



## **First-hand Accounts: Mass Testing Procedures in Beijing**

**European Union Chamber of Commerce in China – Beijing Chapter**

### **Background**

In response to the mid-June outbreak of COVID-19 in the Fengtai District of Beijing, the municipal, district, and neighbourhood authorities across the city have taken various actions to mitigate the coronavirus' spread. The most restrictive rules have been applied in the areas with the highest number of cases.

However, what began as a return to restrictions that were standard practice even just one month ago (health app and temperature checks at entrances, entry/exit permit checks or guest registration, and tighter requirements on mask wearing) has also expanded into mass testing in some areas.

The European Chamber had two members of staff, Business Manager and lead of European Affairs, Ester Cañada Amela, and Senior Policy and Communications Manager, Jacob Gunter, living in areas where mass testing was implemented over the weekend. They shared their details in the below walkthrough in the hopes that it could prove useful for members of the European Chamber who might have staff that are required to undergo similar mandatory testing in the future. Ester was able to take several photos throughout the process, which are shared for reference on page two.

### **Walkthrough**

#### **Announcement of Testing**

On Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> June, representatives from the local government came through Jacob's neighbourhood to give notice of the mandatory testing the following day. They verified personal details: name, passport number, phone number, temperature, and address. Jacob was then notified that he needed to report for testing at the nearby centre between 9:00 and 9:30 the following morning. How this information would have been conveyed had Jacob not been home at the time remains unclear.

Ester and her flatmate, on the other hand, were informed via WeChat on Saturday evening that tests for their building would be conducted at 12:15. While – due to the late notice – they had not been able to register in advance, they were encouraged to go to the testing point at the set time, where they would be registered on-site (the information requested was the same as in Jacob's case). Testing in her case was a voluntary procedure.



*Registration stations for specific buildings/communities*



*The whole procedure took place in a public park, testing stations were make-shift*



*The vial with the corresponding barcode.*

## The Test Centre

After arriving at the test centre or test location at the scheduled time, expect to join a long line and maintain a distance of at least one metre between yourself and others. While lined up, aides may take your temperature and/or ask that you show that you brought your ID/passport.

At the end of the first queue, you need to find the neighbourhood/小区 that you live in. They have signs up in Chinese characters, so those who can't read them may need to ask someone for help (It may also be a good idea to bring your housing contract, or your address written in Chinese). Line up at the desk corresponding to your area. Once there, they will verify your personal info again or register you if you had not done so previously, then send you on to the next and final line.

The final line takes you to the COVID-19 test itself. As you near the front of the line, someone will direct you to one of the many smaller lines in front of each testing station (similar to how the queue system works at airports when coming through customs). Wait here until it is your turn, again, respecting the one-metre distancing rules.

## The Testing Procedure

The test stations have two medical workers, each in full PPE. One will take your ID/passport and verify your details once more, and then put a sticker with a number and barcode next to it. That barcode and number correspond with those placed on a test unit.

The other medical worker will ask you to sit in a chair, pull down your mask, open your mouth and say 'ahhh'. They have a long testing swab that will be moved around the back of your throat several times to collect the sample. While not painful, the experience is not pleasant, and induces a gag reaction. However, the whole testing process takes 5-7 seconds long. The end of the swab is broken off into the test vial and then sealed. You put your mask back on, and are free to go.



## **Final Notes**

The whole process, from entry to exit, took Jacob about 15 minutes, and Ester less than an hour. A small army of medical workers and volunteers were processing between 50 people per minute, and a steady stream was coming in through the entry area and out through the exit.

Everything was done in make-shift facilities set in an outdoors environment. While initially disconcerting, considering the nature of how the COVID-19 virus transmits in an indoor vs. outdoor setting, it makes good sense. However, one should not expect to go through a state-of-the-art facility with bright and shiny equipment in private rooms. That being said, at no point did either Jacob or Ester feel that there were safety or sanitary issues.

All things considered, the whole process was efficient, the medical workers highly professional, and the volunteers/government representatives courteous. In both Ester's and Jacob's case, the process was additionally free of charge – in spite of it being a voluntary procedure in Ester's case.

It was unclear to either Ester or Jacob if test results would be sent out or not. Presumably, anyone who is positive will be notified and given further instructions, but whether or not negative results will also be sent out remains unknown.