

## Programme

# International Workshop: Parliaments in Pandemics

**Date:** 26–27 May 2022

**Place:** hybrid (in-person – Prague, Academic Conference Centre, and on zoom).

**Keynote speaker:** Dr. Sven T. Siefken (Institute for Parliamentary Research, Berlin / Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg)

### Workshop theme:

During the Covid-19 pandemic, democracy worldwide continued to deteriorate. As established and new democracies faced unprecedented challenges to public health and the economy, their democratic quality declined. While established democracies could largely prevent pandemic erosion of democratic quality, democracies in transitions could not. Pandemic is an opportunity for executive aggrandizement –strengthening governments, weakening parliaments, and testing the judiciary. The pandemic challenges legislatures in multiple ways: testing institutional features and exacerbating pre-existing political tensions, the interaction between legislative and the executive branch - augmenting executive aggrandizement and pre-existing illiberal tendencies, redefines the relationship between legislatures and experts, functioning of the parliaments – increasing demands for modernization and digitalization of parliamentary procedures. In particular, the pandemic highlighted the tensions between the two competing logics: representation (emphasizing voice and individual MPs) and governance (emphasizing decision-making and accountability). While in non-pandemic times, these logics coexist, the pandemic exacerbated these tensions due to the scope and urgency of this crisis. During the crisis, governance logic prevails - focusing on decision-making and accountability to a lesser degree.

Keynote speaker Sven T. Siefken will present first findings of the second wave of a global expert survey ‘Parliaments in Pandemics’. Conducted in 2020, 2021, and 2022, the survey focused on how the pandemic changed the legislatures' roles and, in particular, electoral, legislative, oversight, communication- and-representation functions.

**The event is supported by the Strategy AV21 of the Czech Academy of Sciences, research program No. 15 – Global Conflicts and Local Interactions: Cultural and Social Challenges, and organized in cooperation with IPSA RC08 Legislative Specialist and IPS FSV UK.**

## Programme:

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2022**

**9.30–9.45 Opening Remarks and Welcome**

**9.45–11.15 Keynote and discussion**

*Parliaments in Pandemics: A Global Expert Survey*

Dr. Sven T. Siefken, Institute for Parliamentary Research, Berlin / University of Halle, Germany

11.15–11.30 Coffee Break

**11.30–13.00 Panel 1 (on-site Prague). The impact of Covid19 on the Functioning of Parliaments**

Chair and discussant: Zdenka Mansfeldova, Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences

*Legislative Behaviour of MPs in the Czech Republic in Times of Covid-19 Pandemic*  
Lukáš Hájek, Charles University

*The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Central and Eastern Europe*  
Petra Guasti, Charles University and Institute of Sociology Czech Academy of Sciences

13.00–14.00 break

**14.00–16.00 Panel 2 (zoom). Pandemic Challenges to Parliaments around the World**

Chair and discussant: Petra Guasti, Institute of Sociology Czech Academy of Sciences

*Parliamentary Opposition Behaviour During Covid-19: The Case of the Turkish Parliament*  
Omer Faruk Genckaya, Marmara University and Selma Genckaya, Freelance Researcher, Istanbul

*Redefining Governance Processes and Procedures in a Global Crisis: The Sub-Saharan African Experience*  
Benjamin Ekeyi, Legislative Strengthening/PFM/Legislative Policy/Development Expert

*Parliaments in the pandemic in a multilevel political perspective*  
Pablo Oñate, University of Valencia

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2022**

**9.30–11.00 Panel 3 (on-site-Prague). Pandemics and the Clashing Logics/Cultures of Politics**

Chair and discussant: Sven T. Siefken, University of Halle, Germany

*A vanishing ideal of parliament? Current crises from the perspective of parliamentary cultures*  
Adéla Gjuričová, Institute of Contemporary History

*The historical context for triggering conflicts of sovereignty and the use of technocratic logic of doing politics*  
Emilia Tudzarovska, Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences

11.00–11.15 Coffee break

**11.15 – 12.30 Concluding Discussion and sum up**

## Abstracts:

### *Legislative Behaviour of MPs in the Czech Republic in Times of Covid-19 Pandemic*

Lukáš Hájek, Charles University

COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) pandemic has affected almost every aspect of our lives. While millions of people fought with the disease, economies, societies and institutions faced side-effects of government measures resisting the spread of the virus. This article describes the effects of the pandemic on the legislative behaviour of MPs in one of the worst-hit countries in the world, the Czech Republic. The results show that the number of bill proposals and roll calls substantially increased during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic times. Since the start of the outbreak, a third of roll calls and a half of bill proposals concerned the pandemic. Nonetheless, the outbreak did not substantially affect the voting unity of parliamentary party groups nor the opposition became more supportive of the cabinet. Still, while the liberal Pirates became more cooperative during the pandemic than the pre-pandemic period, the rightist antisystem party Freedom and Direct Democracy receded from the rest of the parties on the pandemic issues.

### *The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Central and Eastern Europe*

Petra Guasti, Charles University and Institute of Sociology Czech Academy of Sciences

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a new and unparalleled stress-test for the already disrupted liberal, representative democracies. Around the world, the pandemic significantly affected the balance of power in favor of the executive and technocracy (unelected experts). The paper focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on the balance of power between the parliament and the executive in four CEE democracies governed by populists. The focus is on three essential functions of the parliament - accountability, deliberation, and representation. On accountability, do parliaments yield power to the executive and limit their government oversight during a pandemic? Or does the opposition intensify its scrutiny (interpellations, the reauthorization of emergency measures)? On deliberation, are parliamentary debates during the pandemic more consensual, or do existing divisions and polarization prevail? And finally, on representation - how does representation change during the pandemic? Is there a balance between responsiveness and responsibility? Comparing the interaction between right-wing populist (Hungary and Poland) and technocratic populist (the Czech Republic and Slovakia) governments and the parliaments during the pandemic sheds light on the tension between populism and representative democracy (cf. Caramani 2017, Guasti 2020), in particular, how populism weakens the role of the parliaments.

### *Parliamentary Opposition Behaviour During Covid-19: The Case of the Turkish Parliament*

Omer Faruk Genckaya, Marmara University and Selma Genckaya, Freelance Researcher, Istanbul

Parliament is a representative institution of democracy and plays an essential role, especially during conflict, wars, and disasters when decisions are often made unilaterally and haphazardly by the executive. Parliament proposes and adopts necessary laws to facilitate the executive function and scrutinizes all legislation and policies initiated by the executive. Since 2018, a sui generis presidential system has been in effect in Turkey, and the President issues presidential decrees on the matters regarding the executive power excessively by bypassing the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT). The President did not declare a state of emergency administration during the Covid-19 pandemic. Several measures, such as lock-down were in practice, using presidential decrees and regulations, which are arguably unconstitutional. The opposition deputies acted responsively and submitted several motions of legislation and

supervision during the pandemic. A total of 103 individual bills, 116 parliamentary inquiries, and 1606 written questions related to the pandemic were submitted mainly by the opposition deputies in two years (March 2020 through the end of April 2022). None of these motions were given priority by the parliamentary majority that supports the President. Inspired by the methodology used by Louwerse et al., (2021) this paper aims to assess the sentiment of a majority that supports the executive -President- and opposition party groups in the GNAT towards the government's actions related to the pandemic. Over 2400 speeches referring to the pandemic were selected from the parliamentary minutes and coded as very positive through very negative. "Words" and "phrases" expressed in these paragraphs are coded as meaning in support or opposition to the government's performance. During the first quarter of the pandemic, the opposition expressed sentiments in a rally-around-the-flag dynamic, and then the tone and content of the speeches turned severely and negatively.

*Redefining Governance Processes and Procedures in a Global Crisis: The Sub-Saharan African Experience*

Benjamin Ekeyi, Legislative Strengthening/PFM/Legislative Policy/Development Expert

When the Coronavirus hit Sub-Saharan Africa in early 2020, many jurisdictions did not envisage the impact it will have on the livelihoods of its people, the governance process, and the way they will eventually go about their daily activities. But as the pandemic began to take its toll, it became obvious that it will eventually reshape and redirect the way government does its business. Though, unlike other regions of the world with high cases and fatalities, coronavirus and other related crisis still proved more than just a public health challenge and redefined the dynamics of relationship between citizens and government and the executive and legislative arms. In several instances, at the peak of the crises, government businesses were largely disrupted while the legislature totally suspended its plenary. The novel and deadly Coronavirus and other crisis within the region exposed most cruelly, long-ignored weaknesses in the economy, systems of public governance, education, security, social justice and social welfare, and so much more. Thus, unlike in most developed democracies, trust in government dwindled in Sub-Saharan Africa. This paper examines the extent and nature of disruption or effect the pandemic had on governance processes and procedures in emerging and fragile democracies and compares their experiences with those of western developed democracies. The paper argues that most emerging democracies, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa witnessed a turning point in their processes and procedures and there are lessons to be learnt by both sides in strengthening democratic governance in their various countries.

*Parliaments in the pandemic in a multilevel political perspective*

Pablo Oñate, University of Valencia

COVID-19 pandemic entailed a world-wide crisis that changed the relationships between political institutions. Given the need for quick and effective decision-making, it turned those relationships into the "hour of the executive" and the executive aggrandizement: In practically every political system, parliaments saw their decision making and oversight powers severely questioned, when not clearly diminished. Some of them reacted trying to hold the respective executive accountable, opening specific investigation committees, holding experts' appearances sessions, and producing legislation needed to fight the pandemic and its consequences in different domains. Those relationships between executive and legislative evolved as the fight against the pandemic developed and gained in efficacy, usually showing parliament reaction to restore the "traditional" interaction system vis-a-vis the executive. These changing relationships between (national)

executive and legislative got even more complicated in multilevel political systems, where regional level of government hold relevant self-government jurisdiction and powers. Although at the breaking of the crisis re-centralization was the general pattern, the national executives concentrating extraordinary powers, the development of the fight against COVID-19 tended to 'normalize' these relationships and the regional government was actively involved in the different policy fields (health, economy...) to fight the pandemic consequences. This paper analyses the reactions of parliaments -both national and 17 regional ones- along the development of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fight against its consequences. The paper analyses the evolution of these reactions bis-a-bis the national and the respective regional executives, through which parliaments tried to involve themselves in decision-making, holding at the same time the respective executive accountable -exerting its oversight activity-, while maintaining the representative role and activities regarding society at large. Division of powers (executive and legislative) should also, therefore, be studied in a territorial and multilevel dimension, given diverse patterns flourished with different consequences in the respective level of government.

*A vanishing ideal of parliament? Current crises from the perspective of parliamentary cultures*  
Adéla Gjuričová, Institute of Contemporary History

Parliamentary culture is a concept that emerged in parliamentary history research over the last two decades to break the constraints of traditional political history, and engage the perspectives of social anthropology, historical sociology and cultural studies. Besides seeing parliaments as formalized settings for speakers and collective decision-making, it suggests to also analyse them as dynamic spaces characterized by MPs' social and cultural background, specific communications or aesthetics. The resultant complex set of rhetorical, cultural, social, gender, visual, and other characteristics makes up the specific parliamentary culture, i.e. an idea and practice of parliamentarism in the particular national or wider regional context. The paper will introduce the approach as it has been used in interpreting the institutional persistence and vulnerability of parliaments during political-regime changes, and propose its application to the recent challenges of the digital turn, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the current war in Ukraine. It will summarize some general shifts in European parliamentary cultures and track the extent to which the modern parliamentary ideal has changed.

*The historical context for triggering conflicts of sovereignty and the use of technocratic logic of doing politics*  
Emilia Tudjarovska, Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences

The literature on conflicts of sovereignty has argued that EU's new economic governance regime has been marked not only by a vertical conflict between state and supranational sovereignty but also by a horizontal conflict taking place between executives, parliamentary and popular sovereignty. This paper aims to demonstrate that the conditions that are fueling the rise of conflicts of parliamentary and popular sovereignty on nation-state level are not recent or isolated occurrence, and can be traced in the decline of party democracy since 1970s in Western democracies. Moreover, these historical trajectories are specific in the case of the CEE countries. This paper takes the position that these conflicts of sovereignty are linked to the historical state-transformation of these countries, under the EU integration process. To demonstrate, this paper first will offer a historical overview of the conditions under which these conflicts have been emerging traced back "to the year 1989 as a turning point in the history of Eastern Europe, when the 'limited sovereignty' has been replaced by a new form of domination from the EU way of governance. Tracing the transformation of the role of legislatures and party democracy in the case

of CEE (on selected case studies) this paper aims to show that the decline of the party democracy institutionalized through the national parliaments in CEE countries has resulted with constrained scrutiny over policies, especially in the case of economic policy making. The weakness of party democracy and the oversight role of the parliaments resulted not only from external constraints, but also from historical developments intrinsic to each country, with specific historical trajectory, different from the Western democracy, especially in the post 1989 period. This has resulted with significant detachment between the societies and the policy-making processes, evident in the rift between parliaments and the people. In the contemporary doing of politics it also produces rise in the appeals to the people and claims to technocratic expertise - technocratic populism - as a new logic of contemporary decision-making, leading to policy without politics. This paper aims to demonstrate that the conflicts of sovereignty taking place on nation-state level are feeding the logic of technocratic populism, and is an outcome of the historical transformations of the political systems in which the political parties supposed to legitimise their role through the representation, but also through the parliamentary institutionalisation, especially in the use of the parliamentary scrutiny. The absence of such democratic representations supports the role of the executives to use the popular legitimacy and perpetuate the techno-populist logic of governance “for the people” rather than “by the people”.