

# **European Union competences in the field of health protection in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic**

## **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic, which mercilessly hit the world in 2020, showed us that we are not prepared for a pandemic of this magnitude as a world, Europe or individual countries. General chaos reigned and the contagion spread at the speed of light. No one, including national or supranational authorities, knew how best to deal with such a situation. In this context, the EU began to discuss whether the EU should have more competences in this area. The hypothesis underlying this thesis is that the EU does not have enough competences in the field of health. Increasing their existing competences could help to manage possible further pandemics. The aim of this thesis is to investigate whether this hypothesis is correct and whether it would therefore be appropriate to increase the EU's existing competences in public health policy.

In order to test this hypothesis, I examined the issue from both theoretical and practical perspectives and divided the thesis accordingly. In the first part of the theoretical chapter, the thesis concludes that the EU's competences in the field are "only" supporting, but this does not change the fact that these competences are also intended to ensure a stable basis for public health. However, the second part of the theoretical chapter, which elaborates on the proposals for the future of EU competences, comes to the opposite conclusion. EU competences would not only extend but also establish the European Health Union. The practical chapter of this thesis reaches a similar conclusion to the first part of the theoretical chapter. In summary, the expert respondents would not increase the EU's competences, but would focus on improving existing competences. This thesis therefore concludes that EU competences in public health policy should not be increased at the present time. The initial hypothesis of this thesis was therefore not confirmed. After researching the issue, it became more appropriate for the EU to learn how to work effectively with its existing competences.

**Key words:** competences, public health, the COVID-19 pandemic