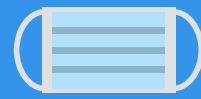


A LOOK AT



THE IMPACTS

OF THE COVID-19



PANDEMIC

ON THE WORK

OF THE COMMISSIONS

FOR THE PROTECTION

OF CHILDREN AND

YOUNG PEOPLE



Maria João Leote de Carvalho and Cláudia Urbano

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A LOOK AT THE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE WORK OF THE COMMISSIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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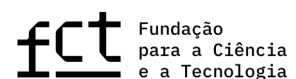
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A LOOK AT THE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE WORK OF THE COMMISSIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Maria João Leote de Carvalho and Cláudia Urbano

Note to the English translation This report was originally published in Portuguese and contains several commonly used abbreviations in that language. Seeking to strike a balance between conciseness and greater readability in English, the Portuguese initialisms referring to the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People (CNPDPCJ) and to the Commissions for the Protection of Children and Young People (CPCJ) were kept throughout the text, as was the initialism referring to the Directorate-General of Health (DGS). Other abbreviations were written out in full.

Foreword by the President of the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People, Rosário Farmhouse

The COVID-19 pandemic required a radical change in how we live, communicate and socialize. Dealing with vulnerability, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity became a necessity.

In matters of childhood and youth, the concerns were manifold. Indeed, though children were *the least infected, they were the most affected* by the effects of the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown and social isolation.

Some of its main effects on children were the increase in inequality and intra-family violence, the unemployment of parents or caretakers, an excessive number of hours spent in front of a screen (becoming more exposed to virtual abuse and dependency), the worsening of mental health problems and substance abuse. The reconciliation, within the family, of distance learning, telework and family life also led to many cases of parental burn-out. The isolation of children, both from their extended families and from the schools or other protective entities, created situations of severe fragility and invisibility.

Against this backdrop, gaining insight into the impact of the pandemic on the protective capacity of the Commissions for the Protection of Children and Young People was crucial in identifying solutions that could help to overcome the difficulties faced.

In this regard, I wish to express to Professor Maria João Leote de Carvalho (Commissioner of the Nacional Council of the CNPDPCJ) and to her colleague Professor Cláudia Urbano my sincere gratitude for the careful and innovative effort to know more in order to act better through the study “A LOOK AT THE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE WORK OF THE COMMISSIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE”. It has greatly contributed to a broader awareness of the solutions found by the Commissions for the Protection of Children and Young People, shining a light on their capacity for innovation, creativity and solidarity in meeting new challenges.

On behalf of the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People, as well as my own, I thank you for having sought, from the very start, to better understand the situation on the ground, so that a more effective protection can be offered to all children.

Rosário Farmhouse

President of the CNPDPCJ

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Background

The year 2020 was marked by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. On 30 January of that year, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 virus as a public health emergency of international concern. Given the rapid expansion of its reach across the globe – there were 115 countries with declared cases of infection at the beginning of March 2020 – and the alarming rate at which it spread among the populations, on 11 March 2020 the WHO raised its previous classification to a global pandemic.¹

In Portugal, on 18 March 2020, a state of emergency was declared² and exceptional measures were adopted to contain the spread of the virus, by imposing a partial suspension of certain rights and a general duty of the population to stay at home, except where otherwise provided by law. Two of the main measures adopted were the closing of all entities that did not provide essential services or basic necessities and the adoption of telework whenever the role of the worker permitted it.

Under two legal extensions, the state of emergency continued until the end of 2 May 2020. It was followed by a period marked by the declaration of a state of calamity,³ combined with a set of new measures and contingency plans that varied according to the evolution of the indicators related to the spread of the disease, by geographic area.

At the international level, on 8 April 2020, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) issued a statement about the impact of the pandemic on children, in which it urged States to respect the rights of the child when taking measures to tackle the public health threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ The Committee drew special attention to a potential worsening of situations of risk and social inequality and to the emergence of new contexts of vulnerability, particularly associated with the growing use of online digital means, and it pointed out the need to assess various dimensions of the effects of the lockdown measures on the development of each child and young person.

It was against this background that, at different meetings of the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People (CNPDPJ), some of the Commissioners mentioned the need to collect information about the experience and the perspective of the Commissions for the Protection of Children and Young People (CPCJs) regarding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their activity. An action was needed to ensure that Portuguese society was more informed of the

¹ More information is available at: <https://www.sns.gov.pt/noticias/2020/03/11/covid-19-pandemia>

² Under Presidential Decree no. 14-A/2020, of 18 March, the state of emergency began in the country at midnight on 19 March. Under two extensions effected by Decree no. 17-A/2020, of 2 April, and Decree no. 20-A/2020, of 17 April, it was prolonged until 11:59 p.m. on 2 May.

³ Declared by the Government through Council of Ministers Resolution no. 33-A/2020, of 30 April, approved pursuant to Article 19 of the Basic Law on Civil Protection, adopted by way of Law no. 27/2006.

⁴ Available at: [URL](#)

actual conditions under which the CPCJs had been working in the community, since the start of the pandemic, notably by giving voice to their professionals.

The CPCJs play a crucial role in ensuring the promotion of the rights and the protection of children and young people in Portugal. Their responsibility became even greater during the pandemic, given the need to swiftly respond to detected cases under conditions that were significantly different than usual, especially as the vast majority of the entities in the community had closed. Two of the main – and very complex – challenges faced by the CPCJs in carrying out their duties were the lower visibility of children and their families to first-line entities, due to the need to comply with the lockdown rules, and the potential consequences of the worsening of situations of social risk and danger.

Therefore, the National Council of the CNPDPCJ deemed it vital and urgent to learn how the CPCJs perceived their action on the ground, what difficulties and limitations they had felt the most since the start of the state of emergency and what positive aspects they could identify as catalysts for their adaptation to the emerging circumstances.

To that effect, in September 2020 the technical team of the CNPCDPCJ was asked to submit a first draft of questions to be addressed to the CPCJs for the purpose of mapping the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their work. That document was reviewed, redrafted and further developed by a group comprised of Commissioners Helena Gonçalves (General-Prosecutor's Office) and Maria João Leote de Carvalho (co-opted member) working in close collaboration with the President and the Vice-President of the CNPDPCJ, Rosário Farmhouse and Maria João Fernandes, respectively, and with the subsequent support of the technical team of the CNPDPCJ. The final version of the survey – *Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs* – was concluded and validated at the beginning of October 2020.

The collection of CPCJ data at the national level was conducted in the form of a survey based on an online questionnaire, which was applied through the LimeSurvey platform provided for that purpose by the Informatics Institute (II, I.P.) of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. The invitation to participate in the survey was e-mailed by the Presidency of the CNPDPCJ to each CPCJ in October 2020. It contained information about the background of the survey, the link to access it and instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire. Each CPCJ was asked to fill in only one questionnaire, so that their reply would be representative of the experience of that entity. The period for filling in the questionnaire on the platform of the II, I.P., ran from 20 October to 26 November 2020.

PART I

METHODOLOGY



1.1 Instrument

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire to collect information about the experience of the CPCJs during the period from 19 March to 31 August 2020. This period was broken down into two different phases based on the restrictions imposed by the rules put in place to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 1st phase, covering the first lockdown, between 19 March and 2 May 2020, after the state of emergency was declared in the country;
- 2nd phase, covering a first stage of lockdown easing, between 3 May and 31 August 2020, starting with the transition to the state of calamity.

Initially, a third phase of collection of information was planned, with a duration of 4 months, starting at the same time as the 2020/2021 school year (1 September 2020) and ending on 31 December 2020. However, given how the pandemic evolved in Portugal, with indicators deteriorating throughout that period and the state of emergency being consequently reinstated and more restrictive containment measures being put in place in January 2021, that option was not implemented.

TABLE 1. Structure of the questionnaire

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE. IDENTIFICATION OF THE CPCJ			
1st stage: STATE OF EMERGENCY (19 March to 2 May 2020)	Frequency and methodology of the meetings of the CPCJ	Restricted format	5 questions (4 closed-ended)
		Extended format	5 questions (4 closed-ended)
	Structure of the teams of the CPCJ	Restricted format	4 questions (1 closed-ended)
		Extended format	3 questions (1 closed-ended)
2nd stage: POST STATE OF EMERGENCY (3 May to 31 August 2020)	Coordination between the CPCJ and other entities	Entities with competence in matters of childhood and youth	2 questions (multiple choice)
		CNPDPCCJ	7 questions (4 closed-ended)
		CNPDPCCJ-Regional Technical Teams	3 questions (2 closed-ended)
		Public Prosecution Service	3 questions (closed-ended)
	Facilities and logistics		6 questions (4 closed-ended)
	Main difficulties faced – rules of the DGS		1 question (open-ended)
	Strengths / positive aspects identified in the work of the CPCJ		1 question (open-ended)

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCCJ, 2020.

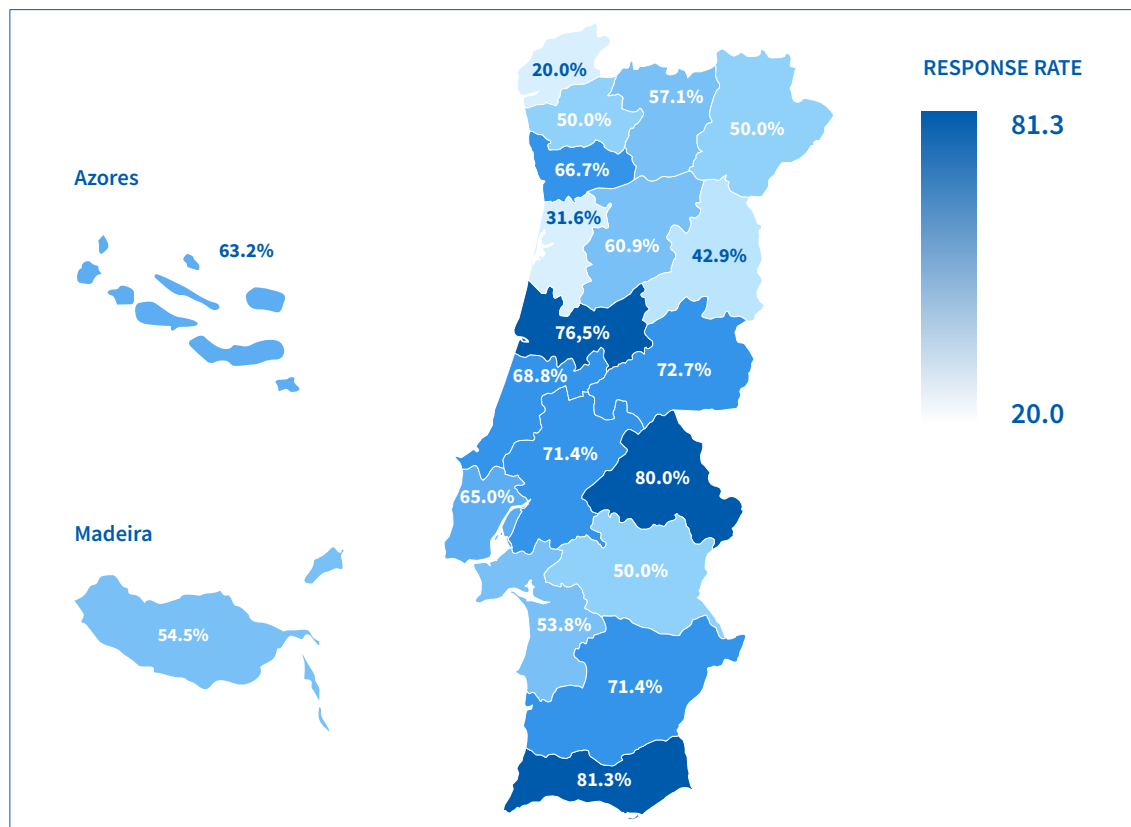
The questionnaire was organized into three parts. The first part included the invitation of the President of the CNPDPCJ, followed by the identification data of the CPCJ. There were two other parts, one focused on the 1st stage of the impact assessment, corresponding to the state of emergency period, and the other geared towards the 2nd stage, in the subsequent post state of emergency phase. Both these parts presented an identical structure around six areas (Table 1).

1.2 Participants

From the universe of 310 CPCJs that exist in the country, 192 questionnaires were collected. The process of initial validation revealed four cases of CPCJs with duplicated questionnaires, making it necessary to validate only one. To that end, the record was eliminated for the questionnaire that was incomplete. After this stage, the total volume of questionnaires validated for analysis corresponded to 188 CPCJs (61% of the universe).

The response rate for the survey, by reference to the total number of existing CPCJs per district or Autonomous Region, varies greatly (Figure 1). Some districts, such as Faro, Portalegre and Coimbra, present a high

FIGURE 1. Survey response rate by district and Autonomous Region



Powered by Bing
Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

participation rate, above 75%, while others have a low participation rate, of less than 35% of the total number of CPCJs located there. Regional diversity is ensured, as CPCJs from every district and the two Autonomous Regions are represented among the survey participants.

Looking at the distribution of the participating CPCJs based on the administrative division of the country into NUT II regions, the most represented regions are the Centre (30.9%), the North (25.0%) and Alentejo (20.2%). They are followed, at a large distance, by those located in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (7.4%), the Algarve (6.9%) and the Autonomous Regions of Azores (6.4%) and Madeira (3.2%).

1.3 Analytical procedures

In December 2020, the information from the questionnaire was transferred from the II, I.P. platform into MS Excel V.2019 Pro files by the technical staff of the IT support department of the CNPDPCJ, Dora Alvarez and Ruben Cardoso. As a second step, the files were sent to the authors of the present report, who, in the first two months of 2021, proceeded to their validation in close liaison with the CNPDPCJ team. Subsequently, the information collected was transposed into a database created for that purpose using the data analysis software IBM SPSS v26. The quantitative data were validated and codified, while the qualitative replies stemming from the open-ended questions initially underwent content analysis and codification.

This was followed by a phase of exploration of the data, which were subject to a univariate descriptive statistical analysis with a view to a preliminary identification of the main trends. As the analysis progressed, indicators related to the work of the CPCJs in 2019 and 2020 were collected from the IT support department of the CNPDPCJ, in April 2021, with the aim of associating each CPCJ to a set of sociodemographic indicators that would make it possible to characterize them.

In a second phase, with a broader understanding of the trends that were identified, variables were selected for the purpose of performing a multivariate analysis that would make it possible to establish a connection between the different dimensions concerning the characterization of the CPCJs, the conditions under which they operate and their work.

To that end:

- i) the number of variables and the number of possible answers were reduced (by recodifying and/or aggregating categories to better systematize the information);
- ii) factor analysis was employed for the variables related to the organizational characterization of the CPCJs (i.e., number of cases (Total Caseload), by year, and evolution between 2019 and 2020, frequency of meetings and methodologies used), the conditions under which they work (i.e., facilities, internet access, existing means and resources), their assessment of the coordination with different entities (i.e., CNPDPCJ, central services and Regional Technical Teams, community entities and the Public Prosecution Service), the weaknesses felt and, lastly, the strengths identified in their work.

The factor analysis resulted in the identification of two dimensions that summarize the position of the CPCJs. The first dimension relates to the infrastructure within which they carry out their work; and the second dimension is more functional, dealing with the support, the responses and their operation.

Once the structure of the information was defined in these two dimensions, the data were used to create profiles (clusters) based on which it would be possible to identify different scenarios in the CPCJs' representation of their work at different stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

PART II

THE IMPACTS OF

THE COVID-19

PANDEMIC



IN THE WORK OF

THE CPCJs

The presentation of the main results of the survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, as contained in these pages, is descriptive and structured around **six major areas** that relate to the organization and the work of the CPCJs: a) management and operation; b) structure; c) facilities and logistics; d) coordination with other entities; e) greatest difficulties experienced; and f) strengths.

2.1 Management and operation of the CPCJ

During the period of the state of emergency (from 19 March to 2 May 2020), the majority of the CPCJs (77.0%) was able to maintain the planned frequency of (non-urgent) meetings in a restricted format, and a small number of CPCJs reported a higher frequency than usual (3.2%) (Table 2).

Looking at the second stage of this analysis, the three months that immediately followed the state of emergency (Table 2), there was an increase in the number of CPCJs that complied with the planned frequency (80.2%) and a significant decrease in the number of those for which the frequency was lower.

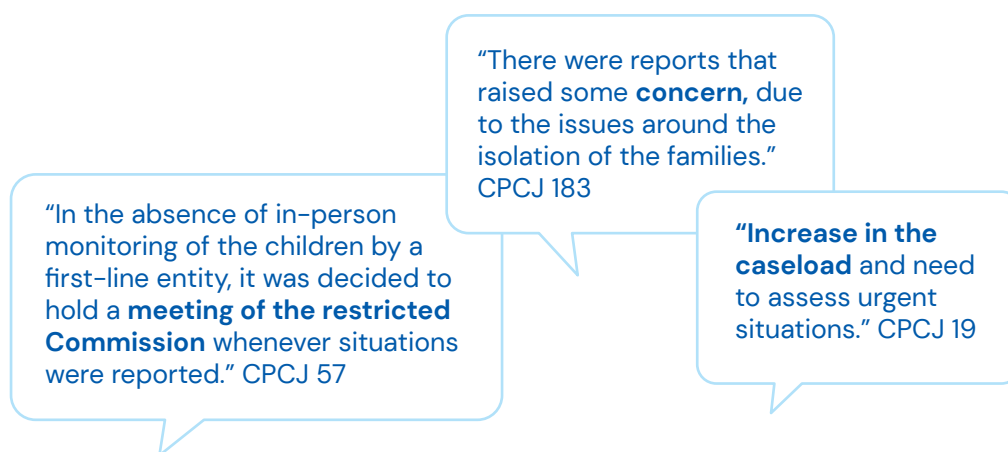
TABLE 2. Meetings of the CPCJ, by format, by period under assessment

	State of emergency		Post state of emergency	
	Restricted	Extended	Restricted	Extended
A) NON-URGENT				
Held as planned	77.0%	16.1%	80.2%	31.8%
Lower frequency than planned	19.8%	78.2%	9.4%	55.7%
Higher frequency than planned	3.2%	0.5%	2.6%	1.0%
DK / NA	0	2.6%	7.8%	11.4%
B) URGENT				
They were not necessary	54.2%	93.8%	46.9%	85.4%
1-3 meetings	32.3%	2.1%	34.4%	2.1%
4 meetings or more	9.3%	1.0%	10.4%	1.0%
DK / NA	4.2%	3.2%	8.3%	10.5%

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

When it comes to the meetings of the CPCJs in an extended format, the scenario is reversed. For the vast majority of the CPCJs, meetings in this format were held less regularly than planned, which can be explained, to a large extent, by the lockdown rules put in place and the consequent closing of community entities and the imposition of social isolation measures.

Regarding the need for CPCJs to hold urgent meetings in a restricted format, a little over half (54.2%) stated that there was no need for such meetings during the state of emergency. Nearly one third reported having held 1 to 3 meetings and 9.4% reported having held 4 meetings or more of this type.



As for the reasons that made urgent meetings necessary, most commonly they related to the initiation of new proceedings and sharing of information about pending ones, reports received, decision making and withdrawal of consent by the family (n=75, 39.8% of the total number of participating CPCJs).

These were followed by the execution of urgent procedures (n=23, 12.3%), solely as a result of situations of domestic violence (n=7, 3.7%) or sexual abuse (n=5, 2.7%) being detected and to analyse the rules of the DGS and set up contingency plans (n=5, 2.7%).

As this was an open-ended question, it must be borne in mind when reading these numbers that other situations of domestic violence and sexual abuse might be included in the first group of CPCJs that reported having held an urgent meeting to open and analyse cases. The nature of the cases under analysis is therefore not specified.

Underlying the urgent meetings is a variety of reasons. Chiefly among them, as pointed out by several CPCJs, are the awareness of the fact that children and young people were less visible in the community and the importance of determining what the actual conditions for intervention were.

Several CPCJs also highlighted the increase not just in the caseload but also in the number of urgent situations for analysis. Indeed, as many community entities with competence in matters of childhood and youth closed, the CPCJ took on an even more prominent role as a first line of response.

2.2 Structure of the CPCJ

Regarding the structure of the CPCJs in their restricted format, it should be noted that a large number of CPCJs (41.4% during the state of emergency and 22.9% in the post state of emergency) suffered a decrease in the number of Commissioners in office (Table 3).

The main reasons given by the CPCJs for the decrease in the number of Commissioners in their restricted format include instructions from the entity of origin (19.4%), placement in telework by the entity of origin (10.4%) and even the termination of their role as representatives of the entity of origin (3.1%) in the periods under analysis.

The need to provide assistance / care to family members, including children (14.1%), and the fact that the technician was part of a high-risk group, as defined in the official guidelines (13.0%), are also among the reasons that are most represented in the set of participating CPCJs. As expected, there were also some CPCJs with technicians who had to suspend their work as a result of quarantine / prophylactic isolation (2.6%) or due to illness.

TABLE 3. Structure of the CPCJ / number of Commissioners, by period under assessment

	State of emergency		Post state of emergency	
	Restricted	Extended	Restricted	Extended
Remained the same	56.3%	41.1%	67.7%	52.1%
Lower	41.1%	28.1%	22.9%	19.8%
Higher	0	0.5%	0	3.6%
DK/NA	2.6%	30.3%	9.4%	24.5%

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

Upon further analysis of the number of Commissioners in the restricted format placed in telework (Table 4), pursuant to the guidelines established in various legal provisions, it is noticeable that there were CPCJs with 4 Commissioners or more who were called back by their entities of origin during the state of emergency (16.7%), which was the most critical period for intervention. This number decreased significantly in the lockdown easing phase (6.9%).

TABLE 4. Commissioners (restricted format) in telework and other modalities, by period under assessment

	State of emergency			Post state of emergency		
	Under the exceptional regime	Person with a disability	Called back by entity of origin	Under the exceptional regime	Person with a disability	Called back by entity of origin
0	69.9%	97.8%	50.5%	84.0%	97.7%	67.2%
1	19.1%	2.2%	14.1%	10.9%	2.3%	13.2%
2	6.6%	0	8.7%	3.4%	0	6.3%
3	2.2%	0	9.8%	1.1%	0	6.3%
4 or more	2.2%	0	16.7%	0.6%	0	6.9%

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

As for the structure of the CPCJs in their extended format, the responding CPCJs pointed to an average of 6.6 participating entities during the state of emergency and 8.2 in the period that followed (Table 5). The maximum number of entities participating in the extended format of the CPCJ was 24, while the mode refers to 10 entities.

TABLE 5. Average number of participants in the extended format, by period under assessment

	State of emergency	Post state of emergency
Mean	6.6	8.2
Mode	10	10
Minimum	0	0
Maximum	24	24

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

When asked about the areas of activity in which they thought they had been affected the most by the decrease in the number of Commissioners in the restricted format, the CPCJs emphasized, first – and for the two periods under analysis (Table 6) –, the monitoring of the execution of the measures (30.3% during the state of emergency and 16.1% in the post state of emergency phase).

TABLE 6. Areas of activity most affected by the decrease in the number of Commissioners, by period under assessment

	State of emergency	Post state of emergency
Monitoring the execution of the measures	30.3%	16.1%
Providing service and information	18.7%	7.3%
Reviewing the measures	24.0%	14.1%
Carrying out acts of collaboration	14.6%	9.3%
Performing the diagnostic assessment	25.5%	14.0%
Coordination with the entities with competence in matters of childhood and youth	22.4%	9.9%
Initiating and conducting proceedings	8.4%	2.5%
Urgent procedures	3.1%	1.0%

Source: Survey *Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs*, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

Importantly, a quarter of the participating CPCJs (25.5%) is of the view that the diagnostic assessment was compromised during the state of emergency. This value decreases in the period immediately thereafter, though it remains significant (14.0%), warranting further reflection.

Along the same lines, the CPCJs noted the existence of limitations to the review of the protection and promotion measures undergoing execution: 24.0% during the state of emergency and 14.1% in the post stage of emergency phase. These are followed by limitations to the coordination with community entities (entities with competence in matters of childhood and youth), with a marked decrease in the values that represent this limitation upon the transition from the state of emergency (22.4%) to the first period of lockdown easing (9.9%).

Even though they present somewhat lower values when compared to the previous categories analysed in this information set, the significance of the results obtained regarding the limitations to the provision of service and

information by the CPCJs (18.7% during the state of emergency), with a decrease in the period immediately thereafter (to 7.3%), should not be downplayed.

Another point to be emphasized concerns the limitations to the acts of collaboration, which displayed higher values during the state of emergency (14.6%) but were still present in the subsequent phase (9.3%). The values are also significant for the limitations experienced, during the state of emergency, both in initiating and conducting proceedings (8.4%) and in carrying out urgent procedures (3.1%). While in the latter case the number is lower, it must be borne in mind that this is the most serious form of intervention provided for in the Promotion and Protection Law. In the lockdown easing phase, the values for these categories were lower but still felt by the CPCJs.

Given this scenario of increasing complexity in their intervention and the need to respond in a context of greater limitation, it is important to understand what vulnerabilities were identified by the CPCJs regarding the ones felt by the Commissioners (Table 7).

In this respect, the replies highlighted the reconciliation of work and family life during the pandemic. This is the most represented category out of the vulnerabilities presented in the full set of replies both during the state of emergency (65.1%) and in the subsequent period (55.2%). The categories of well-being and mental health are very significant, showing very close values in the two periods under analysis (41.7% e 40.6%, respectively, for the 1st and 2nd stages). Despite their somewhat lower values, the warning signs regarding the numbers for burnout and other health problems (chronic disease) should not be ignored. These were mentioned by almost a fourth of the participating CPCJs for the period of the state of emergency and by a fifth for the immediately subsequent phase. A portrait to be kept in mind and further reflected upon, given the demanding nature of the role.

TABLE 7. Types of vulnerabilities experienced by the Commissioners (% of affirmative answers)

	State of emergency	Post state of emergency
Burnout	23.4%	20.3%
Health (chronic disease)	25.5%	21.4%
Well-being and mental health	41.7%	40.6%
Reconciliation of work and family life	65.1%	55.2%

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

2.3 Facilities and logistics

Out of a total of 188 participating CPCJs, 21.9% had their facilities closed during the period of the state of emergency; this number decreased in the second period under analysis (4.2%) (Table 8).

Around two thirds of the CPCJs stated that they continued to provide face-to-face service during the state of emergency in addition to others forms of service, such as by telephone (93%), via e-mail (72%) or on online digital platforms (26%).

The number of CPCJs that were able to return to providing face-to-face service rose to 87.5% after the state of emergency. Irrespective of the modality of service, in almost a third of the cases (30.7%) there were partners who assisted the CPCJ so it could continue to operate during the state of emergency. This number decreased slightly in the second stage under analysis (26.0%).

TABLE 8. Provision of service and means of operation, by period under assessment

	State of emergency	Post state of emergency
Were the facilities of the CPCJ closed?		
Yes	21.9%	4.2%
No	75.5%	87.0%
NA / NAp	2.6%	8.8%
Means used to continue to provide service (multiple choice)		
Face to face	66.7%	87.5%
Telephone	93.8%	81.3%
Online	26.6%	23.4%
E-Mail	71.9%	23.4%
Outro	7.3%	4.2%
Did you receive assistance from partners to continue to operate?		
Yes	30.7%	26.0%
No	66.1%	65.1%
NA / NAp	3.2%	8.8%

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

Regarding the modalities of the meetings of the CPCJ in a restricted format during the period of the state of emergency, most were held using a mixed methodology that combines an in-person gathering with the use of digital means (41.7%) (Table 9). With a very similar value, there was a group of CPCJs that used only digital means (40.6%). The percentage of CPCJs that operated solely through in-person meetings was clearly lower.

A significant indicator, which could point to certain options that might be kept in the future, is the increase in the percentage of CPCJs that, after the state of emergency, chose to continue to operate under a mixed methodology using both an in-person gathering and digital means for their meetings (46.7%).

The operation of the CPCJs in an extended format was significantly more affected. For around 43.8% of all respondents, no meetings were held during the period of the state of emergency; activity resumed somewhat during the initial phase of lockdown easing.

Cultural centres, municipal auditoriums, libraries and schools were some of the venues indicated as having been used for meetings of the CPCJs in an extended format. Several CPCJs kept the rule from pre-pandemic times of holding this type of meeting in the facilities of different entities, as used to be the case.

Regarding the digital means used in the periods under analysis (Table 10), the use of the video and audio platform for Zoom calls is the most prominent, at 45.3% during the state of emergency and 32.2% in the subsequent phase. WhatsApp, a multiplatform instant messaging and voice calling app, comes in second place, at 29.7% in the first period and 18.8% in the second period under analysis.

TABLE 9. Methodology used for the meetings of the CPCJ, by period under assessment

	State of emergency		Post state of emergency	
	Restricted	Extended	Restricted	Extended
In person	10.9%	15.6%	31.3%	30.2%
Digital means	40.6%	23.4%	12.0%	14.6%
In person and digital means	41.7%	15.1%	46.4%	18.2%
Other	5.2%	43.8%(*)	2.6%	28.6%(*)
NA	1.6%		7.8%	8.3%

(*) Most correspond to “no meetings held”

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

Still with regard to the existing conditions, *inter alia* the personal protective equipment provided to the Commissioners during the period of the state of emergency, 80.7% of the participating CPCJs stated that such equipment was bought by the municipality, a number that decreased to 78.1% in the subsequent period. On the opposite end, depending on the stage under assessment, 13.5% and 12.0% of the CPCJs, respectively, stated that no such equipment was provided to their members, while 1.6% point out it was acquired by the Commissioners themselves as an individual personal purchase. A residual number (1%) stated that they received the individual protection equipment from other entities.

TABLE 10. Digital means used (multiple choice), by period under assessment

	State of emergency		Post state of emergency	
	Restricted	Extended	Restricted	Extended
Zoom	45.3%	27.1%	32.3%	25.0%
Google Meetings	4.7%	1.6%	4.7%	2.1%
Teams	7.8%	3.1%	6.8%	1.0%
Skype	15.6%	4.2%	9.4%	3.1%
WhatsApp	29.7%	4.7%	18.8%	4.2%
Other	14.6%	4.2%	9.4%	4.7%

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

2.4 Coordination between the CPCJs and other entities

2.4.1 Entities with competence in matters of childhood and youth

The coordination between the CPCJs and other entities operating in the child or young person's community is a central dimension of the work of the CPCJs and a crucial element in creating a specific response for each case. In this context, efforts were made to learn from the CPCJs how the constraints on that coordination were experienced, in the different dimensions and areas of their work (Table 11).

First, it should be noted that, out of a total of 188 responding CPCJs, half (50%) stated that the main difficulties were experienced during the diagnostic assessment of a situation of danger reported during the period

TABLE 11. Constraints on the coordination between the CPCJs and the entities with competence in matters of childhood and youth, by period under analysis

	State of emergency	Post state of emergency
Constraints were overcome and did not affect the ability of the CPCJ to act	44.8%	33.3%
In conducting a preliminary assessment of the situations of danger	43.3%	34.3%
In coordinating with the services of origin of the members	36.5%	27.1%
In the assessment / diagnosis	50.0%	44.9%
In decision-making in a restricted format (to apply measures/ close the case)	33.9%	33.4%
In responding to the need for placement in residential care	13.9%	12.9%
In responding to urgent procedures	11.5%	8.3%
In reviewing the measure applied	45.2%	38.1%

Source: Survey *Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs*, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

of the state of emergency. The values for this trend remained significantly high (44.9%) in the post state of emergency period (3 May to 31 August 2020), warranting special attention.

Intrinsically linked to this dimension, the category concerning the preliminary assessment of the situations of danger also shows high values for both the first period and the second period under analysis (43.3% and 34.3%, respectively). These two categories constitute an essential step of the intervention of the CPCJ when initiating proceedings, during the initial stage when it is urgent to conduct a timely and consistent assessment. Evidently, at the source of these numbers lie the effects associated with the lockdown rules put in place.

Second, at a similar level in terms of high values, there is another key step in the execution of the promotion and protection proceedings to be mentioned, which is the review of the measure applied, with values of 45.2% and 38.1%, respectively.

Third, relevant values were also reported for the constraints experienced by the CPCJs in finding residential care placement for the child or young person, with practically no variation between the two periods under analysis (13.9% and 12.9%). This begs further inquiry into the response capacity of the national system, which suffered from severe constraints in terms of available resources even before the pandemic and has, since then, been subject to specific social isolation rules imposed on the population placed in care.

Along the same lines, and possibly bearing a relation to the aforementioned need, constraints were also identified in conducting urgent procedures. Despite their lower statistical values when compared to the previous categories (11.5% and 8.3%, respectively, by period under analysis), they are nevertheless cause for particular concern, as they relate to the most serious and urgent form of intervention of the CPCJs, since what is at stake is the physical integrity or the life of the child or young person.

It becomes clear that, even in the case of urgent responses, the CPCJs faced increased difficulties during the pandemic. While these limitations are neither completely new nor restricted to the periods under analysis, the pandemic did uncover, and possibly worsen, some of the greatest weaknesses of the national system of promotion and protection with regard to its capacity for a timely response.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that the number of CPCJs stating that the constraints had been overcome and had not affected their response capacity decreased from 44.8%, during the state of emergency, to 33.3%, in the subsequent period. This variation might be associated, to a certain extent, to the need to restructure procedures and reorganize their action in view of the new guidelines during the phase of lockdown easing.

2.4.2 With the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People (CNPDPCJ)

The questionnaire was also used to collect information about the assessment of the response from the CNPDPCJ, at the level of both its central technical team and the Regional Technical Teams, in providing guidance concerning the requests from each CPCJ during the periods under analysis.

The assessment of the participating CPCJs is decidedly positive for both the national and the regional level of activity (Table 12). However, it must be noted that a large number of CPCJs did not reply to this question as regards the CNPDPCJ - central (21.9% when considering the first stage under analysis, 19.8% regarding the second) and the CNPDPCJ - Regional Technical Teams (7.8% and 14%, respectively, for the same periods).

Only six of the CPCJs that presented a negative assessment of the action of the CNPDPCJ gave reasons for their reply. Those reasons refer, in essence, to situations related to interministerial coordination and the need to accord priority status to the work of the CPCJ - "There should be coordination between the CNPDPCJ and the Ministries so that the entities

are bound by their obligations to the CPCJs” –; to the lack of clarity around the priority accorded to the intervention of the CPCJ – “The circular letter equating the work carried out in the Commissions to first-line work should have been sent to the Commissions right at the start of the state of emergency, holding commissioners responsible for continuing to show up at the facilities of the commission and keeping them open to the public” –; and to some deficiencies found in the time taken to respond to the requests made during the first phase.

When asked about what could have been improved at both levels of activity of the CNPDPCJ, the replies indicating “nothing to report” stand out among those received from the CPCJs. Those that mention certain aspects that could have been improved refer mainly to the low visibility and subsequent need for greater dissemination of information about the CNPDPCJ and the CPCJs in the public sphere during the pandemic (11.5%

TABLE 12. Assessment of the response from the CNPDPCJ and the Regional Technical Teams, by period under analysis

	State of emergency	Post state of emergency
CNPDPCJ		
Assessment of the response from the CNPDPCJ in providing guidance concerning the requests from the CPCJs	Very positive: 24.5% Positive: 50.5% Insufficient: 2.1% Very insufficient: 1.0%	Very positive: 21.9% Positive: 56.3% Insufficient: 1.6% Very insufficient: 0.5%
What could have been improved?	Nothing to report: 63.5% Visibility / greater dissemination in the public sphere: 11.5% Clarity of the information provided: 9.4%	Nothing to report: 67.7% Visibility / greater dissemination in the public sphere: 9.4% Appropriateness of the dissemination / timeliness of the information: 5.2%
CNPDPCJ – Regional Technical Teams		
Assessment of the response from the CNPDPCJ – Regional Technical Team in providing guidance concerning the requests	Very positive: 41.1% Positive: 49.5% Insufficient: 0.5%	Very positive: 39.1% Positive: 44.8% Insufficient: 1%
What could have been improved?	Nothing to report: 87.5% Clarity of the information provided: 3.6% Content of the information: 2.6%	Nothing to report: 81.8% Content of the information: 2.6%

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

during the state of emergency and 9.4% in the subsequent period) and to the need for greater clarity of the information provided (9.4%) during the state of emergency. In the case of the Regional Technical Teams of the CNPDPCJ, the aspects that were mentioned present very low values and concern only the content and clarity of the information provided.

As for the recommendations and materials made by the CNPDPCJ (Table 13), the assessment of to their usefulness is decidedly positive. Higher values can be found in the “very useful” category during the period of the state of emergency when compared to the post state of emergency period. Values relating to a negative assessment both of the materials and the recommendations are residual. However, it bears noting that there was an increase, though slight, in the percentage of CPCJs in the post state of emergency period that indicated “don’t know / no answer”.

TABLE 13. Usefulness of the CNPDPCJ recommendations and materials, by period under analysis

	State of emergency		Post state of emergency	
	Recommendations	Materials	Recommendations	Materials
Very useful	39.6%	31.8%	29.2%	26.6%
Useful	54.7%	60.9%	58.9%	63.0%
Not useful	1.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%
DK / NA	4.2%	6.7%	8.9%	8.9%

Source: Survey *Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs*, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

2.4.3. With the Public Prosecution Service

Three closed-ended questions were asked about the coordination with the Public Prosecution Service (Table 14). The aim of the first question was to determine whether there were constraints on this coordination and, should the answer be in the affirmative, what those were specifically.

The overwhelming majority of the responding CPCJs stated they experienced no constraints on their coordination with the Public Prosecution Service (87.0% during the state of emergency and 83.9% in the subsequent period). Some of the CPCJs adopted a similar stance when they pointed out this coordination as one of the strengths in the periods under analysis.

There were two other questions aimed at gaining insight into the nature of this coordination. The aim of the first question was to learn how each CPCJ assessed the response from the Public Prosecutor to the specific requests addressed to him or her. The aim of the second question was to determine

TABLE 14. Identification of constraints on the coordination with the Public Prosecution Service, by period under analysis

	State of emergency	Post state of emergency
Response from the Public Prosecution Service		
No constraints	87.0%	83.9%
Adoption of a new procedure, more onerous to the CPCJ, with regard to monitoring and reviewing	3.1%	1.6%
Lack of information on how monitoring and reviewing would be carried out	3.6%	4.2%
Greater difficulties in contacting the Public Prosecutor	3.1%	1.6%
DK / NA	3.1%	8.9%

Source: Survey *Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs*, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

the perception of the CPCJ regarding what could have been improved (Table 15).

The findings confirm the trend from previous questions, as the overwhelming majority of the CPCJs indicated that they had nothing to report in terms of coordination issues that could have been improved, with values above 80% in the two periods under analysis. Regarding the state of emergency, 3.1% of the participating CPCJs did not respond, a value that increases to 8.9% when the following phase is considered.

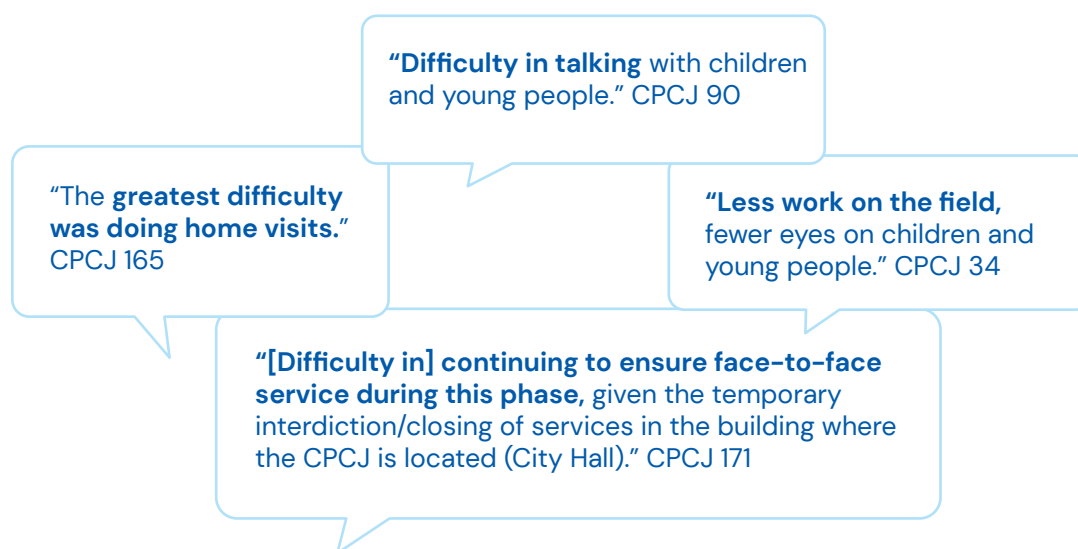
TABLE 15. Assessment of the response from the Public Prosecutor, for the period under analysis

	State of emergency	Post state of emergency
What is your assessment of the response from the Public Prosecutor to the specific requests addressed to him or her by the CPCJ?	Very positive: 45.8% Positive: 41.7% Insufficient: 3.6%	Very positive: 44.3% Positive: 40.1% Insufficient: 2.6%
What could have been improved?	Nothing to report: 82.8% Indicating means of contact: 7.3% Information: 5.2%	Nothing to report: 80.7% Information: 5.7% Indicating means of contact: 3.6%

Source: Survey *Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs*, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

2.5 Main difficulties faced

When asked about the main difficulties faced in the periods under analysis, many participating CPCJs responded by expressing their concern over the lower visibility of children, young people and their families in the community and the growing complexity of gaining access to them, since the start of the pandemic.

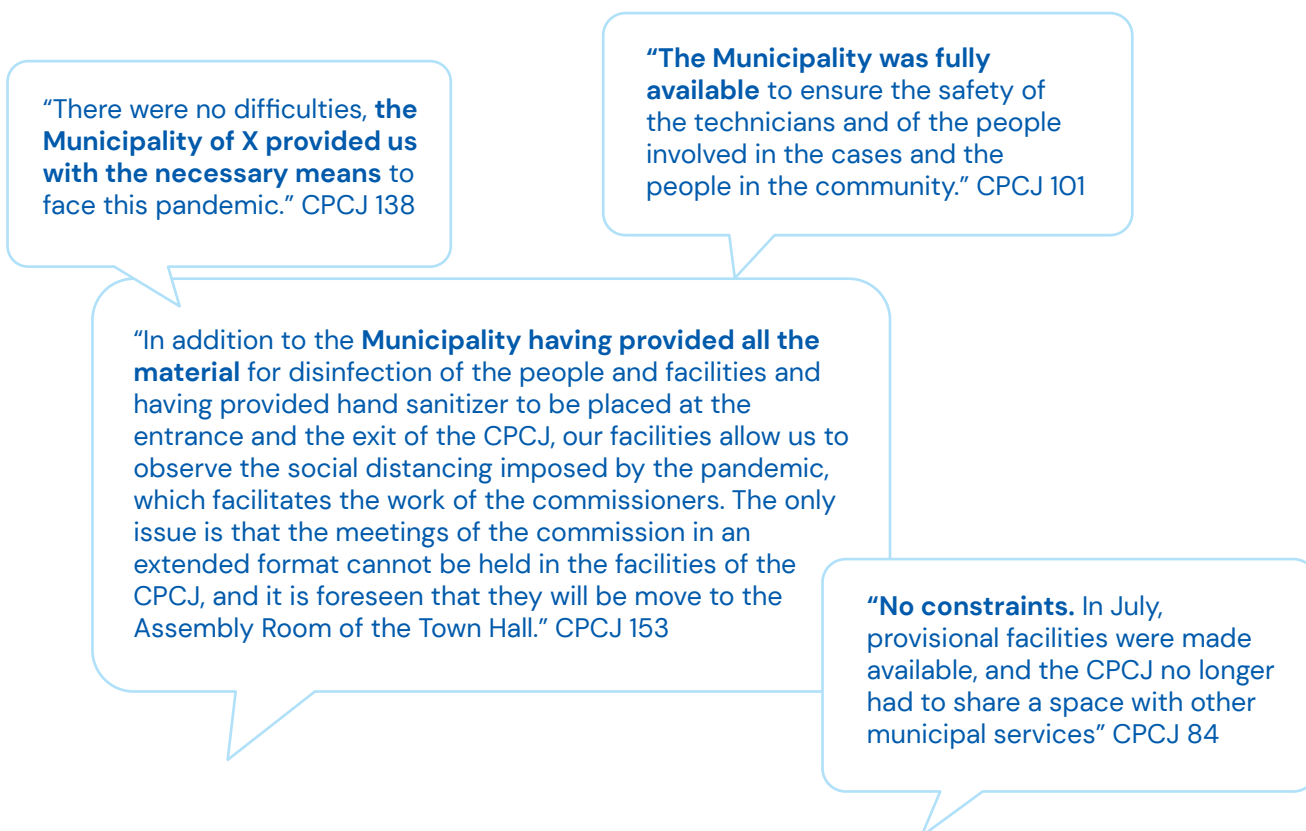


Fewer than half of the CPCJs stated that they had not faced greater difficulties when intervening and when applying guidelines from the authorities or, even if they had, that they had overcome them.

In this context, many replies highlighted the action of City Councils and local bodies in providing support and solutions, on the short and medium term, that allowed the local CPCJ to overcome any initial difficulties.

Other CPCJs pointed to the "reduction of the in-person working time of the team" (CPCJ 73) and the choice "not to provide face-to-face service" during the initial stage (CPCJ 140) as factors that contributed to no difficulties being identified.





On the opposite end, 103 CPCJs (54.7%) identified negative aspects related to constraints on their action and on the need to adapt to and apply the rules and guidelines issued by the official authorities (Table 16).

TABLE 16. Main difficulties / constraints faced by the CPCJ, by area

State of emergency		Post state of emergency
39.9%	facilities and logistics	38.8%
15.4%	human resources	21.8%
17.6%	cleaning and sanitation	16.5%
7.4%	protective equipment	9.6%
10.1%	computer equipment	6.9%
6.9%	internet access	5.9%
20.7%	other	9%

Source: Survey *Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs*, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

The greatest difficulties fall within one of the following categories: facilities and logistics, human resources, cleaning and sanitation, protective equipment (personal and for the CPCJ), computer equipment and internet access. A final category – other – gathers various situations that present small values when considered in isolation (closing of facilities, reduction of the activity of the extended commission, team rotation, lack of a car, backlog, nature of the options for placement in care and safety of the families).

A significant part of the participating CPCJs noted the same difficulties in both periods under analysis.

2.5.1 Facilities and logistics

The analysis of the data in Table 16 shows how the limitations to the facilities and logistics that provide the setting for the operation of the CPCJs are serious problems, which (often) preceded and (also) persisted after the period of the state of emergency, as expressed by several CPCJs.

“The logistics of the seat of the CPCJ do not, by and large, meet its needs. Generally speaking, the facilities of the CPCJ, either during the pandemic or in “normal times”, **do not match the needs**: the entrance and the waiting room are shared (and noisy) with other municipal services and do not ensure confidentiality; the stairs that give access to the CPCJ are not suited for people with reduced mobility; the seat of the CPCJ is a single small room that not only does not ensure confidentiality but is also wholly unsuitable for hearing the child and does not allow several staff members to carry out different tasks simultaneously, creating a significant constraint on the daily work.” CPCJ 150

“**The structural characteristics associated with the facilities in which the CPCJ operates restrict** proper ventilation of the premises, considering that there is only one door for access, without windows around the entire premises.” CPCJ 80

“The conditions at **the facilities of the Commission are insufficient** to provide service to families. There is only 1 room with a window. The technicians work in an open-space office, with questionable conditions in terms of workplace hygiene and safety.” CPCJ 23

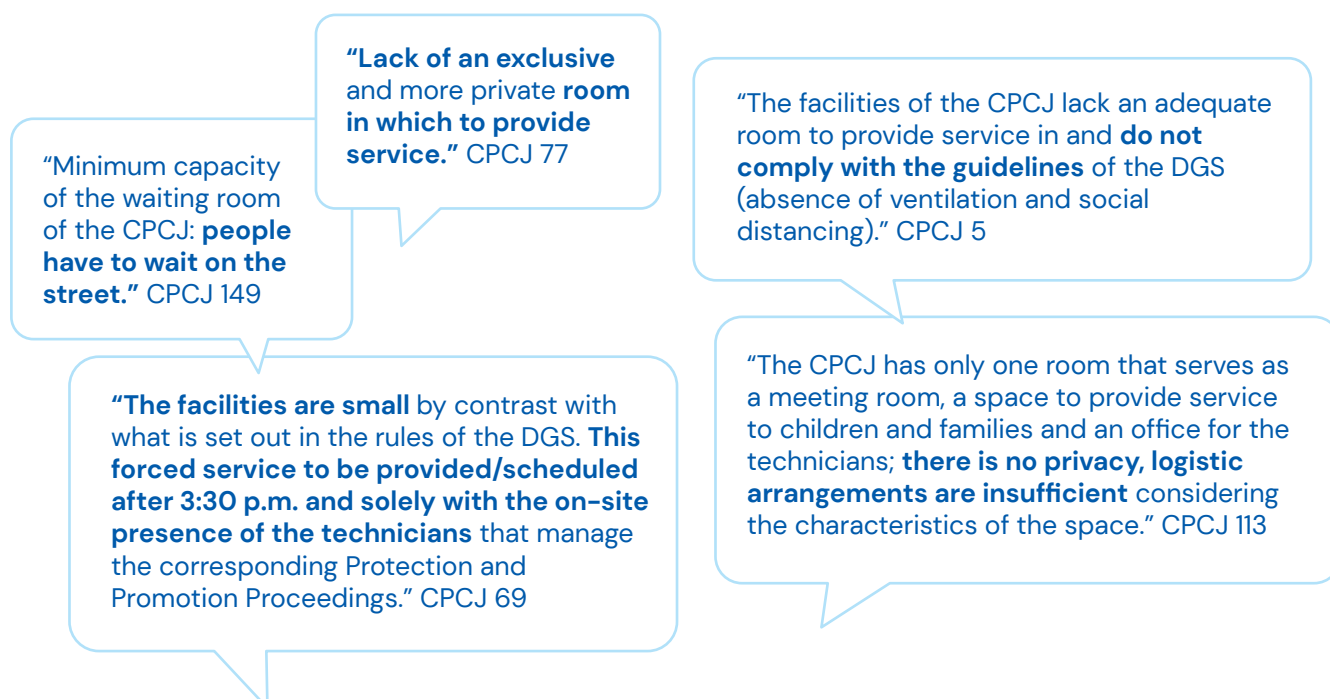
This is a portrait that can leave no one indifferent. It reveals certain forms of *minimization* of the intervention to protect children and young people that persist in Portuguese society to this day.

Among the (serious) weaknesses found in this dimension of the analysis, as recurrently mentioned by the participating CPCJs, there is a set of structural problems that influence their operation and their work, and that of their partners, with the children and young people in their communities of origin, which the pandemic *merely* made more visible.

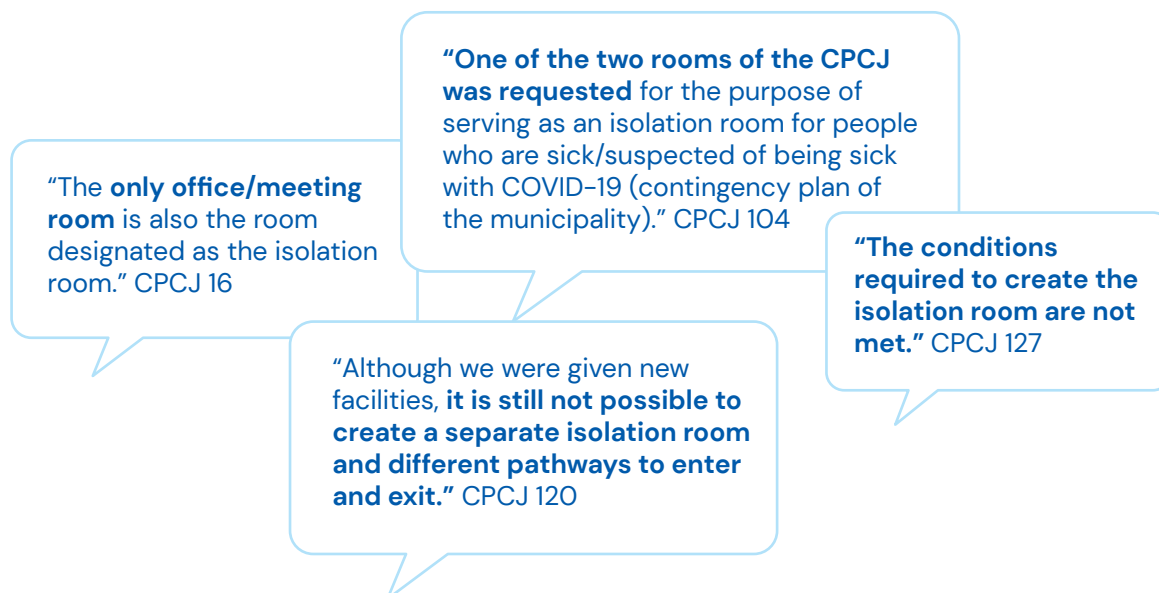
The imposition of rules and guidelines to combat and prevent the spread of the virus unveiled a broader framework of basic deficiencies in terms of facilities and logistics, which were mentioned by a significant number of CPCJs and cut across the two periods under analysis (39.9% and 38.8%, respectively).

This reveals how the constraints persist, at least, in the medium term.

A limitation felt more acutely concerns the scarcity or even the absence of adequate rooms and spaces that can be used to receive and provide service to families and children. This was one of the concerns most frequently mentioned by the CPCJs, and it directly interferes with the dynamics and demands of their activity, including in safeguarding the privacy of children, young people and their families.



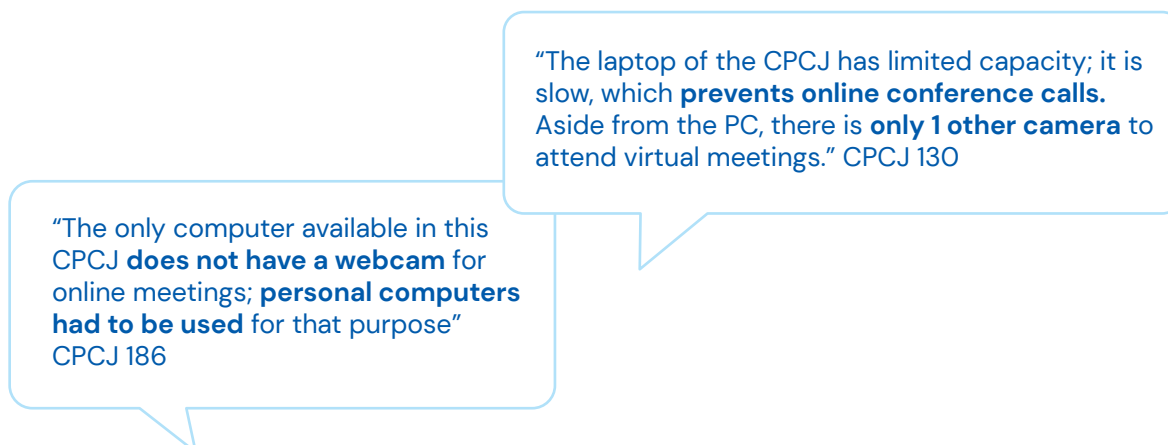
Some CPCJs also mentioned as an added problem the fact that their spaces were used as an isolation room or that they lacked the means to set up an isolation room or different pathways to enter and exit, as established in the official rules and guidelines in that regard. In some cases, despite changing facilities, those limitations persisted after the period of the state of emergency.

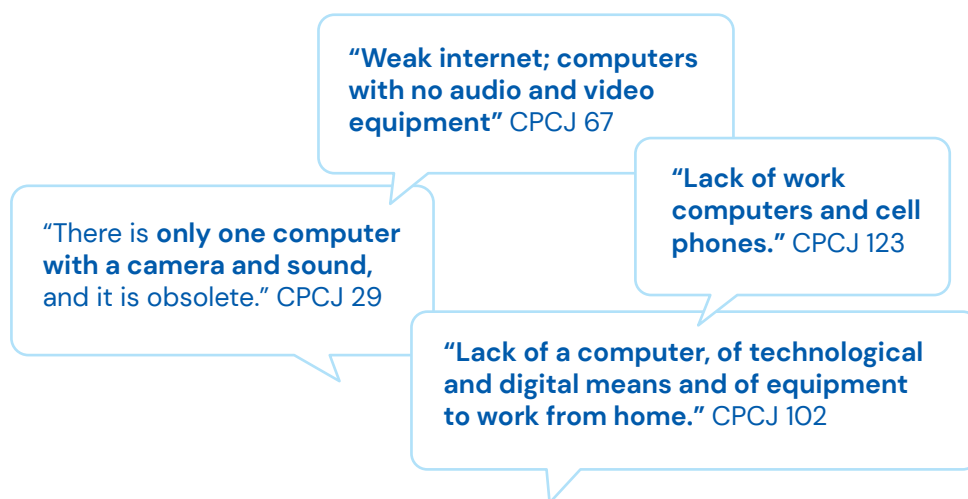


2.5.2 Computer equipment and internet access

Other constraints of particular relevance during the state of emergency related to the provision of computer equipment and internet access to the CPCJs so that they could intervene and contact families.

Online digital means were used to try to restore some type of normality and a connection with previous practices. The routine of intervention essentially became digitally mediated, with significant insufficiencies being noted in these areas.

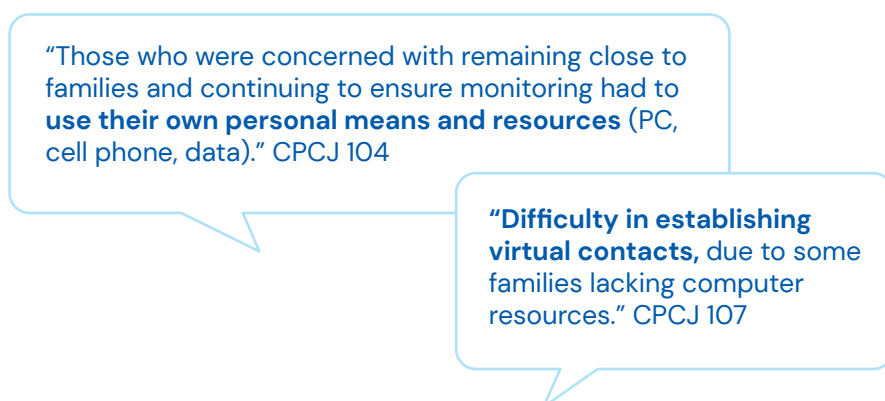




Much of the equipment available to the CPCJ did not fulfil the technical specifications required to establish online digital contacts, thereby making certain actions impossible.

The CPCJs that pointed out this dimension in a negative light often mentioned the age of the equipment, the lack of essential accessories, especially a camera / webcam, and the impossibility to update the software to more recent and appropriate versions. For most of them, the alternative was to use the personal equipment and resources of each Commissioner to ensure that the CPCJ continued to act.

Thus, the fact that the CPCJs continued to operate was, in different cases, dependent on the availability of IT resources of their own members, with a range of very diverse situations.



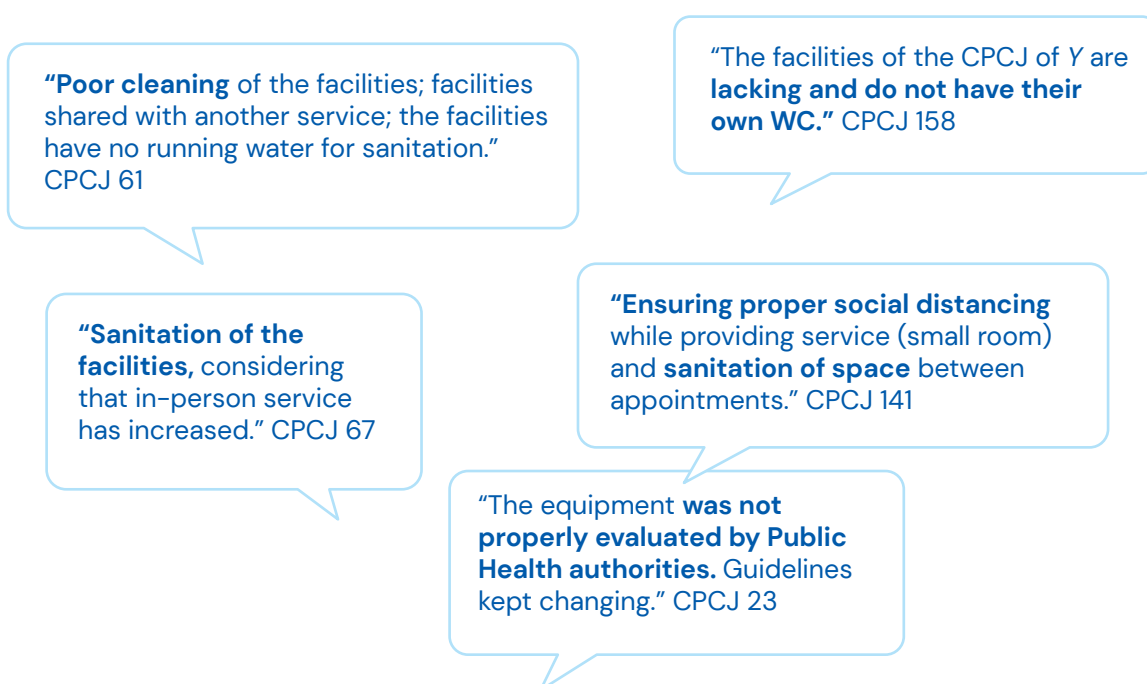
Given the nature of the action of the CPCJs and the sensitive personal data they work with, this experience should elicit a critical reflection and the establishment of guidelines to frame the use of technological platforms in a way that ensures full compliance with the rules on data protection and prevention of unlawful third-party access to the digital records of children and young people.

There are other relevant conditions to consider in this area regarding the resources available to families. Some CPCJs emphasized the added difficulties in intervening and contacting families that have no computer resources and/or internet access. This is a widespread issue that, in some cases, was addressed with the support and equipment provided by some community partners, which helped to overcome part of the initial constraints.

2.5.3 Cleaning, sanitation and protective equipment

Regarding the implementation of cleaning and sanitation rules to prevent the spread of the disease, some of the difficulties mentioned bring back to the surface structural problems that relate to the quality of the facilities in which the CPCJs operate.

It should be noted that the values in this category are very close for the two periods under assessment, without significant differences between the one registered during the state of emergency and the one from the subsequent period. This trend might reveal structural constraints that already existed pre-pandemic and for which no solution could be found.



In the periods under analysis, these limitations grew more pronounced, and it became apparent that, for several CPCJs, complying with the rules and guidelines of the official authorities became an even more complex challenge as a result of a set of adverse circumstances.

The number of CPCJs that mentioned “failures in the delivery of some of the PPE” (CPCJ 29) is lower. It should be emphasized that this category of analysis became larger in the post state of emergency period. It includes a reference to the use of protective devices when providing service and performing other actions in the premises of the CPCJs.

While the coordination with the public health authorities was, in most cases, emphasized as one of the more positive aspects (see 2.6), there were also cases in which the CPCJs highlighted this coordination and the changing nature of the guidelines as a negative aspect.

2.5.4 Human resources

In terms of human resources, the first point raised for analysis relates to the question posed by several CPCJs about the challenges stemming from the need to reorganize in order to continue to operate during the pandemic, given their small size, the lack of resources or the mobilization of those resources towards other tasks at their entities of origin.

“Lack of sufficient human resources.” CPCJ 185

“We are few, and each of the members has little time to dedicate to the Commission; it is difficult to compose balanced groups in terms of avoiding contagion. Right now, our biggest fear is that if one of us is infected, we all go home, and then who will provide service at the facilities of the Commission?” CPCJ 46

“The biggest logistic constraint relates to the loss of administrative support between March and June. The administrative assistant was placed in another service at the entity of origin.” CPCJ 115

Given the specialized nature of their intervention, irrespective of the number of Commissioners, “to manage the number of people on site” (CPCJ 91) was one of the main demands, made more complex by the structural limitations of the facilities in a significant number of CPCJs, as shown in section 2.5.1.

When it comes to shared spaces in buildings with other services – “organizing physical spaces to provide service in coordination with Municipal Services” (CPCJ 62) –, this constraint took on new meaning and the need to ensure close coordination among all those involved became a priority, one not always compatible with the nature and the demands of the work of the CPCJs.

However, the central issue in this area, which was raised by more than one CPCJ and was already relevant pre-pandemic, is perhaps how the entities of origin of the Commissioners manage the time assigned to them for the purpose of doing Commission-related work, which, under the law, must have priority status. The portrait drawn in this questionnaire, however, shows that this does not happen in certain cases.

This problem is not new. Again, this structural issue was already an issue before the pandemic. Nevertheless, once the pandemic emerged, it became more complex, requiring broader and deeper critical reflection in order for the basic requirement laid down by the law to be effectively implemented in all cases.

“It was possible to ensure that the Commission continued to operate and that safety rules were complied with, but **the Commission cannot depend on the guidelines of the entities represented in it, since they ignore the priority status of the Commissions.**” CPCJ 16

“The alternating availability of staff members during this phase, since there was a rotation in their placement in telework by the services of origin, which implied a **greater workload and added responsibilities for those doing in-person work.**” CPCJ 171

“**Backlog, due to the lockdown period. Less availability for projects of prevention, such as 'Adélia'**” CPCJ 102

2.6 Strengths

One of the most relevant findings of this survey concerns the strengths identified by the CPCJs in their own activity: 97.3% during the state of emergency, which decreased to 95.7% in the post state of emergency (Table 17).

These strengths fall within one of the following major categories: continuing to operate, response capacity, coordination with partners, contacts with children and families, Commissioners, team cohesiveness, creation/ adaptation to new work instruments/methodologies and, lastly, an “other” category (which includes a variety of specific situations with residual values).

The aspect most often emphasized in the replies of the participating CPCJs was their ability to reorganize in the face of particularly adverse circumstances, which enabled them to continue to operate and retain their response capacity across their various areas of activity.

Chiefly, it was noted that they continued to provide service, to monitor and manage cases and to contact children, young people and their families,

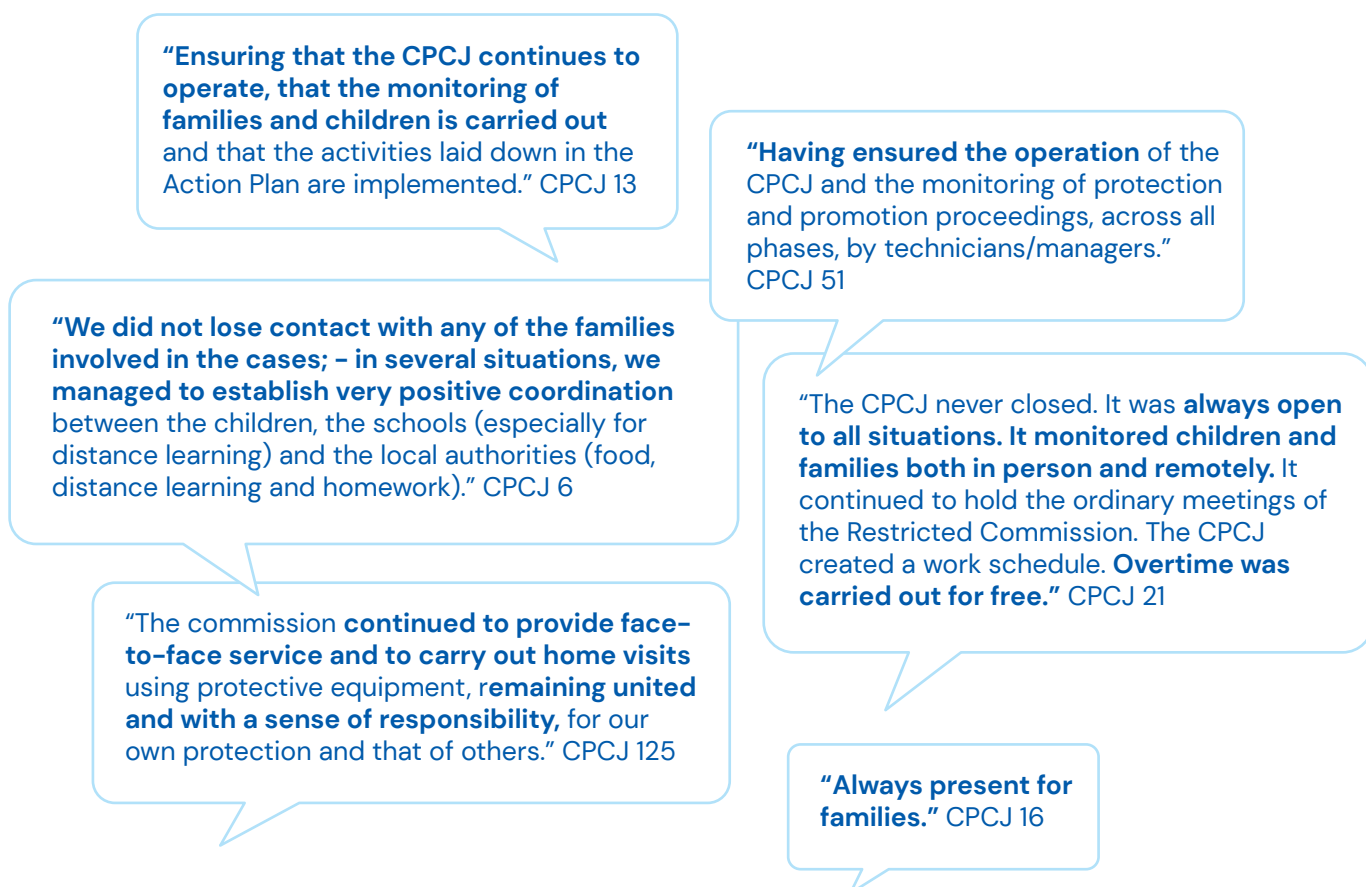
TABLE 17 Strengths identified by the CPCJs, by area

State of emergency		Post state of emergency
42.0%	continuing to operate	30.3%
42.0%	response capacity	37.8%
21.3%	coordination with partners	16.5%
27.7%	contacts with children and families	25.0%
50%	Commissioners	37.8%
42.6%	team cohesiveness	33.5%
25.5%	creation/ adaptation to new work instruments/methodologies	19.5%
17.5%	other	12.6%

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

through a highly participatory process in which the people, the Commissioners and the community partners were placed at centre, with varying levels of adjustment depending on the initial characteristics and social context of each CPCJ.

“The commitment and availability of the technicians” (CPCJ 93), the “flexibility, cooperation and mutual assistance between the commissioners” (CPCJ 49), all of which crucial to the “cohesiveness of the team of the restricted commission” (CPCJ 57), to a “cohesive and engaged team” (CPCJ 97), were pointed out as strengths by half of the participating CPCJs, which makes team cohesiveness the most significant category of the lot in terms of its size.



Without people there is no system. Even more so when the circumstances required everyone to show a greater capacity not to slow down in the face of the responsibility to act, at a time when children and young people were less visible in the community and therefore the difficulties in detecting new situations of danger and monitoring cases already undergoing execution or assessment were potentially greater.

Another significant aspect, as clearly expressed in the testimonials, is how the role of the CPCJ became more relevant and broader in scope as a result of the entities in the community closing.

“Acting to prevent and remedy, crucially sustained by an ‘open door’ policy” (CPCJ 85), is a key concept that clearly illustrates the role that some of the CPCJs took on within their territories. Departing from their liaison role in the system of promotion and protection, many CPCJs likely broadened their scope as they faced the need, in some territories, to respond as first-line entities, due to the rules imposed on the entities that provided non-essential services.

“A strong sense of togetherness between all the commissioners and a greater effort to participate in the meetings and/or other activities so that high-quality service, in close proximity to the entire community, could continue to be provided, despite the physical distance.” CPCJ 20

In that sense, there was a need for greater flexibility and capacity to adjust when responding to the various needs that arose in the community. This required taking on a new role and making an additional effort in terms of planning and acting. Naturally, these situations were experienced very differently by each CPCJ, depending on its social network and on the plans made regarding its activity and the coordination of responses during the period of lockdown.

“General notice (placed at the entrance to its facilities and disseminated on its Facebook page) containing information about the means (mobile and e-mail) to contact the CPCJ of W and about the permanent service regime; Dissemination of other helplines for children and young people, notably the helpline created by the National Commission; Dissemination, on the Facebook page of the CPCJ of W, of “tips” on positive parenthood (Adélia), the educational entertainment website ‘coronakids.pt’ created by the DGS and warnings about the risks / dangers of the Internet; Regular contacts with the families being monitored, via telephone or video conferencing, and in person, whenever required by the urgent nature of the situation; Implementation of all urgent measures.” CPCJ 103

“The restricted team remained operational, as they continued to be available and to respond / monitor situations, from home. The technicians were given phone cards to contact families and entities.” CPCJ 79

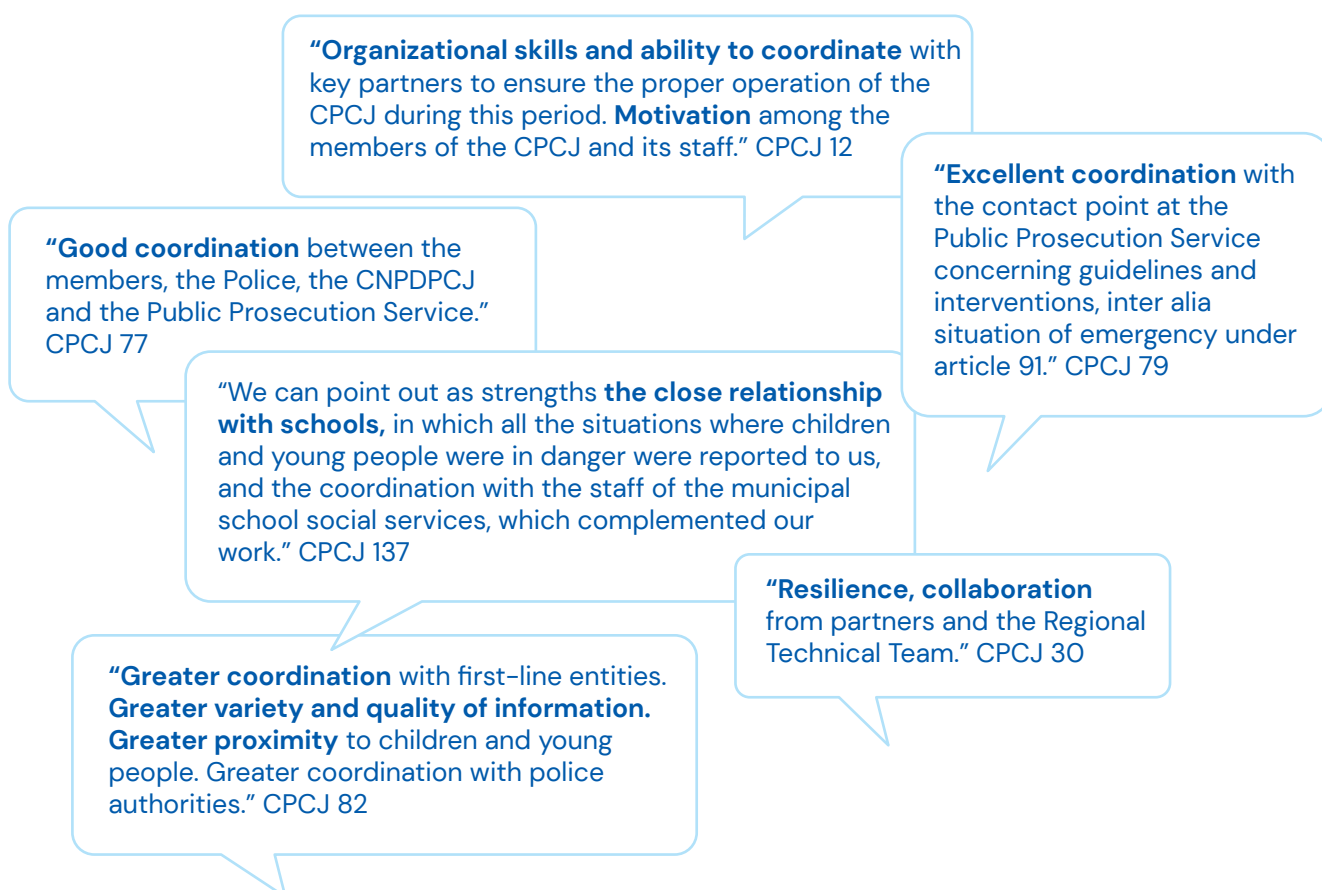
“CPCJ of YY called upon more often to clarify doubts.” CPCJ

“Contact was always possible, as the phone calls were redirected from the landline to the cell phone; Restricted format members were available to respond to urgent situations that might arise.” CPCJ 141

“Adaptability and resilience of the technicians, as the CPCJ replaced, to some extent, the first-line entities that were not active.” CPCJ 143

For this purpose, the concern with disseminating information in the community and among the population about how the CPCJ continued to operate and to maintain communication channels that were permanent and easy to access appears as one of several priorities. It meant not just disseminating information about the model for providing service and the opening hours of the CPCJs, but also acting in the field of prevention, as is part of their scope. For some, this was the basis for presenting, through various means, information, clarifications and relevant knowledge issued by other official entities, such as the DGS and the CNPDPCJ.

A restricted area, identified by one fifth of the participating CPCJs as a strength during the state of emergency, concerns the coordination with other community partners.



Several CPCJs also considered the role played by families to be a relevant factor – among the most positive ones – in overcoming difficulties.

This perspective is not just unidirectional, from the CPCJ towards the families - “always present for families” (CPCJ 16) -; rather, there is a special focus on preserving the connection between the children and their families

in situations of greater vulnerability, as in the case of one CPCJ that pointed out as a strength the fact that it was “possible to continue to provide service to parents in detention through video calls” (CPCJ 114).

“Families were receptive to learning about the new monitoring methodology and to providing information.” CPCJ 24

“Contact with families was maintained and even expanded. Families were receptive to online monitoring.” CPCJ 114

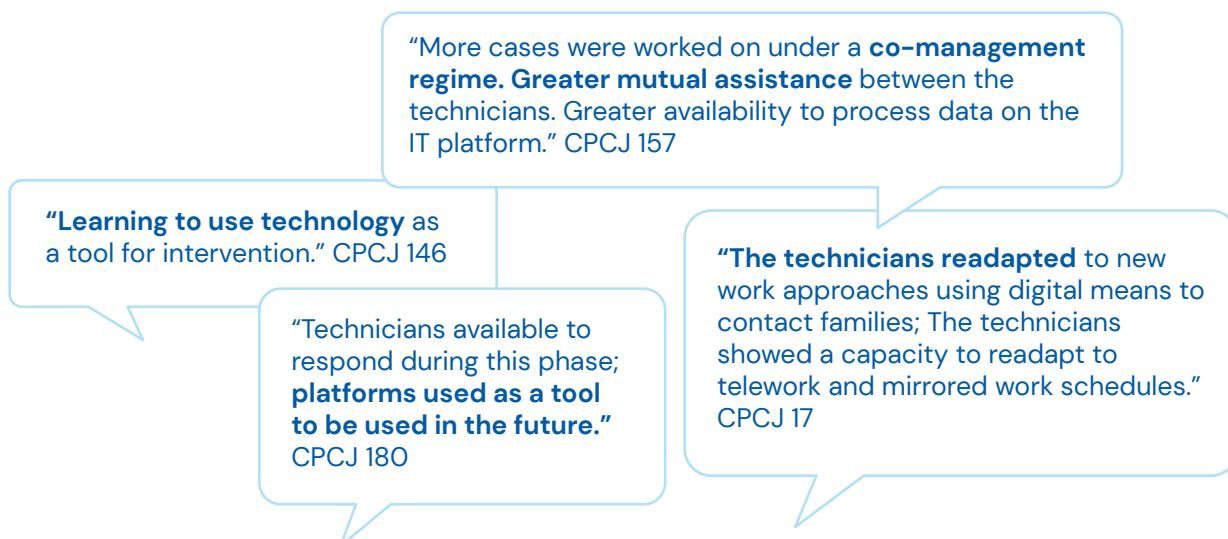
Also pointed out in this context was the capacity “to always keep online contact with the children and young people who are the focus of the intervention” (CPCJ 58) and to provide support in specific cases, such as by “assisting young people with school tasks” (CPCJ 60).

In some replies there is mention of the fact that some families requested assistance from the CPCJs more often, particularly “in situations of logistic need (internet, computer...)” (CPCJ 98). It is also clear that this result crucially depended not just on the means provided by the CPCJs but, in many cases, also on the personal resources of the Commissioners.

“Those who wanted to remain close to families and to continue to monitor the cases had to use their own personal means and resources (PC, mobile, mobile data). The City Council did not provide these resources to the technicians so that they could carry out close monitoring of the families.” CPCJ 23

“The technicians used their own personal phone numbers, which made it possible to ensure very close monitoring of the families.” CPCJ 94

A significant part of the CPCJs pointed to the readiness to create /adopt / adapt to new work methodologies and instruments as their strength in the two periods under analysis (25.5% and 19.5%, respectively). This is an area considered by the CPCJs themselves as warranting further exploration in the future, with a view to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of their action, especially by considering digital modalities and tools not usually considered before.



While many of the CPCJs that responded to the survey took the view that “despite the difficulties experienced in the previous period it was possible to reestablish the normal operation of the CPCJ.” (CPCJ 143) in the post state of emergency period, for others the difficulties identified previously, especially those of a structural nature, have remained and require a new focus and investment from those with powers to act in this field.

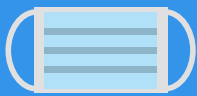
“Strengths: **Availability and readiness to adapt to the new challenges faced when acting/ intervening. Capacity to reinvent / readjust monitoring procedures and strategies. Stronger team spirit.**” CPCJ 38

Overall, the positive aspects strongly identified by the CPCJs in their activity in the two periods under review allow us to state that the pandemic also opened windows of opportunity that part of the participating CPCJs, forced by the adverse circumstances, were able to seize, converting and transforming potential problems into strengths, especially by “enhancing multidisciplinary work and mutual assistance within the team” (CPCJ 127).

It is thus clear that they are capable of reinventing themselves and showing openness towards promoting change within the system. This is a factor that should be further developed so that their action can become more efficient and effective.

PART III

THE CPCJs



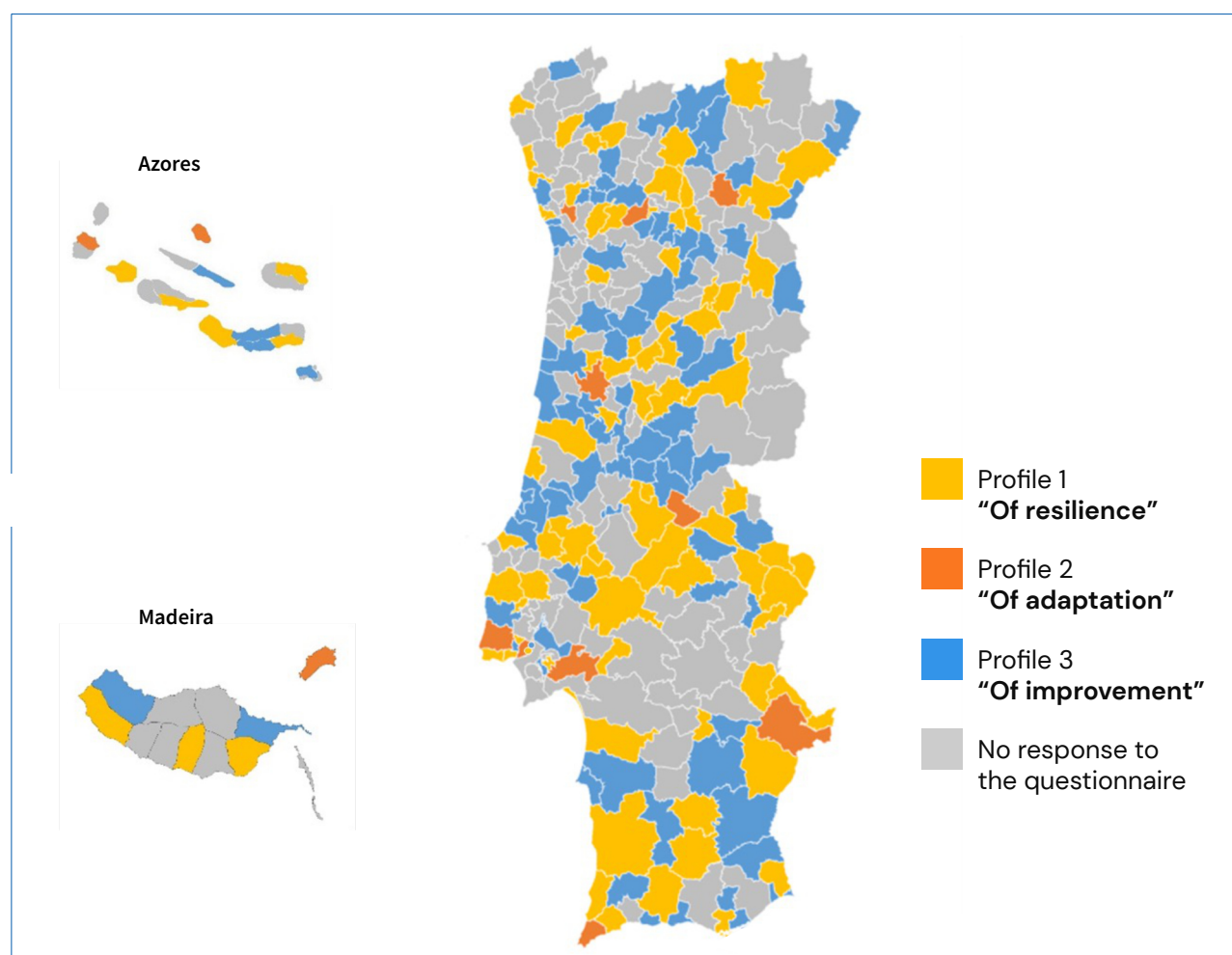
DURING

THE PANDEMIC

As explained in the section on procedures, by selecting key variables and reducing the number of response categories, through aggregation, it was possible to systematize the results into profiles (clusters), using a K-means method. Based on this process, 3 profiles were drawn: profile 1, named “of resilience”, includes 87 commissions (46.3%); profile 2, named “of adaptation”, is comprised of 14 commissions (7.4%); and profile 3, named “of improvement”, relates to 87 commissions (46.3%).

These profiles illustrate the tendency of some CPCJs to form a group based on their relative proximity due to sharing characteristics and/or positions in some variables, even though they might not be a perfect match in all the variables, given the specificity of each. Ultimately, there could be as many profiles as responding CPCJs and, conversely, there could be a single profile, because all of them are Commissions for the protection of children and young people.

FIGURE 2. Geographic distribution of the CPCJ profiles



Powered by Bing

Source: Survey Impacts of the Pandemic on the Work of the CPCJs, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

The profiles are created by approximation and differentiation: by approximation, when they share characteristics and/or positions; by differentiation, when they are set apart from others based on their different characteristics and/or positions.

Once they are grouped into 3 profiles, what stands out from this classification, regarding the description and naming of the profiles, and considering the variables they are based on, is the following:

PROFILE 1	PROFILE 2	PROFILE 3
<p>“OF RESILIENCE”</p> <p>the CPCJs in this profile, compared to the other two, present an increase in their activity, as assessed on the basis of total caseload between 2019 and 2020; they are of an average size, with a higher representation of CPCJs whose caseloads range from 50 to 99 cases or from 100 to 199 cases.</p> <p>These CPCJs held fewer meetings in a restricted format than planned, and most held only online meetings during the state of emergency and the post state emergency; their assessment of the CNPDPCJ, the CNPDPCJ – Regional Technical Teams and the Public Prosecution Service is positive, but less so than in the other profiles.</p> <p>Their facilities do not make it possible to comply with the rules of the DGS, which is an indication of some structural limitations.</p> <p>They identified certain strengths, mostly related to the use of new technologies and tools for action.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">87 CPCJs</p>	<p>“OF ADAPTATION”</p> <p>the CPCJs in this profile, compared to the other two, present a decrease in their activity, based on the total caseload between 2019 and 2020, and are of a bigger size.</p> <p>They stated that the planned number of meetings in a restricted format was met. In addition, this is the profile with more urgent meetings. CPCJ meetings were essentially held online.</p> <p>Their evaluation of the response from the Public Prosecution Service, the Regional Technical Teams of the CPNDPCJ and the CNPDPCJ is very positive.</p> <p>All of them mentioned negative aspects, especially the fact that they operated in facilities that did not make it possible to comply with the rules of the DGS, additional constraints resulting from a lack of enough PPE and of adequate computer equipment, greater difficulties in accessing the internet and in complying with cleaning and sanitation procedures.</p> <p>They also list strengths, in particular the coordination with partners, the role of the Commissioners and the cohesiveness of the CPCJ team.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">14 CPCJs</p>	<p>“OF IMPROVEMENT”</p> <p>this profile stands out from the other two for essentially including the CPCJs that maintained their level of procedural activity, based on the total caseload between 2019 and 2020; CPCJs of different sizes are represented in it.</p> <p>This profile includes the CPCJs with a higher-than-planned number of meetings in a restricted format, and it is the one most represented in terms of urgent meetings held. The meetings were held essentially using a hybrid format, both in person and through digital means only.</p> <p>This profile presents the highest values for a very positive assessment of the responses from the Public Prosecution Service, the Regional Technical Teams of the CPNDPCJ and the CNPDPCJ.</p> <p>There is a tendency not to identify weaknesses, and the main strength identified was having ensured that the CPCJ continued to operate.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">87 CPCJs</p>

The categories used to differentiate the profiles can be found on Table 18, with a row for characterization, another for assessment of the monitoring, another for the identification of weaknesses and a final one for the identification of strengths.

TABLE 18. Descriptive measures by profile

		Profile 1 (n=87)	Profile 2 (n=14)	Profile 3 (n=87)
CHARACTERIZATION		OF RESILIENCE	OF ADAPTATION	OF IMPROVEMENT
Evolution of the total caseload between 2019 and 2020	Decreased significantly (-15%)	14.9%	7.1%	18.4%
	Decreased (between -5 and -15%)	20.7%	42.9%	19.5%
	Remained the same (-/+5% deviation)	33.3%	28.6%	33.3%
	Increased (between +5 and +15%)	17.2%	21.4%	12.6%
	Increased significantly (+15%)	13.8%	0.0%	12.6%
Size of the CPCJ (Total caseload in 2019)	Up to 20 cases	8.0%	14.3%	10.3%
	20-49 cases	25.3%	21.4%	24.1%
	50-99 cases	18.4%	7.1%	17.2%
	100-199 cases	21.8%	14.3%	19.5%
	200-499 cases	18.4%	7.1%	20.7%
	500 cases or more	8.0%	35.7%	8.0%
Number of meetings in a restricted format	As planned	72.1%	92.9%	79.1%
	Fewer than planned	27.9%	7.1%	14.0%
	More than planned	0.0%	0.0%	7.0
Urgent meetings	No	58.6%	35.7%	55.2%
	Yes	41.4%	64.3%	44.8%
Methodology of the meetings of the restricted CPCJ	In person and online	25.3%	42.9%	58.6%
	In person only	51.7%	50.0%	29.9%
	Online only	11.5%	7.1%	11.5%
	Another type	11.5%	0.0%	0.0%

		Profile 1 (n=87)	Profile 2 (n=14)	Profile 3 (n=87)
ASSESSMENT OF THE COORDINATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES		OF RESILIENCE	OF ADAPTATION	OF IMPROVEMENT
Response from the CNPDPCJ	Very positive	4.6%	35.7%	44.7%
	Positive	65.5%	28.6%	41.2%
	Insufficient	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%
	NA	23.0%	35.7%	14.1%
Response from the CNPDPCJ-Regional Technical Team	Very positive	15.3%	57.1%	68.2%
	Positive	75.3%	35.7%	29.4%
	Insufficient	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
	NA	8.2%	7.1%	2.4%
Response from the Public Prosecution Service	Very positive	21.8%	57.1%	71.8%
	Positive	63.2%	21.4%	25.9%
	Insufficient	1.1%	21.4%	2.4%
	NA	13.8%	0.0%	0.0%
NEGATIVE ASPECTS				
Negative aspects	None mentioned	23.0%	0.0%	75.9%
	Negatives aspects are mentioned	77.0%	100.0%	24.1%
Facilities – compliance with the rules of the DGS	Mentioned as a negative aspect	60.9%	71.4%	11.5%
	Not mentioned	39.1%	28.6%	88.5%
Protective equipment and PPE	Mentioned as a negative aspect	10.3%	57.1%	1.1%
	Not mentioned	89.7%	42.9%	98.9%
Computer equipment	Mentioned as a negative aspect	0.0%	85.7%	1.1%
	Not mentioned	100.0%	14.3%	98.9
Internet access	Mentioned as a negative aspect	0.0%	78.6%	0.0%
	Not mentioned	100.0%	21.4%	100.0%
Cleaning and sanitation	Mentioned as a negative aspect	23.0%	64.3%	2.3%
	Not mentioned	77.0%	35.7%	97.7%
Human Resources	Mentioned as a negative aspect	21.8%	28.6%	20.7%
	Not mentioned	78.2%	71.4%	79.3%

		Profile 1 (n=87)	Profile 2 (n=14)	Profile 3 (n=87)
		OF RESILIENCE	OF ADAPTATION	OF IMPROVEMENT
STRENGTHS				
Strengths	None mentioned	1.1%	0.0%	7.8%
	Strengths are mentioned	98.9%	100.0%	92.0%
Continuing to operate	Mentioned as a strength	28.7%	28.6%	33.7%
	Not mentioned	71.3%	71.4%	66.7%
Response capacity	Mentioned as a strength	35.6%	35.7%	40.2%
	Not mentioned	64.4%	64.3%	59.8%
Coordination with partners	Mentioned as a strength	16.1%	28.6%	14.9%
	Not mentioned	83.9%	71.4%	85.1%
Commissioners	Mentioned as a strength	36.8%	57.1%	35.6%
	Not mentioned	63.2%	42.9%	64.4%
Team cohesiveness	Mentioned as a strength	31.0%	50.0%	33.3%
	Not mentioned	69.0%	50.0%	66.6%
New instruments and methodologies	Mentioned as a strength	23.0%	14.3%	17.2%
	Not mentioned	77.0%	85.7%	82.8%
Contacts with families/children	Mentioned as a strength	25.3%	28.6%	24.1%
	Not mentioned	74.7%	71.4%	75.9%

Fonte: Inquérito Impactos da Pandemia na Atividade das CPCJ, CNPDPCJ, 2020.

There are, indeed, different situations experienced by the CPCJs during the adverse times of the pandemic. This is noticeable in certain variables that clearly differentiate the profiles. Such is the case of the identification of negative aspects and major constraints in the implementation of rules and guidelines, shining a light on structural weaknesses, but also of strengths; the work carried out and the methodologies adopted during the meetings; and the assessment of the coordination with the CNPDPCJ, the Regional Technical Teams of the CNPDPCJ and the Public Prosecution Service.

However, it is important to understand that certain variables, because they are experienced by a large part of the CPCJs, ultimately do not particularly stand out in any of the profiles.

Size, based on the total caseload, does not appear as a differentiating factor; each CPCJ seems to adapt to the demands of its local context.

The differences between the CPCJs as reflected in their activity in 2020 thus seem to stem more from differences in physical resources and work conditions (i.e., facilities, equipment, internet), in teamwork (i.e., cohesiveness, Commissioners) and in the support received pursuant to requests both from the community partners and the central services in different areas of activity.



FINAL

CONSIDERATIONS

The survey *Impacts of the Pandemic on the Activity of the CPCJs*, implemented in 2020 by the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People, is not statistically representative at the national level, as the analysis was restricted to the group of 188 CPCJs that responded to the questionnaire. Therefore, the results presented here cannot be generalized to the entire national territory.

Despite this limitation, using the quantitative and qualitative information obtained, it is possible to draw a unique social portrait of some of the main features of the intervention carried out by the CPCJs and the communities for the protection of children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This portrait, in turn, shines a light on important indicators concerning the system of promotion and protection, at a time when 20 years have passed since the current model entered into force. Despite all the progress achieved over the last decades, there are structural insufficiencies and deficiencies that persist in different CPCJs and could potentially grow worse due to the impacts of the pandemic, whose full extent is not yet known.

This survey by the CNPDPCJ also ensures accountability from those within this system who have specific powers and bear the responsibility to act with regard to children and young people in danger. It also gives a voice to the professionals of the CPCJs. The views and perspectives they share about their work during the pandemic make a relevant and indispensable contribution to the critical reflection on the public policy framework for childhood and youth. This provides essential guidance in ensuring the effective protection of all children and young people in the country.

It is now the time to take in, acknowledge and debate all the potential that emerged during these years and to set the priorities in which to make an investment, one that is absolutely vital for achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness in the execution of childhood and youth policies. The portrait outlined in these pages shows a clear need, which must be fulfilled. May the pandemic, thus, become an opportunity to change and to strengthen the intervention in the community.

