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EDITORIAL NOTE

A month after the outbreak in China in December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) designated COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern. On 11 March 2020, the coronavirus disease, COVID-19, which was already spread around the globe, was declared a pandemic. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, told a media briefing that “this is not just a public health crisis, it is a crisis that will touch every sector.”¹ The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly caused the greatest crisis in modern time. The consequences of the virus are very

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¹ World Health Organization. 2020. WHO Director-General’s opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 – 11 March 2020. <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020> (last visited 4 December, 2022).

serious as it has reached almost every country in the world, with total of 646,070,635 confirmed cases and a death toll of 6,636,146.² However, not only has it had consequences on the health system, serious lockdowns, and led to the issue of production and distribution of vaccines, it has also caused serious human rights and humanitarian crises. Furthermore, it has affected the world economies which are struggling with rising unemployment, and led to the temporary closing of certain sectors, such as hospitality and civil aviation. Another important critical issue is ensuring human rights, due to many government restrictions, and enforcement of discriminatory measures, which have greater negative impact on certain groups in societies.

The *Annals of the Faculty of Law in Belgrade* has recognized the importance of the consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and allotted one issue in 2022 to its influence in different legal and social areas. Therefore, this issue contains nine papers on the COVID-19 pandemic, a topic that was the 2021 strategic project of the Institute for Social and Legal Studies at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law. Some of the contributions have a more global approach, while others primarily deal with measures implemented in Serbia. Therefore, the authors analyze the consequences and risks of the COVID-19 pandemic to certain areas and discuss opportunities related to the global and Serbian legal orders.

The contribution by Zoran Radovanović discusses the COVID-19 crisis and its interplay of medicine, law, and politics. The author explains the legal basis for international public health, anticipating the pandemic and confronting it, the world's response to the pandemic, as well as a Serbian approach to it. The author discusses some important issues, such as wrongly selected priorities, the ambivalent attitude of officials toward vaccination, and the falsification of data. Radovanović concludes that since the winter of 2022/2023, it would become an endemic disease, with reduced impact on the lives of people. However, the consequences of COVID-19 will remain, extending to the economic, psychological, and social levels. This conclusion gives an excellent introduction to the next paper, written by Boris Begović, on the global economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides a general picture of the economic effects, covering the demographic effect, impact on economic growth, supply-side impact, demand-side impact, impact on poverty and economic inequality, and the legacy of macroeconomic policies (monetary and fiscal). The author concludes that the swift, massive and comprehensive government macroeconomic intervention was decisive in

² Worldometer. Countries where COVID-19 had spread. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/countries-where-coronavirus-has-spread/> (last visited 28 November, 2022).

avoiding a depression. However, this intervention led to inflation, an increase in sovereign debt, and big government (huge budgets, massive subsidies, transfers, etc.). Begović especially points out the need for more research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human capital, and the change in remote and online business activities.

The aspect of business activities, from the perspective of gender equality, was further analyzed in a paper by Dragica Vujadinović. The author finds that the international, European and Serbian gender equality framework is very solid, but the persisting hierarchical power relations, subordination, and gender inequality still exist in practice. This inequality was further accelerated during the pandemic, and the author concludes that all social crises lead to declining emancipatory trends and rising patriarchal ones. The proof of that is the matrix of domestic work and caring for children and family. Vujadinović argues that while patriarchy persists in all countries, poorer and more traditionalist societies and authoritarian states are more susceptible to it, which has also been visible during the pandemic. Despite this, the measures against COVID-19 were gender-neutral and did not deal with women who worked from home, women employed in healthcare and education, and in different service jobs, who experienced a decline in living and working conditions, because they also bore the burden of increased domestic obligations. Therefore, the author concludes that the gender gap will be wider and greater if the proper measures are not introduced, especially in times of crisis.

The issue of vaccination, mentioned in the papers by Zoran Radovanović and Boris Begović, was further elaborated in the paper by Marija Draškić. The title of her contribution is rather provocative as she asks whether avoiding mandatory COVID-19 vaccination is the consequence of arrogance toward science and a lack of respect for common sense. The author discusses whether it is permissible to prescribe mandatory vaccination, and whether it is constitutional and legal to introduce it in general, or only to certain categories only. In order to come to that conclusion, Draškić analyzes the decisions of the Constitutional Court of Serbia, the Constitutional Court of Croatia, and the Constitutional Court of Slovenia, as well as the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (Grand Chamber) in the *Vavrička and Others v. the Czech Republic* case, from 8 April 2021. Relying to the mentioned sources, the author finds that mandatory vaccination is not a human rights violation, and her main argument is based on the basic scientific fact that vaccination cannot be effective without the existence of collective immunity.

The group of authors prepared a contribution on the impact of COVID-19 to the aviation industry in 2020 and 2021, which was one of the sectors shut down in the first year of the pandemic. The authors analyze the

impact of the pandemic on stakeholders in the aviation industry, which required countermeasures aimed at mitigating the effects of the pandemic. These were primarily the reconfiguration of networks and capacity, the switch to cargo operations, and staff reduction. The authors also conclude that the European aviation industry was hit harder by the pandemic due to an individualistic approach in implementing measures to combat the pandemic. This led to another conclusion – that universally recognized and harmonized rules for air passenger travel need to be provided in the aviation industry. Also, some long-term effects of the pandemic on aviation emerged, such as stricter hygiene and safety standards, further digitalization at airports, traveler vaccination certificates and test results in mobile apps, etc. However, some positive effects of the pandemic were recognized, such as the improvement of on-time performance indicators, and an increase in flight efficiency, along with subsequent environmental (CO2 emissions) and economic (fuel) benefits.

Mirjana Drenovak Ivanović discusses the importance of the right to a healthy environment during the pandemic. The author analyzes whether environmental protection was a priority during the pandemic and, if yes, which aspects of environmental protection represented the primary concern. Also, she discusses whether the measures limiting public gatherings had an impact on public participation in decision-making, and whether the Government stipulated an environmental impact assessment of activities and decisions. The author concludes that public participation was very limited due to the many measures that affected public gatherings, which also led to a reduction in the volume of production and transportation, on one hand, and to more medical waste, on the other. In 2021, the participation of the public in decision-making was additionally restricted, which had a negative impact on environmental protection and the preservation of stable climate conditions. However, the author explains that, in order to reduce this negative effect, video conferences and comments on draft acts in electronic form were introduced, the impact of which needs to be further analyzed.

Another very important sector that was influenced by the pandemic is taxation. Thus, Svetislav Kostić scrutinizes the tax treatment of flexible forms of work in Serbia during the pandemic. The author argues that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the emergence of flexible forms of work, evasion of taxes and contributions for compulsory social security. Kostić explains that the Serbian Tax Administration attempted to collect taxes from persons that pursued flexible forms of work, which caused widespread protests. This dispute was resolved in an agreement that provided some transitional solutions and future changes to tax regulations. The author further analyzes these transitional solutions and provides very clear suggestions for longer-term solutions.

Valerija Dabetić prepared a paper on online teaching, illustrating the need for improving the digital skills of the new generation of lawyers. The author presents the results of a study that was prepared at the Faculty of Law during the pandemic. The goal of this research was to learn about with the experience of students, teachers, and associates, regarding online teaching. The study showed the positive and negative sides of this type of teaching. Dabetić argues that a modern way of life, cost reduction, and the need for further conquest of the digital space open up possibilities for the use of digital platforms even after the pandemic. On the other hand, the author highlights the issue of access to digital education and the discrimination to which students without internet and computers were exposed, as well as the need for further education of teachers and associates, which needs to be tackled if online teaching is to become a regular method of working with students.

However, COVID-19 is not the first public health emergency. Throughout history, infectious diseases have caused many problems for societies. Thus, Zoran Mirković deals in his paper with measures against the plague and other contagious diseases in Serbia in the mid-19th century. The author argues that at that time the lack of medical knowledge about the plague led to inadequate treatment and measures that were oriented toward the quarantining of affected people. Mirković concludes that despite all their shortcomings and resistance, these measures reduced the spread of epidemics. Many parallels can be drawn with the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore, this paper testifies to a history that can even explain the culture of resistance against certain health measures.

As mentioned above, these papers shed light on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on different legal, economic, social, and healthcare areas. However, the common denominators that pervade all contributions are different human rights issues and the impact of the pandemic on humanitarian and human rights crises. The same can be said for a historical overview and how much we learned from some previous public health emergencies. Therefore, the recommendations and conclusions provided by authors need to be carefully taken into account in any future crises, in order to be ready for some future pandemics. Only well-considered measures, which include impact assessment for individuals, including the most vulnerable groups in societies, may be considered to be adequate.