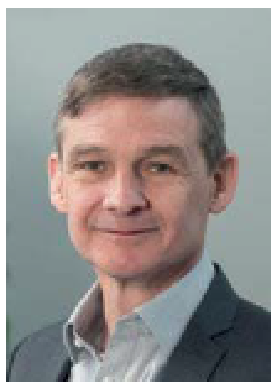
It all depends on the comparison

The pandemic has caused enormous variations even in the key figures of the home improvement industry

The sales figures presented by the *DIY International* research team in this latest volume of *Statistics Home Improvement Europe* are highly disparate from country to country, from company to company, and from product group to product group. Did the performance of the different DIY operators really vary that much?

No. There's another reason for the wide variation in sales in 2021 compared with 2020. The lockdowns and other pandemic-related restrictions not only varied from country to country, but also came at different times. If the entire retail sector was closed one month and open the following year, this naturally generated huge growth rates – and in the opposite case, enormous slumps.



How meaningful is a comparison from year to year? Because this question is quite rightly asked of a publication like *Statistics*, we have always included a comparison with 2019, the last "normal" year before the pandemic, in the sales figures for the top 20 DIY store operators in Europe and worldwide.

In contrast, there were fewer strong movements in the figures for the DIY store numbers. Here, the pandemic did not have such a pronounced impact in the short term, because construction projects that had already been were not simply stopped. But in the medium term there could be a dip.

Even though this volume of Statistics naturally refers to the past year, I cannot write this editorial in July 2022 without addressing the dramatically changed situation brought about by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Of course, the human suffering is the first thing that concerns us. But one also has to think about the prospects for the industry.

There are many indications that the European economies are heading for a recession. It is not yet possible to say exactly what this means for consumer behaviour with regard to home improvement. Will DIY stores become relevant once more as providers of affordable solutions for a homing trend that is possibly set to intensify? Or will they feel the pinch of consumer reticence? How will the already tight situation in terms of availability of goods, supply chains and prices develop? The only thing that is clear is that there is a great deal of uncertainty. The industry is probably facing further tense times.

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And don't forget: all data are available to download in digital format– see the last page.

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