

Coronavirus

FELCA Member Reports

March 11, 2020

ITALY

After China, Italy is at the moment the country with the largest number of corona virus infected people, more than 10.000.

All over the country schools and universities are closed.

Closed as well, all the public places (cinemas, theatre, stadiums, gyms...)

People are asked to stay home unless it is necessary to go to work - many people work from home now - to buy food or medicines. All these measures are valid till April the 3rd, in order to slow down and stop the virus.

As far as our business is concerned:

all the school group travels, within Italy and abroad, have been cancelled since February 23rd.

Individual bookings for late spring and summer departures are very few, if any.

The students do not want to book before we all see the end of the emergency, both in Italy and in the countries where our students usually go for a language course.

IALCA is constantly in contact with the Italian authorities to monitor the events and to protect the industry as much as possible.

Paolo Barilari
Vice President, IALCA
President, FELCA

SOUTH KOREA

We have many Covid-19 patients but it is mainly due to the secret Church (pseudo-religion) things.

The virus has been spreading all of the regions in S. Korea but the government and Korean authorities have been managing really well. However, the schools and Universities, like some other countries, closed for 1-2 weeks and event and fair with large group of people is not permitted.

Regarding the business, we, of course, have got a negative impact on the market. For example, I've lost 90% bookings compare to last year this month. But the high season here is summer and winter time and we have some more time to recover market.

If the covid-19 has gone by June, I hope, the market in Korea will not be damaged badly. But it would be unlikely, I reckon. Fingers crossed!

Jeesung Jang
Executive Secretary, KOSA

JAPAN

All elementary and junior high schools have been closed since the beginning of this month. Remote work has been encouraged. Many people work from home now. All big events have been cancelled. Many museums are closed.

Almost all Spring group education tours have been cancelled. March is a second big peak season for Japanese agents. (Universities in Japan have one month holidays and high schools have two weeks holidays in March.) Some host families arranged by schools overseas refused to host Japanese students. Students and parents are showing concerns if Japanese students would get discriminated outside Japan.

Under this circumstance, agents facing many difficulties as you can imagine such as refund money, cancellation charge, changing host families, and so on.

We, JAOS, is discussing what we can or should do to schools, consumers and our member agents as an industry association.

Tatsu Hoshino
Executive Secretary, JAOS

THAILAND

All education agents in Thailand have been affected by the virus situation. Most parents are panic.

More than 500+ Thai Summer school students to the UK, US and NZ for March-April 2020 have cancelled their trips. For those agents who recruit full-time students to high schools/universities, they are starting to receive deferral requests as its uncertain that the situation will be better before July (Australia/ NZ's high school /Uni intake) and September (US and UK High school/Uni intake).

Most educational events/exhibitions in Bangkok have also been cancelled as the representatives are allowed to travel to Thailand. It's very quiet across all industries including ours.

Bee Boonkerd
President, TIECA

TURKEY

According to official reports and announcements, there is no coronavirus case recorded in Turkey yet. So I can say that, at least at the moment, there is not a huge effect on the nation's daily life.

However, when it comes to business, parents are becoming more and more anxious day by day. In Turkey, we can say that the usual main season is just starting. So till the last couple of days we have just faced an acceptable number of cancellations. Groups were not being cancelled but size of groups was being declined.

However, especially after the letter of Ministry of Education sent to schools here in Turkey that advises them to cancel the schools' and students' visit to abroad, it was started to seen cancellations for the entire groups. On the other hand, many of our students who are already abroad have decided to stop their education and to turn back to Turkey. Schools are offering credits to agencies for these students, which seems as a way to finance the schools by agencies. As you all will be agree, agencies are not rich to be able to do that and this will cause financial problem for many agencies.

Last but not least, we can easily see that there are many parents who are just waiting and would like to see where the situation will go. Unfortunately it seems they are just potential candidates for new cancellations.

As UED we are also discussing the situation and things we can do. There will soon be meeting of UED just on this issue, and we will let you know how UED will act.

Gokhan Islamoglu
Coordinator, UED

Last update from Turkey

Yesterday, it was announced that the first corona virus case was confirmed in Turkey.

On the other hand, Ministry of Health published an official announcement which advises all institutions and associations to cancel their international organizations and events in Turkey.

This announcement will possibly effect the upcoming students fairs in Turkey.

Gokhan Islamoglu
Coordinator, UED

FRANCE

France is concerned with covid-19. 4 regions are qualified as “epidemic centers”. Today the virus has continued spreading throughout the country.

For language study vacations, there has been a significant decline in registrations either for short term summer stays or study abroad trips in every country.

The government has asked for suspension of school excursions for further notice. Regarding young people currently studying abroad, the French government has asked for repatriation of students who are studying in areas not recommended to visit by the French ministry of foreign affairs. The ministry of education has also asked for repatriation of every school group currently travelling abroad, regardless of country.

About agencies certified by L’Office, this represents an 70% decrease in activity, creating financial distress for the related companies. L’Office with umbrella groups (UNAT, EDV, SETO) have asked to be consulted for further decisions of the French government.

Eric Soulard
General Delegate, L’OFFICE

BRAZIL

Today we have 30 coronavirus confirmed cases in Brazil without deaths. Since last Sunday the number of suspicious cases has grown 40%. The confirmed cases are in 7 States, and São Paulo has the largest number. The Minister of Health wants to avoid panic and asks everyone to follow the steps to avoid getting the virus. They have said they will not follow the measures taken by Italy. We have to bear in mind that it is summertime in Brazil and things might get worse when the wintertime arrives.

However, the situation is more complex because the Brazilian currency is devaluing in a fast speed due to the coronavirus crisis that affects immensely the Brazilian economy. On Monday, 09th March the Ibovesp, the stock exchange fell 12%. In 2020, the Real has already fallen more than 15% against the American dollar. It has a huge negative impact in any business in the country.

Many schools are cancelling their participation in fairs organized in Brazil for this time of the year.

The clients are cancelling or postponing the programs abroad. According to the Brazilian rules (the Consumer Protection Code) the amounts related to cancellation must be returned to the clients without taking into consideration the schools' cancellation policies. Agencies are discussing case by case with partners abroad.

Furthermore, the impact is that for future months clients do not want to book or pay the programs in advance. We are in a standby situation but we can foresee a damage to our industry, once no monies are circulating for going abroad, and therefore for paying the enrolments to study abroad.

We truly wish this nightmare goes by as soon as possible.

Maura Leao
President, BELTA

GERMANY

Regarding Germany, we have major problems in the FDSV, both in the outgoing area as well as in the incoming area. Our members have to deal with severe cancellations every day.

Together with other associations, we have created a spontaneous survey of sales losses. Right now our members are already experiencing a drop in sales of almost 9,000,000 euros compared to the previous year. Looking at the Easter bookings, it will probably get a lot worse.

We have teamed up with other industry associations and made ourselves heard in Berlin. It is not yet clear what the aid from the Ministry of Economic Affairs will look like. We hope for quick and unbureaucratic help.

The situation in general is that many parents are afraid to send their children abroad, school classes are increasingly cancelling school trips abroad due to pressure from parents, and students and adults are either not booking language courses at the moment, or would like to change the starting date or do cancel trips that they had already booked.

In the incoming area, the situation from abroad is no very different - even worse, since we also have corona cases in Germany. It is terrible for our members at the moment!

Stay healthy and let's hope for the best!

Julia Richter
CEO, FDVS

TAIWAN

Status of Covid-19 in Taiwan.

1. Lucky or not because of political situation between Taiwan and China, China limited the travelers from China to Taiwan last year, so the number of travelers from China dropped drastically.
2. Our government stopped travelers from Mainland China since Jan. 28. Strict measures for those travelling from, Hong Kong and Macau, these include isolation, self-quarantine or denied entry to Taiwan. And a 14 day home-quarantine for travelers from South Korea, Italy and Iran.

3. Postponing semester of elementary and high school till Feb. 25, some universities even later early March. (This affects to those study tours as put-off of summer vacation, this creates problems of cancelation, refund, etc. and will refer to deal like the year of SARS.)
4. All the big events request health report name list, and wearing facemask, temperature measuring, washing hands, etc.
5. So far, we only heard the cancelation of Study Word Education Fair, while 3 Fairs just finished last week organized by agents and IDP fair is coming on March 14/15.

**Up today, Taiwan remain exercise normal safety precautions.
48 case confirmed, 1 died.**

As we have experience of SARS in 2003 (we did hold an education Fair too), so people are pretty aware of the situation, and try to wear facemask most of time. And government set several Line notice boards including Virus report, travelling advice, entry permit, and where to buy the facemask. etc. So everything seems in order. But anyway, we still need to be cautious because it is not ended yet. Bless everyone.

*Françoise Chien
General Manager, IECA*

SPAIN

The situation in Spain is quite difficult at the moment.

From today the schools in Madrid and Vasque Country are closed for 15 days as well as universities and even language schools.

The market is absolutely frozen and regarding the summer junior programmes the agencies are between 30% and 50% behind same week last year, we are waiting even a worse situation with the schools closed now as families won't be taking any decision for their children travelling abroad.

School groups which were about to travel are changing dates to later in the year and even for departing in September, some from outside Madrid still travelling.

There is a huge hysteria in the society and things are not looking very good.

*Oscar Porras
President, ASEPROCE*

ARGENTINA

As from the ARSAA point of view, the situation here is as follows: 19 people infected with COVID19 so far. One died last week.

Educational institutions do not allow entrance to any teacher or student who has recently been abroad.

Schools and universities are still open for local students.

Regarding our industry, all sales for Junior summer programs are frozen, some of our agencies have started receiving requests for cancellations. We are trying to avoid cancellations by telling parents it is still too early to know what's going to happen in July, that we must wait until they come up with a vaccine, but things get worse day after day, and the weather is changing here, getting cold, which may make things worse.

It seems crazy, but we keep welcoming flights from all over the world... the Ministry of Health is doing little to check passengers arriving at Ezeiza Airport, and I am pretty sure we will get news about more infected people very soon.

Gabriela Ardito
President, ARSAA