

HSU press release – DSA proceedings against Booking.com

Real stars, real hotels

Hotelstars Union offers Booking.com a crucial key for free to tackle fake listings. The automated cross-check against official star ratings would verify not only the category, but also whether a hotel actually exists. Official stars prevent fraud.

Brussels/Berlin, 21 October 2026 – The European Commission has today launched [formal proceedings under the Digital Services Act](#) against Booking.com. It is investigating whether the platform has adequately assessed and mitigated the risks posed by fraudulent and non-compliant listings, as well as by phishing. The Hotelstars Union (HSU) welcomes the proceedings and is offering a solution that is ready for immediate use.

Hotel stars are one of the most important criteria for guests when choosing a hotel. This was most recently explicitly confirmed by the [Dutch College van Beroep](#). Anyone placing a fake hotel listing therefore uses stars in their advertising, as they remain the most important filter. This is precisely where an automated cross-check against the HSU's official classification data comes into play. Every establishment with HSU stars has been inspected on site by a national classification body. The cross-check thus confirms not only the star category, but also the name, address, and, crucially, the establishment's existence. If providers can no longer enter stars themselves, a fake listing loses its most effective advertising tool.

Other platforms have demonstrated for years that this is technically feasible. Tripadvisor has been cross-referencing the HSU's official star data daily since June 2022 and displays only verified stars in HSU member countries. Expedia cites the HSU as the source of its star ratings in HSU member states. But Booking.com continually chose to display stars based on unverified information provided by providers and is for questionable decisions like this one consequently the subject of formal DSA proceedings.

Booking.com presents the star ratings consistently and clearly alongside the hotel names and uses them as a search filter. In doing so, the platform adopts the information as its own and must vouch for its accuracy. This is where the DSA comes into play: under Article 6(3), a marketplace is liable under consumer law even if it presents information in a way that third parties attribute to the marketplace. The [Dutch Reclame Code Commissie](#) already deemed the star ratings on Booking.com misleading in November 2025. The appeal body confirmed this assessment in April 2026. That same month, the HSU again called on Booking.com to cooperate. The platform continues to refuse to link up with the official data.

"Booking.com does not need to invent new technology to protect guests from fake hotel listings. Verified data is already available; other platforms have used it for years. Anyone who prominently uses star ratings to advertise a hotel has to take responsibility for ensuring they are accurate," explains Markus Luthe, President of the Hotelstars Union.

The HSU calls on the Commission to make the cross-checking of star ratings against official classification data a key component of any potential remedial measures or commitments. The HSU is offering Booking.com free access to its data in all member states.

Consumer protection can be that simple. You just have to want it.

About the Hotelstars Union

Under the auspices of HOTREC Hospitality Europe, the Hotelstars Union comprises the hotel associations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Founded in 2009, it has operated since 2021 as an association under Belgian law, with its headquarters in Brussels. The Hotelstars Union reliably classifies hotels into categories from 1 to 5 stars based on a standardised set of criteria. With over 22,000 classified hotels and 1.2 million classified hotel rooms across its member countries, it offers transparency, quality and security for guests and hoteliers alike. Further information is available at www.hotelstars.eu.