

EGPA 2021 Conference



RESILIENCE AND AGILITY OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN TIMES OF CRISES



PANEL 1 | ORGANIZATIONS AND INNOVATIONS IN CRISES

Wednesday, 8 September 2021 – 11.00am to 01.00pm

Venue: Auditorium Lafontaine – ULB – K1.105

[Zoom Meeting Room](#)

Opening

Prof. Jean-Michel Eymeri-Douzans

President of the European Group for Public Administration (EGPA), Science Po Toulouse

Welcome messages of representatives of the Local Organising Committee:

- Philip Vergauwen, Dean, Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management (SBS-EM)
- Prof Jan Mattijs and Prof Vincent Mabillard – Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management (SBS-EM)

Keynote speaker

Mr. Gilles de Kerchove

Institutional Innovations and Informal Leadership in Times of Crises

Former EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator (2007-2021)

Invited speaker(s)

Dr. Dorit Nitzan (virtual) or her Deputy Director

Regional Emergency Director (European Region's WHO Health Emergencies Programme)

Moderation

Shéhérazade Semsar-de Boisséson

CEO of SSB Corp. Belgium, Advisory Board Member and former CEO of POLITICO Europe

The relationship between administrative and institutional innovation and crisis situations is far from simple. While urgency might seem conducive to innovation, organizations can also fall back on core routines that might be more or less adequate, but hamper innovation. Furthermore, resilience, notably through innovation, is not the same at individual, organizational, policy and society levels.

It has been noted that organizations have a hard time learning and reforming in times of crisisⁱ. Yet government policies, and to some extent institutions, respond to crises and bear traces of their consequences. A stylized narrative about institutional resilience could be: “in crisis situations, delivery organizations cope to survive, and policy response occurs through informal action, through specialized emergency response structures, or by entrepreneurial creation of new (competing) organizations”.

Although this narrative could provide a rough policy and management guide, it leaves many questions open. For example, both for policies and organizations, there is a trade-off between anticipation and resilience (in the sense adaptation during or after the fact). “Anticipatory actions do have their place in a sensible safety strategy; the difficulty is to know what mix of anticipatory and resilient measures is optimum.”ⁱⁱⁱ There is a debate about the “right” level of preparedness.

Crisis response structures are another element of resilience. The form, importance, governance, operations, of these units vary from one country to another. If we confront various experiences lessons from these structures, what lessons can we draw?

People are fundamental in creating resilience, both in a general sense of, for example, disaster preparedness of a population or an organization, and in individual cases when civil servants or decisionmakers take on special importance for responding to a crisis. This individual contribution can be through stewardship, creativity, or many types of (plural) leadershipⁱⁱⁱ.

Material aspects should not be overseen. The pandemic showed the importance of hospital capacity, respirators, protective equipment. Other crises raised concerns over security and surveillance equipment, construction equipment, transport capacity. Information technologies – their contribution and their failures – are probably the single technological aspect common to all crises. Not just the IT infrastructure’s own resilience, but also its contribution to wider organizational and institutional resilience, needs to be assessed.

Finally, questions of (national, local) sovereignty have kept popping up in crisis situations about many of the above – material aspects, crisis response autonomy, policy interdependence. They probably cannot be wished away as mere political bother. They are closely related to cultural and political expectations about safety, raising further questions about what public opinion can accept in terms of risk and effort.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR THE SPEAKERS

After their presentations, it is suggested that the discussion proceeds based on the following questions, and others from the audience.

1. In retrospect, how have specialized emergency organizations or services fared in your experience? They have a reputation for being under-resourced, how do you see this? How do you preserve the "idle" capacity of emergency response? What sort of governance would you advise for emergency response?
2. Can routine service organizations do more than cope to survive in crises?
 - a) Can you give examples of innovation under pressure? Are such "innovative" urgency solutions also viable in the longer run, or are they contingent and doomed once the crisis is over?
 - b) What is your experience about having "dynamic capabilities", i.e., room for flexibility and innovation, in service delivery organizations?
3. Has IT proved to be a resource or a liability in the crisis situations to which you which you were confronted? What is the potential of e-government services in improving resilience?
4. What individual behaviour have you witnessed that seems important in fostering resilience? What are the key skills to develop for resilience? What are possible lessons for Management and Public Administration education?
5. What sort of public communication about risks would you advocate in your sector? Is a defense of autonomous individual or community-level resilience something you would consider? Or do you accept expectations that risk has to be fully institutionally covered?

ⁱ Arjen Boin et al., *The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

ⁱⁱ Aaron B. Wildavsky, *Searching for Safety*, (Routledge 2017), *Studies in Social Philosophy & Policy*, no. 10 (New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Books, 1988), 94.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mark Crossweller and Petra Tschakert, 'Disaster Management Leadership and Policy Making: A Critical Examination of Communitarian and Individualistic Understandings of Resilience and Vulnerability', *Climate Policy* 21, no. 2 (7 February 2021): 203–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1833825>; Yuen Lam Bavik et al., 'Crisis Leadership: A Review and Future Research Agenda', *The Leadership Quarterly*, 6 May 2021, 101518, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2021.101518>.

Keynote Speaker:

Gilles de KERCHOVE was EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator from 2007 to 2021. As such, he coordinated the work of the European Union in the field of counter-terrorism, maintained an overview of all the instruments at the Union's disposal, closely monitored

the implementation of the EU counter-terrorism strategy and fostered better communication between the EU and third Countries to ensure that the EU played an active role in the fight against terrorism.

He was previously Director for Justice and Home Affairs at the EU Council General Secretariat (1995-2007), where he played a central role in the negotiations leading to the creation of Eurojust, CEPOL or the European Arrest Warrant. Before that, he was Deputy Secretary of the Convention which drafted the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union (1999-2000). He was also Head of the Private Office of the deputy Prime-Minister of the Federal Government of Belgium, Minister of Justice, Minister of Economic Affairs (1993-1995) and Minister of Defense (1989-1995).

Mr. de Kerchove teaches European Law at the Université Catholique de Louvain, at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and at the Université Saint Louis-Bruxelles. He has published a number of books and articles on European law, human rights, security and counter terrorism. Gilles de Kerchove graduated in Law from Université Catholique de Louvain (1979) and obtained a Masters in Law (LLM) at Yale Law School in 1984.

Speakers:

Dr. Dorit Nitzan or her Deputy Director

Regional Emergency Director (European Region's WHO Health Emergencies Programme)

Dorit Nitzan is the WHO Regional Emergencies Director. She joined WHO in 2005 and held different senior positions, and the teams led by her received UN and WHO's awards. Dorit is a pediatrician, nutritionist and an epidemiologist. She completed her medical school in Tel Aviv University, nutrition at the Hebrew University and specialty and MPH at Columbia University, NYC, USA.

Ihor Perehinets

Ihor Perehinets, MD, MPH, serves as a Technical Adviser on Health Security in the WHO Health Emergency Programme (WHE), supervising countries health emergency prevention and preparedness activities. The Programme supports countries in their effort to monitor core IHR capacities and supports development and strengthening of the systems and functions for better health securities.

Before joining WHO EURO Dr. Perehinets served as Deputy Minister of Health of Ukraine and was responsible for the health systems and public health services reform coordination in the country and EU-Ukraine Association Agreement implementation. During his time in the Ministry of Health key reform strategies, including on new model of health financing, public health services strengthening, and medicines procurement were developed and subsequently endorsed by the Government in 2016-2017. He also implemented one of the biggest projects of the MOH of Ukraine – procurement of the medicines through the international organizations with the overall budget over USD 95 million.

Dr. Perehinets has an extensive experience in public health field in Eastern Europe. His main interests lay in the field of health systems strengthening and public health to insure broader system resilience and health securities. Prior to joining MOH Dr. Perehinets worked for the WHO Country Office in Ukraine as a Deputy Head. He holds MD degree from Lviv State Medical University, Ukraine, and MPH from San Jose Sate University, USA.