

FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR

With the enormous effects COVID-19 has had on practically every sphere of civic life, the pandemic has not only given rise to a health crisis but also an economic and social one, with important political repercussions worldwide. A wide range of measures have been adopted to tackle these crises which have had a major impact on people's lives and activities of all kinds. The pandemic has a health dimension, certainly, and a socio-economic one. But it also has a highly important legal dimension, because the means that the public authorities have used to deal with it pose numerous questions and problems. Suddenly, and abruptly, the pandemic has raised public law issues of the first order. For example, the use and scope of the emergency law; the effect on and restriction of people's basic rights, with freedom of movement, the right of assembly and the right to privacy being among the main ones affected directly. Also, the way the public institutions and authorities, including the judiciary, operate in times of crisis; the distribution of powers between the different levels of government and the relationship between them, in decentralised states; and, finally, the response capability of international and supranational organisations faced with a global emergency.

All these issues have already merited considerable academic attention in the last few months, since the start of the pandemic, and they will undoubtedly be the subject of discussion and reflection for a very long time to come. The *Catalan Journal of Public Law* could not remain aloof to these concerns, hence our wish to contribute to the analysis and debate on the questions raised by this exceptional situation in this special issue which is entirely devoted to the COVID-19 crisis. It includes articles on the "state of exception" law, the effect on the rights to freedom of movement, privacy and personal data, as well as digital disconnection in the public administration sphere; the effect on self-government; the European Union's responses, and the impact of the crisis on public opinion on the freedom-security scale. All these articles contribute points of interest to the debate now open and which has to continue on all these questions. We would like to publicly thank all the authors for their disinterested effort and their contribution to this special issue of the journal.

This is perhaps the first time that the whole of humanity has been simultaneously faced with the same experience. The problem has been the same everywhere while the response to it has been similar and diverse at the same time. Similar, because many of the means used respond to the same basic ends, such as reducing social contacts to control the spread of the virus and strengthening health systems. But diverse too, because the starting points and judicial, institutional and political contexts were different in each place. Consequently, the means of intervention have been too. Thus, there is a great deal of interest in learning more about the different experiences of using legal means to tackle this major crisis and the debates that have arisen practically everywhere on the use made of them and the consequences flowing from them, especially as regards the effect on people's rights. That is our intention with the various articles in the second part of this special issue, which deal with the experience of fighting against the pandemic in several countries. We believe these articles also make an important contribution to the global debate that has started on these issues and, from here, we would equally like to publicly thank all the articles' authors for the generosity and interest they have shown in collaborating with the journal.

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