

Revision Process 2025-2030

General conditions and objectives

The Hotelstars Union (HSU) provides a harmonised hotel classification system with common criteria and procedures in the participating countries. The main objective of the Hotelstars Union is to enhance the reputation and quality of the hotel industry in the participating countries by creating transparency and security for guests, thereby facilitating hotel marketing.

The Hotelstars Union's harmonised set of criteria for hotel classification is revised every five to six years to reflect changing guest expectations and market requirements. The revision is carried out in cooperation with all 21 HSU member countries, which represent 22,000 classified hotels or more than 1.2 million classified rooms.

The latest process of the revision began in 2023 and was completed in mid-2024.

The revision had the following four objectives, always under the premise of investment protection, which were also determined by the classification criteria:

1. Simplification and reduction of criteria resulting in a more transparent and flexible system.
2. Strengthening the core services of the hotel industry to protect traditional, often service-intensive hotels.
3. Consistent integration of technological developments and the concept of sustainability to meet current market trends and guest expectations.
4. Adapting labour-intensive criteria to the changing world of work.

1. Simplification and reduction of criteria

The number of criteria has been reduced by about 3% from 247 to 239. This reduction is mainly due to the merging of some minor criteria and the complete deletion of others. However, fewer completely new – optional – criteria have been introduced. Some criteria have stricter requirements, while others have more relaxed and transparent requirements.

This revision continues to focus on the function behind each criterion rather than just the hardware. As a result, many relevant criteria have more openly formulated requirements, providing greater entrepreneurial freedom within the system to meet new trends and guest expectations.

2. Strengthening the core services of the hotel industry

The points threshold of 2020-2025 was retained. However, the number of points awarded for essential minimum criteria has been increased to emphasise the importance of the hotel industry's core services. For example, more points are awarded for requirements in the reception area and reception service, larger rooms, seating facilities in the rooms, and mattress hygiene.

3. Consistent integration of technological developments and the concept of sustainability

The goal of integrating new technological developments is achieved through new criteria and the open formulation or adaptation of requirements. This paves the way for global digitalisation in the hotel and meets guests' expectations. Be it in the form of modern technology at the reception, where fully automatic check-in and check-out are now possible, especially in the lower categories (1*-2*), or by self-service kiosks, which are now included in the new 4-star criteria and can replace the minibar, maxibar and room service.

The new system also reflects the principle of sustainability, including the removal of some criteria for environmental reasons and in anticipation of obligations under the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation. Items such as sewing kits and shoe polishing kits are no longer provided necessarily in the rooms. The number of cosmetic products required in the rooms has been reduced. Writing utensils and a notepad are no longer a must in the 3* to 5* categories but can be offered optionally in all categories. Instead of the new acquisition of mattresses and pillows, the focus is now on cleaning the covers and core of the mattresses as well as the pillows to extend their lifespan. In future, every hotel website, from 1* to 5* category, will be required to include public transport information on the website. Hotels also receive extra points for providing secure bicycle storage or measuring their carbon footprint according to international standards.

4. Adapting labour-intensive criteria to the changing world of work

Changes in the world of work, particularly the shortage of staff, which poses new challenges for many hotels, have been taken into account, mainly by reducing the required presence times at reception and room service.

In addition, the requirements for hotel restaurants have been eased, especially for 4-star hotels, by removing five opening days and allowing them to choose the number of opening days themselves. Hence, from 1* to 4*, the number of days the restaurant must be open is no longer specified, but it must be stated on the website on which days the restaurant is open. For the 5* category, the restaurant must still be open seven days a week.

Conclusion of the revision 2025-2030

After the introduction of the Hotelstars Union's harmonised criteria in 2009, a first revision in 2014 (criteria 2015-2020), and a second revision in 2019 (criteria 2020-2025), the current revision aimed to develop the existing criteria further while protecting the investments driven by the classification criteria.

The number of criteria has been reduced. This reduction is mainly because some minor criteria have been merged, and others have been completely deleted. This simplifies the system. The open formulation of requirements for many relevant criteria, without specifying the exact nature of the requirement, creates more entrepreneurial freedom within the system. Increasing the number of points has strengthened the hotel industry's core services. In addition, the points system strongly encourages larger room sizes, recognising the quality feature of "size within the private area."

Adapting existing criteria to meet new requirements and introducing new criteria to align with market expectations have considered both technological developments and sustainability.

The labour market challenges were met primarily by shortening the length of service and, in some cases, by technical compensation measures. However, the five-star level was maintained as a luxury and high-end service on the hotel market.