

Reaching for the Stars

Towards a Unified European Hotel Classification System

In 2006, the EU established Directive 2006/123/EC, calling for more transparency on services in the internal market in relation to classification. HOTREC then started the groundwork for a unified European hotel classification system. We asked Rikard Bergsten, Chairman of Hotelstars Union 2011 and responsible for hotel classification in Sweden, about the birth of the association and how far they have come so far in working towards the directive...

Shortly after the 2006 announcement, we discovered that certain European countries had similar criteria, so the hotels associations of Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland formed the Hotelstars Union, under the patronage of HOTREC. Following our meeting in Prague in 2009, we decided to draw up a list of criteria that our member countries have stated implementing in 2010. The classification system is based on the earlier German classification and follows the 21 principles that HOTREC have stated regarding how classifications systems in Europe should be handled. So far, this system covers 270 criteria and also allows hotels the ability to receive a superior star ranking for each class (1-5). 18,000 hotels will soon be obligated to follow this system in 2012. A revised criteria set is scheduled for 2014. We do a series of regular inspection visits to assure that the criteria are enforced.

Membership to the Hotelstars Union is open to other HOTREC members. This year, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will join thus expanding the Hotelstars family to ten countries.

How will you be communicating the classification system to international guests?

Of course, the hotels themselves have the choice of advertising their ranking systems. On our end, we will be communicating to booking agencies, travel agencies, online travel agencies, about the new system. Hotels will also need to change their marketing as needed if they would like to communicate their ranking.



Rikard Bergsten

Chairman of Hotelstars Union 2011 and responsible for hotel classification in Sweden



You mentioned that you would like to have additional member states join. How will you be taking into account countries that have already set up a revamped national hotel classification system, such as France?

Whenever a country will change or adjust, we will assist in helping them doing so.

As I said it might take a few years before all potential countries have joined Hotelstars Union. We have had communication with France but Hotelstars Union was created after the French decision. However there are a lot of similarities between the European system and the French. We hope France will join in a near future.

What do you feel, in general, are the biggest advantages of the European hotel industry with regard to “international competitors” and what particular message would you like to give to foreign tour operators, and international travel agencies to encourage them to “push” Europe as a destination?

My comment here is that a common pan European classification system will increase the quality of the hotel product and as well will increase the satisfaction of the global traveler... “You get what you want”.