

**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CENTRES FOR FEDERAL STUDIES
(IACFS)**

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

15 and 16 OCTOBER 2020 14.00 CET (GMT +2)

Conference Theme: Combating the COVID-19 pandemic: Federalism a boon or bane?

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost all countries of the world, including those with a federal or hybrid-federal system of government. Eight of the 11 most infected countries are federations: the USA, Brazil, India, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Mexico, and Argentina. Other federations have done better. In combating the pandemic, core elements of federalism have come to the fore: the division of responsibilities (disaster management, health care, and social and economic lockdowns, etc), and intergovernmental relations and cooperation. How have federal systems responded to the pandemic: has federalism been a boon or bane? This question is addressed with reference to 20 case studies of all the main federal countries in the world.

The aim is to reflect on how, since the first outbreak of the virus in a country, the federal system functioned and responded over the crucial period ending in October 2020. Although the full significance of the pandemic and its social and economic consequences may only become apparent in years to come, the first six months are pivotal.

One of the consequences of the pandemic is that we have to gather virtually. Given the time constraints that are thus imposed, please note:

1. Each presentation will be no more than 8 minutes.
2. In case of co-authors, the person whose name is in **bold** gives the presentation.
3. Questions or matters of discussion are to be placed in the zoom comment box, which will then be directed by the moderator.

Day 1: 15 October 14.00 to 16.00 CET

Zoom link: <https://bit.ly/3d4joXU>

Session 1: 14.00 – 15.00: Moderator: Jaap de Visser

Federal-state contestation?

The focus is on whether, and if so, how, federal- state relations played out at the outset of the pandemic. Some of these relations were acrimonious and contested. Conflicts may also have arisen during the course of the pandemic over the divisions of powers. What were / are the key drivers of these contestations?

- (1) United States: **John Kinciad** and Wesley Leckrone (Center for the Study of Federalism (CSF), Meyner Center for the Study of State & Local Government, Lafayette College)
- (2) Brazil: **Gilberto M. A. Rodrigues** and Vanessa Elias de Oliveira (*Nucleus for the Study of Federalism and Local Government, Federal University of ABC*), Marcelo Labanca (*Brazilian Center for Constitutional Studies in State Law -ConState, Catholic University of Pernambuco*) and Sergio Ferrari (Rio de Janeiro State University)
- (3) Austria: Karl Kössler (Institute of Comparative Federalism, EURAC Research, Bolzano)
- (4) Bosnia-Herzegovina: Milan Sitarski (Institute for Social and Political Research (IDPI), Mostar)
- (5) Ethiopia: Dr Zemelak Ayele (Center for Federal and Governance Studies, Addis Ababa University)

Discussion

Session 2: 15.00 – 16.00: Moderator: Eva Maria Belser

State initiatives and checks on federal government?

Of particular interest is whether subnational governments have used their constitutional space (where they had some) for innovative measures to deal with aspects of the pandemic? Have the states been the proverbial laboratories for better coping with the pandemic? Also, did the states act as a check and balance on federal action?

- (1) Russia – the role of Novosibirsk Oblast: **Vyacheslav Seliverstov** (Institute of Economics and Industrial Engineering, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of

Sciences, Siberian International Centre for Regional Studies (SICRS), Novosibirsk) and Ivan Leksin (Lomonosov State University, Moscow)

- (2) Spain – the role of Catalonia and Basque Country: **Mario Koelling** (Foundation Manuel Giménez Abad for Parliamentary Studies and the Spanish State of Autonomies, Zaragoza), Mereia Grau Creus (Institut d'Estudis de l'Autogovern, Barcelona), and Mikel Erkoreka (Ituna Center for Basque Economic Agreement and Fiscal Federalism Studies, University of the Basque Country)
- (3) South Africa – provinces and municipalities: **Tinashe Chigwata**, Nico Steytler and Jaap de Visser (Dullah Omar Institute, University of the Western Cape)
- (4) Mexico – states: Jose M. Serna (Institute of Legal Research, National University of Mexico)

Discussion

Day 2: 16 October 14.00 to 16.00 CET

Zoom link: <https://bit.ly/3nqGOLP>

A key variable with regard to the success or otherwise in confronting the pandemic has been the coordination and cooperation between levels of government, both vertically and horizontally. Did such coordination take place in terms of an existing disaster management system or intergovernmental relations structures and procedures? How successful have they been? Did new forums emerge fit for purpose? Also, if fitting, any of the contributors may focus on intergovernmental fiscal relations: what was the impact and what, if anything, changed?

Session 3: 14.00 to 15.00: Intergovernmental relations I : Moderator: Cheryl Saunders

- (1) Canada: **Johanne Poirier** and Jessica Michelin (McGill Law School)
- (2) United Kingdom: Paul Anderson (Research Group on Federalism and Conflict Resolution, Canterbury Christ Church University)
- (3) Australia: Nicholas Aroney (University of Queensland)
- (4) Switzerland: Eva Maria Belser (Institute of Federalism, University of Fribourg)
- (5) Belgium: **Patricia Popelier** and Peter Bursens (Research Group on Government and Law, University of Antwerp)

Discussion

Session 4: 15.00-16.00: Intergovernmental relations II : Moderator: Nico Steytler

- (6) Germany: Gisela Färber (German Research Institute for Public Administration (GRIP) German University of Administrative Sciences)
- (7) India: Ajay Kumar Singh (Centre for Federal Studies, Hamdard University, New Delhi)
- (8) Argentina: Antonio Hernandez (Institute of Federalism, National Academy of Law and Social Sciences of Córdoba)
- (9) Italy: Elisabeth Alber, Erika Arban, Paolo Colasante, Adriano Dirri, **Francesco Palermo** (Institute of Comparative Federalism, EURAC Research, Bolzano)
- (10) European Union: Simone Barbareschi, **Beniamino Caravita**, Adriano Dirri, Francesco Severa, Sergio Spatola (Associazione Osservatorio Sul Federalismo e i Processi Di Governo, Rome)

Discussion

Closure

Covering the times zones: Starting times of the meetings

Given the geographical spread of the centres across the globe, the starting times of the conference cover the whole virtual day:

7.00 local time (GMT – 5): Mexico City

8.00 local time (GMT -4): Canada (Montreal, Kingston), USA (Philadelphia)

9.00 local time (GMT -3): Argentina, Brazil

13.00 local time (GMT +1 [DST]): United Kingdom

14.00 local time (GMT +2): Italy, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, South Africa

15.00 local time (GMT +3): Ethiopia

18.30 local time (GMT +5.30): India, Sri Lanka

19.00 local time (GMT +7): Russia (Novosibirsk)

22.00 local time (GMT +10): Australia (Brisbane)

23.00 local time (GMT +11 [DST]): Australia Melbourne