P117 / Situated Preparedness: European actors, Governance and Policy implementation in the Face of Emerging Risks

Topic : Multilevel Governance and Local Policy

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Preparedness has become a central principle of contemporary public policy, shaping how governments and international organizations anticipate, monitor, and respond to uncertain future threats (Lakoff, 2017). From emerging infectious diseases and vaccination programmes to environmental disruptions and climate-related hazards, preparedness policies increasingly rely on surveillance infrastructures, scientific expertise, intersectoral coordination, and anticipatory forms of governance. Within the European Union (EU), the COVID-19 pandemic revealed uneven and contrasting preparedness capacities among Member States (Eerens, Hrzic, and Clemens, 2023; Moury, Jacques, and Ben Jelili, 2025). It also showed that Member States opted for further integration in response to the pandemic (Brooks et al., 2023) and reinforced European institutions' role in epidemic surveillance and response, particularly through a security discourse (Godziewski and Rushton, 2024). This panel aims to analyse how preparedness can serve as a valuable resource for key actors seeking either to promote their interests or to place specific issues on the European agenda.

This panel focuses primarily on preparedness policies concerning emerging infectious diseases and the institutional response to epidemic outbreaks within the EU. It mobilizes the notion of "situated preparedness" to describe how transnational ambitions for disease preparedness are translated, negotiated and implemented from European institutions into Member states policies and surveillance practices. From this perspective, preparedness emerges not as a uniform technical capacity that can simply be transferred from one context to another but as a situated process which is implemented into national administrations and shaped by local epidemiological realities, institutional surveillance capacities and professional configurations. Preparedness is also shaped by power relations among several actors and it is therefore a site of competition between interests over agenda-setting and resource allocation. From a comparative perspective within the EU, and given that health remains primarily a national competence, preparedness raises questions both about Member States' capacity to respond to epidemic threats and about the europeanisation of health issues (Guiguier, 2011; Hassenteufel, 2013). This process may take place through cooperation and Member States' compliance with European agencies such as the ECDC, or through the funding of sectoral programmes designed to strengthen health-system resilience, such as the EU4Health programme. The panel also investigates how preparedness policies, alongside existing public health policies, are translated, adapted, and even reconfigured in response to Member States' local institutional, administrative, and health contexts. These questions make it possible to examine both European health governance and the ways in which health crises caused by emerging epidemics may contribute to the Europeanisation of health issues, for example through the joint procurement or production of vaccines, the collection of health data, or the promotion of One Health.

Drawing on research in multilevel governance, public policy analysis, agenda-setting, the sociology of expertise, and knowledge production, this panel welcomes empirical contributions from different policy fields and geographical contexts. It aims to foster discussion of how preparedness is governed, enacted, and sustained within the EU, how it reflects the transformation of the European policies and, more broadly, how this notion can be useful to analyze multilevel governance on health issues.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite proposals examining the design, agenda-setting, and implementation of preparedness policies, as well as their effects on EU institutions, agencies and Member States. Contributions should clearly identify the key actors and interests involved in these processes. Papers may address health, environmental, climate, technological, or other relevant policy domains related to preparedness, and may use qualitative, quantitative, comparative, or mixed-methods approaches. We particularly welcome papers engaging with

one or more of the following three dimensions of preparedness:

1) Preparedness as an issue within the European institutional framework. What groups of actors contribute to putting preparedness policies on the agenda, regarding their own interests ? This first dimension examines the interests advanced by the actors involved and the resources they mobilise to influence decision-making in favour of preparedness policies. We particularly welcome papers addressing economic interests, especially in relation to the security dimension of these policies, including vaccine production and the strengthening of surveillance capacities. In short, this theme asks whether a shared community of interests around preparedness exists.

2) Preparedness as governance transformation : How do preparedness policies reshape the EU's governance arrangements and the process of European integration? This second dimension examines how epidemic crises and preparedness initiatives affect the distribution of responsibilities between EU institutions and Member States, the development of EU-level instruments and legislation, and the coordination of health policy across levels of governance. It also considers how preparedness contributes to the Europeanisation of health issues and how far it strengthens the EU's role in a field in which competence remains primarily national. Papers may address the evolution of EU institutions and agencies, cooperation between the EU and Member States, joint procurement policies (for vaccines and masks), or EU-level legislation and programmes that expand or consolidate European action in health matters.

3) Preparedness as a process. What happens to preparedness when it is implemented within European institutions, their agencies or within Member States? Preparedness is often assessed through formal governance arrangements, technical capacities, or compliance with common standards. However, its everyday implementation may depend on informal collaborations, individual initiatives, knowledge or professional resources and networks that compensate for fragmented institutions, unstable funding, or limited public-sector support. Moreover, the risks prioritised by international agendas do not necessarily correspond to those perceived as most urgent by Member State administrations or local actors. Papers may examine the implementation (gaps) of preparedness frameworks, the effects of institutional fragmentation, the distribution of responsibilities across administrative levels, or tensions between policy standardisation and context-specific needs. Comparative and multilevel studies exploring why similar policy frameworks produce different outcomes across territories are especially welcome.

We plan to organize this panel in person, while also offering the possibility of online participation. The panel co-chairs will be present in Rennes for the IPPA Symposium. The panel will comprise three sessions, each focusing on one of the three dimensions outlined above. Each session will accommodate up to four papers, with 15 minutes allocated for the presentation of each paper, followed by one hour of general discussion.