

International Conference

The Contested Authority of International Institutions in Global Health: National Decouplings, Regional Stumbling Blocks and International Collisions

Heidelberg, Germany, 13-14 November 2019

Call for Abstracts

International institutions play a central role in the formation of structures - institutions also have a considerable influence on the governance of international policy areas. This is also the case in international health policy. Despite many successful cases, the action of institutions can be associated with complications and blockages. For this reason, international health governance faces a growing set of obstacles in several topics, such as the protection against non-communicable diseases, or public health emergencies. This applies equally to the international, regional and national levels.

At the general international, i.e. multilateral level, international institutions and their actions do not just coexist - the regulatory areas of the respective institutions overlap and so do their activities. The spheres of influence of international institutions also collide in the regulatory areas affecting international public health, e.g. in the field of food protection or in tobacco control. Beyond the conflicting situation of international organizations, the landscape of international health policy has changed considerably in recent decades. International organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) are no longer the sole driving force in shaping international health policy. Rather, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have contributed to shifting the balance of power between multiple actors. This may entail advantages and disadvantages.

At the regional level, there is a growing tendency towards the development of international health governance along the lines of groupings or blocs of countries. The development of local structures is a central building block in the development of the necessary capacities for the promotion and protection of health. Regional institutions and networks of cooperation are now playing an increasingly important role in the development of a global health infrastructure, but one that has so far been little discussed in scientific terms. There is also a need for scientific clarification if regions lead to sidelining the formation of public health structures at the multilateral level.

At the national level, the development of nation-state health structures are closely linked with the development of international health structures. This applies in particular to the coordination between international institutions and OECD countries: actors and structures of the respective national health systems are in intensive exchange with the WHO in order to make health systems more resilient to risks both at the national and at the international level. More than 800 national WHO collaboration centres or national epidemic prevention programmes illustrate an extensive cooperation network between the national and international levels in the health policy field. This picture is reversed when considering individual nation states beyond the OECD world: The embedding of national health structures in the international health policy depends on the development capacities of the corresponding states. In less developed countries, the often fragmentary health systems are not only a problem in the fight against threatening diseases - lack of political will, a weak state monopoly on the use of force or even a defensive stance against the international health system further undermine a weakly developed or even non-developed public health system. Moreover, challenges at the national level are not limited to settings of constrained resources and a hampered development. Rather, they may be a result of the adoption of opposing policies. An example of this is the rise of vaccine hesitancy across highly-developed economies.

Research questions

The proposed research questions will be oriented along these three levels (multilateral, regional, national), with an emphasis on the international perspective. Here is a non-conclusive list of relevant research questions in consideration of the workshop.

Multilateral Level: Interinstitutional links between international institutions and its challenges for the international promotion of health

- In which areas of public health regulation may tensions arise between international institutions?
- What is the state of the multilateral governance of public health when the regulatory areas of international institutions overlap, and possibly collide?
- What impact do interactions, networking or competition between organizations have on the multilateral governance of public health?

Regional Level: Regional institutions and inter-state cooperation as a „Stepping Stone“ or a „Stumbling Block“ for the international promotion of health

- Is there a "Health Regionalism" and what characterizes it?
- Does regional action play the role of "Stepping Stone" or "Stumbling Block" for the further development of international health governance? Is international health governance improving or worsening because regions are actively promoting public health policies?
- Can regions react better to acute health threats (pandemics, contaminated goods) because they already share common ideas and are already institutionalized in another policy (e.g. trade or development finance)?

National Level: The challenges of relations between international institutions and weak and post-liberal states - consequences for the international promotion of health

- To what extent can politically-driven resistance against international institutions at the national level weaken their work? Where can these trends be found in international health policy?
- Which factors currently inhibit the impact of international institutions on national health systems in developing countries?

The interaction between these three levels is also relevant from the perspective of the International Public Authority (IPA) approach, fostered mainly at the Max-Planck-Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law.

Co-organizers

Forschungsstätte der Evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft e.V. Institute for Interdisciplinary Research (FEST); Max-Planck-Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law (MPIL)

Dates and Venue

Call for abstracts - **Deadline: 9 August 2019**

Conference: **Heidelberg, 13 -14 November 2019**

Applications

We especially encourage researchers, post-docs, doctoral students in social sciences (political science, sociology) and law to submit academic abstracts for (paper) presentations on topics related to the workshop's theme. Although there is a specific interest in social science-related papers and legal papers, submissions of other disciplines are highly welcome to broaden the view, inspire discourses, and to gain an interdisciplinary perspective. Proposals shall be no longer than **700 words** and shall be submitted with short biographical notes of no more than 100 words to **Thomas Lange** thomas.lange@fest-heidelberg.de no later than **9 August 2019**. Early submissions of proposals are highly welcome.

Publication opportunities and financial support

We will discuss a publication format as a follow-up to the workshop depending on the quality and degree of development of papers. We can cover some workshop costs for presenters, and will provide details at a later stage.

For further questions please contact

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On behalf of the **FEST Institute for Interdisciplinary Research**

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On behalf of the **Max-Planck-Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law**