

Crisis, E-Participation, and Lawmaking: Stakeholder Engagement and Transparency in Slovakia Before, During, and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The study explores the concept of governance legitimacy, emphasizing its dependence on citizens' perceptions of governmental credibility and acceptability. It discusses how trust, transparency, and public participation are critical for maintaining legitimacy when governments introduce emergency legislation in response to urgent situations. The analysis reveals that while such legislation can facilitate rapid responses to complex issues, it often comes at the cost of reduced oversight and stakeholder engagement after crisis. This paper aims to analyse the changes in law-making processes during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on the stakeholders' perspectives regarding the significant increase in emergency and non-standard legislation. The research problem revolves around understanding how these alterations impacted stakeholder engagement and consultation opportunities during pandemic and how it affected the quality of law-making process after pandemic. The study examines changes in the perception of accessibility and transparency of the legislative e-participation platform, Slov-lex, in Slovakia, assessing its role in the law-making process among its users. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through surveys (2020, 2021, 2025) and semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders (2019) involved in the Slov-lex e-participation platform, a key tool for citizen and stakeholder engagement in the legislative process. The expected results aim to demonstrate a decline in transparency both during the pandemic and after it. This study contributes to the academic discourse on the challenges and adaptations in law-making during and after crises. The relevance of this research extends to understanding rule-of-law practices within the NISPAcee region, providing critical lessons for enhancing the transparency and inclusiveness of governance in the future.