

Good morning to all,

In France, as most of you already know, when SYNHORCAT started a legal action in conjunction with other trade unions in front of French competition authority, against booking.com, Expedia, Agoda and HRS, we had one main goal: the total invalidation of rate parity clauses, which are the keystone for OTA's dominant position in France of course, but in the entire European market as well.

In our opinion, the decision taken on last Tuesday by the French competition authority, in coordination with the Italian and Swedish antitrust courts, on top of being curiously motivated, is totally unsatisfactory.

As of today, online rate parity clauses can still be enforced in France, as well as in Italy and Sweden.

In this context, the engagements taken by booking.com, but not by other OTAs, to abandon:

- Rate parity for hotels, but only for offline channels,
- Rate parity with other OTAs,
- Inventory parity,

Are just anecdotal.

In 2015 indeed, hoteliers only handle a quickly decreasing portion of booking requests by phone, fax, telex... or carrier pigeons.

In a nutshell, these *Booking.com's* commitments, approved in curiously motivated decisions by competition courts, are only smoke and mirrors!

Booking.com Europe's CEO even admitted this when interviewed by a leading French newspaper a few days ago -let me quote - : "there will be more competition between online travel agencies, which could be good for consumers, but i don't believe it would change anything in consumers' habits".

Mr. Verhoeven got the point: nothing will change despite his company's commitments!

This is why SYNHORCAT will appeal to this decision.

With this in mind, we strongly encourage our Swedish and Italian friends to do so. We are also willing to cooperate fully on this with them, as mutual support will be key in achieving our common goals.

Moreover, almost everyone in the assembly is directly affected by these issues. We strongly encourage all of HOTREC members who have not done so yet, to engage similar legal actions in their respective countries. You can count on SYNHORCAT's help and support on this.

We also warmly thank the HOTREC for publicly supporting our views in the past few days and we think as well that the GA should issue a statement about this soon.

We think that HOTREC should play a crucial role in supporting members for new and existing legal actions, as well as in coordinating actions all over Europe.

Once again, this is crucial issue for the entire European hospitality industry: we should all get together in order to obtain the end of rate parity clauses.

Thank you.