

Welcome to the first edition in a new series of bulletins, as part of HOTREC's strategic partnership with TOPOSOPHY. In this series, titled 'Hospitality in Transition' we shall broaden our focus to assess the wider context for decision-making in the hospitality sector today. Navigating the 'new normal' of public health regulations, travel disruption, accelerated digitisation, and the ongoing need to shift to a more environmentally and socially sustainable business models will require new insights, ideas and guidance. Therefore, future editions of this bulletin will examine hospitality's transition towards:

- **New business models, the evolution of STR and OTAs, post COVID-19**
- **The demands of the emerging 'low-touch economy'**
- **The demands of a low-carbon economy**

## Europe's hospitality sector faces a new challenges in adapting to the 'low touch economy'

Low touch services, based on reduced close-contact interaction and stricter hygiene measures will be accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This new "low touch economy" model will change the way people spend their leisure time and many businesses will have to embrace new practices. Many trends which were already present will be accelerated. The word "clean" has always had an integral part in hotel management and guest reviews, however in a post-COVID-19 world, its meaning will be more important than ever.

- Implement enhanced hygiene protocols, in coordination with medical organisations and health authorities, while ensuring that all staff and customers are aware of their own responsibilities
- Ensure that more guest touch-points can be delivered via smartphone (e.g. check in, room key, food orders, pool bookings), while ensuring a personalised, high-quality standard of service
- Reduce customer-staff interaction by using smartphone concierge, robots, avatars or kiosks for specific tasks and interactions, while ensuring that staff are still readily available when needed
- Enhance the appeal of hotel facilities while providing reassurance around the health and hygiene measures in place
- Invest in making the changes listed above, in the context of a marketplace under severe pressure from the impact of international travel restrictions, sudden border closures and low consumer confidence in specific elements of travel

## Working towards a common European approach to travel, hygiene and tourism recovery

The European Commission Communication 'Tourism and transport in 2020 and Beyond' released on 13th May 2020 set out a coordinated framework to 'enable all Europe to benefit from a restful and above all, safe tourism season through 2020-2021'.<sup>1</sup> The framework consists of four areas of action for Member States to prioritise:

- **Shifting consumer trends and values, post COVID-19 and beyond**
- **The emergence of new technology and its potential uses in the restaurant and hotel sector**

Short-term rentals continue to disrupt communities and the lawfully-established hotel sector, requiring careful vigilance and pressure on national and local authorities to act. Therefore, we shall continue to include a dedicated STR Monitor in future bulletins. Together with TOPOSOPHY, we look forward to examining all of these issues in more depth, and using them to advocate on behalf of our members at national and European level on all the major issues that demand our attention.

1. Easing restrictions, easing Freedom of Movement and restoring connectivity
2. Harmonising standards and public health measures that will help give travellers confidence
3. Improving business liquidity and providing employee support for businesses facing capacity restrictions
4. Respecting consumer rights (and allowing flexibility around travel plans) and providing clear communication to help consumers to plan and book with confidence [ [Source](#) ]

On 20th May the [European Tourism Manifesto Alliance](#) (of which HOTREC is a member) welcomed this announcement, declaring that "the alliance remains open to work with the Commission and Member States to ensure that recommendations are turned into concrete actions that are workable and feasible for all players, big and small". [ [Source](#) ] Concerned in particular about the impact of COVID-19 on SMEs in Europe's tourism sector, on 19th June the European Parliament called for additional measures to save European tourism. These requests were focused on:

- Short-term financing for businesses in order to avoid bankruptcies
- Support for a long-term, sustainable recovery of the tourism sector
- Guaranteeing safety by: establishing common standards and detailed protocols for hygiene and health screening measures; developing early alert systems that could warn tourists about a potential health threat, and; a common EU safety certificate for tourism businesses that meet the highest hygiene and safety standard. [ [Source](#) ]

## Guidelines to help the tourism industry keep COVID-19 under control

The International Standards Organisation (ISO) has said that one of the biggest challenges to individuals and businesses has been the lack of a standardised approach to hygiene and safety. Now, the Spanish Association for Standardization (UNE) together with Spain's institute for quality tourism (ICTE) has published [a new set of protocols](#) with directives to help those working in tourism keep COVID-19 under control. The guidelines apply to a wide range of business within the tourism sector, such as travel agencies, heritage sites, hotels, museums and restaurants, among others. Protocols cover cleaning, disinfection, booking systems contingency plans among other areas. The project received full support from Spain's Secretary for Tourism and was developed in record time. ICTE also took on the substantial task of drafting the documents and getting the consensus of the relevant stakeholders in order to provide a clear, harmonized protocol to be applied across the country. [ [Source](#) ].

1. European Commission (2020) Tourism and Travel in 2020 and Beyond: A Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 13 May 2020, available at: [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)



## AHLA introduces new hotel cleaning and safety standards:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in May the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) introduced '[Safe-Stay](#)', a new industry-wide health and safety protocol. The AHLA [Guide to enhanced Industry-Wide Cleaning Standards](#) outlines practical steps for hotels to be able to create a safe and clean environment, focussing on employee & guest health, employee responsibilities, cleaning products and protocols and physical distancing.



## Portugal “Clean and Safe” stamp

Turismo de Portugal created a '[Clean and Safe](#)' stamp of approval which aims to distinguish tourism businesses which are compliant with hygiene and cleaning requirements that prevent and control the spread of COVID-19. In order to obtain the certificate, hotels, resorts or different service providers will have to implement internal protocols, in conjunction with the recommendations of the Directorate-General for Health. The seal is optional, free of charge and it is valid for one year. Turismo de Portugal will also carry out random audits to ensure that businesses are compliant.



## Greek authorities work on health protocols for short-term rentals

Delphi Economic Forum, it was announced that Greek authorities are currently outlining health protocols to be applied by short-term rental operators in the country. The Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO) together with the National Public Health Organization (EODY) are preparing detailed health standards to which all owners of properties, which are leased for tourism purposes, will have to adhere. [Greek Travel Pages](#) ([2020 Greek Authorities Working on Health Protocols for Airbnbs](#)).

## Tripadvisor’s “Travel Safe” tool

TripAdvisor has added a new feature to its review system called “Travel Safe” which allows travellers to filter accommodation and restaurants based on safety precautions, leave reviews specifically focused on health and safety aspects of their stay. This comes after a consumer survey, with selected results shown below. [ [Source](#) and [source](#) ].



- 92% said cleanliness is the most important factor in selecting accommodations.
- 84% said cleanliness or sanitization certificates are important when booking a travel experience
- 79% said it's important to publicly display compliance to government safety standards

## STR MONITOR

### Airbnb files to go public

Following several difficult months earlier in the pandemic, when Airbnb laid off a quarter of its staff and raised \$2 bn in equity and debt, in July CEO Brian Chesky announced that business was picking up and that the company may go for an IPO. After many months of rumours, Airbnb finally [announced](#) on 19th of August that it has submitted confidential paperwork for an initial public offering.

### Catalonia approves decree that recognises short-term rentals

In August the provincial government of Catalonia approved a tourism decree recognising home-sharing and other short-term rental activities. Airbnb [welcomed this decision](#), however Janet Sanz, the deputy mayor for Urbanism in the city of Barcelona, stated that [the city will appeal](#) the new decree.

### New restrictions on STRs in Budapest

Officials in Budapest have approved [legislation](#) helping cities in Hungary to set a limit on the number of days a host can rent out their property on STR platforms. Owners of STRs will also have to register them with the local authorities. These changes follow a sharp rise in the price of properties and long-term rents and are also aimed at preventing tax avoidance.



## Singapore Clean

In April, the Singaporean Government launched [Singapore Clean](#), a new audit system to certify hotels and tourist attractions for cleanliness. To be certified, businesses must pass a seven-point, audited checklist. If all requirements are met, the 'SG CLEAN' seal is awarded. Specific requirements for hotels include having a dedicated SG Clean manager, a process to check employees' temperature and overall health, observation of health and travel advisories and governmental orders on COVID-19.



## Slovenia’s Green & Safe label

In response to the increased importance of health and safety, Slovenia's tourism board launched the new '[Green & Safe](#)' label. As part of the scheme, in June, a manual on Responsible Travel Standards was released. It provides information on hygiene standards, measures and recommendations of the National Institute of Public Health, and also identifies opportunities that Slovenia can provide to travellers to position the country as a safe, green and sustainable destination.



## Track and trace apps become a vital tool

Hospitality businesses are places associated with a lot of human interaction and most are now required to keep records of their visitors, so ‘track and trace apps’ can be particularly effective. For example, to comply with the NHS track and trace requirements, new initiatives such as [identecoTrack](#) or [Twine Visitor](#) have been created in the UK to assist British businesses in keeping track of their visitors and maintaining their premises safely.



Meanwhile, Airbnb has launched its [Enhanced Cleaning Protocol](#). If hosts do not enroll in this programme they must adopt a 72-hour period between stays in order to ensure that rooms are properly cleaned. However there are doubts about whether hosts can afford the higher costs of adopting meticulous cleaning procedures, and whether Airbnb can properly enforce and monitor these measures.

## Airbnb moves to stop party houses

In order to reduce unauthorized parties and ensure safety, Airbnb [has banned citizens under 25 years of age](#), and those with fewer than three positive reviews, in France, Spain and the UK to rent entire homes close to where they live. The company has also announced a [global ban](#) on parties and events at Airbnb listings and introduced a cap on occupancy at 16 guests.

## Lisbon plans to reclaim short term rentals

In July the Mayor of Lisbon, Fernando Medina, wrote [an unprecedented statement](#) in The Independent expressing his desire to help key workers to return to the city centre, having been forced out by the recent tourism boom. The city has introduced the new [Secure Income \(Renda Segura\)](#) programme, through which landlords can rent their apartments to the municipality for a minimum term of five years, while the city will be responsible for finding tenants.