

Public Sector Leadership during COVID-19 Crisis

Paper



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Reference list

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Executive Summary

The role of leadership in the world of work, whether private or public, is a recurring theme in scientific literature, in political speeches and in employees' analysis, who, better than anyone else, denote the impact of its exercise in organisations.

The recognition of the importance of leaders increases in contexts of greater demand and complexity, such as those of reform and modernisation of public administration, or of crisis, such as the one we are currently experiencing due to the pandemic crisis, without forgetting public sector innovation ecosystems promotion.

The Portuguese Presidency conducted a research on the leadership during the pandemic crisis, where employees and managers perceptions' were identified, and limited in time to the end of the pandemic first wave.

Throughout this Paper several issues will be addressed, among which we highlight: employees perceptions of managers' performance during the pandemic; leadership styles; main challenges for ethical leaders during the COVID-19 crisis; best suited leadership style for the crisis context; skills to be improved to face the crisis; e-leadership skills and how did the crisis influence trust between managers and employees.

1| PART

Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a global impact on societies and economies never before seen or imagined, prompting governments around the world to enact a massive lockdown. From the very beginning, two major objectives were set for the public sector: to protect people's health and lives and to ensure that public organisations continued to provide essential public services. These objectives have influenced the way public organisations work, and in particular their management which, almost overnight, has had to adapt to manage employees at a distance.

In the light of this unforeseen context that could not be overlooked, there was a need to adapt the work to be developed in the framework of the II Strategic Domain - Ethics and organisational culture - of the EUPAN Strategy Paper 2019-2022 -, focusing on the effects of the

pandemic on ethical leadership and trust between managers and employees.

This approach complements the work carried out by the Romanian and Finnish Presidencies, on the challenges facing public administration organisations with regard to fundamental values and ethical provisions, as well as the trust placed in them by citizens. Thus, from a macro approach presented by the aforementioned Presidencies, the Portuguese Presidency has opted for a micro-level approach of daily working relations.

It was also aimed to ensure the German Presidency work continuity, which “endeavoured to collect knowledge acquired and experiences made by public administrations in handling the (first wave) of the pandemic” (EUPAN German Presidency report, 2020). To complement information provided by other Member States, such as the Netherlands was another objective. Wim Pullen¹ and Bartele Hoekstra² from the Center for People and Building of the University of Delft³ have conducted a national study, based on a survey addressed to all Dutch civil servants from April until October 2020 on remote & hybrid working.

However, our focus is on employees and managers’ perceptions of how organisations, and particularly managers, have dealt with this crisis. To obtain a holistic view on this subject will be important for future managerial and political decision-making.

Within EUPAN, the leadership topic has not been neglected. On the contrary, over the years, it has been part of the work programme of several presidencies with different focuses. The EUPAN Strategy Paper 2019-2022 gives an opening for this theme to be addressed again under the II strategic Domain. Thus, the Portuguese Presidency 2021 has decided to approach the issue of ethical leadership and trust in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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To this end, four questions guided our research, namely:

- What main challenges ethical leaders face during the Covid-19 crisis?
- What are employees' perceptions of their managers' performance during the pandemic?
- How did the crisis influence trust between managers and employees?
- What leadership style is best suited to deal with the crisis context?

Employees and line managers' perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 on motivation and leadership, collected through an online questionnaire at the end of the first pandemic wave, are our main source of information.

Before presenting the results obtained, it is important to distinguish between leadership in the public and private sector, and clarify the leadership concept in the public sector for the purposes of this Paper.

Methodological note

The main purpose of this Paper is to identify EUPAN central/federal public administration staff perceptions on line managers' performance during the pandemic's first lockdown from different perspectives.

The empirical research, based on the results of a survey on the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on leadership, was complemented by desk research, covering both literature and EUPAN countries' websites. Some EUPAN members also contributed by providing the results and findings of national surveys and studies carried out on the subject matter in question, in their public administrations.

The online survey, launched between August and September 2020, had as target audience EUPAN Members States, Observer Countries and European Commission. Hereafter this survey will be referred to as 2020 EUPAN survey.

Given the impossibility of having a representative sample of the study universe, a minimum of twelve answers per country including different age groups, gender and hierarchical position (snowball sampling) were collected within EUPAN. That is why we can only speak of perceptions and not of representative results. However, it fulfils the intent and

function of icebreaker and food for thought to spark discussion on the leadership topic in the public sector.

Study scope and respondent characterisation

The participants scope defined consisted of 27 Member States, the European Commission and 7 countries with observer status. We have received replies from 19 Member States and the European Commission. Of the 240 responses expected from these participants, we collected 164 answers.

The large majority of respondents (48%) were between 31 and 45 years old, 29% were between 46 and 55 years old, 12% were at most thirty years old, and 10% were from fifty-six to sixty-five years old. Only one respondent claimed to be older than 65.

On the subject of gender, 71% self-identified as female, 28% as male, and one person as non-binary. Furthermore, among our respondents, age is independent of gender ($p \geq 0,05$).

In what regards hierarchical position, 79% of respondents positioned themselves as employees and the remaining 21% said they were managers. The low number of managers ($n=33$) among our respondents will hinder the detection of statistically significant ($p < 0,05$) associations of hierarchical standing with other variables.

Like gender, the hierarchical position is, among our respondents, unrelated with age ($p \geq 0,05$). The same ($p \geq 0,05$) applies to our exploration of a putative relation between gender and hierarchical position. However, visual examination suggests this might be just a methodological artefact. To be precise, this may be a case of the sample size being too small to enable the statistical analysis to affirm that the greater percentage of men in managing positions (+14 pp.) cannot be accounted for by random fluctuation.

Collective or institutional answers were not taken into consideration regarding personal data.

Data processing

The surveys had a combination of open and closed questions, with a Likert scale being used to allow the expression of the respondents' opinion to a battery of questions.

For the treatment and analysis of the data received, a database was created in Excel and later exported to SPSS. The absolute frequencies and percentages corresponding to each type of response were calculated for each variable.

The results are, as a rule, presented in whole numbers. Consequently, there will be rounding error, and the percentages reported may add up to more than 100%.

2| PART

Public versus private sector leadership

Leadership is one of the most complex and multifaceted phenomena to which organizational and psychological research has been applied (King, Albert S., 1990), and even today, a universally accepted concept of leadership remains elusive as the understanding of it continues to evolve (Hunt and Fedynich, JAH, 2018).

The interest on public sector leadership as a study focal area, autonomous from the political and managerial sphere, has grown since the late 1980's, but is more pronounced from 2008 onwards. Researchers point out that the environment, structure, ethical responsibilities and the goals or end purpose of the public sector substantially differs from the private sector. Although private and public leadership share much in common (Van Wart, 2013), these differences have a direct impact on leadership. Public service leadership deals with complex stakeholder relationships with significant constraints in resources and ethical responsibilities.

Public leadership main differences, according to Rainey (2003) and Orazi (Orazi et al, 2013) are as follows:

- Greater control of stakeholders, resulting in higher accountability to a greater number of different stakeholders;
- Greater political influence;
- Greater constraints in public manager decision-making, both inwards and outwards;
- Higher levels of formalisation and red tape, in particular with regard to staffing and purchases;
- High public service motivation: less focus on high income, and more emphasis on work that is beneficial to others;

- Greater expectations for equitable and equal treatment and for transparency;
- Greater goal complexity and ambiguity.

3| PART

Public sector leadership

There is no agreed definition of public leadership. Several possible definitions have been put forward based mainly on the focus and role of administrative leadership⁴; the level of discretion (authority and autonomy), and the public service own values (the ethical dimension) including social justice and moral purpose, though not exclusive of leadership in the public setting, are key components of public service leadership (Vogel and Masal, 2015; Sun and Anderson, 2012; Van Wart, 2013).

In line with this view, Grint (2010; 2012) argues that four clusters of leadership concepts may be distinguished:

- Leadership as a personal quality (Traits and Charismatic leadership theories focus on the person);
- Leadership as a position (more restrict to management function);
- Leadership as a process, (social-influence process involving how an individual or a group influences others toward a particular goal or objective) (Avolio, Bruce, 2004),
- Leadership as a guiding purpose. In the case of the public sector, the leadership purpose is the commitment to the public service. (Van Wart, 2003).

Based on literature review regarding administrative leadership, Van Wart (2003) has collected five possible definitions:

- Administrative leadership is the process of providing the results required by authorized processes in an efficient, effective, and legal manner;

⁴ Administrative leadership focuses solely on the people and processes involved in leading, managing and guiding government and non-profit agencies (Van Wart, 2013 (p. 521)).

- Administrative leadership is the process of developing or supporting followers who provide the results;
- Administrative leadership is the process of aligning the organisation with its environment (especially changes at the macro level) and realigning its culture as appropriate;
- The key element of administrative leadership is its focus on service;
- Leadership combines the delivery of technical performance, with internal management of followers and external management of the organisation - all with a public service orientation.

In Van Wart's words, however, "leadership can be seen as a composite of several or all of these notions. Leaders typically are called upon to do and be all of these things - perform, develop followers, align their organizations, and foster the common good".

For the purposes of this Paper, we adopted the definition of public service leadership as stated in the OECD 2020 "Leadership for a high performing public service - Towards senior civil service systems in OECD countries" working paper, which brings together all these elements and adds adaptability and innovation that are crucial in today's administrations.

"The concept of leadership (...) refers to the way senior civil servants work towards governance objectives through/with others. This implies two basic dimensions. First, leadership is about achieving objectives, which change and improve upon the status quo, implying some kind of change, innovation and/or transformation. Second, leaders do not achieve objectives alone. Leadership is an interpersonal phenomenon, and so leadership is about the relationship between individuals or groups."

With regard to the concept of leader, we have adopted a broad perspective, including the middle managers, who are in the spotlight in the context of the current pandemic, due to their responsibility in managing teams, and ensuring a high performance of each organisational unit.

4| PART

COVID-19 pandemic impact

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought a global and unprecedented challenge to all governments and society sectors. The

urgent need to respond to the health crisis has led governments to define and adopt several drastic measures in order to control the spread of the virus. One of these measures was the national lockdowns, which have ranged from total to partial depending on the gravity of the situations since March 2020. As from the start, a double objective was established to protect citizens' health and wellbeing while ensuring public services provision on an ongoing basis. As such, as soon as lockdown measures entered into force a large proportion of the workforce at both private and public sector stayed at home and worked remotely whenever their functions were compatible with it.

Public sector work and workplaces were transformed almost overnight. The responsibility for operationalising this change was left to public organisations, placing an extra demand on public sector managers that were forced to quickly take decisions based on scarce and uncertain information, act to create conditions for employees to continue working and organisations functioning, and take part in joined-up coordination across policy silos and levels of government (OECD, 2020).

The need for an efficient and ethical public leadership has been even more pressing in this pandemic context in order to meet the two major objectives of protecting people and maintaining service delivery. Two challenges shared equally by the private sector.

The first question we set out to answer fits into this scope and refers to the challenges that ethical leaders faced during the pandemic. Therefore, what do we mean exactly by ethical leaders and ethical leadership?

5| PART

Ethical leadership

An ethical leadership is intrinsically related to an ethical conduct. We cannot but agree more with the Canadian Frank Iacobucci reflection when he states that “ethical conduct is valued for a number of reasons. In the public sphere, society generally expects fair and impartial treatment from public servants regardless of the level or position they occupy. (...) one of the badges of a progressive democracy is the honesty, impartiality, and fairness of its public service; it is just as important as the other components of a democracy. If the public service fails in this respect, it impacts not only the citizens affected but also can bring the administration of the democracy into disrepute. (...) Contemporary society place a great emphasis on ethical conduct

because, among other things, it deals with a risk that is in many ways more damaging than a financial one, namely, the damage to one's reputation and respect in our society. (Iacobucci; 2016).

Ethical leadership has been defined as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown et al., 2005).

According to Northouse (2004), foundations of ethical leadership are community-building, respect of others, serving others, showing justice and manifesting honesty.

The concepts apply both to private and to public sector settings. However, it is consensual that performance of public duties necessarily incorporates an ethical dimension. A set of principles, values, and rules of conduct are defined for public sector organisations and apply to civil servants, public employees and senior civil servants.

In the other hand, leadership is central for promoting ethics in the public service.

The promotion of accountability, professionalism, public service motivation and values-based decision-making, along with prevention of deviation from ethical norms is the overall ethical leader's roles.

An ethically competent manager demonstrates commitment to high standards of personal and professional behaviour, has knowledge of relevant ethics codes and laws, has the ability to engage in ethical reasoning when confronted with challenging situations, is able to identify and act on public service ethics and values, and promotes ethical practices and behaviour in public agencies and organisations (Menzel, 2010).

However, implementing ethical leadership is challenging due to competing values and high demands and standards public sector leaders face on a daily basis. To resolve these conflicts of values, the leader needs to be clear about the organisational values, promote their discussion and ensure that everyone knows them. This requires visible value-based decision-making.

Strong character traits that include integrity, authenticity, self-knowledge, sense of duty, optimism, consistency, perseverance and leading by example “walk the talk”, are required in order for leadership to be regarded as good and effective ethical leadership.

From all these traits, we highlight integrity for the relevance it assumes both internally and externally, influencing the image the general public has of public institutions. Van Wart (2013) argues that integrity encompasses several dimensions, namely, honesty and truth telling, trustworthiness, fairness, and conscientiousness (or concern for doing an effective job).

Ethical leaders face many challenges and the pandemic crisis was one of them. In this context, the main challenges ethical leaders have been facing during the Covid-19 crisis should be analysed.

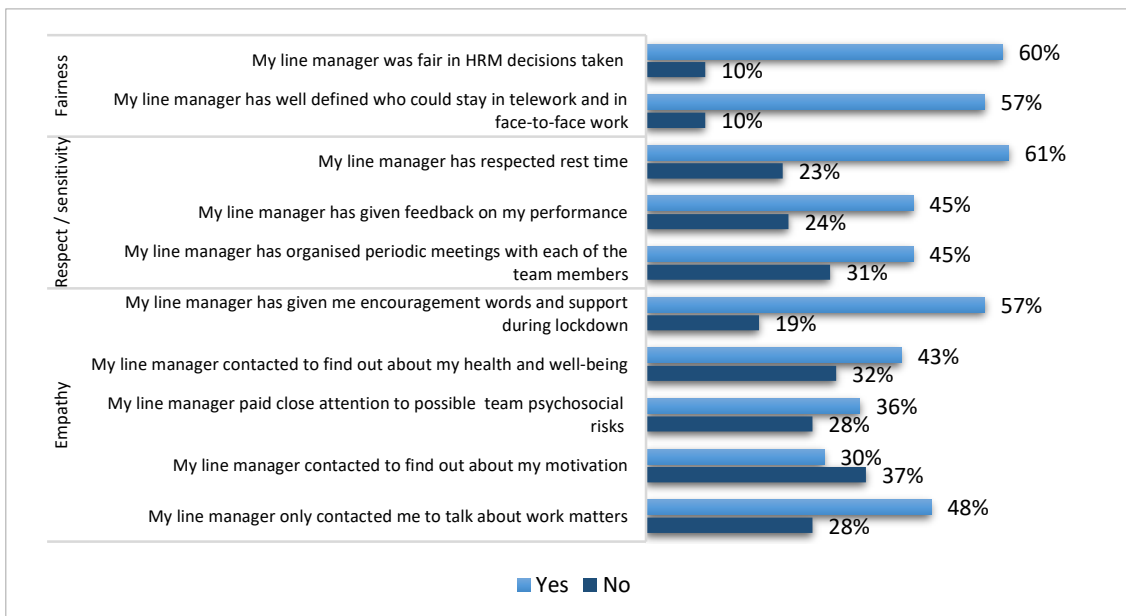
The challenges that leaders and managers have faced, and continue to address, regarding human resources management, are multiple and complex, and include:

- Creating the conditions for employees to continue to work in a safer manner, which has meant the adoption of large scale teleworking and smart working and more flexible work arrangements;
- Identification of essential tasks, which particularly covered those linked to technological support to teleworking, as well as all the others ones not compatible with remote working;
- Identification, based on the tasks performed, of who could work remotely;
- Providing an individual response to a multiplicity of situations that have arisen, such as the protection of employees most at risk, to whom it was not possible to work remotely;
- Reorganisation of workspaces and times in order to ensure the social distancing of employees.
- Preparing contingency plans Covid-19 for their respective organisations in accordance with the guidelines of the national health authorities.
- Ensuring the sustainability of employees’ motivation and well-being, and pay attention to possible mental health risks;
- Providing support to employees in a remote working environment, attending to both professional and personal needs.

In this context, we consider that the main ethical challenges would be related, firstly, to fair and transparent decision-making, secondly, to respect and sensitivity for each employee's unique situation and needs, and finally, to empathy translated into expressing concern for each employee's physical and psychological well-being.

Chart 1 shows the results on employees' perceptions regarding how managers have responded to these ethical challenges.

Chart 1: Employees perceptions of line managers' response to ethical challenges



Source: EUPAN survey 2020

A clear majority of respondents felt that managers showed fairness in their human resource management decisions; respect for the employees and their families rest periods; and empathy, by clearly given encouragement and showing support.

However, although employee perceptions were generally positive, the individual attention reflected in the feedback on work done and a clear demonstration of concern for the health and wellbeing of employees, as well as for the mental health risks associated with lockdown, did not achieved a consensus among respondents. And the same applies to non-work related personal contacts carried out by line managers.

On the other hand, concern for employees' motivation in this demanding period was not widely expressed by managers.

As a conclusion, the manifestation of empathy and communication (in this case linked to the communication purpose/content) seems to be a topics that need to be further developed. Managers contact cannot only be about work issues, but extended to the physical and emotional wellbeing and motivation of the employees.

6| PART

Employees' perceptions on managers' performance during the pandemic

The second question that guided our research addresses the assessment of classical management attributions such as effective human, financial and technological resources management in a crisis environment.

In this specific context, managers have strived to swiftly operationalize needed measures to ensure remote work and an efficient functioning of all organisational units. Workforce, including managers, were asked to work in new ways, and for the majority, in a new virtual environment.

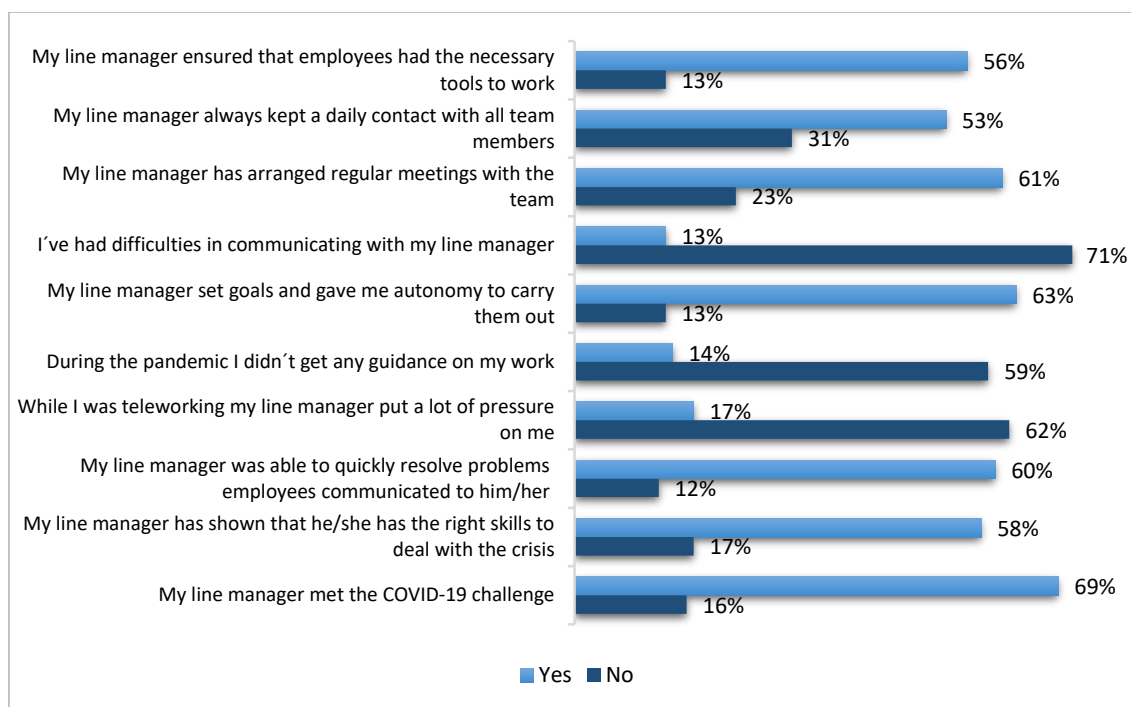
After the initial challenge of setting-up the framework conditions and practical arrangements to enable the remote work, such as equipment and a technological infrastructure capable of responding to a massive transfer of employees to distance work, the leaders had to face other challenges. The first consisted on dealing with personal uncertainties and doubts about the crisis situation itself, followed by more practical and operational issues such as supporting, guiding and controlling teams' work and cohesion. In this regard, was of particular relevance the need to establish and maintain new ways of individual communication with all team members to understand their availability and readiness to comply with tasks. One last challenge and outmost important one was to guaranty employees and organisational units' usual level of productivity.

The specificity of this context required particular skills, namely, e-leadership skills, to manage a remote workforce, and a shift on lasting assumptions about teleworking. In fact, teleworking requires a paradigm shift in human resource management, implying a transition from a control-based work culture to a trust-based one. This means giving employees greater autonomy and responsibility in the performance of their work duties.

In line with this analysis, Vadkerti (2020) argues that it has been shown that the forced recourse to teleworking has contributed to the creation of foundations capable of giving rise to a more modernised public sector in its work organisation models, which requires a change in the organisational culture still prevailing in most European countries.

On the other hand, concerns about employee performance appraisal in a virtual environment have also been raised. In this matter, the experience of the Portuguese administration's management model based on management by objectives proved to be an advantage in assessing teleworkers performance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chart 2: Employees perceptions of managers' performance during the pandemic



Source: EUPAN survey 2020

Respondents gave an overall positive assessment of the managers' performance during this period, with 69% of employees expressing the opinion that their line manager had met the Covid-19 challenge.

The majority felt that line managers had proceeded well in relation to holding regular meetings with the team. Indeed, contact with team members appears to have occurred on a daily basis, meaning that there were no difficulties in communicating with managers. These results are in line with the conclusions of the study developed by the Portuguese administration on the adaptation of organisational models of work in the central government administration during the Covid-19 pandemic,

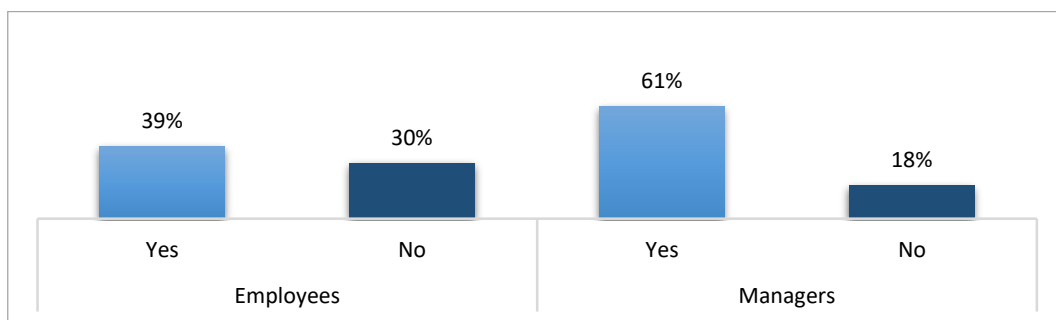
which indicates that more than 68% of the employees who responded evaluate the communication with their managers in a teleworking situation as good or very good.

With regard to work performance, the opinion that employees had autonomy to carry out their duties, with the necessary amount of guidance, and without being subject to unnecessary pressure, was consensual. In addition, managers proved to be able to quickly solve problems that arose and were reported by employees.

The demonstrated managers' capacity to respond to the many situations that have come across, reflects the increased workload experienced throughout this pandemic period.

Workload increases were felt by 43% of respondents, but it has affected managers more significantly than employees.

Chart 3: Employees and managers' workload perceptions during the pandemic



Source: EUPAN survey 2020

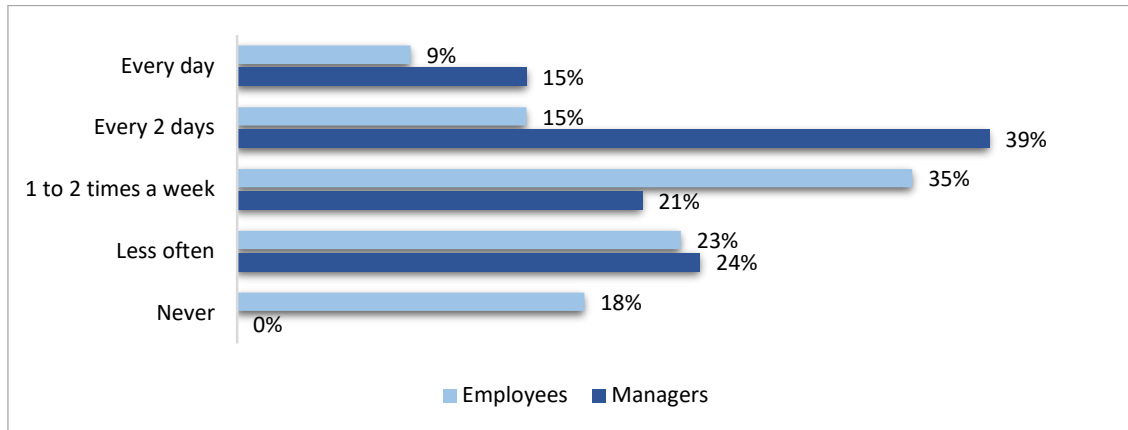
As for the frequency of work outside regular working hours during the first lockdown, to respond to work requests, the most frequent answer is that it took place one to two times a week (32%). Besides, 10% respondents did it every day, and 20% did it every other day.

On the other hand, only 23% of respondents work outside regular working hours more seldom than once a week, and 14% never do so. When analysing this information considering the variable position, we can see in chart 4 that managers experiencing work outside the regular schedule every day where 6 pp. (percentage points) above the corresponding figure for employees.

Nevertheless, the most significant difference in terms of hierarchical position is situated on the second rung of frequency (every two days), where managers are 24 pp. above employees. The higher workload reported by managers is easily understandable, given the higher level

of responsibility, complexity and demand that occurs in a context of crisis.

Chart 4: Frequency of work outside normal working hours by position



Source: EUPAN survey 2020

Employees' perceptions on managers' efforts to ensure the IT equipment that staff needed to work was again positive. As results in chart 2 show, 56% of respondents were of the opinion that line managers were able to secure them. For 13% of respondents, however, it was necessary to resort to private technology to be able to continue working.

A similar result was presented by the German study on the impact of the corona pandemic on national public service, conducted in the second half of 2020, stating that insufficient equipment in many locations led to two thirds of employees having to resort to private technology in order to continue working (Next: Public, 2020, page 11).

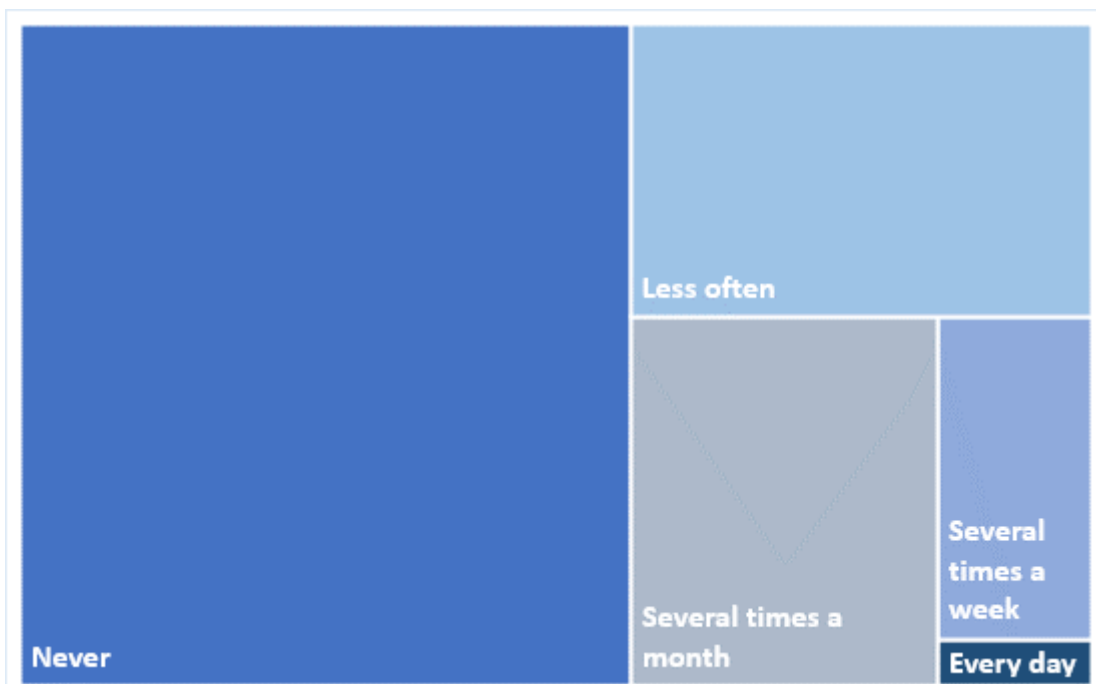
The Portuguese administration study mentioned above on the adaptation of organisational models of work in the central administration during the Covid-19 pandemic goes further and points to the lack of equipment and adequate technical conditions as one of the factors preventing the use of teleworking. The results show that among the employees who were in a teleworking situation, 37.02% say that the employer did not provide any means or essential equipment to carry out professional activities in teleworking mode, 34.70% say that there was such provision of means and equipment and 28.28% admit that it was only partial.

These results reveal organisations' low investment in equipment that enables workstation portability, reflecting a certain inaction or lack of willingness to change in the way of working. This situation may be justified, on the one hand, by the budgetary restrictions to which many

administrations have been subjected in the last decade and, on the other hand, by an organisational culture that favours face-to-face work, and tends to show a stronger control base orientation.

This line of argument is reflected clearly on the results obtained for the question on how frequently employees had worked remotely before this crisis (figure 5). Indeed, more than one out of every two respondents (57%) never have worked outside the office before the COVID-19 pandemic, and only 8% did it on a regular basis.

Chart 5: Frequency of remote work before the COVID-19 pandemic



Source: EUPAN survey 2020

The aforementioned German national study presents a similar conclusion. In its point 7 of the key findings: “For 45% of administrative employees, there was no possibility of working from a home office before Corona”.

In the case of the Portuguese central administration study, results also show that the use of telework before the pandemic was residual. The services that responded to the question indicated that prior to March 2020 they had only 1% or less of employees working remotely.

Finally, it should also be noted that 58% of the respondents (chart 2) considered that managers demonstrated the appropriate skills to deal with the crisis, against 17% who answered that they did not agree.

As an overall assessment, we can conclude that managers demonstrated agility, resilience and commitment in addressing this situation.

Referring to the performance of public service leaders during the pandemic, the OECD 2020 working paper on “leadership for a high performing civil service” argues that “Effective public service leaders rose to the challenge, leveraging new technologies and managing their workforces in new ways to protect their well-being while maintaining and boosting the delivery of essential services”.

Good and effective leadership is also a key requirement for building trust within organisations. The Finnish Presidency, in 2019, addressed the topic of trust and public administrations both at the macro level, i.e., citizens' trust in public organisations, and at the "micro" level, meaning the intra-organisational context or building trust within public administrations, which was widely discussed.

Our focus on trust is now framed by the pandemic and leads us to raise the question of how this crisis has influenced trust between public managers and employees. Before that, however, let us look at the definition of trust in a work environment and its components.

7| PART

Leadership and trust

Trust is defined as a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another' (Rousseau, Denise *et al.*, 1998). In work context, interpersonal trust is considered as an individual's or group's expectations that the word or promise, verbal or written, of another individual or group can be relied upon (Savolainen, Taina and Häkkinen, Sari, 2011).

From a psychological point of view trust declines most often when positive expectations are disconfirmed (Lewicki *et al.*, 2006), and vice-versa.

Trust and above all trustworthiness, i.e. the ability to be relied on as honest or truthful, is a basic element of workplace relations given its impact on employees' general well-being and on the creation and sustainability of a positive, supportive, safe, and collaborative working environment.

In approaching leadership, it is imperative to address the issue of trust, a key element in the effective exercise of the role of leader, particularly if we consider public sector leaders. The environmental complexity, in which they operate today, requires them to take on different roles considering the multiple stakeholders with which they interact. Public sector leaders need to be trusted political advisors, transformational leaders, effective social partners (Bonturi, 2019, Finnish Presidency Report) and efficient, motivational and engaging managers.

The key components for building trust are, according to our research, the manager's personality traits and skills, particularly interpersonal skills, together with ethical behaviour and dominant leadership style.

A set of personality traits such as openness, self-control, conscientiousness and predictability, as well as interpersonal skills like communication, active listening, collaboration and empathy are valued as indispensable for building trust in any workplace. Beyond these, it is the manager's sustained ethical behaviour, which translates into honesty, fairness, integrity, rule compliance, concern and respect for others, that contributes most to generating an environment of trust.

Reinforcing this idea, the OECD Council Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability (2019) advocates the promotion of values-based decision-making as a fundamental condition for building trust within public organisations.

Consistent demonstration of these traits, skills and behaviours will allow trust be nurtured and sustained. Trustworthiness, as a leadership trait and managerial skill, cannot be overemphasized. It should be on the top-three list of leader competences, along with the social skills of collaboration and communication (Savolainen & Häkkinen, 2011).

The debate on leadership and trust also focus on the difficulties and challenges of achieving trustworthiness, which have been widely addressed under the Finish Presidency in 2019. The main findings of the work developed at the time, pointed to several situations contributing to it:

- Firstly, to consolidate relationships of mutual respect and understanding, which are the basis for trustworthiness, is considered to be time consuming and “a central challenge in

leadership today is that all too often there is insufficient time to build trust” (Airaksinen, in Finnish Presidency Report, 2019);

- Secondly, in practice, leadership appears to be more a negative interaction than a positive one, i.e., managers tend to communicate only in bad moments;
- Lastly, public administrations increasing complexity leads to competing priorities, objectives and values which undermine managers’ capacity to act consistently in a fair, ethical, professional and competent manner. The multiplicity of values inherent to public service poses a challenge to values-based leadership, which translates into the constant management and resolution of tensions and conflicts between different public values. Tensions between democracy and bureaucracy; efficiency and equality; consistency, change and innovation; accountability and risk-taking are always being negotiated (OECD, 2019). Thus, the managers’ competencies and skills to lead ethically and to act on a trustworthy manner should be strengthened.

Difficulties in building trust are also emerging due to the increasing digitalisation of public services and the shift to a more remote working environment, which affects interactions between managers and employees.

Traditionally, trust is built on close personal relationships and on common experiences. Furthermore, personal interaction allows for physical signs such as eye-to-eye contact that reinforce team members’ complicity.

Working remotely there are less opportunities to physically come together, share experiences, and create such complicity. Building and maintaining trust becomes dependent on distance communication, thereby increasing the relevance of good, clear, open, honest and regular communication between managers and employees.

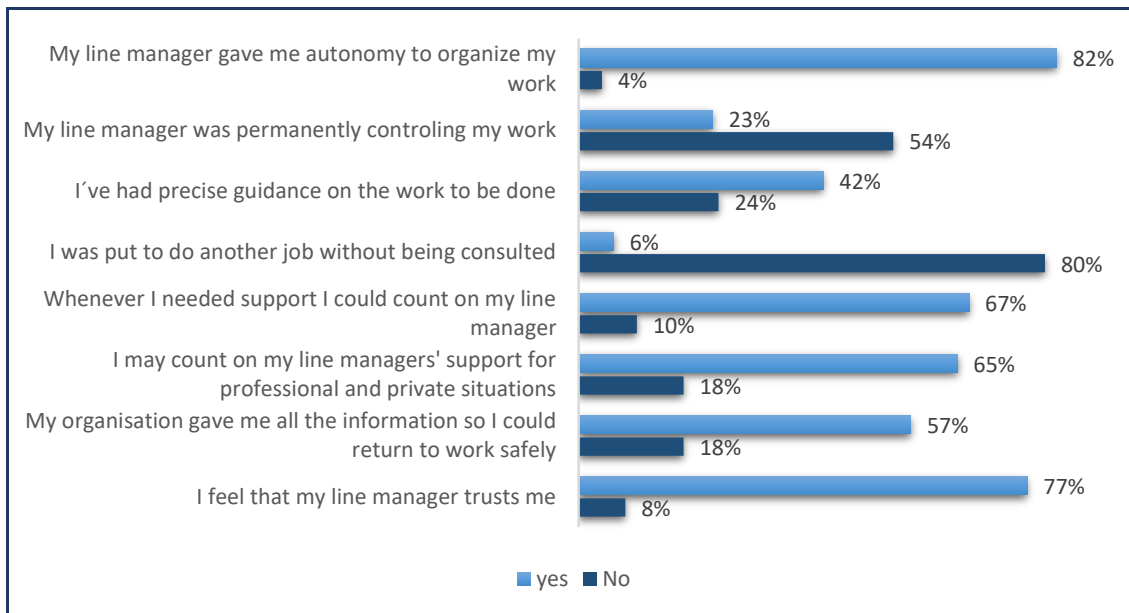
According to the Dutch national study “We work at home”, the possibility to contact the manager whenever necessary is one of the factors influencing trust between managers and employees. In fact, being able to easily approach the manager with *ad hoc* questions, discuss problems, agree on the support needed to develop work and have the autonomy to carry it out has a positive influence on employees’ satisfaction and reinforces the perception that they can count on their managers.

8| PART

How did the crisis influence trust between managers and employees?

The current pandemic has led to a considerable number of employees being placed in telework and has presented managers with the extra challenge of sustaining trust at a distance. The ability to show support, provide guidance and promote employee motivation through distance communication has been put to the test in this crisis context. However, managers seem to have handled the challenge well.

Chart 6: Perceptions on the crisis influence on trust between managers and employees



Source: EUPAN survey 2020

In general, employees recognised that they had the support of their managers for both private and work situations. They also felt that they had autonomy to conduct their work, albeit with the necessary guidance, which led to a general feeling that their line managers trusted them.

This staff acknowledgement is reinforced by the Dutch national study. This one seems to find a linear influence between employees' positive opinion of their managers, i.e. the perception that they can rely on their managers, and their feeling of having autonomy to plan activities, make decisions and take responsibility for their work. On the contrary, when managers look more closely at work progress and exercise more control, it is found to have a negative effect on trust between employees and managers.

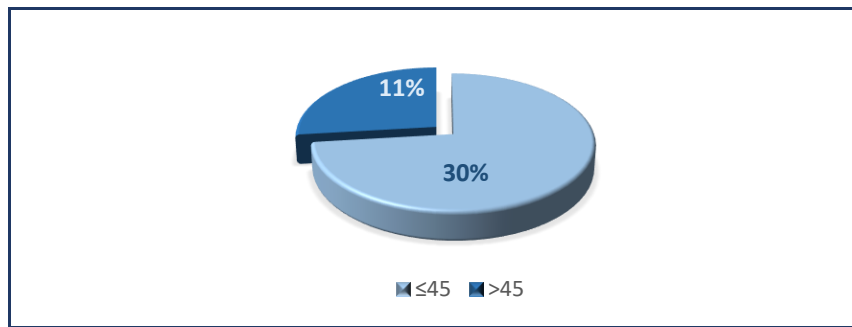
In secondment or mobility situations aimed at reinforcing areas that needed more staff to deal with the additional workload caused by the pandemic, employees were systematically consulted, which leads us to conclude that staff redeployment, when it took place, was on a voluntary basis.

Also interesting to note, in this regard, is the German Presidency survey on Covid-19 conclusion, which argues, “(...) less countries reattributed existing staff within their administration than chose to hire new staff – though of course some made use of both options. One explanation why new hires were generally preferred over secondments would be that many public authorities are short on staff as it stands: They cannot afford to further reduce their workforce even in exceptional circumstances. Another, that the legal and practical framework for secondments – voluntary or ordered – is not always as straightforward as it could be.”

The organisation also scores positively the fact of providing employees with the necessary information to return to work safely.

Employees' perception that they had autonomy to organise their work (82%) is confirmed by the opinion of the respondents' majority (54%) who rejected the statement that their line manager was permanently controlling their work.

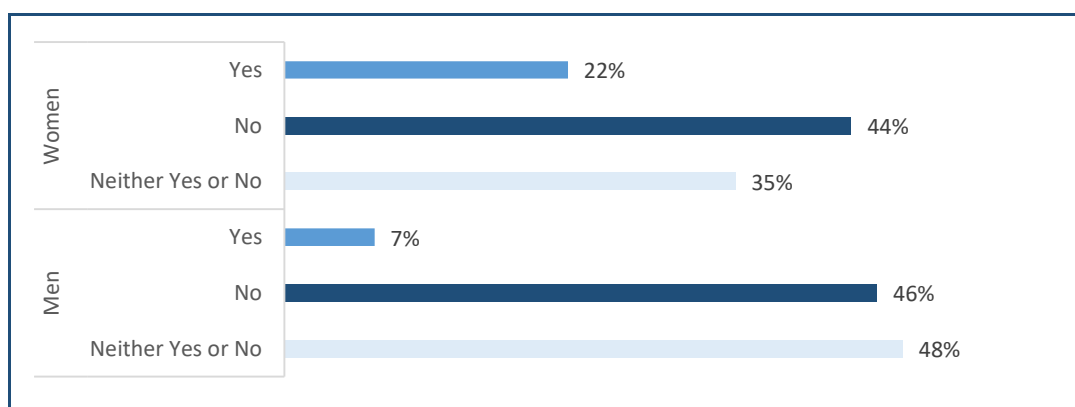
Of the 23% of the respondents who expressed the opinion that their direct manager had exercised permanent control over their work, 30% belonged to an age group under 45 years old. Only 11% of respondents over the age of 45 agreed with this statement, as expressed in Chart 7. These perceptions are in line with House's Path-Goal theory of leadership (1975, 1996) which argues that leaders tend to adopt different leadership styles according to employees' professional development stage, providing more guidance and exercising more control over less experienced employees, who tend to be younger, and giving more leeway to the more experienced ones.

Chart 7: Employees' opinion on managers' control over their work by age

Source: EUPAN survey 2020

As a conclusion, managers' behaviour in this period was considered adequate to foster trust. The pandemic did not have a significant impact on trust between employees and managers. Supporting this conclusion is the German national study outcome, which shows that "60% of respondents say they felt their manager was there for them during the Corona pandemic. Only one-eighth felt that this was not the case".

In view of the high positive opinion towards the statement, "whenever I needed support I could count on my line manager" (67%) combined with "I may count on my line manager's support for professional and private situations" (65%) we tried to understand if these results were linked to gender. However, opinions for the statement "I felt more comfortable asking my line manager for support in solving my problems because she is a woman" showed that gender does not affect the close relationship between employees and managers, as we may confirm in Chart 8.

Chart 8: Results by gender to statement "I felt more comfortable asking my line manager for support in solving my problems because she is a woman"

Source: EUPAN survey 2020

9| PART

Managers' performance overall assessment

Overall assessment of managers' behaviour and performance is mostly positive, as showed in the table below, although there is no consensus on the statement on e-leadership and the organisation's perceived investment in technology.

Figure 1| Employees perceptions on managers' performance during Covid-19 crisis

| Statements | Yes | No | Neither Yes or No |
|--|-----|-----|-------------------|
| Employees felt that managers supported them in both professional and private situations | 65% | 18% | 17% |
| Employees did not felt abandoned during the crisis | 9% | 76% | 15% |
| E-leadership experience during the pandemic has been positive | 48% | 12% | 40% |
| The HR was effectively and fairly managed by the organisation | 51% | 27% | 22% |
| Employees and managers considered that the organisation was better prepared to deal with a new lockdown | 65% | 13% | 22% |
| Since the beginning of the crisis, organisations have invested in modernising and expanding their technological infrastructure | 40% | 26% | 34% |

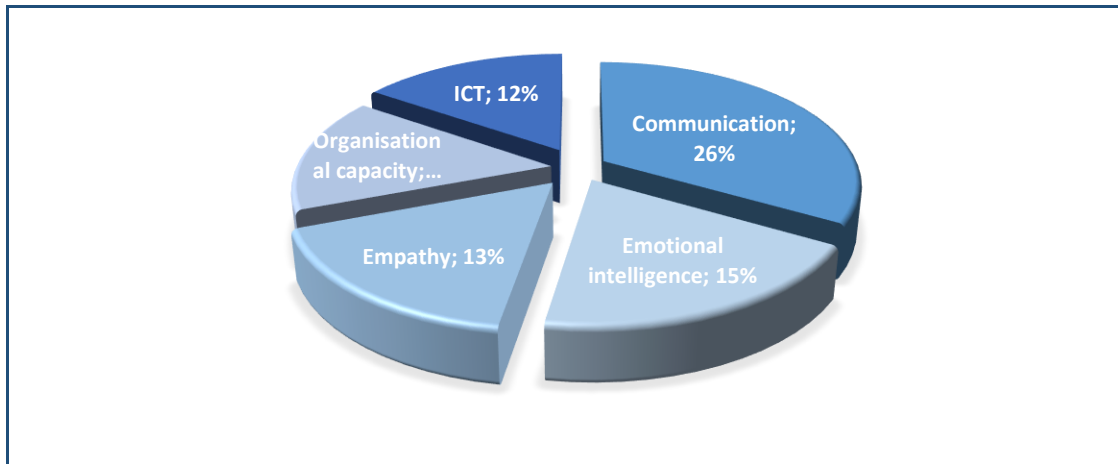
Source: EUPAN survey 2020

To understand employees' views on the skills that managers needed to cope with this most difficult time, they were asked to identify those that they considered essential, but which were demonstrated to a lesser extent or were even lacking during this period. Not surprisingly, Chart 9

shows that the five most frequently mentioned skills were communication (26%); emotional intelligence (15%); empathy (13%); organisational skills (12%) and ICT skills (12%).

These perceptions are in line with the aforementioned difficulties that managers experienced in communicating clearly and demonstrating empathy to the expected level by employees.

Chart 9: Skills to be improved to face the crisis



Source: EUPAN survey 2020

Today there is consensus that the pandemic besides challenging was and still is a learning opportunity for all, and remote management or e-leadership requires new competences. In spite of the different contexts, there is a lot of consistency in the types of leadership skills needed in traditional and virtual environments, and their differences are critical to success and failure (Van Wart et al, 2017).

E-leadership is considered to be “a social influence process embedded in both proximal and distal contexts mediated by Advanced Information Technology (AIT) that can produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behaviour, and performance” (Avolio et al., 2014: 107). Areas where digital skills for leadership are most important (Van Wart et al., 2017) include:

- E-communication skills - communication clarity, purpose and flow;
- E-social skills - good leaders support, blended communication means – virtual and face-to-face; network building;
- E-team building skills - membership identification; team motivation, structure, encouragement and accountability; team recognition (rewards, development and advancement);

- E-change management skills - provides change management techniques by pre-planning transitions, monitoring implementation, and refining technology practice with experience;
- E-technological skills - currency with relevant ICTs; blending traditional and virtual methods; knowledge of essential technology; IT security management;
- E-trustworthiness skills - creating trust through honesty, consistency, fairness, and general integrity; work life balance respect (e.g. e-communication restrictions – right to disconnect); ensure diversity monitoring.

10| PART

Challenges, skills and styles of today's public sector leadership

The challenges public managers face today are not limited to e-leadership.

Public sector leadership has grown in complexity as a result of developments in society, the political environment and technology. Citizens are more aware, demanding and increasingly eager to participate and cooperate in governance. The political environment is increasingly characterised by rapidly evolving agendas addressing emergent and more interconnected challenges. Technology it is seen as a support, facilitating and shaping the way of working, but it is also seen as a challenge, and more recently even as a threat (it may be the case of artificial intelligence).

The challenges managers face range from fiscal stress; workforce management against a backdrop of fewer resources and greater responsibilities; substantial technological and communication changes to pressures to lead horizontally both within and outside the organisation.

Consequently, the roles and tasks that managers are expected to play have grown in demand. In practice, the roles of policy advisor and organisational manager, efficiently managing human, financial, technological and material resources, remain dominant. However, intervening across organisational boundaries, sectors and jurisdictions (external actor) is increasingly important. As such, promoting the establishment of and actively participating in networks and partnerships is crucial to address ongoing and emerging policy

challenges, as well as to improve the impact of public services (creating public value). Furthermore, managers are expected to facilitate change by encouraging and rewarding innovation and creativity; make leading in diversity a top priority; be trusted partners to citizens and an ever-growing list of stakeholders (OECD, 2020), and, finally, to lead with integrity.

What skills managers need today and in the future?

Managers require different sets of skills, from leadership, management and technical to interpersonal or social skills, in order to perform well in today's complex and rapidly changing reality.

Technical skills (hard skills) refer to qualifications, experience and knowledge that normally make up management positions profiles. These profiles have changed over time from a more generalist and broadly legal background, until the first half of the 20th century, to more specialised and professionalised backgrounds (Hopman and Berg, 2015). The importance of substantive knowledge at the manager level has grown in recent years.

Several leadership and management skills sets have been defined, though there is no consensus on a model template. The United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has built a competencies framework around five executive core qualifications, namely leading change; leading people; results driven; business acumen, and building coalitions.

The competencies identified are considered to be the necessary ones “to build a federal corporate culture that drives for results, serves customers, and builds successful teams and coalitions within and outside the organization” (in OPM website). The following table is presented for example purposes:

⁵ In Leadership for a High Performing Civil Service, OECD, 2020 (page 8).

Figure 2: U.S. Office of Personnel Management Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ)

| ECQ | Abilities | Competencies |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Leading change | To bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organisation, to meet organisational goals, including the ability to establish an organisational vision and to implement it in a continuously changing environment. | Creativity and innovation; External awareness; Flexibility; Resilience; Strategic thinking and Vision. |
| Leading people | To lead people toward meeting the organisation's vision, mission, and goals, including the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts. | Conflict management; Leveraging diversity; Developing others and Team building |
| Results driven | To meet organisational goals and customer expectations, including the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analysing problems, and calculating risks. | Accountability; Customer service; Decisiveness; Entrepreneurship; Problem solving and Technical credibility |
| Business acumen | To manage human, financial, and information resources strategically. | Financial management; Human capital management and Technology management |
| Building coalitions | To build coalitions internally and with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, non-profit and private sector organisations, foreign governments, or international organisations to achieve common goals. | Partnering; Political savvy and Influencing/negotiating |

Source: Global definitions of leadership and theories of leadership development: a literature review, University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, in OPM, 2016.

Interpersonal or social skills (soft skills) are the behaviours, tactics or methods used to interact with others. These behaviours can be influenced by personal traits such as openness, kindness, self-awareness or extraversion (sociable or out-going). Common social skills

associated with workplace environment are communication, active listening, empathy, teamwork, flexibility and collaboration.

Kuperus and Rode have carried out a two-phase (2008 and 2015) comparative study⁶ on Top Managers in Europe which included as one of the subjects, the competencies profile applying to senior managers in the EU Member States (MS).

The authors of the study describe in depth what kind of leadership and leaders are needed in “today’s world: analytical, decisive and motivated as well as aware of the environment in which they function”. A comparative graph showing the list of skills applicable to senior managers during the study period was constructed. From it, we conclude that in seven years the skills that senior managers need to perform their tasks have double, reflecting civil service increasing complexity.

The relevance assumed by participation in networks and partnerships required the development of collaborative and co-creative skills, but also of negotiation. The scope of leaders' action has also led to an emphasis on analytical, crisis management and innovation skills.

Chart 10| Top managers’ competencies and competency profiles in the EU MS: (2008 and 2015)



Source: H. Kuperus and A. Rode, Top Public Managers in Europe, 2016

⁶ Herma Kuperus and Anita Rode, Top Public managers in Europe, 2016 (EUPAN)

The OECD's latest work on leadership draws on the findings of nine case studies that aimed to provide insight into senior civil servants' leadership skills required for working on complex public sector challenges. Notwithstanding the diversity of themes and national contexts represented by the case studies, it was concluded that SCS required common leadership capabilities. Whether the focus was on digital leadership, collaboration, or inclusive leadership, there was more overlap than great differentiation of the identified core leadership capabilities.

Core leadership capabilities:

1. Values-based leadership: Individual SCS are required to negotiate multiple and often competing values that guide their decision making towards the public interest. SCS are expected to work in ways that promote common public values – through e.g. higher standards of accountability, transparency, integrity, equality, and ethical behaviour.

2. Open inclusion: Successful leaders challenge their own perceptions by searching for voices and perspectives beyond those they normally hear from (open) and ensuring psychological safety for these voices to contribute to their leadership challenges (inclusion). SCS use particular mixes of traits and behaviours so that employees and stakeholders feel included and valued. This includes traits such as compassion, respect, empathy, engagement, empowerment, humility, courage, accountability, self-reflection/awareness (of one's own biases); cultural agility, openness to diverse points of view, the ability to motivate and inspire diverse teams and serve underrepresented groups.

Openness to input and ideas is also a prerequisite for leading public sector innovation, as ideas come from all directions, whether top down, bottom up, or outside in.

3. Organisational stewardship: SCS reinforce a trust and values-based culture and equip their workforce with the right skills, tools and working environments.

SCS translate political objectives into tangible impact through the organisation they lead. They exert influence through this organisation using communication tools, rewards and sanctions, and by assigning resources and building capability. This could be very transactional, but in many cases it is a kind of collaboration – leaders are increasingly expected to surround themselves with people who complement their own skills and capabilities, and delegate appropriate authority to them. The SCS's job is then to develop common meaning and

understanding, to foster a trust-based collaboration with and among a range of subject matter experts across their organisations.

4. Networked Collaboration: Finally, looking beyond their own organisation, successful SCS are adept at collaborating through networks, with other government actors, and beyond.

In today's public sector governance, groups need to come together in new ways to achieve their goals, and this may include collaborations among multiple ministries and agencies; levels of government; NGOs and the private sector.

This requires SCS who are able to see and understand their own role within a larger delivery system and to identify and map the other actors in that system. SCS then build trusted relationships with those actors, developing networks to share information, generate common understanding and collaborate on effective responses.

Source: Leadership for a High Performing Civil Service, OECD, 2020

In 2014, Zenger and Folkman published the results of a study on "skills that have the greatest impact on a leader's success in the position held". The following chart was drawn based on the interviewees' answers.

Chart 11| Skills leaders need at any level



Source: Zenger and Folkman, "The skills leaders need at every level", Harvard Business Review, 2014

As there is a variety of sources with the definition and listing of key competencies, which leaders need to meet the challenges of Public

Administration today, and in situations of greater demand, such as the current pandemic crisis, we tried to draw up a summary table presenting key skills for each specific domain.

The table below has been drawn up based on the aforementioned sources, to which was added the data from the World Economic Forum's report on the future of work, published in October 2020. This one presents the skills needed for the workforce in general in the current and future context, i.e. this new and more digital normal. It were also taken into account the digital skills public sector leaders need as identified by Van Wart et al. (2017); the results of the study "Next Public Leadership: Towards a vision for SCS leadership in the twenty-first century", developed by Hopman and Berg, from the Leiden University. This study presents the public service leaders' challenges in this century, as well as the competences needed to meet these challenges. The listing of managers' competences to be developed through training in the Deutsche Bundesbank was also considered.

Figure 3| Key skills for public sector managers

| Domain | Skills |
|---|--|
| Leadership and Management | |
| Leading People | Conflict management; Developing others; Team building; Inspiring and motivating others. |
| Leading Change | Initiative; Creativity and innovation; External awareness; Flexibility; Resilience and Vision. |
| Results orientation | Citizen and public service orientation; Output focus; Collaboration; Strategic orientation; Change and innovation focus; Resources optimization; Planning and organization. |
| Problem solving/conceptual intelligence | Strategic thinking; Analytical thinking; Critical thinking; Environment awareness; Strategic vision; Complex problem solving; Reasoning and ideation; Systems analysis and evaluation; Judgement (which means being able to make an informed assessment in line with primary objectives based on knowledge, experience, and an evaluation of |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| | relevant aspects); Technical or professional expertise. |
| Accountability | Willingness to assume responsibility (which means using decision-making scope, delegating, taking responsibility for outcomes and learning from mistakes). |
| Networking | Cooperation; Relationship building; Collaboration; Persuasion and negotiation; External environment awareness; Trust building with different stakeholders. |
| Partnerships/Building coalitions | Political savvy; Influencing/negotiating; Institutional representation and collaboration. |
| E-leadership | |
| E-communication | Communication clarity, purpose and flow. |
| E-social skills | Good leaders support; Blended communication (virtual and face-to-face); Network building. |
| E-team building | Team motivation, structure, encouragement and accountability; Team recognition (rewards, development and advancement); Membership identification. |
| E-change management | Provides change management techniques by pre-planning transitions, monitoring implementation, and refining technology practice with experience. |
| E-technological skills | Currency with relevant ICTs; Blending traditional and virtual methods; Knowledge of essential technology; IT security management. |
| E-trustworthiness | Creating trust, honesty, consistency, fairness, and general integrity behaviour; Work life balance sensitivity (e.g. e-communication restrictions, like the right to disconnect); Ensure diversity monitoring. |

| Social skills | |
|---|--|
| Communication | Active listening; Sustained dialogue; Information flow. |
| Team building | Interpersonal relationship; Cooperation; Development and motivation of employees. |
| Motivation | Being a credible role model; Creating an atmosphere in which all staff are committed to the organization's objectives. |
| Inclusion/Diversity | Diversity orientation; Openness to diverse points of view; Multicultural competencies; Respect; Self-reflection/awareness (of one's own biases). |
| Ethical Leadership | |
| Building trust | Interpersonal skills (openness, self-control, conscientiousness, consistency); Values orientation; Honesty; Fairness; Rule compliance; Concern and respect for others. |
| Embodying and imparting public service values | Higher standards of accountability, transparency, integrity, equality, and ethical behaviour. |
| Appreciation | Treating each other with respect, transferring responsibility, acknowledging performance and working together constructively. |
| Equality of opportunity | Creating fair and transparent conditions so that all staff members can successfully contribute and develop their skills. |
| Behavioural skills | Empathy; Adaptability; Capacity to anticipate consequences; Determination; Capacity to manage ambiguity; Social sensitivity. |
| Personal Skills | Comfortable with ambiguity, change, pressure and contrarities; Agility; Creativity, originality and initiative; Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility; Persuasion and negotiation; Self-management, self-awareness, self-reflection, self-confidence and self-development orientation; Responsibility and commitment to the service and Specialized knowledge and experience. |

Source: Own elaboration.

After having addressed the issue of the skills needed to deal with public administrations complexity, another question arises and it relates to the leadership styles that appear to be most appropriate for today administration, and for crisis periods.

However, before trying to answer this pertinent question, we will try to define the concept of leadership styles and, in a non-exhaustive way identify some of the leadership styles most frequently mentioned in literature.

Leadership styles

Leadership style definition encompasses several components. Factors such as personality traits, experience, skills and abilities of individuals, combined with the organizations' needs and culture, will influence the development of a specific leadership style.

Each leader is different and tends to combine various leadership styles to be effective in his/her role. Leaders tend to adapt their style according to the roles or duties to be performed and the interlocutors/parties involved. "House's idea of leaders matching styles to different situational demands has nearly universal support (Van Wart, 2013).

Hersey and Blanchard (1972) introduced this idea in a simple way, advocating that leaders needed to pay close attention to employees' developmental, and related psychological states, as they mature and adjust their styles accordingly. For example, employees need training and more guidance when they are new and inexperienced and so accept a more directing style. On the other hand, when employees are reliably competent and almost entirely self-directed, the ideal style is delegating (Van Wart, 2013).

As a general principle, leader's behaviour should be guided by ethics and morals, both on a personal and professional level. On a personal level, they should demonstrate a high level of awareness of their values and moral principles and the ability to use them as a guide when faced with ethically ambiguous situations and dilemmas. At the professional level, the role of a leader is continuously promoting decision-making based on ethical values throughout the organisation and among those being led. As such, ethical leadership should be integrated with – not separated from – other leadership styles (EUPAN Presidency Report, Finland, 2019), which means that ethical leadership features should complement and be a feature itself of all other styles.

Sociopsychologist Kurt Lewin developed a framework in 1939, which formed the basis for many of the approaches, which followed on this subject. According to his framework, there were three major styles of leadership: Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-Faire. Nowadays, and based on literature researched, seven more common leadership styles are identified⁷, adding to these three, namely bureaucratic, transactional, transformational, charismatic, coach, strategic and servant style.

Although each style has its own characteristics, we can classify them based on whether they are more “Directive” or more “Delegative” styles considering the decision-making degree of centralisation or decentralisation; the employees level of participation in the organisation and the main leadership orientation, i.e., focused essentially on obtaining results and increasing productivity or employees’ development, enabling them to perform better.

Autocratic and bureaucratic styles show a more directive character. Decisions are taken by leaders on their own or with a small trusted group without employees’ involvement. The leader centralises power and has absolute control over work and employees. A strict reward and punishment system is implemented to achieve results.

Employees lack freedom and autonomy in performing their duties, which is an obstacle to innovation and creativity. In such an environment, staff turnover and absenteeism can be high.

Bureaucratic style

The bureaucratic style is linked to a hierarchical organisational structure where each employee has a defined list of responsibilities, and there is little need for collaboration. Employee contributions can be considered, but in most cases, the leader tends to reject them when they conflict with the organisation’s past policy or practices.

These styles are best suited in emergency situations (health, civil protection), contingency situations where there is a need to meet short deadlines or in situations requiring centralised control (armed forces, negotiations with external organisations). They are also suitable when employees need great supervision because they are new or inexperienced or lack appropriate qualifications or skills.

⁷ Without prejudice to other styles identified in literature, as they do not gather consensus or are still at a very early stage (e.g. authentic leadership) were not mentioned in this Paper.

Transaction and democratic styles

Transaction and democratic styles focus is on performance, the setting of targets and efficient use of resources to achieve them. The leader makes the final decision, but contrary to authoritarian styles, participation of employees in decision-making is promoted and valued, especially regarding the democratic style.

In the particular case of transactional leadership, a specific incentives and repercussions system (usually in the form of monetary reward for success and disciplinary action for failure) is negotiated between management and employees. Transactional leaders are also focused on mentorship, instruction and training to promote goals achievement.

Transactional style is best suited for organizations or teams tasked with achieving specific goals or situations entailing high degree of precision or technical expertise. A democratic approach is most effective in situations where quality is more important than productivity.

Transformational leadership

In contrast to transactional style, the transformational leader focuses on employees' personal and professional development and on the organisation's growth and change.

Transformational leaders focuses on clear communication, goal setting and employee motivation. Employees are led out of their comfort zone, and inspired to permanently pursue and achieve different and higher goals. The leader-follower relationship is built on mutual respect, trust and loyalty, common values and vision sharing.

The impact on the organization's performance is highly positive, allowing transformational leaders to truly commit to change the organisation.

Transformational leaders embrace different leadership behaviours. They act as role models and show ethical behaviour, with subordinates tending to identify with them (idealized influence). They use inspirational motivation by articulating an appealing vision of the future, challenge followers with high standards, speak with optimistic enthusiasm, and provide encouragement and meaning for what needs to be done. In addition, transformational leaders promote employee involvement by encouraging them to express their ideas and stimulating them to view issues from new perspectives (intellectual stimulation). Finally, they show individual consideration when dealing with others as individuals, showing concern for employees' well-being,

needs and aspirations, promoting their development and empowering them.

Strategic leadership

Inspirational motivation brought by the transformational approach has influenced strategic leadership that, from a simplistic point of view, refers to creating a vision for the organisation, defining the steps to achieve it and involving, motivating and persuading subordinates to adhere and strive to accomplish it.

Similar to transformational leadership, strategic leaders' main purpose is to bring about change, to meet the vision or long-term focus. To this end a diversity of external and internal factors that challenge the organization are taken into account. Each leader shall design a strategy that leads to transformation in the structure, processes, and employees' development and empowerment.

Six key capabilities that a strategic leader must master to be effective have been identified. These are the ability to anticipate, which means predicting change and react to all situations; the ability to challenge the status quo and strive for change; the ability to interpret the surrounding world with a fresh insight; the ability to decide on the basis of different inputs and choose from multiple options; the ability to align different perceptions, finding common ground and negotiating; and the ability to learn along the way and adapt one's own conduct.

Under these leadership styles employees' involvement in decision-making is high and a two-way communication system is in place. The focus is on achieving a vision set for the organisation, which may require constant change. Employees' development is a priority and a means to reach the final goal, though regarding the transformational approach there seems to be an authentic concern with their wellbeing and growth both from a personal and professional point a view.

Charismatic leaders

Highly influenced by transformational leadership and by Max Weber's theories of power and authority, charismatic theory recovers a trace-based approach to leadership.

Charismatic leaders are visionary, self-confident, with strong convictions and a great need for power (House, 1977). They are *verbally eloquent, sensitive, creative, and resort to emotion to bond and captivate people. Moreover, they are risk-takers* driven by convictions and commitment to their cause. Charismatic leaders inspire and

motivate followers to perform at high levels and to be committed to the organization or the cause.

On the downside, charismatic leadership risks arrogance, grandiosity and a lack of ethical behaviour (Orazi, 2013; Van Wart, 2013) when leaders are driven by self-interest or poor judgment.

Coach-style leaders

Focused on increasing employee performance and growth, coach-style leaders are committed to creating a learning environment. Employees are encouraged to develop different knowledge or skill sets as leaders assign them new tasks to try out, always offering constructive feedback and guidance. The aim is to achieve a good balance between support and challenge that will allow for continuous improvement.

Coach-style leaders commit to strategies to foster good communication and collaboration among team members and encourage them to strive independently for better results.

Laissez-faire style

Decentralised decision-making is the main feature of the laissez-faire style, and a step forward in employee development. The laissez-faire leader focuses on employees and teams' autonomy and independence. Decision on working methods, individual roles and pace of work is delegated to team members. The leader provides overall direction and support.

This leadership style can be effective in work environments where team members are highly qualified, well trained and motivated, and also share the leader's vision.

Servant leadership

The leader-subordinate roles reversal is the corner stone of the servant leadership approach.

The modern concept of servant leadership was coined in 1970 by Robert Greenleaf, arguing that "Service to followers is the primary responsibility of leaders and the essence of ethical leadership".

Servant leaders choose a power-sharing model of authority by giving priority to the needs of their team members and encouraging collective decision-making. They often lead by example and show integrity, empathy and generosity.

This approach, according to the theory proponents, will create a positive corporate culture that will result in a high level of morale among team members and thus high levels of organisational performance. However, on the downside, these leaders may lack authority and find themselves involved in a conflict of interest by putting their employees ahead of the organisation's objectives.

Ethical leadership

Integrity should be highlighted from for the relevance it assumes both internally and externally, as it influences the image that the general public has of public institutions. In the view of Van Wart (2013) integrity encompasses several dimensions, namely, honesty and truth telling, trustworthiness, fairness, and conscientiousness (or concern for doing an effective job).

However, implementing ethical leadership is a challenging and Herculean task due to a variety of factors, from which we highlight the following:

- The belief that in daily management only compliance with legal and regulatory limits is required. The application of ethical rules in the workplace as in other aspects of life is not seen as necessary (Carroll, 1987). Furthermore, it is seen as time consuming and hard work “to proactively consider ethical standards in day-to-day business practices, to communicate ethical standards to employees, to make decisions with ethics in mind, and to continuously monitor the alignment between one's own behaviour and espoused ethical values” (Brown et al., 2005).
- To balance competing values, such as 'democracy and bureaucracy; efficiency and equality; consistency, change and innovation; accountability and risk-taking, (OECD, 2019), and different management priorities, like employee development and meeting organisational objectives in daily practice is considered as a highly complex task.

Dark side of leadership

In summarising the various leadership styles, we cannot fail to mention the less positive dimension that is sometimes present in leaders, which has not been given due attention. In their article on “The dark side of leadership and management”, Alma Harris & Michelle Jones (2018) start by citing that “the destructive or counter-productive forms of leadership and management have received considerably less attention, in the empirical literature, than those associated with more positive

outcomes. Yet there is a growing body of literature that highlights why and how leadership and management may not always be a force for good (Cohen 2018). This evidence base points towards the negative features or the 'dark side' of leadership and management practices (Woestman and Wasonga 2015)".

A leader's personality that reveals traits such as narcissism, control, arrogance, selfishness, interpersonal insensitivity, among others, can lead to abuse of power, lack of empathy and unethical behaviour. The emergence of the so-called "dark side of personality" which incorporates, according to authors such as Kurtulmus (2019), Redmond (2014) and Jones (2011), these personality traits, prompts leaders to prefer to follow personal interests and hidden agendas, disregarding collective interests and benefits. The dark side of leadership comprises "bad leadership practices that are harmful and provide negative outcomes for organizations, their staff and even the public" (Kurtulmus, B. E., 2019).

11| PART

Leadership style best suited to deal with the crisis context

In order to understand the respondents' opinion as to the leadership style demonstrated in this pandemic period by their line managers, information was structured around two factors.

The first one focused on the opposition between managers applying control over the employees or granting them autonomy. Statements such as "my manager was permanently controlling my work"; "while I was teleworking, my manager put a lot of pressure on me", "during the pandemic, I've communicated on a daily basis with my manager" and "my manager gave me the autonomy to organise my work", among others, were considered.

The second factor, built on the contrast between outcome-oriented vs people-oriented leadership, took into consideration statements, such as: "my manager only contacted me to talk about work matters"; my manager was able to find a solution for the less qualified employees whose work is not compatible with teleworking"; "my manager has arranged regular meetings with the team" and "my manager contacted me to find out about my motivation".

When the results were analysed through the lens of the independent variables age and position we found differences both in terms of the

broad age groups positioning along the *Laissez Faire* factor, with older respondents scoring higher, and in terms of the hierarchical positions' relation with *People-oriented vs Outcome-oriented*, with managers more aligned with the first pole.

Chart 12| Leadership styles perception during the pandemic



Source: EUPAN survey 2020

Differences in perceptions regarding people versus outcome-oriented styles can be justified by the dual objective set by Governments within the lockdown, i.e. on the one hand, to protect citizens' health and on the other hand, to maintain service delivery at a regular level.

Employees' perceptions of managers' and organisations' orientation towards outcomes or performance may be influenced by governments' focus on maintaining service delivery, widely disseminated even through the adoption of campaigns and slogans, as is the case of the Portuguese administration, which has taken on the slogan "We are on".

By contrast, the majority of the managers considered that the main orientation or concern in this period was with people and their safety and health.

Considering the results for the independent variable age, it is interesting to note that the different perceptions assumed by the employees within the age groups analysed are in line with the aforementioned Path-Goal theory of leadership (House, 1975, 1996). As such, younger employees considered that they have experienced more guidance and control from managers, in contrast to older employees who felt greater autonomy in the organisation and execution of their tasks.

In short, according to survey results, the most suitable leadership style for times of crisis seems to be one that includes skills such as communication, empathy, organisational capacity, emotional intelligence and ICT and, on the other hand, embraces a balanced orientation towards people and results.

The research conducted found a diversity of opinions in this area. Asencio (2016) argues that scholars have found both transactional and transformational leadership behaviours to be positively related to performance within government agencies. However, to achieve the best results leaders needed to possess both types of leadership (Bass, 1985). On the one hand, transactional leadership clarifies roles, objectives to achieve, and rewards for improved performance. On the other hand, transformational leadership provides an overarching sense of direction and vision (Van Wart, 2003), and do not rely on financial incentives to motivate employees.

Integrated leadership

However, there is a growing consensus that the transactional-transformational dichotomy and its top-down approach is not the most appropriate for the new ways of working in the public sector. In this line of argument, Orazi, et al. (2013) acknowledge that "Researchers and practitioners have more recently shifted their attention toward 'integrated' leadership". The most suitable leadership style for public administration environments seems to be a combination of transformational and transactional behaviours (ensuring clarity of desired outcomes, increasing followers' intrinsic motivation, recognising achievements, rewarding high performance), to which is added the importance of preserving and promoting integrity and ethics in the performance of tasks.

Furthermore, horizontal and collaborative way of working within and outside the organisation is being increasingly stimulated and adopted. Network-based activities are seen as a way to meet policy goals and tackle society-wide problems through collaborative innovation. Therefore, flatter organisational structures are considered as best suited and gain ground on the traditional hierarchical structure. Hopman and Berg (2015) argue that "In the network society of the twenty-first century, the government is just one of the relevant players. Interconnectedness and mutual interdependencies make horizontal organisation not only possible, but also necessary".

Traditional leader-centred perspectives no longer seem to respond effectively to these challenges, and according to Ospina (2017) are being

complemented and sometimes replaced by systems-centred perspectives on leadership. As such, public managers are more and more required to demonstrate shared/distributed leadership styles.

In this line of thought, Kellis and Ran (2012), advocated “the establishment of a public leadership theory that is supported by three tenets, the principles of authentic (values-based), transformational, and distributed leadership, to better equip public managers to function in a crisis-laden complex constitutional democracy”.

Distributed or shared theories view leadership “as an influence process among group members leading one another toward achieving common goals” (Ospina, 2017). It is proposed that “public leaders are most effective when they focus on organizational stakeholders, including employees within their organization, citizens being served, partnering institutions involved in providing, or creating the service, in addition to the leadership hierarchy in their own organization. It encourages public leaders to share leadership among these stakeholders as required by the various contexts and circumstances that arise, thereby creating a leadership process rather than vesting all leadership responsibilities and activities in a single person” (Kellis and Ran, 2012).

As a conclusion, we may consider that the most suited leadership style for today's public administration is an integrated one. As the word itself suggests this leadership style integrates many others. Like the transformational style to manage human resources; transactional style to guide the organisation towards the fulfilment of objectives and the achievement of results; shared style to cope with a networking environment, as managers are encouraged to share leadership among stakeholders according to context and circumstances; and ethical leadership to promote trustworthiness and a positive work environment.

12| PART

Conclusion

The survey results show a very positive opinion from the employees on how the organisations and the managers at the central government administration level dealt with the pandemic crisis and all its constraints.

Managers have demonstrated agility, resilience and commitment in dealing with this critical situation. Their behaviour and performance were considered adequate to maintain trust, meaning that the pandemic has not had a significant impact at this level on the relationship between employees and managers.

This positive assessment can be considered as surprising or unexpected, giving the exceptionally demanding and dramatic crisis context. However, in situations of uncertainty and, in this case, widespread fear, leadership has taken on added importance as it required swift and firm decision and action.

Similar to what occurred at the political level, where people turned to governments for measures and protection, seems to have been the case at the administrative level, with employees expecting action from managers. Considering that this evaluation was carried out at the end of the first lockdown, the employee's perception may have been influenced by a certain state of grace, symptomatic of these more serious situations.

Furthermore, this assessment may also be justified by the recognition of a genuine commitment and sense of mission to the respective organisations taken by managers, and employees, given the urgency of the situation and the need, on the one hand, to protect people's health and lives and, on the other hand, to keep public services operational.

As points for improvement, communication and empathy should be highlighted.

With regard to the former, the problem does not seem to lie in the frequency of communication but rather in its content, purpose and means used to communicate with the employees. Confirming this perception are the results of the Portuguese central administration survey (2021) stating that 69% of respondents evaluate the communication with their manager, in a situation of teleworking, as being positive. On the other hand, 70% of the entities of Direct State Administration⁸ and 67% of the entities of Indirect State Administration⁹, which answered the survey, highlighted the

⁸ Direct State Administration entities are those subordinated to the Government. Its main entities are ministries and the organisations integrated therein over which the Government direct steering power applies.

⁹ Indirect State Administration entities are subject to State supervision and control. It includes public entities, other than the State legal person, with legal personality and administrative and financial autonomy, which carry out an administrative activity that pursues purposes specific to the State.

dimension "communication" as being the one that brought the greatest challenges. Within this dimension the need for new forms of faster and regular communication was highlighted, both internally (departmental and interdepartmental) and externally (with other entities and in attending to the public), which may be achieved through technological platforms.

Considering empathy, there seems to be a need for greater awareness and concern on the part of managers about the employees' physical and emotional wellbeing, and even "happiness" in line with current people-centric business and public management trends, which may require further training in this field.

Another conclusion we can draw from this crisis is the need for leaders to strengthen or acquire e-leadership skills. Digitalisation and the new ways of working that were reinforced during this period are a reality accepted by most of the respondents and there is no going back. This means that it is imperative to address the lack of skills or the skill mismatch to lead in a remote environment.

An integrated leadership style gathering transformational, transactional, shared and ethical leadership appears to be the best-suited style to better tackle crisis situations and today's public administrations increasing complexity.

Finally, from this crisis we still learn that we are more resilient than we thought we were and that we need each other to successfully face adversities that stand in our way.

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