

The European Business Registry Association (EBRA), together with our peer organizations International Association of Commercial Administrators (IACA), Corporate Registers Forum (CRF) and ASORLAC, sought member feedback on the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on business registries. The response period was open from 8 March to 16 April 2021. We hereby present the received responses from our member jurisdictions.

Country	Republic of Slovenia
Institution	Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services (AJPES)
Contact person	Tadej Ulčar
E-mail	tadej.ulcar@ajpes.si

COVID-19 in your country

The Republic of Slovenia's Government declared a state of epidemic twice (March-May 2020 and October 2020 - ongoing). The situation caused stagnation in the entire economy and significantly affected the service sector and sole proprietors.

The crisis affected the young and less educated people, especially women, the hardest. The more significant impact to the less educated is also influenced by the high share of such employees in activities that were among the most affected by restrictive measures. Numerous targeted government intervention measures in 2020, financial stability, and good previous business results are why the solvency indicators do not reflect the extent of the impact. However, the health crisis could have more serious negative effects on the business environment than the available data for 2020 show.

As the epidemiological situation remains uncertain, the recovery is strongly dependent on the pandemic's further course and the implementation of the vaccination strategy in Slovenia and other countries.

Impact of COVID-19 on workload and operations

We can, without reservation, conclude that the impact was substantial. The Agency needed to reroute plentiful resources to ensure and meet required service levels, devise new processes compliant to the health crisis, emergency legislation, and arrangements. It would be fair to acknowledge that employees on all levels operated on overdrive to ensure essential services' continuous operations. The epidemic caused groundbreaking changes to the way we do business, as most of our staff worked from home for the first time. Nevertheless, AJPES continued to provide essential services in person at all branch offices, following all the health and safety recommendations (i.e., usage of personal protective equipment (masks), temperature measurements ...).

The impact also reflects on the number of registrations. Overall, we see a reduction of new incorporations of all entities by 10% compared to 2019 and an increase of the striking-off from the Business register by 5%. As inferred in pt. 1, sole proprietors are affected the most, with a 6% decrease in new registration and an 18% increase in de-registrations.

Impact of COVID-19 on development projects and strategy

The ongoing COVID-19 epidemic has a limited impact on projects and strategy.

One of the Agency's strategic goals is (from establishment) to promote electronic services and reduce administrative burdens using the continuous improvement cycle. Execution of most register procedures was (even before the epidemic) possible using digital tools but seldom used by the clients.

The epidemic raised awareness of the general public for the online procedures and recognition of key stakeholders of the importance of administrative simplification where appropriate, giving digitalization and digital services a higher priority.

However, it caused some delays with development projects. We needed to temporarily route resources to enable remote workplaces and adapt business processes and organizational culture to the new circumstances. Nonetheless, further course of the health crisis remains a high-risk factor and could yet impact the timeliness of planned information projects.

COVID-19 and companies

Slovenia implemented different corona-measures concerning business entities' registration to prevent delays in the process, simplify the procedures, and help business entities meet their obligations while considering health recommendations.

The government's intervention was most significant at the beginning of the epidemic (spring of 2020), although many of the measures are still in force to this day. Most of them aimed to enable various steps in procedures using remote means or to simplify electronic processes (i.e., waive the qualified digital signature demand) as clients were faced with shortening of the office hours and capacity limitations.

During the acute phase also the time limits in proceedings were suspended (not running), while the legal deadline for submitting annual reports was extended by two months and one month, last year and this year, respectively.

The "New Normal"

Enhanced importance of digital procedures, administrative simplification, and remote workplaces shall remain vital elements of the "New Normal". As part of our PDCA cycle, we will analyze all of the ad-hoc measures implemented during the pandemic and formally include the most effective ones in our business continuity plan. Our focus will be on providing equal and engaging alternatives to physical locations and in-person proceedings, both for our clients and employees.