



By **Marc-Ivar Magnus**, Vice President, Trade, Corporate Responsibility, Legal, WFSGI

HELPING THE INDUSTRY TO FEEL THE PULSE – THE WFSGI COVID-19 SURVEY

Marc-Ivar Magnus (37) from Fribourg, Switzerland is the WFSGI Vice President for Trade, Corporate Responsibility and Legal since March 2017. Marc started with the WFSGI as an intern in 2010 during his final academic year. Thereafter he coordinated the WFSGI CR Committee's work and later, he took care of the federation's activities in the field of international trade too. Recently he also took over the responsibility of the coordinated manufacturing activities under the WFSGI umbrella. Marc also managed the development of the RSI – Responsible Sport Initiative, which is a verification solution for companies who are jointly auditing their shared suppliers. Marc is a member of the board of directors of the FFC – Fair Factories Clearinghouse. He holds a Master in Law with international, European and penal law as areas of specialization.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected the entire sporting goods industry. Beside the multitude of new challenges arising, the consistent uncertainty about the near future was an omnipresent issue that made it difficult for SGI companies to forward plan.

The topic was discussed with the members of the WFSGI Manufacturing Committee, a unique blend of brands and manufacturers. At the beginning of the pandemic, the manufacturing companies were at the front line of the challenge. It became clear that there was no central information source for the sporting goods industry providing information on the situation in the different regions and trying to predict short term developments.

Therefore, the WFSGI and its Manufacturing Committee developed a survey designed to gather relevant information on the emerging key trends for the sporting goods industry in relation to the pandemic and where the problems continued to lie.

To provide meaningful feedback to the respondents of the survey, it was crucial that the survey was not a 'one-off' but was able to track closely how those trends evolved. For this reason, it was decided to conduct the survey on monthly basis and compare the results over time.

This also gave the WFSGI the opportunity to update the survey progressively according to feedbacks received.

At the end of every month, the results were compiled, analysed, and compared to the ones from the previous months. The analysis was showcased on a graph showcasing the monthly changes together with some explanatory notes and shared with the full WFSGI membership.

The WFSGI monthly survey was constructed and executed with the sole purpose of providing its members with a consistent source of comparable information that might be of assistance in their decision-making processes.

The WFSGI was very pleased to see the high number of industry representatives taking part in the survey that provided a representative data set. WFSGI was particularly positive about the response given that a number of members had placed a significant volume of staff on furlough and/or short work schemes due to COVID and that this was a new field of activity for WFSGI.

The results of the survey showed first that the situation was very volatile. While it seemed that things are going in a positive direction in one region, the trend was reversed the month after or negatively impacted by the situation in another region. This was mainly also due to the interdependencies between manufacturing companies located in one region and retail and brand companies in other regions. Thus, the sporting goods industry was impacted due to its truly global structure.

It was also quite evident, that the developments announced in the news were mirrored in the responses of participants of this survey. If the infection rates in a region were increasing, companies were facing labour shortage due to infected staff or staff taking care of infected family members.

After all, the survey also showed in an obvious manner, that the sporting goods companies are quickly adapting and very responsive to find solutions to arising challenges. Whereas the beginning of the pandemic was scarred by supply chain disruption, material shortage, etc. These issues were less of a problem the longer the pandemic persisted.

Even though this was the first time that the WFSGI conducted such a repetitive survey to gather data, it was very well received from the WFSGI membership. In addition, the data also provided a useful resource for sporting goods and non-sporting goods media in evaluating the impact of COVID-19.

With that said and taking the feedbacks and the active contribution of the companies into account, the WFSGI will in the future further monitor the industry's need for specific information and data. Based on the experiences made, the WFSGI will quickly be ready to implement new surveys to serve its members with the necessary insights and relevant data from the sector.

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MAGAZINE

2021

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WORLD FEDERATION
OF THE SPORTING GOODS INDUSTRY



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