

## **BHA – Jacques Vitu**

After the departure of Patrick Bontinck to head up BITC, **Jacques Vitu, General Manager of Hotel Amigo** was elected President of **BHA**, the Brussels Hotel Association. Jacques sees as one of his main responsibilities the need to – contrary to Belgian politics – unify all the different efforts by BITC, Toerisme Vlaanderen and OPT for the promotion of Brussels. Quite a task, sceptics would say nearly an impossible task, but nevertheless a necessary goal if we ever want to make of Brussels a major worldwide player both on the leisure and the Convention (MICE) market.

He will be creating different workgroups to attack the different problems and especially on the MICE market will work closely together with Square, the transport companies etc... The main objective remains to attract major congresses to the Belgian Capital which will require the different instances not only to work together but also to foresee the necessary budgets and investments. The president reminded us that the Brussels hotels in the whole of Brussels alone are responsible for 14,000 jobs, a fact that is not recognized enough and judged at its correct value. It is more than time to assemble all the different players at all levels to promote a unified and transparent front that will be able to attract big manifestations to the city.

As new president, one is entitled to a couple of wishes. Jacques is particularly keen to get an overall VAT reduction to 6% to make our hotels more competitive in comparison to the neighbouring countries /cities.

Another hobby horse is today's lack of cohesion in the quality norms for the hotels. Before even attacking this on a European level, he wants to streamline the Brussels/Belgian guidelines to give the Brussels hotels more positive ammunition to attract the clients. He is aware of course that this is a big job which will have to be tackled in different stages.

One of the work groups that will be established is on the problem of employment by creating closer contacts with the different hotel schools in the country as they are responsible for preparing the future workforce. It is absolutely necessary to create a good environment in which young people will feel at home and will not see the need for looking abroad for jobs as is the case today.

Last but not least Jacques wants to ensure more opportunities for small and middle large hotels who are often overlooked and who are a vital part of the hotel industry in our capital.

*The BHA has also a new Secretary General, Rodolphe van Wayenbergh, former General Manager of the Metropole Hotel and its offices remain in the BECI offices with whom a close working relationship exists that will be even more elaborated in the future.*