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HOTREC supports EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy, calls for action on SME competitiveness

The European hospitality sector highlights simplification, fair digital markets and skills development, urging Member States to prioritise SME investment and accessible funding.

HOTREC, the European association representing hotels, restaurants, bars and cafés, supports the European Commission's new EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy, which sets out measures to strengthen the competitiveness, sustainability and resilience of Europe's tourism sector.

Presented today by Commissioner for Sustainable Tourism and Transport Apostolos Tzitzikostas, the Strategy recognises tourism's essential contribution to Europe's economy and employment, as well as the importance of creating a more favourable business environment for SMEs.

HOTREC supports several initiatives, especially those aimed at reducing administrative burdens, ensuring fair digital markets, strengthening skills and improving access to funding. However, successful implementation will depend on ensuring that the proposed measures reflect the realities of a diverse tourism ecosystem, mainly composed of SMEs and micro-enterprises.

Marie Audren, Director General of HOTREC, commented:

"The Strategy is a significant step towards strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of European tourism. We support its focus on simplification, fair digital markets, skills and practical assistance for SMEs.

We call on Member States to make full use of available and future EU funding opportunities and prioritise investment in tourism SMEs and micro-enterprises. Funding must become easier to access, with simpler procedures, clear information and tailored assistance to help businesses invest, innovate and become more sustainable.

Europe's hospitality businesses need practical support, not additional complexity. HOTREC stands ready to work with the Commission, Member States and other stakeholders to ensure that the Strategy delivers tangible benefits for businesses, workers and destinations."

HOTREC's overall assessment

HOTREC supports the proposed EU Simplification Initiative, assistance for SMEs in their green and digital transitions, the EU Tourism Academy, improved connectivity and stronger crisis preparedness.

The Strategy's recognition of the need for fair and transparent commercial practices by online booking platforms, alongside effective enforcement of the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and Digital Services Act (DSA), is also an important development.

For HOTREC, successful implementation will require:

- **Competitiveness and simplification** to remain central priorities, with concrete measures to reduce administrative burdens.
- **Accessible EU funding and practical support for SMEs**, enabling businesses to invest in sustainability, digitalisation and innovation.
- **Respect for existing sector-led initiatives and national systems**, particularly accommodation classification, avoiding duplication and additional requirements.
- **Skills development beyond formal qualifications**, including voluntary recognition of skills acquired through professional experience and non-formal learning.
- **Active involvement of tourism businesses** in implementing the Strategy, ensuring that future initiatives reflect the sector's operational realities.

HOTREC looks forward to contributing to the Strategy's implementation, including through the proposed EU Tourism Alliance, and working with its national members and EU institutions to turn these ambitions into concrete results.

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Notes to editors

HOTREC is the umbrella association representing hotels, restaurants, bars and cafés in Europe. It brings together 47 national associations in 36 European countries, representing approximately 2 million businesses and 10 million jobs. 99% of hospitality businesses are SMEs, of which around 90% are micro-enterprises.

European Commission documents

- EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy
- European Commission press release
- Questions and Answers

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