

**HOTREC<sup>1</sup> position on European and international classification  
Approved by the HOTREC General Assembly,  
Vienna 15 October 2005**

Classification systems already exist at national and regional level in most European Union Member States. A great number of our associations have contributed to the development of such systems, either on their own initiative or in collaboration with public authorities. These systems are widely used and widely known.

Consumers refer to classification as an important help for choosing a hotel: it is therefore important that information on the meaning of the classification in the different countries be easily available to them. Consequently, HOTREC member associations fully agree with the call for more transparency in relation to classification made in the proposal for a Directive on services<sup>2</sup> and in the conclusions of the workshop on services at the Budapest Tourism Forum<sup>3</sup>.

HOTREC member associations, therefore, on their own initiative, endeavoured to increase the accessibility to information on their various classification systems. Information on what stars mean in the different countries will soon be made available on the websites of HOTREC and of its member associations.

As far as approximation or harmonisation of the existing systems is concerned, HOTREC member associations will continue to oppose any attempt by the public authorities or the standardisation bodies at European or international level to initiate work on a European-wide or world-wide classification system.

Differences in culture and geographical situations explain that the criteria and methodology of the systems of classification currently in force in the European countries vary. When the systems were developed, by whom (industry or public authorities or both) and whether they are made mandatory by law, add also major elements to the diversity.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 1,5 million businesses and provides 7,5 million jobs in the EU alone. HOTREC brings together 37 National Trade and Employer Associations representing the interest of the sector in 23 different European countries.

<sup>2</sup> COM(2004)2final/3

<sup>3</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/services/tourism/tourism\\_forum/tourism\\_forum\\_2004.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/services/tourism/tourism_forum/tourism_forum_2004.htm)

Nonetheless, HOTREC member associations have undertaken to bring the classification systems closer together, using a bottom-up approach, in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity.

As a first step, HOTREC organised the benchmarking of key aspects of the various systems. This exercise resulted in “*15 Recommendations for the setting-up of and/or the review of national/regional hotel classification systems in the Member States of the European Union*” (Annex). Thus, in the future, systems will get closer and closer to one another, without any brutal disruption of the existing schemes, which would be to the detriment of the consumers as well as of the industry.

HOTREC and its member associations will inform the public authorities and the standardisation bodies at national, European and international level of this position and of their work in relation to classification.

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*Annex: “15 Recommendations for the setting-up of and/or the review of national/regional hotel classification systems in the Member States of the European Union”*

## **Classification of hotels in the Member States of the European Union**

### *15 HOTREC recommendations for the setting-up of and/or review of national/regional hotel classification systems in the Member States of the European Union*

*Approved by the HOTREC General Assembly  
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1. Classification systems must ensure that **accurate information** is provided to the guests;
2. Compliance with **legal requirements** is a prerequisite to classification;
3. Classification systems must ensure **cleanliness and proper maintenance** of the establishments in all star categories;
4. Guests should be informed **transparently** about the classification system and the star category of the hotel;
5. **Tour operators** are invited to indicate the national/regional classification on their marketing material alongside their own classification, if they have one;
6. The **number of stars** obtainable must not exceed five;
7. Stars should be granted/confirmed only after a **control**;
8. This control should take place **regularly**;
9. It is desirable that this control takes place **on site**;

10. **Complaints by customers** relating to classification should be dealt with in a systematic manner;
11. **Explanation** for classification decisions have to be made available to the hotel concerned;
12. Every classification system must allow for an **appeal by the hotel** concerned against the result of the classification;
13. Classification systems should have some **range of flexibility** in the application of their criteria;
14. Classification criteria should be regularly adjusted to **market requirements**. A systematic **inventory process** of the criteria should take place regularly;
15. Whenever **research on consumer expectations** in relation to classification is carried out in one country, it is desirable that the results are made available to all HOTREC member associations.

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