



HOSPITALITY EUROPE BUSINESS NEWSLETTER

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INDUSTRY INTERVIEWS

Interview with Mr. Benjamin Lephilibert, Managing Director at LightBlue Environmental Consulting



Benjamin Lephilibert is the Founder and Managing Director of LightBlue Environmental Consulting, a social enterprise working predominantly on food waste prevention across Asia and Europe with hotel groups, restaurants, government agencies, and international organizations. He is an international speaker, guest-lecturer in culinary and business schools, solution designer of FIT Food Waste Monitoring Tech, co-designer of The PLEDGE™ on Food Waste certification and benchmarking system, and a certified trainer for the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

1. Your company, [LightBlue Environmental Consulting](#), has been committed for over 12 years in sustainability performance and 7 years in the fight against food waste, and has been guiding, training and accompanying organizations in integrating circular business models to move towards zero food waste. Could you tell us more about LightBlue's mission? Could you also share with our readers a success story related to your activity?

I established [LightBlue](#) in 2012 with a mission to reconcile business excellence and sustainability because I wanted to prove the industry that by adopting a more circular approach to the business and considering waste as a resource, there were multiple benefits on the environmental, social, and especially financial front. You do not have to compromise on your business performance if you are to consider waste and food waste as a way to improve your performance.

To share our achievements, the first success story was when we managed to convince the first hotel to join our food waste prevention program as we thoroughly helped them tracking the impact of food waste monitoring to improve their operation. One of the recent case studies was with JW Marriott Hotel Bangkok, whom we have been working with for 18 months. They have saved 118 tons of food from being discarded, translating into a serious financial benefit. Another achievement was with the MICHELIN Guide Thailand, which we have built collaboration as Technical Sustainability Partner. We helped them to run [the first ever Zero Food Waste to Landfill MICHELIN Star Revelation Event](#) that happened in November 2019 by helping the venue, MICHELIN Guide, MICHELIN chefs, and team to have all preventive measures in place. All the food that would not be served to the guests would be safely rescued and donated to feed people. The remaining that was unsafe would be captured and sent to the pig farms. As a result, around 60kg of surplus food was rescued for donation, 220kg of food waste was turned into pig feed, and 700kg of carbon dioxide equivalent was not emitted from just in one event.

2. [HOTREC firmly believes that sustainability will be essential to hospitality's long-term competitiveness and growth](#). What is your view on sustainability in the European tourism and hospitality sector? How do you think the coronavirus crisis influenced our path towards a greener industry?

In my opinion, the general level of awareness from not only professionals in the hospitality sector, but also mainly from customers has raised dramatically over the past 5-10 years. Going back to what was business as usual is no longer an option, and I think that every hotelier knows that very well. There is an increasing demand by those consumers for transparency around the indicators of environmental and social performance, which is going to be even more prominent over the upcoming years. Consumers will choose destinations/hotels that have reliable

environmental and social programs in place because they want to indulge themselves while they travel, knowing that the hotels they are choosing are actually having the right measures in place to minimize the negative impacts of travel on the energy, water, waste, use of chemicals, benefits for the local communities, etc.

Regarding the pandemic, it is a challenging question, but I am a positive person. I tend to think that the coronavirus and all these lockdowns have helped people in general and travellers to realize that this fast-paced lifestyle has to be questioned. I think that people's relationship with food has changed dramatically with the shooting numbers of people growing their food or trying to source their food locally instead of relying on imported food items. At the same time, the crisis would also accelerate the demand for responsible tourism and hospitality along with an increase of awareness and understanding that the clock is ticking. Climate change is no longer an issue for only hippies and tree huggers. It is everyone's responsibility. Therefore, travellers including the change of demographic will put further the pressure on hotel operators, hotel groups, destination management organizations, and destinations in general to adopt more responsible practices. A few organizations have been taking advantage of the coronavirus situation to rethink about how they run their business and how they can lighten their negative impacts while satisfying their customers.

3. LightBlue is particularly committed in education and training for businesses. Could you describe us your recent initiatives in this area and share with us upcoming opportunities which could be relevant for hospitality entrepreneurs?

We have developed a holistic set of solutions to help hospitality players to have food waste preventive measures in their operation. Those are ranging from having [food waste monitoring technology](#) to implementing certification program like [The PLEDGE™ on Food Waste](#), building capacity, reviewing their operation, and having more efficient procedures in place with an end goal to reach zero food waste to landfill.

Some of the recent initiatives that we have been running, for instance, are international development projects with the German Cooperation Agency (GIZ) where we have been training their local consultants out of four different countries in Southeast Asia.

1. We have built their capacity on food waste monitoring for commercial kitchens: we trained them on how to implement an effective system in kitchens, what are the equipment that is needed, and who should be involved.
2. We trained them on how to use [FIT \(Food Intel Tech\)](#), the monitoring system to collect the right information related to food waste. This information is related to how much is wasted, when is it happening, what is going to the bin, where is it happening, why, and how much does it cost.

Then those local consultants have been taking this knowledge and those tools to implement food waste prevention programs in their respective areas with hotels or restaurants, in order to accompany them in a process of reducing food waste.

Another remarkably interesting initiative was related to building the capacity of consultants in various regions from Canada to the US, the UK, Spain, Italy, Belgium, France, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, and Madagascar on becoming [The PLEDGE™ on Food Waste accredited consultants](#). We have been training those consultants, being independent or from consulting firms that were interested in integrating knowledge and know-how related to The PLEDGE™ on Food Waste certification program so they could offer to restaurants, canteens, and hotel's outlets to accompany them in a process of certification. By getting trained around this certification program, they can confidently go after new customers, offer them to implement a new system, and accompany them in the process of certification, so the restaurants could

cut on food waste, costs, as well as getting their effort recognized by getting this third-party audited certification to display and attract new types of customer.

The last initiative is about building bridges with universities. We recently had a chance to train lecturers in hospitality management from a public university in Singapore. Also, there are some interesting projects coming up with universities in Europe where we will be teaching either lecturers or Master students in Food & Beverage or Hospitality Management with our [5x3-hour Full Course on Food Waste Prevention](#). The full course has been designed for professionals to gain all the necessary knowledge around food waste with case studies and tools, specifically in the hospitality sector from multiple angles.

Speaking in particular around the topic of food waste, there are multiple opportunities. There is a rising demand from customers for more responsible practices. I think hoteliers are looking for ways to implement those solutions, but they do not necessarily know how to do so. There is a growing need for expertise, for consultants to accompany those hotels in a process of reducing their environmental impact or pursuing environmental certification to reduce their consumption of energy, water, chemicals, etc. We are as well as mentioned earlier building a capacity of independent consultant or consulting firms that are interested in adding food waste in their portfolio of solutions to their existing customers in the restaurants or the hotel sector. They are becoming accredited consultants for The PLEDGE™ on Food Waste training. If they are successful, they are qualified to integrate this service in their portfolio, they get access to multiple supporting tools and resources, so they can accompany those business entities in a process of reducing food waste, cutting on cost, and getting their effort recognized by the general public while nurturing the local ecosystem of food waste solution providers as this certification program has been designed to follow the food waste hierarchy pyramid, which goes from prevention being the top option to looking at ways to redistribute for human consumption, share food waste to feed animals, or transform related directly to upcycling. And I think that upcycling of food waste is a gigantic opportunity for anyone, not only in the hospitality sector but also in the food sector more in general where there are dozens of startups that have beautiful success stories. And that is just the beginning. The opportunities are just everywhere.

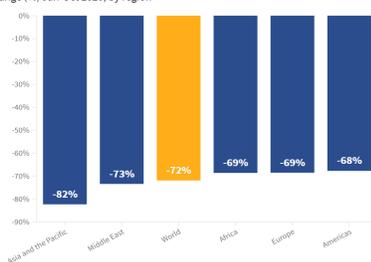
8 January 2021



BUSINESS TRENDS & STUDIES

Tourism's *annus horribilis*: end of the year report by UNWTO

International arrivals fell by 72% over the first ten months of 2020
YTD change (%) Jan-Oct 2020, by region



According to the [latest tourism data by the World Tourism Organisation \(UNWTO\)](#), **international tourism arrivals fell by over 70% between January and October**, and UNWTO expects it to fall to 75% for the whole of 2020.

The sector registered huge economic losses, **with export revenues from international tourism decreasing by US\$ 935 billion worldwide**. The latest estimates forecast that coming back to 2019 levels will take from 2 and a half to 4 years.

Focusing on Europe, while it is reassuring that the first doses of COVID-19 vaccine are being administered and that [the European Medicines Agency \(EMA\) approved another vaccine](#), it is important to take into account how European countries are still months away from mass vaccinations.

The current data confirm how the [lack of coordinated travel restrictions at national level continues to negatively impact the sector and contributes to a climate of uncertainty](#).

“A coordinated approach to easing and lifting restrictions on travel whenever it is safe to do so is essential”, stated Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General of UNWTO. “This will not only open destinations up to tourism again, but clear and consistent rules between countries will go a long way towards building back trust in international travel and boosting consumer confidence.”

11 January 2021



Hospitality at the time of Brexit: what changed after 1 January?



After months of disputes over future business competition rules and fishing rights, on 24 December 2020, the EU and UK agreed on the post-Brexit trade and cooperation agreement detailing the future relationship between the two.

The agreement was signed by President of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen and President of the European Council Charles Michel on 30 December and, on the same day, it received the royal assent by the UK

Parliament.

President Von der Leyen defined it as “a fair and balanced deal” and “the right and responsible thing to do for both sides”.

On 1 January, the UK officially left the EU single market and custom union and the new arrangements came into force. [According to POLITICO](#), the first days of Brexit already brought various inconveniences dealing with, among other things, supply chains, fresh products and international travel.

What is clear so far is that the hospitality sector in the UK will undoubtedly be impacted in its ability to recruit overseas workers and by greater frictions in trade.

Freedom of movement was replaced with a new points-based immigration system designed to favour high-skilled workers over low-skilled ones – which make up the majority of workers in our sector. EU citizens with a salary lower than £20,480 will not be able to take a job in the country.

Moreover, despite the deal will not impose tariffs or quotas – with the exception of products violating the so-called rules of origin – it will surely complicate and increase the paperwork demanded importing foodstuff in the country.

This will greatly impact the restaurant sector relying on fresh products and will be particularly troublesome for small businesses. [The Scottish seafood sector, for instance, already lamented too many bureaucratic steps and potential delays](#) for fresh products supposed to arrive in the UK in 24 hours maximum.

[EU businesses have already called for a period of adaptation.](#)

11 January 2021



COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

Time to 'Go anywhere' with Ireland's ultimate Hotel Gift Card



In September 2020 the [Irish Hotels Federation \(IHF\)](#) launched a new [Book Direct](#) style gift card. With staycations all in vogue, the 'Go Anywhere Gift Card' from [Irelandhotels.com](#) is the ideal gift for any occasion. Accepted by hundreds of hotels and guesthouses throughout the country, it is Ireland's ultimate hotel gift card.

Supported by Fáilte Ireland, the 'Go Anywhere Gift Card' is all about giving the gift of a memorable holiday experience and discovering the very best of what Ireland has to offer – all while supporting local tourism and Irish businesses. The gift card can be delivered by email or post in a special gift box and offers tremendous flexibility with hundreds of hotel and guesthouse options – whether for a family getaway, a luxury stay in a destination hotel or a mini-break.

Commenting on the launch of the 'Go Anywhere Gift Card' from Irelandhotels.com, **IHF President Elaina Fitzgerald Kane** said: *"Irish hotels and guesthouses excel at creating truly memorable experiences for our guests, and that's why we're very excited to be launching this gift card today – bringing together hundreds of our member hotels and guesthouses to create a fantastic and really flexible gift experience. As a nation we are very generous when it comes to giving gifts and what better way to brighten up someone's day than a gift that opens up so many options for a breakaway in Ireland. And of course, it's a great way to support Irish tourism and local businesses."*

At the launch of the new "Go Anywhere Gift Card", Catherine Martin TD, Minister for Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport and the Gaeltacht said: *"The 'Go Anywhere Gift Card' is a wonderful idea for a gift, especially with the added benefits of the Stay and Spend Scheme. It will afford the recipient an opportunity to explore and discover the wonderful hotels available all over our beautiful country and the excellent value on offer."*

Paul Kelly, CEO, Fáilte Ireland stated: *"The 'Go Anywhere Gift Card' is a very welcome initiative by the Irish Hotels Federation which Fáilte Ireland is extremely pleased to support. The card will make a perfect gift particularly as we enter the run-in to Christmas and we hope it will encourage and inspire people to take breaks and enjoy the abundance of wonderful hotels across the country."*

The 'Go Anywhere Gift Card' can be purchased online and can be delivered electronically, or in a special gift box. The gift card also facilitates the receiver booking directly with the hotel or guesthouse, which can have additional benefits such as special offers and reduced prices not available through third-party sites.

4 January 2021



DIGITAL ISSUES

Federalberghi and Nexi collaborate towards safer and more transparent online transactions for Italian hotels

Federalberghi and [Nexi](#) – leader PayTech in Italy – collaborated to realise the initiative “**Incasso senza pensieri**” (“Carefree collection”): a new service to improve online transactions’ quality and safety.

“Over 60% of bookings are done online” stated Mr. Alessandro Nucara, Director General of Federalberghi “therefore, we feel a responsibility to offer to both hotels and tourists safe and effective payment methods that will safeguard all parties.”



Mr. Dirk Pinamonti, Nexi’s Head of e-commerce, instead, stressed how “today, over 70% of disputes related to online bookings concerns payments not recognized by credit cardholders. Our goal is to significantly reduce this kind of dispute and allow hotels to offer their clients a simple, safe and transparent experience, from booking to checkout.”

The “*Incasso senza pensieri*” initiative allows to identify the contractors online and makes contract terms even more transparent. The first advantage is, therefore, a reduction in disputes, as this initiative will prevent misunderstandings, errors and opportunistic behaviours. The system will also help to manage possible disputes in an effective way – by decreasing the number of printed forms, working time and bureaucracy.

18 December 2020



EDUCATION & TRAINING

Supporting apprenticeships in light of COVID-19



The tourism and hospitality industry is facing an unprecedented crisis and the consequences are significant in all aspects of business life. **The Danish government fears that the economic consequences might lead to the termination of current apprenticeships, as well as reluctance to take in new apprentices in the near future.** In order to ensure the supply of vocational educated and trained staff once the crisis is over, business activity resumes and new skilled staff once again is needed, the Danish government has announced two initiatives.

- To ensure that both current and future apprenticeships in private companies are not terminated and that planned apprenticeships are still offered, the Danish government has introduced a **temporary wage subsidy scheme for private internships from 1 May to 31 December 2020**. The scheme will cover 75% of the wages of ongoing apprenticeships and 90% for new apprenticeships agreements in 2020.
- To counter the COVID-19 related challenges that would remain despite the wage compensation, an **'emergency school apprenticeship'** has been introduced effectively securing an apprenticeship for all waiters and receptionist.

11 January 2021



National Culinary Apprenticeships virtual Open Day

The [Irish Hotels Federation \(IHF\)](#), in collaboration with key stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industry, hosted a National Culinary Apprenticeships Virtual Open Day via Zoom in September. The event was a great success with good attendance from Career Guidance Counsellors, secondary and third-level students, job seekers and those currently working in the industry.

Click on the following links for a [recording of the event](#) and [related presentations](#).



4 January 2021



SUSTAINABILITY

Green and safe Responsible Travel Standards



“I feel Slovenia” recently developed a [“Manual on responsible travel standards in Slovenian tourism”](#): a series of solutions and tools to help Slovenian tourism and hospitality plan and tackle new health and sustainability challenges at this times of uncertainty.

The manual provides information on:

- Hygiene standards, measures and recommendations of the National Institute of Public Health that are applicable to the tourism industry in Slovenia;
- Opportunities that Slovenia, as an already well-established green, active and healthy destination, can provide at a time when tourists around the world are paying special attention to the choice of safer, customised and boutique tourist accommodations, programmes and experiences;
- Communication tools that under the general promise of Slovenia as a green and safe country highlight 10 key content areas that can also be used in your communications.

Visit the [“I feel Slovenia”](#) website to know more!

5 January 2021



Continued growth in the Green Key

In 2020 the [Green Key Ecolabel](#) has once again proved that it truly is an Ecolabel by the industry for the industry. Despite the current crisis, the Green Key has experienced astonishing growth in Denmark in 2020 as 18 new hotels, 4 new hostels, as well as 2 new conference centres, have been awarded the Ecolabel. This means that the Green Key in Denmark alone has increased the number of labels by 14% in a year, which for the industry, has been characterised by crisis and economic turmoil. This is not only good news for Green Key as an Ecolabel. It also stands as a testimony of the important role of private initiative in creating a more sustainable world.

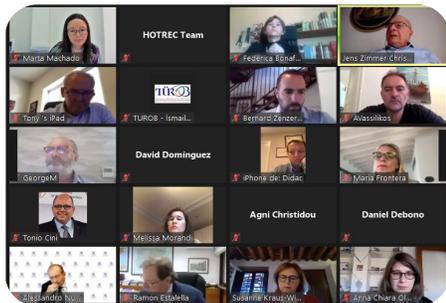


11 January 2021



EVENTS & TRADE SHOWS

HOTREC Internal Workshop: a Recovery Plan for the Hospitality sector (21 October 2020)



On 21 October 2020, HOTREC organised a virtual workshop to learn more about the **European Commission's short- and long-term instruments to support hospitality businesses**. The workshop invited all participants to share best practices and exchange views on digital and sustainability-related activities.

Mr. Eric Philippart, Deputy Director General at DG GROW (European Commission), advised Members on the best way to present a successful recovery plan at national level and

informed them on the several instruments available at national level to help the sector recover, namely:

- Recovery Plan
- State Aid
- SURE mechanism
- European Investment Bank
- Cohesion Funds Temporary reduction of VAT rates at national level

The agenda of the event, all presentations and main conclusions are available on the [related page of the HOTREC website](#).

7 December 2020



Recovery and Sustainability at the heart of the 4th International Hospitality Forum (23 November 2020)

On 23 November 2020, more than 1100 participants attended the [4th International Hospitality Forum](#). The event was organised by the [Hellenic Chamber of Hotels](#) (HCH) in partnership with [Phocuswright](#).

The Forum kicked off with a welcoming speech by the Greek Minister of Tourism, Mr. Harry Theoharis, and continued with an exclusive interview with Ms. Maud Bailly, CEO Southern Europe for Accor.



Dr. Peter O'Connor, Senior Market Analyst at Phocuswright, presented the results of a global study on the travel market according to which **the recovery of the sector should be quicker after news of the distribution of a vaccine**, with an expected increase by about 50% in 2021 and even a more promising scenario in 2022 and beyond.

During the first panel discussion on **"Strategies for Operating in a Post COVID-19 World"**, all speakers agreed that tourism will gradually start getting back on track in 2021, but clarified that the recovery will be measured in terms of quality (e.g. added value) rather than quantity

(e.g. the number of arrivals and overnight stays). To strongly recover, the industry will have to invest in three key points: i) strict compliance with the health protocols; ii) provision of digital content, services and experiences. and iii) sustainability.

The second-panel discussion on “**Sustainability – The Future of Travel**” stressed how sustainability must be seen as an opportunity for the hospitality sector – not just as some type of obligation.

“The International Hospitality Forum is being held for the 4th year running, which goes to show that the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels has managed to create an institution with international reach, further adapted to and reinforced by the use of new digital technologies.” Commented Mr. Alexandros Vassilikos, President of the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels. *“These allow us to host internationally recognised speakers, but also offer us the opportunity to welcome participants from across the globe. The success of the Forum meets a fundamental mission of the HCH we are deeply committed to: to provide the necessary know-how and information to our members, so they may make the right business decisions.”*

14 December 2020



HOTREC Webinar on Cohesion Funds (9 December 2020)



The online workshop on Cohesion Policy Funds organised by HOTREC on 9 December 2020 gave to the participants a unique opportunity to discuss:

- The mechanisms deployed by the European Commission to help hospitality businesses to overcome the COVID-19 crisis under the umbrella of the Cohesion Policy;
- Finding out projects being developed in this field at national level, and;
- Engaging in a Cohesion Policy project.

Mr. Laurent de Mercey, Policy Officer at DG Regio (European Commission), Mr. Alvaro Carrillo, General Director at ITH (CEHAT, Spain) and Ms. Maarika Liivamagi, General Manager at EHRA (Estonia) participated as speakers and contributed to the workshop’s goal of clarifying various aspects of Cohesion Policy Funds.

The main outcome of the meeting, as well as all presentations, can be found [here](#).

17 December 2020

