Boosting resilience in public administration after COVID-19 - the role of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

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The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted systemic and societal weaknesses as if through a magnifying glass, making us aware that public sector organizations are often not resilient enough to respond adequately to shocks and stress scenarios. In terms of organizations, resilience has been described as an organization's ability to survive and prosper. The more adaptive, competitive, agile and robust an organization is, the better it rebounds from adversity and the more strengthened and resourceful it becomes. Although no universal blueprint of resilience applies equally to every organization, resilience requires strong leadership, human resources, partners and management systems that support the rapid ability to change and adapt.

With the aim of promoting the resilience of public sector organizations in the EU-Member States, the OECD, together with the KDZ - Centre for Public Administration Research, is implementing the project "Strengthening the Resilience of Public Administration after COVID-19 with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)", funded by the DG REFORM of the European Commission. The main objective is to gather evidence from organizations using the CAF and determine if and how it helped them better manage the COVID-19 crisis, become more resilient, and thus ensure long-term organizational health.

The CAF is the European Common Assessment Framework for better Quality in Public Administration. The CAF improves public sector organizations through self-assessment and contributes to Good Governance. With the CAF assessment questionnaire, employees and managers review their own organization and jointly define strengths and potentials for improvement. This self-assessment leads to continuous improvement that permanently develops the quality of the organization. The CAF model has nine criteria that define modern public management and good governance. These include the topics of leadership, personnel, partnerships, budget, knowledge, IT, processes, citizens and customers, social responsibility and key performance[1].

Eleven case studies have been conducted, each focusing on a specific CAF user organization. The CAF user organizations were selected on the recommendation of the European CAF correspondent network, with an emphasis on coverage of all levels of government and different sectors. The case studies have been developed between February and June 2022 with the help of local experts and researchers. The individual analyses will be complemented by so-called "deep-dive workshops" to discuss and consolidate the findings that will finally result in an overall study with recommendations for action to foster resilience in public administration.

Many of the organizations are long-term CAF Users whereas others just started to implement the CAF. Furthermore, all organizations set efforts in the past to implement quality management structures and related activities focusing on the different criteria described in CAF 2020.

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[1] More information about the European CAF network and users: www.caf-network.eu , www.caf-centre.eu

Table 1: Eleven CAF Cases

| Country	Organization	Government level	CAF implementation
Austria	Women's Service of the City of Vienna (MA 57)	local	2011, 2013, 2018, 2022 (currently completing the fourth time)
Belgium	National Office of Employment	state	2001, 2003, 2005, 2007 Changed to EFQM: 2009, 2014, 2016, 2019
Bulgaria	Sofia Regional Health Inspectorate (SRHI)	regional	2016-2018
Croatia	Croatian Pension Insurance Institute (HZMO)	state	Started 2020
Greece	Municipality of Thessaloniki	local	2010
Italy	Italian Space Agency (ASI)	state	2014, 2017, 2020
Poland	Lubuskie Voivodship Office (LUW)	regional	2009, 2011, 2013, 2016, 2019
Portugal	The Vouzela and Campia School Grouping (AGEVC)	regional	2008, partially completed 2011, 2015, 2016 & 2018 Effective CAF User, 2020-21
Slovakia	Ministry of Environment	state	2019, 2021 Effective CAF User
Slovenia	Agency for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development (AAMRD)	state	Started 2019
Spain	Madrid Salud	local	Since 2014 (2015 first CAF 500+ certification)

Source: KDZ, 2022

The following chapters provide first insights by showcasing challenges, innovative practices, lessons learned and the role of CAF for resilience based on the eleven CAF user organizations analyzed.

1 Challenged by the unpredictable

Although the individual cases are characterized by great heterogeneity, six key challenges have been identified that the organizations had to deal with due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Figure 1: The challenges of Covid19 for public administration
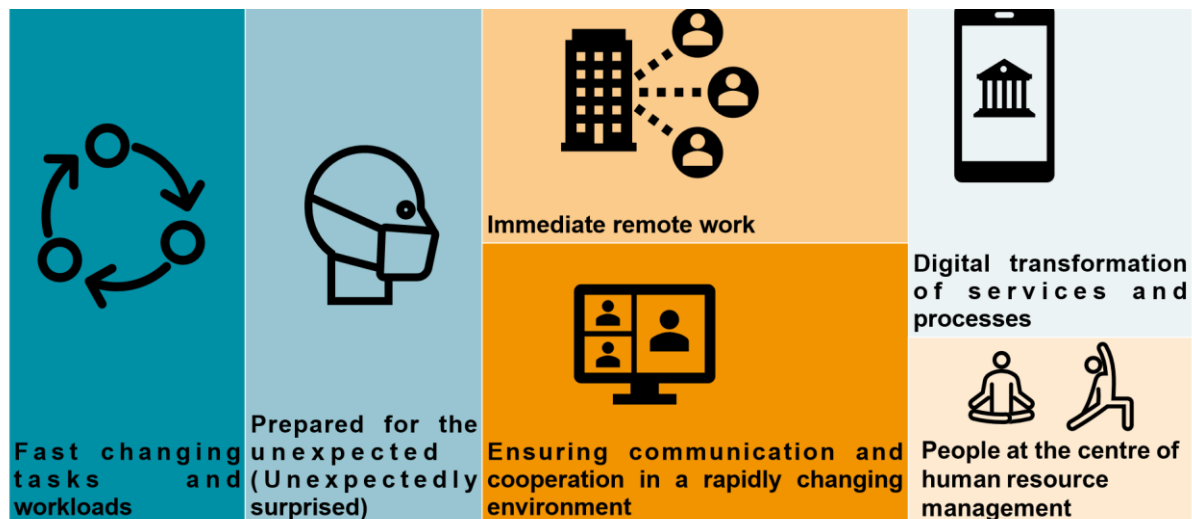
Source: KDZ

1.1 Fast changing tasks and workloads

The pandemic not only stopped the way people worked together but also their tasks and workload. Some organizations (especially in the health sector) faced a sharp increase in their daily tasks. The increased workload had to be distributed among existing staff, as hiring new staff was another challenge, especially in the early days of the pandemic outbreak. The disruption of established routines was reported, for example, in the Department of Women's services of the City of Vienna, Austria. Functioning routines and work practices (e.g. personal counselling for women) were no longer possible, but the demand for support increased. In Bulgaria, staff faced increased workloads due to COVID-19 testing and vaccination. This also required changes in their workflows. The Sofia Regional Health Inspectorate (SRHI) provided 24-hour coordination between the emergency centre, hospitals and treatment centres to ensure the timely assignment of beds for patients requiring treatment.

1.2 Immediate remote work

Almost all organizations had not previously implemented remote work policies. This brought up several challenges, especially when services were provided in person, such as monitoring visits to farmers in the case of the Agency for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development of the Republic of Slovenia (AAMRD). Priority was given to the transition to remote operations to minimize disruption to services. New processes had to be created and appropriate documentation produced, e.g. in the Portuguese Vouzela and Campia School Grouping (AGEVC), a COVID-19 prevention and response plan. One of the biggest challenges was managing the processes remotely with inadequate hardware and software solutions, which also meant a lack of secure access to the relevant databases. For public organizations, in particular, the absence of legal regulations for the new situations presented major challenges that had to be solved first.

1.3   Prepared for the unexpected

Public entities are characterized by long public procurement processes which are necessary to guarantee transparency, efficiency and legality. In the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute (HZMO), access to hardware and protective masks was limited at the beginning due to both the lockdowns and the high demand, which slowed down the processes This problem was even more urgent since no financial resources had been planned for it, so the lack thereof was clearly noticeable. The purchase of protective masks, for example, and the determination of other guidelines had to be executed under great pressure for the leadership. The decision-making process and the time pressure under which these decisions were made have been reported by the Lubuskie Voivodship Office (LUW) in Poland. The Italian Space Agency (ASI) faced delays in achieving planned objectives and had to adjust its planning accordingly, and initiatives of strategic importance (e.g. agreements, research contracts, industrial contracts) had to be postponed because of the temporary closure of several industrial facilities.

1.4   Ensuring communication and cooperation in a rapidly changing environment

The Portuguese government ensured that the COVID-19 measures were coordinated with Vouzela's Town Hall and the nine Parish Councils in the municipality of Vouzela to minimize crisis management failures. Restrictions in the operations of partner organizations, particularly in the payment of pensions by the Croatian Post and commercial banks, posed an obstacle for the Pension Insurance Institute in Croatia. For ASI, the impact was especially noticeable on the supply chain sustainability, as several disruptions in logistics led to an average delay of 1 to 2 months in Italian space programs. For the Municipality of Thessaloniki, it was difficult to switch to a different mechanism of communication with the other levels of government and business partners.

1.5   Digital transformation of services and processes

One of the biggest challenges in the public sector was to ensure adequate controlling systems for newly developed services to prevent fraud and abuse. Also offering telephone and online services on a large scale, as well as adapting and changing internal processes and structures have proven difficult. An example for that was the Vienna Department of Women's Affairs which had to convert almost all services to online formats and had to build up the competences for this largely on the job. The existing information and counselling formats could not simply be transferred to the digital world either, but had to be redesigned. Frequent lockdowns and the recommendations to work remotely also forced the National Office of Employment of Belgium (NEO) to move very quickly in the digital arena by replacing regular physical consultation platforms with forms of remote dialogue. By comparison, before the crisis, only 15 per cent of the employees were already working regularly from home one day a week. However, this had an impact on the process of "Indemnification". Before the NEO decides whether the unemployed person is or was reimbursable, the person is given the opportunity to present the individual arguments, in accordance with the regulations in force. This procedure could not be maintained during the crisis because of mandatory instructions or restrictive measures to avoid non-essential travel or personal contact.

### 1.6 People at the centre of human resource management (HRM)

One of the key challenges in all organizations was to ensure staff solidarity and flexibility within the organization. The lack of interpersonal contact due to lockdowns and remote working could have jeopardized both the smooth running of internal processes and coordination in customer contact and services. But also the recruitment procedures and the induction of new staff had to be adapted to the new circumstances.

2 Necessities drive innovation

A crisis cannot be glossed over. Nevertheless, the innovative practices that emerged during the crisis in the organizations are remarkable. Many organizations had to change routines and learn new tasks, and leadership had to adapt drastically to the new environment.

The innovations of the eleven cases can be summarized in six thematic core areas.

Figure 2: The innovations of public administration due to Covid19
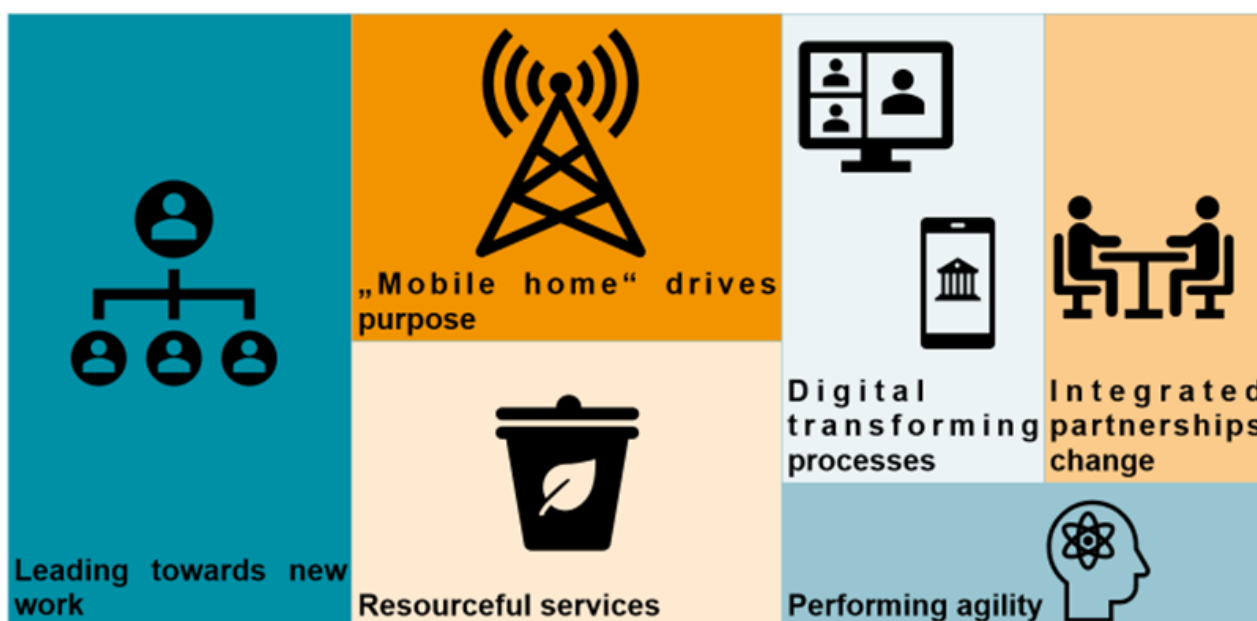
Source: KDZ

2.1 Leading towards new work

The workforce in public sector organizations had to transition quickly to new working conditions. Collaborating online with new tools as well as managing a workforce from a distance. The transition to this new working environment challenged not only the private sector but also the public sector. Services which have been necessary for citizens had to be continued without major interruptions.

The Women's Service of the City of Vienna (MA 57) explained in two examples how new formats arise when familiar infrastructure collapses. The Hotline service saw a massive increase in calls in 2020 due to the lockdowns and the impossibility of face-to-face consultations. Not only was the increase in calls due to the lockdown, but also because of the difficult situation, women and families found themselves in. Custody, separation, and divorce posed an even greater challenge and initial psychological counselling became more important than ever. This fast adaption was only possible thanks to the expertise and experience of the teams both internally and externally in cooperation with partners. The lockdown faced leadership with the challenge that their workforce suddenly is not "tangible" anymore. In the MA57 the concerns about that subsided relatively quickly because a time-recording program contributes to transparency. It records the time and activities of the employees. Requests must be done in this system and the manager of the division has to approve the requests including the activities to be completed since remote working had not yet been introduced in the City of Vienna. Also, ad hoc calls between colleagues and leadership were gradually replaced by regular meetings and jour fixes which contributed to trust within the team. Moreover, there were support offers from the city in place for employees who were overwhelmed with the situation, and existing videos and online seminars on ergonomics or fitness were a very good extension during the pandemic as a support system for employees.

2.2 "Mobile home" drives purpose

Teleworking working has become a trend in recent years, especially in the private sector. The COVID-19 crisis has created a sudden need for all sectors to start or increase working from home. Furthermore, the crisis revealed the importance and value of public services for society. The purpose and impact of their work became more visible than ever and this was encouraging the employees.

In the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute (HZMO) the COVID-19 pandemic required the creation of remote working conditions for approximately 1.000 employees in a limited period of a few days. Hence, the role of the HZMO's Sector for Informatics was crucial. Within two to three days the situation was normalized thanks to the IT department and effective communication among employees. Most of the employees were pleasantly surprised by the way remote work was performed in terms of access and speed of application, especially considering that they previously had doubts about the successful implementation of such an operation.

The National Employment Office in Belgium (NEO) shows how the COVID-19 crisis led to more solidarity between the employees and the organization as a whole. This meant that tasks were taken over by employees in self-organization, either to relieve others or because customer inquiries were increasing. The reason for this solidarity, flexibility and self-organization can be found in the fact that COVID-19 has brought the importance of many public services, public administration and also public and civil servants to the fore. The purpose, impact and public value of the employees' own work became visible and had a motivating, inspiring and team-building effect for many.

2.3   Digital transforming processes

Switching to home office or remote working is only one side of the story, but this also implies the complete transformation of existing processes. Organizations had to rethink their current processes and either make arrangements for intermediate solutions or marking the start of the pandemic as a starting point in changing their approach to digital processes.

The Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic changed its internal and external communication via a "Moss Board" and "Green Line". Ensuring internal and external communication is essential for the functioning of organizations. In the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, the pandemic affected all types of communication. Gradually, the MS Teams platform became the only source of contact between the employees in the Ministry. Since there was an increase in internal and external communication, several new communication channels were established. For internal communication, the Ministry created the "Moss board", for external communication, the "Green Line" was introduced. The "Moss board" is used for receiving announcements, brief surveys, or messages within the Ministry. This helped to uphold the information flow and strengthen the relationship between employees. The "Green Line" on the other hand was implemented to strengthen the relationship with the citizens and to raise awareness of environmental protection since it is also used to report environmental complaints that are directly forwarded to the public administration body.

The pandemic accelerated the digitalisation process in the Italian Space Agency since their goal was full dematerialisation. The CAF helped to highlight unstructured processes, which initiated a process of analysis and revision. This dematerialisation effort was started with the IT platform "Office Automation". The lockdown brought a sharp acceleration in the implementation of these efforts. To standardise the IT support services a new unit was established, namely the Digitalisation and Processes Unit (Digitalizzazione e Processi) which is responsible for the processes and procedures. This also initiated a process to promote Office Automation in other research units to further internal development due to standardised processes that allow information to be shared in a standardised way.

2.4   Resourceful Services

The pandemic also helped introduce services that did not exist prior. Especially for public sector organizations developing new services during this time was extremely challenging since most of their services had to continue. These led to innovations and new approaches, especially for online services.

The municipality of Thessaloniki in Greece established services to continue supporting vulnerable groups despite the restrictions in place. The departments responsible for vulnerable groups were prioritised in ensuring their operations. To name a few, the municipality, in collaboration with Doctors of the World, introduced tele-medicine interventions, psychological support in the form of tele-education and support for pregnant women via Skype. Furthermore, a psychological support line was established to deal with the emotional consequences of the pandemic. The soup kitchen continued its distributions at set times and outside the building to minimise infection risk. For people who could not pick up their meals, the "Help at Home" initiative for home delivery was

established. The department responsible for migrants and refugees provided information about the latest developments in the pandemic via mail in their respective native languages to ensure adequate assistance for this group.

To ensure the quality of remote work the Agency for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development of Slovenia (AAMRD) implemented a reporting system for monitoring employees' tasks. The leaders needed to prepare detailed orders with specific job descriptions, e.g. not just examine the application or request, but specify the application or request for working from home and review employees' reports. According to the instructions, employees had to prepare daily and weekly reports on tasks they had done at home, which were approved by their superiors. It turned out that, for leaders who made accurate orders and invested sufficient time in the preparation of the orders, the results improved. They were even better when the leaders had good communication with the employees since the decisions were made quickly. Moreover, remote work made the employees happier, in particular those with childcare responsibilities, as they were able to balance work and home life more easily.

2.5   Integrated partnerships change

Partnerships have emerged as an outstanding factor in quickly adapting and managing the crisis. Organizations that were able to fall back on long-standing partnerships (e.g. IT companies or external service providers) that were already integrated into the existing processes were particularly successful.

The Sofia Regional Health Inspectorate (SRHI) went a step further and integrated volunteers into their service delivery. Due to the high workload of employees and the growing amount of COVID-19-related work, SRHI involved volunteers for the first time. In the beginning, the volunteers were allocated to help in basic activities; for example, working as team drivers for SRHI (either with private or SRHI vehicles). With the spread of the pandemic, 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, and support for the teams involved in testing and immunization. To improve motivation and encourage the participation of more volunteers, a framework for recruitment and remuneration has been established.

The AGEVC (The Agrupamento Escolar de Vouzela e Campia in Portugal) established solid relationships not only with staff and students in the schools but also with the educational community. The member of the school grouping recognised very early on that effective partnerships are key that their communities becoming more resilient. Changing the teaching model to distance learning required an effective communication network between teachers, parents, class leaders and students. Faced with these new challenges a unique model of weekly assignments was introduced, that made it easier for the students to perform the tasks at home and on time. In the first weeks of the pandemic partnerships and protocols to be open to the community and explore new learning opportunities for students have been established. It resulted in greater inclusion and appreciation of the school in the community. These partnerships resulted in an Education Parents' Day, the Professions Fair, delivering of baskets to families in need and many more.

2.6 Performing agility

Good performance in a crisis requires agility, and rapid and adaptive action. The organizations examined have demonstrated agility in different ways and have faced new challenges quickly and innovatively.

The National Employment Office in Belgium (NEO) works with an integrated management model and a dashboard to monitor the implementation of the strategy and services. The dashboard is based on the current strategic objectives between 2022 – 2024 and provides over 500 indicators. The information is available to everyone in the organization except for figures where personal data is collected. During the crisis, the usage of the dashboard got a significant role. The Central Management Committee used it on a daily basis and could react quickly to the changing needs. This was done through daily video conference calls instead of face-to-face meetings twice a month. Based on the monitoring the Internal Control and Process Management Department made adjustments, determined priorities and examined where people could jump in so as to support their colleagues. The dashboard was an enabler for the agility of the organization, the leadership and the employees and allowed a fast adaption of services and work plans.

The Lubuskie Voidship Office (LUW) in Poland proved agility in being open to new forms of contact with citizens. When the office was closed, innovative solutions had to be introduced quickly, so that citizens would not feel cut off from access to administration, and to reduce a sense of loneliness in the difficult situation of crisis and lockdown. LUW officials had a sense of mission and responsibility for the public good and several innovations were implemented to ensure citizens' contact with LUW. First of all, telephone calls were redirected from the office to the private telephones of officials who worked in the home office. Thanks to the immediately implemented system of call forwarding, LUW was available to citizens at all times. Another innovation concerned the introduction of a system for citizens to arrange visits to the office. They had an appointed time of admission, the official waited for them at the door to the office and accepted the documents. To facilitate the electronic signature at the entrance of LUW a computer was positioned in such a way that they could use it to obtain an electronic signature. An employee of LUW was helping them.

3 The impact of CAF on resilience

When one tries to embed the challenges and innovations in the framework of the CAF, an interesting picture emerges. As the following graphic shows, the challenges and innovations identified in the case studies can be assigned to the CAF enablers. This is an indication that relevant measures to strengthen organizational resilience are being developed during CAF implementations and that the CAF has an impact on strengthening resilience.

Figure 3: Innovations and Challenges in the CAF model

Source: KDZ

The CAF Resilience Index

All observed organizations have provided an assessment based on their perception of how and to what extent the CAF contributed to the organization's resilience during the COVID-19 crisis. Based on the following resilience criteria the impact of CAF has been measured[2]:
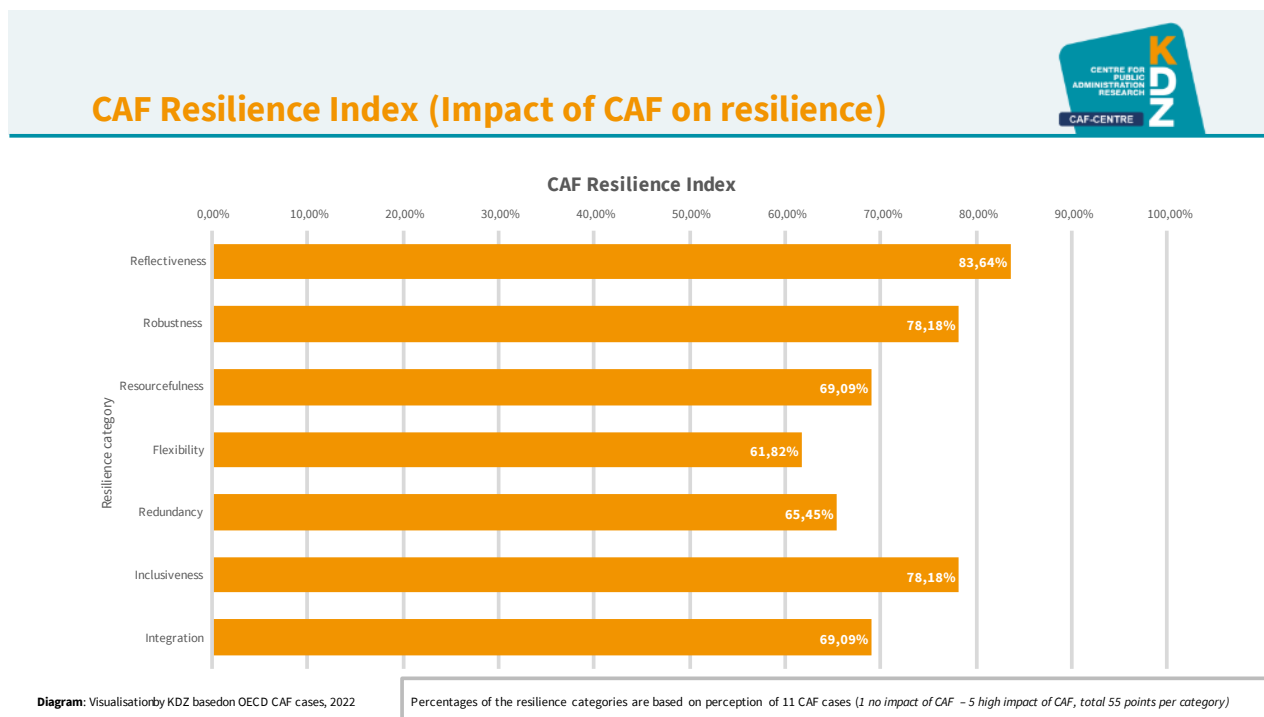
- ability to learn (reflective)
- limiting the spread of failure (robust)
- has backup capacity (redundant)
- can easily repurpose resources (resourceful)
- has alternative strategies (flexible)
- includes broad consultation and communication (inclusive)and
- has systems working together (integrated)

The following figure shows that the strongest impact of CAF has been observed in the categories *Reflectiveness*, *Robustness* and *Inclusiveness*. Accordingly, the CAF has a particular impact on those categories of resilience in which communication, team orientation, respect, error culture, openness and inclusion are important. These are all related to the process of CAF

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[2] The resilience categories were originally developed by the Rockefeller Foundation for cities and are also applied by the OECD (Rockefeller Foundation & ARUP, 2014, p. 5, 2015).

implementation.[3] The specifics of the CAF process mean that learning, empowerment and involvement of internal and external stakeholders become second nature which fosters resilience.

Figure 4: Resilience Index Overview

CAF Resilience Index (Impact of CAF on resilience)

CAF Resilience Index

Resilience category	Value
Reflectiveness	83,64%
Robustness	78,18%
Resourcefulness	69,09%
Flexibility	61,82%
Redundancy	65,45%
Inclusiveness	78,18%
Integration	69,09%

Diagram: Visualisation by KDZ based on OECD CAF cases, 2022

Percentages of the resilience categories are based on perception of 11 CAF cases (*1 no impact of CAF – 5 high impact of CAF, total 55 points per category*)
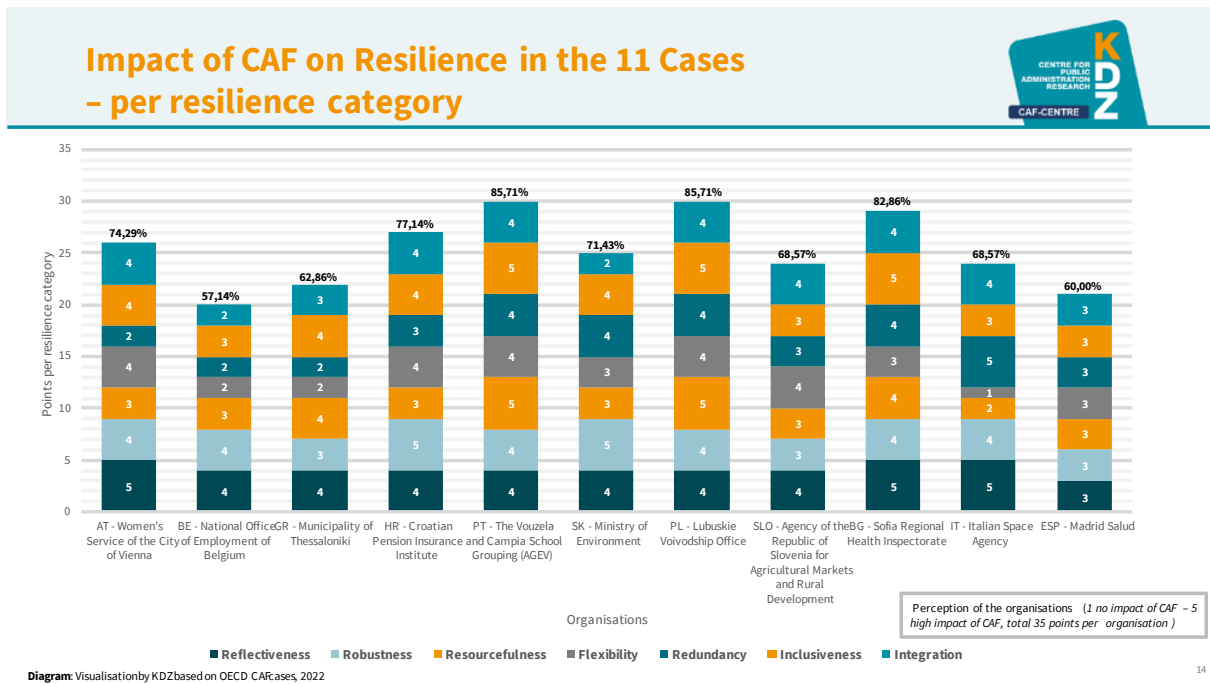
Source: KDZ

The evaluation of the resilience categories according to the individual organizations displays an interesting picture. Those organizations that have used the CAF more than once and for a longer period show that the CAF has a higher impact on resilience than the other organizations. For CAF power users, CAF use leads to more resilience.

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[3] This finding also supports the results of the study "Impact of CAF on Human Resource Management and People" conducted under the Slovenian Presidency in 2021 where CAF was proven to have a high impact in related items like "internal communication", "teamwork", "feedback culture etc.

Figure 5: Resilience Index per Organization

Impact of CAF on Resilience in the 11 Cases – per resilience category

Perception of the organisations (*1 no impact of CAF – 5 high impact of CAF, total 35 points per organisation*)

Legend: ■ Reflectiveness ■ Robustness ■ Resourcefulness ■ Flexibility ■ Redundancy ■ Inclusiveness ■ Integration

Diagram: Visualisation by KDZ based on OECD CAF cases, 2022

Source: KDZ

4   Lessons learned

The systematic examination of the challenges and innovations of the organizations in connection with COVID-19 allows the following conclusions and lessons learned: Those are important for the future development of public sector organizations and especially the strengthening of resilience and adaptability for future crises.

- CAF strengthens the resilience of public sector organizations as well as their agility. The CAF methodology and implementation process have significant impacts on the improvement of communication, competence, team orientation, respect, error culture, openness and inclusion, self-organization and participatory leadership. The improvements in these areas are highly relevant for strong organizational resilience.

- Mindful and participatory leadership sets the ground for resilience – A culture of openness, trust, dialogue and teamwork enables self-organization and sparks innovation and responsibility within an organization.

- Focusing on the employees – Appreciating their flexibility, solidarity and self-organization in terms of workloads and tasks was very important. On the other hand, making sure that their well-being stands at the centre of the organization.

- Partners are treasures – Well-functioning long-term partnerships and collaborations inside and outside the organization are an asset and strengthen resilience. The case studies have clearly shown that organizations with long-term and well-integrated partnerships (e.g. IT providers, Universities) performed better during the crisis.

- Digitalization was the biggest helper in overcoming the pandemic – It is important to acknowledge that the provision of several public utilities and services highly depended on new digital support tools and digitalization in general. Many of the new or adapted services would not have been maintained without these innovations.

- Flexible teleworking is effective and efficient – One more important factor was definitely flexible teleworking which proved to be effective and efficient. This rapid "trial phase" and experiences gained for working remotely and being more flexible should be included in new-work strategies and their implementation.

- Existing process management is an enabler for quickly adapting services – Organizations with established process management handle the adaption of processes to new services and circumstances faster.

- Monitoring and controlling are important – Monitoring and controlling suffer during a crisis. The need for fast reaction and quick development of new or adapted services often does not allow proper monitoring and controlling of how this would be used in "normal" times. Nevertheless, the case studies have revealed the importance of controlling and monitoring to ensure the lawful performance of services and the use of public funds.

- New decision-making formats have been developed immediately and should be continued – Useful innovations which help organizations after the pandemic are the new decision-making formats that evolved relatively quickly and should be maintained e.g. working groups, task forces, transversal boards, etc.

- Crisis- and risk-management plans have proven their effectiveness – Organizations with existing crisis- and risk-management plans adapted faster to the pandemic situation. This was mainly connected to existing organizational structures, crisis responsibilities, committees, and preparations.

- Lack of strategic foresight planning and thinking – More strategic foresight thinking is needed to prepare for the unexpected. In this regard, the case studies have shown the dependence on central government guidance and the need for cooperation with overarching governmental levels.

All the CAF cases show that the long-term use of CAF, anchoring-related structures and a culture of continuous improvement in the organization supports the responsiveness to crisis and resilience of public sector organizations. It has been carved out that digitalization has a "super-power" in transforming public organizations but more is needed: A Leadership culture which is built on trust, dialogue, intrapreneurship, responsibility and self-organization and thus enables new ways of collaboration "across organizational borders" and drives towards an agile footprint of public administrations. This will boost innovations in public sector organizations to build the necessary capacities for managing uncertainties, strengthen foresight capacities, be prepared, and find quick and powerful solutions for mastering future crises.

Attachment: The Eleven Public Sector Organizations

Women's Service of the City of Vienna (MA 57), Austria

The Vienna Department of Women's Affairs (MA 57) is providing information and is a central contact point for the female population of Vienna as well as the female employees of the city of Vienna. Their main focus areas are equal rights, protecting women and children against violence, and ending gender-based violence and sexism in all its forms. The department implemented the CAF three times since 2011 and is currently implementing it for the fourth time.

National Office of Employment of Belgium (NEO)

The NEO manages the system of unemployment insurance in Belgium and is also responsible for the career break system. It has 16 entities throughout the country and is managed by a joint management committee. The NEO implemented the CAF from 2001 to 2007 a total of four times and switched to EFQM from 2009 until 2019.

Sofia Regional Health Inspectorate (SRHI), Bulgaria

The SRHI is the biggest regional health inspectorate for the inhabitants of the Sofia Region in Bulgaria. It is a subordinated unit of the Ministry of Health. The SRHI implemented the CAF between 2016 and 2018 for the first time.

Croatian Pension Insurance Institute (HZMO)

The Croatian Pension Insurance Institute was established to ensure an insurance system based on intergenerational solidarity. The goals are set in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, and Family and Social Policy. Their goal is to implement "pay-as-you-go" pension insurance.

Municipality of Thessaloniki, Greece

The Municipality of Thessaloniki is located in the Central Macedonia region and falls under the competence of the regional unit of Thessaloniki. Their competencies are among others managing local affairs such as improving the lives of the local population, environmental protection, boosting employment, promoting education as well as supporting vulnerable groups. The municipality applied the CAF in 2010.

Italian Space Agency (ASI)

The Italian Space Agency (ASI) is a public research institution under the Ministry of University and Research focusing on scientific and technological research in the space and aerospace sector and is located in Rome. It develops research programmes. The ASI applied the CAF a total of three times in 2014, 2017 and 2020.

Lubuskie Voivodship Office (LUW), Poland

The Lubuskie Voivodship is one of the 16 provinces in Poland with around one million inhabitants. They have extensive tasks and responsibilities such as public safety, crisis management, health protection, education, environmental protection, and social policy to name a few. The Lubuskie Voivodship implemented the CAF in 2009, 2011, 2013, 2016, and 2019.

The Vouzela and Campia School Grouping (AGEVC), Portugal

The Vouzela and Campia School Grouping is located in the municipality of Vouzela and offers education to more than 600 students from kindergarten to grade 12. The territory of the Grouping is quite dispersed and consists of kindergartens, elementary schools, and the Vouzela High School. The Grouping implemented the CAF for the first time in 2008 and partially completed it in 2011 and 2015. It got the 'Effective CAF User' label in 2016 and 2018, and implemented the CAF for the sixth time in 2020-21.

Ministry of Environment, Slovak Republic

The Ministry of Environment is one of the fourteen ministries in Slovakia. Its current term lasts until 2024 and has its headquarters in Bratislava. The tasks of the Ministry are among others the protection of the environment, quality of water, fisheries and forestry, air protection and national environmental policy. The Ministry implemented the CAF in 2019 and acquired the 'Effective CAF user' label in 2021.

Agency for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development of the Republic of Slovenia (AAMRD)

The AAMRD is part of the Ministry of Agriculture and its main responsibilities are the allocation of financial resources in the fields of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, the food processing industry, and rural development. It provides services for the benefit of all stakeholders related to agricultural and rural areas. The AAMRD started implementing the CAF in 2019.

Madrid Salud, Spain

The organization was established in 2005 and unites the activities in public health and safety under one umbrella in the city of Madrid with over 3 million citizens. Among others, the competencies comprise preventing and treating addictions, environmental health, food safety, animal control etc. Madrid Salud implemented the CAF in 2014 and in 2015 it acquired the CAF 500+ certification.