

# GERMAN HOTEL INDUSTRY FIGHTS FAKE STARS



The hotel industry in Germany is no longer willing to tolerate false information associated with hotel stars. Since autumn 2016, the German Hotel and Restaurant Association Dehoga identified a total of 2,034 cheating hoteliers, who improved their star rating without any valid certification.

German hotel industry will not tolerate any more frauds regarding the star ratings. **Not long ago, two hotels were fined for falsely improving their star ratings.** By the end of last year, 558 cheaters were caught by the association. 473 hotels applied for the Dehoga stars. 403 cases were handed over to the Centre for Fighting Unfair Competition. The center claims to have initiated 106 cases of misleading advertisement.

Dehoga awards stars based on a comprehensive list of criteria. The classification is valid for three years. Currently, just under 8,300 companies are awarded. In autumn 2016, the association introduced a regular and automated evaluation of all homepages of German hotels.

According to Dehoga, ignorance often plays a role. "Many hoteliers did not seem aware that an arbitrary increase of stars is not allowed according to the law," a spokeswoman of the association said. Sometimes an operator change also causes delays. There are also borderline cases, for example stars in the family crest of hotel owners. About 600 unclear cases pursued by Dehoga are further not legally addressed.

However, some go to court based on the evaluation of the Centre for Fighting Unfair Competition. **"Hotel companies that have been legally convicted of faking star ratings must ensure that the advertising is removed or changed,"** said the CEO of the Centre. "If this does not happen, severe penalties are imminent."

An example of this fine is when the district court of Dessau-Roßlau imposed a €1500 fine against a hotel operator. According to the court, despite the conviction, he again advertised stars on his site without valid classification.

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