

## COVID-19 update 57 – 19/12/2020-14/01/2021

A compilation of press releases/articles on policies and best practices from various EU and national information sources, and information provided by our members

⇒ Please note that from now on this update will be published on a 2-week basis.

### 1. EU MEASURES

The European Central Bank (ECB) has published a briefing assessing short-term economic developments during the COVID-19 pandemic via the use of adjusted tools of measurement. (Source: DeHavilland)

Under the [State Aid Temporary Framework](#), the Commission has recently approved:

- [€23 million for Belgian measures](#) to support the production of coronavirus-relevant products;
- [two Czech employment schemes](#) to support companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak;
- a [€202 million Croatian scheme](#) to support companies in the tourism and sports sectors in the context of the coronavirus outbreak;
- a [€1,25 billion German measure](#) to recapitalise TUI that, like many other companies active in the tourism sector, has been hit particularly hard by the coronavirus crisis;
- a [€120 million Greek support](#) scheme to compensate Aegean Airlines for damages suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak;
- a [€73 million Italian support](#) scheme to compensate Alitalia for further damages suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak;
- a [modified €1,1 billion Italian scheme](#) to support internationally active companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak;
- a [€2,9 billion Polish scheme](#) to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the context of the coronavirus outbreak.

Apart from that, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and Banca March are joining forces once again to [support the economic recovery](#) of **Spanish small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs – up to 250 employees), mid-caps (between 250 and 3.000 employees) **and large corporates** (over 3.000 employees) via three agreements. These agreements will mobilise more than €600 million of financing, of which a total of €270 million will be in the form of guarantees or loans from the EIB.

### 2. NATIONAL MEASURES

For information on the current **provisions regarding the crossing of Single Market borders**, please consult the Commission's [Re-open EU](#) web portal.

According to Eurostat, on average, in November, the revenues of retailers in the euro area fell even more sharply (-6,1%) than analysts had expected compared to October (-3,4%). France recorded the biggest losses, while revenues increased in Germany. The clothing and footwear sector is the most affected with a decrease of 17% compared to the previous month. (Source: [Lebensmittel Zeitung](#))

The current situation boils down to stricter measures in most Member States, new lockdowns with curfews and shops that are closed once more...

## AUSTRIA

From 26 December until 24 January, curfew restrictions apply again throughout the day, whereas before Christmas they applied between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. **Shops and schools are closed until 18 January.** From 15 January, only residents who have undergone an antigen test will be able to resume social life before the restrictions are generally lifted on 24 January, the government said. **During the week of 18-24 January, schools, stores and restaurants will be open to anyone who has had an antigen test less than a week before. Teachers, shopkeepers in contact with customers and public transport drivers will be tested every week from 18 January.** (Source: [L'Avenir](#))

## BELGIUM

**“Essential” and “non-essential” shops are open in Belgium** but strict rules apply: Customers have to shop alone, alcohol can no longer be sold after 20.00, night shops have to close at 10 p.m. because of the curfew between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. (though most of them already close at 20.00 because of the alcohol prohibition). Bars, cafés and restaurants are closed but they can still offer delivery and take away services. Hair dressers, beauty salons and jobs implying a physical contact with customers are closed until further notice. the Belgium's Consultative Committee decided to maintain the current curfew until 1<sup>st</sup> March. It will meet again on 22 January and it might revisit some of these measures. Brussels registers again an increase in contaminations, and the Minister President of the Brussels Region, Rudi Vervoort, stated on 13 January that the night curfew, the mask requirement, the 8 p.m. closure of shops, and the prohibition of public alcohol consumption would be maintained until 1<sup>st</sup> March. (Sources: [Info-Coronavirus](#), [POLITICO](#))

## CYPRUS

Cyprus lives another lockdown in a bid to curb an aggressive rise in coronavirus infections. From 10 until 31<sup>st</sup> January, **businesses such as hairdressers, beauty salons and department stores are closed.** Authorities have also reintroduced a text messaging system that grants people permission to leave their home — which is allowed only for work, shopping for essentials, visiting a doctor or exercising, with just two outside trips a day permitted. The current curfew from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. remains in place. (Source: [POLITICO](#))

## CZECH REPUBLIC

Since 27 December, there is a re-imposition of the ban on free movement of persons under the daytime rules up to 11 p.m. and at night until 5 a.m.. There will be several exceptions to this ban, in particular for trips to work and in connection with business, for trips to see family, for the purchase of basic necessities and for trips to health-care facilities. **All shops and services remain open provided that they ensure that there will only be one customer per 15m<sup>2</sup> in the establishment.** (Source: [Government of the Czech Republic](#))

## FRANCE

The Fédération du Commerce coopératif et associé (FCA) has joined forces with the Conseil du Commerce de France (CDCF) and many trade federations to request massive support and an opening on Sundays in January by means of a press release sent on 28 December. Their aim was to alert the public authorities and inform them about the concerns of retailers because one month after the reopening of the so-called “non-essential” shops, the latter are struggling to regain the level of activity they had before the lockdown. Elisabeth Borne, Minister of Labour, replied that the prefects were instructed to respond favourably to

requests for exemptions. Unfortunately, there will be no automaticity in the opening of shops on Sundays in January 2021. According to the Minister “We have different situations depending on the outcome of the consultations (in the departments). In most cases, we will open as we do every year for the Sunday sales, so the last two Sundays in January”. (Source : [FCA](#))

Since the beginning of January, more and more departments have decided to impose a 6 p.m. curfew, two hours earlier than in the rest of the country, because of the very high number of COVID-19 contaminations. **On 14 January, it was even decided that all places, businesses or services open to the public will be closed at 6.00 p.m. from 16 January for a period of at least two weeks.** This means that, to allow for time to get home before curfew, the last customers leave the stores at 5.30 p.m. This is a new shortfall in sales imposed on retailers: In normal times, a quarter of sales are made after 6 p.m., and 12% between 6 and 7 p.m.! To compensate this shortfall, some stores adapt their hours and open earlier in the morning. (Sources: [LSA](#), [Le Soir](#))

**The health crisis has reinforced consumers’ appetite for local and regional products.** According to the independent research institute Xerfi local and regional products (defined as products consumed in the region of production, products processed by SMEs and/or linked to a region, a know-how or the uses of a population) represent 30% of sales in large and medium-sized stores of which more than 60% comes from crafts, markets and small businesses. According to Xerfi, supermarkets and medium-sized stores are redoubling their efforts to list more local players causing fierce competition between large food manufacturers and SMEs over shelf space. (Source: [LSA](#))

## GERMANY

German Chancellor Angela Merkel [announced](#) an extension of the lockdown until at least the end of the month. The new rules will restrict for the first time non-essential travel for residents of hard-hit areas all over Germany. The rules also include the strictest limit on gatherings, with members of any one household being allowed to meet only one other person. **Shops and restaurants will remain closed until the end of January.** Schools are also to remain closed, with classes to be held online, until at least the end of the month. (Sources: DeHavilland, [Reuters](#))

According to the results of a new **trend survey of the German Retail Federation (HDE)**, retailers continue to see themselves in a difficult position and **of the 1.500 retailers surveyed, 79% consider the state aid measures to be insufficient.** The association calls for an adjustment of the bridging aid, 60% of the shops in the inner cities see their existence as endangered. 23% expect to have to definitely close in the first half of the year, in the second half of the year the figure is 28%. According to the results of the survey, help does not arrive on time. The “well below normal Christmas business” also played a role in the poor situation of stationary retail and pessimism. (Source: [e-tailment](#))

The pick-up of ordered goods is especially important for retailers during the lockdown in order to continue to generate sales. For this reason, **DER MITTELSTANDSVERBUND** vehemently advocated to allow for click-and-collect nationwide – successfully! **Since 11 January 2021, almost all Länder (federal states) – except Saxony – have allowed customers to collect goods.** (Source: [DER MITTELSTANDSVERBUND-ZGV](#))

In an **open letter to Chancellor Angela Merkel**, the presidents of the federal and state trade associations in Germany **draw attention to the dwindling acceptance of the measures by the sector to combat the corona pandemic in Germany.** Whilst the retail and horeca sectors are making sacrifices for the whole of society, there is a lack of prospects and promised help. It is observed with concern that desperate operators are planning to open bars and shops. (Source: [e-tailment](#))

The decision of the Bavarian state government that the **wearing of an FFP2 mask will be mandatory when shopping** from 18 January onwards could ultimately weaken stationary sales compared to online retail. The retailers reject such a requirement for several reasons and do not consider it necessary, various media report. It is not even necessary, since the majority of customers are already wearing a mask. In the event of an obligation, however, it must be ensured that sufficient masks are available. The retail sector foresees staffing problems, as insurances impose a maximum time for wearing masks, which may lead to personnel bottlenecks. (Source: [e-tailment](#))

After excellent development of the retail business in 2020, **REWE Group** is increasing the disbursements to the cooperating retailers. In its core business, the Retail Germany division recorded double-digit growth. Not only at REWE, but across the industry, it is expected that the upward trend will end in March 2021 when the food retail trade has to start against the high sales from the same month last year due to hamster purchases for the first time. (Source: [Lebensmittel Zeitung](#))

## IRELAND

The types of shops that are allowed to open depend on the level of restrictions in the [Plan for Living with COVID-19](#). The plan has 5 levels that correspond to the severity of COVID-19 in a location. Ireland is currently at [Level 5](#) until 31 January 2021, meaning that **since close of business on 31 December 2020, all retail, except for essential retail, are closed**. At level 5, [only essential retail and shops](#) can open. Click and collect from non-essential retail is no longer available. Click and deliver can continue to operate. (Source: [Citizens Information](#))

## ITALY

Supporting local communities is a core value for **SPAR Italy partner Ergon** in Sicily. At a time when many households are facing greater financial challenges than usual, **the SPAR Partner has donated 200 computers to allow students from financially challenged households to attend remote classes**. This donation was made in partnership with the Sicilian Caritas community centres., Ergon identifies education and community as areas to invest in for the future. Giving students the opportunity to continue their education during the pandemic helps give them hope in a better future. The laptop donation was made possible with the support of Unicredit bank and its 'Social Impact banking' initiative. There are 18 Caritas centres in the part of Sicily where Ergon operates. The community centres support school pupils and university students by providing them with appropriate tools to attend remote classes. (Sources: [SPAR International](#), [DESPAR Italia](#))

The curfew from 10 p.m. until 5 a.m. still applies in the whole country. Bars and restaurants are closed, but they can deliver meals with no time restriction, whereby they have to respect the curfew for the take aways. **All shops remain open**, including on Sundays in some regions. (Source: [e-Venise](#))

## THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands is extending coronavirus restrictions until 9 February as infections are still high and the government is "very concerned" about the UK variant of the disease. Under the current restrictions, which were due to expire on 18 January, schools have been closed, **all but essential shops are closed**, and people are prohibited to invite more than two people to their homes. (Source: [France24](#))

## POLAND

Poland's Finance Minister Tadeusz Kościński said on 13 January he hoped some restrictions on daily life imposed to counter COVID-19 will begin to disappear around the end of the first quarter, when the vaccination scheme will start to sort effect. Poland ordered hotels, ski slopes and **many shops to close in December** in an attempt to prevent a damaging third wave of the coronavirus. "Some restrictions will remain for quite a long time, but I think that 80% of these restrictions will start to disappear at the turn of the first and second quarter", he said. (Sources: De Havilland, [Reuters](#))

## PORTUGAL

Portugal's government announced a new nationwide lockdown on 12 January in response to the increasing COVID-19 infection rate. The new restrictions are similar to those imposed during the spring, shutting non-essential business and telling citizens to stay home. **Food shops and pharmacies can stay open, although most other stores must close.** Restaurants will be limited to takeaway services. (Source: [POLITICO](#))

## SPAIN

While a virtual return to normal in Catalonia was foreseen for the first week of January, the Catalan authorities decided differently. Catalan Minister of Health, Alba Vergés, indicated during a press conference on 4 January, that from 7 until 17 January, Catalonia would return to municipal lockdown, i.e. the Catalans cannot leave the territory of their municipality during these ten days. **Malls are closed and only essential stores are open on weekends. Stores of less than 400m<sup>2</sup> may also open.** Bars and restaurants remain open even if the restrictions are stronger (limited hours). (Source: [L'Indépendant](#))

## SWEDEN

On 8 January the Swedish parliament has approved **a law giving the government the right to apply tougher measures in the fight against the current pandemic:** limit opening hours and visitor numbers in shops, restaurants and bars, public transport and in sport and cultural venues. If necessary, the law can also be applied to curb public gatherings in parks or at private events. This is a major change in its management of the pandemic as Sweden used to be quite permissive, only "inviting" Swedish citizens to keep distances, work from home if possible and wash their hands. Shops, restaurants and sport infrastructures have stayed opened since March 2020. (Sources: [POLITICO](#), De Havilland)

## UNITED KINGDOM

2020 was the worst year for high street job losses in 25 years: 176.718 jobs were lost in 2020; about 3.400 jobs were lost each week during the year. (Sources: [ACS](#), BBC)

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a third national lockdown that took effect on Wednesday 6 January. The lockdown imposes similar restrictions to the first two ones. Government guidance confirms that **all convenience stores, including petrol forecourts, off-licences and automatic car washes can remain open.** The restrictions will be reviewed frequently by the Government and public health bodies. (Source: [ACS](#))

The British Government has enforced tougher measures following a shocking increase in new contaminations, with a focus on retail. This follows reports that there is lower compliance with lockdown laws compared to the previous lockdown last year. James Lowman, ACS Chief Executive, was on BBC

Breakfast on 12 January discussing face covering compliance and the implications for convenience retailers and store colleagues [here](#). ACS keeps putting the same position forward: retailers and store staff need only inform customers to wear face coverings, it is the job of police to enforce face covering compliance. (Sources: [IGD](#), ACS)

Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland, announced that Scotland will strengthen its lockdown measures to **prevent non-essential retailers from offering click-and-collect services and to limit how take-away food and drinks can be sold** from 16 January. She said that **only essential retailers would be able to offer click-and-collect services, while customers will not be allowed inside to pick up take-away food and drinks**, the latter will have to be served from a hatch or door. (Sources: POLITICO, [Reuters](#))