

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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Health

• ***European Alcohol and Health Forum: latest developments***

On 26 April 2012 took place the 10th Plenary Meeting of the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF).

The EAHF is a platform launched by the European Commission's DG SANCO in 2007 where bodies active at European level (e.g: consumers, alcohol producers, retailers, hospitality, NGO's, advertisers) can debate, compare approaches and act to tackle alcohol related harm. In fact, the stakeholders of the Forum act in order to accomplish their self-binding commitments, which aim to reduce alcohol-related harm.

The topic in focus during the last meeting was responsible marketing.

During the first part of the meeting results of different studies financed by the EU Health Programme were presented.

For instance, HAPI Consortium informed on the study: "*Trends and drivers of young people's drinking habits and beverage preferences*". The main conclusion was that alcoholic products do appeal to minors, without distinguishing if the product is beer, wine, spirit or cider. Rand Europe revealed that 10-15 year olds are highly exposed to television alcohol advertising compared with adults aged 24 years old.

The second part of the meeting was dedicated to activities related with self-regulation of commercial communications. The World Federation of Advertisers presented the "Responsible Marketing Plan", which aims at developing common rules for marketing through social media to be applied in all the alcoholic types of drinks (beer, wine or spirits).

In addition, examples of self-regulation being carried out by the industry were presented. For instance, the Brewers of Europe informed stakeholders on the "Beer Pledge", which aims at enhancing responsible marketing through partnerships with digital and social media and is meant to tackle alcohol misuse. In addition, the European Committee for Wine Enterprises reported on the progress made in the Wine Communication Standards, which is part of the Wine in Moderation Programme.

Finally, the contractor responsible for the evaluation of the EAHF (COWI Consortium) presented the state of play of their work. Overall, the results of the EAHF are considered positive by the contractor. The next steps of the evaluation will consist of interviews to the different stakeholders of the Forum, which will be used as input for the final report. The latter is expected to be delivered in November 2012.

The next EAHF meeting is scheduled for 22 November 2012. The main topic of the agenda will be the results of the evaluation of the EAHF.

The meeting will be followed on the next day by the Open Forum, which will be a meeting open to the public in general.

HOTREC, which shares the concerns of public authorities with regard to alcohol-related harm, joined the Forum in 2008. HOTREC committed itself to raise awareness among its member associations on the activities of the Forum and to encourage them to be actively involved, with a special focus on responsible drinking and the enforcement of age limits when serving and selling alcohol.

So far, the British Beer and Pub Association, the Finnish Hospitality Association and the Swedish Hotel and Restaurant Association are the members of HOTREC who joined the Forum. More HOTREC members are encouraged to formally join soon. Further details on the commitments by HOTREC and its members can be found on the HOTREC [website](#).

It is to be noted that HOTREC is following closely the evaluation process of the EU alcohol strategy and the evaluation of the Forum. Moreover, the British Beer and Pub Association is also part of the evaluation advisory group, which ensures the representation of the hospitality sector in the evaluation process.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

• **Hotel Fire safety: Commission steps back from initial plan!**

As a follow-up to the workshop on hotel fire safety held on 11 June 2012, where the HOTREC MBS Methodology was discussed as a possible basis for a revision of the 1986 Recommendation on hotel fire safety ([86/666/EEC](#)), the European Commission circulated at the end of July 2012 a consultation document in order to gather detailed comments from stakeholders on the outcome of the workshop.

This consultation document included:

- Some possible amendments to the part “Management” and “Systems” of the MBS methodology;
- A request of comments on those possible amendments;
- Some additional questions about definitions, possible additional guidance documents and enforcement of a non-binding Recommendation.

The consultation was open until 10 September 2012 and many stakeholders (including HOTREC) provided contributions. Some stakeholders repeated their disappointment at the Commission’s proposal to revise the Council Recommendation and many of these contributions showed a lack of consensus among stakeholders on the issue.

Given this situation, it seems that the European Commission changed its plans and now intends to adopt a broader approach within a longer timeframe. Indeed, hotel fire safety would be included into an upcoming Green Paper on the safety of services. This Green Paper, which is expected for the end of 2012 or beginning of 2013, would address various safety issues for various types of services. The question of a possible revised Recommendation on hotel fire safety would be just one of the options proposed by this Green Paper.

The European hospitality industry considers that the initial proposal of the European Commission to base a revision of the 1986 Council Recommendation on the HOTREC MBS Methodology is a clear recognition of its high quality and added-value at EU level. This instrument is a practical and flexible performance-based tool which summarises hotel fire safety into a set of hands-on advices, which any hotelier can easily understand and follow, and which is applicable whatever the national or local legislation in place.

HOTREC also 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. HOTREC clearly intends to pursue its promotion throughout Europe, independently of any EU plans.

Given the added-value and success of this scheme in many European countries, HOTREC still considers the option of a revised Recommendation based on the MBS Methodology, as initially proposed by the Commission, as the most viable, especially given the high number and complexity of existing legislation in Europe on the matter.

TOURISM

• **Tourism in Europe: challenges ahead!**

In the light of the implementation of its Communication on Tourism ([COM\(2010\)352final](#)), the European Commission has recently updated its Rolling Plan. In parallel, several meetings, which counted also with the participation of the industry, took place in Brussels in the latest months, including the European Tourism Day, a meeting to find ways to encourage senior citizens to travel off-season and a meeting to update stakeholders on the state of play of the 50.000 tourists initiative.

European Tourism Day

To celebrate the European Tourism Day, the Commission organised a one day conference on 27 September 2012, which focused on the main topics of seasonality and maritime and coastal tourism.

The meeting counted with the presence of Commissioner Tajani (Enterprise and Industry portfolio), who stressed the need to tackle the seasonality problem with the help of new infrastructures, in order to make offers more appealing to tourists.

Commissioner Tajani took the opportunity to announce the following actions carried out by DG ENTER:

- Talks are being handled between his Cabinet and the Cabinet of Commissioner Malmström (Home Affairs portfolio) in order to facilitate the visa applications for tourists coming to the EU. A joint Communication would be issued still in 2012 in order to facilitate some procedures in the application of the Visa Code.
- An EU / Egypt Task Force Business and Tourism Summit will be organised on 13 and 14 November 2012 in Cairo.

An EU delegation composed of high level industry representatives is expected to take part in the Business and Tourism Summit, occurring on 13 November. B2B meetings are foreseen to be organised in loco. A political Task Force, taking place on 14 November, will analyse the state of play of the situation in Egypt and will probably design an action plan to be implemented in the country in the future.

Commissioner Ms. Damanaki (Maritime Affairs and Fisheries portfolio), also present in the meeting, referred the economic importance of the maritime and coastal tourism in terms of growth and jobs: e.g., over half of the hotel capacity in Europe is concentrated along the coasts; nearly two and a half million people work in coastal tourism.

Nevertheless, the Commissioner also highlighted the coastal challenges: again, seasonality; poor accessibility of certain coastal destinations (e.g.: islands); lack of skilled professionals; and competition of other non EU destinations. As a consequence, the Commission is preparing a Communication on "Challenges and Opportunities for Coastal and Maritime Tourism in Europe". The Communication should be issued during the first quarter of 2013 and focus on: competitiveness, sustainability, image and financial support. It will be based on the results of a public consultation done during 2012.

The main conclusions of the meeting were the following:

- All stakeholders should acknowledge the evolution of the demand outside the pick seasons in quantitative and qualitative terms:
 - In quantitative terms, the number of tourists moving inside the EU or coming from non EU countries should be known, also taking into consideration that seniors, young people and disabled people have an increased willingness to travel nowadays.
 - In qualitative terms, health, safety, the quality of the services and the training of the employees are of crucial importance for tourists.
- A multi stakeholder approach is encouraged by the Commission, so that synergies and ideas could be put into practice in order to tackle the seasonality problem.
- Coastal infrastructures need to offer more options for tourists, in order to be attractive along the entire year.

Encouraging senior citizens to travel off-season

On 26 September, the European Commission's DG ENTER invited industry representatives to provide ideas on how to encourage senior citizens to travel off-season. The options on the table included the following:

- Involve the National Tourism Board and the national associations of hotels to create packages which are attractive to the target groups;
- Include the possibility of personalizing the packages;
- Promote the STEEP platform (platform of sales, linking demand and supply for accommodation and tourism services; focusing on the CALYPSO target groups –disabled people, young people people with difficulties and seniors) and think how consumers are going to access the offers presented in the platform (as the STEEP platform is a B2B connector) – in this sense, maybe a communication campaign could be envisaged;
- Facilitate the visa application procedure for tourists coming to the EU;
- Provide trainings for tourism professionals;

During the meeting the Commission announced that a new call for proposals focusing on senior travellers will be launched in 2013.

50.000 Tourists Initiative

On 26 September, a meeting was organised by the European Commission's DG ENTER for stakeholders to present information on the state of play of the "50000 Tourists" project.

This initiative aims to encourage tourists coming from Chile, Argentina and Brasil (Mexico might join in the near future), to travel to Europe, with reduced prices, during Europe's low season (between October 2012 and March 2013). Likewise, during Latin America's low season, European tourists will be encouraged to travel to Latin America

Most of the European stakeholders (National Tourism Boards, tour operators, travel agents) informed that the packages for the Latin American tourists were ready to be used.

Mostra, the Commission's communication contractual agent, presented the website which intends to promote Europe as tourist destination to Latin America tourists.

The Commission commented that it was essential that the number of tourists coming to Europe was measured to be able to assess the success of the initiative.

European Parliament Tourism Taskforce

Mr. Fidanza (EPP, IT), Vice-Chair of the new European Parliament Tourism Task Force, presented on 9 October the priorities of this new Task Force.

Some of the priorities for the MEPs composing this group are:

- Visa Policy – the Parliament considers that more facilitation for tourists coming from the BRIC countries (Russia, India, China) should be envisaged and that the visa system should be more harmonised in the EU. For this reason an oral question is foreseen during a Plenary session in 2012;
- Accessibility and seasonality – on these issues an own-initiative report might be expected during 2012;
- Quality - including label topic and classification systems. On the first issue, several meetings will be held with DG ENTER, so that the Parliament understands the state of play of this action. Under the classification systems topic, the Parliament considers that some more harmonisation should be envisaged and a public hearing will be organised in 2013.

Regarding the visa topic, HOTREC agrees that more visa facilitation for tourists coming from BRIC countries is needed. Moreover, a general improvement of the application of the Visa Code would be welcomed.

HOTREC also supports the initiative of encouraging senior citizens to travel to Europe and within Europe off-season. This objective promotes mobility across Europe and consequently contributes to the growth of the businesses. Nevertheless, funding coming from the EU or from Member States seems to be crucial in order for the initiatives to be able to be developed. Low prices provided by the industry need to be compensated. In fact if there is no revenue, businesses/hotels might consider closing during the low season, as they might not be profitable.

Concerning the "50000 Tourists" pilot project, more participation from the Latin American tour operators' and travel agents' seems to be needed. In addition, the offers done by stakeholders should be made available through booking channels. HOTREC will continue monitoring this initiative, but action will be taken only at national level by the members of HOTREC who are interested in the initiative.

• **Study on impact of EU policies on tourism**

On 15 October 2012, the European Commission made public its study on “*The impact of EU policies and the measures undertaken in their framework on tourism*”. The elaboration of this study is one of the multiple deliverables laid down on the implementation rolling plan of the 2010 Communication on Tourism.

The consultancy Risk & Policy Analysis (RPA) was commissioned by DG ENTER in 2011, to carry out this analysis.

Its introduction stresses, once more, the importance of the European tourism sector which is forecast to continue increasing its influence and contribution to the overall employment rate, economic development and social cohesion in the EU.

In order to develop a methodology for the better mainstreaming of tourism across different policies in the future, the study examines the impact of the different EU policies on tourism. RPA recommendations for this mainstreaming exercise can be summarised as follows:

1. Stimulate competitiveness in the tourism sector:

- Investigate and encourage new types of tourism, for instance investigate the barriers to the development of rural tourism and engage in a dialogue with relevant policy stakeholders to address these barriers;
- Continue work to ensure that the rights of tourists as consumers are protected;
- Continue work in the area of antitrust and mergers to encourage competition among tourism sector companies; and
- Monitor the transposition into national law and implementation of different tourism-related EU Directives and their impacts on companies, including microenterprises, and tourists.

2. Promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high quality tourism:

- Continue the dialogue with the aviation industry to minimise environmental impacts and meet international commitments;
- Raise awareness among tourists and the industry stakeholders about environmental performance; and
- Encourage regional development in line with environmental principles.

3. Consolidate the image and profile of Europe as a collection of sustainable and high-quality destinations:

- Increase efficiency and investigate the possibility of incorporating facilitating measures or new technologies for visa applications;
- Promote strategic planning of cultural or sporting events to include tourism strategies; and
- Explore channels to raise awareness about the different quality and environment labels available for tourism facilities and strengthen the image and promotion of Europe as a collection of diverse destinations whilst working on a coherent transport network across Europe.

A summary report of the study can be downloaded at the following links in various languages: [English](#), [French](#); [German](#), [Italian](#) and [Spanish](#).

The full report can be downloaded at the following [link](#).

On a different issue, but linked with the above mentioned study, please, find [here](#) “A Guide to EU Funding Programmes for Tourism Stakeholders”.

HOTREC was contacted by RPA Consultancy at the end of January 2012. On the basis of the questions put forward by the consultancy, HOTREC elaborated a questionnaire to consult its member associations. HOTREC sent its final response to the Commission based on the replies received and past experience on the impact of EU policies on the tourism sector.

HOTREC will analyse in detail the results of this study and use it for its future positioning on EU policies.

• ***TOURISMLink is moving forward***

TOURISMLink is a European Union funded action aiming at improving the competitiveness of the tourism sector by fully using the capabilities of information and communication technologies (ICTs). More concretely, it will be an online platform facilitating the flow of information among travel service suppliers (such as travel agents and tour operators) and destination tourism enterprises (such as providers of accommodation, transport and complementary services). HOTREC is partner in the European Consortium created to launch it.

On 11 July 2012, the Consortium presented its market analysis to the Advisory Board which will be in charge of following the evolution of the project. After integrating some of the comments put forward by the experts participating in this Board, the market analysis has been officially accepted by the European Commission. The first phase of TOURISMLink has, therefore, been successfully accomplished.

The development of an interoperability framework (second-phase) is now started-up. A first draft version of the interoperability framework will be presented to the next Advisory Board meeting to be held on 6 November 2012.

In the meantime, on 25 September 2012, the TOURISMLink members started discussions on the possible countries involved in the pilot projects which will serve to test the new platform. Other topics of discussion were the future business and governance models.

STANDARDS

• ***Regulation on European standardisation formally adopted***

With the agreement of the Council, on 4 October 2012, the [Regulation on European standardisation](#) was formally adopted following a previous first reading agreement with the European Parliament

The final text includes numerous amendments to the initial Commission proposal aiming at more transparency throughout the standardisation process. According to the new Regulation, to enter into force on 1 January 2013, European standardisation organisations shall encourage and facilitate the representation of all relevant stakeholders throughout the standardisation procedures. It is further specified that “*standards for services are voluntary and should be market-driven, whereby the needs of the economic operators and stakeholders directly or indirectly affected by such standards prevail*”. A new article requests the establishment of 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 of the European Commission.

With regard to SMEs, specific measures are introduced in order to facilitate their participation in the standardisation process also at national level, and to propose access of micro and small enterprises to standards at special rates.

HOTREC welcomes efforts to make the European standardisation process more transparent and inclusive with regard to participation of relevant stakeholders. With the formal adoption of the Regulation, HOTREC is hoping that the practical implementation of the new rules will reflect the openness and envisaged transparency of the new European standardisation process, including the requirement that standards should be market-driven and that the needs of the economic operators and stakeholders affected shall prevail.

With regard to standardisation of hospitality services, it should be stated that the need for such standardisation work 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. 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.

TAXATION

• **Reduced VAT rates: New EC consultation launched!**

On 8 October 2012, the European Commission launched a consultation on the review of existing legislation on VAT reduced rates. Contributions shall be submitted by 4 January 2013 at the latest.

This current consultation is a follow-up to the Commission Communication on the future of VAT of December 2011. One of the guiding principles identified in that document was the abolition of those reduced rates which constitute an obstacle to the proper functioning of the internal market.

The Commission consultation clearly states that “*while the issue of the potential distortion of competition was raised on several occasions in the past, neither the two public consultations, nor the two studies have revealed any major anomalies in this respect with the reduced VAT rates as they are applied today*”. Despite of the strong background of the previous studies and consultations, the Commission is asking now, whether there are concrete situations, whereby the application of certain reduced VAT rates is resulting in distortion of competition.

In this current consultation paper, the Commission is already mentioning a possible outcome, saying that “*should the situation arise at the end of the process, an abolition of reduced rates was the preferred policy option, this would not automatically mean that it would trigger an increase in the overall VAT/tax burden*”.

These consultation results should serve as a background for (legislative) proposals of the European Commission foreseen to be issued by the end of 2013.

HOTREC has been participating in the previous consultations on VAT, highlighting the importance of reduced VAT rates for the hospitality and tourism sectors, and for the European economy.

It should be borne in mind that the market share of Europe (being currently the Nr. 1 tourism destination in the world) is rapidly decreasing; some other destinations are already on the passing lane. Increasing VAT on tourism services and its consequences might quicker than expected result in finding Europe only at 2nd place among the most visited tourism destinations.

COPYRIGHT

• **Collective Rights Management: the European Parliament launches the debate!**

Following the release of the Commission proposal for a Directive on Collective Management of Copyright ([COM \(2012\) 372](#)) in July 2012, the European Parliament is now starting to examine the proposal in 1st Reading. The JURI (Legal Affairs) Committee will be the main Committee in charge of the dossier; therefore it will lead the discussion in the European Parliament. The IMCO (Internal Market and Consumer Protection), ITRE (Industry and Research) and CULT (Culture and Education) Committees will also provide opinions.

Within the JURI Committee, MEP Marielle Gallo (EPP, France) has been appointed Rapporteur on the Commission proposal and will be the main responsible person for drafting the opinion of the leading Committee. The main shadow rapporteurs will be the MEPs Françoise Castex (S&D, France), Cecilia Wikström (ALDE, Sweden), Christian Engström (Greens, Sweden), Sajjad Karim (ECR, UK), Jiří Maštálka (GUE/NGL, Czech Republic) and Francesco Enrico Speroni (EFD, Italy).

Moreover, the EPP group organised on 1 October an [open hearing](#) in the European Parliament on the proposed Directive. The meeting was chaired by the Rapporteur and the discussions were organised according to three panels:

- Collecting societies to the benefits of artists: governance and transparency;
- Collecting societies as enablers for multi-territorial licensing of music;
- The interaction among collecting societies, commercial users and consumers in the digital era.

Many stakeholders were invited to speak, including representatives from collecting societies, consumers and commercial rights users. If, on the one hand, many collecting societies' representatives considered the Commission proposal as going too much into the details and leaving too little room for flexibility; on the other hand, commercial users and consumers expressed their wishes to see the proposal further strengthened on a number of aspects (e.g. provisions on relations with users, tariff setting, dispute resolution, governance of

collecting societies). MEP Gallo indicated during the hearing that she aims to publish a working document on the Commission proposal in December.

Meanwhile, the Council has not yet formally started to work on the Commission proposal. The topic is expected to be a low priority for the current Cypriot Presidency of the EU, meaning that it will be most likely up to the Irish Presidency (1 January 2013 – 30 June 2013) to fully launch the discussions in the Council.

As most commercial users of copyrighted work, the European hospitality industry welcomes the proposal of the European Commission as a step in the right direction, but considers it needs to be further strengthened on a number of key aspects to solve some of the recurrent problems faced by users in their dealings with collecting societies.

In particular, HOTREC considers that the chapter of the proposal on the relations with users, and particularly the provisions on the setting of tariffs, should be strengthened, so as to ensure that tariffs are reasonable (as already stated by the European Court of Justice) and are truly negotiated with rights users representatives and not unilaterally imposed without any control. Moreover, the provisions on dispute resolutions should make sure that the access to an independent dispute resolution body is always possible in case of disputes between right-users and collecting societies.

These requests are fully shared by most users of copyrighted work. For this reason, HOTREC calls on the European Parliament and Council to fully take into consideration the work carried-out within the Copyright Users Platform (CUP) and which makes 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).*

These detailed proposals are available on the HOTREC [website](#).

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

• Working time: negotiation period extended

In August 2012, the European Commission agreed to join a proposal from the European Social Partners to extend their negotiating period on the revision of the Working Time Directive until 31 December 2012.

According to articles 154 and 155 of the TFEU, the European Social partners have 9 months to conclude negotiations, but the period can be extended if both the employers and employees' representatives agree on it. BUSINESSEUROPE and ETUC formally started negotiations in December 2011.

The review of the Working Time Directive is aimed at updating EU working time rules. Under the current Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC), each Member State must ensure that each worker is entitled to:

- A limit to weekly working time, which must not exceed 48 hours on average, including any overtime;
- A minimum daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours in every 24;
- A minimum weekly rest period of 24 uninterrupted hours for each seven-day period, which is added to the 11 hours daily rest;
- Paid annual leave of at least four weeks per year;
- Extra protection in the case of night work (e.g. average working hours should not exceed 8 hours per 24-hour period; night workers should not perform heavy or dangerous work for longer than 8 hours in any 24-hour period).

There are a number of exceptions and derogations, providing flexibility to these rules.

If no agreement is reached in December 2012, the European Commission could put forward a legislative proposal.

• **Seasonal workers: negotiations between Parliament and Council continue**

On 25 April 2012, an orientation vote on the seasonal worker dossier took place in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) of the European Parliament.

MEP Claude Moraes (S&D, UK), Rapporteur for this dossier, had 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 in June 2011. The Rapporteur welcomed the proposal in general and favoured a maximum period of stay of 6 months in any period of 12 months for the seasonal workers.

The orientation vote held in April gave a mandate to the Rapporteur to start negotiations with the Council on the basis of the amendments supported during that vote. For the moment no official information on the state of play of the negotiations has been made public.

The next Justice and Home affairs Council meeting will take place on 25 and 26 October. A discussion point on the seasonal worker dossier is, however, not still forecast on the draft agenda.

To download the full text of the LIBE orientation vote result, please see the following [link](#).

FOOD

• **Reducing food waste in food chain high on EU agenda**

On 5 October 2012, the European Commission organised, as part of the Advisory Group on the Food Chain, the first meeting of a new Working Group on food losses and food waste. The Advisory Group on the Food Chain brings together consumers and economic operators from the entire food chain, with the aim to facilitate the consultation and the dialogue on food safety policy between the Commission and European stakeholders.

This initiative is to be seen in a wider context in which food waste is being put high on the agenda of the institutions, with the adoption in 2011 of two initiatives:

- A [Commission Communication](#) on a “Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe”, where the Commission announced its intention to assess how to reduce food waste;
- A European Parliament own-initiative report on “How to avoid food wastage: strategies for a more efficient food chain in the EU” ([A7-0430/2011](#)), which called for the promotion of best practices among stakeholders and for some stronger actions at EU level.

During the 5 October meeting, the European Commission explained that a recent EU preparatory study showed that there are 90 millions of food wasted each year at all stages of the food chain. Efforts should therefore focus on all levels of the food chain and target specific causes per sector. Consequently, the Commission intends to identify good practices among stakeholders and to see if it is possible/useful to propose some actions at EU level, bearing in mind that it is a subsidiarity issue.

To prepare the meeting, stakeholders were invited to reflect on three questions:

- “Could you describe the problem of food losses/food waste in your sector? What are the reasons and do you have data about the amounts?”
- “How could food losses/food waste be reduced in your sector?”
- “What are the constraints (technical, cultural, financial) to reduce food losses/food waste in your sector?”

Following discussions with the stakeholders, the European Commission concluded by announcing that the Working Group and the institution should work on some areas that seem to make consensus, such as:

- Awareness raising, information and communication;
- Facilitation of the exchange of good practices;
- Determining common definitions and methodologies for estimating food waste in the EU;
- Educate business about cost-benefits of reducing food waste;
- Set targets for food waste reduction in EU waste legislation;

- Develop EU guidance on consistent and more systematic communication on portion size to reduce waste;
- Clarify labelling legislation on “use by” and “best before”;
- Fiscal incentives to donate to food bank;
- Etc.

The Commission also announced that a specific EU website on food waste will be set-up, with the aim to further promote the reduction of food waste in the EU and to facilitate of exchange of good practices. Moreover, a study on consumer behaviour and food waste will be carried-out and a Communication on "sustainable food" should be issued in 2013. The Commission shall also reply to the European Parliament's call on actions contained in the above mentioned EP own-initiative report.

The next meeting of the Working Group is scheduled on 8 February 2013.

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. 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 positively contribute to the Working Group on food waste and food losses, 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 on the matter.

PAYMENT SERVICES

• Towards legislative proposals on Multilateral Interchange Fees and on revision of Payment Services

On 3 October 2012, the European Commission adopted a Communication entitled a “Single Market Act II” ([COM\(2012\) 573 final](#)), in which it announced, among others, its intention to issue new legislative proposals in 2013 to make payment services market in the EU more efficient.

In particular, the Communication indicates that in the 2nd quarter of 2013 two pieces of legislation should be issued:

- A proposal on Multilateral Interchange Fees (MIFs);
- A proposal to revise the Payment Services Directive.

The proposal to revise the Payment Services Directive should tackle issues such as insufficient harmonisation, ineffective competition in some areas of the card and internet payments and lack of incentives for technical standardisation, for example in the area of mobile payments. Moreover, the proposal on MIFs is to be seen as an intent to bring clarifications to the payment card market, following the ECJ's decision of 24 May 2012 which confirmed that MasterCard's cross-border MIFs scheme was in breach of the EU's competition law, as it constitutes a restriction of price competition to the detriment of the merchants.

As a major user of card and internet payment, the European hospitality industry is directly concerned by the two envisaged legislative proposals. HOTREC has been complaining for years about the level of Multilateral Interchange Fees for payment card schemes, and 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 the decision by the Commission to issue a legislative proposal on MIFs and call for their progressive elimination.

HOTEL CLASSIFICATION

• Malta: the 12th country of the Hotelstars Union!

Malta has become the 12th country joining the [Hotelstars Union](#), the common European hotel classification system initiated by national hotel associations under the patronage of HOTREC. Malta is the first southern European country to join the Hotelstars Union system, which proves that the system can accommodate all European countries even with different climatic conditions.

The common criteria catalogue comprising of 270 criteria for hotel classification forms the basis of this comparable and transparent system. It is not always an easy task to adjust existing national classification criteria to the requirements of the Hotelstars Union system, nonetheless the expansion of the system shows that it is possible and makes the requirements set for the same categories of hotels comparable across Europe. This facilitates also the choice for the guests.

The founding and the current development of the Hotelstars Union can be regarded as one of the best examples of successful un-bureaucratic market-driven initiatives in Europe. The prospects for future expansion of the system are positive. It can be expected that within the next years more countries will become part of this common hotel classification system in Europe.

SUSTAINABILITY

• ***Energy Efficiency: Council endorses political agreement***

On 4 October 2012, the [Council](#) endorsed the political agreement on the Energy Efficiency Directive. The [European Parliament](#) had already given its favourable vote to the agreement on 11 September.

The Member States did not agree on the previous Parliament provision to make the 20% energy saving target binding. They agreed, instead, on a 20% indicative target and on some binding measures.

Some of the binding measures introduced in the Directive are as follows:

- Energy companies are obliged to reduce their energy sales to industrial and household clients by at least 1.5% each year;
- Member States are requested to renovate 3% of the existing public buildings which are “owned and occupied” by central governments, not regional or local authorities;
- An obligation on each EU member State to draw-up a roadmap to make the entire buildings sector more energy-efficient by 2050 (commercial, public and households included).

With the legally binding measures introduced by the Energy Efficiency Directive, it is estimated that the EU could reach approximately 17% energy savings. The rest of the percentage (until 20%) will be calculated as follows:

- In April 2013, Member States are expected to present their national efficiency programmes and calculate what target they are to achieve. The European Commission will evaluate them.
- If the Commission analysis of the national energy saving plans shows that the EU is not on track to meet the 20% energy savings target, it must add to the Directive more binding measures to fill the gap.
- If Member States do not apply the additional measures and are still not on track to meet the target, the Commission will then propose binding targets.
- The savings will be calculated as of 2014 and there will be a review of the Directive in 2016.

The Directive will enter into force 20 days after its publication in the Official Journal of the EU, foreseen in [November 2012](#). Following entry into force, Member States will have a year and a half to bring the majority of the Directive's provisions into national law.

Please, see the Commission's press release at the following [link](#).

ENTERPRISE POLICY

• ***Which are the TOP 10 most burdensome legislative acts for SMEs?***

On 1 October 2012, the European Commission launched a consultation process for SMEs and their representatives organisations to identify the top 10 EU legislatives acts considered most burdensome for SMEs and micro-enterprises. The consultation period is open until **21 December 2012**.

European Commission Vice President Antonio Tajani, Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship, said ““Very often I am told that the European Commission is too far removed from the daily reality of small businesses. We want to address this gap. Today, we are giving businesses the opportunity to identify those

areas and pieces of legislation where we can make a difference. (...). Please do not hesitate to let us know where we could eliminate excessive burden”.

The consultation document makes reference to the most burdensome measures within the following areas:

- **Services:** provision of services across borders, recognition of professional qualifications;
- **Customs:** customs controls and formalities, classification of goods, custom tariffs;
- **Employment and Social Affairs:** co-ordination and transferability of social rights, health & safety at work, organisation of working time, social security schemes, free movement of workers, posting of workers;
- **Energy:** energy supply, energy efficiency, renewable energy;
- **Product safety:** use of standards, demonstrating conformity in the absence of a harmonised standard, conformity assessment procedures, conformity assessment involving a conformity assessment body, EU declaration of conformity, CE marking rules, information/labelling/traceability obligations, controls/inspections;
- **Environment:** tackling climate change, air quality/pollutants, biotechnology, nature and biodiversity, chemicals, industrial environmental audit, eco-labelling, noise, waste, water;
- **Business environment:** public procurement, company law, intellectual and industrial property, data protection;
- **Taxation:** VAT, excise duties, other indirect taxes, direct taxes;
- **Consumer protection:** safe shopping, electronic commerce, legal redress and settlement of disputes, food safety, animal and plant health;
- **Transport:** transport of goods/passengers, road transport, maritime/inland waterway transport, other transport modes.

This consultation is one of the action points mentioned by the Commission in the report: [“Minimizing regulatory burden for SMEs. Adapting EU regulation to the needs of micro-enterprises”](#) of November 2011.

Please, see the [press release](#) and other [related information](#) on this issue.

HOTREC will consult its member associations on the basis of the questions addressed in the consultation and will send a consolidated response to the European Commission in due time.

STATISTICS

• **Recent statistical publications**

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

- [415 million tourists expected worldwide in the May-August peak season](#) (news release – July 2012) - The study shows that International tourist arrivals worldwide grew by 5% in the first four months of 2012;
- [International tourism on track to hit one billion by end of 2012](#) (news release – September 2012) – The article points out that international tourism remains firmly on track to reach one billion tourists by the end of 2012;

In addition, Eurostat released the following publication: [“Winter season tourism trends 2011-2012”](#) (Statistics in Focus, 37/2012). The study shows that in the 2011-12 winter season, compared with the same period in 2010-11, tourism recorded positive growth rates in most of the EU countries.

HOTREC GENERAL ACTIVITIES

• **Next General Assemblies**

HOTREC will hold on 25-26 October 2012 its 65th General Assembly in Dublin, Ireland.

Next year, the Spring General Assembly will be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 16-17 May. Greece will follow in the Autumn, but dates will only be confirmed next week in the Dublin GA.