Exit strategy for libraries, archives, and documentation centres

Guide with advice for the phased resumption of activities

Notes

The COVID-19 crisis has a major impact on our society as a whole. On 13 March, far-reaching measures came into force in Belgium in the fight against COVID-19. Experts agree that we will have to live with the coronavirus for a long time yet. This requires an adaptation of our work processes, both in the short and long term.

On Friday 24 April, the National Security Council announced its exit strategy, by which Belgium wants to phase out the measures taken. The National Security Council had not taken a position on libraries, archives and documentation centres at that time. The ministerial decision of 15 May says that libraries may be open from 18 May. This means that they may be open to the public with free entrance and exit for basic services (borrowing and returns).

With this guide, the Flemish Association of Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres (VVBAD) **seeks** to provide **practical advice to the** information sector in **order to** return **to normal operation in phases,** if the National Security Council permits this again. The opinions in this document provide guidance and **do not** in **themselves constitute any obligations.** We want to emphasize that **each institution** can have **different areas of focus and timing because of their individual characteristics**.

Regardless of the phase of the phase of the phase, a number of rules remain in force:

- Limiting contacts between people.
- Respecting social distancing.
- Maintaining good hygiene practices, also called 'barrier gestures'. In addition, covering the mouth and nose is recommended in public spaces.

You can do this with a face mask, scarf or bandana. In itself, a mouth mask does not offer adequate protection – it needs to be combined with necessary hygiene measures and physical distance.

If it is not possible to take the necessary security **measures with** a **particular service, it is advisable** not to **restart that service for the time being.** The municipality, or the parent organization of the library or archive, decides which services it opens or not, when and under what conditions. These conditions may be stricter than the general safety measures, based on (1) the impossibility of complying with the general rules on *social/physical distancing* and hygiene, (2) the risk of group formation, or (3) the infeasibility of control (and any) enforcement where this is desirable.

The list of tips and advice in **this guide is not exhaustive** and **can be updated at any moment.** .

Do you have any questions or comments? Contact us through [vvbad@vvbad.be.](mailto:vvbad@vvbad.be).

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1. GENERAL GUIDELINES FROM THE GOVERNMENT

✔ Stay home when you feel sick.

✔ General hygiene measures (e.g. hand hygiene, sneezing and coughing into your elbow).

✔ Keep at least 1.5 meters away.

✔ It is mandatory to wear a face mask on public transport; in other places it is strongly recommended.

✔ Remote working remains the norm where possible.

✔ For more information: www.info-coronavirus.be..

2. PHASED REOPENING

2.1 Public libraries

This chapter outlines the possible stages of a phased reopening of public libraries. The first step was taken by most libraries while under lockdown, because they offer a public service. The implementation of the next phases is conditional and dependent on the current guidelines of the National Security Council.

Step 1 (lockdown): Limited service via a pickup system.

- Booking materials by telephone or electronic means.

- The library prepares the order (with respect for measures in place).

- The collection of books is done by appointment.

- The user picks up his package in a separate room (if possible).

- Return of materials preferably via the book drop. If this is not possible, the loan period may be extended.

- Materials are quarantined for at least three days after delivery.

- Mobile services (e.g. the bibliobus) are suspended. These vehicles (with limited space) cannot guarantee the distance measures for the staff and for the users.

Step 2: Limited access to libraries for the public (access to the collections). -> from May 18

- The library allows for limited public access.

- Only for borrowing and returning materials.

- Most library spaces remain closed (newspaper corner, reading room, study areas, seating areas...). Seats, stools and the like are removed or made inaccessible if possible.

- Access to public PCs for people who don't have the Internet at home.

- The system in place under lockdown for collecting pre-ordered books can remain in parallel according to the needs and real situation on the ground.

- Group visits (e.g. class visits) are not yet possible.

- However, the schools can make agreements with the library to access the collections, in accordance with the measures in place (e.g. through book packages).

  Suggestions:

  - Reservations by telephone or electronic means.

  - Pick-up of book packages for the classroom or school.

- The return of the materials borrowed by the classes is organised in consultation between the library and the school/classroom. The materials are returned. If this is not possible, the school guarantees the storage of the works according to conditions agreed with the library.

Step 3: Reopening the residence spaces of the libraries to the public.

- Public spaces (newspaper corner, reading room, seating areas, study places, coffee corner...) are reopened to the public.

- General measures shall continue to apply.

- Groups and classes can visit the library again, outside opening hours and on appointment.

- The distance rules and hygiene measures must still be respected.

- Mobile services (e.g. the bibliobus) can be restarted, with strict compliance with precautions (limiting number of visitors, use of facemasks…)

Step 4: Re-establishment of public activities and training.

- At this stage, (certain) activities and training can be organised again. The meeting function of the library will gradually be used again. It will be important to follow the general guidelines of the National Security Council. For example, major events are prohibited until 31 August.

- In conducting activities, close attention will need to be paid to rules on social distancing and hygiene regulations.

2.2 University and college libraries

Vocational colleges and universities are working on a contactless campus, based on government guidelines. The colleges are meeting within the Flemish Secondary Schools Council (VLHORA) with infectious diseases prof. Dr. Erika Vlieghe on the drawing up of guidelines for the contactless campus and will follow the guidelines drawn up there.

2.3 Archives and documentation centres

Step 1: Employees on the shop floor.

- Resume non-urgent archive processing in the workplace.

- Remote searches can take place alongside and necessary preservation actions (internal and external).

- The reading room remains closed.

Step 2: Limited reading room operation.

- Use of the reading room may be made by appointment.

Step 3: Normal reading room operation.

- The reading room operation returns to normal.

- It is also possible to return to normal operation in terms of selection and acquisitions of archival materials.

Step 4: Resumption of normal archive operation (including public activities).

- Public activities such as exhibitions and lectures can be reorganised.

3. GETTING BACK TO WORK SAFELY

Working from home   remains the norm, but in the information sector there are already a lot of workers in the workplace. In the first phase of the exit strategy, comprehensive security measures will be needed to safely organise work in the workplace.

As an employee - back office

✔ Keep 1.5 meters distance.

✔ Encourage remote working whenever possible. Give priority to employees who fall into a risk group or have a risky home situation.

✔ Adjust the office layout with plexiglass or ensure sufficient distance between the workstations (e.g. use meeting rooms and lunchrooms to ensure dispersion).

✔ Don't shake hands.

✔ Wash your hands regularly with soap and water.

✔ Stay at home if you have any of the following symptoms: runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, light cough, increase in temperature.

✔ Communicate the guidelines clearly within your team.

✔ Sanitize your workplace daily, including work supplies. Choose a fixed workplace and don't share materials. If that's not possible, use disinfectant or a plastic film and change this with every use (e.g. with a keyboard).

✔ Create an overview of tasks that can happen from home.

✔ Spread out the lunch breaks.

✔ Make clear agreements about which employees are working when and where in the building.

✔ Consider a shift system, in which permanent teams work together at the same time, in order to reduce the possibility of infection between employees.

✔ Limit work by volunteers on the premises as far as possible. Take particular account of people in risk groups, i.e.:

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● those aged 65 and older.

●those aged 18 years and older with an underlying condition.

●people with diabetes.

● people who are overweight.

More tips for a safe working environment can be found in the general guide of the Federal Public Service (FPS) Employment, Labour and Social Consultation: www.werk.belgie.be/nl/nieuws/generieke-gids-om-de-verspreiding-van-covid-19-op-het-werk-tegen-te-gaan.

4. LIBRARIES

Not all libraries start the exit strategy from the same point. Many public libraries organized a takeaway service during   the lockdown. Other libraries will not start or skip this step   until restrictions have been further eased. Therefore, this chapter first   responds to a number of points that are important in step 1 (limited service during the lockdown), in addition to the guidelines   for back office tasks cited in Chapter 3. After this we give tips for the organization of step 2, the limited reopening for the public.

4.1 Points of interest from step 1 (limited service during lockdown)

TAKEAWAY FUNCTION

✔ Reserve books in advance (online, by phone and/or by e-mail) so that your employees can prepare them in advance, with gloves on.

✔ assign each borrower a time slot for picking up a reservation. Make sure that as few people as possible come to the library at the same time. Only allow them to enter the entrance hall to pick up a package by name and avoid contact between them (among themselves) and the employees.

✔ Extend the period of lending of books or ensure a quarantine period of 72 hours for the returned books.

RETURNED MATERIAL

✔ Use a book drop if possible.

✔ Quarantine books for 72 hours after return or ensure proper disinfection to prevent the virus from spreading though them.

✔ You can choose to disinfect the returned material but pay attention with sensitive materials. Focus on material that is used intensely, such as children's books, toys and learning materials, tablets, laptops, and so on.

ON DELIVERIES (suppliers)

✔ Keep 1.5 meters distance.

✔ Agree in advance a place where the goods are delivered.

✔ Ask to share information on the arrival time 15 minutes in advance.

✔ Wear gloves.

✔ Consider delivery drop off at the door.

DIGITAL SERVICES

✔ Encourage users to use digital services as much as possible (see section 4.3 for more info).

✔ University libraries and university libraries can scan certain chapters on request for urgent questions from, for example, thesis students.

4.2 What to watch out for in a limited reopening to the public? (Step 2 - from 18 May 2020)

GENERAL

✔ Hang rules for users on both the inside and outside of your library (see Annex 1 for inspiration).

✔ Appoint one or more 'corona managers', employees who manage all measures and follow their correct application.

✔ Provide a steward at the entrance at large libraries during the opening hours. Encourage visitors to keep their visit short so that multiple people can visit the library.

✔ Review the possibility to have of custom opening hours in order to allow for the performance of back office tasks safely during closing hours.

✔ Limit the number of users. A general approach to this is a maximum of 1 visitor per 15 m². Also take into account the specific properties of the location and avoid concentrations at certain points.

Limiting the number of users can be done in different ways:
- through a ticketing system.

- provide only as many shopping baskets or bags as the maximum number of visitors admitted. Make use of these items mandatory. Every time a user comes out with their basket, it is disinfected, and the next user is allowed to enter. You can also provide a buffer with a number of additional access items so that there is time to disinfect the item. In this situation, ensure that there is a supervisor who is in charge of the disinfection.

✔ clearly indicate where the queue is and where it may stretch to.

✔ Consider the following risk groups:

- 65 and older.

- 18 years and older with an underlying condition.

- people with diabetes.

- overweight people.

  Provide them with a separate opening moment after cleaning the library or organise a home delivery of library books for these groups.

✔ Avoid situations where people have to be close together.

✔ Do not organise any activities yourself. See if you can eventually support local projects (e.g. support for students who have lost teaching time, activities for people who spend their holidays at home, ...).

✔ Help to disseminate local information (digital, but also by posters, flyers...).

✔ Let customers make an appointment for certain services, such as using public PCs, materials from storerooms, and so on.

✔ The reshelving and reorganisation of books is organised and carried out outside the opening hours around or in closed aisles.

✔ Make sure you have the option of contactless payment, disinfectant gel or cotton swabs at the atm.

Hygiene

✔ Provide (contactless) alcohol gel dispensers, tissues and pedal bins for users in different places, especially at the entry and exit.

✔ Implement regular cleaning processes (during short closing moments). Focus on surfaces such as plastic and metals.

✔ Clean lending points and access items regularly. Prepare any cleaning material so users can make lending points clean before use. Close lending points that are placed too close together.

✔ Provide employees with the appropriate material (facemasks, gloves, alcohol gel, opportunity to wash hands regularly). Provide the right instructions for use.

✔ Ensure a good aeration of the space (by opening the windows) before the arrival of the public.

Infrastructure

✔ Leave doors open where possible and avoid unnecessary contact with door handles.

✔ Provide a separate entry and exit.

✔ Provide one-way traffic (with arrows, tape, tape, bollards, panels...).

✔ Provide guidelines regarding the use of toilets. For example, make only a limited number accessible and clean them after each use.

✔ Close all non-essential amenities such as coffee appliances to the public.

✔ Encourage users to plan their activities so that they can consult all the catalogue at home and find out what materials they want to borrow. Make a limited number of computers available to consult the catalogue, with cleaning material or have an employee offer support.

✔ Close reading corners, tables and other seats. Do not allow visitors to read in the library. If possible, remove the seating furniture and make non-loanable materials (e.g. magazines) inaccessible.

✔ Remove all books 'in the spotlight' or 'on display' to prevent them from being touched and restored by different people.

✔ Provide plexiglass at the counters.

✔ Clear aisles of obstacles.

✔ Limit the use of the lift to the necessary and to 1 person at a time. Let the visitors mainly use the stairs where at all possible.

Communication

✔ Make sure all employees are aware of the guidelines.

✔ Ensure clear communication about the guidelines to your users (website, social media, newsletters, posters...).

✔ Encourage the use of your digital services.

✔ Ask visitors to plan their visit if possible and consult the catalogue in advance.

✔ Ask visitors to come to the library alone if possible.

✔ Ask visitors to keep their visit to the library short.

✔ Appeal users' sense of responsibility to abide by the rules.

4.3 Tips for a wide range of digital offerings for public libraries

CULTUURCONNECT

✔ Digital Stage

✔ Fundels: interactive children's books.

✔ Stream Movies.

✔ E-books lending platform.

✔ My Leestipper (reading tips).

✔ Reading Community.

✔ Bieblo: reading inspiration for children.

✔ Livestreaming.

✔ Gopress Archive (free).

REACHING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

✔ Challenge people with a Facebook or Instagram challenge.

E.g. the #LeuvenLeestChallenge (Leuven Reads Challenge) on Instagram or the Facebook challenge of 'Stage at Home'.

✔ Use online storytimes.

ENCOURAGE READING FOR PLEASURE

✔ Give access on your website to a printable reading bingo for children (or adults).

✔ The updated [New Book Finder](#) from Iedereenleest (Everyone Reads) Everyone's gives children and young people up to the age of 18 tailor-made book tips.

✔ Organize a 'Battle of the Books'.

✔ Organize an online book club.

✔ Use QR codes to encourage children to read.

HELP ONLINE

✔ Develop a tool to help users continue their digital business questions online.

E.g. the Digidokter of the Library of Bruges.

✔ Try to replace your activities with online activities.

E.g. Read together NL Online by Muntpunt.

✔ Organize a platform for help with homework.

E.g. on the basis of a call-hour or chat moment.

5. ARCHIVES AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRES

A first step out of the lockdown will mean that on-site operations will resume for most archives and documentation centres. To do this, follow the advice for back office tasks in chapter 3. The reading room will remain closed during the first step. A possible next step the exit strategy, described under Chapter 2 as the second step for archives and documentation centres, involves limited reading room operation. This chapter explores these two first steps.

5.1 Points of interest from step 1 (employees on the shop floor)

ARCHIVAL WORK

- ✔ Limit the number of employees per archive space.

- ✔ Limit the use of the lifts to 1 person at a time.

- ✔ As far as possible, carry out inspection tasks digitally. Upon a visit, the protocol of the organisation/municipality to be visited shall be observed.

- ✔ Provide a quarantine period of 24 hours for incoming archival documents made of paper and cardboard and 72 hours for works with smooth surfaces.

DIGITAL SERVICES

- ✔ Use digital services where possible. E.g. Digital consultation and digitisation on request.

- ✔ Also look at the possibilities, time investment and costs of digital services in the long term. E.g. Handle information questions by phone (or via chat).

WORK WITH THE PUBLIC

- ✔ When an archive institution has a museum department, or an exhibition, the guidelines of the museums apply to that section. If these guidelines cannot be met, the exhibition cannot be physically open to the public.

- ✔ Review the educational tasks and projects scheduled for the archive institution in connection with school programs, in consultation with the schools. Make sure that these are aligned with the guidelines for education and see if digital solutions are possible.

5.2 What to pay attention to in a limited reopening of the reading room for

General

✔ Hang rules for users on the outside of the archive. Repeat these rules inside the reading room.

✔ Provide a steward at the entrance of large institutions.

✔ Limit opening hours to perform back office tasks during closing hours.

✔ Avoid situations where people come into contact with each other. Provide a walking route by the reception, the desk and through the study room.

✔ Opt for a limited (reading room) opening:

- Limit (in the first phase) access to the reading room to the strictly necessary, such as searches for building permit applications, notarial searches to settle inheritances and thesis research. Avoid searches related to recreational research such as genealogical or local historical searches.

- Limit the number of visitors and limit to one person per research. A generally accepted starting point is a maximum of 1 visitor per 15 m². Also take into account the specific properties of the location and avoid concentrations at certain points.

   Limiting the number of users can be done in different ways:

   o   via a ticketing system.

   o   provides only as many shopping baskets or bags as the maximum number of visitors admitted. Mandatory use of those items. Every time a user comes out with their basket, it is disinfected, and the next user is allowed in. You can also provide a buffer with a number of additional access items, so there's time to disinfect the item. In this scheme, make sure that a supervisor is in charge of sanitising the items.

- Work by appointment and with a time slot. Provide a separate time slot for each visitor so that visitors do not arrive together.

- Have archive documents booked in advance (digital, e-mail and/or by phone). If possible, prepare the requested works at the user spot. Provide clear guidelines to prevent the mixing of archival documents. Requesting additional archive documents on site is not possible.

- Ask visitors to bring their own laptops.

- Provide a counter with a screen where visitors can get information and support.

- Provide a 24-hour quarantine period for returned paper and cardboard archival documents and 72 hours for archival pieces with smooth surfaces.

Hygiene

✔ Provide (contactless) alcohol gel, tissues and pedal-bins for users in different places, especially at the entry and exit.

✔ Clean the workspaces after each use.

✔ Provide employees with the right material (facemasks, gloves, alcohol gel, opportunity to wash hands regularly). Provide the right instructions for use.

✔ Ensure a good aeration of the space (by the opening of the windows) before the arrival of the public.

Infrastructure

✔ Leave doors to the reading room open and avoid unnecessary contact with door handles.

✔ Provide a separate entry and exit (if possible).

✔ Provide guidelines regarding the use of toilets, cloakroom so that the distance measures can also be stored here. For example, make only a limited number accessible and clean them after each use.

✔ Close all non-essential amenities such as coffee appliances to the public.

- ✔ Provide fixed user spots throughout the reading room. Provide each user spot with the rules. Remove unnecessary seats.

- ✔ Provide plexiglass at the counters.

- ✔ Clear aisles of obstacles.

Communication

- ✔ Make sure that all employees, volunteers and visitors are aware of the guidelines.

- ✔ Ensure clear communication about the guidelines to your users (website, social media, newsletters, posters...). Share this information again when users are making appointments.

- ✔ Use digital services where possible.

5.3 Tips for digital service for archives

HELP ONLINE

- ✔ Develop a tool to help users continue their questions about digital searches in the catalogue online.

- ✔ Provide online training for recreational research such as historical, genealogical and local history research. Focus on digital possibilities.

6. USEFUL LINKS

✔ An overview of the measures and FAQs of the FPS Public Health:
www.info-coronavirus.be/nl.

✔ Campaign Material in the fight against COVID-19:
www.info-coronavirus.be/en/campagne.

✔ Generic Guide of the Federal Public Service (FPS) Employment, Labour and Social
Consultation to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at work:
www.werk.belgie.be/nl/nieuws/generieke-gids-om-de-verspreiding-van-covid-19-on-
het-werk-tegen-te-gaan.

✔ The Department of Culture, Youth and Media has an information page on COVID-
19 with FAQs that are useful for the cultural sector: www.cjsm.be/informatie-
covid-19.

✔ The VVSG has an overview of police decisions by province and the procedures and
guidelines for local authorities:
www.vvsg.be/kennisitem/vvsg/coronavirus-actuele-informatie-en-richtlijnen.

✔ The IFLA: COVID-19 library information page.
www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries.

✔ EBLIDA Newsletter on the guidelines in several European countries:
www.eblida.org/news/april-newsletter-special-issue3.html.

✔ Tips for disinfecting and communicating at the reopening of the library:
www.ctlibrarians.org/page/c19reopen.

✔ FREQUENTLY asked questions about the Culture Connect library system:
https://leerplatform.cultuurconnect.be/courses/bibliotheken-in-tijden-van-corona/.

✔ World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations:
www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid
19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6B.

✔ Mensura's advice on an approach for employers and employees during the corona crisis:
www.mensura.be/nl/corona.

Attachments

Annex 1: Rules for Users - Libraries

In the case of a phased reopening to the public, it   is advisable to communicate clearly with your users. For example, the following rules can be set out at the entrance and in the library itself.

Rules

✔ Keep 1.5 metres distance from others, both inside and outside the library establishment.

✔ Don't shake hands.

✔ Come to the library alone.

✔ Stay at home if you have any of the following symptoms: colds, runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, light cough, increase in temperature.

✔ Stay at home if a roommate has one of these complaints.

✔ Be in solidarity and keep your visit as short as possible.

✔ Borrow books purposefully. Preferably look up your book in advance in the catalogue or book it in advance.

✔ Don't just take books off the rack. Only do that if you actually borrow the book.

✔ Always follow the instructions of the employees.

Annex 2: Rules for Users - Archives

In the case of a phased reopening to the public, it is advisable to communicate clearly to your users. For example, the following rules can be set out at the entrance and in the reading room.

Rules

✔ Keep 1.5 meters distance from others, both inside and outside the archive.

✔ Don't shake hands.

✔ Stay at home if you have any of the following symptoms: colds, runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, light cough, increase in temperature.

✔ Stay at home if a housemate has one of these complaints.

✔ Limit the reading room visit to 1 person per search and to the scheduled time slot.

✔ View only one archival material at a time to avoid mixing. Put the archival material aside before you start the next one.

✔ Requesting additional records is not possible.

✔ Always follow the instructions of the employees.