



**Innovation
Norway**

NORWEGIAN GRANT PROJECT

**"Together for healthy, safe and dignified
workplaces in the metalworking industry"**

***TRAINING PROGRAM FOR MANAGERS
AND THE IMPACT OF THE
COVID19 PANDEMIC***

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INTRODUCTION

The entry of COVID-19 into our lives has dramatically changed the way we do business and run our organisations. Manufacturing, as a key sector of industry, had to adapt quickly to the new challenges posed by this contagion. Managers and executives play a key role in this process.

This program was created to provide you with the necessary skills, knowledge and tools to manage your teams in difficult times when the pandemic affects not only our health, but also our working environment.

The main objectives of the programme are to:

Teach you and your teams the importance of the safety and hygiene measures that are necessary to protect health in the workplace. Provide you with the tools and planning to ensure the best possible continuity of production in situations where personnel may be affected by the pandemic. Help you and your teams manage the stress and anxiety associated with the pandemic and provide space for communication and support. Keep you informed about current recommendations and changes related to the pandemic so that you can make informed decisions.

We are aware that the pandemic has brought many uncertainties and challenges, but we believe that with this training we will increase your skills and prepare you to manage a team in difficult conditions.

I. COVID-19 Precautions

Familiarisation with current COVID-19 safety and hygiene recommendations and regulations. Teaching basic preventive measures such as wearing masks, physical distancing measures and frequent hand washing. Training of employees and checking compliance with these measures in the workplace.

a) Familiarisation with current recommendations and regulations:

This includes getting an update on what health authorities and government agencies are recommending in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This information may include restrictions, hygiene and safety guidelines, and other recommendations that the organisation and employees should follow.

b) Teaching basic preventive measures:

Employees should be provided with training on basic preventive measures to prevent the spread of the virus. This includes wearing masks or face shields, keeping physical distance from others, and washing your hands frequently with disinfectant soap and water. The emphasis should be placed on proper handwashing technique.

c) Staff training

The organisation should ensure that employees are properly trained in these preventive measures. The training should include practical information on how to protect yourself from infection, how to properly use masks and how to handle disinfection.

Basic preventive measures include:

1. Compulsory masks: Requiring employees to wear masks in confined spaces such as office buildings and public transport helps reduce the spread of the virus by intercepting

drops that the wearer excretes. Companies and institutions should provide masks to employees and enforce the policy of wearing masks in confined spaces.

2. Hand hygiene: Proper hand hygiene, such as washing your hands frequently with soap and water or using hand sanitizers, is critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Employees should be encouraged.
3. Physical distance: Maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 meters between individuals can help reduce the spread of the virus by reducing the number of drops dispersed in the air. Companies and institutions should rearrange workspaces where necessary to ensure possible physical distance and encourage employees to maintain a safe distance from each other.
4. Employee training: It is important to provide employees with training and information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This should include information about hand hygiene, physical distance, wearing masks, and avoiding large gatherings. Companies and institutions should ensure that employees are fully informed and equipped with the information they need to stay safe.
5. Employee health monitoring: Employee health monitoring, including temperature control and symptom tracking, can help prevent the spread of the virus in the workplace. Companies and institutions should have clear policies in place for employees who are not feeling well, including instructions on when to stay at home and when to return to work.
6. Meeting and travel restrictions: Reducing non-essential meetings and travel can help reduce the spread of the virus by limiting the number of people who come into close contact with each other. Companies and institutions should consider using virtual meeting technology to reduce the need for face-to-face meetings.
7. Increased hygiene measures: Increased cleaning and hygiene measures in the workplace, such as regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces and providing disinfectants

hand sanitizers, can also help prevent the spread of the virus.

The aim of this point is to comply with workplace measures: The organisation should put in place mechanisms to check compliance with workplace safety measures. This may include regular inspections, monitoring compliance, and alerting you to any violations. This point is crucial to ensuring a safe working environment for employees during a pandemic and helps minimise the risk of spreading the disease in the work environment. It is also important to maintain employee confidence in the organisation and to meet the health and safety regulations and recommendations of government authorities.

II. COVID-19 crisis plan

Developing and improving a COVID-19 crisis plan for employees. Training of managers in the field of crisis management, including isolation and monitoring of possible infections.

a) Creation and improvement of the crisis plan:

The organisation should create a plan that includes steps and procedures for responding to a COVID-19 outbreak among employees.

This plan should include the following:

- Identification of possible infection scenarios and their impact on the working environment.
- Measures for isolating infected employees and monitoring their health status.
- Ensuring that the disease does not spread to other parts of the organisation.
- Procedures for communicating with relevant employees and informing about further measures.

b) Training of managers in the field of crisis management:

Managers should be trained on how to respond appropriately to COVID-19 emergencies.

These include:

- Recognition of signs of infection and the rapid isolation of affected employees.
- Monitoring the health status of infected employees and cooperating with medical experts.
- Informing and communicating with other employees about measures and the current situation.
- Coordination with other departments and authorities, if necessary.

The aim of this point is to ensure a quick and effective response of the organisation to a possible COVID-19 infection and to minimise the spread of the virus in the work environment. The crisis plan should be flexible and regularly updated in accordance with the current conditions and recommendations of the health authorities. Training managers is crucial so that they can respond quickly and professionally to crisis situations and protect the health and safety of employees.

The COVID-19 Crisis Plan should be a comprehensive strategy to manage the pandemic quickly and effectively.

Here is a list of key elements that such a plan should include:

1. Health infrastructure: The plan should include measures to strengthen health infrastructure, including increasing hospital capacity, ensuring an adequate supply of medical supplies and increasing the number of medical staff.

2. Testing and tracing: Define a strategy for COVID-19 mass testing and contact tracing of infected individuals. Include a plan to ensure sufficient testing and rapid testing.

- 3. Vaccination:** Indicate the vaccination plan of the population, including the definition of priority groups for vaccination, vaccination schedule and distribution plan.
- 4. Virus containment measures:** Describe measures that can be used to contain the spread of the virus, such as travel restrictions, closures, quarantine measures, and meeting restrictions.
- 5. Health protection and hygiene:** Include measures to raise public awareness of the importance of hand hygiene, wearing masks and physical distancing.
- 6. Provision of protective equipment:** Provide a plan for the provision of protective equipment for medical personnel and the public, including masks, gloves and disinfectants.
- 7. Communicate with the public:** Define a strategy for communicating with the public that includes educational campaigns, information on measures and how to protect against infection.
- 8. Economic measures:** Indicate economic measures to support people and companies affected by the pandemic, such as support programmes, social benefits and temporary flexibility of labour law.
- 9. International cooperation:** Consider working with international partners and organisations, in particular to ensure access to vaccines and other treatments.
- 10. Plan for different scenarios:** Have plans ready for different pandemic development scenarios, including the possibility of additional waves and variants of the virus.
- 11. Expert advice:** Mechanism for regular consultations with epidemiologists, doctors and scientists who can provide you with up-to-date advice and recommendations.
- 12. Securing supplies:** Make sure you have sufficient supplies of medicines and medical supplies in case of increased demand.
- 13. Legislative measures:** Review and, where appropriate, adapt the legislative framework for crisis situations in order to respond effectively to the pandemic.

The contingency plan should be flexible and able to adapt quickly to changing conditions. It is also important to regularly update the plan based on new information and experience.

III. Remote Management

This point focuses on training in the field of remote management and team leadership, which is important at a time when part of the employees work outside the office or workplace.

a) Training in methods and tools for remote management and team leadership:

Managers and executives should be trained in the skills and tools needed to effectively manage a team remotely.

These include:

- Teaching various communication tools such as video conferencing, chat applications and project management tools.
- training in planning and organisational skills for remote work.
- Managing time management and prioritising tasks for remote teams.

b) Communication and monitoring of work results:

An important part of remote management is effective communication with the team and monitoring work performance.

These include:

- Establishing clear communication channels and expectations regarding availability and response time.
- Regular meetings and team meetings through virtual platforms.
- Monitoring and evaluation of employee performance based on set objectives and key performance indicators.

Remote management and team leadership require specific skills that are different from traditional office management. Training in these skills and tools can help managers and executives better manage a remote work environment, maintain team productivity, and maintain effective communication.

IV. Hygiene and Safety at the Workplace

Updating and raising awareness of hygiene measures in the workplace, including frequent disinfection of surfaces. Ensuring that employees are adequately informed about safety measures.

This point focuses on the importance of hygiene and safety in the workplace, which is particularly crucial in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

a) Updating and raising awareness of hygiene measures in the workplace: The organisation should update and improve hygiene procedures and measures in the workplace to ensure that the risk of spreading infection is minimised.

These may include:

- Frequent disinfection of frequently touched surfaces such as handles, handrails, elevator buttons, etc.
- Introduction of regular cleaning and disinfection of common areas and facilities such as kitchenettes and toilets.
- Ensuring an adequate supply of disinfectant and protective equipment such as disinfectant tablecloths and soap.

b) Ensuring that employees are adequately informed about safety measures: An important aspect is to ensure that all employees are well informed about hygiene and safety measures at the workplace.

These include:

- Providing clear information on how to properly disinfect surfaces and how to follow safety precautions.
- Posters, leaflets, or electronic communication channels that highlight the importance of maintaining hygiene and safety.
- Training and educational materials available for employees to familiarise themselves with safety procedures.

Emphasis on hygiene and safety in the workplace is key to preventing the spread of COVID-19 and keeping the work environment safe for all employees. Updating and improving these measures, along with informing employees, helps create awareness of the importance of hygiene and safety and promotes their adherence in the workplace.

In workplaces where there is a greater concentration of people (employees, visitors, delivery people, supply, maintenance, etc.), it is important to ensure effective measures are in place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. This is a paramount obligation for employers in the current period, not only moral, but also legislative. In addition to observing the general preventive measures issued by the Chief Hygienist of the Slovak Republic at the beginning of the spread of the coronavirus, it is necessary to implement other measures at the workplaces.

For employees, it is necessary to provide a sufficient amount of personal protective equipment (masks, masks, respirators, gloves, goggles and shields)

depending on the work performed) and disinfectants. As a precaution, it is advisable to ensure increased disinfection of areas, especially handles, work surfaces, aids, etc., or to ensure the principle of open doors (open doors where possible so that employees can freely pass through and do not have to catch the handles. Employees who, in the performance of their work performed at the employer's workplace, are not directly exposed to this biological factor, the employer provides protective equipment in accordance with the guidelines of the Chief Hygienist of the Slovak Republic. The provision and use of these protective equipment is controlled by regional public health authorities.

V. Mentoring and Coaching

Developing skills in mentoring and coaching employees to be able to better support their teams in times of pandemic.

This point focuses on the development of mentoring and coaching skills for employees tasked with supporting their teams in times of pandemic, which is particularly important for maintaining team performance and motivation.

a) Development of skills in mentoring and coaching:

The organisation should provide training and development programs to employees who will perform the role of mentors or coaches.

These trainings should include:

- Principles of mentoring and coaching and the differences between these two approaches.
- Information on how to communicate effectively with the team and provide support and advice.
- Strategies to motivate employees in challenging times such as the pandemic.

b) Supporting the team during a pandemic:

Mentoring and coaching should be aimed at supporting employees in solving problems, coping with stress and maintaining high work morale at a time when the work environment can be uncertain and challenging.

c) Individual and team meetings:

Mentors and coaches should regularly consult with individuals or teams to provide feedback and offer support in addressing specific issues or challenges associated with the pandemic.

d) Communication skills development:

Particular emphasis should be placed on developing skills in effective communication, as mentoring and coaching involve active listening and empathy.

The aim of this point is to create a team of mentors and coaches who are able to provide support and guidance to their colleagues during a pandemic. This increases the resilience of the team, improves its work ethic and ability to solve the challenges associated with an uncertain work environment.

Stress occurs due to different stressors, but not every stressor triggers a stress response in every individual. Whether there is a “stress phase” depends on our perception of the stressor and its cognitive processing. So first we evaluate the severity of the stressor and then we assess our own options to manage the stressor. An adequate dose of stress may not be harmful to the body, but on the contrary, it encourages it to perform. Stress begins to be harmful when the load level is inappropriate or the stress lasts too long. In both cases, the body is depleted and various problems such as pain, inflammation, sleep and eating disorders, burnout syndrome...

A few anti-stress types:

- reduce too high ideals
- learn to say 'no'
- set priorities
- a good plan saves you half the work
- include breaks in the activity
- seek emotional support
- to find a balance between work and personal life

Productive practices and strategies:

- manage their work (professionally and humanely)
- be able to handle information (accept, sort, reject)
- be yourself and with others in peace
- to like yourself and others in a healthy way
- be able to empathize with others
- be able to confide in others and have trust in close people
- have what to believe in, who to believe in
- positive tuning – voltage change
- know how to "turn off the brain"
- respect your own biological clock
- proper diet, sleep, diet, sports
- be aware of your inner philosophy
- humor and relaxation
- look at yourself occasionally and worry about distance (detachment)

be aware of life values – priorities and follow them.

VI. *Continuity of Production*

Planning and training to ensure the best possible continuity of production, even if there is a staff outage due to COVID-19.

This point concerns the continuity of production and ways to ensure that production continues as safely and efficiently as possible, even if there is a staff outage due to COVID-19.

a) Production continuity planning:

The organisation should develop a plan that includes measures and procedures to maintain continuity of production in the event of a staff outage due to COVID-19.

The plan should include:

- Identification of critical positions and workers in production and the development of a strategy for their replacement if necessary.
- Stocks of necessary materials and raw materials for a minimum interruption of production.
- Re-evaluation of production processes and optimisation as far as possible.

b) Continuity training:

Employees should be trained in different scenarios that could lead to staff outage. These include:

- Training of workers in dual roles or replacement positions if necessary.
- Emphasising the importance of quickly and effectively coping with emergency situations and problems in production.

c) Ensuring technology and infrastructure:

The organisation should ensure that the technology and infrastructure required for production are reliable and protected from disruption. This includes backing up important systems and devices.

d) Cooperation with external suppliers:

The organisation should work with external suppliers and the supply chain to ensure that products and components are available even in the event of manufacturer problems.

The aim of this point is to minimise production outages that could negatively affect the operation of the organisation and to ensure that production continues even during a pandemic or crisis.

Planning the continuity of production is key to maintaining the stability and competitiveness of the organisation.

VII. Employee Psychological Support

Training in providing psychological support to employees who may be exposed to higher stress and anxiety related to the pandemic.

This point focuses on psychological support for employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that organisations have mechanisms and resources to provide emotional and psychological support to employees who may find themselves under increased stress and anxiety.

a) Training in the provision of psychological support:

Employees should be trained in skills that enable them to better understand and respond to the psychological needs of their colleagues.

These include:

- Recognising signs of stress, anxiety, and mental strain.
- Ways to listen empathetically and communicate with those who may need support.
- Referrals to experts when needed.

b) Availability of psychological support:

The organisation should ensure that employees have access to psychological support, either through an internal team of psychologists or external services. Employees should know where to turn if they need help.

c) Communication and information

It is also important to regularly inform employees about available sources of psychological support and that it is perfectly normal to seek help when they feel stressed or anxious.

d) Prevention and wellness programs:

In addition to reactive psychological support, organisations should also invest in prevention and wellness programs that help employees manage stress and maintain mental health.

The aim of this point is to create an environment of support and understanding in the organisation that helps employees manage the stress and anxiety associated with the pandemic. Psychological support can play a key role in maintaining the mental health of employees and increasing their overall well-being.

Prevention and mental health support during the pandemic

To prevent mental and emotional problems, countries have started to take new measures in the field of mental health. Many countries and non-profit organisations responded promptly and launched various programs related to mental health prevention and promotion. For example, the US implemented a historical expansion of telemedicine during the pandemic, which included the provision of free psychotherapy services, and several US states launched COVID19 crisis helplines and online chats. For example, Mental Health America offers a free, home-based anonymous test to diagnose symptoms of mental disorders. China provided free 24-hour psychological assistance during the pandemic, strengthened online mental health education on social networks, and uses artificial intelligence to identify individuals who may be suicidal by monitoring messages posted on the social platform

Weibo In South Africa, they created videos specifically for healthcare staff highlighting symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression, with direct links to seek help. NGOs also offered free psychotherapy to health professionals via phone or Zoom. Lebanon issued a government action plan to promote mental health, which included promoting mental health, mitigating stress factors associated with COVID-19, supporting quarantined people and frontline workers, as well as ensuring continuity of services for patients with pre-existing mental disorders.

For example, New Zealand is the only country that has also developed a specific mental health recovery plan.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought not only challenges for many countries, but also opportunities to reform mental health care and change the way mental health services are delivered, which are the foundation of a healthy and productive population. The aim of eliminating the negative effects of the pandemic on mental health is to combine individual and affordable mental health care, but also to implement an appropriate mitigation policy and create conditions for long-term mental health support, which can ultimately reduce the strain on health, reduce social costs and reduce productivity decline.

Prevention and mental health promotion in post-covid measures

Some mental health consequences of the pandemic have already manifested themselves, others will persist or manifest themselves later. The increasing prevalence of mental disorders will not only negatively affect the quality of life of the population, but will also have significant economic consequences on the state of public health. However, the good news is that mental disorders are very often diseases that can be prevented and treated. Therefore, it is important to support, prevent and systematically minimise the mental health consequences of the pandemic.

Mental health prevention and support can be implemented on several levels.

As a result of the pandemic, the OECD recommends strengthening mental health support from individual prevention and low-threshold preventive support through specialised support and, last but not least, to implement policies that have a minimal impact on the mental health of the population.

Mental health has deteriorated significantly during the pandemic crisis and it is also likely that suicidal intent may increase over time. Only a few countries in the world have made suicide prevention one of their health priorities, and only 38 countries have adopted a national suicide prevention strategy. There is no comprehensive concept of suicide prevention in Slovakia. Efforts to prevent suicide during the COVID-19 crisis, like the prevention of psychiatric disorders, can be classified into three categories, which include: universal, selective and indicated preventive measures.

VIII. Monitoring and Updating

Regularly monitor the situation and current COVID-19 recommendations and update the training program as needed.

This point focuses on the importance of regularly monitoring the COVID-19 situation and updating the training program based on current recommendations and information.

a) Regular monitoring of the situation:

The organisation should regularly monitor for updates related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes monitoring official reports from health authorities, government agencies, and public health experts. It is also important to monitor the current state of the organisation's operations and

regions where it has employees.

b) To update your training program:

Based on current information and recommendations, the training program should be regularly updated.

These include:

- Reviewing and updating hygiene and safety practices based on new knowledge about the virus.
- Updating the production continuity plan and other safety measures based on changes in the situation.

c) Communication with employees:

The organisation should regularly communicate with employees regarding updates and changes to the training program. Employees should be informed about new measures and procedures and what is expected of them in the context of the pandemic.

d) Responding to local developments:

If an organisation operates in multiple locations, it should respond to local pandemic developments and adapt its practices and measures based on local needs and situations.

The aim of this point is to ensure that the organisation remains up to date and able to respond to the current risks associated with the pandemic. Regular monitoring and updating of the training program are key to maintaining the safety of employees and the organisation's ability to adapt to changing conditions.

CONCLUSION:

Proposals to support employee well-being after the Covid-19 pandemic

1. Ensure the safety of your employees

After the outbreak of the pandemic, many people are concerned about the risks associated with leaving home and staying in large groups of people. It is important not only to reassure employees, but also to implement the right protocols so that they feel safe when working and visiting the workplace. These may include a table reservation system, limiting the number of people at the workplace, providing disinfectants and masks, thorough daily cleaning of the workplace, allowing employees to work from a place where they feel comfortable and asking what else would suit them.

2. Listen to your employees

The easiest way to find out how someone is feeling is to talk to them directly. Organizing regular meetings, virtual or in-person, could have a big positive impact on someone's day. Friendly conversations will give employees the opportunity to tell you if they have any problems, allowing you to help them find a solution before the problem gets worse.

By ensuring that employees' problems are heard, you will improve the overall well-being and morale of employees at work. Other ways to see how people are feeling include anonymous surveys, group discussions, and feedback forms.

3. Create and promote ways people can ask for advice

Whether someone is solving a problem at work or at home, they can benefit from being able to talk to someone. Consider creating a team of wellbeing volunteers that employees can turn to for confidential conversation and advice. They may not feel comfortable talking to someone on their own team, so make sure people from different departments are involved.

Providing wellbeing training will also better prepare employees to support others and improve the quality of their advice.

4. Make mental health a priority

Today, mental health and wellbeing in the workplace are discussed more openly. Many employers have taken steps to make this a priority and include it in their work policies, for example, citing it as a reason for taking time off and introducing measures to maintain well-being. These include offering support, such as advice for those who are struggling. Promotion of well-being and raising awareness of it at work can help prevent mental illness, making employees happier and safer.

5. Accept the changes caused by the pandemic

The pandemic has caused many changes, especially when it comes to work. This has led to great uncertainty among employees, but it is also an opportunity for business development.

Restructuring, refocusing and rebuilding can be exciting and can lead to more opportunities for employees. If you embrace and adapt to these changes, your team can feel motivated and excited about the future instead of worrying. Making the most of the new changes will help you prepare your organisation for any future situation, such as continuing to use online platforms efficiently and offering flexible or hybrid working conditions.

This training program should help production managers better adapt to the current challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure the safe and efficient operation of the production facility.