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HOTREC Guidance to National Associations: The hotel, restaurant and café sector and responsible drinking

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Introduction

The national associations of HOTREC¹ share the concerns of the European and national authorities in relation to the abuse of alcohol, in particular by young people. Responsible drinking is in the best interests of the producers, retailers, hospitality establishments and individuals who have a responsibility to themselves and others not to abuse alcohol.

While alcohol has been, and continues to be, consumed in an unproblematic way by most of the people and its consumption has declined in the EU since 1970, hazardous drinking generates harms for individuals and societies.

The European hospitality sector fully supports the objective to combat abuses in order to minimise alcohol-related harm. HOTREC member associations are tackling the alcohol abuse issue, in dialogue with interested parties, adding value to the legal framework in place in their countries, at national and local level.

Since drinking patterns and traditions vary across the EU, no single approach to alcohol policy can succeed uniformly in every Member State. A one-size-fits-all-solution at European level would not be appropriate. Flexible strategies are essential. National legislation varies from country to country (e.g. minimum age to buy alcoholic beverages) and actions undertaken must adapt to the national context and the specific needs of local communities.

Reducing alcohol-related harm requires full respect and proper enforcement of the rules already in place as well as a true engagement by all stakeholders. All parts of society (families, public authorities, schools, law enforcement agencies, economic operators, societal NGOs, etc.) have a role to play within their field of activity.

¹ HOTREC is the spokesperson of hotels, restaurants and cafés at European institutional level in all matters affecting the sector. HOTREC projects the voice of hotels, restaurants and cafés in the European Union, an industry that boasts 1,4 million businesses and provides 7,5 million jobs in the EU alone. HOTREC brings together 39 National Trade and Employer Associations representing the interest of the sector in 24 different European countries.

The hospitality industry accepts its responsibility to limit alcohol misuses and is committed to responsible serving within the legal framework. The purpose of this paper is to provide guidance on how to ensure and strengthen this engagement.

In line with its commitment within the European Alcohol and Health Forum, HOTREC encourages its member associations to carry out one or more of the following actions, taking into account their national specificities:

Practical guidance

Provide advice and practical support to help hospitality businesses to comply with the legal requirements in relation to the selling and serving of alcohol (e.g. distribution of leaflets, organization of seminars, training sessions, development of guidelines, articles in the trade association's magazine, etc.).

Exchange of best practices

Exchange of good practices between hospitality establishments, in particular with regard to the enforcement of age limits for serving alcohol and responsible drinking (e.g. provide posters, information, web resources, counselling, hotlines, articles in trade association's magazines, etc.).

Join *fora* or platforms established at national / local level to discuss alcohol policies and exchange good practices aimed at reducing alcohol related harm.

Make commitments within the European Alcohol and Health Forum, with a focus on the following priorities areas:

- Develop information programmes on responsible drinking;
- Enforce age limits for serving and selling alcoholic beverages.

Cooperation with public authorities

Cooperate with policy makers at all levels (national, regional and local) and law enforcement agencies to achieve balanced and effective solutions to curb underage drinking, binge drinking, drink driving and other hazardous consumption.

Cooperation with stakeholders

Where appropriate, cooperate with other stakeholders to disseminate information and develop awareness-raising campaigns on drink driving, responsible drinking, etc.

Codes of conduct and self-regulation

Consider adhering to a national code of conduct or a self-regulatory code on the marketing of alcoholic beverages, where appropriate, in partnership with other operators along the value chain.

Commercial communications by hospitality businesses or display on hospitality premises

If not already forbidden by law, invite hospitality businesses to:

- Avoid in all their commercial activities, communications that encourage immoderate drinking or drink driving;
- Avoid any suggestion that drinking alcohol can enhance sexual, physical, mental, financial or sporting performance;
- Avoid any association with violent, aggressive or illegal behaviour;
- Make commercial communication subject to relevant voluntary national codes of conducts, where in place.

Promotions

If not already forbidden by law, invite hospitality businesses to:

- Avoid promotions where entry fees give unlimited access for free to drinks (e.g. so-called *flat rate* parties or open bars);
- Avoid promotions that are incentive to speed drinking;
- Avoid promotions that involve free drinks in large quantities or for specific groups.

Anti-social behaviour

Invite hospitality businesses to cooperate with law enforcement agencies and public authorities at national and local level, with a view to minimise alcohol related disorder in the neighborhood (e.g. sharing information, etc.).

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