

Interest Group on International Health Law

Annual report 2020

The Interest Group on International Health Law (IGHIL) was set up in June 2016 and its activities have progressively developed over time, with a number of events and initiatives that have involved an increasing number of members and interested parties. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic put the subject matter in the spotlight, leading to a series of activities focused on its international law dimensions.

The Coordinating Committee is currently composed by Gian Luca Burci (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva) and Stefania Negri (University of Salerno), founders and original co-conveners of the IG, who will continue as members of the Committee until January 2024; as well as by Stéphanie Dagrón (University of Geneva) and Pedro A. Villarreal (Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg), who were elected in January 2018 and will remain in charge until January 2022.

Following the planning of activities agreed by the Committee, and taking into consideration the logistical limitations due to the pandemic, several online events have taken place in 2020.

The first event was a webinar on “International Law in the Age of COVID-19: The Impact of the Pandemic on Peace and Security”, jointly organised by the ESIL Interest Groups on International Health Law and International Peace and Security. In light of the prevalent global crisis, the webinar was an opportunity to engage in scholarly debate regarding multiple challenges posed by the pandemic to international law and international institutions. The session took place through Google Meet on 23 June, 2020, and involved scholars from both Europe and the United States of America. Part of the discussion’s output is expected to be published soon through in an online open-access platform.

The second event was a webinar on “Biolaw, Health, Innovation and COVID-19”, co-organized with the ESIL Interest Group on International Bio Law. This webinar anticipated some of the papers to be presented at the international conference on “Bioethical and Legal Challenges Posed by Health Innovation: the Role of International Biolaw and International Health Law”, which was originally scheduled for April 2020. Five out of the eleven speakers selected for the conference participated in the webinar, anticipating their researches and adapting their original topic (biomedical research, vaccinations, data protection) to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The above-mentioned conference on health innovations and bioethics, a joint event of the ESIL IGs on International Health Law and International Bio Law, will be held in Salerno during 2021 (spring or autumn at latest), provided that the evolution of the pandemic will allow the celebration of a presential event.

Lastly, with regard to the relationship with other Interest Groups, as described above, the IGHIL has continued its successful cooperation, particularly with the IGs on International Peace and Security and on International BioLaw.