



# HOTREC position paper on the EU Talent Pool

Position paper | January 2024

## Executive summary

- HOTREC **fully supports the establishment of an EU Talent Pool**, that will put employers in the EU in contact with third-country nationals. This approach will support the hospitality sector in overcoming the skills and labour shortages and coping with the phenomena of the ageing population and consequent shrinking of the working-age population. It will also provide a better quality of life to those coming from third countries.
- It is very positive that the EU Talent Pool is open **to low and medium** professional skills, as most of the skill needs in the sector are part of these categories.
- HOTREC and its members **should be involved in building** the **list of shortage occupations**, respectively at the EU and national level.

HOTREC fully supports the proposal for a Regulation published by the European Commission on “Establishing an EU Talent Pool” (**COM (2023) 716**)final on 15 November 2023, as part of the **Skills and Talent Mobility Package**.

HOTREC is the European Association of Hotels, Restaurants and Cafés in Europe. Altogether we represent 2 million companies (99% being SMEs) and provide 10 million jobs<sup>1</sup>.

Overall, we consider that a platform that connects EU employers with third-country nationals looking for a job opportunity is a **win-win solution**: it allows those who migrate to **improve their life quality** and **provides more working force and skills** for host countries. The mechanism will **boost the economy** for all.

We very much welcome the fact that the Platform is open to **low, medium, and highly skilled job seekers**. This specification should be part of the **articulations** of the proposal. For the past years the hospitality sector has been facing severe **skills shortages** (mostly low and medium skills). This challenge was already a reality before the COVID crisis. The skills gap covers mainly digital, interpersonal skills, language skills,

cooking, digital or sustainable abilities. The main reasons are technological changes (e.g., the need for companies to be more active online in terms of marketing; and social media) and/or societal changes (e.g., the need for companies to comply with new customers' demands, for instance, related to sustainability).

Since COVID, the sector is also facing a severe lack of workforce. On average, there is currently a gap of between **10% to 20%** of the workforce missing in the sector in the EU, compared to 2019 levels.

We consider that the platform will also help tackle the prospect of an **ageing population** and a **shrinking working-age population**<sup>2</sup>.

Our priorities on the proposal for a Regulation are highlighted below.

### Art. 3 – Participation

We fully support that Member States participate in the EU Talent Pool on a **voluntary basis**. We would welcome that the transfer of vacancies by Member States to the EU Talent Pool IT platform is not done automatically – it is positive if the Member States have the right to choose not to publish a vacancy.

### Art 6 – Processing of personal data

The data to be provided by the job seeker should be relevant to support the match between the job seeker and the employer. The indication of **skills, language knowledge, academic or professional qualifications, and work experience is relevant** to the potential employers.

### Art 8 – EU Talent Pool Secretariat

We support that the European Commission provides for the EU Talent Pool Secretariat. In this way, the Commission can safeguard the overall management of the Talent Pool, and ensure the coordination with all national contact points, as well as other policies/initiatives, such as the Commission Recommendation on the recognition of third-country skills and qualifications (**C(2023)7700 final**).

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<sup>1</sup> HOTREC is the umbrella association of Hotels, Restaurants, Bars, Cafés and similar establishments in Europe. It brings together 47 national associations in 36 European countries and serves as the voice of European hospitality. The industry counts 2 million businesses, 99% of them being Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), providing 10 million jobs and contributing to 3% of the EU GDP. HOTREC's mission is to represent and champion the industry's interests towards the EU and international institutions, foster knowledge sharing and best practices among its members to promote innovation and serve as an expert platform for the hospitality sector.

<sup>2</sup> According to the European Commission Ageing Report 2024 page 4 (link), between 2022-2070 there will be a decrease of 18% of the EU working population.



## Art 9 – EU Talent Pool Steering Group

The Commission proposal foresees the participation of two representatives of the cross-industry social partners in the Steering group. While we very much welcome this point, **we consider that the hospitality sector should also be involved**, when relevant, in discussing the **shortage occupation lists** at the EU level. **HOTREC members** should be involved in **setting up the occupation lists at the national level**. We also consider it positive if the hospitality sector, as one of the sectors heavily hit by the lack of skills and labour, would provide input on how the tool works.

## Art 10 – EU Talent Pool National Contact Points

HOTREC fully supports that the EU National Contact Points are appointed amongst the relevant authorities from the field of **employment and immigration**. Coordination between the two policy areas is key to ensuring the **smooth run of the procedures** regarding the **employment** of third-country nationals, as well as **work permits or visa procedures**.

HOTREC welcomes art 10/2/c, as it specifies that the National Contact Point shall notify the Secretariat of the national list of shortage occupations once a year and national adjustments to the list of EU-wide shortage occupations.

We also consider that blocking employers from accessing the EU Talent Pool in the event of breaches of their obligations under labour or social law should be limited in time (art. 10/2/e). The current wording allows for a perpetual ban, even due to a small violation, which contradicts the principle of proportionality.

## Art 11 – Registration and access of job seekers from third countries

Job seekers may create their profiles via Europass. Hospitality employers are not so familiar with Europass features. But we recognise that some uniformization is welcome when recruiting third-country nationals, as skills, certifications and previous work experience might be more difficult to assess.

## Art 12 – Profile registration and access of jobseekers from third countries in the context of Talent Partnerships

We welcome the idea that Member States taking part in a Talent Partnership may decide to rely on the EU Talent Pool to facilitate the recruitment of job seekers from that third country. In this case, job seekers will have the skills validated by the Talent Partnership and certified by an EU Talent Partnership pass. If a third country has established a Partnership Agreement, it means that a certain level of cooperation with the EU is already underway.

The pass will include the details on education and training, as well as the qualifications and skills acquired by the third-country national. This information should be easily understood by all employers.

## Art 13 – Participation of Employers in the EU Talent Pool

We welcome the fact that the EU Talent Pool National Contact Points will transfer to the platform the vacancies part of the EU-wide shortage occupation list. **HOTREC and its members would like to be involved in building up, respectively, the EU and national shortage occupation lists**. The shortage occupation lists should be based on the real shortages in the sector. It is useful to gather information directly from the source, where the skills and labour force are missing.

## Art 14 – List of EU-wide shortage occupation lists

It is positive that the EU-wide shortage occupation list be updated. But the expression “significant number of Member States” is too vague. We propose that the shortage occupations list is updated if two Member States request (art. 14/1/a).



### Art 19 – Accelerated immigration procedures

We fully support the possibility of deploying a faster recruitment of registered job seekers from third countries. The procedure may include the obtention of visa and residence permit or the exemption from the principle of preference for Union citizens for job vacancies transferred to the EU Talent Pool IT platform. It is essential that **after a match** between the employer and the employee, **mechanisms are fast**, for the employee to take up **residence and start his/her job** as soon as possible.

### Art 22 – Committee procedure

It is positive that the Commission is assisted by a Committee. **The Committee will be updating the shortage occupation lists. We consider that social partners** (horizontal and, where relevant, sectoral, namely the hospitality sector) and Member States should be part of the Committee. Valid information on the skills missing should come directly from the source – in our case, from the hospitality sector.

### Annex – List of EU-wide shortage occupations

HOTREC very much welcomes the proposed list of EU-wide shortage occupations, as they reflect the needs of the hospitality sector: cooks; waiters; cleaners; environmental protection professionals; web and multimedia developers; and software developers. We consider that the category “receptionist” should be added to the annex.

We also would like to highlight the need for language skills; interpersonal skills; and social media professionals in our sector. We would encourage an update of the Annex accordingly and look forward to continuing being involved in the update of the list.

Overall, we consider the EU Talent Pool to be a **necessary mechanism** for the future recruitment of workers to the EU. We count on the support of the European Parliament and the Council to approve the tool as swiftly as possible.



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