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## ANDREAS KEESE, GENERAL MANAGER OF HOTEL SACHER WIEN, WINS THE EHMA BEST PRACTICES 2025 AWARD



**Panos Almyrantis** (President of The European Hotel Managers Association), **Andreas Keese**, (General Manager of Hotel Sacher Wien) and **Yamel Henriksen** (AHLEI)

London, 13 March 2026 – The European Hotel Managers Association (EHMA) has honoured **Mr Andreas Keese**, General Manager of **Hotel Sacher Wien**, with its prestigious “**EHMA Best Practices 2025**” Award. The accolade recognises an outstanding, guest-centred approach to the theme “**How IoT and AI Help Hoteliers Enhance the Guest Experience**”, celebrating applied innovation that strengthens service quality while protecting the essence of human hospitality. The award was presented during the **52<sup>nd</sup> EHMA Annual General Assembly**, held at **The Dorchester** in London.

EHMA EUROPEAN HOTEL MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

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EHMA created the *Best Practices Award* to spotlight innovative initiatives that generate tangible benefits for guests and hotel teams. Mr Keese's submission stood out for its disciplined, service-led philosophy: technology should **sharpen quality, speed and insight**, while **human responsibility, empathy and tone remain constant**. It is a model that resonates strongly with the realities of luxury hospitality in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Commenting on the award, **Panos Almyrantis, President of EHMA, National Delegate for Greece & Cyprus, and Chief Growth & Commercial Officer at Ella Resorts in Athens**, highlighted the broader significance of this year's winning project:

"Best Practices is, at its core, about translating innovation into meaningful service — leveraging technology to enhance the guest experience, empower our teams, and preserve the warmth and authenticity that define European hospitality. Andreas Keese has shown, with great clarity, how AI can elevate excellence while fully safeguarding the human touch that remains at the heart of our industry."

## A Showcase of Vienna's Heritage and Human-Centred Innovation

At **Hotel Sacher Wien**, **guest communication continues well beyond checkout**. Online feedback is treated as a natural extension of the guest journey, deserving the same care and attention as on-property interactions. As part of the winning Best Practices project, the hotel implemented an AI-enabled platform designed to help teams respond to guest reviews with greater **speed, consistency and nuance, without diluting human accountability**. Drafts generated by the system are **never sent automatically**: every response is **read, refined and approved by a team member**, who assumes full ownership whenever feedback is emotional, sensitive or complex.

The initiative delivered benefits far beyond efficiency. By consolidating reviews from multiple platforms into a single interface and analysing sentiment, language, volume and trends over time, the system strengthened the hotel's service intelligence. It enabled teams to spot recurring themes, anticipate emerging service gaps and identify meaningful opportunities for improvement — while freeing up time for **personalised follow-up and thoughtful service recovery**.

A second strand of the project showcased Hotel Sacher Wien's characteristically **pragmatic approach to innovation**: the introduction of an AI-powered voicebot deployed as a controlled experiment to improve speed and availability in guest communication while protecting the hallmarks of high-touch luxury service. The trial handled **2,362 guest calls**, resolving **50.3% autonomously** and absorbing **2,128 minutes (approximately 35.5**

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hours) of call handling—freeing Front Office, Concierge, Spa and Restaurant teams to focus on higher-value, emotional guest interactions.

Importantly, the project also demonstrated the discipline to stop what cannot scale responsibly. The *voicebot* contract was ultimately terminated not because the concept failed, but because there was no roadmap for deep system integration — an insight that underlines a broader operational truth: AI delivers sustainable value only when it is **embedded within the hotel ecosystems**, not added as a standalone layer.

**Key highlights of the winning Best Practices project include:**

- **Human-led AI guest communication**, where AI supports drafting while people retain full ownership of voice, empathy and decision-making.
- **One interface for multi-platform review management**, reducing missed interactions and improving response speed and consistency.
- **Stronger service intelligence**, using trend and sentiment analysis to identify recurring issues and drive targeted improvements.
- **Measured innovation in voice-led guest support**, demonstrating time savings and team relief without compromising luxury standards.
- **A “test, learn, refine” mindset**, grounded in integration, scalability and operational impact.

## AHLEI Scholarship Benefit

Thanks to EHMA's partnership with **AHLEI (American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute)**, the EHMA Best Practices 2025 winner has received a **complimentary scholarship** for the **Certified Hotel Administrator (CHA)** programme, as well as a **Certified Hospitality Manager (CHM)** programme scholarship for an emerging leader who collaborated on the Best Practices project — reinforcing EHMA's commitment to practical learning and leadership development.

## About Andreas Keese

**Andreas Keese** began his hospitality career as a chef, steadily progressing through operational leadership roles before joining **Hotel Sacher Wien** in 2017. He was appointed **General Manager in 2020**, bringing a people-centred leadership style shaped by discipline, craft and a deep respect for teamwork. An EHMA member since **2023**, he is guided by a clear conviction that culture is the foundation of service: “A great hotel is

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built by great people. As General Manager, my passion lies in creating an environment where excellence, warmth, and authentic Viennese hospitality can thrive every single day.”

## A Special Mention for the 2025 Finalists

EHMA extends its congratulations to the other finalists, whose projects reflect the breadth and ambition of applied innovation across Europe:

- **Manuel Otero (Owner, Hotel Inglaterra – Seville)**, recognised for an ambitious digital transformation programme combining IoT and AI to elevate guest experience, strengthen operational efficiency and reinforce long-term competitiveness, all while preserving the character and service culture of a historic, family-owned hotel.
- **Pedro Pinto (General Manager, Corpo Santo Hotel / Creator, Guest Guru System)**, recognised for an AI-powered approach that transforms real-time feedback and operational data into targeted, gamified training, enabling teams to master modern guest expectations while upholding the principle that technology supports service rather than replacing it.
- **Stefano Plotegher (CEO Palace Hotel Merano)**, recognised as a finalist for his contribution to this year’s Best Practices programme and its focus on practical, guest-journey-centred innovation.

## About the European Hotel Managers Association (EHMA)

Founded in Rome in 1974, the European Hotel Managers Association (EHMA) is a prestigious non-profit organisation committed to excellence in Europe’s luxury hospitality industry. With a membership of 500 top professionals overseeing more than 400 premier hotels across 24 countries, EHMA fosters leadership, innovation, and the highest service standards. Through educational initiatives, networking events, and industry research, EHMA drives knowledge-sharing and professional growth while shaping a sustainable, forward-thinking future for European hospitality.

Website: <https://ehma.com>

Event Website: <https://ehma.com/london2026/>

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