



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.

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### COVID-19 in your country

*Sweden confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on 31 January 2020. Since then, more than 700,000 people in Sweden have had the infection, and more than 13,000 have died.*

*Sweden has refrained from country-wide lockdowns. The government passed a temporary exception to Swedish law for 3 months (starting April) where authorities potentially could have decided on some degree of lockdown, but it was never used as the infection rates slowed down markedly.*

*The government has introduced a number of restrictions in connection with the pandemic law. These restrictions have affected life of most people and many companies, e.g. in retail, restaurants, cultural and sports events.*

*The Public Health Agency of Sweden has also published regulations and general guidelines relating to everyone's responsibility to prevent COVID-19 infections. This has affected how people interact and how they can meet socially. People are recommended to work from home when possible, and many employers have introduced restrictions in the workplace.*

*Unemployment has increased from 6,8% in 2019 to 8,3% in 2020.*

*GDP decreased during 2020 by 2,8% compared to 2019.*

*The number of bankruptcies has not increased – the levels for 2019 and 2020 are about the same.*

*The number of new companies has increased about 14% in 2020 compared to 2019.*

### Impact of COVID-19 on workload and operations

#### Workload:

- *Number of new companies 2020: about 73,500; increase of 14% compared to 2019.*
- *Total number of cases 2020: about 1,3 million; increase of 3% compared to 2019.*
- *The demand for phone and e-mail service has increased, due to many questions regarding COVID-19 challenges. For example, 18% more emails were answered during 2020 compared to 2019.*
- *New work task handling cases regarding short term financial support for businesses. The main tasks have been customer support, case handling, quality assurance, and*



*coordination of work between different authorities. Up to 27 case administrators have been involved.*

Service times:

- *Registration of new businesses: 71% within 7 days; compared to 88% in 2019.*
- *On average the service time for case registration in 2020 are 11 days, compared to 13 days in 2019.*
- *Phone waiting times have decreased; in 2020 63% of all calls were attended to within 2 minutes compared to 80% in 2019.*

Reorganization and workplace measures:

- *More than 90% of employees work from home.*
- *Physical meetings have been transformed to digital meetings using primarily Skype. No physical meetings are allowed.*
- *Disinfectants are available at entrance and around the workplace.*
- *Seating is restricted to certain areas and is distanced.*

### **Impact of COVID-19 on development projects and strategy**

*We cannot see that we have deviated significantly from our development plans. Planning meetings, strategic reporting and workshops have been carried out according to plan, even if they have taken place at a distance instead of on site. Larger national conferences, such as large gatherings in the public sector, have been canceled or replaced by shorter digital conferences. Whether there will be any negative consequences of this, such as misunderstandings or bad decisions, remains to be seen. However, today we cannot noticeably see that our results have deteriorated. If this is the case, the reason may be that Swedish authorities are decentralized and located throughout the country. Distance working has therefore been a common way of working even before the pandemic.*

### **COVID-19 and companies**

Measures in business registration introduced during the pandemic (not all are still applicable):

- *Allowing holding annual shareholder meetings fully digitally*
- *Generous assessment when applying for remission of late fees or in appeals when referring to Corona-related problems*
- *Pauses injunction at a vacant board when the vacancy has lasted for 18 months; companies avoid liquidation injunctions*
- *Instead of writing off a case where the response time has expired (usually 3 weeks), a reminder is sent and an additional 2 weeks response time is given before the write-off*
- *Does not forward unpaid late fees or special fees to the Swedish Enforcement Agency*
- *Restrictive in imposing official notice on the companies if it is a period where the company may have been affected by corona at times of the shareholders' meeting*
- *Holds decisions linked to postal delays*
- *Pay supplier invoices before the last payment date, we pay these as quickly as possible.*

Measures by government to support business during the pandemic:

- *Adjustment support for companies based on turnover losses*
- *Short-term layoffs for reduced wage costs*



- *Temporary discount for rental costs in vulnerable industries*
- *Increased state responsibility for sick pay costs*
- *Deferment of tax payments*
- *Government loan guarantee for small and medium-sized companies*
- *Increased borrowing opportunities for companies (financed by government)*
- *Increased government investment in small innovative companies*
- *Tax reduction for investments in equipment*
- *Reduced employer and deductibles for young people*
- *Temporarily abolished benefit taxation for gifts to employees.*

### **The “New Normal”**

*We are continuing our efforts to digitalize our operations. Our vision is a business sector where business data flows without barriers and contributes value to society. This means fully digitally flows of information with no or minimum manual handling. Reaching the vision will assist in preserving business continuity and maintain service quality in the long term.*

*In the medium term we are investigating how our workplace can be adjusted to better cater for our future (“new normal”) needs. The pandemic has increased our digital maturity and given us experience in working remotely.*

**Please share anything else you find relevant in the context of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic that you haven’t mentioned before. If you would like to submit any supporting information related to your response, please e-mail your file to [survey@ebra.be](mailto:survey@ebra.be), with clear reference to your country and jurisdiction.**

*During 2020, the Swedish Companies Registration Office has participated in a number of major activities at EU level, for example introduction of new regulations such as Single Digital Gateway, eIDAS and others. No decisions have been made yet, but we can see that there are many indications that there will be delays. Meeting frequencies and deadlines are fixed, but more deliveries are postponed and important documents such as proposals for implementing acts and specifications are more difficult to reconcile between Member States. Whether this leads to permanent delays remains to be seen. It should appear in 2021 and 2022.*