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Editorial: After a Last wave of the Pandemic: Towards a Post-COVID Era (Public Policies in Times of Pandemics II)

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Introduction

This is an Editorial in the Special Edition of the European Scientific Journal entitled “After a Last Wave of the Pandemic: Towards a Post-Covid Era” (Public Policies in Times of Pandemics II). It is a great honor for us, the proposal made by the Editorial Team to participate as Guest Editors of this second Special Edition. After the success of the first special edition entitled "public policies in times of pandemics", we decided to continue by publishing a second special edition. Unfortunately, the remarkably distinguished Professor of the University of the Peloponnese Nikitas-Spiros Koutsoukis passed away just before the publication of this volume. This Special Edition is dedicated to the memory of Professor Nikitas-Spiros Koutsoukis.

An accumulation of death cases from pneumonia that occurred in Yuhan, China in December 2019 and early 2020 (Zu, Jiang, Xu, Chen, Ni, Lu & Zhang, 2020), was to develop into one of the pandemics that devastated humanity. The initially unknown nature of the pandemic caused by the then-new coronavirus in combination with the initial absence of medicine and vaccinations alerted the governments and health authorities of all humanity (Gao, & Yu, 2020). A wide range of pandemic-facing policies has been designed and implemented by governments in cooperation with each other to

address the pandemic (Dergiades, Milas, Panagiotidis & Mossialos, 2020). Such policies were:

- Health policies
- Epidemiological surveillance policies
- Policies for the statistical study of the pandemic
- Free movement restriction policies
- Labor market policies
- Participation policies in digital technologies
- Educational policies
- Policing policies of the traffic and assembly restriction measures
- Large-scale vaccination policies

These policies have led to the protection of vulnerable groups and the population, reducing at the same time the overburdening of the health system (Din, Asghar & Ali, 2020) until the beginning of autumn 2021. Since then, with the onset of the 4th wave of the pandemic, policies are adapting to new conditions in order to effectively protect individuals (Kim, Yu, Yu, & Park, 2021).

Policies during and after the fourth wave of the pandemic

The fourth wave of the pandemic appeared in the fall of 2021, alerting states around the world (Tough, 2021). By then a large part of the population of the developed countries had already been vaccinated and efforts were focused on repeating the vaccination and ensuring its application in the developing world, along with the use of new medicines. In this phase, the health services of the states drew attention to the continuation and the effort for the complete vaccination of individuals. The young, the partially vaccinated, and the treatment of the pandemic by the health system at this stage were put under the microscope of the authorities at that time.

Great emphasis is placed on vaccination in developed countries (Mathieu, Ritchie, Ortiz-Ospina, Roser, Hasell, Appel, ... & Rodés-Guirao, 2021). The closure of some large public vaccination centers is considered a major problem. The public is paying attention and governments are taking steps to improve the vaccination campaign and to persuade the unvaccinated to get vaccinated.

As horizontal lockdown measures appear to be receding, policies are being modified to address the threat based on new data. The policies implemented for work, education, and circulation (Curran, Gormally & Smith, 2022) are redesigned and modified to be effective, leaving more room for the movement and activity of individuals. As risk is always present, a dynamic monitoring of the results of the measures of these policies, combined with their

appropriate modification, can be beneficial to the biological protection of individuals.

Pandemic recovery policies

The living space of the coronavirus is claimed to be reduced by increasing vaccination of children (Tian, Yang, & Chen, 2022) immunity and the transition of the pandemic to a simpler form. The possibility of recovery from the deep crisis of the pandemic is more visible. The recovery of the world economy is expected to be rapid, with direct coordination of fiscal and monetary policy. The increase in consumption and tourism is considered to be part of the government's goals for a powerful recovery. In Europe, financial support programs aim to help businesses recover harmlessly from pandemic conditions. Financial support for the recovery focuses on the green and digital recovery sectors which states targeted even in the past.

Information technologies are widely used to investigate market changes during the recovery period. Purchasing patterns are changing because consumers prioritize security in their financial transactions. Moreover, communication between organizations and companies (Nayal, Pandey & Paul, 2022) exchanges the information needed for recovery.

The green recovery from the pandemic faces new challenges in international climate negotiations. Green growth in the framework of recovery focuses on climate action, such as providing new jobs and businesses through a clean, green transition. The green recovery aims for a safer, healthier, inclusive, and more resilient world for all people.

Employment promotion policies are already being designed by governments in an attempt to contribute to the recovery. Labor policies will help redistribute income and produce new goods in larger quantities.

Furthermore, welfare policies can also provide welfare services while increasing the number of staff employed in this field. The development of the welfare state can be a lever of development for societies previously affected by the pandemic.

This Special Edition entertains, following the first Special Edition of Public Policies in times of Pandemics, to gather valuable publications on the current phase and the impending recovery from the pandemic. Therefore, the papers which we received were related to the following policies :

Policies during and after the fourth wave of the pandemic

- Health policies
- Broad vaccination policies
- Sanction policies for the unvaccinated
- Epidemiological surveillance policies
- Traffic restraint policies
- Labor market policies

- IT technology expansion policies
- Policies to consolidate distance work and education
- Educational policies with emphasis on health protection
- Policies for monitoring traffic and labor measures

Pandemic recovery policies

- Economic policies
- Fiscal policies
- Monetary policies
- Information technology policies
- Lessons learned about pandemic health policies
- Environmental policies and development
- Labor policies
- Welfare policies
- Development of a welfare state

Other previous pandemic-facing policies

Within the framework of a complete pandemic-facing policies study, scholars have submitted papers related to pandemic preparation and response policies during the early stages of the pandemic (prior to the 4th wave) which were mentioned above. These policies served in the urgent and early response to the pandemic. The policies show partly several characteristics.

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