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COVID-19 Crisis in Europe

After the two previous *Bishop News Briefs* about the COVID-19 crisis in Hong Kong and the US there is unfortunately not a lot of good news from Europe.

The car industry is slowly grinding to a halt and major airlines in various countries may not survive without government bailouts. All other industries are grinding to a halt as well, most companies, connector companies being no exception, are working with skeleton staff where possible and focusing on the most important and urgent matters only, while all expansion plans are put on hold. All eyes are on the governments, the guidelines, and the support services. This includes essential medical personnel, facilities, and supplies, police and fire brigades, and companies that keep essential utility services going and communication channels open.

Any form of traveling is very limited and several large EU countries have closed their borders including Italy, France, Spain, and Germany (partially). It is expected the UK may follow. In some countries people are not allowed out in the street without a signed document (France). More countries will follow, and many EU nationals are trying to get back to their home country before everything is closed off. Everybody prefers to be at home and/or with family in these difficult times. However, travel restrictions and severe reductions in travel options by air, rail, and road is making this more and more difficult.

All big events have been cancelled, including the EURO 2020 football championship and large music festivals. In fact, just about all events are cancelled irrelevant of country, location, or size. Most shops, except those classified as essential, like supermarkets, are closed. Those that are open let in a limited number of people at one time and the elderly sometimes get special time slots to do their shopping. In Belgium they allow you 30 minutes in the supermarket and then you must leave to let other people in.

The list of restrictions goes on and on, and so does the list of economic damage and personal distress and grief.

Looking forward, it is hard to say when this crisis will be over or even when the number of new cases will start to decrease. It is perhaps more difficult to manage the disease because the EU/Europe is not one single country with one central (federal) government like China or the US. While some countries took immediate action, others delayed it, perhaps for economic or political reasons. Europe and the world will not be the same place anymore one year from now. Countries and companies will review and evaluate their interdependencies, their supply chains, and their priorities. Connector companies will have similar considerations and will in the end of course also follow the OEMs and end-users. In the end the whole process may lead to stimulating more local production (food, medicine, and other (electronics) products), but also to more international cooperation (health and environment). Both which can be very positive.