

COVID-19 and national measures expecting changes in state administration – the case of Czechia

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Abstract

In this paper we summarize our findings on measures that were applied by Czech national authorities as a response to the COVID-19 and expected changes in state administration authorities. Our methodology relied on a systematic review and qualitative analysis of official documents. The paper is based on a qualitative analysis of acts approved by central bodies in the period from 1st March 2020 to 31st October 2021. The paper presents results of their analysis and coding.

Keywords

Organisational changes, public authorities, Czech state administration, COVID-19

1. Introduction

Literature clearly suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has disturbed existing political-administrative systems (Di Mascio et al. 2020). It has also discussed that the pandemic may contribute to significant changes in organisations that are necessary to solve turbulent problems (Ansell et al., 2020).

Changes in the wake of COVID-19 have started to be researched. Responses to COVID-19 indicate that the pandemic may contribute to significant changes at the organisational level. Dwivedi et al. (2020) or Nagel (2020) have already argued that the COVID-19 crisis has forced many organisations to undergo significant transformation, to rethink key elements of their business processes and use of technology to maintain operations. Some of these changes are likely to be permanent (Foss 2020). But the available literature has predominantly approached changes in business/private sector organizations and their management (Aristovnik et al. 2020). There is only some research on impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on public administration, but it is still rather narrowly focused and deal primarily with public finance/budgeting or national governance and policies approved to cope with the pandemic. Also, although exploring and explaining change has become a central concern for organisational scholars (Našim and Sushil, 2011), they have focused especially on organisational changes caused by internal, not external factors (Packard 2013, Nograšek and Vintar 2014). The COVID-19 crisis clearly represents an important external factor.

In order to overcome some of the research gaps, our aim was to identify changes that have occurred as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic in Czechia. We focused on a normative response and searched for documents which were approved on the national level by central bodies and required changes in state administration (either directly, or indirectly). Our methodology was qualitative. We used Nograšek and Vintar 2014' s diamond model as a theoretical base for our research and analysis. This model is based on two main assumptions: 1) ICT has a central role as a key driver of organisational transformation and 2) ICT is dependent

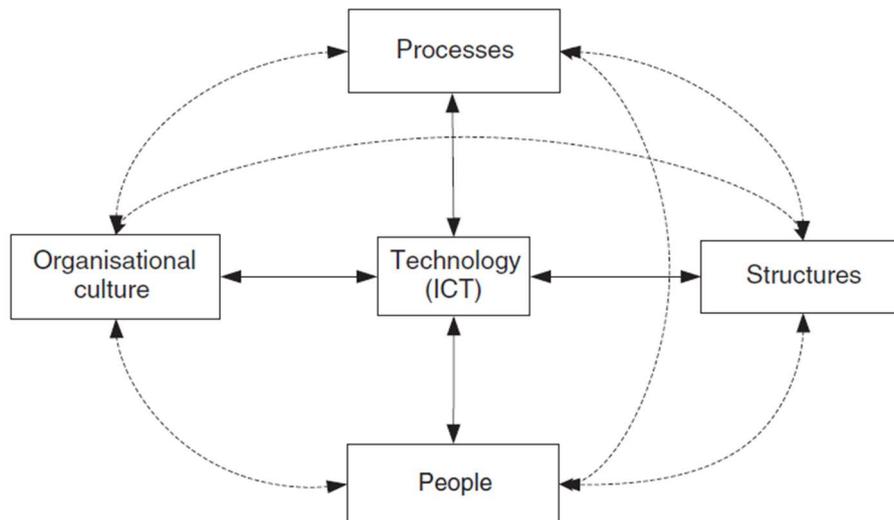
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on other organisational components (processes, people, structures, culture). The advantage of their model, in comparison to other upgrades of the Leavitt's diamond model, is twofold: 1) it overcomes the limitations of both technological determinism and socio-technical theory; and 2) provides basis for analysis of both the 'nature' and 'depth' of organisational change (by providing a list of attributes for each).

Figure 1 – The central role of technology presumed by the Nograšek and Vintar (2014) model



Source: Nograšek and Vintar (2014)

Although the model was primarily intended for analysis of organisational change in the e-government era, we believe it is equally relevant and suitable for explanation of organisational change initiated by the COVID-19 crisis. It is also a useful framework for analysis of both the 'nature' and 'depth' of organisational change as a response to ICT implementation (in our case due to the corona crisis).

The documents we analysed were coded with the view of affecting one of the elements of the Nograšek and Vintar (2014) model. The model elements are defined as follows (Nograšek and Vintar 2014, 113 – 114):

- “Technology” is simply defined as use of ICT
- ‘People’ capture the availability, adaptability, and productivity of staff.
- ‘Processes’ are defined as “specific ordering of work activities across time and space, with a beginning and an end, and clearly defined inputs and outputs”.
- ‘Culture’ is “a pattern of shared basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that have worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”
- ‘Structure’ is understood as: “(1) the pattern of formal relationships and duties; (2) the way in which the various activities or tasks are assigned to different departments and/or people in the organisation; (3) the way in which these separate activities or tasks are coordinated; (4) the power, status, and hierarchical

relationships within the organisation; and (5) the planned and formalised policies, procedures, and controls that guide the activities and relationships of people in the organisation.”

Our research was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Which institution took the prime role in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis (specifically regarding issues that affect the organisation of state administration)?

RQ2: What kind of legal acts and soft law consisted the response to the Covid-19 crisis (specifically regarding the organisation of state administration)?

RQ3: Were legal acts and soft law adopted in favourable epidemiological situation (as preventive measures), or in deteriorated epidemiological situation (as measures addressing acute problem)?

RQ4: Which organisational aspects within state administration, were subjected to the strongest pressure for change as a result of the Covid-19 crisis?

RQ5: What are the key organisational changes (expected) at the level of state administration?

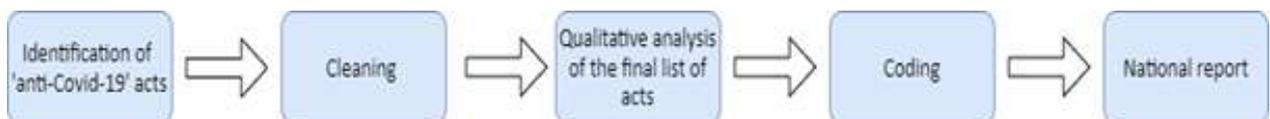
The paper aims to provide a preliminary systematic insight into organisational changes expected by documents approved on the central level in state administration (not in self-government). It is a partial result of the initial phase of a more complex project (Slovenian-Czech Lead Agency Project “Impacts of COVID-19 on organisational change and digitalization in public administration”, No 21-47171L). The aim of this initial phase of the project was to scan the national context and identify specific requirements for digitalisation and/or organisational changes.

The following text is structured as follows: Methodology of our research is outlined in the following point 2. The point 3 outlines and discuss the main results of our research and analysis and is followed by conclusions in the point 4.

2. Methodology

The methodology we used in the research relied on a systematic review and the qualitative analysis of official documents. A joint research protocol was prepared in close cooperation of the Slovenian and Czech project teams and anticipated the steps outlined in Figure 2.

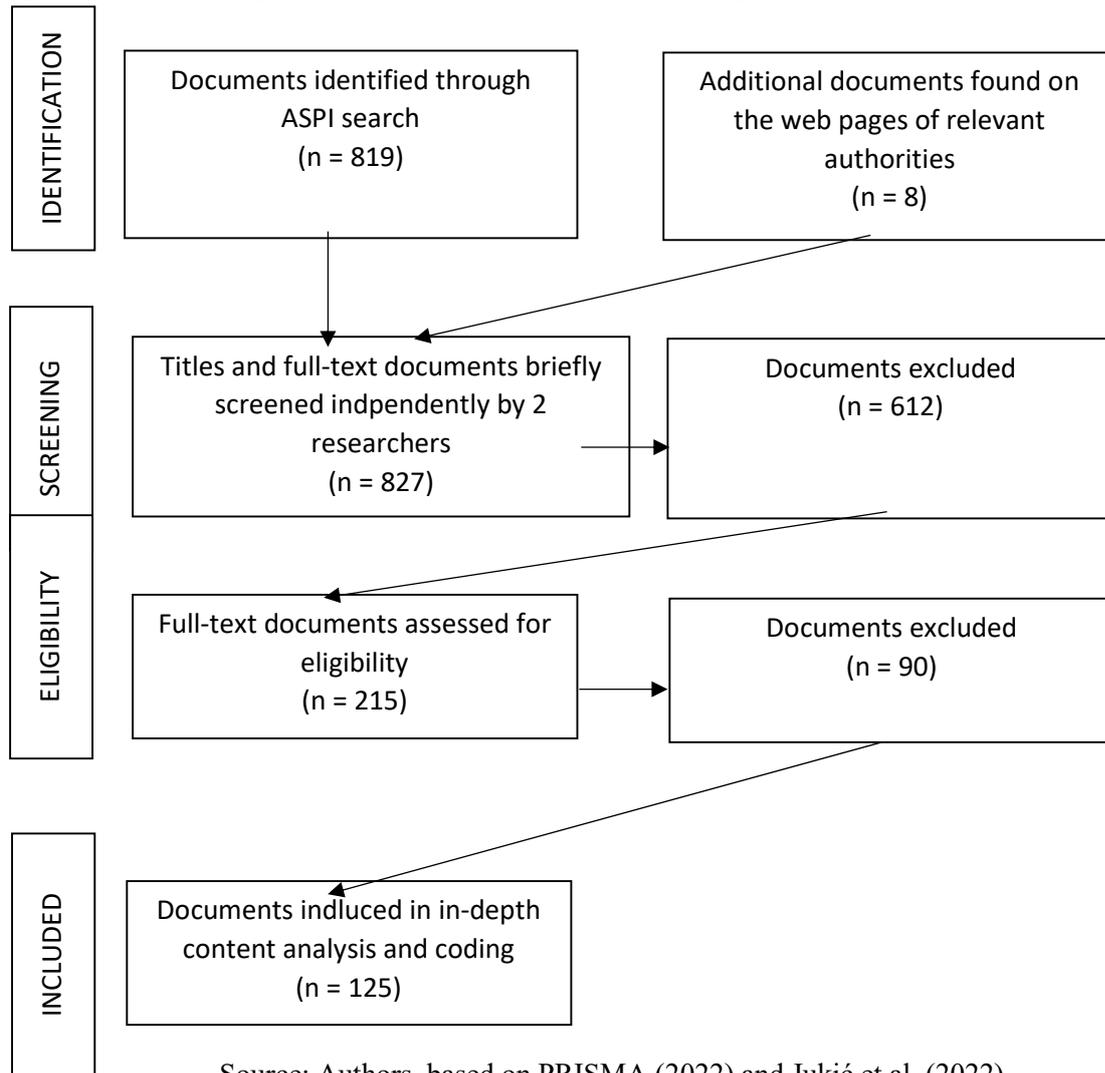
Figure 2 – Research steps



Source: Authors.

The PRISMA diagram presenting the selection of acts is outlined in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – PRISMA diagram presenting the selection of acts for the qualitative analysis



Source: Authors, based on PRISMA (2022) and Jukić et al. (2022).

The first step concentrated on the identification of all ‘anti-Covid-19’ acts adopted in the period of March 2020 to October 31, 2021. The criteria used for identification of acts (primary and secondary law and soft law) and their selection were as follows:

- adopted at the central level of governance;
- adopted in the period of March 2020 to October 31, 2021;
- adopted (explicitly) as a response to the COVID-19 crisis (it was required that COVID-19 or similar national term is mentioned in the act or its goals); and
- clearly referring to or impacting state administration – organizations at the central level⁴;

⁴ The group of state administration authorities in Czechia includes the following types of authorities: a) ministries; b) central state administration bodies existing within or linked to ministries; c) bodies/administrative offices with nationwide tasks directly controlled by the government and listed in the act on responsibilities of ministries and other central authorities (act no. 2/1969); d) agencies with separate legal personality (semi-autonomous or more or less autonomous legal entities, i.e. not subordinated to ministries, they may have their own chapter in the State Budget).

- regulation of general situations (e.g., quarantine, provision/availability protective equipment, testing), which although not specific to state administration might indirectly affect them.

We used ASPI information system for the identification of the primary and secondary law, because no national law information system was available that would enable the team to adjust search criteria. Two searches were conducted in ASPI. During the first, all types of Czech legal documents approved between the 1st March 2020 to 31st October containing the word “koronavir” were searched and 819 documents were found. During the second search, the term “covid” was used and 739 were found. Results of both the searches were exported into rtf file and saved as MS Word files. The lists were also printed as pdf files for back-up purposes. Both the lists were compared and it was decided to work only with the first list containing 819 results.

This search in the law database was followed by additional search that was focused on legal documents and soft law not registered in ASPI. In searching for these additional documents and information we were

- looking at the section “News” (<https://www.mvcr.cz/zpravodajstvi.aspx>) and, also, by using the search tool on the web pages of the Ministry of the Interior (using the same key words as in ASPI);
- going through service regulations and related documents prepared by the State Civil Service Deputy as published on the web pages dedicated to the State Civil Service (<https://www.mvcr.cz/sluzba/dokumenty-a-stanoviska.aspx>).

Another 8 documents were added to this preliminary list - service regulations approved by the Deputy of the Minister of the Interior for the State Civil Service found during the additional internet search, because these regulations are not registered in law included in the ASPI database of legislation. The documents were found during our search for additional the soft law that is not recorded in databases of legal acts. Unfortunately we have not found any more specific soft law dedicated to steps/more concrete recommendations regarding measures for coping with the COVID-19 crisis in state administration authorities that would be approved on the central level. We found only two recommendations – one approved by the Deputy for the State Administration (from 22 November 2021) and one by the Government (approved by its resolution no. 909 from 7 September 2020). Because they were rather general in nature and only repeating requirements on necessary provision of protective equipment, reduction of personal contacts and preferred electronic channels, it was decided not to include them in the list of relevant documents.

For the following step – the cleaning, a MS Excell file containing the list of all 827 (819+8) documents found was prepared. They were inspected (screened) as to whether they fulfil criteria agreed in the joint research protocol. Two researchers went through the list independently screening the titles and, briefly, the content of full-texts of the documents and based on the following discussion of their results the acts that did not fulfil the criteria were excluded from the initial list. In this way a preliminary list containing 215 documents was prepared for the following eligibility assessment.

In the following step, 215 full-text documents were checked against the project eligibility criteria (defined in the joined research protocol) were prepared and subjected to *qualitative analysis and further cleaning*. Based on the discussion with the Slovenian team, documents containing new duties of public health offices were excluded from the list. Although public health offices are considered as state administration bodies (deconcentrates of the Health Ministry) in Czechia, it was agreed by both the teams that due to their specific role the documents imposing new

requirements on them would be excluded from the analysis. Eventually, 125 documents were identified as relevant and were subjected to the qualitative analysis and coding.

The focus of the analysis was placed specifically on the provisions that regulate or impact one or more organisational elements included in the model of Nograšek and Vintar (2014) – technology, people, processes, culture and structure. The joint coding template was prepared as part of the research protocol and was followed by the Czech team. The draft version of coding was discussed with colleagues from Slovenia and the coding was finalized reflecting the feedback received.

3. Presentation and discussion of the findings

In the monitored period (March 2020 - October 2021), we identified 125 documents with direct or indirect impact on the state administration authorities in Czechia. A more detailed analysis of these documents showed that only 37 of them have the potential to influence directly one or more of the organizational elements of the Nograšek and Vintar's model (for more details, see Table 1 in the Appendix). These 37 documents were therefore in the centre of our analysis. We identified and coded 125 provisions from these 37 documents. We present our findings in the below text.

3.1 General results

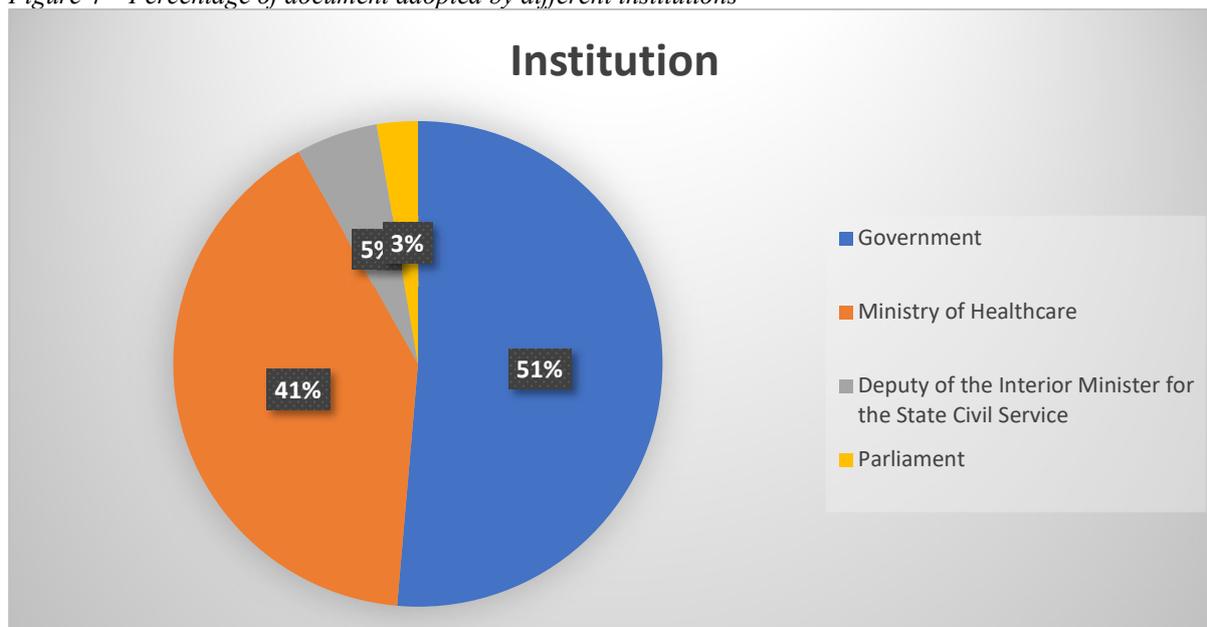
A look at the institutions that took part in the adoption of these documents clearly shows that, with the exception of only one document adopted by the legislative body (Parliament), all documents were produced by the executive bodies. Specifically, more than half of all the documents and almost half of all documents were approved by the Government (51,4%) and by the Ministry of Healthcare (40,5%), the other documents were produced by the Deputy of the Interior Minister for the State Civil Service (5,4%) (see Table 1 and Figure 4).

Table 1 – Kind of institutions and number of adopted documents

Institution	Number	%
Government	19	51,4
Ministry of Healthcare	15	40,5
Deputy of the Interior Minister for the State Civil Service	2	5,4
Parliament	1	2,7
Total	37	100

Source: Authors.

Figure 4 – Percentage of document adopted by different institutions



Source: Authors.

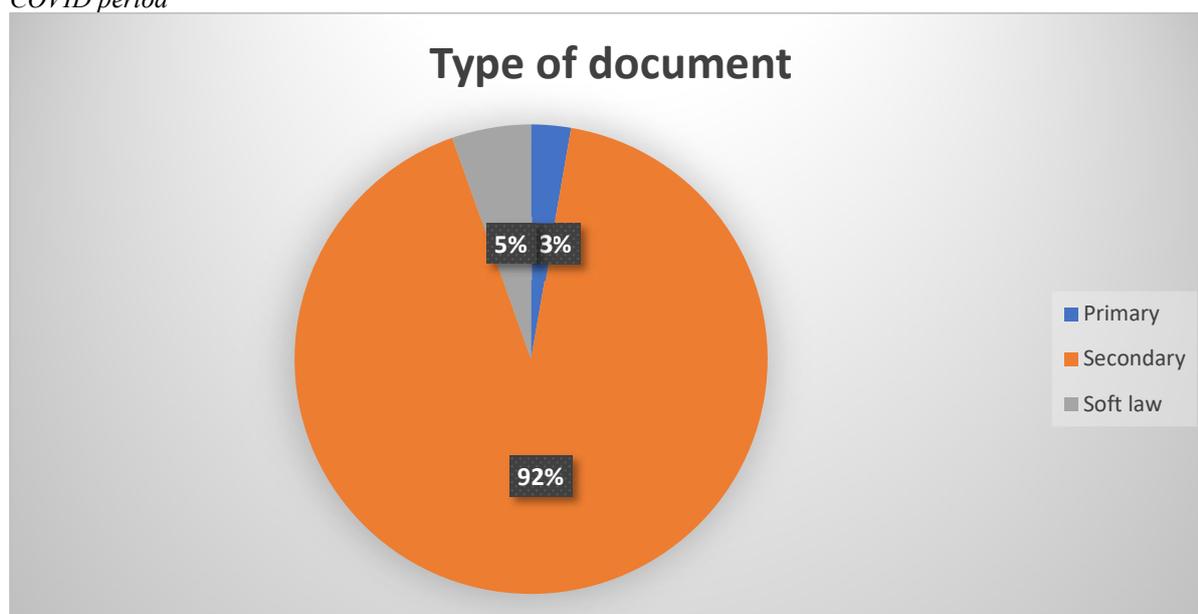
The vast majority of these documents are secondary type of documents (91.9%) (see Table 2 and Figure 5). This is probably due to the fact that there seems to be no general tendency of key policy actors to significantly change the nature and scope of the powers, the organizational structure and the way in which state institutions operate as set out in the period before COVID-19. This type of "hard change" can be affected either by the primary documents. It can thus be expected that documents we identified and analysed will be minimally or not at all focuses on change of the organizational element "Structure". At the same time, secondary documents are more suitable for implementation of "soft changes" because they are more time-flexible than the primary documents and thus have the potential to significantly influence the organizational elements such as "Technology", "People" and "Processes" that are in centre of our interest.

Table 2 - Type of documents adopted that regulate the organisation of state administration in the post-COVID period

Type of document	Number	%
Primary	1	2,7
Secondary	34	91,9
Soft law	2	5,4
Total	37	100

Source: Authors.

Figure 5 – Overview of types of documents regulating the organisation of state administration in the post-COVID period



Source: Authors.

Our analysis of the documents from the point of view of the epidemiological situation at the time of their adoption shows that more than half of them (52%) were received in a quite favourable situation (below 59 cases per 100 000 population) and almost the other half (48%) in a serious epidemiological situation (above 240 cases per 100 000 population). Only a minimum of documents (14%) were received in a favourable epidemic situation (below 10 cases per 100 000 population coloured by yellow) (for more details see Table 3 and Figure 6).

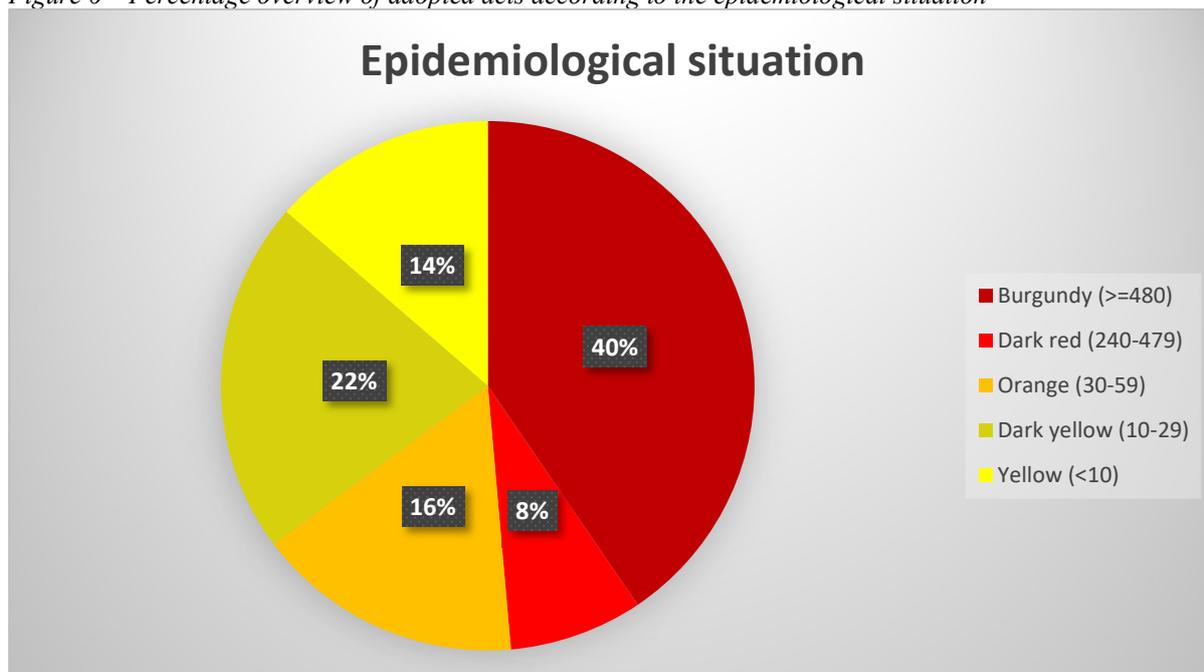
A look at particular types of documents at the time of their adoption shows that the single primary legal act was adopted in a very serious epidemiological situation (burgundy), similarly as did one of the two soft laws and a large number of secondary documents (14) (see Table 4).

Table 3 - Overview of documents with regard to the epidemiological situation at the time of their adoption (sorted by their highest frequency)

Epidemiological situation	Number	%
Burgundy (≥ 480)	15	40,5
Dark red (240-479)	3	8,1
Orange (30-59)	6	16,2
Dark yellow (10-29)	8	21,6
Yellow (< 10)	5	13,6
Total	37	100

Source: Authors.

Figure 6 – Percentage overview of adopted acts according to the epidemiological situation



Source: Authors.

Table 4 - Type of document adopted according to the epidemiological situation

Type of document	Epidemiological situation	Number	%
Primary	Burgundy (>=480)	1	2,7
Secondary	Yellow (<10)	4	10,9
	Dark yellow (10-29)	10	27
	Orange (30-59)	4	10,8
	Dark orange (60-119)	1	2,7
	Dark red (240-479)	1	2,7
	Burgundy (>=480)	14	37,8
Other (soft law)	Orange (30-59)	1	2,7
	Dark red (240-479)	1	2,7
Total		37	100

Source: Authors.

3.2 Impact on organisational elements

In this part we present the key findings concerning the five organizational elements of the Nograšek and Vintar 2014 model ('Technology', 'People', 'Processes', 'Culture', and 'Structure'). At the same time, we present other relevant information beyond the official model elements (labelled "Additional important information"), which although not specifically addressing state administration organs have still affected their organization and work (e.g., quarantine, potential COVID-19 exposure, etc.).

As already noted, we coded 125 provisions identified as relevant in the 37 documents impacting state administration. The analysis of the presence of individual organizational elements in the analyzed provisions shows the largest share of provisions affecting "Processes" (38.4%), followed by "People" (23.2%), and the lowest share of provisions included "Additional information" (see Table 5 and Figure 7).

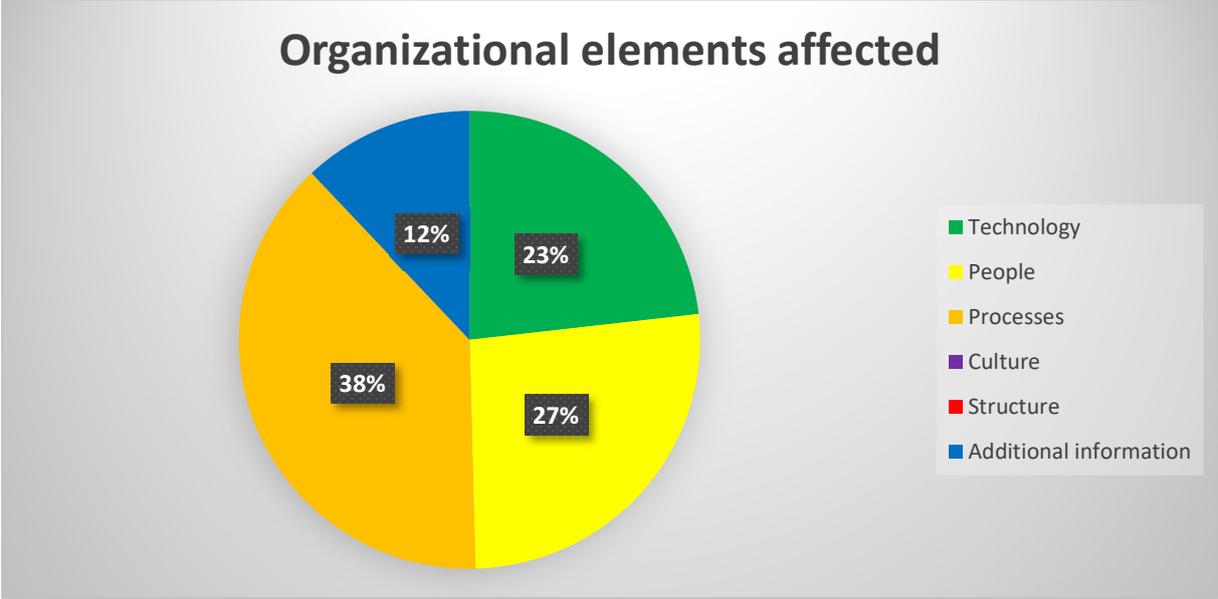
We did not identify an organizational element “Culture” and “Structure” in any of the documents. A possible reason is the difficulty of identifying these elements without the use of additional data sources - especially interviews with actors working in a specific state administration institution and relevant internal organizational documents. Moreover, all the documents examined are of temporary nature.

Table 5 - Organisational element affected by the provisions analysed

Organisational elements	Number	%
Technology	29	23,2
People	33	26,4
Processes	48	38,4
Culture	0	0
Structure	0	0
Additional information	15	12
Total	125	100

Source: Authors.

Figure 7 – Organisational element affected by the provisions analysed



Source: Authors.

3.2.1 Impact on technology

Out of a total of 125 provisions analysed, only one-fifth focused on technology (29). These provisions were present in a total of 15 documents. With the exception of one document focusing on the area of “Population movement” (Border crossing/return from risk areas), these were exclusively documents focusing on “Functioning of state authorities and public service provision” (12), namely Operation of state service authorities and Social benefits” (2) (Table 6). The main topic of these provisions is the replacement of face-to-face communication between civil servants and between civil servants and citizens by electronic communication (including the digitization of citizens’ contact processes with the public administration).

More specifically, these provisions contain three topics (as shown in Table 6): (1) Total replacement or limitation of personal contact and preference of written, electronic or telephone communication with clients/between civil servants inside/outside public authority, which were supplemented in later documents by the requirement of higher hygiene measures in case of personal contacts; (2) Preferences and increasing scope of digitization and electronic

tasks processing in state administration; and (3) Enabling the electronic application for a social benefit (without using qualified e-signature, scanned/ photographed version of application is allowed).

Table 6 - Impact of analysed documents on „Technology“ (N=29 provisions)

Doc. n.	Institution ¹	Number of prov.	Topic	Impact on 'Technology'
30	GOV	2	Border crossing/return from risk areas	Limitation of personal contact and preference of written, electronic or phone communication with clients/between civil servants inside/outside public authority
20	MH	2	Operation of state service authorities/Work of civil servants	
26	GOV	3		
27	GOV	2		
28	MH	2		
35	GOV	2		
38	GOV	2		
39	GOV	2		
10	GOV	2		
12	MH	2		
14	GOV	2		
17	MH	2		
47	GOV	2	Operation of state service authorities/Work of civil servants	
29	GOV	1	Social benefits	Preferences and increasing scope of digitization and electronic tasks processing
41	GOV	1		
				Enabling the electronic application for a benefit (without using qualified e-signature, scanned/photographed version of application is allowed)

Notes: ¹ PAR = Parliament, GOV = Government, MH = Ministry of Healthcare, DIM = Deputy of the Interior Minister for the State Civil Service.

Source: Authors.

3.2.2 Impact on people

The share of provisions focused on the organizational element "People" was similar to the share of provisions focused on the element "Technology" - almost a third (27%, respectively 33 measures contained in 14 documents) (Table 7). All these documents focused on the topic "Functioning of state authorities and public service provision" and the subtopic Operation of state service authorities/Work of civil servants.

Of the seven possible organizational elements that could be identified in the area of "People" according to Nograšek and Vintar (2014)⁵, we found the presence of only two elements. In the first case it was "Change of communication channels" (3 documents containing 6 provisions), which consisted of preferences of written, electronic or telephone communication with clients and/or between civil servants inside and/or outside public authority. In the second case, It was the "Change of the extent of work per employee and the duties per employee" (11 documents containing 27 provisions), which related in particular (a) to the reduction of the number of employees in the workplace, (b) to the minimization of employees' contacts with clients and (c) with other employees in the workplace and (d) to setting conditions for distant working of employees. Specifically, the following seven situations were identified (see Table 7):

- Only necessary number of employees should be present at a workplace;

⁵ These elements are as follows: Classical workplace change, Change of the extent of work per employee and the duties per employee, Change of the complexity of work, Change of communication channels, Establishment of different kinds of partnerships, Emergence of new type of leadership, Need for new competencies and skills.

- In the case of quarantine of part of employees, public authorities should ensure their functionality by alternating of separated groups of employees/distant working;
- In the case of different place, duties of superiors to employees and duties of employees are specified (timely and proper performance, informing of superiors, following legislation etc.);
- Reassessment of working from a different place and its dynamic combination with a presence of employees on workplaces, or just using a distant work considering;
- Personal contacts with clients should be reduced;
- Minimalization of personal contact with other persons in offices/during catering.

Table 7 - Impact of analysed documents on „People“ (N=33 provisions)

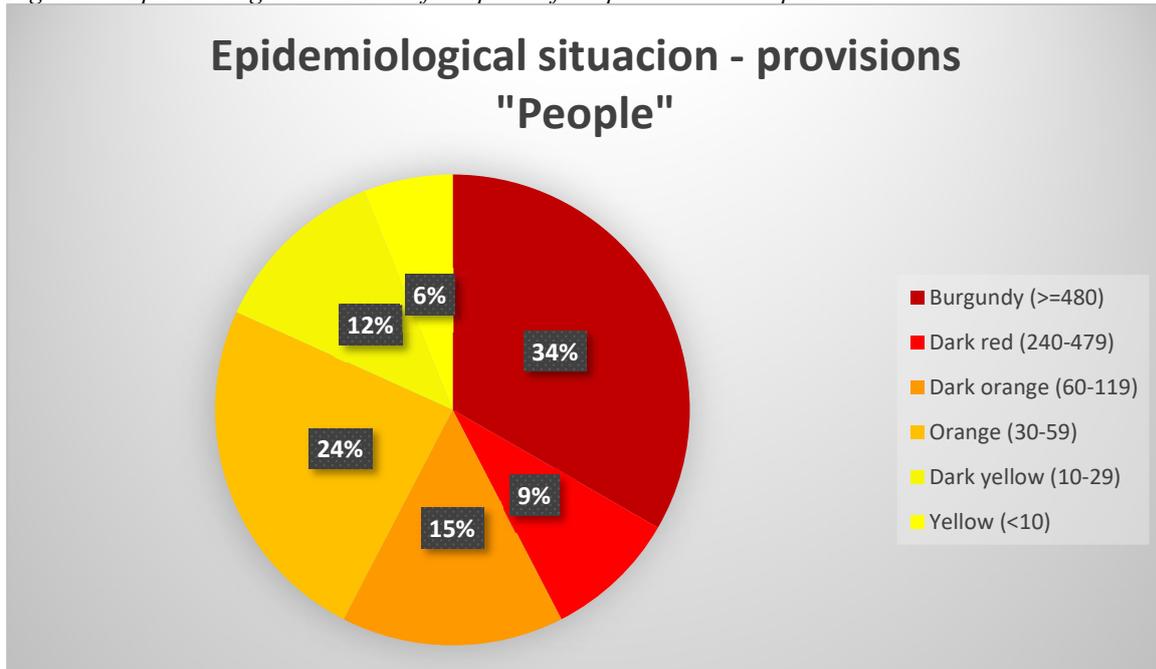
Doc. n.	Institution ¹	Number of prov.	Topic	Impact on 'People'	
10	GOV	2	Operation of state service authorities/ Work of civil servants	<p>CHANGE OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preference of written, electronic or phone communication with clients/between civil servants inside/outside public authority <p>CHANGE OF THE EXTENT OF WORK PER EMPLOYEE AND THE DUTIES PER EMPLOYEE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only necessary number of employees should be present at a workplace - In the case of quarantine of part of employees, public authorities should ensure their functionality by alternating of separated groups of employees/distant working 	
12	MH	2			
14	GOV	2			
17	MH	2			
20	MH	1			
26	GOV	2			
27	GOV	1			
28	MH	2			
35	GOV	2			
38	GOV	2			
39	GOV	2			
45	DIM	5			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the case of different place, duties of superiors to employees and duties of employees are specified (timely and proper performance, informing of superiors, following legislation etc.)
46	DIM	3			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reassessment of working from a different place and its dynamic combination with a presence of employees on workplaces, or just using a distant work considering - Personal contacts with clients should be reduced
47	GOV	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Necessary distancing in the cases presence of employees at a workplace and personal contacts with clients - Minimalization of personal contact with other persons in offices/during catering 		

Notes: ¹ PAR = Parliament, GOV = Government, MH = Ministry of Healthcare, DIM = Deputy of the Interior Minister for the State Civil Service.

Source: Authors.

By looking into the epidemiological situation at the time of their adoption, we see that most of them (43 %) were adopted in unfavourable epidemiological situation ("burgundy" and "dark red"). On the other hand, a similar share of provision (42%) was adopted in a relatively favourable epidemiological situation ("yellow", "dark yellow" and "orange") (see Figure 8).

Figure 8 – Epidemiological situation of adoption of the provisions “People”



Source: Authors.

3.2.3 Impact on processes

The most from the 125 provisions analysed have the impact on the organizational element “Processes” (38%, specifically 48 provisions contained in 27 documents). From 6 organizational elements designed according to Nograšek and Vintar (2014) in the area of “Processes”⁶, we identified 2 elements labelled as “Information flows” and “Automation / transference / coordination of activities and renovation of the entire process”.

The first element (“Information flows”) were present in some documents focused on subtopic “Health protection in prisons” and in all documents focused on “E-application for testing used by health protection authorities” and “Communication between state authorities”. Provisions included in these documents were specifically related to (a) the need to sign a declaration that visitors in prisons are not quarantined and have no symptoms of the disease, (b) delivery of access links to territorial health service providers to regional authorities by the Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic (ÚZIS), and (c) the transmission of information between tax administration authorities and between General Health Insurance Company (VZP) and The Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic (ÚZIS) about persons paying public health insurance.

The second element (“coordination of activities”) we identified in all documents focused on the subtopic “Operation of state service authorities / Work of civil servants” and “Social benefits” and in most documents focused on “Health protection in prisons”. These were most often processes related to coordination of activities or automation (see Table 8):

- In the case of documents aimed at “Operation of state service authorities”, it was a requirement that activities necessary tasks ensuring continuity should be followed, public authorities should reduce their office hours and in the case of personal contacts, relevant protective measures should be applied

⁶ These elements are as follows: Automation / elimination / transference / coordination of activities and renovation of the entire process, Vertical and horizontal integration, Information flows, Process control and process management, Sourcing, and The autonomy of process performers.

- The documents regulating “Social benefits” required a simplification of some procedures related to the provision of some social benefits; and
- In the case of documents dealing with “Health protection in prisons”, temporarily decision of prison service authorities on joint accommodation of prisoners of some types to mitigate risks of spread of COVID-19 among prisoners and employees were required.

Table 8 - Impact of analysed document on “Processes” (N=48 provisions)

Doc. n.	Institution ¹	Number of prov.	Topic	Impact on ‘Processes’
4	MH	1	Health protection in prisons	INFORMATION FLOWS: - Prison service authorities should require visitors to sign a declaration that they are not quarantined and have no symptoms of the disease/they should implement organizational and hygiene related measures
22	MH	1		
31	MH	1		COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES: - Temporarily decision of prison service authorities on joint accommodation of prisoners of some types to mitigate risks of spread of COVID-19 among prisoners and employees
1	GOV	1	Communication between state authorities	INFORMATION FLOWS: - Extensions of some deadlines in provision of information in international cooperation in tax administration
44	MH	1		- General Health Insurance Company (VZP) to provide The Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic (ÚZIS) about persons paying public health insurance without delay and requirement to register these data in the IS of Investition Illnesses
3	MH	1	E-application for testing used by health protection authorities	INFORMATION FLOWS: - The Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic (ÚZIS) to provide regional authorities with access links to health service providers existing on their territories
23	MH	1		
40	MH	1		
42	MH	1		
43	MH	1		
10	GOV	3	Border crossing/return from risk areas	COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES/PROCESSES: - In the case of personal contacts, relevant protective measures should be applied - Only necessary tasks ensuring continuity should be followed - Public authorities should reduce their office hours - Measures related to distancing, availability of stands for hands disinfection, use of protective measures and higher hygiene measures should be implemented. - Necessary provision of protective equipment: to work with job modes that enables economic use of antigen tests.
12	MH	3	Operation of state service authorities/Work of civil servants	
14	GOV	3		
17	MH	3		
20	MH	2		
26	GOV	2		
27	GOV	2		
28	MH	3		
30	GOV	3		
35	GOV	3		
38	GOV	3		
39	GOV	2		
46	DIM	1		
47	GOV	2		
19	GOV	1		
29	GOV	1		
41	GOV	1		

Notes: ¹ PAR = Parliament, GOV = Government, MH = Ministry of Healthcare, DIM = Deputy of the Interior Minister for the State Civil Service.

Source: Authors.

3.2.4 Additional important information

In the analysed documents, we identified a very small number of provisions with a general impact having not exclusive impact on state administration organizations (15 provisions in 10 documents that represent 12% share of all provisions). Specifically, we identified measures in all three organizational elements we monitored and presented above ("Technology", "Processes" and "People"), mostly than in "People" (12 provisions in 7 documents). These provisions are to a lesser extent focused on the topic related to the "Use of e-application for testing by health protection authorities", "Social benefits", and "Health examinations" and to a greater extent on "Functioning of critical infrastructure" (see Table 9).

Table 9 - Additional important information having not exclusively impact on state administration organizations (N=15)

Doc. n.	Institution ¹	Number of prov.	Topic	Additional important information
23	GOV	1	Use of e-application for testing by health protection authorities	TECHNOLOGY - All health protection authorities should use exclusively the electronic application available in the National healthcare information system and resort registers (NZIS) and also indicate a type of the test (PCR / rapid test)
24	GOV	1		
40	GOV	1		
49	GOV	1	Social benefits	PEOPLE - WORK CONDITIONS: - Eligibility for nursing allowances for employees who cannot perform their job due to taking care of kids
32	MH	2	Health examinations	PEOPLE - CHANGE OF THE EXTENT OF WORK PER EMPLOYEE AND THE DUTIES PER EMPLOYEE: - The presence of employees only in the cases they passed a negative test PEOPLE - THE DUTIES PER EMPLOYEE/EMPLOYEE TESTING: - Employees should pass the testing based on request of their employer (except they had COVID-19, were vaccinated etc.)
6	GOV	1	Functioning of critical infrastructure	PEOPLE - THE DUTIES PER EMPLOYEE/ INSTRUCTIONS: - Employees of critical infrastructure should stay at places designated by their employer during security breaks and, also, during their time off (with some exceptions)
7	GOV	1		
33	GOV	3		
36	GOV	2		
37	GOV	2		
33	GOV	3		
36	GOV	2		
37	GOV	2		
33	GOV	3		PROCESSES – SOURCING - Organizations of the critical infrastructure should designate their contractors necessary for their functioning (having regularly updated list of these contractors)

Notes: ¹ GOV = Government, MH = Ministry of Healthcare

Source: Authors.

In the first case, provisions affected the element "Technology" is related to the impact on all health authorities, that should use only the electronic application available in the National Health Information System and Departmental Registers (NZIS) and indicate the type of test (PCR / rapid test) in this system. In the second case, the organizational element "Processes" is impacted by provision focused on "sourcing" of organizations of the critical infrastructure which should designate their contractors necessary for their operation and having a regularly updated list of these contractors. Provisions affecting the organizational element "People" are focused specifically on: (1) work conditions of employees who cannot perform their job due to taking care of kids through the eligibility for nursing allowances, (2) change of the extent of work per employee and the duties per employee through the necessity to pass a negative COVID-19 test, and (3) change of the extent of work per employee and the duties per employee of critical infrastructure related especially to the necessity to be present on workplace during security breaks and, also, during their time off (with some exceptions) and to follow instructions of employers concerning their new duties related to the state of emergency (for more details see Table 9).

4. Conclusion

The above text outlined findings of our qualitative analysis that focused on the content of acts (primary, secondary and soft law) that were adopted by Czech central bodies in order to cope with COVID-19 in the period between March 2020 till the end of October 2021 and impacted state administration organizations.

Answers to the research questions can be summarized as follows:

RQ1: Which institution took the prime role in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis (specifically regarding issues that affect the organisation of state administration)?

The results show that, with the exception of only one document adopted by the legislative body (Parliament), all documents were produced by the executive bodies - by the Government and by the Ministry of Healthcare.

RQ2: What kind of legal acts and soft law consisted the response to the Covid-19 crisis (specifically regarding the organisation of state administration)?

Almost all documents responding to the COVID-19 crisis are of secondary type (92%) and the number of soft laws is negligible (5%). It is probably due to the fact that there seems to be no general tendency of key policy actors in the Czech Republic to make "hard changes" in form of change of the nature, scope of the powers, the organizational structure and the way in which state institutions operate set in pre-COVID-19 time (that can be affected either by the primary documents). In this context, secondary documents seem to be more suitable for implementation of "soft changes" that have been occurred because they are more time-flexible than the primary documents.

RQ3: Were legal acts and soft law adopted in favourable epidemiological situation (as preventive measures), or in deteriorated epidemiological situation (as measures addressing acute problem)?

Whereas more than half of adopted documents (52%) were received in a quite favourable epidemiological situation (below 59 cases per 100 000 population), almost the same share of documents (48%) were adopted in a serious epidemiological situation (above 240 cases per 100 000 population). This information does not allow clear explanation. On the other side, a look at particular types of documents shows that the single primary legal act was

adopted in a very serious epidemiological situation (equal or more than 480 cases per 100 000 population), similarly as did one of the two soft laws and a large number of secondary documents (38%)

RQ4: Which organisational aspects within state administration, were subjected to the strongest pressure for change as a result of the Covid-19 crisis?

The analysis of the presence of individual organizational elements in the analysed documents shows the largest share of provisions affecting “Processes” (38%), followed by “People” (26%) and “Technology” (23%). In analysed documents we did not identified an organizational element “Culture” and “Structure”, probably because there exist the difficulty of identifying these elements without the use of additional data sources (interviews with relevant actors and analysis of relevant internal organizational documents).

RQ5: What are the key organisational changes (expected) at the level of state administration?

In the area of “Processes” we identified an effort to influence operation of state service authorities in both in the field of “Information flows” (through the introduction of e-application for testing used by health protection authorities and ensuring better communication between different state authorities) and in the field of "coordination of activities" (especially of office hours, personal contacts, application of relevant protective measures, and procedures related to the provision of some social benefits).

Provisions in the area of "People" focused both on "change of communication channels" (through preferences of written, electronic or telephone communication with clients and/or between civil servants inside and/or outside public authority) and on “change of the extent of work per employee and the duties per employee” (through the reduction of the number of employees in the workplace, the minimization of employees' contacts with clients and with other employees and setting conditions for distant working).

In the area of “Technology” we identified the effort to prefer the written, electronic or telephone communication with clients/between civil servants inside/outside public authority, to increase the scope of digitization and electronic tasks processing in state administration and to enable the electronic application for a social benefits.

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