



Home Improvement stores seen Globally as “Essential Retail” ...but not in Germany!

My name is John W. Herbert and I am the General Secretary of the European and Global Association for the Home Improvement Retail Industry (EDRA/GHIN) based in Cologne Germany. Together the two Associations have 216 companies as members operating around the world in 75 countries with over 32,000 stores and members sales over €320.billion. The German Association, the Bundesverband Deutsche Heimwerker und Baumärkte e.V representing all the “Baumärkte” in Germany are also members of EDRA/GHIN.

Since the very start of this Covid-19 pandemic, in almost in all countries in the world the “Baumärkte” were seen as being “essential retail” alongside food stores, pharmacies and banks.

In March 2020, in the first stages of the pandemic in Europe, EuroCommerce, the voice for the EU retailers in Brussels, issued a [Press Release](#) recommending that the “Baumärkte” in the EU to be classified as being essential.

During this pandemic, people have been urged by their governments to “stay at home”. They are not allowed to visit relatives, dine in restaurants, attend sporting and cultural events, nor visit the theatre/cinema or even go on holiday! The sense of the home has evolved, it is no longer only for relaxing, eating and sleeping. For many the home, in this pandemic, has also now become a classroom for the children, a home office, a gym!

During this lockdown one has the time and the opportunity, in the safety of their homes, to make small repairs or complete small renovation jobs, yet in German one cannot do this because the local government chose to close the Baumärkte. For me this is “willkur” and most unfair and extremely frustrating for the consumer.

During this first lockdown, the spacious German Baumärkte were seen as “essential retail” and were open. The hygiene standards and the safety measures installed in these Baumärkte were exemplary.



In many other countries, whilst many retail stores around the world are closed, the Baumärkte remain open as “essential retail”, this includes many other European countries where often the “incidence rate” is even higher than in Germany.

Yet in Germany the “Baumärkte” remain Geschlossen!

One argument I have heard is why should the “Baumärkte” remain open when other stores are closed? The answer is simple, because people are spending almost all of their time “locked” in their homes. Another argument is that in urgent cases “click and collect” is possible, however, try telling that to older people who do not have computers or smart phones, or are even just unfamiliar with the online sales channel.

Therefore, I appeal to you with your enormous “Media Clout” to recommend that the “Baumärkte” reopen and at least give the German consumer the opportunity to carry out small repairs and small renovation jobs in the safety of their homes, with the ever-increasing recognition that in this pandemic the consumer has re-discovered the importance of their homes.

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