



## **WORKING PAPER ON SUSTAINABILITY IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR**

HOTREC<sup>1</sup>, the umbrella association representing the hospitality businesses in Europe, is fully committed to the sustainable economic development objectives set out by the European Union. Indeed, HOTREC believes these objectives are a key to ensuring Europe's growth and competitiveness.

HOTREC therefore adheres completely to the widely accepted definition of sustainable development: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

With regard to tourism and hospitality sectors, HOTREC can only express its agreement with the need to promote **sustainable, responsible and high quality tourism**, which can only be achieved if it is based on economic growth, stability and regeneration. For this reason, HOTREC agrees to foster the following **general principles** amongst its member associations:

- The preservation of the economic sustainability of the tourism industry;
- The preservation and protection of the environment, biodiversity and the prudent use of natural resources;
- The respect of the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities and regions, the conservation of their living cultural heritage and traditional values, and the contribution to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

To this end, HOTREC is pleased to offer its European platform for the promotion of these principles amongst hospitality businesses.

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<sup>1</sup> HOTREC represents the hotel, restaurant and café industry at European level. 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 some 62% of value added. The industry provides some 9,5 million jobs in the EU alone. HOTREC brings together 43 National Associations representing the interest of the industry in 26 different European countries.

However, HOTREC believes that sustainable tourism development requires the **informed participation of all relevant stakeholders**, as well as **strong political leadership**, to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Thus, responsibility on sustainability related issues should also be placed on consumers and governments, including local authorities, and not only on businesses.

HOTREC also points out that sustainable use of resources in the tourism industry necessitates **real incentives, especially financial, for both the industry and consumers** to facilitate a shift in their practices and together achieve sustainability.

Certainly, over recent years, the number of consumers of hospitality services who are demanding a more sustainable and caring world has increased exponentially and businesses are willing to respond to these demands by making the necessary investments. However, complying with environmental rules can be challenging for the small firms that mostly form the European hospitality sector.

Therefore, HOTREC calls on the European Union institutions to provide the necessary funding and other financial incentives to hospitality businesses, to help them to fulfil the sustainability objectives. Otherwise, hospitality businesses cannot in many cases cope alone with the investment required to become sustainable or improve their environmental performance. Viability of tourism businesses must be assured.

In parallel, HOTREC considers that consumers should also be educated to adopt sustainable behaviour when using hospitality services, because sustainability addresses them in the same way, as it does businesses. Awareness raising campaigns should therefore be addressed to both entrepreneurs and consumers.

Overall, sustainable tourism should maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

On the basis of the considerations above mentioned, HOTREC member associations commit to work along the following **policy lines of action**:

- The promotion of the numerous existing best practices in the hospitality sector throughout Europe. To do so, HOTREC will invite its national member associations to share those valuable experiences with other

countries and will produce a catalogue of best practices in sustainability matters.

- The support and promotion of good environmental practices, provided that the investment required to put them in place can be recovered and result in profits in the medium and long-term.
- The promotion of regional agricultural products and the enhancement of the relation between tourism, local agriculture and culture.
- The promotion of the use of energy efficient products and renewable energy sources, as well as of projects aimed at building capacity on energy management for enterprises, to help fulfil the EU objective of 20% energy savings by 2020.
- The promotion of sustainable water resource use and waste management, both in pursuing new business developments and in their daily operations.

By endorsing the general principles and policy lines of actions contained in this working document, HOTREC calls on the EU institutions to **consult and involve the hospitality industry in all European Union policy and legislative initiatives related to sustainability**, to ensure that the specific needs of the industry are duly taken into account.

#### **Environmental labels**

HOTREC is favourable to the use of environmental labels for tourist accommodations services, provided that they are always voluntary, focused on a consumer oriented approach -so that consumers are equally involved- and, of course be industry driven.

HOTREC will use this working paper as a basis for its further involvement in sustainability related policy initiatives.