**CEN standardisation initiative on COVID-19 tourism health protocols
HOTREC Member consultation**

**1. The issue**

On 10 January 2021, CEN and CENELEC received a letter from the European Commission (EC) (see letter in Annex), requesting the development of a European standardisation deliverable for COVID-19 health and safety protocols for tourism establishments and services. The European Commission recommends that the standardisation deliverable document:

* be made available free of charge;
* includes a visual identity or equivalent, which can be displayed by businesses and be seen and understood by consumers;
* includes sufficient flexible protocls to be further developed and adapted, according to the specific nature and needs of destinations, services or establishments.

So far, our understanding is that this standard could be largely inspired by ISO’s ongoing work on ISO PAS 5643 ( [‘Guidelines for the prevention from COVID-19 in the tourism industry’](https://www.hotrec.eu/iso-tc228-project-measures-to-reduce-the-spread-of-the-covid-19-in-the-tourism-industry/)) and rapidly transposed into an European standard via the so-called ‘[Vienna Agreement’](https://www.cencenelec.eu/intcoop/StandardizationOrg/Pages/default.aspx). However, the letter seems to indicate that the European Commission is not entirely satisfied with ISO’s progress: “It is particularly important to fill a void of coordinated guidance, until the ISO PAS currently in preparation will be published.”

**HOTREC therefore wishes to consult Members to gather initial views on whether an additional standardisation initiative via CEN would be desirable for the European hospitality market, and what type of option, if any, would be preferrable (see below 2. The process). Your views would be most welcome by 10 February 2021.**

**2. The process**

The [CEN Management Center (CMCC)](https://www.cencenelec.eu/aboutus/MgtCentre/Pages/default.aspx) met on 26 January 2021 with the [CEN Technical Board (BT)](https://boss.cen.eu/technicalstructures/pages/bt/) to agree on a way forward. Possible ways forward could be:

1. the development of a [CEN Workshop Agreement (CWA)](https://www.cen.eu/work/products/cwa/pages/default.aspx), based on existing national specifications;
2. the adoption of the ISO PAS 5643 (once published by ISO) as a European deliverable (noting that this will require negotiations with ISO).
3. Any other more suitable options.

In case the CWA is chosen, UNE (Spanish institute for standardisation) has expressed its will to coordinate and provide the secretariat of the workshop, as UNE is also leading the works at ISO level.

It also should be noted that:

* a CWA does not have the status of a European Standard and involves no obligation at national level.
* A CWA procedure is open to the direct participation of anyone with an interest in the development of the agreement.
* HOTREC is currently preparing a contribution to ISO’s ongoing work on ISO PAS 5643 on guidance for the tourism sector and has consulted Members on this topic. This process will also lead to guidelines rather than a more binding international syandard.

The CEN Technical Board will reconvene on 18 February 2021. The target date for the adoption of the CEN deliverable is 21 April 2021.

**3. Our initial assessment**

With regard to the CEN initiative, HOTREC could issue the following general view:

*“HOTREC supports international guidance which is conducive to rebuilding consumers’/travellers’ trust in tourism and addresses their concerns regarding health and safety in tourism establishments. At the same time, a multiplication of international initiatives may not align with the hospitality sector’s need for clarity and consistency regarding guidance. Furthermore, the development of binding standards (i.e. via CEN) may create additional costs and burden for a sector that has been hit extremely hard over the course of the past year.”*

It should be noted that the current description of the CEN deliverable is not incompatible with this view as the deliverable can be expected to be free of charge, flexible and include a visual identity that can be clearly understood by consumers.

**4. Background information**

In the addition to the CEN initiative, three other initiatives developed in an international or European context and outlining guidelines for the tourism sector, with specific points covering accommodation and catering establishments, should be taken into consideration:

1. On 31 March 2020, the [World Health Organization (WHO) published guidance for collective tourism accommodation establishments such as hotels and similar establishments](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331638/WHO-2019-nCoV-Hotels-2020.1-eng.pdf) to protect the health of its staff and clients amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance also aims to help any authority involved in public health to respond to a public health event in hotels and tourism accommodation establishments. HOTREC contributed to these guidelines and welcomed them: [HOTREC's reply to WHO guidelines on "How to protect against COVID-19 in hotel industry" - HOTREC](https://www.hotrec.eu/policy/hotrecs-reply-to-who-guidelines-on-how-to-protect-against-covid-19-in-hotel-industry/).

The [WHO followed up on 7 April with similar interim guidance for food business](https://www.hotrec.eu/wp-content/customer-area/storage/e9bd4f979d28e27a79c958e36a9c4fd7/WHO-2019-nCoV-Food_Safety-2020.1-eng.pdf), namely recommendations on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at work; how to recognize the symptoms of the virus; and how to transport and delivery food ingredients and food products.

1. As part of its Communication on “[Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond](https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/communication-commission-tourism-and-transport-2020-and-beyond_en)” on 13 May, the European Commission published a document outlining [guidance for the progressive resuming of tourism services and for health protocols in hospitality establishments](https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/covid-19-eu-guidance-progressive-resuming-tourism-services-and-health-protocols-hospitality-establishments_en). HOTREC has also welcomed this guidance in the context of regular calls with the European Commission addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector.
2. In June 2020, [ISO launched an initiative to develop ‘Guidelines for the prevention from COVID-19 in the tourism industry’](https://www.hotrec.eu/iso-21-guidelines-for-the-prevention-from-covid-19-in-the-tourism-industry-spain/). Though a rapid adoption procedure was initially foreseen, the work seems to have lagged behind schedule. It should also be noted that ISO is not seeking to develop a full international standard (which is what it usually does) but rather guidance (a so-called Public Available Specification (PAS)). Observers have noted that this guidance is very similar to what WHO has already put forward.

At present, ISO is open to receiving feedback on a current draft guidance – and a HOTREC Members’ consultation is currently underway to provide ISO with feedback and comments. ISO TC228 will reconvene next March to take stock of comments and move ahead.

\*\*\*\*\*