



38th EIASM WORKSHOP
ON
STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
“CHALLENGES FOR HRM IN THE NEXT GENERATION”

April 27 - 28, 2023

INTERNATIONAL CHAIRPERSONS

Professor Emeritus Michael SEGALLA - HEC Paris, France

Professor Bruno STAFFELBACH - University of Lucerne, Switzerland

LOCAL CHAIRPERSON

Professor Daniela PAUKNEROVA - Faculty of Business Administration - Prague University of Economics and Business

Friday, April 28, 2023

8:40 – 9:10	CHANGES IN HRM FOLLOWING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC – RESEARCH IN SIX CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN (CEE) COUNTRIES JÓZSEF POÓR, ALMINA BESIC, CHRISTIAN HIRT, BOTOND GÉZA KÁLMÁN, ARNOLD TÓTH, ZSUZSANNA SZEINER, KATALIN SZABÓ, KINGA KEREKES AND MONICA ZAHARIE, ZIJADA RAHIMIC, AND SNEZHANA ILIEVA
09:10 – 09:40	LEADERSHIP STYLES AND JOB-RELATED LEARNING IN THE SWISS ARMED FORCES: PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AS A MEDIATOR MARTINA MORARD
09:40 – 10:10	EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES: NATURE AS ENVIRONMENT, FRIEND, AND BOOSTER OF EMPLOYEE’S WELL-BEING ADAM TABORSKY
10:10 – 10:40	Coffee break
10:40 – 11:10	SPECIFICS OF GENERATION Z ENTRY INTO THE CZECH LABOR MARKET EVA HOVOŘÁKOVÁ
11:10 - 11:40	WORKPLACE INTERVENTIONS FOR LEADERS IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY – A REALIST EVALUATION JUDITH SCHMITT
11:40 – 12:10	HOW TECHNOLOGY PROVIDERS LEGITIMIZE AI FOR TALENT ACQUISITION IN THE FACE OF LEGAL OPAQUENESS AND AUDIENCE’S TRUST CONCERNS CHRISTINA FUCHS, REICHEL ASTRID
12:10 – 13:30	Lunch



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Changes in HRM following the Covid-19 pandemic – research in six Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries



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Prague, April 27-28, 2023



European Institute for
Advanced Studies in Management



Changes in HRM following the Covid-19 pandemic – research in six Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries

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Introduction

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, economically and socially throughout 2020-2022, there have been massive changes in the lives of individuals and organizations. After the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, various governments acted almost immediately with large scale closures and social distancing (IMF, 2021). Within the European Union €, governments have responded to the with unprecedented speed and scale, providing financial support to member states.

The pandemic has greatly affected the workforce. Since the crisis of 2008-2009, employment has steadily increased throughout the world (BLS, 2018; Farooq & Kugler, 2015), and this has also been the case in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region (ILO, 2018). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021), out of 3.5 billion workers globally, 255 million people lost their jobs in 2020, the first year of the, taking into account layoffs and hours lost. During the pandemic, however, companies relied on closures, furlough or remote work. In addition, across many companies Human Resource departments suddenly faced a change in their role and responsibility (see e.g. Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Juhász et al. 2020)

In this study, we focus on the changes in human resources resulting from the pandemic, across six countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), namely Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

This region is an interesting context for our study, due to the different economic characteristics and different responses to the Covid-19 pandemic (see e.g. Karoliny & Poór, 2019; Kazlauskaitė et al., 2013; Poor & Plesoianu, 2010; Stachova et al., 2020; Vatchkova, 1997). While in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, HRM has slowly developed since the transition from a planned to a market economy in the 1990s, in Bosnia and Herzegovina this transition is still ongoing, rendering HR still rather operational. In Austria, however, HR has steadily grown more strategic, impacting the reactions to the Covid-19 pandemic (see Hirt et al., 2022; Viehauser & Tengler, 2020; Varga, 2020). This short paper proceeds by outlining our method, as well as initial findings from our study.

Research Method

In our study, we used the results of the CoronaHR project, initiated by Hungary, in which the authors of this paper also collaborate. We collected data through a questionnaire-based survey carried out in all six countries covered by the research. The questionnaire was first edited in Hungarian, using a questionnaire validated by two rounds (round 1 in June-July , 2020, round 2 in August-November, 2020) of previous surveys carried out in Hungary in the first year of

the pandemic (Poór et al., 2021 and 2022). Based on the Hungarian version, the authors translated the questionnaire in English and in all the languages of the countries examined.

Our questionnaire includes the following major groups of questions:

- the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on the economies of the countries studied and on the organization under review,
- general and HR crisis management measures most characteristic of the audited entity,
- changes/changes initiated in the HR field in the audited organization as a result of the crisis,
- the opportunities created by the Covid-19 crisis at the examined organization and its HR ,
- jobs and competences positively and/or negatively affected by the effects of the crisis,
- characteristics of the organization under consideration, the respondent HR area and the responding person.

The questions could be answered on a 4- or 6-point ordinal scale. The even number of options forced the respondents to commit, but also gave them the opportunity to express their level of commitment in a differentiated manner (Asún et al., 2016).

The data collection was carried out using a questionnaire that can be completed both online and in electronic document form. The respondent organizations were selected by the variant of the respondent-driven time-space sampling method (Heckathorn, 1997; Parsons et al., 2008) adapted to the current research. The sample obtained by the method used is of course not representative, but due to the large number (n= 1048) and diverse nature of the respondents, it is also suitable for drawing various conclusions. We also emphasize the international nature of our sample, which makes it suitable for collecting and formulating regional experiences. The collected data was processed after cleaning using statistical methods, using IBM-SPSS Statistics 28, MS-Excel 365 and Jamovi Desktop 2.3.18.0 software (Poór et al., 2021).

Hypotheses

We formulated seven hypotheses after reviewing the literature, all of which are related to the role of HR:

Hypothesis	Text
H1	The amount of HR work, the expectations for HR work and the importance of professional HR work increased during the pandemic.
H2	Typical crisis management measures in the field of HR focus on headcount management / manpower needs (downsizing, redundancies, interim staff reduction, reduction in manpower demand through automation and training) and new working time management (reduction of working hours, authorization of teleworking, replacement plans).

H3	The most typical crisis management measures in HR depend on the size of the organization.
H4	The most typical crisis management measures in the field of HR show a relationship with the ownership of the organization.
H5	Retaining key people and talent have become particularly important for organizations, with unique, hard-to-copy organizational knowledge and expertise seen as a way out of the crisis, and human resources seen as of strategic importance.
H6	Most organizations see the crisis as an opportunity to bring about positive change, and they see potential growth in many areas of HR because of the crisis. The areas of remote work, occupational health and safety, and internal communication are growing in importance.
H7	A paradigm shift in the field of HR that began nearly thirty years ago treats the employee holistically, as a human being. However, this direction has developed faster in the field of theory than in practice. The global crisis caused by the pandemic significantly accelerated the practical application of the new theory.

Source: Authors' own research

The hypotheses can be divided into 3 groups. In the first group, there is a hypothesis, a general assumption that pandemics have increased the amount of HR work and HR-related expectations.

The second group includes the hypotheses (H#2, H#3, H#4), according to which the size, ownership structure, nationality, and the existence of the HR department of the responding organizations influence the measures taken in crisis management.

The third group is related to the global changes currently underway in HR (H#5, H#6 and H#7). They see crisis management not as a constraint, but as an opportunity so that the paradigm shifts currently taking place in HR – the essence of which is the appreciation of the role of human capital, the retention of knowledge capital, and talent – can be realized in practice as soon as possible.

Results

Initial analyses show that the volume of HR work and the increase in HR-related expectations can be observed in all countries, although not to the same extent. While this is most visible in Austria, it is the least the case in Slovakia. We found a significant relationship between the existence of an HR department and the increase in the importance of professional HR activities. We showed that among the responses to the pandemic, workplace health protection and remote work were the two most common HR responses in all countries. At the same time, the

proportion of these measures among all measures differed from country to country, so the role of citizenship was partially verified here as well. However, there was a significant difference in the nature of HR measures according to the size of the organization. In larger companies, remote work and workplace health protection were the most typical HR responses, while small companies used the frequently used cost reductions and headcount freezes more often. We also examined the role of ownership composition. From this, we found that the above-mentioned measures are mostly applied to subsidiaries of foreign companies, while the development of replacement plans is more typical of state-owned companies.

In the third hypothesis group, it could be established that the perception of the importance of talent retaining and knowledge capital is strongly influenced by the country in which the responding companies located. At the same time, we showed that for more than half of the responding companies, the crisis is also an opportunity, and this ratio also characterizes each country separately. We also experienced a significant increase in the area of human centric measures' applications rate, which is considered modern, i.e., the crisis accelerated the practical application of new theoretical knowledge in the examined geographical region.

Summary

Our study was Central European regional research covering six countries on the topic of how crises affect human resource management in various organizations. Our results prove that the size of the country and the company play a decisive role in crisis management, and the application of certain measures depends on the ownership structure, but that the responses are also highly context dependent. It is a positive result that the majority of respondents see the crisis as an opportunity for further development in the area of HR and that the crisis also strengthens the practical application strategic HR models.. Overall, HR is transforming due the pandemic, albeit not at the same speed across the region.

Acknowledgment

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