

Austrian Professional Hotel Association

Classification Procedure for Apartments & Holiday Homes - 2015-2020



Information, May 11, 2016

1. The system

- 1.1 The Austrian Classification for Apartments and Holiday Homes is a standardised system, valid all over Austria - based on the hotel classification of the Hotelstars Union (HSU) -, which offers guests a reliable guide to apartments and holiday homes.
- 1.2 Classification into a particular star category is carried out, upon application by the establishment, by independent committees. Regular inspections and a system of on-going self-assessment ensure quality.
- 1.3 Member businesses can choose to make use of this service feature of the professional bodies of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber.
- 1.4 This guideline applies only to apartments, holiday homes or similar accommodation holding a business licence and which offer little or no service. It also applies to apartments and holiday homes which are managed together with another accommodation, but as a separate outbuilding and with its own business licence. These guidelines do not apply to full-blown hotels and GARNI accommodation. There is a special guideline for these establishments.
- 1.5 The classification criteria are - based on the HSU-hotel classification - revised every six years, are based on current market research results and reflect guests' expectations (worldwide online-guest survey 2013).
- 1.6 The criteria catalogue for the Austrian Classification for Apartments and Holiday Homes consists of a mixed system with minimum criteria that must be fulfilled without fail, a minimum number of points and additional points. This mixture results in the number of stars to be awarded.
- 1.7 Apartments and holiday homes are divided into four categories.
- 1.8 For over 20 years the "Austrian Hotelstars" - which have been used until the end of 2013 - have been a registered trademark in Austria. The successive change to Hotelstars Union-design has started in Austria in January 2014. The new trademark of the Hotelstars Union - „HOTELSTARS.EU“ - is an internationally registered trademark as well. Hotels/apartments/holidayhomes now are committed to exclusively use the new Hotelstars Union-design. This registered trademark gives guests and hoteliers the guarantee that hotelstars are only used by classified hotels/apartments/holidayhomes. Consequently, guests can be sure that Austrian hotel establishments are only allowed to use the trademark if they can satisfy the high quality requirements of the Austrian hotel classification system.

1.9 In case of a downgrading or a total withdrawing of the stars, hotels/apartments/holidayhomes are committed to use the trademark/logo of the new classified star-category, respectively to refrain from using the stars at all. In case of insolvency or closing of the establishment, it is forbidden to use the trademark „HOTELSTARS.EU“ until a new classification - this applies to hotels/apartments/holidayhomes. Moreover, the [rules for the use of the star-signs and the trademark "HOTELSTARS.EU"](#) in the current version apply.

2. General criteria for evaluation

2.1. The overall impression

Overall impression and condition (furnishings and fixtures & fittings) and immaculate standards of cleanliness and hygiene are basic pre-conditions for entry into the Austrian Classification for Apartments and Holiday Homes.

2.2. Over and above those criteria, the following are also important for classification into the particular categories:

- 2.2.1. If available: Quality of service and this includes demeanour, dress, friendliness and professionalism of management and staff.
- 2.2.2. External appearance, including access/access road, the drive up to the building, parking and garden.
- 2.2.3. The hotel's own leisure and additional facilities, for example an indoor pool, sauna, meetings rooms, garden and garage parking.
- 2.2.4. Guest satisfaction, the number of complaints and handling thereof.

3. Guidelines for the classification of apartments and holiday homes

3.1. One star

Simple fixtures and fittings, amenities necessary for a conventional overnight stay at the establishment are very clean and in immaculate condition.

3.2. Two star

Functional and comfortable fixture and fittings. The quality of the fixtures and fittings is measured by their functionality and cleanliness, the materials used are of lesser importance.

3.3. Three star

Refined and uniform fixtures and fittings in the visual field of guests, homey character. Hardware in good condition.

3.4. Four star

First-class fixtures and fittings, generous spaces with qualitatively high and up to date fixtures and fittings, good noise insulation, hardware in very good condition.

4. The classification process

4.1. The application

The hotel owner applies by sending a completed application form to the relevant professional body for entry into the Austrian Classification for Apartments and Holiday Homes and declares that he/she is in agreement with the guidelines. Application forms are available for downloading from www.hotelsterne.at. In the case of new-builds, rebuilds and expansion of accommodation an application can be filed to apply for the expected star standard before the official grading in a procedure that has been set up specifically for such eventualities.

4.2. The inspection

Using the classification guidelines, data provided by the establishment owner and the inspection visit report, a federal state committee will classify the establishment. Establishments already classified are inspected regularly within a period of 3 to a maximum of 5 years. In the course of this check, an establishment's grading can be confirmed, changed or disallowed. Committee decisions are communicated to the establishment in writing. With the completion of the criteria catalogue the hotelier takes part in a regular system of self-assessment. Within this process, the establishment confirms in writing to the professional bodies that the relevant criteria within its category have been fulfilled. It is the personal responsibility of every hotelier to inform the relevant professional body immediately in case of essential changes or reconstructions in the apartments/holiday homes. Significant changes in management may require a reclassification. An operators change or insolvency has to be reported to the relevant federal group. In generally the inspection can only take place, when the establishment is in operation. The commission is entitled to inspect all operating areas. More over the committee can inspect the establishment unannounced at any time (including e.g. rooms that the hotelier had not prepared for the committee's visit). During the committee's visit, photos can be taken for documentation purposes.

4.3. The committees

In every federal state there is a federal state committee at the hotel sector of the Chamber of Commerce.

Committee members are appointed by the managing board of the professional body. The chair is elected by the committee members. Federal state committees reach their decisions on a majority vote. In Vienna, apartments and holiday homes are classified by an expert committee at the Vienna Tourism Association. The constitution of this expert committee to which external professionals are also drawn, has its own rules of procedure.

4.3.1. Liability

It is agreed there will be no liability for damage resulting from slight negligence by committee members. There is also no liability for damage by other parties, for loss of earnings or achieved savings. Disclaimer of warranty applies to every level of jurisdiction and committee.

4.4. Appeals

The owner of the establishment can appeal by means of a registered written letter against a grading or non-grading into a category within four weeks after notification of the committee's written decision. The complaint must contain justification for the appeal. The appeal must be lodged with the relevant professional body. The appeal has a postponing effect unless the classification committee unanimously excludes this effect, especially in cases where the general assessment criteria for classification have not been fulfilled. A renewed application for classification in a star category can only be made if the deficiencies/conditions alleged by the classification committee have demonstrably been resolved/met.

4.5. Handling of appeals

In the case of appeals a regional committee - put together by the relevant professional body in the federal state - checks the decision of the federal committee. A regional committee is made up of minimum two members from other federal states and more over one non-voting member of the federal state concerned, who up until the time of the appeal has not been involved in the current classification process. The regional committee decides unanimously, will visit the establishment and write a report for the senior committee. This report has to be prepared, no matter if positive or negative. The senior committee - whose composition and procedure are modelled on the executive committee - decides within seven months and prepares a decision memorandum in which the reasons for the decision are given. The decision is sent in writing to the appeal applicant and the relevant professional body of the Hotel Association. The costs for the regional committee are carried by the establishment making the appeal.

Further enquiries: ¹

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¹ Although much care has been taken in compiling the information, no responsibility is taken for correctness. Both the author and the Austrian Professional Hotel Association disclaim liability.