



European Hospitality leaders meet in Athens to tackle industry challenges and promote sustainable growth

Athens, 8 September 2023 – HOTREC Executive Committee met in Athens to discuss top priorities for the European hospitality and tourism industry.

Staff shortages, reflections on the 2023 Summer season and the green and digital transitions: these were the most urgent topics on the table during HOTREC's last Executive Committee meeting, reuniting industry leaders from across Europe. Participants emphasized the industry's essential role in fostering a well-being economy, and the industry's potential for growth and job creation. Together, they reflected on concrete steps that will help hospitality companies thrive.

Looking back at the past months' floods, wildfires, and other natural disasters that occurred across Europe, Mr Alexandros Vassilikos, President of HOTREC, commented: *"The vulnerability of the European tourism industry to climate change is undeniable. The sector is committed to act – and act fast – to implement sustainable practices. Investments made today will yield numerous benefits – including reduced energy costs, a healthier environment, and enhanced long-term resilience and competitiveness."*

Representatives were able to share insights with Ms Olga Kefalogianni, Minister of Tourism of Greece, who highlighted the importance of hospitality, and celebrated it as *"a key partner for the Greek government, contributing for almost 25% to the local economy."*

HOTREC welcomed conversations on how public authorities and the private sector can work together to help support hospitality businesses retain and attract workers – a concern shared by many other sectors across Europe, as well.

Minister Kefalogianni stated that *"now more than ever, it is crucial that all actors work together to address today's challenges, build our resilience and drive the critical sustainability transition,"* and recognised HOTREC's vital role in facilitating cooperation and finding solutions in these crucial matters. Within that scope, she also announced that the Ministry of Tourism is already studying and has the willingness to examine working closely with Hotelstars Union (HSU), the European industry-driven star rating system to bring harmonisation, high-quality and transparency to hotel classification.

Finally, Minister Kefalogianni drew attention to the impact of Short-Term Rentals (STRs) on housing supply in Greece and the necessity for regulatory action. The government is currently discussing new regulations aimed at improving data-sharing and transparency, responding to long-standing concerns raised by the hospitality sector.

Mr Vassilikos added: *"We are extremely grateful to the Minister for joining us today and meeting with hospitality representatives, hearing directly about the challenges they are facing and the great potential that exists in the sector."*

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What is HOTREC?

HOTREC is the umbrella association of Hotels, Restaurants, Bars and Cafés and similar establishments in Europe. It brings together 47 national associations in 36 European countries and serves as the voice of the European hospitality industry. 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.

The European hospitality industry is a vital economic contributor, comprising over 1.8 million businesses and employing more than 9 million people. It plays a vital role in driving economic growth and job creation, contributing approximately 2-3% to the total EU GDP. The industry is characterized by a high level of entrepreneurship, with 99% of businesses classified as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These companies bring innovation, creativity, and a personal touch to the industry.