

Book review

Marian Gorynia*

Book review: The economic and legal impact of COVID-19. The case of Poland

Editors: Jerzy Menkes and Magdalena Suska

Routledge London and New York

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It should be noted that the high value of the book under review may be indirectly demonstrated by the very fact of its publication in such a prestigious publishing house as Routledge. This publishing house is one of the most respected publishers of economic texts in the world. In addition, it is worth noting that in the last few years, there has been a tendency for Routledge to open up more to issues and authors from Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, in a sense, Polish authors are the beneficiaries of this opening, and their texts are relatively more often published by top-shelf publishers.

The great and undeniable advantage of the book is its timeliness and the pace at which it was written. At the time of writing this review, that is, in September 2021, a year and a half has passed since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland. It should be emphasized that in such a short period of time a mature, well-thought-out, interdisciplinary work was created, dealing with several important aspects of the plague and at the same time constituting a kind of “Polish voice” in the international discussions addressing the issues of getting to know, investigating, and interpreting the various consequences of the “black swan,” which is the SARS-Cov-2 coronavirus.

Therefore, it was very good that a group of academics from the Warsaw School of Economics started researching the signalled issues and an important study was created, which is significant not only for what has already happened, but may also be useful in the future, even in the near future, as the pandemic is still ongoing, and predictions are made of the so-called fourth wave.

The discussion on the COVID-19 pandemic in the scientific literature as well as in journalism should be interdisciplinary, as the plague is a multidimensional phenomenon in itself. In the reviewed book, attention was focused on two aspects – economic and legal. From this point of view, the study is a “bull’s-eye.” It provides a broader research perspective in the approach to pandemic issues, and this broader horizon is very much needed when we want to deeply reflect on the interpenetration of the two mentioned aspects of the plague: economic and legal ones. Moreover, the considerations in the book may turn out to be useful for conducting comparative analyses in an international cross-section and may be useful in discussing the shaping of future solutions in periods of possible subsequent pandemics and in building post-pandemic reality/normality. Thus, the breadth and importance of the issues raised as well as a relatively broad research perspective constitute the second important advantage of the discussed work.

The third strength of the study is “The economic and legal impact of COVID-19. The case of Poland” is a well-thought-out, clear concept, well connected with the goals of the conducted research procedure. This is certainly due to Jerzy Menkes and Magdalena Suska, who have addressed the challenge of scientific editing of the study.

As emphasized above, the book’s advantage is its interdisciplinary dimension. The editors emphasize this circumstance in the introduction to the work, noting that the authors’ reflections include the legal, economic, and social aspects of the pandemic. However, what is an asset of the study for the reader, may

*Corresponding author: **Marian Gorynia**, Poznań University of Economics and Business, Institute of International Business and Economics, Department of International Competitiveness.

pose some difficulty for the reviewer in assessing the work. It manifests itself even when assessing the declared goals of the study. These goals are as follows (p. 3):

- Objective 1 – to examine the compliance of actions taken by Poland in the face of COVID-19 with the objectives and principles of international organizations of which it is a member and to draw conclusions from these experiences with a view to prevent possible future similar disasters.
- Objective 2 – assessment of Poland’s activities based on EU regulations (in particular, on state aid and public procurement) taken in connection with the COVID-19 outbreak and the likely importance of financial support for Poland (as part of the long-term EU budget for 2021–2027 and the emergency reconstruction programme Next Generation EU) aimed at mitigating the negative effects of the pandemic and supporting recovery.
- Objective 3 – assessment of the impact of the pandemic on the implementation of the European Green Deal in Poland.

For an economist, a certain difficulty is a professional reference, especially to the method of achieving the first goal. It turns out that both international and national legal regulations relating to the broadly understood issue of pandemic response are quite complicated. However, when responding generally to the declared objectives of the work, it can be stated that they have been defined in an understandable manner and the reader should feel satisfied with the convincing arguments provided, which justify undertaking of the reported research.

The “supporting structure” reflecting the transparency and correct structure of the work is provided in the following table of contents (the original English titles of the individual components of the book are given below):

Introduction

1. International Disaster Response Law (IDRL) in Poland
Jerzy Menkes and Magdalena Suska
2. The legal aspects of the introduction of a lockdown in Poland
Jerzy Menkes
3. Poland in international cooperation in the face of the COVID-19 challenge
Magdalena Suska
4. Poland and EU cooperation – mechanism of joint public procurement (COVID-19)
Łukasz Dawid Dąbrowski
5. The EU funds for addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic: Implications for Poland
Elżbieta Kawecka-Wyrzykowska
6. Financial measures adopted in Poland in light of the COVID-19 state aid EU framework
Adam A. Ambroziak
7. Poland and the European Green Deal amidst the pandemic
Marzenna Błaszczuk-Zawiła
8. The emergency measures underpinning Poland’s Convergence Programme 2020: The Case of the trade credit reinsurance scheme
Alina Dorota Szypulewska-Porczyńska
9. Polish banking sector in the face of COVID-19
Andrzej Janik
10. Summary and Conclusions

The advantage of the above-described concept and structure of the book is that, depending on the needs of the reader, it can be read in an individualized way:

- A reader with extensive, comprehensive interests may find it useful to study the entire book – this approach is recommended for those readers who are interested in a relatively comprehensive understanding of the analysed aspects of the pandemic.

- A reader with more selective interests related to a specific aspect of COVID-19, but at the same time wishing to get an overview of the book's issues in general, should read the Introduction, chapter(s) of interest, and Chapter 10 (summary and conclusions).
- A reader with very selective interests (focused only on a specific aspect of a pandemic – for example, pandemic effects in the banking sector), may read a selected chapter of the book – this is possible due to the fact that the book's chapters have a modular, relatively independent formula.

Another strong point of the book is the competent, strong authors' team, which directly affects the content and form of the considerations conducted. All chapters are written very thoroughly. As a rule, the authors used a broad, extensive, and varied literature on the subject. They skilfully selected and used it. It is also important that the latest, up-to-date bibliographic achievements in the researched field were used as far as possible. The strength of the author's team is also manifested in the fact that it is a very well-balanced team. The professional level of the individual chapters is high. It is difficult to properly distinguish any of the chapters, both in the positive and negative sense. Being aware of the subjectivism of the choice made, I would like to make an exception and point to two chapters as deserving special recognition from the economist's point of view. First of all, I mean Chapter 5, the author of which is Professor Elżbieta Kawecka-Wyrzykowska. The fifth chapter deserves a distinction for its compactness, and at the same time comprehensive presentation of the EU funds for addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the whole of the EU and in Poland (funds coming from a regular multiannual EU budget and from the extraordinary New Generation EU Facility). The uniqueness of this chapter is also related to the fact that it relates to the future. Second, appreciation is due to the author of Chapter 6, Professor Adam Ambroziak, who faced the difficult task of presenting, organizing, and assessing the financial tools used in Poland in the fight against the pandemic under EU state aid regulations. By the way, it would be worth considering the change in the order of these two chapters – it seems that the sixth chapter, focused on the ex-post perspective, should be preceded by the fifth chapter focusing on the ex-ante approach.

It is also the duty of the reviewer to refer to the methodology and research methods used in the study. The declaration of the authors' team on this matter is very laconic. It was presented in the introduction to the work (p. 3) and basically comes down to the statement that in the legal research part the dogmatic-legal and legal-comparative methods were used, and in the economic part, the descriptive analysis method was applied, as well as selected statistical methods.

Two postulative observations can also be made, when addressing the work under review:

- Although the authors note in the introduction to the book that they have not set themselves the task of providing an exhaustive overview of the broad pandemic issue in relation to Poland, it would be advisable, perhaps, to try to deal with other aspects of COVID-19. However, it would probably require building a larger, wider research team, which would make it possible to address topics that have not been covered so far.
- A high rating of the reviewed work is accompanied by an "appetite for more" in yet another sense of the word. Perhaps it is worth considering the idea of conducting, at least to a limited extent, comparative analyses on an international scale. Inevitably, such a study could concern a limited group of countries, but it seems that comparing Poland's situation with several carefully selected benchmarks could lead to significant added value. Maybe this can be included in the possible preparation of the second edition of this valuable work?

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Summarizing the above remarks, it should be stated that the work "The economic and legal impact of COVID-19. The case of Poland" is undoubtedly a very up-to-date, necessary publication addressed to a wide group of potential readers. The study has a clear structure, is characterized by a high level of substantive considerations, is correct in terms of methodology and research methods, and also refers to the latest, extensive, and carefully selected literature on the subject.

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