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THE BUSINESS DIGEST
OF THE EUROPEAN CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE OF THE PHILIPPINES

Issue on Health

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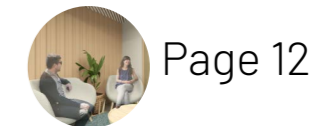
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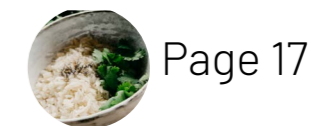
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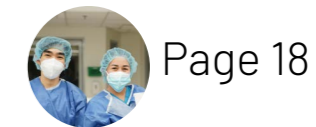
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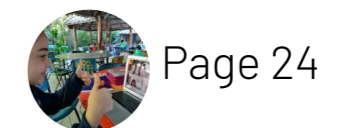
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2021 Europa Awards Press Release

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Editorial

Over the last 15 months, health has become a core focus with the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic that has stilted economic growth and forced businesses to restructure and to adapt with the changes in times of crisis. It is important now more than ever to keep ourselves healthy and to stay at the top of our health.

The healthcare sector made a breakthrough with the development of the sought-after COVID-19 vaccine in just a couple of months. This milestone sparked an array of discussions from countries, sectors, and individuals. As part of your Chamber's COVID-19 response, we launched the COVID-19 Vaccination and Health Systems Forum Series early this year in which we discussed preparing the country for the beginning of the recovery from the pandemic. With the help of local and international experts, we were able to put together on vaccine development and updates, health supply chain, and health sector trends and projections post-COVID-19. In addition, one of the topics in our AI+ Forum Series is on Healthcare Technology, and we are honored to have welcomed Vice President Leni Robredo last May 06 to discuss the OVP's COVID-19 response and how they are able to give light to uncommon health practices such as online or tele-consultations among others. For this issue, we invite you to read through our content on health and the continuing changes and innovations that come with the COVID-19 pandemic.

On page 8, read about the health impact of Philippine counterfeit and how counterfeited goods may risk your health as well as the serious harm it can cause to the global economy. Let's also take a deep dive into addressing mental health in the workplace and how important it is for companies to be proactive in responding to the issue as poor mental health can affect job productivity. This article is contributed by our Design + Build Partner, Trends and Concepts, who recently spoke on the topic at the Wellness First: Moving Towards a Healthier Workplace webinar spearheaded by the ECCP Human Capital Committee.

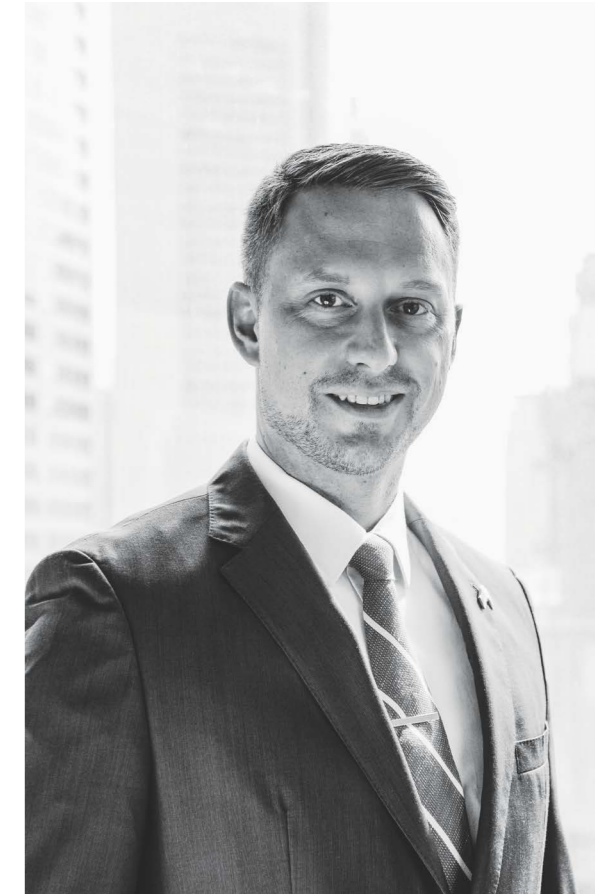
In this issue, we also feature the initiatives of DSM Nutrition to achieve zero hunger in 2030 and their commitment to combat worldwide malnutrition as well as Metro Pacific Hospital Group's CSR program in partnership with the MVP Group called Tulong Kapatid which includes sustaining frontliners through daily meal distribution.

Dr. Kenneth Hartigan-Go on page 20 shares with us how to fight COVID-19 by addressing vaccine hesitancy, a current problem the Philippines finds itself trying to overcome along with the global shortage of vaccines. We also invite you to take a look at measures to prevent yourself from getting COVID-19 especially in an area of widespread transmission from the World Health Organization (WHO) on page 22.

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the ECCP has been a frontrunner among business organisations. One of the Chamber's initiatives is to support the international schools' community by creating a technical working group to discuss the safe reopening of schools. On page 24, German School Manila shares how "new normal" worked for them in these times of the pandemic and how the transition to online schooling took them only a short amount of time.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the winners of the recently held Europa Awards. May your stories serve as an inspiration for other companies and organizations to take action so they too can be champions of sustainability. We also thank our partners and sponsors for the unwavering support. We could have not done this without each and every one of you.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the EuroPH Connect, and as always, thank you for your continuing support.



Florian Gottein
ECCP Executive Director



Counterfeiting Goods: Saving Money May Risk Your Health

South-East Asia IP SME Helpdesk

Facts and trends

Over recent decades, counterfeiting has been causing serious harm, not only to the global economy but also to consumer health and safety. The huge, quickly generated profits made from illicit trading (comprising counterfeiting activities) has encouraged counterfeiters to find new ways to evade the detection and restriction of their illegal activities and to speedily adapt to changing circumstances. Booming e-commerce, the intensive use of social media platforms and most recently, the Covid-19 pandemic, have all driven the counterfeiting issue to become a critical concern.



In a report published in 2019 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)¹, the Philippines is listed among the top 25 economies for the provenance of counterfeit and pirated goods for the period of 2014–16. Indeed, the Philippines is ranked as the third most significant producer of counterfeit pharmaceuticals traded worldwide (just after India and China, first and second respectively)². In this article, we'll take a look at how

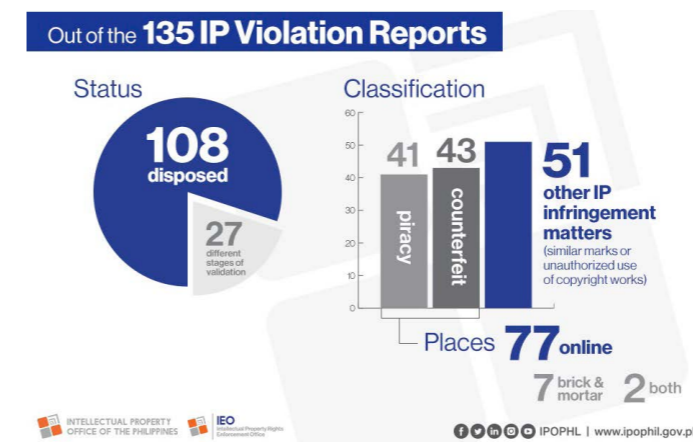
counterfeit trading activities are evolving in the Philippines as well as at the explicit and implicit consequences of using counterfeit products on human health.

According to Statista's data in 2020³, the Philippines is one of the fastest-growing e-commerce markets in the world, with up to 76% of e-commerce penetration. In world terms, Filipinos are among the populations that use the internet the most, spending at least an average of 10 hours per day on the web. As in many other countries, the Covid-19 outbreak has resulted in many strict restriction measures, such as lockdown, social distancing, working from home, etc. During the crisis, online shopping has become an efficient way to fulfil people's need. Filipino consumers can now easily search for and buy what they want on popular e-commerce platforms (such as Lazada, Shopee, Zalora, eBay) or social media platforms (such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter). A joint e-Conomy report in 2020⁴ by Google, Temasek and Bain emphasised significant changes in the digital life of the Philippines: 37% of digital consumers were new to the services due to Covid-19 and 95% of them intend to continue with at least one digital service post-pandemic.

Moreover, the Covid-19 crisis has caused an immediate income reduction for many people across the globe, including the Philippines, driving consumers to look for goods at the cheapest prices. In 2020, the Philippines' GDP is reported to have shrunk by 9.5%, the worst drop since 1947⁵. Given the current environment of uncertainty and fear, and the real threat of significant declines in income, many consumers are now unable to purchase branded goods and services. Buying cheap counterfeit products is a tempting option for consumers with low budgets.

Amid the chaos, counterfeiters have promptly taken advantage of the new situation and, unfortunately, they are often one step ahead of authorities and policy. Recently, an overwhelming number of counterfeits being sold on e-commerce sites, social media platforms and dark-net markets have been detected, warned about, and reported by authorities, brand owners and consumers.

According to the IP Violation Reports⁶ from the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOP), from January to September 2020, IP complaints lodged at the IPOP increased to 135, surpassing the total of 129 complaints received in the previous 5 years (from 2015 to 2019). Among those, the majority of violators were operating online.



Source: <https://www.ipophil.gov.ph/news/jan-sept-2020-reports-complaints-on-ip-infringement-surpasses-2015-2019-total/>

The Covid-19 pandemic has also made people afraid of getting sick. Many people started to stockpile medicines, tests, and protective equipment (such as face masks, medical devices, disinfectants, sanitisers etc.), causing a dramatic surge in demand for those products. During the peak crisis, global transportation was seriously affected, resulting in higher prices for raw materials. There were not enough products originating from genuine sources to meet the huge spike in demand. Consequently, broken supply chains, a strong demand of essential products, and a high level anxiety among consumers has accelerated the surge in illicit trade and counterfeiting. 'When the supply does not meet the demand, it creates an environment where poorer quality or fake medicines will try to meet that demand,' said Pernette Bourdillion Esteve from the World Health Organization (WHO)⁷.

During the same week in early March 2020, the WHO declared the Covid-19 outbreak to be a global pandemic while Interpol (in collaboration with the police, customs and the health regulatory authorities from 90 countries) made 121 arrests worldwide and seized counterfeit medical items worth more than USD 14 million under Operation Pangea XIII (between 3 and 10 March 2020). The operation successfully took down more than 2 500 web links, including websites, social media pages, online market places and online adverts for illicit pharmaceuticals⁸.

A recent report by Check Point Research⁹ revealed that there has been an alarming increase of fake Covid-19 vaccines available on the dark web since November 2020 – when the positive news about vaccine trials and the imminent availability of vaccines was released. Phrases such as 'available corona virus vaccine \$250', 'Say bye bye to COVID19=CHLOROQUINE PHOSPHATE' and 'Buy fast. CORONA-VIRUS VACCINE IS OUT NOW' were used to tempt people into buying fake medicines. Check Point's expert also noticed that a dark-net search for Covid-19 returned multiple results, including hundreds of advertisements – an increase of over 400% since early December 2020.

In addition, a dramatic surge in newly registered web domains related to vaccines or Covid-19 was reported. In November 2020, there were 1 062 new domains registered containing the word 'vaccine' (out of which 400 also contain 'covid' or 'corona'). These figures are equivalent to the previous 3 months (August, September and October 2020) combined.

The health and safety consequences of counterfeits

Using counterfeit products, especially fake medicines, can cause serious harm to health and safety for consumers, as they are more likely to contain dangerous ingredients than authentic goods. Furthermore, counterfeit products usually do not go through the required consumer compliance and safety tests before being put on the market.

Recently, some alarming figures related to counterfeiting were released in the EUIPO's Qualitative Study on Risks Posed by Counterfeits to Consumers¹⁰. This study clearly displays the extent of the dangers to health posed by counterfeit goods, as evidenced by the alerts submitted by EU market surveillance authorities (MSAs) using the European Commission's "Rapid Alert System for dangerous non-food products" (RAPEX system). The report concentrates on the seven most common risks reported: chemical, injuries, strangulation, choking, electric shock, damage to hearing and fires.

An analysis of RAPEX alerts carried out from 2010 to 2017 pointed out that:

- A total of 97% of the dangerous counterfeit goods recorded were assessed as posing a serious risk.
- Toys are the most popular type of product, followed by clothing, textiles and fashion items. In fact, the end-users of 80% of the goods reported as being dangerous and counterfeit (toys, childcare items and children's clothing) were children. The most common danger reported (32%) was related to exposure to hazardous chemicals and toxins that could cause acute or long-term health issues (from both immediate or long-term exposure).
- A total of 24% of the dangerous products recorded as counterfeit posed more than one danger to users.
- The causes of the risks identified ranged from poorly constructed products or the use of inferior supplies and

1 <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/g2g9f533-en.pdf?expires=1617871694&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=5A2965E-4B201677AA07AB112CEE181F9>

2 <http://www.oecd.org/gov/trade-in-counterfeit-pharmaceutical-products-a7c7e054-en.htm>

3 <https://www.statista.com/topics/6539/e-commerce-in-the-philippines/>

4 https://www.bain.com/globalassets/noindex/2020/e_conomy_sea_2020_report.pdf

5 <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Philippines-GDP-shrinks-9.5-in-2020-worst-since-1947>

6 <https://www.ipophil.gov.ph/news/jan-sept-2020-reports-complaints-on-ip-infringement-surpasses-2015-2019-total/>

7 <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-52201077>

8 <https://www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2020/Global-operation-sees-a-rise-in-fake-medical-products-related-to-COVID-19>

9 <https://blog.checkpoint.com/2020/12/11/covid-19-vaccines-touted-for-just-250-on-darknet/>

10 https://euiipo.europa.eu/tunnel-web/secure/webdav/guest/document_library/observatory/documents/reports/2019_Risks_Posed_by_Counterfeits_to_Consumers_Study/2019_Risks_Posed_by_Counterfeits_to_Consumers_Study.pdf

components, to a lack of understanding of regulations or safety mechanisms.

With counterfeit medicines, the impact can even be life-threatening. According to a WHO study on public health and the socioeconomic impact of substandard and falsified medical products¹¹, many counterfeit drugs contain undeclared active ingredients that might have serious unwanted health consequences. These can pose very serious threats to consumer health and public system such as:

- adverse effects (for example toxicity or lack of efficacy) from incorrect active ingredients;
- failure to cure or prevent future disease, thereby increasing mortality, morbidity and the prevalence of disease;
- contributing to the progression of antimicrobial resistance and drug-resistant infections;
- a loss of confidence in health-care professionals, health programmes and health systems;
- an increase in individual and health system spending on health care;
- lost income due to prolonged illness or death;
- lost productivity costs to patients and households when seeking additional medical care, the effects of which are felt by businesses and the wider economy, etc.

Illegal trading and counterfeiting have negative consequences, not only for the economy (decrease of revenue and profits, erosion of brand confidence and reputation) but also for consumer health and safety. The boom of e-commerce and the extensive use of social media platforms, along with the recent Covid-19 outbreak, have been creating fertile ground for the production, distribution, and consumption of counterfeit products. To tackle this threat, continuous actions, efforts, and financial resources are required from the authorities, agencies, and IP owners to track, monitor and stop the illegal activities of counterfeiters.

But above all else, it is the responsibility of the consumer to adopt a wise attitude and to **avoid buying and using counterfeit products**. Purchasing counterfeit goods may instantly save a few pesos, but paying with our health means a higher cost for all of us.

The South-East Asia IP SME Helpdesk developed and published a **Guide on How to Remove Counterfeit Goods from e-commerce Sites in South-East Asia** ([link here](#)), an **e-commerce infographic** ([link here](#)) and a **Philippines IP Country Factsheet** ([link here](#)).

For more information about IP in South-East Asia, check out our website at https://intellectual-property-helpdesk.ec.europa.eu/regional-helpdesks/south-east-asia-ip-sme-helpdesk_en.

The South-East Asia IP SME Helpdesk is an EU initiative that provides free, practical IP advice to European SMEs in relation to SEA. EU companies can send questions to question@southeastasia-iprhelpdesk.eu and will receive a reply within 3 working days.

This article was drafted in April 2021.



11 https://www.who.int/medicines/regulation/ssffc/publications/SE-Study_EN_web.pdf?ua=1



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Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace

Trends and Concepts

Gone are the days when mental health issues are trivialized and not cause of a concern for an organization. No one is spared when it comes to mental health issues even your happiest and most productive employee. It is important for organizations to be proactive in responding to this issue because the poor mental health of employees can affect their job productivity, engagement, and relationship with coworkers. In the long run, poorly-addressed mental health in your workplace can negatively affect the bottom line of your organization.

1. Creation of information campaign that destigmatizes mental health issues

As a stepping stone in addressing mental health in your organization, you may want to start by educating your members on the basics of mental health and why it is important to our overall well-being.

You can start doing this by sharing flyers, pamphlets, or booklets that talk about mental health and why it matters to them personally. You can also host a seminar/webinar or a workshop from a mental health professional which will explain the proper way of addressing their own mental health issues and how they can, as coworkers, can address their colleague's mental health problems.

Mental health information can empower employees to interact more positively with their coworkers. Giving them information is the first step in de-stigmatization which also allows employees to be more open-minded with sensitive topics which can create a community or an environment where one is not discriminated against or frowned upon due to their mental health issue.

2. Initiate informal conversations and interactions

Whether you are implementing a physical or remote work set-up, informal interactions alleviate the stress from doing work. For physical setup, you may implement a dedicated day for office lunch out or team merienda. By doing this, you are allowing employees to have something to look forward to with their week which can make work less stressful. Moreover, this can also be a space where they can rant and openly discuss life problems or issues.

Even if you are in a WFH setup, you can tap the affordances of your enterprise social media. Making a non-work-related channel in your enterprise social media can show your organization's commitment to humanizing and making the workplace more bearable by incorporating spaces that allow employees to interact with. The non-work-related channel allows employees to have a breather and space where they can just chat random thoughts whether they are memes, jokes, or funny videos on the internet.

Moreover, having a dedicated channel for entertaining content also creates a sense of community that goes beyond the traditional work environment. This sense of community, in the long run, can translate into a more positive work culture and environment, increased loyalty, and a more productive workplace since it allows employees to be more comfortable with each other.

3. Creating and maintaining a relaxation area within the office

Most employees today are still coping with the sudden shift to office work from the dreadful work-from-home setup. It is important to set up a dedicated space where employees can chill and relax to recharge themselves.

Having a dedicated relaxation room or space can alleviate the stress and burnout caused by their daily work. Having a dedicated office space for relaxation also shows your employees that your organization values their well-being. Some ideas you may want to consider include gaming rooms, nap areas, coffee and snacks pantry, or even as simple as a lounge where employees can chit-chat and sit for a while.

4. Invest in your Human Resources' capacity-building

As our world becomes more and more complicated due to numerous crises and disasters including the recent COVID-19 pandemic, it is important for your organization to stay updated with the latest trends and information regarding mental health.

It is important for organizations to be a facilitator of a positive environment where employees have a dedicated professional to talk with or converse regarding their problems. Having someone to talk with is a first step in addressing issues and can partially alleviate the burden from your employee. Investing in the capacity-building activities of your HR team can make them more aware of how to properly respond to different issues of employees, even just the words or phrases to use in conversations are crucial when it comes to mental health issues. Capacity building can also help them in the ideation of more programs and projects that can address the problem of mental health in your workplace.

5. A genuinely healthy work environment

Programs and projects addressing mental health issues should not just be done in compliance with government laws and policies in the workplace. An organization should adhere to mental health policies genuinely because it is the right thing to do for the well-being of its members.

It's already 2021, mental health should not anymore be taboo in your office. You must now start initiating more intensified mental health programs to protect your employees and the organization.

Trends and Concepts (TAC) continuously emphasize the importance of employee well-being. This emphasis does not only include the space and environment, it also extends to the practices, human resource, and culture of the company. Through Trends and Concepts' design and build services, your office can become a space that enhances the physical and mental health of employees.





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Striving to Achieve Zero Hunger

DSM Nutritional Products

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic may have changed the way many businesses collaborate, but DSM's commitment to combating worldwide malnutrition, and striving to achieve zero hunger by 2030, is stronger than ever.

As one of the world's most widely consumed foods, rice plays a significant role in many diets around the globe. In low income countries, it can make up to 70% of an individual's calorie intake. Though it is a great source of energy, it is a poor source of micronutrients and has a low overall nutritional value beyond carbohydrates and protein.

Vitamin and mineral deficiencies are also an issue outside of low-income countries, affecting most regions worldwide at varying levels. While malnutrition is often associated with those not consuming enough calories, the lack of essential vitamins and minerals in ample or high calorie diets is a prominent issue, known as 'hidden hunger'.

The popularity of rice presents an opportunity to fill the nutrient gap in rice-eating populations worldwide by increasing the

nutritional value of rice. A wide variety of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients such as amino acids and fibers can be added post-harvest to effectively address malnutrition and contribute to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2).

A growing number of countries have mandated rice fortification and are fortifying rice distributed through social safety nets (for example school feeding), or have set voluntary rice fortification standards to address hidden hunger.

As a purpose-led company, DSM takes pride in helping its partners create effective and cost-efficient products that will shape brighter, healthier futures for individuals worldwide. More than an ingredients supplier, DSM is an active, end-to-end partner in driving the affordable nutrition revolution forward, and is leading the conversation on how food fortification and supplementation can be used effectively to create a healthier and more sustainable future for all.



Salamat mga MVPs: MVP Group Strengthens COVID Warriors

Sustains Frontliners Through Daily Meal Distribution

Metro Pacific Investments Foundation

Makati, Philippines, 3rd May 2021 – Tulong Kapatid, the corporate social responsibility alliance of foundations and companies under the MVP Group of Companies, mobilized a distribution of over 68,000 meals for COVID frontliners amid the alarming increase of COVID-19 cases.

Fully aware of how Metro Pacific Hospitals Group's frontliners have been at the forefront of defense, exposing them to a higher risk of infection with each upsurge, the group activated the Salamat mga MVPs initiative. Spearheaded by Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan and the MVP Group CSR Council, the effort aims to thank the true most valuable people in the new normal: the individuals who have been fighting tirelessly against the pandemic.

During its onset last year, Tulong Kapatid organized an immediate response to the depleting supplies of personal protective equipment (PPEs) in hospitals, augmenting the discrepancy by purchasing as much resources as possible. This "second wave", hospitals called for hot meals to provide nourishment for their medical and utility personnel, a request that the group was more than willing to address.

The group, comprised of Metro Pacific Investments Foundation, OneMeralco Foundation, PLDT-Smart Foundation, Alagang Kapatid Foundation Inc., Maynilad, and Makati Medical Center Foundation distributed meals to ten hospitals under MPHFI - Makati Medical Center, Asian Hospital, Marikina Valley Medical Center, Cardinal Santos Medical Center, De los Santos Medical Center, Dr. Jesus C. Delgado Memorial Hospital, Manila Doctors Hospital, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Sacred Heart Hospital of Malolos, and Los Banos Doctors Hospital - as well as government hospitals within Metro Manila. Public hospital beneficiaries included the East Avenue Medical Center, Philippine Children's Medical Center, National Kidney and Transplant Institute, Lung Center of the Philippines,

the Philippine General Hospital, PNP General Hospital, Victoriano Luna General Hospital, Rizal Medical Center, Dr. Jose Rodriguez Memorial Hospital, Ospital ng Muntinlupa, Navotas City Hospital, Ospital ng Malabon, Dr. Rosario Maclang Bautista Hospital, Quezon City General Hospital, Valenzuela Emergency Hospital, and even vaccination sites in Parañaque and Las Piñas.

What started out as a simple treat day for Metro Pacific Hospital frontliners, transformed into a daily commitment to provide them with the needed sustenance to continue their fight to save the lives of Filipinos. The initiative expanded to include government hospitals within the Metro to further broaden the warranted gratitude for COVID frontliners.

"In these uncertain times, we hold on to what we can be thankful for – a prime example of which are our brave frontliners," says Chairman Pangilinan. "The daily battle they're fighting is unimaginable and we take it upon ourselves to give them strength, both physically and mentally, as our way of expressing solidarity."

Tulong Kapatid plans to reach out to more hospitals and healthcare facilities to express its thanks to as many frontliners as possible.

For further information, please contact:

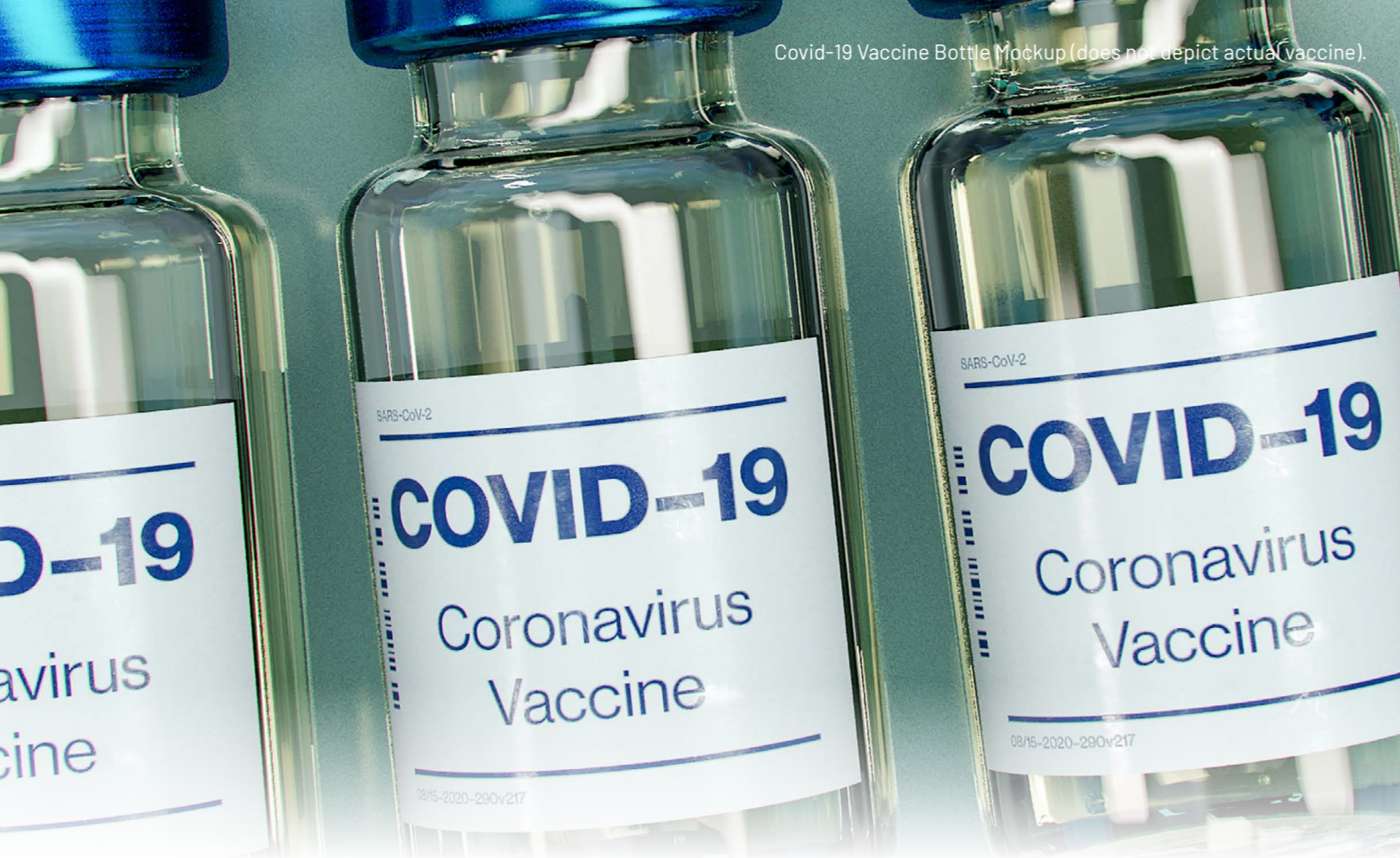
Melody del Rosario
VP - Public Relations and Corporate Communications, MPIC
09189635639



#SalamatMgaMVPs



The True MVPs: Frontliners from Metro Pacific hospitals and government hospitals alike receive daily meals from Chairman Manny V. Pangilinan and Tulong Kapatid, the corporate social responsibility alliance of foundations and companies under the MVP Group of Companies, as a show of support for their tireless commitment to battle the COVID-19 pandemic.



Fighting COVID Together: Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy

Kenneth Hartigan-Go MD

The Philippines is facing a two-pronged problem in immunizing its citizens against the current pandemic – vaccine hesitancy coupled with the global shortage of COVID-19 vaccines.

Despite over 100 years of public health benefits attributed to vaccines, vaccine mistrust still lingers due to disinformation and hoaxes. Globally, the narrative of the controversial MMR vaccine allegedly causing autism has long been debunked and proven false by healthcare professionals. However, these truths were retracted by a publishing journal, making disinformation continue to persist and cause untold damage. Years ago in the Philippines, lies about tetanus vaccines containing hormones that make women sterile were also proven to be false. As recently as 2017, falsehoods about Dengvaxia causing death were permitted and repeated by the government and the media, which led to the vilification of health institutions, programs, products and people. Additionally public trust in all vaccines plummeted from a 93% confidence rate in 2015 to 32% in 2018. Communities rejected routine vaccinations, which led to a measles outbreak in 2019.. It appears that vaccine hesitancy reflects not only a mistrust of the product but also of the institutions involved in the value chain of vaccine production, procurement, regulation and roll out.

And then the pandemic hit.

As it drags on, the pandemic is impacting not only the healthcare system or the economy, but it has also come to represent the tension between individual liberties on the one hand, and, on the other, the societal interdependence necessary to control the pandemic.

Misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines have already spread as virulently as the Coronavirus; if not addressed appropriately, it will only get worse. We are in the midst of what sociologists call an “infodemic”, an epidemic of information that may either be true or false. In this environment, vaccine myths abound and are indiscriminately passed along. **ALL of the following statements are false:**

- The vaccines were rushed and are therefore not safe
- Vaccines can alter your DNA
- Vaccines can give you COVID-19
- Vaccines contain egg protein which is dangerous to those allergic to eggs
- Vaccines will make you infertile

A March 2021 Pulse Asia survey showed that the Philippines had fallen to a low of 16% vaccine confidence, falling further from the previous 39% taken just a month prior; there have been no updates whether the condition is improving to date. An informal poll of the companies which pre-ordered vaccines revealed that as much as 80% of their rank and file employees rejected vaccination. Vaccine hesitancy and anti-vaxxers are dangerous, but the greatest danger is apathy. Much like the implementation of the vaccination roll-out, tackling and addressing vaccine hesitancy should also be undertaken from a whole-society approach, using sound arguments for public benefit and potential risks.

Government officials and public health authorities must ensure that they battle every inaccuracy regarding vaccines and immunization by setting the example for better health and risk communications. They must be the first to safeguard a process which ensures that only appropriate and accurate information is shared by the appointed person/s. However, vaccine hesitancy cannot be solved by the government if the institution itself has been a source of confusion; instead, they may choose to engage with reliable health professionals and community leaders to correct the problem. One credible spokesperson with consistent and accurate messaging who acknowledges the consequence of incomplete information can effectively address public confusion and concern.

All public officials are obliged to correct any misinformation; not doing anything to rectify the situation can be perceived as negligence and will lead to the loss of trust, not just in the vaccines, but in the public system as a whole. **Regulatory authorities** should also take action against misinformation. They need not wait for the problem to be reported before they act because it is part of their mission to check on violations and deal with them appropriately. The recent risk communication, pronouncements and eventual retracting of our regulatory authorities have not been reassuring.

Healthcare professionals and scientists must communicate factual scientific information and fight actively against vaccine misinformation. Although social media can be a powerful platform to disseminate sound information, professional ethics dictate that health professionals must not post personal opinions on social

media to avoid causing inadvertent harm. Health professionals posting medical journals or news articles on social media without curation or commentary can also send an unclear message; they have an obligation to explain what the article means and its context in an evolving body of knowledge. Health professionals debating the complexities of science in public and on social media can also provoke public confusion and erode public trust in the healthcare industry. Sometimes, media practitioners encourage debate to pit one talking head against another. It is up to the public to discern whether these talking heads are actually experts or if they are scientists engaging in epistemic trespassing, a poor practice in which non-experts are speaking, publishing and advising as if they were experts.

The public and the community at large should be mindful of information and avoid forwarding unverified messages or half-truths to friends who would then do the same. This creates a dangerous echo chamber of false narratives beyond logic and scientific facts. With so much misinformation and opinions masquerading as truth, fact checking certainly becomes a big challenge. Cultivating a mindset of healthy skepticism may be necessary; it is important to question everything and resist passing on a message until it has been verified.

The **pharmaceutical industry** shares the same responsibility: communicate facts about vaccines using language appropriate for intended audiences. Communication intended for the public must be stated in a manner that will be easily understood by the general population.

Media personnel, leaders and owners of media agencies must remember their tacit and implicit obligation to verify facts when reporting public health-related news. News reporting is, first and foremost, a responsibility and a public trust; it must not devolve into a mere competition for audience shares.

Whatever personal opinions or feelings you may have about vaccines or the industry that manufactures them, the benefits of vaccines are undeniable. The goal is herd immunity and the return to normalcy. Let us make this our advocacy to help save lives.

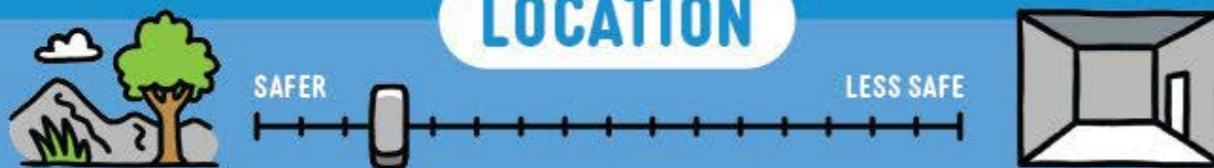
This article was drafted in May 2021.



3 FACTORS TO HELP YOU MAKE SAFER CHOICES

WHEN YOU'RE IN AN AREA OF WIDESPREAD COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

LOCATION



Open air spaces safer than enclosed spaces

PROXIMITY



Farther away from others safer than close together

TIME



Shorter time periods with others are safer

REMEMBER, IT'S ALWAYS SAFER TO:



KNOW YOUR RISK.
LOWER YOUR RISK.



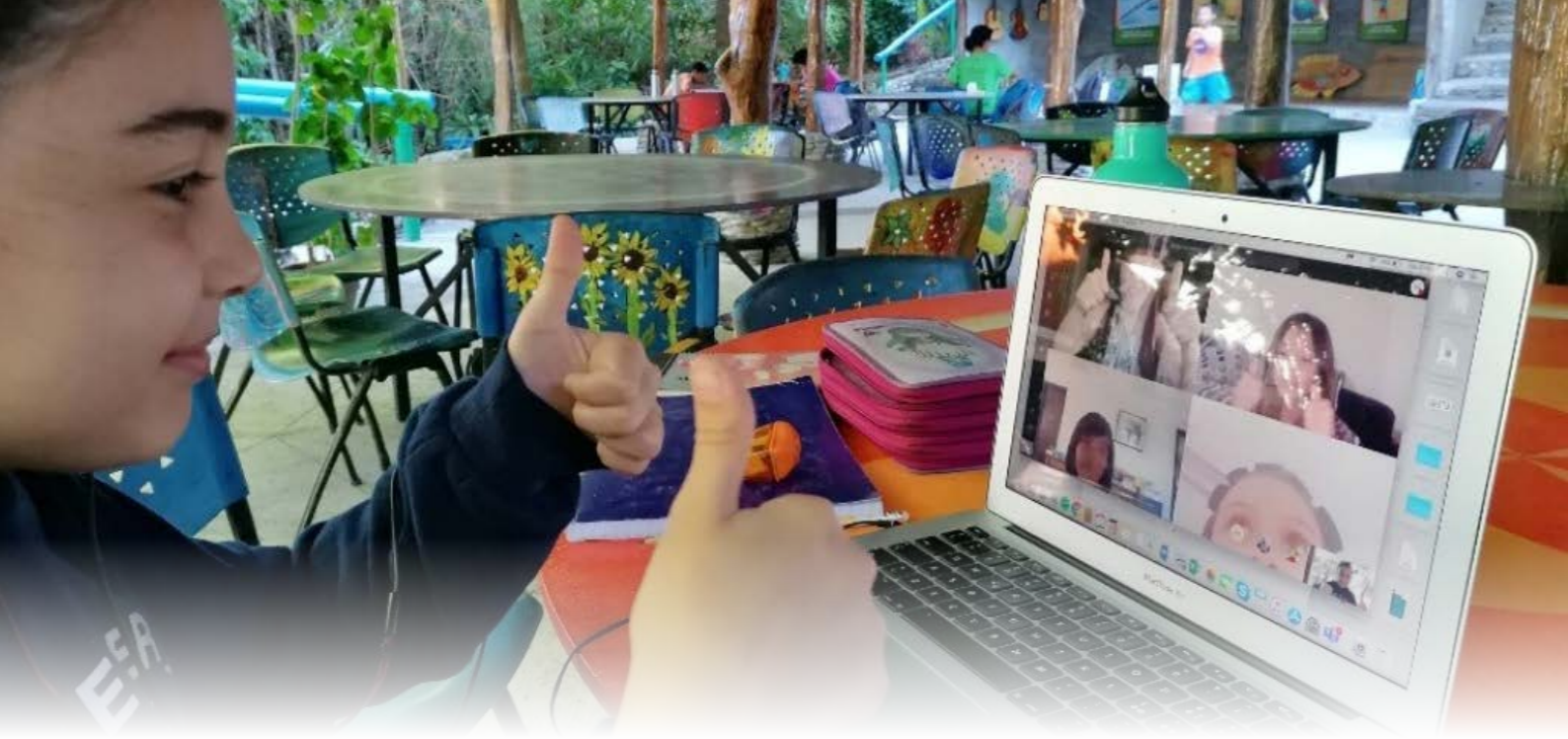
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How the German School in Manila Makes Schooling in the “New Normal” Work

German European School Manila

Less than 24 hours after the Philippine government ordered schools to close on the evening of March 9, 2020, online schooling at the German European School Manila (GESM) was up and ready. The transition, which one might reasonably think any school would lose at least a week's worth of classes to, took away from GESM a grand total of one day.

If that wasn't a display of the oft-noted German efficiency, then we don't know what is.

But while the speed of its transition is impressive as it is, how GESM continued to thrive in the new normal might be more worthy of note. The results speak for themselves: The most recent international assessments of its English-based offerings (IB Diploma Programme and the International General Certificate for Secondary Education or IGCSE) netted a passing rate of 95% – an impressive 12 points above the global average. Its Primary Years Programme's exemplary handling of online classes has been cited in a worldwide conference of educators by the International Baccalaureate Organization itself. Not to mention that not one of its students ever failed the German school-leaving exams (Schulabschlussprüfungen) for 15 years in a row now.

Here, we try to break down what the German school did and are doing differently, the ways it adapts and what could be learned from its example.

1. Allowing for the worst

Quite simply, the key to the lightning-fast transition was anticipating it beforehand. Ever since word reached GESM that a physical closure of all schools is possible, its staffers were on the drawing boards, coming up with solutions to a situation they did not know would materialize. A virtual platform was selected and set-up. Key staff members who would orient and instruct the rest

of the faculty on the online transition were identified. So when the government announcement came in March, the school only had to push a button, metaphorically speaking.



GESM staffers work overtime to prepare books and materials for delivery to students on March 16, 2020.

2. Going the extra mile

Contrary to what one might expect, GESM sends out equipment, books and other items to its students every week at no extra cost. The delivery is done door-to-door and would include supplies for arts and crafts, scientific experiments, cooking ingredients, etc. This service has also gone beyond the usual school materials. At the height of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) in Manila, the German school's staff went out of its way to purchase and deliver phone chargers, left-handed scissors, printer cartridges, buy medicine and even do grocery for teachers, students and their parents who were either stranded at home or left without any way to obtain what they needed during the lockdown.

And how long did it take GESM to start delivering after the closure? Two days.

3. Riding the trend

New cultural phenomena emerged from the communal experience of being quarantined at home. Students and their parents are

not immune to these trends, of course – a fact that educators of GESM recognized well. As the hashtag #quarantinebaking trended on social media, teachers pounced on the opportunity to ride on the fad. Primary classes began integrating baking and cooking in their math lessons to learn about ratios, fractions, and capacity measurements. Even GESM's preschoolers had a class where they made noodles at home while learning about the letter “N”.

The rise of the so-called “quarantine garden” was another such phenomenon. Partnering with the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry, the German school acquired packs of vegetable seeds for its students, sent to their homes and used for lessons in science, the environment, and economics.

4. Using circumstances to your advantage

Instead of bemoaning the current situation, the German school tried to see the opportunities presented by the new normal. This is perhaps most evident when GESM mounted its day-long University Fair last November, when the school cobbled together 26 of the most notable higher education institutions around the world and attracted around 400 students, teachers, and parents to register. The attendance figures and program offering were a huge leap from the last such event. The organizational expenses were negligible; there was great flexibility for the attendees; the feedback from speakers and viewers were better facilitated – all because it was done 100% online. Taking advantage of a world locked to the screen, GESM was able to go international and extend its reach far and beyond what would have been considered possible for the same event last year. The same experience was true for the school's parent-teacher evenings, engagement to which increased dramatically since adapting a virtual format.

5. Consulting and adjusting accordingly

Despite having the momentum going forward, one must be able to stop, assess its progress and conduct checks to its performance. In GESM's case, this is done by several surveys and regular consultations with the students' parents (via an institutionalized Parents Advisory Council). Several adjustments to the schedule and workload of the students had already been implemented as a result of this policy, and small tweaks and improvements here and there are still being made along the way. True to its policy of preparedness and adaptability, the school most recently conducted a short research on online fatigue, with the aim of arming itself with the information to counter and prevent it.

6. Giving back when you can

In December 2020, to end a year full of changes and uncertainties especially for the underprivileged, the GESM community held “A Series of Fortunate Christmas Events”, a string of online affairs that raised close to PHP130,000 for several charitable causes. The whole school mobilized to organize virtual concerts, raffle draws and other shows to raise the amount. The endeavor not only taught the students how to work together to mount events, but also imparted to them the value of giving back to the community. As a UNESCO school, GESM strives to develop pupils into socially engaged citizens of the world.

7. Planning for all scenarios

While the whole country anxiously awaits the government's reopening of schools, the German school has already acquired and tested equipment for a blended-learning set-up, where classes could be conducted to students who are physically present in the

classroom and to those who are tuning in from home simultaneously. The idea is to allow for home-based pupils to be able to see, hear and interact with any other pupil in class, physically present or otherwise. All the while, they are also able to follow what's being discussed by the teacher via video or by receiving the feed from the classroom smart board.

This gives GESM the capability to offer live classes virtually and in the classroom at the same time. While a good number of parents probably look forward to the reopening of schools, there might be some who are not comfortable with the idea of physically sending their children back. Should schools be allowed to hold face-to-face classes anytime soon, GESM resolves to keep the option of remote learning open for parents who are of the latter opinion. In any case, it has made itself available and a good option for both.

GESM maintains a good relationship with the Department of Education and the local government of Parañaque owed in large part to its social projects and adherence to safety protocols. Recently, the school has been granted exception by authorities to hold examinations with students on campus. From there, it's not such a far cry to think it would be among those schools in Manila where face-to-face classes would resume first.



GESM's Volker Ross and Santanu Bhowmik (first and second from left) with school staffers and the student moderators of the University Fair in the background.

Conclusion

When the Philippine government ordered schools to close in March 2020, no one seemed to seriously think it was going to be for the long haul. It's been a year since that fateful announcement and yet the prospect of having pupils return to school physically is as uncertain as it was 12 months ago. How the experience went within that time varied from one school to another, though. And it is clear that not everyone had to scramble to create and keep a semblance of schooling alive.

Some, like the German European School Manila, are taking the challenge in stride, clicking their heels as they go.

For more information about the GESM and its programmes, please email admission@gesm.org.

The **GERMAN EUROPEAN SCHOOL MANILA (Deutsche Europäische Schule Manila)** or GESM is an international, multi-lingual, co-educational school in the Philippines. An IB World School, the GESM offers the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) and the Primary Years Programme (PYP). The school aims to develop students into global citizens committed to a sustainable future and is a duly recognized UNESCO school. Twice awarded by the German government as an “Excellent German School Abroad”, it is supported and supervised by the Central Agency for German Schools Abroad (ZfA).

ECCP Announces Winners of 2021 Europa Awards

11 June 2021, Makati City, Philippines – The European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP) named the winners of its first 2021 Europa Awards held virtually on Thursday.

The six organizations were recognized for their outstanding sustainability efforts and initiatives across six categories. The winners and finalists per category of the 2021 Europa Awards are:

The six organizations were recognized for their outstanding sustainability efforts and initiatives across six categories. The winners and finalists per category of the 2021 Europa Awards are:

- Winner of the Smart and Safer Mobility Award**
 Scandinavian Motors Corp. (Volvo Cars Philippines)
 Finalists: Aboitiz Equity Ventures; Honda Philippines, Inc.; Scandinavian Motors Corp. (Volvo Cars Philippines)
- Winner of the Clean and Efficient Energy Award**
 Shell Philippines Exploration B.V. (SPEX)
 Finalists: Aboitiz Power Hedcor Group; Citicore Renewable Energy Corporation; Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines Inc. (CCBPI); METPower; Shell Philippines Exploration B.V. (SPEX)
- Winner of the Circular Economy Award**
 H&M Hennes & Mauritz, Inc.
 Finalists: H&M Hennes & Mauritz, Inc.; Metpower; Nestlé Philippines
- Winner of the Sustainable Food and Nutrition Award**
 Pilmico Foods Corporation
 Finalists: Century Pacific Food, Inc.; East-West Seed; GEA Westfalia Separator Philippines, Inc.; Nestlé Philippines; Pilmico Foods Corporation
- Winner of the Green and Inclusive Finance Solutions Award**
 CreditBPO Tech, Inc.
 Finalists: CreditBPO Tech, Inc.; Engie Services Philippines; The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited – Philippines
- Winner of the Water Resource Management Winner Award**
 Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines Inc. (CCBPI)
 Finalists: Alternative Indigenous Development Foundation Inc.; Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines Inc. (CCBPI); Republic Cement Services, Inc.

Winners in each category received a trophy designed by creative designers Rita Nazareno and Gabriel Lichauco of Nazareno/Lichauco for ZACARIAS 1925 who served as Trophy Sponsors for the Awards. The Awards were co-presented by Republic Cement Services, Inc. for Circular Economy; Procter & Gamble for Clean and Efficient Energy; Mazars in the Philippines for Green and Inclusive Finance Solutions; and Villar SIPAG at Tiyaga Foundation, Inc. for the Sustainable Food and Nutrition Category.

“We received more than 70 entries beginning mid-March until the end of April. Eventually, this was narrowed down to 22 finalists,” ECCP Executive Director Florian Gottein said.

“All of them are exceptional in their own right and we are fortunate enough to have the support of an equally exceptional panel of judges to help us review the merits of these entries throughout the process,” added Gottein referring to the technical judges invited to

evaluate the entries.

SGV & Co. is the Official Tabulator for the ECCP 2021 Europa Awards. The Firm also tabulated the scores and rankings of the finalists and winners of the Awards.

The technical judges include Jean-Marc Arbogast, Country Manager of International Finance Corporation Philippines; Atty. Jose Layug Jr., President of Developers of Renewable Energy for AdvanceMent, Inc; Dr. Jose Bienvenido Manuel Biona, Executive Dean of the De La Salle University Enrique K. Razon Jr. Logistics Institute; Bonar Laureto, Executive Director of Business for Sustainable Development; Cherrie Atilano, President and Founding Farmer of AGREA Agricultural Systems International, Inc.; and Christopher Ilagan, Chairperson of Philippine Water Partnership.

Ambassador Luc Véron of the Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines, and former Undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Member of the Board of Trustees of the Manila Observatory Dr. Antonio La Viña sat as final judges.

During the online event, the ECCP also launched the publication of its Sustainability Whitebook containing the Chamber’s policy recommendations on six thematic areas of mobility, energy, circular economy, agriculture, finance, and water management and how these policy advocacies are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Philippine Development Plan.

The organizers also released a special edition of the EuroPH membership magazine featuring in-depth accounts of the winners’ entries. Judges and some event partners also contributed articles on thought leadership, success stories, and best practices on sustainability. All publications related to the Europa Awards can be accessed by visiting eccp.com/2021-europa-awards.

“The number of nominations we received demonstrates the growing commitment of the business community to adopt sustainable business practices in their core plans and strategies,” added Gottein. “We are proud to share their stories and achievements, and are grateful to those who participated in and made the Awards possible.”

The Event Partners of the Awards are the Villar SIPAG at Tiyaga Foundation, Inc. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation. It is also supported by its Platinum Sponsors, Procter & Gamble and Mazars in the Philippines. Gold Sponsors of the event include Damosa Land, ING Bank Philippines, PPI Pazifik Power, Pru Life UK, Bosch Philippines, Straive, and Vivant Corporation. Its Silver Sponsors are Prime Infrastructure Holdings Inc. and Nestle Philippines.

Its official Media Partners are One News and BusinessWorld. The Awards also received support from its Sustainability Partners, Austrian Embassy Manila, Royal Danish Embassy Manila, Embassy of the Netherlands, and the Embassy of Sweden Manila. Its Advocacy Partner is GeiserMaclang.

Various organizations also supported the Awards as its Endorsing Partners which include AGREA, Airline Operators Council, Business for Sustainable Development, Developers of Renewable Energy for AdvanceMent Inc., Philippine Chamber of Food Manufacturers, Inc., Philippine Energy Efficiency Alliance, Philippines Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture, and Philippine Water Partnership.

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Values that the company continues to uphold are Caring, Teamwork and Continuous improvement.

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ONLINE ACTIVITIES



JULY 2021

01,02
09:00 AM - 12:00 NN

e-Learning

**Expanding Your Influence:
Understanding the Psychology
of Persuasion**
Quintegral

01
03:00 PM - 04:30 PM

**Live, Work and Invest
in Czech Republic**

02
04:00 PM - 05:00 PM

**Bodyweight Workout
and Fitness Q&A with
Coach Justin Nepomuceno**

05
10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

The Future of Marketing

06
03:00 PM - 05:00 PM

**6th Joint Economic Briefing:
Opportunities in the Philippines More Than
A Year into COVID, with an Emphasis on FDIs**

08
09:00 AM - 12:00 NN

e-Learning

**Effective Virtual
Presentation Skills**

08
04:00 PM - 05:30 PM

**IP 101: The Fundamentals of Intellectual
Property for the Start-Up Sector**
IP SME Helpdesk

12,13,15,16
01:30 PM - 04:30 PM

e-Learning

**Negotiation Skills Workshop
for the New Normal
Business Environment**

14

02:00 PM - 04:00 PM

**Discovering Public-Private-Partnership
(PPP) Opportunities**

22

02:00 PM - 04:00 PM

AI+ Financial Services
Eastern Communications

23

10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

**Monthly Roundup:
Landlords' Briefing on Energy
Efficiency and Conservation Law 2.0**

27

01:00 PM - 04:00 PM

e-Learning

**Design Your Leadership Journey
(An Exercise in Design Thinking)**
HURIS Inc.

28

10:30 AM - 12:00 NN

**Data Center Solutions for a
Post-Pandemic Business Era**
ICS, APC, and HPE

28

03:00 PM - 05:00 PM

**New Opportunities Waiting
in Davao for the Swedish
Business Community**

29

09:00 AM - 04:00 PM

e-Learning

**Data Visualization using
Power BI: Introductory Module**

30

03:30 PM - 05:00 PM

**Integrating ESG into the
Investment Process**
Architas, AXA Philippines

