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Scandic invests heavily in accessible rooms

Hotel chain accelerates conversion program to meet demand

The Scandic hotel chain, which since 2003 has been working to make its hotels accessible to disabled guests, is now stepping up the pace of the conversion program. In 2008 alone, Scandic will add over 100 accessible rooms, as well as raising the standard of the accommodation by providing height-adjustable beds. The aim is to meet increased demand.

Around 50 million people in Europe currently have some form of disability*. This number is steadily growing, in part because of the aging population. Increasing numbers of disabled people are actively employed, and increasing numbers are travelling for business or leisure purposes. To meet the increased demand from disabled guests, Scandic will add over 100 accessible rooms in its existing hotels during 2008.

"We currently have difficulty satisfying all the room requests we receive from individual disabled guests, from various organizations, and from older people who find our accessibility aids a great help," says Magnus Berglund, Scandic's disability ambassador. "Scandic has won a number of awards for its accessibility program in recent years, which has probably added to the demand."

The idea of offering at least 10 per cent of total room capacity in the form of accessible rooms first arose when Berglund took up his post in summer 2003. Scandic also drew up a 93-point accessibility standard for all its hotels, including hearing loops, cane holders, information in braille, and vibrating alarm clocks and fire alarms. All staff received training in accessibility issues.

"Scandic sees investing in accessibility as a step towards a better society and, equally importantly, as a competitive advantage in the market," continues Berglund. "Many people probably think of accessible rooms as sterile and dull, but guests who have experienced our rooms prefer them because we have focused on functionality, size and design," he ends.

In this autumn's major program, the largest number of new accessible rooms will be built at the Scandic Asker hotel in Norway, where demand is so high that the chain has opted to add an entire wing containing 33 accessible rooms. In addition to the 100 rooms currently under construction, over 300 more rooms will be added over the coming years in the 11 new hotels Scandic is in the process of developing.

Scandic is a proud sponsor of the 2008 Swedish, Danish and Finnish Paralympics Teams, 6-17 September, Beijing, China.

** according to the European Disability Forum, www.edf-feph.org*

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Scandic is a leading European mid-market hotel company with 147 leased, managed and franchised hotels in operation and under development, with a total of over 27,000 rooms in ten countries. The aim is to grow the number of hotels to 200 over the next years, focusing on the Nordic region, Northern and Eastern Europe and Russia. Since 1994, sustainability has been an integrated part of the business and Scandic is proud of being a recognised industry leader today. From the start in 1963 the business concept has been to offer trouble-free and accessible hotel services for all - today delivered by 6,400 enthusiastic team members. Visit scandichotels.com

