

Draft EFFAT Guidelines on Daily Hotel Housekeeping

For a first discussion at the EFFAT Tourism Sector General Assembly on 16 November 2022

Since a couple of years, hotel chains have launched so called “green choice” programmes, proposing guests to opt out of the daily cleaning of their hotel room, and, if they do so, offering them rewards, e.g. vouchers to be used at the bar or in the restaurant of the hotel, or points on the hotel chain’s loyalty programme.

With such programmes, hotels claim to protect the environment and to contribute to sustainability, by using less water, energy and detergents, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint.

Many hotel guests believe that turning down room services helps housekeeping staff by relieving their overall workload, but according to housekeepers, these programmes are only designed to save money for the hotels, particularly on labour costs, and often have a damaging impact on housekeeping staff.

When guests reject housekeeping services, often at short notice, fewer rooms have to be cleaned, less housekeepers are needed, housekeepers loose working hours and salaries, more workers are put on on-call scheduling, work schedules become less predictable, harming work-life balance, making jobs overall more precarious.

But even if room cleaning is turned down, housekeepers may not be fully discharged of those rooms, as they still might be asked to remove e.g. dirty towels, guests’ laundry and trash, or to provide e.g. additional towels, amenities, water bottles, which is not necessarily counted in their room quota.

In addition, if rooms haven’t been cleaned for days, they are more dirty and much harder to clean, so housekeepers need more time, which is often not granted, and stronger detergents, which can have an impact on their health.

Furthermore, in the long run, there is concern that housekeeping will become a service which is not included in the price for a hotel stay anymore, and that guests will have to pay extra for getting their rooms cleaned and serviced, although this should be considered as the core of hospitality.

Having discussed the issue at European and global level, the EFFAT Tourism Sector decided to elaborate, in cooperation with IUF, guidelines that help making jobs of hotel housekeepers safer.

EFFAT commits itself to:

- use hotels which provide daily room cleaning when organising meetings or doing block bookings for participants
- train EFFAT staff on the policy, and to make it a criteria when asking for price quotes from hotels
- raise awareness of member organisations on this threat to hotel housekeepers' livelihoods and health, and ask them to adopt guidelines requiring hotels they use for events to provide daily housekeeping
- discuss the issue at EWCs of transnational hotel chains
- bring the issue up in European sectoral social dialogue
- support member organisations in their fight for decent working conditions and collective agreements in hotel housekeeping

EFFAT calls upon other trade union federations, befriended organisations, etc. to:

- use hotels for events and travel which do not give guests a "green choice" to opt out from daily room cleaning
- inform hotels and convention centres about the policy and make it a criteria when asking for price quotes for the organisation of events and when doing block bookings
- inform all co-workers, affiliates, member organisations about the policy and encourage them to use hotels which provide daily room cleaning, and to not opt out from housekeeping services