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**HAPSc**  
Policy Briefs  
Series

Vol. 1 No. 1  
"Policy making  
during coronavirus crisis"

# HAPSc

## Policy Briefs Series

Policy making during  
coronavirus crisis

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## Note from the President of HAPSc

We are pleased to present the inaugural issue of our new semi-annual scientific journal. The HAPSc Policy Brief Series will publish a series of policy briefs which aim to provide proposals and ideas for today's world. We intend that it should promote an international and interdisciplinary dialogue regarding new, revitalised, and, sometimes, re-present old ideas that may be currently applicable.

As you might expect, our inaugural issue will be concerned mainly with the Covid-19 Pandemic and its potential after effects. It was for this proposal that we won a Bronze medal at the "Patient Partnership Awards" earlier this year.

One of our key aims is to connect scientific dialogue with policy planning, learning, and the transfer of best practices across boundaries, both geographic and intellectual. It is in this effort to deal with the effects of a crisis of the magnitude of the Pandemic that we need to recruit ideas based on and from experts in public health, policy making, political analysis and data analysis. This interdisciplinary consultation with experts must lead the efforts to develop guidelines that are based on the best scientific data available. A Journal enhancing interesting ideas about politics and policy in a rapidly changing world.

In order to gather the best international ideas, we will accept policy briefs and papers in English, French, Spanish, and Greek.

I hope you find our Journal interesting, thought-provoking, and, hopefully, practical.

Yours sincerely,

*Symeon Sidiropoulos*

Political Scientist

President of HAPSc

## Note from the Director of the Scientific - Advisory Board

The first issue of the Policy Briefs series discusses policy making in unprecedented times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an introductory issue to a thematic series of publications on specific policy areas and challenges. The basic aim to provide a platform for experts and new scientists to express their views not only from the political science perspective but also across other fields.

This issue addresses critical aspects of policies related to the pandemic, such as international collaborations, welfare state, health and education, public administration, human rights, environment and economy.

The 32 articles included approach pandemic policies from the perspective of several countries, allowing pluralism in the way policy meets pandemic related needs and informing prioritization across policy fields.

We are confident that this editorial effort will enrich the scientific discussion at such turbulent times, when the need for solid evidence is more urgent than ever. We would like to thank all authors for their contributions and the editor for his editing this first issue.

*Professor Kyriakos Souliotis*

President of the Scientific Council of HAPSc

## Introductory Note: A doctor's brief insight to COVID-19

The emergence of SARS-CoV-2 has created a number of diverse types of challenges that are unprecedented and characterized by great scientific challenges. Many questions and hypotheses have emerged due to Covid-19 similarities to other viruses, that have caused serious diseases and disasters in the past in the history of mankind. Of course, there are also differences with past viruses but the point is that Covid-19 is a virus that spreads rapidly, with very fast contagiousness, but probably with different effects between men and women or people of different age groups or vulnerable groups of people in the same or different country. With Covid-19, social cohesion is threatened and social exclusion is established and imposed due to necessity. Covid-19 threatened not only the biological survival but also survival as a whole due to repercussions on the working environment, the emotional and social area as well.

By coronavirus we return to basics and we retrograde in every level of life. Covid -19, identifies with the ultimate war. The virus has unleashed a sneaky earthly war without rules. Cutting off the progress and development communication, social connection, biological expressions among fellow beings, education etc. This threat cannot be addressed by delay or by poor methods. Cohesion and cooperation are prerequisites for tackling this threat. Solving also other matters among all the actors involved, can be a drastic solution since in this war, the existing and upcoming repercussions do not only harm the present but the future development as well. The virus harmed nation's leaders around the globe, by affecting their strategies/policies and humans of every socioeconomic status, race, age or gender. From the first moment, science and scientists are exclusively responsible with their strategies and guidelines. This forces them to rise to the occasion, due to the fact that they are crucial for policy making. This remains to be proved.

Answers about the role of science and its importance, in this hard period. Every knowledge of science from classic to innovative one, at that time that we are all isolated in our homes and others with no place to stay, no food to eat and no medical treatment, has not yet fulfilled our questions. Scientists (education, research) have the capability and responsibility to unify the world, in this hard period, and resolve equally the pandemic. Because Covid-19 gave birth to inequality for once again. So, if we manage to make these threats visible we can bring prosperity and a solid quality of life. Scientists are those, that can use research tools and technology to help humanity and convince governments, institutions and all kind of actors to invest in humans and their future.

Communication is vital for progress, exchange of views of knowledge, information and feelings. The reduced alternative way worsens perception, judgment and efficiency. Covid 19 has affected human

relations on various levels: within the family, socially, in schools, in the workplace. Hence, social media and online communication, have been the basic weapon of maintenance and survival of humans: through those, information, activities, situations, and human emotions were channeled through art (and not only art). The honest and effective dialogue, cohesion and cooperation between scientists, of all expertise, poses a challenge and a commitment. Medical sciences, humanitarian, economic and cultural sciences, are all obliged to provide insights, research, actions and results.

All over the world every governments' position on the problems of covid-19 is made in a different way. This varies according to the different political ideologies, systems, government capabilities, personalities of government officials, the different political and moral values of the people in each country. Also, the treatment is different for each leader and each system of health, research, education and culture, depending on the capabilities of the state. The impacts on health, development and financial support of countries are diverse. Collaboration, then, on at least some common models tested, which can reduce the impact of these inconceivable changes in people's daily lives, is more than necessary. In order for support measures to be effective, they must be based on research protocols that take into account the specificities of different peoples, their culture, eating habits, hygiene habits and level of knowledge, so that help and psychological support for the largest population of each country, until a solution is found in the therapeutic approach and treatment and transmission of the virus.

***Paraskevi (Pari) Rapti***

Dr. Endocrinologist, Vice President of HAPSc Interdisciplinary Committee  
Responsible for HAPSc's COVID-19 actions

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## Topic 1

Political situation and policies in national and European level

## Policy Measures for the Diaspora during the COVID-19 Crisis: The Case of Cyprus<sup>1, 2</sup>

Angeliki Konstantinidou<sup>3</sup> & Daniela Vintila<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic constitutes an unprecedented challenge for policy-makers worldwide. The coronavirus outbreak has rapidly put into question states' preparedness for crisis management, while also raising particular concerns on how national governments assist their citizens abroad in situation of distress. This Policy Brief tackles the issue of governmental responsiveness to the diaspora in a context of pandemic alert. In doing so, we focus on the case of Cyprus, one of the EU Member States with the largest share of citizens residing abroad. Drawing on official documents publicly released by different Cypriot authorities, we map the different initiatives adopted by the Cypriot Government in the attempt to assist its diaspora during the pandemic. Our analysis shows that, in line with its traditional approach towards non-residents citizens, Cyprus has adopted a rather pro-active stance vis-à-vis its population abroad. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, several initiatives have been put forward by ministerial actors, often via inter-institutional cooperation, aiming to mobilise resources that could meet diaspora' needs. However, the Government's engagement with the diaspora during this crisis has remained rather selective. Most policy measures primarily aimed to provide support to Cypriots in specific (mainly European) destination countries, while also targeting particularly vulnerable groups of individuals stuck abroad during the pandemic.

### Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak has rapidly fuelled debates on states' preparedness to ensure the safety of their citizens and residents against unexpected health hazards. In addition to raising concerns on how to protect nationals and non-nationals living in their territory, states have also been progressively confronted with the need to assist their citizens abroad during the pandemic. This includes not only individuals stuck abroad as tourists or students, but also those temporarily or permanently living abroad who wished to return to their country of nationality or were facing particular vulnerable situations in their host countries. Across the EU, such unusual need for intervention triggered different institutional responses, with national policy-makers adopting varying emergency measures for their

<sup>1</sup> To cite this paper in APA style: Konstantinidou, A. & Vintila, D. (2020). Policy Measures for the Diaspora during the COVID-19 Crisis: The Case of Cyprus. *HAPSc Policy Briefs Series*, 1(1): 13-23. DOI: 10.12681/hapscpbs.24944

<sup>2</sup> This research has been conducted in the framework of the project "Migration and Transnational Social Protection in (Post)Crisis Europe (MiTSoPro)" that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement No. 680014).

<sup>3</sup> Angeliki Konstantinidou is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Ethnic and Migration Studies (CEDEM) at the University of Liege in the framework of the ERC-funded project "Migration, Transnationalism and Social Protection in (post-) crisis Europe (MiTSoPro)". (correspondent author)

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Daniela Vintila is lead postdoctoral researcher in the ERC-funded project "Migration, transnationalism and social protection in (post)crisis Europe" at the Centre for Ethnic and Migration Studies (CEDEM) of the University of Liege.

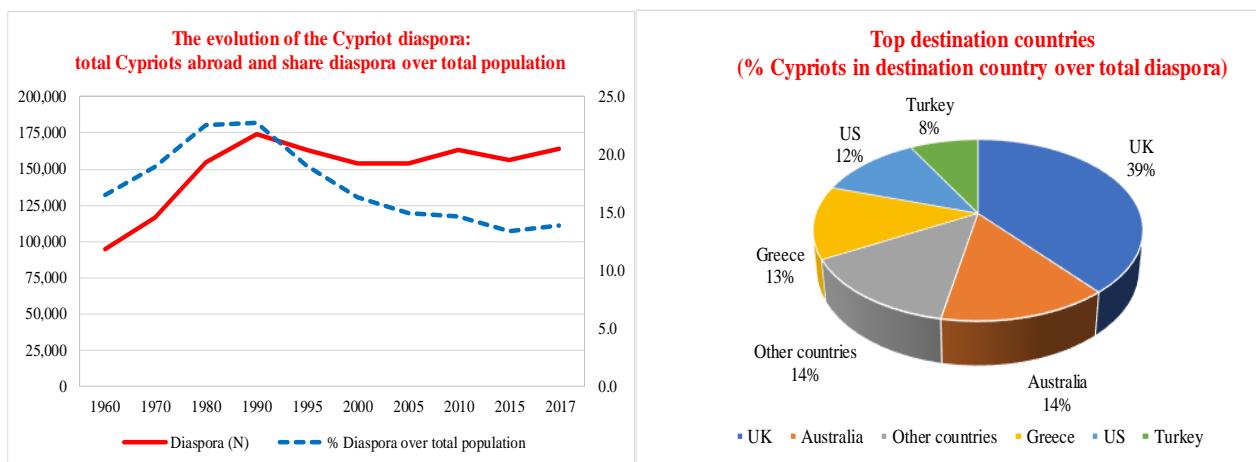
diaspora (repatriation, special consular assistance, diplomatic discussions to ensure the protection of those abroad, etc.).

This Policy Brief focuses on the case of Cyprus, one of the EU Member States with the most sizeable diaspora in relative terms (compared to the country's total population). The paper aims to assess the responsiveness of Cypriot public authorities to the needs of non-resident Cypriots in the context of the pandemic. As we will show, Cyprus has adopted a quite pro-active position towards its population abroad, not only through constant information provision for non-residents, but also via the mobilisation of resources aiming to provide concrete help to Cypriots abroad in a situation of distress. Yet, such engagement was rather selective, as most policy initiatives aimed primarily at assisting Cypriots residing in specific (mainly European) destination countries.

### **The Cypriot Diaspora: An Overview**

Cyprus has traditionally been considered an emigration country. The island witnessed several emigration waves, some of which even prior to the independence of 1960 (Demetriou, 2003). Migration outflows have become a constant feature in Cyprus' recent history, with the latest emigration wave being triggered by the 2008 financial recession (Konstantinidou, 2020).

Since the 1960s, the share of the diaspora has been consistently high (more than 10% of the total population- Figure 1), this making Cyprus one of the EU countries with the highest proportion of citizens residing abroad (Lafleur and Vintila, 2020). By 2017, more than 160,000 Cypriots were living in other countries, accounting for 14% of the Cypriot population. Most of those who left the country during the last decade are young people: around 66,000 individuals aged 20-39 years old left Cyprus during 2012-2017 (Eurostat, 2020), the main reasons for recent emigration being either studies or better work opportunities abroad. Currently, the Cypriot diaspora mainly concentrates in specific destination countries, due to cultural and historical affinities or geographical proximity. By 2017, more than a half of all Cypriots abroad were settled in the UK (63,160 individuals) and Australia (23,149). Greece and the US are also relevant destinations, with 21,215 Cypriots residing in Greece and 20,091 in the US in 2017.

**Figure 1. The size of the Cypriot diaspora and main destination countries**

Source: Own elaboration with World Bank (2011) and UN data (2017; 2019).

Traditionally, Cypriot authorities have maintained a rather “amicable” relation with the diaspora. They have usually tapped into non-residents’ resources, while also considering them as critical actors for raising awareness regarding the “Cypriot issue” abroad (Demetriou, 2003). To maintain and formalise close ties with the diaspora, authorities have set up a rather extensive institutional network for citizens abroad. This includes key institutions such as the Service for Overseas and Repatriated Cypriots (*Υπηρεσία Αποδήμων και Επαναπατρισθέντων*) or the World Federation of Overseas Cypriots (*Παγκόσμια Ομοσπονδία Απόδημων Κυπρίων*, POMAK) both founded in 1976; as well as more than 150 diplomatic missions and over 80 honorary consulates abroad (Konstantinidou, 2020).

Over the years, several policy initiatives were proposed for non-residents. Most of them emerged in the areas of education and culture (for instance, by establishing a network of Greek-speaking schools abroad, providing access to Greek language courses to non-residents or by offering scholarships to Cypriot students abroad to study in Cyprus) or citizenship (by allowing individuals of Cypriot descent to apply for the Cypriot nationality). Oftentimes, specific schemes aiming to encourage diaspora’s return have also been implemented. Yet, despite the general inclusiveness of the Government’s position towards nationals abroad, most of these initiatives primarily targeted Cypriots residing in specific destination countries, like the UK or Greece (Konstantinidou, 2020).

Given this relatively strong engagement of Cypriot authorities with the diaspora, one could reasonably expect that nationals abroad have also been the target of policies adopted during the COVID-19 crisis. Yet, given that the Government has historically paid more attention to Cypriots in specific (mainly European) host countries, it could also be assumed that such diaspora-oriented initiatives triggered by the pandemic have targeted particular diasporic communities, rather than all Cypriots abroad.

The following section will assess if this was indeed the case, by looking at the type, scope and limitations of the policy measures that Cyprus adopted for its diaspora since the beginning of the pandemic. Our analysis draws on official documents released by different Cypriot authorities (the President, the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Works (MTCW) since late January until the beginning of June 2020<sup>5</sup>.

## **COVID-19 and Policy Measures for the Cypriot Diaspora**

Unlike other countries around the world more severely affected by the pandemic, Cyprus registered less than 1,000 confirmed cases and less than 20 coronavirus-related deaths at the time of writing this paper. In relative terms, this means that around 0.1% of the population was infected, with a death rate of around 2% of all confirmed cases (John Hopkins University of Medicine-Coronavirus Resource Center, 2020). To prevent the spread of the virus, Cyprus has quickly reacted to the threat by following the directives of the World Health Organisation and the European Centre for Disease and Prevention Control. Travel restrictions were implemented since February 2020<sup>6</sup>, strict travel regulations (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020d) were imposed shortly after, a total ban of commercial flights (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020e) was adopted on 21<sup>st</sup> of March<sup>7</sup> and early lockdown measures (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020f) were announced on 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, when the country reported 116 cases. Regardless of the (lack of) severity of the pandemic in Cyprus, the Government implemented different initiatives to help Cypriots abroad.

### *Basic help via information provision*

Since the outbreak, Cypriot authorities have established several channels of communication with nationals abroad. At the end of February 2020, the MFA posted a contact list (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020g) of Cypriot diplomatic missions abroad and the Ministry's

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<sup>5</sup> Phase II of the deconfinement (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020a) flattened on 08/06/2020 (Kathimerini Cyprus, 2020a). After that date, the full restriction of movement and curfew was lifted and airlines progressively resumed (Republic of Cyprus, 2020) their operations under new guidelines. However, MTCW announced that repatriations (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020b) will be continued until the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2020.

<sup>6</sup> The first travel restrictions were announced by the MoH and concerned everyone returning from North Italy, South Korea, Iran or Japan. Returnees were self-checked for COVID-19 symptoms and those presenting symptoms had to consult a doctor. Travel restrictions progressively increased to include other EU and non-EU countries (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office (2020c).

<sup>7</sup> Announcement made by the Minister of Health after the meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee under the chairmanship of the President of the Republic, imposing a ban for 14 days. The ban was renewed several times until 09/06/2020.

emergency contacts. One month later, a special online platform for Cypriots abroad<sup>8</sup> was created. Connected to MFA's National Crisis Management Centre, this platform aimed to manage non-residents' requests, allow communication with the homeland, and provide useful information about repatriation.

#### *Active intervention for Cypriots stranded abroad: repatriation measures*

Just like many of its European counterparts (European Parliament, 2020), Cyprus has pro-actively intervened in the repatriation of its citizens stranded abroad, this probably being the most important type of concrete help provided to the diaspora during the pandemic. According to a press release (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020h) of the Press and Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus, 7,500 individuals were repatriated to Cyprus until 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2020. Repatriation initiatives were implemented shortly after the outbreak as in mid-March 2020, the MTCW already announced (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020i) the organisation of charter flights for repatriation.

The first repatriations (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020j) targeted Cypriots who were abroad for medical reasons, business, short-term stays or official reasons; and they later started to include broader categories of the population abroad. The first flights were organised from the UK, with the Minister of Transportations encouraging Cypriots who transit in the UK to contact a special phone line (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020k). On the first day of the flight ban (21/03/2020), three charter flights (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020l) repatriated 439 individuals from the UK; and more flights were organised after this date [for instance, 96 Cypriots were repatriated from the UK on 09/04/2020 (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020m), some travelling from other countries; 116 were repatriated on 14/04/2020 (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020n) and 96 on 15/04/2020 (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020o)]. Yet, the MoH also specified that repatriation flights could only be organised according to the country's capacity to receive those from abroad (2,000 individuals every 15 days). Repatriations were also restrictively implemented: only those who showed a negative COVID-19 test (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020p) at the latest four days before the flight could be repatriated<sup>9</sup>; and repatriated citizens had the obligation to spend 14 days on preventative quarantine (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020p)

<sup>8</sup> See: <http://www.connect2cy.gov.cy/> (Accessed: June 9, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> To assist in this process, MoH published a catalogue with accredited organizations abroad providing this medical certificate (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020q).

in state designated facilities.

Repatriation flights were also directly organised from Greece (another major destination for the Cypriot diaspora), whereas others only used Greece as a transit country. By way of example, Athens was used as transit for a flight from Doha (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020r) carrying 26 Cypriots coming from Australia, Qatar, the Philippines, China, Japan and South Korea. Other flights originating from Hannover (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020s) and Frankfurt (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020t) in Germany transited Thessaloniki. At the time of writing this paper, no information was made available on specific repatriation flights from the US or Australia, the two most important non-EU destinations of Cypriots abroad. Furthermore, by the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, only seven Cypriot citizens<sup>10</sup> were repatriated from third countries under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

#### *Additional support for all Cypriots abroad*

Besides repatriation, additional measures initiated by different public officials, often involving collaboration between different ministerial actors and usually targeting specific groups of non-residents, were also adopted. Some measures aimed to keep Cypriots abroad in contact with homeland authorities: for instance, the Presidential Commissioner chairing the Service for Overseas and Repatriated Cypriots held discussions with diaspora representatives [Diaspora Leaders (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020u), Youth Diaspora Leaders (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020v)] and diplomatic officials (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020w) regarding the development of the pandemic in host countries and in Cyprus. Other measures aimed to provide more concrete aid. As an illustration, the MoH and the MFA helped Cypriots abroad to procure medicine (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020x) from Cyprus, when such medicine was no longer available in host countries. Via its diplomatic missions abroad, the MFA also set up a network of health professionals<sup>11</sup> (already residing in the host countries) to secure medical care service where the need arises. Mental health issues were also addressed: in collaboration with the Consortium of Rectors of Cypriot Universities, the MFA announced the initiative (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020y) to provide psychological support and counselling via a special phone line to all Cypriots students, including those abroad. Similarly, the Minister of Finance announced the provision of financial aid (Cyprus

<sup>10</sup>See: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/summary\\_tables\\_of\\_repatriation\\_flights\\_4\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/summary_tables_of_repatriation_flights_4_may_2020.pdf) (Accessed: June 9, 2020).

<sup>11</sup>See: <https://www.pio.gov.cy/ανακοινωθέντα-άρθρο.html?id=12987#flat> (Accessed: June 9, 2020).

Government Press and Information Office (2020z) (750 Euros) for Cypriot students in higher education institutions abroad who are not able to return to Cyprus.

Authorities' special interest in Cypriot students abroad can be explained by their high numbers<sup>12</sup> and the pandemic's timeline, which included the Easter period. Students who would traditionally return to Cyprus for Easter holidays were unable to do so, this increasing their dependency on families back in Cyprus. Additionally, travel restrictions imposed even before Easter which impeded students to return also led to a legal suit (Kathimerini Cyprus, 2020b) against the Republic of Cyprus, although the case was rejected by the Administrative Court. However, early in the pandemic, the MFA discussed a support plan (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020aa) for Cypriot students abroad with the President of the Pancyprian Federation of Student Associations and the Heads of the National Student Associations of Cyprus in Greece, the UK, Bulgaria, Russia and the Czech Republic. The President of the Republic (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020ab) also justified authorities' special attention to students: "*Our concern for (their) protection...is a given and it is proven by the decisions of the Government... to support them financially... provide them with medical... and other assistance*".

#### *Additional support for targeted destinations*

Whereas the above-mentioned measures targeted all Cypriots abroad regardless of their place of residence, specific initiatives were adopted for those residing in Greece and the UK. For instance, the MFA collaborated with the National Federation of Cypriots in the UK to send free boxes with Cypriot food to Cypriot students in the UK (almost 4,500 boxes<sup>13</sup> were prepared by May 2020) and to provide medical assistance, accommodation and legal advice<sup>14</sup> to Cypriots in the UK. Specific healthcare arrangements were also made for Greece (Cyprus Government Press and Information Office, 2020ac), by providing direct contact information of doctors. After the lifting of the strict measures between Greece and Cyprus, the Cypriot Ministries of Transportations and Education also collaborated to arrange for flights aiming to assist Cypriot students to safely return to Greece and resume their studies in Greek universities<sup>15</sup>. Finally, while some Cypriots in the US and Australia benefitted from the

<sup>12</sup>See: <http://www.highereducation.ac.cy/gr/statistika-stoicheia.html> (Accessed: June 11, 2020).

<sup>13</sup>See: <http://www.presidentialcommissioner.gov.cy/anthropos/anthropos.nsf/All/7BDD4B15F4756230C225855E002A4FD1?OpenDocument> (Accessed: June 9, 2020).

<sup>14</sup>See: <https://cypriotfederation.org.uk/2020/03/covid19support/> (Accessed: June 9, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> Three flights on 24/05/2020, (See: <https://www.pio.gov.cy/ανακοινωθέντα-άρθρο.html?id=13864#flat;>) three on 03/06/2020 and three more on 06/06/2020 (See: <https://www.pio.gov.cy/ανακοινωθέντα-άρθρο.html?id=14031#flat>) Those flights were organised as a response to the requests (See: <https://www.philene.ws/koinonia/eidiseis/article/941705/sos-apo-kyprioiyo-foitites-stin-ellada>) of repatriated students in Cyprus studying in Greece who flagged their need to return in Greece (Accessed 09/06/2020).

global assistance schemes implemented by Cypriot authorities (i.e. 17 Cypriots repatriated from Australia and 32 from the US, medicine sent to the US), they do not seem to have represented the target group of any specific initiatives adopted by homeland authorities during the pandemic.

## Concluding remarks

Summing up, although the Cypriot Government seems to have adopted a pro-active stance to protect its citizens abroad during the pandemic, most efforts (including repatriation and other initiatives of concrete support) targeted specific diasporic communities (mainly those residing in Greece and the UK) and particularly vulnerable groups (students). In some cases, the effectiveness of such measures was also questioned<sup>16</sup>. Overall, very few initiatives were oriented towards Cypriots residing outside of the EU, this indicating a rather selective engagement of the Cypriot Government with its nationals abroad in times of crisis.

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<sup>16</sup> Cypriots working in Qatar (See: <https://www.philenews.com/koinonia/eidiseis/article/939676/sos-apo-kyprioy-s-to-katar>), and Cypriots trapped in South Africa (See: <https://www.philenews.com/f-me-apopsi/arthra-apo-f/article/941298/kravgi-apogosis-50-egglobismenon-kypriyon-stin-n-afriki>) criticised the Cypriot Government for its inactivity to their demands for repatriation and assistance (Accessed June, 2, 2020).

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## Postmodernism versus state during pandemic period. The case of Poland<sup>1</sup>

Iwona Jakimowicz-Pisarska<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

The last few months because of COVID-19 pandemic we were able to observe the new challenge for nation states, state's structures and their leaders. Moreover, in the whole world, governments still have to reorganise the states' functioning and adapt new tools and solutions to unknown conditions. As usually, unpredictable issues push the states to modernisation and enquire searching more and more convenient transformation of the state's structure. What is more, this dynamic challenge, which creates an unavoidable situation, betray the weakest and the strongest faces of each state in the world. This text is focused on the European experiences and pays the readers' attention on the examples of European state's reactions in the face of pandemics. The aim of the author is to show the issues which appeared visibly and undoubtedly in European states' functioning on the example of particular decisions and actions taken the last few weeks.

### Introduction and methodological background

In this article postmodernism will be the methodological base. There are philosophical or purely theoretical studies on postmodernism as a theory, but it has not been fully applied as a basis for a study on politics or its selected aspects (Bernacki, 2000; Kuźniarz, 2011). This is the reason why, the author would like to show how this paradigm can be used to analyse the current political decisions. We all, the political science researchers, are not only viewers but also participants of the last changes, this method seems to be even more suitable and appropriate to this topic. In the opinion of postmodernists, objective epistemology is not possible, as the researcher is always a part of the researched reality and his involvement, preferences or spectrum of knowledge influence the degree of cognition of the studied political and social space. Thus, research methods, in the postmodern perspective, are neither measurable nor objectively verifiable. Thus, despite critical remarks regarding the objectives of this approach (Barut, 2017; Blok, 2018; Habermas, 2014; Hahne, 2007; Kubera, 2013; Ptaszek, 2009), it seems particularly useful in a specific case of researching the functions of the European nation-state. Moreover, postmodernism, as a current of thought, implies the necessity of combining various areas of knowledge, i.e. history, philosophy or cultural studies, and the acknowledgement of the fact that erudition and intellectually efficient human mind do not have to be sufficient to understand reality. Rather, the postmodernists identify a link between the knowledge obtained and the power by which it was acquired and exercised. The functioning of

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postmodernism within the political science, or even in a more narrow sense as a theory of international relations, is based on a deconstructive approach. Thus, the interpretation of the researched phenomena, subjects or events, is relative, as it is conditioned by the place and time of the researcher and the researched reality.

### **The main picture of pandemic in Poland from a postmodern perspective**

In Europe the pandemic crisis has blown out more or less in March 2020. Almost all European states reacted on the COVID-19 spreading at the same time but their first decisions and other steps were different. What caused that, in spite of the same time many governments made different decisions?

Common for all EU states was a decision about lockdown and as a result all Schengen borders were closed immediately for movements of EU civilians as well the others groups of people. In spite of Sweden and Great Britain all countries limited the civil rights of their inhabitants like: freedom of movement outside the country but also inside the country.

For postmodernists, politics is understood as solving problems "here and now". It is the specific political and social problems that are the subject of the researcher's attention, not the hierarchical perception of state institutions and their mechanisms of solving the emerging tasks resulting from this structure. The main aim of all governments was to stop spreading the pandemic virus and decrease the number of people who can be ill in the short term perspective. So, although the virus can't be stopped by closing the state's borders and the sources of COVID-19 weren't only inside the counties' territory but also in common for more than one political jurisdiction regions, the political impression was done and the European leaders were able to announce their success in the first part of fight with COVID-19. From a postmodernistic perspective, the aims which solve the problems "here and now" were managed to achieve. After over 3 months of the lockdown decision the number of people who are ill is lower and lower in almost all EU states.

On the other hand, this first decision is a clear proof how important still the border issue is and the strong people thinking about the state as a territory. Globalisation changed the meaning of borders as lines dividing areas and forced states to act also in extra-territorial space. The contemporary theories of postmodernism do not question the primacy of the nation-state in the international space, but the dispute between them concerns the extent to which the contemporary nation-state has the power to act independently on the international stage, and to what extent it is determined by the structure of the globalised system in which it functions (Czaputowicz, 2007). More and more state's activities is in no relation with the physical aspects of the land and less and less important the size of the country is getting to its development and international position. However, the decision about the board closing

seems to remind an old picture of kingdom where walls around the territory and closed gates were a symbol of protection and security. In spite of globalization and more invisible web of international connections in the world, the way of thinking about state is still based on the territorial security. Where the closed fort gives people an illusion of defense and security.

In Poland the Prime Minister and his ministers not only let citizens stay at home, avoid going abroad and traveling between the cities inside the country by reducing the number of public transport connections rapidly but also took a decision about closing the air space over the country<sup>3</sup>. All these actions weren't able to limit the COVID-19 spreading substantially but were a clear sign for everybody that the government treads the issue indeed. This show the strength of ruling leaders were also used as a part of domestic policy in current fight before the next Presidential elections of May 2020 (Berendt & Santora, 2020)<sup>4</sup>. Moreover in Poland, the narration about the COVID-19 was also kept in military convention – the government leaded the war; mobilized the army of doctors; all ruling politicians serve the citizens and the state. Using this kind of category of vocabulary makes an impression of full control and strength from the political establishment side.

However, power is defined by Foucault as a certain type of relations between individual entities. It is worth noting, however, that Foucault does not perceive these relations as an attempt only to seek the domination of one of the parties, but also reserves the right for the adversary to refuse or rebel against these aspirations. The essence of power is not an obligation, repression or suppression, but the creation, channeling, and reproduction of political forces. It is also a component of the social networks that operate in the state (Błesznowski, 2016). Foucault's main concern is the reflection on the functioning of power and the state in postmodern conditions. As the world is not homogeneous, its activities are not replicable, and the superior subject is the citizen, there is a need to redefine the functions of the state in the international space of postmodern relations. As Czaputowicz (2007: 169-170) explains, Foucault's introduction of the concept of "governmentality" (*gouvernementalité*) is intended to define the consolidation of power exercised by state institutions by means of political economics and security policy in order to govern and influence citizens. Foucault indicated that the European state functions in three dimensions: theological, political and social. In each of the historical periods, other institutions have been responsible for meeting the needs of their respective areas of activity. In such a state, the autonomy of citizens is a delusion. They are subject to the actions of the authorities, which consist of ruling or domination. This distinction introduced by Foucault forces us

<sup>3</sup>In Europe only two states decided to close their air space – it was Poland and Ukraine.

<sup>4</sup>Finally, the date of Presidential elections was changed under the strong pressure of many people's demonstration and big public debate which was supported but the oposition parties and its leaders. They are expected to be on the 28th of June 2020.

to consider the functions of the state in both cases. While domination is associated with building the hierarchy and order of the state, ruling involves influencing and regulating the lives and behaviours of citizens (Foucault, 2000: 174). In Foucault's opinion, governance is primordial in relation to the state and, preceding the state, it creates it on an ongoing basis (Foucault, 2010: 257). Therefore, the functions of the states result from the style of governing, as a change of style may automatically cause a change in the type of functions necessary for it.

Polish leaders from ruling party PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość ang. Law and Justice) use this narration for the fight for their particular goals and based on Polish historical background and experiences of still vivid communist past. They often link the current situation with the war or any communist past when two groups of society called “they and we” had to stand against each other. As noticed by Marta Figlerowicz in “Foreign Affairs”, some of the ruling party’s actions have stirred offense through their symbolism, but others may have implications that will long outlast the pandemic. During the shutdown, the PiS has promoted legislation that would diminish citizens’ personal autonomy and increase the influence of the PiS for years to come (Filerowicz, 2020). Kaczyński and his team have taken advantage of the quarantine period to advance a conservative legislative agenda. They tried to pass new law regulations which can change the relations of state’s institutions with citizens also after shutdown period and help them to keep the power after the next elections. What is more, Poland’s ruling party has been at odds with democratic norms and with the EU since long before COVID-19 appeared. But during the pandemic, even preexisting tensions have come to a head. The PiS has tried for several years, for instance, to replace Supreme Court judges who don’t agree with the party’s political views. Now they used the pandemic as a tool to explain why so dramatic changes are necessary for them and they explain their point of view even more aggressively. The coronavirus pandemic is not only wreaking destruction on public health and the global economy but disrupts democracy and governance in Poland. It has hit at a time when democracy was already under threat, and it risks exacerbating democratic backsliding and authoritarian consolidation in pro Kaczyński parties and political leaders. There are already signs that Polish government is using the crisis to grant itself more expansive powers than warranted by the health crisis, with insufficient oversight mechanisms, and using their expanded authority to crack down on opposition and tighten their grip on power. One of the most visible aspect of this attitude to Polish domestic policy is the fact that government use the current need to restrict public gatherings as a pretext to crack down on the wave of antigovernment protests. Although Poland has been less tragically hit by the coronavirus than Western Europe so far, the epidemic has already sped up the erosion of democracy.

## Post-pandemic democracy in Poland

Nobody knows how the next months can change the picture of democracy in Poland. Poland has again fallen in the annual index of democracy compiled by Freedom House, a US-based NGO. As a result, the country is no longer ranked in the highest category of “consolidated democracy”, according to the report’s methodology. Instead, it is classified as a “semi-consolidated democracy” (Freedom House, 2020). The Presidential elections are only one step to limit the spreading power of Kaczyński and his people. The president has the right to veto new laws and the current government does not have the majority in the Sejm (at least 60% of members of parliament) needed to override it. The opposition hoped that their candidate would win, potentially paralyzing Kaczyński’s party’s efforts to build a “new state”.

Acknowledging that the contemporary nation-state is no longer merely a space of sovereign power and coercion, but has become a performative entity that emerges as a result of certain practices, actions and decisions, postmodernism offers, as a continuation of the positivist, or perhaps even more post-positivist current, tools that can be useful in the study of such a subject (Bauman, 1995). The analysis of the polarization processes of the Polish political scene and the tools which are used by the political parties allows us to redefine already known concepts and to determine them again in the post-modern international space. Similarly, the method of the so-called dual reading, i.e. such a re-reading of the previous actions of the state institutions that will reveal internal tensions and incoherence of their functioning that were overlooked so far, in order to allow for the re-conceptualization of their functioning in postmodernist version (Devetak, 2006). Governmental propaganda, primarily broadcasted by state television, is serving Poles a kind of doublespeak. On the one hand, it is praising the authorities’ fight to rescue Poland from the pandemic; on the other, it claims that the situation in Poland is not bad enough to prevent the presidential election from going ahead. Of course, the governing camp denies the reform has eroded judicial independence and the rule of law, arguing that the courts are more democratic because they are now better equipped to defend citizens’ interests. They also assure public opinion that they want to keep and even develop democratic standards in the future and the pandemic is not a situation which can be used to political fight. Poland’s government, however, argues that its controversial overhaul of the judiciary, public media and other institutions is necessary to sweep away the remnants of the former communist regime. That sounds a bit ridiculous over 30 years after transformation and over 5 years of Kaczyński’s party governs in Poland. As Alexander Wendt notes, the international space, and thus also the state as its most important subject, is a product of ideas, values, experience, it is necessary to constantly observe, study and determine the phenomena that occur in it, so as to be able to diagnose

and analyse processes occurring in it (Wendt, 2008). Nowadays, researchers and analysts will be able to observe how the post pandemic narration can create the new deal of state's functioning in Poland.

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## EU Policies in time of coronavirus crisis<sup>1</sup>

Danai-Georgia Koutsopoulou<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This paper seeks to uncover the link between the current crisis in the field of migration and asylum policies and the rise of populist polarization in Europe. Provided that normative consistency serves effectiveness, the study reflects on the existing literature, selected legislative acts, and cases. Hence, criticism against the European Union's heterodetermination and inertia in the political debate is simmering. Populist phenomena all over the spectrum define the supranational policymaking, outweighing voices of inclusion and democracy, if not the very essence of the Union's value-based system. Contrariwise, liberal democracy shall not only be capable of defending itself and including the alien when the fears come true but also educating its citizens in the democratic realm before enforcement promptitude is practically imperative. All in all, primary and secondary legal norms entail adequate solutions to address the issue institutionally, subject to political determination, and courage.

### Introduction

*Petitio principii* (εν αρχήι αιτήσθαι, *circulus in probando*) describes a logical fallacy where the sentence to be proven is already included implicitly or explicitly in the hypothesis. Since the very basis of the argument needs confirmation itself, it is questionable how a contested hypothesis can extort a sound conclusion (multiple queries fallacy).

The *vicious circle* (fallacy of many queries) tends to avoid questing the hypotheses in a way that eventually “there is as much evidence pending as is necessary for the conclusion itself”. This variant is missing a sound statement and thus its circular reasoning is not understood.

Using Aristotle's logical tools, the subsequent analysis explores the legal implications of populism and the immigration crisis within the European Union (EU). Since the study focuses on the constitutional viewpoint of these variants, it presumably coheres better to work on the legislative *acquis* and the relevant case law, notwithstanding programme documents, political declarations, if relevant. The aim is to uncover the inconsistency and retrogression of the Union between liberal democracy and populism. The main reasons therefore are not only the vast systematic divergence among the Member States but also the inertia of the institutions and the Court towards clear theses and straightforward commitments.

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The fallacy would roughly be as follows:

- The Union is “*founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail*- The procedure of Article 7 TEU addressing contravention to the above values at the domestic level has been instigated only in two cases, against Poland (European Commission, 2017) and against Hungary (European Parliament, 2018). No other measure or statement unambiguously expresses disapproval of the domestic political parties' rhetoric or actions.
- The Union's populism yardstick, if any, is very limited to two Member States, and it does not profoundly affect the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, since only in the Hungarian case scarce concerns about fundamental rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees were addressed (Morijn, 2019: 622).

There is an important agenda of democratic reform left aside, in order to deal with a substantially illusionary scare-gun (Howse, 2019). The brief's conception builds upon this reasoning pattern to prove the EU's myopia and explain that the ceaseless forbearance of the institutions does not enhance unity but instead endangers the entire integration process, liberal democracy and the position of individual. Consequently, the EU is not self-evidently a Union based on the rule of law, but needs to repeatedly prove this, especially when such challenges become so apparent, as in the current phase.

Part I includes all necessary background in terms of terminology, norms, as well as facts, whereas Part II underlines the fallacies by way of exemplary depictions in the legislation and the jurisprudence. The last Part concludes and offers a more optimistic view of the issue based on the historical evidence of the successful overcoming of wars and crises in the European region. Besides, there is a very adequate legal regime and constitutional legacy, subject to sincere and brave enforcement.

## Approach and Results

Yet apart from the fact that several populist coalitions have appeared in the political arena, their practical significance regarding decision-making and the general orientation of EU Immigration and Asylum Law has not luckily been equivalent. This does not mean that there is no real populist threat nor that there have not occurred certain ambiguous backslides towards nativism. It is argued that the

EU has maintained a phobic stance risking its value-based system instead of bravely confronting Member States incompliance. Notwithstanding the CJEU's significant effort to balance interests and tame confrontations, the following analysis suggests that there is a case of auto-censorship stemming from the overall heterodetermination, meaning monopolizing the discourse.

Accordingly, the aim of this section is to introduce a twofold enigma. If the EU constitutes a legal order founded in values, such as the rule of law and human rights, it is also important to (re)read the political discourse accordingly. In the case of Asylum and Immigration law policies holding great controversies but also cruciality for the integration process, the legislature and the judiciary ought to safeguard primary law.

## Conclusion

Notwithstanding the rejection of formal constitutionalism within the EU, the small c (Shaw, 2017), manifests a factual hierarchy of norms. As repeatedly declared by the Court<sup>3</sup> during the Heroic Period (Wiler, 1991), it is not only the constitutional charter<sup>4</sup> but also the reality and the very essence of a provision that manifest the constitutional significance of a matter, such as the rule of law, the sincere cooperation, or even entire policy areas, such as the internal market or the area of freedom, security and justice. This is internally observed in Article 6 TEU, where international agreements and constitutional traditions are elevated to the level of constitutional supremacy. More interestingly and based on the above multi-faceted sources of inspiration, the rule of law in this excursus of comparative constitutionalism entails several components that realize liberty and the respect of human rights. Liberal constitutionalism symbolizes a political community owned by the people, within which fundamental norms such as human rights, play a principal role and within which there is always a question of fairness, justice, and effectiveness. In the European normative order, the endeavours of modern constitutional scholarchy, challenge the power of supranational political institutions by demoting the formal structure and promote cohesion. The European legal order is a very clear example where this type of interaction between norms and norm-making occur and mutate. And significantly, the Area of Freedom Security and Justice creates a subfield of this mutation. The impact of the policies on the individual (Thym, 2016), be it the EU citizen or the persecuted individual, as well as the State as such, advance them to the core of the legal order.

Liberal constitutionalism either descriptively or normatively comprise of governmental institutions and powers, notwithstanding its inherent grievances balances popular sovereignty in an operational

<sup>3</sup> See: Case 294/83, Les Verts, ECLI:EU:C:1986:166, para. 23; A. Rosas and L. Armati, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> See: Les Verts, ft. 2.

manner. It does so to preserve its own tools and ideals, namely individual liberty, non-discrimination, and the rule of law. The rule of law offers the comprehensive disciplinary proprium behind the inherent divergence of twenty seven legal orders, in view of legitimizing the exercise of supranational public authority. Hence it is the very *acquis* to defend (Kochenov, 2019a), the absence of which renders customs or monetary union pointless (Bogdany, 2009) and in the long term deemed to fail (Bartels, 2009).

Primary EU law defends the disadvantaged (Mestmacker, 1994) who mostly fear the implications of disengagement from the assurance of human rights and the rule of law. In that sense, EU law pulls matters out of the exclusive grip of politics and negotiation and subjects them to a system of integration through law. The fragmentary and sparingly written character of the Treaties appointees the Court to pave the way. The Court's interpretative methodology has upright functional consequences for fashioning political choices about the nature of the policies, i.e., the policies on border checks, asylum, and immigration. Replacing national regulation with a single EU model carries a profound re-regulatory potential. Policing has sharpened under the claim to have created a system of special protection through the means of supremacy and direct effect, supplemented by State and private liability and imbued by the principles of good administration and fundamental rights (Habermas, 2015).

On the contrary, populism encompasses a series of concepts and initiatives that put into retrospection the above values. It questions their existence, their creation, and/or their validity. It stores resentment against dissenting statements but ultimately contradicts itself by trusting the same accused institutions for its hijacking into political hierarchy. Ironically, democracy is indeed destiny (Howse, 2019), learns its lessons and reverses even the most painfully losing battles.

In normative terms, although an obscure and diverse term, populism is also a discourse and a strategy that can be classified in the following mutations:

- i. populism as democratic determinator, i.e., popular sovereignty, unreconcilable social antagonism;
- ii. populism as a means to achieve political aims, i.e., sovereignty;
- iii. populism as substantial ideology relying on certain beliefs, i.e., against elites (Kaltwasser et al. 2018).

By and large, it is of lesser value which mutation applies in every particular case, as they mostly tend to overlap. It is, nevertheless, essential to acknowledge how intrusive populism is in the liberal *status quo* (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018). It induces “ideational” hatred among social partners, targets the foreigner and poisons tolerance and inclusion. The division among “the pure people” versus “the

corrupt elite,” therefore, affects not only the institutional balance in the domestic and the supranational level, under the claim of “popular” (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018) sovereignty precedence, but most importantly deprives the individual from the refuge to an independent judicial body.

The moralized form of anti-pluralism and antagonism is not always clear from the outset. It recognizes, nevertheless, in almost all cases, the citizens as the only source of legitimacy, by delegitimising established authorities and mechanisms staffed by and serving the elites.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

As promised in the introduction, the approach in this section will be more confident and future oriented. Not aligning with the very common habit of utterly identifying “elephants in the room,” the main argument hither is that there is enough and adequate legislation to address populism.

First, Article 7 TEU mediates between societal and legal discourses concerning backsliding in the rule of law within the domestic legal order. For much of the academic literature (and unsurprisingly for the politicians) the procedure is “dead”, as not only has it been inactive in several instances where it appeared applicable, but also it has led to another *quid pro quo* rather political features or bilateral (Kochenov, 2019b: 5) nexuses in the already complex multilevel institutional relations. Further, the procedure as such is rather complicated but still a realistic option in the cases presented above.

It contains the following procedural steps, chronologically interdependent:

- i. Reasoned proposal by one third of the Member States, by the European Parliament or by the European Commission
- ii. Hearing of the Member State’s authorities
- iii. Recommendations on the alleged issues, if possible
- iv. Council’s determination of a “clear risk of a serious breach by a Member State of the values referred to in Article 2 TEU” after consent of the European Parliament thereon.
- v. Observations by the Member States on the “persistent breach” of the values enshrined in Article 2 TEU
- vi. Council’s determination of the existence of a “serious and persistent breach” by unanimity rule, after a proposal by one third of the Member States or by the Commission
- vii. Decision on suspension of voting and other rights in the Council by a qualified majority, while Union law remains fully applicable and binding

viii. Revocation of the punitive measures following pertinent assessment of the situation and the eagerness and success of the national authorities in addressing the determined breaches.

While inflexible in terms of the necessary majorities, the concept signifies a fine border line beyond which derogations from the very core of the EU cannot be tolerated. It also holds a self-precautionary effect of what the Union aspires to be by portrays of a stigmatizing effect to the “foreign body” within the same “Union” (Kochenov, 2019b: 6), more intensively than the infringement proceedings can do. In the two current cases of the Polish and Hungarian regimes, the packaging of discontent in policy areas implicitly conferred to the Union, formed an uncontrollable nativist, anti-liberal stance, flirting with substantial coup by irrationally evoking the popular element as the sole legitimizing factor of clearly unconstitutional, fundamental rights-restrictive initiatives. Either way, it appears to be the sole recourse, as contrarily to the enforcement mechanism of Articles 258 - 260 TFEU, within the framework of general principles of EU law there is no other effective mechanism (Kochenov, 2017).

From another perspective, the main actors of the political realm, the political parties are themselves bound by Article 2 TEU. Regulation 1141/2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations (EU-Euratom, 2014) requires full adherence to the values enshrined in Article 2 TEU for the funding of European political parties and European political foundations *en bloc*. Although contested (Morijn, 2019), the opting for a legal act of general application, binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States<sup>5</sup> sends a clear message on the significance of the issue for the EU democratic project. During the values verification mechanism the adherence to the value package is tested<sup>6</sup>. “Manifest and serious breach” in the course of “programme and activities”<sup>7</sup> as a standard of review seems to correspond to the aforementioned case of Article 7 TEU. It is unlikely to explicitly contravene Article 2 TEU. It is therefore necessary to ensure policy implementation in that value direction.

Whether the adherence to the rule of law is destiny (Howse, 2019) remains unsure and of unpredictable durability. Safeguard mechanisms in the judicial proceedings for individuals and assurance of their enforcement by the institutions and the Member States themselves expands the horizons of policing towards a democratic ethos of self-control, introspection and openness. The EU overlooking of the undesirable effects of communautaire commitment does not affect only the backsliding countries, but also endangers the soundness of future measures, as well as disintegrates

<sup>5</sup> See: Article 288 para. 2.

<sup>6</sup> See: Recital 12, Articles 3(1)(c) and 3(2)(c).

<sup>7</sup> See: Article 3(1)(c).

the citizens from the Union. The self-vindication of the EU's assertion to the rule of law, as per the first variable looming over the present study necessitates evidential materialization.

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## Effects of Policy Responses to the Spread of Covid-19 Pandemic<sup>1</sup>

Helen Briola<sup>2</sup> & Konstantina Briola<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

Covid-19 is a new invisible threat that has affected almost all countries of the world. In this paper we study the effects of policy responses to the spread of coronavirus pandemic. For this purpose, we utilized the dataset of Oxford Coronavirus Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT) and we examined the correlation of policies with the number of daily coronavirus cases in five countries (Greece, Italy, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom). In order to achieve that, we calculated Kendall Correlation Coefficient and Spearman Correlation Coefficient as well as p-value for the statistical importance of our data. Our results indicate that the policies have a direct impact on the spread of Covid-19.

### Introduction

Covid-19 is a new and invisible threat, having spread to almost all countries of the world (Domanović, 2020). Indeed, there is a continuous increase in the number of confirmed cases and deaths associated with the coronavirus. It has turned the world upside down and changed every aspect of our lives: how we live and interact with each other, how we work and communicate, how we move and travel (CCSA, 2020). The outbreak has already caused a significant human misery and great economic turmoil. A recent study by the Asian Development Bank suggests that the global cost of the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to range from \$2 trillion to \$4.1 trillion in global GDP (Asian Development Bank, 2020).

During the crisis, all governments around the world have implemented a number of policies, in order to prevent further spread of the virus. However, some countries did not promptly take appropriate measures to limit the spread of it, which may justify the existence of increased cases.

In this research, we study the correlation of Covid-19 cases with the policies adopted by each country. The time factor plays a key role in this process. Our data were collected from January 1, 2020 to June 3, 2020. In this context, we focused on specific European countries (Greece, Spain, Italy, United Kingdom and Sweden). We took these countries by sampling because of the variety of policies they followed (Sweden that did not take strict measures, Italy and Spain that did not take immediate action,

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and Greece that took immediate action). What we assume is that if the correlation of the number of cases with the different policies of countries is high, then the policies have a direct impact on the spread of the virus.

## Related Work

With the outbreak of the pandemic, a huge international mobilization has been created by networks of researchers and other experts investigating various aspects of Covid-19 (from diagnosis and surveillance, to its impact on the socio-economic environment). In this context, the research interest in the spread of the disease and the impact of different control measures have emerged.

Specifically, in Taghrir et al. (2020) it is reported that the measure of mass quarantine in China, has been effective in controlling the spread of disease. Respectively, studies showed that policies such as mass quarantine, travel restriction and large-scale monitoring of suspected cases were successful in reducing the epidemic size (Ai, 2020; Yang et al. 2020). Also, according to research about the impact of different control measures by the Chinese government (Fang et al. 2020), stricter government control policies (types 3 and 4<sup>4</sup>) have been associated with a slower increase in the infected population.

Similar surveys have been conducted for other countries worldwide. One of these is by Jarvis et al. (2020), which revealed that the physical removal measures adopted by the United Kingdom's public, have greatly reduced the contact level and is estimated to have a significant impact in reducing the transmission of COVID-19. Finally, another study Jüni et al. (2020), taking data from 144 geopolitical regions worldwide, showed that public health interventions (mass gatherings, school closures, social distance measures) were strongly associated with reduced epidemic growth.

## Dataset

In response to the rapid spread of COVID-19, all governments around the world have implemented several policies. As a result, a wide range of responses have been created by governments covering all areas of policy such as: restriction and closure policies (e.g. school closures and traffic restrictions), financial policies (e.g. income support) and health system policies (e.g. test schemes).

The Oxford Coronavirus Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT), in order to study which policies can be effective in controlling the epidemic, systematically collects information on many different

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<sup>4</sup> The coding of measures is explained in Table 1.

common political responses received by governments, which are concentrated in 17 indicators (such as school closure and travel restrictions) (Hale et al. 2020).

However, government policies seem to differ from country to country, along with the degree of emergency measures. To see the differences in the severity of the measures that each country has implemented separately, OxCGRT creates a score for each indicator. For the purposes of our study, we will refer and use 6 of these indicators as well as the coding of measures as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Coding of Measures**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Coding of Measures</b>
<b>School Closure</b>	0 - No measures 1 - Recommend closing 2 - Require closing (only some levels or categories) 3 - Require closing all levels
<b>Workplace Closure</b>	0 - No measures 1 - Recommend closing (or work from home) 2 - Require closing (or work from home) for some sectors or categories of workers 3 - Require closing (or work from home) all-but-essential workplaces (e.g. grocery stores, doctors)
<b>Restrictions on gatherings</b>	0 - No restrictions 1 - Restrictions on very large gatherings 2 - Restrictions on gatherings between 101-1000 people 3 - Restrictions on gatherings between 11-100 people 4 - Restrictions on gatherings of 10 people or less
<b>Stay at home requirements</b>	0 - No measures 1 - Recommend not leaving house 2 - Require not leaving house with exceptions for daily exercise, grocery shopping, and 'essential' trips 3 - Require not leaving house with minimal exceptions (e.g. allowed to leave only once a week, or only one person can leave at a time, etc.)
<b>Restrictions on internal movement</b>	0 - No measures 1 - Recommend not to travel between regions/cities 2 - Internal movement restrictions in place
<b>International travel controls</b>	0 - No measures 1 - Screening 2 - Quarantine arrivals from high-risk regions 3 - Ban on arrivals from some regions 4 - Ban on all regions or total border closure

## Experiment

In this paper, we study the correlation of policies with the number of daily Covid-19 cases. Specifically, we study the relationship of these two variables (policies and number of cases) using

two correlation coefficients: Spearman's rho and Kendall's tau, both of which are commonly used nonparametric methods of detecting associations between two variables (Taylor, 1987: 409).

Spearman's correlation coefficient as well as Kendall are non-parametric statistical measure, and we use them to measure the strength of association between two variables. Their values range from -1 to +1, where the value  $r = 1$  means a perfect positive correlation and the value  $r = -1$  means a perfect negative correlation. So, there is considered a strong correlation if the correlation coefficient is greater than 0.8 and a weak correlation if the correlation coefficient is less than 0.5.

In the context of null hypothesis testing we are using p-value in order to quantify the idea of statistical significance of evidence. The p-value can take any value between 0 and 1. Values close to 0 indicate that the observed difference is unlikely to be due to chance, whereas a p-value close to 1 suggests no difference between the groups other than due to chance. In general, the smaller the p-value, the stronger the evidence against the null hypothesis (Dahiru, 2008).

Our approach consists of five experiments (one for each country) and the procedure can be summarized in the steps below:

1. Merge the policies of the country we want to correlate and the daily cases based on date.
2. Normalize the values.
3. Compute Kendall correlation coefficient between each country's specific policy and daily number of cases.
4. Compute Spearman correlation coefficient between each country's specific policy and daily number of cases.
5. Compute p-value for each policy.

For the purpose of this study we used the general-purpose programming language Python in order to preprocess the data and compute correlations and p-values, since it is commonly used for this kind of computations.

## Results

The table below presents the policies to address the virus (School Closures, Workplace Closures, etc.), as well as the differences in the severity of the measures that each country has implemented separately (0 = No measures to 3 or 4=Strict measures). Also, in the data, a percentage of austerity of all the measures followed by each country is presented (Stringency Index). Based on the policies we have listed in the table below, we note that Italy has taken the tightest measures and Sweden the most tolerant measures. However, if we take into account the Stringency Index, which includes additional

policies from those we have included, Spain has the highest percentage (79.1%) and Sweden the lowest percentage (32.4%).

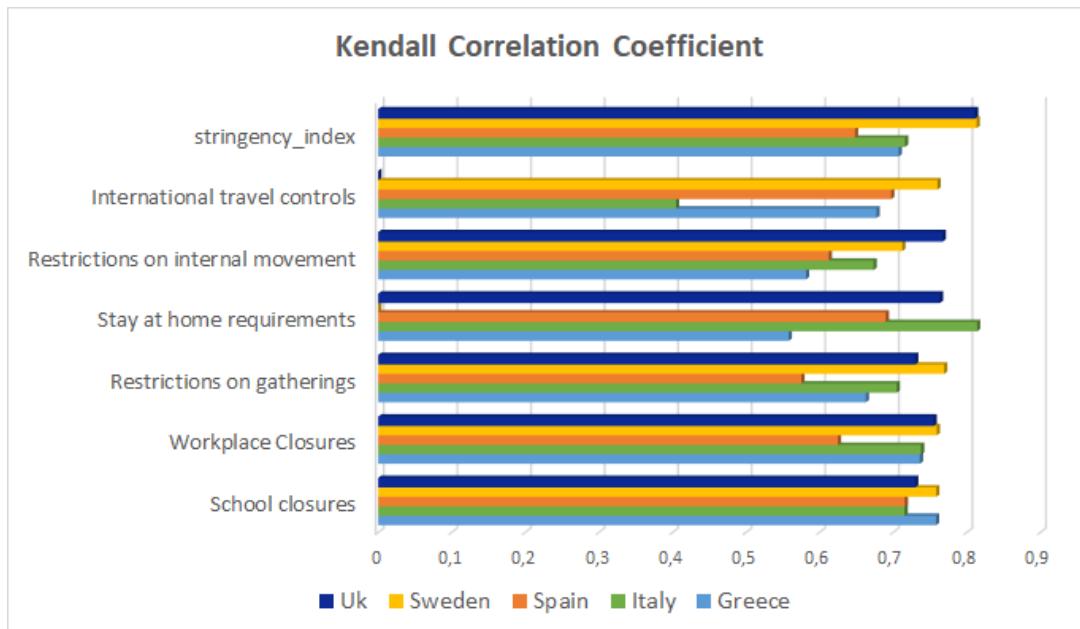
**Table 2. Severity of measures in each country**

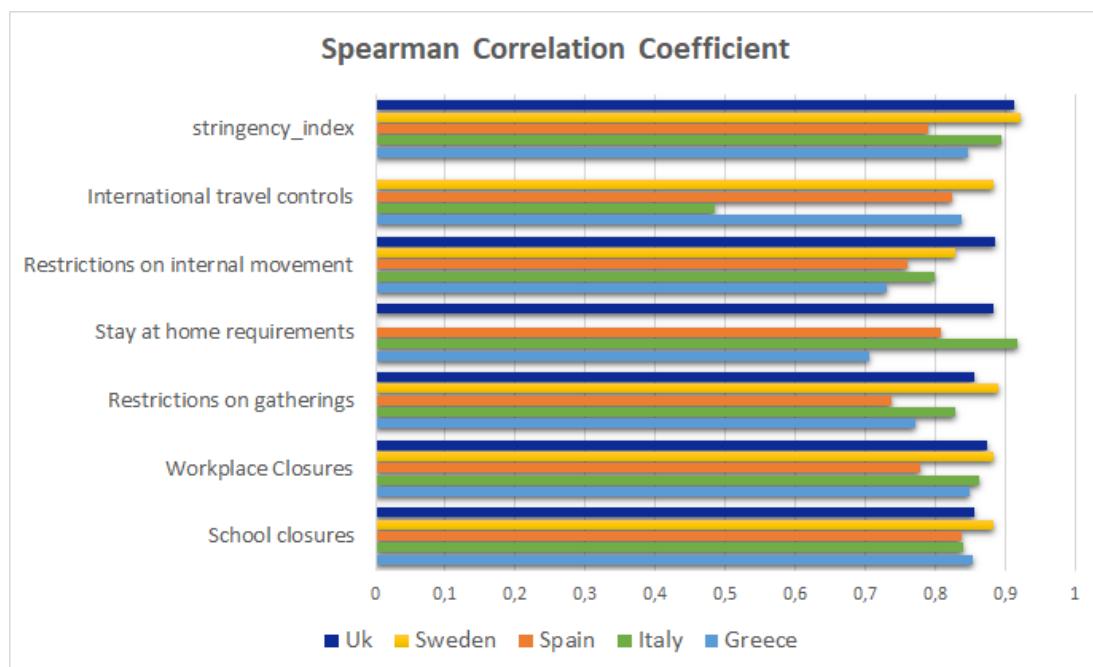
Countries	School Closures	Workplace Closures	Restrictions on gatherings	Stay at home requirements	Restrictions on internal movement	International travel controls	Stringency Index
Greece	2,3 (Median 3)	1,2 (Median 2)	3,4 (Median 3)	2	2	3	72.2%
Italy	3	1,2,3 (Median 3)	4	1,2,3 (Median 2)	1,2 (Median 2)	1,2,3 (Median 3)	69.9%
Spain	3	1,2,3 (Median 2)	1,4 (Median 4)	2	1,2 (Median 1)	1,4 (Median 4)	79.1%
Sweden	1	1	2,3 (Median 2)	0	1 (Median 0)	3 (Median 3)	32.4%
United Kingdom	3	1,2 (Median 2)	4	1,2 (Median 1)	1,2 (Median 1)	0	66.67%

*Note:* In multi-level policies and in the stringency index, we have used the median since the day the first case occurred

Our results indicate that there is a strong correlation of the number of coronavirus daily cases and the policies that each country followed and can be summarized in the figures below.

**Figure 1. Kendall Correlation Coefficient for each policy response of each country**

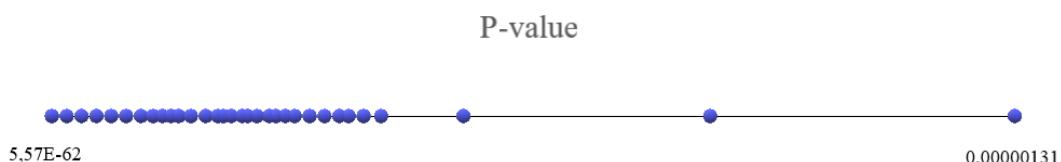


**Figure 2. Spearman Correlation Coefficient for each policy response of each country**

As we observe from the figures above both correlation coefficients are high enough but Spearman Correlation Coefficient is higher than Kendall. Moreover, school closures and workplace closures seem to affect the number of daily cases and have a high correlation coefficient in most of the countries. Furthermore, international travel controls have a quite low correlation coefficient for Italy, however, this could be explained by the fact that Italy did not take immediate action.

In our experiment we could not calculate correlation coefficients for “Stay at home requirements” in Sweden and “International travel controls” in United Kingdom, since, as it is explained in Table 2, these countries did not apply these policies at all (since June 3, 2020) so correlation coefficient could not be calculated.

In order to evaluate the statistical importance of our results we also calculated p-values for each policy in each country. Our results can be summarized in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. P-values for each policy response of each country**

As we notice from the figure above, p-values range from 5.57E-62 (the lowest p-value) to 0.00000131 (the highest). These results indicate strong evidence against the null hypothesis, as there is less than a 5% probability the null is correct (and the results are random), since all of them are less than 0.05.

## Conclusions

In this paper we studied the effects of policy responses to the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. For this purpose, we examined the correlation of policies with the number of daily coronavirus cases in five countries (Greece, Italy, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom) from January 1, 2020 to June 3, 2020 by calculating Kendall Correlation Coefficient and Spearman Correlation Coefficient. Our results indicate that there is a strong correlation of covid-19 daily cases and policies that each country applied. Although, some countries, such as Sweden, did not take strict measures, the correlation coefficients of their policies with daily cases are quite high, which shows that the policies have a direct impact on the spread of the virus.

To put it in a nutshell, from our results it is implied that, even though all policy responses had a great impact in the number of daily cases, some of them stood out for each country. The time that each measure was taken played a critical role on that. In order to be more precise, in Sweden restrictions on gatherings had the highest correlation coefficient whilst in Greece and in Spain school closures had the highest one. Moreover, in UK restrictions on internal movement seems to be the most correlated with the number of daily cases. On the other hand, in Italy stay at home requirements had the highest correlation with the number of covid-19 cases. These results may be due to the fact that each country took measures in a different period of time and the severity of them differs for each one of them.

A possible extension of our work would be the application of our approach in all of the countries in order to examine the effects of policy responses to the spread of coronavirus worldwide. Moreover, we could also study other policy responses such as cancellation of public events or testing policies. Lastly, we could use other correlation coefficients such as Pearson Correlation Coefficient in order to evaluate which correlation coefficient is the best for our approach.

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## Topic 2

Welfare State and social consequences of the coronavirus crisis

## Ethical Decision Making in Emergent Emergencies under a Veil of Ignorance<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

In this paper we initially propose a scheme for the determination of threats due to the Covid19 pandemic, followed by appropriate response measures. In order to devise successful response actions, one should pay extreme care in identifying the actual threats posed and, as a matter of fact, prioritize them with respect to their severity on human life, societal risks, democratic operation of the institutions and the state and irreversible environmental impact.

But would everyone be benefited the same by these response measures? There lies the danger to be unfair of even ignoring socially disadvantaged groups and, thus, increasing social inequality gaps. And the new equilibrium attained runs the danger of being less stable than the old one, exhibiting degraded emergent behavior and capabilities for self-organization. In this case we would have achieved exactly the opposite of what we wished for, a system of lower resilience to perturbations.

Thus, we argue that the ethical element is the predominant factor that should determine all types of feedback responses and actions taken by decision-makers in all political, social, economic and environmental aspects during the process of returning to normality.

Towards this purpose, a method of determining the morality of response measures is required. A variation of the ‘Veil of Ignorance’ provides such a method, as introduced in this paper. It asks the decision-makers to make choices about social or moral issues related to the feedback responses to the pandemic and assumes that they have enough information to know the consequences of their possible decisions for everyone but would not know which person they will be themselves, in the new equilibrium. We believe that the proposed ethical framework will result to just and fair to all response measures.

### Introduction

In a holistic-systemic view of social and political phenomena, several modelling conceptions help us grasp their extremely complex and interacting variables that lead to complicated, multi-faceted and sometimes chaotic behaviors. These conceptions include:

- Self-organization: A process where some form of overall order arises from local interactions between parts of an initially disordered system.

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- Resilience: The capacity of a broad array of complex adaptive systems to absorb, withstand and ‘bounce back’ quickly and efficiently from a perturbation by exercising their own inherent capacities of emergent self-organization (Zebrowski, 2019).
- Autopoiesis: The system’s capability of reproducing and maintaining itself.
- Emergent behaviors: Complex traits of a system that are not apparent from its components in isolation, but which result from the interactions, dependencies, or relationships they form when placed together in a system and are impossible to predict (Smith & Stevens, 1996).
- Equilibrium: The condition of a system in which competing influences are balanced, resulting in no net change.
- Feedback: Occurs when outputs of a system are routed back as inputs as part of a chain of cause-and-effect that forms a circuit or loop, leading either to non-linearities or new equilibria.

A state of equilibrium is reached when all, or most, political, social, economic, technological and environmental parameters are in balance. Such states have been reached throughout history, in certain civilizations and for specific time periods, usually followed by turbulence and imbalance leading to disasters of large scale. Physical phenomena play a significant role in tilting the scales and leading - eventually- to new equilibria. Mankind has experienced several types of equilibria and disasters in succession, attributed both to physical phenomena such as plagues, earthquakes, floods etc., as well as to man-made phenomena such as wars, environmental degradation, income inequality, breach of fundamental human rights, inappropriate use of technology etc.

It is within liberal democracies of the late century that a relatively stable environment was achieved in terms of most of the sociopolitical and environmental parameters. Although there exists great criticism to this critically balanced interaction of all parameters, which is mainly targeted towards ethical considerations concerning income inequality, the refugees’ problems, climate crisis etc., there is a consensus that these may be -historically- the best of times with respect to mortality, extreme poverty, providing education to larger audiences, raising awareness for human rights, environmental activism etc.

## Catalytic Reactions

However, systems under equilibrium are experiencing severe disturbances and their resulting emerging behavior may lead them to totally different equilibria states. Such disturbances may act as catalysts accelerating the transition to the new equilibria, sometimes in violent manners. In this paper we consider the *Covid19* pandemic to have such a catalytic effect on all aspects of normal life.

Although we have experienced it for a relatively short period, and it would be risky to come to conclusions it is the severity and brutality of its manifestation and effects that make a first analysis attempt worthwhile.

Moreover, the uncertainty associated with its origins, its consequences, the force and its duration, pose a serious challenge to all scientific disciplines and a rather urgent one. Response measures are urgently required to be taken immediately, however to which direction and to what extend remains an open question to be answered mainly by scientists and decision-makers. In this paper we propose initially a scheme for the prioritization of threats due to the pandemic, followed by appropriate response measures. Then we propose the implementation of an ethical decision-making framework, which would result to just and fair to all response measures. We hope that our contribution will help towards this end.

### **Identification of the threats and resilience strategies**

In order to design any line of successful response actions to the pandemic, one should pay extreme care and attention in identifying the actual threats posed and, as a matter of fact, prioritize them with respect to their severity on human life, societal risks, democratic operation of the institutions and the state and irreversible environmental impact.

Threats to human life imposed by the pandemic require the immediate action of decision-makers to tend the needs of the people on one hand and to restrict the spreading of the virus, on the other. Resilience strategies are required within a biopolitical imperative to '*make life live*' (Foucault, 1998, 2003). Obviously, Foucault's term refers to the intersection between power (political, economic, judicial etc.) and the individual's bodily autonomy. By enhancing the regenerative capacities of systems underpinning and constitutive of community life, such resilience strategies should aim to optimize the conditions under which life might quickly and efficiently bounce back from a systemic perturbation.

The uncertainties associated with the pandemic range well behind health safety. They spread to social, legal and any type of systemic uncertainties rising during the transition trajectory of the system from the old state to the new. After all, we are living in a '*Risk Society*', where we are increasingly preoccupied with the future, which generates the notion of risk (Giddens, 1999), whilst trying to find a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization (Beck, 1992). However, there are differing opinions as to how the concept of a risk society interacts with social hierarchies and class distinctions (Caplan, 2000). Risks, much like wealth, are distributed

unevenly in a population and will influence quality of life. This calls for responses to the pandemic that take into consideration in a just and fair way the socioeconomic distributions.

An alternative insight to emergency governance, since the advent of the war on terrorism, was given by Giorgio Agamben. He claims that a permanent state of emergency (exception, siege, necessity) '*has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including so-called democratic ones*' (Agamben, 2005). Western civilization draws a fundamental biopolitical distinction between the politically qualified life (*bios*) and 'bare life' (*zoé*). If the state continues to operate in an 'inclusive-exclusion' mode, there runs the danger of individuals to be stripped by all their legal recognition and rights and placed in a legally sanctioned state of abandonment and exclusion (a 'bare' life, (Agamben, 2020)). Although his approach to the pandemic was heavily criticized as premature and exaggerated (Peters, 2020) in his own country (Italy), obviously if something like this would happen it would severely affect the operation of all democratic institutions that are fundamental to the functioning of the democratic society. Thus, recovery responses to the pandemic should consider optimizing trade off's between ethics, safety and speed of recovery.

Additionally, the impact of the pandemic to environmental decisions should be studied extensively. Rather than allowing further exploitation of natural sources at any cost, the intervention of the virus should serve as a '*dress rehearsal*' for the next crisis, the one in which '*the reorientation of living conditions is going to be posed as a challenge to all of us, as will all the details of daily existence that we will have to learn to sort out carefully*' (Latour, 2020, p.1) in a sense that the health crisis prepares, induces and incites us to prepare for climate change. Biopolitical consequences are obvious in this case as well.

Finally, it should be taken into account that in today's uncertain world, for any realistic response policy to succeed, we should take into consideration that the individual must act, plan actions and calculate the likely gains and losses of acting (or failing to act) under conditions of endemic uncertainty (the notion of *liquid modernity*, according to Baumann, (Davis, 2016)). Social forms and institutions no longer have enough time to solidify and cannot serve as unquestionable frames of reference for human actions and long-term life plans. Thus, individuals have to become flexible and adaptable and any form of decision making has to be made under conditions of at least some uncertainty.

### **A cohesive Decision-Making framework under the 'Veil of Ignorance'**

It seems that the ethical element is the predominant factor that should determine all types of feedback responses and actions taken by decision-makers in all political, social, economic and environmental

aspects during the process of returning to normality and restoring part of the old equilibria while establishing new ones.

Universities and Research Centers already target their research potential to eliminate vital threats and (hopefully) will provide treatment for all, eliminating any biopolitics danger of any kind of discrimination. Communication and computer technologies can bring together people over long distances for business conferencing, teaching and learning in universities and schools and even provide cultural education, documentaries etc. aiding the needs for communication and entertainment whilst eliminating to some extend the need for direct contact, where unnecessary. Well established mathematical and computer tools can aid decision-making under uncertainty, in ways that may provide a greater than before insight to political and social phenomena.

The state is deemed the primary decision-maker in these cases. Different political scientists, philosophers and experts have tried to deconstruct and understand this changing nature of both the individual and collective which we call as ‘state’ today. Thomas Hobbes portrayed the commonwealth as a gigantic human form built out of the bodies of its citizens, the sovereign as its head. Hobbes calls this figure the "*Leviathan*" and this is responsible for protecting the security of the commonwealth (Schmitt, 2008). By accelerating the activities of tightly integrated agencies operating concurrently on varied aspects of a common response strategy, the modern state has to organize feedback responses to the pandemic and to quickly close down the ‘disruptive’ time of the emergency event and accelerate the return to ‘normality’. Health and security are of paramount importance, but the state has to make the necessary trade-offs to guarantee the continuity of standard political and economic processes.

But would everyone be benefited the same by these response measures? There lies the danger to be unfair of even ignoring disadvantaged groups and, thus, increasing social inequality gaps. And the new equilibrium attained runs the danger of being less stable than the old one, exhibiting degraded emergent behavior and capabilities for self-organization. In this case we would have achieved exactly the opposite of what we wished for, a system of lower -instead of higher- resilience to perturbations.

Ethical decision making under uncertainty requires a different code of conduct if all people are to be satisfied and their needs taken into consideration. Thus, a method of determining the morality of response measures is required. A variation of the ‘*Veil of Ignorance*’ (Rawls, 1999) provides such a method, as presented for the first time in this paper. It asks the decision-makers to make choices about social or moral issues related to the feedback responses to the pandemic, in order to re-establish the new equilibrium, and assumes that they have enough information to know the consequences of their

possible decisions for everyone but would not know, or would not take into account, which person they are themselves. Thus, not knowing one's ultimate position in society would lead to the creation of fair to everyone responses, as the decision-makers would not want to make decisions which benefit a certain group at the expense of another, as they could end up in either group themselves.

Although one could never eliminate all personal biases and prejudices, the proposed cohesive framework helps to minimize them by considering all individuals as rational, free, and morally equal beings. When policy-makers imagine that they know nothing about the particular talents, abilities, tastes, social class, and positions they will have within a social order (Rawls, 1999), this '*Veil of Ignorance*' will prevent them from conceiving response policies to the pandemic that differentiate, downgrade and limit the biological rights, positions, and resources, downgrade democratic institutions or increase uncertainty risks for any member in that society. Thus, resilience would be achieved in a morally just manner. Essentially, this is the true meaning of Social Auropoiesis (Fuchs & Hofkirchner, 2009). Society reproduces and produces man as a social being, and man reproduces and produces society by socially coordinating human actions: a dialectic of social structures and human actors.

## Conclusions

The pandemic crisis is an utmost historical moment for the political distribution of public power and state authority. The art of politics is balancing among all interests of the stake holders. We cannot prevent such events from happening, but the state has to respond by quickly closing down the 'disruptive' time of the emergency event and restoring standard political processes. The use of all available technologies for health, communication, decision-making in risky and uncertain environments will help us attain the new equilibrium state, hopefully a more resilient one.

However, as argued in this paper, the desired resilience should be achieved through an ethical '*Veil of Ignorance*'. We should identify the challenges and dangers and see the world for the viewpoint of others, in order to achieve a fair, just and sustainable society. After all, this pandemic can be perceived as an urgent warning to act and transform our views of the world, in order to avoid upcoming catastrophes of colossal scale. Soren Kierkegaard's (Kierkegaard, 1987, p.30) famous quote is surprisingly relevant:

*"A fire broke out backstage in a theatre. The clown came out to warn the public; they thought it was a joke and applauded. He repeated it; the acclaim was even greater. I think that's just how the world will come to an end: to general applause from wits who believe it's a joke."*

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## Mexico's "Fourth Transformation" after the pandemic: Windows of opportunity for adaptative policies<sup>1</sup>

César Morales Oyarvide<sup>2</sup> & Antonio Villalpando Acuña<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract (in English)

The spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the infectious agent that caused COVID-19, has put a level of pressure on governments and their structures only seen in times of war. The governments of the world face a health challenge that will have profound economic consequences, which requires an effective response to contain the contagions of the disease and, at the same time, an unprecedented economic effort to preserve jobs, value chains and lifestyles. This reality has reached Mexico during the administration of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who, since the beginning of his presidential term on December 1, 2018, has launched an ambitious set of austerity measures aimed at releasing resources for cash transfer programs and infrastructure projects. The struggle between a model that bets on reducing the size of the State and that of public spending and an economic reality that will demand more public investment and state intervention will define the course of Mexico's future public policies. The authors discuss a new world full of windows of opportunity to promote a more ambitious social, fiscal and security policy agenda, on which depends the Mexican government ability to avoid the worst social consequences of the pandemic and the economic crisis.

### Abstract (in Spanish)

La propagación del virus SARS-CoV-2, el agente causante de COVID-19, ha ejercido un nivel de presión sobre los gobiernos y sus estructuras como solamente se había visto en tiempos de guerra. Los gobiernos del mundo enfrentan un desafío sanitario que tendrá profundas consecuencias económicas, lo que demanda una respuesta eficaz para contener los contagios de la enfermedad y, al mismo tiempo, un esfuerzo económico sin precedentes para preservar empleos, cadenas de valor y estilos de vida. Esta realidad ha llegado a México durante la administración de Andrés Manuel López Obrador, quien, desde el comienzo de su mandato presidencial el 1 de diciembre de 2018, ha puesto en marcha un ambicioso conjunto de medidas de austeridad a fin de liberar recursos para programas de transferencias y obras de infraestructura. La pugna entre un modelo que apuesta por reducir el gasto del Estado mexicano y una realidad económica que demandará mayor inversión e intervención estatal definirá el rumbo de la política pública de México. Los autores discuten sobre un mundo nuevo lleno de ventanas de oportunidad para impulsar una agenda de política social, fiscal y de seguridad más ambiciosa, de cuyo aprovechamiento depende el poder evitar las peores consecuencias sociales del binomio pandemia-crisis económica.

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic came to Mexico at a time when the role of the State in the economy and society and the scope of its actions are undergoing a profound review. In 2018, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) took office and implemented a government program that he called the Fourth Transformation (4T), following the Mexican War of Independence, XIX<sup>th</sup> century Reform and XX<sup>th</sup> century Revolution. Little can be predicted about the ramifications of the crises caused by the new coronavirus. What seems like a fact is that, in the times to come, *lopezobradorismo* will face circumstances that will demand a State with greater capacity for intervention, but flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances. The future of public policies in the 4T will be disputed between two extremes: defending the programmatic vision that was established in 2018 and an environment that will demand problem-focused and, therefore, adaptive governance.

### **Pandemics: disruptive forces and windows of opportunity**

A well-known effect of pandemics is their ability to hinder large collective projects. Among other things, a pandemic was responsible for the Athenians losing the Peloponnesian war, for Justinian to be unable to reunify the Roman Empire, and for the Vikings to stop exploring America. Despite the outrages of some local governments, the integrity of the federal project in Mexico is unlikely to be jeopardized because of this epidemic. However, the underlying process -the multiplication of new problems and an environment with a high level of uncertainty- will create conflicts between the programmatic and somewhat rigid way of governing that has characterized the 4T and the need to solve specific problems on the fly and adapt several of the Mexican government's assumptions to the new reality.

One of the most useful theories to analyze processes of change in public policies such as the one that Mexico will foreseeably experience in the coming years is the multiple streams framework and windows of opportunity (Kingdon, 1984). The basic idea behind this theory is that there are times when certain circumstances change the priority and interpretation of public problems, offering an opportunity to reevaluate solutions that would have been discarded in any other moment. In this case, the circumstance that opens the window of opportunity is the pandemic itself, but also its effects on the economy, the ecology of the cities and the ideological structure of the citizens. As it was not seen decades ago, the future will allow us to speak of a return to strong governments and interventionist States. The new circumstances will open the possibility of reviving the rise of the social State in the North and of accelerating its development in the Global South (Piketty, 2020). However, the dimension of this window of opportunity will only be comparable to the magnitude of the social

conflicts and the challenges that governments will experience as a result of the pandemic, which will be articulated both ideologically and in the most daily and material way of living.

In “The History of a Crime”, Victor Hugo wrote that "one can resist the invasion of an army, but not the invasion of an idea". This phrase communicates in a splendid way the times that the people and their governments are going to go through in the coming years. In the future, two ideas will reemerge with colossal force: authoritarianism and economic heterodoxy. The portrait of East Asian societies, both less liberal and more able to coordinate their citizens, will leave a lasting impression on the minds of the most fearful citizens while giving the radical right the attention it needs to vindicate, as if it were a virtue, the controlling mania of its most visible representatives. At the same time, the breakdown of health systems, the rising unemployment and the loss of confidence in the markets will raise the need to revive economies through the centralization and nationalization of services, public investment and the introduction of new fiscal pacts. These two ideas will shape the arena in which all future public policy reforms will be discussed.

### **“Fourth Transformation” policies after the pandemic**

The tension between authoritarianism and economic heterodoxy will exert tremendous traction on a basic dimension of the shaping of public policies: the ratio of winners to losers.

This will be especially noticeable in one particular field of State intervention that the 4T has privileged: social policy. So far, the main social policy tool of the 4T government has been the direct transfer of resources. In the government's programmatic vision, the *motto* “putting the poor first” has meant, with good reason, prioritizing certain groups that have been neglected for decades, especially in the rural world, as beneficiaries of government cash transfers. However, after the COVID-19 crisis another actor will enter the Mexican scene: the vulnerable population. We understand “vulnerable population” as those people who maintain a situation of economic insecurity such that a shock like this crisis will plunge them back into poverty. This is a social group that has had significant growth in Mexico and Latin America, especially in the cities, but which remains pretty much outside the government priorities (López Calva et al., 2014). So far, the Mexican government's commitment has been to redouble the protection of the most marginalized by increasing the funding and scope of its flagship social programs. However, in a context of “new poverty”, these types of focused programs funded by all taxpayers - with concentrated benefits and diffuse costs - such as *Jóvenes construyendo el futuro* (a training and apprenticeship program for young people) may be viewed with suspicion by millions of unemployed people. Likewise, programs such as *Sembrando vida* (a Keynesian-type program aimed at increasing agricultural and forestry production) could arouse anger as rural and

semi-urban areas are the least affected by the epidemic. New circumstances are likely to generate pressures towards a revision of the government's social programs, of the universe of its beneficiaries ("putting the poor first", yes, but which ones?) and a recomposition of the social groups that support *lopezobradorismo*.

Just as targeted transfers will become more problematic, redistributive programs and policies - with diffuse benefits and relatively concentrated costs - will have their best window of opportunity in the last 50 years and no government should hesitate to use its resources to fund universal welfare systems. In the case of Mexico, the reform to article 4 of the Constitution, which constitutionalizes some social benefits such as scholarships for impoverished children and old-age pension, and the creation of the *Instituto de Salud para el Bienestar*, a controversial institution that was created this year as an attempt to start building a universal health care system, were some recent steps towards that objective.

However, the pandemic will generate a unique circumstance to discuss other major issues, such as breaking the link between basic rights and working conditions, since nowadays, the access to several social benefits in Mexico depends on whether or not a person has a formal job. In addition, the pandemic might allow us to undertake the problematic lack of coverage of our social security system, which in 2018 only served 42.7% of the population (CONEVAL, 2018). To alleviate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and, above all, to protect the Mexican population against its return, the government will need to implement some initiatives that had been discarded in the recent past, such as an unemployment insurance. To unnecessarily delay these processes, by passing timid reforms or not passing them at all, would give authoritarian thinking a perfect breeding ground: one characterized by a high level of uncertainty.

The way to finance these policies will also require adapting some of the assumptions of the 4T. So far, to raise taxes or to acquire public debt as a way to increase public funds have been ruled out by the Mexican government, relying on efficiency and savings as a source of resources. This economic and fiscal orthodoxy, which worryingly resembles the recipes applied in Greece and southern Europe after the 2008 financial crisis, has been called "republican austerity". The difference between *lopezobradorista* austerity and that imposed by the Troika a few years ago is mainly presented in moral terms: while the latter hit social spending, the former was presented as a way to finance social projects by reducing government luxuries and public corruption. Recently, this difference seems more rhetorical than realistic. Be that as it may, the economic and social crisis caused by the new coronavirus will show the limits of republican austerity soon. At the same time, the effects of the pandemic will generate a window of opportunity in the form of a moment of solidarity and national unity that could be used to call for a new social pact that translates into a progressive fiscal reform. It

will be the time to discuss, as it already occurs in other countries, new taxes on wealth and inheritances and a global agreement against fiscal evasion. Given the obesity epidemic in Mexico and its pernicious effects in the increase of COVID-19 mortality in the country, it will also be time to consider a higher tax on sugary drinks. Mexico continues to be the country that proportionally collects the least taxes in the OECD and one of the last in Latin America (OECD, 2019). If we take into account the loss in oil revenues during 2020, to take advantage of this opportunity will be more urgent. Consent to these new taxes will be more likely if those resources fund general benefits and the Mexican government continues to increase its collection efficiency, since any kind of fiscal privilege will be interpreted as an attack on collective security in the post-COVID world.

In terms of public security, the future will also bring new challenges that will push the government to take bolder measures to regain peace. The new levels of unemployment are likely to favor drug trafficking organizations, a sector of the economy whose demand will surely increase. Thinking about the effect of a vertiginous growth in the demand for drugs, two situations seem equally possible: either the cartels are reunited and come to a new agreement to “administer the abundance”, or, the drug violence is intensified, given the gangs’ new incentives to gain more *plazas* and their access to a quasi-infinite industrial reserve army. This ambiguity may bring into question the legalization of drugs, as well as their regulation; the former considering a potential source of income, and the latter considering that, prior to the pandemic, drug and alcohol use had already increased by a factor of up to four in just five years in Mexico (Comisión Nacional contra las Adicciones, 2017). In this sense, the future will open a window of opportunity to contemplate the formalization of industries such as cannabis, whose commercialization could bring similar income to that of alcohol (Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, 2019). In addition to the commercialization of drugs, the government will have to make provisions to face a new phenomenon: massive consumption. If addictions are not treated as a public health issue, job losses due to absenteeism, the new burden on the health system, and the effect on public safety in many cities would create a kind of “Mexican rust belt”. Tackling these problems will require a highly accurate and flexible public policy design.

### **Steel and bamboo: from program to adaptive flexibility**

From what has been said above it can be deduced that in the future the Mexican public administration will have to increase its performance in a dimension for which it was not designed: small adjustments and flexibility. Government change in Mexico has always involved a restructuring of the State: it is the time to create and disappear ministries and to plan, as if the future were known, the thematic axes of the incoming administration. The National Development Plan (PND), a policy instrument created

in the 1980s, is based on the assumption that everything is plannable, that no situations or actors will arise that cannot be channeled in terms of what that document establishes. Coupled with endemic levels of corruption, this inflexibility ends up causing government actions to have a diminished and delayed effect on what or those for whom they were intended. Similarly, it means that public resources cannot be assigned to any function other than the original one without first going through the parliament, regardless of how urgent the new circumstances are. The pandemic has done nothing but magnifying that problem.

Overcoming these restrictions will represent a monumental challenge for *lopezobradorista* orthodoxy. To achieve this, the erosion of the bureaucratic apparatus that has occurred throughout these first two years of AMLO's presidential term must be reversed and, at the same time, the government must be provided with more resources and a renewed framework for action that allows public money to be exercised with greater accuracy. To accomplish its goals, 4T must do so without compromising its essence: to fight corruption and to prioritize the poor.

"For I am harder than steel, I would break rather than bending," said *flamenco* singer Camarón de la Isla. So far, the 4T's way of governing seems to abide to that verse, as President López Obrador himself has said (Méndez, 2019). However, the challenges posed by the post-COVID-19 have changed reality in such a way that, in order to consolidate the transformation project that was proposed in 2018, the Mexican government must stop working like a steel sheet and start doing it more like a bamboo plant. Bamboo is as strong as metal, but more flexible, which has proven to be very useful in earthquake-resistant constructions. To resist the challenges posed by the pandemic, public policies must be like this material, capable of withstanding the worst storm without breaking. The building they will hold is none other than our country.

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## India on foot: Internal migrants during COVID-19 in India<sup>4</sup>

Leelashree Godara<sup>5</sup> & Sourav Kumar<sup>6</sup>

### Abstract

India, home to a population of 1.2 billion, is the country fourth worst hit by COVID-19 in terms of the total number of cases. Within this humongous population is the category of internal migrant workers who have been hit to the extent that their survival is at stake. Introducing this catastrophic hit, this policy brief purposefully elaborates on the challenges faced by India in dealing with this pandemic. The number of internal migrants in India is greater than the total population of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany put together. This unmasks the need for deliberation on the issue of social security of these migrant workers and the role of the state in providing it. Despite measures like the ‘Inter-state workmen act, 1979’, ‘Unorganised Sector Workers Social Security Act, 2008’, and findings of multiple committees, the migrant workers have not been able to integrate into their destination regions to a satisfactory level. Through this paper, the loopholes in these provisions have been highlighted and it has been explained how these provisions failed miserably when put to test by a global pandemic. The authors point out that given the diversity in India’s states, a one-size-fits approach is bound to fail and thus they endorse the demand for greater decentralisation in decision making when it comes to managing a health crisis. The authors recommend a tailor-made and feasible data collection and maintenance strategy as the base on which new provisions for migrant workers could be formulated.

### Introduction

COVID-19 hit the world by surprise and while India managed to contain the spread in the initial months, it is now the fourth worst hit with over three hundred seventy thousand cases as of June 18, 2020. In a country with a population of 1.2 billion, COVID-19 unfurled an unprecedented exodus of internal migrants. Walking thousands of kilometres barely seemed a challenge to the migrant workers who set on a journey to their *real* home, barefoot. The real challenge was to survive another day under lockdown; in a city where they had been working for months or years but which still had an alien air about it. According to the Census of India (GoI, 2011), there are about 194 million permanent and semi-permanent migrant workers and 15 million short-term migrant workers i.e. of temporary and circulatory nature. The total comes to 209 million. Only seven countries in the world have a total population greater than this number (United Nations, 2019). The disastrous impact on life and

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livelihood of such a large chunk of population warrants an urgency to discuss the plight of workers in the unorganized sector.

This paper tries to analyse the role of the state to safeguard the economic and social security of migrant workers. In the light of the existing provisions, the need for a robust and custom-made policy for India's internal migrants has been portrayed. A major part of this paper is dedicated to providing feasible policy recommendations to resolve the issues relating to the life and livelihood of 209 million migrant workers.

### **Existing Provisions and the challenges faced**

The constitution of India gives a 'fundamental right' to every citizen of India 'to move freely throughout the territory of India' and 'to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India' under article 19 (GoI, 2015). Further, under article 246, the areas of legislation for the state and the central government have been laid down in the VII<sup>th</sup> schedule. Accordingly, 'inter-state migration; inter-state quarantine' is an area of legislation under the central government and 'welfare of labour including working conditions, provident funds, employers' liability, workmen's compensation, pensions and maternity benefits' can be legislated and administered by both central and state governments.

Under these powers, the central government enacted 'The Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act' (GoI, 1979) which mandates the employer/contractor to provide a registration number to the migrant workers (if they are more than five in number). The law provides for regular wages, suitable housing, free medical facilities, and displacement and journey allowances as well. This act is applicable nationwide but does not cover seasonal, temporary and self-employed migrant worker. According to the National Sample Survey Organisation of India (NSSO, 2010), these makeup 30% of the total migrant workers, and are therefore quite vulnerable. The checks and balances (for example regular checks by an inspector) enacted to bring the act into operation, failed to provide the intended social security even to those covered under its garb (MoLE, 2012).

The central government enacted the 'Unorganised Sector Workers Social Security Act, 2008' or USWSSA (GoI, 2008) in response to a report titled "Condition of Work and Promotions of Livelihoods in Unorganised Sector" (Sengupta, 2007). However, the act was more a populist move than having the requisite substance to realize what the report sought to achieve (Dutta & Pal, 2012). In its latest move, the central government constituted a Working Group on migration that submitted its report in 2017 (MoHUPA, 2017). When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country, three years had passed by and actions on the report were still awaited. The fact of the matter is that in every

report, similar points were emphasised but what was desired on paper, could never be achieved in reality (Varma, 2020).

A nationwide lockdown was announced on March 24, 2020, to contain the spread of COVID-19. It hit the hardest on the survival of the people who survived on daily earnings. They didn't even have the psychological security of a home to go back to. The 'Shramik' special trains came as a promise too late (Iyer, 2020). They were already on their way, on foot. The central government advised state governments to operate relief/shelter camps with food aid and medical facilities using state disaster response fund. The only data in the public domain, however, was the painful images of people walking home barefoot (Biswas, 2020).

The Finance Ministry has come up a relief package under the name '*Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan*' which includes short and long term measures for migrant workers. These include immediate food grain distribution, One Nation One Ration-card or ONOR (Sharma, 2020), better Public Distribution System (PDS), and affordable rural and urban rental housing facilities under Pradhan-Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). According to the government, the measure is expected to benefit 80 million migrant workers and their families.

COVID 19 exposed the serious lack of data which resulted in the failure for protecting the basic civil rights of migrants. Despite being a formal citizen, migrants faced a denial in terms of social and political support. According to UNESCO (2013), there is an urgent need to develop a governance system for internal migration in India, i.e. a dedicated system of institutions, legal frameworks, mechanisms and practices aimed at supporting internal migration and protecting migrants. (Sivaraman, 2020)

The government, however, seems to have fast-tracked to the solutions as these measures remain incomplete in the absence of comprehensive data. Targeting the livelihood issues and social security measures based on 10-year-old data remains a challenge. For example, how does one bring into the fold those people who have become migrant workers in the past 10 years and keep on adding every year? How does one reach a migrant worker who is under distress? How does one provide immediate financial help to them? How does one ensure that the beneficiaries are only migrants? How does one ensure that a migrant worker has access to an adequate health facility in a situation of zero-earnings? The existing provisions could not address the issues till date due to data inadequacy, and sparse implementing staff. The policy scenario still remains patchy. Keeping in view these policy inadequacies, we advance to some short and medium-term recommendations.

## Recommendations

**a) A Migrant Photo Identity Card (MPIC)** – We need to develop a comprehensive, digital and centralized dynamic database of migrant labourers in the form of an MPIC. This would be a smart card with the following details:

- i. A portable ration card number under ONOR – So that the migrant labourers can have access to government ration at their current place of residence irrespective of their place of origin.
- ii. Place of origin and current place of residence – To be able to allocate food grains to states under PDS and to ensure door-step delivery if necessary.
- iii. Current employment – To gauge the economic and social vulnerability of the migrant worker.
- iv. Bank account details – For direct cash transfers in times of distress like the current pandemic.
- v. Aadhaar Card details – To avoid duplicity. (Sen, 2019)
- vi. Mobile numbers – To contact in distress situations and provide them with information.

Such a card may be renewed automatically as well as manually. The place where the family is withdrawing ration under the migrant card may automatically be registered as their current place of residence. The registration of migrant workers and issuance of photo identity cards or smart cards can be undertaken by the central government in collaboration with civil society organisations and state labour departments, and the details be then shared with the states for action.

“It is clear that there is an urgent need to develop a governance system for internal migration in India, i.e. a dedicated system of institutions, legal frameworks, mechanisms and practices aimed at supporting internal migration and protecting migrants.” (as cited in Sivaraman, 2020)

**b) Managing return migration** – The immediate challenge that the government has to deal due to return migration is to allay the stigma associated with COVID-19. This can be done by distributing basic hygiene items like soaps, masks, sanitisers etc and spreading awareness on war footing through state machinery as well as by engaging volunteers and civil society organisations. As the migrant labourers abandon cities and go back to their villages, livelihood is taking a hit. To meet this challenge on an immediate basis, food grain and pulses need to be supplied regularly to meet the nutritional needs of migrant workers and their families. The PDS infrastructure could be utilised to distribute the huge buffer food grain stock (832.69 Lakh Metric Tonnes of Wheat and Rice) lying with the Food Corporation of India as of June 2020 (FCI, 2020). For the time being, food distribution could be done regardless of the existence of valid documents to dispel

the fear of food insecurity. A positive step by the central government in this regard has been to increase the budgetary allocation under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. This would generate employment as well as create demand in the economy.

An information dissemination campaign about legal rights, entitlements, and social protection measures custom made for the migrant labourers should be started. The return migrants may also be provided guidance, training and financial support if they wish to set up small businesses to reintegrate themselves in their place of origin.

In the medium term, Migrant Assistance Centres (MACs) may be set up in major destination and source regions which would provide counselling to migrants on job opportunities and provide them job placements, thus offering some respite from the dominance of contractors (Srivastava & Sasikumar, 2003). These would also act as migrant registration centres for the proposed MPIC. For these MACs, the state labour department has to be strengthened by first fulfilling the shortage of manpower, and then by pushing in funds both from the central and the state budgets.

- c) **Health and Education** – Migrant labourers must be provided health insurance on the lines of *Awaz* Health Insurance Scheme of the Government of Kerala (GoK, 2017). It is suggested that at the central government level, the migrant labourers be immediately brought under the ambit of the *Ayushman Bharat* health insurance. This would serve twin purposes; one, social security and two, make data on migrant workers available. This insurance may also be linked with the proposed MPIC.

Along with this, a transferable credit system at the school level may be developed nationwide. It must be made portable across states so that the wards of migrant workers do not face dropouts or loss of education. In the medium term, skill education through vocational training programmes be provided to the migrant labourers who had earlier been involved in unskilled manual labour. Here, the most important thing would be a regular inspection to record the success rate.

- d) **Decentralisation** – Given the size and demography of India, state-wise inputs must be sought by the central government before launching a one-size-fits nationwide policy. This is to say that the central government must play the role of a facilitator as far the policies related to migrant workers is concerned, be it health, education, sanitation, employment, or nutrition various. Major migration corridors in the country must be identified and the migration receiving states must be given budgetary incentives for the integration of migrants as normal residents.

## Conclusion

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has speculated that the job crisis emerging out of COVID-19 lockdown will worse hit the migrant workers and informal sector workers (ILO, 2020). Food and nutritional intake, access to health care and education of these groups of people will be badly impacted. We need to recognise that migrants are a major stakeholder in urban and rural sustainability. The central, as well as the state governments, need to step up and play the lead role in creating conditions conducive for the return of migrant labourers and to make them feel secure enough that they won't be pushed into such a crisis again for none of their faults.

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## Covid-19 has brought back the necessity of the welfare state: The Greek case<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

In Europe, despite systemic, functional and structural differences, the welfare state has been a key component of the state after World War II. In recent decades, the former has been accused for inflating government spending and turning people into passive recipients of benefits and services. For this reason, and for several more, such as globalization, the transforming nature of employment and the changing family patterns, the welfare state has undergone the necessary reforms in order to combine the effectiveness and efficiency of its services and benefits. The outbreak of 2009 economic crisis has created tremendous problems to the welfare state, especially in the hardest hit countries, such as Greece. Although these structural problems and inefficiencies existed, the Greek state in general and the National Health System (NHS) in particular have handled the coronavirus successfully, making the country an example for the others but also stressing the necessity to consolidate the welfare state and specifically the NHS. This paper aims to analyze the way the Greek state handled the coronavirus crisis while underlie the importance of the welfare state especially in times of crisis and the challenges that coronavirus has created.

### Introduction

During the recent economic crisis, the austerity doctrine applied in several Eurozone countries, treated the welfare state as the “critical patient”, reducing many of the necessary provided services (Karger, 2014; Kotroyannos et al, 2013; Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2012). Health systems have suffered huge blows as long as financial pressures have led to staff reductions, reduced Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds and the inability to modernize in countries such as Greece (Mpouzika, Mpouzika & Papathanassoglou, 2018). At the same time, wage cuts have made many patients unable to meet their health needs<sup>5</sup>. After the end of the severe economic crisis, the welfare state in general and the individual services it offers, especially in countries that have been hardest hit by fiscal adjustment,

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<sup>5</sup> For further details see Eurostat data at: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do> (Accessed: April, 15, 2020).

have come out with multiple wounds (Sbarouni et al., 2020). However, despite those discrepancies, it should never be ignored that health is a human right and the tendency to fight diseases is timeless (Efthymiou, Vozikis & Sidiropoulos, 2019). These facts indicate that the welfare state intervention is necessary, especially in times of crisis.

As several welfare states in Europe tried to heal their wounds from the recent economic crisis, the health crisis of covid-19 came to add another critical challenge. European national health systems have been called upon to manage a situation, similar to that they have not faced since the World War II. In this pandemic, however, one thing is certain; the welfare state and the national health systems, despite the chronic problems and weaknesses they may face, are at the forefront, ready to protect all citizens.

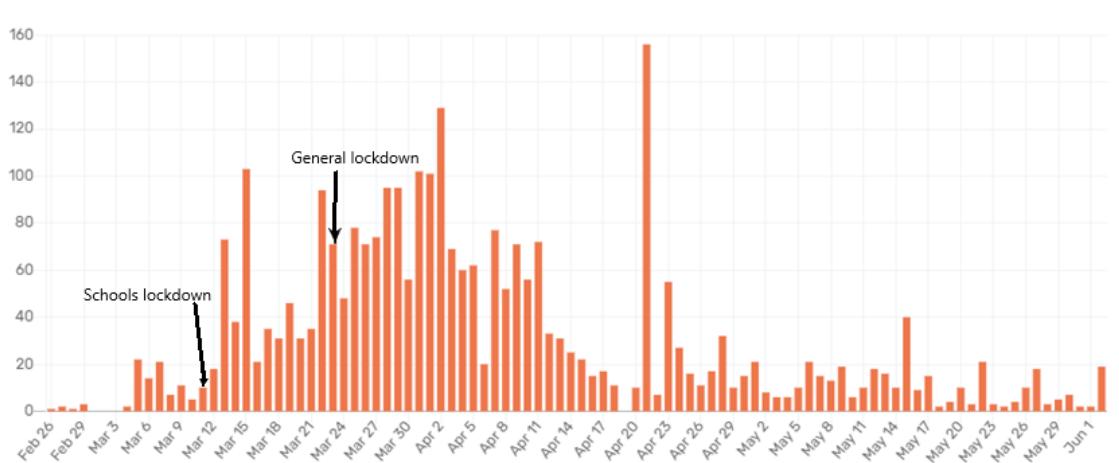
### **The case of the Greek NHS during the coronavirus crisis**

At this point, the case of the Greek National Health System should be highlighted again. Although the data show that it is the most understaffed and one of the most problematic systems in the EU as long as Greece has the lowest per capita rate of GPs (Economou, 2015; Eurostat, 2018; Lionis et al, 2019) and among the lowest per capita ratio of registered nurses (Economou, 2015), so far, it has responded effectively to the challenge of covid-19. Thus, until June 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 there were 179 deaths from the coronavirus while most European countries have counted large numbers of deaths every day, mainly during March and April 2020. For instance, the deaths in Italy have increased to 33,530 as of June 1<sup>st</sup> 2020<sup>6</sup>.

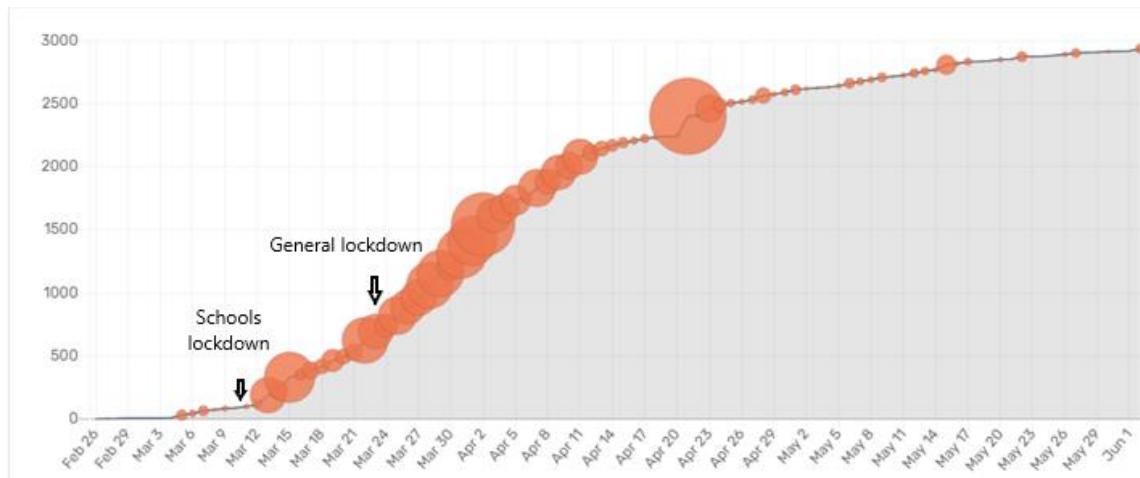
But which was the main reason for handling the crisis effectively in Greece? The answer may have two parts. The first is related to the fact that the Greek government took the lockdown measures in time, thus avoiding the uncontrolled spread of the virus and consequently, the excessive pressure on the national health system, which has a very low percentage of ICU beds based on population, compared to the majority of the advanced systems of the EU countries. The Greek government have closed schools immediately after the first coronavirus cases (March 11<sup>th</sup>) and before the first death. It should be mentioned that on March 11<sup>th</sup> the World Health Organization declared officially that Covid-19 is a pandemic and Greece acted immediately by closing not only schools but also suspending social events and public gatherings (Georgiou, 2020). The Greek government acted after only 5 cases of unknown origin by closing schools while on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020 imposed a country-wide lockdown due to an increase in the confirmed cases (see: Figures 1 and 2).

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<sup>6</sup> Data from: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html> (accessed: June 1, 2020).

**Figure 1: New cases per day in Greece**

Source: Greek government, <https://covid19.gov.gr/covid19-live-analytics/> (Accessed: June 1, 2020)

**Figure 2: New cases per day/total cases**

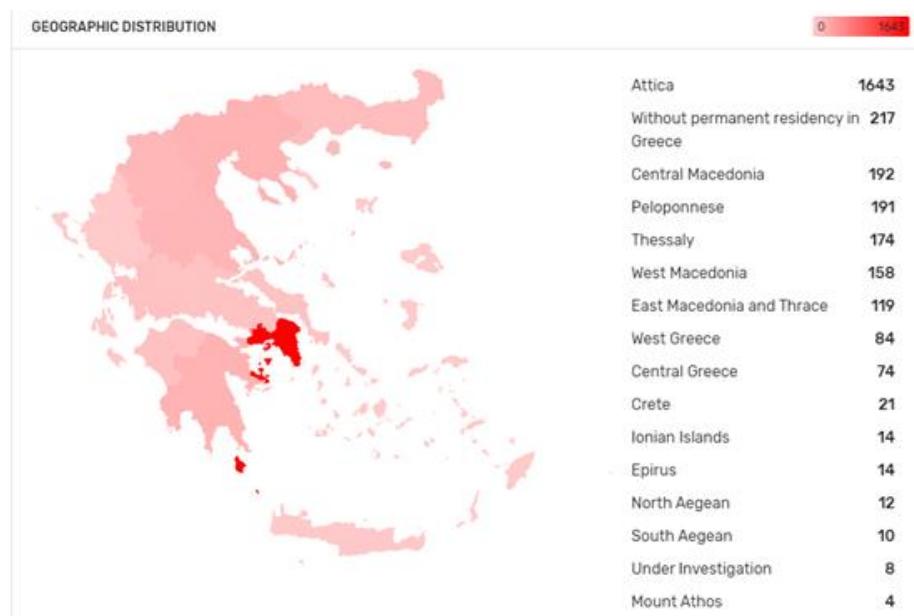
Source: Greek government, <https://covid19.gov.gr/covid19-live-analytics/> (Accessed: June 1, 2020)

This immediate handling of this extreme situation has given time to the government to increase the ICU beds and thus, to better confront the situation of increasing cases that need ICU treatment. Given the fact that the Greek NHS had only 600 beds in general, the significant increase to 1200<sup>7</sup> during the first month of the pandemic did not lead to the overcome of the total capacity. This also another measure that proved the necessity of the public health system, especially in times of severe crisis.

<sup>7</sup> For further details see: [greekcitytimes.com/2020/05/04/greece-plans-to-add-more-icu-beds/?amp](https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/05/04/greece-plans-to-add-more-icu-beds/?amp) (Last accessed: 01/06/2020).

At the same time, the immediate lockdown measures reduced the distribution of the virus especially in vulnerable places where there is lack of medical staff or equipment, such as several small islands (see the country distribution as of June 1<sup>st</sup> in Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Geographic distribution of coronavirus in Greece as of June 1<sup>st</sup> 2020**



Source: Greek government, <https://covid19.gov.gr/covid19-live-analytics/> (Accessed: June 1, 2020)

The second part of the answer to the main question posed above, is related, on the one hand, with the ability of the medical staff to confront and handle such a difficult-extreme situation and on the other hand, to the immediate mobilization for the creation of more ICU beds, as mentioned above. Obviously, there are still shortcomings, but the immediate lockdown management and the support of the national health system by both the government companies and civil society organizations who have donated equipment valued more than 89 million Euros<sup>8</sup>, have offered to the Greek NHS the necessary “breath”.

### **The remaining challenges**

But the question that still remains is what should happen after the covid-19 crisis. It is clear that extraordinary measures to strengthen the national health system have significantly contributed to the effective management of the crisis so far. However, it is necessary to permanently strengthen the national health system with nursing and medical staff, with equipment of more ICUs and with the supply of medical materials that are necessary. The consignment that the covid-19 crisis lefts is the

<sup>8</sup> For further details see: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/08/c\\_139039070.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/08/c_139039070.htm) (Accessed: June 1, 2020).

need for National Health Systems and their importance in order to provide the necessary social protection that a modern state should include.

At the same time, another need arises. After the end of this health crisis, an economic crisis will occur. In this case, the welfare state is needed to support the vulnerable, to provide incentives and therefore to alleviate the new economic and social wounds that have already been opened, so that the EU countries can get out of the crisis faster. The new European recovery fund<sup>9</sup> for the EU member states is a helpful tool that finally shows that there is still this notion of European solidarity. Greece will benefit from this an amount of 32 billion Euros<sup>10</sup> but the challenge of how to use these funds still remains. Therefore, the current crisis highlights the need for the welfare state to be a helpful and supportive mechanism for overcoming huge problems and challenges for the protection of citizens' lives and well-being. This may have been forgotten during the 2009 economic crisis, but the health crisis and its implications come to remind us, with a harshest way, the limits of private initiative and the scope of public intervention regarding social issues.

It turns out that the state on both sides of the Atlantic is facing the risk of death, as long as the pandemic poses the self-evident presence of the state in the face of a threat to life. The question is which state is appropriate to address this risk on the one hand and to restore the rights and freedoms on the other? The restoration of a new welfare state that must protect life, as its preservation is a necessary condition for prosperity, and therefore for the protection of the economy. This is the challenge now also for Greece which successfully protected its citizens' lives and now faces the danger of a new economic crisis as long as the IMF predicts a -10% downturn for 2020 (IMF, 2020).

The challenge now for this state is to find a way to preserve rights and alleviate social inequality. Therefore, this state should rebuild society. In the face of the threat of death, it aims not only to protect life but also to create the conditions for the reconstruction of society based on the concept of health for all. To achieve this, the proper mix will have to be rediscovered where freedom will not be a reason to endanger the lives of others.

It should be noted that this necessity does not imply the restoration of statehood, an extended state that is characterized by multiple distortions, but a state that is different, flexible and a bearer of rights. Therefore, this new state must renew its consensus tools, its institutional framework and its production mechanisms in order to maximize all its advantages and guarantee its citizens an increase in their income and quality of life, with justice and stability. It is true that Greece is a laggard in

<sup>9</sup> For further details see: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52819126> (Accessed: June 1, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> For further details see: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/253099/article/ekathimerini/business/greece-to-get-32-bln-euros-according-to-eu-commission-proposal> (Accessed: June 1, 2020).

quality of life and social justice among EU member states but now that paved the way for effective handling of the coronavirus and thus successfully protecting citizens' lives, there is the challenge to confront these structural inefficiencies and transform its welfare state in general.

Thus, issues such as the long-standing deficiencies of the Greek welfare state and especially of the NHS, such as the imbalance of public and private interests (Tountas et al., 2020), the problematic employment security, the extensive informal economy and the high levels of doctors' unemployment, should be severely confronted through an extensive but smart public investment. Should this opportunity is let behind, a handling of a second wave of coronavirus will be difficult both for the NHS and the Greek economy.

Certainly, whenever there is a great need, neoliberals run for rescue in the arms of the state, in what we described as a welfare state, because the individuals are weak as long as they are unable to make counterproductive investments. This trend also happened during the 2009 financial crisis (Stiglitz, 2010). Therefore, it becomes even more understandable how useful a powerful and flexible welfare state is; not wasteful of necessary funds but capable of protecting the whole society without negative discriminations. In this case, the state can rest on an unproductive investment, but this is the only one that will pay off in a period of severe need.

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## Topic 3

### Public Administration and Local Government in coronavirus crisis

# Strengthening European local governments to address global health crises and their consequences<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The crisis generated by Covid-19 is a product of global interconnection, but its impacts are manifested locally in a differentiated manner. This text assumes precisely that local governments, as the administration closest to the citizens, are a key instrument to face the effects of this and other global risks in a more democratic and effective way, because they can provide differentiated and more adequate responses to the concrete needs of the citizens. Moreover, if decisions taken at a local level are widely participated and deliberated by the population, they are more legitimate, and this makes it easier for citizens to accept measures that restrict freedoms, such as those imposed worldwide by the public health measures taken in response to Covid-19. In line with these assumptions, in this policy paper we highlight the need to strengthen European local governments by giving them greater resources and more autonomy. Our position is consistent with the recommendations made by international bodies during the current pandemic, but it is also supported by the evidence the authors have gathered from their participation in a European research project within the H2020 program (COST Action IS 1207 LocRef). Based on the results of this research, a series of practical recommendations are proposed for the European Union and the member countries to grant increased resources and a greater degree of autonomy to local governments.

## Introduction: Covid-19, a window of opportunity for local governments

Crises arising from global risks are a threat to our lifestyle and even our survival as a species, but they also open up opportunities for the implementation of new ideas and forms of collective organization. Thus, Covid-19 has shown that complex problems can only be solved through the cooperation of the different levels of government to which multilevel governance refers, regardless of the degree of centralization of political and administrative structures. This is the view of the most notorious international bodies, such as the UN and WHO secretariats, but also of others of a very different nature, such as the OECD or the IMF.

Unexpectedly, the pandemic has shown the resilience that communities and local governments can exercise, as they have been forced to manage a considerable part of the health, social and economic

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consequences of the pandemic, despite having very scarce resources and little legal room for action. In fact, local governments seem to have revealed themselves as fundamental actors in solving the most immediate problems of precariousness that affect the quality of life and well-being of their most vulnerable citizens in this catastrophic context. For this reason, Covid-19 has opened up an opportunity to rethink the role of local governments in multilevel governance systems and to redesign their possibilities so that they can contribute to addressing global problems in a more democratic, effective and legitimate manner. This opportunity presents itself after a decade marked by the international deployment of austerity policies and structural reforms. Although applied in an unequal way, these policies have reduced the capacity of public services in Europe, deeply weakening the Welfare State. The same budgetary austerity has resulted in a hard blow to the social protection services provided by municipal governments, although this coincides with the remuneration of some local public services as a counterpoint to the excesses (in cost, inefficiency and loss of citizen control) caused by the privatization of local services which, however, was advocated by the New Public Management paradigm (Wollmann & Iglesias, 2016).

An unimaginable effect of the pandemic has been the recognition by the European Union that rebuilding our societies after the pandemic requires increased public spending. Should this be done, the current budgetary restrictions that have so far limited the capacity of local governments to take action in most European countries should be eased. This would provide with an opportunity to reinforce the incipient trend towards reorganization and remuneration of essential local public services, revitalizing local public policies on public health, as well as the services of the local authorities.

### **Local governments as an antidote to the crisis of liberal democracy**

Covid-19 has highlighted the complexity of global governance even for European democracies. In mid-March, they seemed to be overwhelmed by the advance of the pandemic. The European partners were then absent, engrossed in their own difficulties. Lacking healthcare materials, they displayed an image of lack of solidarity and unfairness, and even competed on international markets for supplies, which increased shortages, pushed up prices and undermined the quality of products (Barreito & Iglesias, 2020). This first response to the crisis by European countries was national and centralized. However, both the European Union and national governments now seem to admit that neither decentralization nor austerity policies can be an effective response to the consequences of the pandemic in the medium and long term. Rather, they seem to be aware that responses require strong public policies to address the specific conditions of each locality.

The difficulties evidenced by representative democracies in managing the complexity of the pandemic and other global problems sum up to almost two decades of growing disaffection among citizens towards democratic institutions (Foa, 2020). The increase in the number of votes for populist parties and the rise in citizen protests over the past decade are eloquent examples of this disaffection. In a context where representative democracy has been hard hit by the economic, social and cultural effects of decades of neoliberal globalization and almost blunted by the recession and the consequent austerity policies that were applied under the pretext of overcoming it (Barbeito & Iglesias, 2020), Europe now faces an unprecedented task of reconstruction and risk prevention.

Although greatly weakened by austerity, local governments seem to be saved from the general disaffection towards political institutions. Surveys sponsored by the European Commission (the Eurobarometers) repeatedly show that local governments are an institution that inspires strong trust among citizens. This circumstance makes local governments the best political institution to introduce democratic innovations, favoring more legitimate and effective public decisions (Dahl, 2014).

The results of the pan-European research COST Action IS 1207 LocRef also suggest that local governments constitute a crucial space for strengthening democracy from the point of view of both legitimacy and effectiveness (Denters, 2017). The closer this level of government is to the specific problems of citizens, as well as its proximity to voluntary associations, the more likely it is that citizens will become aware of common problems, get involved in their management and see short-term results. Therefore, if they have sufficient autonomy and resources, local governments are spaces of resilience in the face of crises that are very appropriate for taking the measures that are best suited to the needs and possibilities of each locality. Hence the importance of neighborhoods and city design for social interaction and sustainable economic growth. Finally, the above-mentioned research suggests that participatory and deliberative instruments favor the legitimacy of local governments and that decisions that take into account citizen participation reinforce satisfaction with representative institutions.

The strengthening of local governments must be done in relation to other territorial powers, and providing resources to local public policies in education, health, security, social services, housing and environment, among others. It must also include the mobilization of civil society (NGOs and neighborhood associations) to strengthen social public action. The response to the crisis caused by Covid-19 is thus an opportunity to redefine the priorities of local public administration and, additionally, its organizational and procedural structures and its service delivery models.

## Conclusions: the importance of the local for effective crisis management and democratic recovery

This text has defended the role of local governments as an effective democratic instrument to deal with global risks, including Covid-19. In line with this, we encourage empirical studies to test the extent to which there is a positive correlation between greater local autonomy and a better response to the crisis caused by the pandemic. Such studies would complete the evidence already available supported by the research results of the LocRef project (covering 31 European countries), according to which citizens prefer to accept measures in which they have participated rather than measures decided by distant instances (Schwab, 2017). The same evidence argues that local governments and communities are able to combine effectiveness and efficiency with democratic innovations by involving citizens in the design of local public service delivery and its co-production, including preventive health services in neighborhoods. This is due in part to the social capital that spontaneously emerges in small population groups, which implies a clearer knowledge of nearby problems and the development of empathetic skills to solve common problems (Denters, 2017). It is certain that this civic implication is possible only if citizens have the necessary time to be able to dedicate it to the matters of their community, and this will only be possible if that time is financed monetarily (Barbeito & Iglesias, 2020).

The crisis prompted by Covid-19 should impel central governments to effectively recognize the decisive role of the local levels, reinforcing their autonomy and resources through reforms that hardly require normative changes. They should also encourage local governments to promote citizens' initiatives that favor the emergence of solidarity networks in the neighborhoods, as these would be an ideal tool for identifying and helping the most vulnerable or underprivileged neighbors. By connecting communities, such networks could better address the effects of inequality, fostering social and economic cohesion, revitalizing public space and building resilience.

Furthermore, local governments are responsible for the provision of basic services and personal care that directly affect the safety and health of citizens. The services provided by local governments (transport, citizen safety, home care, cleaning, waste treatment, water supply, etc.) have proven to be essential during confinement. Furthermore, local governments are essential within the fourth pillar of the Welfare State, i.e. social services for the care of dependent persons and educational services for children. Strengthening these services would lead to the creation of local employment and, in some countries, such as Spain, it would also help prevent the depopulation of rural areas.

## Policy recommendations for practitioners

- a) Rediscovering the local level. Citizens value efficiency in local service delivery, but also local democratic processes. That is why reforms must be implemented to facilitate citizen participation in decision-making processes, but without neglecting transparency and accountability. Each local government should be allowed to design its own governance strategy combining democratic aspects with those of improving public management, under the assumption that there are no "best practices" that can be applied out of context. Local governments are dependent on the path laid down by their historical tradition, political culture, socio-economic conditions, needs and demands of the different social groups in their community.
- b) Establish mechanisms of deliberative democracy, such as participatory budgets (Kersting, et al. 2016), as they provide opportunities for citizens to participate in debates regarding the design, implementation and evaluation of local public policies. This requires the institutionalization of democratic innovations that allow citizens to have a direct and binding influence on decision-making processes for the development of local public programmes and policies (Barbeito & Iglesias, 2020).
- c) Strengthening institutional and financial capacities. In particular, ensure that local governments have sufficient financial resources for the provision of public services and to address health crises and their negative impacts.
- d) Adopt strategies for inter-territorial cooperation with regional and central governments, as well as inter-municipal collaboration, accompanied by internal reorganizations to optimize service delivery chains. The spectrum and scope of cooperation will depend on the specific context of each municipality and the services it provides, as well as the intergovernmental and inter-administrative relations derived from the principle of subsidiarity.
- e) Redesign administrative structures and processes according to the specific needs of each municipality, following the principles of good local governance and cooperating, where necessary, with the private sector or local civil society through the co-production or provision of local public services or through partnerships or other models of cooperation between the local public and private sectors, coordinating actions with the appropriate territorial levels of government and ensuring, in such cases, that control and accountability mechanisms are put in place.

All these recommendations can be implemented without any substantial changes to the constitutional or regulatory framework. Nor do they require a significant increase in public spending. For these reasons, we believe that European states cannot afford to ignore the important role that local

governments and communities play in the effective reconstruction of European societies after the pandemic.

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## State performance in crises: A proposal for action for Brazil<sup>1</sup>

Ernani Contipelli<sup>2</sup> & Daniel Francisco Nagao Menezes<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract (in English)

The great challenge for government action at these times is to devise strategies that bring together at the same time: the ability to encompass different dimensions of the problem; mechanisms for dialogue and articulation with the multiple actors with competence to affect the measures put into action and the speed of response consistent with the urgency of the effects resulting from the pandemic. The text will analyze the challenges and responses of the Brazilian State to the COVID-19 crisis, based on multidimensionality and intersectoriality. Three points will be discussed in the article: a) political-institutional articulation between different governmental and non-governmental sectors; b) elaboration of a national pandemic containment; c) establishment of transparency mechanisms for ongoing actions and communication with society.

### Abstract (in Spanish)

El gran desafío para la acción del gobierno en estos momentos es diseñar estrategias que se unan al mismo tiempo: la capacidad de abarcar diferentes dimensiones del problema; mecanismos para el diálogo y la articulación con los múltiples actores con competencia para afectar las medidas puestas en acción y la velocidad de respuesta consistente con la urgencia de los efectos resultantes de la pandemia. El texto analizará los desafíos y las respuestas del Estado brasileño a la crisis COVID-19, basándose en la multidimensionalidad y la intersectorialidad. Se discutirán tres puntos en el artículo: a) articulación político-institucional entre diferentes sectores gubernamentales y no gubernamentales; b) elaboración de una contención nacional pandémica; c) establecimiento de mecanismos de transparencia para acciones en curso y comunicación con la sociedad.

### Introduction - Understanding the problem in Brazil

In the face of crisis situations around the world, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the discussion on the government's capacity to present adequate responses to the increasing number of demands characterized by the transversality, multidimensionality and intersectoriality that should comprise the strategies gains strength of state action on the effects of situations of this magnitude. In particular, when the context is marked by the predominance of scenarios guided by a high degree of dynamism, incomplete information, high levels of social tension and considerable susceptibility of governments to the performance of multiple actors inside and outside countries, in addition, of course, to growing

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expectations in relation to the State's action with regard to issues that directly affect the levels of social and economic well-being of populations during crisis situations.

In general, challenges in coordinating government action are directly related to multifaceted and intersectoral problems that require the participation of various actors and organizations. The literature (Barifouse, 2020; Conti, 2020; G1, 2020; Hustain et al. 2020; Larson, 2020) shows that gaps or difficulties in coordinating initiatives under the responsibility of multiple actors generate fragmentation of actions, dispersion of results, inefficiency of spending and prevalence of one-off and temporary effects on complex issues, such as the one we face in the face of the increase in cases of people infected with the coronavirus and its severe consequences for the public at risk and the economy of the countries. Given the scope of the current and future impacts of the pandemic on the social and economic conditions of the affected populations, it is pertinent to state that the crisis triggered by Covid-19 is characterized by both elements: multidimensionality and intersectoriality. But, what does this mean in practical terms?

Firstly, large-scale epidemiological crises are multidimensional in nature and require measures that cover different areas, such as health, economics, the labor market, infrastructure, urban mobility, health, logistical and social issues of a broader nature.

Second, the coordination of multidimensional actions requires intersectoral action capable of bringing together, under common objectives, an extensive list of social actors - national and local governments, sectors of the private initiative and civil society entities - , due to the scale and complexity of the effort needed to tackle the pandemic and its effects. In this sense, it is necessary to establish dialogues and articulations with sectoral ministries responsible for actions of different axes, with states and municipalities responsible for carrying out actions and with different entities and actors from civil society, including a wide spectrum of partners ranging from representatives of sectors industry and commerce, leaders of social movements, representatives of other countries and international organizations. As a result of this diverse range of actors, the interactions necessary for proper management can vary enormously in the degree of systematization, periodicity, themes and objectives.

Multidimensionality and intersectoriality are recurrent themes in the discussion about effective ways to manage complex situations that public agents face all the time. Despite this, the additional element found in crisis scenarios, especially crises of international proportions that involve public health issues, risk of morbidity and collapse of essential services to the population, is the urgency.

With due proportions, different countries have already faced situations of calamity caused by climatic events, environmental tragedies and emergency scenarios in public health of national and international scope. Brazil, for example, has already had to mobilize efforts and create management arrangements responsible for implementing measures to mitigate social and economic impacts resulting from the electrical blackout experienced in 2001, due to prolonged periods of drought in the semiarid region in 2013-2014, or in other scenarios of health emergencies, such as the Zika epidemic that occurred in 2015-2016, aiming to reduce the impact on the population's living conditions. Obviously, the scenario faced now differs enormously from the situations mentioned, however, measures taken in previous cases aimed at defining management arrangements can serve as an apprenticeship to understand the possibilities of government action at this time.

There is no standardized manual that allows defining exactly which procedures or measures must be implemented to guarantee the confrontation of atypical situations and devastating effects in different dimensions of human life, as demonstrated by the Covid-19 pandemic since the beginning of 2020; however, countless works and researches that have been and continue to be developed demonstrate that there are experiences already implemented in other countries, or in other crisis situations experienced by Brazil itself, that can contribute to the design of minimum guidelines, without which the probability of acting in a punctual, fragmented manner and often in opposite directions it becomes significantly elevated. In this sense, it is crucial that the following guidelines are considered as guiding efforts to coordinate action within and outside the governmental sphere:

- definition of a management body recognized as legitimate and valid by all the actors involved in the crisis resolution process;
- clear definition of the roles and competencies of each of the bodies and actors involved;
- definition of action flows and protocols that guide the interaction and participation of the different actors;
- establishment of mediation and conflict resolution instances;
- creation of mechanisms that allow the quick monitoring of the implemented measures and their results, aiming at eventual course corrections and necessary adjustments;
- use of instruments of transparency and accountability for government action with society as a whole.

In the wake of these guidelines, the first and most usual measure taken by governments in the face of crises is the establishment of committees responsible for dealing with the crisis and its repercussions,

the so-called crisis committees, crisis offices, emergency committees, among other denominations. In Brazil, this instance is materialized by the Crisis Committee for Supervision and Monitoring of the Impacts of Covid-19, established by Decree No. 10.277 (Brasil, Decreto, 2020), of March 16, 2020, under the coordination of the Sub-section of Articulation and Monitoring of the Civil House of the Presidency of Republic, with the participation of representatives of 27 bodies, such as ministries, public companies and regulatory agencies. Of course, the simple formal creation of a coordination body in crisis situations is not enough to guarantee the adequacy or success of necessary measures coping with the impacts observed in the moments that precede the emergency situation, at its peak and in progress, and even in the post-crisis period, due to the possible consequences derived from the crisis scenario.

In general, the moment or timing of the creation of these bodies is crucial to ensure that adequate responses are given to the different situations that are outlined along the trajectory of the crisis. There is a fine line and a difficult balance between anticipating risks, preventive action, aiming to mitigate possible effects of the crisis, and the creation of instances of this nature when the crisis is in place and its effects are already felt by the population. In spite of this, after the constitution of the body responsible for coordinating efforts aimed at facing and containing the crisis caused by Covid-19 and its effects, it is important that the coordinated action of the government structure is able to encompass three major fronts of action.

### **First front: political-institutional articulation between different governmental and non-governmental sectors**

Multidimensional problems require intersectoral solutions. Convergence between government initiatives does not mean demand for centralization in the execution of public policies. The coordination of efforts carried out by different actors according to their competences and areas of specialization reduces the possibilities of: i) overlapping actions with similar scopes; ii) the occurrence of specific improvements to the detriment of structural changes caused by the dispersion of actions; iii) dichotomy between concentration of public investments and maintenance of service gaps; and iv) waste of highly disputed human, bureaucratic and financial resources within bureaucratic instances.

To make articulations of this nature feasible, it is crucial to guarantee formal instances and permanent communication channels, which involve the essential actors for the good performance of crisis coping strategies, avoiding asymmetry and mismatch of information, reducing the chances of divergent

orientations in relation to related matters passed on to the population, as well as the negative impacts of the dispersion of efforts in the fight against the effects of the pandemic.

It is extremely important that, in addition to periodic meetings, there is the definition of interlocutors responsible for dialoguing and keeping the different actors involved informed about the strategies to be adopted, the measures under discussion and those already put in place, as well as alignment efforts of speeches and narratives with sectors such as:

- economic sectors with the greatest impact;
- Federation units (states and municipalities), prioritizing those with the highest pandemic incidence and / or greatest vulnerability;
- Legislative and Judiciary powers;
- countries and international organizations;
- third sector and civil society organizations with great capacity for social mobilization.

### **Second front: elaboration of a national pandemic containment**

The clear advantage of defining a National Strategy for Confronting and Containing the COVID-19 Pandemic would have the main advantage of avoiding the dispersion and fragmentation of isolated and, at times, contradictory actions carried out by the numerous actors with the capacity to act on pandemic. The proliferation of measures implemented by multiple actors at different times, with no minimum coordination efforts, tends to amplify the feeling of disorder and panic in society by emitting divergent signs or orientations on certain topics, in addition to considerably increasing the chance of overlapping actions, waste of resources of all kinds, service gaps or effectiveness of the measures implemented.

Until March 30, 2020, only at the federal level, 59 measures were published (Rache et al. 2020) aimed at reducing the impact of the pandemic, which deal with the most varied topics, such as health, agriculture, transportation system, social protection, employment protection, budget rules and release of resources for different purposes that, it seems, are not part of a cohesive strategy led by the federal government under the figure of the crisis committee responsible for ensuring the coordination, convergence and complementarity of the measures put in place action.

It is worth highlighting the relevance of combining the process of developing a cohesive action strategy with the creation of mechanisms that allow the rapid monitoring of the implemented

measures and their results, aiming at possible course corrections and necessary adjustments to ensure the achievement of the expected results and effectiveness implemented measures.

By way of illustration, a national strategy to confront and contain Covid-19 could be structured along the following lines:

- axis 1: epidemiological-sanitary plan and measures to contain the virus;
- axis 2: mitigation of economic impacts resulting from measures of isolation and social distance;
- axis 3: strengthening of the social protection network as a way to resolve the impacts on areas of greatest social and economic vulnerability;
- axis 4: measures to protect work, employment and income generation in the face of the impacts caused by the pandemic;
- axis 5: package of measures to support the states and municipalities most affected by the pandemic.

### **Third front: establishment of transparency mechanisms for ongoing actions and communication with society**

Crisis moments, by definition, tend to generate reactions and behaviors based on the sensation of chaos and panic in the affected populations. The establishment of transparency mechanisms in relation to the set of measures and efforts adopted by governments and periodic channels of communication with society are crucial to mitigate the social and psychological impacts arising from the uncertainty and insecurity that have guided the daily lives of different institutions and families. The taking of a position and the establishment of these communication and accountability channels contribute not only to the strengthening of democratic arrangements for the management of public affairs, but also have the potential to welcome, at least in part, the concerns expressed by the population. In the same sense, these mechanisms can still have significant impacts on the consolidation of political leadership in times of worsening crises and disruption of the conditions of normality that guide daily life with measures such as social distance and reduced circulation of people.

#### *How to do this?*

1. Define specific spokespersons to publicly address the pandemic. It is not necessary for communication to be centralized under the figure of a representative, it is possible for representatives to be appointed due to expertise, institutional competence or body to which they belong (ministers, high-level government officials, governors, mayors, specialists in certain themes, among others).

However, it is crucial that there is coordination and convergence between speeches and responses given to society as a whole, to resolve possible communication failures and to avoid that opposite or contradictory orientations are passed on to the population.

2. Define timeliness and frequency with which communication is made. This adds greater reliability and predictability to government action in the face of the daily changes experienced at the height of the crisis. At first, there will be an increase in hospital admissions, however, in the long term the trend is the reduction.
3. Establish the type of information (content and format) and communication channels that are of public knowledge, especially from the media, research bodies, think tanks, universities and society in general.
4. Respond quickly to new situations that arise, including assuming the asymmetry and incompleteness of the variables and evidence available for decision making or providing more explanations about certain events.

## General considerations

Coping with crises is a short, medium and long-term process that requires continuity and maintenance of investments in transversal public policies, combined with strategies to sustain the effects of these measures. It is essential to ensure the combination of the policy agenda aimed at the immediate impact and noticeable results in the short term and the structuring ones, aimed at breaking the conditions for reproducing the social and economic effects resulting from the pandemic. Part of these results are not necessarily noticeable in short periods, they are changes whose effects can be felt with greater intervals, for example. However, the non-investment in these actions contributes to deepen and strengthen the factors that influence the reproduction of the vulnerabilities that already mark Brazilian society in different dimensions.

It is believed, therefore, that facing crises, among so many other dimensions, cannot do without a government concern with the coordination of its actions, since the delivery of expected results to society will only be carried out with the interaction of a diversity of actors, not only linked to the state, but also to civil society and the private sector. This document lays down the minimum bases for an action proposal to face the crisis, strongly based on the establishment of good coordination mechanisms.

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# Shared-knowledge, Transparency, and Accountability: In Enabling State-Society Relations Governance on COVID-19 Resilience Building Societies<sup>1</sup>

Eddy Bruno Esien<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

This policy brief examines shared-knowledge, transparency and accountability to improve enabling state-society relations on COVID-19 resilient building governance and takes into account the impact on third-country nationals (TCNs) in Austria, Finland, Czechia, and Lithuania. Existing research pointed to state-society relations as decentralised multi-stakeholder governance in public service reform for sustainable resilience building societies. However, the governance faced budgetary constraints and low public sector performance management. Although the relational governance shows certain public authorities have failed and/or ineffective to administer and achieve a range of public policy goals, there is still little policy study research in Nordic, Baltic, Central Eastern European - CEE and Central Western European countries explaining the improvement of state-society relations model on COVID-19 resilient building societies and its impacts to TCNs' in the selected entities. Based on a qualitative cross-country oriented research approach with fewer country comparisons, primary data from the authors of this policy paper research, documents, published and unpublished scholarly texts are collected and analyzed with document and content analysis techniques. The findings indicate insufficient shared-knowledge for responsive decision to local concerns, lack of diverse interests groups' consultations, and quality service delivery often not transparent that infringe the core values of trust, public accountability, mutual responsibilities, and citizens' participation in effective public service relational governance implementation and impact TCNs and ethnic minorities peoples' COVID-19 crisis-related resilient in the selected entities. This policy brief recommends shared-knowledge for open access to relevant information, mutual corporate responsibilities between government, public and private organization policy for public interest, diversify migrants communities involvement in policy consultation for open democracy, rebuilding of bureaucrats' professional capacity to ensure commitment and increase public service staff, and legislation to set specific working ethics and values compatible with public interest that combine honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, and fair equal treatment of citizens (especially from heterogeneous minorities subgroups) in the formulation, implementation, and delivery of public care to sustain COVID-19 resilient building societies. Not meeting these marginal policy adjustments and recommendations may intensify the reinforcement of public service distrust and corruption, deepen political and /or social inequalities, jeopardize open democracy, and impair sustainable COVID-19 resilient building societies.

## Introduction

The policy brief examines shared-knowledge, transparency, and accountability to improve the overall enabling state-society relations on COVID-19 resilience building. It also takes into account the impact to TCNs heterogeneous subgroups and ethnic minorities groups of citizens. Moreover, TCNs' and

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other ethnic-minorities' groups of citizens should not simply be joined together in one monolithic category on COVID-19 shock-related resilient building governance. TCNs are a distinct group of people characterised by varying degrees of a political and socio-economic integration process with diverse needs on crisis-related and stresses resilient building. The policy brief put forward the argument that Austria, Finland, Czechia, and Lithuania public administrators must take into account the plurality and dichotomy of the country's TCNs when involving multi-stakeholders to address COVID-19 resilience building. These marginal adjustments may be useful for policymakers' decision-management, administration, and arrangement considering a new organizational form of the enabling state-society relations to improve COVID-19 resilience building governance in the comparative entities. Within the context of shared-knowledge, transparency, and accountability that ensures decentralised multi-stakeholders, cooperation between government and the community, and mutual trust, the significant improvement on COVID-19 resilience societies may be sustainable.

## **Policy Audience**

This policy brief is addressed to Government Officials, private actors, and institutions. In this case, Government Officials are policymakers that define, maintain, and enforce the rule of the laws as regulator for collective action, while relying on public administration in COVID-19 resilience building politics. Private actors and institutions are non-state policymakers' bodies<sup>3</sup> that influence sustainable new organizational reforms in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to build resilience societies that impact TCN's and socio-economically ethnic minorities groups.

## **Policy Aims**

The aim is to improve the overall changes in the enabling state-society relations governance on COVID-19 resilience building and take into account the impact to TCNs in Austria, Finland, Czechia, and Lithuania. This policy brief argues that there is a need for a marginal improvement in enabling state-society relations multi-stakeholders governance to ensure trust in public sector performance and build resilience societies. Therefore, diversify external experts' and community participation is relevant to reduce centrality for better policy response of local conditions and that may guarantee transparency, accountability, trust and ethical values with anti-corruption tendencies in an open democratic resilient inclusive-oriented society. This may reduce risks and sustain COVID-19 reliance building societies. This policy brief also offers recommendations to state-society relational multi-

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<sup>3</sup> such as practitioners, lobbyist, public interest groups, public relations firms, business groups, faith-based organizations, community-based organization, individual activists, and social media

actors governance on COVID-19 resilience building that impact TCNs and other ethnic minorities groups in the selected entities

## Background of the problem

Government's shock and crisis-related reforms have a long history in industrialized democracies. The reform takes place in a fragile macroeconomic context, often coupled with budgetary deficits (see Esien, 2019; 2020) to sustain resilience societies (Fraser and Kirbyshire, 2017: 6-7). In 2019Q4, according to Table 1, the general debt-to-GDP ratios were 30.8% (Czechia), 36.3% (Lithuania), 59.4% (Finland), and 70.4% (Austria) (Eurostat, 2020: 2). Such pervasive budgetary constraints, even though they were below the EU27 (77.8%), had a significant impact on government provision of public care. The impact revolves around a new governance to change the organizational management of complex inter-related, uncertain shocks and stresses related resilience (Fraser and Kirbyshire, 2017: 9) in public policies formulation, implementation and administration ramification.

The move contributes to a more decentralisation and also reduces quality and performance of government (Marino, 2012). Quality and performance determines public "trust in government" performance and public sector overall quality (Thijs et al., 2017: 54-55) in delivery of public care on resilience building. From 2010 to 2016, for instance, citizens' trust in government fell in Austria (54% to 35%), Finland (49% to 40%), and Czechia (32% to 27%) (see Table 2). On the other hand, in Lithuania, from 2010 to 2016, citizen's trust in government rose from 12% to 23%. This suggests distrust of government indicates ineffective use of taxpayers' money in public sector management and aspects of corruption in dealing with public businesses.

Decentralisation and multi-stakeholders governance reforms are desirable within the interaction, arrangement, cooperation, coordination, and interdependence of state and non-state institutions for resilient building (Thompson, 1965; see Esien, 2019; 2020). This enables, for instance, participation, individual responsibilities, awareness, diversity, self-regulation, integration and adaptation on COVID-19 resilience building coping strategies systems. Nevertheless, it will take time for bureaucrats to adapt to the new decentralised multi-actors relational open method of cooperate governance in complex public policy making and implementation that requires bureaucrats' professional capacity and quality performance management (Thijs et al, 2017; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017). Sustainable multi-stakeholders governance is also complex because of its normative ideals that lack autonomy and self-regulation with accountability (Fraser and Kirbyshire, 2017: 11) for improvement on COVID-19 risk-related resilience building. Multi-stakeholders reforms take place in

the context of efforts to decrease the size of government. In Austria, for instance, expenditures shrank from about 19.76 per cent of GDP in 2015 to about 19.49 per cent in 2017 (The Global Economy, 2020). In Finland, the annual government expenditure was more than 24.39 per cent of GDP in late 2015 and about 22.81 per cent in 2017. In Czechia, expenditure shrank from about 19.22 per cent of GDP in 2015 to about 19.19 per cent in 2017. In Lithuania, spending fell from 17.22 per cent of GDP in 2015 to 16.31 in 2017 (see Table 4).

Not surprisingly, government relationship with business and civil society participation for “shared set of responsibilities” (Kooiman, 2003: 5) often dominates the state and inter-organizational socio-political agenda. A reduction of exclusion that involves non-state actors’ regulators seems most industrialized economies effective programmes to sustain resilience societies. The current situation is in sharp contrast to the old age of sovereign nation-states (Potůček and Rudolfova 2016) resilience building systems governance, when the government was the exclusive regulator responsible for the provision of public care (Midley, 2000). This suggest public welfare delivery on resilience building was not run in the market, but through government commitment on building public service capacity for service delivery (Esien, 2019: 271; 2020)

Transferring public service: The new concern to deliver public care through multi stakeholder that includes non-state agencies has led the government to view state-society relational governance as an opportunity for collective responsibility and to replace the centralised hierarchical state providers in two ways. First, the government cooperates in “a system of continuous nested government at several territorial tiers” (Marks, 1993: 392) with multiple non-state institutions to enhance effectiveness, democratic legitimacy, individual autonomy and responsibilities on resilience building policy goals. Second, state-society relational multi-actors governance strengthen resilience building strategies beyond systems and emergency plans to improve social safety nets and bolster public services performance (United Nation, 2018: 4). The hope of this concern seems to have been that public administrators would cooperate, monitor and control performance and institutional compliance. Even though managing the governance seems difficult in the worsening economic situation with weakened government effective responsiveness and low administrative capacity to observe non-state institutions behaviours and achieve policy goals.

In short, despite enabling state-society relations, the multi-stakeholder governance faces challenges. Some bureaucrats have failed or are ineffective in responsiveness to manage a huge sum of taxpayer’s money in the selected entities on resilience building range of policy goals. These uncertainties also impact TCNs and disadvantage ethnic minorities groups subjective well being. Within this context, a

rigorous policy study to improve the enabling state-society relations multi-stakeholder governance on resilience building is imperative in the selected entities. This policy brief fills this gap and improves the overall enabling state-society relation multi-stakeholder governance on COVID-19 resilience building in Austria, Finland, Czechia, and Lithuania and its impacts to TCNs and ethnic minorities groups.

The next section concerns the policy options to derive recommendations on COVID-19 resilience building improvement for sustainability.

### **Policy Option: Broader Adjustment in the border of Enabling State-Society Relation Institutional Framework**

This policy brief research design includes primary and secondary data. The primary data are from the authors' research. The secondary data are published and unpublished publication on multi-stakeholders resilience governance. The criteria for selecting the documents include official reports, policy studies, and academic journals. Geographical focus, type of data available and audience drives the data selection choice and sources in this policy brief to increase the reliability of the approach. The enabling state-society relations multi-stakeholders model is the main component of this framework. The key features of enabling state-society relational framework covers the following: (I) Shared-knowledge; (II) Societal consultation; and (III) transparency and accountability for mutual trust in public business

Without open shared knowledge, there is a lack of adequate well-managed communication, participation and transparency. Without transparency, lack of accountability and corruption persists with societies that feel excluded and behave unethically and untrustworthy. With open shared-knowledge, diversified societal consultation, and transparency, there is increasing tendencies for collective share of responsibilities and mutual trust to effectively sustain public funds for public benefits, cohesive society with respect, human dignity, economic prosperity, and open democratic responds on COVID-19 resilience building societies.

#### **Shared-knowledge for responsive decision to local concerns**

While budgetary constraints is clearly desirable from the central government for market efficiency perspective, governments' efforts to provide public care cannot be achieved alone, as they are in some countries (Esien, 2019; 2020). The developments of multi-stakeholders relations in the provision of public care are essential to political mobilisation, political equality, and sustainable development.

Governments cannot provide, manage, administer, and govern these services at an adequate level from their own administrative capacity. Multi-stakeholders relational governance brings together different partners across territorial tiers (Marks, 1993: 392), scales and/or sectors in dialogue, decision-making and implementation of solutions in a coordinated and integrated manner (Djalante et al., 2011). This is fundamental to ensure open information with knowledge sharing and public accountability (Fraser and Kirbyshire, 2017: 9). Reduced multi-stakeholders and knowledge sharing may cope with budgetary constraints but exclude greater participation by groups affected by decisions. This indicates challenges in citizen's participation that impact COVID-19 resilience building, which may undermine vulnerable peoples' voices. The only way to keep down such presumably undesirable development in the selected entities is likely to maintain participation and open information with efficient knowledge sharing that may encourage responsive decision and democratic legitimacy to local concern and changing circumstances. This is important for addressing unpredictable, evolving and locally experienced COVID-19 shock and stresses related resilience.

### **Societal consultation for engagement and partnership**

Direct government consultation is one of the ways for the central government to consult with economic and social actors in the course of policy preparation as part to achieve policy goals and sustainable governance. Such sets of societal consultation in the form of organized interest groups participation in policy-making and corporatist structures of interest mediations are resourceful for bureaucrats to strengthen effective policy processes. Consultation of this kind may make sense to build reliance coping societies, but bureaucrats' adaptation in multi-stakeholder governance and professional quality performance challenges create complex outcomes. In response to a survey in Austria, Czechia and Lithuania, for instance, the quality of bureaucrats slightly diminished and risks public service politicised rather than professional (Thijs et al. 2017, p. 38) that may create barriers for independent diverse policy advisers to enter into policy advice on COVID-19 resilience building. Since the government has failed to strengthen the involvement of different citizens' priority, public administrators' professional capacity and quality service performance on COVID-19 resilience building is imperative. Targeting civil service professional quality may not eliminate the incapacity or insufficiency. Even though enabling state-society relational multi-stakeholder governance can bring beneficial influences to both citizens' resilience and to the taxpayers, the benefits depend crucially on the government's regulatory capacity to manage the relation well. In this environment, a simple selection of bureaucrats (without consultation of diverse interest groups such as community-based and migrants' communities), efficient regulatory quality, rule of the law for sustainability,

system of values, and the reduction of exclusion is not sufficient to build COVID-19 resilience shock-related societies.

### **Restricting transparency and accountability for mutual trust in public business**

Institutionalised regulatory mechanisms ensure transparency and accountability for government trust in public service. For example, institutional compliance regulatory mechanism guides checks & balances such as transparency international watchdog bodies and ombudsman (Thijs et al., 2017: 38-39) to effective regulation. A striking feature of the current enabling state-society relational multi-stakeholders governance in some countries, however, is the virtually restricted legal access to government information by citizens / public and transparency perception to corruption that impact administrative capacity on COVID-19 resilience building. In Czechia, for instance, there is a relative low score (fourth quintiles) in overall ranking of digitalization and service delivery capacity and performance that indicates restrictive government information with clearly less accessible to the public (Thijs,et al.,2017: 48). Several authors emphasize that transparency and accountability in Czechia, Lithuania, Austria, and Finland need further policies alongside existing Non-discrimination Acts for Equal Treatments measures to tackle corruption (see Esien, 2019; 2020; Thijs et al., 2017: 48) and enhance equal opportunities. Governments in the selected entities, for instance, introduce a transparency Amendment Act to fight corruption. However, information asymmetry between the principal (government bodies) and agents (private organizations) exist in enabling state-society relational multi-stakeholder governance corporate arrangements that influence the provision and implementation of transparency policy measure on COVID-19 resilience building (Kameník et al., 2010: 6).

In the past decades, central governments in Austria, Finland, Czechia, and Lithuania, determine public administration and control from a sovereign nation states regulatory perspective. Recently, under state-society relational multilevel actors' governance, the governments involve agents from the private and non-profit sectors among other non-state institutions in public service governance on COVID-19 resilience building. Lack of transparency and open shared-knowledge, with unequal societal consultation indicate insufficient government response to citizens' participation, ineffective management, and distrust in government and public service performance. The policy outcome may also limit diverse citizens' participations especially from migrants' communities and undermines vulnerable people on COVID-19 pandemic resilience building societies. This makes the enabling state-society relational multilevel actor's governance ineffective and inefficient for quality capacity performance and sustainable COVID-19 resilience building coping strategies.

As a matter of fact, each of the above may be considered as a prerequisite in enabling state-society relations multi-stakeholder governance in a way that best serves taxpayers' money and protects inclusion on COVID-19 resilient building sustainability. If knowledge sharing is open and transparent, there is a possibility that diverse citizens from different interest groups (such as NGOs) and (migrants) communities (who are equally the most vulnerable welfare dependence in crisis-related shocks and stresses) will take part and share the collective burden with individual responsibilities. Without open shared-knowledge, there is no guarantee that taxpayer's voices are headed on COVID-19 resilience building. Moreover, without transparency and accountability there is a strong possibility of corruption and public distrust in government provision of public care. Lack of transparency also shows that vulnerable people and ethnic minority groups experience political inequalities and are excluded from public assistance sub production regimes (such as healthcare, employment, and work systems etcetera). These people are likely people with disabilities (PWDs), elderly, lone mothers, TCNs (such as (im) migrants, refugees, undocumented newcomers) and socio-economically disadvantaged ethnic minorities' heterogeneous subgroups with multiple disadvantaged. Hence, the bigger picture and potential benefit of critical thinking, evaluation of policy performance and diversify expertise knowledge are blur and underrepresented on government effective and efficient negotiations at several territorial tiers of COVID-19 resilience building sustainability in the selected entities.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In this policy brief, Austria, Finland, Czechia, and Lithuania's public policy reform on COVID-19 resilience building in the realm of enabling state-society relational multi-stakeholders governance, is marked with shortcomings. A substantial part of the relational corporate governance exempts a well-managed communicative open knowledge sharing for responsive decision to local concern. Equally, the weak effective responsiveness of governments to societal consultation and democratic deficits may undermine minorities group of peoples' voices on COVID-19 resilience building policy goals. Moreover, quality and service delivery performances are often not transparent that infringe citizens' participations to manage tax payers' money. Under these circumstances, public distrust may prevail in public service performance and the core idea of collective responsibilities, autonomy, reduction of exclusion, democratic legitimacy, and the effectiveness and responsiveness of governments' policy goals for sustainable development on COVID-19 resilience building is blurred.

As a matter of fact, the research recommends following policy reforms improvement in this area for marginal adjustments:

- 1) State-society relations on COVID-19 resilient building should be subject to freedom of collective shared-knowledge and open information. Access to relevant information should be made easy (e.g. in different TCNs citizens' languages) and available to the public through well organized e-government service delivery platform.
- 2) Mutual cooperation and partnership between all the government units, migrants' communities, actors, and institutions that provide public services and goods on COVID-19 resilient building should be clearly enforced and nested at several territorial tiers.
- 3) Migrant communities should participate in crisis-related resilience policy consultation and policy advice as they are the most affected in COVID-19 pandemic crisis to ensure sustainability, enhance open democracy, and reduce democratic deficit
- 4) Public administrators should commit to cut government spending on consultants, and reinvest, taxpayers' money to rebuild public service capability with permanent jobs and increased staffing. This is good news for open democracy- less corporate interest and more frank and fearless advice to the government.
- 5) Trust in government, ethic and value-added standard in COVID-19 resilient building includes
  - (a) standardize open information for transparency
  - (b) data information that is focused, proportionate, relevant, and not too frequently change to the COVID-19 process, and
  - (c) legislation that should set specific working ethics, which include empathy, humility, compassion, honesty, integrity, and fairness to treat contemporary super diversity public service users

In conclusion, the enabling state-society relational multilevel stakeholder governance is decisive not only in public management and administration of tax payers' money that regulates fiscal imbalances and adjust budgetary deficit, but decentralised collective responsibility of the state, the business, and civic sector in service delivery system on COVID-19 resilience building through open shared-knowledge, transparency, and accountability that impact TCNs and ethnic-minorities citizen's shock-related resilience building policy outcomes. Not meeting these goals might not only lead to the lack of public value accountability, corruption, and political inequalities, but may devastate vulnerable people's subjective wellbeing, jeopardize citizen's trust in government and public service performance and impair open democracy on COVID-19 crisis-related resilience building sustainability.

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## Appendix:

**Table 2: Trust in government 2010 to 2016, in %**

	Trust in Government,		
	2010	2016	Difference in point
Austria	54	35	-19
Finland	49	40	-9
Lithuania	12	23	+11
Czechia	31	27	-4

Thijs et al, 2017; Esien, 2019; 2020

**Table 3: Professionalism of Civil Service**

	Civil Service Professionalism	
	2012	2015
Austria	4.4	4.3
Finland	5	5
Czechia	3.7	3.8
Lithuania	4.5	4.4

Quality of Government Expert Survey; Seen in Thijs et al., 2017: 43

**Table 4: Government annual expenditure in % of GDP in Austria, Finland, Czechia & Lithuania**

	Annual Government Expenditure in Percent of GDP			
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Austria	19.76	19.67	19.49	19.32
Finland	19.22	23.66	22.81	22.66
Czechia	19.22	19.27	19.19	19.97
Lithuania	17.22	17.00	16.31	16.49

The Global Economy.com, 2020

## The impact of Covid-19 on Better Regulation agenda<sup>1</sup>

Panagiotis Karkatsoulis<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

The outbreak of the Covid-19 has had a negative impact on Governance systems. According to the recent literature, the pandemic should be understood as one more step towards Autocracy. Governance systems have reacted to the coronavirus pandemic through a series of decisions, which suffer both in terms of their issuing significant faults as far as it concerns both their process of issuing and their content. The vast majority of the commented decisions are violating the legality principle and have been issued on a “state of emergency” basis.

In fact, what has been happening during the pandemic, is a systematic cancellation of the Better Regulation Agenda. Recent surveys have shown that the poorest the quality of Governance, the heaviest (negative) impact of the coronavirus on regulatory policies. In Greece there was an intensification of corporatistic regulation and decisions during the crisis. Covid-19 has functioned as an alibi: Many agencies and public organizations followed an extralegal procedure, when it came to the recruitment of personnel as well as public procurement. What does change during a crisis like the pandemic, is the people’s attitude towards government, which offers an opportunity to push some reforms forward. But as long as the governance system remains unchanged those reforms are bound to fade out soon after the crisis is over.

### Introduction

The outbreak of the Covid-19 has a negative impact on Governance systems. Though the pandemic has just happened and the short time does not allow to draw secure conclusions, we consider that the vast majority of literature is tending that the recent pandemic should be understood as one more step in a transition from Democracy to Autocracy (Cepaluni, Dorsch, & Branyiczki, 2020; Kavanagh & Singh, 2020). Furthermore, many writers recall the long-established strand of critique of modern biopolitics in the humanities represented by authors like Michel Foucault (Nygren, Olofsson, & Olofsson, 2020), Roberto Esposito (Short, 2020), and Giorgio Agamben (Berge, 2020).

Recently, Agamben made his standpoint clear in an article about the Coronavirus, in which he describes the media and the authorities as doing ‘their utmost to create a climate of panic, thus provoking a true state of exception, with severe limitations on movement and the suspension of daily life and work activities for entire regions’ (Agamben, 2020).

Biopolitics became not only a global fact but they have introduced a new set of notions and distinctions, which, as it seems, they are going to dominate (at least for the near future) the discussion

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about social coherence and integrity. As Roberto Esposito explains on the meaning of immunity “Socially and politically speaking, even face masks and social distancing are part of an immunitarian attitude toward human interaction. So, immunity is at the center of everyday life today. Immunity is something ambivalent: it generates its own risks and dangers as well. To connect this to the contemporary crisis, during the pandemic, the intertwining of politics and medicine has become absolutely central. On the one hand, medicine has become politicized in the crisis, as shown by the conflicts between virologists and epidemiologists on what seems like purely scientific questions. These are, in fact, also of a social and geo-political nature. On the other hand, politics has become medicalized, treating the citizen as a patient in need of perpetual care and turning social deviance into an epidemic disruption to be treated or suppressed. Of course, this has very significant consequences. Giving doctors the task of political decision-making, on the one hand, strongly reduces the scope for political action and, on the other hand, radically transforms the political arena, making deviance a pathological condition” (Esposito, 2020).

However, since we are still in the unknown as far as it concerns the deep structure and the extent of the coronavirus disastrous impact on the human organism, we can admit with Habermas that: “The economic and social science experts should be cautious about making ill-considered forecasts. One thing can be said: There has never been so much awareness of our ignorance and of the necessity to have to act and to have to live under conditions of uncertainty (Habermas, 2020). On a juxtaposition, Slavoj Zizek has published a book in which he claims that the pandemic is revealing the need for a ‘reinvented communism’ (Zizek, 2020)

Apart from the various positions and estimations, there is not even one who predicts an easy way of disengagement from Covid-19. Bruno Latour in its essay on Coronavirus stresses that: “It’s a huge experiment. This is a global catastrophe that has come not from the outside like a war or an earthquake, but from within. Viruses are completely inside us. We cannot completely eject them. We must learn to live with them” (Latour, 2020).

### **From the philosophical point of view to an administrative/political**

Moving from the philosophical point of view to an administrative/political one, some certain evidence-based conclusions are already present: Governance systems have reacted to the coronavirus pandemic through a series of decisions, which suffer significant faults as far as it concerns both the process of issuing them and their content. Most of the commented decisions are violating the legality principle and operating on a “state of emergency” situation.

A state of emergency is a situation in which a government is empowered to perform actions or impose policies that would normally not be permitted to undertake. A government can declare such a state during a natural disaster, civil unrest, armed conflict, medical pandemic or epidemic or other biosecurity risk. Such declarations alert citizens to change their normal behavior and orders government agencies to implement emergency plans.

States of emergency can also be used as a rationale or pretext for suspending rights and freedoms guaranteed under a country's constitution. The procedure for and legality of doing so vary by country.

As Gessen stresses In “Surviving Autocracy,” (Gessen, 2016) the United States has been terribly unprepared for a figure like Donald Trump. Not because he came out of nowhere; if anything, he took advantage of a political system that was ripe for a demagogue, swollen already by money and the powers concentrated in the executive branch. The same goes to Greeks who have been exhausted by the leftist Government led by Tsipras who has been transformed from a revolutionary to a pure neo-liberal.

Following Schmitt's terms (Ausnahmezustand) (Schmitt, 1978), the emergency has led governments to violate the division of powers and undertake the legislator's role, which has been, practically, abandoned by the legislature. The pandemic is a sort of a global state of emergency which must be studied in its detail. However, it's a paradox the mere fact that each one of the EU member states has reached a decision on a state of emergency, according to its own estimation and decision making mechanisms. The “state of emergency” was a true expression of sovereignty.

However, the modern state of emergency due to the coronavirus copies Schmitt's definition of “sovereignty” as the power to decide to initiate a state of exception. Through the state of exception, Schmitt included all types of violence under right, in the case of the authority of Hitler leading to the formulation "The leader defends the law" ("Der Führer schützt das Recht") (Schmitt C. , 1934).

The violation of the principle of the separation of powers and, specifically in the pandemic case, of the legislative function, has led to the institutionalization of “new, extralegal rules” (Mbembe).

In fact, what has been happening on the pandemic, it is a systematic cancelation of the Better Regulation Agenda, as it has been applied during the last decades. In this sense the violation of Democracy is, somehow, indirect. We may call it a “hollowing out of the rule of law” paraphrasing the term “Hollowing out of the State” introduced by R. W. Rhodes (Rhodes, 1994). It is a continuous slip to authoritarianism.

There are, though, significant differences between the classic example of the Reichstag Fire (the arson against the German parliament) which led to President von Hindenburg's “Reichstag Fire Decree”

following Hitler's advice, but there are undoubtful similarities as well: The consequences of entering a state of exception may unroll slowly. "Even the original Reichstag Fire was not the Reichstag Fire of our imagination—a singular event that changed the course of history once and for all," Gessen wrote, pointing out that the Second World War did not begin for another six years after the Reichstag burned.

Alongside with the state of exemption another phenomenon in governance has been developing: the "hollow out of the state" (Rhodes, 1994). Hollowing out of the state, is a concept to describe a situation where an increasing number of public interest services is provided by the private sector or networks outside government, while at the same time public authorities seem to maintain control, but they are doing so just in a symbolic way. The hollow state can be identified by four main elements: privatization; alternative service delivery systems; the transfer of sovereign powers to the EU; and the new public management as the private sector's toolkit applied to the public sector. The resulting problems include fragmentation and lack of accountability.

A combination of the state of exemption with the hollowing out of the state results to a "hollowing out of the Rule of Law". When we apply the above described concepts of the "the state of exemption" and the "hollowing out of the state" to the current coronavirus crisis, we conclude the following:

1. Parliaments set back during a crisis and the executive takes over and regulates through emergency legislation.

2. The crisis creates a regulatory trilemma:

- Changes and reforms may happen, which in "normal" times cannot be implemented. According to this concept, crisis creates a fertile ground for changes.
- The crisis may open Pandora's Box resulting to an escalation of the crisis.
- The crisis might not influence functionalities and structures of Governance, since its results do not create any threat for established culture and values which have been remained unchangeable for a long period of time.

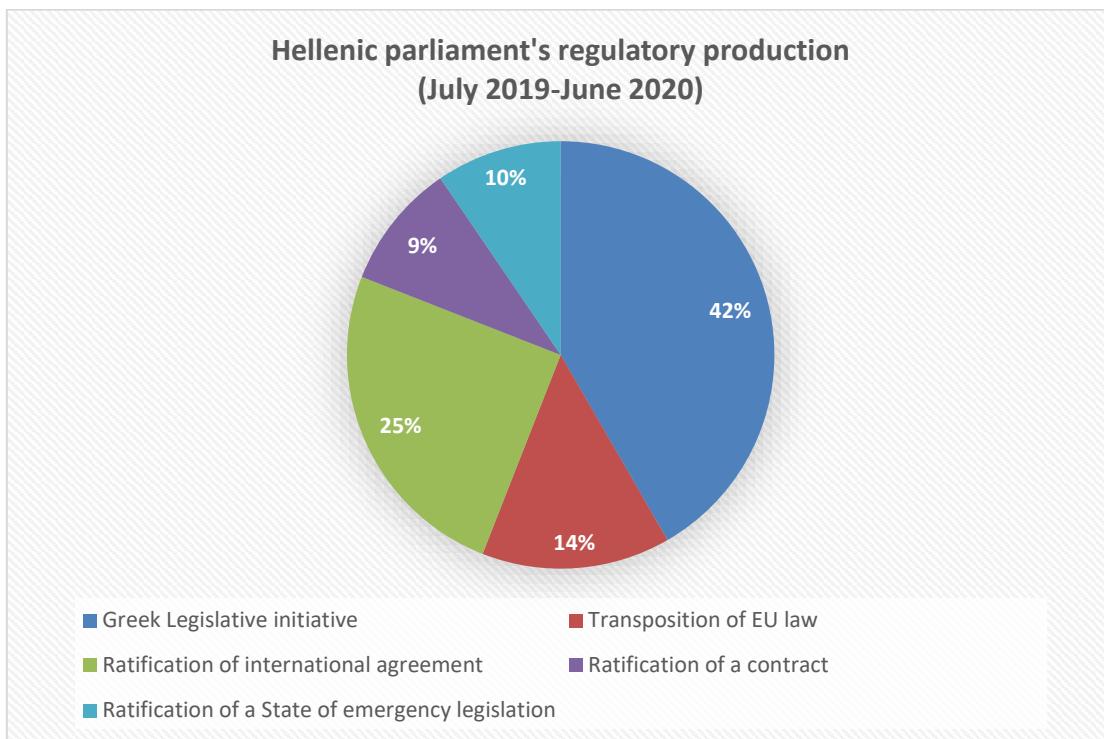
Having studied and analyzed the Greek regulation during the outbreak in Greece (February 2020-June 2020), we have concluded that there are significant deviations from the Better Regulation standards and principles as they have been formed by both the European Commission and the Greek Government. Better regulation relies on evidence and a transparent process, which involves citizens and stakeholders (for example, businesses, public administrations and researchers) throughout the law-making process.

Emergency legislation is an exceptional regulatory process, which, according to the Greek constitution, should be used strictly in emergency situations. The over-use of it shall be avoided. Emergency legislation is issued by the executive, namely the council of ministers, and has then to be ratified by the parliament within certain time limits, in order to be valid. The emergency legislation during the pandemic were 4 legislative acts in a total of 43 legislative acts enacted during that period. Compared to the regulatory production of the previous 12 months (July 2019 – June 2020) there is no spike in emergency legislation. More specifically, from July 2019 to June 2020 there have been enacted 8 emergency legislations in a total of 82 legislative acts (including the pandemic period). That means that in the past year the government has made use of the emergency legislation 4 times during the pandemic and 4 more times before that. Nevertheless, the issues regulated by the 4 emergency legislation issued during the pandemic, were indeed connected to the coronavirus, such as:

- The organization of the immigrants hot spots, the requisition of emergency housing to host infected immigrants in case of an outbreak, and other issues related to immigrants.
- The extra financing to the ministry of health in order to deal with the coronavirus extra expenses
- Labour related issues, for workers to be able to follow the lockdown instructions without been fired.

But the issues regulated through emergency legislation before the pandemic were mostly clientelistic arrangements. Those arrangements did not contain themselves just into the emergency legislation, but spread throughout the legislative production of the 12 months period. Clauses that introduced exceptions from the law had been enacted many times between July 2019 – June 2020. Clientelism, present in Greece for two centuries, has evidently affected the law-making practices as well. Most of the Greek Governments, both left and right wing, have paid their tribute and reproduced the clientelistic networks. The right-wing government of New Democracy (ND), that emerged after the elections in July 2019, is no exception.

From the total of the parliamentary regulatory production of the previous 12 months, there is a 10% that refers to the state of exemption due to the coronavirus. The rest 42% refers to regulations initiated by the Greek government, while another 25% refers to the ratification of international agreements, 14% to the transposition of EU law, and 9% to the ratification of public contracts.

**Figure 1: Regulatory production of the Hellenic parliament (July 2019 - June 2020)**

There have been 36 laws (42% of the legislative production, as shown in figure 1) for which the legislative initiative belonged to the Greek government. Those are the laws that are inhibited by regulatory exemptions, as international agreements, contracts and EU law have a mostly pre-described text. In those 36 laws we have mapped 90 cases of exceptional regulatory clauses:

- 14 exemptions regarding staff hiring in the civil service
- 34 exemptions regarding secondments, transfer and mobility in the public sector
- 8 exemptions regarding remuneration of civil servants
- 6 exemptions regarding the selection of the leadership in the public sector
- 25 exemptions referred to public procurement
- 3 exemptions referred to other administrative issues.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the impact of the coronavirus on governance depends on its context. The political, legal and administrative culture of each country is not affected even in a case like the pandemic, which

creates the need for immediate and acute actions. Even if the results of governing through a crisis may seem different (i.e. more effective) than usual, the underlying practices and culture remains the same. What does change during a crisis like the pandemic, is the people's attitude towards government, which offers an opportunity to push some reforms forward. But as long as the governance system remains unchanged those reforms are bound to fade out soon after the crisis is over.

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## Public Administration and Local Government in coronavirus crisis<sup>1</sup>

Ioannis Mouroutsos<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This policy brief presents the necessary measures taken by the government in cooperation with other state bodies to deal with the health crisis in the field of public and local administration. The policy brief highlights some of the major changes that have been attempted for the digital state and the integration of new technologies into our daily lives as well as their usefulness in a range of activities utilized across the spectrum of public administration, from the narrow public sector to the first and second degree administration.

### Δημόσια Διοίκηση και Τοπική Αυτοδιοίκηση κατά την κρίση του κορωνοϊού

Ιωάννης Μουρούτσος<sup>3</sup>

### Περίληψη

Σε αυτό το σύντομο άρθρο παρουσιάζονται τα αναγκαία μέτρα που χρειάστηκε να πάρει η Κυβέρνηση σε συνεργασία με άλλους φορείς του κρατικού μηχανισμού για να αντιμετωπίσει την υγειονομική κρίση στον τομέα της Δημόσιας διοίκησης και Τοπικής αυτοδιοίκησης. Μέσα στο άρθρο επισημαίνονται ορισμένες από τις μεγάλες αλλαγές που επιχειρήθηκαν για το ψηφιακό κράτος και την ενσωμάτωση των νέων τεχνολογιών στην καθημερινότητα μας όπως επίσης και την χρησιμότητά τους σε ένα εύρος δραστηριοτήτων που αξιοποιούνται σε όλο το φάσμα της δημόσιας διοίκησης, από το στενό δημόσιο τομέα μέχρι την αυτοδιοίκηση πρώτου και δεύτερου βαθμού.

### Εισαγωγή

Σκοπός του παρόντος policy brief είναι η παρουσίαση ορισμένων σημαντικών αλλαγών στη λειτουργία της δημόσιας διοίκησης μέσα από την χρήση νέων τεχνολογιών πληροφόρησης και επικοινωνίας. Αφορμή στάθηκε η εμφάνιση μιας άνευ προηγουμένου υγειονομικής κρίσης με την ονομασία covid-19. Ήταν λοιπόν, επιτακτική ανάγκη μέσα σε σύντομο χρονικό διάστημα να

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δημιουργηθούν νέα δεδομένα στήριξης όλου του κρατικού μηχανισμού για να μπορέσει να συνεχίσει την εύρυθμη λειτουργία του, αλλά και να μπορούν οι πολίτες να εξυπηρετούνται με ασφάλεια.

Συγκεκριμένες αλλαγές ευρείας κλίμακας έλαβαν χώρα μέσα από την υλοποίηση διαδικασιών για τη δημιουργία ψηφιακού κράτους και την ενσωμάτωση των νέων τεχνολογιών στην καθημερινότητα των Ελλήνων πολιτών, όπως επίσης και την χρησιμότητά τους σε ένα εύρος δραστηριοτήτων που αξιοποιούνται σε όλο το φάσμα της δημόσιας διοίκησης, από το στενό δημόσιο τομέα μέχρι την τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση. Η πρωτοφανής υγειονομική κρίση που προκάλεσε η παγκόσμια πανδημία, ανέδειξε με κατηγορηματικό τρόπο τη σημασία που έχει σήμερα η διαδικτυακή προσβασιμότητα και η ψηφιακή εγγραμματοσύνη για τη συμμετοχή των πολιτών στην εργασία, στην εκπαίδευση, στην επικοινωνία, στις υπηρεσίες και στην πληροφόρηση. Τέλος, στο παρόν άρθρο γίνεται αναφορά για το πώς επηρέασε την καθημερινότητα των πολιτών η πανδημία του covid-19, όπως επίσης τις ενέργειες και δράσεις που εφάρμοσε και υλοποίησε η δημόσια διοίκηση.

Το τελευταίο διάστημα βιώσαμε μια πρωτόγνωρη παγκόσμια υγειονομική κρίση με τεράστιες συνέπειες σε οικονομικό, κοινωνικό, πολιτικό επίπεδο αλλά και απώλειες χιλιάδων ανθρώπινων ζωών που παρόμοια της δεν έχει υπάρξει εδώ και περίπου έναν αιώνα. Όπως όλες οι χώρες του πλανήτη μας έτσι και η δική μας προσπάθησε άμεσα λόγω των έκτακτων συνθηκών της υγειονομικής κρίσης να λάβει αυστηρά μέτρα αντιμετώπισης διαχείρισης του κινδύνου της πανδημίας, με πρωταρχικό σκοπό και στόχο την ασφάλεια των πολιτών (Gao & Yu, 2020). Μέσα στα αχαρτογράφητα νερά που βρισκόταν ο κρατικός μηχανισμός και η διοίκηση της χώρας μας λόγω του «αόρατου εχθρού» με την ονομασία covid-19 (Laliotis, 2020), έγιναν από νωρίς προσπάθειες να αντιμετωπιστούν δύσκολες καταστάσεις χωρίς να έχουμε παραδείγματα διαχείρισης ανάλογου κινδύνου στο παρελθόν. Όλος ο κρατικός μηχανισμός, κατάφερε σε σύντομο χρονικό διάστημα να λειτουργήσει άμεσα και αποτελεσματικά. Τόσο η πολιτική ηγεσία, η οποία θεσμοθέτησε το Νομοθετικό πλαίσιο της τηλεργασίας και της εκ περιτροπής εργασίας όσο και οι κρατικοί υπάλληλοι που εφάρμοσαν και υλοποίησαν τα εν λόγω μέτρα. Ενδεικτικά σύμφωνα με τα στοιχεία της ΕΛΣΤΑΤ του μήνα Απριλίου 2020, ποσοστό άνω του 70% του προσωπικού της, εργάστηκε με τηλεργασία (ΕΛΣΤΑΤ, 2020). Στην κατεύθυνση αυτή κινείται και η νέα Πράξη Νομοθετικού Περιεχομένου της 22/08/2020 (ΦΕΚ 161/A' /22.08.2020) στην οποία ορίζεται, ότι οι εργαζόμενοι, εφόσον ανήκουν στις λεγόμενες ευπαθείς ομάδες, θα μπορούν ακόμη και με ένα τηλεφώνημα, γραπτό μήνυμα στο κινητό ή email να ενημερώνουν τον εργοδότη τους ότι θα εργαστούν εξ αποστάσεως, όπως συνέβη και την περίοδο Μαρτίου και Απριλίου 2020 από την πλειοψηφία των υπηρεσιών του Δημοσίου. Οι υπάλληλοι του δημοσίου που ανήκουν σε ομάδες υψηλού κινδύνου θα μπορούν να εργάζονται με

τηλεργασία ή back office (χωρίς να έρχονται σε επαφή με το κοινό) έως την 31η Αυγούστου (Λαμπαδίτη, 2020).

Η υγειονομική κρίση οδήγησε στην λήψη μέτρων που έδειξαν ότι η χώρα μας μπορεί να πειθαρχεί, να λειτουργεί με ενότητα και να διαθέτει μία πραγματική ευρωπαϊκή κουλτούρα. Μέσα από την υγειονομική κρίση δόθηκε η ευκαιρία να δούμε γύρω μας να γεννιούνται σύγχρονοι και ανώνυμοι ήρωες που με κίνδυνο την ίδια τους τη ζωή προσπάθησαν να μας προστατέψουν παίρνοντας μέτρα πρόληψης για όλες τις κοινωνικές ομάδες του πληθυσμού μας με σκοπό να σώσουν χιλιάδες συμπολίτες μας.

Η χώρα μας προσπάθησε να μετατρέψει την κρίση αυτή σε ευκαιρία. Μία ευκαιρία που όλοι οι Έλληνες περιμένουν εδώ και χρόνια να δουν να υλοποιείται αλλάζοντας την καθημερινότητά τους. Είναι γεγονός ότι πάντοτε για τη λήψη πολιτικών αποφάσεων συμβάλλουν σημαντικά και τα στελέχη της Δημόσιας Διοίκησης. Σήμερα η Ελλάδα διαθέτει προσωπικό στις Δημόσιες Υπηρεσίες υψηλού επιπέδου που βοηθούν καθημερινά προς την κατεύθυνση αυτή. Με λίγα λόγια, η Δημόσια Διοίκηση βρίσκει τον σωστό βηματισμό που της αξίζει.

Λόγω της πρωτοφανούς υγειονομικής κρίσης και της κρισιμότητας της κατάστασης, απαιτήθηκε εντατική προετοιμασία και συνεργασία όλων των υπηρεσιών του δημοσίου. Η επεξεργασία μιας ρύθμισης, η εξέταση των συνεπειών που αυτή επιφέρει στο συνολικό σύστημα, η κανονιστική διατύπωση και κυρίως η εφαρμογή ενός πλέγματος πολιτικών (Weible et al. 2020), δεν μπορούσε να πραγματωθεί μόνο με την εντολή της εκάστοτε πολιτικής ηγεσίας.

Παρόλα αυτά η Κυβέρνηση γνωρίζοντας τις παθογένειες της Δημόσιας διοίκησης και του τεράστιου προβλήματος της γραφειοκρατίας σε σύντομο χρονικό διάστημα, υλοποίησε την ενοποίηση των υφιστάμενων πληροφοριακών συστημάτων όπου 501 υπηρεσίες του δημοσίου ενοποιήθηκαν με επιτυχία στο gov.gr και κάθε μέρα προστίθενται νέες. Ήδη έχουν φθάσει τις 520. Έτσι περάσαμε άμεσα κάτω από ένα καθεστώς ανάγκης, στη νέα ψηφιακή εποχή όπου οι ψηφιακές πρωτοβουλίες που πάρθηκαν ήταν ένα χρήσιμο όπλο κατά της πανδημίας, όμως ταυτόχρονα αποτελούν εργαλεία που θα βελτιώσουν τη ζωή όλων μας την επόμενη ημέρα.

Τα ταχέα βήματα ψηφιακού μετασχηματισμού που άρχισαν στα μέσα Μαρτίου 2020, λόγω Covid-19, δεν έχουν ακόμη αποτυπωθεί ούτε στις δομές, ούτε στις στατιστικές. Αυτές, αντιθέτως, δείχνουν το μέγεθος των προκλήσεων ψηφιακού μετασχηματισμού, ο οποίος προϋποθέτει ανθρώπινο δυναμικό με ψηφιακές γνώσεις και δεξιότητες. Οι ψηφιακές γνώσεις, δεξιότητες και ικανότητες, είναι πλέον, στις αρχές του 21ου αιώνα, προϋπόθεση ατομικής και συλλογικής ευημερίας. Είναι ίδιας σημασίας με τις βασικές ικανότητες: να διαβάζεις και να γράφεις, να υπολογίζεις, να επικοινωνείς

και να συνεργάζεσαι, να λύνεις προβλήματα. Ουσιαστικά τις διατρέχουν και τις βελτιώνουν (Ιωάννου, 2020).

Συγκεκριμένα επιταχύνθηκε η ψηφιοποίηση του δημοσίου με τη προσθήκη τριών υπηρεσιών που αφορούν μεγάλο όγκο συναλλαγών (εξουσιοδότηση, υπεύθυνη δήλωση, άνλη και εξ αποστάσεως συνταγογράφηση). Παράλληλα η Κυβέρνηση με την εποπτεία και σχεδιασμό από το Υπουργείο Ψηφιακής Διακυβέρνησης προχώρησε το σχέδιο της νέας εποχής ψηφιακής διακυβέρνησης στη δημόσια διοίκηση της χώρας μας μέσα από συγκεκριμένα μέτρα που θα διευκόλυνναν την καθημερινότητα των πολιτών, πολλώ δε μάλλον εν μέσω κρίσης της πανδημίας όπου όλοι οι κάτοικοι έμεναν κλεισμένοι μέσα στα σπίτια τους και οι συναλλαγές με φυσική παρουσία με το δημόσιο έχριζε τεράστιας δυσκολίας και ειδικά σε άτομα που ανήκαν στις ευπαθείς ομάδες.

Η Κυβέρνηση θεσμοθέτησε νέες μεθόδους και μέτρα λειτουργίας για την εξυπηρέτηση των πολιτών. Τα εν λόγω μέτρα στόχευαν σε μια νέα γενιά δημόσιας διοίκησης που πριν χρόνια φάνταζαν αδιανόητα. Συγκεκριμένα ο κρατικός μηχανισμός πέτυχε μια αποτελεσματική παρέμβαση ως αποτέλεσμα της ευρύτερης κινητοποίησης μέσα από πλατφόρμες ψηφιακών υπηρεσιών, νομοθετικές και ρυθμιστικές πρωτοβουλίες, οδηγίες για τη διευκόλυνση και την ασφάλεια των πολιτών κατά την ψηφιακή διεκπεραίωση των υποθέσεών τους, αποδεικνύοντας με αυτό τον τρόπο τη δέσμη έγκαιρων μέτρων που έλαβε το Υπουργείο Ψηφιακής Διακυβέρνησης, τη δύσκολη περίοδο του κορονοϊού, με σκοπό την εξ αποστάσεως λειτουργία του Δημοσίου, την απομακρυσμένη εξυπηρέτηση των πολιτών, την τηλεργασία (ΦΕΚ 55/ Α' /11.03.2020) και την τηλεκπαίδευση.

Μέσα σε όλα τα μέτρα που πήρε η Κυβέρνηση κατά την περίοδο της υγειονομικής κρίσης ήταν η λειτουργία του gov.gr, η άνλη συνταγογράφηση, έτσι ώστε οι πολίτες πλέον έχουν -εφόσον το επιθυμούν- τη δυνατότητα να λαμβάνουν τις ιατρικές τους συνταγές στο κινητό τους, χωρίς να χρειάζεται να τις προσκομίζουν τυπωμένες στον φαρμακοποιό. Η πλατφόρμα τηλεδιασκέψεων e:Presence όπου δίνεται η δυνατότητα σε όλους τους φορείς του ευρύτερου Δημοσίου να οργανώσουν και να πραγματοποιήσουν διαδικτυακές τηλεδιασκέψεις. Το μητρώο ασθενών COVID-19, όπου δημιουργείται ένα και μοναδικό σημείο αναφοράς για τα κρούσματα του ιού, με τα απαραίτητα δεδομένα για την αντιμετώπιση και καταπολέμηση της πανδημίας να βρίσκονται στη διάθεση των εμπλεκομένων φορέων. Επίσης προχώρησε η λειτουργία της ηλεκτρονικής υπογραφής σε όλα τα μέλη της κυβέρνησης και την Πρόεδρο της Δημοκρατίας. Επίσης ψηφιοποιήθηκε η φορολογική ενημερότητα για τις πληρωμές από το Δημόσιο, όπου οι πολίτες και οι επιχειρήσεις που παρέχουν υπηρεσίες και προϊόντα, σταδιακά απαλλάσσονται από την υποχρέωση να προσκομίζουν οι ίδιοι φορολογική ενημερότητα για να μπορέσουν να πληρωθούν, καθώς η διαδικασία θα γίνεται αυτόμata.

Σημαντικό ρόλο στην πρόληψη και αντιμετώπιση της πανδημίας έπαιξε και η Τοπική Αυτοδιοίκηση πρώτου και δεύτερου βαθμού όπου σε συνεργασία με όλες τις Υπηρεσίες των Υπουργείων, ειδικών επιστημόνων σε θέματα πανδημίας, της Γενικής Γραμματείας Πολιτικής Προστασίας (ΦΕΚ 64/Α'/14.03.2020), της Ένωσης Περιφερειών (ΕΝΠΕ) και της Κεντρικής Ένωσης Δήμων Ελλάδος (ΚΕΔΕ), κατάφερε μέσα από δράσεις και μέτρα που έλαβε έγκαιρα να συμβάλει στην αντιμετώπιση της πανδημίας και να προφυλάξει τους πολίτες.

Οι Δήμοι σε όλη την Ελλάδα, προώθησαν το μέτρο της τηλεργασίας δίνοντας τη δυνατότητα άδειας ειδικού σκοπού (ΦΕΚ 55/ Α'/11.03.2020) και την εκ περιτροπής εργασία. Δόθηκε στην Τοπική Αυτοδιοίκηση έκτακτη οικονομική ενίσχυση 15 εκατ. ευρώ για την προμήθεια μέτρων ατομικής προστασίας. Οι Δήμαρχοι και οι Περιφερειάρχες είχαν τη δυνατότητα για απευθείας αναθέσεις σε προμήθειες υλικού που αφορούσαν την αντιμετώπιση του κορονοϊού. Επίσης, στηρίχθηκαν οι επιχειρήσεις, κυρίως από το χώρο της εστίασης και της φιλοξενίας, που έκλεισαν με κυβερνητική εντολή, αναστέλλοντας την καταβολή μιας σειράς ανταποδοτικών τελών, αλλά και μειώνοντας τα ενοίκια όσων μισθώνουν δημοτικά ακίνητα, βάσει του νέου θεσμικού πλαισίου.

Παράλληλα με συντονισμένες ενέργειες των Δήμων ανά την Ελλάδα εντάχθηκαν στο πρόγραμμα «Βοήθεια στο σπίτι» οι εργαζόμενοι των ΚΑΠΗ και των παιδικών σταθμών, τα οποία δεν λειτουργούσαν, για να συνδράμουν στην στήριξη των ηλικιωμένων που είχαν ανάγκη. Το πρόγραμμα επίσης ενισχύθηκε με τη διανομή υλικού ατομικής προστασίας (5.000 μάσκες και 10.000 γάντια στους Δήμους για εργαζόμενους στο πρόγραμμα) και παράλληλα δημιουργήθηκε σε κάθε Δήμο τηλεφωνικό κέντρο όπου μπορούσαν να απευθύνονται οι πολίτες. Στη συνέχεια, όλες οι συνεδριάσεις όλων των συλλογικών οργάνων της τοπικής αυτοδιοίκησης διεξάγονταν μέσω τηλεδιάσκεψης ή δια περιφοράς.

Η κυβέρνηση στην προσπάθεια της να πάρει έγκαιρα μέτρα στην αντιμετώπιση της πανδημίας, με Πράξη Νομοθετικού Περιεχομένου (ΠΝΠ) (ΦΕΚ 84/ Α'/13.04.2020) που εξέδωσε, προχώρησε στη δημιουργία και λειτουργία προσωρινών δομών φιλοξενίας και υπνωτηρίων από τους ΟΤΑ α' βαθμού σε συνεργασία με τους εγκεκριμένους φορείς προστασίας των εξαρτημένων και ευάλωτων ατόμων (OKANA, ΚΕΘΕΑ, ΨΝΑ, ΨΝΘ κ.ά.). Σημαντικό ρόλο διαδραμάτισε και η ΚΕΔΕ, όπου λόγω του θεσμικού της ρόλου, δημιούργησε την Ψηφιακή Πλατφόρμα Καταγραφής Αιτημάτων ΟΤΑ, μέσα από την οποία έδωσε στους Δήμους τη δυνατότητα να αποστέλλουν άμεσα κάθε είδους στοιχεία, ερωτήματα ή αιτήματα που είχαν, προκειμένου να δοθούν λύσεις σε προβλήματα που δημιουργούνταν ή να δοθούν επεξηγήσεις, που είχαν να κάνουν με την εξειδίκευση κι εφαρμογή των όσων προβλέπονταν στις ΠΝΠ.

Οι Δήμοι στο πλαίσιο των αρμοδιοτήτων τους, παρά τις δυσκολίες που επέφερε η υγειονομική κρίση, συνέχισαν να ασκούν τον θεσμικό τους ρόλο, για να διαφυλάξουν τη δημόσια υγεία. Έκαναν σημαντικά βήματα μπροστά, όσον αφορά την καλύτερη εξυπηρέτηση και διευκόλυνση των πολιτών, μέσω της επιτάχυνσης της διαδικασίας ψηφιακής αναβάθμισης των υπηρεσιών τους, προσπάθεια που θα συνεχιστεί με ακόμη μεγαλύτερη ένταση το επόμενο διάστημα, ώστε να γίνει πράξη το όραμα για τους Ψηφιακούς Δήμους. Παράλληλα ανέδειξαν για μια ακόμη φορά το ανθρώπινο πρόσωπο της αυτοδιοίκησης, μέσα από τις κοινωνικές τους δράσεις και πρωτοβουλίες, καθώς μέσα από τις 880 δημοτικές Δομές Βοήθειας, κάλυψαν τις ανάγκες σε βασικά είδη (φάρμακα, τρόφιμα, είδη υγιεινής) 80.000 περίπου συμπολιτών τους. Επίσης πάνω από 700.000 είναι εκείνοι που ωφελήθηκαν μέσα από το TEBA (Ταμείο Ευρωπαϊκής Βοήθειας προς τους Απόρους – TEBA, 2020), το πρόγραμμα επισιτιστικής βοήθειας, όπως και πάνω από 12.000 είναι επίσης εκείνοι που είχαν τη δυνατότητα να απολαύσουν δωρεάν γεύματα σε καθημερινή βάση, μέσα από ειδικά προγράμματα που υλοποίησαν Δήμοι σε όλη τη χώρα (Δήμος Μίνωα Πεδιάδας, 2020). Τέλος, επισημαίνεται ότι οι αλλαγές που συντελέστηκαν στη δημόσια διοίκηση εν μέσω κορονοϊού οφείλουν να είναι η αφετηρία για να συνεχίσει η κυβέρνηση την εφαρμογή ενός ολοκληρωμένου στρατηγικού σχεδίου για τη βελτίωση και εκσυγχρονισμό των βασικών υποδομών της Δημόσιας Διοίκησης.

Η πρωτόγνωρη υγειονομική κρίση, ανεξάρτητα από τον χρονικό ορίζοντα της και τις διεθνείς εξελίξεις, αποτελεί την αφετηρία για τον εκσυγχρονισμό της Δημόσιας Διοίκησης. Στο πλαίσιο αξιοποίησης των ευκαιριών που δημιουργήθηκαν λόγω της αποφυγής εξάπλωσης του covid-19, προτείνονται τα ακόλουθα:

1. Η εκτεταμένη εφαρμογή της τηλεϊατρικής. Συνεργασία μεταξύ Υπουργείου Υγείας και Υπουργείου Ψηφιακής Διακυβέρνησης, για την εφαρμογή ψηφιακών προγραμμάτων τηλεϊατρικής που να επιτρέπουν στους γιατρούς την εξ αποστάσεως παροχή ιατρικών υπηρεσιών στους ασθενείς.
2. Η καθιέρωση κεντρικού συστήματος προμηθειών υγειονομικού υλικού, καθώς με την εφαρμογή του θα υφίσταται συνολική εικόνα των αναγκών για την καλύτερη προμήθεια του υγειονομικού υλικού. Παράλληλα θα εξοικονομείται χρόνος ως προς τη διαδικασία παροχής του υλικού και ανθρώπινοι πόροι.
3. Η διατήρηση του νομοθετικού πλαισίου για τηλεργασία των ευπαθών ομάδων καθώς και η επέκταση του μέτρου αυτού για όλο το προσωπικό, όπου αυτό είναι εφικτό.
4. Η επέκταση εφαρμογής νέων τεχνολογιών και η εκπαίδευση του προσωπικού της δημόσιας διοίκησης μέσω του Εθνικού Κέντρου Δημόσιας Διοίκησης - Ινστιτούτο Εκπαίδευσης Προσωπικού.

5. Η δημιουργία κόμβου Υποστήριξης Επενδυτικών και Επιχειρηματικών Δραστηριοτήτων, με αναδιοργάνωση των υπηρεσιών της τοπικής αυτοδιοίκησης, οι οποίες θα παρέχουν αξιόπιστες πληροφορίες για όλες τις παραμέτρους που συμβάλλουν στη λήψη επενδυτικών αποφάσεων και θα υποστηρίζουν ενδεχόμενους επενδυτές των σχετικών διαδικασιών και αιτημάτων τους.

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## Topic 4

### Health Policies in the time of coronavirus crisis

## COVID-19 and Leisure: Directions for Policy Makers<sup>1</sup>

Ioanna Maria Kantartzī<sup>2</sup> and George Karlīs<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

Epictetus, the Greek Stoic Philosopher, once said “Happiness and freedom begin with a clear understanding of one’s principle. Some things are within your control; and some things are not”. In adopting Epictetus quote for the current COVID-19 world, it has become more important than ever to realize that freedom and happiness can be intrinsic states that come from within the individual. Leisure, also an intrinsic state, is linked with freedom and happiness, and when leisure, freedom and happiness are experienced, a healthy lifestyle can be under your control and achieved. The current paper presents the importance of experiencing leisure, freedom and happiness for physical and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic era. COVID-19 is not only political, social and economic challenge, but also a citizen’s well-being challenge. For this reason, three directions for policy making from the current and post COVID-19 era are presented: 1) *the promotion of a healthy lifestyle*, 2) *individual and community activation* and 3) *empowering people*.

### Introduction

Defining leisure is no easy task. Leisure means different things to different people in different societies as well as within a specific society. Researchers of leisure do not agree on one holistic, comprehensive definition. However, most researchers do agree that leisure is important to enhance quality of life, wellbeing, sense of freedom and self-control. But what is leisure, and how have researchers of leisure defined this notion?

For some researchers, leisure is simply the opposite of work, that is, freedom from paid work and labour (Voss, 2013). Leisure is a time period in which one is free from paid work responsibilities. Yet, leisure can mean more than this. Josef Pieper (2009), a Catholic theologian, gives us a spiritual based definition of leisure and supports that leisure is a mental and spiritual attitude of mind; leisure is thus a condition of soul. That is, the leisure experience comes from within the individual. Further, Zurawik (2020) states that “leisure can be defined as a mental state that occurs in free time during voluntary activities on the basis of personal interest; it is intrinsically satisfying, pleasurable, and

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pursued for individual rewards (Zurawik, 2020: 4). That is, leisure is a state of mind, a state of condition experience.

Karlis (2004), posits that although leisure is a concept that researchers do not universally agree on, it is a culturally specific notion that means different things to different people in different societies. Despite where or by whom leisure is experienced by, it is an important notion in life – a concept that has been coined as “serious leisure.” Robert Stebbins many years ago, put forth the term “serious leisure” ultimately justifying how important leisure is in one’s life. Serious leisure is defined as “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical launch themselves on a [leisure] career centered on acquitting and expressing its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (Stebbins , 1992, p.3 cited in Kim et al., 2019). Leisure not only helps individuals to further develop their lives, but also [leisure] support people’s communities, contributes to the development of a social health system and adds to the promotion of a balanced lifestyle (Trenberth, 2005). Research by Park (2004) purports that “serious leisure participation can be seen as an individual’s continued effort to improve and nurture their life quality (cited in Kim et al., 2019, p.5). Similarly, Paggi et al., (2015) present that leisure activities create a positive relationship between physical health and well-being.

Leisure experience stem from the needs and capacities of the individual and has unlimited potential (Karlis, 2004). That is, the leisure experience evolves from seven important elements: 1) understanding ourselves, 2) helps us to address our leisure needs as well as others individual needs, 3) improve the quality of our life and the quality of the community in which we live, 4) help us develop our social skills, 5) support us in the adjustment of life stages and life cycles, 6) help us better understand the society we live in and 7) contributes to society as a whole (Havighurst & Feigenbaum, 1959; Karlis, 2004; Zurawik, 2020). Thus, the leisure experience helps individual to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Moreover, Havighurst & Feigenbaum (1959), identifies two leisure categories: a) home centered activities (e.g. TV, radio, movies, sewing, home exercise) and b) community centered activities (this category includes the home centred activities as well as, sports events, movies, Church, theatre, etc.). Thus, there is no denying that leisure is individual, yet it is a social phenomenon as well, as it is driven by people in home and/or community settings.

## **COVID-19 and Leisure**

In 2019, the first case of COVID-19 was identified in the Republic of China, and on January 30<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the outbreak of the virus, ultimately declaring a public Health Emergency while issuing a set of temporary

recommendations (WHO, 2020). Countries all over the globe applied restrictive measures to fight the virus. Social distancing and social isolation measures were implemented, and restrictions were placed on the service sector including leisure, recreation, and sports. Outdoors restrictions led to the closure of public parks and recreation centres and facilities, the closure of private and non-profit recreation service, and on physical social interactions in leisure and recreation spaces. The dynamic of the leisure services changed suddenly with people facing the challenge of finding leisure in different ways to ensure quality of life, well-being, and physical and mental health.

Self-isolation and social distancing measures caused dissatisfaction and frustration amongst many individuals. Some negative emotions and concerns were expressed through social media. It can be said that this negativity resulted by the sudden change and disruption of lifestyles, and the social and economic implications of people's daily routine. Thus, COVID-19 caused drastic change in the way we live. What usually follows drastic change such as those generated by COVID-19, is policy change. Researchers have supported that "policy change occurs through interactions between wide external change or shocks to the political system and the success of the ideas in the coalition, which may cause actors in the advocacy coalition to shift coalitions" (Cerna, 2013:5). Leisure, and its industry, has been subject to this drastic change and the re-thinking of policies and directions for change.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for individuals during COVID-19 and its social isolation and social distancing measures is distinguishing paid employment (work) from leisure time – as work has moved for many into their homes – and, finding ways to experience leisure in the household. Pre-COVID-19, the place of work had a physical location outside of home, and the place of leisure had physical locations outside of the home (e.g., parks, sports bars, the coffee shop, the stadium, etc.), as well as inside the home. Although some leisure was experienced at home, the outdoors and outside the home has always been a prime resource for leisure. COVID-19 caused a sudden change in the way we experienced leisure and, in the challenges, posed on us to engage and find enjoyment in leisure at home.

Mannell (2013), a psychologist examining leisure, developed a theory a few decades ago called the Self-As-Entertainment (S.A.E) theory of leisure. This theory asserts that the way we experience leisure depends on our personality. Some of us can entertain, and find leisure things to do, easier than others. Mannell claims that our differing personalities make it harder for some people to find what to do during leisure time, whereas, for others entertaining themselves is quite easy. The challenge during COVID-19 is that we do not have recreation directors at the local community centers guiding us with what to do, camp counsellors coordinating activities, or access to swimming lessons at public swimming pools. However, we have time, and more time than ever before as we save time from

commuting to and from work offices or sites. We not only have more time for leisure, we also face the challenge of having to experience leisure at home and with limited leisure activity guidance and resources.

Leisure has been characterised as a *normal good*; this *normal good* not only benefits the society, but also has positive income effect (Voss, 2013). In other words, leisure is perceived by society, as well as individuals, as something that is positive and beneficial for you (Karlis, 2004). The benefits of leisure are many. Karlis (2004) presents the benefits of leisure as consisted of four different types. These are: a) personal, b) economic, c) environmental, and d) social.

The *personal* benefit of leisure consists of individual, case specific benefits. Through leisure, individuals recognize the meaning of life, manage their stress, and can lead their lives in a balanced way. Individually also, leisure, contributes to the development of skills, and finally, gives people satisfaction, and improves quality of life. The personal benefit of leisure also includes fun, satisfaction and well-being, all attributes that are important for physical and mental well-being. The fact that leisure opportunities outside of the household have diminished as a result of COVID-19 restrictions has had an impact on the leisure lifestyles and leisure benefits of individuals.

The *economic* benefits, according to Karlis (2004), include the preventiveness of health service, contributes to a productive work force, as well as to the yielding of big economic returns, motivates the business relocation and expansion in communities, reduces high cost of vandalism and criminal activity, and finally, leisure is a catalyst for tourism and an important investment for the environmental protection. It has also been supported that individuals who buy leisure are the suppliers of labour (Voss, 2013). Economical, the leisure, entertainment, and sport industries have all been affected by COVID-19. Leisure, entertainment, and sport industries outside the household are places of large people gatherings – these opportunities are not only on hold for now but will take some time to rebound to where they were before.

The *environmental* benefits include the environmental health of the community, environmental protection and rehabilitation, investing in the environmental leading to increase in neighbourhood property value, and is also an insurance for a new improved environmental future (Karlis, 2004: 16). Although the detrimental overuse of national parks and historical sites has been relieved during COVID-19 pandemic, our appreciation and experience of the outdoor areas such as National Parks and archeological sites through firsthand visitations is missed. Perhaps post COVID-19 society will be one in which we learn to greater value our outdoor leisure and recreation resources while build a deeper appreciation, care and respect for our outdoors and its environment.

Humans, by nature, are social animals. We need to be with others, to socially interact, to share, to love, and to be loved. Leisure is a means and a tool for enhancing social interaction. Furthermore, under the social benefit umbrella, Dodd et al., (2009) supported that there is a positive relationship between core family leisure and family cohesion as well as family adaptability, and also leisure activities can benefit the adolescents' life satisfaction (cited in Chen et al., 2019: 2; Specht et al., 2002). The social benefits of leisure, include the capability of building strong communities, reducing alienation and anti-social behaviour, building strong families, developing sense of the community pride, and enhancing services for children through after school programs (Karlis, 2004: 16). During COVID-19, family social interaction has increased at home, yet the social-physical opportunities of the outside world have been restricted and even halted.

In sum, leisure is an internal state of condition that helps individuals to improve their lives, but also, an external tool, as it can be used by governments in the policy making process. Thus, from the external point of view, leisure has a political character. The challenges for policy makers are how can leisure be implemented and directed in a socially distant and social isolation society that is restricted primarily to home leisure resources, opportunities, and experiences.

### **Suggestion for policy makers**

Leisure through the years has developed a political character which is connected with the concept of civil rights and the concept of citizenship. During the post-World War II, western countries tried to create a welfare state based on political, economic and social development. The first step for this achievement came through citizenship. Bianchini (1992), supported that citizenship "represents an attempt not simply to extend social rights, but also to bridge the potentially socially disruptive gap between the individual and the community, and between the exercise of individual rights and the common good" (quoted in Coalter, 2010). Marshall (1963), identifies three areas of rights: a) political rights, b) social rights, c) civil rights. These rights translate to the ability of individuals to participate in activities of their choices. Thus, individuals holding citizenship, are free to act in accordance of their needs. In other worlds, people are free to develop their quality of life through plenty of available choices (Choi & Bum, 2019). One of these choices includes the participation in leisure. Thus, as it is also supported by Trenberth (2005), leisure played an important role not only in the development of a healthy lifestyle, but also in the development of citizenship. This is the reason why leisure is characterised as a component of social citizenship (Coalter, 2010).

It is widely argued that citizens have a duty to themselves and to their state. Citizens have a duty to develop a healthy and responsible lifestyle (Coalter, 2010). According to Stebbins' (1992) the

development of a healthier society can be achieved as people practice their citizenship through their participation in leisure activities. However, we should wonder how possible is it to practice our citizenship rights through leisure in an era of social restrictions? In other words, how possible is it to exercise your rights for improvement of your leisure lifestyle in an era of self-isolation; in the era of COVID-19?

After the end of self-isolation and social distancing in plenty of countries all around the globe, people will need to gain back their lives. Services will once again be opened, including leisure services. The experience of COVID-19 has illustrated to the world how important leisure is for physical and mental health, and how we should not underestimate its overall significance on well-being. People have the need for mental, physical and social support; this need in the post COVID-19 might become greater with a greater reliance on social and political services. It is for this reason that the following directions for policy makers are put forth:

### *1. Promotion of a healthy lifestyle*

People all over the world, during the COVID-19 restrictions used social media to express their needs and concerns. The “*we stay home*” social media campaigns influenced people by creating a sense of protection for ourselves and others. People united and showed responsibility. Post COVID-19 will be a time for governments to use the same means of social communication for the betterment of society. The best way to do so, is to understand the meaning of a healthy lifestyle; thus, the importance of the presence of leisure in their lives. Social media can be used as a great tool for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle through leisure, leisure activities, and leisure services.

### *2. Individual and community activation*

People today more than ever have the need to interact with each other and with their communities. This need is interconnected with the maintenance of mental and physical health. Healthy lifestyle can be achieved not only when people have motivations to stay healthy, but also, when governments create a safe and positive environment for its citizens, through leisure services, so to further develop the well-being of society. Thus, governments need to create and re-create leisure facilities, which not only will protect citizens from the expansion of COVID-19, but also help them to maintain their physical and mental health through community leisure services.

### *3. Empowering people*

Social distancing and social isolation have been challenging “socially” for everyone. The social and work impact on society have been drastic. Some people have lost their jobs because of the expansion of the virus and some feel insecure about the future. Governments post COVID-19 will need to act to

re-create and re-energize not only the economy, but also the social fabric and wellbeing of society as well. Leisure and its services can play a vital role as focus expands beyond mass society to the individual. Leisure activities are a great tool of people empowerment. It helps build individual and community spirit from grassroots, bottoms-up perspective, ultimately contributing to the wellbeing of individuals and society.

## Conclusion

This paper while focusing on the importance of leisure for healthy lifestyles, provided a brief overview of leisure and the COVID-19 era. Three directions for policy have been put forth as a means to help re-establish and re-create leisure, and its activities and services post COVID-19. Leisure, as a state of mind condition helps one feel free while also building feelings of self-esteem (Karlis, 2004). Indeed, by taking policy measures that incorporate leisure, societies would be in a better position to establish a positive social-psychological dynamic post COVID -19. This paper has called for decision-makers to consider the importance and key role that leisure, its activities, and services can play as societies work towards returning to normal post COVID-19.

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## European response to COVID-19 health crisis<sup>1</sup>

George Nastos<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

The world is undergoing the pandemic health crisis of COVID-19. First and foremost, the pandemic is causing losses in human lives all over the world. Secondly, it is testing the economies of all countries, regardless of the degree of dispersion and loss of lives between the states. Another consequence of this health crisis is that apart from national health systems, it also puts to the test political systems. This consequence is even greater for an evolving political system such as the European Union, which in a decade has faced two other crises - the Eurozone and the refugee crisis. The EU has once again been called upon to face an exogenous cross-border crisis. It has to confront a pandemic within the existing framework of its competence, tools and bodies, while creating new ones in the need to support its Member States. This paper focuses on the European Union's response to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, the weaknesses that this crisis has brought to the fore and the policies that would help the EU manage similar crises in the future.

### Introduction

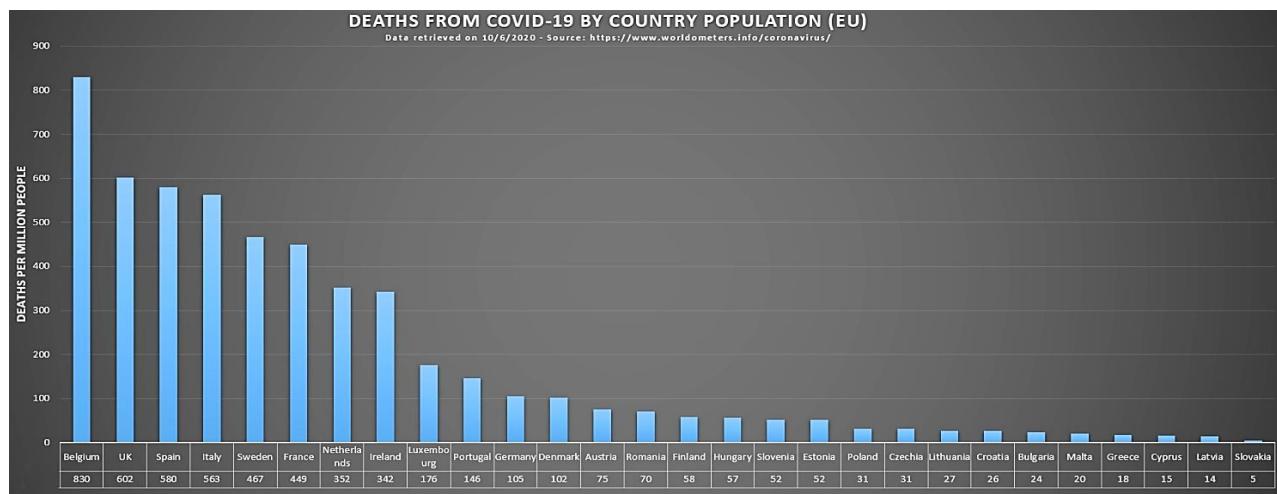
Following the outbreak of pneumonia in the city of Wuhan, in the province of Hubei, China, on January 9, 2020, the Chinese health authorities announced that it was a new strain of coronavirus (2019-nCoV). The isolated coronavirus has been officially recognized since February 11, 2020 as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and is a new virus that causes the COVID-19 disease. Due to its high infectiousness, within a month a local epidemic became a pandemic. On March 11, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic and the new virus hit Europe hard, which then became the centre of the global health crisis. Italy was the first

European country which experienced the severe outbreak and by 17th of March all countries within Europe had a confirmed case of COVID-19. The European Union was once again facing a new cross-border crisis with the primary concern being the protection of the lives of its citizens.

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"Cross-border crises" are defined as those threats that require urgent action and cross geographical, political, economic, social and legal boundaries (Ansell, Boin, & Keller, 2010). Such crises involve more participants, who tend to be more scattered and often with different agendas, while at the managerial level they create the need to adapt to a close collaboration under conditions that are much more difficult to achieve. As has been observed, after a major crisis, or when faced with the complexities of new threats, leaders often express "solidarity" and the desire to take strong collective action. However, they rarely follow this up by authorizing the EU to take action by providing strong



legal bases on which to act, and whatever action is taken must be within the existing limits of competence, capabilities and tools available (Boin, & Rhinard, 2008).

The growing need for a European response to crises could signal a more active role for both EU institutions such as the Commission, the Council, the European External Action Service (EEAS), and for European organizations and agencies such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). These and other organizations are called upon to become co-ordinating nodes of knowledge among experts who can bring coherence and have an advantage in crisis management in the EU (Jordana & Triviño - Salazar, 2020).

As we will see, despite the initial shock in the early stages of the pandemic and the lack of coordination observed, the EU then acquired a more active role by helping Member States in a policy area where it had never had to intervene so intensively in the past. However, and within the general framework of European integration, there are still many steps to be taken towards a European mechanism for immediate response and management of cross-border crises with the necessary capabilities and competence, to achieve the EU's goal of protecting its citizens against such crises.

## EU response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The European Union's main tools for addressing public health issues are: a) The Decision 1082/2013/EU as a regulatory framework on cross-border public health threats. It aims to contribute to a high level of public health protection in the EU by ensuring the coordination of both risk assessment and risk management in public health emergencies (Council of the European Union and European Parliament, 2013). b) The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), which analyses and interprets data from EU countries, provides scientific advice to EU governments and bodies, ensures early detection and analysis of emerging public health threats, helps EU governments prepare for epidemics and constitutes an important source of comparable epidemiological data for Member States (European Union, 2005). c) The Health Security Committee, as an important forum for mutual consultation and exchange of information between Member States that prioritizes the assessment of threats and risks, the rapid mobilization of experts and the provision of technical assistance and guidance (European Commission, 2001).

Institutionally, public health issues are the responsibility of the nation states, with the EU simply having an advisory and supportive role (Anderson, McKee and Mossialos, 2020). However, there are many who criticize the EU for lack of coordination between the national health systems of the Member States, especially in the early stages of the outbreak. A paradox is pointed out in dealing with COVID-19 at the European level (Pacces and Weimer, 2020): While the very existence of the European Union is based on dealing with major cross-border and global challenges that nation-states cannot cope with on their own, in the pandemic crisis of the new coronavirus it was the national governments that had the first say and were called upon to deal with a crisis disproportionate to national capabilities. The result was a differentiated response, with each EU member state managing the pandemic in its own way. Different strategies have been adopted depending on the culture, structure and capabilities of the health system, the degree of centralization of the administration, and so on. The price of this differentiated reaction to a cross-border health crisis is, on the one hand, an inability to better track and control the dispersion, and on the other hand, the re-emergence of borders within the EU, suspending one of the fundamental values of the European Union – the free movement of persons and goods (Pacces and Weimer, 2020).

Article 168 TFEU calls on the EU to act on global health issues, promoting cooperation with third countries and relevant international organizations. However, it also establishes that the responsibility for organizing and managing the health systems belongs to the Member States (Renda and Castro, 2020). ECDC hosts the Early Warning and Reaction System, an online portal linking public health

organizations in Europe. This allows Member States to share information about COVID-19 cases as closely as possible in real time. However, countries beyond the European Economic Area, including Switzerland, do not have access and the United Kingdom has already withdrawn, against the advice of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, because Downing Street believed that participation in it would weaken the British government's bargaining position in the next round of Brexit negotiations (Flear, de Ruijter and McKee, 2020). This undermines the need for closer cooperation with non-EU countries.

In the first stages of the pandemic, the main goal was to control the dispersion of the virus, avoiding massive numbers of cases that would put too much pressure on national health systems. Each Member State adopted its own lockdown, diagnostic and movement procedures. The main policy adopted was that of social distancing. While different regulatory measures were initially used between states, later there was a relative convergence on how to achieve this in the best possible way. However, the guidelines issued by the ECDC and the European Commission on measures of social distancing, contact tracking and strategies for conducting diagnostic tests, remain at the recommendation level without being binding on EU Member States. Also, in terms of data exchange and collection, while EU Member States share data, in many cases the level of quality and detailed data varies greatly from country to country. Both global and European management of the pandemic seems very fragmented and insufficiently coordinated. This situation easily leads to problems of collective action, as well as to strategic behaviour by nation states. (Renda and Castro, 2020).

Moreover, the pandemic of COVID-19 brought to the fore the lack of self-sufficiency in health products and the great dependence of the European Union in this area on China (Palaiologos, 2020). Evidence shows that 50% of masks and protective materials are imported from China. 40% of antibiotics imported by Germany, France and Italy also come from China. In addition, 80% of pharmaceutical ingredients imported into the EU come from China and India, while 90% of the world-class penicillin is produced in China. Finally, Europe does not produce paracetamol at all, a widely used analgesic and antipyretic drug. The last EU paracetamol plant in France closed in 2008. The EU Commission has launched four different joint public agreements with 25 Member States to address these deficiencies. However, at the beginning of the crisis, some countries blocked the export of medical equipment.

Despite the primary shock and weaknesses in the initial stages of the pandemic, the European Union, within its institutional capabilities, has taken a number of actions in an effort to resolve any coordination problems, achieving a relative convergence on policies adopted and supporting the

Member States most affected by the health crisis. Some of the Commission's main actions in addressing the crisis include (European Commission, 2020): The European Commission has supported 18 projects since March in the fight against the COVID-19 disease, involving 140 research teams inside and outside the EU. At the same time, 140 million euros were allocated for the development of vaccines, new treatments, diagnostic tests and medical systems, to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus and save lives. In an effort to better coordinate between Member States, the European Commission has set up a European team of scientific experts to coordinate measures to tackle the pandemic. Deficiencies in protective medical equipment observed within the EU have led the European Commission to require that exports of such equipment outside the European Union must be subjected to an export license from the Member States. The aim was to prevent the adoption of individual measures by Member States affecting the circulation of such equipment within the single market, as well as in third countries. For the same purpose, sufficiency in medical equipment, the European Commission has set up a strategic medical equipment stockpile as part of the rescEU mechanism to help EU countries through the COVID-19 pandemic. On April 14, the Council approved the European Commission's proposal to activate the emergency support mechanism in order to directly support the health systems of the Member States in their fight against the pandemic with 2.7 billion euros providing direct support where most needed. In mid-May, the Commission presented a set of guidelines and recommendations for tourists, travellers and businesses.

## Conclusions

The EU's response to the COVID-19 health crisis can be separated into three phases. The first relates to the initial stages of the pandemic with the rapid dispersion of the virus across Europe. Here, the management of the pandemic was mainly a matter for the nation states and the individual decisions they made, while the EU appeared to struggle within weaknesses in terms of capabilities, competence and coordination. The second period includes the months of social distancing and lockdowns, where the EU marked significant improvement in the coordination, the sufficiency in medical supplies and the relative convergence of Member States in the policies adopted for the management of the pandemic. The third phase relates to the lifting of the lockdowns and the restart of the European economies, while at the same time continuing the fight against SARS-CoV-2 and preparing for the next day. Here the expectation of the member states is for an increased role of the EU in dealing with the consequences of the pandemic and preparing for a possible second outbreak next winter.

Despite the initial shock of the EU regarding the COVID-19 crisis, the European Commission has taken a number of important steps to address a common strategy for the management of the pandemic.

However, much remains to be done as the EU's competence in public health is limited and its ability to prevent, respond quickly and manage crises remains weak. First of all, the need for better coordination with common public health management protocols is emphasized. It is also necessary for the EU to achieve a higher level of self-sufficiency in healthcare equipment and an efficient distribution system for emergency situations. The data, information and experience of this health crisis must become the basis on which the necessary political steps are taken to better shield the European Union, both from possible future pandemic situations and, in general, in other possible external crises from natural causes.

### **Implications and recommendations**

The European Union has a lot to learn from the experience of the COVID-19 crisis and needs to go further in strengthening the safety of public health. Some of the next steps should include the creation of health units with specifications for dealing with pandemic emergencies in each Member State of the Union, as well as a new common protocol for managing and dealing with health crises. It is also necessary to allocate more resources for research and development. Particularly important is the development of policies that will allow the increase of European production in healthcare equipment, in order to achieve more self-sufficiency.

Dealing with a pandemic crisis like COVID-19 is not just a matter of public health. Effective management and control could also prevent serious social and economic disorders (Dayrit and Mendoza, 2020). Investment in health care should not only be increased but should be encouraged as a way to increase the resilience and sustainability of the economies of EU member states. Furthermore, the next steps for better coordination, and perhaps the extension of the EU's competence in the field of public health, should address not only pandemics, but also general health issues at the cross-border level (e.g. the high microbial resistance in antibiotics observed in many Member States, which has been classified by international organizations as a global risk to public health and safety)<sup>3</sup>. Finally, the ongoing external crises faced by the European Union demonstrate the need to focus on strengthening the role of existing European organizations (e.g. ECDC, EFSA, ECHO) or, if necessary, creating new rapid response mechanisms for the management of future crises arising from exogenous factors, such as major natural disasters, effects of climate change, and so on.

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<sup>3</sup> More at <https://atlas.ecdc.europa.eu/public/index.aspx?Dataset=27&HealthTopic=4>

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## AI transforming Healthcare Management during Covid-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The dawn of artificial intelligence (AI) as a platform for improved health care provides unparalleled opportunity to enhance patient and clinical team performance, minimize costs, and reduce the health effects of the community. It provides a broad description of the legal and legislative context of the AI tools intended for the implementation of health care; highlights the need for equality, accessibility, the need for a human rights goal for the work; and identifies important factors for further advancement. AI framework describes the obstacles, drawbacks, and best practices for AI development, adoption, and management. It brings in a paradigm shift to healthcare, driven by rising clinical data access and rapid advancement in analytical techniques. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is going to revolutionize the practice of medicine and change the delivery of healthcare. This paper discusses the role of artificial intelligence in the advancement of health care and associated fields. It also discusses, the value of artificial intelligence in various healthcare sectors' transformation.

### Introduction

#### Background

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a broad term that encompasses a range of technologies (many of which have been under development for several decades) that aim to use human-like intelligence for solving problems (Simonite, 2017). In the healthcare domain, these expert systems have been designed by clinicians working with programmers. Another approach to AI is the use of machine learning (ML)

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techniques including artificial neural networks (ANNs). Using an ANN approach, computer programmes create decision-making networks of artificial “neurons” that operate in ways similar to biological nervous systems (Zheng, He, and Congdon 2012). For image processing and interpretation for radiology, dermatology, and pathology, as well as for enhancing the depth and precision of biomedical signal interpretation, ML-powered clinical decision support systems (CDSSs) were proposed for health care (Golub, 1999; Russell et al., 2010). In recent years AI has a gradual use in several sectors such as on robotics and AI implementations on healthcare industry and medicine. Other paradigms that we can observe from sectors can include AI technologies in the public sector, emerging artificial intelligence methods for deep conflict resolution and humanitarian response to conflict resolution, consultation, lobbying, mediation, peacekeeping, crisis management etc. (Efthymiou et. al. 2020).

### *Healthcare safety*

Safety and security are a vital sector in health care. The healthcare environment will require a high degree of transparency, validation, and safety evaluation before AI-based technologies are introduced relative to low-risk technology and programmes such as AlphaGo and IBM Watson. Artificial intelligence (AI) has immense potential to enhance health care efficiency, from increasing diagnosis specificity to the optimization of patient preparation to anticipating results of treatment. However, incorporating AI technology into the provision of healthcare is likely to add and intensify a variety of new risks. Infirmities in the underlying data and frameworks can lead to dangerous recommendations for AI systems which are inadequate to local treatment processes and intangible approaches of AI such as deep understanding can make explaining and learn about problems quite difficult to optimize. For instance, software errors and errors in AI will easily impact vast numbers of patient's safety and security. These problems include the discrepancy between the data a system is trained on and the environment it needs to make predictions and the complexities of understanding and explaining how machine learning systems make predictions (the 'black box' problem). In the long run, the researchers point out the possible consequences in the area of AI protection of certain basic technological problems being tackled. This include, for example, autonomous systems that independently find new ways of achieving the text and letter, but not the essence, of the intended goal (the 'reward hacking' problem) and, in doing so, causing unintended harm (Yu et. al., 2018).

### **Developing AI research and analytical framework**

Responding to different concerns would demand the creation of a large theoretical and analysis context that not only covers but also reaches well beyond the technical problems inherent in the

application of particular algorithms. It may include looking back at the realistic tasks of identifying, designing, evaluating, and applying models and data that underlie AI systems. And it will mean looking ahead to the operational and structural environments in which AI technologies can be embedded — which will often struggle to do so. Understanding these decisions and the human and operational mechanisms that govern them is essential to the creation of a holistic image of the protection of the AI environment. It will therefore be necessary for health science and policy to both relate and benefit from these wider studies and debates on AI protection and governance. By drawing attention to some of the main technical challenges raised by machine learning, researchers are making a significant move forward and helping to launch a fresh dialogue on the regulation of AI protection in healthcare. Medicine was listed as one of the most promising fields of operation for AI. The need for a large network of analysis and analytical mechanisms is demanded immediately (Yu et. al., 2018).

### *Artificial intelligence and health information management (HIM)*

Health information technology has had a major influence on the health information management (HIM) field. HIM experts are members of the Allied Health Network and promote efforts to ensure the transparency, precision, quality, and reliability of health records. The central duty of the HIM profession is to ensure that the right knowledge is given to the right individuals to deliver quality health care (Dimick, 2012). The digitization of health data has had a huge effect on the duties and work of HIM practitioners, prompting them to take on more specialized tasks in gathering, preserving, and using health data. Healthcare is going through an awareness explosion. "The exponential growth of scientific knowledge and the acceleration of technical progress has culminated in a large array of data that is difficult to decode and implement." Physicists are immersed in data that demand much more complex analysis, but they are nevertheless required to perform efficiently. The claim that AI will "increase decision-making by clinicians by uncovering clinically important knowledge hidden in a vast volume of data" is highly appealing, particularly now that expert clinicians are in short supply all over the world (Ganapathy, Abdul, and Nursetyo, 2018; Miriovsky, Shulman, and Abernethy, 2012).

### *AI and clinicians*

According to the Canadian Association of Radiologists, "there is evidence that AI can enhance the efficiency of clinicians and that both clinicians and AI work together are better than one of them alone". Indeed, AI technology is required to achieve the "precision medicine" objective. Precision medicine is an evolving medical paradigm where medical procedures and therapies are personalized

to the patient's needs. "Precision medicine presupposes the existence of vast processing resources and algorithms that can learn on their own at an exponential pace". Increased recognition of AI-enabled technologies and more advanced use of AI solutions by healthcare professionals at the point of treatment have important consequences for HIM procedures. This includes functional consequences for common HIM procedures, such as medical coding, as well as, more broadly, core HIM responsibility for handling health data and knowledge. Each use case provides explanations of the expected application of AI, addresses the related effect on current HIM processes and procedures, and examines potential possibilities and obstacles for integrating HIM procedures. The enhanced awareness of AI-enabled software and the increasingly advanced use of these AI applications by healthcare professionals at the point of treatment have functional consequences for data management (Ganapathy, Abdul, and Nursetyo, 2018; Tang et al. 2018).

### *Future of AI*

Future data will not be gathered exclusively within the framework of the health care environment. The proliferation of mobile sensors will enable future physicians to track, analyze, and respond to additional streams of biomedical data obtained remotely and automatically. These technologies have been under development for a number of years. More than five years back, a blood pressure cuff that attaches to a smartphone and transmits data to a health care provider was available 36 years ago. Tools are now available that monitor glucose levels, have electrocardiogram measurements, or also capture human cognitive and mental wellbeing tests. If wearable sensors advance, they will eventually allow for continuous and discreet tracking of precise health parameters. They can replace widely worn items, such as watches, worn under standard clothing, or even incorporated into "smart" clothing. These types of devices can conceivably relay data back to the healthcare provider, potentially directly to the EHR, which poses numerous challenges. It would be important to trace the origins of these data as the quality, reliability, and therapeutic importance of the data can be unknown (Stanfill and Marc, 2019).

### *AI linked with some more advances and transformation*

As Francis Collins proposed in his vision of the Precision Medicine Initiative, the next generation of scientists would "create innovative new methods for the identification, assessment, and study of a wide variety of biomedical knowledge – including genetic, biochemical, cellular, biological, behavioral, physiological and environmental parameters." Conventionally, we generally speak about the importance of maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of health data, including data relating

to specific patients (Collins and Varmus 2015). It has been shown that small variations in the lab values in the patient's EHR will fully modify the mortality prediction made by what is essentially a well-trained predictor; (Wang et. al. 2019).

### **How can AI transform healthcare?**

Humans and robots each have their own particular strengths and disadvantages, and they should support each other by delivering and maximizing healthcare. The opinion of the American Medical Association stresses the relationship between man and machine, which has significant consequences for the application of AI in healthcare. Artificial intelligence can be used as an effective instrument and allies to improve, develop, and extend human capacities, provide the kinds of treatment people require at the time and where they need. AI will form an alliance to increase therapeutic outcomes (i.e. efficacy, safety, and feasibility), availability, and affordability of treatment. For activities where the computer has improved human competence (e.g. cancer detection, diabetic retinopathy, and some cardiac conditions), for activities where mistakes do not contribute to significant effects (e.g. vaccination to an at-risk demographic group), or for cases when medical physicians are unable but the software may do a decent job (e.g. using a chatbot to teach a patient how to administer an insulin injection). The effective use of AI in healthcare demands that AI systems be incorporated into workflows to facilitate clinical decision-making at the point of treatment. There is a fast-growing number of businesses, especially start-ups, which are developing numerous types of AI healthcare applications. Such systems typically fall into one of four categories: patient-facing, doctor-facing, science, and telehealth. Mayo Clinic Neuroradiologists use AI to identify molecular biomarkers in magnetic resonance imaging scans instead of samples obtained during surgery. Researchers at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center have developed a deep learning model and framework that uses only the recorded diagnostics as labels for full-slide picture processing while eliminating manual annotation of broad data sets that other deep learning models need (Eggerth et. al. 2020).

#### *AI and its applications in COVID-19 pandemic*

AI will easily identify unusual signs and other 'red flags' and therefore alert patients and health authorities. It helps facilitate quicker decision-making and is cost-effective. It helps to build a new diagnostic and control system for COVID 19 cases, using helpful algorithms. AI will create an intelligent network for automated detection and prediction of the dissemination of this virus which will also care in the careful diagnosis and care of infected individuals (Ai et al. 2020). AI can help determine the extent of transmission of this virus by recognizing clusters and hot spots and can

effectively detect and monitor the interaction of individuals. This technology can detect and model the existence of the virus from the available data, social media, and media outlets, the threats of the outbreak, and the possible distribution of the virus. AI is used for drug testing by evaluating the available data for COVID-19. It is important for the design and production of drug delivery. This technology is used to speed up drug testing in real-time, where normal monitoring takes a lot of time and thus helps greatly accelerate this process, which would not be feasible for humans. AI can help assess the degree of dissemination of this virus by recognizing clusters and hot spots and can accurately diagnose and track the presence of individuals. This technology can identify and model the presence of the virus from the available data, social media and media sources, the threat of the epidemic, and the potential spread of the virus. AI is used for drug testing by analyzing the evidence available for COVID-19. It is important for the design and manufacture of the delivery of drugs. This system is used to speed up drug testing in real-time, where routine tracking takes a lot of time and thus helps massively accelerate this process, which would not be possible for humans (Aw and Am 1989; Li et al. 2020). AI will have an effect on prospective health care and solve more emerging issues that will the workload of physicians. With the support of a real-time data collection, AI may provide up-to-date information that helps deter this disease. In the future, this will become an important tool for fighting other epidemics and pandemics. It will provide a prevention measure and tackle many other diseases. AI will play a vital role in delivering both predictive and preventive healthcare in the future (Vaishya et al., 2020).

### *AI and Urban Health Data*

However, while recognizing the value of the data industry, concerns such as anonymity, data security and distribution, and legal standards for health care management and surveillance, among others, remain important. While the usefulness of such data for enhancing performance, competitiveness, and processes in various fields is celebrated, there are critiques of the essence of data processing, storage, maintenance, and usability for such a small number of consumers. These associated benefits of big data clearly influence the geopolitical position, both in corporate and traditional governance, and there is increased competition between powerful economies to ensure that they have maximum control over big data. These are known to be coveted symbols on the world map, and it is expected that these systems will continue to work for their overarching influence as much as possible in the health sector, the same strategy is retained where vital knowledge and data are not openly exchanged between economies as would be expected to support most dynamic economies, although different economies will support from leveraging the value of such data collections (Kharpal, 2018).

Besides, both the new demographics of health, disease and decease patterns have changed as a part of broad of changes such as the population growth, the urbanization, the flee of refugees (as we know populations on the move face multiple health risks, because they are unsheltered to risk factors and affect the health of other refugees and immigrants as well as the reception country) are the factors shaping the future health care system (Fouskas et. al., 2019; Kotroyannos et. al., 2019; Vozikis et. al., 2020). As Eftymiou, Vozikis and Sidiropoulos has mentioned those changes in social, economic, political and demographic differences creates the need for development of health systems. The health sector has been characterized by the laws of supply and demand. The progress of computing, robotics and artificial intelligence strengthens the idea that humanity is heading into a new era. Positive benefits could also stem from the cooperation of states and organizations on a global level and by using technological achievements, ai, big data, ehealth, mhealth apps, can be the way to ameliorate the quality of services and to deal with new challenges that will arise in the health sector (Efthymiou et. al., 2019; Sbarouni et al., 2020).

## Conclusion

AI-powered technologies have taken incremental strides in solving critical problems, but have yet to make a significant aggregate impact on the global healthcare market, considering the considerable media coverage that surrounds it. With a multitude of problems to be addressed, motivated by well-documented trends such as an ageing population and increasing prevalence of chronic illness, there is a strong need for new creative innovations in healthcare. Early detection of various chronic diseases by artificial intelligence helps in early initiation of the treatment for it, which slowdowns the disease progression, improves patient's quality of life, and further reduces the economic burden involved in healthcare management (Efthymiou, 2016). It is very important to continue the development of these methods which gives the right direction for research in near diagnosis of various chronic diseases. AI will promote changes in health quality, patient engagement, and access to healthcare services. It will improve the effectiveness and quality of healthcare services and allow health care facilities to offer more and more treatment and management to more patients. AI will help enhance the perception of healthcare professionals, allowing them to devote more time to direct patient care and management. The artificial intelligence has recently been advertised as one of the main technologies contributing to a real step forward in the administration of health care and services. Diagnostic and healthcare management is often known to be a laborious and exhausting operation, so new artificial intelligence technology is creating technologies and methods to support and overcome health management problems. If the main issues can be tackled in the coming years, it will play a leading role in the

potential operation of healthcare management, growing clinical capital, and ensuring optimal patient outcomes.

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## Topic 5

### International Relations and coordination in Coronavirus Crisis

## The World Defense Expenditure 2019 and trends in the Covid19 era<sup>1</sup>

Themistoklis Z. Zanidis<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This paper focuses on the recent publication of the SIPRI Institute on global defense spending for 2019. The latter is on the rise for 5th consecutive year, climbing to the highest point since 1988, the Cold War era. This fact has multiple interpretations. The most important construe apropos the geopolitical competition, from hegemonic competition between the United States and China to regional ones, can constitute perils to international security with unpredictable and catastrophic consequences for global peace, economy and trade. The recent crisis over the Covid-19 pandemic has expanded the breach between the West and China, raising skepticism or even suspicious on both sides. Relations between the two powers, the United States and China, have deteriorated, threatening global stability while states are unable to find a commonplace for a successful and definitive fight against the pandemic.

The unstable geopolitical environment has experienced the burden of the pandemic crisis due to Covid-19. The restrictive measures taken by governments to intercept the pandemic may be the reasoning for restraining defense spending world widely. This prospect can be a future reality if we take into account the cost caused to national and global economy by the protracted lockdown. Therefore, governments may be compelled to increase spending on the welfare state (health infrastructure, support for the lower classes, support for sectors of the economy most affected by the pandemic such as transportation and tourism) by cutting the defense budget. The latter consists a critical indicator of national sovereignty and its fully understandable the fact that is exceptionally difficult for states to make unforced military budget cuts. However, because of the recent extremely critical situations experienced by humanity as a whole, governments should consider limiting their defense spending, which will be monitored closely by the United Nations for a limited time and focus on dealing with the economic and social effects of the lockdown.

### Introduction and main issues

The recent publication (April 2020) on global defense expenditures for 2019 of the Stockholm-based SIPRI Institute (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) entitled “*Global military expenditure sees largest annual increase in a decade—says SIPRI—reaching \$1917 billion in 2019*” is indicative of the current trends and leads to fruitful conclusions regarding military budgets in an erratic global environment. The purpose of this policy brief is to epitomize the most crucial points of the aforementioned publication.

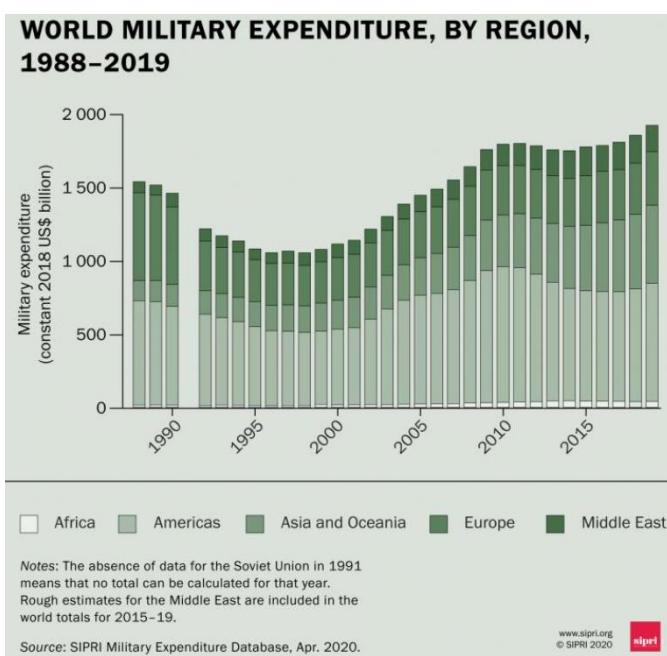
<sup>1</sup> To cite this paper in APA style: Zanidis, T. Z. (2020). The World Defense Expenditure 2019 and trends in the Covid19 era. *HAPSc Policy Briefs Series*, 1(1): 140 – 148. DOI: 10.12681/hapscpbs.24959

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SIPRI is an independent international institute, which was founded in 1966 and was dedicated to the investigation of conflicts, military equipment, arms control and disarmament.<sup>3</sup> It provides data and analysis from open sources to policy makers, researchers, media and stakeholders in order to promote dialogue and peaceful settlement of conflicts. During the recent years, the Institute has been consistently ranked among the world's top think tanks. Among other topics, SIPRI publishes annual bulletins on global military spending trends. These bulletins cover the period from 1949 to 2019. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the nature of military spending has restrictions, as such information is considered being critical to national defense<sup>4</sup>. As a result, free access to such sensitive

information is hard both for the public as well as for the researchers.

As such, there are discrepancies in some of the amounts quoted in the SIPRI newsletter from official government reports.<sup>5</sup> However, all the data mentioned in the SIPRI newsletter refer to official state reports. Therefore, military budget data includes expenditures for the armed forces, ministries, and other defense-related government agencies and paramilitary forces, especially when performing military operations as well as expanding military space. This data is accompanied by expenses related to military and political personnel (payroll and



pensions) as well as expenses related to education, maintenance, supply, research/development and assistance to other states (SIPRI, 2020).

According to the newsletter, the total amount of defense spending worldwide for 2019 is estimated at \$ 1917 billion, which is the highest, recorded since 1988 (during the Cold War). In Figure 1 we notice a steady decline between 2011 and 2014, which concurs with the economic crisis. Since 2015 the rise is on an annual basis with the peak recorded last year. The escalation in defense spending is 3.6% since 2018. Accordingly, the escalation in defense spending compared to 2010 is 7.2%. In terms of

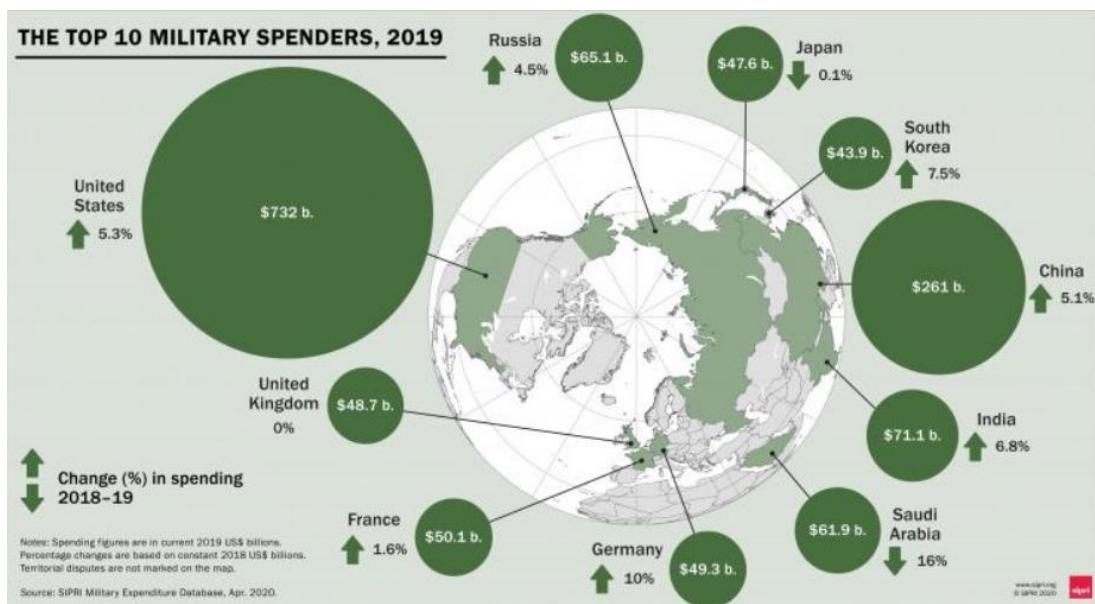
<sup>3</sup> See more at: <https://www.sipri.org/about> (Accessed: May 6, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> See more at: <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-and-military-expenditure/military-expenditure> (Accessed: May 6, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> See more at: [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/fs\\_2020\\_04\\_milex\\_0.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/fs_2020_04_milex_0.pdf), where at page 8 regarding the estimation of expenditures in UK and Germany.

the share of defense expenditure in relation to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) it amounts to 2.2%. Of particular interest is the distribution of this amount as shown in Figure 2. The five countries with the largest military expenditure, covering 62% of global defense spending, are the United States, China, India, Russia and Saudi Arabia.

**Figure 2.**



Source : <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-and-military-expenditure/military-expenditure>

The United States is at the top of the list as it spent \$732 billion to cover its defense spending. The aforementioned amount is up to 5.3% percent since 2018. Despite the spectacular rise in 2019, the country's defense spending is down 15% since 2010 which has been considered to be a record year. The United States maintain its dominance regarding the world's military strength as it accounts for 38% of total defense spending which equals to the next 10 largest spenders combined together. China ranks at the second place with approximately \$261 billion in military expenditure, almost 1/3 of the respective American. The interesting feature in the case of China is not the 2nd place but the fact that the country already owns 14% of the global share while it shows a steady increase since 2018, equal to 5.1%<sup>6</sup> as well as the amazing 85% since 2010.

In addition, China's military budget has been steadily rising since 1994. The increase conforms to the country's economic growth, and shows that Beijing is converting its economic power into military in order to pursue its geopolitical ambitions. India ranks third globally with a share equal to 3.7%. This increase reaches 6.8% since 2018 while the amount spent by the country in 2019 is estimated at \$71.1 billion dollars. The Russian Federation is at the fourth place, spending \$65.1 billion in 2019, which translates into a share of 3.4%, with an increase amounting to 4.5% since 2018. The top five is

<sup>6</sup>However, the increase is lower than the US increase respectively.

completed by Saudi Arabia, which is estimated to have spent \$61.9 billion for the period under investigation, showing a significant decline of 16%<sup>7</sup> since 2018. In the top five, it can be noted that only the United States is among the Western Powers, while the absence of European states is characteristic. In contrast, there are three Asian Powers (China, India, Russia) as the Asia-Ocean region, which accounts for 27% of global defense spending, surpassing Europe, which is limited to just 19%. America is at the top with 43%, while Africa is just 2.1%.

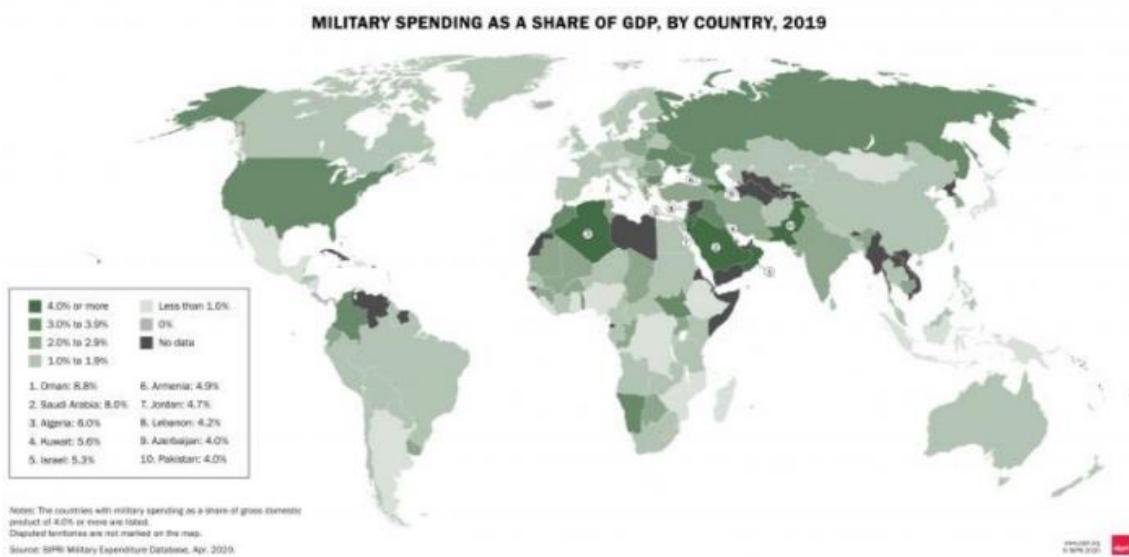
It is obvious that the distribution within such extensive regions is not unvarying. Indicatively, it should be mentioned that regarding the region of the Americas (share 43%), 39% concerns the North, 0.5% the Central and 2.8% the South. Accordingly, in the region of Europe (19% share), the West occupies the lion's share with 13% followed by the East (3.9%) and Central Europe (1.6%). Also, always at a regional level, Europe recorded the largest percentage increase which was 5%, followed by Asia-Oceania (4.8% rise), Americas (4.7% rise) and finally Africa (1.5 % rise).

In the next five positions we will find the great European Powers, France, Germany, United Kingdom followed by Japan and South Korea. The adjustment between 2018-2019 is spectacular regarding Germany, which shows an increase of 10%, while in contrast, Japan shows a marginal decrease of 0.1%. The strongest European Power, in military terms, is France which has spent \$50.1 billion in 2019, accounting for 2.9% of total global spending. The next five places are occupied by Brazil, Italy, Australia, Canada and Israel. Those fifteen states account for 81% of global military expenditure, spending a total of \$1533 billion. Also, from the top fifteen states of the list, six are members of NATO<sup>8</sup>, accounting for 48% of global spending (\$929 billion). All NATO members, or 29 states, spent a total of \$ 1,035 billion. Figure 3 shows the map regarding military spending as a percentage of each country's GDP for the year 2019. It is noteworthy that China seems to spend a lower percentage of its GDP on defense than the United States. Similarly, Western European countries appear to be spending a small percentage of their GDP on defense as they are covered by the US protection umbrella through NATO. Only ten states allocated 4% or more of their total GDP to cover their defense spending. Of these countries, six are in the Middle East, namely Oman<sup>9</sup>, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Israel, Jordan and Lebanon.

<sup>7</sup>It's the only state, from the top-5, which actually reduced its defense expenditure between 2018-2019.

<sup>8</sup> US, France, UK, Italy and Canada.

<sup>9</sup> The country is spending 8.8% of GDP, top of the list, for its defense expenditure

**Figure 3**

Source : <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-and-military-expenditure/military-expenditure>

Observing more carefully the list of the forty countries that spent the largest amounts on their defense expenditures in 2019, we will focus specifically on the 16th and 34th position as they are occupied by Turkey and Greece respectively. Turkey occupies the same position in the table for 2018 and 2019 as it spent \$20.4 billion, an increase equal to 5.8%. The Turkish increase compared to 2010 is equal to 86% and reflects the growth of the Turkish economy which translates into an extensive armaments program which comes largely from the domestic defense industry. Finally, Turkey accounts for 1.1% of global defense spending. Greece, on the other hand, is in 34th place for 2019, one place lower than the previous year. The country spent a total of \$5.5 billion<sup>10</sup>, down slightly by 0.4% since 2018. However, the Greek decline in military expenditure in 2019 compared to 2010 is equal to 23%. This is due to the economic crisis that has gripped the country for almost a decade, and which has left its mark on the military budget. However, the emerging regional environment in the Eastern Mediterranean, with an increasingly revisionist and assertive Turkey as well as the refugee crisis which puts pressure on Greece's eastern borders, makes it imperative that Greece should invest more funds in order to improve the deterrent capability of its Armed Forces.

In conclusion, the Greek government has to deal with the aggressive Turkey in the Aegean sea and Eastern Mediterranean, the refugee crisis which is used by the Turkish authorities to put pressure on EU and simultaneously has to mitigate the Covid19 outbreak, in the country, which is far from over yet. In order to achieve this demanding triple goal is obliged to invest great amount of money, either

<sup>10</sup> The country has a share equal to 0,3% of Global Defense Expenditure

coming from EU funds or the country's means, in its armed and security forces as well as to improve its healthcare system.

### **Trends in Defense Expenditure during the Pandemic**

The recent pandemic that has occurred and is still going on is able to halt the current trend in military expenditures globally. Indeed, the armed forces of numerous states were used by the governments to deal with covid-19 (Economist, 2020) break out. Due to the latter, the impact on the global economy by restrictive measures is expected to be severe, forcing states to reduce their extensive defense spending (IISS, 2020).

At the same time, the growth of the Chinese economy has led to extensive competition between the two Powers. In Europe, Russian aggression is leading to a gradual increase in the defense spending of Eastern European countries (Economist, 2020), especially Poland. Nevertheless, there is reasonable skepticism in the West about the sincerity of the public defense spending charts which are published by Chinese (ChinaPower, 2020) and Russian (SIPRI, 2020) authorities.

Returning to the present, the pandemic has deepened mistrust between the United States and China, while the rapid Chinese military expansion poses significant security dilemmas in neighboring countries of the region, which are leading to an increase in their defense spending (Japan, South Korea) (SIPRI, 2020: 7). The instability of the international environment and the development of geopolitical competition foretell the continuation of the upward trend in defense spending, which may ultimately not be verified. In parallel with the pandemic, the crisis of oil prices has occurred, which collapsed as the barrel price fell to historic low \$22 (BBC, 2020). This is expected to have a negative effect on the exports of countries such as Russia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, which are important actors in the global defense industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis without precedent in living memory causing serious economic recession (OECD, 2020). Restrictive measures to control the pandemic are estimated by IMF, World Bank, European Central Bank and the UN, will also have a negative impact on global and European economy. More specifically, the IMF argues that the Global growth is projected at - 4.9% during 2020 (IMF, 2020). Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a more negative impact of first half of 2020 while the recovery is projected to be more gradual than previously forecast (IMF, 2020). In addition to this, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) recently published a report which claims that the global economy will suffer losses between \$5.8 to \$8.8 trillion the equivalent to 6.4% to 9.7% of GDP due to the Covid-19 pandemic (ADB, 2020). The economic losses in Asia-Pacific

region could range between \$2.0 to \$4.1 trillion. Only the Chinese economy is predicted to experience losses up to \$1.6 trillion (Asian Development Bank, 2020).

The global economy is predicted by IMF, ADB, WB (World Bank, 2020) and ECB (N. Battistini – G. Stoevsky, 2020) to experience serious losses because the pandemic caused a real shock to tourism, investment, consumption, production, and mainly trade which faced increased costs due to the needed safety measures. Especially world trade will be reduced by \$2.6 trillion due to travel restrictions and border closures. Global employment is estimated to lose approximately 242 million jobs (Asia-Pacific region share will be up to 70% of global employment losses). Governments are struggling to control the pandemic and simultaneously to launch policies that mitigate the effects of COVID-19 global economic impact. These measures are mostly about fiscal and monetary easing, increased health spending, and direct support to cover losses in incomes and are necessary because they can reduce the total cost of the pandemic to \$5.4 trillion (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Last but not least, the International Organizations such as OECD are focusing on two equally probable scenarios – one in which a second wave of infections, with renewed lock-downs, hits before the end of 2020, and one in which another major outbreak is avoided (OECD, 2020). As expected, in the worst case scenario (with another major outbreak which is upon us) global economy<sup>11</sup> will face additional decline up to -14,4% in Spain, -10% in Russia, -9,8% in Greece, -8,5% in US, -7,3% in India, -6,3% in Australia (OECD, 2020) (Figure 4).

Figure 4.



Source: <http://oecd.org/economic-outlook>

Some of the countries that are expected to hit hardest by the pandemic are Italy, France, the United States, Germany and Canada, not to mention Greece. These states, except Greece, also spend the largest amounts of money, within NATO, for defense purposes. The need to tackle the impending economic crisis and strengthen the welfare state may force governments to cut defense budget, even the US government, which is by far the world's top military spender. States such as Indonesia and

<sup>11</sup> The World economy in the one-hit scenario will reduced by 6% while in the double-hit scenario will experience loses up to 7.6%.

Thailand have already announced cuts in their defense spending for the current year of \$588 and \$555 million respectively (Defense News, 2020) while South Korea's cuts are up to \$733 million (Asian Military Review, 2020).

In conclusion, the international state system is experiencing a steady increase in defense spending in recent years as the international environment is characterized by intense instability. However, unpredictable developments and events, such as the outbreak of the pandemic, are able to slow down or even stop the increase in military expenditure as the impending economic crisis comes to the forefront, while no one is yet sure about the time of returning to normality. It is of highly importance, regarding the global economic stability and peace, that the total military expenditures be controlled by an International Organization at least for the pandemic period. The ideal Organization to fulfill this extremely crucial task is the United Nations which represents more efficiently the entire World Order of States. In addition to this, the UN Assembly provides a unique podium to every State, regardless its size and power, to present its perspective of global affairs during the Covid19 era. Simultaneously, the Great Powers can agree to defense expenditure control as well as the mechanism of this control within the Security Council.

It's understood that this is a tough political decision which no government has ever undertaken before. But the current situation is critical, due to the pandemic which causes further instability to the fragile global economy. As a consequence, the global arms control should be high in political agenda (a realistic option to governments) as more funds should be driven to the population's protection.

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# Immigration in the Covid-19 Era: The role of Greece and Turkey, the necessity for a common European immigration and foreign policy<sup>1</sup>

Konstantinos Papadakis<sup>2</sup> & Konstantinos Zafeiris<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

Immigration and refugee flows in the Eastern Mediterranean migration path have been increased the last two decades, a fact that created the need for coordinated political reaction from the EU, which now faces new challenges because of the Covid-19 pandemic. This article analyses the new challenges Covid-19 creates by focusing on the “lesson learned” of previous pandemics and their effect on mankind and also on the necessity of a common European policy both in the fields of immigration policy and foreign policy towards the stabilization in the Eastern Mediterranean, mainly by focusing on the role of Greece and Turkey.

## Introduction

Threats to security: “...any action or succession of events that threaten drastically and for a relatively limited time to reduce the quality of life of the people of a country or that threaten to significantly reduce the range of available policy choices of a country's government or not government entities within it.” (Ullman, 1983: 133). The history of epidemics - pandemics is very fascinating and must teach us. The earliest reference to a possible plague epidemic is found in the Bible. The plague is described as a plague that struck the Philistines because they had stolen the Ark of the Covenant from the people of Israel. Thus, the Philistines were punished for their a-witness. These events date to about the second half of the 11th century BC.

The most well-known case of a pandemic is Black Death. It was one of the most devastating pandemics in human history and was instantly transmitted and aided by poor hygiene, lack of medical knowledge and subsequent superstitious prejudices. By early 1348 it had already spread from Italy to central France, until the winter of the same year in the south of England and then in the Netherlands. The result of the pandemic was the loss of almost a third of Europe's population. The first official records of the pandemic began in October 1347, when Genoese merchant ships from the Black Sea

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port of Kafa, approaching the port of Messina in Sicily full of the dead and dead, transported the disease to Europe. The world's population returned to pre-1347 levels in the 17th century.

### **Epidemics of the past and lessons learned**

An epidemic that many researchers have dealt with for a very long time is the plague of Athens (430-428 BC), which is described in great detail by Thucydides. He mentions the symptoms and the development of the disease that resulted in the death of 1,050 of the 4,000 soldiers in a campaign. A plague so great (like this one) and with such devastating consequences that it had no equal in human history. This is how Thucydides - in the history of the Peloponnesian War - described the epidemic that broke out in Athens and changed the military balances in the long-running Athens-Sparta war. Thucydides identified the roots of the plague in Ethiopia and estimated that the epidemic had wiped out about 1/3 of Athens' population, with the city's troops receiving an irreparable blow.

Another historical example of a pandemic was the so-called "Justinian plague." At a time when the armies of the almighty Byzantine emperor were reliving the old glory of the Roman Empire by recapturing lost lands, an internal enemy was showing its frightening teeth: around 540 AD. An unknown disease caused by Egyptian rodents was transported by ship to Istanbul. It is estimated that the plague killed 5,000 people a day, destroying about half of the city's population. However, the pandemic was not confined within the walls of Constantinople, but spread to Europe and Asia and was the deadliest epidemic of antiquity.

We can also mention the first cholera pandemic in 1817, the poliomyelitis of 1916, the yellow fever of Memphis in 1878, the influenza pandemic or "Spanish flu" of 1918-1919, the chicken pox epidemic in India in 1970 and finally the well-known SARS from Asia in 2003, which show that the common denominator of their common health conditions is the cause of their creation but also the movement of the population as the cause of their spread.

Insisting on the latter, it is generally accepted that immigration is a "global phenomenon." However, globally, most writers and analysts' mean that, especially since the mid-1970s, many countries have been affected by immigration, that there has been a growing variety of migrant backgrounds and that immigrants belong to a wider socio-economic scale than ever before. The greatest period of recorded migration, for most analysts, was the 19th century, after 1815. In total, around 25.8 million foreigners entered the United States between 1881 and 1924, as opposed to the 1930s which was just 0.5 million people entering the United States (Borjas, 1994). From the beginning of the 19th century until 1913, it is estimated that about 50 million Europeans had emigrated, of which 46 million to the so-called "new world" (Taylor & Williamson, 1994). After the war, and especially in the 1980s, the number of

immigrants has actually increased, but the percentage of foreigners in the indigenous population is only in the ½ of the corresponding percentage at the end of the 19th century. The 20th century has been described as "the century of immigration" (Lazaridis & Amitsis, 2001: 258), because the most important population movements and changes in the composition of the population (violent or peaceful) took place. A large percentage of these people who move from country to country are economic migrants, who are looking for a better future for themselves and their families. These movements are so common today that they are so large that they provoke reactions inside countries that welcome immigrants.

However, there are qualitative differences from the past. Qualitative research has shown that migrants' responses to relevant issues often revolve around issues such as how their life was "there", how they would like it and what is important to remember and what to change. The idea of ethnic origin is simply a radical concept that is thought to inextricably link individuals in a space and place (Vermeulen, 1997: 21). Their descriptions of living conditions in the two social environments, "there" and "here", show how their perceptions of identity, and therefore also of otherness, are (re) created within the modern dynamics of social relations<sup>4</sup>.

### **Immigration in the Covid-19 Era: The role of Greece and Turkey**

It was well-known among the member states of the EU but now it has become a common sense (especially after the statements of the Turkish President) that Turkey is promoting the illegal immigration towards Europe. The provocative and blackmailing statements of the Turkish president towards Greece and the European Union have become a daily occurrence. In short terms if someone wants to briefly describe the refugee / immigration problem in the Eastern Mediterranean, would say that Turkey is using the human pain of the immigrants and the refugees as a weapon of an asymmetric war against Greece and as a mean of blackmailing towards the European Union in order to get more money. Unfortunately this behavior is leading to the deaths of hundreds of people, among them many children. Greece wants to preserve human lives and so systematically and with the help of the Frontex, guards her sea and land borders, as any modern European state should do, with determination and disposal of great numbers of personnel and resources. It would be crucial for Greece to establish a

<sup>4</sup> Ethnic identity is used as an analytical term and refers to a dynamic and at the same time invisible phenomenon: dynamic in the sense that it is in constant adaptation and invisible because it is rather impossible to identify objectively (see: Veikou M. & Triandafyllidou A. (2002). The Hierarchy of Greekness. Ethnic and National Identity Considerations in Greek Immigration Policy. *Ethnicities*, 2 (2): 189-208 - Veikou M. (2003). Ambiguous Insiders and the Description of "Homeland": Belonging in Immigrants' Ethnic Identity Narratives. In: .Robin, R. & Strath, B. (Eds), *Homelands. Poetic Power and the Politics of Space*. Brussels: P.I.E./Peter Lang, 223-246). More than anything else, ethnic identity is based on the perception of belonging to a community. People who share the same ethnicity do not necessarily share something above that feeling or the idea that they all somehow belong to the same group (although quite often such feelings are expressed with specific symbols such as common language, common religion, etc.).

Contiguous Zone within which it could deal with illegal (and Turkish-led) immigration. Greece, once the ship with the illegal immigrants enters the coastal zone, and after conducting a boarding, if she finds out that there are immigrants on the ship, is obliged to examine whether their repatriation entails its responsibility otherwise it would be a violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In the face of such a possibility, Greece is usually led to the decision to finally accept them and lead them at an Aegean island, which are now overcrowded with immigrants and refugees. The adoption of the Contiguous Zone offers Greece the opportunity to control the illegal (and Turkish-led) immigration, as well as the opportunity to consider its alternatives, without being under the pressure that would be caused by the fact that illegal immigrants are in the coastal zone.

### **Reasons that the Turkey lead to illegal immigration**

The main reason that Turkey promotes the illegal Immigration towards Greece is because of the long going Aegean Dispute between the two countries. The Turkish Coast Guard (TCG) published, alleged official maps and documents claiming that half of the Aegean Sea belong to Turkey. In this sense, Ankara claims to won dozens of Greek islands, the entire eastern Aegean from the island of Samothraki in the North to Kastellorizo island in the South. The maps and claims have been uploaded on the website of the Turkish Coast Guard Sahil Güvenlik Komutanlığı in the context of a 60-page report about the activities of the TCG in 2016. On page 7 and 13 of the report, the maps allegedly show Turkey's Search And Rescue responsibility area. The maps show half of the Aegean Sea and also a very big part of the Black Sea, where Turkey's SAR area coincides with the Turkish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). It should be noted that Turkey has not signed the International Convention for the Law of the Sea of 1982, which delimits the boundaries of the EEZs. However, Turkey claims an EEZ of more than 200 nautical miles.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 1: Turkish Claim in the Aegean**



Source: Turkish coast guard. Available at: [www.sahilguvenlik.gov.tr](http://www.sahilguvenlik.gov.tr)

Turkey is taking advantage of the fact that Greece hasn't yet a Contiguous Zone in order to control the illegal immigration in its interest, and to perform save and rescue operations in high Seas. So Turkey is using the immigrants and refugees as a way to question Greece's sovereignty over several islands of the Aegean and her EEZ as well as and the right to extend her Territorial Waters width to 12 Nautical Miles (UN, 1982).

The Contiguous Zone of a coastal state, in accordance with Article 33 of the 1982 Law of the Sea, is the zone bordering its territorial sea. The Contiguous Zone cannot extend beyond the 24 nautical miles of the baseline from which the width of the territorial sea is measured. Within the Contiguous Zone, the coastal state may exercise the control necessary to:

- I. prevent the violation of customs, fiscal, immigration or health laws and regulations on its territory or in its territorial sea.
- II. punishes violations of the above laws and regulations committed on its territory or in its territorial sea (Papadakis, 2018).

Moreover Greece is obligated to prevent the illegal immigration according to the European Union Laws. In particular the Regulation 2016/399 of the European Parliament, in March 9, 2016 states: "Border control is in the interest not only of the Member State at whose external borders it is carried out but of all Member States which have abolished internal border control. Border control should help to combat illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings and to prevent any threat to the Member States' internal security, public policy, public health and international relations." (European Parliament, 2016: 77/2).

Turkey has even used the pandemic crisis of Covid-19 as a weapon which would help her to put more pressure on Greece and EU. According to Greek authorities Turkey concentrated big numbers of Covid-19 infected immigrants with a plan to push them into the Greek islands and at the land border of Evros. It also said that this movement of illegal immigrants (infected with the Coronavirus) was organized and coordinated by the Turkish police, the coastguard and the gendarmerie. The purpose was to cause an epidemic crisis at the immigrant shelters that exist in Greece and afterwards to blame Greece that the essential precautions weren't held as it should be and that Greece isn't a safe country because of the epidemic outbreak (which eventually didn't happen).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, no matter how hard Greece tries to deal with illegal immigration, there will be no permanent solution and the problem with Turkey will only be solved if there is a common policy and

a decisive stance by the European Union, which will include both political and mainly economic sanctions against Turkey. It's more than certain that decisive European sanctions will force Turkey both to stop using immigrants as a mean of exercising foreign policy and at the same time, blackmailing the European Union. What's need to become a common sense that mainly Greece along with the other European States of the Mediterranean (Italy, Spain and Malta) are not just protecting their own borders but at the same time they are protecting and the borders of the EU as they are obligated to do according to European Law (Regulation 2016/399 of the European Parliament, March 9, 2016). The European Union needs to strongly support those countries with personnel, resources and of course to provide political support especially in the case of Greece towards Turkey. In the Covid-19 era, and because of the challenges it creates, that need has become an urgent necessity. Strong initiatives need to be taken as soon as possible and, in any case, surely within the year 2020.

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## There is always something new emerging from Africa<sup>1</sup>

Apostolos Xyraphis<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This paper focuses on the political and economic significance of Africa for a declining Europe, from a Greek vision and perspective. We argue that major ongoing developments (covid-19 included) and those perspectively announced pose dilemmas and the burden of engineering of choice, to decision-makers. As there are no country-level solutions that could be sufficient to address contemporary complex issues such as migration flows, pandemics, sustainable growth, climate change and multiple inequalities, we explore a possible new moral basis for future Euro-African coordination and collaboration.

### Introduction

It was the Greeks who first turned an observation into a proverb. The phrase chosen as a title has carried different meanings over the centuries; today, it can be applied with confidence to the enterprise and attainments of anyone who deals with economic intelligence regarding Africa. The COVID-19 day after will make us all reflect on a central question: How we want our world to be on that day? If it will be a window of opportunity for improving global wellbeing and governance it will depend on our individual and collective responsibility to grab it. This paper argues that Africa is emerging and in doing so, Africa meets Greece's spirit first. Old and almost forgotten human and spiritual bonds between Africa and Greece need to get revitalized as they have been always pacific and harmoniously complementary. We're talking about forge a moral basis for Europe's new start with Africa, in a context of high uncertainty.

### The political and economic significance of Africa is essential to Europe and to Greece in particular.

As 21<sup>st</sup> century's global challenges, they cannot be addressed without a conjunction with an African perspective. Climate change, geographical distribution of resources, health and security issues cannot simply ignore numbers and the African dimension. For instance, the projected African population growth for the years to come will be huge, as people living on the continent are expected to double from approx. 1 billion today to 2 billion by 2050 (UN, 2019). By then, it is estimated that more than

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50% of Africans will be younger than 18. They will need jobs, estimated to a rate of 20 million annually, in order to cater the basic needs of the young generations.

### **Dilemma no 1: Migration and brain-drain or in-situ creation of jobs?**

**Here lies the burden of dilemmas for both Europe and Africa, as they both will have to dialogue and debate on causes and effects and hopefully they will be able to set up arrangements leading to win-win options for their people as they never did before.** At the political level, the political dialogue could involve African Union and European Union, in parallel with a civic dialogue between institutions such as Union des Conseils Économiques d'Afrique (Ucesa) and European Economic and Social Council (EESC).

Greece, a southern EU country-member, feels the pressure of demography and instabilities from neighboring Africa as much as African countries feel the pressure of inequalities and poverty. For both, these are exogenous factors as they do not dispose the keys of saluting them. Most of the time their asymmetric character tend to shape the future of this part of the world as did historically, in a negative way. However, the main driver for prioritizing Africa and bringing it at the core of the European perspective is related with the need of European economy for manpower.

In the meantime, 21st century gives peoples some hope for improvement, digitalization creates already knowledge societies everywhere and provides unprecedented opportunities for ‘forgotten’ regions and nations changing the bets in the game. Then, COVID-19 changes the game, it broke a 30 years global equilibrium and inevitably poses the following fundamental dilemma. Which one of the three constituents of the old triplet will prevail over the other two: liberté- fraternité- égalité? The answer to this will define social relations within the nations as well as between the nations.

### **Dilemma no 2: Gains-drain or gains-remain for Africa is the question.**

As labour in the continent will be cheaper than in Europe, as resources are abundant, what if economic activities would concentrate, redirect and develop inside Africa?

In addition, there is also a growing market within the African continent, which may be attractive for **direct foreign investments**, in principal. According to the McKinsey Global Institute (2019) increased consumption by Africa’s growing middle class means consumer spending will hit \$1.4 trillion by 2020.

**Structural change<sup>3</sup>** for African economies is needed but as they are still ‘traditional’, **time is the critical parameter** for them to catch up the train of transition to future. Hence, a central question arises: is it possible for an economy that hasn’t met 3rd or 2nd or even 1st industrial revolution, to get into the 4th?

Germany for instance prepared the transition from one industrial revolution to the next gradually in time (j-shift) but African countries as well as Greece have to run and pass over some steps. They need to concentrate their efforts to the opportunities, where they have **competitive advantage<sup>4</sup>**.

All in all, African economies as well as Greece need adequate strategies and a vision, in order to get the means of their future. However, nothing in a transition process is simple and without sacrifices. You have to abandon something in the short term to gain at the long term.

## Greeks in Africa

The economic significance if the above is increasing, represents huge potential for Greek private sector activities as well, in many different areas such as retail, shipping business and maritime transport.

*The presence of Greeks in Africa has historical but not colonial roots.*

Apart from antiquity and byzantine presence, from early 18<sup>th</sup> Century already Greek communities were established from Tanzania to South Africa and from Congo to Ethiopia, not to mention the over the centuries presence of Greeks in Egypt and North Africa. Another parameter of Greek -African relations consists of the aid for development provided by Greece in the frame of UN development goals especially for sub-Saharan countries (Ivory Coast, Liberia, Benin, and Nigeria). Within the frame of World Food Program, Greece contributes with humanitarian aid in West African countries and mostly to the European Development Fund which finances major projects in Africa (i.e. Sudan, Angola, Niger, Zimbabwe, Peoples Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Nigeria).

Greeks have developed significant business activities<sup>5</sup>, for example in Ethiopia in the fields of drilling and constructions, coffee plantations and export, pharmaceuticals, fruit exports, furniture, home appliances, etc. In Nigeria, dominant position in the field of flour production holds a Greek company which is one of the greatest flour producers in the whole sub-Saharan Africa. Other important Greek companies with perennial presence in the area are active in the fields of construction, batteries and

<sup>3</sup> See: Author’s intervention at the AICESIS Conference on the Future of Work, Bucharest, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> RBV theory explains the central role of human resources in creating value.

<sup>5</sup> For further details see: Hellenic-Africa Chamber of Commerce and Development, [www.helafrican-chamber.gr](http://www.helafrican-chamber.gr)

mobile phones, food and snacks, information technology, production of pipes and tubes, cosmetics and the banking sector, as well.

Last but not least, a special case is shipping, where Greeks are world champions, for example, a large part of Nigeria's oil and gas exports is carried out by Greek ships, while major Greek shipping companies are active throughout the region with considerable value added to Africa's effort to integrate new global economy.

**The political significance of Africa** is also a major consideration as it is time to gain its place according to its weight (Clerc, 2019). For doing so, it needs **stable political conditions that will have to go hand in hand with an inclusive economic development**. Consequently, for Greece and for European Union as a whole, it is vital to support any relevant process towards more stability in Africa, less inequalities, to engage stronger in green and blue investments, to drive more societal projects, to proceed with more direct transfers for infrastructure and to foster innovative entrepreneurship. All in all, to generate more inclusive growth in a aristotelean harmonious 'win-win' basis.

### **Institutional preconditions**

Historically, no society had the types of institutions required for modern economic growth, though a few had elements of them for quite long periods (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2019). Growth arose when institutional transitions took place. Historical dynamics of institutions in Africa have been different. Processes of state formation seem to have been delayed relative to Eurasia. These initial institutions interacted in an asymmetric way with a series of shocks that hit Africa. Let's hope that Covid-19 will not harm Africa that much. The fact is that African countries emerged at independence with a complex path dependent set of institutions that were probably anachronistic, introvert and **very weak to enhance 'neoterism'**.

### **Is the picture clear?**

To reduce **ambiguity**, we consider **the following fields** as essential part of the effort needed, when talking about a genuine 'win-win' relationship between Africa and Europe: a) the existence of a common and strong commitment to move rapidly ahead, b) an honest sharing of intentions from all parties d) good governance providing genuine assessments e) accurate data and information availability, f) transparency and confidence.

**The goal is to create conditions of objectivity for all sides (Plato's search for 'αλήθεια' the idea of truth).**

## Conclusions

The new European Commission presidency called recently to build with Africa “a partnership between equals” and also the new European Council’s presidency expressed the will to “write together the new pages for an optimistic and positive future”.

The above statements despite all good intentions are subjected to doubt as **good intentions** have always been the case historically. What has been missing in practice was the credit of them.

Unexpectedly, EU’s attention for a new approach towards Africa was recently expressed in the European Economic and Social Committee’s (2020: 3) joint declaration with some other national ESCs (the Greek one included) which has been adopted on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Shuman Declaration: This strategy, as the Schuman Declaration already clearly stated, must be “offered to the world as a whole without distinction or exception, with the aim of contributing to raising living standards and to promoting peaceful achievements. With increased resources Europe will be able to pursue the achievement of one of its essential tasks, namely, the development of the African continent”. Today more than yesterday, the new strategy for a common Euro-African renaissance is the greatest geopolitical opportunity we have before us”.

However, **three present developments** tend to become drivers for a change: one is related with the fear of migration flows in relation to demographic burst in the continent, the fear of COVID-19 is the second one and third, the run for market shares in a promising Africa emerging, once COVID-19 pandemic being stopped. A crowding is yet observed with China, the Gulf countries, India, Turkey and after Brexit Britain. European Union nevertheless still remains the principal investor in Africa and its main commercial partner.

We argue that a “reset” is possible and the context is favorable for a new start (Guerraoui & Affaya, 2019). The Cotonou’s agreement which defines EU – ACP relations expires and its revision could be the occasion for a new start. African Union asks for Africa to be treated as a whole (Maghreb and South Africa included). To overcome criticism from all sides and mostly to overcome antagonism between notions of “eurocentrism” versus “afrocentrism” (Molefi, 1998), objectivity is needed.

**What Greeks have to offer in building an “equal to equal partnership” is the ideological background with “humanism” and “dialogue”, as foundations of the forthcoming “Eurafrica”. Greek nation successfully reacted to recent COVID-19 crisis and revealed how amazingly**

**effective could this nation be when it comes to use its inherent reflexes and cultural values: solidarity between generations and the fact that for Greeks, humans come first.**

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## Syria: double “battlefront” during COVID-19 era<sup>1</sup>

Antonia-Nefeli Karaleka<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

For many countries, the COVID-19 health crisis has been the biggest challenge of the last decades. However, for Syria it has been included to an already long list of challenges. How did Syria managed the first wave of the pandemic and what were the results? Is the country now more experienced and ready to face a possible second wave of COVID-19? How could Syria have worked more effectively during the last three months and how will it take advantage of this experience to get equipped for the near future. And most importantly, what is the involvement and which are the results of foreign authorities and countries' involvement? This study will attempt to answer these questions about Syria, a country that has been at the forefront of political developments for the past nine years.

## Συρία: το διπλό μέτωπο στην εποχή του κορωνοϊού

Αντωνία-Νεφέλη Καραλέκα<sup>3</sup>

### Περίληψη

Για πολλές χώρες η υγειονομική κρίση του κορωνοϊού αποτέλεσε τη μεγαλύτερη πρόκληση των τελευταίων δεκαετιών. Για τη Συρία όμως ήρθε να προστεθεί σε μία ήδη μακριά λίστα προκλήσεων. Πώς διαχειρίστηκε η Συρία το πρώτο κύμα της πανδημίας και ποια ήταν τα αποτελέσματα; Είναι πλέον έμπειρη και έτοιμη να αντιμετωπίσει ένα πιθανό δεύτερο κύμα κορωνοϊού; Πώς θα μπορούσε να είχε λειτουργήσει αποτελεσματικότερα τους τρεις τελευταίους μήνες και πώς θα αξιοποιήσει την εμπειρία της αυτή για να εφοδιαστεί για το άμεσο μέλλον και ό,τι φέρνει αυτό μαζί του; Και κυρίως, ποια η ανάμειξη και με ποια αποτελέσματα τρίτων δυνάμεων; Σε αυτή τη μελέτη θα γίνει προσπάθεια να απαντηθούν αυτά και άλλα ερωτήματα για τη Συρία, μία χώρα η οποία εδώ και 9 χρόνια βρίσκεται στο προσκήνιο των πολιτικών εξελίξεων.

### Εισαγωγή

Η εξάπλωση της ασθένειας COVID-19 διέγραψε μία επεκτεινόμενη πορεία, οδηγώντας σε μια νέα πανδημία. Ξεφεύγοντας από τον αρχικό γεωγραφικό της πυρήνα και διασπειρόμενη σταδιακά σε ολόκληρο τον πλανήτη κατέστησε τη συνακόλουθη κατάσταση αρκετά διαυγή – σε όλους τους τομείς πλην της υγείας. Στις 11 Μαρτίου 2020 ο Παγκόσμιος Οργανισμός Υγείας χαρακτηρίζει την

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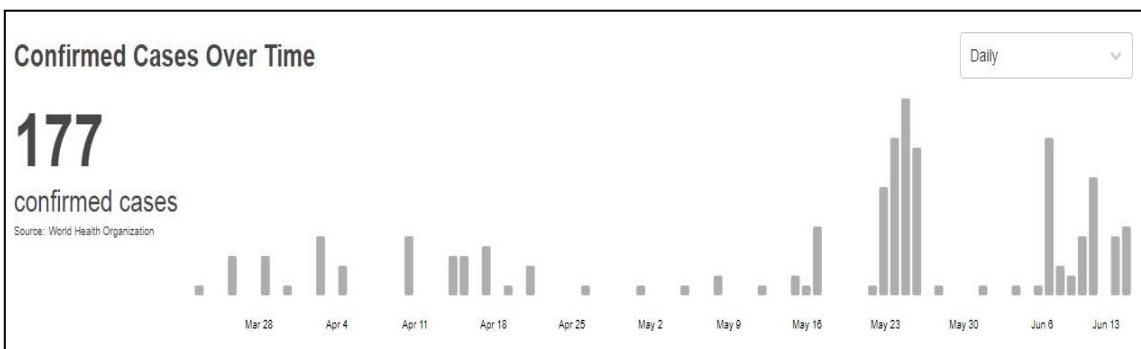
<sup>3</sup> Η Αντωνία Νεφέλη Καραλέκα είναι Μεταπτυχιακή φοιτήτρια στο Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών. Έχει ολοκληρώσει τις προπτυχιακές σπουδές της στο Τμήμα Πολιτικής Επιστήμης και Δημόσιας Διοίκησης του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών και στη Διαχείριση Ανθρώπινων Πόρων στο Αμερικανικό Κολλέγιο της Ελλάδας.

ασθένεια ως πανδημία (WHO Timeline – COVID 19, 2020). Έως τότε είχε γίνει σαφές σε παγκόσμιο επίπεδο ότι η νέα αυτή πρόκληση δεν είναι μόνο μία υγειονομική κρίση: είναι μία κρίση με πρωτόγνωρα, συχνά αντιφατικά, αποτελέσματα σε κάθε τομέα του ανθρώπινου βίου. Ο τομέας που επηρεάζεται ιδιαίτερα, όπως και σε κάθε περίπτωση κοινών διακρατικών δυσκολιών είναι αυτός των διεθνών σχέσεων. Αν και δεν υπάρχει χώρα που να μην επηρεάστηκε από την πανδημία, ωστόσο στην παρούσα μελέτη θα προσεγγιστεί η περίπτωση της Αραβικής Δημοκρατίας της Συρίας.

## Συρία: το υπόβαθρο

### *H σημασία της περίπτωσης*

Πηγή: Παγκόσμιος Οργανισμός Υγείας: <<https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/sy>> (Ανακτήθηκε 16/6/2020)



Η είσοδος της παγκόσμιας κοινότητας στη νέα πραγματικότητα του κορωνοϊού, χαρακτηρίστηκε ως έξοδος από την παλαιά κατάσταση πραγμάτων. Ωστόσο αυτό δεν είναι απόλυτα ακριβές. Η Συρία μετά από 9 χρόνια συνεχόμενου πολέμου, έρχεται αντιμέτωπη με μία ακόμη απειλή. Τη στιγμή που η συριακή λίρα έχει υποτιμηθεί στο μισό της αξίας της από τις αρχές Μαΐου, 8 εκατομμύρια άνθρωποι υπολογίζονται ως έχοντες ανάγκη για άμεση πρόσβαση σε φαγητό (Kenny, 2020). Οι τιμές βασικών εισαγόμενων αγαθών όπως ζάχαρη, αλεύρι και ρύζι, έχουν έως και τριπλασιαστεί (OCHA, 2020a; 2020b). Παράλληλα, στους 2.7 εκατομμύρια ανθρώπους υπολογίζονται οι εσωτερικοί μετανάστες λόγω της εμπόλεμης κατάστασης της χώρας. Η ανακωχή Ρωσίας-Τουρκίας στο Ιντλίμπ στις 5 Μαρτίου 2020 οδήγησε ορισμένους να επιστρέψουν στις αρχικές τους εστίες χωρίς αυτό να σημαίνει ότι ζουν σε συνθήκες ασφαλέστερες από εκείνες της συντριπτικής πλειονότητας η οποία ζει σε υπερπληθείς καταυλισμούς (Culebras, 2020).

### *H επίδοση της Συρίας κατά το πρώτο κύμα*

Συνεπώς, η ιδιαιτερότητα της περίπτωσης της Συρίας έγκειται στο γεγονός των κακών συνθηκών διαβίωσης του μεγαλύτερου μέρους του πληθυσμού της, οι οποίες μπορούν να αποβούν μοιραίες σε πιθανή έξαρση του ιού στην περιοχή. Στο πρώτο κύμα του ιού η Συρία, σύμφωνα τουλάχιστον με

τα επίσημα στοιχεία, κατέγραψε μόνο 170 κρούσματα (WHO COVID Disease Dashboard, 2020). Παρόλα αυτά η εγκυρότητα των στοιχείων αυτών είναι έντονα αμφισβητήσιμη, καθώς μόλις στα τέλη Μαΐου ξεκίνησαν να πραγματοποιούνται μαζικότερα τεστ, όπως απεικονίζεται και στο διάγραμμα.

Επιπλέον, ήδη από το Μάρτιο η κυβέρνηση πρότεινε στους πολίτες που εμφανίζουν συμπτώματα να μην κοινοποιούν το πρόβλημα υγείας τους. Με αυτόν τον τρόπο πιθανολογείται ότι πολλά κρούσματα δε γνωστοποιήθηκαν (McLoughlin, 2020). Η πρόταση αυτή της κυβέρνησης δεν είναι τυχαία. Η πανδημία αποτελεί εξαιρετική ευκαιρία για επιθέσεις καθώς οι υπηρεσίες ασφαλείας είναι απασχολημένες με εσωτερικά ζητήματα. Ενδεχομένως λοιπόν να πρόκειται για μία τακτική προκειμένου να αποφύγει να προβάλει ένα προφίλ στρατιωτικά και αμυντικά εξασθενημένης δύναμης. Αυτό δεν είναι πρωτοφανές καθώς και άλλες χώρες, όπως η Ρωσία, η Μυανμάρ και το Τουρκμενιστάν, παρά τη στενή επικοινωνία με περιοχές που πλήττονται έντονα από τον κορωνοϊό κατέγραψαν ελάχιστα κρούσματα. Φαίνεται ότι ο αριθμός των καταγεγραμμένων κρουσμάτων ποικίλει ανάλογα και με το καθεστώς στην εκάστοτε περίπτωση. Τα πιο αυταρχικά καθεστώτα δεν διατηρούν ενημερωμένες βάσεις δεδομένων και έτσι είναι συχνότερο να μην καταγράφουν – ή ακόμη και επιβεβαιώνουν – κρούσματα. Μελετώντας το Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2019) και το Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, επιβεβαιώνεται ότι οι χώρες με πιο δημοκρατικά καθεστώτα τείνουν να σημειώνουν περισσότερα κρούσματα από αυτές με λιγότερο δημοκρατικά. Άλλωστε, όπως σημείωσε εύστοχα η Michael Meyer-Resende, οι χώρες που πραγματοποιούν λίγα διαγνωστικά τεστ παρουσιάζονται ως μικρότερο πρόβλημα, οι χώρες που πραγματοποιούν λανθασμένα τα διαγνωστικά τεστ φαίνεται σα να μην έχουν καθόλου πρόβλημα, οι αριθμοί είναι πανίσχυροι.

### *Οι φόβοι για το μέλλον*

Αν και η πορεία της χώρας σχετικά με τον ιό είναι ενθαρρυντική, ωστόσο οι φόβοι για το μέλλον είναι παρόντες. Η υγειονομική περίθαλψη είναι ανεπαρκής με 57 δημόσια νοσοκομεία (64%) να λειτουργούν πλήρως. Ακόμη, υπάρχει μεγάλη έλλειψη τόσο υγειονομικού προσωπικού, όσο και εξοπλισμού (Hubbard, 2020). Ακόμη ένα ιδιαίτερο χαρακτηριστικό στη Συρία είναι η επιφανειακή μείωση, αλλά όχι πλήρης παύση των εχθροπραξιών. Αντιθέτως, καθώς η διαθεσιμότητα αγαθών διαρκώς μειώνεται η έλευση της πανδημίας πιθανότατα να εντείνει τις εντάσεις στη Συρία (Alaaldin, 2020). Ο ΠΟΥ συνεργαζόμενος με τις κρατικές αρχές προσέφερε βοήθεια με στόχο τη στήριξη και των τριών «κοινοτήτων» (Κούρδοι στα βορειοανατολικά, αντικαθεστωτικοί στα βορειοδυτικά και καθεστωτικοί στην υπόλοιπη χώρα). Όπως θα ήταν αναμενόμενο η στήριξη αυτή δεν έφτασε με τον

ίδιο τρόπο και στις τρεις πλευρές και έτσι τα Ηνωμένα Έθνη επιχείρησαν να προσφέρουν στη ΒΔ Συρία μεταφέροντας τρόφιμα μέσω Τουρκίας (WorldFoodProgram, 2020). Η πανδημία φαίνεται ότι δε θα παύσει τις συγκρούσεις· ενδεχομένως μάλιστα να τις αυξήσει προσθέτοντας στην αρχική τους νοηματοδότηση έναν ακόμη παράγοντα (Yüksel, 2020).

## Η επείγουσα κατάσταση

Ήδη από την έναρξη διασποράς του ιού εκτός Κίνας, η Γενική Γραμματεία των Ηνωμένων Εθνών προέτρεψε παγκοσμίως τα κράτη να κατευθυνθούν προς μία παγκόσμια ανακωχή. Ουσιαστικά υπήρξε προτροπή προς τη συνεργασία των χωρών της περιοχής και την εύρεση από κοινού λύσεων για την προστασία του πληθυσμού και τη διαχείριση της κρίσης. Αναφέρεται ότι η συνέχιση των εγθροπραξιών μόνο καταστροφική μπορεί να είναι για τους πληθυσμούς των χωρών που είχαν ήδη αρχίσει να πλήττονται από την πανδημία. Τα Ηνωμένα Έθνη έκριναν ότι οι χώρες της Μέσης Ανατολής και της Βόρειας Αφρικής [Middle East and North Africa (MENA)] όφειλαν να δράσουν σεβόμενες τη δημόσια υγεία και να θέσουν ως προτεραιότητα τον πληθυσμό τους λήγοντας τις έντονες διαμάχες. Ειδικότερα, σε μεγαλύτερο κίνδυνο θεωρήθηκε ότι βρίσκονται η Υεμένη, η Λιβύη και η Συρία εξαιτίας των μακρών εντάσεων στο εσωτερικό τους (UNCOVID 19 Response, 2020). Παρόλα αυτά, οι χώρες της MENA δε φάνηκε να ακολουθούν αυτόν τον δρόμο. Η κάθε μία ανταποκρινόμενη στις δικές της ανάγκες ακολούθησε ξεχωριστή πολιτική προστασίας. Το συριακό κράτος ήδη από τον Μάρτιο επέβαλε αυστηρούς περιορισμούς με στόχο τον έλεγχο διασποράς του ιού. Ωστόσο, όπως αναφέρθηκε παραπάνω, πολλά κρούσματα δεν έγιναν γνωστά. Ακόμη σημαντικός παράγοντας στην καταμέτρηση κρουσμάτων αποτελεί ένα νέο, μικρότερο κύμα Σύριων προσφύγων προς τη Τουρκία και τον Λίβανο το οποίο παρατηρήθηκε και το οποίο δυσχεραίνει την ύπαρξη καταποιητικής εικόνας για την κατάσταση της Συρίας.

Επομένως, δίδεται η εντύπωση ότι σε πιθανή νέα έξαρση του ιού σε παγκόσμιο επίπεδο η Συρία δε θα είναι προετοιμασμένη. Η πρακτική εξωτερική παρέμβαση ξεκίνησε μόλις στις αρχές Ιουνίου. Έτσι, αφού άρχισαν τα μαζικότερα τεστ στις 7 Ιουνίου, ειδικότερα στην περιοχή του Ιντλίμπ, τρόφιμα και υγειονομικό υλικό άρχισε να προωθείται προς τις πιο βαριά πληττόμενες περιοχές της Συρίας.

Η πρόταση των Ηνωμένων Εθνών για σύμπραξη των χωρών και σύμπλευση στην κρίση κατέστη ουτοπική, ενώ σε ορισμένες περιπτώσεις οι αιματοχυσίες συνεχίστηκαν με αμείωτο ρυθμό. Αυτό θα έπρεπε να είναι αναμενόμενο. Η προτροπή ανακωχής προς χάριν μίας υγειονομικής κρίσης ίσως είναι μικρής σημασίας για χώρες στις οποίες καθημερινά σκοτώνονται εκατοντάδες άμαχοι και στρατευμένοι. Μπορεί για τους διεθνείς οργανισμούς ή χώρες σε κατάσταση ειρήνης, η πανδημία

να αποτέλεσε τη μεγαλύτερη πρόκληση που κλήθηκαν να αντιμετωπίσουν εδώ και πολλά χρόνια. Ωστόσο, για χώρες όπως η Συρία, η πανδημία ήταν άλλη μία αιτία ενδεχόμενης πρόκλησης θανάτων. Αυτό φυσικά δε σημαίνει ότι δεν πάρθηκαν αυστηρά μέτρα σε πολλές χώρες της MENA, μεταξύ των οποίων και στη Συρία. Όμως, είναι σημαντικό όταν προσπαθούμε να αξιολογούμε την ανταπόκριση και τη θέσπιση προτεραιοτήτων σε αυτές τις χώρες, να συνυπολογίζουμε το συσχετισμό δυνάμεων και τη σύγκρουση συμφερόντων που αυτές συνεπάγονται. Για παράδειγμα είναι αντιφατικό να ζητούν οι ευρέως χαρακτηριζόμενες ως δυτικές χώρες να κάνει η συριακή κυβέρνηση ανακωχή τη στιγμή που η επιβολή κυρώσεων συνεχίζει απτότητη. Χωρίς αυτό να σημαίνει ότι θα πρέπει η συριακή κυβέρνηση να χρησιμοποιεί την υγειονομική κρίση ως πρόσχημα απλώς για την άρση των κυρώσεων και όχι για την ουσιαστική της αντιμετώπιση. Μπορεί σε θεωρητικό επίπεδο οι κυρώσεις να σχετίζονται με την κατάπαυση των εχθροπραξιών και τη διενέργεια διαλόγου όμως η εμπειρία έχει δείξει ότι συνήθως αναζωπυρώνουν τις εντάσεις λειτουργώντας ως πρόκληση παρά ως κατευναστική δύναμη. Ωθούν στην εξεύρεση εναλλακτικού δρόμου παρά στην επαναφορά της ομαλότητας.

Παρά τις ήδη υφιστάμενες κυρώσεις, οι ΗΠΑ επανήλθαν με νέες οι οποίες τέθηκαν σε ισχύ στις 17 Ιουνίου 2020. Στόχος τους, σύμφωνα με τον Αμερικανό Πρέσβη στο Συμβούλιο Ασφαλείας των Ηνωμένων Εθνών, είναι η οικονομική και στρατιωτική εξασθένιση του καθεστώτος του Άσαντ προκειμένου να σταματήσει τη διαρκή καταπάτηση των ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων και να μη θέτει πια εμπόδια στην ειρηνική ανάκαμψη της χώρας. Από την άλλη πλευρά, ο Κινέζος ομόλογος ανέδειξε την απάνθρωπη κίνηση των ΗΠΑ η οποία μπορεί να προκαλέσει περαιτέρω καταστροφές σε μία χώρα όπως η Συρία, ενάλωτη στην κρίση της νέας πανδημίας (ZhangJun, 2020)

## Οι εναλλακτικές

Βλέποντας αυτή την αντιφατικότητα ανάμεσα σε αυτά που πρότειναν οι διεθνείς οργανισμοί και των πράξεων τόσο των δυτικών δυνάμεων, όσο και της ίδιας της Συρίας, η αντιμετώπιση της υγειονομικής κρίσης στη χώρα μπορεί να ήταν επιτυχής, αλλά σίγουρα όχι ικανή για να εγγυηθεί μία αντίστοιχη επιτυχία στο άμεσο μέλλον. Έτσι, η προσοχή στρέφεται στο πώς θα μπορούσε να είχε εξ αρχής καλύτερη διαχείριση η κατάσταση, προκειμένου, πλέον, να υπάρξει ορθή και έγκαιρη προετοιμασία για πιθανή δεύτερη έξαρση του ιού (Burrows, 2020).

### *Αναζήτηση μίας συντονιστικής δύναμης για την αντιμετώπιση της πανδημίας*

Η πρώτη προσέγγιση η οποία αφορά την αντιμετώπιση της πανδημίας σε παγκόσμιο επίπεδο και μπορεί να εφαρμοστεί και στην περίπτωση της Συρίας πηγάζει από τη Θεωρία Ηγεμονικής

Σταθερότητας. Εν ολίγοις η θεωρία αυτή, η οποία έχει πρακτική απήχηση, προτάσσει την ανάγκη ανάδειξης μίας «ηγεμονικής» δύναμης όταν προκύπτει η ανάγκη αντιμετώπισης μίας κρίσης. Θεωρεί ότι η ικανότητα πλήθους μερών – εν προκειμένω χωρών – για τη διαχείριση μίας κρίσης είναι περιορισμένη (Nexon, 2018). Η πιο αποτελεσματική λύση φαίνεται να είναι η καθοδήγηση και ο συντονισμός από μία δύναμη. Επανειλημμένως κατά τη διάρκεια του πρώτου κύματος του νέου κορωνοϊού στηρίχθηκε τόσο από κρατικές αρχές όσο και από μελετητές ότι τη θέση αυτή θα όφειλαν να λάβουν οι ΗΠΑ χωρίς όμως οι τελευταίες να δείχνουν ενδιαφέρον για κάτι τέτοιο. Αντίθετα, αρνήθηκαν να στηρίξουν τη διεθνή προσπάθεια, αντιτέθηκαν στον Παγκόσμιο Οργανισμό Υγείας και αντί να κινηθούν στην προτεινόμενη από τα Ηνωμένα Έθνη ομόνοια μεταξύ των κρατών αφιερώθηκαν σε μία προσπάθεια εύρεσης της αιτίας και του φταίχτη της υπάρχουνσας κατάστασης, παρά λύσης της.

Το πνεύμα της θεωρίας ηγεμονικής σταθερότητας εφόσον υιοθετηθεί με γνήσιες προθέσεις θα μπορούσε να είναι μία αποτελεσματική λύση κατά την προετοιμασία της παγκόσμιας κοινότητας, η οποία έχει στρέψει το βλέμμα στο μέλλον. Η πρόταση να συμβεί κάτι τέτοιο μεταξύ των χωρών της MENA φαίνεται αδύνατη. Στην παρούσα φάση η πλειονότητα των χωρών είναι ήδη αρκετά απασχολημένες με εσωτερικά τους προβλήματα, επομένως δεν είναι διαθέσιμες να αναλάβουν την καθοδήγηση των γειτονικών χωρών και οι σχέσεις των περισσότερων είναι τόσο τεταμένες που δε θα επέτρεπαν κάτι τέτοιο (Bozdaglioglu, 2020). Από την άλλη, ίσως αυτή η ανάγκη για έναν «ηγεμόνα» να λειτουργούσε ως ανάχωμα για την ανάδειξη μίας κεντρικής δύναμης στην περιοχή, κάτι που σε κάθε περίπτωση δε φάνηκε να συμβαίνει.

Η πρώτη, λοιπόν, εναλλακτική θα ήταν η έγκαιρη, ουσιαστική και οργανωμένη βοήθεια μέσω μίας ανεξάρτητης αρχής, δηλαδή ενός διεθνούς φορέα που θα συσταθεί ειδικά γι' αυτό. Ενδεχομένως θα μπορούσε να τελέσει υπό τη σκέπη του ΠΟΥ, πάντως σίγουρα ανεξάρτητα από τα ενδιαφέροντα των επιμέρους χωρών. Σε κάθε άλλη περίπτωση οι συμμαχικές δυνάμεις της κάθε μεριάς θα στέλνουν ξεχωριστά τη βοήθειά τους ενδεχομένως χειροτερεύοντας την κατάσταση, καθώς δε θα μπορεί να υπάρχει κεντρικός έλεγχος και συντονισμός της εξέλιξης της κρίσης. Δε θα έπρεπε μία χώρα να αναλάβει το ρόλο του «ηγεμόνα» αντιμετώπισης της κρίσης στην προκειμένη περίπτωση, καθώς η διεύρυνση της ανάμειξης 3<sup>ων</sup> χωρών στα εσωτερικά της χώρας θα λειτουργήσει ως ξερό δέντρο σε μία ήδη μαινόμενη πυρκαγιά. Ο μόνος «ηγεμόνας που θα μπορούσε να είναι αποτελεσματικός είναι μία ανεξάρτητη αρχή στις οδηγίες της οποίας θα συμμορφώνονταν όλοι.

Δημιουργία γόνιμου εδάφους για εξατομικευμένη διαχείριση της κρίσης

Η δεύτερη – και ίσως ρεαλιστικότερη – λύση είναι η παροχή κινήτρων στη Συρία προκειμένου να στρέψει την προσοχή της περισσότερο στην πανδημία. Θέτοντας ως στόχο την προστασία του πληθυσμού, ο οποίος στην πλειονότητά του έχει γονατίσει από τις συνθήκες στο εσωτερικό της χώρας, μία αποτελεσματική αντιμετώπιση θα ξεκινούσε από την παραχώρηση διευκολύνσεων προς τη Συρία υπό προϋποθέσεις. Έτσι θα μπορούσαν τόσο οι ΗΠΑ, όσο και η ΕΕ να προβούν σε μερική άρση των κυρώσεων σε βασικούς τομείς οι οποίοι επηρεάζουν τη διαβίωση των πολιτών. Ακόμη, η ελεύθερη πτώση της συριακής λίρας χρειάζεται μία παύση προκειμένου οι τιμές των προϊόντων πρώτης ανάγκης να επανέλθουν σε ανεκτά επίπεδα. Για να γίνει αυτό θα πρέπει να κυκλοφορήσει περισσότερο δολάριο στην αγορά μέσω του δανεισμού σε αμερικανικά δολάρια, πράγμα το οποίο πρέπει να επιτραπεί πρώτα απ' όλα από τις δυτικές δυνάμεις. Οι εισαγωγές θα πρέπει να διευκολυνθούν σε μεγαλύτερο βαθμό, καθώς στην παρούσα φάση η χώρα βασίζεται πολύ σε αυτές. Η έλλειψη εγχώριας παραγωγής, οι μειωμένες εισαγωγές και η διαρκής υποτίμηση του νομίσματος καθιστούν το πρόβλημα ακόμη πιο δυσχερές. Φυσικά, πρέπει να υπάρξουν εγγυήσεις απ' όλες τις μεριές ότι τόσο η υποσχόμενη βιοήθεια (τόσο δάνεια σε δολάριο όσο και ανθρωπιστική βιοήθεια, βλ. ΠΟΥ) θα δοθεί όσο και θα αξιοποιηθεί από τη Συρία προς όλα τα μέτωπα με προκαθορισμένο τρόπο και όχι καιροσκοπικά. Οι δυτικές δυνάμεις και ιδιαίτερα η ΕΕ οφείλουν να αναγνωρίσουν το γεγονός της απειλής ενός ακόμη μεγάλου κύματος προσφύγων, εάν η οικονομική και πολιτική κατάσταση της Συρίας συνεχίσει με τον ίδιο ρυθμό συνδυαστικά με την υγειονομική κρίση, η οποία πρώτα απ' όλα θα πλήξει τους ανεπαρκώς στεγασμένους πολίτες της. Εάν ξεσπάσει νέο κύμα προσφύγων ταυτόχρονα με μία δεύτερη έκρηξη του ιού, οι Ευρωπαϊκές χώρες θα έχουν να δώσουν διπλό αγώνα σε ανηφορικό έδαφος. Το συμφέρον και των δύο πλευρών θα έπρεπε να είναι διαυγές· ο πληθυσμός της Συρίας πρέπει να προστατευτεί για να προστατευτεί ολόκληρη η κοινωνική αλυσίδα μέρος της οποίας αποτελούν γειτονικές χώρες αλλά και ευρωπαϊκές.

## Επίλογος

Ο Σύριος λογοτέχνης Χάλιντ Χαλίφα θεωρεί ότι είναι η πρώτη φορά κατά την οποία οι Σύριοι ξεφεύγουν από τα αποκλειστικά δικά τους προβλήματα – με τα οποία καλούνται να έρθουν αντιμέτωποι εδώ και 9 χρόνια – και γίνονται μέρος της ανθρωπότητας (Al-Mounes, 2020). Η τραγωδία πλέον είναι κοινή για όλους. Παρόλα αυτά φοβάται ότι ακόμη και με κοινά προβλήματα προς επίλυση, ο κόσμος θα αγνοήσει γρήγορα την αντιφατική «οιμόνοια» που προσφέρει αυτή η πανδημία ξεχνώντας και τους Σύριους. Οι προτεινόμενες λύσεις ίσως μπορούν να λειτουργήσουν ως βάθρο εικίνησης μίας ομαλότερης πορείας, καθώς η κατάσταση της πανδημίας στη Συρία επηρεάζει πολύ μεγαλύτερο μέρος του ανθρώπινου πληθυσμού από τους καταγεγραμμένους

κατοίκους της.

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## Topic 6

### International Organizations in corona crisis era

## Besieged sovereignty: The pandemic and the triple relation between state, international organizations and integral society<sup>1</sup>

Carina Barbosa Gouvêa<sup>2</sup> & Pedro Hermílio Villas Bôas Castelo Branco<sup>3</sup>

*...during the crisis, the one who governs is the Prince, concentrating powers.*

*Machiavelli*

### Abstract

The theory of sovereignty has been challenged by the limits established by the international field and tensions, a likely subordination of the internal right to the global community that is governed by rules and principles and not simply by the exercise of power. The pandemic from COVID-19 has provided an opening in the theoretical field of fragmentation of the theory regarding state sovereignty. A new way to materialize sovereignty that, when put into practice, can assume the functions of global governance exercised by an international organization. This ability of exercising state sovereignty, named besieged sovereignty in this document, has the initial goal of justifying the use of this new concept that emerged from a state of global exception, in addition to presenting, briefly, the approach to the validity of legal norms. Two hypotheses will be presented for the field of this research: can there be unilateral and/or plurilateral intervention in state sovereignty in case there is a declaration of a state of emergency, of exception, in the global field? Can there be an authorization of the United Nations Charter for direct intervention on behalf of individual or collective self-defense, in the case of an armed attack upon the nation that represents imminent risk of transmission and spread of the pandemic? We will argue that besieged sovereignty represents a serious risk to state sovereignty and that the international community needs to be actively engaged in ensuring that governments observe the standards and quickly return to normal so that there is no "legitimate use of force" and unilateral or plurilateral interventions, since the sovereign will be the one who is capable, over the abnormality, in order to suspend the legal order in whole or in part and with the purpose of restoring normality.

### Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the rapid spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) around the world configures as a pandemic. WHO director Ghebreyesus declared that the word "pandemic" should be used with extreme caution "(...) it is a word that, if used in the wrong

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sense, can cause irrational fear or unjustified acceptance that the fight is over, leading to unnecessary death and suffering”<sup>4</sup>.

The pandemic justifies the implementation of the state of exception, the state of emergency in the inner and outer levels. Its implementation invariably affects economic, civil, political activities, restricts rights, imposes limits to freedom, in order to work around concrete problems that originated it and to restore the regular course of social life. The decision to adopt the state of emergency is justified by the insufficiency of normative legal order to predict all the contingencies, critical and extraordinary situations, that threaten the regular course of ordinary life.

The validity of legal norms presumes a factual situation of legal normality and no norm will be valid if an abnormal situation is present. As old Aristotle reminds us: “when the law is expressed universally and a case that is not covered by the universal declaration arises, it is fair, since the legislator failed and missed due to the excess of simplicity, to correct the omission – in other words say what the legislator would have said had him been present, and would have included in the law had him had knowledge of the case” (Aristotle, 1954: 336). The generic and abstract law that aims to guide human conduct in a way to grant it predictability, is not strong enough to know all the possible cases of the complex reality, it cannot predict the outbreak of wars, the spread of viruses, natural accidents, etc. It would be, however, possible for the philosopher to correct the flaws of the judge when facing a concrete case, if he had behaved as a legislator, he would have done it had he had knowledge of the situation. Although the Stagirite had explained the problem of the contingency by making it visible in the discussion about the limit of generic law applicability while facing a concrete situation, he couldn’t have realized the dimension of the rupture between theory and praxis, law and decision, that occurs in exceptional situations.

### **Fragmentation of the theory regarding state sovereignty**

The excess of complexity of reality, by imposing an extraordinary situation that flees from normative prediction, demands a restorative sovereign decision of derailed legal and social orders.

Aristotle believed that the judge, when facing the impotence of the law, should be capable of putting himself in the place of the legislator and declaring what the latter would declare had him been present and fill his gap. Schmitt disagreed with the philosopher (Schmitt, 1985), because the judge could never put himself in the legislator’s place and act as if he were the representative of his will or of the

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<sup>4</sup> Available at: <https://twitter.com/who/status/1237777130773151754> (Accessed: June, 15, 2020).

mouth that pronounces the words of the law, as Montesquieu wished. In the understanding of the German jurist the extreme contingency, the critical situation, the absolute exception, because it is unrestricted, including to suspend the current legal order: every sovereign decision of public order restorative nature is a disruption with the law, and therefore, is *ex nihil*, which means it derives from a normative nothing, it is a decision for the restoration of law and not a law norm (Castelo Branco, 2013). This stems from the regulatory failure to deal with emergency situations. The truly exceptional situation is the one deprived from any normative predictability, therefore it is guided by the complexity of the concrete case, always with the goal of restoring the normal factual order for the norms to recover their validity. One of the inferences to be drawn from the German jurist's theory of exception is that in order to achieve the fundamental aim of structuring social life, giving it stability and predictability, a decision is required to partially or fully suspend the laws to restore the purpose principle of law, which is the factual order, without which legal norms cannot apply: the legal order underlies a factual order that can be understood as an order created by a structuring political decision or founding of social reality without which there is no legal order. Under the state of exception, in order to restore public order, rights are restricted, especially freedom, in order to re-establish law, the legal system. Thus, it would be possible to infer the well-known phrase of the German jurist: it is not necessary to have the right to realize the law, which means the need to restrict rights to restore the legal order (Schmitt, 1985).

The sovereign who decides on the state of exception, therefore, is not necessarily the mandate of the maximum office of a republic, but it may be another character who is able to decide when it is necessary to enact the exception for the restoration of social order. *Necessitas legem non habet*, the need, urgency, emergency situation imposed by a pandemic does not have previous laws that establish specific measures to deal with its confrontation, mainly because social, climatic and political variables differ from place to place, in addition the human being is fallible and his enemy, identified as a new coronavirus, is invisible and still somewhat unknown. Faced with the fight against the global viral enemy, the reality pressures politics for a decision to impose a state of exception. It is imperative in these cases to restrict freedom in order to save lives and restore public order and security. Therefore, we understand that facing the exceptional situation of a viral threat to collective lives of populations spread out across the globe, the right to life assumes primacy in relation to the right to freedom and actions that are in fact effective to face the spread of the disease are actions of public, state and supranational bodies. The exponential viral spread can only be detained with public nature measures that avoid gatherings, promote the closing of establishments, cities, borders, prevent the transit of

vehicles and the evacuation of areas, the nationalization of hospitals during the spread of the virus, etc.

However, despite the pandemic imposing a state of global exception, in order not to besiege the sovereignty of political units - which is practically impossible - there is a fundamental question of a temporal nature: it does not affect all countries at the same time. The epicenter of large-scale viral propagation is moving rapidly, but concomitantly to all countries, which allows, in the face of insufficient normative predictability, to learn from the mistakes and successes of other countries in combating the enemy and to adopt measures that prove greater efficiency. The pandemic experience highlights the possible failure of the normative system in the face of the unpredictable, after all it is something new, a new virus that highlights the vulnerability of the normative system and requires its suspension in order to implement extraordinary measures. This challenge leads us to shed light on the relationship between law and politics.

While in the normal situation the legal rules are valid and decisions can be based on the normative order previously established, the exceptional situation requires a sovereign political decision. Its decisive force causes a split between norm and law in order to realize the law regardless of normative predictability and save the legal order by restoring the factual order that presupposes the legal order. The paradox of the exception lies in the fact that in order to save the right it is necessary to act against the right: to save lives, it is provisionally necessary to restrict civil liberties.

The state of emergency has two essential strategic components: a normative framework constituted by constitutional and international norms; and an operational structure involving organization and strategic plans coordinated in a multi-sectoral way with the support and collaboration of the whole society, in the case of a pandemic, of the integral, global society.

It can be represented from the internal and external perspective. Internally, it comes from the formal governmental declaration with political and jurisdictional control in response to an exceptional situation that represents a serious threat to the country. Externally, the threat goes beyond transconstitutional boundaries, affecting other sovereignties - in this case and in most cases, it is the international actors, via international organizations, that trigger the state of emergency.

These interventions, unilaterally or multilaterally, can suspend certain government functions; alert citizens to change their behavior, authorize government agencies to implement contention plans, as well as limit or suspend civil freedoms and human rights, since we are navigating in the field of its absolute protection.

Certain restrictions can be fully justified, considering the prophylactic measures: take precautions to avoid lack of control and make the peak of the pandemic not so high, since there is a virtual threat to the entire population.

The State must respect the limits foreseen by the relevant normative instruments of national and international law, which does not imply in a temporary suspension of the Rule of Law nor does it authorize those who are in power to act in disagreement with the principle of legality, to which they are connected. Some characteristics of the state of emergency are mentioned: temporality; exceptionality; internal and/or external official statement; broad communication; proportionality; legality; revocability of human and fundamental rights.

Two hypotheses need to be discussed, referring to the internal and external plan and which are connected: in the internal plan, could there be a breach of constitutional competences to act in the name of the security of the community? Regarding the external plan, can there be unilateral and/or plurilateral intervention in state sovereignty in the event of a declaration of a state of emergency, of exception, in the global field? Could there be authorization from the United Nations Charter for direct intervention in the name of self-defense, individually or collectively, in the event of an armed attack on the nation that represents imminent risk?

The purpose must be compatible with formal control, which may vary depending on strategic plans: restriction of freedom of the press and prohibition of public meetings, domestic employment of the armed forces, evacuation of people from homes or jobs, searches in homes without a warrant, as long as provided in the emergency law, closing schools, colleges and public institutions. In a state of emergency, the responsibility for government should remain with the civil authorities both nationally and internationally, being the armed forces obliged to provide support as a subsidiary force.

And who should decide about the state of exception? The sovereign. Who is it? And in the current case, while facing a pandemic, that is, a pandemic sickness broadly diffused and in the context of the state of exception, sovereignty is besieged.

The sovereign is the one who decides about the estate of exception and this is a more political matter than it is a legal one. According to Schmitt (1985), the law is not Strong enough to predict exceptional situations and which will act in a sovereign way facing the outgoing crisis.

The flank opens for the theoretical fragmentation of state sovereignty, here designated as besieged sovereignty. Emergency situations triggered in the global context can affect a State's relations with its neighbors, since everyone has responsibility and interest in ensuring that emergency decrees in the global context, such as the pandemic, for example, are implemented in the national context.

## Conclusion

The international Community needs to be actively engaged in guaranteeing that governments observe the standards and quickly guarantee the return to normality so that there is no “legitimate use of force” and no unilateral or plurilateral interventions, since the sovereign will be the one who is capable over abnormalities, in order to partially or fully suspend the legal order and with the means to restore normality.

An emergency situation puts enormous pressure on the state and society and, in order to achieve the desired purpose effectively, the cooperation of citizens is a fundamental element. In this context, the adoption of social restructuring measures becomes adequate to deal with the increasingly complex social demands of society that face the threat of an existential collapse on a global scale.

Solidarity expresses co-responsibility for the destiny of all, with the sharing of the burden of living together. In this pandemic context, it is necessary to understand that the state apparatus, responsible for providing, realizing and concretizing services, will not be capable of promoting the contents of the right to life and health by itself. Responsibility should be shared within the scope of the solidarity of integral society, allowing the construction of instruments of cooperation and mutual assistance.

And how do we achieve success against our current enemy? According to Orozimbo Nunes<sup>5</sup>, through awareness, information and responsibility – taking care of yourself means caring for others.

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<sup>5</sup> Orozimbo Nunes is a fictional character inspired by Brazilian literature.

# Diasporas engaging during the pandemic: international global exchanges in response to the Covid-19 crisis<sup>1</sup>

Larisa Lara-Guerrero<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract:

The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented phenomenon that has challenged governments, international organisations, academics, and members of the civil society worldwide. In an effort to contribute to the alleviation of the pandemic and enhance the dialogue among diaspora experts, the International Organisation of Migration and iDiaspora organised three global exchanges. This policy brief argues that these platforms are particularly useful in times of crisis and restricted mobility because diasporas around the world have been able to share crucial information, give advice and create an open dialogue to inspire other migrants to develop their own initiatives against the pandemic.

## Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented phenomenon that has challenged governments, international organisations, academics, and members of the civil society worldwide. At the beginning of the outbreak in mid-March, governments opted to implement restrictive measures in order to prevent the spread of the virus such as closing borders and limiting the movement of people in general. Migrants have been particularly affected by these types of restrictions since on the one hand they could not return easily to their homeland (Mandraud, 2020) and on the other hand, vulnerable migrant populations have been particularly affected by the pandemic by not having access to health and social security (McKee Irwin and Del Monte, 2020).

In the pre-pandemic era, international organisations, NGOs, and governments, were already interested in producing research and platforms to better integrate migration into development policies (de Haas, 2006; ICMPD and ECDPM, 2013; JMDI, 2015). Since the 2000s, migrants and diasporas have been recognised as agents capable of enhancing development in both their homelands and hostlands through transnational links. Indeed, diasporas have the capacity to engage with their homeland societies and transform them through economic, social, and political exchanges. However,

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it is important to note that these channels and interconnections might be disrupted in times of crisis and the pandemic was not the exception.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the global population at different rhythms and intensities, but it has been challenging for the governments, international organisations, diasporic organisations, and migrant communities. In an effort to contribute to the alleviation of the crisis and provide an opportunity to diasporas across the world, the International Organisation of Migration organised three global exchanges through their initiative iDiaspora, a global engagement and knowledge exchange hub for diaspora communities (iDiaspora, 2019).

This policy brief aims to analyse the impact of these Global Forums in the relief of the Covid crisis. In order to do so, I will briefly discuss the specificities of the Covid crisis and its implications for international migration and in particular for diasporas. Second, I will introduce the Global Exchanges organised by the iDiaspora initiative and how they contributed to the exchange of good transnational practices to face the pandemic. I will argue that platforms such as iDiaspora are particularly useful in times of crisis and restricted mobility since through these virtual exchanges, migrant communities around the world have been able to share crucial information, give advice and create an open dialogue to inspire other migrants to develop their own initiatives against the pandemic.

### **The impact of Covid-19 on migrants**

The pandemic has affected migrant communities and international mobility in different ways, nevertheless not all the countries have been affected equally. The coronavirus pandemic has revealed important flaws in the global health systems and the lack of access to social protection, especially in developing countries.

Overall, older people, people with chronic illnesses and healthcare workers are at greater risk of contracting the virus (WHO, 2020). In order to contain the spread of the virus, authorities have recommended to follow strict hygiene and social distancing measures. Nevertheless, for some people, as specifically for vulnerable migrants, these measures have been difficult or impossible to follow.

In the case of migrants, housing and employment conditions as well as access to health security are key factors influencing their risk of contracting the virus. Worldwide, migrants have different rights which can limit their access to social services as well as impact their living conditions. Therefore, their level of vulnerability differs and depends on their own capacities to cope with the dangers derived from the pandemic. Some migrants have come together to develop diasporic initiatives to support people from their communities either from their homelands or their hostlands.

The use of “diaspora” has proliferated in the last two decades (Brubaker, 2005). The current consensus to designate diasporas includes three main elements: the first is dispersion in space to two or more locations; the second, orientation towards a homeland and the third, boundary maintenance over time (Brubaker, 2005; Gamlen, 2011). It is relevant to note that diasporas are heterogenous groups. As a result, members belonging to a same diaspora may have different interests and different forms of engaging with their homeland.

In times of crisis, diasporas engage with their homeland differently than in peaceful times (Smith and Stares, 2007). Indeed, the dynamics of crisis might change the access that migrants have to both resources and to political and social opportunities in their hostland. In addition, the emergency context might restrict the ability of migrants to congregate and organise initiatives to engage with their homeland. As for any crisis, during the Covid-19 outbreak, migrants had to learn to navigate new challenges and readapt to new norms such as mobility restrictions and the closure of so-called “non-essential” services in order to engage with their homelands. When responding to the current health crisis, diasporas have tried to inform the members of their communities about the evolution and prevention measures to reduce the spread of the virus. In addition, to alleviate the effects of the crisis, diaspora organisations have also provided humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable population within their community either in their homeland or their hostlands.

### **Global Exchanges organised by the iDiaspora**

The International Organisation of Migration and iDiaspora organised three global diaspora virtual exchanges with two main objectives: 1) to create a space for collaboration where diaspora groups from around the world could share their best practices responding to the Covid-19 crisis and 2) to showcase the work already done by diasporic groups and enhance the cooperation between policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders involved in mainstreaming of migrant communities into the coronavirus crisis (IOM, 2020).

The first virtual exchange took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2020 in English, the second one on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May in French and the third on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June in Spanish. The virtual discussions involved nearly 300 stakeholders including policymakers, researchers, members of the global civil society interested in maximising the potential of diasporas facing the pandemic worldwide.

In each meeting, panellists were able to present the work done by their organisations to support their respective communities in different countries and contexts. These presentations were valuable for the participants because they were able to identify the best practices on how members of multiple diasporas have been organising initiatives to inform and support the members of their own

communities. In addition, these virtual platforms were key to establish common strategies among the diasporic organisations to create synergies among the stakeholders involved in the crisis alleviation at the local, national, and even international level. The presentations were followed by a round of questions and answers through which the participants shared their experiences and ideas on how to better integrate migrant populations into the response to the pandemic.

Even if the virtual exchanges were organised at different stages of the crisis and the participants were facing different challenges related to their specific context, the discussions shed light on three main lines of action: the type of initiatives to be developed, how to do it at the local and practical level and finally on how to collaborate with international organisations to boost synergies at the international level.

The first series of recommendations included an analysis on the type of initiatives and programmes that the diasporas around the world have implemented. In the three sessions, experts discussed about the urgency to inform about the sanitary and security measures related to the Covid-19 crisis. Moreover, they emphasised the relevance of implementing different types of programme to provide a holistic response to the health crisis. In particular, this included the implementation of humanitarian aid initiatives, psychological assistance, and administrative support related to repatriation.

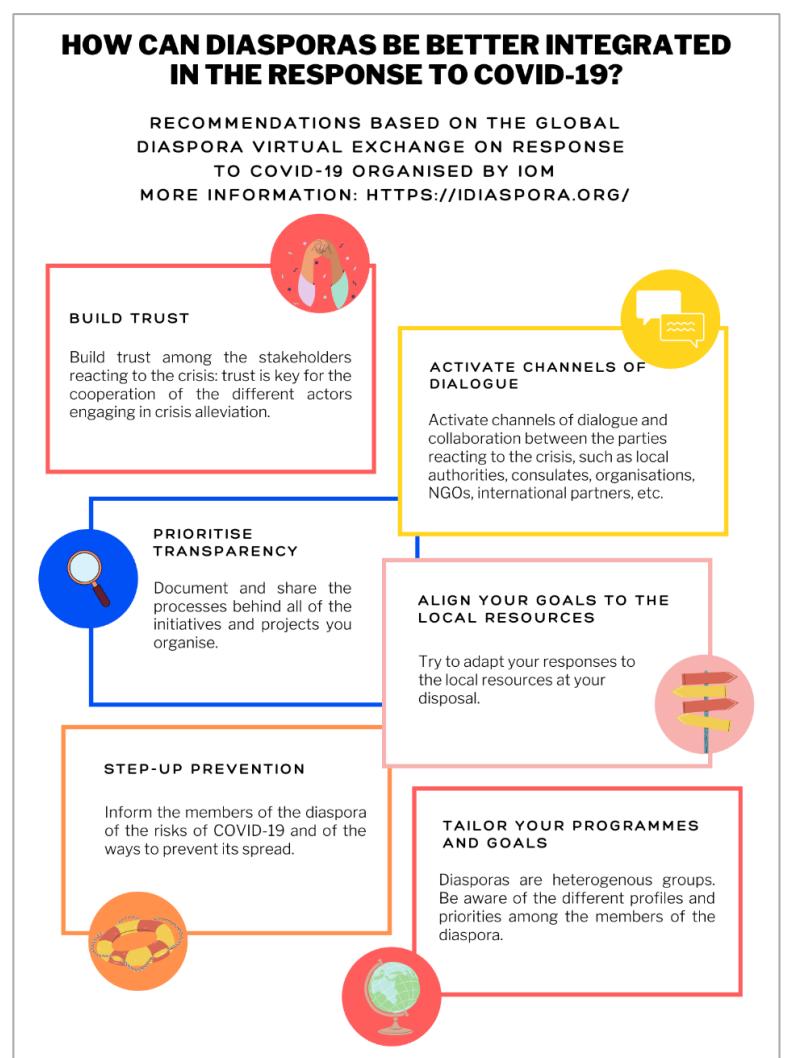
The second line of action identified by the participants included specific strategies and advice on how to integrate local authorities into the mainstreaming of migrants into the alleviation of the pandemic. The stakeholders participating in the virtual exchanges emphasised the necessity to understand the local context and the profile of the different members of the diaspora in order to be able to implement efficient programmes. Key information about the members of the diaspora and technological tools can improve the design of the responses. For instance, some participants mentioned the relevance of conducting surveys to identify the most vulnerable migrants and better tailor the transnational initiatives. Finally, on various occasions, the participants highlighted the pertinence of implementing strategies using online platforms and mobile applications since in this specific crisis, mobility and social contact are restricted.

The third line of action depicted by the experts working on migration was the relevance of collaborating between all the stakeholders facing the Covid-crisis including international organisations, NGOs, academics, and other networks to boost international cooperation and identify the best practices on the field to prevent the spread of the virus and to face future challenges related to it.

## Conclusion

The effort made by the International Organisation of Migration and iDiaspora to coordinate three global exchanges with members of the diaspora from all the corners of the world to respond to a pandemic is unprecedented. Through these virtual meetings, different actors involved in the development of diasporic initiatives in America, Europe, Africa, and Asia were able to learn and share relevant information to better include the members of the diaspora responding to the global sanitary crisis.

The immediate response by the IOM and iDiaspora to organise these exchanges has proven to be effective for four main reasons. First, the IOM invited a different range of experts working and studying diasporic dynamics. By inviting policy-makers, academics, social workers, and other stakeholders,



*Graphic summary of the first Global Exchange in English produced by Larisa Lara-Guerrero and published in IOM (2020)*

the forums represented an opportunity to learn about diasporic transnational engagement in times of crisis from different perspectives. Second, besides the expertise of different actors, the IOM made three virtual meetings in three different languages. By inviting English, French, and Spanish speakers, the international organisation ensured to include people from different regions and gave them the opportunity to express their ideas openly in their own language.

Third, the virtual exchanges created a platform not only to learn and share the best practices but also to recognise the work of all the stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of transnational initiatives. The public and international recognition of the participants might incentivise the creation of more initiatives and inspire other actors to develop new synergies to respond to the crisis.

Finally, these virtual exchanges acted as an open arena where participants had the opportunity to express freely, learn from their different experiences, and share their personal stories on the field. In times of crisis, these platforms of free dialogue are particularly important to generate empathy among stakeholders facing similar challenges.

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## The multilateral security organizations at stake. NATO, OSCE and the Covid-19 emergency: an opportunity into the crisis?<sup>1</sup>

Gian Lorenzo Zichi<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

The Coronavirus outbreak showed how nobody was prepared to this crisis and to its economic, social and political implications which now represent the main challenge for political actors. However, if the measures taken by national states to curb the sanitary emergency seem to have partially restored their capacity to address the events, the Covid-19 has struck a significant blow to the already fragile multilateral system, as exemplified by the allegations – some of them based on coherent elements of criticism, other with less objective basis and misleading – to the *World Health Organization* (WHO). To better investigate the impact of this unprecedented crisis on the international institutions and its implications on security, the present article aims first to shed light on how two important organizations as the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO) and the *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe* (OSCE), have reacted and are acting to this crisis: an aspect just partially covered by the public media and that deserves to be better explored to avoid misleading interpretations. Secondly, trying to offer to the national stakeholders and public opinions a useful way to look on the Covid-19's impact on these forums, the analysis will also reflect on the possibility that this crisis could be turn by the organizations into an opportunity to relaunch themselves and become more aware of the other elements of concern as health risks, climate change and migration which, even not strictly related with the conventional interpretation of security, are posing undeniable aspects of concern. In front of the contradiction between the emerging of complex global challenges and the deteriorating of the multilateral order, this crisis should foster organizations and states to find a new reason to cooperate in answering to the future global threats, recognizing that a better security is possible only through a comprehensive approach.

### Introduction

«Because COVID-19 is a threat to all of us.  
And together, we can emerge stronger from this unprecedented crisis».  
Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

«If solidarity and co-operation prevail, we have the chance not only to conquer COVID-19 faster, but also to rebuild trust, create resilience, foster greater regional co-operation, and strengthen security for the benefit of us all».  
OSCE, Joint letter to the OSCE Community.

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The COVID-19 spread out at a time when the multilateral system was already «*under enormous strain*», especially as far as two of the most relevant organizations committed to international security – the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO) and the *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe* (OSCE) – are concerned (OSCEPA, 2020a). Indeed, in the last few years NATO faced an increasing number of internal issues (i.e. the unresolved theme of member countries' financial contributions or the different strategy perception between the two Atlantic shores) and major external challenges, like the resurgent Russia, the rising People's Republic of China (PRC), the eroding system of military and diplomatic guarantees and the emerging of new hybrid security defiance, such the cyber and disinformation warfare (Lute, Burns, 2020). This situation brought into question the very essence of the transatlantic relation, as clearly stated by French president Emmanuel Macron, according to whom the alliance was «*brain dead*» (The Economist, 2019): heavy words delivered in the midst of the celebrations for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Atlantic Pact of 1949, which would have been overcome only in December, when the Heads of States' London Summit restored a minimum of solidarity and cohesion (EuroNews, 2020).

Within this controversial framework, NATO started to become aware of the Covid-19 emergency in the early days of March 2020 when the virus hit its European members. After expressing «*sympathy and solidarity*» to allies by voice of Secretary General (SG) Jan Stoltenberg (Stoltenberg, 2020), the organization focused on two priorities: to provide a clear information on the modalities through which the Alliance was reacting and to ensure the continuation of the wide spectrum of its activities. On March 6<sup>th</sup>, the Alliance decided to open a special section of its official website entitled 'NATO response to COVID-19' and, at the middle of the month, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General Tod Wolters, affirmed «*the Alliance's ability to conduct its missions, operations and activities has not been affected by the emergency*» (NATO, 2020a). The priority accorded to these two aspects has been legitimated by the fact that the spreading of the virus in Europe for NATO coincided with two delicate questions that were coming to an end.

The first was the organization of 'Defender Europe 2020', one of the most important military exercise scheduled in Europe in the last twenty-five years with the involvement of 18 countries and 37.000 soldiers (20.000 coming from the United States) with the scope to show «*the ability of the U.S to support and to protect Europe if needed*», which was announced in late January by the SG and set for April 27 – May 22<sup>nd</sup> (U.S. European Command, 2020). The operation - conceived to test the Alliance battle readiness, and implicitly capable to send an answer to the recent Russian manoeuvres in Eastern Europe - has been deeply affected in its preparation by the Covid-19 outbreak (Thomas, Williams, Dyakova, 2020). In fact, the sanitary risks related to this important units deployment together with

the circulation of fake news on the true nature of the exercise also within the Atlantic's public opinions, forced NATO and the U.S. European Command to announce on March 18<sup>th</sup> a redefinition of the exercise, now rescheduled for the 5-19<sup>th</sup> June in Poland with a substantial downsizing of personnel (around 6.000), activities and with significant countries' absences, for example Italy (Ministero della Difesa, 2020). The second open dossier was the finalization of the accession of North Macedonia to the Alliance, which somewhat benefited from the crisis in removing obstacles and speeding up the process, so that on March 27 the country officially became the 30<sup>th</sup> NATO's member state (NATO, 2020b).

A more direct commitment by the Alliance has begun at the end of the (busy) month of March, with an activity of support to its member states in their efforts to obtain and transport the medical supplies needed by their own sanitary and civil systems. This activity has taken place through special military air convoys under the coordination of two bodies: the *Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre* (EADRCC) and the *NATO Support and Procurement Agency* (NSPA), which from the 26<sup>th</sup> of March up today have received requests of assistance from NATO Allies and partner countries including Italy, France, Belgium, Spain, Greece, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia, Rumania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Lithuania (EADRCC, 2020; NSPA, 2020). NATO considered itself entitled to act under the provisions of the *2010 Strategic Concept* – which mentions the ‘*health risks*’ as an aspect of potential concern for the organization's operations (NATO, 2010) – and as an application of the principle of resilience expressed by the article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which recalls both the member states and the Alliance to act to «*maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack*» (NATO, 1959: art.3) . So, NATO's response has been strictly coherent with its mandate, showing how «*there is a close link between the civilian efforts to fight a health crisis and the ability of the military to support those efforts*» as Stoltenberg said (NATO, 2020c).

### **The impact of the virus ‘from Vancouver to Vladivostok’: Covid-19 and the OSCE**

The Covid-19's crisis came at a very sensitive moment for OSCE as well. Since the early 00s, the world's largest regional multilateral security framework - entitled to guarantee «*stability, peace and democracy*» among its 57 participating states and 1 billion people - is dealing with growing effectiveness problems due to the difficulty to reach a consensus on key decisions and agenda priorities, and to the tensions between the participants themselves, as in occasion of the Ukraine crisis in 2013 and of the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in March 2014 (OSCE, 2020a).

In 2020 old concerns – related to the unresolved question of national contributions to the common budget and to the limited results of the *Special Monitoring Mission* (SMM) in Ukraine – and new opportunities arose, like the annual Chairmanship taken for the first time by Albania, and the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the *Chart of Paris* as a symbolic moment of reflection on the past and the future. Similarly to NATO, the OSCE continued its activities, adopting remotely forms of work and meetings which have brought - on April 23<sup>rd</sup> - to the first online Permanent Council (OSCE, 2020b).

Coherently with its nature of multilateral platform of dialogue, unable to elaborate binding norms due to the lack of a legal personality (Brander, 2009), the organization addressed the crisis reminding participants of the multiform impact of this emergency. This action has been summarized by the letter «*to the OSCE community*», signed by the leading figures of the main OSCE's bodies together with the Albanian Chairmanship on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, in which the organization recommended that «*their democratic institutions continue to function effectively*» even with the limitations to individual freedom due to the lockdown; to pay attention on the need to «*safeguard women and others at risk of domestic violence, as this increases during periods of confinement and social uncertainty*»; and finally to guarantee «*transparency in sharing information with the public, [...] a free flow of information, and to enable journalists to report freely about the pandemic*» also as a way to counter «*fake news on the health crisis*» (OSCE, 2020c).

### **An opportunity from the crisis? Between hopes and reality**

The description of how NATO and OSCE have approached the Covid-19 outbreak leads to a reflection on the possible collateral consequences of the crisis on both organizations, which can be useful for political stakeholders and public opinion to provide a way to look on these frameworks.

Although this analysis shows that both organizations gave a somehow operational answer to the crisis, the need is also clear for them to improve their capacity to communicate what they are doing and are able to do. This effort should be finalized to avoid foreign disinformation and propaganda from the East and Far East (Russia and PRC), but also to restore solidarity among the allies, starting with public opinion, which – especially in Western Europe - are becoming less able to understand their role in the international system<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the study entitled 'NATO Seen Favourably Across Member States' by the PEW Research Center, the level of favourably in ten years (2009-2019), even if it still score high percentages, is decreased in France from 71% to 49%; in Germany from 73% to 57%; in Spain from 56% to 49%; in Italy from 64% to 60%. (Fagan, Poushter, 2020: 8)

This consideration leads to a second one, i.e. if the Covid-19 crisis could be turned by NATO and OSCE into an opportunity to finally face the allegation of being «*Cold War relics*», unable to face present and future threats, for example, adding to the security interpretation those aspects - such as climate change, migration and lastly health risks - not yet considered, but that are increasingly affecting the security perception of states and people. An improvement in this direction is possible by the fact that both organizations dealt with this soft security elements in the past (Farkas, 2019). For instance, public health and environment sensibility were discussed in relation to security by the NATO's *Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society* since the 60s (Hatzivassiliou, 2017); and these themes were included in the *Final Act*'s second basket (1975) by the Helsinki Process. Originally considered secondary in relation to the Cold War security priorities, these aspects remained in the shadow even after the end of the bipolar confrontation, when the two redefined themselves and their mission, adding the new hybrid threats to security to the conventional ones (NATO, 2020d; GJØRV, 2020). A claim for a mandate change for these organizations is unrealistic and even unneeded: on the contrary, what is desirable is a real improvement of their capacity to '*adapt*' to a fast changing and global related security scenario (SÖDER, 2020; OSCEPA, 2020b). However, at the moment, the possibilities for such a change are few and uncertain. Directly questioned on the eventuality that «*the Alliance broaden its definition of what makes an adversary*» and if public health could get more attention on the defensive posture, the SG affirmed that the Alliance is not «*the main responder to a health crisis*», while it should «*make sure that the health crisis doesn't become a security crisis*» (Brzozowski, 2020; NATO, 2020c); furthermore, in the first event - the '#NATO2030' initiative of June 8<sup>th</sup> - designed to reflect «*on where we see our Alliance ten years from now*», very little space has been paid to the human security threats (NATO, 2020e). Even if the discussions on environmental and migration issues today have been included within the OSCE comprehensive security concept, the internal weakness by the organization prevents the achievement of more substantial results (OSCE, 2020d).

Nevertheless, this dramatic crisis should be an occasion for international organizations, national states and public opinions to pay more attention to these unconventional security challenges and to finally come to the long awaited reflection on the multilateral system, which could use its past experience not just to survive in a changing world, but to face tomorrow's challenges; some of which are already visible today.

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## The BRICS response to COVID-19<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Since late 2019, SARS-CoV2 pandemic has spread worldwide. After several generations without a severe pandemic, the mixture of health and economic crisis has hit populations in all continents. The high degree of connectivity that States share, enabled by the current transportation and communication technologies, caused different regions of the world to be affected by coronavirus disease at almost the same time. Yet States responses to the SARS-CoV2 pandemic were not the same. This brief focuses on the BRICS countries individual, bilateral and collective responses to the international health crisis caused by coronavirus disease, from the early detection of COVID-19 cases in China in late December 2019 to the current surge of cases in Brazil.

### Introduction

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV2) was first detected in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, on 8 December 2019. SARS-CoV-2 infection can cause coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which can provoke a particular acute respiratory syndrome, leading to hospitalization and possibly death.

On May 27, 2020, the Organizing Committee for Russia's Presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2019-2020 and the Russian BRICS Chairmanship in 2020 announced that it would postpone the BRICS Summit scheduled for July 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the communiqué released, a new date for the meeting depends "on the development of the epidemiological situation in the states of the group and worldwide" (BRICS, 2020). Russia, the host country of the 2020 Summit, is the third nation with the highest number of cases with reported (370 thousand), behind only from the United States (1.7 million) and from another BRICS country, Brazil (411 thousand).

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Yet, the centrality of BRICS countries in the pandemic is not only due to infection numbers. First, China, despite a series of questions about reaction time, has become an example of combating COVID-19 alongside other East Asian countries, such as South Korea, Singapore and Vietnam. Finally, according to the WHO specialist Dr. Mike Ryan, by mid-May has become the new epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, with Brazil being the most affected country in the continent.

Thus, this paper seeks to elucidate the possible impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on BRICS countries and the BRICS institutions multilateral engagement structure. To do so, this paper first presents the socio-political context of the main policies of each BRICS country in the fight against COVID-19. In addition, this briefing shows how the group has been articulating, presenting the main policies taken since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, this briefing concludes by reflecting on the possible impacts of the pandemic on the BRICS institutions multilateral engagement structure and its members.

### **BRICS nations individually**

Before analyzing the policies of each BRICS country in the fight against COVID-19 and the socio-political context in which these nations are enshrined, a brief overview of the current stage of the nationwide infection in each nation should be highlighted. By early June 2020, there was a strong concentration of the number of infected people in both Brazil and Russia. Simultaneously, India occupied the 9<sup>th</sup> position in the worldwide number of infections, with 180,621 COVID-19 cases, followed by China 16th with 84,126 and South Africa 30th with 29,240 cases each. Analyzing the number of deaths, the first member of the BRICS to appear is Brazil, which is in 5th place with a total number of 27,878 deaths. India ranks 13th with 5,144 deaths, followed by China (14th) and Russia (15th) with 4,638 and 4,555 respectively. South Africa is in 35th place with 611 deaths.

From what has been analyzed, we can consider that Brazil will be the regional epicenter of Latin America. Within the BRICS, the Latin American country is responsible for 40.2% of those infected and 65% of deaths. For comparison, Russia and India, countries with the highest number of infected and dead, respectively, represent 34.3% and 12%.

#### *China*

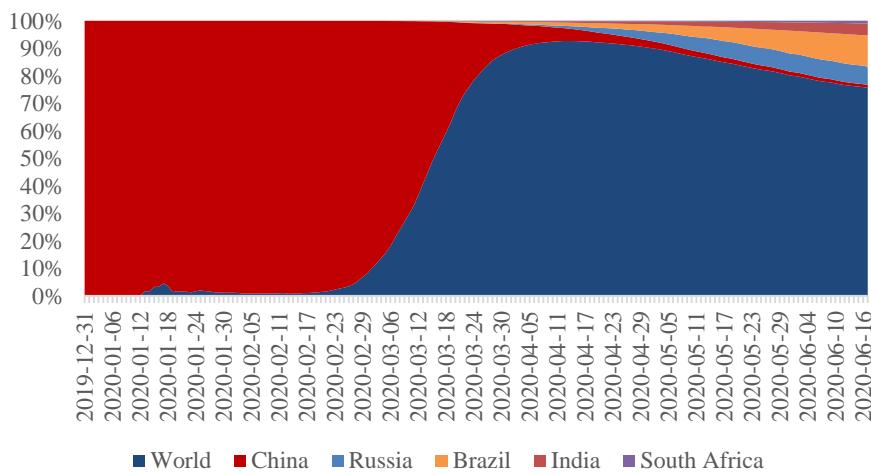
The pandemic outbreak made China the leader in number of cases for the first months; however, after six months of outbreak, the country is currently the 19<sup>th</sup> in number of Covid-19 cases, registering 83,221 reports, with 78,377 recoveries – a 94% recovery accuracy (WORLDOMETER, 2020). On June 7, the Chinese government released the document entitled "Fighting COVID-19: China in

Action" which details China's prevention, control and treatment efforts to combat COVID-19, in addition to cooperation with the international community (CGTN, 2020). Divided into four chapters, the document divides the fight against COVID-19 into 5 stages.

The first phase took place between December 27, 2019 and January 9, 2020, and it corresponds to the period when the Covid-19 pandemic surged after unknown pneumonia cases started being detected in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, Mainland China, in December 2019. These cases were traced to the Huanan Seafood Market; on 8 January 2020, the cause of pneumonia cases was identified as a new kind of coronavirus (KHAN, 2020). By the end of January 2020, all Chinese provinces already had Covid-19 cases confirmed (CHAPPELL, 2020), and the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared a global health emergency, due to the rising number of cases and an international outbreak (BBC, 2020).

The second stage occurred between January 20 and February 20 and was characterized by an attempt to count the progress of the disease. For this, the control of entry and exit of Wuhan and the sending of medical teams to Hubei and Wuhan were established. At the end of this phase, for the first time in Wuhan, the newly cured and discarded cases outperformed the newly confirmed cases (SCIO, 2020).

**Figure 1: Total COVID-19 Reported Cases per Country as a Share of Total Cases Worldwide (Dec 31, 2019 to Jun 17, 2020)**



Source: Our World in Data (2020)

In the third combat stage, between February 21 and March 17, the number of cases was controlled in the epicenter (Wuhan) and the cases stabilized in the rest of the country. After strict lockdown measures being taken in order to avoid further propagation of the virus, daily new cases in China fell from thousands to hundreds in March; imported cases – that is, transmissions coming from abroad –

surpassed locally transmitted ones for the first time on 13 March (REUTERS, 2020), which highlights the pandemic control after the first spread in Mainland China.

In the fourth stage, from March 18 to April 28, progress was made in Wuhan, in addition to the continued decline in the number of domestic cases. This decline in the number of domestic cases allowed much of the restrictions and controls in Hubei to be removed, with the exception of Wuhan (SCIO, 2020). In parallel to that, during the period, the biggest concern was the cases of COVID-19 coming from outside China, which on March 25 were already confirmed in 23 Chinese provinces.

The last stage, which started on April 29, has been characterized by continuous prevention and control. At this stage, the Chinese government tested almost 10 million citizens of Wuhan (WONK, 2020). Moreover, in order to finally surpass the pandemic, the state developer China National Biotech Group (CNBG), a subsidiary of China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm), is developing an inactivated Covid-19 vaccine, currently under a phase-2 clinical trial. Its safety and efficacy has been proved testing more than 2,000 people, and production units are being constructed to supply 200 million doses a year (XINHUA, 2020).

These measures, in terms of international cooperation, may be a promising result, due to the Chinese approach emphasizing the importance of the WHO – China pledged US\$2 billion to the organization for the next two years – and the view on self-developed vaccines as a global public good instead of a profiting patent (WANG, 2020), which has been the approach of private USA companies. Therefore, BRICS cooperation may profit on simultaneous vaccine productions being conducted among its countries, with shared knowledge and technology transfers to definitely tackle the pandemic.

### *Russia*

On January 29, 2020, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin ordered the creation of a unified federal headquarters for the fight against coronavirus. Its responsibilities include: monitoring the current situation of coronavirus in the country and the world, preparing recommendations to state bodies and regions, monitoring and coordinating work to prevent diseases (RUSSIA, 2020).

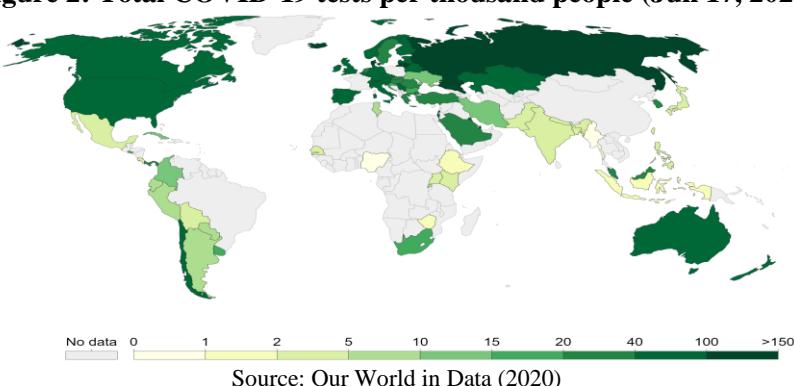
The first two cases of coronavirus infection were confirmed in Russia on January 31 (RIA NOVOSTI, 2020). Since February 20, Russia has temporarily suspended the entry of Chinese citizens, including those who enter the territory of Russia for the purpose of work, study, business, tourism, as well as in private. A week later, Russia also restricts air traffic with Iran due to the risk of spreading the virus (TASS, 2020).

On March 10, Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin signed a decree banning mass events with more than 5,000 participants in Moscow. Later, due to the situation with the spread of coronavirus infection, these restrictive measures were expanded. Thus, it is forbidden to hold events with more than 50 participants in Moscow. Moreover, it was announced that secondary and sports schools will be closed from March 21 (CHEVTAEVA, 2020). Since March 18, the government has closed Russia to all foreign citizens and stateless persons without exception (VEDOMOSTI, 2020). On March 19, all 85 regions of Russia were put on high alert. Mass events have been canceled throughout the country, and universities and schools have switched to distance learning (TASS, 2020). On March 27, regular and charter flights to the rest of the world have been discontinued, with the exception of flights for the return of Russian citizens. Since March 30, Russia has restricted traffic through all border checkpoints, including roads and Railways. The total number of cases in Russia, as of June 7, were 467,673, with 5,859 fatalities (WORLDOMETER, 2020).

In June, Russia is going to start providing its Covid patients the first approved drug to tackle the pandemic. The so-called antiviral Avifavir is going to be ministered to patients from June 11, and its production is expected to be able to treat sixty thousand patients per month. Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) has already funded 300 million rubles to ChemRar, a drug manufacturer, in an attempt to turn the Avifavir viable on treating Covid patients (OSBORN, 2020). In addition, Russian scientists announced clinical trials for a Covid vaccine, being conducted in June as well. The Vector Institute, based in Novosibirsk, plans to complete trials in September, as in Russia there are almost fifty Covid vaccine projects being conducted simultaneously (REUTERS, 2020).

The previously mentioned Russian medical achievements on tackling the spread of Covid-19 pandemic may be crucial on BRICS developments in terms of surpassing this global challenge. A scientific-based, systemic, and public approach may bring successful results on sanitary international cooperation, as a public-produced vaccine and antiviral production may raise the possibilities of saving human lives, regardless of national financial conditions and royalty payments based on patents.

**Figure 2: Total COVID-19 tests per thousand people (Jun 17, 2020)**



## India

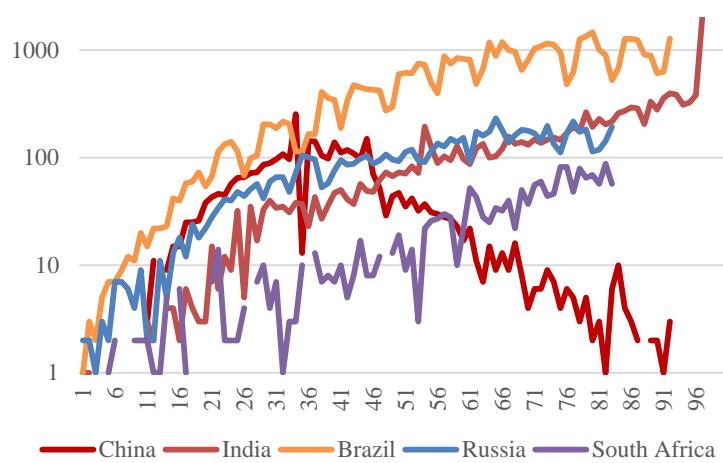
The first Indian case of COVID-19 was identified on January 30, 2020. On March 24, 2020, the Indian Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared a lockdown across the country. Since then, India has experienced a slow-paced increase of infections, especially in urban areas. As India eased lockdown restrictions to a minimum, the country experienced a significant rise of COVID-19 cases. Thus, the lockdown has had no significant impact on reducing the cases in India (see chart 02).

The federal lockdown has not been equally applied across India. Local level cases have differed since the beginning of the crisis. Data from the State of Kerala, run by the left front, shows a flattened curve in mortality of 0.5 compared to 2.7 percent experienced nationwide (Swaminathan and Johnson, 2020).

Following the lockdown, the economic crisis in India has developed on two fronts. First, the rising of COVID-19 cases affected migrant workers and unorganized laborers sectors in particular. Secondly, the impact on both demand and supply sides of the economy led to severe job losses (Sridhar, 2020).

According to the 2018 Periodical Labor Force Survey (India, 2018), the majority of the population in India depends on the daily wage earnings. During the 2020 pandemic, job losses were concentrated on the agricultural and the construction sectors. The government of India announced multiple economic packages, mainly for the unorganized sector workers, with limited benefits and several conditionalities. Thus, with an abysmal healthcare system which is virtually privatized, the government of India fails to provide basic income support to workers from all sectors.

**Figure 3: New Deaths per Day, First One Hundred Days since First Reported Death by COVID-19 by Country (Log10)**



Source: Our World in Data (2020)

### *South Africa*

The first case of COVID-19 in South Africa occurred on March 5, according to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NIDC, 2020). And on March 15th, with 61 confirmed cases of COVID-19, the President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster and the national command council was created to better combat the crisis. One of the first measures taken was to ban travelers from high-risk countries at the time, such as Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and China as of March 18, 2020 (Ramaphosa, 2020a).

However, the number of cases continued to increase, reaching 927 cases. Thus, despite initial efforts by the South African government, the country declares lockdown<sup>7</sup> between March 27 and April 17. During that first lockdown period, the number of cases jumped from 927 to 2606 (Ourworldindata, 2020), forcing the government to extend the lockdown until the end of April. In addition to awareness policies, increased port and airport entry controls and lockdown, assisted by a committee of scientists<sup>8</sup>, the national COVID-19 command council has also put mass testing of the population into practice.

Despite the control actions, the number of COVID-19 cases in South Africa has increased dramatically. In a statement on June 8, President Ramaphosa said that more than half of all cases since the outbreak began were recorded between May 24 and June 7 (Ramaphosa, 2020b). During that period, the number of newly infected was 24,626 compared to 20,124 between March 6 and May 23.

Finally, comparing South Africa with other countries on the African continent, the country is the nation with the most cases. The African continent has 251,866 cases, with South Africa representing 29% (73,600) of the total cases of COVID-19 (AFRICA CDC, 2020). Within South Africa, the Western Cape province accounts for 60% of cases (44,143) and 73.7% of deaths (1156).

### *Brazil*

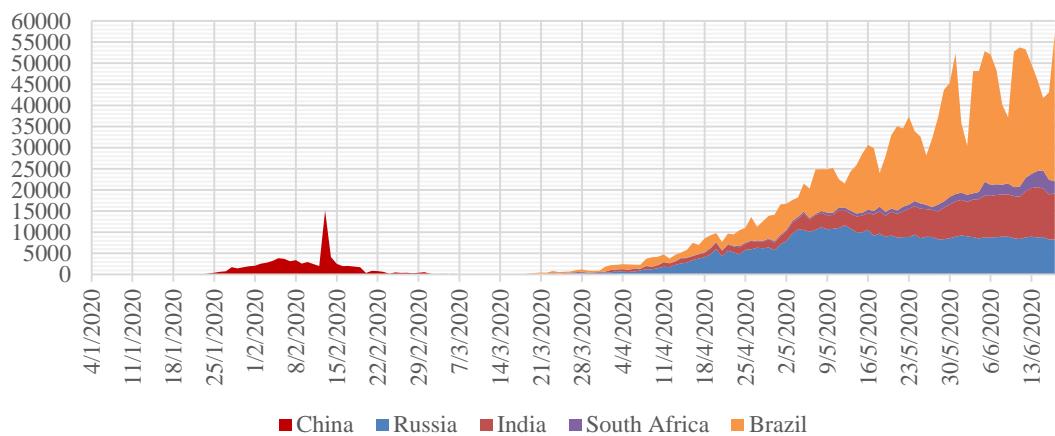
The first Brazilian confirmed case was reported on February 26, 2020, in São Paulo. In the first stages of the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic in Brazil, the infection was largely due to imported cases. Self-declared travel history and genetic analysis confirmed that the first detected case in Brazil, was acquired via

<sup>7</sup> During this period the borders were closed, allowing only the transport of food and essential goods, in addition there was a ban on movement between provinces, metropolitan and district areas and agglomerations, except for funerals, but with a maximum limitation of 50 people. See: <<https://sacoronavirus.co.za/2020/03/26/national-lockdown-regulations/>>.

<sup>8</sup> According to Wiysonge (2020) the committee is composed of 45 scientists with experience in laboratory testing, clinical issues, public health and research and has the role of synthesizing the available scientific evidence to facilitate decision making by the control panel.

international importation from Northern Italy. The overall majority of imported cases came from Italy (54.8%) (Candido et al., 2020). Since then, Brazil has reported 923,189 COVID-19 cases, with 45,241 deaths by June 17, 2020. Having reached the second position in total coronavirus disease cases worldwide by May 23, 2020 and the first position in daily confirmed by May 28 2020, Brazil surpassed the US with over 20,599 new diagnosed infections daily (see chart 01).

**Figure 4: Daily Confirmed New COVID-19 Cases**



Source: Our World in Data.

It is widely regarded that the current state of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in Brazil can be attributed to Federal level governmental failures. With explicit disregard for the spread of coronavirus cases in Brazil during its first stages in February and March 2020, the Federal government led by President Jair Bolsonaro has continued to mismanage the SARS-CoV-2 sanitary crisis in what may be a unique case in the world. Contrary to previous warnings the Brazilian Federal government did not mobilize the Brazilian National Health System to its full potential.

The general attitude of disregard for human life of President Bolsonaro, crystallized in the now famous phrase “So what? What do you want me to do?”, reflects the stance of the entire administration upon the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in Brazil (The Lancet, 2020). On March and again in April 2020, Bolsonaro’s administration has twice changed the Health Minister. Since then, the Brazilian government stopped disclosing comprehensive data on coronavirus cases and deaths (Londoño, 2020). As of 16 June 2020, Brazil continues lacking a Health Minister, with the Federal response to the epidemic being overseen by high ranking military officers politically linked to the president.

## Conclusions

The BRICS countries have been searching for international cooperation options to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in their respective territories. This cooperation has been pursued in

bilateral and multilateral stances. In the bilateral area, the cooperation initiative between Brazil and the USA resulted in the donation of 2 million doses of hydroxychloroquine. Chinese authorities has overseen bilateral initiatives between various countries by sending teams and medical supplies has proven successful so far, in what has been called masks diplomacy.

In the multilateral field, in addition to the World Health Organization and other regional bodies (SCO, SAARC, MERCOSUR, African Union), the BRICS initiative emerges as an important tool to combat COVID-19. In a meeting held on April 28, the BRICS members agreed to allocate USD 15 billion to fight the pandemic. On April 30, the New Development Bank (NDB) approved a US\$1 billion project for India to combat COVID-19 (NDB, 2020). In the meeting held on May 7, the Health Ministers of the BRICS member countries addressed the pandemic together.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated existing trends, such as the shift of the geopolitical axis to Asia and animosities between China and the USA. Multilateralism has also undergone significant transformations. However, among the few conclusions that the current crisis offers is that problems have become global, thus demanding globally coordinated responses. In this way, the BRICS countries can act as catalysts for global change.

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## Topic 7

### Human Rights Violation Issues and Concerns

# The view of the coronavirus pandemic response through the lens of political philosophy: Utilitarianism and the Rawlsian approach<sup>1</sup>

Dawid Aristotelis Fusiek<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

The paper discusses the moral justification of the adoption of the restriction measures during the coronavirus pandemic, and attempts to connect it with the notion of human rights and freedom. The popular Western response falls in the line of the work of John Rawls and his perception of justice and fairness. The premise of Rawlsian approach is that the state has a duty to protect everyone as they themselves would wish to be protected. However, as the time has progressed, the outcomes of the lockdown has begun to become visible, hence challenging the initial Rawlsian view of the issue at stake. Under the new circumstances, the political theory of utilitarianism seems to be gaining ground, but in its most brutal form. Dismissing the roots of the utilitarian theory, the utilitarian calculus has been used as a sophism by politicians for the introduction of the notion of “sacrifice” for the greater good. By the presentation and application of the two approaches, in the face of a future reemergence of similar problem, this paper argues for the adoption of a combining approach that covers the concerns of both and answers the moral dilemmas that have emerged from this period of quarantine.

## Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic is not an unprecedeted phenomenon. While cases of a similar pandemic can be traced in ancient history, for instance, the famous Athenian pandemic in 430.B.C. (that was responsible for the death of Pericles), or even in more recent examples such as the Spanish Flu of 1918, the contemporary world was “caught off guard”. Everything started on 12 March 2020, when the WHO announced the unknown then, coronavirus as a pandemic (WHO, 2020). Soon after that, the states began implementing stricter measures. However, instead of tranquillizing people, the measures led them to a Hobbesian “state of nature”, where the possession of primary goods expressed power.

From the perspective of now, it is difficult to argue that coronavirus pandemic shook our world. The states were confronted with an invisible enemy, a malicious virus that was highly infectious, and also deadly. Not surprisingly, the speeches of many Prime Ministers started to figure out catchy phrases such as “invisible war” in a rather blunt effort to justify the induction of Schmidtian “state of

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emergency”<sup>3</sup>. The extraordinary measures were adopted to alleviate the struggle of national medical sectors that were not only confronted with the harsh reality of the virus but also with the limitation of their operational capabilities. Besides that, the pandemic proved to be not profitable for the global economy as trade, industries and businesses were put on halt. While respectful of the natural right to live, this move has resulted in unpleasant economic consequences for all the world. Despite relying on his logic and superiority over matter, the Cartesian man found himself dependent on the will of a microscopic virus.

The focal point of this pandemic became the human and his interaction with society. As a response to the ongoing problem, governments decided to impose (in some cases, strict and others less) lockdowns to flatten the curve of the expansion of the virus. The outcome of this decision was the isolation of millions of people inside their houses. While many people turned to solipsism and other forms of self-cultivation, others in the act of defiance started to roam the streets protesting (e.g. the current situation of the US). Others began to question the existence and the origins of the virus by blaming either the 5G networks or “the evil Chinese Empire” or even, Bill Gates. Nonetheless, there is no denying that except for the warm example of social cooperation, such as the balcony-singing in Italy, there were also selfish free-riders who did not hesitate to show their disregard about the measures by not abiding by the lockdown measures.

In the meantime, the lockdown forced everyone to confront profound questions of human existence and serious moral question such as: What is right and what is wrong? What is the biggest good? What matters more: freedom or safety? Should we sacrifice ourselves for the vulnerable, and vice versa? In this context, the role of political philosophy is evident. A lot of the serious dilemmas that humanity faced during the last two months have been already analyzed and addressed by this field. In the previous decades, several prominent academics have taken on the undertaking of describing the relationship between citizen and their governments, hence providing much insight regard issues such as freedom, equality and the public good that could also be applied to the current situation. Therefore, this brief paper provides to transfuse the leading ideas of utilitarianism and the Rawlsian approach in

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<sup>3</sup> A very good example is the statement of the Greek Prime Minister on 17 March, 2020. To be more specific, he states that “We are at war. With an enemy who is invisible, but not invincible”

“"We are at war with an invisible enemy" Greek PM says” (2020) Reuters. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-greece-pm/we-are-at-war-with-an-invisible-enemy-greek-pm-says-idUSA8N28L06W>. (Accessed: June 30, 2020).

See also: “Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 4 April 2020” (2020) GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-of-the-duchy-of-lancaster-statement-on-coronavirus-covid-19-4-april-2020>. (Accessed: June 30, 2020).

the modern setting and shows some of their main ideas undergirding competing conception of right and wrong.

## Utilitarianism

An excellent way to begin is by studying a deep and well-worked-out ethical theory. Utilitarianism has not only has a long historical tradition but also has reached wide conclusions when tackling the philosophical problems thrown up by our political life. In reality, utilitarianism has been the target of severe criticism or has become a “straw target”, thus leading to its diminishing popularity in the modern political philosophy. Nonetheless, as Dudley Knowles highlights, “it has two great virtues which we should not lose sight of” (Knowles, 2001: 23).

Firstly, it is a theory based on a thought that seeks to have universal appeal: when judging conduct, it is important to analyze the outcomes of the human actions depending on the contribution they have to the welfare of all those the actions affect. Secondly, it focuses on the purpose of the states’ government and its inabilities. The last trait is mostly a characteristic of classical utilitarian thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and it deflects the consideration of governments as businesses that are responsible for the promotion of the well-being and reducing of the suffering of all its subjects (Goodin, 1995). The last sentence sounds rather familiar as it resonates the discourses of governments and politicians justifying the adoption of lockdown measures.

Before proceeding further, it is essential to point out that utilitarianism, as mentioned above, has a vast philosophical legacy, which this section is not possible to cover. Thus, the point that this paper focuses mostly, is the core of the utilitarian theory, which is: Right actions maximize well-being (Schneewind, 1968), and how this could be applied in the case of coronavirus pandemic. The aforesaid principle of utility can be elaborated in many ways, such as sticking to Bentham’s happiness of the greatest number (Hart, 1982). While it was formulated as a standing that everyone affected by the policies should be considered (Bentham & Parekh, 1973: 309-310), this formulation has been a “bone of contention”, as it has been accused of ignoring the right of minorities. After all, what is significant is that utilitarianism is a consequentialist theory as it requires the comparison of the alternative outcomes and their consequences to locate the one, which offers the maximum amount of good (Knowles, 2001).

Actually, this is the current concern of governments internationally. Following the initial phase of the spread of the coronavirus, they are now faced with the scenario of a global recession and the collapse of national economies. Under these circumstances, the utilitarian ideas have resurfaced more brutally.

By dismissing the roots of the utilitarian theory, the utilitarian calculus (the aforesaid act of comparison) has been used as a sophism by politicians for the introduction of the notion of “sacrifice” for the greater good. Considering that the vulnerable groups do not constitute the majority of the national population, there have been many supporting that it would benefit the societies to accept the casualties to minimize the consequences of the virus.

At the beginning of the lockdown period, this argument could not find fertile ground. However, as businesses and people have begun to experience either the psychological or economic consequences of the social distancing, its appeal has started to grow. For instance, while the statement of Dominic Cumming, the former adviser to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, “herd immunity, protect the economy, and if that means some pensioners die, too bad” caused public uproar at the end of the March, the current increasing number of anti-lockdown UK’s protests seems to indicate a change in the spirits (Drewett, 2020). On top of that, the lack of academic consensus has also fueled further this dispute regarding what is the best-case scenario for the maximization of national well-being. Some papers such as Harrison’s paper in New Zealand prove the lack of a common voice of science (Daalder, 2020), and cause the fiery response from researchers that find themselves arguing in favour of the natural right to live.

As the first signs of the recession have been visible on the horizon, the dominating question is: In case of a downturn that could have long-term outcomes and cause widespread misery, is it possible that attempting to save every last life from the pandemic could lead to the maximization of well-being? The answer seems easy, but it becomes more complicated when viewed from a more objective perspective. Indeed, it is inhumane to put a notional prince on human life when investigating policies, but it is also significant to remember that families and entire sectors are dependent on industries such as tourism. For example, in Greece, despite the country’s well-praised response to the coronavirus pandemic, the prolongation of the lockdown measures could have devastating effects on an economy that one in four people work in the sector of tourism (The Economist, 2020).

The view of a moral problem through a utilitarian lens is an unsettling experience as the results are not always the ones that you would expect. However, it is important to remember the roots of utilitarianism and the reason why it came to be. The quest to maximize well-being is not a distasteful one as long it sticks to promoting the no-harm principle, and it is the true expression of the interest of the state and not the government’s.

## Rawlsian approach

It is impossible to talk about social justice without mentioning John Rawls' work. His published in 1972 book, *A Theory of Justice*, stirred the world of political philosophy leading to a series of new debates. This section seeks to present only a small amount of his work, which is already a complicated task due to Rawls' systematic way of writing and the brevity in which this must be done.

The Harvard philosopher views justice as the virtue of a well-ordered state and comprises all aspects of ethical well-being. Considering that nations are natural associations, individuals find themselves being a member of a society that assigns duties and rights without looking at the advantages that stem from this social cooperation. However, in a world that is not so "idealistic" (there are scarcities of resources *per se*), the goal of achieving a just and morally acceptable society is central. To tackle this issue, Rawls' theory of justice proposes the adoption of two fundamental principles

First Principle: Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all;

Second Principle: Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions:

- a. They are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity;
- b. They are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle). (Rawls, 2005: 42-43).

A critical problem that emerges is the inquiry of how such principles could potentially be built. For this reason, Rawls introduces a theoretical "veil of ignorance", where all the "players" of the social game are placed in the so-called "original position". Being blinded by this theoretical veil and having only the basic knowledge of notions (such as life and society), each player is forced to use his morality as a guiding compass, hence adopting a more generalized view. In this manner, the reached moral decision are the most reasonable ones, because they are made by people endowed with fundamental moral powers and free from preexisting takes of concepts (due to the veil of ignorance), and in accordance with the aforesaid two principles.

Contrary to utilitarianism, Rawls criticized the maximum of well-being for not being ethical and lacking fairness. There is a need for the existence of social and political justice that establishes an assurance of basic necessities and opportunities while providing people with the ability to assert themselves. What people choose to do after, it is something in the discretion and capability of the

individual. Paradoxically, a perfect good example of a policy related to the coronavirus pandemic following in line with Rawls' thinking is the lockdown measures. In the face of the new threat, societies all over the world chose eventually (some with a further hesitation, e.g. Brazil) to mandate claustrophobic lockdowns to minimize the death and suffering of the vulnerable groups. The acceptance of this approach by the majority of the population seems to indicate that there is a prevailing belief that governments should not only abandon anyone but also do the best to ensure that everyone has the same opportunity of survival.

One could argue that while the lockdown is a solution that accomplishes a degree of fairness, it also hides at the same underlying social inequalities. This is very visible in the US in the case of infection, because the state does not cover the medical costs. Furthermore, the poorer sections of the society cannot sustain the consequences of the isolation or the lockdown. In some countries, the states provided some form of financial aid, e.g. Germany, Greece or France, but sticking strictly to Rawls' view, this is not the state of absolute fairness he had envisioned. Finally, in the case of a pandemic, the individualistic dimension of the theory is problematic when it comes to a commonly shared threat. What is the point where one's right to opportunity becomes someone else's danger?

## Conclusion

The choice to analyze the response to the coronavirus pandemic through the perspective of utilitarianism and Rawls' work stems from the realization that the arguments proposed by the two theories are being currently used by many politicians and governments to either prolong the restriction measures or eradicate them. In fact, there are also other theories such as libertarianism (that adhere for minimum limitation imposed by the state on the individual liberty) or communitarianism (that argues that justice is based on the common good), which could explain better policies followed by some countries, such as the Netherlands, or the anti-lockdown protests in the US. Yet, they did not manage to capture better the "essence" of the ongoing debate in the popular West.

After the initial months of the quarantine (in the case of Europe), the winner seems to be the Rawlsian approach. The response adopted by the politicians expressed the view that the state has a duty to protect everyone as they would wish to be protected. This stance was also shared by people that decided that they should self-isolate for the sake of others. However, the current "change" of hearts" attributed to the concerns of economic recession and further seclusion has led to more protests, but also the mitigation of the preexisting measures. The scenario of a second-wave does not seem so scary anymore as people desire a return to the preexisting "normality". After all, as Aristoteles said, the human is a social animal. So, ultimately, the same concerns preceding the first lockdown has started

to reemerge. At least, this time, we have the benefit of the knowledge of how humanity and states respond to such a threat. The realization of human vulnerability and the magnitude of such a phenomenon could serve as a mean for the formulation of a better response. In this quest, the findings of the two theories could prove to be more than helpful.

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# The European Union Obligation: Member States must not Neglect the Consequences of Covid 19 to the Disadvantaged Asylum Seekers and Refugees<sup>1</sup>

Sibusisiwe Bulala Kelly<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

In early March 2020 the health crisis warnings of corona virus also known as Covid 19 emerged in the European Union (EU). It dominated political dialogues prompting a sense of urgency, fear, and disruption among people. Suddenly there was a halt to the continuous controversial discussions on migration, asylum seekers and refugee challenges across the EU Member States and beyond. The message from the health experts and governments among the EU Member States was clear. Stay home, wash your hands constantly, maintain physical distance, and keep the children away from vulnerable grandparents. However, these seemingly extreme health guidelines engendered great anxiety for the disadvantaged people living in crowded refugee camps across the EU and beyond. It became very clear that the requirement of physical distancing has become a privilege only available for the populations that have the capacity.

Research shows that overcrowding and lack of sanitation in refugee camps continue to be problematic across the EU Member States. Somehow, it seemed unfair for the Member States governments to emphasise on the importance of constant wash of hands and social distance among its citizens, whilst ignoring the horrific living conditions of those displaced and stranded in the internal and external borders of the EU. Additionally, there are claims that Covid 19 has not fully manifested in the EU refugee camps, however with lack of information on corona virus testing in the camps it is difficult to legitimately evaluate the situation. This brief assesses the EU Covid 19 response in relation to the area of Asylum. Also serves as a reminder for the EU policy makers not to forget the migration discourse during coronavirus crisis. Particularly, for the asylum seekers and refugees as their presence will continue to impact major dimensions of the EU communities such as political, economy, and social, well beyond Covid 19.

## Introduction

It is important to understand that immigrants willingly or by choice travel to search for better life. Whereas, asylum seekers and refugees against their will and fear for the safety of their lives are forced to seek protection in countries they find themselves in. Therefore, the different legal definitions of these groups of people also known as third country nationals should be taken very seriously as it can positively or negatively influence the outcome of their lives.

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## Covid-19 Definition

According to the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC) coronavirus official named Covid 19 is associated with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 also known as SARS-CoV-2, (ECDC, 2020).

## Identified Key Concerns on the EU Asylum

- The use of Covid 19 health security measures as a deterrent to asylum seeking in the EU.
- The EU failure to enforce quotas scheme on sharing asylum seekers between Member States.
- The risk of enforcing return policy for rejected asylum seekers during global health crisis.
- Ethical issues concerning turning rejected asylum seekers into a workforce to save economy.
- Continuous detention of asylum seekers, lack of sanitation and testing for Covid 19 in refugee camps across the Member States.
- EU Scientific Covid 19 health guidelines specific for asylum seekers and refugees issued almost 6 months down the line.

Covid-19 has globally affected many fundamental human rights most of all is the right of the free movement of people which is the integral part of the EU. Despite the fact that migration issues are not on the forefront of the EU's Covid-19 agenda and dialogues, the topic of refugees and asylum seekers will remain problematic for the Union beyond Covid-19.

### *As Covid -19 Strike: New Ways of Thinking are Required*

The ECDC states that it is crucial to acknowledge that Covid-19 is not airborne but could be transmitted through person to person droplets. It is aggressive and has not been known in humans before. Therefore, requires new ways of thinking, behaving and acting, this means people have to change the way they relate and interact with each other. Also, other health experts warn that it is vital for people to understand that although Covid 19 may be transmitted as influenza or exhibit similar symptoms, these two viruses are very different and do not behave alike. In other words Covid -19 affects different people in different ways. However, in populations where the appropriate physical distancing or isolation measures are properly maintained the risk of severe Covid 19 disease is considered very low (ECDC, 2020). Though, it is the opposite for the disadvantaged populations where the physical or social distancing is impossible, such as people living in crowded unsanitary refugee camps and slums around the world. As other health authorities have warned, people can still have the coronavirus even if they have no symptoms (Harvard Health Publishing, 2020).

### *EU Covid -19 Timeline*

The Euro-Surveillance reported that the Covid -19 investigation in the European regions was implemented on the 27 of January 2020 just a month after the Chinese announced suspected cases in December 2019. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2020 only 19 cases of the Covid 19 where detected in the European regions, but by the 5<sup>th</sup> of March there were 4,250 cases and 113 deaths in 38 countries (Spiteri et al, 2020).

The ECDC on the 26th of May 2020 reported that the numbers of deaths in the European Region has reached 168,308 deaths (1,843,581 cases) with the United Kingdom leading at 36,914 (261,184), Italy 32,877 (235,400), France 28,432, Spain 26,834 (235,400), Belgium 9,312 and Germany 8,302 (179,002) (ECDC, 2020).

Almost 6 months down the line, 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 the ECDC issued Covid -19 health guidelines specific for refugees and asylum seekers applying similar health principles to other populations.

The United Nations (UN) Secretary General warns that, worse is still to come and no one will be safe until everyone is protected as the virus will continue to strike and countries with inadequate healthcare systems will suffer the most (UN News, 2020).

### *Asylum trends*

In the EU 27 Member States 612,700 first time applications for asylum were lodged in 2019, an increase of 63,700 from 549,000 in 2018 (Eurostat, 2020). The European Asylum System Officer (EASO) reported that EU+ recorded just 8,730 asylum applications in April 2020, a drop of 87% compared to January and the lowest in past 12 years (EASO, 2020).

### **The Situation of Covid -19 in the EU refugee camps**

The EU guidelines on asylum suggest that in order to alleviate overcrowding and ensure that Covid 19 health rules are properly applied in refugee camps, Member States should transfer asylum applicants to less crowded camps particularly those vulnerable to coronavirus.

The Amnesty International reported that as of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2020 Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos, and Leros had nearly 31,400 over capacity, with 37,427 people in facilities with a total capacity of just 6,095 (Amnesty, 2020).

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2020 reported that 471 asylum seekers accommodated in a hotel in Southern Greece were quarantined after 150 tested positive for Covid -19 (IOM, 2019).

The Deutsche Welle (DW) reported that the German court ruled Covid 19 protection in refugee camps inadequate, after claims that half of 600 people tested positive for Covid 19 in the Germany refugee camps (Nielsen, 2020).

### **The EU Covid- 19 Guidelines on Asylum vs. EU and International law of Refugees**

#### *Closing EU Borders*

The European Commission on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 issued guidelines for border closing management measures during Covid -19, allowing Member States to refuse entry of third country nationals if it is justifiable on the grounds of threat to public health.

Under the international law countries have the right to decide who they accept or not accept. However, seeking asylum is also a fundamental right guaranteed by article 18 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights with respect to the rules of the 1951 Geneva Convention of Refugees. The Convention requires countries to offer protection for people fleeing from persecution without discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality religion, or political affiliation.

#### *Claims of violation of the right to seek asylum in the EU*

The European Council on Refugees and Exiles ECRE on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2020 claimed that the EU Member States excluding UK responded very differently to Covid 19. The majority closed their borders to asylum seekers' entry and suspended asylum procedures on grounds of Covid 19 or lack of staff. Whilst others required medical certificates from asylum seekers, others enforced quarantine measures before allowing asylum seeking or refusing disembarking (ECRE, 2020).

Some EU Member States are accused of using corona virus epidemic to fuel xenophobia and anti-asylum rhetoric instead of addressing the issues of their broken health care systems (Gall, 2020). On the 1st of March 2020 the Hungarian Government website reported that the Chief Security advisor to the Prime Minister of Hungary had stated that there is a connection between the corona virus and illegal immigration. As a result the government decided to indefinitely suspend its admission of asylum seekers from the Serbian borders, due to fear of people coming from countries that are considered epicentres of the corona virus especially Iranians (Hungarian Government, 2020). Regardless that, most of the people who have been waiting in the Serbian borders have been there for more than 18 months and have not been able to travel back and forth to the perceived risky countries (Gall, 2020). On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May the Guardian reported that asylum seekers were beaten up by Croatian authorities stripped off their clothing and their heads and backs were spray painted crosses "to cure Covid 19" (Tondo, 2020).

### *Guidelines on Asylum Area*

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2020 the Commission issued guidelines on the area of asylum mainly focusing on the return and resettlement procedures during Covid- 19. The guidelines recognised the adverse impact of Covid- 19 on asylum processes, but also implored Member States to safely continue returning rejected asylum seekers to their original countries. Before Covid- 19 health crisis EU Member States have pledged to resettle approximately 30,000 asylum seekers and refugees in 2020 and this programme have been severely disrupted.

Prior to these guidelines, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 in the name of reducing overcrowding in camps, the Commission entered into an agreement with the Greek government to pay each asylum seeker €2000 for the voluntary return. Excluding asylum seekers who arrived in Greece after the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2020 or the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, the day Turkey announced opening its borders to let the asylum seekers or “migrants” enter the EU territory (EU News, 2020).

Imposing voluntary return policy on helpless people at the beginning of a volatile global health crisis is risky and callous. This could be interpreted as a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights ECHR article 4 of protocol no. 4, requiring States not to return people where their lives would be in danger. Also, under effective remedy rule, rejected asylum seekers are entitled to appeal the decision, including those returned to the EU Member States under the Dublin Regulation implemented to prevent asylum seeking to more than one EU Member State.

On the other hand, Italy has “regularised irregular immigrants” to counteract the impact of Covid -19 on the country’s agriculture and social care industry. It is important to recognise that most of these “irregular migrants” converted into a workforce are rejected asylum seekers (Misculin, 2020). Although some might view this policy plausible, there are legal and ethical questions to be answered. ECHR article 2 stipulates that everyone’s right to life shall be protected by law. Article 2 prohibits subjecting others to torture or inhuman degrading treatment. Ethical question is whether it is fair or right for Italy to use most desperate people to save its economy whilst shielding the natives from Covid- 19. ECHR Article 4 prohibits forced labour and slavery.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 the Reuters reported that the European Union had asked Greece to move “migrants” or asylum seekers most at risk from Covid -19 (Reuters, 2020). Greece declined the request due to lack of reported Covid -19 cases in refugee camps. Stating that asylum seekers are safer in the camps than they would be in mainland, also Greece expressed disappointment with lack of support from the EU (Baczynaska, 2020). How can people be deemed safe living under conditions that are considered inhuman, degrading and contrary to Covid -19 health guidelines?

Article 26 of the Geneva Convention 1951 gives refugees freedom of movement and the right to choose their place of residency within the host State. Article 31 states that asylum seekers should not be penalised for illegally entry to any country. According to the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in some Member States asylum seekers continue to be detained despite the high risk of Covid -19 due to worsening living conditions in the camps (FRA, 2020). The 1968 Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms at article 2.1 states that anyone lawfully residing in a country has the right to freedom of movement and everyone shall be free to leave any country including his or her own.

### *The EU Asylum Containment Policy is not new to Covid -19*

Containment policy for asylum seekers in the EU is not novel to Covid -19, for example, in 2018 Greek court ruled against it (Human Rights Watch, 2018). In 2019, 25 Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) wrote an open letter to the EU leaders, in order to stop the unfair and unnecessary containment policy design to prevent asylum seekers from leaving the Greek islands (Caritas, 2019). Again, in March 2020 a letter including 250 signatures from different organisations was sent to Greece, EU and other world leaders, highlighting that, Greece violates the national, EU and international laws during Covid -19 pandemic in relation to detention of asylum seekers in insanitary overcrowded places during the pandemic (Greek Forum of Refugees, 2020).

## **Recommendations and Lessons Learned**

### *Right Intentions – Wrong Delivery*

In the response to Covid -19 the EU Commission stated that the top priority of the EU is to safeguard the health and well-being of its citizens (European Council, 2020). This message implies that non-European citizens are excluded from the protection against Covid -19 and it is a dangerous way of thinking.

The principles of World Health Organisation adopted in 1946 clearly state that no nation will enjoy peace and security until everyone has access to quality affordable healthcare and this require mutual cooperation between governments and individuals.

This brief suggests that the EU must learn from the case of Singapore where the government prioritised the health of its citizens at the expense of migrant workers. The Singapore gold star standards of coronavirus testing and tracing had both showed the dangers of neglecting marginalised communities and the vulnerability of the nations to a second wave of the virus infections (Ratcliffe, 2020).

In the mist of Covid- 19, it is deeply troubling that some if not all EU Member States find it acceptable to apply different health standards between its citizens and those living in asylum accommodations (Michael and Hosford, 2020).

The EU Commission suggested that during Covid -19 applications of asylum can be posted or emailed, interviews either suspended or conducted through video conference. The children of asylum seekers and refugees can be educated similar to the natives' children. How about availability of the internet connection in the refugee camps?

Covid -19 has proven that access to high quality of healthcare and internet connection for all people at an affordable price should be made a right protected by national and international law. According to Social Justice Ireland, (2020) the lack of quality internet can lead to social exclusion and discrimination against disadvantaged communities.

Nonetheless, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2020 in solidarity Covid -19 action, EU distributed protective medical equipment to the most affected Member States. Denmark and Netherlands were the two countries that sent medical care and shelter equipment for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (Europe Commission, 2020).

## Conclusion

The Chinese announced suspected cases of Covid -19 at the end of December 2019 and a month after the EU began the investigation of corona virus cases in the European regions. Less than two months in the analysis it was clear that the Covid -19 deaths and new cases were rising in an unprecedented manner across the EU. In early March 2020 the ECDC Covid -19 health guidelines were robust and comprehensive, highlighted the importance of applying social distancing and isolation among populations in order to mitigate the spread of corona virus. It was evident from the beginning that people living in refugee camps across the EU were more likely to be at risk of contracting the corona virus. Regardless, the ECDC guidelines specific for asylum were issued almost six months into Covid -19 with same principles of social distancing. Overall, the guidelines seemed not to fully appreciate the reality and the grave situation faced by asylum seekers and refugees across the EU refugee camps.

On the other hand, the EU guidelines on border management during Covid -19 appeared to be inconsistent, not only with the guidelines on the EU asylum area, but also contrary to the EU and international law of seeking asylum. Consequently, there was a lack of fair and coordinated response between the EU Member States and this seriously undermined the legitimacy of seeking asylum within the EU.

It is claimed that corona virus has not fully manifested in the EU refugee camps however, there is also lack of evidence showing that testing for Covid- 19 has been done in the camps in order to substantiate these claims. It is of utmost importance that the policy makers acknowledge that the dire living conditions, overcrowding and continuous detention of asylum seekers in refugee camps across the EU is not novel to Covid- 19. Therefore, it is counterproductive for the EU to insist on applying Covid -19 health guidelines regardless of the unworkable situation in the camps. Covid- 19 crisis has presented the EU with an opportunity to persuade the Member States to meaningfully accept their fair share of responsibility. In other words, sharing asylum seekers and refugees between Member States has become a healthy and safety emergence not just for the EU but for the global community. Also, the EU must think very careful of returning the rejected asylum seekers to their countries of origin in the mist of global health crisis as this could create unintended consequences.

Additionally, it is vital for policy makers to understand that when people are excluded, left behind or discriminated against for any number of reasons, mutual trust and respect is also eroded between people and governments or health authorities and without trust among people there would be no cooperation and this means no peace or security for all.

In times of highly politicised crisis such as Covid -19, appropriate use of language and terms is of utmost importance. Particularly for those in power as their words can determine the success and failure of life saving policies.

Studies have shown that policies that imply exclusion of other populations are the major foundation of racism, xenophobia and discrimination and also promote inequalities among people. Health experts warn that Covid -19 Virus is a global persistent threat that may result in people having to learn to live with it. As not all viruses are curable as the world have experienced with the continuing Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) pandemic, although under Control. One thing is clear with Covid -19 everyone is a potential weapon regardless of race, colour, nationality or religion, naturally we are all in the same boat.

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## “Fallen Angels” under European Union’s migration gesture<sup>1</sup>

Vasiliki Plessia<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

According to the European Commission, from January 2020 till now, there have been new 8636 asylum requests to Greece. In the meanwhile, the living conditions of refugees and migrants in the overcrowded camps and hotspots, have attracted the attention of the press once again, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. After her visit at the Greek, and thus European, borders, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen was alarmed by the current situation of thousands unaccompanied minors and asked Commissioner Ylva Johansson to ensure their protection. (European Commission, 2020). This policy brief outlines the parameters of all International and European judiciary background, which protects children under refugee or migrant status. Moreover, referring to recent quantitative data, it analyses the current state of affairs, as well as the problems children face as residents in current camps and hotspots in Greece. Thus, taking all these into account it suggests briefly the following possible measures:

- The creation of a minors’ allocation platform for all EU countries.
- Public awareness-raising, through media campaigning at a European level.
- The adoption of the Proposal for a new Asylum Procedures Regulation 2013/32/EU.
- The facilitation of mutual trust and cooperation between national authorities, in order to proceed quickly with the relocation of unaccompanied minors and the raising of funds for that purpose.
- The increase of juvenile prosecutors per child.
- The application of safety measures in camps and hotspots, in order to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The establishment of external consultancy methods for NGOs in order to monitor the use of EU funds in accordance with childrens’ needs.

### Introduction

There is no denying the fact that since the height of migration crisis, in 2015, the European Union has made courageous efforts, by means of expanding its jurisdiction, enforcing law, financially supporting states, creating networks and institutions in order to manage the migratory flows. Today, we are reaching the tipping point of migration gesture, as the long delayed new Pact on Migration and Asylum is expected to be announced.

However, so far, *the retardation of asylum procedures, even for children, is due to bureaucratic and governmental political disagreements within the EU*. As a result, unaccompanied migrant minors are residing under bad living conditions for long. *Within the support of the European Commission,*

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*Greece has recently launched an unaccompanied minor's relocation program in a volunteer basis. Yet, the situation of “Fallen Angels” inside the hotspot fences demands a rapid response and comprehensive solution, as it reflects a rather defamatory image for a prosperous continent, which has always respected, and fought for, human rights.*

## **Legislative Framework**

Although, the International and European legal framework is rich and creates a satisfactory protection regime for children, it is not fully implemented.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the relevant guidelines such as 2003/86/EU, 2004/83/EU, 2005/85/EU, 2011/95/EU and its amendment (Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors), are the legal instruments for the protection of minors. More precisely, refugee status, quicker access to education, as well as the obligation of states to protect children from economic exploitation, the provision of rehabilitation services, and the prohibition of child detention are ensured. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that according to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and more precisely to the fourth goal, which optimizes the quality in education, targets 4.1 and 4.A “ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education” and “provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”. (SDGs 4.1, 4.A). (United Nations- SDGs Knowledge Platform).

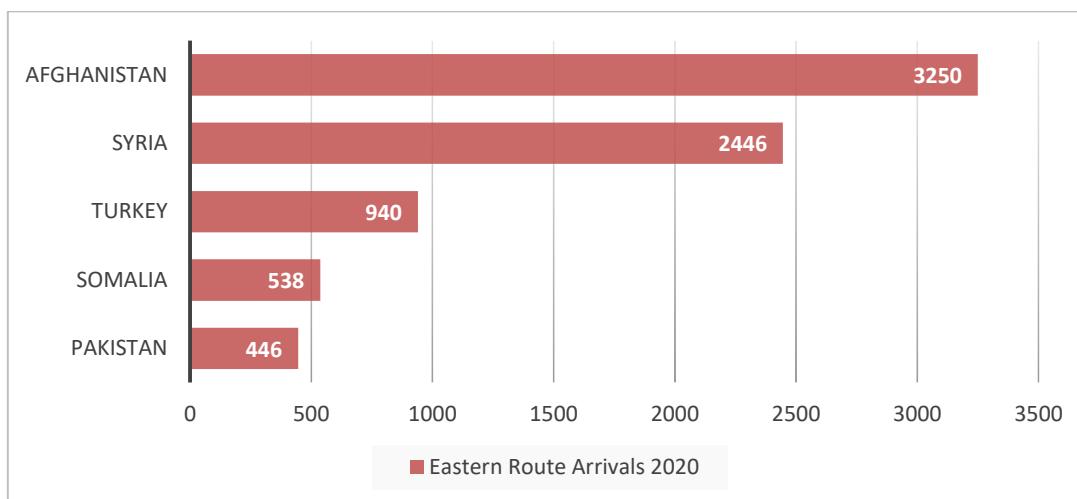
As far the asylum procedure is concerned, according the Dublin III Regulation, applications should be examined by the first European state the refugee enters (avoidance of “asylum shopping”). Article 8 of the Regulation states the right to family reunification. The state in which a family member of the unaccompanied minor’s family resides, is deemed legally responsible. In the case of children who have lost their families, the Public Prosecutor is responsible for defending their interests.

The Proposal for a new Asylum Procedures Regulation 2013/32/EU, as part of the package reform of the Common European Asylum System, emphasizes unaccompanied minors’ needs, and addresses the need for the proper time management of asylum applications. Furthermore, “the protection of citizens and freedoms”, is the first goal of the EU’s Strategic Agenda 2019-2024. This goal calls for a comprehensive migration policy and consensus between member states on burden sharing. (europa.eu).

In the meanwhile, the management of migrant people and children is a more complicated issue, as they follow the registration procedures, but it takes time to examine whether their repatriation is possible. Currently, most of asylum seekers originate from Afghanistan, Syria, Turkey, Somalia and

Pakistan. As a result, apart from Syrian citizens, it is more complicated for the others to obtain a refugee status. It is obvious that this procedure, is more bureaucratic for children, leaving them staying in hotspots for more than a year.

**Figure 1: Eastern Route Arrivals 2020**



Source: European Council, Council of the European Union, 2020.

### The current situation

According to the European Commission, over the last five years 1/3 (30.3%) of asylum applicants were minors aged under 18. As of June 2019 in Greece they were present 32.000 children. More than 5500 unaccompanied children were living in overcrowded refugee camps and hotspots. For example, the Moria refugee camp in Lesbos can accommodate only 160 children and not 520, which are actually residing. (DW, 2019). According to UNICEF in Greece 58% of minors are boys and 42% are girls. It is important to realize, that most of the children cannot proceed with asylum procedures as they do not hold a refugee status. However, for successful applicants, Germany (39%) remains the first destination of asylum seekers, followed by France (12%), Spain (11%) and Greece (10%). (Unicef, 2019).

As mentioned, children face poor living conditions in the reception centers which have a small number of suitable accommodation places. Sometimes, minors are kept in hospitals or in prisons due to the lack of facilities. Human Rights Watch (HRW) has called Greek authorities to release 276 from detention and to transfer them in a safe place in order to be protected from COVID-19 pandemic. (HRW, 2020). Also, integration in the Greek educational system poses difficulties due to the language barrier and a denial to participate. To further complicate matters, the identification of children is a lengthy procedure. As a matter of fact, in most cases, due to the workload of juvenile prosecutors, other experts (sociologists, social workers and lawyers) are authorized to carry out the necessary

procedures on their behalf to represent the unaccompanied minor refugee. Some NGOs, such as “Metadrasis”, are active and receive considerable EU funding in order to assist children (guardianship, interpretation, access to education etc.).

However, there are many cases where minors are exploited. More specifically, teenagers, either to assist their families, who are still in their country, financially, or to find money to pay the illegal traffickers in order to achieve what they cannot legally do - leave Greece to go to another EU country - are subject to labor or sexual exploitation, so that they can ensure a small amount of money. It is also worth pointing out the issue of thousands of disappearances of accompanied and unaccompanied minors in the country. In 2018, 1.110 unaccompanied minors went missing and only 421 were found (less than 50%). (Hellenic Police, 2019). Many of those who are never found become victims of trafficking. Also, tensions occasionally rise within the hotspots, mainly because of the improper conditions of living and the different cultural backgrounds (for instance, the death of an Afghan teen). (DW, 2019).

On the one hand, generally speaking, Greek citizens do not consider migrants as a threat; however 88.2% believe that EU should be more helpful in order to tackle the issue. (Dianeosis, 2019). On the other hand, migrants gesture has created a european solidarity crisis, with the Visegrád group member states (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) refusing to participate actively in a burden sharing mechanism.

*In March 2020, the Commission presented its Action Plan for immediate measures to support Greece. In parallel, with regard to unaccompanied minors, Luxembourg became the first country who has participated in Greece relocation program and accepted in a volunteer basis on April 2020, 12 children, aged between 11 and 15, from Greek camps. Following that, a second group of 50 children flew to Germany and 20, 50 more children flew to Switzerland and to UK accordingly, in accordance with the COVID-19 prevention rules. In July, 49 children relocated from Greece to Portugal and Finland. (European Commission, 2020).*

Also, Greece signed with Netherlands an agreement of three-year cooperation in the field of Asylum and Immigration, which includes the construction of safe accommodation structures in Greece, for the special reception of unaccompanied minors. However, the Netherlands are not participating in the volunteer relocation program, as it is considered a temporary solution. (Government of the Netherlands, 2020).

## Recommendations

It seems that the issue of unaccompanied minors has not been a priority and agenda for most European countries. As a result, more political pressure is needed in order for governments to effectively respond to the situation and contribute to the acceptance of minors, not exclusively on a voluntary basis. EU countries are urged to create a specific quota platform of allocation for unaccompanied minors, according to the GDP of each EU country. In conjunction with the above, the relocation of children should be according their interests, provided they are appropriately informed for the relocation process and are culturally aware. Countries should also give priority to vulnerable children, such as those who face any form of trauma, harassment and/or sickness. Public sensitization through media campaigning is essential, as it may encourage states to assume their responsibilities. Migrants, refugees, NGO representatives on a volunteer basis are encouraged to speak up in order to achieve that goal.

Also, actors are called to fully implement the international and community's *acquis* and more precisely to set the agenda in Parliament in the next few weeks in order to adopt immediately the *Proposal for a new Asylum Procedures Regulation 2013/32/EU*. The identification, and tracing of, family members, and consequently, family reunification, may be achieved through better coordination, trust and cooperation on data collection among national authorities. For instance, the minor's age assessment provided by the Greek authorities should be considered valid from partner countries and it can easily be tested in the arrival countries via DNA samples. Also, asylum processes would take less time if the eligibility criteria for children identification were not that strict (e.g. limiting strictness to specific nationalities and date of arrival).

As for the guardianship system, Greece is called to appoint juvenile prosecutors, who will be assisted by their European colleagues. Thus, establishing a smaller number of children per guardian may avoid trafficking and exploitation of children, as juvenile prosecutors will have a tighter relationship with children. Moreover, the promotion of other European countries' good practices is essential. For instance, Belgium's national action plan 2015-2019 against trafficking in human beings, adopted measures in order to improve detection of minor trafficking victims. Also, the recruitment of female police officers in Ghent, has generated better communication between women and girls under prostitution and trafficking. (European Commission).

The enforcement of safety measures, as a means of ensuring proper hygiene and social distancing is important in order to prevent the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Smaller camps or separate areas for unaccompanied children may enhance closer monitoring, thus preventing the need to restrict the

movement of illegal minors. Furthermore, childrens' daily needs and training can be complemented through augmenting volunteering positions in refugee camps and hotspots. More precisely, volunteers from different cultural backgrounds, through European Solidarity Corps and European Volunteer Service programs will strengthen the work of NGOs, and at the same time they will function as channels for raising awareness for the immigration crisis back to their home countries.

Finally, external consultancy, organized by experts from the European Migration Network, is recommended for NGOs in order to monitor the use of EU funds and ensure that they respond to children needs. Additional EU funding for unaccompanied minors in Greece may be provided by Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The financial support to states of relocation and Greece should also be increased (EUR 6,000 to the Member State to which the child was relocated and EUR 500 to the Member State of departure), in order to ensure minors' protection needs and social adjustment.

Considering these circumstances, managing and supporting unaccompanied minors is not only a legal-based responsibility of each-member state, but a clear demonstration of European solidarity.

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## Topic 8

Tourism and Business in the new coronavirus era

# Tourism in the post Covid-19 era: An opportunity for expansion of the tourism season; The case of Crete<sup>1</sup>

Alkiviadis Kyriakakis<sup>2</sup> & Dimitrios Tzirakis<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

Tourism worldwide has been affected by Covid-19 and many tourism destinations have been hit hard. The effects of the virus on the tourism sector will be long-lasting and economic losses inevitable. Nonetheless, there is a strong positive correlation between tourism and economic growth. As a result of this, the tourism season expansion can, under specific circumstances, lead to greater economic growth. Global crises can help countries that effectively deal with them, to evolve and effectively expand their seasonality, along with specific measures taken by the local governments to restore tourism and even more to expand it (Beirman, 2003).

For Greece, and Crete in particular, that heavily depends on its tourism sector, the economic losses are expected to be devastating. However, based on the development of Covid-19, so far, Greece is presented with a unique opportunity to improve its comparative position and prolong the duration of its tourism season.

Crete is the ideal holiday destination to take advantage of the current situation, in order to prolong its season. Crete is an island with a very diverse landscape and a mild climate, all year round. The region of Crete, over the course of the past decade, has put significant effort in promoting its own brand and has already succeeded in extending the island's tourism season by at least one more month, with season starting mid-March and ending early November (Enterprise Greece, 2018). Moreover, in low season, there have been attempts by local Tour Operators and there has been a small but steady flow of Tourists, even in the extremely low season, between November and February. Of course, all initiatives taken by the locals, are important but are not sufficient. Coordinated support is needed by the government and the prefecture of Crete to boost the island and create a viable extent tourism season.

## Introduction

On the occasion of the devastating outbreak of Covid-19 and the impact it is having on the tourism sector worldwide, this paper seeks to shed light on a different perspective of the ongoing crisis. A large number of articles has recently been written focusing on the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism industry and the measures that should be implemented in order for the sector to resume operations.

Every big crisis, however, is a chance for innovation and drastic change. As we have already seen with several other sectors during the Covid-19 pandemic, these difficult times may also lead to new opportunities. In this paper we will examine the case of the island of Crete. The pandemic offers an

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opportunity to take certain actions that are long overdue. Although Crete has a longer tourism season than many smaller Greek islands, the model remains largely the same; The vast majority of tourists are summer lovers coming for the good weather and beaches.

This article will focus on the opportunity presented to convert the ‘lost months’ of the tourism season into an extension of the season, and eventually a metamorphosis of the tourism model as a whole. This will be pursued through a case study on the Mediterranean island of Crete, as Crete has much more to offer in many other forms of tourism, for instance, recreational and agricultural tourism. Crete needs to prolong its tourism season and in the long-run move towards a 12-months tourism model.

## **Economic Development and Tourism Expansion**

Tourism and economic growth seem to be linked concepts for many countries, not only the ones that rely heavily on Tourism but also for many other countries, as the influx of foreign capital positively contributes to a healthy trade balance (Kaplan & Celik, 2008; Georgantopoulos, 2013).

Various studies have been carried out across different destinations; Balaguer and Cantavella-Jorda (2002) have examined data of Spain between 1975 and 1997 and have confirmed the theory of tourism-led economic growth. We have to admit though, that despite the fact authors concluded that growth can be applicable not only for developing countries, there is no substantial supporting evidence. Kaplan & Celik (2008), on their research mentioned the great impact of Tourism on the Turkish economy on a long-run basis by analyzing crucial macroeconomic indicators. Dritsakis (2004), investigated and confirmed that Greece relies heavily on Tourism in terms of economic growth by analyzing statistical data from 1960 till early 2000s.

On the other hand, questions have emerged regarding the importance of Tourism, especially in developing countries by benchmarking Spain and South Korea (Oh, 2005). Oh (2005) indicated that not always economic growth derives through Tourism and Croes and Vanegas (2008) have identified that tourism and economic growth might be interlinked so that tourism can lead to poverty reduction, but not in such a degree where there can be an impact on economic growth of a whole community.

Tourism development can occur only under a specific framework where certain circumstances exist. Political instability, terrorism and even corruption can damage the expansion of tourism of a certain area while it can lead to isolation of the specific destination and recession of the economy (Yap & Saha, 2013) while safety and security are positively valued derivatives regarding tourism and economic development (Papathanassis, 2016).

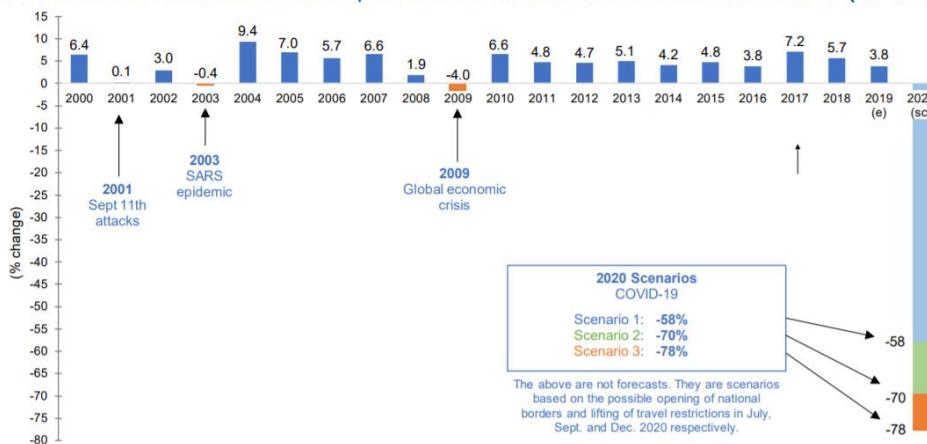
In connection to the above, tourism season expansion can lead to greater economic growth, under specific circumstances. The need of escaping from the beach-led tourism and the exploration of alternative Tourism models that will lead to sustainability and all-year-round tourism has been heavily supported by various studies (Kim & Chen, 2006; Papathanassis, 2016). Global crises can help countries that effectively deal with them, to evolve and effectively expand their seasonality, along with specific measures taken by the local governments to restore tourism and even more to expand it (Beirman, 2003).

### The Covid-19 crisis

Covid-19 has developed into an unprecedented crisis, for the world as a whole and for tourism in particular. According to the IMF the global economy is expected to contract sharply by 3% in 2020 (UNWTO, 2020: 46). In the case of advanced economies this contract may even amount to 6%. Tourism has already been one of the hardest hit sectors worldwide and one of the sectors for which the changes brought upon by Covid-19 will be long-lasting (Maniga, 2020; Pololikashvili, 2020). Arrivals in March have dropped by 57%, while current scenarios point to declines of 58% to 78% in international tourist arrivals for the year (UNWTO, 2020: 27, 29). The twelve most affected countries (in total number of Covid-19 cases) account for a 39% share of world tourism arrivals. This list

### Arrivals could drop 58% to 78% depending on pace of normalization

International tourist arrivals, 2000-2019 and scenarios for 2020 (% change)



Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (e) Estimate (sc) Scenario-based data

includes Spain, Italy, France, and Turkey (2020: 43).

Source: UNWTO

## Most affected countries account for 54% of all spending (over 50,000 cases), as of 2 May 2020

As of 2 May 2020, a total of 215 countries, areas or territories have reported cases of COVID-19

Countries with more than 50K COVID-19 reported cases	Share of World Tourism Arrivals (%)	Tourism Share of Exports in the country (%)	Share of World Tourism Receipts (%)	Share of World Tourism Expenditure (%)
United States	5%	10%	15%	10%
Spain	6%	16%	5%	2%
Italy	4%	8%	3%	2%
United Kingdom	3%	6%	4%	5%
Germany	3%	3%	3%	7%
France	6%	8%	4%	3%
Russian Federation	2%	8%	1%	2%
Turkey	3%	17%	2%	0%
Iran	1%	5%	0%	1%
Brazil	0%	2%	0%	1%
China	4%	1%	3%	19%
Canada	2%	5%	2%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39%</b>		<b>42%</b>	<b>54%</b>

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)  
Note: Countries with more than 50K COVID-19 reported cases to 2 May 2020, according to the World Health Organization (WHO)

Source: UNWTO

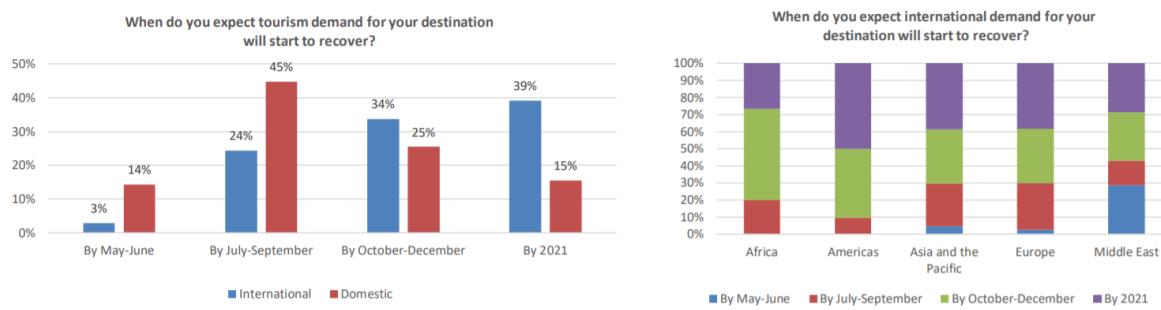
Furthermore, the size of the total impact is still unknown. There is a fear for major disruption in the airline industry, due to several airlines struggling to survive as a result of an already massive decline of 80% in air bookings worldwide in the first quarter of 2020 alone (UNWTO, 2020: 20). International passengers are expected to decline by 44% to 80% in 2020 according to ICAO (2020: 20). IATA forecast total air passenger market to end 2020 at -48% in RPKs (Revenue Passenger Kilometers) (2020: 20).

Many countries like Portugal, Spain, and Greece, heavily depend on the tourism sector. In the case of Greece, tourism directly contributes 20% to the country's GDP and employs more than 900,000 people, accounting for one fifth of the workforce (INSETE, 2020a). Since the financial crisis of 2009, tourism in Greece has been steadily growing and has strongly contributed to its economic growth over the past years. Now, however, arrivals are expected to drop dramatically. Director General of INSETE (Greek Tourism Confederation), Ilias Kikilias stated during an interview with Kathimerini newspaper that "*in the decade of the financial crisis, tourism – with a total of 260 million visitors and 143 billion euros of revenues from abroad, emerged as probably the most important pillar of our economy and employment. With Covid-19, tourism also emerged as one of the first sectors damaged, and at great speed and intensity.*" (Ekathimerini, 2020).

Thus, the more important to tackle this issue effectively. Many hospitality professionals, politicians, and researchers focus on how to reopen the sector and with what measures in place, a very difficult and important aspect. Nonetheless, 'what is lost, is lost, and will not come back'. For many of these

countries, a big portion of the tourism season will be lost by the time the borders reopen (INSETE, 2020b: 5). For Greece, for instance, while many big hotels plan to open at early July, there is a fear of low levels of demand due to social distancing (UNWTO, 2020: 49). Countries will receive just a fraction of the travellers that they normally receive. It is estimated that international tourism will start to recover by Q4 2020 (UNWTO, 2020: 24). For the majority of tourism related activities in Greece, October normally marks the end of the tourism season.

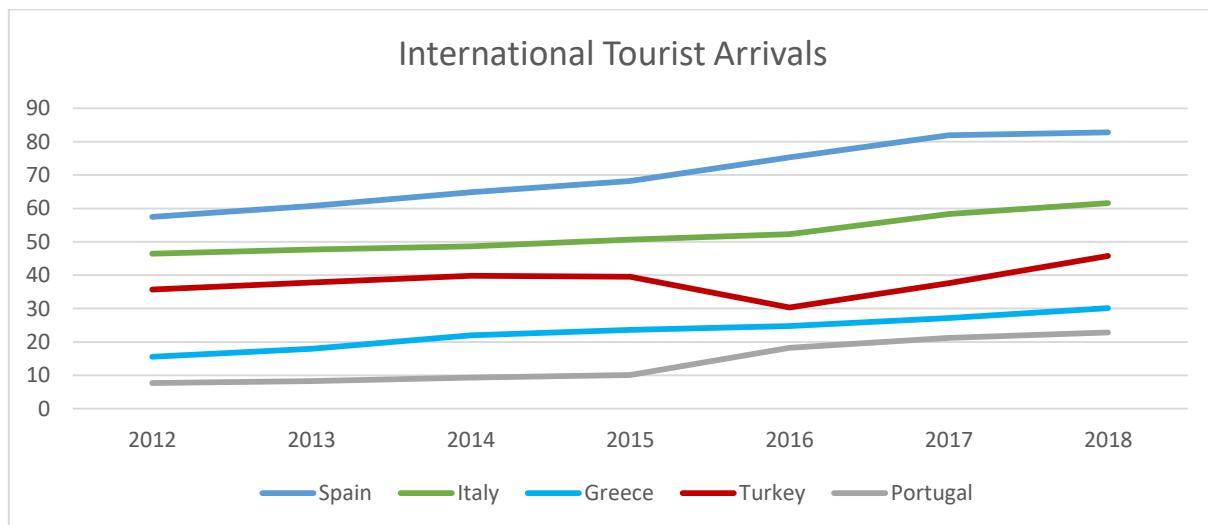
**International demand would recover by Q4 and mainly in 2021 according to the UNWTO Panel of Experts survey responses**



Source: UNWTO

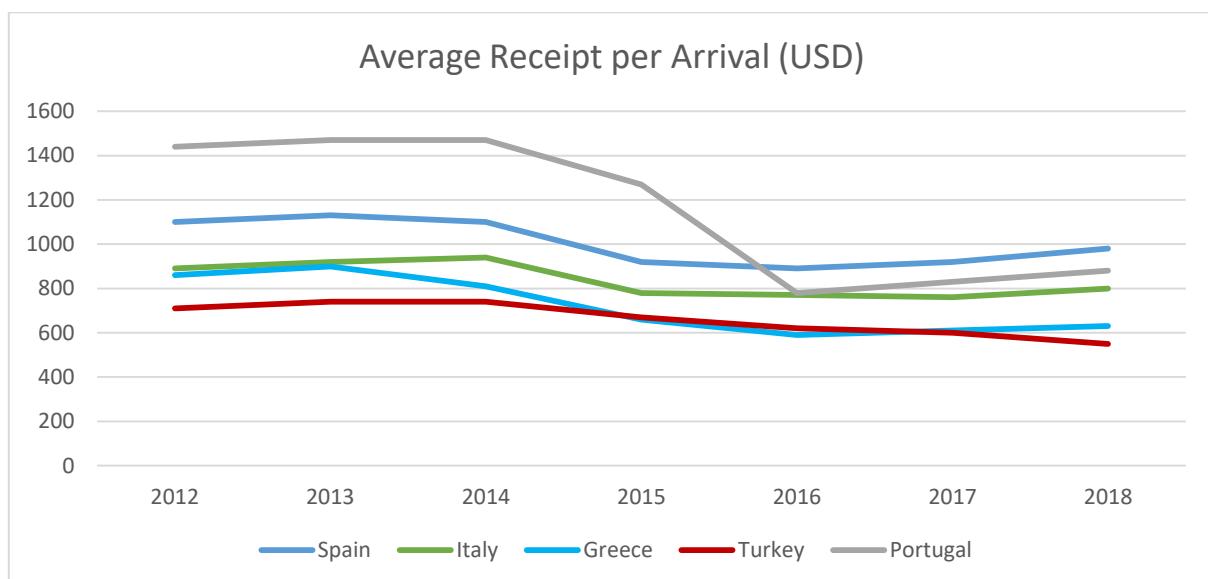
## Discussion

According to the UNWTO, the 5 main Tourism destinations in the Mediterranean are Spain, Italy, Turkey, Greece and Portugal. Cumulatively these 5 destinations have served more than 240 million tourists in 2018 (UNWTO, 2019). Spain is the leading country with more than 80 million tourists served per year. The impact of tourism on the economy of all of those countries, exceeds 10% of each country's GDP (UNWTO, 2019).



Source: UNWTO

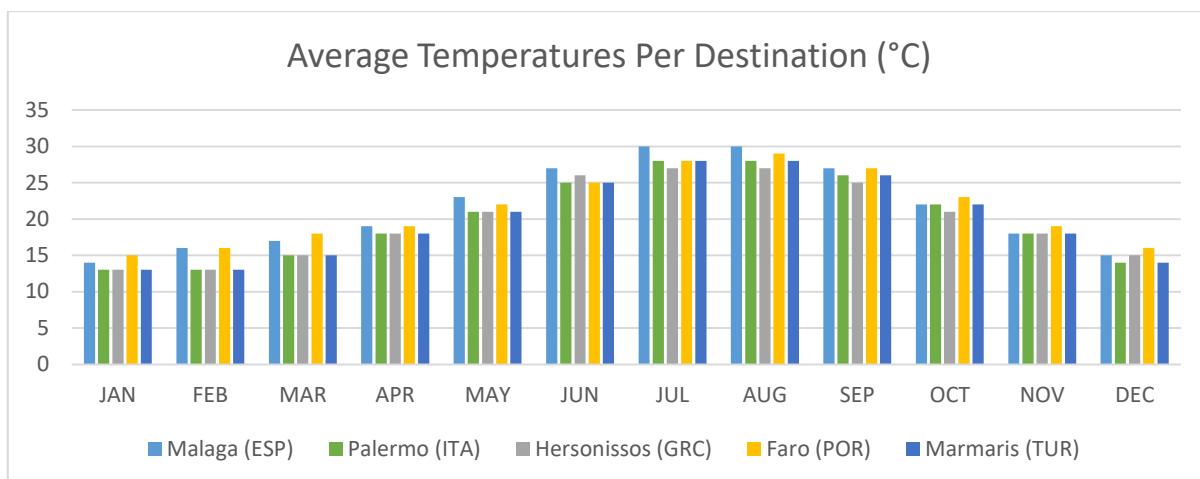
Revenue-wise, we can be surprised by the image that we get; Portugal seemed to be one of the most appealing destinations for high income tourists until 2016 when tourism started to grow rapidly, thus decreasing the average revenue per tourist. On the other hand, most of the countries have seen a decrease in the average spending per customer, which can be explained as a result of the financial crisis that initiated in 2009. In regards to Turkey, while statistics show that there has been a rapid decrease in the average spending per tourist, this should not be misjudged as appealing to lower income tourists; While the rest of the 4 countries belong to the eurozone and have a stable financial sector, Turkey has seen a rapid decrease of its currency (TRY) trade rate in comparison to the USD. Back in 2015, the average exchange rate of USDTRY was 2.55 while in 2018, this was doubled at 5.22. As a result, Turkey became a cheap destination that attracted tourists and assisted Turkey to gain a rebound over Tourism arrivals, after the failed coup of 2016 that took place in Turkey. Regarding Greece, Italy and Spain, they seem to follow a similar pattern.



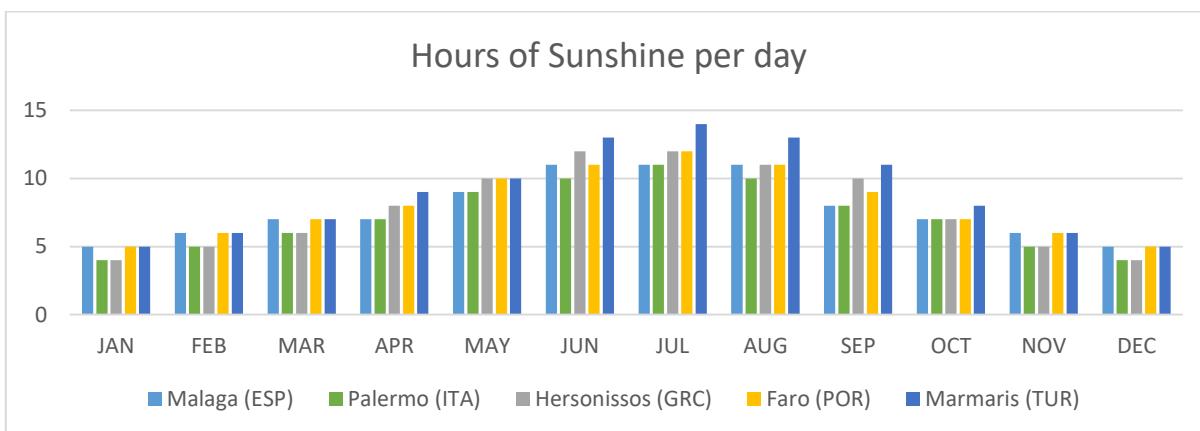
Source: UNWTO

## The case of CRETE

Crete is a destination which is very popular with different kind of Tourists. As Crete is the largest island in Greece and the 5<sup>th</sup> biggest in the Mediterranean, Crete could be examined as a destination by itself, such as Cyprus or Malta. Crete is an island with a very unique landscape as it is an island with tall mountains that have snow 5 months in a year (summit of Mountain Idi at 2454 m.) and sunshine of approximately 280 days per year with more than 100 beaches awarded with the blue flag award (for water and area quality). The below tables show how Crete stands in comparison to other Countries across the Mediterranean in terms of weather and Sunshine.



Source: Accuweather



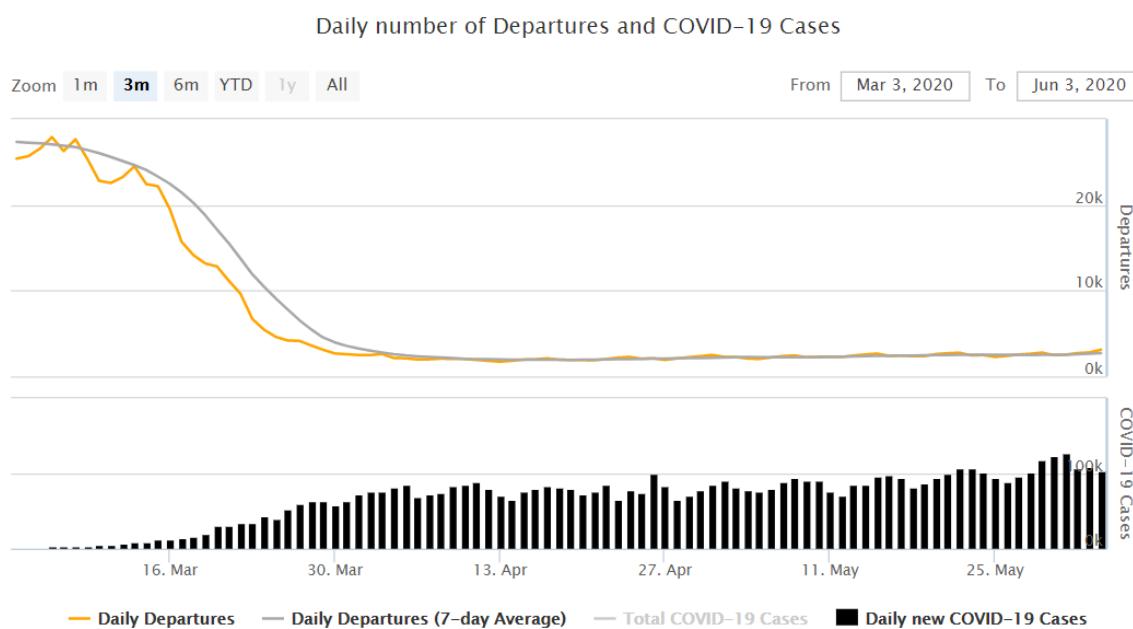
Source: Accuweather

This mixture of various landscapes that are easy to reach, has made Crete appealing to various kinds of Tourists. In comparison to many other destinations where each island is targeted at a specific group (e.g. Ibiza for Partying, Mykonos for tycoons and the jet set etc.), Crete has managed to diversify its portfolio and create a specific place for everyone. For instance, Chania area is very popular with the locals (Greeks) and with the families that seek a lively, intriguing but also relaxing destination to spend their time. Chania has the most awarded beaches in Crete (52) and also some of the most famous such as Elafonissi and Balos which are awarded as 2 of the 10 most famous beaches in Europe (Tripadvisor, 2020) while most of the hotels are small boutique type hotels. Malia is considered as a party destination such as Ibiza. Hersonissos is a very popular destination for Mass Tourism with big hotel units that have many facilities inside and offer to clients everything that they may need. This area also hosts many tournaments, conferences and incentives that require such facilities. Also, for the people that wish to spend more, Elounda with its true 5 star and deluxe hotels offers an unforgettable experience to upper-class people that keep a low profile, for more than 40 years.

### *Reasons to support season expansion*

Investing in prolonging the tourism season will of course help counter the negative effects of the pandemic and the substantial economic losses. There is also a possibility that there will be a relatively higher demand for travel services in the 4th quarter of this year and possibly even in September (INSETE, 2020b: 5).

Moreover, there is another important reason why now is the right moment. One of the main challenges to prolonging the tourism season has historically been that the Greek islands heavily depend on charter flights. The airplanes used for these routes are used for winter destinations after the summer ends. Some traditional ‘winter destinations’ were hit hard by the pandemic, making it unlikely that they will operate, and even if they would many travellers will be hesitant to choose those places as a holiday destination. Many of the airplane fleets are ‘stuck on the ground’ and are likely to remain so as long as there are countries with closed borders (UNWTO, 2020: 3).



Source: ICAO

In the last years, Crete is following a different path in terms of branding and Tourism appeal. In most of the world exhibitions (such as WTM London, ITB Berlin), Crete either possesses its own stand or has a very large space inside the Greek stand, in a first try to promote the island as an all-year-round destination. In the last 10 years, a lot of progress has been made and Crete has managed to extend the tourism season by at least 1 more month with season starting mid-March and ending early November (Enterprise Greece, 2018). Moreover, in low season, there have been attempts to boost season

expansion by local Tour Operators and there has been a small but steady flow of Tourists, even in the extremely low season, between November and February.

Based on the evolution of the pandemic in Greece so far, especially in relation to the country's main competitors such as Spain and Italy but also France and Portugal, Greece has the opportunity to improve its comparative position and recover slightly faster than other markets (INSETE, 2020b: 5). In addition, the great dispersion of its customer base is another advantage that enables the country to take advantage of the various markets as they recover (INSETE, 2020b: 5). The combination of the above facts makes it possible for airlines and tourist agencies to support an initiative to prolong the tourism season. It is up to Greece to take advantage of the situation and prove that the country has more to offer than just 'sun and sea' (Papathanassis, 2016).

## Conclusions & Recommendations

The Covid-19 crisis has affected tourism worldwide. Greece as being heavily reliant on tourism, has been subsequently affected. Nonetheless, due to successfully dealing with this unprecedented crisis, it is among the countries that is presented with a unique opportunity to use the pandemic as a future growth driver. The above analysis, using Crete as a case study, highlighted the fact that 'the right time has come', and that Greece is in the position to extend its tourism season, expand its customer base and diversify the services offered.

### *Recommendations*

Steps to expand tourism base have been made in the last years. The initiatives taken by the locals are important but not sufficient. As a result, in order for the above set goals to be achieved, coordinated support is needed by the government and the prefecture of Crete to boost the island and create a viable extended tourism season. In terms of policy, Greece needs to escape from the narrow term of being a summer holiday destination and diversify its tourism profile by expanding into the developing sector of so-called "*experience tourism*" (Stamboulis & Skayiannis, 2003) such as gastronomy tourism, hiking tourism, rural tourism etc. These forms appeal to tourists in the low season where nature is intact and easier to reach (milder climate, not overcrowded). Moreover, most of these types of travellers are of higher income class (Brondoni, 2016). Greece needs to seek alliances in promoting this product in order to make it appealing to travellers. Alliances with tour operators from countries that constitute Greece's main travellers' base and are interested in such products are strongly advised (Georgantopoulos, 2013; Brondoni, 2016). Strong evidence exists that investment in M.I.C.E. & Sports Tourism can lead to tourism season expansion (Dwyer & Forsyth, 1997). In order to achieve

this, cooperation between the local authorities and the major sports clubs of the island should be established. Doing so will offer access to the athletic facilities and expertise necessary for the organisation of sport events with the ability to attract tourists, foreign sports clubs and media attention.

In addition to the above, allowances need to be provided during low season, in order to support the destination to become appealing. A series of measures should include the following:

- Strategic planning on infrastructure as a general guide
- Reduction or even elimination of airport fees for incoming flights
- Suspension of accommodation tax
- Reduction of VAT from 24% to 13% or even to 6%
- Transformation of unemployment benefits to work incentives
- Financial benefits and incentives to local businesses such as reduction of social-security contributions and company tax

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## The contribution of CSR during the covid-19 period in Greece: A step forward<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The spread of the Covid-19 brought global institutions, societies, states and economies in a critical position as they encounter a new worldwide multilevel crisis. At the same time, states have had to handle this crisis acquiring an interventionist role, protecting the social and economic cohesion, providing better health care services for their citizens and investing in scientific research, as a means to restrict this new pandemic. In order to handle that situation and its consequences, the use of all the available resources became necessary as well as the improvement of the cooperation between the private and the public sector. In Greece private sector has shown an unprecedented willingness for Greece's CSR tradition, to contribute government's efforts.

### Introduction

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a concept has been developed both theoretically and practically in different countries and periods. Nevertheless, it has been further developed and analyzed during the last 60 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Carroll, 1999). Despite the fact that there are many definitions for CSR and in several occasions scholars do not offer a clear definition for it, McWilliams and Siegel define CSR as these “*actions that appears to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law*” (McWilliams & Spiegel, 2001: 117). Theoretically, CSR can take place in different ways and for different reasons and aims. But the recent unexpected and multifaceted coronavirus crisis has shown up a different perspective in CSR; and many brands all around the world offered money, production lines, capabilities and material

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resources to produce assemble items which are needed in order to treat and contain the new coronavirus pandemic (Marom & Lussier, 2020: 257).

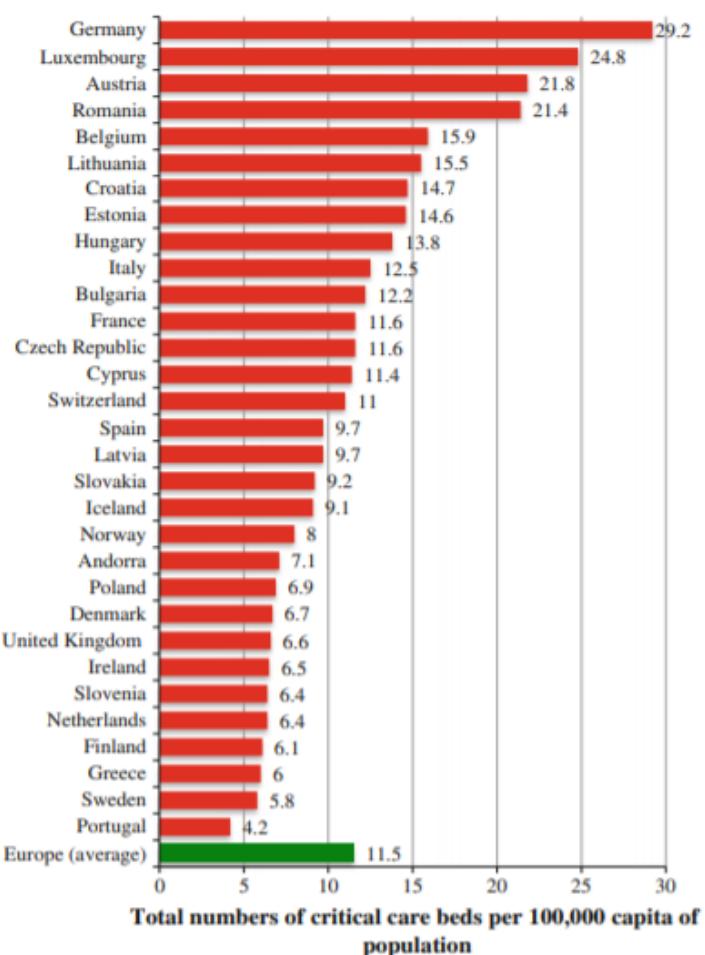
### **Background of the situation and CSR in Greece**

In order to understand the crucial meaning of CSR in the Greek case during the coronavirus crisis, it is important to mention that a) in 2019 Greece had just started to recover from a 10 year economic, financial and debt crisis, which means that the expenditure on social policy and healthcare had been reduced since 2009, and b) the Corporate Social Responsibility tradition and culture is generally weak in Greece.

Several scholars had claimed that “*while CSR in Greece appears to be developing, there is still scope for improvement and further diffusion of relevant practices*” (Skouloudis, Evangelinos et al, 2011: 205). Furthermore, CSR in Greece seems to be at a low assimilation level by society, businesses and the state. However, these three pillars have to work hard in order to reach the EU level of CSR (Metaxas & Tsavdaridou, 2010: 41). In other words, it is widely supported that Greece belongs to the countries with late CSR development in an organized way (Stampoulis & Dimitriou, 2015).

### **CSR during coronavirus in Greece**

While the coronavirus crisis was spreading, the Greek government started an attempt to increase the available intensive care units (ICU), the number of which was far below the European average, and to provide all the necessary means to healthcare personnel. According to the Greek Prime Minister’s, Kyriakos Mitsotakis statement (Athens-Macedonian News Agency, 2020), in January 2020 there was 5,5 intensive care units (ICU) for every 100.000 inhabitants, while in July 2020 there was 7 ICU for every 100.000 inhabitants and the aim is until December 2020 to achieve the European average of 12 ICU for every 100.000 inhabitants. The available formal data from 2012 seems to agree with this Prime Minister’s statement and place Germany in the top of EU ICU per citizen, with 29.2 per 100.000 inhabitants, Greece 6 ICU per 100.000 inhabitants and Portugal at the bottom of the list with 4.2 ICU, while the average of EU was at 11.5 per 100.000 inhabitants.

**Table 1: Intensive Care Units in EU per 100.000 inhabitants**

Source: Rhodes, A., Ferdinand, P., Flaatten, H. et al. (2012: 1647–1653).

From the early beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Greek Government asked for voluntary assist from private sector in order to support the national healthcare system and provide all the necessary materials to healthcare personnel, as a way to strengthen CSR during the COVID-19 era. A few months later, at the presentation of donations to the National Health System from private sector, which was organized by the Ministry of Health, as a recognition of contribution, at May 7, 2020, it was announced that 865 companies, organizations and institutions had already provided funding to the National Health System. The total amount was calculated at 89.1 million euro (Greek Ministry of Health, 2020a), providing funding about critical medical equipment, means of personnel protection as well as ICU beds. Furthermore, several private companies announced the full redefinition of their CSR program in order to fully respond to the new pandemic challenges.

**Table 2: Funding to Greek NHS during COVID-19 from private sector until May 2020**

<b>Medical equipment</b>	40.1 million in €
<b>Means of personal protection</b>	26.2 million in €
<b>Deposits</b>	12.5 million in €
<b>Other categories and species</b>	5.8 million in million in €
<b>Building renovation</b>	6.5 million in €
<b>Total</b>	89.1 million in €

Source: Greek Ministry of Health (2020b).

This process was very important both for the improvement of CSR culture in Greece and practically will help the Greek government to handle successfully the crisis. The improvement of CSR culture in Greece at this period is a basic finding of a recent research from Global Link (2020) which mention that 58% of big and foreign companies have CSR and the 79% of them has a CSR plan and they enrich it.

In order to understand why these donations were practically important in order to handle the pandemic there is nothing more than to study the formal data of the donations. According to the Greek Health Ministry's data of May 7, 2020, the contribution of private sector to the public was 1,228 monitors for ICU, 1,051 respirators, 595 beds for ICU, 177 patient stretcher, 172 portable respirators of patients, 20,252,348 masks, 330,199 surgical uniforms, 160,397 full body protective clothing etc. Thus, through these donations government prepared the system during the general lockdown and reinforced the NHS.

**Table 3: Indicative examples of private's sector contribution to Greek NHS**

<b>monitors for ICU</b>	1.228
<b>respirators</b>	1.051
<b>beds for ICU</b>	595
<b>patient stretcher</b>	177
<b>Other</b>	Yes
<b>Total in million (€)</b>	40.1
<b>different types of masks</b>	20.252.348
<b>surgical uniforms</b>	330.199
<b>full body protective clothing</b>	160.397
<b>Other</b>	Yes
<b>Total in million (€)</b>	24.2

Source: Greek Ministry of Health (2020b).

## Conclusion

The cooperation of public and private sector is very important, because it could reinforce social cohesion and especially, offer solutions during an emergency situation. The companies' social responsibility and their participation to a common plan to handle a crisis can be determinant. Although the "Greek success story" of the first phase of the pandemic is based different reasons such as management of the crisis, organization and information, CSR was also a positive response to the crisis. However, it is important to highlight that it is necessary to make a step forward from the context of understanding CSR as a philanthropy action, but to turn it into an organized, continuous policy that can lead to a more sustainable and equal society.

## Implications and Recommendations

The Greek case of successful management of COVID-19 pandemic can give some conclusions for best practices also about CSR and the recognition of its contribution to the society. From that case, we can conclude that it is important the government to provide motivations to private sector in order to develop corporate social responsibility policies (CSR). Also, transparency and public accountability both for the governmental and the private sector CSR programs is necessary. Especially in times of crisis, government should conduct needs assessment initiatives in order to collect empirically grounded data and based on that, give periodical directions to stakeholders about the real social needs of CSR, where it can be developed, how it should complement state's actions and policies, thus setting up some crucial aims and directives. That means practically the introduction of a general plan with which private and public sector and social partners as well will be able to flexibly cooperate and offer positive outcomes to the society.

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## COVID-19 and health passport<sup>1</sup>

Nikos Kosmadakis<sup>2</sup> & Konstantinos Lapidis<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

The health crisis in Europe brought about a series of changes to the daily lives of millions of people in recent months. It is a crisis which will have its material mark on the social, economic life not only in Europe, but also worldwide. The consequences will be incalculable if an effective drug or vaccine will not be found in time. Many European economies will collapse, and tourism will suffer. Taking the importance of tourism in many European countries into account, we have compiled the following text focusing on the health passport or protocol. It is a policy that many European countries will follow. The defense of Public Health goes beyond the individual Good, while the economy takes second place. Through this analysis, we try to capture the challenge of health ethics. The health protocol forms a new kind of Ethics which abandons its previously ethical character, while obtains utilitarian characteristics. At the same time, the public debate as it takes place in Europe is clearly mentioned and it is also proposed the Health Passport as kind of policy. The health passport should be aligned with the strengthening of European institutions and procedures.

## COVID-19 και Υγειονομικό Διαβατήριο

Νίκος Κοσμαδάκης<sup>4</sup> & Κωνσταντίνος Λαπίδης<sup>5</sup>

### Περίληψη

Η υγειονομική κρίση, όπως ξέσπασε τους τελευταίους μήνες στην Ευρώπη, έφερε μια μεγάλη σειρά αλλαγών στον καθημερινό βίο εκατομμυρίων πολιτών. Είναι μια κρίση που θα αφήσει το υλικό της αποτύπωμα στην κοινωνική και οικονομική ζωή όχι μόνο της Ευρώπης, αλλά και σε παγκόσμιο επίπεδο. Οι συνέπειες θα είναι ανυπολόγιστες εάν δε βρεθεί εγκαίρως ένα αποτελεσματικό φάρμακο ή ένα εμβόλιο. Πολλές ευρωπαϊκές οικονομίες θα καταρρεύσουν, ενώ ο τουρισμός θα υποστεί πλήγμα. Λαμβάνοντας υπόψιν τη σημασία που έχει ο τουρισμός σε πολλές χώρες της Ευρώπης, συντάξαμε το παρακάτω κείμενο που έχει ως επίκεντρο το υγειονομικό διαβατήριο ή πρωτόκολλο. Είναι μια πολιτική που πολλά ευρωπαϊκά κράτη θα ακολουθήσουν. Η προάσπιση της δημόσιας υγείας υπερβαίνει το ατομικό αγαθό, ενώ η οικονομία μπαίνει σε δεύτερη μοίρα. Μέσα από αυτήν την ανάλυση, προσπαθούμε να αποτυπώσουμε την πρόκληση που ενέχει το υγειονομικό πρωτόκολλο για την ηθική. Το υγειονομικό πρωτόκολλο διαμορφώνει μια «νέα ηθική», η οποία εγκαταλείπει το μέχρι πρότινος δεοντοκρατικό της χαρακτήρα, ενώ αποκτά ωφελιμιστικά χαρακτηριστικά. Ταυτόχρονα, γίνεται σαφής αναφορά στη δημόσια συζήτηση που λαμβάνει χώρα στην Ευρώπη, ενώ προτείνεται η θέσπιση του λεγόμενου διαβατηρίου με παράλληλη ενδυνάμωση των ευρωπαϊκών θεσμών και διαδικασιών.

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## Το υγειονομικό πρωτόκολλο ως πρόκληση της ηθικής

Η έννοια της ηθικής συνδέεται αναπόσπαστα με το βαθμό ελευθερίας του προσώπου. Είναι ίσως αδιανότο να χαρακτηρίσουμε μια πράξη ηθική εάν το πρόσωπο που την τελεί βρίσκεται σε καθεστώς ανελευθερίας ή υπακούει άκριτα στις οδηγίες μιας αυθεντίας. Κομβική έννοια στην ηθική είναι η αυτονομία. Η αυτονομία θεωρείται θεμελιώδης για τους ατομικούς δρώντες και όχι για την ηθικότητα, ενώ η ιδέα πως η αυτονομία είναι θεμελιώδης για την ηθικότητα εισάγεται σε δεύτερο επίπεδο, με βάση τη σημασία της προστασίας, του σεβασμού και της ενίσχυσης της ατομικής αυτονομίας (O' Neill, 2011: 46).

Η αυτονομία είναι μια μορφή ελευθερίας. Εξαιτίας της ελευθερίας που διαθέτει το πρόσωπο, μπορεί να διαμορφώνει ένα σχέδιο ζωής, το οποίο στηρίζεται στην εκπλήρωση κάποιων στόχων οι οποίοι αποτελούν ατομική επιλογή. Αντίστροφα, η συγγραφή ατομικού σχεδίου ζωής (διαμόρφωση ατομικού βίου) είναι μια μορφή ατομικής ελευθερίας. Η ελευθερία αυτή, όπως ερμηνεύτηκε από τον Ιμμάνουελ Καντ, δεν αναφέρεται σ' ένα αυτόνομο εαυτό, ή στα αυτόνομα πρόσωπα ή στους αυτόνομους, αλλά αναφέρεται πάντοτε στην αυτονομία του λόγου, στην αυτονομία της ηθικής, στην αυτονομία των αρχών και στην αυτονομία του βούλεσθαι (O' Neill, 2011: 109). Με αυτόν τον τρόπο, η αυτονομία αποκτά θετικό περιεχόμενο, πράγμα που σημαίνει την ικανότητα αυτοκαθορισμού της δράσης του προσώπου βάσει ορθών λόγων προς το πράττειν, δηλαδή βάσει έλλογων σταθμίσεων (και όχι βάσει τυχαίων επιθυμιών ή παρορμήσεων), άρα, κατά τον Καντ, βάσει κανόνων ορθολογικά καθολικευστίμων (Σουρλας, 2015:55). Το άτομο δεν είναι ελεύθερο με την έννοια της απουσίας κάθε εξαναγκασμού, αλλά έχει μια ελευθερία κίνησης η οποία αποτελεί κινητήριος μοχλός αυτοκαθορισμού της δράσης.

Η εκπλήρωση στόχων στη βάση της ελευθερίας του προσώπου διαμορφώνει ταυτόχρονα τους όρους περιορισμού της ελευθερίας. Η ελευθερία δεν πρέπει να είναι αχαλιναγώγητη ούτε ασύδοτη. Για τον Καντ η αυτονομία δεν είναι σχεσιακή, δεν έχει διαβαθμίσεις, ούτε αποτελεί μορφή αυτοέκφρασης. Αφορά το πράττειν βάσει ενός συγκεκριμένου είδους αρχών και, ειδικότερα, βάσει αρχών υποχρεώσεων (O' Neill, 2011: 109). Ουσιαστικά, το πρόσωπο εξαιτίας της έλλογης βούλησής<sup>6</sup> του είναι υποχρεωμένο να υπακούει σ' ένα σύνολο ηθικών κανόνων που αποτελούν δεσμεύσεις για τον ίδιο. Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο ηθικών δεσμεύσεων, το πρόσωπο οφείλει να σέβεται τα άλλα πρόσωπα με καθηκοντολογικούς όρους. Τίθεται εύλογα ένα ερώτημα: μέχρι που φθάνει η ελευθερία του

<sup>6</sup> Ο Καντ από την αρχή των Θεμελίων της Μεταφυσικής των Ηθών προβαίνει στο διαχωρισμό της βούλησης εκείνης που καθορίζεται από τα φυσικά μας ένστικτα και στη βούληση εκείνη που την καθορίζει ο Λόγος (έλλογη βούληση).

προσώπου σε περιπτώσεις όπως η σημερινή που χαρακτηρίζεται από την παρουσία του COVID-19, ο οποίος έχει ονοματιστεί από το δημοσιογραφικό, ιατρικό και πολιτικό κόσμο ως «αόρατος εχθρός»;

Ένα χαρακτηριστικό παράδειγμα αποτελεί ο τουρισμός. Κάποιες ευρωπαϊκές χώρες φαίνεται να προτίθενται να νιοθετήσουν μια τέτοια επιλογή. Λαμβάνοντας υπόψιν τον επιβεβαιωμένα μεγάλο χρόνο επιβίωσης του ιού τόσο σε επιφάνειες, όσο και στους ασθενείς, αλλά και την έλλειψη στοιχείων στα οποία να συμφωνεί η επιστημονική κοινότητα για την επιβιωσιμότητα του νιού κατά τους θερινούς μήνες και τις υψηλές θερμοκρασίες νιοθετήθηκαν διάφορα μείγματα μέτρων. Σχεδόν το σύνολο των ευρωπαϊκών τουριστικών προορισμών, κατά το άνοιγμα των συνόρων τους, θέσπισε μια σειρά πρωτοβουλιών, αλλαγών και μέτρων σε χώρους εστίασης, ξενοδοχειακές μονάδες κ.λπ.. Τέτοια παραδείγματα αποτελούν η απόσταση των καθισμάτων στα ξενοδοχεία, η χρήση προστατευτικών μασκών, η μέτρηση της θερμοκρασίας των τουριστών στα αεροδρόμια και δειγματοληπτικοί έλεγχοι για COVID-19.

Το υγειονομικό πρωτόκολλο αποτέλεσε αναγκαιότητα, ενώ το πολιτικός κόστος το νομιμοποίησε στη λήψη μιας απόφασης που υποστήριζε πως «η Δημόσια Υγεία είναι υπεράνω όλων». Τι σημαίνει όμως σ' ένα βαθύτερο φιλοσοφικό επίπεδο; Σημαίνει πως οι κυβερνήσεις των ευρωπαϊκών κρατών λειτούργησαν στη βάση της συνεπειοκρατικής θεωρίας του ωφελιμισμού. Οι κυβερνήσεις στάθμισαν τις συνέπειες και υποστήριξαν πως όσο μεγαλύτερη διασπορά του ιού υπάρχει, τόσο μεγάλες είναι οι συνέπειες και για τη δημόσια υγεία, αλλά και για άλλους τομείς όπως η οικονομία. Γι' αυτό το λόγο, θεσμοθετήθηκε από τα κοινοβούλια τους το συγκεκριμένο πρωτόκολλο το οποίο αποτελεί παραβίαση της αυτονομίας του προσώπου. Το όφελος των πολλών επισκιάζει το όφελος των ολίγων. Στο πλαίσιο λοιπόν μιας ωφελιμιστικής αντίληψης περί προστασίας της δημόσιας υγείας, οι κυβερνήσεις περιέστειλαν τις ελευθερίες των προσώπων. Η κατάσταση έκτακτης ανάγκης σε τομείς όπως η δημόσια υγεία, η οικονομία και η προστασία μεγάλου μέρους του πληθυσμού (υπερήλικες, άτοκά με υποκείμενα νοσήματα) επέβαλαν την παρέκβαση του Κράτους στην ιδιωτική σφαίρα του προσώπου και κατ' επέκταση στην επιχειρηματική δραστηριότητα, όπως ο τουρισμός.

Από την άλλη, οι πολίτες με πνεύμα διαλόγου συναίνεσαν στην απώλεια της προσωπικής τους αυτονομίας. Η προσωπική αυτονομία, ως μια ελευθερία κίνησης και δράσης, παραχωρήθηκε εκούσια από τους κατόχους (τους πολίτες) στον κρατικό μηχανισμό. Διαμορφώθηκε ένα υγειονομικό συμβόλαιο με συγγραφείς το κράτος και τους πολίτες. Για να παραφράσουμε το Κοινωνικό Συμβόλαιο του Ελβετού διανοητή Zan-Zak Ρουσσώ, οι πολίτες μέσα από την αποδοχή του υγειονομικού πρωτοκόλλου συναίνεσαν στις πρωτοβουλίες του κράτους για τον COVID-19 με σκοπό την αποφυγή καταστάσεων που θα έθεταν την υγεία του ευάλωτου κλινικού πληθυσμού σε κίνδυνο, αλλά και τη δική τους.

## Υγειονομική κρίση: προκλήσεις, ερωτήματα και πιθανές λύσεις

Η υγειονομική κρίση, μεταξύ άλλων, κατέδειξε για μια ακόμη φορά το πόσο διασυνδεδεμένος και αλληλεξαρτώμενος είναι ο κόστος, επίσης κατέδειξε πολύ σημαντικές οπτικές τόσο του ιδιωτικού όσο και του δημόσιου βίου, οπτικές οι οποίες υπό άλλες συνθήκες θα ήταν απαράδεκτες. Η κατάσταση αυτή που βιώνουμε σήμερα απαιτεί μια άμεση ρύθμιση στην βάση της κοινωνικής πραγματικότητας, μια ρύθμιση η οποία πρέπει όσο ποτέ άλλοτε να εμπειριέχει στις προτεινόμενες πρακτικές εφαρμογές της τα στοιχεία τόσο της ηθικής, όσο και της νομιμότητας και της ασφάλειας συνδυαστικά και σε κατάλληλο βαθμό. Θα ήταν καταστροφικό να οδηγηθούμε σε πρακτικές που καταστρατηγούν τη νομιμότητα, ή ακόμα και την ηθική, όπως την γνωρίζουμε μέχρι σήμερα, στο όνομα της ασφάλειας. Είναι δεδομένο ότι βιώνουμε μια κατάσταση η οποία έχει επηρεάσει όλα τα επίπεδα της ανθρώπινης δραστηριότητας και στη βάση αυτή ίσως θα μπορούσαμε να δεχτούμε πρακτικές οι οποίες θέτουν κάποιες πολύ συγκεκριμένες προτεραιότητες. Σε αυτή την περίπτωση, θα πρέπει να θέσουμε κάποιες βασικές δικλείδες ασφαλείας που θα ρυθμίζουν την μετέπειτα βιωσιμότητα και τον τρόπο εξέλιξης των πρακτικών αυτών, όπως αντίστοιχα συμβαίνει αυτό σε επίπεδο νομοπαραγωγικής διαδικασίας και εφαρμογής των νόων από την δικλείδα που ονομάζεται Σύνταγμα (Κοντιάδης & Φωτιάδου, 2016). Είναι δηλαδή πολύ σημαντικό σε τέτοιες περιόδους κρίσεως να θέτουμε προτεραιότητες και να αναπροσαρμόζουμε τις αντίστοιχες πολιτικές στο βαθμό που είναι απαραίτητο και μόνο μέχρι εκεί (Agamben, 2013).

Ο τουρισμός σαν πεδίο ρύθμισης φαίνεται να έχει πάρα πολλές συνιστώσες και τεράστιες προεκτάσεις. Η ρύθμιση ενός τέτοιου πεδίου υπό το πρίσμα αυτής της υγειονομικής κρίσης δημιουργεί την ανάγκη συνεργασίας και συνεννόησης σε όλα τα επίπεδα διακυβέρνησης (Εθνικό, Διακρατικό, Ευρωπαϊκό). Οποιαδήποτε άλλη προσέγγιση του εν λόγω ζητήματος δεν θα είχε ούτε τη νομιμοπόίηση ούτε και τα προσδοκώμενα αποτελέσματα. Οι προβληματισμοί που ανακύπτουν σε πρακτικό επίπεδο είναι πολλοί, αυτό όμως που πρέπει να γίνει σαφές και να ρυθμιστεί σε Ευρωπαϊκό επίπεδο, ώστε να μην αφεθεί η ρύθμισή του στα κράτη μέλη, είναι ο τρόπος εισόδου στη χώρα τουριστικής υποδοχής, καθώς η ρύθμιση σε αυτό το επίπεδο θα καθορίσει εν πολλοίς τις πρακτικές και τις ρυθμίσεις στα άλλα επίπεδα. Η πρόταση που έχει τεθεί επ' αυτού του ζητήματος είναι η δημιουργία ενός υγειονομικού διαβατηρίου, όπως ήδη έχουμε αναφέρει παραπάνω, υπό την έννοια να υπάρξει ασφαλής είσοδος στην χώρα υποδοχής αλλά και ασφαλής επάνοδο στην χώρα αποστολής.

Ειδικότερα την ιδέα του υγειονομικού διαβατηρίου προωθούν 6 χώρες της Ε.Ε, με την Αυστρία και την Γερμανία να κάνουν την αρχή, όπου μια πιθανή συμφωνία μεταξύ τους θα επιτρέπει την εκατέρωθεν τουριστική κίνηση. Αντίστοιχες συζητήσεις γίνονται μεταξύ Κροατίας και Τσεχίας και

μεταξύ Αυστρίας και Ουγγαρίας (Μοσχονάς, 2020). Σύμφωνα με το Euronews «η Ελλάδα φαίνεται να κινείται στο ίδιο μήκος, με τον Υπουργό Τουρισμού κ. Θεοχάρη να αναφέρει ότι γίνεται διαβούλευση στην Ε.Ε., προκειμένου σε κάθε Ευρωπαίο πολίτη που θα θέλει να ταξιδέψει να του γίνεται ένα αξιόπιστο τεστ για την ανίχνευση του κορωνοϊού» (Euronews, 2020).

Η Ευρωπαϊκή Επιτροπή αναφέρεται σε εναρμονισμένους κανόνες και κατευθυντήριες που θα δοθούν στα κράτη μέλη, ενώ με την σειρά του ο Π.Ο.Υ. ασκεί κριτική στην πρόταση περί υγειονομικού διαβατηρίου τονίζοντας ότι «σε αυτό το σημείο της πανδημίας δεν υπάρχουν αρκετά στοιχεία σχετικά με την αποτελεσματικότητα της ανοσίας που προκαλείται από αντισώματα για να διασφαλιστεί η ακρίβεια ενός διαβατηρίου ανοσίας. Άτομα που υποθέτουν ότι έχουν ανοσία μπροστά στο ενδεχόμενο μιας δεύτερης λοίμωξης επειδή έχουν λάβει θετικό αποτέλεσμα εξέτασης μπορεί να αγνοήσουν τις συμβουλές για την προστασία της δημόσιας υγείας. Η χρήση των πιστοποιητικών αυτών μπορεί συνεπώς να αυξήσει τους κινδύνους εξάπλωσης του ιού» (WHO, 2020).

Η πρόταση του υγειονομικού διαβατηρίου εκτός από την πρακτικής φύσεως κριτική την οποία υφίσταται από τον Π.Ο.Υ., έχει και άλλες προεκτάσεις που αφορούν τόσο την ρύθμιση του επιδημιολογικού ισοζυγίου στο εσωτερικό των χωρών με βασικό ερώτημα το πώς θα επιβληθεί ένα μέτρο μονομερώς και μόνο για τους τουρίστες χωρίς να υπάρχει κάτι αντίστοιχο για τους γηγενείς, επίσης στην ίδια βάση πώς θα ρυθμιστούν οι εισροές από τις κατ' εξοχήν πληγείσες χώρες (Ισπανία, Ιταλία) χωρίς να υπάρξει διαχωρισμός. Τέλος, πώς θα διαφυλαχθούν τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα με την εφαρμογή του υγειονομικού διαβατηρίου, καθώς πρόκειται για «ένα απολύτως ευαίσθητο προσωπικό δεδομένο. Όσο και εάν η προστασία της δημόσιας υγείας αποτελεί σοβαρό λόγο σε περιόδους πανδημίας και επιτρέπει την χρήση κάποιων, ακόμη και ασυνήθιστων μέτρων, κανένα εργαλείο δεν θα πρέπει να θέτει σε κίνδυνο την ιδιωτικότητά μας» (Ε.Σ.Π.Δ, 2020).

### Προτάσεις ομαλής εφαρμογής του Υγειονομικού Διαβατηρίου

Με σκοπό την αποφυγή της υπονόμευσης των ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων και του διαχωρισμού-απομόνωσης συγκεκριμένων κρατών, καθώς επίσης και για την γενικότερη καλλιέργεια μιας συμπεριφοράς που θα υπονομεύει τις αξίες της συνεργασίας και της αμοιβαιότητας, όπως αυτές ορίζονται από το αξιακό πλαίσιο της Ε.Ε., προτείνουμε:

- την ρύθμιση του ζητήματος σε αμιγώς ευρωπαϊκό επίπεδο, στη βάση της συναίνεσης και της τήρησης των θεσμικών ευρωπαϊκών διαδικασιών και σε καμία περίπτωση την άφεση του ζητήματος σε επίπεδο διακρατικών συμφωνιών. Με αυτό τον τρόπο θα αποφευχθεί η πιθανή απομόνωση χωρών όπως η Ισπανία και η Ιταλία, γεγονός που θα ήταν καταστροφικό για τις ίδιες

αλλά και για τις αξίες που πρεσβεύει το ίδιο το ευρωπαϊκό οικοδόμημα, με την όποια δυναμική του αποδίδεται.

- τη θέσπιση του λεγόμενου υγειονομικού διαβατηρίου, όπως προκρίνεται, όχι όμως με μια απλή πρόταση κατευθυντήριων, έστω και εναρμονισμένων, αλλά μέσα από την συνήθη νομοθετική διαδικασία με την θέσπιση κανονισμού ή οδηγίας υπό την επίβλεψη εφαρμογής από την Ευρωπαϊκή Επιτροπή, γεγονός που θα διασφαλίζει τη νομιμότητα της πρακτικής και θα δημιουργήσει την απαραίτητη δικλείδα ασφαλείας έναντι οποιασδήποτε παραβίασης.

Είναι εξαιρετικά κρίσιμο να υπάρξουν οι προϋποθέσεις για μια ισορροπημένη και προσεκτική αντιμετώπιση του ζητήματος της υγειονομικής κρίσης, με σκοπό την επίτευξη της μέγιστης δυνατής προστασίας σε επίπεδο μετάδοσης του ιού και παράλληλα την προφύλαξη των δικαιωμάτων και των αξιών που απορρέουν από την ιδιωτική σφαίρα δικαιωμάτων. Επίσης κρίσιμο σημείο αποτελεί ο τρόπος διαχείρισης των πληγέντων χωρών, μέσα από τομείς όπως ο τουρισμός. Το συμπέρασμά μας είναι ότι δεν μπορεί να υπάρξει καμία ισορροπία στα παραπάνω ζητήματα, εάν δεν υπάρξει μια κεντρική (Ε.Ε) νομοθετική παρέμβαση η οποία θα ρυθμίζει ρητά τις παραπάνω προβληματικές με γνώμονα τις ανάγκες του συνόλου τόσο υπό το πρίσμα των ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων όσο και των ευρωπαϊκών αξιών. Αυτό τον ρόλο μπορεί να τον παίξει η Ε.Ε και επιβάλλεται να το κάνει, καθώς τα κέντρα αποφάσεων των Βρυξελλών είναι σε θέση να έχουν μια ολοκληρωμένη εικόνα της κατάστασης και έτσι μπορούν να διασφαλίσουν τόσο την ρύθμιση της όσο και την αποφυγή της οποιασδήποτε καταστρατήγησης κεκτημένων και θεμελιωδών δικαιωμάτων.

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## Topic 9

### The Coronavirus and the Environment

## What are the effects of COVID-19 on the environment?<sup>1</sup>

Michail Melidis<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Contrary to the socio-economic aspects of the coronavirus crisis, the environment has comparably attracted lesser attention. To the question, if there is a silver lining to the global pandemic, existing data and studies show that the environment is an unanticipated beneficiary that gives a glimmer of hope for the post-COVID-19 period. Acknowledging the difficulties in conducting in-depth evaluations over the environmental impacts as the pandemic still unfolds, some preliminary inferences can be drawn. The aim of this paper is to outline and analyse the indirect effects of COVID-19 on the environment for a better understanding and knowledge during the lockdown at the international level. Indicatively, some of the positive effects are met in the decrease of GHG emissions, the fall of fossil fuel consumption, the improved air and water quality, and the re-emergence of wildlife. On the other hand, key challenges lie in the significant increase in medical waste, waste management, and environmental pollution.

### Introduction

The intensity and spreading of COVID-19 around the world showed emphatically the serious problems of national health systems and economies. The halting of the economic activity, the disruption of transport networks, the issuing of travel bans, and the adoption of social distancing measures evidence the magnitude, depth, breadth, and response of national governments to the pandemic (Chakraborty and Maity, 2020). The highlighting of nations' underlying problems through a rapidly evolving multifaceted crisis overshadowed the environmental domain (Helm, 2020). In this setting, the environment has unexpectedly seen significant improvements that merit further attention (Saadat et al., 2020; Zambrano-Monserrate et al., 2020). The analysis of the indirect effects of the pandemic seeks to shed light on the main improvements and challenges in a turbulent period (Hamwey, 2020). Hence, the paper is structured as follows. It starts with the development of the methodological steps of this research, then analyses the effects of COVID-19 and, lastly draws some conclusions and policy recommendations.

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## Methodology

Methodologically, this paper draws on a range of different sources such as academic papers, newspaper articles, environmental reports, studies, and impact assessments with a view to providing a clear picture of the indirect effects of the global pandemic on the environment internationally. It should be mentioned that as the pandemic unfolds short-term impacts may be difficult to calculate, however, there are certain sectors that can be measurable and draw useful conclusions and policy recommendations. To avoid misconceptions all the data used here derive from the period January-April 2020. Importantly, some of the limitations of this research include the lack of data availability on a country level despite the blossoming literature.

### Indirect effects

#### *Reduction of GHG emissions*

One of the most noticeable improvements is found in the sharp drop of carbon emissions worldwide from February to March 2020 in comparison to the same time period in 2019 (Carbon Brief, 2020; National Geographic, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2020). For example, estimates show that China as the world's largest emitter (30% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on an annual basis) saw a fall of 25% of its carbon emissions as a result of the reduction of industrial activity and coal consumption (CREA, 2020). Indicative of that are the satellite images taken by NASA (NASA Earth Observatory, 2020) and the European Space Agency (ESA, 2020) that depict the decline in NO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the industrial areas, power plants and vehicles during the period January-February in major Chinese cities. It is telling that pollution levels and clouds of toxic gas hovering over the main industrial power stations and urban centers vanished. In the US, the city of New York had a reduction of almost 50% in carbon monoxide (CO) emissions from vehicles in the first weeks of lockdown. Finally, data from the Copernicus Sentinel-5P Satellite display a decrease of air pollution, particularly a decline of NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations over Italy (especially Northern Italy) as a result of the lockdown (ESA, 2020).

#### *Consumption of fossil fuels drops*

The industrial and economic activity has been heavily affected by the coronavirus pandemic and contributed to a remarkable fall in carbon emissions. Notably, the decline of crude oil, steel production, and flights (70%) have significantly impacted the reduction of emissions (Carbon Brief, 2020). However, one of the determinants is the nosedive of China's use of coal (Meller, 2020). The use of coal amounted to 59% of China's energy needs in 2018 and while serving the large production

base composed of many heavy industries and powerhouses, it largely accounts for the only domestic source of heating across the country (CREA, 2020). Indicatively, the coal consumption between February and March felt a reduction of 36% in relation to the same period last year. This decline is attributed to the low demand for electricity which affected the demand side of the economy (IEA, 2019). Correspondingly, the EU shows a significant decline in manufacturing and lower power demands which translates into a drop of 9% of the overall EU emissions target in 2020 (European Environment Agency, 2020).

### *Air quality*

Arguably, the decline of CO2 emissions had a positive effect on air quality with a cleaner atmosphere and less pollution in major cities. There have been observed serious reductions around 50% in the concentrations of air pollutants such as nitrogen oxide (NO2) in many urban areas around the world such as Europe and China (EEA, 2020). Some of the main causes lie in the reduced traffic and transportation networks and the fall in industrial activity and economic output. For instance, in major cities such as Milan, the average concentrations of NO2 before 25 March were reduced by 24% compared to four weeks earlier and 21% between 16-22 March in relation to the same week last year. In Madrid, the average NO2 levels were cut down by 56% gradually between each week and by 41% compared to the same week in 2019. Finally, in Lisbon the average NO2 levels declined by 40% between each week, and by 51% compared to the same week in 2019. Also, a notable reduction of NO2 emissions (10-30%) observed in Central China (Wuhan) since January. Satellite images released by the European Space Agency (ESA – Copernicus Sentinel-5P) exhibit that in February the NO2 levels in the atmosphere have seen a reduction between 20% to 30% in comparison to the same month in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

### *Clearer skies*

While aviation has been one of the most affected industries with a dramatic fall in passenger traffic and huge financial losses, the grounding of airplanes and the decline in air traveling had a positive effect on the environment with improving air quality, lower pollution levels, and clearer skies due to fewer exhaust emissions. Interestingly, air traffic in Europe saw a significant plummet due to the cancellation of many flights by the airlines as the coronavirus spread out. At the international level and more specifically global hubs such as Switzerland, Hong Kong, and the UK were confronted with an air traffic reduction of more than 90% compared to the same period last year (FlightRadar24,

2020). According to ACI Europe's impact assessment (2020), the losses amount to 67 million fewer airport passengers who did not fly in the first quarter of 2020.

### *Increased waste*

The spreading of the pandemic and lockdown measures have contributed to the significant rise in waste. Particularly, the shift in consumer needs with extensive use of online shopping and home delivery services has resulted in an acute increase in household waste (BBC, 2020). Also, significant problems noticed in meeting recycling targets with the burning of household recycling due to the lack of manpower in recycling centers in Wales (The Guardian, 2020). Medical waste has also seen a sharp uptick during this period. Indicatively, the production of clinical waste such as protective equipment, masks, and gloves in Wuhan (China) populated by more than 11 million people was on average 240 metric tons per day in comparison to the average of less than 50 metric tons in a normal period. Consequently, high pressures on the existing waste management facilities were generated. The destination of the discarded single-use plastic-based masks, water-resistant gloves and other medical waste such as sanitizers is often landfilling and oceans. For example, evidence from NGOs (Oceans Asia, 2020) shows that Hong Kong is experiencing an environmental crisis with a large amount of garbage and medical waste (masks) spotted on the ocean surface are being washed up to its seashores and beaches (Saadat et al., 2020). The impact of those on fauna and flora seems to be wide-ranging as the animals living in both land and sea in search of food could accidentally eat them with devastating consequences for their lives. Additionally, environmental pollution and contaminated areas from medical waste could jeopardize the breeding of many species and subsequently the whole food chain.

### *Clearer waters and cleaner beaches*

The curtailment of tourist flows and waterborne traffic during the pandemic seems to have brought about an improvement in the water quality of Venice's sinuous canals (McFadden, 2020). The empty canals from motorboat taxis and tourist boats have given a breather to the main waterways to become clearer (The Guardian, 2020). Studies have shown that the contamination of canal waters and surrounding ecosystems is related to the emissions from the boat engines. With the lack of waterborne traffic, the boats are no longer churning up the mud of the canal floors. An immediate effect is the clarity of waters, the return of swans and ducks, and the visibility of the fish and plant-life of the lagoon (Ball, 2020). Also, the condition of the Ganges River shows a serious improvement since the enforcement of lockdown in India which resulted in a decrease in the disposal of industrial waste into

it according to the Central Pollution Control Board data. The improvement of water quality shows the suitability of the Ganges River for bathing and diffusion of wildlife and fisheries (The Economic Times, 2020). Many beaches in the world provide to coastal areas and communities economic benefits, however, they constantly undergo environmental pressures due to overexploitation and pollution. The slashing of tourist numbers and the strict lockdown measures conducted to a better condition of the beaches around the world which are now appearing cleaner and clearer. Indicative examples are the beaches of Acapulco (Mexico) and Barcelona (Spain) (Evening Standard, 2020).

### *Wildlife*

The enforcement of lockdown and the lack of traffic prompted the return of wildlife to towns, city centers, and suburban streets. The halting of economic activity and the absence of human presence constituted a great opportunity for the wild species to venture into urban and rural environments and wander in once-bustling streets, busy parks, and crowded beaches (Cortlett et al., 2020). Examples such as the roaming of deers in Nara, a Japanese city in search of food, the trotting of boars in Barcelona's buzzing avenues, the capture of a wild puma in Chile's capital Santiago empty centre in the midst of a night-time curfew and the wandering of a heard of Kashmiri goats in Llandudno's deserted streets in North Wales indicate that when people's presence declines wildlife takes over (Evening Standard, 2020). In doing so, the natural world manifests its quick adaptability, resilience, and thriving in people's absenteeism (Helm, 2020).

### **Conclusions**

This paper aimed to provide an overview of the indirect effects of COVID-19 on the environment at the international level. In spite of the uncertainty caused by the pandemic due to the unprecedented circumstances, there have been some glimmers of hope and positive signs that the environment can be temporarily benefitted from the unexpected outcomes and short-term improvements such as the reduced GHG emissions, the falling consumption of fossil fuels, the better air quality and clearer atmosphere, the improved quality of waters and cleaner beaches, and liberated wildlife. On the other hand, the mounting problem of waste and environmental pollution reveals the challenges many national governments are confronted with. From the above analysis, it is clearly manifested the interaction between the economy and environment as well as the resilience, adaptability, and quick recovery of the natural world when granted space. Furthermore, a taste of the scale of challenges and actions required in a post-pandemic setting for a greener future is given. These environmental

improvements inject some optimism but do not permit celebrations as this positive picture may look short-lived when the wheels of the economy start reeling again.

## Policy recommendations

The positive picture of the environment that comes out of the pandemic plausibly creates some expectations about the sort of improvements and actions needed for a greener future (Aletta and Osborn, 2020; Blum and Neumärker, 2020). Acknowledging the pressures exercised to governments to soften or lower their environmental ambitions in a bid to ramp up their economies are raised significant questions about their reactions. There are two paths to be followed here. The first is to return to the business as usual model with subsidies to heavy and carbon-intensive industries for a quick fix of the economy that overlooks the scientific community recommendations about climate action and ultimately comes at the expense of the environment. The second is new and sees the pandemic as a great opportunity to change the current growth model by reflecting upon the way we live, consume the natural resources, and treat the environment overall (GLOBSEC, 2020). Undoubtedly, the latter paves the way for a more sustainable model which takes into account not only the current but also the future generations and vulnerable groups. The answer is not to just pump money into the economy and achieve a quick recovery but to invest in human capital and knowledge and build an economy that has at its core the environmental values. The provision of finance packages and fiscal stimuli to step up the transition to a carbon-free economy would be useful but the aftershock of COVID-19 may hold the national governments on a defensive line due to tight budgets. Faced with strong public pressure to address unemployment, the temptation to use of fossil fuels, especially with the current low oil prices, to simply restore their economies would be a clear setback with significant implications for all.

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Topic 10  
Education policies in transition

# Teaching EU Values in Schools through European programs during COVID-19 pandemic. The “Teachers4Europe: setting an Agora for Democratic Culture” Program<sup>1,2</sup>

Foteini Asderaki<sup>3</sup> & Olga Sideri<sup>4</sup>

## Abstract

The establishment of the European Education Area is fundamental for the development of the European Union of Values. The importance of education is the basis of active citizenship and fundamental values that should lie at the heart of the EU as stated in the Paris Declaration 2015, the EU Leaders’ Agenda at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg, 2017 and the new EU strategic agenda 2019-2014. In order to achieve this goal, special attention must be paid to human resources, especially teachers, who, as the main pillars of education, are the key-actors to promote European values. This policy brief outlines the importance of teaching EU values in a digital environment due to Covid-19 pandemic era. “Teachers4Europe setting an Agora for Democratic Culture” program establishes a European network of teachers. Teachers4Europe network challenge is to become the driving force for the promotion of the EU values even in times of social distancing. A prerequisite for promoting EU values lies in the continuous training of teachers and students on issues related to the EU, the reshaping of the curricula, the enhancement of digital skills and digital literacy to advance civic competences and the participation in European programs. The flexibility of European programs offers the opportunity to teachers and students to interact with their peers and stakeholders through e-conferences, e-schools and online lessons. Through this process, effective policy proposals and good practices would emerge, while at the same time alternative forms of education will be established in cases of global crisis as the Covid 19 pandemic.

## Who is this aimed at?

This policy brief is aimed at policymakers and stakeholders on European, national, regional, and local level.

## Recommendations:

Promoting EU values in time of social distancing could be enhanced by:

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- Enhancement of digital skills and digital literacy to advance civic competences
- Fostering digital skills and competences of digitally excluded groups through partnerships between schools, business and the non-formal sector, including public libraries.
- Supporting digital skills development with an emphasis on encompassing EU values in the school curriculum through the implementation of teaching platforms.
- Enhancing the synergies between all levels of education in a digital environment.
- Redesigning initial and in-service teachers' training through distance learning and educational platforms so they acquire the flexibility required and incorporate their knowledge into actions.
- Developing and supporting interaction between European and international teachers' e-networks as a common understanding of EU values.
- Highlighting best practices on teaching the EU values, along with OER in a platform in which teachers across the EU and beyond can have access to.
- Working toward the implementation of the EU values and inclusive education in the digital environment.

**Table 1: Teachers4Europe consortium**

The T4E consortium consists of:

1. University of Piraeus Research Center-Greece, Coordinator of the Project
2. St Margaret College, Malta
3. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover - Germany
4. Universitatea Babeş - Bolyai – Romania
5. EURACTIV – UK
6. Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO
7. Pedagogical Institute - Cyprus
8. Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, Greece
9. Learn to Change – Change to Learn[L2C]

### **The impact of Covid - 19 pandemic on Education**

In January 2020, the global community was faced with an unprecedented crisis. The covid - 19 pandemic, hit most of the world's population, disrupting daily life. A few weeks later, the crisis spread to all areas of daily life, including education. Most of the world's leaders have ordered the suspension of schools, introducing teachers and students to a new reality. However, the educational process did not stop but adapted to the unprecedented conditions by making coordinated efforts to create homeschooling and online education environments where students and teachers can interact. Although the effectiveness of online courses has not yet been evaluated, there have been initiatives

which, due to their flexibility, have had a positive impact. In the above context and after recognizing the contribution of education to social problems, Erasmus+ KA3 Teachers4Europe:Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture Program shaped its actions by utilizing digital forms of interaction to promote literacy and strengthening the digital skills of the participants.

## The Framework

Education and teachers are important factors to promote understanding of the European Union and construct the European identity. The European Union is not only an economic community but also a community of values. Despite the European Union's 70 years of history and the significant normative and legal *acquis* based on democracy, non-discrimination and human rights, teaching values lies mainly in national perceptions and curricula, which not necessarily include the teaching of European Union values as outlined in Article 2 of the Treaty of Lisbon and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union<sup>5</sup>. The 2018 Council Recommendation on Common values, Inclusive Education, and the European Dimension of Teaching encouraged the Member States to promote EU values and active democratic citizenship from an early age and at all levels and types of education and training (Council Recommendation, 2018a). Moreover, many of these values are at risk (Erasmus+ KA3 "Teachers 4 Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture", 2018 - 2021) as a consequence of the European and international crises as the euro-crisis, the migration crisis, BREXIT and the Covid 19 pandemic.

"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."

Article 2 Treaty of the European Union

The Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 encouraged the Member States to continue to implement the commitments of the Paris Declaration, notably through:

- (a) promoting active citizenship and ethics education as well as an open classroom climate to foster tolerant and democratic attitudes and social, citizenship and intercultural competences;
- (b) enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the internet and social media, so as to raise awareness of risks related to the reliability of information sources and to help exercise sound judgment.

<sup>5</sup> See: Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, *OJ C* 326, 26.10.2012.

- (c) using existing or, where necessary, developing new structures that promote the active participation of teachers, parents, students and the wider community in schools; and
- (d) supporting opportunities for young people's democratic participation and an active, critically aware and responsible community engagement;

Source: Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching ST/9010/2018/INIT, OJ C 195, 7.6.2018

Teaching EU values in schools requires a common understanding of their significance for inclusive societies and their promotion through interactive and innovative pedagogical methods. The lack of courses on the European Union, including a strong dimension of education for democracy and human rights, within schools' curricula limits the emergence of active European citizens. In addition, insufficient teachers' initial and continuous training on European issues and digital skills, weaken their roles as mediators of the European values towards students and society.

It is widely acknowledged that the EU through Erasmus+ programs promotes the European dimension in education and teachers' professional development (Symeonidis, 2018). However, Covid 19 pandemic suspended the operation of schools limiting teaching methods to digital environments only. Accordingly, the restrictions in face to face education as well as the introduction of distance learning during the pandemic create new challenges as long as students should effectively be adapted to the new context and at the same time pedagogical methods and actions should maintain their core principles and continue to foster democratic EU values.

In the framework of international crises such as Covid 19 pandemic the Council, following a proposal made by the Commission, revised the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning and the European Reference Framework initially adopted in 2006. The Council stresses that since the penetration of technologies in both work and life has been significantly increased, "the individuals should be able to use digital technologies to support their active citizenship and social inclusion, collaboration with others, and creativity towards personal, social or commercial goals." (Council Recommendation, 2018b) In addition, it encourages the creation and interaction of e-networks of teachers, students and other stakeholders through the eTwinning platform. Moreover the European Commission released the Digital Education Action Plan (2018 - 2020) presenting measures for 'preparing citizens for an increasingly interconnected, globalised future' (European Commission, 2018).

**Table 2: Digital Education Action Plan (2018 - 2020)**

<b>Priority 1: Making better use of digital technology for teaching and learning</b>	<b>Priority 2: Developing digital competences and skills</b>	<b>Priority 3: Improving education through better data analysis and foresight</b>
Action 1 - Connectivity in schools Action 2 - SELFIE self-reflection tool and mentoring scheme for schools Action 3 - Digitally signed qualifications	Action 4 - Higher Education Hub Action 5 - Open science skills Action 6 - EU Code Week in schools Action 7 - Cybersecurity in education Action 8 - Training in digital and entrepreneurial skills for girls	Action 9 - Studies on ICT in education Action 10 - Artificial Intelligence (AI) and analytics Action 11 - Strategic foresight

Source: European Commission, Digital Education Action Plan (2018 - 2020) Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en) (Accessed: July 20, 2020).

The Erasmus KA3+ Teachers4Europe: Setting up an Agora for Democratic Culture (T4E) Program which consists of nine partners from European countries, aims to create a cross-border, sustainable and long-lasting teachers' network, will promote social and civic competences through enhancing digital skills. The participation of over two hundreds stakeholders and policymakers will increase the positive momentum of the program on a social and policy level; it will improve the quality of training and learning through synergies by utilizing digital literacy. Despite the restrictions that Covid-19 has posed, the Teachers4Europe program continues its actions through e-learning platforms as a means to enhance democratic dialogue and common EU values.

The Teachers4Europe program focuses on:

- fostering knowledge about the EU, its origins, functioning, policies and strategies
- promoting the significance of participation at the local, national and European elections and the decision-making processes,
- enhancing understanding and ownership of the EU values and fundamental rights and
- appreciating democracy and solidarity as basic EU values with the ultimate aim to become mainstreamed in the curriculum.

The above issues will be accomplished through practical activities and knowledge in the following six areas:

1. Knowledge on EU issues to enhance active citizenship and European identity
2. The EU democratic values
3. Global Citizenship
4. Human and fundamental rights
5. Digital literacy to enhance civic competences
6. Inclusion in Diversity

Teachers4Europe program will evolve as a European learning network involving schools, teachers, policy representatives and community stakeholders that will be committed to act in favor of EU values. In this way, not only the teachers' role will be upgraded but also inclusive and democratic multi- actor learning environments will be established. As an output the dissemination and exploitation not only of the directly involved target groups, but also of the stakeholders in politics and the community, will be promoted. Moreover, the program will foster social and civic competences, communication in the mother languages and, occasionally, also foreign languages, cultural awareness and expression and digital competence and the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. Through its implementation, Teachers4Europe program aims to promote a bottom-up policy reform, which starts from the educators, engages social stakeholders and policy representatives and reaches the educational curricula of the partner countries involved with a relevant impact on the European Education Area.

### **Fostering EU values in a Digital Era**

The Teachers4Europe program aims to support and train teachers on how to approach and teach the EU fundamental values, active citizenship and democracy. But do all Europeans, including teachers and stakeholders, perceive the European values in the same way? Do they rank the European values just the same?

To answer these vital questions, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover along with the programs' partners conducted two Needs Analysis Surveys. The first Survey explored teachers' understanding of the EU values and respective teaching needs; questionnaires have been answered by one hundred twenty three teachers who work and live in ten different European countries. The second Survey has been answered by fifty six stakeholders, and investigates stakeholders' understanding of the EU values. The Needs Analysis results shared Bellamy's view for the meaning of citizenship which has been linked to the participation of a particular type of political community. People who participate in the community are equal and they have internalized the EU values (Bellamy, 2008).

Teachers and stakeholders defined the EU values and what they mean to them both on a personal and social level. On a personal level, a significant share of teachers answered that the EU values help them to understand their role in society as European citizens and as a way of life. On a social level, most of the teachers perceived the EU values as a common communication code and they also stressed that they are the core elements of the European citizenship.

**Table 3: Teachers' ranking of the EU values**

Greece	Germany	Cyprus	L2C	Malta
Democracy	Human rights	Human rights	Love	Human rights
Equality	Freedom	Democracy	Freedom	Respect
Freedom	Peace	Freedom	Tolerance	Freedom
Respecting human rights	Democracy	Equality	Solidarity and cooperation	Equality
Respecting human dignity	Equality	Respect	Equality	

Source: Erasmus+ KA3 “Teachers 4 Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture” (2018 - 2021), Needs Assessment Report for Teachers”, Chapter 3.2: “Most important European values in the partners’ countries”, Page:11, Edited by Leibniz University Hannover.

### Teaching EU values, educational methods and approaches

Regarding the EU values teaching and the preferred educational methods, most teachers answered that they have already integrated the EU values in the classroom through projects. Further to that, most of them choose experiential and interactive learning methods while teaching in foreign languages and treating everyday European policies in their classroom is rather unlikely. Moreover, teachers stressed that they rarely have the opportunity to discuss methods and approaches and exchange good practices.

**Table 4: Teaching methods on the EU values**

Teaching method / type of teaching	Examples
Interactive and experiential methods	simulations, role plays, educational games, animations
Learning through projects	Cross curricular projects, telephone conferences with pupils from other countries, visiting institutions or NGOs, sporting events, intercultural and international projects, school exchanges
Pupils Discussions in class	Different types of debates, presentations, forming an opinion in class, fish bowl
Using true-to-life material/media	Story-telling, videos, multimedia tools, documentaries
Teaching in foreign languages	-----
Engaging pupils to articulate their own opinion through certain institutions	Students’ council, simulation of the EU parliament, developing class rules
Teaching knowledge about the operating principles of the European Union	Working with school books, developing a chart with the title “House of Europe”, arrange the EU in higher-level relations
Using biographies to explain European ideas such as rapprochement and integration	Referring to own (teacher’s) biography

Treating everyday European policies in class	-----
Creative tasks	Theatrical plays, drawing comics
Enhancing social competences in class	Games, group work, jigsaw method

Source: Erasmus+ KA3 “Teachers 4 Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture” (2018 - 2021)., “Needs Assessment Report for Teachers”, Chapter 3.3: “Teaching European Values”, Page:11, edited by Leibniz University Hannover.

### **“Teachers 4 Europe” program contribution to teaching EU values**

To encourage the EU values teaching, Teachers4Europe program will further exploit, expand, and scale up the Teachers4Europe network which has proven quite effective at national and local level implementing successful EU projects in Greece since 2011. Generally speaking Teachers4Europe transnational network act as an inspiring social and cultural incubator that will foster the dialogue with relevant stakeholders on a social and policy level; in addition, the program will contribute to building synergies between institutions at all levels of education and improving the quality of training and learning on EU issues even through the usage of distance learning methods due to the pandemic.

The first step to achieve all the above is the implementation of a platform designed for the program requirements; Teachers4Europe Academy includes online training (MOOC) and educational material and in particular a Handbook on Teaching EU values and a Handbook on EU. It also includes on site annual training activities and two summer schools named “4EU Values” in Malta and “Learning4Europe2Change” in Cyprus. The Teachers4Europe Academy provides teachers with the necessary training, and guidance tools to help them create democratic and inclusive learning environments that will enhance their student’s social skills, democratic thinking, and active citizenship. At the same time, educational material embeds civic education with a particular focus on democratic values, tolerance, non-discrimination, gender issues and social inclusion. The educational material for the training of the Ambassadors has been based on context analysis and the methodology guides. The material includes both conventional and non-conventional methods, extracurricular activities as well as best practices emerged on the European level on the teaching of EU values and active citizenship. In addition, concrete proposals for new school curricula and out of school educational activities will be formulated. In the long-term, European Union itself will be the recipient of the program. Addressing discrimination as well as promoting active citizenship, is a European priority that must be supported by an effective educational strategy both by the EU institutions and national governments.

## Enhancing digital literacy to enhance civic competences

**Media Information Literacy (MIL)** is recognized as a tool for democratisation and an agent for soft change. The T4E consortium will actively support media and technology literacy of teachers

The project will involve:

- The creation of an online platform aiming to enhance communication, collaboration, e-learning, and provide mentoring to T4E ambassadors/teachers and pupils
- A series of webinars on civic education, highlighting excellent examples and best practices in teaching and disseminating values of democracy. Experts on the field will be hosted at the webinars and discussions will be organised in synchronous and asynchronous modes.
- The establishment of an active community of practice to enhance European teachers' participation
- Participating in European networks using social media
- Organising annual meetings to disseminate best practices

As it was expected Covid-19 affected the smooth implementation of the training due to overloading of teachers and professors, so the needs of the target groups were oriented into digital methods and innovative approaches. The dissemination events “T4E Agora for Democracy”, and the “T4E simulation exercise”, are rescheduled. Nevertheless, Teachers4Europe program adapts its actions according to the guidelines which are given by health professionals. The consortium replaced the above actions with a European e-conference held on 6-7 June 2020 under the title “Promoting EU values in the time of social distancing”.

The topic priority of the e-Conference was the onsite and online teaching of EU values in school settings. As such, its main purpose will be to disseminate and discuss innovative methodological approaches and teaching techniques and tools, as regards the teaching of EU values during the recent emerging changes. The two-day conference was available through ZOOM with Youtube LiveStreaming. Thirty-six works by sixty eight presenters were announced in ten panels and seven hundreds live attendees participated in the debates.

Regarding synergies with other actions/sectors which have had a positive impact on the project until now, it is remarkable that L2C launched a webinar series called “Teaching and Learning in during the Covid-19 school closures: towards human centered and meaningful online teaching”. The series aimed at supporting teachers during the transition to online teaching. They gathered more than 100 teachers, including teachers from the T4E network and 4 guest-speakers and facilitators invited to give expert input to teachers.

Due to the expansion of Covid-19 and the sequent uncertainties surrounding the future possibility of travel in Europe, the summer school “Learning4Europe2Change” in Cyprus will be replaced by an e-winter school which will focus on supporting the implementation of competences for a democratic culture, including civic competences and competencies for intercultural understanding and diversity. At the same time e-winter school will aim at strengthening the digital skills of the participants.

In this context a Virtual Simulation exercise of the European Parliament will be conducted in order to empower young participants (pupils from secondary education) through experiential learning. Accordingly, it will enhance human rights, tolerance, solidarity, youth engagement, gender and general equality through increasing the awareness on European citizenship. Thus, we aspire to achieve the maximum possible results for the essential non formal education, information and awareness, namely, all the prerequisites that every citizen needs in contemporary society. Only this holistic approach can, in practical terms, prepare and achieve the essential and integrated democratic identity of an active citizen in the 21st century. Taking all these under consideration, several steps have been prepared in order to reach a successful simulation. Firstly, an e-study guide with all the necessary information for the simulation has been distributed both to educators and to pupils. Also, we have participated in the International e-Conference: “Promoting European values in the time of social distancing” in order to promote this project. Finally, we have planned the conduction of web-meetings with educators and students in order to properly prepare-train them for the Simulation Action.

However, the overall impact of the activities should be the entire society at national and European level. Thus, both television, radio and YouTube channels have significant roles within the implementation of the project especially due to the inability to organize face to face dissemination actions after the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the dissemination of the project will be guaranteed by the invitation of educational and local authorities, stakeholders, parents’ associations, press Media, the whole school community, the teaching staff association, education coordinators, and/or the local communities. Teachers4Europe setting an Agora for Democratic Culture project will evolve as a European learning hub that encompasses additional schools, teachers, policy representatives and community actors committed to working for EU values.

**Interactive learning and dissemination activities**

Teachers4Europe Agora for Democracy conference in Athens, 2021

T4E e- Simulation Exercise of the EU institutions and decision-making process with students from the participating countries, 2020

Students' Rhetoric Symposium "Global Citizen: Supporting Sustainable Cities and Communities" in Elefsina, the European Cultural Capital 2021.

Political Dialogue for Education and Democracy at national level and in Brussels aiming at reforming education systems, 2021

Ancient Agora, located in Athens was the political, judicial, economic, cultural, and social Assembly of Polis (City). Consequently, T4E project intends to replicate a both live and virtual "European Agora for Democratic Culture" targeting at policy reforms on curricula of all levels of education; implementing non-formal educational activities such as role models; redesigning initial and in-service-teachers' training; establishing transnational T4E networks and engaging local governments and communities in raising democratic awareness. Specifically, at the policy level, the countermeasures of the program will be visible to policy makers and those interested at the national level and European level. Their participation would be immediate in order to gain expertise, exchange of good practices and commitment to policy reforms. The ultimate goal of the program is to motivate them to contribute to the "Market for Democratic Culture" that will ultimately lead to a long-term policy reform from the ground up after the end of the project.

**My Message to Europe videos**

"My message to Europe" section has been created in the website, where AT4E's, T4Es' and students' voice can be addressed. The messages are also circulated through the Facebook page  
The messages are subtitled in English.

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8Lkmz-9O9Df0VD\\_fTRQtgriyZOuq3V8](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8Lkmz-9O9Df0VD_fTRQtgriyZOuq3V8)

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