

HOTREC's 92nd General Assembly in Cork: Strengthening Competitiveness and Resilience of European Hospitality

Hospitality leaders representing over 30 countries across Europe gathered today in Cork, Ireland, for HOTREC's 92nd General Assembly, co-hosted by the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF) and the Restaurants Association of Ireland (RAI).

The Assembly takes place at a critical time for Europe's hospitality industry, which represents over 2 million businesses and more than 10 million jobs. Discussions focused on rising operational costs, regulatory developments, sustainability, digitalisation, labour and skills, as well as the broader geopolitical and economic outlook.

In a keynote video address, **European Commissioner Michael McGrath** highlighted the sector's importance: *"Tourism and hospitality are vital to the European economy and growth in every region. [...] Beyond the economic contribution, the hospitality sector plays a vital role in Europe's cultural life, shaping how people experience and connect with our diverse traditions and communities."*

He also acknowledged the challenges facing the sector: *"But I'm also very much aware of the challenges you face, from rising energy costs to climate pressures and sustainability concerns. [...] Last year we proposed a measure setting a target to cut red tape costs by 35% so that entrepreneurs can focus their energy into their business and not bureaucracy. [...] The current energy situation we know has caused a lot of disruption for European citizens and businesses, including your members."*

Cynthia Ní Mhurchú, Member of the European Parliament, commented:

"It's encouraging to see the strong momentum around European tourism at the moment, particularly ahead of the Irish Presidency. In my discussions with stakeholders and colleagues, there is a clear sense that the EU should now evolve from being primarily a 'promoter' to becoming a true 'facilitator' of European tourism. I hope this shift will be reflected in the upcoming Tourism Strategy."

Alexandros Vassilikos, President of HOTREC, stated:

"Resilience is part of the hospitality sector's DNA. But resilience alone is not enough. At a time of heightened geopolitical uncertainty in the Middle East and beyond, our businesses are facing inflationary pressures and constrained aviation routes, creating a highly volatile operating environment for a sector mostly made up of SMEs. What is needed now, more than ever, is a clear policy framework that genuinely supports hospitality and tourism SMEs and provides direction for the future."



HOTREC's General Assembly in Cork comes at a timely moment, offering our members, including our Irish colleagues, a valuable opportunity to exchange views, assess the challenges ahead and coordinate our collective response."

Marie Audren, Director General of HOTREC, added:

"At a time of increasing economic and regulatory pressure, Europe's hospitality sector needs a clear commitment from policymakers to walk the talk on reducing the regulatory burden. Our SMEs cannot remain competitive if they are overwhelmed by complexity and administrative costs. HOTREC will continue to bring together the sector and advocate for practical and balanced solutions that allow hospitality SMEs to thrive."

The General Assembly programme includes a high-level panel on tourism and SME competitiveness, an exchange on the economic and geopolitical outlook, and discussions on the next generation of hospitality professionals, alongside internal statutory meetings and EU policy updates.

HOTREC warmly thanks its Irish hosts, the Irish Hotels Federation and the Restaurants Association of Ireland, for their hospitality and excellent organisation of the event.

Members will reconvene for HOTREC's 93rd General Assembly in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 12 to 14 October 2026.

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