

CARE & PREPARE

The Brewers of Europe response to COVID-19



The Brewers of Europe

Dear Members and colleagues,

I firstly wish to send my best wishes to you all and your loved ones during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The current experience is putting a lot of strain on the personal and professional lives of tens of millions of people across Europe, including the brewing community.

For the first time we are now though starting to see some light at the end of the tunnel in a few countries, even if this still means hitting the peak in the coming days before the curve starts to actually descend. Increasingly, early May seems to cautiously be targeted as a date when some countries may start to gradually roll back some of the restrictive social distancing measures. We however probably also all need to get used to the fact that life will only get back to normal little by little, with many of the measures put in place by governments set to stay in place for at least a few more weeks, in particular those shutting down the pubs, bars and events where citizens like to gather and socialise.

Your Brussels team remains scattered across Europe but is working hard to support you from the different outposts. Here below I just wish to highlight some of the activities being carried out and I hope that, over the coming weeks, more and more of these will turn towards activities to support the re-opening of the beer market across the value chain...

Calling upon 5 Presidents of the EU and all of Europe's finance ministers to support the brewers' on-trade

Last week the President of The Brewers of Europe wrote to the Presidents of the European Commission, Council, Parliament, Central Bank and Eurogroup, outlining the impact that shutting down the hospitality sector was having, not just on the two million hospitality establishments and their workers, but also on the beer sector dependent on it. Whilst supporting the necessary social distancing measures enacted by governments, the President outlined some of the measures needed both now and in the future to ensure businesses and their employees get back on their feet. We also called on members to ensure the letter reached the national finance ministers helping to coordinate the economic responses. See the letter here: [0120Board](#)

Support to breweries with foreign workers

The Belgian Brewers faced a challenge that others may also have seen with regard to brewery employees coming from neighbouring countries who, facing technical unemployment, were covered neither by the supportive measures put in place by Belgium nor by the neighbouring country. Solidarity came to the fore though as the necessary clarifications were provided by France and The Netherlands to Belgium. Please don't hesitate to share similar experiences you may have had locally.

Sharing of best practice HORECA support programmes

The Brewers of Romania were in contact with the Dutch Brewers to understand the opportunity to put in place in Romania a Dutch scheme, where consumers and businesses sponsor and support the hospitality sector now. Through <https://www.helpdehoreca.nl> you could buy vouchers for future usage from your local bar that would allow the bars to continue to pay their rent, bills and employees. Similar schemes are also running in Belgium. Please share your experiences.

Daily tracker of COVID-19 health measures, business support measures and other initiatives

Together with support from the membership, the Secretariat has also been tracking on a daily basis and sharing news on the latest measures put in place to prevent spread of the virus and alleviate the impact on businesses and livelihoods of the drastic measures that have needed to be put in place. The latest sections in the questionnaire allow members to share information on the schemes brewers are enacting to support the efforts, plus some of the messages being used by members to guard against further, over-zealous restrictions on the sale and distribution of beer. Please help us keep this updated. See the latest updated tracker at [0920SG](#).

Arguments used around the world against brewery closures and full sales bans

Unfortunately, some governments across the world, for example those with prohibitionist tendencies, have even shut down breweries entirely or banned all sales and deliveries of alcoholic beverages. Arguments used in other countries successfully to counter such draconian measures include: the need to keep life as normal as possible and mitigate against further consumer panic; the importance of breweries operating at a minimum whilst their income from sales to the on-trade is completely shut down; the importance of breweries to jobs, value and revenues throughout the value chain; the importance of brewers' grains for farmers e.g. cattle feed; the opportunity to also produce hand sanitiser from excess alcohol; brewers can aid with distribution of other foodstuffs; beer sales are key for keeping small grocery stores open; brewery licenses could exceptionally permit direct sales to consumers. Please share any argumentation that you are using locally.

Beer is safe

At present there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with the transmission of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Nevertheless, it may be possible that people can become infected by touching a surface or object contaminated by the virus and then touching their face. Regular and thorough hand-washing minimizes the risk of contamination through handling (re-usable) beer packaging. Europe's brewers implement at breweries the governmental measures propagated to protect oneself and others from protection and encourages consumers to equally do so. See: [Covid19 Knowledge Centre webpage](#)

In the spirit of solidarity, please stay in contact and share any news or experiences you may have that could be shared with the wider membership to ensure the brewing sector exits the current crisis ready to confront the new challenges and opportunities that present themselves.

Finally, here a link to the European Commission's coronavirus response website: https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response_en

In the meantime, please #StaySafe.

Kind regards,
Pierre-Olivier