

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

COVID-19 and its following lockdowns have affected the Norwegian market in many ways. While some make money of the situation (take-away delivery, click and collect services, etc.), other services (hairdressers, restaurants etc.) are suffering big losses due to lockdowns. The Norwegian government has therefore established two Compensation Schemes for the economic losses COVID-19 has caused, including businesses (for example tourism) and losses due to workers in quarantine. We will explain these two later.

We believe that it is vital to keep our main registers running, especially in times like this. We have not seen a big drop in incoming applications/documents yet, just a slowing tendency in the beginning. It's important that changes in company management and other things are done as fast as possible, and therefore keep the case handling time as low as possible. Therefore, the workload is higher and we have also been involved in the new laws established during the pandemic.

We now see that we've had a small incline in 2020 compared to 2019 concerning registration of new companies. In January, February and March we've also seen an incline even higher than earlier years.

Time will show if there will also be an increase in the number of insolvencies. It's too early to tell yet.

Impact of COVID-19 on workload and operations

The income of electronic messages was high before the COVID-19 hit Europe and it has continued to be high.

Office hours and staff are still the same, although most of the work has been done (and still is) from home offices. There is a slightly shorter opening on the phone, but only a couple of hours shorter. If a customer needs help over the phone when sending in an application, one can imagine it will take a longer time before they are ready to send us the application.

One thing is for sure – it will take some more time to get paper applications processed.



Impact of COVID-19 on development projects and strategy

As already mentioned, the Norwegian Government has passed two compensation schemes. We are currently working on the second one. However, the first one, named The Business Compensation Scheme, was a major project. It was given with a short deadline, and therefore it naturally affected the already ongoing projects. One of the projects affected was Brsys, where we are developing a new case-handling platform, which includes all our 17 registers.

We are now working on the compensation scheme for losses due to workers in quarantine. Because of our experience with the Business Compensation Scheme, we have a good head start.

COVID-19 and companies

The Government has negotiated with the opposition and the Parliament has passed the so-called "Corona law" (Korona-loven). The Corona law gives the government extended powers to pass necessary regulations at a fast pace. For instance, the law has made it possible to pass a regulation that puts aside company laws that demand physical meetings and signing of protocols. Expanded access to use electronic signatures and technologies of distant/non-physical meetings has also been allowed.

The "New Normal"

There have been some big leaps, especially concerning the usage of digital meetings. Digital meetings have made us more flexible and more present in the meetings on both national and intentional level. We have also seen that digital meetings are easier to organize than physical meetings.

However, it has been harder with meetings that require a more personal and procedural presence. In any case, a good dynamic in a digital meeting requires that material and documentation is made available in advance.