



## **Slovakia joins as the 22nd member – call for a Europe-wide, consistent and transparent display of hotel star ratings – time to put an end to misleading star fudging on Booking.com!**

**Brussels/Dublin, 21 April 2026 – At its 11th General Assembly in Cork, the Hotelstars Union (HSU) has admitted Slovakia to its circle of members. Substantively, the focus once again was on the non-transparent presentation of hotel star ratings on booking platforms. The HSU and its member countries are calling on Booking.com to end the misleading display of hotel stars in Europe and to show only officially awarded ratings.**

“We are delighted to officially welcome Slovakia as an associate member to our stars family. The transition from observer status to becoming the 22nd member of the Hotelstars Union is a strong sign of European cooperation, trust, and shared quality standards in the hotel industry,” emphasises Markus Luthé, President of the Hotelstars Union. With the introduction of the Hotelstars Union star classification system, Slovakia will in future classify its hotels according to the harmonised criteria, thereby making an important contribution to greater cross-border comparability and transparency for guests across Europe.

The Slovak side also sees the accession as a consistent next step. “Since 2019, we have closely followed the work of the Hotelstars Union as an observer country. Admission as an associate member represents a logical and significant milestone for us,” says Marek Harbuľák, President of the Slovak Association of Hotels and Restaurants (SAHR). “The introduction of the common HSU criteria strengthens quality assurance in our country while at the same time increasing the international comparability of our hotels – to the benefit of both businesses and guests.”

In addition to expanding its circle of members, the HSU General Assembly focused in particular on the continued lack of a uniform presentation of official star categories on booking platforms – most notably on Booking.com.

This follows a recent decision by the Dutch advertising authority confirming that consumers expect hotel star ratings to be based on an objective classification system. Where such transparency is absent, this amounts to misleading information.

“In our view, the current presentation of hotel star ratings on the platform undermines consumer trust. This star fudging must stop,” demands President Luthé. In many countries, Booking.com continues to display stars that are not based on a recognised classification. Instead, non-classified properties are shown with scores or self-assigned star ratings – a practice that is difficult for users to understand.



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The Hotelstars Union therefore calls on Booking.com to:

- display stars only for officially classified hotels
- clearly distinguish non-classified accommodation
- ensure transparent and consistent presentation across Europe

“Consumers must be able to rely on star ratings having meaning and relevance everywhere. We therefore urge Booking.com to finally adapt its practices accordingly,” Markus Luthe concludes.

### **About Hotelstars Union**

Under the patronage of HOTREC Hospitality Europe, the hotel associations of Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, and Switzerland form the Hotelstars Union. It was founded in 2009 and has operated as an association under Belgian law, with its headquarters in Brussels since 2021. The Hotelstars Union reliably classifies hotels in categories from 1 to 5 hotel stars based on a common catalogue of criteria. With more than 22,000 classified hotels or 1.2 million classified hotel rooms in its member countries, it offers transparency, quality and security for guests and hoteliers. You can find detailed information at [www.hotelstars.eu](http://www.hotelstars.eu).

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