliament and the Council. The EP leading Committee and Rapporteur for the dossier has still not been decided.

Actions:

- HOTREC is preparing an in-depth analysis and will consult the HOTREC member associations on the proposal.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC will analyse the details of the Commission proposal and will contribute to the discussion on the proposal.*
- *HOTREC and its members are already engaged in enhancing accessibility of hospitality services.*
- *HOTREC welcomes the flexibilities provided for in the proposal, in particular to the micro enterprises, which represent 91% of hospitality businesses in Europe.*

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Final Package Travel Directive adopted



On 27 October 2015, the European Parliament definitively adopted in plenary session the new Package Travel Directive. The Directive is the result of an agreement reached in trilogue in the spring 2015, and which was already endorsed by the Council.

Next Steps:

The new Package Travel Directive will soon be published in the Official Journal. From that moment, Member States will be given 24 months to transpose the Directive, while the provisions of the Directive will only apply 30 months after the publication.

TOURISM

Conference EU-China Tourism cooperation



On 13th October 2015 took place the conference on EU-China Tourism cooperation, which counted with the presence of MEP István UJHELYI, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee, Cláudia Monteiro Aguiar, Member of the European Parliament, Carlo Corazza, Head of Unit of Tourism, Emerging and Creative Industries, and other relevant stakeholders. The Vice-President of HOTREC, Ákos Niklai also participated at the meeting as a speaker to the event.

The objective of the conference was to discuss on how to enhance tourism cooperation between the European Union and China. Possibilities would include, amongst others:

- Enhance transport connectivity (namely through Air China and other Chinese/European airlines);
- Develop staff skills (staff should understand and speak Chinese language);
- Promoting the quality of the service in the destinations;
- Facilitation of visa procedures (namely the use of multiple entry visa for regular travellers).

HOTREC position:

HOTREC believes that the tourism sector in general should adapt to the needs presented by the Chinese travellers, as China is an extremely important source market in terms of tourism for Europe. In particular, HOTREC believes that visa facilitation agreements should be rapidly implemented, otherwise there is the risk that potential Chinese tourists choose other destinations (e.g. USA, Pacific).

European Parliament own-initiative report on tourism: adoption of the TRAN report



On 29 October 2015, the European Parliament adopted in plenary session its final own-initiative report on "New challenges and concepts for the promotion of Tourism in Europe". The final report remained unchanged compared to the report voted by the TRAN (Transport & Tourism) Committee on 15 September 2015, and touches upon several important issues for the tourism sector (e.g. sharing economy, digitalisation, hotel classification, quality, safety, etc.).

The final European Parliament report is available here: [link](#)

Next steps:

Even if European Parliament's own-initiative reports are not binding, it is rather common for the Commission to issue a reply.

Actions:

HOTREC will monitor if the Commission provides an official reply to this own-initiative report.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC welcomes the provisions of the European Parliament own-initiative report which calls for a level playing field applicable to all actors in the tourism sector, including the sharing economy;*
- *HOTREC also welcomes the recognition and the promotion of the Hotelstars Union initiative and understands that in the field of hotel classification this is the system to be further promoted across Europe;*
- *However, HOTREC considers that the call for the adoption of EU safety standards is inappropriate, as the recent Eurobarometers carried-out by the European Commission clearly show that there is no safety issue in the hotel sector, while the recent Green Paper on Tourism accommodation safety shows that Member States unanimously consider existing legislation and standards as appropriate.*

HOTREC joins the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism



On 5 November 2015, HOTREC officially signed the Private Sector Commitment to the [UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism](#), in the Presence of Mr. Talef Rifai, Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

The UNWTO Global Code of Ethics is a roadmap for a responsible and sustainable tourism development endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001. The Code is a non-binding tool that builds on 10 principles that cover the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of tourism. The Code also outlines the responsibility of every stakeholder in travel and tourism.

Next steps:

HOTREC will promote the Code amongst its national associations, partners and other EU stakeholders

Actions:

By signing the UNWTO Code of Ethics, HOTREC and its member associations commit to:

1. Observe the principles of the Code: HOTREC and its member associations adhere to the principles of the code of Ethics related to sustainable and responsible tourism, human rights - in particularly those of host communities and workers – and the fight against the exploitation of human beings and natural heritage.
2. Disseminate this Code: HOTREC will become ambassadors to the code and will promote it amongst its partners, other stakeholders etc.
3. Report to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation General Assembly: HOTREC will report directly one in every 3 years about the actions taken to put in place the principles of the Code of Ethics.

HOTREC position:

- *The hospitality industry is strongly committed to fostering sustainable and responsible tourism;*
- *HOTREC and its member associations fully adhere to the principles of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and will do its best to implement them in their daily activity and disseminate them.*

HOTREC General Assembly discusses the future of tourism in Europe with the European Commission and MEPs



On 5 November 2015, the HOTREC General Assembly discussed the future of tourism in Europe with MEP István Ujhelyi (S&D, Hungary), Vice-Chair of the Transport & Tourism Committee, MEP Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar (EPP, Portugal) and Mr. Carlo Corazza, Head of Unit Tourism, Emerging and Creative industries at the European Commission.

MEP Ujhelyi and MEP Monteiro de Aguiar presented the newly adopted European Parliament report on "New challenges and concepts for the promotion of Tourism in Europe", and gave their point of view on Visa facilitation, on the Visa Package and on the sharing economy.

Furthermore, Mr. Corazza presented on behalf of Commissioner Bieńkowska the priorities of the European Commission in the field of tourism for 2015-2019, which will focus on the following:

- Business environment and the functioning of the internal market for services – including taxation system which will be examined through a study on the impact on the competitiveness of the tourism sector of the taxation system;
- Taking advantage of the digital revolution, including the sharing economy where the Commission will ensure a level playing field through either the implementation of existing rules, new rules or the introduction of political recommendations to Member States and to regions.;
- Skills and competences in the tourism sector;

Mr. Corazza also stressed the excellent cooperation with HOTREC on all tourism-related issues, which clearly benefits European tourism development.

Susanne Kraus-Winkler and Christian de Barrin met Commissioner Bieńkowska together with a delegation of the Network of European Private Sector in Tourism

A delegation of NET met Commissioner Bieńkowska and his team, among which Sławomir Tokarski, Carlo Corazza and Pedro Ortún on 15 October to promote the priorities of the European Tourism industry including visa, a well-functioning Single Market, with special focus on the Digital Single Market, taxation, as well as upgrading skills and competences. Discussion was open and took place on the necessary speed up of the European Commission's decision-making notably on digitalisation while technology changes every day. Exchange of views were very constructive and messages visibly shared.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Parliamentary Report on EU Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 adopted by the EP Plenary on 23 November

On 23 November 2015, the European Parliament adopted a non-binding [resolution](#) on the EU strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020. The Commission Framework, that aims at ensuring a healthy and safety working environment for all European workers, identifies a series of key challenges that employers and employees face in the area of occupational health and safety. It also lays down a series of actions and preventive measures that should be put in place to address these challenges.

The effectiveness of OSH (Occupational safety and health) management continues to remain a challenge for micro and small enterprises. For this reason, the Parliamentary resolution calls on action to promote compliance with OSH legislation, in particular for microenterprises. The MEPs also emphasize the importance of taking account of the specific situation and needs of micro and small businesses and encourages the Commission, EU OSHA (European Agency for Health and Safety at Work) and the Member States to continue developing practical tools and guideline in order to facilitate the compliance of SMEs with OSH requirements.

Actions:

HOTREC and its trade-union counterpart, EFFAT, will discuss the issue of health and safety at the workplace during its social dialogue meetings and will exchange best practices on the issue.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC welcomes the revision of the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014- 2020;*
- *HOTREC agrees with the Commission and the Parliament on the need to take into account the specific needs of the micro and small companies in order to facilitate compliance with OSH requirements in an easier and less bureaucratic way;*
- *91% of the companies in the hospitality sector are micro-enterprises, therefore eliminating legislation and unnecessary burden for tourism enterprises in the context of OSH management will facilitate compliance with OSH legislation/practices.*

Key outcomes at the SSD plenary meeting

On 4 December 2015, HOTREC and EFFAT held their annual Sectoral Social Dialogue Plenary meeting. The hospitality sector social partners discussed many important topics that are currently affecting the hospitality sector including sharing economy, skills and competences, safety and health at the workplace etc.

The Plenary meeting also counted on the participation of Commission representatives that updated EFFAT and HOTREC members on important topics impacting the sector. Mr. Carlo Corazza, Head of the Tourism, Emerging and Creative Industries at DG Growth explained in details the Commission action plan for the tourism sector including:

- Improving the regulatory framework/environment for tourism SMEs;
- Assessing the impact of the digital revolution and the challenge it poses on SMEs;
- Facilitating the access of EU funding for tourism SMEs;
- Analysing the divergence between the needs of the industry and the available skills in the market (divergence between demand and offer);
- Bringing in more tourists from 3rd countries to Europe.

With regard to tourism, the meeting also served to present and discuss the Tourism Industry Manifesto: Tourism for Growth and Jobs to which both EFFAT and HOTREC have adhered. The members very much welcomed this initiative.

Mr. Henric Stjernquist (EURES, DG Employment) presented the new Droppin platform and encouraged HOTREC national associations to promote the platform to their companies in order for them to join it. Droppin is an online platform that enables companies and organisations to promote youth-oriented opportunities (for example, apprenticeships, e-learning, traineeships etc) and also gives registered companies the possibility to partner between them in order to develop projects together. For young people it offers the opportunity to find apprenticeships schemes and other opportunities to improve their employability.

Ms. Simona Chitu (DG Employment) presented the latest developments on the Hospitality Skills Passport and agreed with the social partners to meet in the coming months in order to discuss new ways to promote the tool.

The Commission Chair of the EFFAT-HOTREC Social Dialogue Committee, Mr. Michael Chaussard updated EFFAT and HOTREC members on the latest developments on social affairs and social dialogue issues.

The Nordic Social Partners (VISITA and the trade unions representatives from Denmark and Sweden) presented the findings of the Nordic Conference on "sexual harassment at the Workplace", that was held in June 2015.

Another important topic discussed at the meeting was around the situation of refugees/asylum seekers in Europe. VISITA together with the Swedish Council for Higher Education and HRF presented the Fast track procedure for newly arrived chefs. The objective of this project is to fulfil the gaps in the Swedish labour market (lack of chefs) and to take responsibility on the situation of migrants/refugees in the EU. The fast track enables any person who has worked as chef in its own country, to validate his/her skills in its own language. The initiative consists of 3 steps.

In addition to all the topics discussed at the meeting, the following documents were adopted:

- EFFAT-HOTREC joint statement on the sharing economy: on their statement, the hospitality sector social partners call for levelling the playing field in the tourism sector. They also call on the public authorities to collect more coherent data about the scope and the impact of the "sharing economy" on businesses and employment in the hospitality and tourism sector, and to guarantee that legislation is fully respected by and enforced upon all providers of hospitality and tourism services, so that customers are protected, employees are treated fairly and entitled to their rights, and responsible businesses enjoy a fair competitive environment / level playing field. For more information follow [link](#).
- EFFAT-HOTREC joint pledge to enhance the quality and attractiveness of apprenticeships schemes in the European hotel and restaurant sector. The social partners will submit their joint pledge in order to join the European Alliance for apprenticeships.
- EFFAT-HOTREC work programme 2016-2017- The social partners adopted the updated work-programme that will guide their discussions during the next year.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC highly values the work done together with EFFAT in the context of the social dialogue;*
- *The social dialogue is an excellent forum to discuss and agree on key issues that are impacting the hospitality sector such as shadow hospitality.*

Platform to tackle undeclared work at EU level: Council confirms deal with EP

On 11 November 2015, the Council and the Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the Commission proposal to set up a platform at European level to fight undeclared work.

The platform is intended to foster closer cooperation between relevant authorities in the Member States responsible for tackling undeclared work. The platform will enhance the exchange of information and best practices, in order to tackle the issue of undeclared work.

The platform will count on the mandatory participation of the Member States, and 4 representatives of the social partners at EU level split equally between employees and employers organisations.

European Social Partners representing those sectors more heavily affected by undeclared work will be appointed as observers to the platform.

For more info follow [link](#).

Next steps:

The Parliament will vote on the agreed text at the EP Plenary session of 1 February 2016. The Council will then adopt formally the text.

Actions:

HOTREC, its trade union counterpart EFFAT and the social partners of the agriculture, cleaning, construction, and security services sectors agreed on a joint letter requesting that these sectors should be actively involved in the activities of the future platform. The letter was sent, on 22-24 April 2015, to the MEPS of the different Parliamentary Committees dealing with the dossier, including the Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) Committee (leading Committee).

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC sees the creation of a platform at EU level as a positive initiative as long as it deals with the issue of undeclared work at cross border level*
- *As expressed in its response to the consultations of the social partners, HOTREC would like to insist on the fact that preventive measures (such as alleviation of fiscal and administrative burden, incentives for regular work, simplification, etc.) should also be put in place as a way to reduce undeclared work;*
- *As hospitality/tourism is one of the sectors with a highest incidence of undeclared work, HOTREC expects to be appointed as observer to the platform*

FOOD

Official controls: no mandatory fees for controls in restaurants says the Council



On 26 October 2015, the Council reached a political agreement on the last proposal made by the Luxembourg Presidency of the EU on the Official Controls Regulation. The political agreement covers all the aspects of the Regulation, including the sensitive issue of the financing of official controls.

Concerning the financing of official controls, the Council agreement strongly focus on subsidiarity, therefore departing from the original Commission proposal. In particular, it proposes that there should be mandatory fees only for a very few sectors with a strong cross-border dimension. However, concerning all other sectors, including the restaurant sectors, Member States would remain free to decide if controls fees are necessary or not.

Together with this political agreement, the Council also gave the mandate to the Presidency of the EU to start the negotiations with the European Parliament in trilogue. Given that the Parliament's position is the same as the Council's concerning inspection fees for restaurants, the issue should not be conflictual.

Next steps:

The Presidency of the EU is to start the negotiations in trilogue with the European Parliament.

Actions:

HOTREC will engage with the Council and European Parliament's representatives during the trilogue negotiations.

HOTREC position:

- *Restaurants provide solely local services: an EU obligation to charge inspection/control fees would breach the subsidiarity principle;*
 - *HOTREC welcomes the Council's agreement on the financing of official controls in restaurants.*
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HEALTH

15th plenary meeting of CNAPA



The 15th meeting of CNAPA (Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action) took place on 7-8 October 2015. The Commission presented a forthcoming health policy platform and the possibility for CNAPA to use it to prepare meetings, discuss and exchange information both within CNAPA and with other stakeholders.

In addition, as a result of presentations given by [WHO](#) and [OECD](#), it was concluded that it is important for Member States to continue gathering comparable data on levels and patterns of alcohol consumption and on alcohol related harm. Moreover, the Finish National Institute for Health and Welfare presented the changes in the Finish legislation to strength regulation of alcohol advertising that entered into force 1 January 2015. The changes include prohibition of alcohol advertising and sales promotion activities that involve taking part in a game, lottery or contest and a prohibition of the use of any consumer-produced content and of viral advertising techniques in alcohol advertising disseminated through electronic communication networks. Finally, CNAPA members also presented the latest developments in their countries, focusing on reducing heavy episodic drinking (binge drinking) and reducing harm from alcohol during pregnancy.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC is of the opinion that a closer cooperation should be established between CNAPA and the Alcohol Forum. HOTREC believes that, at least, umbrella organisations should be able to attend CNAPA meetings and that more CNAPA representatives should attend the Alcohol Forum. In this way, best practices could be shared in a more focused way, which would consequently lead to the implementation of practices aiming at decreasing alcohol related-harm across Europe.*

EPSCO calls on an EU strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm

On 7th December 2015 the Council of Employment, Social Policy and Health adopted [Council conclusions](#) on an EU strategy on the reduction of alcohol related harm. By and large, the Council invited Member States to:

- Continue promoting multi-sectoral approaches as regards the reduction of alcohol-related harm or develop national strategies or actions plans as appropriate;
- Adopt appropriate measures to address the protection of young people from harmful use of alcohol, notably in the field of legal age drinking and marketing exposure.



The Council also invited Member States and the Commission to:

- Strengthen cooperation on effective measures and best practices focusing especially on drink and driving;
- Continue to support the work at CNAPA (Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action), the involvement of stakeholders at national and EU level to reduce alcohol-related harm;
- Need to continue gathering information at EU level on the implementation of alcohol-related national legislation;
- Consider in the light of the report to be adopted by the Commission in accordance with article 16(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers, the possibility of introduction of mandatory labelling of ingredients and nutrition declaration, in particular of the energy value, of alcoholic beverages.

Finally the Council invites the Commission to:

- Adopt by the end of 2016, a comprehensive EU strategy dedicated to the reduction of alcohol-related harm. The strategy should focus on initiatives to reduce alcohol-related harm with a cross-border dimension and an EU added value as a follow-up to the first EU Alcohol Strategy 2006-2012.

Actions:

- HOTREC members to continue implementing voluntary measures to decrease alcohol related harm at national level, especially focusing on:
 - o Enforcing age limits when selling and serving alcohol;
 - o Developing education and information programmes on responsible drinking;
- HOTREC and HOTREC members to continue implementing Alcohol Forum commitments.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC supports a new Alcohol Strategy, as long as it is based on the pillars established by the Alcohol Strategy 2006-2012;*
- *HOTREC regrets that NGOs left the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF) and hopes that they will come back to the platform – the EAHF should be diverse and represent the interests of all stakeholders related with alcohol policy;*
- *HOTREC believes on the added value of the Alcohol Forum, as it is a platform to exchange best practices and where the ultimate goal is decreasing alcohol related harm;*
- *HOTREC looks forward to the Commission announcement on what will be the next steps with regard to the alcohol policy.*

VISA POLICY

Visa waiver agreement signed with Colombia!



On 2nd December 2015 the European Union and Colombia signed a visa waiver agreement for Colombians visiting the EU. The agreement will allow Colombia's citizens to travel more easily to the Schengen area, thus facilitating business activities and people to people contacts. In fact, and according with the agreement, Colombian citizens will be able to travel during a maximum of 90 days throughout 26 Schengen countries. For the moment the visa waiver is embargoed only Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

HOTREC position:

HOTREC fully welcomes the introduction of more visa waiver and / or more visa facilitation procedures in the EU. Visa facilitation will lead to an increase in growth and jobs in the tourism sector in Europe. Moreover, it will contribute for the EU to become more competitive towards other destinations around the world and will help keep Europe's position as world destination number one.

STATISTICS

Europe again on top of growth in terms of arrivals

- [Key figures on Europe](#): Eurostat published its statistical book of Europe 2015, aiming at giving an insight into the European economy, society and environment. Section 9.5 is dedicated to tourism, providing with a brief look into some developments the most popular country destinations within Europe.
 - [UNWTO World Tourism Barometer](#): International tourist arrivals grew by 4.3% in the first eight months of 2015 according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. Europe recorded a robust 5% increase in international tourist arrivals, the highest across all regions. The 28 countries of the European Union boasted 6% more arrivals this period, exceeding the regional average for whole Europe.
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GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Next meetings and General Assemblies

In the coming months, HOTREC will organise and/or participate to the following meetings:

- 16 December 2015 (Brussels, Belgium) – European Tourism Day;
 - 17 December 2015 (Brussels, Belgium) Dániel Makay, HOTREC Public Affairs Manager, to participate to the CEN meeting on swimming pools,
 - 5 January 2016 (Brussels, Belgium) – Marta Machado, HOTREC Public Affairs Manager, will meet the Dutch Permanent Representation of the EU (Council Presidency) about the Visa Package
 - 21 January 2016 (Brussels, Belgium) – Isabel Sobrino, HOTREC Public Affairs Manager, to participate to the Conference on Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) organized by the Social Dialogue Unit. The European Commission will present the key findings of the ESDE 2015;
 - 4-6 February 2016 (Istanbul, Turkey) – World Tourism Forum – Global Meeting 2016 – HOTREC CEO Christian de Barrin will participate as key note speaker under the "sharing economy" panel in order to present the hospitality industry's vision for a sustainable and responsible sharing economy
 - 15 March 2016: European Parliament Breakfast discussion on hotel star classification (e.g. Hotelstars Union (HSU) at the kind invitation of the host, Ms. Isabella De Monte, Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur of the European Parliament report adopted on 29 October 2015 on new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe (2014/2241(INI))
 - 7-1 April 2016 (Limassol, Cyprus) - 43rd EHMA Annual General Meeting;
 - 28-29 April 2016 (Bratislava, Slovakia) – HOTREC 72 General Assembly
 - 19- 21 October 2016 (Valletta, Malta) – HOTREC 73 General Assembly
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