

IAAPA EMEA - Learnings on the current situation

28 January 2021

The IAAPA EMEA Advisory Committee recommends programs and services of the association for the EMEA region. It consists of representatives from various countries and constituencies. As part of their most recent meeting, they invited some additional key players from the EMEA attractions industry and discussed the current situation and learnings from the COVID19 pandemic and decided to share the outcome with all members.

Note: This is a summary of the members of the IAAPA EMEA Advisory Committee and does not address every consideration for all amusement parks or attractions. IAAPA accepts no responsibility or liability for this content, but offers these best practices to members for consideration.

Operator Perspective

- In some areas of the Middle East (i.e., some of the UAE and Saudi-Arabia) our members, which were under a hard lockdown for some months, are currently operating their attractions. While visitor numbers are down, the per capita spending of the remaining visitors has gone up. There is no visible influence from the news about new variants of Covid-19 on the guest behavior.
- In Europe, no parks had sufficient government support. However, furlough schemes are working out well in most of the countries. In some countries, staff can even be trained while on furlough.
- Amusement parks and attractions are often still not considered to be part of the tourism industry, which makes access to certain funding more difficult. There is also a growing competition between different industries on who should open first and who should not be allowed to open.
- No government guidance has been given to parks about re-opening. It is important to prepare for every scenario and to highlight the rigid safety measures.
- There is still no known cluster resulting from a visit to an amusement park within the EMEA region. This impressive statistic will be highlighted by IAAPA and it should also be highlighted by each individual member in their approach about reopening plans.
- As re-opening might come with a very short notice, it is crucial to be on stand-by for opening at any time. Train your staff, test, and prepare your rides now.

- Also consider, that some rides have been down for a longer period than usual, which will require extra-maintenance. The IAAPA Safety Committee is currently preparing an according whitepaper with guidelines on ride reopening checks.
- There are doubts if parks and attractions will be allowed to reopen for the Easter holidays. Most participants of the call from Europe expect to be able to open towards end of April / early May. Some are also working on scenarios where they are not allowed to open at all.
- Travel restrictions will still have a major impact in 2021, especially for those parks in popular tourist destinations.
- Animal parks seemed to perform much better than amusement parks when allowed to open.
- It is important to keep your key staff motivated, even though this might be hard. There are concerns about losing a lot of talent and know-how within the teams.
- All participants are convinced that there is a strong demand in the market for leisure activities and that people are very willing to come back once they can.
- There are discussions in some countries to close the schools now and shorten the summer holidays instead. This would have a huge negative impact on the attractions industry and needs to be monitored / lobbied against.
- The worldwide Standardization body ISO is currently finalizing guidelines on safe reopening of tourism activities (including theme parks). IAAPA EMEA is part of these discussions and will also follow the initiative of the European CEN body to use this ISO guidelines as a basis for a European EN standard on the same subject. The European Commission has demonstrated the will to create a label, that facilities can use, to signal their compliance.

Supplier Perspective

- The situation really depends on the segment of the industry. Suppliers with quick turnaround times suffer more than those with long leads.
- Some members were very innovative in coming up with physical distancing concepts.
- There will be a delay in the effects/impact for ride manufacturers.
- There is a much lower number in new requests coming in, even though the situation has slowly improved in Q4 of 2020.
- Trade Shows and meeting points are being missed, as online sales are not as well accepted as face-to-face meetings within this industry.