



EUROPEAN HEALTH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction In recent years, especially as an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to harmonize some aspects regarding health management issues at the European and international scope has become evident. In this paper we consider how to put into practice a harmonized European system of epidemiological control.

The aim of research This paper aims to assess whether there are legal background to set a system for managing health emergencies in the European Union scope with the purpose of facing future challenges with global relevance and huge impact as the COVID-19 pandemic had.

Objectives The first objective of this papers is to identify the legal basis of a future European Health Emergency Management system. Subsequently, the second objective is to analyse the utility of the regulations that are in force currently, and appoint the legal development that could be useful to set a European Health Emergency Management system.

The methods of the research The methodology used in this paper lays on the analysis of the Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Regulation (EU) 2021/522, and the possibilities of setting a unique health system for monitoring further pandemics, considered as emergency cases.

Theoretical background

Under Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, public health is a competence shared between the European Union and its Member States. Regulation (EU) 2021/522 establishes the European Union Health Program for the 2021-2027 period.

Regulation (EU) 2021/522 aims to boost the EU's preparedness for major cross-border health threats by creating reserves of medical supplies for crises, it is, a reserve of healthcare staff and experts that can be mobilized to respond to crises throughout the EU and increased surveillance of health threats. It aims too to strengthen health systems so that they can face epidemics as well as long-term challenges by supporting disease prevention and health promotion in an ageing population digital transformation of health systems and access to health care for vulnerable groups. Moreover it leads to make medicines and medical devices available and affordable, and to advocate the prudent and efficient use of antimicrobials and to promote medical and pharmaceutical innovation and greener manufacturing.

On the other hand, current technology allows, based on a blockchain system, to carry out tasks for accessing the information of the Member States immediately and with the necessary technical and legal guarantees, allowing the development of an emergency control network that adjusts to the demands of the functions of the Civil Protection Mechanism of the European Union. Its current functions include, in accordance with article 8.1 of Decision 1313/2013/EU, the development of transnational detection and rapid warning systems of interest to the Union, in order to mitigate the immediate effects of disasters; the integration of existing transnational detection and early warning systems based on a multi-hazard approach to minimize response time to disasters; and maintaining and developing situational awareness and analytical skills, together with disaster monitoring and scientifically based advice. They are also responsible for converting scientific information into operational information, and creating, maintaining and developing European scientific associations that deal with natural and man-made hazards, which, in turn, should make it possible to promote links between national systems rapid warning and other warning systems and the linking of the systems with the Coordination Center and the Communication and Information System. All of these functions would benefit from the use of blockchain technology that connects the different European and national health and civil protection networks within the framework of the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism, and would also serve to assemble the efforts of Member States and responsible international organizations, with scientific knowledge, innovative technologies and expertise, when Member States and such organizations further develop their early warning systems.

Main findings

The Civil Protection Knowledge Network of the European Union has the capacity to mobilize and dispatch teams of experts to assist in emergency response can also be established and managed, as well as facilitating the coordination of Member States in pre-positioning of disaster response capabilities within the Union, and improve the interoperability of modules and other response capabilities, taking into account best practices at Member State and international level. For all this, the exchange of data is essential, which is subsequently analyzed by the experts designated by the European Union within the framework of the Network, since it is also expected that the resulting analysis would be shared through the Communication and Information System, with the agreement of the Member States concerned. In order to exchange such data and the resulting analysis, Article 13 of Decision 1313/2013/EU orders the European Commission to create a digital Union on Civil Protection Knowledge Network to aggregate, process and disseminate knowledge and information relevant to the Union Mechanism, based on a multi-hazard approach and including relevant civil protection and disaster management actors, centers of excellence, universities and researchers. The Commission, through the Network, will consider the expertise available in the Member States, at Union level, at the level of other international organizations and entities, at the level of third countries and at the level of organizations working on the field, and will support the coherence of planning and decision-making processes, facilitating the permanent exchange of knowledge and information in all areas of activity of the Union Mechanism. The Digital Civil Protection Knowledge Network Union, provided for in Article 13 of Decision 1313/2013/EU as amended by Regulation (EU) 2021/836, lays the foundations for the exchange of data for the control of any emergency, but also for epidemiological control, which will undoubtedly be a relevant advance to face future health crises. The advantages that the technological base of the blockchain offers would facilitate the management of the Civil Protection Knowledge Network of the Union, which is projected as a digital network, and which must maintain the conditions of security and interoperability that this technology offers. However, blockchain regulation, although also promoted by the European Union for the provision of public services, is still not sufficiently implemented at the time of creation of the European network for emergency control, and which would be equally useful for epidemiological control. Greater progress is needed in this regard. Despite everything, the Union's digital Knowledge Network on Civil Protection, as configured after the 2021 reform, will be very useful to carry out control of pandemics because risks know no borders, and crisis management must have tools of cross-border effectiveness, such as the same Civil Protection Knowledge Network of the Union, which can well be considered, in view of its functions and capabilities, as a digital network for epidemiological control of international relevance.

MAIN RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Member States of the European Union connect separately their emergency information and the alert networks of internal epidemiological data management systems that are usually based on various national health systems. As long as this connection between health data and civil protection emergency data does not occur at the national level, it will not be possible to access all the relevant data for the network to be effective or the information will be duplicated, which would be an inefficient over-effort and therefore, inadmissible from the point of view of the guiding principles on which the provision of public services should be based. It is necessary, therefore, that the data systems and internal networks of the Member States, both in terms of health and civil protection, would be interoperable between to both and with the Union's Civil Protection Knowledge Network, in order to be able to link and share relevant data for the control of all types of emergencies, including health emergencies.

European Regulation on health does not consider applying the net of the Civil Protection European Mechanism and the Union's Civil Protection Knowledge Network as a basic system to make real the former aims stated on Regulation (EU) 2021/522 and to use it could be convenient to put into practice some of the targets that are included in the European Union Health Program for the 2021-2027. Enhancing the European Union Health Program could be possible creating some synergies between the health system and the Union's Civil Protection Knowledge Network, and then, enhance the health crisis management, due to the interchange of information between authorities.