

PRESS RELEASE



#EHMA17 FROM DISRUPTION TO EVOLUTION

Participants in the 44th annual General Meeting of EHMA (European Hotel Managers Association), discussed the theme “Disruptors in Luxury Hospitality” and agreed on the need to be disruptive in order to grow. Key speakers stressed the essential role of technology and how emotional hotelier intelligence and the use of data are to be balanced to stay successfully in business.

Meetings like the Ehma annual conference are very important to keep members informed and regularly exchange opinions and experiences in today’s very fast changing and competitive business environment. Hotels are more and more exposed to various disruptors, that usually come from outside the industry and build on new ideas that reimagine a service or a product in response to client desires and needs. “It is important to stop worrying too much about the effects and instead focus on how to outdo them, advises Ehma President, Hans E. Koch, “Think of doing something disruptive of your own!”.

The event was held at the **Grand Hotel Huis ter Duin in Noordwijk**, a seaside destination on the North Sea close to Amsterdam. On Friday March 17, **Ehma President, Hans E. Koch**, officially opened the institutional part of the meeting. The welcome was given by the President of the **Organizing Committee**, Albert Rouwendal, Ehma National Delegate The Netherlands and General Manager of the Mövenpick Hotel Amsterdam, Bernard Lensink, GM of Landgoed Duin & Kruidberg Santpoort, and Stephan Stokkermans, GM of the Grand Hotel Huis ter Duin in Noordwijk aan Zee.

Hans Koch immediately set the tone of the conference, that proved to be **focused on technology as the main source of disruption**, by commenting how important social media are for Ehma and how the **Forum** of the new website provides a platform to broaden, develop and maintain the network among members.

Twenty nine new members were presented. Tom Kline, Executive Director of Executive Education at Cornell University **drew six courses** for their Professional Development Program among them. The **six lucky winners** were: René Bornman (GM The Dylan Amsterdam), Tomo Ceh (GM Union Hotels

Ljubljana), Sjoert Klein Schiphorst (Palais Noordeinde The Hague), Domenico Miloni (GM Hotel Quirinale Rome), Brita Rohl (GM Hotel Seven One Seven Amsterdam).

The aim of the Association is to be **attractive to young people into Ehma**, who represent potential future members. La **Fondation pour la Formation Hotelière** is willing to support Ehma in this task with initiatives to create additional awareness of the Association **among young future hoteliers from Eastern Europe**, providing stage/management trainee programs of 3/6 months in Ehma members hotels.

Also very important is the **partnership with hotel schools** such as Ecole Hotelière Lausanne, Cornell University, Stenden Hotel Management School, Hotel School The Hague, and Glion Institute of Higher Education. Ehma **Dario dell'Antonia Award at EHL** and **Nadio Benedetti Award at Glion** allow deserving students to be invited to attend the annual General Meeting.

Manuel Otero, National Delegate Ehma Spain, announced that **the 45th annual General Meeting** will take place in February 2018 at the Grand Meliá Don Pepe and Puente Romano Beach Hotel & Spa in **Marbella**, Costa del Sol, Andalusia. A Spanish area that with more than 70 golf courses is the first destination in Europe for golf lovers. **Candidates for the 2019 General Meeting** are Hamburg and Paris.

HOTREC, the association representing the hotel, restaurant and café industry at European level, enjoys a special relationship with Ehma and its President, **Susanne Kraus-Winkler**, is a regular keynote speaker commenting about the most important latest issues affecting the industry today.

"We are living in **difficult times** of unclear future scenarios", remarked Ms. Kraus-Winkler. "In addition to macro problems in politics and economy, the hospitality industry is disrupted through **digitalization and technology innovations**. Beside the lack of skilled labour, bureaucracy and taxation, when it comes to distribution, rate parity clauses, unfair B2B practices, sharing economy, property rights, we have to deal with these issues to stay competitive".

Gijsbregt Brouwer, owner of Tyrscopy, a young company providing online content & activation proven to be successful because of the combination of both a smart strategy and cutting edge technology, agreed that **hotels should take back control of their business** and outlined the rules of the game to succeed in few steps: use influencers and the hotel's own website to tell real stories with real people that guests can share; ensure that staff is constantly nice to customers; activate the community and cooperate with authorities and other institutions.

The role of schools was emphasized by **Dr. Craig Thompson**, Head of Stenden Hotel Management School, the largest hotel school in Europe with 2700 pupils coming from very different countries in the world. With the incredible speed, scale and complexity of change that the world is experiencing, as part of the solution, Stenden is **introducing a revolutionary approach to education** in order to prepare graduates to an ever changing world.

Valérie de Corte, Alumni and Industry Relations Director Ecole Hotelière Lausanne, **raffled two courses**. Alessandra Bragoli, Castille Paris, won participation in "Women and Leadership in the 21st century", and Xavier Collange, Bristol Geneva, won an Executive Education module.

The **Beach House the Breakers of Grand Hotel Huis ter Duin** hosted the first evening where the **Mayor of Noordwijk** welcomed all participants.

Rogier van der Sande, Deputy King Commissioner opened the business sessions on Saturday March 19, dedicated to Education.

The Educational Day was **brilliantly moderated by Sander Allegro**, Director Industry Relations Hotel School The Hague. Speakers from leading companies in this field discussed the major trends and developments that cause disruption, analyzed the distribution issue and explored the consequences of disruption.

Hans Meyer, co-founder Zoku Amsterdam, illustrated a **most innovative hospitality model** that can be best described as a hybrid between a home and an office. The word “Zoku” is Japanese for family or tribe. The idea was to create the most desired home-base where global nomads and ideas can connect and grow, mostly targeted to millennials and women, who are becoming more and more important. **Zoku** is not only a loft, but **a space where people can work and live as well as play and socialize**. The atmosphere is entirely informal, barriers between staff and guests are taken out, and people are encouraged to mingle and share meals in diverse social areas that invite effortless interaction.

One of the big issues of today is sustainability. **Emiel Hendriksen**, Sales Manager Benelux Tesla Motors, a company founded in 2003 based in California, explained the company mission: accelerate the world’s transition to sustainable energy by **using the sun energy for cars provided with autopilot with full self driving capacity**. Sales are now at a record high level, and Tesla is building a Gigafactory in Sparks NV, which is the largest building in the world, producing at the moment 2000 cars a year but planning for a million in 2020.

The outlook for the future of hospitality was further discussed in a **panel made up of three hotel school representatives**, questioning whether globalization will fragment the hospitality industry; how hotel schools can react to modern trends and change; and how the education system itself will be transformed to better interact with students, who are disruptors today and the hotel guests of tomorrow.

The panel was composed by **Michel Rochat**, CEO Ecole Hotelière Lausanne; **Susanne Stolte**, President Board of Directors, Hotelschool The Hague; and **Klaas Wybo van de Hoek**, Vice President of Stenden University of Applied Sciences.

Peter Verhoeven, Managing Director Europe, Middle East and Africa Booking.com, remarked how from its beginning in 1996 Booking.com has become in twenty years **a giant working with one million hotel properties**. Its mission is to empower people to experience the world. Verhoeven’s presentation focused on how **Booking.com uses data to improve customer experience** every day, thanks to **artificial intelligence**, ie. the ability to automatically detect a pattern and develop it in solutions. His advice to hoteliers is to get and use data to make right decisions, experiments and to improve; and that **emotion is a key in order to engage the customers**. However today’s market is so challenging and tech moves so fast that it is essential to find partners to go ahead.

Booking.com direct antagonist, **Kristian Valk**, founder of Hotelchamp, outlined the future of direct revenue and advised ways to increase direct bookings and guest engagement by using smart technology. With a majority of people booking hotels online with OLTAs, considering that in the last 5 years mobile bookings grew from 11 to 40%, technology has become the ultimate disruptor, and globally **hotels are searching for solutions to improve sales through direct channels**. The answer is personalization. **Personalization** makes the online user experience unique, relevant and adjusted to every customer’s needs. Hotels should use **big data analysis** to improve their offerings by **profiling the customers**. Getting direct bookings not only saves a tremendous amount of money in commissions, but direct bookers are more loyal, spend more and give more and better reviews.

A group specialized in providing innovative sustainable cleaning, sanitation and hygiene solutions, was back at the Ehma annual General Meeting with valuable support and ideas for top-line hoteliers. **Dr. Ilham Kadri**, President Diversey Care and Senior Vice President Sealed Air, is convinced that collaborating with hotels, Sealed Air Diversey Care contributes to **a profitable hospitality industry that puts the guests and the environment first**. She illustrated “**Internet of Clean**”, a platform that connects machines, dispensers, sensors, beacons, and other smart devices to improve safety and operational performance, visibility of assets, task prioritization, reduced use of water and/or chemicals, and increased guest satisfaction.

Sealed Air Diversey Care is putting more and more technology into cleaning and has **introduced robots, products of artificial intelligence**, to perform cleaning tasks. Kadri looks at hoteliers as **strategic partners** and believes that with its potential reduction in energy, water and waste, the

hospitality industry can make a huge **positive impact on the environment**. Finally, it should be considered that, though practically invisible, **the cleaning industry employs globally 800 million workers and 1 million staff in hospitality housekeeping**.

Beside **Ilham Kadri**, the final panel of the day consisted of **Madigan Pratt**, President MP&A Advertising Marketing Luxury Hotels.com; **Dennis Spitra**, Senior Business Development Manager STR Hotel Market Data & Benchmarking; and **Peter Agel**, Global Segment Leader Hotels. **Distribution channels and OLTA's** were again the topic discussed with a final advice to hoteliers to stay ahead; to watch changes such as the dramatic transformation taking place in the wholesale tour operating business; and to once a year go back to basics and focus on the most important things. To survive, value and differentiation are the keys.

During the **gala dinner** held at the end of the meeting on Saturday 19 in the Ballroom of the Grand Hotel Huis ter Duin, the President Hans Koch presented **three Awards**.

The **EHMA Sustainability Award by Diversey Care 2017** was conferred to **Andreas Georgiou**, General Manager of the Amathus Beach Hotel Limassol (Cyprus), who developed a complete **environmental energy-saving project** that assists the hotel in its daily operation thus creating sustainability for the community.

The winner of the **European Hotel Manager of the Year 2016 Award** is **Alessandro Cabella**, Managing Director of the prestigious Rome Cavalieri, Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts, for his mature competence and skills in professional management.

Last but not least, **Ehma Lifetime Achievement Award** honoured the extraordinary career of **Hans Wiedemann**, Managing Director & Delegate of the Board of the Badrutt's Palace St. Moritz recognized as an icon of the European hotellerie.

Meanwhile, the **social program** brought accompanying participants during the day to visit the beautiful city of Amsterdam.

Many sponsors have participated making possible the organization of such extraordinary event. The business lunch was dedicated to them and President Hans E. Koch on the occasion thanked all supporting companies and representatives.

EHMA in brief

EHMA was **founded in Rome in 1974** by a small group of top quality hotel properties general managers of the Italian capital. The European Hotel Managers Association aims **to improve qualification of professionals** through training in view of increasing the standards of services to be provided to guests. At present the Association gathers about **410 general managers** of the most prestigious hotels in **29 countries** that make a total of **300 represented hotels, 80,000 rooms, and 62,000 employees**. Members meet once a year to discuss about shared themes such as: new technologies, trends, issues, relations, European hotel data and market search. EHMA admission requires a **minimum of ten-year experience in the hotel sector**.

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