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Updated HOTREC¹ position paper on the development of standards at European and international level

Adopted by the HOTREC General Assembly in Barcelona, 6 November 2009

Introduction

Generally speaking, a standard is a “*model to refer to*” or “*a procedure the repeated use of which allows for delivery of products or services with same specific characteristics*”. Standards in that sense are common in and very useful to hospitality establishments. However, what are at stake here are formal standards developed within the context of official standardisation bodies. Such bodies exist at several levels: national (e.g. AENOR, AFNOR, BSI, and DIN), European (CEN) and international (ISO).

The need for standardisation of services, in particular hospitality services, is not as obvious as it is for industrial goods. Hospitality services are generally custom-made and tailored to the customer. This is very different from products where, for instance, the diameter of a tap must correspond exactly to the diameter of the tube it has to adjust to.

Heterogeneity is a main competitive feature for the hospitality industry. In relation to our services, diversity reflects different cultures, approaches as well as geographical situations, and constitutes one of the major attractions for customers. Most of them do not expect nor wish to find standardised conditions everywhere they travel. On the contrary, their expectations vary according to their destinations, their ages, their budgets as well as the purpose of their trips, be it a business trip or a trip for leisure.

HOTREC, which is not against standards “*per se*”, opposes top-down approaches whereby formal standards are developed at European or international level at the initiative of the EU or standardisation bodies.

¹HOTREC represents the hotel, restaurant and café industry at European level. It counts 1.6 million businesses, with 92% of them being micro enterprises employing less than 10 people. The micro and small enterprises (having less than 50 employees) in the hospitality industry representing 99% of businesses make up some 62% of value added. The industry provides some 9 million jobs in the EU alone. HOTREC brings together 40 National Associations representing the interest of the industry in 25 different European countries.

HOTREC and its Member Associations call for compliance with the following principles in the standardisation process at international, European and national level:

- The development of standards should remain **fully market-driven**: initiatives should come from the market (industry and users). The industry wants that standards be based on commercial considerations as well as on **proper business impact assessments**. Standardisation bodies' role should be limited to providing a methodology and infrastructure;
- **Full and demonstrable consultation of the industry** at all levels – national, European and international – accompanied with voting rights, should be systematically organised on both the **desirability and the proposed contents** of the standards relating to the tourism industry directly or indirectly;
- Clear criteria should define the **representativeness** of all parties consulted and involved in the development of standards. Details on the representativeness of the stakeholders consulted should be made available. The issue of the participation of consultants who get paid for developing standards and, later on, for certifying on the basis of such standards, should be addressed carefully;
- **Transparency of all work undertaken** (including early information and free access to all working documents for stakeholders) should be ensured;
- **Transparency of the voting regime** has to be ensured in order to allow identifying who voted on behalf of a standardisation body, especially when the vote is taking place by correspondence. The **reliability** of the vote by correspondence should be carefully reassessed;
- More generally, all **rules** governing the development of standards should be **reassessed** and **simplified**; the concept of “consensus” should be **defined** in a precise manner;
- The issue of the **time and costs of standards-making**, including the **cost of compliance** for industry, should also be looked at carefully;
- The **impact on competitiveness**: the consequence that small businesses have to pay proportionally more than large enterprises to adapt to standards should be taken in close consideration.

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List of acronyms used in this document:

AENOR: Asociación Española de Normalización y Certificación

AFNOR: Association Française de Normalisation

BSI: British Standards Institution

DIN: Deutsches Institut für Normung e.V.

CEN: Comité Européen de Normalisation / European Committee for Standardisation

ISO: International Organisation for Standardisation