

CIRCULAR APRIL 30, 2020

Subject: Coronavirus Covid-19: proposed protocol for lifting restrictions

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*To those in charge of the operators of the Public Reading Network*

*To the organizing powers of the operators of the Public Reading Network*

Authority: Minister with public reading in his remit

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Madam, Sir,

Following the feedback from the library field to the National Security Council on 24 April 2020, I found it useful to inform you of general instructions relating to the resumption of activity in your sector.

This protocol has to adapt to the realities on the ground in your domain. The management, the organising authorities, and boards of directors are therefore the guarantors of an implementation adapted to their structure.

This protocol was developed during two meetings coordinated by the Public Reading Service (General Directorate of Territorial Action). All the support operators of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and some direct operators were invited. This protocol may need to be adapted to the decisions taken at the next sessions of the National Security Council (NSC).

### **1. General Hygiene Guidelines**

The site <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/fr/faq/>: remains a reliable source of information.

<https://covid-19.sciensano.be/fr> is also a reference site.

Various measures of physical distance are recommended:

- 1.5m between people,
- one person per 10 sqm,
- avoid contact,
- regular hand washing is recommended,
- a librarian/user separation plexiglass at the loan counter is strongly suggested,
- the virus is susceptible to disinfectants.

Regarding the resistance of the virus on media:

- Paper: 4h-6h survival

- Cardboard: 24 hours
- Plastic: 24 hours to 36 hours

## **2. Sector-Specific Details**

Each direct operator has their autonomy and is managed by an organising authority which is also its own. Each library can therefore have an organization, an infrastructure, a team that is unique to it, while respecting legal standards.

Organising authorities are private (ASBL) or public (Communes, provinces).

Each structure is also an employer. In other words, it manages the staff itself which it has taken on, all in accordance with social and labour law standards.

Establishments with a toy library can apply this protocol.

## **3. Proposed Protocol for Lifting Restrictions**

This protocol is a proposal that will have to be adapted to suit specific situations.

Its division into phases allows you to return to the previous phase in the event of a return of the epidemic.

### **3.1. Preliminary considerations**

Currently, 80% of the network is totally inaccessible to the public.

18% of the network offers a take-away solution.

A large part of the staff is working remotely.

Books currently off the shelves are automatically extended and are not returned to libraries. Fines are suspended. Digital offers (Lirtuel for example) have been reinforced.

#### ***3.1.1. Public management***

Access to libraries will be restricted to public members who comply with current health standards.

Suggested of preventive measures:

- Specific communication to users to remind them of hygiene rules for their safety and that of staff. Communication tools are available from the Public Reading Service of the Reading);
- Use of individual protections or individual practices: masks, hydroalcoholic gel in the entrances of the premises, provision of surgical masks for members of the public who do not fall into risk groups, etc.;
- Identify and note accessible surfaces and the number of people who can enter them in order to comply with physical distance measures (to be adapted according to location);
- Set up "circuits" to be used by users in order to avoid crossing and contacts;

#### ***3.1.2. Personnel management***

Workplaces should be considered based on the size of the teams. General measures apply.

Occupational medicine specialists or related organizations can advise each employer on how to ensure a safe return to work.

Suggested preventive measures:

- Individual protections (masks, gloves, hydroalcoholic gel);
- Introducing protective plexiglass at loan counters;
- Organization of work in "revolving teams" (on-site and remote working) to avoid too many people being on site at the same time;
- Reorganization of the workplace;
- Scheduling;
- Intensified cleaning of the premises.

Practical considerations:

- Systematization of the digitalisation of work: shared server, laptops, etc.
- Specific attention to maintenance personnel: training, strengthening of teams, enhanced individual protections.

**3.1.3. Cross-Cutting Stage: Return of Books or Toys**

This step can be coupled with the next steps depending on the realities of work.

Various precautions are recommended:

- Phasing in the return of works by users, depending on the dates of borrowing: establish a concerted schedule between users and the library in order to organize returns, or failing that, extend the books.
- Each library can set its own return schedule according to the tips below.

General instruction: Handle books with gloves, keep books in "quarantine" for at least 3 days. In addition, if deemed useful: disinfect plastic covers.

Practical considerations (to be adapted according to the realities of the library):

- Give limited access to a room so that users can leave book there;
- Return only via book drops (for libraries that have them);
- Use spaces usually accessible to the public to organize the return;
- Rental of places dedicated to returning materials;
- Take into account the teams and rhythm of work over the day to organise the calendar;
- For games: quarantine according to the aforementioned principles, verification of the game by toy library specialists, and quarantine before lending out again.

**3.1.4. Stage 1: Generalisation of a Take-Away System**

Book reservations by phone or electronic route only.

The library prepares the order (in accordance with the measures mentioned above). The collection is done by appointment or in accordance with the general measures mentioned above (limited access, individual protections).

The system of fines is suspended until things return enough to normal.

### ***3.1.5. Stage 2: Re-opening of libraries to the public (Access to Collections)***

Depending on the general measures mentioned, open the premises gradually.

From 11 May 2020: A general reopening date is set to prevent situations where people travel from areas where libraries are closed to ones where libraries are open. This date has been agreed with the network, but also the Union of Francophone Book Booksellers in order to have an inter-sector coherence.

Opening times are left to the discretion of the operator (depending on the location and the teams) and can gradually change depending on the situation. The take-away system can continue to exist in parallel depending on the needs and realities on the ground. Reading rooms, computer access points and activity rooms remain closed until 30 June 2020.

### ***3.1.6. Stage 3: Re-opening of libraries to the public (Access and Use of Rooms)***

The reading rooms, computer access points, activity rooms are reopened to the public.

A protocol will be set up to ensure this step in the best possible conditions.

The general measures remain in place.

Possible deadline: 1 September 2020

### ***3.1.7. Stage 4: Resumption of Activities and Training***

As of the date of this circular, it is too soon to talk about the resumption of activities and training in person.

Teams are putting in place alternative solutions, available online or through other channels to keep in touch with their audiences.

Measures for the resumption of activities with small, limited groups are to be specified to ensure the safety of users and staff.

A protocol will be set up to ensure this step can take place in the best possible conditions. The general measures remain in place.

The '*Reading Frenzy*' event will be the subject of specific reflection.

*Possible deadline: 30 September 2020*

Note: School protocols for classroom management and implementation can be inspiring.

#### **4. Work with Schools (Class Groups)**

Libraries are inaccessible to school classes until 30 June 2020.

On the other hand, schools can organize with the library to gain access to collections, in accordance with the planned measures.

Suggestion of preventive measures:

- Reservations by phone or electronic means;
- Collection of books by a liaison teacher for their class, or their school.

The return of the works is organized in consultation between the operator and the school/class.

The return is arranged for 30 June 2020. Failing that, the school guarantees the storage of the works under limited conditions limited with the library until a fixed date between the parties.

#### **5. Specific Provisions**

**Travelling libraries:** Mobile services such as "library buses" are suspended until 1 September. In effect, vehicles, given the restricted space, cannot allow for the respect of distancing measures for both staff and users.

On the other hand, travelling services will be considered and implemented differently to ensure access to the usual books or services in the most remote areas and not served by a direct operator (with a gradual prioritization).

- Delivery at certain points or relay people;
- Home delivery;
- Order and return management;
- o Etc.

**Inter-library loan:** Each provincial network has different realities. Each support operator manages this aspect of things and works with its network to define a date for the recovery of ILL and the terms of ILL.

The provincial inter-library network loan is suspended until further notice.

#### **6. Contacts and Information**

Regarding requests for further information, you can contact the administration via 02/413.31.28 or the culture.info@cfwb.be counter.

This number is not a substitute for the one set up by the Public Health authorities (0800 14 689), it aims to provide additional guidance for any particular issue related to the functioning of cultural sectors.

The Public Reading Service is also available: Diane-Sophie Knife, Director a.i. with the usual contact information.

Support operators and federations can also be references in the information flow.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. It is important that we are responsible, and consistent in the fight against Coronavirus.

Brussels, 30 April 2020

Benedict LINARD  
Minister of Culture