



РЗИ Столична регионална здравна инспекция



**OECD EC PROJECT
"STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AFTER
COVID-19 WITH CAF"**

GOOD PRACTICE - CAF CRITERIA 3

SOFIA REGIONAL HEALTH INSPECTORATE

BULGARIA



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SOFIA REGIONAL HEALTH INSPECTORATE (SRHI) is a public body to the Ministry of Health

- SRHI's mission is to organize and implement **the public health policy in the Sofia city region**. SHRI is the busiest and largest health inspectorate in Bulgaria - it serves the inhabitants of the Sofia Region with administrative centre Sofia city – the capital of the Republic of Bulgaria (with a population of over two million)
- It implements different activities for public health protection by raising the level of health awareness of citizens and promoting responsible behavior towards health
- It carries out the state health control of public facilities, products, goods and activities of importance for human health and monitoring the factors of the living environment



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CAF IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

SHRI applied CAF in the period 2016-2018. It was awarded with the label “Effective CAF User” on 29 November 2018

On the basis of the analysis, conclusions and recommendations in the Self-Assessment a CAF Improvement Plan was developed, approved by SRHI’s director and carried out by the Inspectorate.

The Plan identified the following priority areas for improvement:

- Development of strategic management, stakeholder relations and public awareness about SRHI
- **Development of human resources management**
- Improving information and knowledge management



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IMPACT OF THE IMPLEMENTED MEASURES IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- **The dialogue between management and employees was improved and feedback provided by employees to the leadership was enhanced.**

For example, an anonymous survey was conducted on employee satisfaction with work in the Inspectorate; a box for employees' ideas and proposals was placed on the premises; a special folder was created on the internal server for suggestions from employees on how to improve performance; periodic meetings were held to promote teamwork (team-building).

- **The beneficial effect of the CAF application and the implementation of the Improvement Plan deepened during the crisis, which found direct expression through dialogue and the readiness and motivation of employees to manage high workloads during the pandemic.**



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The Impact of the Crisis on Human Resources Management (1)

Human resources management has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. The comprehensive approach towards the work and the distribution of tasks to employees and development of competencies have changed significantly, due to the workload and the new COVID responsibilities and functions of the Inspectorate.

Employee engagement during the crisis was extremely high (for example, there were cases where 7 500 citizens a day were to be surveyed, as soon as possible – and the time for such surveillance averaged 20 minutes). That is why, the Inspectorate had to adopt a new Work Schedule 24/7, during COVID-19 peaks. The Inspectorate tries to organise the schedule to allow for a balanced workload and to guarantee sufficient rest for staff.



STAFF WORKLOAD (RELATED ONLY TO PANDEMIC FUNCTIONS):

PANDEMIC-RELATED ACTIVITIES	2020	2021
LABORATORY TESTS	17 116 pieces	19 174 pieces
EPIDEMIC INVESTIGATIONS OF CONFIRMED COVID CASES	56 717 persons	118 901 persons
EPIDEMIC INVESTIGATIONS OF CLOSE CONTACTS TO A COVID-19 CASE	46 143 persons	65 487 persons
PRESCRIPTIONS ISSUED	134 576 pieces	230 576 pieces
PERSONS IMMUNIZED IN SRHI (at the start of the campaign on 27.12.2020)	119 persons	12 718 persons
DISTRIBUTED VACCINES/DOSES (AFTER THE STARTING OF THE CAMPAIGN)	715 pieces	1 045 143 pieces



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The Impact of the Crisis on Human Resources Management(2)

The leadership's key priority during the crisis was the **provision of good working conditions for all members of staff and of enhanced care for their health** (in order to carry out some pandemic activities, many employees were in front-line positions).

For this reason, the organisation provided them with personal protective equipment and organised disinfection of buildings, premises, offices; introduced remote work arrangements; provided employees (and not only citizens) with psychological assistance, aiming to overcome the fear of the virus; gave some financial and social benefits to support front-line workers (based on national decisions and earmarked resources from the Ministry of Health).



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1. During the crisis SRHI adopted the **innovative practice of redistributing the functions of employees and structural units to provide the necessary manpower for the activities related to the COVID-19 crisis** (in the light of the increased volume of the Inspectorate's workload and the insufficient number of staff – during the crisis the SRHI staff was not increased – the actual number of employees stayed at about 260 people).

The essence of the reorganization is that **the employees from all structural units of the Inspectorate are involved in the work on the COVID functions** - even the staff in the general administration or other, non-specialised units, were assigned uncharacteristic new activities in support of the COVID-19-related work.



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EXAMPLES OF THE RE-ORGANISATION OF THE WORK

The people from the general administration were included in some special COVID activities or were appointed to other departments for:

- conducting epidemiological investigations and entering information in the COVID-19 register;
- prescriptions service to confirmed COVID-19-infected persons and their contacts;
- some activities on border health control at Sofia Airport (on duty 8 or 12-hours)
- activities related to logistics, storage and distribution of PPE.

The staff of the Unit for control of public facilities were engaged in transporting inspectorate teams conducting epidemiological studies in old peoples' homes, care homes and refugee centres.

Two departments of specialised administration – Microbiology and Parasitology started working as a common structure with synergy between employees as one team.



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2. Unique Synergy and Interchangeability of the Staff (1)

The managers of the SHRI structures organised the work **on the principle of interchangeability of employees**, in order to ensure the continuity of all COVID-19-related activities.

In this respect SRHI successfully implemented the interchangeability approach not only within directorates but also **across the organisation**. For this purpose, during the crisis the Inspectorate conducted internal training for staff in all directorates for their preparation for COVID related functions. This allowed employees to acquire new knowledge and skills, to develop their digital literacy and to be ready for interchangeability.

Here are some specific **examples**: employees from the food safety laboratory were trained to carry out laboratory studies of the virus; employees tasked with inspecting public premises were trained to inspect health premises.



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2. Unique Synergy and Interchangeability of the Staff (2)

In terms of workforce management during the COVID-19 crisis the most impressive achievement is the level of resulting **synergy in the organisation**. This was manifested in the strengthening of teamwork, the preparedness of employees to work at their full potential under tremendous workloads and stress (for example at the most critical moments of the pandemic the Inspectorate was working 24/7 for nearly 8 months); in their professional conduct in fulfilling all that was required through complete collegiate support, taking on additional work and through sharing, co-ordination and inter-directorate assistance.

Special measures for motivation of the staff (in the light of the peoples justified fear of the virus): an open dialogue between senior management and employees regarding the COVID-19 functions of the Inspectorate, clarifying the specific tasks and risks, counselling, educating staff about the virus, additional insurance cover, benefits and financial assistance.



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3. New Practice of Volunteers' Involvement in SRHI

In view of the high workload of employees and the growing amount of COVID-19-related work, SRHI introduced a whole new practice – **the involvement of volunteers, an innovative step for Bulgarian public administration.**

In particular they were involved in a wider range of activities: including duties at Sofia Airport, epidemiological investigations, data entry into the national COVID-19 information system, support for the teams involved in testing and immunisation.

In view of improving motivation and participation of more volunteers a framework for recruitment and remuneration was established, the budget for which was provided by the Ministry of Health. A procedure for recruitment and selection was announced, necessary documentation was prepared and interviewing of prospective candidates took place.

N of volunteers: 2020: 47, 2021: 35, 2022: 45 (until 1 April)



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4. Development of New Staff Competencies and Skills

The crisis had a positive impact on the development of competencies, knowledge and skills of the staff – especially those skills which are important in dealing with such difficult situations. These include the ability to work under pressure with high workload and in stressful circumstances, the ability to work as part of a team, communication skills, skills for prioritising and organising tasks, and finding solutions to problems in day-to-day work.

Some of the staff skills have been developed to a new high level. For example, a very important characteristic for SRHI is the deepening team culture, created in the joint effort to carry out its functions during the pandemic.

During the crisis the Inspectorate provided training for all staff willing to develop their knowledge and skills – in connection with the redistribution of functions during the pandemic and due to the digitization of processes and services.



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CONCLUSION

SHARED LESSONS LEARNED

The role and responsibilities of senior management for mobilising all employees (especially during the crisis), were particularly important. The senior management team of the Inspectorate have led people by example, supported all employees and motivated them for active participation in fulfilling the mission and the COVID functions of the organisation.

The experience gained also proves the following key conclusion – the cohesion and synergy of SRHI staff was a major factor in the adaptability and the effectiveness of the organisation in a crisis. All the following contributed to staff commitment and support of SRHI's role in this severe crisis: the motivation and the dedication of all employees to the Inspectorate's mission and idea of public role (related to the fight against the pandemic); open dialogue; recognition of staff's contribution and the importance of their work for the entire organisation; improvement of teamwork; empowerment; provision of social benefits; care for staff health and working conditions.

The SRHI also underlined the importance of recruiting motivated and adaptable in the future (willing to accept additional tasks and increased workload during future crises).