

A double standard or simply European differentiated integration? On the Polish pandemic illiberalism in healthcare policy

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The Polish example proves that the extraordinary situations can be used as opportunities to expand and exercise the privileges of power by already illiberal governments. The paper refers to the concept of the CEE pandemic power grab, contributing to a debate by providing some fresh survey data on the Polish interest groups' access to policymakers before and during the pandemic. The main argument is that the COVID-19 pandemic was an useful pretext for those in power to further lower the level of dialogue with interest groups. At the same time, this went hand in hand with a drastic reduction in Polish citizens' access to healthcare services, while there has been a simultaneous misuse of public funds officially allocated to health.