

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Public Organizations: **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

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PART 1

Covid-19 and Public Sector Organizations – An International Comparison

3/34



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1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly reshaped almost all aspects of societal relations, including administrative ones. Namely, in an unexpected circumstance like the Covid-19 crisis the delivery of public services cannot be suspended and must be delivered in a different way, chiefly relying on the available digital technological capabilities and digital competencies. Therefore, public sector organizations have employed various strategies, techniques and communication channels to help them continue to carry out their tasks for citizens, and to effectively organize work within the public sector. Certain approaches immediately proved to represent value added also for the future while others still encounter problems while searching for a balance between protection of the legally defined public interest and the exercise of private rights. With a view to analysing these responses and associated issues for better policymaking of tomorrow on both the supra and national levels, the Faculty of Public Administration at the University of Ljubljana (along with partner institutions in other countries) launched an international study entitled “The impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the efficiency of public administration: the case of general territorial administrative districts”. The study findings may assist in formulating recommendations for the agile functioning of public sector organizations in line with the principles of good public governance. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly shown that turbulent problems – characterized by surprising, inconsistent, unpredictable and uncertain events – persistently disrupt the public sector. This means enhanced digital technological capabilities and digital transformation are an inevitable future challenge for the public sector.

2. Data and Methodology

Data for this report were gathered through a web-based survey covering selected EU (Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Romania, Slovenia) and non-EU (China, Georgia, Mexico, Russia, Turkey) countries. The local public administrations in these countries have different traditions and possess various responsibilities and management styles. The survey was available from the start of June 2020 until the end of August 2020. The final sample consists of 1,209 public managers of public administration authorities competent for conducting administrative procedures and providing public services as general administrative territorial units on the local level. Generally, the public managers were asked to provide their perception of their public administration authority's response to the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The questionnaire was composed of many closed-ended questions addressing various aspects of public sector organizations' functioning, especially administrative procedures and services, human resource management and financial resource management.

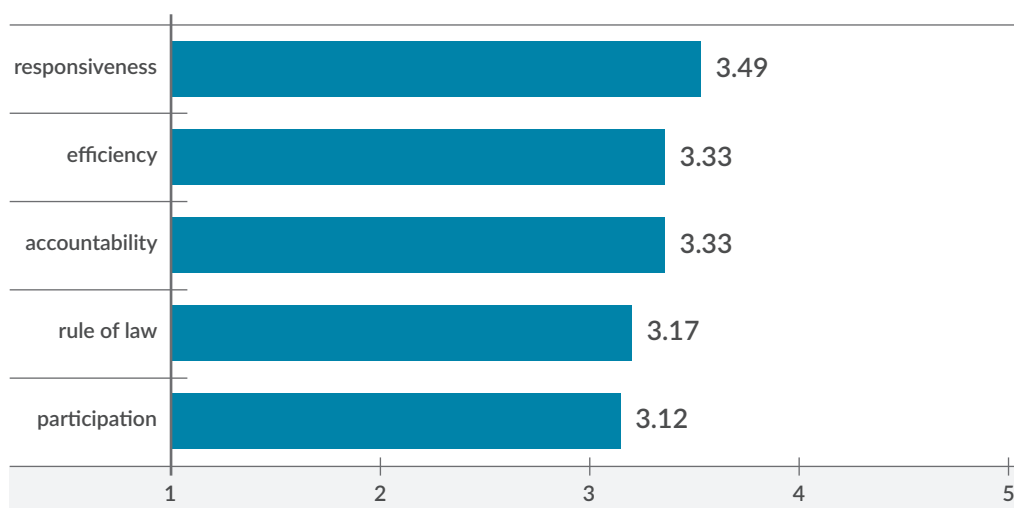
3. International Comparison of Selected Aspects

Procedures and Services

Good governance is essential if public sector organizations are to achieve their objectives and drive improvement. In a nutshell, good governance refers to the public administration process that maximizes the public interest (Keping, 2018). This makes it essential for public sector organizations to follow the key principles of good governance, especially during the Covid-19 crisis. The results of our survey show that the most emphasized principles during the Covid-19 pandemic have been responsiveness, efficiency and accountability. On the other hand, the least emphasized principles have been rule of law and participation (see Figure 1). Further, the international comparison reveals that non-EU countries (e.g. Georgia and Turkey) were mainly ranked in the upper half, while Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries were largely ranked in the lower half with respect to most principles of good public governance during the pandemic.

Figure 1

Emphasized principles of good public governance during the Covid-19 pandemic



Source: Aristovnik et al., 2020; Public Administration Survey, 2020

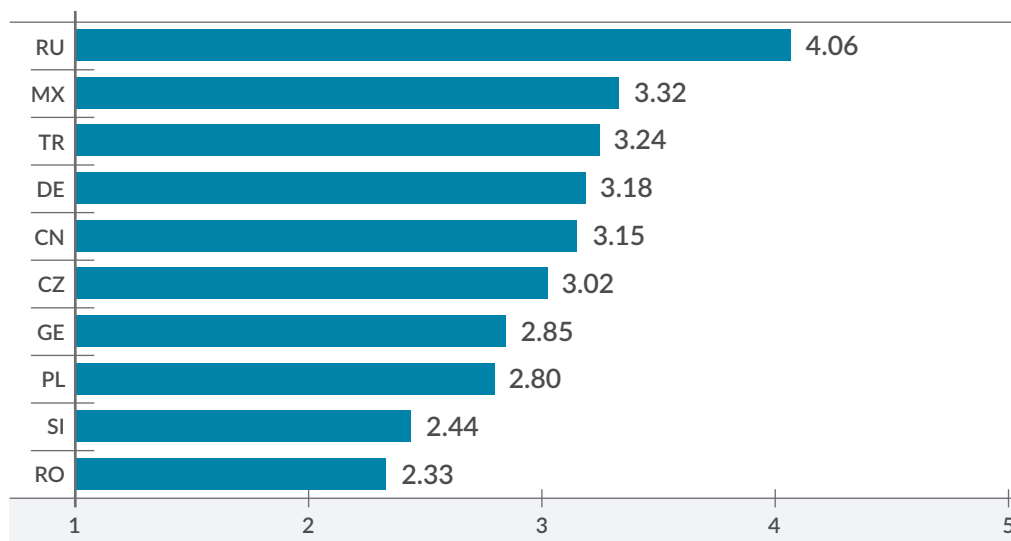
The Covid-19 pandemic may be considered to have accelerated the digital transformation of public service delivery. Accordingly, public sector organizations have employed various and digital-based strategies, techniques and communication channels to help them continue to carry out their tasks for citizens in cooperation with the ministries competent for public sector organizations (vertical relations) and to effectively organize work within the public administration (horizontal relations). Our survey results show that some countries (e.g. Turkey and Germany) were ranked high, while other countries (e.g. Mexico and Czech Republic) low in both aspects. Interestingly, Slovenia was ranked high in vertical relations but low in horizontal relations.

Human Resource Management

Employees are the heart of administrative processes in public sector organizations because they provide services, promote innovation and produce performance. Human resource management plays a strategic role in facilitating the recruitment and retention of valued staff, enhancing organizational effectiveness, and promoting a performance-driven culture. Thus, human resource management has become ever more prominent, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic (Reina & Scarozza, 2020). The results of our survey reveal an urgent need for additional public sector employment during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in non-EU countries (e.g. Russia, Mexico and Turkey). Yet, this is not the case in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (especially Romania, Slovenia and Poland), as indicated by these countries' lower rankings (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Employment due to urgent work needs during the Covid-19 pandemic



Source: Aristovnik et al., 2020; Public Administration Survey, 2020

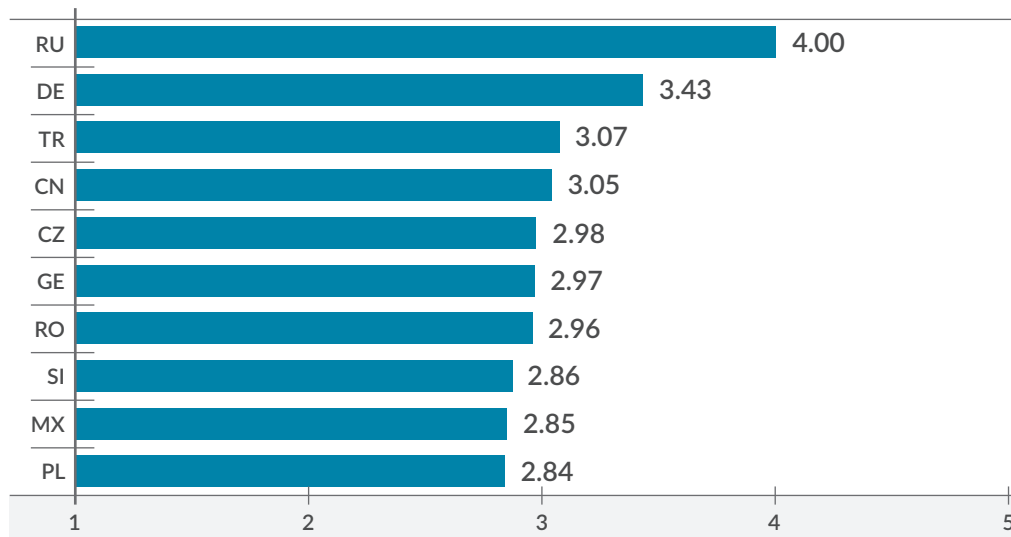
Moreover, the results show that Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (e.g. Poland and Slovenia) have seen a relatively high level of employee relocation to meet urgent work needs during the pandemic, yet this is not the case for non-EU countries (e.g. Georgia, China, Mexico).

Financial Resource Management

Public administration organizations must deliver public services within a sustainable financial framework. Since revenue is rarely sufficient to meet demand, public money must be managed carefully to ensure sustainability for the medium and long term (Sigma, 2020). This also means it is important to establish appropriate financial resource management, especially in unforeseen circumstances like the Covid-19 pandemic. The study results reveal that Russia and Germany had, compared to pre-pandemic, significantly higher salary costs during the Covid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (especially Poland and Slovenia) salary costs did not increase in the period under study in the Covid-19 pandemic (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Estimation of salary costs during the Covid-19 pandemic



Source: Aristovnik et al., 2020; Public Administration Survey, 2020

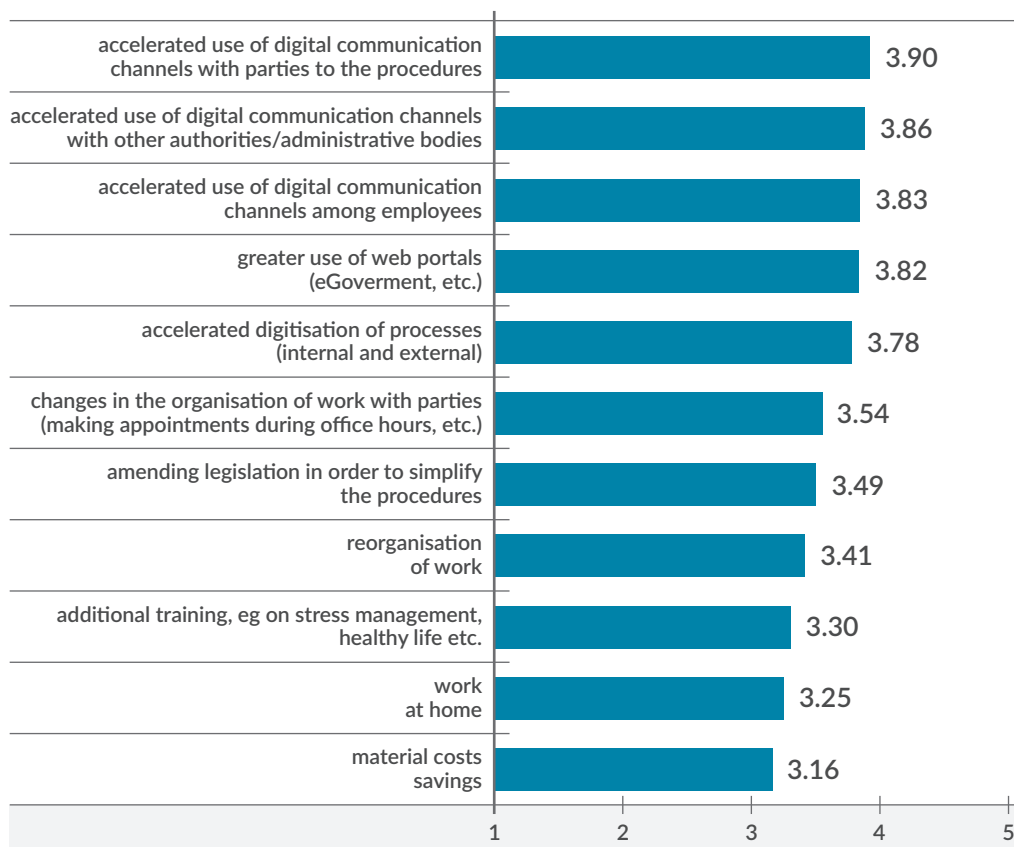
These results are consistent with the findings concerning human resources management. Namely, during the pandemic public organizations in Russia employed significantly more workers than other countries, thereby creating higher salary costs. On the contrary, in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (e.g. Slovenia and Poland) the increased workload created by the crisis was not solved by additional employment but by relocating employees, explaining the lower salary costs in these countries.

The time after the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 crisis has exposed certain systematic shortcomings in various areas that must be addressed if public administration organizations are to effectively provide public services, both now and in the future. Our study results suggest that, following the Covid-19 pandemic, public organizations will strive to maintain selected good practices in different areas: digitalization, law and organizational management (see Figure 4). Additional insight reveals that some EU countries (especially Germany and Romania) will be especially focusing on digitalization, while non-EU countries (in particular Mexico and Russia) will be more strongly focused on organizational management and law.

Figure 4

Likelihood of duration of changes after the Covid-19 pandemic



Source: Aristovnik et al., 2020; Public Administration Survey, 2020

Although it remains unclear what the future holds, it is certain that the Covid-19 pandemic is accelerating digitalization and also encouraging particular changes in other areas (law and organizational management) that must be adopted if digitally transformed public administrations are to perform even better in the future either in normal situations or similar crises.

4. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The year 2020 is one the world will refer to in terms of 'life before Covid-19 and life after'. The environment in which public sector organizations is required to perform a range public services has changed radically, forcing public managers to innovatively adapt their conventional management methods to the new circumstances, i.e. in an environment in which information no longer holds any prognostic value due to the quickly transformed conditions in which different stakeholders have ever more complex motives and interests, which are also constantly changing. This description also applies to or will be more important in any future waves of the Covid-19 pandemic as well as in the post Covid-19 era. The first wave of the pandemic showed public managers that the existing/old ways of managing and leading no longer worked, requiring them to quickly adapt their approaches to the new circumstances as they arose, without any long-term plans or attempts to apply known solutions to completely unknown problems. In the pandemic's second wave, the need to learn and adapt is growing more than ever. The Covid-19 crisis demonstrates how it is necessary to perceive the challenges to the public administration in a new way and shows the need, willingness and capacity to change the public administration's modus operandi in the pursuit of robust solutions to turbulent problems (Ansell et al., 2020).

Therefore, the main goal of our survey was to identify key challenges and opportunities and present an international comparative analysis of selected public administration organizations during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the main purpose was to design the proposals for policymakers and public managers through which public administration would operate compliant with good governance principles. Generally, the findings of the report reveal that public sector organizations across different countries are faced with different challenges. Still, the experiences of the first wave should be considered while preparing policy recommendations. On this basis, several policy recommendations can be offered. First, public managers (especially in CEE countries) should strive to increase certain principles of good governance (particularly responsiveness and participation). The aforementioned can be accomplished by enhancing vertical (from ministries through public sector organizations to citizens) and horizontal (within public sector) relations. Moreover, for some non-EU countries (especially Russia and Turkey) it is important to provide an adequate combination of human resource management measures tailored to their needs, which will in turn boost their efficiency. Namely, these countries appeared to have relatively high levels of both additional employment and temporary relocation to meet urgent work needs during the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to increase efficiency, there is still room for improvement in establishing appropriate financial controls to manage operating costs (e.g. salary and material costs). This mainly applies to Russia and Germany because in the period under study they have been experiencing much higher operating costs during the Covid-19 pandemic than before. Finally, after the Covid-19 pandemic is finally brought to a close, public managers (especially from non-EU countries and CEE countries) should put greater emphasis on digitalization since it is becoming an important tool for facilitating communication and work. At the same time, public managers need to encourage certain changes in other areas (law and organizational management) to facilitate the digital transformation of public sector organizations and equip them with capabilities to ensure they are ready to appropriately respond to similar crises.

Briefly, the disastrous effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on public sector organizations require not the mere recovery and restoration of the status quo but reinvented models of service delivery, including the more effective inclusion of citizens, suitable human and financial resource strategies and appropriate good practices for the future. The turbulent problems exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic especially call for digital-based solutions that are sufficiently adaptable, agile and pragmatic to uphold a particular goal

or function in the face of continuous/sudden disruptions. The report's findings will assist in formulating recommendations for the agile functioning of administrative units in Slovenia according to the principles of good public governance. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that turbulent problems – characterized by surprising, inconsistent, unpredictable and uncertain events – persistently disrupt the public administration. Therefore, enhanced digital technological capabilities and digital transformation are an inevitable challenge for public sector organizations in the future post-Covid-19 world.

Acknowledgments

The report is based on data obtained within the CovidSocLab project – Public Administration Survey (2020) (<http://www.covidsoclab.org/public-administration-survey/>). We could not have done this work without the exceptional assistance of international partners with the translation and data collection. We wish to thank: Yujie Gan, Marie Bohata, Vepkhvia Grigalashvili, Bernhard Hirsch, Fabienne-Sophie Schäfer, Miguel Moreno Plata, Aleksander Maziarz, Mariusz Maciejewski, Ani Matei, Guliya K. Nurlybaeva, Onur Kulaç, and Cenay Babaoğlu.

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PART 2

Covid-19 as a Driver of Digitalized Administrative Units in Slovenia

9/34



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1. Introduction

Since 1991, the Republic of Slovenia has been an independent country, having successfully entered the EU as a full member in 2004. It is a small state with a population of around 2 million and quite strongly connected in various regional networks, including the OECD. Slovenia is a moderate community in almost all respects. Macroeconomically, in 2019 its GDP per capita was 88% of the average of the EU-27. Regarding its administrative tradition and culture, Slovenia is a member of the German-Austrian circle in terms of legacy and legal system, as expressed in the *Rechtsstaat* and Weberian principles of public governance, while there have been individual reform attempts of a more neo-liberal persuasion (e.g. cutting red tape, privatization of certain public services). However, the heritage of the socialist system is also in force in former Yugoslavia, of which Slovenia formed part between 1945 and 1991, also meaning that Slovenia is usually recognized as a CEE (Central and Eastern European) country.

The structure of the country's administrative system is somewhat specific. The Constitution stipulates the separation of powers, where the public administration is part of the executive, enforcing parliamentary law (statutes) and governmental public policies, whereas its acts are the subject of judicial review. Nonetheless, vertically, there is a quite strict 'two-tiered system of power' in which the state does not interfere with basically local self-government tasks and structures, nor vice versa. The Slovenian public administration consists of:

- a) state administrative authorities/bodies, i.e. 14 ministries, 9 governmental offices, approximately 40 executive agencies within ministries, and 58 local administrative units, the latter conducting administrative procedures at first instance (e.g. issuing building permits, registering residences, deciding on foreigners' rights, tasks in the field of agriculture etc.);
- b) local self-government with 212 municipalities;
- c) holders of public authorities, whose tasks are delegated by the state and the municipalities.

Covid-19 was detected in Slovenia in early 2020, with the first wave of the epidemic and a lockdown being officially declared between 13 March and 1 June. Slovenia managed to survive the first wave quite well, yet as at the time of writing in the autumn of 2020 Slovenia is unfortunately one of the three worst affected countries in the EU.

2. Research into Covid-19's Impact on Slovenian Administrative Units – Design

Within the research programme “Development of an efficient and effective public administration system (P5-0093)” co-financed by the Slovenian Research Agency, in June 2020 the Faculty of Public Administration at the University of Ljubljana in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) conducted a survey among Slovenian administrative units (AU). The survey was completed by the AUs' heads. The research aimed to identify the main factors and consequences of the AUs' operation during the (first wave) of the epidemic in spring 2020 in relation to citizens, companies, NGOs etc. as parties to administrative proceedings, as well as in internal relationships between the AUs and other administrative authorities, and between civil servants and individual AUs.

Data for the survey were collected by way of a questionnaire containing 21 substantive and 5 demographic questions in 6 sets that addressed various aspects of the operation of the AU, especially procedural, personnel (HRM) and economic/financial management, and an assessment of post-Covid-19 operations. Questions or claims mainly concerned the assessment of the heads' opinions regarding developments in their AUs during and after the Covid-19 epidemic in relation to normal operations. With the help of the MPA, all 58 AU heads were invited to complete the questionnaire. The online questionnaire was made available to AU heads via an open source application which provides an online survey service. All responses were processed anonymously and aggregated. The response rate, also supported by the MPA's coordination, ranged from 77% to 100% for individual questions, although all 58 units/heads cooperated at least partially. Mainly, the hypothesis of Covid-19 being a driver of digitalization in the framework of good public governance was addressed.

3. Research about Covid-19's Impact on Slovenian AUs – Main Results

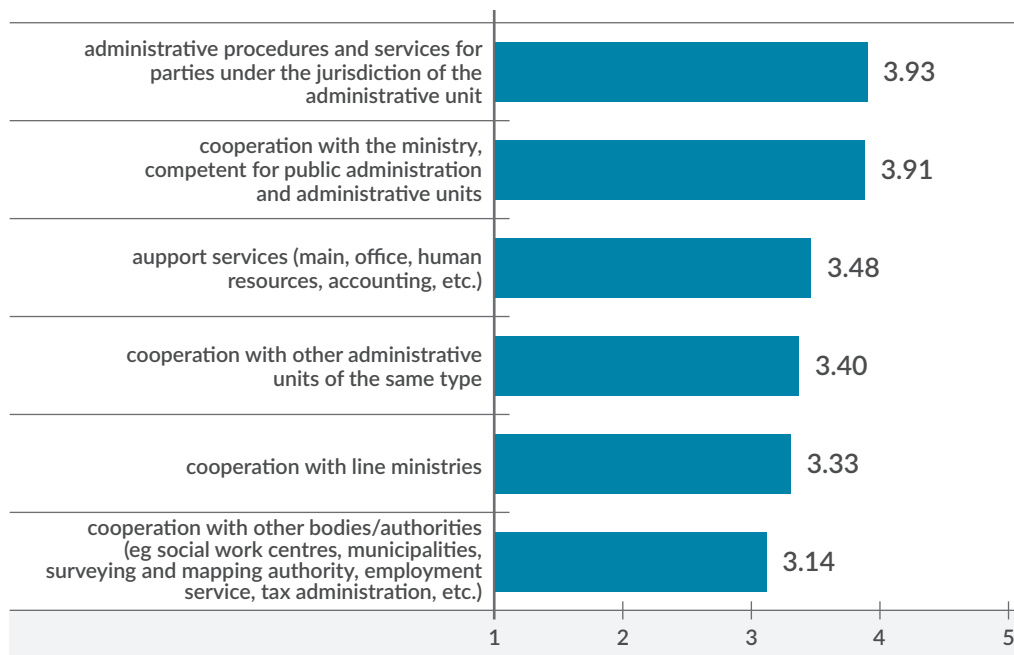
In general, compared to pre-pandemic operations, from March to June 2020 legislation, regulations and measures were adopted very quickly, and there were many of them, which together led to certain inconsistencies among individual sectors/ministries. Hence, in the future, more attention should be paid to inter-ministerial coordination with the AUs, even though the crisis has, in particular at the start, called for a rapid response, because vague or contradictory measures hamper the effective exercise of powers and increase the risk of unethical practices like delaying certain parties' rights and favouring individual interests. Yet, the simplified e-operations have proven to be particularly positive with the use of e-portals, e-mail communication, e-applications and e-services having grown considerably, without major or systemic problems, mostly due to the combined basis of: (i) somewhat developed digitalization before Covid-19; and (ii) adequate legal grounds. Namely, a special law on provisional measures for judicial, administrative and other public matters to cope with the spread of the infectious disease SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) was adopted temporarily (until June) to simplify the formal requirements of the otherwise applicable General Administrative Procedure Act.

Regarding the principles of good governance, accountability, responsiveness and efficiency prevailed, whereas the rule of law and participation were slightly more neglected. However, the balance between protecting public and private interests and the priority of the former has remained a key feature of the administrative procedures conducted by the AUs, although it must be emphasized that efficiency, for instance, cannot underpin a long-term approach at the expense of lawfulness.

As for the administration's procedures and services, the digitalization of work has risen significantly during the Covid-19 epidemic, both in relation to customers (see the Figure

1; especially the use of e-mail and e-portals, social networks and videoconferencing), and among various authorities and between civil servants within a single body (AU). At the same time, this has meant a greater burden on the AUs due to the need to verify possible abuses, albeit there have not (at the time of writing) been many. There are win-win benefits but also side-effects and limits to PA digitalization.

Figure 1
Level of digitalization in the AU in external and internal relations



Source: Public Administration Survey, 2020

The results below should be highlighted with respect to the administrative-procedural part:

- Due to the nature of needs arising in the crisis, the greatest interest, with around 100 administrative procedures in the jurisdiction of the AUs, was seen in the field of internal affairs, with pre/registration of residences standing out. There was also considerable interest in construction and agriculture, with problems also arising in the latter cases, most notably in proceedings with foreigners.
- In terms of individual procedural actions, both parties and officials had the most problems compared to the normal operations with deadlines (30%) and the convening of hearings and service (20% or more). On the other hand, there were almost no reports of problems with applications, obtaining data from other bodies, and issuing decisions or other acts.

These results allow the conclusion that future work on both legislation and its implementation must be more diversified by areas and institutes, and in any case must support digitalization with appropriate security assurances. However, these experiences offer a window of opportunity for permanent increased and simplified (as legally justified) digitalized operations.

The key research findings for the area of human resource and financial management are:

- During the Covid-19 epidemic, most officials were working in their usual workplace (41%), waiting for work at home (30%), had taken annual leave (22%) or were absent due to childcare (5%). Only a small proportion of employees were working at home, i.e. 6%. In the area of wages and staff transfers, the following measures stood out in terms of frequency during Covid-19: allowance for danger and special burdens,

reduction of wages and wage compensations, wage compensation due to the epidemic. There were fewer incidents of relocations, full-time work, and emergency employment.

- The heads most often noticed the following problems among civil servants: lack of formal and informal contacts with colleagues, stress due to changes during the transition to waiting or working at home and a fear of wage cuts, and the lowest stress of all due to a lack of work and fear of losing one's job. On the contrary, the heads most frequently identified the following challenges concerning their role: providing material and spatial conditions (protective measures etc.) and more difficult coordination of urgent tasks in the absence of staff. The least problems were related to the operation of information systems, with the heads even concluding that officials perceive as one of the most positive consequences of the Covid-19 epidemic the opportunity to digitize their work processes.
- The costs of AUs, that is, their operating expenditure, were generally lower, but only temporarily. Due to limits on the AUs' operations, a reduction of costs or operating expenditure was observed in all budget lines. In particular, there was a bigger decrease in costs of paid-in printed matter, investments and investment maintenance and other costs (e.g. sale of real property), while salary and material costs decreased the least. Among material costs, a significant rise was shown in the area of health and safety at work, security and cleaning/disinfecting of the premises.
- Naturally, the cost of civil servants' trainings and business travels was also reduced. Still, it has to be emphasized that in future these gaps will need to be bridged since training is a must for developing a learning organization and adapting to future changes, while cross-organizational and cross-border networking is essential for a harmonized approach to citizens on both national and EU levels.

In sum, it should be noted that the research results reveal many key changes or needs for them in the AUs' operations, which calls for further analysis, e.g. on differences among AUs by location and size, and gives a basis for future systemic measures of the MPA and other relevant institutions.

4. Policy Implications Based on the Lessons Learned and Prospects Expressed

Regarding the main results, Covid-19 has proven to be a driver of the more digitalized work of the public administration, with administrative units as the frontline vis-à-vis citizens in particular. Yet, digitalization cannot be seen as a tool in itself but a tool to stimulate the overall modernization and flexibility of administrative authorities in order to develop an agile and resilient administrative system as a whole.

There is a need for more digitalization in the external relations towards parties in procedures based on their demand. On the other hand, even greater digitalized cooperation could and should be ensured within public administration, not only top-down by the ministries to the AUs but horizontally among the various administrative bodies that are supposed to collaborate while solving a certain life-situation of an individual citizen or company. This requires a systemic approach, chiefly on the national scale, where Slovenia can also learn from best practices from abroad, especially in comparable EU member states like Austria.

Moreover, one should take into account the inevitable concern with planning and enforcing long-term measures, such as for digital transformation and the full realization of good governance principles, not only with ICT tools but while simultaneously combining legal, organizational, managerial and other dimensions. Here, national administrative traditions play an active role so any steps taken should be incremental rather than radical, and respect the (neo) Weberian culture as a characteristic of Slovenia, particularly in the public administration.

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PART 3

Covid-19 and its Impact on German Public Administrations

14/34



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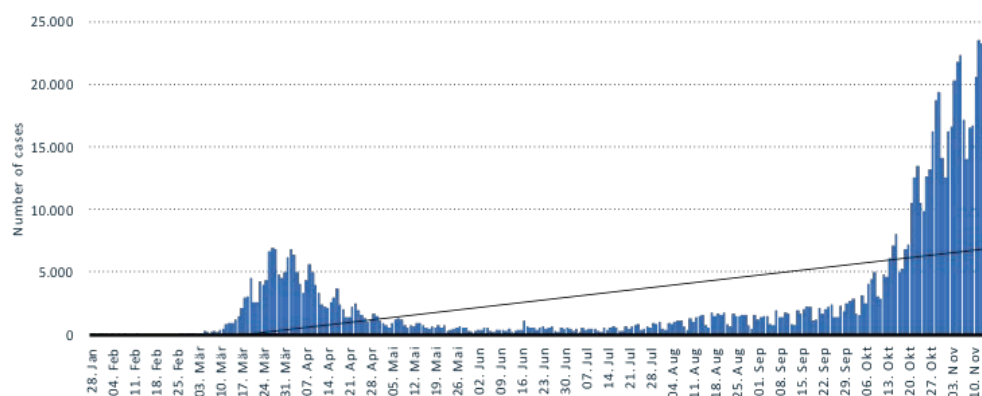
1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic may be considered to be the biggest international crisis since the Second World War (e.g. Merkel 2020; Van der Wal 2020). What started as a “global public health issue” (cf. Van der Wal 2020) has rapidly transformed into a crisis of dramatic dimensions. German governments on the federal and state levels are still trying to find the best way to effectively respond to ongoing events while still being overwhelmed by “competing expert assessments, key public value trade-offs, capacity constraints” (Van der Wal 2020, p. 759), and issues related to it being a federal republic.

It all started when Germany reported its first registered Covid-19 case at the end of January 2020. On 24 February, German health minister Jens Spahn declared that “[t]he situation in Italy also changes our assessment of the situation: Corona has arrived in Europe as an epidemic” (German Federal Ministry of Health 2020). It did not take too long for the first wave to hit Germany, in early March 2020. It lasted for about 8 weeks and resulted in the first lockdown, which had drastic effects for the economic and social development of Germany. Yet, Germany only declared Covid-19 a pandemic at the end of March (cf. Boukert et al. 2020).

During summer 2020, case numbers went down as life mostly happened outside. It seemed as if the pandemic was coming under control. However, numbers again started to increase dramatically as the weather got worse and autumn started. At the time of writing, Germany is considered to be in its second wave, with case numbers being higher than ever before (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Development of case numbers in Germany



Source: Statista, 2020

2. Economic and Social Development

Covid-19 has drastically impacted Germany's economic and social development. Since the first quarter of 2020, effects of the pandemic on Germany's economic performance have been visible. Although the country was not yet significantly affected by the spread of Covid-19 at the start of the year, from week 11/12 onwards the downturn was severe in many areas, with a temporary lockdown in place. The lockdown hit the economy quite hard as stay-at-home orders, temporary school and business closures, and cancellations of events and other activities were enforced. Only grocery stores and stores providing basic services were allowed to remain open. Germans started to hoard basic products such as toilet paper, flour and yeast, leading to shortages in these products. In the second quarter, economic output fell in Germany as Germans limited their expenditure. Still, GDP recovered in the third quarter (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Development of Germany's gross domestic product (price-adjusted in %)

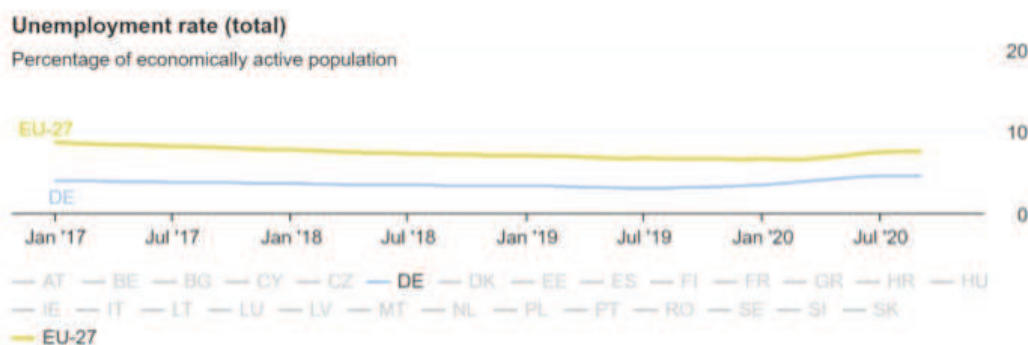


Source: German Federal Statistical Office, 2020a

The economic consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic pose enormous challenges for the labour market. The first effects of Covid-19 were seen in the German labour market, but the unemployment rate is still on a relatively low level (Figure 3). Governmental measures like the short-time work allowance contribute to the fact that the increase has so far been moderate.

Figure 3

Development of Germany's gross domestic product (price-adjusted in %)

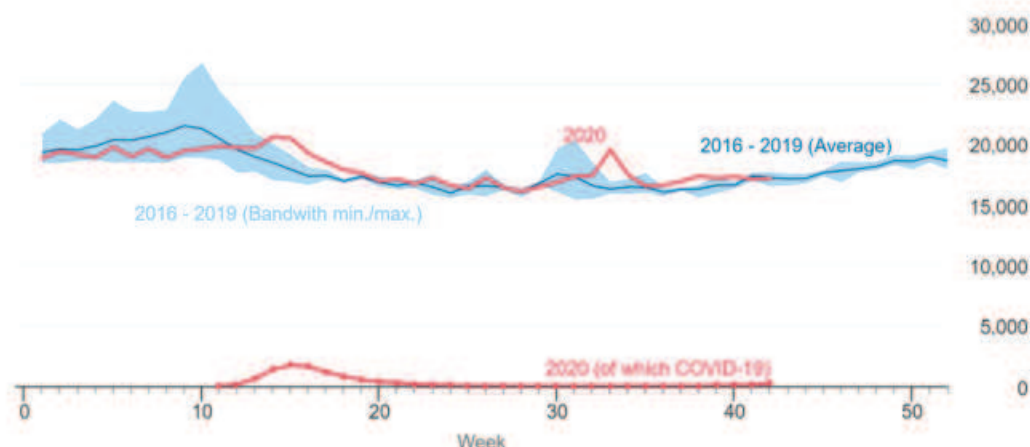


Some values are estimated.

Source: German Federal Statistical Office, 2020a

As it was then still unclear how to treat patients, the situation saw an increased number of deaths in the first wave (weeks 12 to 21, 2020). In the summer, the coronavirus death rate remained very low (with a rise in the number of weekly deaths in week 33 due to a heat wave). As case numbers started to grow again, the death rate increased as well. As at 27 November, a total of 15,160 deaths related to the virus had been reported. According to the Robert Koch Institute, the death rate has again risen. On 27 November 2020, the highest number of deaths in a 24-hour period (426 cases) since the start of the pandemic was reported (Figure 4).

Figure 4
Weekly death numbers in Germany



Source: Federal Statistical Office, 2020a

3. Measures Taken by the Governments

Germans have a history of managing floods (2003) and influenza (2009 and 2017–2018). Since 2013, operational emergency plans and risk analyses have been available for such events. However, in reality, these plans were not practised and not linked to any kind of risk management (Boukert et al. 2020).

Being a typical example of the continental/European federal system (Kuhlmann and Wollmann, 2013; Rosengart et al., 2018), Germany may be described as a classical “bureaucratic model with a strong emphasis on legality and proper function of the regulatory functions” (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017, p. 298; Rosengart et al., 2018). Three government levels have to be considered while debating on and implementing measures to respond to the pandemic – federal, state and county. In Germany, most competencies for responding are on the state and local levels. With regard to the measures imposed, the federal minister of health calls for compliance from the federal states. Moreover, Chancellor Angela Merkel is pushing for coordinated measures but is not in a position to impose measures on federal states. In each round of negotiations on new measures, the chancellor must find an agreement with the prime ministers of the 16 federal states. Each prime minister then takes the agreed-upon measures to their federal government to discuss whether they need to be adjusted concerning the constitution of the particular federal state. Districts (counties) are then responsible for implementing and controlling the measures.

As case numbers started to grow, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry of Health set up a crisis management team as provided for in the above-mentioned federal pandemic plan. After declaring the start of the first lockdown, the German federal parliament passed two bills, the “COVID19-Hospital Relief Act” and the “Act to protect the population in an epidemic situation of national importance”, which asked hospitals to leave beds empty to treat Covid-19 patients, for which they were given compensation.

As numbers decreased, the restrictions of the first lockdown were eased. Like other European countries, Germany introduced a “Corona-Warn-App” mid-year to improve the tracking of contacts. However, this mobile app has encountered several issues. As it is not legal binding, citizens can choose whether they wish to use the app.

Since autumn started, case numbers have started to increase again. Several districts have had to fight local outbreaks (e.g. Berchtesgadener Land). It was therefore decided that the districts must enforce certain measures when the incidence value rises above a certain threshold (e.g. 35 case numbers per 100,000 inhabitants). Yet, this did not lead to lower numbers and resulted in a second lockdown (‘lockdown light’), which commenced on 2 November 2020. The prime ministers and the chancellor decided to continue the lockdown on 25 November 2020.

As more measures were introduced starting in autumn 2020, people began to react to them more intensively. While in March 2020 people generally obeyed the rules and measures imposed, resistance emerged upon introduction of the second lockdown. There was growing concern about whether the Constitution was being respected and whether the constitutionally enshrined “basic rights” (Grundrechte) were being violated. This led to several lawsuits being commenced in federal and local courts, see certain measures being revoked. People also increasingly became organized in (new) social movements (e.g. Widerstand 2020). These movements mobilized against the Covid-19 directives so as to restore their constitutional rights of liberty (Boukert et al. 2020).

4. How Covid-19 Has Impacted the Work of Public Administrations

Implementing a lockdown and the associated measures means greater tasks and responsibilities for local administrations. Public administrations have to distribute financial aid for the local economy, enforce the compliance of citizens and businesses with the newly introduced rules and restrictions, and reorganize internal routines and procedures as services turn digital and employees start remote work. Thus, local administrations’ capacity to cope with Covid-19 is crucially relevant for the effectiveness of the overall national Covid-19 strategy.

In Germany, public health authorities (which belong to the counties) were provided with more personnel to cope with all the measures to combat the crisis (coordination of test centres, contact tracing). As case numbers rose, public health authorities struggled to keep up with the workflow. Support came from the German military and other public institutions that seconded their employees to work for the public health authorities.

Study Design

To study how the virus has impacted the work of public administrations, the authors joined international researchers to conduct a study called “The impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the efficiency of public administration: the case of general territorial administrative districts”. Data were collected in the summer of 2020 after the first wave was already over. The research aimed to identify the key factors and consequences of the operations of public administrations during the first wave in spring 2020 concerning stakeholders as parties to administrative proceedings, as well as in internal relations between the public administrations and other administrative authorities, and between civil servants in an individual public administration.

Data for the survey were collected by way of a questionnaire that addressed various aspects of the public administration’s operations, especially procedural, personnel, and economic/financial management, and an assessment of post-Covid-19 operations. The German version of the questionnaire was sent out to county councillors and mayors.

Study Results

Some of the study's findings are as follows:

- Public administrations struggled to provide all basic services as they ran out of resources like office space or hardware to permit their employees to work from home. Most public administrations reacted by implementing a two-shift system to keep the workflow up. Moreover, they implemented crisis management teams to enforce the measures and rules.
- The study results 1 (Figure 5) show that 40% to 60% of the average share of employees were only working in the workplace compared to normal operations. One reason is that the office space was smaller (27 cases) or significantly smaller (8 cases).

Figure 5

Study results 1 & 2 – Average share of employees working in the workplace and utilization of workspace



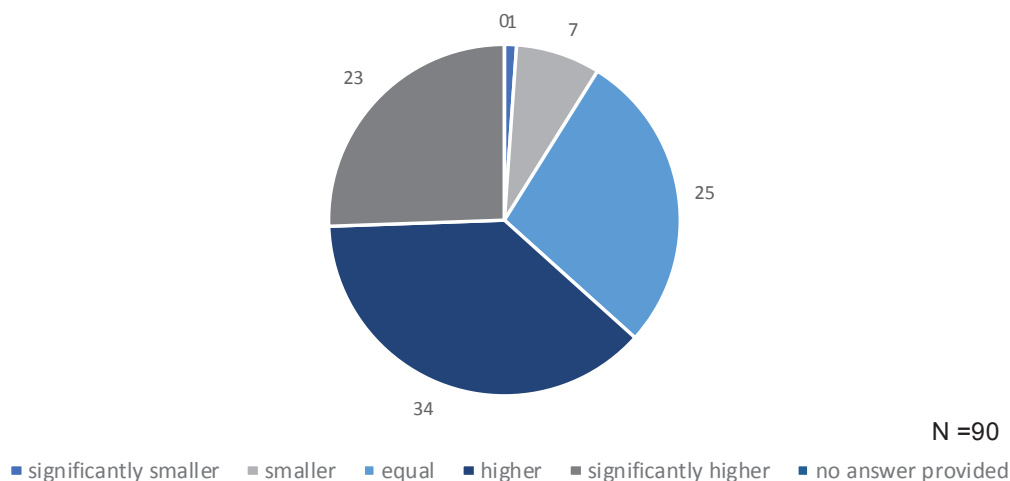
Source: Public Administration Survey, 2020

That public administrations struggled during the first wave is also shown by study results 3 and 4 (Figure 6). With public administrations having to follow urgent orders from ministries and the government, difficulties arose in coordinating these new tasks with the workforce (half the answers stated there was a significantly higher level of difficulties in the coordination of urgent tasks in the absence of staff) which was working in the office and the workforce working from home. Moreover, 23 cases (~ 25.5%) reported significantly higher and 34 cases (~37.7%) higher levels of inconsistencies by areas/municipalities.

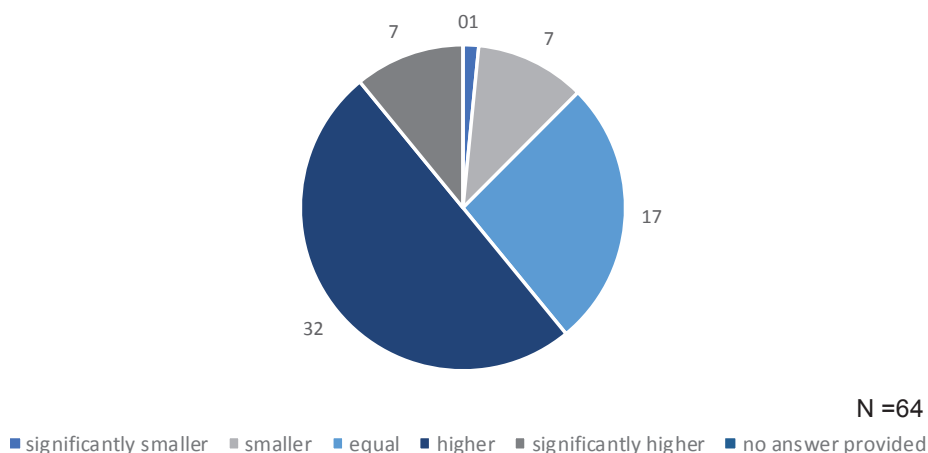
Figure 6

Study results 3 & 4 – Inconsistency by areas/ministries and difficulty of coordination of urgent tasks in the absence of staff

For the time of the epidemic, compared to normal operations, please do estimate the instructions (measures) defining the competences of the administrative unit - inconsistency by areas/ministries.



For the time of the epidemic, compared to normal operations, please do estimate the frequency of challenges/troubles, related to your role – as a head (manager) of the administrative unit: more difficult coordination of urgent tasks in the absence of staff



Source: Public Administration Survey, 2020

An example of how a federal agency responded to the pandemic is the Federal Work Agency. After the German government allowed short-time work compensation, the agency received 10 million applications during the first lockdown. This led to a shift of staff working on these applications from 600 employees to more than 10,000 employees. In total, 25,000 public servants of the Federal Work Agency were working from home as new remote work capacities were created. To control the KPIs of the agency, a daily controlling report to top management was introduced.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, like many other countries, Germany is struggling to fight the pandemic. As no one knows how the pandemic will evolve and when vaccinations will become actually available, public administrations and people generally will need to adjust.

Politicians and researchers have argued that a national strategy is required to fight the crisis. However, Bouckaert et al. (2020) summarize that nationwide solutions and uniform standards can only be achieved when all 16 federal states agree on horizontal self-coordination plus the vertical involvement of the federal level. Yet, some federal states stand out from others by implementing stricter measures. A nationwide solution seems far away.

The survey shows the pandemic has affected the work of Germany's public administrations. They are able to change their work routines if they have to. In the future, public administrations must accept that innovations like digitalization are unstoppable. The pandemic has acted the trigger required to overcome the final burdens to becoming more innovative and digital in the future.

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PART 4

Covid-19 and Public Sector Organizations – The Case of the Czech Republic

22/34



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1. Introduction

After the political changes in the Czech Republic (CR) in 1989, the public administration (PA) has lagged behind the development of the private sector and NGOs. This deterioration may be attributed to the insufficient commitment of Czech politicians to implement the necessary public service reform in line with the principles of good governance.

The PA reform put in effect since January 2003 primarily focused on the territorial structure. Aimed at decentralising the unitary state, it replaced the existing districts (76) with 205 municipalities with extended competence, which took over most of the state administration of the former district authorities. The remaining activities (about 20%) were allocated to the newly created regional self-governments representing new 14 regions. The aim of the central government, i.e. strategic, methodological and coordinating functions, has not been sufficiently met. A low level of both vertical and horizontal coordination and the 'silo mentality' in PA may be seen as the main weaknesses.

In the administrative culture, following the classical continental European culture, the legality principle and legal perspective have dominated the performance (efficiency) principle. According to Spacek and Nemec (2018), the rigid legalistic approach and a formalised direction of administrative activities still prevail. In this context, the existence of rigid codes of belief is widespread. This is confirmed by the Uncertainty Avoidance Index in Hofstede's assessment of national culture (Hofstede 2017). In principle, routine tasks can be executed quite well, yet reactions to unexpected situations, requiring out-of-box thinking and innovative approaches, can be quite difficult. This assumption was affirmed by a survey among Czech public officials conducted in 2018 which revealed the lowest ranking of innovativeness among the most important 14 values (Bohata 2019).

2. The Case of the Czech Republic

Despite promises made during the negotiations for EU membership, the Civil Service Act was only adopted in 2014 (10 years after the CR joined the EU) and entered into force in 2015. The enormous delay is not the only problem as significant compromises undermining the envisaged de-politization and professionalization of the civil service were made during the legislative procedure. Moreover, the government is making continuing efforts to further weaken the not fully independent and professional

character of the civil service, and to build it mainly on the loyalty principle. It must be stressed that the Civil Service Act does not cover the whole PA. Its self-governance is regulated by another legal act, thereby undermining the coherence between different government levels. Municipalities with extended competence executing both state administration and self-governance functions are most affected by this situation.

Consequently, the performance of the Czech PA has been relatively modest. Comparative studies elaborated by the OECD, as well as world competitiveness reports rank the CR in the last third of EU/OECD member states. Indices calculated for the EU-28 in 2017 rank the CR's public sector performance 21st and its government effectiveness 17th (Spacek and Nemec, 2018). We may thus argue in line with the findings of the empirical research that the weak PA has been limiting the country's growth potential.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further aggravated the low effectiveness and efficiency of the functioning of the state. At the beginning of 2020, the Czech government heavily underestimated the risk of the pandemic and did not take any preparatory measures. Only in March did it act quickly, declaring a state of emergency and introducing a lockdown. Yet, both the political leadership and the administrative apparatus were poorly prepared given the mentioned shortcomings in the systemic design of the PA and its practical functioning. To illustrate the situation, we can mention that – to the surprise of the government and public officials in charge – the law on emergency management adopted in 2000 only dealt with natural and industrial disasters, while in a completely new situation the influenza epidemic plan did not provide the necessary guidance. The first and most visible manifestation of these weaknesses was the short supply of disinfection liquids, face masks, and other health protection requisites even in hospitals, healthcare establishments, homes for senior citizens etc. The successful tackling of the pandemic's first wave should mainly be attributed to the following contributing factors:

1. The high personal commitment of many civil servants and other PA employees.
2. Exceptional civic solidarity (sewing face masks at home and distributing them for free) and civil society engagement (various forms of assistance to people in difficult circumstances).
3. The very fast mobilisation of scientific capacities of the whole academic sphere, including universities, offering laboratory equipment and also creative and innovative solutions in developing Covid-19 tests, as well as various protection requisites using nano and other modern technologies.
4. The population's very high level of discipline in respecting the anti-Covid measures, as well as patience in cases of their chaotic adoption and unclear communication by the government.

The assessment of the PA's functioning during the first wave of the pandemic provided below is inspired by two information sources, i.e. the views of independent experts and empirical data from the international survey conducted within the project "The impact of the Covid-19 epidemic on the efficiency of public administration: the case of general territorial administrative units". Surprisingly, while these sources have a different focus (central vs. territorial level) and a different perspective (threats to democracy vs. efficiency), to a great extent they converge.

The opinion of experts is summarized based on the Report on the PA in the first half of 2020 (Zaverečna zprava pracovní skupiny pro veřejnou správu (leden-cerven 2020)) prepared by the Network for Protection of Democracy, and an exchange of views among members of the PA expert group of this network (former senior PA officials, lawyers, academics, members of NGOs). The major issues can be introduced under several headings:

- Juridical mistakes (adoption of incorrect legislative measures that were later annulled by the Constitutional Court).
- Policy driven by populism and political marketing (decisions not based on evidence and expert advice). Lack of strategic management.
- Chaos (several emergency bodies established with unclear and/or overlapping responsibilities, some measures changed immediately after being announced, uncoordinated communication).
- Lack of coordination within the PA (horizontal and vertical) causing problems in the preparation of anti-pandemic measures and delays in their implementation.
- Inadequate expertise (due to insufficient professionalization of the civil service closely linked to inefficient de-politization).
- Insufficient digitalization of the PA.

The survey conducted among heads of municipalities holding extended competence in June 2020 comparing the situation at the time of the epidemic with normal operations confirmed the above-mentioned expert views in several respects. A scale of 1 to 5 was used with the following meaning: 1 - significantly smaller, 2 - smaller, 3 - equal, 4 - higher, 5 - significantly higher. The response rate was 25%.

The clarity (unambiguity) of the legislation, guidelines and instructions defining the competencies of the administrative units (AUs) in the CR is the lowest among all countries (2.75 compared to 2.95 in total). The speed of their adoption and enforcement (3.32) is the lowest among the EU member states included in the survey (CR, Germany, Poland, Romania, Slovenia). Germany leads with 4.59, followed by Slovenia with 4.12, the average for all countries being 3.68. On the other hand, the volume of legislation and other instructions is the second highest (4.08) after Germany (4.5) compared to 3.72 as the average for all countries. Only inconsistency by areas is lower than the total (2.75 compared to 2.99 and 3.75 for Germany – most likely paying this price for the volume and speed). As shown in Table 1, the biggest opportunities for unethical behaviour were identified in the CR.

Table 1
Opportunities for unethical behaviour

Ethical problems	Total	CR
Delay in proceedings without an explicit basis	2.88	3.45
Favouring the interests of individual parties	2.74	3.17
Abuse of power	2.74	3.41
Unjustified use of public funds	2.70	3.32
Bribes	2.48	3.07

Source: Public Administration Survey, 2020

On a positive side, the growing protection of the public interest in Czech PA proceedings compared to the private interests of parties should be highlighted. From this perspective, the CR is on top (3.85 compared to 3.52 and 3.62 for the total and average of other EU member states, respectively).

Regarding the principles of good governance, the Czech picture is mixed. On one hand, the rule of law grew in the CR more than in all countries in total. In an EU-28 comparative study (Spacek and Nemec, 2018), the rule of law in the CR was ranked 15th (in 2016), although the interpretation is not straightforward. For example, the low value for Germany may indicate that the situation in this respect has been very good and there has been no need to further strengthen the rule of law during the pandemic. On the other hand, the signalled decrease in accountability in the CR may be seen as worrying.

In the mentioned EU-28 comparative study (Spacek and Nemec, 2018), accountability in the CR was ranked 17th (in 2016). In Table 2, the Czech results are compared with the average of Germany, Poland, Romania and Slovenia.

Table 2
The principles of good governance

Principle	Average of other EU member states	CR
Rule of law	3.01	3.48
Efficiency	3.40	3.19
Responsiveness	3.59	3.32
Participation	2.82	2.77
Accountability	3.27	2.46

Source: Public Administration Survey, 2020

Regarding the degree of digitalization, the survey results very clearly demonstrate that the CR has been falling behind the other countries (Table 3). It takes either last position or shares this position with Slovenia. Only in the area of cooperation with the ministry responsible for the PA and AUs is Germany ranked last.

Table 3
The degree of digitalization in selected areas

Area	Total	Average of other EU member states	CR
Services in the jurisdiction of the AU	3.67	3.81	3.33
Support services	3.62	3.65	3.37
Cooperation with other AUs of the same type	3.58	3.62	3.43
Cooperation with other bodies	3.58	3.53	3.41
Cooperation with line ministries	3.56	3.56	3.30
Cooperation with the ministry responsible for the PA and AUs	3.51	3.62	3.48

Source: Public Administration Survey, 2020

Regarding the perception of the frequency of work-related challenges/troubles, in the CR a relatively high level of stress due to the inability to provide services to citizens was found, reaching 3.61 compared to 3.42 for all countries. A similar result was obtained for stress caused by the lack of information from state institutions, representing 3.81 and 3.43, respectively.

Estimating the employees' perceptions of positive consequences of the epidemic, the Czech respondents are the most sceptical in all respects, including digitalization. The opportunity to digitalize work processes faster and more efficiently is evaluated at 3.74 (the average reaching 3.8) and the opportunity to learn to use new tools at 3.71 (the average reaching 3.88). The differences are not substantial and quite likely can be attributed to the Czech mentality.

The aforementioned scepticism can also be observed while estimating the probability that changes will remain or be introduced after the pandemic (Table 4), which is reflected by the lowest values for the CR, in some cases again shared with Slovenia. The survey results indicate the leading role of Germany in accelerating digitalization.

Table 4
Likelihood of changes after the Covid-19 pandemic

Area	Total	Average of other EU member states	CR
Accelerated digitalization of processes	3.78	3.92	3.56
Greater use of web portals (e-government)	3.82	3.82	3.1
Accelerated use of digital communication channels with parties to the procedures	3.9	3.91	3.54
Accelerated use of digital communication channels among employees	3.83	3.8	3.53
Accelerated use of digital communication channels with other authorities	3.86	3.89	3.33
Teleworking (home office)	3.25	3.18	2.77
Reorganization of work	3.41	3.31	2.84

Source: Public Administration Survey, 2020

3. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has been dealt with a greater degree of populism and favouring the political interests of the leading party ANO over public health. Most likely, this irresponsible behaviour was motivated by elections for the regional governments and the Upper Chamber of the Parliament taking place in early October. The impact has been catastrophic and the CR has quickly moved on top of the list of countries regarding the number of Covid-19 positive-test cases per 100, 000 inhabitants and also with respect to the number of deaths. Trust in the government has consequently been undermined.

Building on the experience gained so far, lessons should be taken and appropriate policy recommendations formulated. Some hold the potential to bring quick results, while others require a longer-time horizon to be fully implemented:

- Improved access to information.
- Unified and clear communication of PA bodies.
- Improved coordination.
- Improved risk management embracing complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty.
- Enhanced transparency of governance.
- Effective and efficient digitalization of the PA.
- Diffusion of good practices from abroad.
- Enhanced independence of the civil service and increased professionalism of public servants.
- Extension of competencies of the Supreme Audit Office.

A big issue which may have huge impacts on the economy and society including a potential further weakening of the PA (due to a future shortage of resources) is the enormous growth of public debt. There is a lack of credible reasoning justifying such an increase and no strategy for how the debt is to be paid back has been developed. This is a political decision, yet insufficiently protected public officials are not willing/able to provide strong professional arguments for the debate.

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PART 5

Covid-19 and Public Sector Organizations – An Updated Insight into Turkey’s Pandemic Policy Implementation



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1. Introduction

In light of the experience of the H1N1 virus which emerged in 2009, the WHO-led European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control warned that every country should prepare national plans for influenza viruses that may arise. Member countries prepared their own pandemic struggle plans after considering this warning. Turkey is one of these countries (Ministry of Health – Turkey, 2019). For this reason, there is an important level of preparedness, especially at the point of combating the epidemic and preventing its spread. On the other hand, it is understood that no country and its administrators could have contemplated that the epidemic would cause such great damage. The economic, commercial, security, administrative and technological aspects of the pandemic were constantly discussed as other topics. Public administrations will also be one of the areas affected by this process, becoming an important problem for Turkey in the process of combating the epidemic (Babaoğlu, 2020a; Djalante et al., 2020, pp. 4-5).

2. COVID-19 and the Case of Turkey

Since 11 March 2020 when the first case was seen in Turkey, an incremental policy has been observed in terms of measures taken in line with statements of the Ministry of Health (HaberTürk, 11 March 2020). Accordingly, on 14 March 2020 it was announced that flights from abroad had been halted. The first coronavirus-related death in Turkey was on 18 March 2020; on the same day, the president held a coordination meeting on the fight against the coronavirus with the participation of the ministers. After this meeting, measures continued to increase (TUBA, 2020, p. 15).

After the first COVID-19 patient in Turkey was notified on 11 March 2020, nearly 20 million tests were performed in total and some 700,000 laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patients have since been reported in Turkey. The death rate of all laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patients was 2.70% (Ministry of Health – Turkey, 2020). Turkey has performed well in the fight against COVID-19 in this process. The Ministry of Health has managed a data-based policy process and data like which province, how long, and which group were processed using artificial intelligence algorithms. In this process, data visualizations and the creation of online maps are beneficial for controlling the pandemic.

From Turkey's point of view, it cannot be said that it was fully prepared for the outbreak. New and different measures have been needed in each period as this process became more challenging, but the adaptation phase to new measures was quickly circumvented thanks to the dynamic structure of the Turkish public administration. During this process, some problems were experienced, especially in terms of controlling, coordination and planning stages. Certain firms and individuals attempted to exploit the supply deficit in the first months in terms of disinfectants and masks, which are among the protective materials against the pandemic. They directed the market against the citizen for a while until the administrators intervened. In addition, adverse market conditions such as the black market and stockpiling were experienced (Acikgoz & Gunay, 2020).

This lack of preparation caused some problems during the initial period of the outbreak. Turkey made a very rapid breakthrough in the production of surgical masks, which has gained in importance during the pandemic and, in this process, it has distributed masks to many countries for free. On the other hand, for the masks planned to be distributed free of charge across the country a model was first tried through the national postal service, then requests were collected through an e-government portal, while in the final stage distribution was provided via pharmacies through codes sent to mobile phones. But, in this process, it was observed that some administrators had failed in the planning processes, and many failures were seen in the distribution of masks.

Apart from being the most important tool during the pandemic period, technology has become the most important area of policy production. In the process, innovations like artificial intelligence applications for disease diagnosis, data-based analysis applied to manage health policies, data mining applications, and intervention for quarantined patients through robotic technologies were rapidly implemented. Learning processes were able to continue with e-learning methods, people met their many needs through electronic commerce, social media was used for news flow, and leisure activities were largely met by Internet-based content providers. As a result, governments 'use of technology' has increased (Babaoğlu, 2020b).

Rapid developments in information and communication technologies over the last two decades have enabled innovations to emerge in many sectors. These developments have brought promising changes and transformations in the public sector. In this manner, governments deliver services in a more effective and efficient way. In times of crisis, it is very necessary to quickly identify problems and make related decisions. To this end, governments need to ensure the best level of integration of the public administration and digitalization in order to effectively combat the pandemic. In this framework, it is necessary to increase the number of public services offered online and to expand the content and functions of mobile applications related to COVID-19 (Yıldız & Uzun, 2020).

In Turkey, the use of technology in the public sector, which has accelerated since the 2000s, has come a long way in the last 20 years. The state makes significant investments in order to realize digital transformation processes. Here, the Digital Transformation Office, established under the presidency after the transformation of the last presidential system of government, plays an important role (Babaoğlu, 2020b). In the pandemic, it can be said that this unit plays an important role in both maintaining uninterrupted service delivery and providing new services faster and cheaper. Digital government efforts will increase further because of the compelling impact of pandemic-related processes. As in many countries like Turkey, this period has been experienced as a period of digitalization. For example, during this period, the number of services that can be offered through the Digital Government Portal, which is a one-way service module in Turkey, has grown by about 25% (Afyonluoğlu, 2020). The number of units of services has increased to over 5,000. In addition, remote

working systems have been established in many units of central management and service delivery and policy production has continued through digital access. On the other hand, there are differences between the central administration of ministries and the provincial organization in terms of digital possibilities. Hence, while the process of creating policies in the central sense is moving faster, problems have been encountered in some provincial units in the area of implementing the policy.

Lessons are taught using the distance education model in order to protect the health of teachers, academics and students during the pandemic process. Therefore, the need for Internet infrastructure and lesson access devices to ensure the smooth operation of the distance education system has increased (Ozer, 2020: 134). From this point of view, both Turkey and other EU countries need to develop their Internet infrastructure levels so as to ensure efficient distance education. Further, as a social policy, students with limited Internet access and computer facilities should be supported during the pandemic. Information and psychological support services related to the pandemic should be provided to students on the primary education level by adding them to the course curriculum. Institutional structuring should be established in relevant ministries, especially the ministry of education, in an effort to assure the more systematic organization of education policies to be applied throughout the pandemic. On the other hand, with the video conferences that the school administrations will organize with the parents of students on the primary and high school level, the existing problems of the students can be determined and policies implemented in this direction.

2. Recommendations for Policymakers on the Organizational, National and/or EU Level

It can be argued that policy transfer and learning are very essential and functional when evaluated within the framework of the public policymaking process. Best practices that have been implemented in other countries can be of benefit, especially in the formulation phase of the public policymaking process. In the process of combating the pandemic, it is possible to observe that cooperation and solidarity between countries have grown significantly. In this way, the pandemic policies of governments in various parts of the world have become more easily shaped thanks to such interaction. Several policy proposals can be presented to policymakers on the national (Turkey) and European Union level regarding various policies applied in the pandemic.

The measures taken due to the pandemic and the limits imposed on all parts of life negatively affect the economic situation of the citizens. Citizens experiencing economic problems have become unable to support those policies involving restrictions and prohibitions due to a pandemic that has not ended, even after several months. One of the most fundamental aspects of the successful implementation of public policies is gaining public support. Policies implemented without public support often result in policy failures. In the pandemic, there is a functional value to economically supporting the public to reduce the risk of such policy failure and implementing policies successfully. Therefore, an adequate level of economic support programmes should be ensured for citizens who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Through cooperation with countries' central banks and other financial institutions, initiatives must be increased and diversified to address the economic challenges encountered by citizens in the pandemic (Akbulak, 2020).

In the pandemic, conditions have undoubtedly become more challenging for the elderly and citizens with disabilities. Providing and supporting the various needs of these citizens may be considered as a reflection of the social state approach. It is highly essential to establish a special staff organization to meet the needs of disadvantaged

groups during the pandemic. In this fashion “Fidelity Social Support Groups”, as established in Turkey, could be formed in EU countries as well to meet the needs of the aforesaid citizens. By doing so, the needs of citizens who are adversely affected by the pandemic due to unfavourable health conditions can be met effectively and efficiently by the special teams established (Babaoğlu & Kulaç, 2020).

As in every public policy, policy actors are hugely important in policies to combat the pandemic. In fact, the contribution made by official, unofficial and international actors to policy stages directly affects policy success. It is functional to ensure the diversity of policy actors, particularly in the formulation and implementation stages of policies designed within the framework of combating COVID-19. At the stage of formulating policies, there should be more efficient policy formulation by including unofficial actors, especially think tanks, in the process. The reports, policy analyses and detailed research of think tanks have provided countries with fundamental advances in the pandemic, notably in terms of policy transfer and learning. Therefore, governments can be more successful in tackling the pandemic by cooperating with think tanks operating in different policy areas. Street-level bureaucrats are the main actors who implement the decisions taken as part of combating the pandemic. Street-level bureaucrats are involved in the policy fields in which they operate (such as education, health, security), both in the delivery of services and the audit processes of the measures taken. Street-level bureaucrats, who assume great responsibility and duties during the pandemic need to be supported by governments in an effort to increase their work efficiency. The mentioned policy recommendations offered based on various policy areas and actors can contribute positively to the policies of governments to combat the pandemic. More importantly, in this pandemic where millions of people have been directly affected, crisis management can be carried out from a broader perspective with cooperation between countries and policy actors.

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