

# HOTEL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS UNITED IN SEVEN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



A unification of hotel classification systems has started in Prague where representatives of hotel associations from 7 European countries founded a Hotelstars Union. Its members will use the same criteria to determine how many stars a hotel should get.

Hotel stars are a well-known tool for classifying the quality of accommodation world wide. However, the ranking is not unified and as a result, **a visitor may receive much different experience from hotels that have the same number of stars.** A five-star hotel in Uganda will most likely provide a different set of services than a five-star hotel in the U.S.

However, the problematic situation seems to be changing now. A new scheme has been recently founded under the patronage of HOTREC - Hotels, Restaurants & Café in Europe (a society of EU hotel and restaurant associations). On their meeting in Prague this December the hotel associations of **Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland** established a "Hotelstars Union".

More than 17,000 hotels that are situated in these seven countries could be thus soon categorised based upon the same criteria. The new classification system will be launched in Austria, Czech Republic, Germany and Sweden from 1 January 2010. Hungary will implement the categorization in 2010, and Switzerland and the Netherlands in 2011.

So far, the countries use different classification schemes but as soon as they start to use the new system, it will be much easier for a guest to pick a hotel based on the number of its stars. The common classification is based on 270 criteria, which are based on guest surveys. Among the judged criteria is e.g. the width of beds, Internet-PC in the room, safe in the room or ironing service.

The idea of common hotel classification is not new but only now it can be actually implemented at least in some European countries. **Other members of HOTREC are invited to join the Hotelstars Union and it is expected that the membership will grow to 15 within two years.**

Not everyone, however, agrees with the idea of the common classification. For example, **the International Hotel & Restaurant Association (IH&RA) considers current national hotel classification and grading systems as sufficient.** They point out that standards as well as customer expectations vary country to country. According to the IH&RA, one single 5-star-system cannot capture the entire diversity of hotels worldwide. They also add that the cost for creation of a global standard would be extremely high.

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