



Statement 2:

Nordic tourism and hospitality sector: challenges and opportunities

The hotel and catering industry is the largest player in the tourism sector. In 2018 there were approximately 80,000 registered hotel and catering businesses in the Nordic region. The majority of them were small enterprises with fewer than ten employees. The global tourism industry is growing rapidly – by as much as 6% from 2017 to 2018.

Jobs and integration

The HRCT industry creates many new jobs, both directly and indirectly.

Tourism is a major job generator throughout the Nordic region. In early 2018 the number of people working in the tourism sector was 480,000. Over the past ten years approximately 75,000 new jobs have been created, the majority of them being low-paid precarious jobs. The increase is mainly due to young people, students and foreign workers having filled a large proportion of jobs in the industry. Most of those jobs are part-time. Close to 40% of people working in the tourism industry in the Nordic region are between the ages of 15 and 24. The percentage for the EU is 24%. These workers are generally less likely to join a union, since they do not consider the HRCT industry to be their ultimate destination but as a stop along the way. It is an advantage for the hotel and catering industry that it is characterised by diversity and a good gender split. It is an industry in which many young people and foreign workers take their first steps into the job market. NU-HRCT would like more businesses in the Nordic hotel and catering industry, including the large hotel chains, to work actively on diversity and integration as part of their strategy to create value and optimise operations. However, it is important for health and safety, wellbeing and skills development that people stay longer in their jobs and see the industry as a place to stay. This would contribute positively to recruitment and stability in the sector.

Good language skills are crucial to participating actively in our societies and to making a career in the industry. As a trade union, we must demand better language training, and both public authorities and employers must assume responsibility in this respect.

Skills, wages and value creation

The HRCT industry in the Nordic region is notable for a low level of education and training compared with other industries. Around 32% of people working in the industry have only completed basic schooling. However, we have seen a positive trend, as general education levels have risen in the region.

NU-HRCT wishes to highlight the importance of ensuring that the pay and working conditions of all workers in the industry are such that they can have a decent life. A decent standard of living depends on decent wages and full-time employment. Those two components are important in terms of

ensuring that workers are able to provide for themselves and their families without having to have several jobs or being dependent on benefits. Around 45% of workers in the tourism sector in the Nordic region work part-time. Over the past ten years the proportion of part-time workers has risen from 42% to 45%. This trend is not good for the workers, nor for the industry as a whole. It leads to high turnover rates and limited value creation. A prerequisite for growth in the tourism industry and its ability to generate growth for both workers and society at large is a clear focus on education, training and skills development in order to bring about an increase in the number of skilled workers. Enhancement and development of existing and new professional skills, more trainees and further education and training of workers are needed for the tourism sector to remain a driver of employment and growth in local communities. It is NU-HRCT's opinion that trade unions, employers and public authorities must share the responsibility for bringing about such development.

Pay levels and purchasing power differ in the Nordic region due to different agreements and historical factors. To some extent this is also due to differences in pay levels and purchasing power between the individual Nordic countries. A characteristic common to all the countries is that wages are lower in the tourism industry than in many other industries. A large element of young workers, immigrants, women and part-time employment is part of the explanation, but the most important factor is the low level of value creation. Increased value creation is therefore one of the most important focal points in NU-HRCT's work. A key question in this respect is how we can increase productivity without jeopardising health and safety and workers' opportunities to stay in the industry. NU-HRCT believes we should look at technology, the organisation of work, competition and entry thresholds to find out whether it is possible to transfer knowledge between the Nordic countries in order to help accelerate value creation.

Technology, automation and platforms

Technological development has been under way in the HRCT industries for a long time. It has predominantly been guided by guest experiences and endeavours to streamline services such as booking, registration and sales. Value creation, improved health and safety, and the possibility of smarter working methods have only provided a basis for investment to a limited extent. Given the low wages paid in the HRCT industry, the willingness to invest in and develop new technological solutions has been lower than in many other industries. It is the opinion of NU-HRCT that development initiatives should focus on value creation and improved health and safety. The introduction of new technology should be a collaborative effort between enterprises and union representatives with the purpose of ensuring job security and the necessary build-up of skills.

A new form of employment is work provided on digital platforms where demand and supply are matched online. The platform economy allows people to work when it suits them, but they face precarious and unpredictable working conditions. Platforms such as Gigger, Chapper, Volta, Uber and Foodora –to mention just a few – connect employers and workers in the Nordic HRCT industry. In reality, many digital platforms simply function as digital employment agencies. It is the opinion of NU-HRCT that the relevant authorities should regulate such services in order to improve working conditions and ensure greater transparency. In practice, such platforms serve as employers and should be bound by the same requirements concerning transparency and job security as other employers in the labour market. NU-HRCT should instigate a Nordic initiative to examine the

possibility of introducing common rules for registration and reporting of tax returns and platform statistics.

In parallel with our efforts to regulate and control the platform economy we must develop collective agreements that adequately reflect the challenges faced by this part of the industry. NU-HRCT must contribute to the sharing of knowledge between its members and must participate in and promote European work in this field. Following a long strike, the United Federation of Trade Unions in Norway managed to conclude a collective agreement with Foodora. 3F in Denmark has achieved a similar agreement with Hilfr. We must use the experience gained in our continued work.

Health and safety at work, greenwashing and sexual harassment

The industry is faced with considerable health and safety challenges. Both physical and psychological issues must be addressed through active health and safety work at the individual workplace. Heavy lifting, few technological aids, long working hours and stress are common features of everyday work for many workers.

The current 'greenwashing' trend seen in large hotel chains where guests are encouraged not to ask for their rooms to be cleaned every day in return for a small bar voucher or a contribution to a humanitarian organisation is, in fact, just a way of reducing payroll costs. It makes workers' everyday life insecure and creates poor working conditions because cleaning work becomes heavier. In addition, it may be argued that it does not have any significant positive effect on the environment.

The challenges posed by harassment, particularly sexual harassment, are the subject of much discussion in the Nordic region and the rest of Europe. Governments and trade unions have focused on the issue, resulting in several campaigns and conferences. Both employers and workers are committed to addressing the issue, but it is widely reported that there has been no change in behaviour and that unwanted attention is experienced from customers in particular. In addition, some employers still refuse to acknowledge the problem or seek to resume an old debate about what the limits are. It is the victim of harassment who defines what is unwanted. Now is the time for action and reaction. We must continue our campaigns and keep a focus on the issue, and public authorities must seriously consider introducing sanctions. The victims must feel they have the support of their superiors, and the harassers must be met with zero tolerance.