

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to find an answer to the main research problem, how the covid-19 pandemic affected the functioning of crisis management teams and on the way to its solution. The following subsidiary questions were used: what is the composition and mode of work of provincial, district and municipal crisis management teams, with what frequency were the meetings of the teams held in the period before and during the pandemic, what problems the teams encountered during the counteraction to the pandemic, and what should be done to improve their work in the future? The theoretical part discusses issues related to crisis management and its evaluation process. The empirical part presents the methodology of own research and its results. The presented study was conducted on selected units of public institutions from 2018 to 2021. The questionnaires were sent to public administration bodies by e-mail, to the addresses of security and crisis management departments or crisis management centers provided on the websites of the above institutions. The authors of this article aimed primarily to learn about selected, most important issues concerning the activities of crisis management teams rather than to quantitatively measure specific parameters of their functioning. That is why crisis management teams functioning on the level of voivodships from the whole of Poland were subjected to qualitative research. One voivodship was randomly chosen to make a qualitative analysis of the functioning of powiat crisis management teams. Then one powiat from the above-mentioned voivodship, i.e. Słupsk powiat, was randomly chosen, of which the communal crisis management teams functioning in that area were examined. The research results showed that there is no need to introduce radical changes in the functioning of crisis management teams at the territorial levels of their functioning (voivodship, powiat and commune). Pandemic covid-19 modified the mode of work of teams from stationary to remote, which in the future can be used in solving other non-military crises. Assessing the efficiency of the teams, it can be indicated that they function best at the provincial level. Based on the conducted research, the authors presented postulates to improve the functioning of crisis management teams. The issues discussed in the article can be interesting for both theoreticians and practitioners specializing in crisis management.

Keywords: crisis management, crisis management teams, public administration

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Introduction

Civil protection was and is one of the most important challenges for national security systems and is a key function of state security policy. The remark of L. Krzywicki, who claimed that “even the simplest society is an organization of mutual protection, which gives each participant the prospects for a longer life and successful perseverance in the struggle for existence” (Krzywicki, 1951, p.155), is accurate.

Nowadays, the rapidly advancing civilizational development and changes resulting from the globalization process generate various security threats in all areas of state and society functioning, which in turn forces them to constantly monitor and counteract all threats that may harm the foundations of national and political existence of a given entity (Skrabacz, 2006, pp. 40-44). U. Beck, in his book *Risk Society*, draws attention to the various dangers that are a consequence of the development of civilization and socio-economic transformations resulting, inter alia, from the progressive process of globalization (Beck, 2002; Hussain et al., 2021).

Considering that the type and scale of modern threats show evolutionary tendencies, it is vital to involve both the individual citizen and the entities established to carry out specific tasks to ensure continuity of existence and security. Particular attention should be paid to ensure that the aforementioned continuity is maintained at every stage of the functioning of the state, i.e. in the state of peace, crisis and war. For this continuity to be maintained, the conditions of state defense readiness should be met based on the efficiency of structures, both governmental and self-governmental. These structures are responsible for ensuring security in all spheres of state activity, which in turn has a significant impact on its duration and the comfort of citizens' lives. Therefore, it is reasonable to combine the security of a state with the system of national security. The area related to national security mainly refers to the adaptation of both governmental (joint and non-joint) and self-governmental structures to counteract all threats to the state and prepare society to skillfully apply appropriate procedures in emergencies (Olsen, 2014). On the other hand, ensuring security in the broadest sense is realized by the state through specialized entities that perform their statutory tasks at each level of state management (central, regional - voivodeship and local - district and commune). These activities are carried out in cooperation with and coordinated by public administration bodies, which in turn requires the creation of comprehensive and integrated crisis management tools enabling the use of military and civilian components at all levels of response. Indeed, it is essential to ensure strict emergency preparedness and robust crisis management, especially for complex and cross-border crises (Ansell et al., 2010).

Bearing in mind the management function of public administration, which is characterized by counteracting and responding to threats (Sadowski, Skrabacz & Rogowski, 2020), public administration bodies at all levels of state management establish auxiliary teams of an opinion-advisory character (Crisis Management Act, 2007), whose task is to support the decision-making process in an emergency. These teams, statutorily called crisis management teams, are collegiate bodies whose mode

of work, composition and scope of tasks performed are regulated by documents of national (laws and regulations) and local (orders) scope.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic was initiated in China in 2019, it spread across the globe quickly, and international, state, non-governmental structures and societies on all continents had to be involved in the fight against it (Buonomo & March, 2020). The rapid and speedy development of the pandemic meant that all the structures, forces and resources at the disposal of states were thrown into anti-covid action. The paradox of the actions, however, was that, on the one hand, these structures were responsible for fighting the pandemic, while on the other hand, they had to protect their resources, especially human resources, from the negative impact of pathogens (Djalante, Shaw & DeWit, 2020).

In Poland, as in the majority of European countries, the burden of the crisis management activities rested on the public administration and crisis management teams functioning within its structures (Sadowski, Skrabacz & Rogowski, pp. 148-165). In the media coverage of that period, one could hear about the meetings of the so-called crisis staffs, i.e. crisis management teams, which obligatorily operate on a central level – the Government Crisis Management Team (GMS), voivodeship level – the Voivodeship Crisis Management Team (VMS), district level – the Poviatic Crisis Management Team (PMS) and commune level – the Communal Crisis Management Team (CGM). Unfortunately, for a wide audience, the activity of these entities, especially functioning in the structures of local public administration, is unknown, and the level of knowledge about their tasks is negligible. Hence, the article aims to present changes in the functioning of provincial, district and municipal crisis management teams during the covid - 19 pandemic. Assuming the chronological scope of the research (2018-2021), an attempt was made to determine the characteristics of the functioning of these entities in the period before and during the pandemic. In the end, postulates for changes aimed at improving the quality of performance of crisis management teams were formulated.

The conducted research was aimed at finding an answer to the main research problem: how the covid-19 pandemic affected the functioning of crisis management teams and on the way to its solution. The following auxiliary questions were used: what is the composition and mode of work of provincial, district and municipal crisis management teams, with what frequency were the meetings of the teams held in the period before and during the pandemic, what problems the teams encountered during the counteraction to the pandemic and what should be done to improve their work in the future?

Considering the purpose of the research and its subject, as well as the substantive scope of scientific inquiry conducted, the following working hypotheses were formulated: it is assumed that the coronavirus pandemic significantly affected the work of crisis management teams at the provincial, district and municipal levels, especially in terms of the mode of their work and the number of meetings. In addition, it is assumed that the functioning of the teams during this period was

hampered by pandemic strictures, absenteeism of team members' work due to isolation or quarantine, and other impediments unpredictable during this period.

Literature Review

A crisis is "a 'serious threat to the basic structures or fundamental values and norms' of a system that forces important decisions under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances" (Rosenthal et al., 1989). Today, crises are increasingly transboundary in nature and affect areas such as geographic, administrative, infrastructural and cultural (Ansell, 2011; Ansell, Boin, & Keller, 2010; Boin et al., 2005; Fimreite et al., 2014). Due to their increasing complexity, emergency management actors struggle to establish appropriate administrative structures to facilitate coordinated action. These difficulties arise from attempts to combine organizational stability and preparedness for emergencies with flexibility and rapid response, showing that there is often a gap between central plans and local challenges (Boin, 2008).

Crisis management is interdisciplinary and relates to many disciplines, such as social policy, political science, public policy and administration, international relations, business studies, organization studies, psychology, behavioral science, environmental science, health science, engineering, etc. Therefore, it is striking that while there is rich literature on the various elements of crisis management, there is often a noticeable lack of a holistic approach to the issue, including the functioning of crisis management teams.

Crisis management should be viewed not just as a tactical, reactive response when a crisis occurs but as a proactive discipline that encompasses interrelated processes ranging from crisis prevention and preparedness to emergency response and crisis recovery. This holistic view of crisis management focuses on process rather than definitions that are inadequate for understanding the problem (Jaques, 2007).

Many definitions of crisis management in the literature vary from country to country and from organization to organization (Eliasson & Kreuter, 2000). Analyzing the views on crisis management, two approaches to the issue under consideration can be distinguished. The first one, perceives crisis management as civil protection, which is one of the basic missions carried out within the framework of national security by public administration bodies, other state bodies and institutions, entrepreneurs and other organizational units, non-governmental organizations and individual citizens, and in justified cases also by the armed forces, consisting of a number of preventive actions, The second one, refers to the issue of the state and other state authorities, businesses and other organizational units, non-governmental organizations and individual citizens, and in justified cases also by the armed forces, involving the implementation of a number of preventive, preparatory, intervention and restoring the normal state, aimed at protecting life and health of people and valuable property, cultural heritage and the environment to the extent necessary to survive, as well as providing humanitarian and legal assistance during disasters, natural disasters, armed conflicts and occupations and immediately after them" (Kitler & Skrabacz,

2010). The third refers to the issue of specific security management. An example is the definition of the "Generic Crisis Management Handbook", according to which crisis management according to the NATO concept should be seen in a broad sense, taking into account such procedures and activities that aim at taking control of the crisis situation by crisis managers, and that enable them to shape the course of the crisis through preparatory actions (Moore & Lakha, 2007).

Boin and Renaud define emergency management as a set of actions aimed at minimizing the effects of an urgent threat. This action takes place at the strategic (political) level and the operational level (firefighters, police officers, ambulance drivers, technicians, etc.) (Boin & Renaud, 2013). According to Boin, Hart and Kuipers, crisis management includes a set of measures taken to deal with hazards before, during and after a crisis aimed at minimizing the immediate negative effects of an emergency (Boin et al., 2018). On the other hand, according to Beck, crisis management can be called the "executive hour" because it involves dealing with threats immediately and effectively to protect citizens from the negative effects of crises (Beck, 1992).

Over the past 20 years, the concept of crisis management has undergone systematic development beginning with the crisis model (Littlejohn, 1983, p. 13), which consisted of six phases: structure design, crisis team selection, team training, situation audit, contingency plan, and crisis management. Through a model consisting of prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery phases (Boudreaux, 2005; Coppola, 2006; Boin et al., 2005), also referred to as PPRR (Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery) (Cronstedt, 2002) or 16-cell classification matrix (Brunett, 1998, p.142) to the Emergency Planning College planning process, it consists of stages such as direction, information gathering, plan development, consultation, publication, training validation and confirmation/revision (Harrison, 1999, p. 21).

The study of emergency management decision making is relatively a new field. It was not explored until the late 1960s and early 1970s that researchers began to define emergency management as a specific type of decision-making designed to address emerging problems that challenge government agencies. Today, crisis management refers to the decisions and actions taken by decision-makers, both as they prepare to respond to crises and as they recover from them. Dealing with crises is a primary responsibility of governments, policymakers, civil servants, and public sector executives. The actions taken in planning and preparing for the unexpected and unknown, dealing with uncertainty, and responding to crises test the preparedness of public administrations to address public safety threats (Christensen et al., 2016). Due to the increasing complexity of crises and the increasing complexity of relationships in society (Perrow, 1984) and the public sector (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2010), they tend to challenge existing patterns of organization and governance.

While seeking solutions to address constraints in dealing with the above issues, public organizations often choose to develop hybrid solutions. Working across existing organizational boundaries and taking into account multi-level governance

relationships and collaboration needs are crucial. Consequently, there is growing interest in reforms in public administration that focus on integration, horizontal coordination, network arrangements and stronger central government capacity. Recent pan-European research points to a new emphasis on horizontal coordination in the form of network governance arrangements and more holistic instruments to integrate the public sector (Lægreid et al., 2014).

Effective crisis management helps build public trust in organizations and public institutions, while failure to effectively manage a crisis can result in organizational fragmentation, public dissatisfaction and even a change in leadership (Dayton, 2009). In other words, a properly functioning democracy needs a well-functioning public administration as well as a high level of trust in government (Olsen, 2014).

Research on crisis management has most often focused on issues relating to technical/management or strategic/political perspectives on security (t Hart & Sundelius 2013; Boin et al. 2014). Also, in studies of public administration, much attention has been given to issues relating to its organization, cooperation and coordination, or complexity, while less often, it has referred to crisis management. Understanding the nature of crisis management requires an analysis of administrative capacity as well as the role of political and administrative leaders in relation to a country (Lodge & Wegrich, 2014). Hence, the focus of the article is on crisis management in the public sector, in particular, to fill the gap in the state of knowledge about the state of organizational structures and coordination mechanisms in crisis management teams, as cooperation and coordination are major issues in the crisis management literature (Boin & Bynander 2015; Boin et al. 2013).

The article also points out that public administration is becoming increasingly multi-actor and multi-level, and the required coordination across its different levels is increasingly seen as an adequate response to the fragmentation of the political-administrative system, both by public administrators and scholars (O'Flynn et al., 2014). This development has been described as typical of post-modern public management (Christensen & Lægreid 2007). The issues discussed in this paper may interest both theorists and practitioners specializing in emergency management and researchers working on state security.

Research Methodology and Results

Empirical research using the diagnostic survey method was conducted in November and December 2021. In order to collect empirical material, the interview method was applied using an author-designed interview questionnaire. It contained nine open-ended questions to which written answers were requested. Organizational units of public administration in which crisis management teams function were selected for the study according to the following criterion:

- voivodship offices - 16 institutions;
- District starosties from the territory of Pomorskie voivodship - 20 institutions;
- Communal Offices from the Słupsk Poviát - 10 institutions.

The authors' research attention was focused on crisis management teams of representatives of local public administration bodies, as the state of knowledge on their functioning is insufficient and poorly represented in the literature both on management science and security science. Thus, this article fills this gap, contributing to the development of the state of theoretical and practical knowledge in this area.

By accepting such a selection of the research sample, the authors of this article aimed primarily at getting to know selected, most important issues concerning the activity of crisis management teams, rather than quantitative measurement of certain parameters of their functioning. Hence, crisis management teams operating at the level of voivodships were subjected to qualitative research. One voivodship was randomly selected to make a qualitative analysis of the functioning of poviat crisis management teams. Then, applying the same principle, one poviat from the above-mentioned voivodship was randomly selected, i.e. Słupsk poviat, where the communal crisis management teams operating in this area were examined.

The interview questionnaire was sent to public administration bodies via e-mail to the addresses of Departments of Safety and Crisis Management or Crisis Management Centers given on the websites of the above-mentioned institutions. A total of 46 questionnaires were sent, of which 25 completed questionnaires were received and qualified for further study. Detailed data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of interview questionnaires sent and received.

No.	Number of questionnaires	Voivodship Office	District Office	Municipality Office	Total
1.	sent	16	20	10	46
2.	received	8	9	8	25

Source: Authors' own study.

The collected data were primarily subjected to qualitative analysis, which allowed us to clarify the functioning of crisis management teams during the pre-pandemic (years 2018-2019) and during its duration (years 2020-2021) and to indicate differences in this regard. As an independent variable, the period of the spread of coronavirus (taking the end of the first quarter of 2020 as its beginning in Poland) was adopted. Thus, the subsequent pandemic restrictions were introduced in the economic, professional and social areas. The dependent variable in this situation was the activity of crisis management teams, which resulted from the gradual increase in the number of cases of Covid-19 and the adaptation of crisis procedures to subsequent phases of the pandemic. The indicators used to describe the variables were empirical-inferential properties, such as the number of meetings, mode of operation and composition of the crisis management teams.

Turning to the description of substantive data, it is worth starting with the legal basis for the functioning of crisis management teams. The rationale for their establishment is the following legal acts:

- Act of 26 April 2007 on crisis management (Journal of Laws 2007 No. 89 item 590 as amended);
- Act of 23 January 2009 on the provincial governor and government administration in the province (Journal of Laws 2019, item 1464, as amended);
- Act of 5 June 1998 on county government (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 920, of 2021, item 1038, 1834);
- Act of 8 March 1990 on Municipal Self-Government (Journal of Laws of 1990, No. 16, item 95 as amended).

Moreover, each public administration body – voivode, starosta (head of county) and wójt (head of commune) – issued a relevant directive on establishment of a voivodship, powiat and commune crisis management teams, respectively, which defined the composition, organisation, seat and work mode of such a team. Detailed data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. List of legal acts governing crisis management teams.

The office management team Legislative Act	Voivodship	District	Municipal
Crisis Management Act	Article 14, paragraphs 7- 12	Article 17, paragraphs 4-7	Article 19, paragraphs 4-7
Act on a Voivodship Governor and Government Administration in the Province	Article 17	not applicable	not applicable
Act on district government	not applicable	Art. 4 paragraph 1 points 15- 16	not applicable
Act on Municipal Self- Government	not applicable	not applicable	Article 7, paragraph 1, point 14
Ordinance on the establishment of a crisis management team	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Authors' own study.

Detailed principles of work of each crisis management team taking part in the survey were specified in the Regulations of the Provincial/District/Municipality Crisis Management Team, constituting an appendix to the order of the governmental and self-governmental administration body on appointment of the team. This document contains contents concerning, among others, the composition and the seat of the team, the tasks performed by the team and its members, and the mode and manner of its work. The analysis of the regulations of the above-mentioned teams allows for the following conclusions:

- the work of the Team is headed by the voivode, starost, head of the village (mayor, city president) as Chairman;

- the deputy chairman exercises supervision over the correctness of the tasks performed by crisis management entities indicated in crisis management plans;
- the headquarters of the team are located in the building of the voivodship office, poviats starost's office, commune office, in specific cases, it may be another place designated by the Chairman;
- The Team works based on the Annual Work Plan of the Crisis Management Team, approved by the Chairman of the Team, who defines the meeting agenda and persons responsible for the preparation and presentation of the individual meeting agenda items;
- members of the Team and invited persons are responsible for preparing information for the Team's meeting, including proposed solutions, expected outcomes and effects of the proposed solutions;
- If necessary, the Team can use the assistance of experts and experts;
- the presence of the members and persons invited to the meeting of the Team is mandatory;
- the meetings of the Team are open, and in justified cases, due to the protection of confidential information, they can be closed;
- The Team expresses its opinions in the form of arrangements, which include the following elements: content, deadline for realization, entities responsible for their performance;
- The Team is supported by the unit responsible for crisis management.

While moving on to the composition of the members of crisis management teams, the Act on crisis management stipulates that they are the heads of combined services, inspections and guards of voivodeship and poviats, persons employed in the voivodeship office, the poviats starost's office and the gmina office, as well as the representatives of, among others, the Polish Armed Forces, the voivodeship self-government, social rescue organisations and other persons invited by the Chairmen. Detailed analysis of empirical data allowed us to verify the personal composition of crisis management teams, and its results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Composition of crisis management teams.

Crisis Management Team Members	Voivodship Crisis Management Team	District Crisis Management Team	Municipal Crisis Management Team
President	Voivode	Governor	Commune Head/Mayor/Mayor
Vice-President	Director of the UW Department of Safety and Emergency Management	- vice-president; or a person holding a position appropriate to	deputy mayor, secretary of the municipality

		crisis management	
Regular members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservator of Monuments; - Inspector of Pharmacy; - Provincial Sanitary Inspector; - Province Inspector of Trade Quality of Agricultural and Food Products; - Superintendent of Education; - Director of Regional Water Management Authority; - Regional Inspector of Geodetic and Cartographic Supervision - Inspector of Environmental Protection - Chief of Police; - Commander of the Border Guard Branch (in border regions); - Chief of Military Recruitment Centre; - Commander of Territorial Defence Brigade; - Commander of Provincial State Fire Service; - War Veterinarian; - Province Pharmaceutical Inspector - Inspector of Trade Quality of Agricultural and Food Products; - Inspector of Trade Inspection; - Province Building Supervision Inspector - Road Transport Inspector - Inspector of Plant Health and Seed Inspection; - Head of Meteorological Forecasting Office; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - District Fire Chief; - District Police Chief; - District Sanitary Inspector - District Veterinarian - District Building Supervision Inspector; - The head of the District Family Assistance Centre; - Director of Independent Public Specialist Health Care Centre; - Heads of Departments/Managers of the Starosty and county organizational units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inspector for Crisis Management and Civil Defense; - inspectors responsible for: environmental protection and waste management, investments and construction, real estate management and agriculture, technical infrastructure management; - Commander of the Commune Voluntary Fire Brigade; - Police station representative; - Treasurer of the Commune; - Representatives of commune organizational units, educational institutions, representatives of the commune's organizational units: educational institutions, the Education and Culture Center, the Communal Social Assistance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Director of Tax Administration Chamber; - Dy of the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways; - Director of Regional Directorate of State Forests; - A representative of the provincial government appointed by the Marshall of the Province; - Di of the Provincial Branch of the National Health Fund; - Directors of selected departments of the Provincial Office, such as: Budget and Finance, Health, Social Assistance. 		Center and the Municipal Utilities Company
Non-regular members	<p>Staroste (presidents of cities with poviat rights); heads of other local government units; operators of critical infrastructure facilities deployed in the voivodeship area; representatives of law enforcement bodies - the prosecutor's office, courts and other public order and rescue services; owners of sports facilities; representatives of non-governmental organizations.</p>	<p>Representatives of social rescue organizations; non-governmental organizations; rescue experts; Chief of the Military Recruitment Center; Commander of the Border Guard Post.</p>	<p>Representatives of combined services, inspections and guards, appointed by their superiors to perform tasks in the team upon a motion of a mayor; representatives of social rescue organisations experts with the necessary knowledge or experience, invited by the head of village to work in the team.</p>

Source: Authors' own study.

As it can be easily noticed, crisis management teams on the voivodeship level are particularly developed, which results from the fact that services, inspections and

guards are widely represented there, but also the scale and nature of threats are extensive. It is also important to note the unified composition of the VMSC, leadership, as, in each examined voivodeship, the team is chaired by the voivode, and the deputy is the director of the Department of Security and Crisis Management in the Voivodeship Office.

When analysing the county crisis management team's personal composition, it is worth paying attention to the deputy chair of the PMSC, who is a person holding a position relevant to crisis management. This term was used on purpose because there is a kind of freedom in crisis management structures at the level of countys. On the example of the surveyed counties, it can be indicated that these are, for example, deputy staroste, chief specialist for security and crisis management, head of the security desk, head of the department of crisis management and defence matters or head of the department of security and crisis management and the county chief of the State Fire Service. This terminological arbitrariness causes considerable confusion when systematising and describing crisis management structures. The more so that, as it can be noticed, there are significant discrepancies in starosties when it comes to the staffing of crisis management structures, starting from independent one-person positions to desk officers, usually 3-4 persons. When there is a crisis management centre in a starosty, and at this level of public administration, it is obligatory, there are problems with ensuring continuity of work of these entities. It is also worth mentioning that each crisis management team may include representatives of institutions which are specific to a given region.

Such an example can be the Pomeranian Voivodeship, which has two Maritime Offices (in Gdynia and Słupsk), whose representatives sit as a member of the WZZK. Additionally, the director of the Maritime Search and Rescue Service is also a member of this team.

Turning to the mode of work of crisis management teams, at all levels of crisis management, they work in two basic modes: ordinary and extraordinary. The mode of meetings and their topics are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Modes of work and topics of meetings of crisis management teams

Crisis management team	Formal proceedings	
	Scheduled/regular	Extraordinary/emergency
Voivodeship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment of the preparation of the voivodeship for the summer and winter season; - assessment of the preparation of forces and measures to counteract and minimise the effects of floods and other natural threats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - risks resulting from natural forces, such as floods, fires and storms;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessment of the preparation of forces and measures to counteract and minimize the effects of severe frost and intense snowfall; - giving its opinion on the Provincial Crisis Management Plan; 	
District	- analysis and evaluation of the county's safety situation before the summer and winter seasons;	- epizootics, i.e. African swine fever (ASF), highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI);
Municipal	- preparation for the summer and winter season;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fire hazards; - localised flooding; - pandemic covid-19;

Source: Authors' own study.

Table 5 shows an example of the topics based on the analysis of the substantive scope of the meetings of the provincial crisis management teams resulting from the SARS-CoV-2 threat.

Table 5. Examples of topics for meetings of the WZZK resulting from a pandemic risk.

No.	Subject of the meeting
1.	Discussion of the Provincial Epidemic Action Plan, in the context of the threat of infectious disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus
2.	Organisation of a crisis management system in a SARS-CoV-2 epidemic emergency
3.	Assessment of the threat of SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus in the voivodship and preparation of specialised hospital facilities to receive patients
4.	Coronavirus outbreak threat - meeting with heads of (medical) services
5.	Coronavirus outbreak threat - meeting with heads of combined services
6.	Coronavirus outbreak threat - meeting with district chiefs (starostes)
7.	Unifying the way of fighting coronavirus, sharing information from different sources
8.	Organisation of dislocation of patients without COVID-19 in the hospitals of the voivodship allocated from the district hospital
9.	Assessment of the coronavirus threat in the Detention Centre and Prison and introduction of planned action procedures
10.	Increasing difficulties in providing hospital places for COVID-19 patients and patients with suspected SARS-CoV-2 infection in hospitals in the voivodship
11.	Assessment of the current epidemic situation in the voivodship. Preparing for the possibility of a 2nd phase of the epidemic. Proposal to set up an advisory panel to assess the risk of developing a second phase of infections

12.	Assessment of the performance of hospitals for patients without COVID-19. Threat assessment and preparedness of health services in a situation of reduced burden for patients with COVID-19
13.	A briefing in the Police online conferencing system with district office staff regarding institutional quarantine
14.	A discussion on the organisation of patients' admissions in a dedicated COVID-19 hospital and the reorganisation of work in all Emergency Rooms (ER)
15.	Discussing the problems arising from the organisation of quarantine, cooperation of local authorities with the police, PSP and the WOT. Discussing the problems of operation of POZ and taking swabs and work of laboratories.
16.	Discussing the functioning of the collective and household quarantine monitoring system. Evaluation of the functioning of isolation facilities

Source: Authors' own study.

The meetings of voivodeship crisis management teams resulted in recommendations which were passed on by the voivodes to be implemented by field organs of complex government administration and local government entities. On the basis of analysis, synthesis and generalisation, the following group of recommendations can be presented in connection with counteracting the coronavirus pandemic:

- it is necessary to conduct coordinated activities of services, inspections and guards in terms of anti-epidemic activities;
- current monitoring of the epidemic situation in the voivodship is necessary;
- competent services, inspections and guards should strictly enforce violations of quarantine rules and failure to observe the imposed restrictions;
- it is necessary to constantly monitor the availability of masks in the territory of the voivodship;
- services, inspections and guards should cover large population centres, including workplaces, with special antepidemic supervision;
- all services, inspections and guards on the territory of the voivodship, despite the ongoing state of the epidemic, should maintain continuity of operation and continue to perform the duties entrusted to them, both those statutory and those related to combating COVID-19;
- it is necessary to cancel all mass events in closed facilities and to ban school trips and foreign exchanges;
- there is a need to organise temporary hospitals and provide medical staff to work in covid wards.

In turn, at the level of counties, crisis management teams first carried out tasks resulting from instructions of voivodeship authorities and introduced pandemic procedures adequate to the epidemic state in individual regions of Pomeranian voivodship. An information policy was implemented concerning introduced restrictions and the rules of functioning of the population in the public space; the work of self-government institutions was restricted; information was collected from subordinate municipalities concerning the number of infected persons, the needs and and difficulties in functioning of health centres and hospitals.

As for the crisis management teams at the municipal level, in the pandemic situation, in addition to the implementation of provincial and district recommendations, municipalities mainly took care of: the purchase of masks for residents, the purchase of disinfection stations for public facilities, the purchase of personal protective equipment for employees of municipal organisational units, the establishment of a municipal help hotline, the designation of the place of isolation of infected persons and the conduct of disinfection of public spaces, as well as the designation of places of storage and burial of corpses.

Another issue surveyed was the frequency of crisis management team meetings before the pandemic (2018-2019) and during the pandemic (2020-2021). The results obtained in quantitative terms for provincial crisis management teams by participating voivodships are presented in Table 6 and Figure 1.

Table 6. Frequency of WZZK meetings between 2018 and 2021

No.	Name of voivodship	2018	2019	2020	2021
1.	Podlaskie	4	4	13	6
2.	Lubuskie	4	3	15	7
3.	Mazowieckie	2	6	8	11
4.	Świętokrzyskie	8	5	39	15
5.	Małopolskie	6	17	20	28
6.	Wielkopolskie	6	6	7	4
7.	Pomorskie	3	5	4	5
8.	Kujawsko-Pomorskie	3	3	4	3

Source: Authors' own study.

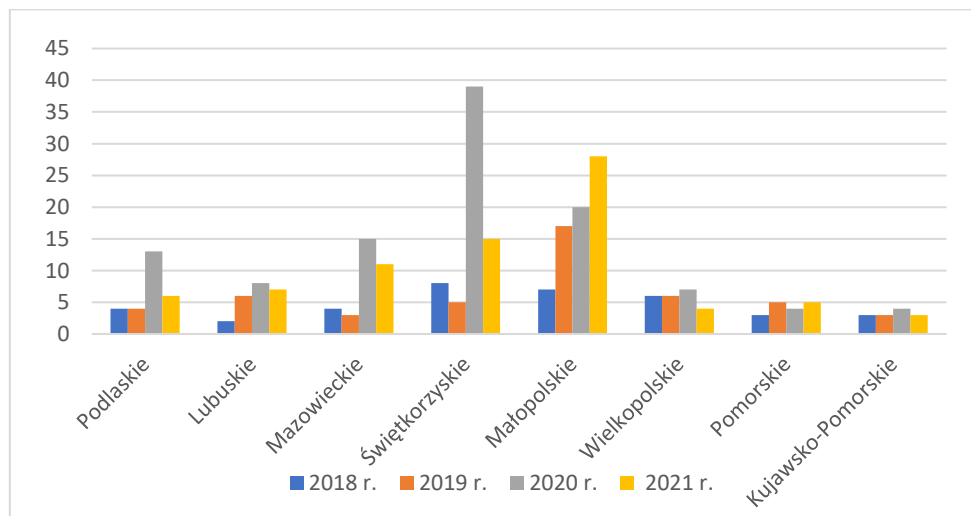


Figure 1: Frequency of WZZK meetings between 2018 and 2021

Source: Authors' own study.

The data obtained confirm the hypothesis that the provincial teams meet at least twice a year on scheduled and ad hoc basis, depending on the occurrence of a situation that may turn into a crisis. There is also a visible difference in the number of meetings before and during a pandemic, although it is not as significant as assumed. In almost all examined voivodeships (except Pomorskie), the number of PZZK meetings was definitely the highest in 2020 and 2021 (except for Wielkopolskie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie), which was obviously caused by the virus pandemic. In three voivodeships (Pomorskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Wielkopolskie), there were no significant differences in the number of crisis team meetings.

As far as the frequency of planned and ad hoc meetings of district crisis management teams are concerned, their number is presented in Table 7 and Figure 2.

Table 7. Frequency of PZZK meetings between 2018 and 2021

No.	Name of county	2018	2019	2020	2021
1.	Kartuzy	2	2	5	10
2.	Kościerzyna	1	3	3	1
3.	Lębork	0	0	0	3
4.	Malbork	3	3	5	4
5.	Nowy Dwór Gdański	3	4	4	2
6.	Puck	9	9	9	9
7.	Starogard Gdański	6	3	1	3
8.	Człuchów	0	0	4	0
9.	Słupsk (miasto na prawach powiatu)	3	2	9	1

Source: Authors' own study.

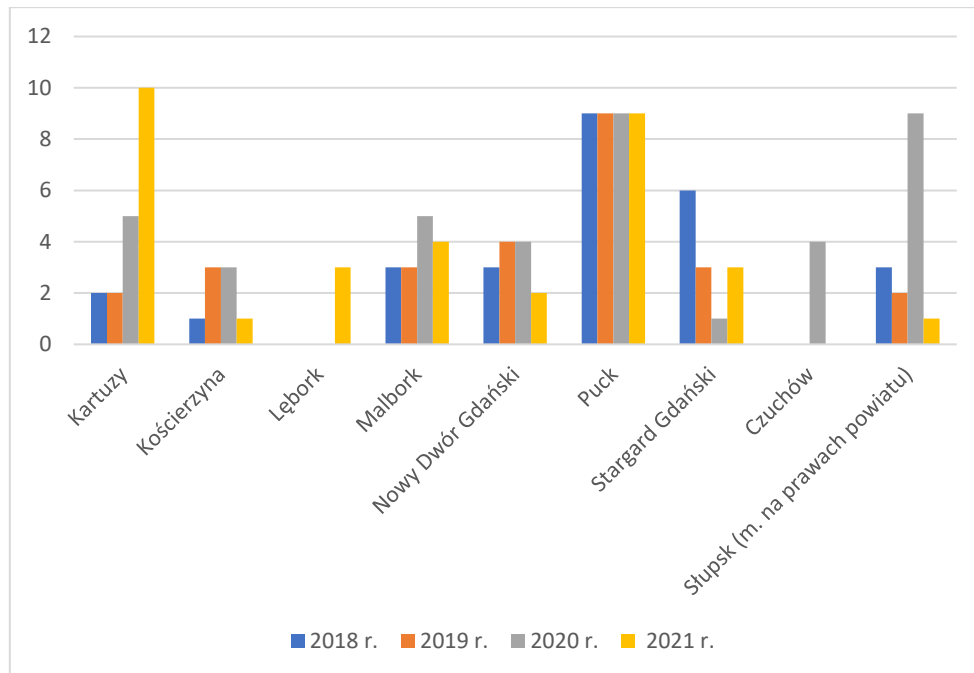


Figure 2: Frequency of PZZK meetings between 2018 and 2021

Source: Authors' own study.

A feature of county crisis management team meetings is their irregularity and the apparent lack of impact of the pandemic on the number of team meetings. In only three districts, the number of meetings of the PZZK in 2020 was higher than in 2018, 2019 and 2021. It is noteworthy that in two districts, there was no team meeting during the year, and in one district also in the so-called covid year, i.e. in 2020. On the other hand, regardless of the situation, the team always met 9 times during the period under study (four years). In the case of municipal crisis management teams, it is also difficult to speak of regular team meetings. A numerical summary is presented in Table 7 and Figure 3.

Table 7. Frequency of the GZZK meetings between 2018 and 2021.

No.	Name of municipality	2018	2019	2020	2021
1.	Dębica Kaszubska	0	2	2	1
2.	Damnica	0	4	6	3
3.	Główczyce	6	5	7	4
4.	Kępice	0	0	1	0
5.	Kobylnica	0	1	3	0
6.	Potęgowo	1	1	4	2
7.	Słupsk (gmina)	4	4	62	16
8.	Ustka	0	0	1	1

Source: Authors' own study

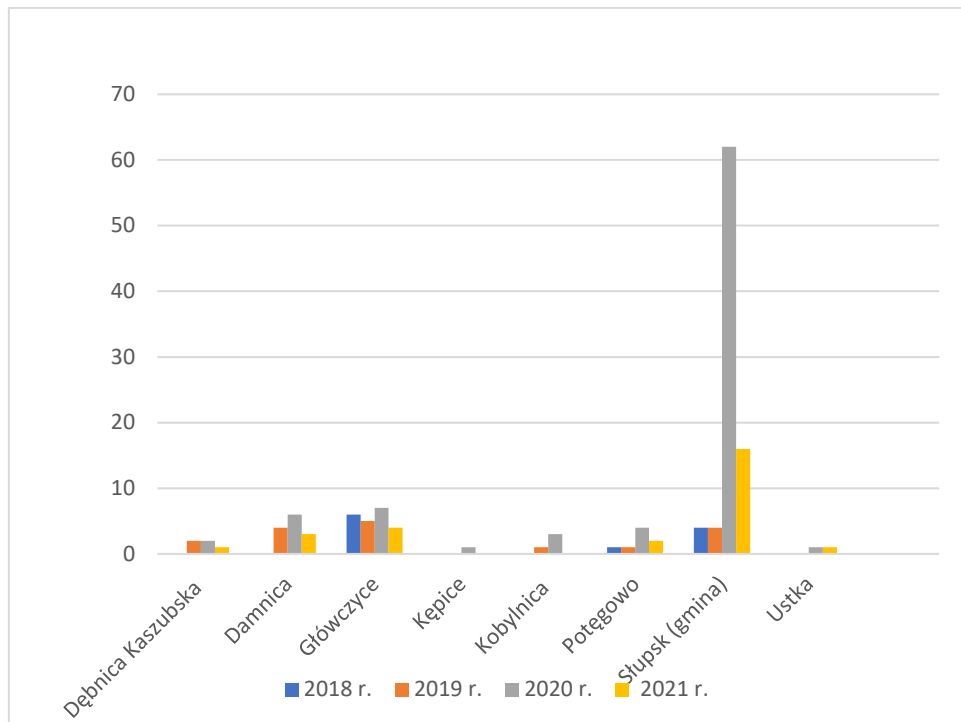


Figure 3: Frequency of the GZZK meetings between 2018 and 2021
Source: Authors' own study.

The municipal crisis management teams (GZZK) are an example of how the rule of mandatory meetings does not apply. In five out of the eight municipalities surveyed, there was a year or years when the team chairman did not meet the team even once. As for the number of meetings, they also vary considerably; for example, in 2020, there were 62 meetings in one municipality and only 1 in another. One could make the initial assumption that at the level of the municipalities surveyed, the teams do not play the role assigned to them by law since they are not convened.

Generalizing the data collected during the empirical study, it is possible to formulate a general conclusion that there is no need to introduce radical changes in the functioning of crisis management teams at the territorial levels of their functioning (voivodship, county and municipality). The Covid-19 pandemic modified the mode of work of teams from stationary to remote, which in the future may be used in solving other non-military crises. Admittedly, this process was accompanied by some technical difficulties, but as the IT skills of the team members improved, the online meetings went more and more smoothly. Technical improvements have been made to enable team meetings via video conferencing and have been introduced as an alternative to face-to-face meetings.

When assessing the teams' efficiency, it can be pointed out that they function best at the provincial level. This is due to at least several factors, such as uniform composition of the team's leadership and members, extensive forces and resources at the disposal of voivodes and managers of complex government administration, and relatively regular and constant number of team meetings, which respond to the occurring crisis situation in a planned and ad hoc manner. At the level of poviats, there have been postulates concerning the improvement of information exchange among services, inspections and guards and the county team for crisis management. It is mainly about transferring current statistical data, information about the occurring event, or transferring equipment and protective measures. There is a noticeable difference in the composition of crisis management teams, especially when it comes to the functioning of units responsible for crisis management in the structures of county starosties. The structural and staffing diversity causes us to deal with different solutions in each county in this field.

Moving on to the assessment of the functioning of the municipal crisis management teams, it can be generalized that it is at this level that certain problems occur, which should be solved nationwide, also on a legal basis. It is primarily a matter of resolving issues arising from the lack of 24-hour circulation of information for the municipal level (there are no obligatory crisis management centers); the lack of a clear specification of the tasks of the municipal self-government carried out under crisis management, in particular with regard to the manner of convening crisis management teams; the lack of regulations concerning the minimum staffing of municipal organisational units carrying out tasks under crisis management; lack of precise scope of purposeful reserve in the municipal budget so that it is not limited only to the response phase, but enables the execution of own tasks in the scope of a widely understood crisis management; lack of fully compatible crisis management system, which would be based on precise legal provisions.

Conclusion

The presented research results fit into the crisis management problem in public administration. From the point of view of the analyzed sector, each crisis means pressure to take decisions concerning actions aimed at counteracting threats that have arisen. These decisions are connected with potentially far-reaching consequences due to the uncertainty of the situation resulting from the crisis. This is due to the fact that crises are not always fully predictable and are characterized by unexpected developments. This specificity of crises confronts decision-makers with dilemmas related to the possible consequences of their decisions in a crisis. Therefore, all crisis management systems need to have the administrative capacity to detect crises, evaluate data, have access to relevant expert networks, and have trust and capacity for cooperation between the different administrative levels and policymakers for crisis management mechanisms to become effective. Crisis management in the case of public administration, therefore, requires a significant coordination capacity at three levels: political, strategic and operational and the analysis of the activities

carried out in crisis management in this sector should additionally take into account the situation of the country, its administrative capacities as well as the institutional system of governance (Christensen, 2019) and vertically at all levels of state governance from the central to the municipal level.

Referring to the problems related to the functioning of crisis management teams during the Covid-19 pandemic, in the opinion of the teams surveyed, no serious difficulties were found in the functioning of these bodies resulting from the pandemic threat. Nevertheless, the work of these collegial bodies was hampered and often even disrupted by external factors resulting from the spread of the covid-19 virus. Due to the epidemic restrictions introduced, meetings of all teams were held in the form of videoconferencing via dedicated computer programmes for remote communication. The first such remote meetings started to be held as early as April 2020. At the same time, once the possibility to hold meetings in stationary form was restored, they were held in compliance with DDM rules. Only for some district crisis management teams, the biggest problem was the lack of the possibility to hold meetings in stationary mode and the high level of infections among team members, or even, as reported by one of the entities participating in the survey, too few online meetings in relation to the needs. For municipal crisis management teams, on the other hand, quite significant problems occurred in the area of acquiring individual, and collective protection means due to their unavailability on the market and rising prices, the withdrawal of some non-governmental organisations from cooperation due to a high level of morbidity among members, and the limitation of the possibility to carry out activities in relation to the homeless.

Crisis management, therefore, requires coordination, both vertically at all levels of government and horizontally within government, as well as collaboration with civil society and private actors (Hustedt, 2019). It is also important to note that crisis management coordination is organised differently across countries (e.g. Christensen et al., 2016; Laegreid & Rykkja, 2016), and local flexibility allows further experimentation and development of new solutions that are transferable to similar contexts. The different approaches tested since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, including inaction, have allowed the effectiveness and implications of individual measures to be gradually assessed and adjustments or direction of change to be made in real-time (Tubb, 2020).

The trade-off between effective coordination at the political, strategic and operational levels on the one hand and the local expertise of representatives of services, inspections and guards and experts sitting on crisis management teams flexibility on the other are not illusory, given that crises involve a strong need for coordination of cross-border capacities.

Based on an empirical analysis of research conducted for nine EU countries, such as Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Austria and concerning crisis management triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, recommendations have been made for improving crisis management systems in EU countries as follows.

- The ability to detect crises through the establishment of effective early warning mechanisms and early crisis response improves the quality of crisis management.
- Consistency and coherence in undertaking actions aimed at mitigating all threats to the security of the state, which in turn requires full coordination of the entire crisis management system, is of key importance for effective crisis management. Crisis Management Teams operating at different levels of the system play an important role in this respect.
- In crisis management, it is advisable to link the early warning system with responsible executive staff, as well as to create permanent links between expert advisory and executive structures.
- Flexible adaptation to changing circumstances and the systematic development of knowledge on how best to counteract threats or prepare for the next one is essential for efficient and effective crisis management. It requires cooperation among experts, politicians, services and civil society (Tubb, 2020).

On the other hand, based on the results of own research conducted on the ground in Poland concerning the years 2018-2021, the following postulates can be formulated to improve the functioning of crisis management teams, noting the need to:

- defining clear strategic objectives and managing priorities before, during and after a crisis situation;
- reduction of bureaucracy and increase of decision-making powers at lower levels of crisis management, i.e. first of all municipalities and then districts, which should result in faster actions for the safety of inhabitants of municipalities;
- improvement of crisis communication, which is a key element in the process of crisis management. Unfortunately, it is often a weak link of this system;
- obligatory determination of the organisational structure and naming of the units responsible for crisis management at the level of municipalities and counties, as there are cases of marginalisation of the issues related to security and crisis management by, for instance, reducing to the minimum the number of posts and substantial overloading of the staff;
- legally regulating the number of scheduled meetings of crisis management teams, especially at the municipality level, as it is difficult to accept the absence of a municipal crisis management team meeting by explaining that there was no need for such a meeting.

In conclusion, the functioning of crisis management teams operating at all levels of the systems of individual EU Member States is an excellent form of exchanging observations, remarks and thoughts on the general state of security in the administered area and a platform for working out common actions for a given region. As auxiliary bodies, they should operate efficiently, continuously and on a high professional level in order to effectively support the decision-makers, i.e. voivodes, starosts and heads of villages (mayors and city presidents) in the most important area of their constitutional responsibility, which is the security of the region and its inhabitants.

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KLUCZOWA ROLA ZESPOŁÓW KRYZYSOWYCH W ADMINISTRACJI PUBLICZNEJ W KONTEKŚCIE COVID-19

Streszczenie: Celem artykułu jest znalezienie odpowiedzi na główny problem badawczy, w jaki sposób pandemia COVID-19 wpłynęła na funkcjonowanie zespołów zarządzania kryzysowego i na drodze do jej rozwiązania. Posłużono się następującymi pytaniami pomocniczymi: jaki jest skład i tryb pracy wojewódzkich, powiatowych i gminnych zespołów zarządzania kryzysowego, z jaką częstotliwością odbywały się spotkania zespołów w okresie przed i w trakcie pandemii, jakie problemy napotykały zespoły podczas przeciwdziałania pandemii i co należy zrobić, aby w przyszłości usprawnić ich pracę? W części teoretycznej omówiono zagadnienia związane z zarządzaniem kryzysowym i procesem jego oceny. Część empiryczna przedstawia metodologię badań własnych i ich wyniki. Prezentowane badanie zostało przeprowadzone na wybranych jednostkach instytucji publicznych w latach 2018-2021. Ankiety rozesłano do organów administracji publicznej drogą elektroniczną na adresy departamentów bezpieczeństwa i zarządzania kryzysowego lub centra zarządzania kryzysowego podane na stronach internetowych ww. instytucji. Celem autorów niniejszego artykułu było przede wszystkim zapoznanie się z wybranymi, najważniejszymi zagadnieniami dotyczącymi działalności zespołów zarządzania kryzysowego, a nie ilościowy pomiar określonych parametrów ich funkcjonowania. Dlatego też zespoły zarządzania kryzysowego funkcjonujące na poziomie województw z całej Polski zostały poddane badaniom jakościowym. Do jakościowej analizy funkcjonowania powiatowych zespołów zarządzania kryzysowego wybrano losowo jedno województwo. Następnie losowo wybrano jeden powiat z ww. województwa, tj. powiat słupski, z którego zbadano funkcjonujące na tym terenie gminne zespoły zarządzania kryzysowego. Wyniki badań wykazały, że nie ma potrzeby wprowadzania radykalnych zmian w funkcjonowaniu zespołów zarządzania kryzysowego na terytorialnych poziomach ich funkcjonowania (województwo, powiat i gmina). Pandemia covid-19 zmodyfikowała tryb pracy zespołów ze stacjonarnego na zdalny, co w przyszłości może być wykorzystane przy rozwiązywaniu innych kryzysów pozamilitarnych. Oceniając efektywność zespołów można wskazać, że najlepiej funkcjonują one na szczeblu wojewódzkim. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań autorzy przedstawili postulaty usprawnienia funkcjonowania zespołów zarządzania kryzysowego. Zagadnienia poruszane w artykule mogą być interesujące zarówno dla teoretyków, jak i praktyków specjalizujących się w zarządzaniu kryzysowym.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie kryzysowe, zespoły zarządzania kryzysowego, administracja publiczna

在 COVID-19 的背景下，危机管理团队在公共管理中的关键作用

摘要：本文的目的是找到主要研究问题的答案，即 covid-19 大流行如何影响危机管理团队的运作以及解决问题的方法。使用了以下附属问题：省、区、市危机管理小组的组成和工作模式是什么，在疫情前和疫情期间小组会议的频率如何，小组在疫情期间遇到了哪些问题应对大流行的措施，以及未来应该做些什么来改进他们的工作？理论部分讨论了与危机管理及其评估过程相关的问题。实证部分介绍了自己的研究方法及其结果。本研究针对 2018 年至 2021 年选定的公共机构单位进行。问卷通过电子邮件发送至公共行政机构，发送至上述机构网站上提供的安全和危机管理部门或危机管理中心的地址。本文作者的主要目的是了解有关危机管理团队活动的选定的、最重要的问题，而不是量化衡量其运作的具体参数。这就是为什么在整个波兰省一级运作的危机管理团队接受定性研究的原因。随机选择了一个省对地方危机管理团队的运作进行了定性分析。然后随机选择上述省的一个省，即斯乌普斯克省，检查在该地区运作的公共危机管理团队。研究结果表明，没有必要在危机管理团队的职能范围内（省、县和公社）对其职能进行根本性的改变。大流行的 covid-19 将团队的工作模式从固定变为远程，将来可用于解决其他非军事危机。评估团队的效率，可以看出他们在省级的表现最好。基于所进行的研究，作者提出了改善危机管理团队运作的假设。文章中讨论的问题对于专门从事危机管理的理论家和从业者来说都是有趣的。

关键词：危机管理，危机管理团队，公共行政