▶ Installation of a Business Continuity Planning

preparation for the outbreak of a Covid-19 pandemic

Contents

1 Objective

The purpose of this document is to provide an overall vision on key issues to be taken into account in preparing all sectors of socio-economic life for the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

Drawing up a plan for the continuity of services will specifically allow:

- to determine the need for human and material resources to defend against a Covid-19 pandemic

- to reduce the socio-economic impact in the workplace and among personnel
- to maintain the highest possible level of activity while protecting exposed personnel
- to maintain essential operations and functions (mainly through planned management of human and material resources)

The development of a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) highlights the pro-activity of the organisation. It allows personnel and partners to send a signal that they are aware of the problems that a Covid-19 pandemic can bring. The finalisation of such a plan will also allow the organisation to take stock of the tools and information needed to deal with a Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, this plan can also be used in other situations that endanger continuity.

The importance of the role of Human Resources Management (HRM) in the elaboration of the continuity plan is emphasised, given the possible absenteeism rate.

The information in this document comes from opinions of the World Health Organisation (WHO); it's also inspired by BCPs prepared by the governments of Canada and the United States. The information is general in nature and must be adapted to the situation of the working environment.

2 Basic assumptions

Basic assumptions for BCPs:

- A pandemic has consequences that can affect a large number of areas, sometimes even the whole world. Consequently, outside help may be limited.
- Organisations may face a significant absenteeism rate (possibly double the number of sick people) because many workers fall ill, stay at home to care for family members, or refuse to go to work to avoid contamination on public transport and in the office.

3 Service continuity planning in the event of a **Covid-19** pandemic

The impact of a pandemic fundamentally affects human resources with numerous consequences throughout socio-economic life.

For example:

- deterioration of essential services: information and telecommunications services, the provisioning of energy, water, food and transport, the banking system
- it becomes more difficult to obtain the supplies needed to continue operations (e.g. import and delivery problems)
- supply and demand will change significantly in specific sectors: there will be a high demand for health services (e.g. hospitals, doctors), security (e.g. the police), and communication services (e.g. internet, telephone) while the demand for leisure services (e.g. tourism, culture, some hospitality sectors) risks plummeting

Public institutions will not be able to deal with all the problems that may affect the Belgian population on their own. Coordination and cooperation between the public and private sectors are thus indispensable, as is an effective information policy, to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Every public organisation must be able to:

- prepare itself to ensure the essential functioning of its organisation
- ensure that socio-economic life continues and allow the public administration to be maintained in its essential areas of competence That's why the organisation must:
    - provide a system to monitor the situation, i.e. be able to review the situation within the concerned sectors
    - ensure that elements are disclosed, within all fields of activity that fall under its authority, that need to be examined to ensure continuity of services and create a BCP
- ensure an effective communication policy in each sector; that policy must be included in the global communication strategy defined by the public authorities (https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/)

4 Business Continuity Planning: checklist

The list of components to be taken into account for the development of Business Continuity Planning can be divided into five major themes:

- Reduce the impact of the pandemic on operations
- Protect the health of your personnel
- Develop a policy that must be implemented in the event of a Covid-19 pandemic
- Provide adequate training and communication
- Coordinate activities with external organisations and governments

Finished	Running	Not started yet	I Reduce the impact of the pandemic on operations	*Useful ideas to make this task a reality*
☐	☐	☐	**1.** Appoint a person and/or a team within the organisation that is responsible for coordination when preparing the Business Continuity Plan. This person (and/or team) is responsible for planning and coordinating crisis management in the event of a Covid-19 pandemic.	This person or team can be incorporated in a crisis unit. If necessary, make this appointment official with the help of the *HRM* department (e.g. with a precise job description)
☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	**2.** Classify the activities within the organisation according to their importance: - activities that are indispensable and must continue to operate at all times - activities that can be interrupted for a period of two weeks - activities that can be interrupted for eight to twelve weeks	It helps if each function in the organisation is defined in advance.
☐	☐	☐	**3.** Check whether these activities are in the hands of persons internal to the organisation or whether some of them are handled by external parties (e.g. subcontractors). In the event of a Covid-19 pandemic, make sure that the continuity of external activities is guaranteed.	
☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	**4.** Determine the resources necessary for the continuity of indispensable activities: - personnel: effective, competent, replacements for essential positions (provide a replacement system, i.e. two-person backup for each key post in addition to the person originally filling that post), a list of volunteers who would like to work during the pandemic, explore the possibilities for reinforcement by pensioners, temporary staff and students - material resources needed to maintain the activity (e.g. essential raw materials, energy supply, sufficient budget) - the legal basis and specific rules applicable during a pandemic situation (for measures to pay personnel, for any claims, holidays, occupational medicine, specific procedures)	Determine with the *HRM* department what specific procedures may be needed (e.g. a replacement system, list of volunteers, specific remuneration, etc.). Check the continuity of the computing systems with the *IT* department (e.g. the methodology for the federal government proposed by FEDICT).
☐	☐	☐	**5.** Train and prepare the people who will perform key positions in the event of a Covid-19 pandemic. This training covers internal and external staff depending on what is needed (e.g. white-collar workers with different titles/job descriptions as well as subcontractors and pensioners).	To be achieved with the help of the *HR* department.

SOURCE: National Crisis Centre, FPS Home Affairs

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Finished	Running	Not started yet	**I Reduce the impact of the pandemic on operations**	*Useful ideas to make this task a reality*
☐	☐	☐	**6.** Depending on the role of the organisation, develop and provide scenarios that increase or decrease demand for the organisation's products and/or services during a pandemic (e.g. probably less demand for restaurants due to possible constraints on public gatherings, the demand for assistance from emergency services increases and there is a greater need for hygienic equipment).	
☐	☐	☐	**7.** Depending on the role and needs of the organisation, determine the impact of a Covid-19 pandemic on the organisation and its financial budget.	Support from the *Budget/Finance* department depending on the various scenarios.
☐	☐	☐	**8.** Assessing the impact of a Covid-19 pandemic on national and international movements (e.g. reduced possibilities in terms of transport, possible quarantines, borders can be closed).	
☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	**9.** Study some alternatives: - other workplaces or working methods (e.g. teleworking, video conferencing) - transport (e.g. in the event of reduced public transport, ensure that those who perform essential functions can still come to work) - accommodation (e.g. view the possibility of overnight accommodation for persons performing essential functions)	Together with the *IT*, *HRM* and *IDPB* departments[1] assess the current situation regarding the possibilities in terms of infrastructure and logistical possibilities at the workplace (e.g. availability of premises, video conferencing equipment, teleworking, hygienic equipment) and, if necessary, with the concerned personnel at home (e.g. is there a computer with an internet connection)
☐	☐	☒	**10.** Stay informed about the Covid-19 pandemic through official, updated and reliable information channels (e.g. information originating from an official public health body).	Follow the news; visit the website https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/ or phone 0800/14 68 9
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	**11.** Draw up a plan for communication and update it regularly. That plan must include: - who is/are the person(s) in charge of coordinating the planning and management of the crisis in the event of a Covid-19 pandemic - who performs key functions, who are their substitutes - an information chain, including the essential partners (e.g. target groups, suppliers, clients) - a procedure for regular communication on the state of the organisation and its personnel	Within the *HRM* and *Communication* departments to be developed
☐	☐	☐	**12.** Organise an exercise to test the plan and update your plan regularly.	

[1] IDPB = Internal Service for Prevention and Protection at Work

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Finished	Running	Not started yet	II Protect the health of your personnel	*Useful ideas to make this task a reality*
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	**1.** Be prepared for and allow personnel absences in the event of a Covid-19 pandemic due to: - own illness - illness of a family member - collective restrictive measures or quarantine - closure of schools and/or the company - a reduction or even the abolition of public transport	Ask the assistance of the *HR/PO* department to provide for specific procedures in the event of absences, as appropriate.
☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	**2.** Increase measures that slow down the infection: - apply enhanced personal hygiene measures: wash your hands regularly with soap and dry them with a disposable tissue, use disposable paper handkerchiefs and throw them away, put your hand in front of your mouth in case of coughing or sneezing and then wash your hands - apply enhanced hygiene measures within the building: disinfect the office of a sick person (including his desktop, telephone, keyboard and office supplies), clean more frequently, collect bins containing used handkerchiefs often and without risk of contamination - fewer contacts between people - internally and with external partners: maintain a social distance (of at least one metre according to general health recommendations), do not shake hands, avoid common areas (canteen, meeting rooms)	Contact the *Purchasing* department to provide: - sufficient hygiene equipment (disinfectant, soap, paper handkerchiefs and disposable wipes, alcohol solution for hands, masks, gloves) and cleaning equipment (floor and surface disinfectant, specific garbage bags) - personnel to guarantee hygiene - a special arrangement of the desks
☐	☐	☐	**3.** Encourage the annual vaccination for the seasonal flu of high-risk personnel, thereby reducing the risk of absences due to illness (worst case prevention): absenteeism by influenza combined with absenteeism by COVID-19);	
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	**4.** Determine which personnel are at serious risk of exposure: - personnel who come into contact with lots of people - personnel who come into contact with people who are susceptible to the illness (e.g. health care professionals, hospital staff) - personnel in charge of hygiene and cleaning - professionals who come into contact with living or dead creatures that may be infected (e.g. poultry farmers, undertakers)	Together with the *IDPB* in particular, provide adequate equipment and protective measures depending on the risk run by the personnel
☐	☐	☐	**5.** Determine which staff members and corporate partners have specific needs. Integrate their needs into your preparation plan (health and psychosocial support)	
☐	☐	☐	**6.** Within the organisation, ensure that the environment, the air conditioning and waste is looked after.	Empty the bins regularly . Turn off the air conditioning.

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Finished	Running	Not started yet	**III Develop a policy to be implemented in the event of a Covid-19 pandemic** *(All tasks listed above and below must be prepared and elaborated. Take the organisation's dynamics into account. To clarify management's decisions, it's best to write out the policy and guidelines. Generic measures by sector can also be considered)*	*Useful ideas to make this task a reality*
☐	☐	☐	**1.** Establish compensation policies for white-collar workers and sick leave typical of a Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. unpunished absence, time off), as well as guidelines for when someone who has been ill is no longer contagious and can return to work.	Together with the *HRM* and the *IDPB* departments, determine which specific procedures and measures are needed. Do this in harmony with management.
☐	☐	☐	**2.** Establish guidelines for alternative workplaces and methods (e.g. teleworking) and flexible working hours (e.g. variable shifts)	Together with the *HRM* and the *IDPB* departments, determine which specific procedures and measures are needed. Do this in harmony with management.
☐	☐	☐	**3.** Establish guidelines to prevent the spread of the disease in the workplace (e.g. encourage personal hygiene and certain social behaviour, remove those showing symptoms of Covid-19).	Together with the *HRM* and the *IDPB* departments, determine which specific procedures and measures are needed. Do this in harmony with management.
☐ ☐	☐ ☐	☐ ☐	**4.** Establish guidelines for specific contamination risks for personnel that: - can be more exposed to/infected with the illness - are suspected of being ill or becoming ill at the workplace (e.g. immediate and compulsory sick leave)	Together with the *HRM* and the *IDPB* departments, determine which specific procedures and measures are needed. Do this in harmony with management.
☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	**5.** Define a policy for staff mobility to: - limit movements and travel to (national and international) affected zones - evacuate personnel working in or near the affected areas when a pandemic erupts - follow up workers coming back from the affected zone	Together with the *HRM* department, determine which specific procedures and measures are needed. Do this in harmony with management.
☐	☐	☐	**6.** Determine which public authorities and persons can activate and stop the organisation's action plan based on which procedures. This will disturb the organisation's professional activities (e.g. activities in the affected areas will be stopped) and imply the transmission of key messages to the concerned personnel.	Together with the *HRM* department, determine which specific procedures and measures are needed. Do this in harmony with management.
☐ ☐	☐ ☐	☐ ☐	**7.** Define a policy for crisis communication with: - the information before a pandemic occurs (anticipation and preparation) - internal and external communication during a pandemic: with personnel, partners and target groups, as well as with the rest of the population (using the media)	Together with the *Communication* department, determine which specific procedures and measures are needed. Do this in harmony with management.

SOURCE: National Crisis Centre, FPS Home Affairs

Finished	Running	Not started yet	IV Provide adequate training and communication	*Useful ideas to make this task a reality*
☐	☐	☐	**1.** Determine the official (national and international) sources of information that will provide precise and appropriate information on the pandemic as well as tools that allow preventive and action measures in the event of a Covid-19 pandemic.	The *Communication* / IDVP department must ensure that it has accurate and appropriate information (may vary depending on the risk incurred by personnel and partners) that is official (the department must be able to justify its sources).
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	**2.** develop and disseminate information about: - the pandemic itself (e.g. signs and symptoms of Covid-19, method of transmission) - the measures for personal and family protection and hygiene (e.g. hand hygiene, how to behave when you have to cough/sneeze, social distance) - the medical and social care provided in the event of a Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. special medical care provided by the public authorities in the event of a Covid-19 pandemic) - the possible treatments (e.g. use of antivirals, vaccines) - the action plans installed in the organisation	The *HRM* department, in cooperation with the *Communication* department, can agree: - to organise info meetings for the personnel (as well as training, depending on the risk incurred) - to hand out documents containing useful information and disseminate that information via the organisation's intranet - to direct personnel to useful sites, such as https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/
☐	☐	☐	**3.** Anticipate fear, rumours and misinformation among staff members and plan your communication strategy.	Together with the *Communication* department, ensure that clear and realistic but also reassuring information, which is adjusted according to the risk run by the personnel, is sent in due course.
☒	☐	☐	**4.** Make sure that the reporting is culturally and linguistically appropriate.	Ensure that the information is disseminated in all languages used within the organisation. At information meetings and when disseminating information, always mention the pandemic reference person within the organisation who can answer all questions.
☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	**5.** Install a contact system that maintains the social link between the personnel and their organisation, so that the following information can be passed on in a timely fashion: - the state of the pandemic within the organisation (absenteeism rate, the situation of production of work/services) and outside the organisation - the state of the activities for personnel and the company's partners, in the workplace and beyond - reminders about the contact system	For example, the *Communication* / HRM department can place a forum on its website where staff can obtain useful information and maintain social contact with the workplace and with fellow employees.

SOURCE: National Crisis Centre, FPS Home Affairs

Finished	Running	Not started yet	**V Coordinate activities with external organisations and the government**	*Useful tools to accomplish this task*
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	**1.** Cooperate with horizontal services such as: - the *HRM* department - the *Communication* department - the *IDPB* department (including occupational medicine, to verify the legal obligations towards personnel) - the *IT* department - the *Purchasing/Budget* department	The coordination is organised by management (e.g. within the management committee)
☐ ☐	☐ ☐	☐ ☐	**2.** Cooperate with external organisations such as: - insurers: find out what is covered by your insurances in the event of a Covid-19 pandemic - private companies for prevention services	
☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	**3.** Cooperate with public authorities such as: - the Federal Public Service Employment and Labour (for the protection of workers) - the Federal Public Service Public Health (for the health policy) - the Government Coordination and Crisis Centre (regarding interdepartmental and interdisciplinary coordination between public authorities)	
☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	**4.** Cooperate with the health authorities responsible for public health at the federal and local level and/or for emergency situations to: - align the organisation's internal emergency plan with the government's external emergency plan - describe what your organisation can offer to the community/sector	
☐	☐	☐	**5.** Share good practices with other organisations in your communities/sector to improve efforts to intervene in that area.	

SOURCE: National Crisis Centre, FPS Home Affairs