



# SIGMA News

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The coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis is an ordeal for humanity that is unprecedented in our lifetime. Lives have been lost, while economies have been locked down and are now in recession. Our mobility has been restricted and uncertainty is troubling us. We cannot afford not to learn from it.

As always, SIGMA has been focusing on public governance systems and their responses to the crisis. It has been clearly demonstrated that well-organised, professional public administrations with a high level of digital readiness are much more resilient to emergency situations of this kind and have managed a smooth adjustment to the new situation. We have also learned that most of the EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood administrations have responded to the crisis rapidly, effectively and in a very similar way as the EU and OECD member states. Their public governance systems have demonstrated agility and flexibility, although lower levels of administrative capacity and digitalisation have in some cases been an obstacle. In discussions with colleagues in SIGMA partners, we have been impressed by many innovative solutions adapted to local circumstances, which could serve as inspiration for the OECD and EU member states.

We are slowly and gradually moving to the “new normal”, and I hope SIGMA’s practitioner-to-practitioner policy advice, assistance with implementation and capacity to provide a platform to exchange practices will be useful. We would like to look beyond the restoration of normal work. We would like to explore how the lessons we have learned and the innovative practices we have observed can help public administrations to transform. I am confident that, in spite of a few months’ slow-down of public administration reforms due to other priorities (protecting life and health and mitigating the economic and social effects of the pandemic), the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis will constitute a boost to faster developments in the future. It will accelerate digitalisation, make governments consider simplifying processes, draw more attention to risk assessment and emergency planning. Things which had been considered “impossible” before will become normal. And this is exactly what reforms are about!

## Supporting public administrations during the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis



The outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic required quick and multi-faceted policy responses. Governments introduced measures that led to more or less intensive lockdown of economies and produced massive, negative, micro and macroeconomic effects. SIGMA experts decided to support the growing challenges faced by their EU Enlargement and European Neighbourhood partners in addressing urgent needs with regard to the functioning of the government and the public administration. You will find more information on the different material and events below, all of which is available on the [dedicated webpage](#) for this exceptional situation.

## Mapping EU Member States responses



Following a discussion with the European Commission, SIGMA carried out an informal mapping exercise using publicly available information and some informal insights (collected between 1-7 April 2020). The document provides a summary of how EU member states and selected OECD countries have managed the initial stage of the COVID-19 crisis with regard to the functioning of the government and the public administration. It was compiled as a source of information and inspiration for decision-making and decision implementation by policymakers in EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood administrations. [Read more.](#)

## Public procurement rules during the pandemic



This paper analyses the basics of application of the procurement rules for the needs of combating the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in the light of the EU public procurement directives and GPA, and gives a short overview of some examples from the EU member states. When events that can be characterised as being a *force majeure* occur, such as natural disasters or outbreaks of epidemics, there are provisions that may be used in order to make the purchasing process faster and less formal. [Read more.](#)

## Managing public services and human resources



Following requests from a number of beneficiaries, SIGMA has prepared [Guidelines for preparing post-confinement roadmaps for public bodies](#) to help prepare the complex process of reopening public administrations after lockdown. SIGMA advises its beneficiaries to prepare a tailor-made “back to work roadmap” for the period following the confinement. The [Annex to the Guidelines](#) aims to help public institutions to prepare for resuming service delivery by presenting a number of questions and examples to help managers to anticipate risks and to respond more effectively to specific challenges regarding service delivery. [Online recruitment to the civil service in Albania as a response to the COVID-19 crisis](#) describes the recruitment procedure introduced as a response to the COVID-19 crisis by the civil service of Albania in order for it to be conducted entirely online. It may help other administrations understand what the legal, technical and organisational pre-requisites are if they consider applying a similar procedure.

## SIGMA events move online



With travel restrictions in place and many administrations under lockdown, SIGMA experts are finding new ways to meet and discuss ongoing issues with our partners and are adapting, as are most public administrations, to working online. SIGMA has organised webinars on areas such as the functioning of government, policy co-ordination and human resource management and will continue to address issues that are important for our beneficiaries and to share knowledge and experience in these exceptional circumstances. [Read more.](#)

## The EU and OECD mobilised during the crisis



The **European Union** and its Member States, acting together as ‘Team Europe’, are taking comprehensive and decisive action to tackle the destructive impact of coronavirus (COVID-19). Priorities and programmes with partner countries are being adapted to address the crisis and [Team Europe is mobilising almost EUR 36 billion](#) for: emergency response; supporting healthcare systems and the response to the pandemic in partner countries; and, economic and business response. The **OECD** has created a [Digital Hub on Tackling the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#), which continues to develop policy briefs in virtually all areas of OECD policy work. The Hub is becoming a well-established and useful tool for policymakers, the international community and the wider public alike.

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