Dealing with customers in the fight against COVID-19

Guide for businesses

Update 01.12.2020
According to experts, we will have to live with the COVID-19 virus for the foreseeable future. We, therefore, need to keep taking measures in order to prevent the further spread of the virus or new outbreaks as much as possible.

This guide sets out the necessary minimum preventive measures to ensure that contacts between retailers and self-employed traders with their customers are as safe as possible by minimising the risk of infection and avoiding contamination as much as possible.

The preventive measures may be supplemented at 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.

In addition to the prevention measures mentioned in this guide, it is also advisable to consult the “Generic guide to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at work” of the Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue.

The content of the guide was compiled with, among others, contributions from Comeos and the High Council for the Self-employed and SMEs, the Responsible Cinema Visit Protocol of the Federation of Cinemas of Belgium, the input from the Grouping of Belgian casinos and the plan for a safe reopening of the slot machine arcades of the VZW UBA-BNGO, the input from the amusement park sector and the trade fairs, the input from the indoor playgrounds sector and the Sector Guide for the reopening of private saunas and public baths, and can be supplemented according to the guidelines of the National Security Council and on the basis of new scientific understanding and best practice.

The initial text was drafted after advice from the working group charged with preparing the exit strategy (GEES). The text was, then, adapted in function of the decisions of the National Security Council and of the Consultation Committee.

Scope

• Retail activities (excluding catering) authorised to open
• Other liberal and independent professions authorised to open without physical contact
• Shopping centres
• Street trade
• Self-employed professions in their own premises, at customers’ home or on location

This guide no longer deals with fairgrounds, cinemas, wellness centres, indoor playgrounds, amusement parks, liberal professions with physical contact, Class I and Class II gambling establishments, trade fairs and other exhibitions, as all these establishments must currently remain closed.
Do not go to shops, if you show symptoms of disease. Please, respect the six golden rules under all circumstances:

- Wash your hands regularly
- Avoid contact with other people as much as possible
- Think about people at risk
- Keep your distance
- Opt for outdoor activities
- Respect the rules on gatherings

Follow the instructions of the staff and the guidelines on display in the shop.

It is recommended going to shops near where you live or work.

Shopping is carried out alone or with a maximum of one other person from the same household or with whom close and lasting contact is maintained. An adult may accompany children under the age of 18 living under the same roof as him/her or persons in need of assistance. In very exceptional circumstances (e.g. when purchasing voluminous goods that require in-depth discussion because of the impact on the household or dwelling), two people may be present: an additional member of the household or for the single person, the close contact. This can be done by appointment in companies that work exclusively by appointment.

Limit your time in shops and other businesses to a maximum of 30 minutes. This may be longer in shops that work exclusively by appointment.

Keep 1.5 metres away from other customers (that don’t belong to your family or your close contacts) and shop staff.

Wash your hands when entering each shop and touch only the items you need.

Customers must wear a face mask or a cloth alternative in shops, shopping centres and on trade fairs. If this is not possible for medical reasons, a face shield may be used. This obligation also applies in shopping streets, on markets (including antique markets and jumble sales) and fairs and any private or public busy place, determined by the competent local authority and delimited by a notice specifying the times to which the obligation applies.

Pay as much as possible electronically or contactless.

It is advisable to give priority to persons older than 65, people who are less mobile and caring personnel.
Guidelines for retailers

Regardless of the type of business, the guidelines mentioned in this guide must be applied. Traders who do not comply with them risk having their establishment closed down by the control authorities.

- All shops can open on their usual days and times. Night shops must close by 10pm at the latest.
- Queues outside the shop should be avoided. Every effort must be made to ensure that the distance of 1.5 metres is respected between people in the queues and to avoid gatherings. If arrangements are made by the local authorities, they must be respected.
- The duration of the shopping must be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes.
- Shops that work exclusively by appointment may allow longer visits. And in very exceptional circumstances (e.g. when purchasing voluminous goods that require in-depth discussion because of the impact on the household or dwelling), two people may be present: an additional member of the household or for the single person, the close contact. This can be done by appointment in companies that work exclusively by appointment.
- Display instructions visibly outside and inside the shop, for example regarding the maximum number of customers who can enter the shop at the same time, the wearing of a face mask or regarding the use of toilets. A template for a display and a communication kit are available on the website of the FPS Economy ([bit.ly/GuideCommerces](bit.ly/GuideCommerces)).
- Duly contact your employees, including temporary workers and trainees, as well as external parties such as customers, clients, suppliers, subcontractors, freelancers, visitors, parents and others who come into contact with the company, to inform them about the rules in your company. Many people will have specific questions - make it clear whom they can contact via info boards, intranet, website, etc.
- Admit no more than 1 customer per 10 square meters of accessible floor surface. However, if the floor surface accessible to customers is less than 20 square metres, no more than 2 customers can enter the premises, as long as a distance of 1.5 metres can be ensured between customers.
- Customers must be able to easily maintain a distance of 1.5 metres both inside and outside the premises. Where possible, apply floor markings, ribbon barriers, physical barriers or a walking route to be followed.
- When the area accessible to the public is greater than 400 m², adequate access control must be provided. Adequate access control involves organised monitoring of compliance with specific measures. These include control of the limited number of customers admitted, the compulsory wearing of a mask, the prohibition of assembly, the rule that shopping must be done individually and social distancing.
- Make sure your shop is well ventilated. For non-automatic doors, leave the doors open as much as possible.
- Ensure the necessary hand hygiene for staff and customers by providing suitable hand gels or disinfectants. Make the products available at the entry and exit and, where necessary, inside the shop (e.g. fitting rooms, ticket machines or payment terminal).
• Set up the **till area** so that a distance of 1.5 metres can be maintained between staff and customers, and between waiting customers in the queue. If this is not possible, provide other safety measures, such as partitions and screens.

• Ensure the shop is set up in such a way that the customer only touches the product he or she wants to buy. If this is not possible, limit as much as possible the number of times the product is handled by both seller and buyer.

• The sale of **alcoholic beverages** is prohibited in all establishments, including vending machines, from 8 pm to 5 am.

• Everybody from the age of 12 (including the staff of the store) must cover one's mouth and nose with a **face mask** or cloth alternative. If this is not possible for medical reasons, a face shield may be used.

• Encourage **electronic payments** by bank card or contactless, and avoid cash as much as possible.

• The **payment terminal** must be cleaned and disinfected after each use, or provide hand gels or cotton buds for customers.

• If possible, work with **orders** and pick-up times.

• Take preventive measures in the **fitting room**: limit the number of people, respect 1.5 metres distance when setting up the cubicles and organising the queue. Disinfect the cubicle after each fitting. Provide hand gel before and after use of the fitting room.

• Pay attention to the **layout of your car park**, e.g. by spreading out the number of parking spaces and spaces for bikes, so a safe distance can be guaranteed.

• **Street sales** and displays, flags or other attributes outside the shops are prohibited.

• It is advisable to give **priority** to persons older than 65, people who are less mobile and caring personnel.

• **Door-to-door sales** are prohibited. The delivery and placement of previously ordered goods at home is permitted.

## Guidelines for shopping centres

• Contact your staff, including temporary workers and trainees, in good time to **inform them** of the rules in force in the shopping centre and train them in their implementation. Do the same with outsiders, such as customers, suppliers, subcontractors, freelancers, visitors, relatives, etc. who may be in contact with your company. Many people are likely to ask concrete questions: it is essential to make it clear to them who they can talk to, via posters, information boards, your intranet or your website.

• **Display instructions visibly outside** the shopping centre, for example regarding the maximum number of customers who can enter the shop at the same time, the wearing of a face mask, or regarding the use of toilets. A template for a display and a communication kit are available on the website of the FPS Economy ([bit.ly/GuideCommerces](bit.ly/GuideCommerces)).

• Provide a **separate entrance and exit** for customers in the shopping centre.

• Provide **hand washing facilities** for staff and clients (suitable gel or disinfectant). Install these devices at entrances, exits and wherever necessary in the shopping centre.
• Make sure your shop is well ventilated.
• For non-automatic doors, leave the doors open as much as possible.
• Admit no more than 1 customer per 10 square meters of accessible floor surface, for a period no longer than necessary and usual.
• Shopping is carried out alone or with a maximum of one other person from the same household or with whom close and lasting contact is maintained. An adult may accompany children under the age of 18 living under the same roof as him/her or persons in need of assistance.
• Organise a system to check how many customers are present in the shopping centre. Adequate access control involves organised monitoring of compliance with specific measures. These include control of the limited number of customers admitted, the compulsory wearing of a mask, the prohibition of assembly, the rule that shopping must be done individually and social distancing.
• Queues outside the shopping centre and at the entrances to the centre's shops should be avoided.
• Customers must be able to easily maintain a distance of 1.5 metres both inside and outside the premises. Where possible, apply floor markings, ribbon barriers, physical barriers or a walking route to be followed.
• Everybody from the age of 12 (including the staff of the store) must cover ones mouth and nose with a face mask or cloth alternative. If this is not possible for medical reasons, a face shield may be used.
• If possible, give the necessary instructions to customers of the shopping centre via the public address system.
• The guidelines for retailers also apply to the individual shops in a shopping centre.
• Pay attention to the layout of your car park, e.g. by spreading out the number of parking spaces and spaces for bikes, so a safe distance can be guaranteed.
• Street sales and displays, flags or other attributes outside and inside the shopping centres are prohibited.
• It is advisable to give priority to persons older than 65, people who are less mobile and caring personnel.
Guidelines in other sectors without physical contact

- Keep **1.5 metres distance**. Apply floor markings where possible.
- Make sure your shop is **well ventilated**.
- For non-automatic doors, leave the **doors open** as much as possible.
- Duly contact your employees, including temporary workers and trainees, as well as external parties such as customers, clients, suppliers, subcontractors, freelancers, visitors, parents and others who come into contact with the company, to **inform them** about the rules in your company. Many people will have specific questions - make it clear whom they can contact via info boards, intranet, website, etc.
- Admit only **one customer** at a time and for no more than **30 minutes**, and use alternatives for consultation and meetings, such as teleworking or digital meetings, as much as possible.
- Professionals who work **exclusively by appointment** may allow longer visits. Even in this case, they can only receive one client at a time.
- **Work with appointments** and plan customer contact as spread out as possible. Avoid using waiting areas. If a waiting area is used anyway, organise the area with respect for the distance of 1.5 metres, and make sure that customers do not sit opposite each other. Position chairs with their backs to each other. Do not offer drinks to customers.
- Everybody from the age of 12 (including the staff of the store) must cover ones mouth and nose with a **face mask** or cloth alternative in the **spaces open to the public**. If this is not possible for medical reasons, a face shield may be used.
- If possible, admit customers in a **separate area** and limit the number of employees present.
- Reorganise the **reception area**, so that the 1.5 metres distance between staff and customers can be maintained. If this is not possible, provide other safety measures, such as partitions and screens.
- Ensure the necessary **hand hygiene** for staff and customers by providing means to disinfect hands with suitable hand gels or disinfectants. Make these products available at the entry and exit and, where necessary, inside the establishment, e.g. when signing documents.
• In the case of customer contacts outside the premises: provide clear instructions for visits/work and ask timely for information about the location. Limit the number of employees/customers present in an area. If the presence of the resident is not required during the work, he or she must move to another area. Provide individual protective equipment.

• The delivery and placement of previously ordered goods at home is permitted.

• The provision of services in the home and those where the distance of 1.5 m cannot be guaranteed are prohibited, except for the provision of services which are legally defined as being necessary for the protection of the vital needs of the Nation and the needs of the population.

• Street sales and displays, flags, door-to-door sales or other attributes outside the businesses are prohibited.
These guidelines apply to street trade, including markets.

Street activity refers to any sale, offer for sale or display with a view to the sale to consumers of products and ancillary services relating to those products by a trader outside the establishments mentioned in their registration in the Crossroads Bank for Enterprises or by a person who does not have such an establishment.

A market is regarded as a manifestation organized or previously authorized by the municipality, to bring together persons who sell products or services at fixed places and times.

These guidelines do not affect the powers of the local authorities to regulate street and fair activities in accordance with the law of 25 June 1993 on the exercise and organisation of street and fair activities.

General guidelines for street trading

- Door-to-door sales are prohibited. The delivery and placement of previously ordered goods at home is permitted.
- Foodtrucks can offer food and drinks to take away until 10 pm at the latest. On-site consumption is not permitted. The sale of alcoholic beverages is prohibited between 8 pm and 5 am.
- Ensure that a distance of 1.5 metres can be maintained at all times between visitors to the street business and the traders.
- Draft a corona circulation plan with clear demarcation of queueing line and walking route via ribbon barriers or crowd control barriers, and mark the queueing line every 1.5 metres.
- Ensure the necessary hand hygiene by providing means to disinfect hands with suitable hand gels or disinfectants. Install them in such a way that they are accessible to the seller and the customer.
- Display the preventive measures that apply to street businesses in a clearly visible place.
- Encourage electronic payments by bank card or contactless, and avoid cash as much as possible.
- The payment terminal must be cleaned and disinfected after each use, or provide hand gels or cotton buds for customers.
- Ensure the shop is set up in such a way that the customer only touches the product he or she wants to buy. If this is not possible, limit the number of times the product is handled by both seller and buyer as much as possible.
Additional guidelines for markets and fairs

- Markets must be pre-approved by the city council, which must adapt all the guidelines below to the local situation.
- Fairs, antique markets, flea markets, annual fairs, Christmas markets and winter villages are prohibited.
- The competent local authority may require all visitors over the age of 12 to wear a face mask or cloth alternative.
- Display the prevention measures that apply to the market clearly visible at all entrances to the market area.
- Shopping is done alone for a period of maximum 30 minutes. An adult may accompany children under the age of 18 living under the same roof as him/her or persons requiring.
- The rules of social distancing are adhered to. Customers, market vendors, carnies and their staff always keep 1.5 metres away from each other.
- A one-way circulation plan is being developed, with separate entrances and exits to the market. Only in exceptional circumstances, a motivated deviation from this is possible by the local government, which will provide an alternative solution.
- Clearly separate the aisles and queues, using ribbons and crush barriers. Use ground markings and/or signs to ensure the distance of 1.5 metres.
- Means for the necessary hand hygiene should be made available at the entrance of the market and at every stall.
- The maximum amount of visitors admitted to the market is 1 visitor per 1.5 running metres at a stall.
- A system is provided to check how many customers are present on the market.
- Provide a filter system at the entrances to the market to limit the number of visitors.
- Set up market stalls at a sufficient distance from each other and ensure a sufficiently wide walk-through path.
- Market vendors, carnies and their staff must cover their mouth and nose with a face mask or a cloth alternative. If this is not possible for medical reasons, a face shield may be used.
- It is strongly recommended that market visitors also wear a face mask or a cloth alternative on the market.
- The consumption of food and drink on the spot at the market is prohibited. No food or drink is offered in the form of tastings for the customers.
- Foodtrucks can offer food and drinks on take-away until 10 pm at the latest. On-site consumption is not permitted.
- The sale of alcoholic beverages is prohibited in all establishments, including vending machines, from 8 pm to 5 am.
- The general guidelines for street trading also apply to the individual market vendor or carny on the market.
Communication material

The FPS Economy created a communication kit with posters, banners and pictograms for merchants, the self-employed, market vendors and municipalities.

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