

Power and governance in times of the pandemic

The European Vaccines strategy and the role of the Commission

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Introduction

While the European Union had still been struggling from the consequences of its worst economic, financial and social crisis since World War II, besides various other challenges, including the refugee crisis, Brexit and its risk of disintegration, an unprecedented public health crisis put the Union to the test once again. The block's initial response was marked by uncoordinated nationalistic responses with the reintroduction of internal borders, lack of solidarity and support vis-à-vis Italy – the first country to be hit hard by the virus. The pandemic had once again exposed the shortcomings of the European project, driving European citizens to an increased period of uncertainty and distress, which shook the EU's credibility at its core.

However, policy learning acquired by previous crises has given the Union the necessary groundwork for a relatively rapid adaptation and response to this new health emergency at a European level. The EU used its existing policies and tools, as well as new approaches, to tackle the economic and social fallout of the pandemic. Nevertheless, many European countries found it difficult to deal with the threat, witnessing among the highest rates of infections and deaths in the world, as was the case of Portugal in

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