EU to the rescue no more?

Lydie Cabane and Martin Lodge reflect on contemporary challenges to EU crisis management regimes

EU member states are said to have largely lost their national economic boundary control. Contaminated food from one member state can cause death in another member state, competition over regulatory standards can create systemic risks as the financial crisis has highlighted, and asymmetric economic fortunes can lead to migration. The European Union is traditionally at the heart of dealing with transboundary policy problems. Whether the EU governance can effectively deal with these varying types of transboundary crisis has been a long-standing preoccupation. Traditionally, these debates have sought to explain differences in transboundary risk, the type of regulation funded by the European Union under the Horizon2020 programme.

Invasive alien species represent a relatively new policy domain. The EU recently passed Regulation 1143/2014 to tackle the transboundary problem. At the heart of the regime is a list of invasive species which attracted considerable debate among interested parties (such as plant export firms, environmental NGOs and the fur industry), inter-institutional conflict between the European Commission and the European Parliament, and debate about the quality of risk assessment that summarized scientific knowledge about particular species. The second pillar is the commitment by member states to establish systems to monitor species and take actions, when required. It might be too early to tell whether the second pillar is functioning, it is presently not clear to what extent member states are committed to creating and maintaining such systems in view of resource depletion. The first pillar, the list, is arguably also under threat. Updating of the list requires risk assessments and it is not apparent whether the European Commission and the member states have sufficient resources to conduct these. There is therefore an urgent risk of falsification and increasing irrelevance of this particular EU regime.

The UK plays a unique role in this context. It was central to the development of the EU regime and claims to have one of the most advanced risk assessment and management systems in place. The same time, Brexit raises essential questions: does the UK want to adopt its own list which will require considerable negotiation with the EU, or does it want to continue shadowing the EU that may be less enthusiastic about this topic, as one of its central promoters is heading the new (lack of) effective management strategies, especially with bee-keepers whose hives were affected, and with neighbouring countries complaining about the failure to contain the invasion early on.

High levels of youth unemployment (above 40%) were also those whose administrative capacities were the most affected by the financial and debt crisis. Local administrations were faced with the problem of identifying potential recipients of such schemes, especially in those member states whose youth unemployment figures were reaching historically high levels (Italy, Greece and Spain). Others (UK) considered this kind of active labour market policy to be ill-suited to their own local conditions and did not implement the Youth Guarantee lounge rather than the negotiation table.

We can find similar dynamics also in other regimes that are associated with different EU decision-making procedures. Take, for example, the case of youth unemployment. The promotion of the so-called Youth Guarantee was noteworthy development after the financial crisis. It was seen as a policy in the math of the financial promote by member states (especially Germany and France and) and by the Europe- an Commission, and it, somewhat uniquely, combined traditional elements of benchmarking and peer review (as part of the ‘Eu- ropean semis- financial (totaling €12 billion). There are, unsur- the level of solidarity, funding commitments and the choice of policy tools. Member states, such as Spain, with devolved competence for such youth schemes, had problems in coordinating and dispensing money.

Member states with the highest youth unemployment figures (above 40%) were also those whose administrative capacities were the most affected by the financial and debt crisis. Local administrations were faced with the problem of identifying potential recipients of such schemes, especially in those member states whose youth unemployment figures were reaching historically high levels (Italy, Greece and Spain). Others (UK) considered this kind of active labour market policy to be ill-suited to their own local conditions and did not implement the Youth Guarantee lounge rather than the negotiation table.

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