

PRESS RELEASE

HOTREC 54th General Assembly

Berlin

20 October 2006

HOTREC's President had a vision: a EU internal market for payments, in which hotels and restaurants would not pay commissions anymore for accepting credit and debit cards... The HOTREC seminar on "*Payments within the EU*" was followed by the 54th HOTREC General Assembly, which confirmed the concerns of HOTREC in relation to various measures or activities in the EU Institutions pipeline, with limited respect being paid to the principle of subsidiarity and very thin impact assessment of these measures or activities on businesses, notwithstanding all the promises for "better regulation"...

At the occasion of an internal seminar bringing together representatives of its 32 associations in 22 countries, HOTREC, Hotels, Restaurants and Cafés in Europe, reviewed the latest developments in relation to payments within the European Union. HOTREC particularly welcomed the findings of the Commission sector inquiry on payment cards issued in April 2006, among which the striking demonstration that:

- Fees paid by businesses to accept debit or credit cards vary greatly among countries;
- Small businesses pay higher fees than large ones, without any volume justification;
- Restaurants and hotels are among the sectors paying the highest fees for accepting payment cards.

Xavier Durieu, CEO of EuroCommerce, presented his hopes and worries in relation to the Supplementary Statement of Objections the European Commission sent to MasterCard last June as well as in relation to the proposed Directive on payment services in the internal market, currently being discussed within the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

HOTREC strongly wishes that the debates on the various fronts (EU and national competition laws, proposed Directive on payment services as well as the various initiatives presented by banks to facilitate the access to a true single market for payments) will result in a decrease in the cost of accepting card payments for the over 1,5 million enterprises in the hospitality sector.

The 54th General Assembly welcomed a new full member association into HOTREC: the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Latvia. It also renewed in part its Executive Committee, which will consist of the following persons for the year to come:

President:	Bernd Geyer (Germany)
Vice President:	Kent Nyström (Sweden)
Treasurer:	Marinus Cordesius (Netherlands)
Members:	Susanne Kraus-Winkler (Austria)
	Joan Gaspart (Spain)
	Akos Niklai (Hungary)

The 54th General Assembly reviewed numerous EU measures and activities announced and likely to have an impact on the hospitality sector in a near future, among which:

- Green Paper on Labour Law;
- Consultation of social partners on reconciliation of family life with work;
- Communication on alcohol strategy;
- Green paper on smoke-free environments;
- Green paper on consumer protection “acquis”, touching upon, among others, the package travel Directive;
- Report on the impact of reduced VAT rates;
- Etc.

In its Conclusions on tourism policy adopted on 25 September 2006, the Competitiveness Council of Ministers invited the Commission “*to make sure that the impact of its policy initiatives on the sector’s competitiveness and sustainability is identified at an early stage*” and “*to continue and enforce the interactive process by consulting with and informing the tourism stakeholders on issues and initiatives that may affect tourism*”: HOTREC hopes that these Conclusions by the Council will be paid close attention to as, notwithstanding all the promises made under the slogan “*better regulation*”, it has not seen much progress in relation to business impact assessment of new measures: one of the last striking example being the proposal for new rules for the issuance of visas, which does not include one single line on the possible impact on tourists and tourism!

The trend at European as well as at international level towards the development of standards for services, and in particular tourism services, continues also to worry very much most HOTREC member associations, which on all occasions possible reiterate their position that standards impacting hospitality services should only be developed at the initiative of the industry. They denounce a transparency and democracy deficit in the working methods of the European and international standardisation bodies.

The next General Assembly of HOTREC will take place in April 2007 in Portugal.

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Note to editors:

HOTREC represents the hotel, restaurant and café sector at European level. This sector counts 1.4 million businesses and provides 7.5 million jobs in the EU alone. HOTREC brings together 36 National Trade and Employer Associations representing the interest of the sector in 22 different European countries.