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#### *Articles of your interest*

## GENERAL POLICY ISSUES

### Interview of MEP Maria Grapini, Member of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee



MEP Maria Grapini (S&D, Romania) is member of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and substitute member of the Committee on Transport and Tourism. MEP Grapini is also the Vice-Chair of the European Parliament SME Intergroup.

On 17 March 2016, MEP Grapini hosted a high level event entitled "Nearly Zero Energy Hotels (NeZEH) for achieving low carbon growth in Europe." The NEZEH initiative aims at accelerating the rate of refurbishments of existing hotels into Nearly Zero Energy Buildings. HOTREC also participated to the event to present the views of the hospitality sector.

In the context of NEZEH, HOTREC asked Ms. Grapini to share her views on energy efficiency strategies for hotels.

- 1. On 17 March 2016, you hosted a High-Level Event on Nearly Zero Energy Hotels (NeZEH). This event represented an opportunity for EU policy makers, representatives from the industry as well as national, regional and local authorities to exchange views and discuss the challenges and opportunities of energy innovation as a means to enhance sustainability and competitiveness in the hotel sector. Could you briefly explain what have been the most important outcomes of this event?**

The conclusions of the event have been already sent to the European Commission's representatives and have been accepted by all the participants.

The pilot project was good and brought concrete results. Hence, my proposal was the continuance of the neZEH project by offering financial support to other hotels.

The effect of the project had a good impact not only on minimizing the energy consumption, but also on the quality of the environment and on the consumers' comfort.

- 2. HOTREC and its national associations are key actors when it comes to sensitizing hoteliers on the benefits of implementing energy efficiency measures. Our associations partner at national level with public authorities, energy companies, NGOs, in order to engage hoteliers in improving their energy management and guide them on energy efficiency options. From your point of view, what other initiatives/measures could the European Parliament introduce/ develop to boost the implementation of energy efficiency strategies and convince entrepreneurs to green their hotels in order to build a sustainable and competitive European tourism sector?**

Energy efficiency and European energy strategy are on the agenda of the European Commission and of the European Parliament. I think that national authorities must work with similar associations to design European and national funding programs regarding energy efficiency, in general for buildings, particularly for hotels. Furthermore, it needs a clear procedure for permanent information of entrepreneurs in the field in order to access European programs. Tourism is an extremely important domain for Romania and should be sustainably and efficiently built.

- 3. 75% of the companies in the hotel sector are micro-sized business. One of the big challenges that hoteliers face when undertaking energy efficiency measures is the limited access to financial resources as well as the lack of knowledge/awareness of feasible options on energy efficiency and the understanding of the benefits of energy savings. From your point of view, what additional measures should the national authorities develop (Funding, fiscal incentives etc) to ensure that NeZEH turn from pilots to a critical mass?**

In general, small businesses, especially micro enterprises have a problem with the access to finance, and also with the lack of possibilities to access information. I consider that projects, additional funding measures model as the neZEH pilot project could be initiated with national grants and guaranteed loans. Projects can be designed as an investment in energy savings and can be charged from the tax budget. The profit, instead of being transferred to the budget, could be used as co-financing for energy efficiency projects.

## CONSUMER AFFAIRS

### UNWTO relaunches the discussions on an international convention on the protection of tourists



On 23 March 2016, the UNWTO relaunched its work on an international convention on the protection of tourists and tourism service providers, with a meeting of the Working Group tasked to draft the convention.

The draft text of the convention contains 3 annexes, with detailed rules to be implemented at international level.

- Annex I prescribes a number of obligations and recommendations on the State parties, when confronted with extraordinary and unforeseeable circumstances that have resulted in the need of assistance on a large scale. The aim of this annex is to ensure that tourists are helped by State authorities in such circumstances;
- Annex II deals with the protection granted to tourists who book packages ;
- Annex III deals with accommodation contracts.

In view of the meeting, UNWTO had prepared a new draft of the convention and of its annexes. The new draft of annex II is merely trying to incorporate at international level the new EU Package Travel Directive.

Concerning annex III on accommodation contracts, the last text provided by UNWTO tries to incorporate large parts of the EU consumer rights Directive. It also proposes that, in case of extraordinary and unforeseeable circumstances resulting in the need of assistance on a large scale (e.g. volcano ash clouds, earthquakes, etc.), hotels would be forbidden to raise their prices for the tourists who would be forced to stay abroad because of such events.

The draft of annex III also proposes that, in case of such extraordinary events, tourists could cancel for free their accommodation booking and that accommodation providers would be prohibited from charging cancellation fees to Tour Operators. HOTREC, which participated to the Working Group, strongly opposed the latter possibility, as the Convention should not address B2B contracts.

#### Next Steps:

UNWTO will consult the State Parties on the controversial issues included in annex III. A new working group meeting should be held in June 2016 at the UNWTO headquarters in Madrid.

#### Actions:

HOTREC will work with UNWTO secretariat to align the text of the Convention on existing EU legislation applicable. HOTREC will also repeat its opposition to the proposal to prohibit cancellation fees charged to Tour Operators when they cancel reservations as a result of extraordinary circumstances. HOTREC members should lobby their governments with the model letter provided by HOTREC.

#### HOTREC position:

- The UNWTO Convention should exclusively focus on consumer protection and shall not tackle business-to-business contracts and commercial practices;
- The Convention should not discriminate hotels in favour of tour Operators. The proposal to prohibit cancellation fees charged to Tour Operators in case of extraordinary circumstances should therefore be scrapped.

## FOOD

### Member States and stakeholders agree on a European roadmap on food product improvement



On 22 February 2016, upon the initiative of the current Dutch Presidency of the EU, 22 EU Member States, 2 EFTA countries, 4 important Health NGOs and 4 major trade associations representing food business operators across the food chain (i.e. EuroCommerce, FoodDrink Europe, FoodServiceEurope and Serving Europe) signed a Roadmap for Action on Food Product Improvement.

The Roadmap considers, among others, that:

- Food product improvement is an important mean to improve people's diet;
- National governments have the responsibility to set public health objectives and food business operators throughout the supply chain including industry, retail, catering, bars and restaurants have a shared responsibility to improve their food products to contribute to improving people's diets;
- Cultural differences in taste and eating behaviour should be respected;
- Some Member States are more advanced than others on this issue;
- SMEs often lack the resources or skills to work on food product improvement;
- Raising awareness among, support of and attention for SMEs by sharing knowledge and best-practices is important in view of their market share;
- Gradual reduction of salt, saturated fats and added sugars in foods is needed to maintain consumer acceptance of improved products.

The roadmap further considers that a long-term agenda is needed to reduce the levels of salt, saturated fats and added sugars (calories) in foods throughout the EU, and that its aim is to accelerate concerted actions from national governments, food business operators, the European Commission, WHO and NGOs.

For this reason, the Roadmap and the States and organisation supporting it call for a number of concerted actions to improve food product from a nutritional point of view along three main lines of actions:

- Work in close multi stakeholder collaboration at EU level on food product improvement, in particular at the level of the EU Platform on Nutrition and Physical Activity;
- Improve scientific basis, monitoring and data collection and sharing at EU level on (improved) products, consumption, methods;
- Exchange best practices & facilitate implementation by companies.

The full Roadmap is available here: [link](#).

#### Next Steps

The EU Platform on Nutrition and Physical Activity, chaired by the European Commission, and the High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity (a group of experts from the governments of the EU Member States) are expected to discuss further the actions promoted by the Roadmap.

#### Actions:

HOTREC was invited by the cabinet of Commissioner Andriukaitis, responsible for Health and Safety, to discuss the possibility for HOTREC to join the EU Platform on Nutrition and Physical Activity.

#### HOTREC position

- *HOTREC considers that initiatives taken at EU level on food reformulation in restaurants should focus on raising SMEs awareness and sharing best practices, as imposing additional legislation on restaurants is unworkable. Focus should be put on pre-packed food;*
- *New obligations imposed on the restaurant sector, which is composed in its vast majority of micro-enterprises should be avoided, as they would inevitably lead to unsustainable costs and administrative burdens;*
- *Public authorities' focus should be on consumption in un-controlled environment;*
- *HOTREC considers that public awareness measures should prevail on this matter (education rather than legislation).*

## Official controls: no trilogue agreement yet



Trilogue negotiations on the Official Controls Regulation continued between the Dutch Presidency of the EU, the European Parliament negotiation team led by the rapporteur MEP Karin Kadenbach (S&D, Austria) and the European Commission with new meetings which took place in March and beginning of April 2016.

The most important aspect of this regulation for the hospitality industry concerns the financing of official controls in food business operators (i.e. hygiene inspections) and the transparency of the official controls.

In the last trilogue meetings, progresses were registered on the issue of transparency and on the non-controversial aspects of the Regulation. However, the issue of the financing of the controls is still in a standstill, as the European Parliament supports full subsidiarity (i.e. meaning that each Member States would be free to decide whether to charge inspection fees or not, whatever the sub-sector), while the Council favours a solution where fees would be mandatory for sectors with a cross-border dimension such as slaughterhouses or meat importers (while national authorities would remain free to decide whether to charge fees or not for other sectors).

### Next Steps:

Further trilogue meetings are expected to take place on 19 April and in the beginning of May. The negotiators expect a final compromise to be agreed before the end of June 2016.

### Actions:

HOTREC, which is in contact with the office of the MEP rapporteur will inform its member associations as soon as an agreement is reached in trilogue.

### HOTREC position:

- *Restaurants provide solely local services: an EU obligation to charge inspection/control fees would breach the subsidiarity principle;*
- *HOTREC therefore calls on the trilogue negotiators to ensure that Member States remain free to decide at national level how to finance official controls in restaurants, as provided by both the European Parliament and Council initial positions.*

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## Towards European codes of good practices for managing Acrylamide formation in food?

The European Commission discussed recently with some stakeholders organizations representing food business operators the possibility to adopt codes of good practices to manage the risks of formation of acrylamide in food.

Such codes of good practices have been adopted by FoodDrink Europe in January 2016, or by Serving Europe (i.e the EU trade Association representing the fast food chains) in March 2016. The European Commission is willing to discuss the issue further with other stakeholders.

### Next Steps:

On 21 April 2016, the Commission will hold a meeting with stakeholders to discuss the codes of practices already adopted or proposed.

### Actions:

HOTREC will participate to the 21 April meeting.

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## CLASSIFICATION

### Hotelstars Union gains the full support from the EU Institutions



Following its recognition by the European Parliament's resolution on tourism adopted on 29 October 2015, on 15 March 2016, Hotelstars Union, together with HOTREC, explained the latest developments of the common European hotel classification system created under the patronage of HOTREC.

It was presented to Members of the European Parliament and the European Commission, as well as to the several travel industry representatives present. The Hotelstars Union (HSU) is the official hotel classification system in already 13 countries in Europe (Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland), with 3 more being in the implementation phase (Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg) and a few more in the planning phase (like France and Italy).

Susanne Kraus-Winkler, President of HOTREC, spoke about the importance of hotel classification, the objective evaluation of the establishments - through the number of official stars awarded – which constitutes a reliable and measurable system on the basic facilities and services to be expected.

Janis Valodze, President of the Hotelstars Union, explained the mechanisms and the details of the system. He emphasised the geographical growth of the system over the last years as well as the need for the regular update of the common criteria based on the direct involvement of consumers, in order to keep the pace with the changes requested by the market. He also emphasised the importance of the inclusion of the official star ratings in the various travel platforms.

Isabella de Monte, Member of the European Parliament recognised the achievements of Hotelstars Union. She emphasised that it is a very good example of bottom-up initiatives coming from the hospitality industry. The wider and wider application of the system across Europe provides consumers with a clear comparison of the accommodation offer not only in Europe but also for visitors from third countries.

Carlo Corazza, Head of Unit in DG Grow of the European Commission ensured Hotelstars Union about the support of the Commission on its activities. He stressed that the system contributes to sustaining European tourism's competitiveness and encouraged the industry to keep further developing it.

#### HOTREC position

- *The Hotelstars Union is aiming to make hotel classification more comparable across Europe;*
- *It has been a successful bottom-up initiative of the industry itself, which received already several times the recognition of the European institutions;*
- *HOTREC and Hotelstars Union will continue further developing this harmonised hotel classification system.*

#### Photo:

From left: Christian de Barrin, CEO of HOTREC, Isabella de Monte, Member of the European Parliament, Janis Valodze, President of Hotelstars Union, Susanne Kraus-Winkler, HOTREC President, Carlo Corazza, Head of Unit, DG Grow, European Commission

# TAXATION

## European Commission issues its VAT Action Plan



On 7 April 2016, the European Commission issued its Action Plan to modernise VAT in the European Union. The main aim of the plan is to tackle fraud, support businesses and help the digital economy and e-commerce. The Action Plan also foresees a modernised rates policy for which the Commission proposes two different options for future consideration.

One of the most urgent steps identified by the Commission is the reduction of fraud in cross-border trade. It is estimated to be responsible for revenue losses of around 50 billion EUR annually in the EU. To tackle this issue, urgent actions are foreseen to be taken, like improving the cooperation between Member States and increasing the efficiency of tax administrations.

With regard to the challenges and opportunities of the growing e-commerce and the 'sharing' economy, the Commission envisages new approaches to tax collection to be considered, like new reporting and auditing tools as well as defining new roles for certain market intermediaries.

In relation to VAT rates, the European Commission intends to propose two options to give more flexibility for Member States as regards VAT rates, both maintaining the system of reduced rates:

1. The list of goods and services which can benefit from a reduced rate would be reviewed in the context of a transition to a definitive VAT system, and be reviewed at regular intervals.
2. The abolishment of this list, allowing Member States greater freedom on the number of reduced rates applied and their level. This option would require safeguards to avoid unfair tax competition, thus this freedom could be accompanied by some basic rules framing the cases in which reduced rates may be applied. The minimum standard VAT rate would be removed.

Lastly, the Commission is preparing a comprehensive simplification package for SMEs that will seek to create an environment that is conducive to their growth and favourable to cross-border trade. In particular, the special scheme for small enterprises of the current VAT Directive will be subject to review.

### Next steps

The European Commission's Action Plan is will be discussed in the European Parliament and in the Council to provide feedback to the Commission on its plans. Proposals are planned to be presented in 2016 and 2017.

### Actions

HOTREC will analyse the Action plan of the European Commission and will further evaluate its impact on hospitality businesses;

### HOTREC position

- Accommodation and restaurant services have been eligible for a reduced VAT rate in all EU countries. Almost all countries apply a reduced VAT rate for tourist accommodation services, while more than half of them apply such a rate to restaurant services;
- Reduced VAT rates for the European tourism and hospitality industry are crucial to be preserved in the long term in order to maintain Europe's competitiveness in the global tourism market;

# TOURISM

## Commissioner Bieńkowska addresses the European Parliament



On 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016 took place a Tourism Taskforce at the TRAN Committee (Committee of Transport and Tourism) of the European Parliament which counted with the participation of Commissioner Bieńkowska (responsible for the portfolio of Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs).

The meeting was organised by and in presence of MEP [UJHELYI](#) (Hungary/S&D) - chair of the Tourism Taskforce. It also counted notably with the presence of MEP de Monte (Spain/S&D), MEP de Grandes (Spain/EPP), MEP Tapardel (Romania/S&D), Chair of the Intergroup on Development of European Tourism, Cultural Heritage, Ways of Saint James, amongst others.

The Commissioner mentioned the following challenges for the Tourism sector:

- Digitalisation and the collaborative economy – in this respect the Commissioner informed that guidance on the application of existing laws to the actors of "sharing economy" will be provided by the Commission. Nevertheless, no new legislation will be put forward;
- Increased competition from third countries – the Commissioner defended that the industry should promote Europe as a destination;
- Skills – cross border trainings and mobility of workers are fundamental to combat skills mismatches and promote employment opportunities;

The Commissioner also mentioned that a start-up initiative will be deployed this year to deal with VAT regulations and burdensome regulatory requirements.

During her intervention the Commissioner also welcomed the [Tourism Manifesto](#).

### HOTREC position

*HOTREC fully supports the Commission priorities in the field of Tourism. In a nutshell, HOTREC defends:*

- *The creation of a level playing field with regard to the "sharing" economy;*
  - *Further cooperation with the European Commission in order to upgrade skills and competences in the Tourism sector;*
  - *Actions developed by the European Commission that would help the sector to become even more visible and that would help increase its global market share.*
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## Commission presents “Back to Schengen” roadmap



On 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016 the European Commission presented a [roadmap](#) to try to restore the integrity of the Schengen free-movement area maximum by December 2016.

Temporary border controls are not only obstacles for the free movement of people, but they also imply a significant economic cost. The European Commission estimated that a full re-establishment of border controls within the Schengen area would generate immediate costs of between €5 and €18 billion annually. Regarding the tourism sector, at least 13 million tourist nights could be lost, with a total cost of €1.2 billion.

In this context, the European Commission presented a road map which includes the following points:

- Call on the European Parliament and the Council to swiftly adopt the Commission proposal for a [European Border and Coast Guard](#);
- Address the shortcomings faced by Greece when managing its external border: identification and registration of all entries; Greece to present an action plan to address the Schengen Evaluation Recommendations; Member States to deploy human resources and technical equipment;
- Implementation of the [EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan](#) and the [voluntary admission scheme with Turkey](#);
- Applying the EU law correctly - Member States must grant access to asylum procedures for all applications made at the border;
- Temporary border controls at internal borders should remain exceptional and proportional with the objective of *returning to a normal situation as soon as possible*.

### HOTREC position

- *The reintroduction of border controls in some countries will have an economic impact on tourism especially on short tourism stays;*
  - *HOTREC hopes that the current border controls are only a temporary measure and that the EU will not deploy a permanent border control mechanism within Schengen. Such measures would pose a serious obstacle to the principle of free movement of people – one of the main pillars of the EU and would disrupt tourism.*
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## High Level Conference “Attracting investment in Tourism”



On 5<sup>th</sup> April 2016, the European Commission organised a high level conference with the objective of "Attracting investment in Tourism".

Tourism has a huge potential to attract new investment and to generate growth and jobs. Estimates show that the tourism sector could in the next 10 years create 5 million additional jobs in Europe (3 million in the EU). Nevertheless, investment is needed in order to exploit the potential of this growth. In this sense the regulatory framework at both national and EU level needs to be clear, simple, and stable to incentivise investments on the longer run. Overall, discussions focused on financing, upgrading skills and improving business environment to strengthen the competitiveness of the EU tourism industry. The meeting counted with the presence of three Commissioners: Commissioner Bieńkowska, responsible for the portfolio of Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG Grow); Commissioner Thyssen, responsible for the portfolio of Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility and Commissioner Corina Crețu with the portfolio of Regional Policy. Several Members of the European Parliament also participated to this event, including Ana Cláudia Tapardel (S&D/Romania), Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar (EPP/Portugal) and István Ujhelyi (S&D/Hungary).

### HOTREC position

- *HOTREC was very much involved in the conference, as Susanne Kraus-Winkler, HOTREC President, and Christian de Barrin, HOTREC CEO participated as panellists for the discussions;*
  - *HOTREC President and HOTREC CEO explained the challenges faced by the sector to access EU Funding; highlighted the need to upgrade existing products and skills and described some of the measures developed by the industry to overcome high rotation of personnel (e.g.: apprenticeships; the use of ICT; online trainings; etc.)*
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## VISA POLICY

### Visa Package approved by European Parliament



On 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016 took place the vote of the Visa Package, at the LIBE Committee, at the European Parliament.

The main outcomes of the vote were the following:

- Definition of Visa Information System (VIS) registered regular traveller is flexible, consisting of a visa applicant whose data is registered in the VIS and who has obtained and lawfully used three visas within the 30 months prior to the application or one multiple visa (also securing in this way the issuing of multiple entry visas);
- Mandatory consular cooperation – it is possible for the traveller to apply for the visa at a consulate located closer to his/her place of residence;
- Travel medical insurance – it remains mandatory, but travellers only need to show it when receiving the visa (and not when applying for the visa);
- The proof of accommodation is not made compulsory;
- Touring visa – inclusion of business related travellers in the scope of the Touring Visa.

#### Next steps

Both the Visa Code and the Touring Visa will be appreciated by a Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting.

#### Actions

HOTREC members requested to continue their lobbying activities towards their respective ministries of Interior/Foreign Affairs and Permanent Representations in Brussels;

#### HOTREC position

- *HOTREC has been a strong supporter of the Visa Package in its integrity as proposed by the European Commission;*
  - *Any facilitation that could make the visa procedure less bureaucratic, expensive and time consuming will have a positive impact in the tourism sector;*
  - *A study Commissioned by the European Commission estimates an increase between 30% and 60% if visa rules were more flexible.*
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## Visa waiver agreement with Peru



On 14<sup>th</sup> March 2016 the European Union and Peru signed a reciprocal short-stay visa waiver agreement.

The agreement applies from 15 March 2016, allowing visa-free travel for Peruvian nationals to the EU for short stays of up to 90 days as well as for EU citizens travelling to Peru. In order for the EU to approve the visa waiver, Peru needed to start issuing biometric passports to its citizens since February.

### HOTREC position

- *HOTREC fully welcomes the introduction of more visa waiver and / or more visa facilitation procedures in the EU;*
  - *Visa facilitation is key to promote tourism, trade, business, consequently leading to an increase in growth and jobs in the tourism sector in Europe. This will help keep Europe's position as world destination number one.*
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## Turkey makes progress towards visa liberalisation



On 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016, the Commission adopted the second progress report by Turkey in fulfilling the requirements of its Visa Liberalisation Roadmap.

At the EU-Turkey Summit on 29 November 2015, Turkey committed to accelerating the fulfilment of the Roadmap, including anticipating the application of the EU-Turkey Readmission agreement.

The report notes that Turkey should start issuing passports that include the fingerprints of the holders, in line with EU standards; intensify cooperation with all Member States it shares borders with; reduce backlogs in implementing asylum procedures and to set up the fight against corruption and organised crime.

### HOTREC position

- *HOTREC favors the introduction of more visa waiver and / or more visa facilitation procedures for travelers coming from third countries;*
  - *Visa facilitation will lead to an increase in growth and jobs in the tourism sector in Europe;*
  - *It will contribute for Europe to become more competitive towards other destinations around the world and will help keep Europe's position as world destination number one.*
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# SUSTAINABILITY

## Nearly Zero Hotels for achieving low carbon growth in Europe



On 17 March 2016, MEP Maria Grapini (S&D Romania) hosted a high level event on "Nearly Zero Energy Hotels for Achieving Low Carbon Growth in Europe".

This event follows-up to the 2015 Conference organized in Nice on 24 June and to the meeting organized in Madrid on 20 January 2016 (in the context of FITUR). HOTREC CEO participated as panelist to the 3 events.

The European initiative Nearly Zero Energy Hotels (neZEH), aims at accelerating the rate of refurbishment of existing hotels into Nearly Zero Energy Buildings by providing technical advice to hotel owners, demonstrating the benefits of investments towards nearly Zero Energy, undertaking training and capacity building activities, organising workshops etc.

The goal of this High Level event of 17 March was to drive the attention of regional, national and European policy makers to commit to a zero energy growth in the tourism sector through reducing legislative barriers and introducing support measures (such as fiscal incentives) for the accommodation sector.

HOTREC reminded the participants that 75% of the 200.000 hotels in Europe employ less than 10 employees. As the hotel industry is composed for 75% by microenterprises, entrepreneurs are often reluctant to invest in greening their hotels, not only because of the costs, but due to the lack of technical knowledge as well as understanding of the benefits of energy savings; not to forget the lack of skilled workforce to deal with the building maintenance.

This is the reason why, initiatives like NeZEH are welcomed by the hospitality sector, although representing an objective to be reached gradually. With this goal in mind, the obstacles that entrepreneurs face when implementing close to zero energy strategies, can be overcome thanks to awareness raising campaigns, workshops, trainings, incentives and EU funding, amongst others.

More information [here](#).

### Next steps:

The NeZEH toolkit will be finalised soon.

### Actions:

- HOTREC will continue to support initiatives in the area of energy efficiency and sustainability
- The feedback of HOTREC national associations on best practices on energy savings in hotels developed at national level is very useful to show the sector's commitment to sustainable tourism
- HOTREC Members are developing lots of trainings and workshops in order to sensitize hoteliers on the benefits of implementing energy efficiency measures. The associations partner at national level with public authorities, energy companies, NGOs, in order to engage hoteliers in improving their energy management and guide them on energy efficiency options

### HOTREC position

- *Sustainability is in the benefit of all and a win- win situation for all as at the end it also reduces costs;*
  - *The hospitality industry is strongly committed to fostering a sustainable tourism industry.*
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# SOCIAL AFFAIRS

## European Pillar of Social Rights

On 8 March 2016, the European Commission presented a first, preliminary outline of what should become the European Pillar of Social Rights.

This preliminary outline is divided into three main categories in the field of employment and social policies. Each of these headings contains a number of policy domains, to which different principles are attached.

The 3 categories are:

1. **Equal opportunities and access to the labour market**: This includes skills development, life-long learning and active support for employment in order to increase employment and employability opportunities.
2. **Fair working conditions**: Needed to establish an adequate and reliable balance of rights and obligations between workers and employers, as well between flexibility and security in order to facilitate job creation, job take-up and the adaptability of firms. Promoting social dialogue is also part of this category.
3. **Adequate and sustainable social protection**: Including access to health, social protection benefits and high quality services, such as childcare, healthcare and long-term care, which are essential to ensure a dignified living and protection against life's risks. This enables citizens to participate fully in employment and, more generally, in society.

Together with this preliminary outline the Commission launched a **broad public consultation** in order to gather the views of the EU institutions, national authorities, social partners, stakeholders, civil society, experts, academia and citizens on the future pillar of European Social Rights. The consultation will gather the feedback of the public around 3 main themes:

- Assessment of the EU current social acquis (refers to the body of EU social rules that exist in the EU level order today);
- New trends in work patterns and welfare systems;
- The preliminary principles identified in the preliminary outline of the pillar.

Social partners both at European and national level will be invited to play an active role in shaping the pillar.

The future pillar of European Social Rights intends to take account of the changing realities of Europe's societies and the world of work. Once established, the European Pillar of Social Rights should build on, and complement, the EU social acquis in order to guide policies in a number of fields essential for well-functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems within the participating Member States.

More information [here](#).

### Next steps

The consultation process runs until 31 December 2016;

Throughout 2016, the Commission will also engage in active debates with EU institutions, social partners, stakeholders etc with the aim of building the European Pillar of Social Rights;

On the basis of the outcomes of the consultation, amongst others, the Commission will put forward a final proposal for the pillar in early 2017.

### Actions:

As it is a key consultation, HOTREC will circulate all background documents and consultation documents to the national associations in order to gather their views;

On the basis of the feedback received from the associations, HOTREC will build-up its own response to the European Commission.

### HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC welcomes the Commission proposal to set up the European Pillar of Social Rights in order to take account of the changing realities of the world of work and of the European societies.*

## STANDARDS

### New ISO project proposal on sustainability management systems rejected by the hotel industry

On 3 February 2016, ISO submitted for a 3 month voting ballot a New Work Item Proposal (NWIP) for the development of an ISO standard on sustainability management system for accommodation facilities.

The proposal is based on a standard already existing in Brazil.

Requirements proposed would the different aspects of sustainability, including environmental, social and economic aspects. Many of the aspects and criteria proposed are already taken for obvious in Europe or are going against trends in Europe, like to require the employment of local people, which goes against the mobility trends and the free movement of persons in Europe.

The standard also would pose high administrative and financial burdens on enterprises wanting to implement it, which would be difficult to cope with, especially by the micro enterprises in the sector, which represent the vast majority of the industry in Europe.

#### Next steps

The ballot on this new item is open until 3 May 2016. In case of a positive result, work on this new international standard would begin.

#### Actions

- HOTREC sent a model letter to its members asking them to send it to their national standardisation body requesting them voting against this new proposal;
- HOTREC will send a similar letter to ISO Technical Committee 228 as well.

#### HOTREC position

- *HOTREC has always been of the opinion that standardisation initiatives shall be market driven (as stipulated also by the relevant EU regulation) and be supported by the industries concerned;*
- *HOTREC considers that there are already several labels and programmes available in Europe and also at international level on sustainability, an additional layer is not needed;*

*Many hospitality enterprises contribute to sustainability not only via such programmes, but also via Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, which are tailored to the participating enterprise thus allowing it to contribute to sustainability in the most effective manner.*

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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

- 18 April 2016 (Brussels, Belgium) Advisory Group on the Food Chain – Working Group on Food Labelling Regulation – During this meeting, the European Commission will update stakeholders on the creation of the food labelling information system, and will discuss the Implementing rules of the regulation on origin information for food. HOTREC will participate to this meeting.
- 21 April 2016 (Brussels, Belgium): EU meeting on Codes of Practice to reduce acrylamide – The European Commission will discuss with stakeholders codes of good practices adopted by some European organisations to manage the creation of acrylamide in food served to consumers. HOTREC will participate to this meeting
- 26 April 2015 (Brussels, Belgium) - Hearing on "Tourism for Growth & Jobs Manifesto" – European Parliament Task Force for Tourism (Committee on Transport and Tourism)- The members of the Steering Committee Manifesto will present the different priorities of the Manifesto. HOTREC CEO, Christian de Barrin will speak about the priority on competitiveness of the tourism sector
- 28 April 2016 (Bratislava, Slovakia) – HOTREC holds its 72nd General Assembly
- 26 May 2016 (Vilnius, Lithuania) – UNWTO organises a seminar on "New Business Models: Disruption and Opportunities" – HOTREC CEO, Christian de Barrin, will participate as speaker under panel 2 "Creating a fair and dynamic business environment"
- 19-21 October 2016 (Valletta, Malta) – HOTREC holds its 73<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly