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Articles of your interest

GENERAL POLICY ISSUES

Interview of Mr. Philippe Palazzi, Member of the Board at METRO Cash & Carry



Philippe Palazzi is Operating Partner, responsible for the countries France, Spain and Portugal, and Member of the Board at METRO Cash & Carry. In his function as Chief Marketing Officer, he is also in charge of developing METRO's core customer target group HoReCa on a global level. METRO Cash & Carry is operating in 25 countries and is the partner for independent businesses.

What are METRO's priorities with regard to the EU food policy agenda?

We are closely following and taking part in the major regulatory developments in the EU arena. The implementation of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation (FIR) remains a challenge, in particular with regards to the ongoing discussions on several implementing measures (precautionary allergen labelling ("may contain"), nutrition labelling for alcoholic beverages, trans fatty acids, etc.) and open interpretation questions of the legal text.

We equally closely monitor the issue of origin labelling of primary ingredients as well as the discussions of the need for origin labelling rules for processed products, such as dairy and meat products.

The overarching issue of traceability is high on our agenda. It plays a major role in many aspects, i.e. hygiene, responsibilities in ever more complex global food chains and above all the fight against food fraud. METRO understands that buying food is a matter of trust. We believe that our innovative traceability solution PRO TRACE adds value for our customers and their customers by giving transparency about our products.

Besides the expectations for transparency throughout the supply chain and the essential food safety, the attributes quality, authenticity and the taste of the products are major criteria for the customer. We implement those expectations into our daily business and continue to improve through innovations. By tracing the product you have access to a variety of interesting and useful information provided by the farmer, fisherman and manufacturer.

Could you tell us more about METRO's actions towards the reduction of food waste and food losses and how METRO and HOTREC could work together on it?

Reducing food waste and food loss is one of METRO's key challenges. We take a holistic approach throughout all stages along the value chain. Due to our extended responsibility towards our B2B customers, we're also active at the end of the value chain when it comes to raising transparency and awareness. For our professional METRO customers from the hospitality sector we have developed "doggy bags" in France and Italy. In Italy we have cooperated with the World Food Programme (WFP) to this regard and the action was extremely well received by our professional customers. The majority of our customers are SMEs. Therefore METRO and HOTREC share the common interest to keep the administrative burden on measuring food waste reduction as low as possible while supporting the overall idea.

And after all we also have to see the topic from an economic point of view – which most likely unites us with our customers in the hospitality sector: Our common core business is selling food, not wasting it. To do this in a more efficient way increases productivity and reduces costs as well.

How does METRO deal with the European Commission's approach to food product improvement and healthier nutritional habits?

The hospitality sector plays an important role in improving the nutritional habits of the society and at the same time we see

that our HoReCa customers have to react to the growing demand on behalf of their customers when it comes to healthy diet. We support our customers in reacting to these demands, as well as in taking on the educational role and promoting healthy lifestyle by providing them with relevant and reliable assortment.

We seek to achieve that by reviewing our product portfolio regularly and by developing product innovations, e.g. product reformulation. Offering our customers products of reliable quality and safety on a daily basis and having sound social and environmental credentials is essential and the prerequisite for our business. When it comes to the question of healthier food products METRO is proud to be particularly strong in offering ultra-fresh fruit and vegetables as well as meat and fish, particularly for the hotels, restaurants and chefs'. Healthier food also equals to know the product by heart, to know where it 's coming from and to have a transparent supply chain. METRO is proud to not only offer fresh and high quality fish but additionally a consistent traceability back to the origin.

Concerning possible European Commission ideas we are strongly convinced, that politics should support the business of our customers and make their life easier – not increasingly bureaucratic and burdensome when it comes to labelling and information demands but find pragmatic, doable and business-focused solutions.

SHADOW HOSPITALITY

Collaborative economy guidelines issued by the European Commission



On 2 June 2016, the [European Commission published a Communication](#) called 'A European Agenda for the collaborative economy'. The Communication intends to provide guidelines to EU Member States on how the existing European legislation affecting the operation of the collaborative economy should be interpreted.

The Communication elaborates on the aspects in relation to market access requirements, liability, consumer protection, employment and taxation issues. The document is rather clear on saying that the collaborative economy service provision by peers or private individuals is an activity on an occasional basis. Thus, it is also very likely, that e.g. accommodation service providers offering accommodation on a permanent basis (the whole year around), of course with a profit-seeking nature, would qualify as traders or service providers. The Communication also calls upon Member States to facilitate and improve tax collection by using the possibilities provided by collaborative platforms, as these already record economic activity.

Actions:

HOTREC will continue its dialogue with the European institutions in relation to the sharing economy, based on its policy paper adopted in November 2015 and the current Communication.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC sees some first positive steps in the Communication, such as the recognition of the existence of business activities in the so-called collaborative economy, however many issues still needs further clarifications in particular the spectrum of liability of the platforms.*
- *HOTREC considers that a simple online registration by the providers of the services would help a lot to increase confidence and trust in the collaborative economy operators.*
- *Liability of platforms may include to request the provision of the registration number, when registering the activity for being traded on the given platform.*
- *HOTREC calls upon the compliance of service providers with food and health safety legislation. There are clear rules at European level on the provision of food services by any provider, which need to be respected, also in the framework of 'home restaurants'.*

UNWTO Seminar on: “New Business Models: Disruption and Opportunities”



A UNWTO Seminar entitled "New Business Models: Disruption and Opportunities" took place on 26 May 2016 in Vilnius under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Finances of the Lithuanian Government, Mr. Evaldas Gustas and of UNWTO Secretary General Mr. Taleb Rifai.

It was attended by representatives of the Member States, among which the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism of Spain, represented by Mr. Antonio Nieto Magro; the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy of Germany, represented by Mr. Marion Weber; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of International Development of France, represented by Mr. Daniele Küss. The CEO of HOTREC, Mr Christian de Barrin participated in the panel "Creating a fair and dynamic environment" together with Ms. Krisztina Boros, European Commission, Mr. Linas Zabaliunas, President of the Tourism Chamber of the Republic of Lithuania, Ms Sofia Gkiiousou, Public Affairs Manager Airbnb and Mr Jos Vranken, Managing Director, NBTC Holland Marketing.

Mr. de Barrin highlighted that due to the development of information and communication technologies, there is a steady increase of unregulated offers in the market, which leads to the development of parallel economies (both regulated and unregulated), both of them providing the same services. Consumers' protection, urbanistic challenges, problems with neighbourhoods as well as the issue of payment of taxes are all challenges to take into account. Mr. de Barrin communicated that simple solutions can already be applied to level the playing field. He pointed out that simple online registration / declaration of such economic activities with the local, regional or national authorities is a key initial step towards more transparency and responsibility by the service providers. Moreover, compliance with the Schengen requirements to register guests and checking their identity when arriving in tourist accommodation establishments should be considered as a common responsibility. Additionally, the compliance with the different tax obligations of service providers is a must as well, in order to create a balanced and fair business environment. Finally, platforms should not display on their sites offers that are illegal (especially in markets where the provision of the services is well regulated). Mr. de Barrin also took the opportunity to promote [HOTREC's policy paper and chart on the Sharing economy](#), proposing 10 steps towards a sustainable and responsible sharing economy in tourist accommodation.

Actions

- HOTREC will keep calling for a level playing field and for fair competition and look forward to cooperating with authorities at national, regional and local levels to further implement some of the key steps of the HOTREC's Chart;
- HOTREC calls upon the EU Institutions and the Member States to reduce administrative burdens, cut red tape and review taxation of SMEs and micro-sized enterprises;
- HOTREC looks forward to any kind of deregulation which would unlock SMEs' potential for jobs creation and growth.

DIGITAL ISSUES

European Commission publishes key principles on Comparison Tools

On 25 May 2016, the [European Commission published a document with key principles for Comparison Tools](#). These principles were developed over the last few years in the framework of a multi-stakeholder dialogue in order to guide operators of comparison tools towards better compliance with the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive as well as to increase their user-friendliness.

The Principles cover inter alia the issue of making hidden advertisements e.g. in the forms of paid for rankings visible. The criteria on which the different rankings are based have to be clearly indicated as well. Furthermore, information provided has to be accurate, including the information on availability. It has to be made clear, whether the availability information relates to the availability on the given comparison tool or to the overall availability. The principles also clearly state that information on availability must not give a false impression of scarcity. Reference is also made to the reviews, where comparison tools should ensure that they are trustworthy, by e.g. requesting proof that the person has actually used the object reviewed. It is also clearly stated that reviews posted by traders or third parties on behalf of traders are 'fake' reviews and shall be banned in all circumstances. To enhance user-friendliness, sellers should be given the opportunity to react to reviews posted by users. Contact details shall be displayed of the comparison tools, including postal address and e-mail address.

Many parts of the key principles have also been incorporated into the updated European Commission Guidance document to the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive.

Several organisations explicitly support these key principles and committed themselves to support their implementation, among which HOTREC and also ETTSA, the European Technology and Travel Services Association, which has among its members inter alia the travel sites Expedia and Trivago.

Next Steps:

The adopted key principles should be broadly implemented by the Comparison Tool operators.

Actions:

HOTREC contributed to the development of the key principles and gave its explicit support to the document. HOTREC Members Associations shall make use of the document as well, when dealing with comparison tools.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC welcomes the Key Principles on Comparison Tools as a positive step towards sorting out several unfair commercial practices existing in the online travel trade sector.*
- *HOTREC invites operators of comparison tools to follow these key principles and implement them to the benefit of consumers as well as in view of better B2B relations.*

Commission Communication on online platforms issued

On 25 May 2016, the [European Commission published a Communication](#) on Online Platforms and the Digital Single Market. The Communication is summarising the outcome of the consultation carried out by the Commission and also identifies the challenges, which need to be addressed with regard to platforms.

One of the issues identified is the lack of transparency, in particular on how platform remuneration influences the listing of search engine results. The issue is also tackled in the key principles on Comparison Tools. More importantly, the document says that 90% of respondents see 'room for improvement in B2B relations'. Most of the respondents stated that market dynamics will not address these issues. The main problems identified are unfair terms and conditions, unfair parity clauses with detrimental effects for the consumer and lack of transparency, especially on platform tariffs, harming suppliers' business activities. The document acknowledges that when entire ecosystems of SMEs are dependent on access to a small number of online platforms, new asymmetries may be created, where suppliers can be exposed to potentially unfair trading practices. Thus the Commission will carry out further fact-finding exercises on B2B practices in the online platform environment.

Next steps:

The European Commission will make further investigations in the B2B practices of online platforms in the coming months and come up with further additional evaluation by spring 2017.

Actions:

HOTREC contributed to the consultation on online platforms, and highlighted the difficulties and practices the hospitality sector encountered with travel platforms. HOTREC will contribute to the Commission's fact finding exercise over the next couple of months.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC welcomes the Commission's intention to look deeper into the B2B practices of online platforms, to which HOTREC will contribute.*
It is important to set the right environment, especially when millions of SMEs get more and more dependent on

FOOD

Official controls: trilogue agreement imminent



Following the new trilogue meeting held in May between the Dutch Presidency of the EU, the European Parliament negotiation team and the European Commission, an agreement on the Official Controls Regulation is now imminent between the three institutions.

The breakthrough in the negotiations was reached when the European Parliament dropped its demand for full subsidiarity on the issue of control fees and agreed to the Council's approach which states that fees would be mandatory for sectors with a cross-border dimension (such as slaughterhouse or meat importers), while national authorities would remain free to decide whether to charge fees or not for other sectors (such as for restaurants).

Next Steps:

A last trilogue meeting is to take place on 15 June, where a formal deal will be reached. The ENVI Committee of the European Parliament and the COREPER will then be asked to confirm the deal, before the Council adopt it as its official position.

Actions:

HOTREC, which is in contact with the office of the MEP rapporteur, will inform its member associations when the agreement is formally reached in trilogue.

HOTREC position:

- *Restaurants provide solely local services: an EU obligation to charge inspection/control fees would breach the subsidiarity principle;*
- *HOTREC therefore calls on the trilogue negotiators to ensure that Member States remain free to decide at national level how to finance official controls in restaurants, as provided by both the European Parliament and Council initial positions.*

HOTREC submit its proposals for the upcoming legislation on managing acrylamide formation in food

Following new discussions between the stakeholders, the European Commission and Member States representatives, the European Commission is now pursuing its work on a new legislation on the management of acrylamide in the food chain. This upcoming legislation should include indicative maximum levels of acrylamide in food, together with sectorial binding codes of practices (proposed by the various sub-sectors of the food chain) for the industry. HOTREC made in May 2016 its proposals to the European Commission for a Code of Practice applicable to the restaurant sector.

Next Steps:

The European Commission will discuss the latest proposals of Codes of Practices with the Member States on 30 June 2016, before circulating to stakeholders a draft of the upcoming legislation for consultation. The final legislative proposal is expected to be released at the end of July or beginning of September.

Actions:

HOTREC will keep liaising with the European Commission to negotiate a flexible and fit for purpose Code of Practice for restaurants in Europe.

HOTREC position:

- *Given the potentially carcinogenic effect of acrylamide, HOTREC is taking its responsibility by promoting a flexible code of practice for the restaurant sector, with a focus on concrete and easy to follow recommendations, so as to diminish acrylamide levels in food served by restaurants, without burdening them un-necessarily.*

Food waste: the European Parliament rapporteur published her draft report on the revision of the Waste Directive



On 25 May 2016, the rapporteur for the ENVI (Environment, Public Health & Food Safety) Committee of the European Parliament, MEP Simona Bonafè (S&D, Italy), published her draft report on the revision of the Waste Directive with her proposals of amendments to the Commission proposal. In particular, she proposes to introduce an obligation on the Member States to explain in their waste national management programme how they will try to reach the food reduction target (-50% by 2030) they committed to at U.N level.

MEP Simona Bonafè is also proposing to strengthen the Commission proposal to make mandatory the separate collection of bio-waste and to encourage member States to provide for financial, fiscal and regulatory incentives to boost the recycling and re-use rates of wastes (including food waste).

The draft report from MEP Simona Bonafè is available here: [link](#)

Next Steps:

MEPs can table amendments to the Bonafè draft report until 23 June. The ENVI Committee is expected to adopt its report in July 2016.

Actions

HOTREC will submit to the most relevant MEPs of the ENVI Committee its proposals of amendments.

HOTREC position:

- *The hospitality industry is a small waster compared to other segment of the food chain, but is nonetheless acting in a responsible manner*
- *Targets for the reduction of food waste throughout the food chain should remain aspirational and should primarily focus on big wasters.*
- *Funding should be provided to incentivize the development of schemes meant to collect unsold food in restaurants in view of their re-use as a source of feed or energy. Similar funding should be available for donations to charitable organizations*
- *Measurement of food waste should be the responsibility of the Member States authorities*

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

The Commission publishes new guidelines on the application of the unfair commercial practices Directive

On 25 May 2016, the European Commission released a new and updated guidance document on the application of Directive 2005/29/EC on unfair commercial practices, as an annex to its new Communication on "a comprehensive

approach to stimulating cross-border e-commerce for Europe's citizens and businesses".

The updated guidance document aims to respond to the challenges presented by the digital world, by clarifying the application of the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive. In particular, it addresses the problem of the application of this Directive to platforms by clearly stating that the Directive should apply when platforms can be assimilated to a "trader". It also explains that Platforms must state clearly that rules on unfair commercial practices do not apply to private persons selling goods, and that search engines would be required to clearly distinguish paid placements from natural search results.

The revised Guidance also incorporates a sets of self-regulatory principles agreed among stakeholders: to support comparison tools to better comply with the Directive.

The Communication is available here: [link](#)

The guidance document is available here: [link](#)

New EU consultation for the fitness check of the EU consumer and marketing law

On 12 May 2016, the European Commission published a new consultation for the fitness check of the EU consumer and marketing law.

The consultation seeks the views of the stakeholders on 6 Directives:

- The unfair Contract Terms Directive;
- The Consumer Sales and Guarantees Directive;
- The Unfair Commercial Practices Directive;
- The Price Indication Directive;
- The Misleading and Comparative Advertising Directive;
- The Injunctions Directive; and
- The Consumer Rights Directive 2011/83/EU.

The purpose of the Fitness Check is to evaluate if these directives are fit for purpose. The consultation is available here: [link](#)

Next Steps:

The consultation is open until 2 September 2016. The findings of the Fitness Check will provide a basis for future policy initiatives in this area.

Actions:

HOTREC will gather the views of its members, in order to provide a consolidated reply from the European hospitality industry to the European Commission.

Carbon Monoxide roundtable organised in the European Parliament to discuss tourism accommodation safety

On 1 June 2016, MEP Linda McAvan (S&D, UK) and MEP Marian Harkin (ALDE, Ireland) co-organised with the Council of Gas Detection and Environmental monitoring a roundtable on Carbon Monoxide during which the issue of tourism accommodation safety was raised.



MEP McAvan explained that during the recent Green Paper consultation organised by the European Commission, Member States unanimously expressed their opposition to any European Directive on the matter, as they do not see any issue concerning tourism accommodation safety. MEP McAvan therefore explained that most probably, there will not be any such Directive under the current Commission.

She nevertheless encouraged organisations working on the issue to adopt a different strategy and to raise it as a national issue instead, in order to gain support from the Member States one by one.

Next Steps:

A new Carbon Monoxide roundtable will be organised in a few months' time by MEP Linda McAvan and MEP Marian Harkin.

Actions:

HOTREC will continue to promote its position towards European decision-makers and stakeholders and will inform the membership about any new developments on the matter.

HOTREC position:

- *HOTREC considers that a one-size-fits-all approach to tourism accommodation safety is inappropriate, given the diversity of tourism accommodation businesses;*
- *Existing tourism accommodation safety legislation and surveillance systems at national and local levels are appropriate and ensure a high level of safety in the hotel market.*
- *Public authorities (European/national/local) should focus their activities on the exponential development of private accommodation offered as tourist accommodation on peer-to-peer websites, as this new segment of the market is largely unregulated and escape existing enforcement mechanisms;*
- *The European Commission should create a web portal where would be indicated all existing safety legislation applicable to tourism accommodation across the EU. This portal could also serve as a hub to exchange best-practices.*

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Commission publishes its New Skills Agenda for Europe

On 10 June 2016, the European Commission published a new Communication untitled "A new skills agenda for Europe - Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness".

The Agenda calls on Member States, social partners, the industry and stakeholders to work together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness by:

- Improving the quality of skills and their relevance for the labour market
- Making skills more visible and comparable
- Improving skills intelligence and information for better career choices

In particular, the Commission communication proposes 10 actions to be taken forward over the next two years:

- A Skills Guarantee to help low-skilled adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and progress towards an upper secondary qualification;
- A review of the European Qualifications Framework for a better understanding of qualifications and to make better use of all available skills in the European labour market;
- The 'Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition';
- The 'Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills' to improve skills intelligence and address skills shortages in specific economic sectors;
- A 'Skills Profile Tool Kit for Third Country Nationals';
- A revision of the Europass Framework;
- Making Vocational Education and Training (VET) a first choice by enhancing opportunities for VET learners;
- A review of the Recommendation on Key Competences.

HOTREC participated on Monday 13 June to a high level event organised by the Dutch Presidency of the EU entitled "Working together to strengthen the Single Market for EU businesses and consumers" and was represented in the expert workshop "Skills -How to develop the right set of skills for enterprises in the Single Market" by Mr. Paul Schoormans, policy advisor for KHN.

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC welcomes the Commission's Communication entitled "A New Skills Agenda and Europe";
- HOTREC looks forward to the review of the European Qualifications Framework to make better use of all available skills in the European labour market
- HOTREC awaits the "Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills" and its chapter on tourism.
- HOTREC fully agrees with the Commission on the need to boost the dissemination of information on funding opportunities for skills development, in order to engage SMEs to develop skills e.g. on ICTs.
- HOTREC calls on the Commission to develop call for proposals in order for Member States to benefit from more funding opportunities to train SMEs in ICTs/digitalisation and health & safety issues.

Launch of the European platform tackling undeclared work

The platform was launched on May 27 by Marianne THYSSEN, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, meeting during which was presented its objectives. The event took place in Brussels under the auspices of the following headline "For more and Better jobs and a fair and open society".

Several representatives of the Member States presented the situation in their country such as France which has developed an action plan, with more than 1500 controls per month or Italy which now holds one inspection system only for the whole country. Discussions focused mainly on best practices to be shared between Member States and common rules when possible to be settled. Marianne THYSSEN insisted on the need to develop a practical and effective platform in order to help the Member States to find solutions. Elections, priorities, challenges including the question of migrants were evoked. The first meeting of the platform should take place on October 6th.

HOTREC is represented in the platform by Mr Jean-Marc Banquet d'Orx, Chairman of HOTREC Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee, who holds a position of Observer.

HOTREC position:

- HOTREC welcomes the initiative with a view to find practical solutions both to address the issues of the employers and the employees.

STANDARDS

Proposals for international standards

Over the last 2 months several proposals for international standards have reached the ISO Technical Committee 228 (TC 228) secretariat. This is the technical committee dealing with tourism related standardisation proposals.

Two proposals were submitted for a formal vote to introduce them as new work items, namely on 'Heritage hotels' and 'Traditional restaurants', with the aim to start developing relevant international standards.

Other proposals were put forward for information and discussion, however these can easily be turned to formal proposals, similar to the previous ones. One such proposal was submitted by UNWTO envisaging to develop an international standard in the sphere of accessible tourism. Other similar proposals relate to Guest houses and Medical tourism.

NET, the Network for the European Private Sector in Tourism, expressed to the members of ISO TC 228 its concerns about a possible international standard on accessibility, highlighting that the proposal for an International Standard covering a wide range of issues under the heading 'Accessible Tourism' could lead to confusion and uncertainty for both consumers and tourism services providers. The development of an international accessible tourism standard risks not taking into account, or even contradicting much of the existing legislation and guidance which is in place to protect people with reduced mobility or disabilities.

Next Steps:

The voting on the 2 formal proposals on Heritage hotels and Traditional restaurants is open until 25 July 2016. The other proposals need further elaboration, before, if at all, they are submitted for a formal approval as new work items to ISO TC 228.

Actions:

HOTREC expressed its concerns to the proposals on the Traditional restaurants and Heritage hotels at the last ISO TC 228 plenary meeting held on 27 May 2016. HOTREC also shared with the members the concerns of NET on the accessibility proposal.

HOTREC position:

- *The vast majority of the European hospitality industry does not see the need for the development of European or international standards affecting their operations.*
- *HOTREC stresses that the development of standards shall be market-driven, meaning that there should be a demand also from the suppliers for such standards. This is not the case for the hospitality sector in Europe.*
- *HOTREC shares the concerns of NET in relation to a possible international standard on accessibility and is open to further discuss the matter.*

European Commission to modernise EU's standardisation policy, including service standards

On 1 June 2016, the European Commission announced a [package aiming at enhancing the European standard setting](#). The focus of the future standardisation policy would be to modernise, better prioritise and speed up standardisation work as well as to focus more on ICT and services standards.

The European Commission intends to define criteria by end of 2016 to prioritise European service standards, with the aim to develop standards where they are identified necessary and effective. A first draft of criteria to prioritise European service standards include stakeholder involvement, including checking potential support and use of the possible standard as well as checking effects on SMEs and consumers.

With regard to service standards, the main benefits identified by the Commission are, inter alia, raising quality and safety, reduce costs and open up markets for businesses, as well as to open markets where services are closely linked to products, such as after-sales services.

Next Steps:

By the end of 2016 the Commission shall set up the final criteria for prioritising service standards, as well as CEN will finalise its mapping of existing service standards across Europe.

Actions:

HOTREC will be in contact with the European Commission regarding the criteria for prioritising service standards.

HOTREC position:

- *With regard to service standards, the vast majority of the European hospitality industry does not see the need for the development of European or international standards affecting their operations.*
- *Although standards are said to be voluntary, they can easily turn de facto mandatory by legislative or market forces, therefore a careful assessment on the needs and impacts on the given sector and its enterprises has to be conducted.*

VISA POLICY

Upcoming decision on visa-free travel for Turkey citizens



On 4th May 2016 the European Commission proposed to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union to lift the visa requirements for the citizens of Turkey under the condition that Turkey will fulfil the objectives of its Visa Liberalisation Roadmap (such as fight against corruption, data protection, judicial cooperation with all Member States, enhanced cooperation with EUROPOL and revision of the legislation and practices on terrorism).

The EU launched the Visa Liberalisation Dialogue with Turkey in 2013, in parallel with the signature of the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement.

Visa free travel will apply to all EU Member States except the UK and Ireland and to the four Schengen associated countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland).

HOTREC position

HOTREC fully welcomes the introduction of more visa waiver and / or more visa facilitation procedures in the EU. Visa facilitation is key to promote tourism, trade, business, consequently leading to an increase in growth and jobs in the tourism sector in Europe. This will help keep Europe's position as world destination number one.

European Commission proposes visa-free travel for citizens of Ukraine



On 20th April 2016, the European Commission proposed to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to lift the visa requirements for the citizens of Ukraine. This could be done by transferring Ukraine to the list of countries whose citizens can travel without a visa to the Schengen area.

In this sense, Ukrainian citizens with biometric passports would be granted a short-stay visa travel valid for short stays of 90 days within any 180-day period for business, touristic or family purposes in the Schengen area.

Next steps

The Council to take a decision on the Commission proposal by qualified majority.

HOTREC position

- *HOTREC favors the introduction of more visa waiver and / or more visa facilitation procedures for travelers coming from third countries. Visa facilitation will lead to an increase in growth and jobs in the tourism sector in Europe. Moreover, it will contribute for Europe to become more competitive towards other destinations around the world*

and will help keep Europe's position as world destination number one.

Lack of visa reciprocity with U.S. and Canada



On 12th April 2016, the European Commission issued a Communication [COM \(2016\) 221 final](#) on the state of play and way forward with regard to the situation of non-reciprocity with third countries in the area of visa policy.

The Communication highlights that the U.S. and Canada continue to apply visa requirements for citizens of Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland and Romania. Nevertheless, citizens from the U.S. and Canada benefit from an EU-wide visa waiver. The visa waiver reciprocity is a pillar of the EU visa policy rules, and, under the rules adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2011, if, within 24 months, full reciprocity in third countries is not applied, then this can be the cause for suspending the visa waiver for citizens of those third countries. In its Communication the Commission is for these reasons inviting the Parliament and the Council to launch discussions and to take a position on the most appropriate way forward. Political, economic and administrative consequences of any possible action need to be taken into account.

State of Play

- The LIBE Committee at the European Parliament discussed the topic on April 2016. MEPs were of the opinion that the EC should adopt a delegated act. After that the European Parliament and the Member States will have 3 months to raise objections/veto;
- At the Council the topic will also be discussed at working group level.

HOTREC position

- *Currently, travellers from the U.S. and Canada account for the largest percentage of all European arrivals. Arrivals from the two markets reached 30.3 million tourists;*
- *According to the European Communication COM (2016) 221 final, estimates indicate that a potential decrease of 5% in the number of US/Canadian tourists to the EU, in case the visa waiver would not be applied, would represent a loss of EUR 1.8 billion for the EU tourism sector;*
- *The economic impact that closing the doors to U.S and Canadian citizens would have for tourism purposes needs to be taken into account;*
- *At the same time, HOTREC encourages the European Parliament and the Council to ask the Commission to continue intense bilateral negotiations with the U.S. and Canada, so that full reciprocity in the application of the visa waiver will also fully apply to Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland and Romania. The European Commission is proposing ways forward in its Communication (e.g. privileging bona fide EU travellers and travellers who have lawfully used a Canadian/US visa in the past e.g. 10 years). These and other possible future solutions are mostly welcome to preserve the application of the visa waiver reciprocity.*

TOURISM

EU prolongs Schengen controls for six months

On 12th May 2016, Foreign Affairs Ministers agreed to prolong by six months controls at certain internal Schengen borders of the EU in Germany, Austria, Sweden, Denmark and Norway.



This specific procedure is foreseen under Article 29 of the Schengen Borders Code, which states that for exceptional circumstances where the overall functioning of the Schengen area is put at risk by serious and persistent deficiencies at an EU external border, border controls might be reintroduced.

Commissioner Avramopoulos mentioned that the EU-Turkey agreement had already led a sharp decrease of the arrivals in Greece. The goal is to return to the normal functioning of the Schengen area and the lifting of all internal border controls by the end of 2016.

HOTREC position

- *HOTREC believes that the freedom of movement of people across Schengen is one of the fundamental pillars of the EU;*
- *HOTREC hopes that the reintroduction of border controls is only a temporary measure and that the free circulation will be installed as soon as possible.*

Smart Borders Package launched



On 6th April 2016, the European Commission launched the Smart Borders Package, which includes:

- A Communication on "Stronger and Smarter Information Systems for Borders and Security" [COM \(2016\) 205 final](#), which aims at exploring how the different information systems (e.g. Visa Information System; Schengen Information System or EURODAC) can become more effective to enhance external border management and internal security in the EU;
- A proposal for a Regulation on "Establishment of an Entry-Exit System" [COM \(2016\) 194 final](#), which will apply to third country nationals admitted for a short stay (maximum 90 days in any 180 day period). The system will collect data (identify person through travel document) and register entry and exit-records (date and place of entry and exit) to facilitate border crossing of bona fide travellers and identify over-stayers;
- A proposed amendment to the Schengen Borders Code to integrate the technical changes needed for the Entry-Exit System.

The aim of the Smarter Border Package is to modernise the Schengen area's external border management by improving the efficiency of border crossing processes. It aims to help Member States deal with increasing traveller flows, without increasing the number of border guards and to promote mobility amongst the Schengen countries in a secure way.

Next steps

European Parliament (LIBE committee) and Council to decide on the proposal for Regulation following the ordinary legislative procedure.

HOTREC position

- *HOTREC welcomes procedures that facilitate the entry of third country citizens in the Schengen zone. This will boost tourism, business and trade in the EU. Consequently, growth and jobs will increase in the sector;*
 - *The entry-exit system should be built in a way that truly saves time to third country nationals not be waiting in the queues to cross the border.*
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GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Next Meetings and General Assemblies

In the coming months, HOTREC will organise and/or participate to the following meetings:

- 20 June 2016 (Brussels, Belgium) - Launch event of the new Skills Agenda for Europe. HOTREC will participate
 - 22 June 2016 (Brussels, Belgium) – EU expert group on food losses and food waste. The HOTREC will participate to this meeting.
 - 24 June 2016 (Brussels, Belgium) – 7th Plenary meeting of the Community of Practice for better self- and co-regulation (the CoP)
 - 29 June 2016 (Madrid, Spain) – UNWTO Working group on the Convention on the protection of tourists. HOTREC will participate to this Working Group meeting.
 - 30 June 2016 (Berlin, Germany) – European Conference – Successfully Finding and Retaining Apprentices – How can it work?
 - 30 September 2016 (Brussels, Belgium) - Sectoral Social Dialogue Steering Committee meeting
 - 19-21 October 2016 (Valletta, Malta) – HOTREC holds its 73rd General Assembly
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