



Judgment of the Berlin Regional Court:

Hotel stars on Google only with valid German Hotel Classification

(Berlin, 20 July 2020) In a judgment by confession dated 8 July 2020 (Ref.: 101 O 3/19), the Berlin Regional Court decided that Google may only display hotels located in Germany as "X-star hotel" on its search results pages if they are based on a valid certification according to the stars of the German Hotel Classification. "This is a breakthrough for more transparency and security in the presentation of hotel offers on the by far the most important search engine for hotels on the Internet," explains Markus Luthe, Executive Director of German Hotel Classification.

The German Centre for Protection against Unfair Competition in Bad Homburg had filed a lawsuit with the Berlin Regional Court against the previously confusing display of hotel stars on the globally dominant search engine. "Google fed its star data from sources that are not comprehensible to the user and also declared non-classified hotels to be 'star hotels'. We successfully opposed this for reasons of fair competition and consumer protection," explains Hans-Frieder Schönheit, Member of the Board of the Centre for Protection against Unfair Competition.

"We already use a data interface to automatically exchange up-to-date information with Google on a daily basis about which hotels in Germany have a valid classification, so that we can guarantee to provide correct star ratings at all times. We invite all hotels in Germany that are not yet classified, regardless of their association membership, to submit a classification application to the [regional classification society](#) responsible for them in order to be able to attract guests on the most influential search platform with hotel stars as the globally recognized symbol for facilities and quality standards," adds Markus Luthe.

The acknowledgment judgement of the Berlin Regional Court refers to the indication "X-star hotel". The classification with average star ratings based on hundreds of subjective user reviews is not covered by the judgement. Further information on the German Hotel Classification is available on the website www.hotelstars.eu

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Facts about the German Hotel Classification:

- In Germany, hotels are only allowed to advertise hotel stars if they have been awarded after a review based on objective criteria by a neutral body. The German Hotel Classification of the German Hotel and Restaurant Association (DEHOGA) provides all classified hotel businesses with the necessary legal security.
- The participation in the German Hotel Classification is voluntary. At present, 7,931 establishments are classified in Germany. With a total of 20,293 hotel establishments in Germany (13,068 hotels and 7,225 hotels garnis; source: Federal Statistical Office), this corresponds to a classification grade of 39.1 percent.
- DEHOGA German Hotel Classification GmbH is responsible for the marketing and organization of the German Hotel Classification. The implementation of the classification in the federal states is the responsibility of 16 regional classification bodies.
- Each hotel is visited during the classification process and the information provided by the hotelier is checked. In order to guarantee the neutrality of the assessment, the relevant commissions usually include representatives of the responsible tourism associations as well as of the hospitality industry.
- The classification is valid for three years. If a subsequent classification is then requested, a new inspection will take place. If there are, during the period of classification, justified indications that criteria are not met, an additional check will also be carried out.
- The catalogue of criteria itself is reviewed at intervals of five to six years within the framework of the European Hotelstars Union and adapted to market requirements. Since July 1, 2020, hotels can - if they wish - already apply the updated catalogue of criteria 2020 - 2025.