



Crossing Boundaries and Crafting the Future of Hospitality: Sustainable Hospitality Challenge 2023 Winners Announced at Future Hospitality Summit

[Abu Dhabi, 27 September 2023] – The [Sustainable Hospitality Challenge](#) (SHC) 2023, by Hotelschool The Hague, has concluded, and the exceptional winner of this year's competition have been announced by William Heinecke, Founder & Chairman of Minor International, at the Future Hospitality Summit in Abu Dhabi. This edition stood out for the remarkable synergy between Tech, Design, and Engineering teams, working collaboratively to revolutionize sustainability in the hospitality industry.

Jonathan Worsley, Chairman of The Bench, organiser of FHS, said: "We are extremely proud to host the finals – and celebrate the winners – of the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge. With 2023 being the Year of Sustainability in the UAE, COP 28 taking place in a few weeks' time and investors and travellers placing more emphasis on ESG, sustainability is under the spotlight more than ever before – and a hot topic at the Future Hospitality Summit.

It has been an honour to be part of this prestigious, ever-growing competition, which continues to play a key role in shaping the future of the travel and tourism sector. As always, the entries push boundaries, challenge the norms and set the scene for generations to come. My congratulations to all involved in this year's Awards, and special kudos to our winners."

The SHC, an annual competition, sponsored by the [NEOM Hotel Development](#), dedicated to fostering innovation and sustainability, attracted visionary teams from across the globe. The winners of the SHC 2023 have not only showcased their ingenuity but have also demonstrated a commitment to crafting the future of sustainable tourism and hospitality through cross-disciplinary collaboration.

In what has been a fiercely competitive event this year, Chris Newman, Executive Director of Hotel Development at NEOM, shared his thoughts on the Challenge:

"Congratulations to the winners of this year's challenge who presented an innovative hospitality concept with an environment-centered design. We are proud to be part of this sustainability-driven initiative, and committed to allowing the next generation of hospitality leaders challenge conventional thought and reimagine the future of our industry"

The winning team will be hosted by NEOM Hotel Development division in northwest Saudi Arabia, where they will see first-hand the cognitive cities and year-round destinations currently shaping the NEOM region. This includes NEOM's luxury island destination, Sindalah, set to welcome guests in 2024 and features three distinct hotel properties. NEOM's support also covers all travel expenses for the teams to attend the Finals at the Future Hospitality Summit.

The winners of the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge 2023

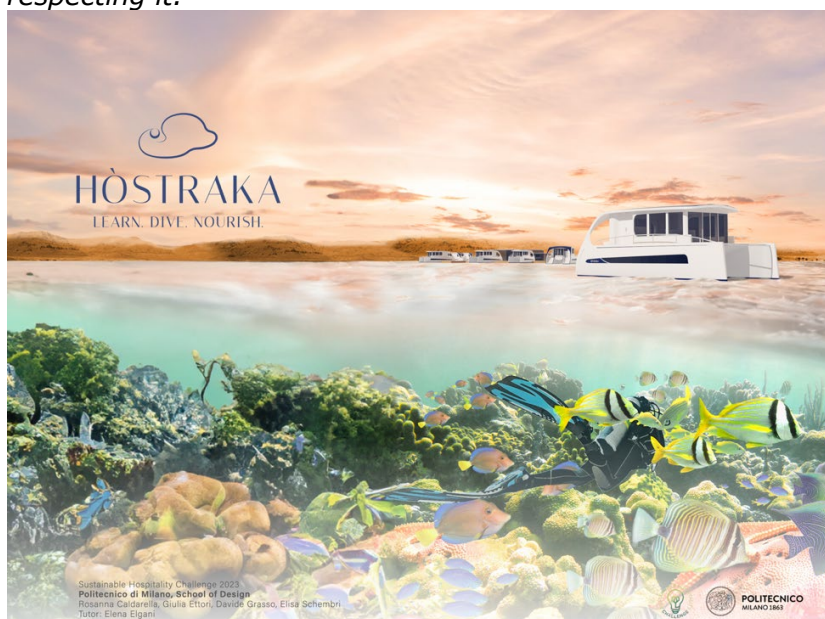
In their debut appearance at the 2023 Sustainable Hospitality Challenge, the dynamic team from **Politecnico di Milano**—comprising **Giulia Etori, Rosanna Caldarella, Davide Grasso, and Elisa Schembri**—has emerged as the undisputed champions. Notably, they were the sole fully design-focused team in the finals, making their victory all the more remarkable. Their groundbreaking concept, 'HÒSTRAKA,' stole the spotlight, representing a visionary leap in sustainable innovation within the hospitality industry.

The winning team describes the concept in their own words:

"It's time to embrace change and restore the equilibrium of the natural ecosystem. Sustainable innovation in hospitality is driven by design strategies, creating immersive experiences able to offer unique adventures, connected to local natural contexts.

Hòstraka, the first floating resort dedicated to sustainable diving and sea experiences, is leading the way in protecting our marine ecosystem while proving that sustainable lifestyles can coexist with exceptional marine adventure.

Our inspiration is drawn directly from the ocean, taking a page from the remarkable oysters' playbook, which can turn adversity into shiny pearls. We aspire to inspire individuals to emulate nature, offering them the chance to live the Sustainable Pearl Experience: a tailored opportunity for guests to indulge in a luxurious experience on their private mobile suite while actively participating in the collection of microplastics from the sea. The utmost pleasure awaits our guests, who will experience the sea like never before: respecting it."



Glenn Mandziuk, Chief Executive Officer at Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, a prominent partner and respected jury member, commented on the winning project:

"In the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge 2023, we witnessed the power of imagination, creativity, and unwavering commitment to sustainability. Each team displayed remarkable potential, but one concept truly stood above the rest. Their scalable concept, targeted market strategy, captivating presentation, and breathtaking visuals left an indelible mark. I can envision their project taking root and flourishing right here in the heart of the Middle East and around the world. Congratulations to every team for their incredible accomplishments, and may you all embark on thrilling journeys in the hospitality sector. This triumph exemplifies the younger generation's profound impact, igniting our industry's pursuit of innovative projects that make net positive hospitality a tangible reality."

These remarkable students have not only earned recognition for their groundbreaking ideas but will also have the unique opportunity to present their project at the prestigious WTTC Summit in Rwanda. The WTTC Summit is a global event that brings together leaders from the travel and tourism industry to discuss pressing issues and innovative solutions for a sustainable future.

Looking ahead, the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge is poised for an exciting future.

In the 2024 edition, the competition will expand and enhance in several significant ways. SHC 2024 will feature an even larger Tech, Design, and Engineering cohort, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation. Moreover, participants will be challenged to develop solutions that are not only sustainable but also investable and ready for the market, reflecting a commitment to driving real-world impact in the industry. Additionally, SHC 2024 will include regional semi-finals in three dynamic locations:

Bangkok, Thailand: Organized in collaboration with Dusit Thani College.

Miami, USA: Organized in collaboration with Florida International University.

Switzerland: Exact location to be announced soon, organized in collaboration with Swiss Education Group.

These regional semi-finals will provide even more opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs and innovators to participate in the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge and make a lasting impact on the industry.

Paul Griep & Stella van Toor (Directors of the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge), commented, "We're thrilled and proud by the success of the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge 2023 and look forward to seeing the winning teams present their solutions at the WTTC Summit on a Global stage. Furthermore, we're looking forward to venturing into the next exciting phase of the challenge for 2024 whereby investible, innovative and relevant products will be developed by the best Hotelschools in the world in collaboration with reputable Tech, Design and Engineering Universities. These product solutions will be "ready to market" and will undoubtedly make impact on our Industry in relation to Sustainability"

For more information about the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge and updates on SHC 2024, please visit www.thestudentchallenge.com or contact the team at sustainablehc@hotelschool.nl.

About the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge:

The SHC is a Hotelschool The Hague initiative that aims to enhance the evolution of sustainable hospitality. During this international student competition in which teams from all over the world take on the challenge of designing a hospitality concept that presents solutions that embrace sustainability and cater to the evolving needs of modern travelers. Established as a platform that challenges innovative hospitality approaches for the last nine years, SHC has evolved into a global knowledge-based initiative. During its years of

activity, SHC has collaborated with some of the most reputable CEOs of the Hospitality Industry, who, from competition to competition, were asked to judge the project proposals. SHC, owned by Hotelschool The Hague, is sponsored by NEOM and official partnered with The Bench and Sustainable Hospitality Alliance.

About Hotelschool The Hague

Hotelschool The Hague was founded in 1929 and is one of the oldest independent hotel schools in the world. The school has two campuses, one in The Hague and one in Amsterdam, with more than 2850 students and 250 employees. Hotelschool The Hague has been voted the best public hotel school in The Netherlands since 2014 and ranks among the top hospitality management schools worldwide according to QS World University Rankings. Furthermore, according to Keuzegids, the school had the best Master in Business Administration since 2019. Graduates of Hotelschool The Hague hold management positions in the hospitality industry worldwide. www.hotelschool.nl

About NEOM

NEOM is an accelerator of human progress and a vision of what a new future might look like. It is a region in northwest Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea being built from the ground up as a living laboratory – a place where entrepreneurship will chart the course for this new future. It will be a destination and a home for people who dream big and want to be part of building a new model for exceptional livability, creating thriving businesses and reinventing environmental conservation.

NEOM will include hyperconnected, cognitive cities, ports and enterprise zones, research centers, sports and entertainment venues and tourist destinations. As a hub for innovation, entrepreneurs, business leaders and companies will come to research, incubate, and commercialize new technologies and enterprises in groundbreaking ways. Residents of NEOM will embody an international ethos and embrace a culture of exploration, risk-taking and diversity.

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