



Mental health prevention in times of crisis

DUE TO THE MENTAL STRESS CAUSED BY THE PANDEMIC AND DEALING WITH ITS IMPACT, THE PSYCHOLOGISTS OF THE CROATIAN PES OFFER THEIR SERVICES TO THEIR COLLEAGUES, ADVISING THEM ON STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH THE STRESS AND PRESERVING MENTAL HEALTH, WHILE IN PARALLEL A NEW COURSE OFFERING INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED ON AN EXISTING E-LEARNING PLATFORM.

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While dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the mental stress for PES staff is even higher than usual. To avoid negative effects and to keep the PES staff as safe as possible under these conditions, services addressing mental health can be a key component to care for the health situation among staff members and to maintain both their ability to work and their efficiency.

With the change of content and the extent of work in times of crisis, finding time to focus on mental health can be seen as less important or at least challenging. Courses on the CES e-learning platform are available to the employees 24/7, enabling participation in one's free time.

Name of the PES

Croatian Employment Service (CES).

Nature of measure (ad-hoc measure or permanent change)

Ad-hoc, with potential to be further developed and kept permanently.

When was the practice implemented?

The idea for the provision of psychological assistance and launching a new course on the e-learning platform that would focus primarily on preserving mental health in times of crises first arose in March 2020 as Croatia entered lockdown. With the introduction of shift work and telework as well as the temporary reallocation of staff to high priority tasks (e.g. job preservation measures), the content of work and means of communication changed drastically for most of the CES's employees. Since then, the central part of Croatia was also hit with two strong earthquakes. Accordingly, the scope of the course has been broadened to help with psychological reactions to such traumatic experiences.

Which organisation was involved in its implementation?

The Croatian PES in general, with the Department for CES staff development and training in charge of managing the content presented on the e-learning platform and developing new activities, as well as psychologists (who otherwise work as career guidance counsellors and trainers) engaged in offering those services.

Which groups were targeted by the practice?

All CES staff members, including management.

What were the practice's main objectives?

Ensuring the mental health of CES staff members in times of crisis and providing support to management in organising work effectively during challenging times.

What activities were carried out?

- ▶ Provision of counselling services by psychologists of the CES
- ▶ Development and set-up of an online course within an e-learning portal offering information on mental health issues.

<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>Only CES resources, especially those of the psychologists employed at the CES.</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>CES resources. Most of the relevant content and sources of information (leaflets, articles, video materials, etc.) used in the online course were developed by independent Croatian psychologists and their associations and collected in one place to make them easily available to CES employees.</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>Until December 2020, 1 659 visits to the online course have been recorded. The number of individual consultations of CES employees with their co-worker psychologists has not been recorded up to now. The content on the subject on the e-learning platform is constantly being updated with relevant information. Based on the positive feedback from CES staff, new activities are currently under development.</p>
<p>What (provisional) conclusions can be drawn regarding the implementation of the measure?</p>	<p>Feedback from CES staff, along with the recorded number of vis-its to the course <i>Managing mental health</i>, suggests great demand for such content and services.</p>



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