

## POLICY RELEVANT RESEARCH AND INFLUENCE

### CASE STUDY

It was pizza night and the family had gathered in the kitchen. In one corner of the main bedroom, however, a light still burned. Cecilia wanted to go down to her family, she had hardly seen the children all week, and one more Zoom call would probably give her a nervous breakdown. But there was a global pandemic kicking off, and as Director of the think-tank, she needed to show leadership.

The phone had been ringing off the hook all week, never mind the deluge of emails, and the inevitable zoom calls. Ministers, special advisers, civil servants, NGOs, business people, the media, all with the same question: ‘what are we going to do?’.

Cecilia thought it would be easier to answer that question if the think-tank had a dedicated and pre-existing department, called something like ‘What do we do about a global pandemic if ever one should occur in the future’. But, of course, it didn’t. What it had instead was a range of researchers, all working on different topics, some relevant, some less so, and all busy. Plus, everyone was now working at home.

### On Think Tanks

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So the easy answer for Cecilia was to say ‘Sorry, no idea’. But she knew that wouldn’t do. Faced with a global catastrophe, the think-tank would have to step up. As leader, it was her job to make sure the think-tank was both relevant and timely. ‘What I need’, she thought, ‘is a short-term action plan of things my team can do’.

That was quite an ask, Cecilia thought. She pulled off a page from her pad, and wrote a heading: ‘Responding to the pandemic: a short-term action plan of things my team can do’. She needed to fill that in, but it was too late to do more. She thought of the pizza and her mouth began to water. Margarita, she wondered? Or Quattro staggoni? It was time to go downstairs. Cecilia rose, stretched, and switched off the light.