

PRESS RELEASE

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE OF THE HOTEL INDUSTRY
AT THE 39TH EHMA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IN VIENNA



More than 150 managers of European deluxe and first category hotels, members of the European Hotel Managers Association (EHMA), take stock of the present situation and draw new paths for the future development of hospitality.

Set against the backdrop of the splendid capital of the Austria-Hungarian Empire and its magnificent palaces, Radisson Blu Palais, Radisson Blu Style and Steigenberger Herrenhof hotels hosted from March 29th to April 1st 2012 the EHMA General Meeting, drawing a large attendance. Among others, two key issues - new technologies and social media - have been highlighted and broadly discussed during the meeting.

Peter Bierwirth, President of EHMA, pointed out that “more surprisingly than one can imagine, hotel properties and management are deeply involved in the relentless technological innovation of high-tech devices. Tools become more and more interactive, tourists and businessmen alike are increasingly choosing their accommodation according to the best available in-house technology.” A true revolution has already begun, internet connection and access – preferably Wi-Fi and free of charge – download times and docking options for laptop and tablets to get a movie or our favourite book, today are far more important than breakfast and in room TV.

Everyday tools and devices such as mobile phones, laptops and tablets, kindles, iPhones and Ipads are increasingly more in number but, at the same, they get smaller in size. In view of this, hotel room design needs to be adapted and renewed: guestrooms and beds gets larger and more comfortable, writing desk become “multitasking” and accessorized. Energy saving, eco-sustainability and security are also kept into account and progressively envisaged.

Social media have become essential. Hotel management cannot but take into account comments, votes and ratings that are posted everyday in the internet along with blogs and Twitter and Facebook, and so on.

The École Hôtelière de Lausanne organized the **University Day**. Professor **Ian Millar**, information technology and hospitality expert, stressed the strategic role of new technologies for the future of hôtellerie. Professor **Horatiu Tudori**, talked on “*Which Revenue Management for tomorrow?*” in order to understand which are the best strategies to apply to be profitable in such a difficult financial context.

On March 30th the **Educational Day** saw the presence of eminent speakers. Opening remarks were delivered by Petra Stolba, CEO National Tourist Office and Christian Mutschlechner, CEO Vienna Convention Bureau. **Ted Teng**, President & CEO The Leading Hotels of the World, one of the greatest exponents of the hotel industry, affirmed “luxury is never static” “luxury today will be standard tomorrow and will lead the way to yet higher standards. Luxury is about how guests feel about themselves when they are consuming”, Teng added. His suggestion is “in order to see the luxury of the future, look to the fundamentals of luxury of the present and past and apply the future technologies to these fundamentals”.

New acronyms deriving from hi-tech such as NFC (Near Field Communication) RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) have entered everyday vocabulary and feature new in-room devices such as remote controls for AC, drapery and window blinds but also voice recognition door access control systems which replace simple door key cards, credit cards swipes for the minibar and so on. Thus, according to Teng, technology is needed in every field so as to satisfy the most demanding guest and make him perceive that he is enjoying services to the highest standards and in a unique exclusive setting.

Bill Carroll, senior lecturer at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, talked about new challenges for the hotel management and also of globalizations and new trends. “Only those who are able to manage and cope with change will survive just like Darwin’s theory has predicted”, Carroll concluded.

Peter Joehnk and Corinna Kretschmar-Joehnk, founders of Joi Design in Hamburg, talked about how the new generation of ‘bleisure’ (business & leisure) travellers affect contemporary hotel design. **Gregor Jasch**, PlanB Advertising Agency Vienna, presented “*The Art of Storytelling as a hotel brand experience*” that is the need to apply distinctive features in order to make a hotel stand out with respect to its competitors. Afternoon panel theme was “*Hotel of the Future – between fashion and mega trends. How to navigate to success*”, moderated by Professor **Ray Iunius**, École Hôtelière de Lausanne.

On March 31st **Peter Bierwirth**, president of EHMA, opened the **General Meeting** with **Verena Forstinger**, chairman of the Organising Committee and General Manager of Radisson Blu Style Hotel in Vienna and **Kurt Dohnal**, EHMA National Delegate for Austria and Eastern Europe. **Sixteen new EHMA members or present at a General Meeting for the first time** were officially welcomed by the assembly: Ivan Artolli, Rocco Forte Hotels, London; Afroditi Arvaniti, NJV Athens Plaza; Sonja Bohrer, Courtyard by Marriott Wien Messe, Vienna; Walter Brandner, Hotel Smolka, Hamburg; Fotis Fakes, Mitsis Blue Domes Resorts & Spa, Kos; Andreas Georgiou, Four Seasons Hotel, Limassol; Rogier M. Hurkmans, Swissôtel Bremen; Nicolas Meylan, Mövenpick Hotel & Casino Geneva, Aris Neofytidis, The Met Hotel, Thessaloniki; Tomi Peitsalo, Radisson BLU Hotels &

Resorts, Helsinki; Elisabeth Perwanger, Steigenberger Hotel Herrenhof, Vienna; Fernando Rojo Nieto, Barvikha Hotel & Spa, Moscow; Spiridon Sarantopoulos, Steigenberger Grandhotel Petersberg, Königswinter; Peter J. Schoenenberger, Mövenpick Resort & Marine Spa Sousse; Thies Sponholz, Roccoforte Hotel de Rome, Berlin; George Stamatiou, Porto Carras Grand Resort, Chalkidiki.

Sonja Bohrer, Fotis Fakes and Elisabeth Perwanger won free attendance to three PDP (Professional Development Program) courses which were offered by Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. The presence of David Wu, **G.K.I.A.** - Golden Keys International Alliance, China - founded in 2003 counting 200 members all over the world - testified the international prestige of the Association.

Ezio Indiani, EHMA Italian National Delegate announced that **Milan will host** the next **General Meeting from April 25 to 28 2013**, with a beautiful “Nessun dorma” tenor live performance and a video (www.ehma-milan2013.com). The Principality of Monaco will host the 2014 General Meeting.

The Gala Dinner was held in the prestigious and imposing Hofburg Imperial Palace, the Habsburg’s principal residence until 1918 and currently official residence of the President of Austria and museum. **Mario Ferraro, General Manager of Molino Stucky Hotel in Venice** was awarded **Hotel Manager of the Year 2011**. The new “**EHMA Sustainability Award by Diversey**” was won by **Veikko Vuoristo, Hotel Haikko Manor & Spa in Porvoo, Finland**.

Dinner with Austrian typical food and fine wine tastings pleasantly marked the end of working days, to spread the knowledge of delicious products of the hosting country.

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