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Articles of your interest

GENERAL POLICY ISSUES

Interview of Ms. Susanne Kraus-Winkler, President of HOTREC



A bit more than two months after the start of her Presidency, HOTREC asked its new President, Ms. Susanne Kraus-Winkler, a few questions about her opinion on the major recent changes affecting the hospitality industry, her vision for the future of HOTREC activities and the biggest challenges currently faced by the industry.

Looking back on 2014, what have been the major agents of change for the industry and how have they impacted the industry?

Well, we are facing the biggest technological change since the industrial revolution, which brought up a lot of new business models and possibilities to our industry, especially when it comes to distribution and new product development. This creates a lot of new opportunities for our industry but also a lot of new challenges as well.

One of the most challenging innovations is the development of the new type of the so called "Sharing Economy" initiated by AirBnB & Co. This is a big business selling non-registered products and creating unfair competition to our industry. Also the OTAs' new ways of creating distribution systems are a big challenge and a lot of new innovations are more or less rolling over our industry in a tremendous speed, which, in addition, prevents us from staying updated.

The problem with all of that is, that the traditional hospitality industry is stuck in the old system of rules and regulations, but the new businesses are not within that frame. So we have a kind of 2 class economy, threatening specially the SMEs, which are still the main backbone of the economy. We have to make sure, that the political parties understand this challenge and that they have to focus on all participants in both the real and this new pseudo economy.

Could you share with us your vision for 2015 and beyond, and which priorities should HOTREC focus on to build a sustainable future for its members?

When it comes to the political and legal issues, new legislation and bureaucracy is burdening our industry much more than ever before and has reached an unacceptable level. It is threatening the industry more intensively than ever before. Especially the small and medium size enterprises are heavily affected.

Besides that, there are, as already mentioned, lots of developments going on out there around us, which effect our industry in totally new ways, which we have to get adapted to and find our way into the future. What I learned, particularly during the last months is, that we have to become more aggressive and demanding in the way we act and we communicate vis-a-vis political bodies. We might even have to change our tone and approach. HOTREC has to learn to fit in this new way of business and political life in the way it acts. We have to act much quicker than before, we have to fight until the last possible moment, we have to explain in detail to political bodies and representatives what exactly is the result of every wrong legislative decision to our industry. I do not understand, why the EU is ruled more or less by the consumer protection institutions or big industries and that the Council is overruling the Parliament with political decisions, as it was the case with the Package Travel Directive right now.

What do you consider the biggest challenges and biggest opportunities for the time to come and which advice would you give to HOTREC Members to address them?

We have to work much closer together, closer than ever before. We have to share all our views and Know How and use all our networks and connections between all members. We have to assemble our expertise within the members and make sure that HOTREC is the perfect platform for all members and countries to create the perfect orchestrated strategy and action taking. This than can work towards the EU institutions as well as towards the individual institutions in the member countries themselves. We did this already, but are not using this intensive enough. We started already, but have to make sure, that we are focusing on EU legislation as well as to all industry developments outside.

We have to make sure, that even outside of EU we have best possible connections and work together with other non-European institutions, when it comes to general industry developments. For me even a newly awakening IH&RA would be important, as it would guarantee a platform for the worldwide tourism economy and specially ensure a perfect communication tool within the whole tourism industry worldwide. At the last UNWTO and IH&RA task force meeting in Berlin we learned that the IH&RA has interesting approaches when it comes to sharing economy and we thought afterwards, that it was inspiring for our strategy to know their standpoints on that topic. So time is changing and we have to change too. It might be time for HOTREC to think about new ways of working and of creating a new organisational structure, as well as to find new connections. In my perception some of the old connections within Brussels are stuck in their system and I am wondering if they are still efficient enough and fit to the needs of today and tomorrow.

Interview of Mr. François Koepp, CEO of HORESCA



On 23-24 April 2015, HOTREC will hold its 70th General Assembly in Luxemburg. A few weeks before this event, HOTREC asked Mr. François Koepp, the CEO of HORESCA (the hosting association), a few questions about the performance of the hospitality industry in Luxemburg, HORESCA's main priorities and the programme of the General Assembly.

The European hospitality industry is famous in European circles for being one of the few industry that kept growing and creating jobs in spite of the economic context. How is the Luxemburgish hospitality industry faring overall at the moment?

Luxembourg's hospitality industry is actually going well again. We have faced the banking crisis, and today we can proudly announce that we surpassed 2007 one of our best touristic years we ever had in our history.

Nevertheless, the ADR (Average Daily Rate) causes us still problems, although increasing significantly the last 3 years. During the crises we were one of only few sectors creating new jobs. Today the hospitality sector represents overall more than 6,9% of the Luxemburgish GDP. Predicting the future trend for 2015 is always difficult. Personally I think our sector will increase this year between 4-5 %. Competition is getting harder, as we have to be prepared to face the future, offering better service and quality to our customers.

What are the key priorities for HORESCA at national level?

At national level our key priority is to maintain the tax burden (direct and indirect) at the level it is. Countries with high wages have a disadvantage in competition, especially a small country as Luxembourg. That's why it is so important to keep advantage on the social security contribution, which is the lowest in Europe.

Other key priorities are the regulation burden: less but better regulation, the social dialogue, unemployment and so on. The list is too long to mention all. But overall "Nation Branding" is very important for our sector.

Luxembourg is a small country, which is at the heart of the European Union. What are the main European issues affecting the Luxemburgish hospitality industry at the moment?

The burden of the EU regulations is affecting constantly the hospitality sector. Small businesses are more affected than big companies. The EU regulation is fitted for Multinational companies but not for small SME's. Allergens legislation as well as the water directive are good examples increasing our costs and affecting our results.

For the EU it is easy to regulate but more rarely for the benefit of small companies, while the interest of Multinationals are often preserved. How could it otherwise be possible that Online Travel Agents can abuse their dominant positions to impose severe financial conditions to hoteliers without any help from the EU regulators?

Once Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission said, that levelling of tax harmonisation could also be done in the reversed way. This should be the key words for further EU politics and member states. Less is always more.

The next General Assembly of HOTREC will take place in Luxemburg on 23/24 April 2015. How important is it for Luxemburg to host this event? Which aspects of the programme are the most important for HORESCA?

We are very proud and honoured to host the 70th General Assembly of Hotrec in Luxemburg. It is a great pleasure for us in welcoming them in the heart of Europe and showing the aspects of hospitality in our Country. We have the pleasure in welcoming the hereditary Grand Duke Guillaume of Luxemburg as well as the Secretary of State of the Economy to our

Gala-diner; this is a great honour and shows to us the importance of the hospitality sector in Luxembourg.

The most important aspects of the programme are the future of tourism and the outlook of the Hotel industry in Europe, the online distribution, food, quality, standards and the package travel directive. In fact we are concerned by all the different topics of the GA.

ONLINE DISTRIBUTION

German court decision on banning parity clauses from HRS contract final

On 9 January 2015, the Higher Regional Court of Dusseldorf confirmed the December 2013 decision of the German Federal Cartel Office, banning the Most Favoured Nations clauses (MFN clauses) from the contracts of one of the biggest, in Germany operational online booking platform HRS.

Next Steps:

In Germany, the Federal Cartel Office will continue its investigations against similar contract clauses applied by Booking.com and Expedia. Other national authorities continue their investigations as well, under the coordination of the European Commission.

Actions:

HOTREC continues to promote its Benchmarks of Fair Practices in Online Distribution, which, among others, call for the ban of parity clauses enforced by OTAs.

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC is against MFN clauses enforced in contracts with hoteliers;
- HOTREC is pleading for the regain of entrepreneurial freedom of hospitality enterprises, which are deprived through the application of MFN clauses from setting their own prices and conditions across their selected distribution channels freely.

Market tests on commitments of Booking.com

On 15 December 2014, the French, Italian and Swedish competition authorities, under the coordination of the European Commission, launched a market test on commitments offered to them by Booking.com in response to the ongoing investigations concerning best price clauses in hotel-Online Travel Agent contracts. In these commitments Booking.com proposes to offer hoteliers the possibility to apply a different price with other OTAs than the one agreed with Booking.com. However, on hotels' direct channels the rate parity with Booking.com prices shall remain ('Narrow MFN clause'). Part of the commitments was also lower commissions or better ranking for hotels complying with some factors set by Booking.com, including compliance with the 'Narrow' MFN clauses.



Interested parties were given the possibility to respond to the market tests by 30 January 2015. HOTREC's member associations in the relevant countries provided their official response to the authorities. HOTREC has submitted its statement concerning the commitments to the European Commission. The competition authorities are about to evaluate the responses and decide on the next steps.

Next Steps:

After having analysed the responses to the market test, the competition authorities will have to decide on the next steps, be it accepting the commitments or continue the investigations without taking them on board.

Actions:

HOTREC will closely monitor the developments on this procedure and consider actions depending on the authorities' decision.

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC is rejecting the proposed commitments of Booking.com;
- The proposed commitments would not lead to offering different (lower) prices to other OTAs;
- The commitments are still depriving hospitality businesses of their entrepreneurial freedom to set their prices and conditions freely on all available distribution channels.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Package Travel Directive: trilogue negotiations underway while HOTREC adopts a joint industry position

On 4 February, the trilogue negotiations on the Package Travel Directive started between the Latvian Presidency of the EU, the representatives of the European Parliament and the European Commission. The Latvian Presidency of the EU published on 12 February its initial line of negotiations for the trilogue (available here: [link](#)). A second trilogue meeting was subsequently held on 5 March, followed by a Council working party meeting on 10 March to discuss the proposals made during the trilogue meetings. The aim of the trilogue is to bridge the gaps between the Council and the European Parliament and to obtain a compromise text.

In the meantime, HOTREC adopted on 26 February a joint industry position paper, which was also co-signed by ETTSA (Trade Association representing OTAs), IATA (International Air Transport Association), IAPPA (International Association of Amusement Parks) and IAB Europe (association representing digital advertisements companies).

Next Steps:

The next trilogue meeting will be held on 22 April 2015. The Latvian Presidency of the EU will try to reach an agreement before the end of its presidency.

Actions:

HOTREC will issue a press release. HOTREC members should use the model letters received and circulate them to their relevant ministries as soon as possible.

HOTREC position:

- The threshold used in recital 17 of the Directive to determine when "other tourists services" are significant enough to be subject to the Directive should be raised;
- Alternatively, a special rule should be created stating that a package should always contain the carriage of passengers;
- In the absence of any transfer of the consumers personal data between the traders, there should not be any Assisted Travel Arrangement formed

SHADOW HOSPITALITY

HOTREC cooperates with IRU

On 24 February 2015, HOTREC and IRU, the international Road Transport Union, agreed to cooperate closer concerning the ever increasing phenomenon of the shadow economy. Both organisations agree, that the activities promoted on emerging online platforms offering services in the tourist accommodation or the taxi sector are far away from the concept of a classical 'sharing economy' and such activities are to be seen as pure business activities. As such, similar business activities generating income and profit shall underlie similar rules and obligations. Therefore, [both organisations are calling for a level playing field](#), so that a fair competing environment among all business providers can be achieved and safe service provision to guests can be assured.

Next Steps:

HOTREC and IRU will further elaborate on possible common actions to achieve a level playing field among all service providers in their respective business activities.

Actions:

HOTREC will continue raising awareness of the discrepancies to be experienced in the shadow economy and will facilitate exchange of practices amongst its members on this phenomenon.

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC is calling for a level playing field in the supply side of the market of tourist accommodation provision;
- Compliance with administrative and fiscal requirements as well as of requirements specific to the tourist accommodation sector should be enforced among all types of suppliers.

FOOD

Proposal on food waste reduction officially withdrawn

As already announced in the 2015 Commission [work programme](#), the European Commission officially withdrew [the circular economy package](#) on 25 February 2015. The package was proposing, among others, to reduce food waste in the food service/hospitality sector by at least 30% by 2025.

The decision received harsh criticism from MEPs of all political parties during a hearing organised by the ENVI (Environment, Public Health and Food Safety) Committee of the European Parliament on 22 January. Almost all MEPs warned that they expect the Commission to stick to its promise to present a more ambitious proposal before the end of 2015. The criticism was also echoed by many Member States in the Council.

Next steps:

The European Commission will present a new legislative package on the circular economy by the end of 2015.

Actions:

HOTREC will consult its members on the way forward and on its position concerning the future package to be proposed by the Commission

HOTREC position:

HOTREC considers that one-size-fits-all binding targets will not solve the issue of food waste and would ignore the specificities of the hospitality industry.

The Commission launches the review of the General Food Law Regulation

Following the announcement in its 2015 work programme that the General Food Law [Regulation 178/2002](#) would be reviewed, the European Commission tasked AGRA CEAS Consulting to carry out an assessment of this Regulation.



AGRA CEAS Consulting already produced a number of documents on which they are consulting stakeholders in the food chain. The first consultation documents focus on the following areas:

- Core requirements and responsibilities for food/feed business operator
- Food/feed safety requirements
- Allocation of responsibilities
- Traceability requirements
- Risk analysis and precautionary principle
- Transparency in evaluation/preparation of food legislation

Next Steps:

CEAS Consulting will interview some stakeholders on specific aspects of the Regulation. This study will be used by the Commission to assess the need to review the Regulation.

Actions:

HOTREC national associations are asked to reply to the online survey made for trade associations by 27 March. The survey is available here: [link](#) HOTREC members should copy their reply to the HOTREC secretariat.

Official controls: discussions on control fees in a standstill?

The Italian Presidency of the EU failed to reach a consensus on the issue of mandatory fees for official controls in the food chain, as the Member States could not agree on the amount of the fees or on the sectors to be subject to or exempt from these fees.

The Italian Presidency had proposed:

- A mandatory control fee covering at least 60% of the cost of individual inspections;

- The deletion of the fee exemption for micro-enterprises;
- A Member State option to exempt retailers and restaurants from the mandatory fee; and
- A national option to reduce the mandatory fees based on the size of businesses.

The new Latvian Presidency of the EU is pursuing the work and has already organised three meetings on the review of the Regulation, one of which partly dedicated to the question of the inspection fees.

Next Steps:

The Latvian Presidency of the EU will try to reach an agreement on the Regulation.

Actions:

HOTREC will continue to monitor the issue. HOTREC members should continue to lobby their governments against an EU obligation to charge control fees in restaurants.

HOTREC position:

- Restaurants provide solely local services: an EU obligation to charge controls in restaurants would breach the subsidiarity principle
- HOTREC welcomes the proposal of the past Italian Presidency to allow Member States to exempt restaurants from an EU obligation to charge control/inspection fees.

EU competition investigation on the Danish fat tax

On 5 February 2015, the European Commission announced the opening of an official investigation against Denmark concerning the defunct fat tax scrapped in 2012. The aim of the inquiry is to determine whether or not food producers who were not forced to add an extra fat tax on their products received illegal assistance that can be assimilated to a state aid.



Next Steps:

The European Commission will collect evidences to determine if state aid rules were violated. If so, the Danish government may have to collect the extra tax from the producers whose products were exempt for the period during which the tax was in place

MEPs calls for mandatory origin labelling for meat in processed food

On 11 February 2015, the European Parliament passed a non-binding resolution in which they call on the European Commission to come up with legislative proposals to make mandatory the labelling of the origin of the meat used in processed foods, as is already the case with bovine fresh meat.

The resolution was passed by a large majority and is to be seen as a follow-up of the [report by the European Commission](#) from December 2013 on this topic, as was requested by the Food Information to Consumers (FIC) Regulation.

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

HOTREC position:

HOTREC recalls its opposition to mandatory origin labelling for meat used as ingredients in non-prepacked food.

DATA PROTECTION

Justice Ministers advance in the right direction

On 12 and 13 March 2015 the Justice and Home Affairs Council mainly discussed chapter II of the proposed Regulation on Data Protection (6834/15) and the one-stop-shop mechanism (6833/15).



With regard to Chapter II, ministers decided that consent should be given "unambiguously" rather than "explicitly". Justice ministers agreed that the data subject's intention's (client) could be given in writing, including electronic, through an oral statement or, if required by specific circumstances, by any other clear affirmative action signifying his or her agreement to personal data being processed (art: 7/1 and recital 25).

Ministers also agreed that legitimate interest to process data could exist when there is a relevant connection between the data subject and the controller in situations such as the data subject being a client or in the service of the controller (recital 38 and art.6/f). Legitimate interest would need careful assessment including whether a data subject can expect at the time and in the context of the collection of the data that processing for this purpose may take place. This would mean that controllers (companies) could keep the data for clients for marketing purposes, if they inform them in advance that they will do so. In any case, recital 39 considers that processing of personal data for direct marketing purposes may be regarded as carried out for a legitimate interest.

Next steps:

The Justice and Home Affairs Council should decide on a general approach on its 15-16 June meeting. Triilogue meetings between the European Parliament and the Council will then probably start.

Actions:

HOTREC will continue lobbying the Latvian Permanent Representation and the EP rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs.

HOTREC members should continue lobbying their national ministries and Permanent Representations.

HOTREC position

- HOTREC welcomes the risk based approach presented by the Council and the fact that a Data Protection officer is not mandatory, unless this is required by Union or Member State Law;
- HOTREC defends that the processing of personal data for the purpose of direct marketing for own or similar services should be presumed as carried out for the legitimate interest of the controller;

HEALTH

A new alcohol strategy?

On 29 January 2015 a [Motion for a Resolution on the EU Alcohol Strategy](#) has been presented at the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) at the European Parliament by all political groups. The objective is to call on the Commission to present a new Alcohol Strategy. Amongst other measures, the Parliament calls on the Commission and Member States to:



- Enhance the role of the Alcohol Forum;
- Monitor progress regarding the Action Plan on Alcohol presented by Member States;
- Review and strengthen the implementation of measures to restrict alcohol sales to those under the legal age for alcohol purchase, namely by restricting sales in premises within a close range from schools;

- Consider the appropriateness of introducing minimum pricing per alcohol unit.

At the same time, CNAPA, the Committee for National Alcohol Policy and Action, formed by Member States representatives, released a [scoping paper](#), also calling the Commission for a new Alcohol Strategy. CNAPA encourages the EU to work on:

- EU rules on the mechanisms to influence prices (including alcohol taxation);
- EU definitions of alcohol beverages that inhibit reduction of alcohol content;
- Alcohol marketing and advertising;
- Providing health-related information through labelling of alcoholic beverages;
- Research, gathering and monitoring.

For the moment the European Commission has not announced a new Alcohol Strategy and defends that the current one (2006-2012) is still applicable.

Next steps:

The LIBE Committee will vote on the draft Resolution on 31 March 2015 while the EP plenary will do so in April 2015.

Actions:

HOTREC has launched a targeted lobbying campaign towards the co-authors of the Motion for a Resolution, and proposed some amendments.

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC welcomes a new strategy, as long as the main objective is curbing alcohol related harm;
- Establishments holding a license to sell alcohol, should be able to continue doing so whatever their location is;
- There will always be establishments that sell alcohol nearby schools. To restrict selling alcohol in those areas, would force the establishments to close down;
- HOTREC proposed that Member States conduct regular control measures in the premises with a close range from schools.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Working Time Directive: Consultation period runs until 18 March 2015

On 1 December 2014, the European Commission launched a [public consultation](#) on the possible review of the Working Time Directive. The Commission is reviewing the Working time rules to reflect on how to best meet the needs of workers business, public services and consumers. The consultation period has been extended until 18 March 2015 due to the high level of participation.

Next Steps:

Once the consultation is closed the Commission will publish its results and will use them to complete its preparatory work with a thorough impact assessment of a range of possible options for the review of the working time rules.

Actions:

On 17 February 2015, HOTREC provided to the European Commission its response on the public consultation.

HOTREC position:

- In the hospitality sector the patterns of work depend heavily on the changing demand for services;
- The need for work force varies a lot in the hospitality sector;
- Flexibility of working time arrangements is crucial for the maintenance of the service within the hospitality sector;
- The maintenance of the opt-out provision is also essential for the hospitality/tourism sector.

Council adopts conclusions on the Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2015

On 9 March 2015, the Council adopted its [conclusions](#) on the Commission Communication on a EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2015.

The Council welcomes the Commission Communication on the issue and confirms that there is a need:

- To improve the implementation of occupational safety and health (OSH) legislation, in particular in micro and small-sized companies;
- To prevent occupational and work-related diseases by tackling existing, new and emerging risks;
- To address the challenges posed by an ageing workforce and longer working careers.

Next Steps:

The Member States, the Commission and the social partners will put in place measures to improve and promote the importance of healthy and safety workplaces.

Actions:

As recognised European Social partner representing the hospitality sector, HOTREC will provide support to employers and workers in order to promote the necessary knowledge and skills to identify, evaluate and control OSH risks

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC welcomes the Council Conclusions and the Commission revision of the EU strategic Framework on Health and Safety at work 2014-2020;
- HOTREC fully agrees with some of the Commission objectives on the topic, like simplifying legislation and eliminating unnecessary administrative burden.

Maternity leave: re-starting negotiations?

On 9 March 2015, MEP Maria Arena (S&D, Belgium) called on the Commission and on the Council to take up again negotiations on the maternity leave dossier. Ms. Arena spoke took the opportunity to speak about this dossier during a debate held in the EP on "progress on equality between women and men in the EU in 2013".

Next steps:

According to EURACTIV news, the Latvian Presidency of the EU has been asked to call for a meeting on 18 March 2015 to analyse whether there is a possibility to negotiate a new compromise between the Council and the EP.

If no agreement is reached by June 2015, the European Commission will withdraw the proposed directive on maternity leave and issue a more modern initiative.

Actions:

HOTREC will continue to monitor the next developments on the issue. As reported previously the President of the European Commission, Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker gave the co-legislators in the beginning of January a 6 month period to unblock the negotiations.

HOTREC position

- HOTREC supports measures on work-life balance and protection of working women who are pregnant, have recently give birth or are breastfeeding;
- Nevertheless, HOTREC is of the opinion that an excessive regulation in this area will add financial costs and additional burdens on SMEs;
- The compulsory extension of maternity leave to 20 weeks with full pay and the introduction of a 2 weeks paid paternity leave would entail additional burdens in the majority of the Member States, where the situation in relation to

maternity and paternity leave varies a greatly.

TOURISM

Coastal and maritime tourism

On 6 March 2015 took place the conference: "[Pan European dialogue between cruise operators, ports and coastal tourism stakeholders](#)". Christian de Barrin, CEO of HOTREC, presented: "The challenges and opportunities of the coastal and maritime tourism to the hospitality sector", by highlighting that seasonality, accessibility and sustainability must be tackled with the support of the EU institutions. Easier access to EU funding would be helpful for the sector.



On 20 January 2015 the Commission organised a conference: "[Smart cooperation in coastal and maritime tourism - Encouraging transnational partnerships through clusters and networks](#)", in order to promote best practices sharing regarding the creation of clusters in the coastal and maritime areas.

Both events are a follow-up of the Commission Communication "European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism" ([COM \(2014\) 86 final](#)).

HOTREC position

- HOTREC welcomes the Commission Communication on "A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism".

Tourism Taskforce

On 29 January 2015 took place the Tourism Taskforce at the European Parliament. During the meeting, Mr. Pedro Ortún, Director General of DG Growth, presented the eight priorities of Commissioner [Bieńkowska](#) for the next five years:

- Simplification of the regulatory and administrative framework;
- Creation of a tourism platform (where all tourism stakeholders would be represented);
- Improve the skills of the workers;
- Promote the digitalisation of the tourism sector;
- Promote sustainable tourism (the charter for sustainable tourism will be approved);
- Fight seasonality – by promoting the low and medium season inside and outside Europe;
- Promotion of interoperability for transport connectivity;
- Joint promotion of Europe - through a pan European dialogue.

Next steps:

Waiting for more information on the next activities to be released from the Commission side.

Actions:

HOTREC will continue to accompany the Commission's initiatives in the field of Tourism.

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC welcomes Commissioner [Bieńkowska](#)'s priorities, but believes that branding Europe as a destination might have a high cost, while the real result is unknown. Branding should continue being mostly developed at national level.
- HOTREC also believes that setting-up a tourism platform is also not a priority for the sector. In fact, dialogue and exchange of views are always welcome, but each stakeholder has its own priorities and sometimes even different views on the same topics.

Senior Traveling

On 5th February took place another EULSTIB meeting with the objective of promoting EU low and medium season tourism. The aim is to implement an Action Plan that encourages senior citizens to travel in Europe during this period. Mr. Akos Niklai, Vice-President of HOTREC, participated at the meeting.

Next steps:

The next EULSTIB meeting will take place on 17th June 2015, in Brussels.

Actions:

HOTREC will contribute to the following objectives:

- Assessing and sharing good practices at EU level and adopting accessibility and quality recommendations;
- Advising on facilitating connectivity and the use of ICTs;
- Developing transnational senior-oriented

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC encourages its members to prepare attractive programmes for seniors during the medium and low season, as a way to increase business opportunities;
- HOTREC calls on the Commission to continue putting forward actions to fight seasonality;

Live events on digital tourism

The European Commission is organising a series of live events - [six webinars](#) - that aim to provide support, insight and guidance on digital issues to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism industry, as well as practical advice on the day-to-day running of a business.

The seminar will examine recent trends in tourists' use of technology to discover, plan and share their travel experiences. Each webinar will be led by an industry expert on one of the topics below.

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC supports all the relevant actions taken by the Commission in order to help SMEs to become more digital.

Kick-off meeting at the European Parliament

On 5 March 2015, the LIBE committee (Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs), presented the following working documents focusing on the Visa Package:

- [Working document on the Visa Code recast](#) – rapporteur: MEP López Aguilar (S&D/Spain)
- [Working document on the Touring Visa](#) – rapporteur: MEP Hortefeux (EPP/France)

During the meeting Mr. Aguilar supported the Commission proposal. MEPs presented doubts with regard to the use of external service providers, elimination of travel medical insurance, mandatory representation of consulates and possibility of issuing temporary visa at the border. At the same time, MEP Hortefeux presented several questions to the Commission regarding the legality and need for the Touring visa to exist.

On the Council side, the first reading of the Visa Code recast has been concluded. It seems that the Council does not favour the Commission proposal. The Latvian Presidency has started to propose some compromise solutions. The reading of the Touring Visa is still in a very initial phase.

Next steps:

The 2 draft reports will be presented on 16 and 17 June 2015. The deadline to put forward amendments is 17 July 2015. The draft report and amendments will be discussed on 3 September and the vote will take place at the LIBE Committee on 13 October 2015.

Actions:

HOTREC requested appointments with the rapporteur and the shadow rapporteurs of the Visa Code recast. HOTREC has also contacted the rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs of the Touring Visa.

HOTREC Associations should contact their relevant ministries and Permanent Representations on the basis of HOTREC position ([link](#)) and proposal for amendments.

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC fully welcomes the Commission proposal on the Visa Package (including the Visa Code recast and the Touring Visa proposal);
- Easier procedures to help legitimate travellers to access Europe will help keep Europe as worlds' number 1 tourist destination.

EP Tourism Intergroup: HOTREC puts forward its views

On 18 March 2015 took place the second meeting of the Intergroup on European Tourism Development. This Intergroup is chaired by MEP Ana-Claudia TAPARDEL.

One of the main points on the agenda was the exchange of views with key stakeholders, in the domain of Tourism and Cultural Development. As representative of the hospitality sector HOTREC was one of the key speakers at this meeting.

HOTREC CEO, Christian de Barrin, did a brief presentation of the European hospitality sector which is a key industry that contributes to job creation and fosters Europe competitiveness. He also referred to visa package, online distribution, shadow hospitality economy and package travel directive, 4 issues that are top on the agenda of the tourism sector and that should be discussed in the next meetings of the Intergroup.

Next steps:

The Intergroup to decide on the programme and dates for next meetings.

Actions

HOTREC will continue liaising with MEP Tapardel in order to propose her different topics that should be discussed at the EP Tourism Intergroup.

HOTREC position:

HOTREC has developed a strong lobbying campaign to set up an EP Tourism Intergroup;

- HOTREC is one of the key stakeholders represented at the EP Tourism Intergroup;
- HOTREC will continue liaising with MEP Tapardel to put forward important dossiers (shadow hospitality economy, online distribution etc.) that should be dealt with at the EP Tourism Intergroup;
- The EP Intergroup is a key forum for HOTREC to put forward its views on the different topics that are currently affecting the tourism sector.

ICT AND TOURISM

TOURISMLink: HOTREC continues promotion actions

As a follow-up to the MOU signed on 24 June 2014 by TOURISMLink consortium partners and the Commission, HOTREC has committed itself to continue promoting TOURISMLink with Ernst & Young through a series of meetings organised all over Europe. A first meeting to communicate the results of TOURISMLink took place in Brussels on 14 January 2015. HOTREC presented at this meeting the TOURISMLink initiative.

Next steps:

HOTREC, its consortium partners and Ernst & Young will continue promotion actions of TOURISMLink in Croatia Spain, Portugal, and possible Italy (dates to be confirmed).

Actions:

HOTREC will keep promoting TOURISMLink to its members and other interested stakeholders. HOTREC is also liaising with DOME (technical partner) to facilitate the access to the platform of companies willing to join TOURISMLink.

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC supports all measures aimed at facilitating the access of SMEs in the tourism sector to the digital market;
- HOTREC fully supports initiatives such as TOURISMLink that are intended to make SMEs more competitive.

QUALITY

Hungarian and German quality schemes re-accredited by HOTREC's EHQ scheme

In January 2015, HOTREC has positively decided about the re-accreditation requests under its European Hospitality Quality scheme of the Hungarian Tourism Quality Award and ServiceQualität Deutschland. In Germany the second level of the scheme, with some slight additions, is acknowledged complying with the criteria of EHQ.



European
Hospitality Quality

Both programmes promote the enhancement of the quality of services within the tourism sector in their respective countries and provide establishments, complying with certain service quality requirements, with recognition and increased visibility on the market.

Together with Sweden and Switzerland, quality programmes of 4 countries enjoy currently the European recognition by HOTREC.

Next Steps:

HOTREC will further strengthen its EHQ scheme and will seek cooperation with other countries for future accreditations.

Actions:

HOTREC National Associations should suggest quality initiatives in their countries for a closer cooperation with HOTREC and for EHQ recognition;

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC promotes voluntary initiatives across Europe enhancing service quality in hospitality services;
- HOTREC developed its European Hospitality Quality scheme as an umbrella quality scheme offering a tool for evaluation and comparison of existing quality schemes across Europe.

COPYRIGHT

New European Parliament draft report on the implementation of the 2001 Copyright Directive

On 15 January 2015, MEP Julia Reda (Greens, Germany) released her [draft report](#) on the implementation of [Directive 2001/29/EC](#) on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society. The draft Reda report focuses on the following aspects:

- The possible introduction of a single European copyright title to reduce the lack of harmonisation;
- Safeguarding public domain works;
- Reducing the term of protection of copyright when these term exceed current international standards;
- Existing exceptions and limitations contained in Directive 2001/29/EC.

A first exchange of views was held on this draft report by the Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament on 23 February.

Next steps:

The Legal Affairs Committee will table amendments to the draft report before its adoption. The plenary session is expected to adopt this report in May or June 2015.

Actions:

HOTREC will follow the debates on the Reda report and inform its members about any further relevant development.

COMPETITION

Interchange Fees Regulation: trilogue agreement endorsed by EP plenary

On 21 January 2015, the COREPER of the Council endorsed the [agreement reached in trilogue](#) between the Italian Presidency of the EU and the representatives of the European Parliament on the [Regulation on Interchange Fees for payment cards](#) (MIF Regulation). Following this, the ECON (Economic & Monetary Affairs) Committee of the European Parliament endorsed the trilogue agreement on 27 January, followed by the plenary session of the European Parliament on 10 March.

Next steps:

The Council should definitely adopt the MIF Regulation in April or May 2015.

HOTREC position:

HOTREC welcomes the agreement reached on the MIF Regulation, which will cap fees for consumer cards.

STATISTICS

Recent statistical publications

The UNWTO World Tourism Barometer has recently published the following articles related to tourism:

- "[International tourism on track to end 2014 with record numbers](#)" – (Barometer publication December 2014) – International tourism reached a new record by the end of 2014 with over 1.1 billion international tourists travelling the world in one single year;
- [Over 1.1 billion tourists travelled abroad in 2014](#) – (Barometer publication January 2015) - International tourist arrivals reached 1,138 million in 2014, a 4.7% increase over the previous year. For 2015, UNWTO forecasts international tourism to grow by 3% to 4%, further contributing to the global economic recovery. The number of international tourists (overnight visitors) reached 1,138 million in 2014, 51 million more than in 2013. With an increase of 4.7%, this is the fifth consecutive year of above average growth since the 2009 economic crisis.

Moreover, the European Commission released its new survey on [Preferences of Europeans towards tourism](#) – (Eurobarometer publication March 2015). This year's survey on tourism, conducted by the European Commission shows, inter alia, that 95% of the respondents were satisfied with both the safety and the quality of their accommodation. 0% experienced any fire related emergency problems. The survey also shows that personal recommendations (55%) and the internet (46%) are the most important when making travel plans. Further details in the [full Eurobarometer](#).

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Next meetings

In the next weeks, HOTREC will organise and/or participate to the following meetings:

- 18 March 2015 (Brussels) - EP Tourism Intergroup: HOTREC has developed a strong lobbying campaign to set up an EP Tourism Intergroup. HOTREC will participate to this meeting as a speaker;
- 24 March 2015 (Brussels) – SME Intergroup meeting on the Package Travel Directive – HOTREC President will participate as a speaker;
- 27 March 2015 (Brussels) - kick-off meeting of the Digital Tourism Platform: HOTREC will participate to the meeting to contribute with its own expertise on the area of tourism & ICT;
- 13 April 2015 (Paris) – Global Lodging Forum – HOTREC will participate to this event that facilitates a closer encounter between the various business areas involved in the development of the hospitality industry;
- 17 April 2015 (Geneva) – EHMA Annual Congress – HOTREC President will participate as speaker to the 42 Annual Congress of the European Hotel Manager Association;
- 22 April 2015 (Luxembourg) – Late Night Entertainment Working Group: on the occasion of its General Assembly in Luxembourg, HOTREC will hold its bi-annual meeting on late night entertainment.
- 22 April 2015 (Luxembourg)- Hotelstars Union (HSU) Meeting: The Managing Board of HSU will hold its regular meeting, inter alia assessing first experiences with the revised criteria catalogue;
- 27 April 2015 (Brussels) – Wine in Moderation Conference: HOTREC will continue developing its partnership with Wine in Moderation.

Next General Assemblies

On 23-24 April HOTREC will hold its 70th General Assembly in Luxembourg, in presence of Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. MEP Ana-Claudia Tapardel and Mr Georges Friden, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the EU will also be present at HOTREC GA as guest speakers.

The Autumn General Assembly will be held in Amsterdam on 5 and 6 November 2015.
