

Notary Mr. Georgios Rouskas
President CNUE
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Wetteren, 13. April 2020

Dear Mister President,

A few weeks ago, nobody could predict we would be wrist out of our comfort zone. And certainly not in such a way.

Everybody has fallen again to earth. Feet back on the ground. Realising that actually nothing is that normal as we thought.

That we have to enjoy life when we can... but in moderation ... Not only materialistic, but don't forget to enjoy your family, friends, colleagues, and loved ones.

And in hindsight the oh-insurmountable difficulties turn out to be pernickety.

In times like that, it seems more than clear that we need each other.

Two big words are still keep on my lips: SOLIDARITY and COLLEGIALLY !!!

That's what we all need now.

" Spread solidarity and collegiality, not that virus".

So, stay at home, as much as possible; and please help each other where and as many as possible. If we are looking at the figures of Italy, Spain, France, ... and many other countries.

On, 01. April 2020:

for example, in Italy:

Total cases:	110.574
amongst them - deaths:	13.155
Current positive cases:	80.572
Amongst them: Hospitalized with symptoms	28.403
And in Intensive Care:	4.035
And in quarantine at home:	48.134
And total healed:	16.847

A real disaster, a catastrophe.

Many losses... big family pain...

All our thoughts and prayers are with the victims, and their affected families and friends.

More than half of the world is taking necessary measures to fight against this virus, and try to stop the spread of this virus.

All major events are being canceled and postponed worldwide to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus:

- The Eurovision Song Contest
- All football competitions
- Other sporting events have been affected as well: Formula One, the World Athletics Indoor Championships, The French Open Tennis (Roland Garros); Wimbledon (Tennis); the Olympic Games; Cycling races: Paris-Roubaix and Liege-Bastogne-Liege, the Tour of Flanders, Milan-Sanremo and the Tour of Lombardy, Giro d'Italia, Tour de France... etc., etc., etc.,
- Music & Arts Festivals
- Tomorrowland Winter 2020
- The Kentucky Derby
- The Boston Marathon
- Several St. Patrick's Day parades and festivities all over the world
- Several fashion shows in Paris and Milan
- Several major corporate conferences have been canceled or postponed
- ... etc., etc., etc.,

In every country there are more or less severe measures that are based on the evolution of the spread of this COVID-19.

Such as there are:

1. **Citizens are required to stay at home** to avoid contact outside of their family as much as possible; except:
 - a) To go to work (behalf on what's mentioned sub 2.)
 - b) For essential travel (to the doctor, food shops, post office, bank, pharmacy, to refuel or to help people in need)
 - c) Outdoor exercise is allowed and even recommended. You can exercise together with family members living under the same roof and together with 1 friend. Trips with family members living under the same roof are allowed. It is important to keep a reasonable distance.

Larger gatherings of people are not allowed.

2. **Companies - irrespective of their size - are obliged to organise working from home for every position where this is possible, without exception.**
 - a) If this is not possible for certain employees, social distancing will be strictly respected (at least 1,50 meter). This rule applies both to the performance of work and to transport organised by the employer. If companies cannot meet these obligations, they must shut down.
 - b) If the authorities find that the social distancing measures are not being complied with, first a heavy fine will be imposed on the company; in the event of non-compliance after the fine has been imposed, the company will have to shut down.
 - c) These provisions do not apply to key industries and essential services. However, they will have to ensure that the social distancing rules are respected as much as possible.

3. **ALL Schools are closed**
4. **Bars, restaurants, nightlife and party rooms, hotels, and all non-essential shops and retail outlets are closed, with the exception of food shops, pharmacies, pet food shops and newsagents.**
 - a) Even hairdressers are closed
 - b) In addition, access to supermarkets is regulated, with the number of customers being limited (1 person per 10m² and a maximum presence of 30 minutes).
 - c) Bars are obliged to put their terrace furniture inside.
 - d) Night shops are allowed to remain open until 10 PM and must comply with the social distancing instructions.
5. **Public transport** should be organised in such a way as to ensure social distancing.
6. **Non-essential** travel outside (e.g. Belgium) **is prohibited.**
7. **Outdoor markets are shut down.** Food stalls are only allowed in areas where they are indispensable.

Everyone is aware of how difficult **the measures listed above** are and to what extent they **impact** everyone's **daily life**. But the gravity of the situation and the protection of public health require these sacrifices.

Among the affected ones, there are, without a doubt, people who are the breadwinner of the family.

But: Administrations must continue to function in order to guarantee their services, subject to social distancing measures and/or **teleworking** where possible.
The public administrations must inform the public about the possibilities of obtaining documents and information via alternative channels (online).
The administration must give preference to these alternative channels to limit the number of journeys made.

Civil-law notaries, lawyers, and bailiffs are allowed to continue to receive clients, mainly for signing deeds? **BUT ONLY:**

- if necessary, and
- if social distance is respected;
 - o all what's not urgent, has to be postponed;
- Teleworking and electronical communication with their clients should be applied as much as possible.

Employees in Notary-sector are out of the media spotlight, which these days focuses on health professionals and workers whose efforts guarantee the supply of essential goods to the population.

However, the **Notary-sector** still plays a **FUNDAMENTAL ROLE**.
Even if this is not enough expressed in the media.

We, notaries and their employees, **always have to be available** for urgent deeds; for last wills; urgent proxy's, and other urgent deeds that are tied to tax deadlines; etc...

National and European authorities are expecting this from us.

Let us hope that they will not forget this in future, and that they always will remember the importance of our profession and our sector. That Latin Notary is highly needed... even when very much of other sectors are already closed down for a long time; and that Latin Notary and all of his employees still is on the barricade, along with health workers and other vital professions

First of all, it is essential to protect the health of these employees, so that they can continue to perform this essential work safely;
and it is also essential to protect the health of all clients.

Secondly, it is highly recommendable to make **solidarity and collegiality** work in all directions.

- 1° If there is the possibility of tele-signing the deeds, or to let them sign by proxy: Let it work this way!
- 2° If there is the possibility of tele-working? Promote or oblige it; to keep every notary and employee healthy through this period;
- 3° If necessary, by lack of sufficient work:
- 4° make use of a system of total or partial technical unemployment, possibly specially set for these corona times; and we call on all notary-employees, in solidarity with their employer, to temporarily accept this total or partial unemployment, for as long as it takes and may be necessary;
- 5° Make use of social assistance systems arranged by the government in case of this total or partial technical unemployment;
- 6° On the other hand, we would like to call on the employers to keep as many employees as possible at work, through the system of partial unemployment, and by redistributing the available work;

We are convinced that this mutual solidarity, in these difficult times, will benefit us all, and that the personnel will highly appreciate this, and at the restart of normal life, in times of an overload of work that was forced to be postponed, the personnel will be happy to perform extra.

It is very important that we could coordinate efforts – CNUE and CPNUE - to protect the health, livelihoods and wages of workers in our sector, not only nationally, but across Europe.

The exchange of information, the dissemination of good practices are key elements in curbing the spread of the disease and preventing it from leading to a total social and employment crisis.

In this aim, we would have to prepare a package of recommendations to our national and European government and our national and European notary-authority to defend all workers in our sectors – notaries and employees.

Meanwhile, we call on the whole society to be very aware of the exceptional nature of the measures to prevent the spread of this awful disease.

In these difficult times of the Corona Virus, we wish all employees in the notarial profession, both from the notary offices and from all notarial institutions, and all notaries, a lot of courage, and especially that everyone can stay healthy and will not be affected by this disease. In this crazy time, it's clear that we all have to search for a new balance, between thinking ahead and being in the now.

Due to teleworking, we are closed off from all your colleagues. (Almost) no social contact ...

Meanwhile it is very important, for our mental health: To not focus too much on what is no longer possible; but to focus on what is still possible!

Above all, keep in touch with others: with your colleagues, family members, friends - even if it is from a distance.

It is important to keep the good spirit alive. To help each other where possible.

Then in the end, we will all come out stronger together.

We would like to do something to the lack of European Solidarity.

Like already said: " Spread solidarity and collegiality, not that virus".

Help us, to help you, and to help Latin Notary above this crisis.

Thanks in advance.

Take care of each other, because, we need each other !

Kind regards.



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