



Open letter to the President of the French Republic

Mr President,

Mr Olivier Véran, your Minister for Health, has ordered the closure of sports venues for several months on the grounds that they are high-risk places.

This decision is unfounded and seriously affects an entire sector of activity. 4,600 clubs - 55,000 employees - 6 million users.

The use of an American survey of March 2020 cannot, must not, be continually and peremptorily opposed to sports venues; can what was true in March in the United States (with no lockdown, no implementation of sanitary protocol in the cities of the survey) be true in January 2021 in France?

Of course not!

Serious studies conducted in Europe with EuropeActive and UKActive show that the contamination rate in sports clubs is less than 0.5 per 100,000 visits.

What image does this give of sports venues by putting us at the top of that list, along with restaurants and bars, of establishments that are kept closed?

- to members, future members and the general public?
- to investors and the banking sector?

Mr President, fitness clubs are not high-risk places.

The reasons for this?

- the application of strict health protocols in each club;
- the vast majority of users are under 65 years of age;
- the users are very rarely in a situation of comorbidity;
- lastly, the regular practice of a sport gives the users a better immune defence system.

Therefore, Mr President, we question where you get the data and statistics incriminating sports venues.

Your Deputy Minister in charge of Sports, Mrs. Roxana Maracineanu, wrote a few weeks ago: "Physical and sports activity is essential for the well-being and health of the French people, all the more so in this period of health crisis. As the Prime Minister reminded us, the priority is for people to live. The resumption of sport is essential for social life to resume. I am convinced that for our fellow citizens, whatever their age, the desire to play sports (again) will be the strongest, whether practised freely or within a club, a gym, alone or with others, to get back into shape, to surpass oneself, to let off steam, to recharge one's batteries in this period that is so difficult for both body and mind."

Sports venues must open to keep their employees, who are today demotivated and disappointed.

Sports venues must open or risk seeing their customer databases evaporate completely.

Sports venues must open to quickly erase the physical and psychological discomfort of the French people due to the lockdowns.

Sports venues must open to contribute to the prevention of other epidemics.

Sports venues must open to give hope to the owners devastated by the fact that their entire professional lives are disintegrating day after day.

Last Thursday 10 December during his speech on the procedure towards the end of lockdown, your Prime Minister, Mr. Jean Castex, who received the video of a customer itinerary in a gym, with a letter from the trade union FranceActive-FNEAPL, answered us directly: "I know that these measures can be hard felt and sometimes misunderstood. I want to remind you of the rationale behind them. It is not just a question of ensuring that the places you go to or the activities you do have strict health protocols. In times of outbreaks, one needs to step up a gear and take measures to avoid flows, gatherings and concentrations of population as much as possible."

Mr. President, we understand this logic of flow management, but do not forget an essential difference, the sports venue sector, is fighting alongside you against the Covid-19 pandemic by keeping the population in shape, by reinforcing the immune defences of the users, and thus ensuring the essential safeguarding of our health system.

The trade union FranceActive-FNEAPL has been working hard with your ministries for several months on health protocols, on financial compensation for all these VSBs/SMEs and on an ambitious recovery plan for our sector of activity.

But this is no longer enough, Mr. President, France's sports venues are agonising.

Compensation is not enough to ensure the survival of this sector. There is a huge gap between government compensation announcements and the reality in the field.

Many companies have received nothing or very little.

We are a long way from "whatever it takes", Mr. President.

The French are at the end of their rope, our elders are isolated, the youth are depressed, the health staff is exhausted. The sectors of sports venues, restaurants, bars, hotels, events, culture, winter sports, aeronautics, automotive, tourism and many others are on their knees.

Our survival and that of our businesses now depend solely on the vaccine and the speed of the vaccination campaign. Experts say that if the population at-risk and health professionals were vaccinated as quickly as possible, there would be little risk of saturating intensive care.

We urge you, Mr. President, to unite all the nation's efforts to make this crucial step towards a return to a more normal life a success.

Kind regards,

Thierry DOLL

President of the trade union FranceActive-Fneapl

Pierre-Jacques DATCHARRY

Director of Publication of the trade magazine
Fitness Challenges

