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Legal Policy & Pandemics

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Global Pandemic Network**

Legal Policy & Pandemics

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Editorial

Volumes n. 3 (2023) and n. 4 (2024) of the *Legal Policy & Pandemic Journal* collect the research conducted by the members of the Global Pandemic Network (GPN) on One Health (OH) that was presented at a conference held in Rome (at Sapienza University and Museo Nazionale Romano – Palazzo Altemps), at the University of Macerata, and the University of Urbino Carlo Bo from May 10 to 15, 2024. These presentations were organized by the Institute for Global Health Emergencies Response (IGHER) of the European Public Law Organization (EPLO), UN-Habitat, the Human Rights Consortium of the University of London and the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS).

Developments at the international level by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) (together named as the “Quadripartite organizations”), have led to the conceptualization of the “One Health strategy”. This strategy has been defined by the One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) as, “an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems”. This approach is based on the recognition that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent [see the article of Coli].

With the Covid-19 pandemic, the OH strategy is back in the spotlight

As a zoonosis, Covid-19 has shown that human health (as well as Human Rights) does not live in a vacuum and is not isolated, but is instead closely interconnected with the health of ecosystems and animals. Environmental degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss have devastating impacts on human health. These increase the risk of new pandemics, undermine all related human rights (such as the right to life, health, dignity and freedom), exacerbate inequalities and threaten the rule of law.

The acknowledgement that the severe ecological crisis we are experiencing acts as a vehicle for public health crises (specifically, pandemics) now places the One Health strategy at the centre of preventive health strategies.

A key step is to move from strategy definition to implementation

This point is addressed by the proposed WHO pandemic treaty [Prieur], and recently flowed into the landmark decision taken by the 78th World Health Assembly that culminated in the formal adoption of the world’s first Pandemic Agreement.

In this context, it is essential to understand the meaning and scope of the strategy and to define the tools for its implementation. The contributions in this volume converge in this direction: the One Health strategy now must be known and implemented through the integration of human, animal and environmental health safeguards for global sustainability.

The approach is complex: it “mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate change, and contributing to sustainable development” [WHO].

One Health represents a fundamental paradigm shift that must be understood and widespread throughout society in order to be made effective. It not only needs to be understood by people, but also to be formally included in the social and legal system, through appropriate (legal) tools.

The research exposed in vol. 3 and 4 of the *Journal* confirms the difficulty of introducing the strategy into the legal systems of different countries, and affirms the need to develop legal strategies to institutionalize One Health.

To this end, studies have shown the need for a real paradigm shift and the establishment of a robust legal framework [Bullon, Coli], as One Health is an essential element of resilience [Sulistiawati].

Institutions at all levels (international, regional, national, and local [Vito]) are called upon to act, although this causes problems of multilevel coordination [Dominici, Pecchioli, Di Giovanni]. Different types of regulation come to the fore, including the use of guiding principles and framework laws, and institutional mechanisms for administrative and scientific coordination [Bullon, Coli] that take into account the cross-cutting nature of the strategy. This affects many sectors, from industrialization and urban planning [Saygilar] to agricultural policies, biodiversity protection, and the protection of local communities [Gómez Jiménez] and their traditions and knowledge [see, for example, Barbieri *et al.*, who cites the case of the Mediterranean diet].

The One Health approach is also key to address current unmet public health issues. It examines, from a regulatory and organizational perspective, both the need to strengthen the network of services in the territory in line with a comprehensive public health care strategy, and the scope for public intervention to improve citizens' access to medicines and pharmaceutical innovation (also thanks to the increase of modern practices such as telemedicine) [Celati].

An interdisciplinary approach and collaboration are essential to enhance disease surveillance, reduce pollution, and promote sustainable practices [Shankar, Pandey].

To this end, it is necessary to gather credible data, implement programs, and promote evidence-based policy and practice. Technical agencies are needed, but this is not enough. Overcoming the challenge of coordination is essential, and can be achieved through inter-agency multidisciplinary groups such as the African Union's "One Health Coordinating Group on Zoonotic Diseases", which is tasked with strengthening coordinated surveillance, prevention, and control of zoonotic diseases on the continent [Kasimbazi].

The development of intersectoral regulations and commitment and participation in global forums and educational initiatives also go in this direction [Sulistiawati].

This requires strong political commitment, financial investments, and institutionalized national One Health programs to raise awareness. Thus, the role of communication is crucial [Kezaabu].

The paradigm shift is not easy and, in this perspective, the role of judges is essential. This transition can be observed both in the case law on climate change and in the case law in some countries that advocate for a transformative shift from an anthropocentric to an eco-centric worldview, in order to realize the full benefits of the One Health Approach [Shankar, Pandey].

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