

European International Studies Association
EWIS 2021
New Workshop Proposal

COVID19: Lessons (to be) Learned

The outbreak of COVID19 is an inflection point in global health governance. The disruptive nature of the disease has challenged the abilities of national and local governments to initiate policies designed to eradicate or mitigate the impact of the virus in the face of pre-existing cultural and economic constraints. These limitations highlight the fact that any response to a novel infectious disease relies not only on biomedical interventions but on changes to social practices and policy regimes. As we have seen across Europe and the world, the successful implementation of new policies and practices requires public and political support if they are to succeed. Without such support, the policies fail and the disease becomes a greater threat than would have otherwise been the case.

Europe – and most of the rest of the world – was spared significant impact from the SARS and MERS coronavirus outbreaks that the East and West Asian regions were forced to address. While the 2009 H1N1 outbreak was global, its severity was limited. Similarly, the 2003 H5N1 and 2013 H7N9 influenza outbreaks were generally confined to East Asia and the developing world. As such, the epi-geographical footprints of those outbreaks were limited in their medical and social impacts on Europe and the developed world. However, as COVID19 has shown, that positive outcome also held negative consequences. The lessons that other regions learned through direct engagement with different outbreaks have been drawn upon to mitigate the impact of the current pandemic. Conversely, the absence of earlier outbreaks meant that the developed countries did not have an opportunity to embed critical lessons in its populations, economies, and institutions.

This implies that the current pandemic represents a critical juncture for those regions that previously were substantively untouched by earlier outbreaks; one that will require new policies and social practices if COVID19 is to be, at least, mitigated. But what are those lessons? Are they global in nature or are there institutional, historical, cultural, gendered lenses that limit their applicability? Do they apply equally at the local, national and transnational levels or are there scalar variables that alter outcomes? What else needs to be done? This EWIS places European responses to COVID19 at its heart but within a comparative, multi-level framework. In terms of structure, papers will be sought that look at European and global responses to the pandemic; from one or more levels and through a variety of lens and disciplines. The purpose of this workshop is to develop a deeper understanding of the learning typologies that the world will have to embed in responding to emergent infectious diseases now and in the future.

Dr Catherine Lo Yuk-ping and Dr Nicholas Thomas
Co-Chairs: EISA Global Health section