

Survey on the Impacts of COVID-19 on Human Resources activities for PostEurop Members

- Key messages -

PostEurop carried out a survey among its membership on the “Impacts of COVID-19 on Human Resources Activities” in May–June 2020. The survey aims to gather information on measures taken and foreseen, which could be shared and further incorporated by posts to further support their everyday functions.

The results of the survey showed a **significant level of engagement from posts during the height of the crisis when government restrictions came into play and this continues into the “return to normal” period to further support the organisation and community at large.** Posts adopted a range of measures and developed numerous activities in HR related areas such as Resource Planning & Financing, safer Working Conditions, Prevention & Diagnostics, and Training & Development. Below a brief summary of the respective areas:

Posts adjusted staff working conditions:

- **Restrictive measures**, which were applied during the lockdown period, consisted mainly of closures to some postal units/centres, shift cancellations or reduction in working time.
- **Home office work was largely encouraged or extended.** Teleworking for postal employees proved to have overall positive impacts as it brought higher efficiency in meetings, higher employee satisfaction and less sick leaves; thus, many posts intend to **apply home office work policy in the long-term** (however, this may not apply in some countries with a restrictive national legislation).

Posts took numerous precautionary measures to assure the health & safety of staff and customers and to avoid the further spread of the COVID-19 virus:

- **Different precautionary measures were applied at respective workplaces** (i.e. post offices, sorting centers, delivery modules, administration). Special focus was given to **common areas** (i.e. meeting rooms, staff canteens, rest areas, lifts, toilets).
- Guidelines for **physical distancing** were applied everywhere and required employees to keep minimum distance between individuals at all times, maximum percentage or number of persons present in any designated areas; separation shields were placed; clearly written information, posters and signages on the walls and floors were used extensively. Given the fact that postal services and operation include close human contact, the physical distancing remains a challenge for many posts and lot of measures had to be taken to meet the requirements.

- **Strict hygiene** was reinforced through compulsory and frequent washing of hands, disinfection programs, improved air circulation, as well as using disposable products in canteens.
- **Protective & hygienic equipment** was sourced and provided to the staff (i.e. face masks, face shields or visors; gloves; foot covers; sanitizers and disinfectants for hands and surfaces) and its usage was made obligatory in relevant cases.
- Specific proactive **measures to detect the virus** were taken. Many posts used automatic body temperature detection equipment to measure the temperature of employees on premises, or only selected staff, usually when entering the building, or at the start of their work shift. In some cases, employees had to complete a survey to identify symptoms related to the COVID-19 virus, or had a medical worker present for consultations. Some posts conducted diagnostic tests for their employees either on an obligatory (in case of virus cluster, or symptomatic staff), or voluntary basis (asymptomatic staff). Many posts applied preventive approach, i.e., observed the same strict rules in case of infection as well as in case of only suspicion of infection.

The posts adapted the training and development of their staff:

- **Internal communication channels** were used to regularly inform, instruct, or train the staff, mostly on COVID-related issues or ICT skills.
- **IT tools** were provided to the staff to enable and enforce remote communication and training.
- **Essential training requiring physical presence** (i.e. in operation) was **adjusted to respect physical distancing**.
- **Less essential training** without the necessity of physical presence was **converted into an online and/or offline format**. Existing online training continued and are increasingly being used.
- **New, mostly online training in response to pandemic** was developed for all as well as for selected staff. It focused on training the trainers, management staff during and post pandemic and included business continuity, managing work outside the office, adaptation to pandemic-induced process changes, occupational health & safety, ICT skills for online communication and remote work, or skills for new types of services.

Posts developed plans for the staff's return to their workplace after the lockdown:

- Plans for the return of staff to their workplaces strictly follow the instructions of national authorities. They are **internally coordinated** (generally together with trade unions) and their implementation is in some cases **externally controlled** by the competent labour inspection authority.
- The **applied approaches** to return to work **depend heavily on the respective epidemiologic situation** within the country and/or in the company, **necessity of physical presence at work**, and **workplace or staff category** (administration; operation – sorting, delivery, counter). Posts returned certain staff categories first (young and resilient; basic & reserve staff), or introduced new work shifts and separated attendances. Administration staff has returned gradually, or to a limited extent.

Selected posts have incorporated financial support from their government to compensate COVID-19 related costs:

- Some posts were eligible to apply for government support.
- The funds obtained were used for buying **personal protective equipment**, paying **benefits to front-line staff**, providing **compensation to staff** (short-time working, furlough, temporarily laid off, partially unemployed, parental leave), or to the **company** (covering sickness wage costs, reducing employer contributions).

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ABOUT POSTEUROP

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Our Members represent **2 million employees** across Europe and deliver to **800 million customers daily** through over 175,000 counters.

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