

Live from Brussels

Newsletter

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Main EU developments over the last 3 months of interest to the hospitality sector

HOTREC represents the hotel, restaurant and café industry at European level, bringing together 43 national associations representing the interest of this industry in 26 different European countries. The sector counts 1,7 million businesses, with almost 92% of them being micro enterprises employing less than 10 people. The micro and small enterprises (having less than 50 employees) represent more than 99,5% of businesses and make up 62% of value added. Last but not least, this industry provides some 9,5 million jobs in the EU alone.

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Under the responsibility of Anna Maria Torres, HOTREC Chief Executive

HEALTH

• **Partnership between HOTREC and Wine in Moderation signed!**

On 25 May 2012, a Memorandum of Understanding between HOTREC and Wine in Moderation – Art de Vivre Aisbl (WIM) was signed.

The [WIM Program](#) is an initiative which intends to enhance the ideals of moderation and responsibility while drinking wine. Moreover, it aims to educate stakeholders and the public about the social and health risks of alcohol misuse and how to best appreciate wine.

The **main objective of the Memorandum of Understanding** is that **members of HOTREC, on a voluntary basis, establish partnerships at national / local level with representatives of the WIM programme** (e.g. wine associations, national associations responsible for the coordination of the WIM Program in various EU Member States; wine companies) in order to join forces to identify areas of cooperation for promoting responsible drinking among professionals and consumers.

By signing this partnership agreement both associations strengthen the implementation of their commitments towards the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF). In fact, the WIM Program is the European wine sector's measurable commitment to contribute to the reduction of alcohol-related harm. Likewise, it is part of HOTREC's commitment to motivate its member associations to develop voluntary actions focusing on ways to promote responsible drinking, in accordance with the [Charter of the European Alcohol and Health Forum](#).

The EAHF was established in 2007 and is a cornerstone of the European Commission strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol-related harm. HOTREC joined the Forum in 2008 and committed itself to raise awareness among its member associations on the activities of the Forum. HOTREC is focusing on two main topics: responsible drinking and enforcement of age limits when serving and selling alcohol.

The signature of this partnership with WIM is a further step in proving out the commitment of the hospitality industry vis-à-vis the above mentioned topics.

Further information on the EAHF can be found on the following [website](#).

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

• **Commission conference on the revision of the Package Travel Directive**

On 5 June 2012, the European Commission organised a conference on the revision of the Package Travel Directive ([90/314/EEC](#)). The aim of this conference was to gather the views from a broad group of stakeholders on some of the open issues in the revision process of the Directive.

In the introduction to the conference, the European Commission explained that the Package Travel Directive is now outdated with the uptake of internet bookings and dynamic packages customized by the consumer himself on the web. Consequently, depending how the combination of services is arranged on the web, the legal protection can vary and some traders can market combined tourism services without being caught by the scope of the Directive. The Commission's aim is therefore to:

- Close the legal gaps that were identified in the current legislation;
- Clarify the liabilities in a package holiday;
- Maintain a high level of consumer protection, while cutting on the administrative costs of compliance with the Directive.

During the conference, an external consultant contracted by the Commission presented the results of a study on the feasibility and usefulness of a package travel logo that could be used to indicate whether holiday services bought online are protected or not by the Package Travel Directive. The study clearly showed that such labels were not very effective, as the tests revealed that whatever the logo, its form of expression or its location on a website, only 2% of consumers were clicking on it to know what it was about.

Most of the discussions in the conference concerned the definition of a package in the meaning of the Directive and the feasibility to include or not in the scope of the Directive some form of "click-through" packages (when a consumer buys a tourism service online from one service provider and is then re-directed automatically to another tourism service providers with the automatic transfer of all the booking data of that consumer). Other aspects dealt with in the conference included the clarification of the liability regime under the Directive, as well as the obligations of the organizer in cases of "force majeure".

The Commission's intention is to finalise the impact assessment as soon as possible, in order to release its official proposal by the end of 2012 or beginning of 2013 at the very latest.

More information on the stakeholder conference is available here: [link](#)

As a provider of tourism services, the European hospitality industry is directly concerned by the revision of the Package Travel Directive. HOTREC considers that a revised Package Travel Directive should provide a clear definition of what constitutes a package. In particular, HOTREC considers that there should always be a "transport" element in the combination of services that make a package. Moreover, the current definition of a package speaks of a combination of different services, one of which being tourist services not ancillary to transport and accommodation, but accounting for a significant proportion of the package. HOTREC considers that the term "significant" should be strictly clarified as a fixed minimum percentage of the overall package price. Finally, HOTREC stresses that the liability regime under the current Directive should not be altered, as the liability in a package travel should always strictly lie upon the contractual parties.

• Hotel Fire safety: Commission workshop on the revision of the 1986 Recommendation

On 11 June 2012, the European Commission organised a workshop on hotel fire safety to which all interested stakeholders were invited. The aim of this workshop was to launch the revision process of the 1986 Council Recommendation on fire safety in existing hotels ([86/666/EEC](#)), but also to discuss with stakeholders the possibility to update the 1986 Recommendation on the basis of the HOTREC MBS methodology that could be integrated into the annex of a revised Recommendation.

In the introduction to the workshop, the European Commission explained that:

- The objective of the workshop was to discuss the use of the MBS Methodology as a basis to update the existing 1986 Recommendation on hotel fire safety;
- The idea of a Directive that would specify requirements for small and large hotels is not viable, given the variety of environments of the hotel sector;
- The Commission does not have conclusive evidence showing that safety problems are linked to gaps in national legislation, but rather believes that safety issues are coming from enforcement of existing measures/legislation;
- It believes that the MBS Methodology is the most suitable tool for an update of the Recommendation, and that a Recommendation based on the MBS methodology would yield good results in terms of safety in the short-term.

If some stakeholders expressed their disappointment at the Commission's proposal and called for a Directive on hotel fire safety, most of them nevertheless considered that the HOTREC MBS methodology is a good tool, which constitutes a good starting point. Each section of the MBS methodology was discussed in details and some stakeholders proposed to either clarify or strengthen some of its provisions.

As a follow-up to the conference, the Commission indicated that a few amendments to the section "Management" and "Systems" of the MBS methodology would make consensus among some stakeholders, and stressed that it will discuss with HOTREC the impact these proposals may have on the MBS methodology.

The European hospitality industry considers the initiative of the European Commission as a clear recognition of the added-value at EU level of the HOTREC MBS methodology. This instrument is a practical and flexible tool which summarises hotel fire safety into a set of hands-on advices, which any hotelier can easily understand and follow. HOTREC therefore welcomes the Commission's apparent intention to base a revision of the 1986 Recommendation on the MBS methodology.

HOTREC nevertheless stresses that the MBS methodology is a coherent and state-of-the-art scheme which is already being implemented and promoted to hoteliers by national hotel association in 15 European countries. Therefore, the MBS methodology should not be altered in substance if it is to be integrated into the 1986 Recommendation. Indeed, any such alteration could undermine the value and the coherence of the whole scheme and would not be welcomed by HOTREC and its members.

• **Promotion of Alternative Dispute Resolution schemes: 1st reading agreement in sight**

On 10 July 2012, the Legal Affairs Committee (JURI) of the European Parliament adopted two reports that mark a step towards the adoption of a Directive and of a Regulation meant to promote the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution schemes for consumers in disputes with traders.

These two reports concern the European Commission proposals for:

- A Directive on consumer ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution), [COM\(2011\) 793/2](#); and
- A Regulation on consumer ODR (Online Dispute Resolution), [COM \(2011\) 794/2](#).

The proposed Directive on consumer ADR covers contractual disputes between consumers and traders arising from the sale of goods or the provision of services; while the proposed Regulation on ODR covers contractual disputes between consumers and traders arising from the online sale of goods or provision of services between consumers and traders. The proposed Directive on ADR contains an obligation for traders to inform consumers about the ADR entities by which they are covered and which are competent to deal with potential disputes. The proposed Regulation on ODR intends to create an EU-wide online platform providing consumers and businesses with a single point of entry for resolving on-line the disputes concerning purchases made on-line in another EU-country.

The two reports voted by the JURI committee slightly widen the scope of application of the Commission proposals, as they suggest that the Regulation apply to both domestic and cross-border purchases and that the Directive should apply to both offline and online purchases.

According to the JURI reports, the Directive on ADR would support the creation of ADR bodies competent to handle contractual disputes between a consumer and a trader, but would exclude traders' complaints against a consumer. The JURI reports also suggest the creation of a European quality label to ensure that ADR schemes respect the guarantee standards put forward by the Commission proposals. The JURI report on ODR proposes to extend to 90 days (instead of 30 days) the timeframe for the resolution of online disputes.

These two reports follow the adoption by the Council on 30 May of a rather similar general approach which also includes a financial threshold below which the Member States can decide not to apply the Directive.

Following the adoption of these reports by the JURI, negotiations between representatives of the Parliament and of the Council will start in order to reach a first reading agreement that is likely to be endorsed by both institutions during the autumn of this year.

Consumers are at the heart of the activities of the European hospitality industry, and HOTREC welcomes the steps taken by the Council and the European Parliament towards a strengthening of the use of ADR schemes. HOTREC nonetheless stresses that the vast majority of hospitality businesses are micro-enterprises (over 92%) that should not be subject to burdensome information requirements. HOTREC therefore calls on the EU institutions to take account of this specific situation when considering the provisions in these proposals that deal with traders' obligation of information on ADR schemes by which they are covered.

TOURISM

• **TOURISMLink - Market analysis ready**

TOURISMLink is a European funded project in which HOTREC participates, which aims at facilitating the contact, flow of information, interaction, business exchanges and thus competitiveness amongst all kind of tourism businesses in Europe, SMEs in particular. To allow this interaction, the project will use a system that will work as a B2B connecting platform and will cover all sectors of the tourism industry. More concretely, it will connect the supply and demand side of tourism services, i.e. hotels, similar accommodation establishments and complementary offer on the one hand, and travel agencies and tour operators, on the other hand. The system will ensure interoperability between all businesses involved and will be open source.

On 11 July 2012, a workshop on the TOURISMLink project was held with the representatives of the European Commission, key experts/advisors on the tourism and ICT industries, as well as some HOTREC and ECTAA member associations who will hopefully participate in the TOURISMLink pilots, which will be developed soon.

The objective of the workshop was to present to the Commission representatives the first completed phase of the TOURISMLink project: the market analysis. Indeed, the first six months of the project have been

devoted to elaborating and providing with an in-depth market analysis of the tourism industry, notably in terms of the current and foresight integration of ICT and eBusiness solutions and systems in the sector.

All participants to the workshop agreed that it would be convenient to clarify the governance and business model before launching the pilots. Some participants also expressed the interest in participating in the TOURISMLink pilot projects, either as source markets or destinations.

The next workshop should be organised around the end of the year.

For more information on the TOURISMLink project, its partners and the market analysis just completed, please see the recently created [TOURISMLink website](#).

• *New Tourism Task Force launched at the European Parliament!*

On 19 June, the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) announced the creation of a Tourism Task Force. It will be formed by 13 MEPs representing all parties present in the European Parliament.

The new Task Force will be chaired by MEP Brian Simpson (S&D, UK). MEP Carlo Fidanza (EPP, IT), will be the Vice-Chair.

On 10 July 2012, MEPs held a first discussion on the main future objectives of the Task Force, which should cope with the ambitious goals presented by the European Commission in its Communication on Tourism of 2010.

Its main goals would be the following:

- to monitor and follow actions started by the Commission which are related with Tourism;
- to involve various stakeholders of the sector to propose concrete measures to be suggested to the EC;
- to highlight certain political priorities related to Tourism;
- to study the possibility of setting-up a budget line for Tourism.

During the meeting, some MEPs pointed out some of the topics that could be discussed within the Task Force, namely: quality of tourism services; training of professionals; facilitation of visa requirements, especially for travellers coming from BRIC countries (Russia, China and India); protection of consumers; possibility of creating an European ticketing system that would allow travellers to circulate easily across Europe; accessibility for disabled people; and sustainable tourism and standards.

It has been agreed that this would be a horizontal Task Force, as various topics, debated in several other Parliamentary Committees would be touched upon.

In September 2012, MEP Carlo Fidanza will present a working document outlining the key priorities of the Task Force, as well as the working methodology, the timing and the involvement of the tourism stakeholders.

HOTREC very much welcomes the establishment of a Tourism Task Force in the European Parliament, as it is an outstanding opportunity for the voice of the hospitality sector to be heard in the European arena.

HOTREC was nevertheless concerned with the comments done by some of the MEPs present at the meeting, as it seemed that some of them were generally in favour of standards for Tourism, without looking at whether they are justified or not.

HOTREC will follow very closely the developments of the Task Force.

STANDARDS

• *ISO procedures changing*

On 25 May 2012, ISO Technical Committee (TC) 228 on tourism activities held its annual plenary meeting, where new rules concerning new standardisation work item proposals were announced.

According to these new rules, the future standardisation proposals will have to be put forward and worked on under stricter conditions. For instance, new proposals will have to show “*very robust information showing their market relevance*”. Furthermore, the “Yes” votes in favour of a new standardisation work item will have to be justified by the voting national standardization bodies. Moreover, once a new proposal is voted, at least

four countries having voted “Yes” to the proposal will have to be present in the Working Group meetings, elaborating the details of the draft standard proposal.

These are important changes and might make new projects launched and completed only if there is real support for them. So far, many new proposals seemed to be voted with a simple “Yes”, just because of an attractive title.

These new rules apply to all new work items proposed after the 1 May 2012.

With regard to management system clauses in proposed standards, there is still uncertainty about the limits, i.e. how far ISO working groups can go when defining quality requirements. Further clarification from the ISO Technical Management Body is required here. Currently, management clauses are not allowed in tourism standards, and this is closely monitored by the ISO Central Secretariat.

The already adopted ‘Environmentally friendly accommodation’ work item is still under discussion. Alternative solutions to a classical formal standard for this proposal are still being examined and are to be further discussed. Therefore the outcome of this standardisation project is still uncertain.

HOTREC welcomes the changes for ISO procedures making new standardisation proposals better examined before they are adopted. It should be expected that proposals will undergo a more thorough feasibility check both from the proposers and the national standardisation bodies voting for new standardisation work items.

HOTREC believes that standards have to be market driven, supported by the relevant industry, based on consensus and voluntary. However, the vast majority of the European hospitality industry does not see the need for standards for hospitality establishments for the time being.

• Council and Parliament agree on draft Regulation

On 31 May 2012, the Council and the European Parliament reached a political agreement on the first reading adoption of the [draft Regulation on European standardisation](#) (COM(2011) 315).

As already proposed by the European Parliament through its vote on the draft proposal in the Internal Market and Consumer Affairs Committee (IMCO), the agreement shall improve conditions for participation of stakeholders in the standardisation process and should also include in its scope the standardisation of services.

The European Parliament’s draft resolution includes numerous amendments to the Commission proposal, e.g. a better involvement of stakeholders in the standardisation process; that all relevant stakeholders are encouraged and their representation facilitated throughout the standardisation process; the acceptance of new work items for the annual standardisation work programme; and the technical discussion of proposals. A specific new article is proposing to establish a notification system for interested European Business Federations in order to ensure proper consultation and market relevance prior to adopting the annual work programme and adopting standardisation requests.

With regard to SMEs, the draft report proposes specific measures to facilitate the participation of SMEs in the standardisation process also at national level, and proposes access of micro and small enterprises to standards at special rates.

Following the political agreement between the two institutions, the European Parliament will have to vote on the final text in its September 2012 plenary meeting.

HOTREC welcomes the effort to make European standardisation procedures more transparent and inclusive with regard to participation of relevant stakeholders in the processes.

However, it should be stated that the need for standardisation of services, especially hospitality/tourism services, is not as obvious as it is for industrial goods. Hospitality services are generally tailored to the customer, which is contrary to the spirit of standardisation. Heterogeneity is the main competitive feature of tourism, as diversity reflects different cultures, approaches as well as geographical situations. Most tourists do not expect or wish to find standardised conditions everywhere. This is also why the vast majority of the European hospitality industry does not see the need for the development of standards in its field of activities.

Therefore, HOTREC is cautious about standardisation and believes that standards have to be always market driven, supported by the relevant industry, based on consensus and voluntary.

TAXATION

• VAT: Place of supply of telecommunication services

On 4 July 2012, the European Commission invited stakeholders to exchange views on the future treatment of the place of supply of telecommunication services to non-taxable persons.

According to [Directive 2008/8/EC](#), from 1 January 2015 the place of supply of telecommunication services to non-taxable persons shall be the place (the VAT rate of that country shall apply) where that person resides. That would mean that the VAT rate applied to an internet connection in a hotel might be different from the VAT rate applied in the country of that hotel, as it would be the VAT rate applied in the country of residence of the guest.

Discussions have started on the detailed implementation into the practice of these new rules. The Commission is planning to issue a draft Implementing Regulation to the VAT Directive by the end of 2012, in order to clarify the details of application of the rules concerning place of taxation of telecommunication services. This draft Regulation will have to be discussed between the Member States and they will have to agree on these detailed rules.

HOTREC sent written comments to the European Commission and also participated in this stakeholder meeting. HOTREC expressed its concerns with regard to increased bureaucracy and other difficulties the industry might suffer with these new rules.

HOTREC emphasised the need of the implementation of the basic principle laid down in the VAT Directive, namely taxation at the place of consumption. Telecommunication services offered by hospitality establishments are always “consumed” on the spot. The place of taxation would therefore be evident. It would be a huge burden for the industry, composed to around 92% of micro enterprises, to calculate the final bill of a hotel stay taking into account VAT rates for specific services of several countries (the country where the hotel is located and the country of residence of the guest).

Moreover, telecommunication services are usually offered as an ancillary service to the hotel room. The European Court of Justice has on several occasions stressed that ancillary services shall be treated in the same way as the principal service. Taking the above into consideration, HOTREC is hoping that hospitality establishments will not be burdened further with the implementation of different tax rates for specific services.

COPYRIGHT

• Directive on governance and transparency of collecting societies: Commission proposal finally released!

On 11 July 2012, the European Commission officially released its awaited proposal for a Directive on Collective Management of Copyright ([COM \(2012\) 372](#)). The aim of this proposal is to both facilitate the pan-European licensing of copyrighted work in the online environment and restore trust between collecting societies, right holders and right users through the implementation of good governance principles.

The Commission proposal is broadly divided in three important parts, two of them (Title II and IV) being more relevant to the European hospitality industry, as they deal with the relations with the users, the transparency principles and dispute resolution systems, while the last part (Title III) deals with multi-territorial licensing of online rights in musical works.

More precisely, Title II of the Commission proposal prescribes a number of general principles that should be applied in any collecting society. These principles concern:

- The membership of collecting societies, and in particular the rights of the right holders in the organisation, the membership rules, the role of the general meeting of members and supervisory functions inside the collecting society;
- The management of rights revenue, including detailed rules on the collection and use of rights revenue, rules on deductions applicable to the rights revenue, rules on the distribution of amounts due to right holders;
- The management of rights on behalf of other collecting societies;

- Relations with the users (e.g. provision of all necessary information in the negotiations with users, obligation to propose tariffs based on objective criteria, non-discrimination rule, etc.)
- Transparency and reporting obligations (e.g. yearly reporting to their members, obligation to report to users on standard licensing contracts, tariffs, and repertoire, annual transparency report on the collecting society, etc.)

Title IV deals with “enforcement measures” and more particularly with dispute resolutions between both collecting societies and its members or between collecting societies and right users. This title also considers the possible use of independent alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for disputes with right users as an option to be implemented by Member States if deemed appropriate.

The Commission proposal will now have to go through the ordinary legislative procedure and be debated and approved jointly by the European Parliament and the Council.

More information on the Commission proposal is available here: [link](#)

The European hospitality industry welcomes the proposal of the European Commission as a step in the right direction. Indeed, HOTREC has been calling for years for a binding regulatory framework that would regulate the activities of collecting societies and impose on them good governance, transparency and accountability principles. Given this, HOTREC considers that the provisions of the proposed Directive are particularly relevant concerning the governance as such of collecting societies, but nevertheless underlines that the principles governing the relations between collecting societies and users, and the provisions on independent dispute resolution systems need to be strongly strengthened.

HOTREC therefore calls on the European Parliament and Council to fully take into consideration the work carried-out within the Copyright Users Platform and which make concrete proposals on the matter. These proposals are supported by 10 European Associations that represent most users of copyrighted works: the Association of European Radios (AER), BEUC (the European Consumer Organisation), Cable Europe, Digital Europe, the European Broadcasters Union (EBU), the European Competitive Telecommunications Association (ECTA), European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO), GSMA Europe (the European association representing mobile phone operators), HOTREC and the Performing Arts Employers Association League Europe (Pearle).*

More detailed information is available on the HOTREC [website](#).

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

• Update on various social affairs issues

Discrimination outside the workplace – discussions continue in the Council

A progress report on the proposal for a Council Directive ([COM \(2008\) 426 final](#)) which provides for protection against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief beyond the workplace, was discussed at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting of June 2012.

Significant progress has been made under the Danish presidency in the provisions concerning age as discrimination factor. However, extensive further work needs to be advanced in important issues such as the disability provisions, including accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, the overall scope and subsidiarity.

Moreover, certain delegations have maintained general reservations, questioning the need for the Commission proposal. Other delegations have also requested clarifications and expressed concerns relating in particular to the lack of legal certainty, the division of competences and the practical, financial and legal impact of the proposal.

The proposal which has been under examination in the Council since 2008 will now continue to be discussed amongst the representatives of the Member States under the Cyprus Presidency of the EU.

For more information on the progress report, please see the following [link](#).

Employment Package- to be discussed in the Parliament

On 18 April 2012, the European Commission adopted a Framework Communication and 9 working documents laying down a new set of measures to re-launch employment in Europe.

The Communication and working documents are the following:

- Communication: *“Towards a job-rich recovery”*;
- Commission staff working document: *“Quality framework for traineeships”*;
- Commission staff working document on *“Exploiting the employment potential of the personal and household services”*;
- Commission staff working document: *“Reforming EURES to meet the goals of Europe 2020”*;
- Commission staff working document on *“Labour market trends and challenges”*;
- Commission staff working document: *“Implementing the Youth Opportunities Initiative - First steps taken”*;
- Commission staff working document *“Exploiting the employment potential of ICTs”*;
- Commission staff working document on *“An action plan for the EU healthcare workforce”*;
- Commission staff working document *“Exploiting the employment potential of green growth”*.

All these documents have been put forward to the Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL) of the European Parliament for information.

Furthermore, the European Commission is organising a major conference on employment policy, under the title "Jobs for Europe", on 6-7 September 2012. The conference will build amongst others, on the above mentioned Employment Package and on the outcomes of the 2012 [European Semester](#).

The conference will be structured into the following topics:

- Building a dynamic European labour market: transitions, human capital investment, mobility;
- Impact of the crisis on employment: "programme countries", wages, jobless households;
- Sectors with high job-creation potential: green economy, white coat jobs, information and communication technologies (ICT);
- Employment policy throughout the life cycle: youth, gender & work-life balance, active ageing;
- Pathways to full employment: job guarantee, social economy, welfare to work.

The conference will be addressed, amongst others, by the European Commission President, José Manuel Barroso; the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz; and the President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy.

Please, see the following [link](#) for more information on the conference.

HOTREC will monitor the discussions of the Employment Package within the European Parliament and will also be present in the announced conference.

DIGITAL ISSUES

• **Positive feedback to HOTREC's proposed fair practices in online distribution**

On 10 May 2012, HOTREC published its updated proposal for Benchmarks on Fair Practices in Online Distribution, covering issues like rate parity, reviews and others, and invited online distribution partners to assess themselves with regard to their compliance with these proposed benchmarks.

Online distribution is of utmost importance for the European hospitality industry, but unfortunately, this sector, which is characterised by micro and small enterprises, is often facing practices in online distribution which many hoteliers consider to be imbalanced. The European hospitality industry believes that rate, distribution and product sovereignty must remain with the hotel. However, in many cases this general market principle is infringed due to the emerging pressure by certain distribution partners. Furthermore, the hospitality industry is also confronted with marketing practices considered unfair like brand bidding or domain grabbing.

The [self-assessments received](#) from distribution partners will help hoteliers in their cooperation with them. It is crucial for both the digital partners and hoteliers to work together within a fair framework of cooperation, which at the end will not only benefit the two of them but also the travellers.

Visa POLICY

• **Implementation of the Visa Code – the industry perspective**

On 20 June 2012, DG Enterprise of the European Commission organised a meeting which counted with the participation of DG Home Affairs to exchange views with the tourism industry representatives on the problems that have been noticed regarding the implementation of the [EU Visa Code](#). The Visa Code, which entered into force in April 2010, establishes the conditions and procedures for issuing visas for short stays in the Schengen area of maximum three months during any six-month period.

Some of the main problems pointed out by the industry included the following:

- Length of time certain consulates take to grant an initial appointment for visa applicants or to issue the final decision regarding the visa application (sometimes it takes more than the two weeks reasonable timing);
- The burden that it represents for visa applicants to have the obligation to appear in person to have their biometric data collected when trying to enter the Schengen zone for the first time. The travel costs that this exercise implies, especially in countries such as Russia or China, can be quite discouraging for travellers;
- Lack of clarity regarding the list of supportive documents visa applicants need to present when applying for a visa;

DG Home Affairs announced that in July 2013 an impact assessment might be launched in order to prepare the way for a potential revision of the Visa Code.

HOTREC realises that some of the problems regarding the implementation of the Visa Code are due to the fact that national authorities do not have enough centres for the biometric data to be collected. Part of the problem is also that a reasonable number of staff should be working in the visa application procedures, so that the system could run smoothly, which is not the case nowadays.

Nevertheless, especially the exigency for visa applicants to appear in person when applying for the visa for a first time is proving to be demotivating and burdensome for tourists to come to Europe. In addition, some more visa facilitation for tourists coming from the BRIC countries (Russia, India and China) should be envisaged, as they represent a great source of economical investment for Europe. In order to prepare the possible revision of the Visa Code, HOTREC member associations were requested to share concrete examples of continuously disruptive practices, if any, regarding its implementation, with DG Home Affairs and DG Enterprise of the European Commission.

SUSTAINABILITY

• **Hotel carbon measurement initiative**

The International Tourism Partnership (ITP)* and the World Travel and Tourism Council** (WTTC) in collaboration with 23 leading global hospitality companies launched on 12 June 2012 a common methodology to calculate and communicate the carbon footprint of hotel stays and meetings in a consistent and transparent way.

Currently, approaches to measuring and reporting on carbon emissions vary widely. This can lead to confusion amongst consumers. This is the reason why, in early 2011, the Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative Working group (HCMI) composed of hotel members within ITP and WTTC was set up. The aim of this working group was to elaborate on a common methodology to measure carbon footprint and to improve the communication of carbon impacts to consumers and, thus, improve the transparency and clarity for the consumer.

The result of the work developed within this working group is the methodology named “HCMI 1.0”. The objective of HCMI 1.0 is to align the hotel sector in how it reports carbon emissions, and develop a common language which will provide clarity to customers who would like to understand their carbon footprint. In addition, the methodology will help the client achieve its own carbon reduction goals.

The priority for the Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative is to be further extended and used by a large range of hotels and their customers.

** The International Tourism Partnership (ITP), founded in 1992 and part of the International Business Leaders Forum, brings together the world's leading international hotel companies to provide a voice for environmental and social responsibility in the industry.*

*** The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) is the global authority on the economic and social contribution of Travel & Tourism.*

STATISTICS

• **Recent statistical publications**

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

- [International tourism off to a strong start in 2012](#) (news release - May 2012) - the study shows that International tourist arrivals worldwide grew by 5.7% in the first two months of 2012;
- [415 million tourists expected worldwide in the May-August peak season](#) (news release – July 2012) – the article points out that International tourist arrivals worldwide grew by 5% in the first four months of 2012;

In addition, Eurostat released the following publication: “[Tourism in Europe – results for 2011](#)” (Statistics in Focus, 28/2012). The study shows that Europeans made five million more holiday trips in 2011, but spent less days in their destination.

Finally, the new OECD report – “[OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2012](#)” – indicates that OECD countries were the destination of choice for 66% of global arrivals in 2010 with EU countries accounting for 50.2%.

HOTREC GENERAL ACTIVITIES

• **Next General Assemblies**

- The 2012 Autumn General Assembly will be held in Dublin, Ireland, on 25-26 October 2012.
- The 2013 Spring General Assembly will be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 16-17 May 2013.
- The 2013 Autumn General Assembly will be held in Greece.

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