

Berlin, 21<sup>st</sup> of September, 2005

## **The European youth accommodation market needs a harmonized framework for better recognition.**

31 European Organisations gathered at the first Youth and Student Accommodation Workshop in Berlin under the umbrella of the "Bureau International du Tourisme Social" (BITS) to gain a closer insight into the current issues concerning hospitality for the youth market in Europe at a time where the need to harmonize legislation on youth travel throughout the European Union is rising.

The session on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> of August, 2005 presented 8 different approaches to quality standards for youth accommodation in different European countries. The two working sessions on the morning of the following day identified industry expectations and possible first steps for first EU-wide policies.

All participants agreed on the current lack of recognition of the youth market hospitality industry at local, national and international level. Consequently they would welcome an initiative by the European Union to be adopted by national governments within their own specific framework.

A first step should be to provide a definition for "youth accommodation" (currently missing from the accepted ISO norm 18513:2003) using the word "hostel" i.e. an accommodation with minimum 25% dormitories, selling overnights per bed, being designed for young people (e.g. common areas for entertainment and socialising; providing information for "young" people). This new category of accommodation could be the umbrella term for the existing "youth hostel" (ISO 18513:2003 2.2.8) and "Kindererholungsheim" (ISO 18513:2003 2.2.28), allowing further subdivisions like "independent hostels", "group hostels", "city hostels" or "countryside hostels".

Establishing a clear definition for youth accommodation should support the organisation of a European platform. National associations could then develop, together with their NTO, efficient communication strategies based on a quality scheme. A second step should provide a reference document proposing a framework for national authorities to develop their own legal structure (as this does not currently exist in most EU countries) and possibly their own quality development scheme (e.g. star rating, funding, certification, etc).

The first YSAW showed how different the national situations are at this point in time across the European Union; from Ireland where no licence is even needed to run a youth accommodation, to France, where the provision of accommodation for groups of minors is subject to very strict regulation. The commissioning of an extensive study about all forms of youth accommodation in Europe in relation to the existing legal frameworks and quality development schemes is strongly recommended in order to ensure the development of a sustainable and useable legal tool.

The next YSAW will take place in Paris in summer 2006. Details will be communicated at a later stage this winter.

YSAW is an initiative of Youth Travel Partners. All presentations and contacts can be found online: [www.y saw.org](http://www.y saw.org).

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