

# PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## EHMA 52<sup>ND</sup> AGM IN LONDON CHAMPIONS PROGRESS, LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION IN LUXURY HOSPITALITY



*The EHMA Management Council, together with the Organising Committee, opened the 52<sup>nd</sup> EHMA Annual General Assembly at The Dorchester in London.*

**London, 16 March 2026** – The European Hotel Managers Association (EHMA) held its 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) in London, United Kingdom, from 13 to 15 March 2026, uniting general managers and senior hospitality leaders from Europe’s most prestigious luxury and premium hotels. Under the theme **“Transforming Hotel Hospitality for a Thriving Future”**, the gathering explored how leadership, innovation, sustainability and technology are shaping the next chapter of European hospitality — while reaffirming the enduring, human essence at the heart of service excellence.

### Charting the Path Ahead

Under the continued leadership of **President Panos Almyrantis** (National Delegate for Greece & Cyprus and Chief Growth & Commercial Officer at Ella Resorts in Athens),

EHMA EUROPEAN HOTEL MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

[www.ehma.com/london2026](http://www.ehma.com/london2026)

# PRESS RELEASE



alongside **First Vice President Paweł Lewtak** and **Vice President Stephan Stokkermans**, the Association remains committed to pursuing the shared ambition to lead with vision, innovate with purpose and strengthen the standards that define European luxury hospitality.

“As EHMA looks to the future, we see transformation not as a disruption to be feared, but as a responsibility to be thoughtfully embraced,” said **Panos Almyrantis**. “This theme goes beyond a statement. It reflects our shared commitment to preserving the human essence at the heart of hospitality, while guiding our industry forward with clarity, purpose, and integrity.”

## Awards Recognising Excellence in Hospitality

Four prestigious awards were presented during the AGM, celebrating leaders whose work exemplifies excellence, integrity and forward-thinking performance:

- **European Hotel Manager of the Year 2026: Andreas Keese**, General Manager of **Hotel Sacher Wien** (Austria) – recognised for an exceptional leadership journey shaped by discipline, humility and people-first culture, coupled with strong operational performance at one of Europe’s most distinguished grand hotels.
- **EHMA Sustainability Award by Diversey 2026: Stephan Stokkermans**, Managing Director of **Grand Hotel Huis ter Duin** (The Netherlands) – honoured for an evidence-led “Responsible Luxury” strategy, combining measurable impact, independent verification and meaningful guest engagement while exceeding baseline European sustainability expectations.
- **EHMA Hans Koch Lifetime Achievement Award 2026: Francisco Pereira da Silva**, Owner and General Manager of **Hotel Albatroz Beach & Yacht Club** (Portugal) – recognised for a lifetime of dedication to hospitality excellence and decades of exemplary service and contribution to EHMA and its community.
- **EHMA Best Practices Award 2025: Andreas Keese**, General Manager of **Hotel Sacher Wien** (Austria) – awarded for the project “**How IoT and AI Help Hoteliers Enhance the Guest Experience**”, highlighting how digital tools can refine service precision, personalisation and predictive engagement, while strengthening operational intelligence. The programme also featured the **AHLEI scholarship benefit** supporting professional development.

# PRESS RELEASE



## Event Highlights and Future AGM Host City Announcement

The AGM officially opened on Friday, 13 March, at the prestigious **The Dorchester**, with the 52<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary General Meeting guiding members through key documents and reports, alongside Members' Time — an open forum reflecting EHMA's culture of dialogue, transparency and shared direction. A focal point of the afternoon was **EHMA Best Practices 2025**, exploring how IoT and AI are becoming practical tools for guest experience enhancement and sustainable operational performance.

A dedicated intervention on Artificial Intelligence by **Gianni Buonsante of Ingenia Direct** further deepened the conversation — positioning responsible AI adoption as a strategic opportunity when balanced with privacy, security and compliance, and when anchored in a human-centred approach to transformation.

Members also looked ahead with confidence, confirming **Cannes as the host city for the 53<sup>rd</sup> EHMA AGM in 2027**, followed by the announcement of **Athens as the host city for the 54<sup>th</sup> EHMA AGM in 2028**.

The afternoon's second official session at The Dorchester reinforced EHMA's inclusive, intergenerational spirit. **Senior Lecturer Ian Millar** introduced the **Young EHMA Group 2026** and — together with EHL Hospitality Business School — celebrated emerging talents through the **Young EHMA Awards**.

With official matters concluded, delegates gathered at **Raffles London at The OWO** for a vibrant Welcome Evening, setting the tone for a weekend defined by exchange, collegiality and renewed ambition.

"We were proud to welcome EHMA to London," said **Duncan Palmer**, Managing Director of Bvlgari Hotel London and Chairman of the Organising Committee EHMA London 2026. "Our city represents resilience, creativity and global perspective. It provided an inspiring environment in which to explore how our industry can evolve responsibly while preserving the values that define genuine luxury."

## Strategic Partnerships and Membership Growth

Strategic collaboration remained central to the London programme. **Brenda Collin**, Executive Vice President Europe at **Preferred Travel Group**, presented the key travel trends.

# PRESS RELEASE



EHMA officially welcomed 30 new members: **Susanne Åberg, Catherine Besse, Sandeep Bhalla, Pascal Billard, Laurence Bloch, Shaun Broers, Thomas Brugnatelli, Patrizia Candela, Alessandro Convertino, Simone D'Alessandro, Georgios Daskalakis, Gregory De Clerck, Grzegorz Gacek, Michael Jacobi, Oliver Key, Francisco Macedo, Kurt Macher, John McLean, Nicola Migheli, Friðrik Pálsson, Pierre-Louis Renou, Charles Richez, Trine Richter, Konstantinos Rokos, Sigita Rudzeviciene, Canio Sabia, Jannes Sörensen, Annetta Svoronou, Olivier Thomas, Tej Walia**, further enriching the association's vibrant community and bringing total membership to 500 distinguished hospitality leaders across Europe. **"EHMA – Shining Stars"**, a film by **Gianni Buonsante of Ingenia Direct**, celebrated the achievements of EHMA members in 2025.

Enriching the discussions, EHL Hospitality Business School, Nolan Cornell School of Hotel Administration and AHLEI provided valuable insights.

The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, together with Yamel Henriksen, marks an important step in strengthening shared commitment to excellence in hospitality education and professional development. This collaboration between EHMA and AHLEI, the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute, reaffirms a mutual dedication to empowering both current and future leaders with the skills and perspective needed to navigate an evolving industry.

## **Educational Day: "Transforming Hotel Hospitality for a Thriving Future"**

Held on Saturday, 14 March, at **The Dorchester**, the Educational Day Conference featured a forward-looking agenda with renowned speakers examining the strategic forces reshaping luxury hospitality — leadership, technology, sustainability, gastronomy and performance under pressure. Following **Mr Peter Hancock's (MC)** opening ceremony, EHMA President **Panos Almyrantis**, Chairman of the Organising Committee **Duncan Palmer**, and **Philippe Leboeuf, CEO of Dorchester Collection**, formally opened the session.

Key themes included:

- **Transformational leadership and human resources**, chaired by Professor **Dimitrios Buhalis** (Bournemouth University), with contributions from **Stefan Wissenbach** – (Hospitality's Golden Era: Culture Changes Everything!), **Jannes Sörensen** and **Philippe Clarinval** (Transformational Leadership), and **Niale McLoughlin** (The Source of Service), alongside the **EHMA Emerging Leaders Programme** presented by **Marco Truffelli** and **Dr Jan Ferris** of **RESILIRÉ Psychological Growth** emphasises the essential role of psychological safety and resilience "to Lead and Live Better".

# PRESS RELEASE



- **Smart Hospitality in the AI era**, exploring how artificial intelligence, data intelligence and smart systems can be harnessed responsibly — enhancing operational precision while safeguarding the human connection that defines true hospitality — with contributions from **Phil Le Brun** (Building Adaptive Organisations in the AI age), **Professor EHL Alessandro Inversini** (Human Capital AI Transformation) and **Tony Matharu** (Data-Technology, a Hotelier’s Perspective).
- **Food and Beverage for a brighter future**, featuring **Chef Ferran Adrià** (The Evolution of Fine Dining in Hospitality) and **Henry Chebaane** (Restaurant and Hospitality Design) highlighting how gastronomy, culinary identity and immersive experience design continue to shape lasting guest impressions.
- **Driving towards a sustainable future**, with speakers including **Christoph Steindorf** (Beyond the Stay), **Peter Andrews** (Redefining Value: Sustainability as Hospitality’s Growth Strategy), and **Ufi Ibrahim** (Financially Intelligent Sustainability), focused on measurable impact, ESG accountability and outcomes-driven environmental leadership.

The programme culminated with an address by **Brendan Hall**, world-renowned yachtsman and skipper, sharing insights on leadership under pressure and decision-making in uncertain environments — parallels that resonated strongly with the realities of modern hotel management (Delivering Excellence through Uncertainty and Change).

## Cultural Programme and Social Events

Accompanying guests enjoyed a specially curated London programme, offering privileged access to the city’s royal heritage, world-class culture and refined culinary scene.

Later that evening, **the prestigious Savoy** hotel hosted the Gala Dinner and commanded the spotlight during the Awards Ceremony — an iconic setting for EHMA’s most distinguished accolades, honouring leadership, integrity and visionary commitment within European hospitality. On Sunday, 15 March, the **Farewell Brunch at The Chancery Rosewood** brought the weekend to a warm and elegant close — an opportunity to reflect on shared experiences, strengthen new connections and depart with lasting memories of an inspiring AGM in the heart of London.

Throughout the weekend, London played host to European hospitality — bringing together visionary leaders, pioneering ideas and a shared commitment to shaping the future of luxury and premium hotel management.

# PRESS RELEASE



## Partner Acknowledgements

EHMA extends sincere thanks to the Organising Committee, led by Mr Duncan Palmer — Mr Luca Virgilio, Mr Lee Kelly, Mr Michael Voigt, Mr Francisco Macedo, Mr John McLean and Mr Anthony Lee — and to the sponsors and partners whose generous support made EHMA London 2026 possible: Acqua di Parma, AHLEI, Blastness, Canary Technologies, Casale del Giglio, De Cecco, Diversey – A Solenis Company, Dorelan, Dream&Charme, EHL – Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne, ESI – Executive Search International, France 24, Frette, Getpica, Ingenia Direct, Journal des Palaces, Kuohu Artesian Water, La Bottega Collective, Laurent Perrier, Lavazza, Markas, Maurel, Mepra, Nolan Cornell University, Preferred Hotels & Resorts, RESILIRĒ – Psychological Growth, Rivolta Carmignani, Scent Company, Villeroy & Boch, together with London sponsors Bournemouth University, Encore, Global Hospitality Services, Independent Hotel Show, John Nassari, Trip.Com.

## 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/>

For information, please contact:

**EHMA Press Office**

**Gianni Buonsante**

**Ingenia Direct**

**Mobile: +393356510124**

[gianni@ingeniadirect.com](mailto:gianni@ingeniadirect.com)

[www.ingeniadirect.com/en/](http://www.ingeniadirect.com/en/)

# PRESS RELEASE

