

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.

FOOD	2	PAYMENT SYSTEMS	7
• The European Parliament report calls on fighting against food wastage all along the food chain	2	• New Commission Green Paper on card, mobile and internet payments	7
CONSUMER AFFAIRS	2	TAXATION	8
• EU Collective redress: towards a cautious support from the European Parliament	2	• Commission Communication on the future of VAT released	8
• New Commission proposals to boost the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution systems	3	ENTERPRISE POLICY	8
• A new detailed Commission action plan to boost E-commerce	4	• € 2.5 Billion to boost SME's between 2014-2020	8
TOURISM	5	QUALITY	9
• P.ICT.URISM kicked off!	5	• Elaboration of European Tourism Quality label advancing	9
STANDARDS	5	STATISTICS	10
• EP draft report on proposed Regulation on Standardisation out	5	• Recent statistical publications	10
SOCIAL AFFAIRS	6	HOTREC GENERAL ACTIVITIES	10
• Updated information on various social affairs	6	• Spring 2012 General Assembly	10
• Seasonal workers Directive: orientation vote in the European Parliament	6		

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FOOD

• ***The European Parliament report calls on fighting against food wastage all along the food chain***

On 19 January 2012, the European Parliament adopted in plenary session an own-initiative report on “*how to avoid food wastage: strategies for a more efficient food chain in the EU*” ([A7-0430/2011](#)) that was prepared by MEP Salvatore Caronna (S&D, Italy). The report considers that food-wastage (i.e. healthy and edible food wasted) is becoming a growing problem in the EU in terms of sustainability, as it is estimated at around 179 kg per capita in the EU (without even considering agricultural waste or fish catches returned to the sea). The report is also making a link between food wastage and hunger in the world.

Recognising that “*food waste occurs across the entire food supply chain from the agricultural production stage [...] to the distribution, management and consumption stage*”, the Caronna Report calls on a number of actions to be undertaken at EU level. In particular, it considers that:

- It is vital to “*reduce food waste along the entire food chain*” and calls on “*all stakeholders to take greater shared responsibility [...] and step-up coordination*” on the matter;
- The Commission, Member States and stakeholders should exchange best practices;
- The Commission, the Member States, processors and retailers should develop guidelines to address avoidable food waste and should implement “*greater resource efficiency in their section of the food supply chain*”;
- Member States should create economic incentives for limiting food waste;

In addition, the report also:

- Asks the Commission to ***consider “amendments to the public procurement rules on catering and hospitality services, so that [...] when contracts are awarded, priority should be given to undertakings that guarantee that they will redistribute free of charge any unallocated (unsold) items to citizens who lack purchasing power”***; and
- Urges the Commission to designate **2013 the European year against food-waste**.

As a key component of the food chain, serving millions of meals to European citizens every year, the European hospitality industry is naturally a key partner to reduce food wastage along the food chain. As the representative of the European hospitality industry, HOTREC is fully committed to the sustainable economic development of the European Union, and this clearly encompasses the issue of food wastage. For that reason, HOTREC will carefully follow the proposals of the European institutions on the matter and will try to ensure that the objectives set-up in the European Parliament report can be achieved, while at the same time preserving the hospitality industry from unnecessary burdens and red-tape. HOTREC particularly welcomes the call for exchange of best practices at EU level and for economic incentives to be put in place.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

• ***EU Collective redress: towards a cautious support from the European Parliament***

On 12 January 2012, the JURI (Legal Affairs) Committee of the European Parliament endorsed the report from MEP Klaus-Heiner Lehne (EPP, Germany) untitled “*Towards a coherent approach to collective redress*” ([A7-001/2012](#)). This report builds on the announcement by the European Commission in its working programme of an upcoming legislative proposal for an EU framework for collective redress.

The Lehne report, widely supported by the JURI Committee, cautiously welcomes the Commission’s initiative. Indeed, while it recognised that “***victims of unlawful practices, citizens and companies alike, must be able to claim compensation for their individual loss or damage suffered [...] where the cost risk might not be proportionate to the damages suffered***”, it immediately stresses that **Europe must refrain from introducing US-style class action schemes**. The report further stresses that, in light of the principle of subsidiarity, the European Commission should demonstrate that action is needed at EU level, even though it also recognizes that existing collective redress systems in place are widely divergent and “*may undermine the enjoyment of rights by citizens*”.

The Lehne report also stresses that uncoordinated EU initiatives fragmenting the single market should be avoided and that, in case there are evidences that an EU scheme is desirable, it should take the “*form of a horizontal framework including a common set of principles providing information access to justice via collective redress within the EU, and specifically [...] dealing with the infringement of consumers’ rights*”.

The report further re-iterates that safeguards must be put in place within such a horizontal instrument to “*avoid unmeritorious claims and misuse of collective redress*”. It then provides detailed suggestions for safeguards concerning the standing, the compensation of actual damage, the access to evidence, the “*loser pays*” principle and a “*no-third party funding*” principle.

The Lehne report is expected to be voted in plenary session of the European Parliament on 2 February 2012, while the European Commission is expected to make its proposals on the matter in the course of 2012.

The European hospitality industry deeply believes that collective redress schemes should only be introduced in the EU with the greatest caution and after an in-depth reflexion, in order to avoid the pitfalls inherent to class action systems. Therefore, HOTREC and its member associations welcome the cautious stand taken by the JURI Committee and calls on the Commission to take as a basis for further reflexion the detailed safeguards suggested in the Lehne report. As repeatedly argued by HOTREC, any collective redress system should ensure that the introduction of unmeritorious claims is effectively discouraged, the defendant is not unreasonably burdened, and specific attention is given to the risks of “legal extortion” and to the defendant’s reputation when no illegal behaviours were previously identified.

• **New Commission proposals to boost the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution systems**

On 29 November 2011, the European Commission released a legislative package composed of:

- A Communication on “Alternative dispute resolution for consumer disputes in the Single Market” [COM\(2011\) 791/2](#);
- A proposal for a Directive on consumer ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution), [COM\(2011\) 793/2](#); and
- A proposal for a Regulation on consumer ODR (Online Dispute Resolution), [COM \(2011\) 794/2](#).

With these proposals, **the European Commission intends to boost confidence in the single market by ensuring that every consumer in the EU can bring a dispute to an appropriate ADR entity, regardless of the sector in which it has arisen, and regardless of whether it relates to a domestic or a cross-border transaction.** The advantage foreseen by the Commission is that ADR is a low-cost and fast alternative for consumers and businesses seeking to resolve disputes.

The proposal 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. This information should be provided on the trader’s website and on invoices and receipts relating to the contracts. Moreover, Member States would have to ensure that disputes can always be submitted to an ADR scheme complying with the requirements indicated in the Directive. It also provides for some conditions of access to ADR schemes and outlines detailed conditions for an out-of-court dispute resolution system to be officially considered as an ADR.

The proposal on ODR intends to create a 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. Moreover, it contains an obligation **for traders involved in cross-border e-commerce to inform the consumers about the ODR platform on the trader’s website and when the consumer submits a complaint to the trader.**

Both the proposed Directive on ADR and proposed Regulation on ODR will now be examined by the Council and the European Parliament through the ordinary legislative procedure. However, both institutions already endorsed in advance these initiatives in spring 2011, while the Head of States and Governments in the 2011 Spring and October European Council called for adoption of the proposals by the end of 2012.

The European hospitality industry welcomes the intention to boost the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. ADR mechanisms are indeed a cost-efficient way to deal with contractual disputes, especially when they relate to a cross-border contract. However, HOTREC is concerned about the new obligations of information contained in the two proposals which shortly follow the adoption of the new Consumer Rights Directive. HOTREC considers that the obligations of information contained in the Consumer Rights Directive are sufficient to inform concretely consumers about ADR possibilities. For that reason, HOTREC considers that an obligation for the trader to inform consumers about ADR possibilities not only on their websites but also on invoices and receipts relating to the contracts would contradict some of the provisions contained in that Directive. HOTREC will follow carefully the legislative process relating to these proposals.

• A new detailed Commission action plan to boost E-commerce

On 11 January 2012, the European Commission published a Communication untitled “A coherent framework for building trust in the Digital Single Market for e-commerce and online services” ([COM\(2011\)942](#)). This Communication recognizes the advantages brought by the development of e-commerce but also identifies a number of obstacles preventing consumers and businesses from taking full advantages of the possibilities offered by e-commerce. In particular it stresses that there is still in Europe “a patchwork of different laws, rules, standards and practices, often with little or no interoperability”, while it recognises that the “practical difficulties related to cross-border transactions (payments, deliveries, dispute resolution, risk of abuse) discourage people from taking full advantage of the internet to purchase [...] goods and services”.

For these reasons, the Communication identifies 5 objectives to be achieved in order to boost the uptake of e-commerce:

- Develop the legal and cross-border offer of online products and services;
- Improve operator information and consumer protection;
- Reliable and efficient payment and delivery system;
- Combatting abuse and resolving disputes more effectively; and
- Deploy high speed networks and advanced technological solutions;

These five objectives are underpinned by 16 targeted initiatives. Some of these initiatives are directly or indirectly relevant to the European hospitality industry, as the European Commission proposes to:

- **Review in 2012 the copyright legal framework**, with the view to address issues related to collective rights management;
- Issue a **report on the consultation on the online distribution of audiovisual works**;
- **Ensure that the rules on selective distribution are applied rigorously and “examine the problems caused by stakeholders in traditional trade who misuse their bargaining power in a bid to obstruct the activity of new online operators”**;
- **Develop codes of good conduct and guidelines for comparison websites giving consumers access to transparent and reliable information allowing them to compare the price, quality and sustainability of goods and services**;
- **Develop a strategy for the integration of the markets for payment by cards, internet or mobile phone**, with the view to make these payment services more transparent to consumers and sellers and to increase the security of payment and data protection (See separate article in section “Payment systems”);
- Etc.

These initiatives will be developed throughout 2012-2014.

With the rapid uptake of the internet, the European hospitality industry has been one of the pioneers to use online facilities to market its services. For that reason, HOTREC will follow carefully a number of initiatives mentioned in the new e-commerce communication, such as the actions on copyright, comparison websites or card and internet payments. In particular, HOTREC welcomes the close attention paid by the Communication to the problems related to the reliability and transparency of the information offered by some comparison websites and to the problems faced by consumers and merchants when using payment card schemes. This is a true recognition of HOTREC’s long standing work and call for EU actions on the matter.

TOURISM

• P.ICT.URISM kicked off!

On 17 January 2012, the European Commission officially launched the demonstration project P.ICT.URISM for the creation of an ICT platform for tourism in Europe. A consortium formed by ECTAA, the European association of travel agents and tour operators; HOTREC; ITH, the *Instituto Tecnológico Hotelero* (Spanish Hotel Technological Institute); *Università Bocconi*; and ZN, a Brussels-based communications agency, will be carrying out this project during the next 30 months.

The main goal of P.ICT.URISM is **to facilitate SMEs in the tourism sector to interconnect via a technological platform with all relevant market players and thus helping them to participate in the digital value chain and maximise their competitiveness and market reach.**

P.ICT.URISM capitalises, in particular, upon relevant work developed already in Spain (*ThinkTur* and *Travel Open Apps* platform) and adapts it and expands it at European level. A series of pilot projects involving businesses from destination and source markets will be implemented in the next months.

The demonstration project is the “technological pillar” of the European Commission “ICT for Tourism Initiative”, which is composed of two other pillars:

- An Expert Group that brings together high level representatives of the tourism and ICT areas, to analyse market evolution; identify SMEs needs on ICTs; and provide with recommendations for future policy development (“political pillar”);
- An ICT & Tourism Portal that will assist tourism businesses in each step of their decision-making and business processes, by providing them with useful information, such as e-Toolkits; market development data; relevant legislation; etc. (“operational pillar”).

HOTREC is very much looking forward to work on this project closely together with its member associations in order to provide hospitality businesses around Europe with a seamless online architecture of businesses processes and data exchange models, which corresponds with their needs in terms of ICTs and, therefore, enhance their business opportunities.

STANDARDS

• EP draft report on proposed Regulation on Standardisation out

On 4 January 2012, the MEP Lara Comi (EPP, Italy) issued her draft report on the proposed Regulation on European standardisation ([COM\(2011\)315](#)). The draft report was discussed in detail in the IMCO (Internal Market and Consumer Affairs) Committee on 25 January.

Previously, in a public hearing of 23 November 2011, many participants (MEPs and other invited speakers) stressed the importance of the balanced involvement of all stakeholders in the standardisation process, including SMEs and business representatives. Some MEPs were also questioning the need of standardisation of services, as many of them are individually offered, unlike in the case of goods.

Following the results of the hearing, Ms. Comi has made a move towards clearer involvement of relevant stakeholders in the standardisation process, enforcing the aim of the Commission to allow for voluntary, market-driven and consensus based standards. The draft report proposes, inter alia, that **already the annual standardisation work programme of the European Commission’s should only be adopted after the consultation of all relevant stakeholders.**

The IMCO Committee has scheduled to vote on this report on 21 March. The EP plenary vote is foreseen for the 22 May 2012.

HOTREC welcomes the envisaged improvement of the standardisation process, especially with regard to better involvement of all relevant stakeholders. Therefore, HOTREC welcomes the report by Ms. Comi; however it believes that some aspects still need to be further elaborated in order to ensure that standards are really market-driven and consensus based. Standards cannot be called market-driven, if the industry to which potential new standards may apply, is not agreeing with their elaboration.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

• **Updated information on various social affairs**

Working time – Negotiations launched!

Negotiations between Business Europe and ETUC on the possible revision of the Working Time Directive were formally launched on 8 December 2011. According to the information received by HOTREC, this first meeting was mainly devoted to an exchange of views on the aims of each delegation. The employers' delegation (BUSINESSEUROPE) insisted on negotiating only on the "on-call time" and "paid annual leave" issues; while the employees' delegation (ETUC) stressed that they wanted to enter into negotiations on the "opt-out" and "reconciliation of work and family life" issues.

The next meeting will be held on 10 February 2012.

HOTREC favours a focused review of the working time rules as expressed on its reply to the second-phase consultation of the social partners on the possible content of an EU action regarding the working time rules. This option consists of proposing new solutions focused on the questions of "on call time" and "compensatory rest".

Maternity leave – No progress

The European Parliament first reading legislative resolution by MEP Ms. Estrela (S&D, Portugal) report, which favours, amongst others, the introduction of 20 weeks maternity leave on full pay and the introduction of 2 weeks full paid paternity leave, continues to be discussed within the Council of Ministers

No agreement could be reached, once again, at the last Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council held on 1 and 2 December 2011. According to the conclusions drawn on the issue by the Council representatives, *"it has become crystal clear that the period of 20 weeks of maternity leave with full pay is unacceptable to the Council. Taking into account the broad diversity of maternity protection and social security systems among the different Member States, as well as the financial implications, especially during the crisis, the introduction of such a solution could have counterproductive effects"*.

Discussions on the maternity leave dossier will, therefore, continue within the Council under the current Danish Presidency of the EU (January-June 2012).

Discrimination beyond the workplace – No progress

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, continues to be discussed in the Council of Ministers.

During the Polish Presidency of the EU (July-December 2011), significant progress was made, in particular, in the attempt to clarify the provisions concerning age as a discrimination factor: *"In certain cases, differential treatment is justified. For example, age limits are needed to protect minors"*, expressed the Council representatives.

However, no final agreement could be reached on a number of issues and discussions will continue under the current Danish Presidency of the EU.

• **Seasonal workers Directive: orientation vote in the European Parliament**

In June 2011, MEP Claude Moraes (S&D, UK), Rapporteur for this dossier, released his [draft report](#) on the Commission proposal for a Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third country nationals for the purposes of seasonal employment ([COM \(2010\) 379 final](#)). The Rapporteur welcomed the proposal in general and favoured the maximum period of stay of six months in any period of twelve months for the seasonal worker.

Mr. Moraes also pointed out that:

- The Directive should apply also to third-country nationals, who are legally staying in the territory of a Member State and who apply for a seasonal work permit in that Member State; and not only to third-country nationals who reside outside the territory of the Member States;
- The employer shall comply with a list of minimum requirements for the accommodation: adequate space, protection from the elements and other threats to health, etc.

More than [200 amendments](#) have been put forward to the report. Due to the large number of amendments introduced, an orientation vote took place on [26 January 2012](#) at the LIBE Committee. The orientation vote gives a mandate to the Rapporteur to start negotiations with the Council on the basis of the amendments supported during that vote. The agreed text between the Council and the Parliament will then be voted in the LIBE Committee.

HOTREC generally welcomes the proposal for a Directive as the text establishes for the first time clear rules for the admission of non-skilled third country nationals and can help to avoid their exploitation.

PAYMENT SYSTEMS

• ***New Commission Green Paper on card, mobile and internet payments***

On 11 January 2012, the European Commission adopted a Green Paper untitled “Towards an integrated European market for card, internet and mobile payments” ([COM\(2011\)941 final](#)).

The aim of this Green Paper is to provide a detailed analysis of the current situation for card, internet and mobile payments and to seek stakeholders’ views on how to overcome some of the obstacles identified to a fully integrated payments market. In particular, it tackles the following issues:

- **Multilateral Interchange Fees (MIFs): high MIFs for payment card schemes and lack of transparency for merchants (such as hospitality businesses)** are identified as problems to be overcome;
- **Cross-border acquiring of transactions for merchants:** the Green Paper recognises the potential benefits for merchants of cross-border acquiring of transactions and raises the issue of the facilitation of cross-border acquiring.
- **Difficulties faced by sectors dependent on the use of payment card schemes: the Green Paper recognises that some sectors are dependent on their ability to accept payment by cards and asks whether there is a need for specific rules** addressing the behaviour of payment service providers and payment card schemes vis-à-vis those dependent users.
- **Transparency in the consumer-merchant relationship (and in particular about the prices of the different payment cards/ of the Merchant Service Charge / of the MIFs) and the need for revised rules on rebates and surcharging** are also addressed by the Green Paper.
- **Some of the specific rules of payment card schemes (e.g. Honour all card rules, blending practices, etc.) are considered to negatively affect transparency** in the pricing and to hinder competition;
- **Frauds in remote card transactions** (particularly through the internet) and data protection for payments by card are considered as two major issues to be tackled.

The Commission Green Paper also organises a stakeholder consultation dealing with these issues, which will be open [until 11 April 2012](#).

As a major user of card and internet payment, the European hospitality industry is directly concerned by this Green Paper. As the representative of the European hospitality industry, HOTREC has been complaining for years about the level of Multilateral Interchange Fees for payment card schemes, about the lack of transparency and the anti-competitive nature of some of the rules imposed by some payment card schemes to hospitality businesses. HOTREC therefore welcomes this Green Paper as a step in the right direction and will provide a detailed reply to the issues raised in the Commission analysis.

TAXATION

• **Commission Communication on the future of VAT released**

Following a public consultation on the future of VAT, closed in May 2011, the European Commission issued on 6 December 2011 its Communication on the future of VAT ([COM2011 \(851\)](#) final). At the same time the results of the public consultation were made available as well.

The Communication aims at setting out the **fundamental features of a future EU VAT system**, which can perform its function of raising revenue, while increasing competitiveness. It also lists the **priority areas for further action**.

The Communication says that the future VAT system should be efficient and neutral, meaning potentially a broadening of the tax base, as well as implementing the principle of taxation at the standard rate, generating more revenue and possibly allowing the standard rate to be reduced. Derogations from these principles would have to be rational and uniformly defined. Neutrality involves equal rules with regard to the right of deductions, with very limited restrictions on the exercise of this right. The current rules on deductibility will have to be reviewed.

According to the Communication, a more efficient VAT system would include the limitation of the use of reduced VAT rates. The Commission proposes the review of the current VAT rate structure. It points to a [recent economic evaluation](#), which is saying that reduced rates are often not the most suitable instrument for pursuing, especially, social policy objectives. This study, however, also says that the major differences in the VAT systems of Member States lay more in the VAT administration than in the rates. An important argument in the possible limitation of the use of reduced VAT rates is the potential to reduce the standard rate instead by couple of percentage points. The Commission also refers to the current economic and financial situation, which is an additional argument for broadening the use of the standard rate in order to consolidate national budgets.

However, the Communication acknowledges that potential benefits of a limited use of reduced rates should not be disregarded. The above mentioned study finds “*reduced rates of VAT for ‘labour-intensive services’ more justifiable*”, as many of them are substitutes for Do-it-yourself home production.

An assessment of the current VAT rates structure will be launched in 2012 and the Commission will make proposals after ample consultation with stakeholders and Member States by the end of 2013. Moreover, the Commission will propose to include in the EU VAT web portal clear and binding information on the list of goods and services that are not covered by the standard rate in each Member State.

In relation to the broadening of the tax base passenger transport is mentioned, which in certain Member States is exempt from VAT. The Commission will propose a more neutral and simpler VAT framework for passenger transport services, which may mean higher tax burdens overall on passenger transport in Europe.

HOTREC will follow carefully the development in relation to the future of VAT in Europe and hopes that the involvement of stakeholders when assessing the VAT rates structure will be appropriate. Reduced VAT rates, applied in most Member States for hospitality services, are not only a key for the success of tourism in Europe, but also contribute to the creation and maintenance of jobs in Europe.

ENTERPRISE POLICY

• **€ 2.5 Billion to boost SME’s between 2014 and 2020**

On 30 November 2011, the European Commission announced a budget of € 2.5 billion over the period 2014-2020 in order **to promote access to finance and to expand entrepreneurial skills (including the creation of new enterprises)**.

This budget line is the basis of the new “Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs” ([COSME](#)), which carries on the initiatives developed by the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme ([CIP](#)).

The COSME programme will focus on the following objectives:

- Improve access to finance for SMEs through a reimbursable equity financing system, plus a loan facility;
- Expand access to markets inside the Union and at the international level - on the one hand, the [Enterprise Europe Network](#) will facilitate business expansion in the Single Market; on the other hand, international industrial cooperation will be encouraged;
- Stimulate entrepreneurship: the activities performed by entrepreneurs, young people and women will be encouraged supported.

The Commission hopes that COSME will become a useful instrument to overcome the crisis, by boosting the industry and by creating new jobs. The ultimate consequence is the reinforcement of the EU economy.

HOTREC welcomes very much this EU strategy, as European hospitality enterprises are predominantly formed by small and medium-size: 99% have less than 50 employees and as many as 92% have fewer than ten workers on their payroll.

QUALITY

• **Elaboration of European Tourism Quality label advancing**

On 25 January 2012, the European Commission organised an open conference on the envisaged European Tourism Quality (ETQ) label, which would be an umbrella quality label recognising, on the basis of some common European criteria, national/regional quality initiatives in the field of tourism. The creation of this label is one of the priority actions of the European Commission announced in its 2010 Communication on Tourism. Preparatory work started in December 2010 with the direct involvement of some key stakeholders, including HOTREC.

The open conference was organised in order to present and discuss the outcome of a previous stakeholder consultation on the future ETQ label and to see the future steps in this Commission initiative. The diverging views with regard to the implementation of the project were not coming too much closer to each other; however some trend-setting opinions were clearly visible. According to the majority of the consulted parties, **the project should be implemented with a full European coordination without the involvement of new, burdensome and probably cost intensive national quality boards.** This would allow faster and less bureaucratic recognition of quality initiatives of different countries at European level.

With regard to the form of the implementation of the project, the Commission is now considering to set up the ETQ label through a legislative proposal, as long as it is possible under the Treaty of Lisbon. According to information provided in the conference, a Regulation shall be the most probable act and it could be proposed before the end of 2012, meaning that the European Parliament and the Council would have to agree on a common text according to the ordinary legislative procedure. This Regulation would follow the model of the [Eco-label Regulation](#) which is voluntary, but binding for those who adhere to it.

HOTREC, as the initiator of a similar European quality label in 2007 (European Hospitality Quality), the only European umbrella quality scheme at the moment, is participating with great interest in the discussions of the future ETQ label and is willing to contribute with its experience to the success of this Commission initiative. However, as stressed by HOTREC since the beginning of the discussions, if implemented, the ETQ label should be voluntary, inclusive, simple and smart, backed by a light organisational structure and being able to easily respond to the needs of the market, which, in the field of tourism are mainly made up by family, micro and small enterprises. HOTREC will inform its member associations on the new developments and will consider the way forward, also in the light of the future details to be provided by the Commission concerning the envisaged legislative proposal.

STATISTICS

• *Recent statistical publications*

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

- [European tourism grows above expectations](#) (Interim update, November 2011) - Europe showed a strong growth in international tourist arrivals (+6%).
- [International tourism to reach one billion in 2012](#) (Interim update, January 2012) - International tourist arrivals are on track to reach the milestone one billion mark later this year.

In addition, Eurostat, the EU statistical office, has released the following publication: [Winter season tourism trends 2010-2011](#) (Statistics in Focus, 55/2011). The study shows a positive growth rate in most of the EU countries compared with the same period in 2009-2010.

HOTREC GENERAL ACTIVITIES

• *Spring 2012 General Assembly*

HOTREC will hold its next General Assembly in [Limassol \(Cyprus\) on 26-27 April 2012](#).

The Secretariat is already preparing the programme in a new format, in close collaboration with the hosting association, the Cyprus Hotel Association (CHA).