

Our 2021 Material Issue: COVID-19

 3,022  12 min  6  employees

CREATING RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE VALUE FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Considering the health of all its stakeholders as its topmost priority during the pandemic, Garanti BBVA, as always, focused on taking responsible and sustainable actions through these times. **Infrastructures** capable of tracking the impact and course of the pandemic and of **strengthening data-driven decision-making** were developed, and regular analysis of data using the pandemic-linked **comprehensive, up-to-date database** backed **proactive action** plans. One of the strongest muscles of the Bank in this period has been its organizational agility, which provided the ability to rapidly shift its focus for redefining its priorities, fulfill its stakeholders' needs uninterrupted and rapidly while protecting their health, and consequently to deliver good experiences.

LOOKING OUT FOR EMPLOYEES' HEALTH

Being Türkiye's leading financial institution, Garanti BBVA erected its primary responsibility upon **protecting** first and foremost **employee health** in every step along the way and to manage this strategy in a balanced fashion with the **priority given to its customers**. The Bank has been handling the **steps taken and precautions adopted** under the headings monitoring the current situation and health processes, hygiene and employee services, physical environment, and finally, technology and data. In doing so, Garanti BBVA takes the utmost care to achieve **total alignment with the instructions and guidance of local and international health authorities**.

- **Monitoring The Current Situation and Health Processes**
Close follow-up of the current status of employees' health and management of health processes

- **Hygiene Measures and Employee Services**
Providing the hygienic working environment needed by employees and adoption of all necessary hygiene precautions

- **Physical Environment**
Arrangement of physical working environments and facility services in accordance with the conditions dictated by the pandemic

- **Technology And Data**
Utilizing the means and possibilities offered by technology to integrate data within decision-making and employee experience processes using robust data infrastructures

WORKING ORDER DURING 2021

As one of the most vital steps of **preventing the spread of the pandemic**, all employees falling under the "vulnerable group" as defined by local health authorities and all employees that Garanti BBVA **specifically wanted to keep safe** such as **pregnant employees** were kept **away from working environments during high-risk periods**. All non-essential **events, trainings and foreign trips** were **canceled**. As work-from-home under the remote access model was sustained when necessary, rotating working model of **home-based working and in-office presence** was carried on in regional offices and branches **to the extent compelled by the course of the pandemic**. Working hours were modified in line with the decisions made by the authorities. **Flexibility** was provided in the **dress code** to allow employees to work more comfortably and to facilitate their adherence to hygiene guidelines.

Plexiglass separators were installed in **branches** in order to **protect the health of customers and branch employees** in contact with customers. Besides regular **disinfection** in all branches and buildings, masks, disinfectants, gloves and similar **products for ensuring hygiene** continue to be supplied on an ongoing basis to all the employees in work locations.

With the goal of giving the foreground to protect the health of its customers, employees and their families and ensuring business continuity, Garanti BBVA has been **one of the first companies to switch to location-independent working**, which was enabled by its robust digital infrastructure. The Bank was able to sustain all its activities efficiently with the help of the **agile transformation** that had been finalized prior to the pandemic, its **robust digital infrastructure** and **one team culture**. Always turning a careful ear to its employees' expectations, the Bank aimed to deliver a **sustainable best employee experience**. Combining the **productivity** of teleworking and **face-to-face communication necessary for bonding socially**, the **hybrid working model** began to be implemented successfully at the Bank. It will become a major working model in the future as well.

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In a bid to provide the **best service quality** in business areas that saw a marked increase in customer demands during the pandemic, a fast transformation was realized thanks to Garanti BBVA's **flexible organizational structure**, and **employees' capabilities were bolstered with the necessary training programs, as emerging customer needs were resolved quickly based on an agile approach**.

DAILY INVENTORIES TO FOLLOW UP THE HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Created in 2020 and actively used in 2021, the inventory, which can be easily reached through digital platforms, lets all employees to **report** illness and suspected cases for themselves and their families **on a daily basis to the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) team**. In addition to the inventory, online platforms were established for monitoring risk situations and **taking action proactively**, and for employees to enter their HES codes and vaccination statuses to move ahead while taking advantage of the protection provided by the vaccine both for the sake of employee health and business continuity. Information and

reminders about vaccination processes were periodically shared with the employees. **Corporate Integration with the Ministry of Health was brought to completion and vaccination, isolation and PCR test data of all employees** began to be evaluated by the OHS team in order to **offer the necessary healthcare support** and to **preclude any risk of infection** at the locations. Evaluating all the data gathered continuously, the OHS Team made the necessary medical assessments and followed up employees' isolation processes. **Contact was established with all employees reporting a suspicious case within 24 hours**. Employees who are confirmed or highly suspected COVID-19 cases were **followed up closely through their recovery**. **Adherence** to the Bank's corporate policies and practices not just by Garanti BBVA employees but also by **3rd party service providers was monitored closely**.

Infrastructures capable of tracking the impact and course of the pandemic and of **strengthening data-driven decision-making** were developed, and regular analysis of data using the pandemic-linked **comprehensive, up-to-date database** backed **proactive action** plans. In principle, the Bank closely followed the course of the pandemic **around the world**, and its evolution **across the country**, along with certain **high-risk hinterlands**. Accordingly, **proactive measures customized for regions for the days ahead** were adopted, rather than reactive ones for today. **Ratios of office- or home-based working** were **dynamically arranged**. **Social distancing** and close contact tracking processes **in buildings** were backed by technological infrastructure and **mobile applications**, and steps were taken as necessary. In addition, available data were monitored constantly; decisions were updated as and when necessary, and needs were fulfilled with an **employee-centric flexible structure**.

COVID-19 Hotline to ensure that all employees have the quickest access to information from the most reliable sources.

COVID-19 HOTLINE FOR EMPLOYEES

Believing in the high value of **information provision** and **transparent communication** in every step taken, Garanti BBVA keeps its employees informed about the evolution of the situation

through **regular** announcements and broadcasts. **Bringing its employees together with occupational physicians and subject matter experts** on respective fields, **as well as the senior management**, the Bank facilitates access of its employees to the most accurate and quality information needed. The COVID-19 Hotline remained in use also in 2021. The **information page created on the intranet** allowed all employees to **instantly track** the implementations and **developments**.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Putting emphasis and dwelling also on its employees' psychological well-being, Garanti BBVA incorporated **additional psychological support service for the negative effects of the pandemic** to its existing "Employee Support Hotline" service offered since 2010. In this context, employees who feel the need benefit from the online psychological support service on this line. Additionally, **monthly interactive seminars** were organized whereby **expert psychologists** gave information about the different aspects of the pandemic to all Garanti BBVA employees. Moreover, **monthly bulletins covering suggestions** to increase the well-being of employees continued to be published in 2021.

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Numerous training programs were designed within the scope of protection measures against COVID-19 and adjustment to the new working formats. Two training modules were offered to employees, which were titled "**Health and Safety in Home-Based Working**" and "**Ergonomics**" aimed at helping establish healthier and more secure settings at home, besides online OHS training programs.

While all efforts within this scope **helped employees feel secure**, they also constituted an element strengthening the employee-centric HR strategy of Garanti BBVA. They also guaranteed

complete fulfillment of responsibilities towards employees, customers, stakeholders and the society.

GRADUAL NORMALIZATION AND RETURN TO OFFICE

Having **remotely carried out** its tasks and services in roles allowing teleworking particularly in Head Office departments **from March 2020 until October 2021**, Garanti BBVA **achieved its targets** also in this working model.

In keeping with the increasing rate of vaccination of employees, besides the developments in the world and in Türkiye, the Bank started implementing the **new hybrid working** order in the **October-December 2021** period in line with the pandemic circumstances. With the new gradual normalization process, the maximum in-office presence in Head Office buildings was set as 40% of the capacity and employees **returned to office for two days a week** maximum.

In parallel with this transformation, the Bank initiated "**shared clean desk**" practice to adjust its offices to the new format and to use them optimally. With the **digital booking** solution developed in-house, employees began to book offices to use them.

Providing secure working environments for employees has been the Bank's top priority when preparing the offices according to prevailing conditions. To this end, the Bank reviewed office use guidelines, employee and facility services and updated and released the **Working Environment Guide**. Necessary social distancing, unconditional mask and hygiene rules remain in place in working environments and in all shared spaces according to the current circumstances.

Providing the best employee experience with digital developments and protective measures such as the integration of the Ministry of Health database and the Bank's own COVID-19 database, Garanti BBVA is **the leader bank steering the sector**.

Offering the best employee experience with digital developments such as the **integration** of the **Ministry of Health database** and **the Bank's own COVID-19 database** at building access systems in lobbies of buildings, Garanti BBVA made its employees feel and experience that the Bank stands by its employees also through this rough patch and that we are better together, while consolidating its position as **the leader bank steering the sector**.

Capable of supporting its employees' **well-being, development, and work-life balance** and of providing them with **flexible models**, Garanti BBVA will continue to capture all its learnings and experiences in working models, and to **work to bring the age of opportunity to everyone**.

Detailed information about the actions Garanti BBVA has taken to look out for its employees' well-being within the context of COVID-19 can be found in the sections titled The Best and Most Engaged Team and Data and Technology.

STANDING BY THE CUSTOMERS

As always, Garanti BBVA included its customers within its top priorities also in these challenging times and worked to stand by its customers and to **take the actions that will create value** for them at all times. The Bank **continued with its investments to bolster its technology** with the aim of increasing the speed and success of its current and future steps. The Bank was able to **respond to customer needs independently from location** and complete their transactions **rapidly**.

In this period, Garanti BBVA more tightly embraced its goal of **being more than a bank** for its customers and being positioned in their lives as a **solution partner**; the Bank relentlessly carried on with its surveys to **hear its customers**, and to **gain insight into their changing behaviors and needs**.

CUSTOM-TAILORED SOLUTIONS TO +65 CUSTOMERS

No amount limitations were applied for +65 retail customers' **cash withdrawals via order**. In addition, the rule mandating +65 customers without an ID card to collect their **cards** solely

from branches was revoked, and the practice of **card delivery by courier to their addresses** continued in 2021.

END-TO-END DIGITALIZATION

Garanti BBVA fully shifted the remote onboarding process that was launched on its mobile app in 2019 to its digital channels upon the regulatory change effected in the banking sector. The process named "**Contactless Onboarding Technology**" **digitalizes the processes of becoming a customer and credit card application end-to-end**, and delivers a contact-free, **easy and secure** experience for customers. Completely digitalizing the remote onboarding process, this step has been an important phase within the rapid transformation in banking triggered by the pandemic.

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As the pandemic persisted throughout 2021, Garanti BBVA kept furnishing **uninterrupted service** to its customers on the back of its robust technology, standing by its customers with its **rich set of more than 500 transactions on digital channels**, and offering **life-easing solutions** for them.

CUSTOMERS' CHOICE IN DIGITAL BANKING: GARANTİ BBVA

The pandemic-driven fast pace of digital transformation in the past two years brought about behavioral learning and a real transformation thanks to the conveniences offered by digital channels. Garanti BBVA **responded to this need at the highest extent**, by constantly reviewing both its **capabilities on the digital channels it offers and its overall service model, revising them where necessary**. Carrying on with developments on every possible platform in keeping with its **vision of being accessible by customers anywhere they need banking services**, and

converting digital channels into a setting offering **financial advisory** to customers, Garanti BBVA aims to reach the users at the right time with the right message, by strictly focusing on offering a **better experience** at all times and embracing **omni-channel strategy**.

In the period from the onset of 2020 until end-2021, the **number of digital banking customers went up from 8.5 million to 11 million**, while the **number of customers using mobile channels increased from 7.8 million to above 10.6 million**.

PIONEERING SOLUTIONS IN CONTACTLESS TRANSACTIONS

In response to the surge in contactless transactions particularly upon the start of the pandemic and the increased frequency in customers' use of QR transactions, Garanti BBVA took the experience delivered to customers one step further with the **"Common QR"** feature.

Garanti BBVA integrated Türkiye's own national **QR code standards** announced by the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye in its **mobile channels, ATM and POS devices**.

Hence was launched the capability for cash withdrawal from all ATMs featuring the **TRKarekod** symbol using Garanti BBVA mobile app and from all Garanti BBVA ATMs using the mobile app of any other bank. Other features introduced on Garanti BBVA Mobile included **shopping payment, FAST** (Instant and Continuous Transfer of Funds), **intra-bank money transfer, EFT** and **account QR** capabilities aligned with the TR Karekod standard. These features allow making payments and withdrawing cash using the mobile app without carrying a physical card, and making money transfers without the need for such information as IBAN, account no. etc.

The Bank put its visionary investments and leadership in payment systems to use for **sustainable economic development** and for **contributing value to its customers** during the pandemic. "Cardless / Contactless Payment" facilities in BonusFlas kept improving. In 2021, the Bank carried on with its intense information campaign regarding **contactless shopping solutions**

such as **Payment with QR, Mobile Payment** and **GarantiPay**. To promote widespread use of payment with QR, the Bank enabled **card payments from all compatible POS devices of other banks**, besides those of Garanti BBVA. By the end of 2021, **payment from current account with QR** was introduced.

Standing by its customers during the pandemic period with its leadership in payment systems, Garanti BBVA has **doubled the number of annual contactless transactions**.

The Bank replaced POS devices used at member merchants with **contactless terminals** enabling payment without touching the POS device, and offered **PIN pad devices with contactless capability**. Garanti BBVA quickly adjusted itself to contactless transaction limits being increased to TL 350 by the Interbank Card Center (in Turkish: BKM). While the **number of annual contactless transactions doubled**, the Bank kept standing by its customers owing to its **operational excellence** prioritization. In a similar move, the Bank increased the number of QR-enabled devices to encourage payment with QR, and **payment collection from non-Bank cards** was enabled through developments on the part of the POS device in QR transactions. As a result of all these developments, **QR transactions tripled**. To facilitate customers' **shopping without leaving their homes**, the Bank cooperated with a number of **e-commerce** companies. Garanti BBVA invested in its remote payment infrastructure so that commercial activity of physical business places would not be hurt, and end users would be able to make their payments without leaving home during the pandemic, and thus launched **Collection by Code**.

Keeping its customers among its priorities in this period, as it always does, Garanti BBVA continued to **understand their changing needs and expectations** and to **offer the solutions aligned with their needs**. With its initiatives, the Bank not only keeps pace with the evolution in customer behaviors, but also

invites its customers to change and **continues to evolve together with them**.

DEFERRALS & RESTRUCTURING

To **protect customers' financial health** in this period, the Bank offered the chance to defer and restructure the debts on its loan products. The Bank **extended the deadlines for prizes** earned in campaigns. **Credit card payment limits were increased** to facilitate spending for retail customers. **Limit increase** campaign was initiated to help **commercial credit card holders** to sustain their businesses and ease their product purchases.

The Bank also **suspended the closure** of credit cards **to cash advance** during the course of the pandemic due to non-payment of minimum payment amount three times within the year; customers were able to fulfill their cash needs with their credit cards during this period that they were financially distressed until 30 September 2021 when pandemic actions were terminated.

Garanti BBVA stood by its customers in several respects including temporary payment difficulties of customers during the pandemic, preserving their cash assets amid the uncertainty environment, postponing their card debts while continuing to use their cards, and preventing downgrading of their credit scores,

Garanti BBVA had provided a solution for credit cards with the **Postpone Payment** product launched on **30 March 2020**, which remained in force **until end-September 2021**. In line with the pandemic actions announced by the BRSA, the Bank presented a pandemic package for customers, which included **1/2/3-months postponement** followed by a **6-installment repayment plan**; the package was discontinued on 30 September 2021.

With its solutions offered, Garanti BBVA stood by its customers in several respects including **temporary payment difficulties** of customers during the pandemic, preserving **their cash assets**

amid the uncertainty environment, postponing their card debts while continuing to use their cards, and preventing downgrading of their credit scores, in addition to enhancing customer experience and increasing the trust held in the Bank.

Garanti BBVA will always continue to stand by its customers, be their solution partner, and take actions that will create value for them.

[Detailed information about the actions taken by Garanti BBVA within the scope of standing by its customers can be found in the sections titled Financial Health, Reaching More Customers, Operational Excellence and Data and Technology.](#)