Dealing with customers in the fight against COVID-19

Guide for a safe restart of hospitality

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FPS Economy, S.M.E.s, Self-employed and Energy
According to experts, we will have to live with the COVID-19 virus for the foreseeable future. We therefore need to keep taking measures to prevent the further spread of the virus or new outbreaks as much as possible.

This guide sets out the necessary minimum preventative measures to ensure that contact between catering establishments with their customers is as safe as possible, by minimising the risk of infection and avoiding contamination as far as possible.

These preventative measures may be supplemented at the sectoral and/or company level to take the specific context into account as much as possible, so that activities can be resumed in safe conditions. Other appropriate measures offering equivalent protection may also be taken.

This guide offers guidance to catering establishments that have had to (partially) suspend their activities, in preparation for a safe resumption of their activities. Catering establishments that have not interrupted their activities and have already taken the necessary measures themselves may use this guide as a source of further inspiration.

In addition to the preventative measures in this guide, it is also advisable to consult the "Generic guide to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at work" on the website of the FPS Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue.

The content of this guide was compiled from information from the Economic Risk Management Group (ERMG) and the initiatives of the catering sector (draft protocol for restarting the catering sector) and producers (proposal for a joint approach to the safe reopening of the catering sector).

This text was drawn up following advice from the Group of Experts tasked with an Exit Strategy (GEES).

**Purpose of this guide**

These guidelines apply to restaurants and cafés, including the food and drink facilities at a hotel.

These guidelines do not apply to room rental or accommodation.
Guidelines for the customer

- **Book** your catering visit in advance as far as possible.
- **Do not go** to the catering establishment if you have **symptoms of coronavirus**.
- Follow the **instructions** of the staff and the guidelines on display in the catering establishment.
- Keep **1.5 metres away** from staff and other customers, excluding those in your party.
- **Limit your movements** in the catering establishment. Only move to and from your table and to the toilets.
- **Cough or sneeze into your elbow or into a paper tissue** that you immediately discard in a dustbin with a lid (e.g. in the toilets).
- Ensure good **hand hygiene** and only touch the objects you need to.
- **Pay** as far as possible **electronically** or contactless.
Before restarting, ensure complete cleaning and disinfection of the materials and areas used by staff and guests.

Contact your employees, including temporary workers and trainees, in good time, as well as external parties such as customers, suppliers and others who come into contact with your company, to inform them about the rules at your company. Many people may have practical questions: it is important to tell them whom they can turn to via information panels, your intranet or your website.

Make arrangements visible outside and inside the premises. You will find a model poster and a communication kit on the website of the FPS Economy (bit.ly/GuidePourHoreca).

In the case of home services, the service provider may only be present at the place of service for the duration strictly necessary.

Encourage advance reservations as much as possible.

Have consideration for the layout of your car park, e.g. by spreading out the number of parking spaces and spaces for bikes to guarantee a safe distance.

For non-automatic doors, leave the doors open as far as possible.

Have a welcome conversation with your customers, where you raise their awareness, inform them and explain the preventative measures in place and the rules relating to guests' health.

Coats and accessories will not be accepted by the staff; guests must hang their own coats and other items at the designated place.
• Customers must be able to easily maintain a distance of 1.5 metres both inside and outside the premises (except between people in a single party). This distancing measure also applies to the terrace and the sanitary area.

• Movements of customers within the establishment and outdoors are organised in such a way as to minimise any contact with other customers and staff in all circumstances, always respecting the distance of 1.5 metres.

• Provide guidance of guests to the tables as far as possible. Indicate the places/tables yourself to avoid contact between customers. For example, put up a ‘Wait to be seated’ sign.

• Do all you can to aim for the physical distance of 1.5m as far as possible. For example, work with floor markings to support this / to organise circulation (fixed, clearly marked waiting and walking paths outside and inside the catering establishment). If necessary, provide additional protective measures, such as plexiglass screens or other physical barriers.

• It is mandatory to eat or drink while seated. Eating or drinking at the bar or standing up is not permitted. Only one-man shops can order and serve at the bar, always respecting the distance of 1.5 metres with and between customers.

• Tables are set up in such a way that the distance between them remains 1.5 metres. The number of tables should be adjusted accordingly. This rule may be deviated from if a sufficiently high barrier is provided (e.g. made of plexiglass, at least 1.80m high).

• A maximum of 10 people can sit together at a table. The general rules on permitted social contact as laid down by the government must be respected.
• Ensure the necessary **hand hygiene** for staff and customers by providing suitable hand gels or disinfectants for disinfecting the hands. Make these products available at the entry and exit and, where necessary, inside the premises (e.g. toilets, dining area and terrace).

• Provide only paper towels or paper and lockable bins in the **toilets** on the premises. The sanitary facilities must be cleaned and disinfected frequently.

• **Clean tables and chairs** thoroughly after each customer.

• Offering a **menu and drinks menu** that is taken by hand by various customers is absolutely not recommended. Use signs on the walls or other alternatives for this. If a menu or drinks menu is used, then clean it thoroughly after each customer.

• Use as many **paper** tablecloths, doilies, placemats and napkins as possible.

• Do not put any butter jars, salt and pepper kegs, oil or vinegar, ketchup bottles, bread baskets, decorative items, etc., on the table. Give **preference to individually wrapped portions** (which you can prepare yourself).

• **Glasses, cups, crockery and cutlery must be washed** with soap and rinsed after each use (more information in separate box below).

• Wearing a **face mask** or other fabric alternative within the establishment or at the place of service is mandatory for the staff, except for roles where the safety distance can always be respected.
For ventilation, it is recommended to increase the air exchange rate and supply as much outside air as possible, either by natural ventilation or by mechanical ventilation, depending on the occasion. When using mechanical ventilation systems, the maintenance of artificial ventilation systems in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions, in particular with regard to the cleaning and replacement of filters, is essential.

The use of communal games present at the drinking facility (billiards, darts, etc.) is only permitted if the distance of 1.5 meters can be respected. After each use, the games will be disinfected.

There is a closing time, i.e. 1am, unless the local authorities decide to bring this time forward.

Set up the till area so that a distance of 1.5 metres can be maintained between staff and customers, and between customers waiting in the queue. If this is not possible, then provide other safety measures, such as partitions and screens.

Encourage electronic payments by bank card or contactless, and avoid cash as far as possible.

When using the payment terminal, it must be cleaned and disinfected after each use, or make hand gels or cotton buds available to customers.
Glasses, cups, crockery and cutlery

Glasses, cups, crockery and cutlery must be washed with soap and rinsed after each use.

Simply rinsing the beer glasses in cold water with a rinsing agent is not sufficient. Machine dishwashing is preferable to hand dishwashing.

If you wash by hand, it is recommended to use hot water and detergent. If necessary, you can rinse with cold drinking water.

If it is not possible to wash with hot water, then pay extra attention to the following points:

- the washing-up water used must always be kept clean,
- always use sufficient detergent (according to the manufacturer’s recommendations),
- soak the glasses in detergent water for a sufficiently long time,
- rinse with drinking water.

Use a sink for dishwashing and another sink for rinsing. Allow the glasses to drain and dry thoroughly before reuse. Ideally, do not dry with a towel. If this is unavoidable, then make sure you take a clean towel as often as necessary. Always wash the towels after use.

Wash your hands before touching the washed glasses.

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Communication material

The FPS Economy created a communication kit with posters, banners and pictograms.

You will find this communication material on bit.ly/covid19-commkit.