The Efficiency of Enforcement of Anti-covid Measures

Abstract

This thesis evaluates the efficiency of the enforcement of anti-epidemic measures during the covid-19 pandemic in years 2020 to 2022. Although the Czech Republic had managed the first wave of the outbreak in spring 2020 in an exemplary manner, it later showed one of the highest increases in new infection cases relative to population worldwide, as well as a rather high number of excess deaths. Why did the country become one of the most affected regions during the pandemic, even though the anti-covid measures were similar to those in other countries? One possible explanation could stem from the insufficient enforcement of existing anti-epidemic measures by governmental authorities.

Based on the data provided by the administrative and police authorities in the territory of Prague for the period between March 2020 and May 2022, this thesis describes the real-life practice in terms of inspections, offence proceedings and subsequent sanctions for violations of anti-epidemic measures. The conclusions are supported by other publicly available information as well. The thesis then undertakes an analysis of the enforcement of anti-epidemic measures through the lens of the economics of crime and G. Becker's rational choice theory.

The thesis concludes that the effectiveness of enforcement of anti-epidemic measures has been limited, showing that the state has essentially resigned to enforce many such measures. In many cases, the frequency of inspections was almost minimal. In fact, the state effectively relied only on voluntary compliance with some of these measures, such as a quarantine, since the probability of inspection was so low. The relevant authorities have often been overstretched or lacked the legal instruments to carry out effective inspections at all. The subsequent sanctions were also low. Most of the detected offenses had been handled by issuing reprimands or warnings, and the average fine often amounted to only a few hundred Czech crowns. Neither the likelihood of being caught nor the subsequent penalties have been anywhere near the level that would effectively deter potential offenders from violating the measures. Based on these findings, the paper concludes with a set of recommendations that can be used to improve the enforcement of anti-epidemic measures in the future, in case another pandemic or other serious crisis comes.

Keywords: anti-covid measures, enforcement, offences