# Crisis, Populism, and the Decline of Regulatory Quality: Assessing Law-Making Legitimacy in Slovakia

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates the impact of emergency legislation on law-making processes and regulatory quality principles (RQPs). It examines the relationship between RQPs and the legitimacy of law-making, shifting the focus from regulatory outputs—commonly explored in existing research—to the process itself. Specifically, it analyses how transparency, stakeholder participation, and evidence-based decision-making shape the acceptance and credibility of legislation. The analysis shows that a strong commitment to RQPs significantly enhances the legitimacy of the legislative process, reinforcing public trust and confidence in government.

Focusing on Slovakia—previously recognised for its high pre-pandemic standards of regulatory quality—the study assesses how emergency legislation affected law-making procedures during and after crises and and following the rise of a new populist government in 2023. It evaluates whether such legislation was confined to crisis-related issues (the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine) or also used for unrelated purposes, and whether post-crisis law-making returned to pre-crisis standards. By analysing transparency and stakeholder participation in primary legislation passed between 2019 and 2025, the research reveals a potential decline in democratic accountability and an increased risk of democratic backsliding. The misuse of emergency powers by the new populist government indicates a significant weakening of governance legitimacy.

The findings provide insights into the long-term effects of crisis-driven law-making and populist governance on the resilience of RQPs and democratic legitimacy. The paper contributes original empirical evidence on the dynamics of regulatory quality and democratic processes within the NISPAcee region, a context characterised by pronounced variation in governance practices.