

FOLLOW-UP ON THE GOVERNANCE OF THE CENTRE OF GOVERNEMENT DURING THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

After the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the disease caused by the coronavirus a pandemic, many countries carried out measures in order to prepare for its consequences. In Brazil, the federal government established the Crisis Committee for Supervision and Monitoring of the Impacts of Covid-19 and the Coordination Operations Centre of the Crisis Committee for Supervision and Monitoring of the Impacts of Covid-19 (CCOP), focused on organizing government actions and advising the President of the Republic on the battle against the pandemic.

▪ WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

On March 25, 2020 the Federal Court of Accounts – Brazil (TCU) approved the Special Plan for Monitoring Actions Against COVID-19 and its consequences. The focus was to enable a better interaction and communication between SAI Brazil and the several public agents, point out the risks, and timely guide managers on the problems and risks that could compromise the effectiveness of the actions.

In addition, one of the objectives of the work was to assess the governance of the Centre of Government during the crisis.

▪ WHAT HAS BEEN FOUND

The assessment on the Centre of Government's governance pointed to a lack of strategic guidelines or objectives dealing with the pandemic. There was a lack of a broad strategic planning, in order to guide actions and priorities, defined based on a previous evaluation of the health, economic, political, and social conditions, to be carried out by the corresponding ministries.

In addition, there was also an absence of an integrated risk management model to conduct the fight against the pandemic. Moreover, there was a lack of a communication plan of actions and their impacts, presented in an open, understandable, accessible, and transparent manner, coordinated with ministries and other

bodies, focused on avoiding ambiguity and obscurity in the authorities' speeches as well as in government communication overall.

▪ WHAT HAS BEEN DECIDED

Through Decision 1.616/2018-TCU-Full Court, TCU alerted the Executive Office of the President that the lack of a clear strategic guideline to combat COVID-19 and its risk management, and the absence of a coordinated and comprehension communication plan could compromise expenses and results for tackling the pandemic and also hinder the effective political coordination and articulation between agencies and bodies, both federal and regional.

TCU recommended the Executive Office to include, as permanent members of the Crisis Committee, the presidents of the Federal Council of Medicine (CFM), the Brazilian Medical Association (AMB) and the National Council of State Health Secretaries (Conass), with the right to voice and vote, and as members of the CCOP, those representing such organizations and the representatives of the Special Secretariat for Social Communication of the Presidency of the Republic (Secom).

On a subsequent deliberation, Ruling 2.092/2020-TCU-Full Court, TCU recommended that the Executive Office should adopt, among the framework criteria developed to select projects to take part in the Pró-Brasil Program, the one related to the contamination and deaths caused by COVID-19.

In addition, the Court determined that the Executive Office and the Ministry of Health (MS) should, under the terms of article 250, item II, of TCU's Bylaws (RI-TCU), and article 6 of the Access to Information Act (LAI), and in compliance with the principle of transparency, within 15 days, disclose on their websites, with due notice, in case they did not already do so, the minutes of the meetings of the Crisis Committee and CCOP, ensuring the confidentiality of classified information.

Finally, the Court determined that the Executive Office should submit to the TCU, including the indication of risks and associated countermeasures to mitigate them, the actions planned for producing or acquiring future doses of the vaccine against COVID-19 and immunization of the Brazilian population. In case these actions had not been planned, they should develop such plan within 60 days, due to the urgency and relevance of the matter, on a joint effort with the MS, and preferably with the participation of state health departments, submitting it to this Court of Accounts.

Additional information:

Decisions: 1.616/2018 and 2.092/2020, both from TCU's Full Court

Rapporteur: Minister Vital do Rêgo

Case: TC 016.708/2020-2

Technical Department in charge: Department of External Control – State Management (SecexAdministração)