

## Governing the COVID-19 response

Anna Sagan

*A Sagan*<sup>1,2,3</sup>, *M Karanikolos*<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, London, UK

<sup>2</sup>LSHTM, London, UK

<sup>3</sup>London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

Contact: a.sagan@lse.ac.uk

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that effective leadership and strong governance are essential for resilience in the face of a shock to the health system. Even though adequate financing of health systems, and ensuring that they have an adequate workforce, physical infrastructure and material supplies can bolster health system resilience, resilience is not merely a function of hard resources but also of soft factors, including capacities of leaders, strengths of institutions, and societal values and culture. Indeed, countries that topped the Global Health Security Index (GHSI), an index that focuses on measuring technical preparedness for epidemics and pandemics, in 2019 were among those that performed the worst during the COVID-19 crisis, as measured in deaths or damage to the economy. A country's initial governance capacity, at the onset of the pandemic, shaped its ability to respond. For example, countries with effective leaders, strong institutions and higher levels of societal trust were often better positioned to respond adequately. But government capacity and trust could change over the course of the response. For example, deliberative decision making that is inclusive, transparent, and accountable, coupled with effective public engagement, can build legitimacy and support for difficult decisions. In the longer term, it can contribute to building trust and improving policy making. This presentation will provide an overview of the strategies that countries-mainly in Europe but also with examples from other regions-have implemented to achieve effective leadership and decision making, coordination, generation and use of information in COVID-19 response decisions. A brief overview of key metrics to assess resilience in the area of governance will also be provided.