



EU digital strategy can tip the scales in favour of European SMEs and municipalities



Brussels, 25 February 2020 – HOTREC warmly welcomes the European Commission’s ambitious announcement on digital policy. Measures addressing the responsibility of online platforms, the strong market power of a limited number of players, better sharing of data and the collaborative economy represent a positive step towards empowering European SMEs and municipalities.

Over the past 20 years, online platforms have re-shaped the way consumers book accommodation and travel. HOTREC considers that their key role in today’s tourism landscape needs to be reflected in EU rules to ensure balanced and fair European markets, safeguarding local and citizens’ interest and better manage tourism flows.

Markus Luthe, Chair of HOTREC’s Distribution Working Group and CEO of the German Hotel Association, said: “There is no hiding from the fact that EU rules have not kept up with the rapid development of the platform economy and are now in need of a serious makeover. Today, what is illegal offline must also be illegal online.”

He added: “When it comes to the impact of digital on tourism, there is clear need to ensure that local authorities can set out measures of public interest as they see fit, collect taxes and manage flows. They cannot act with only limited access to platform’s data and a patchy regulatory framework. EU digital rules must support destinations and local businesses: they are the reason why consumers go online to book travel and accommodation in the first place.”

The European Commission Communication entitled “Europe fit for a digital age: Towards a truly European digital society” sets out an ambitious policy proposal plan for the coming two years, including the following measures:

- Digital Services Act Package to strengthen responsibility of online platforms and boost administrative cooperation between competent authorities. The package could include an evaluation and possible adaptation of the EU competition rules.
- A legislative framework for data governance and a Data Act that could tackle business-to-government data sharing and clarifications on B2B data sharing scenarios.
- A focused initiative on the collaborative economy and an initiative to promote and protect the interests of platform workers.
- A Digital Education Action Plan to prepare young people effectively for the digital age and increase the number of graduates with advanced digital skills.
- An SME strategy to help SMEs become more competitive and innovative, create more jobs and benefit from digitization.
- A digital taxation initiative, taking into account progress made in the context of the OECD.

HOTREC is at disposal of the EU institutions and stakeholders for input and data on the impact of digital platforms on the European SME and tourism landscape.

For further information: www.hotrec.eu

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What is HOTREC?

HOTREC represents the hotel, restaurant and café industry at European level. The sector counts in total around 1.8 million businesses, being 99,5% small and medium sized enterprises (91% are micro enterprises, i.e. employing less than 10 people). These businesses make up some 60% of value added. The industry provides some 10 million jobs in the EU alone. Together with the other tourism industries, the sector is the 3rd largest industry in Europe. HOTREC brings together 40 national associations representing the interest of this industry in 29 different European countries.