

Integration through expansive unification: The birth of the European Health Union

Anna Kyriazi (Università degli Studi di Milano), Maurizio Ferrera (Università degli Studi di Milano), Joan Miró Artigas (Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals)

The COVID-19 pandemic pushed the EU to centralize several public health functions. With the European Health Union initiative, four reforms have been adopted to strengthen the EU's health security framework: the extension of the European Medicines Agency and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's mandates, the creation of the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority, and the upgrading of the Decision on serious cross-border threats to health. This article analyses the reconfiguration of authority patterns resulting from these reforms, comparing the EHU's institutional profile with the public health systems of the US and Switzerland. It argues that the EHU exemplifies a distinct mode of integration (expansive unification) in which national sovereignty is not transferred to the center but is jointly exercised at the center. This mode of integration is suitable for capacity building in core state domains, when functional needs confront reluctance from constituent units to surrender control.