

## SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION

### BRIEF

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### Research interest:

The purpose of this short term mission was to initiate a line of collaboration with Professor Sarah Bigi, from the Department of Linguistic sciences and foreign literatures of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milano (UCSC), around our common interests related to the analysis of the design and implementation of healthcare policies.

The use of conceptual tools from the sociological institutionalist theoretical framework together with key concepts and methods from argumentation theory could greatly help us in developing a more complex understanding of the way in which healthcare policies and practices are actually designed and finally implemented on the ground.

### STSM Summary:

As a result of our collaboration we initiated work on a paper aimed at providing a comparative analysis of the way in which Italy and Spain responded to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic among care homes for the elderly.

We started by reviewing the emergency preparation plans that had been drafted in both of these countries, particularly regarding infectious diseases and influenza-type pandemics. Following current debates in the literature on crisis management, we hypothesise that whenever there is no sufficiently developed and internalised preparedness plans and protocols, in situations of emergency the response to the crisis will fall back to existing institutional arrangements (and

their weaknesses). In our initial review of Italian and Spanish emergency regulation we realised that previously existing plans/strategies regarding pandemics were quite vague in their definition, had not been translated into preparedness measures, and did not refer to care homes for the elderly practically at all.

The second aspect we will emphasise in our paper is the role of multi-level governance structures in the handling of a situation like the pandemic. To do so we started focusing in the instructions dictated during the first wave of the disease between central and regional authorities in both countries. In our initial analysis we observed how instructions dictated by national and regional health authorities during the first months of the pandemic lacked precision and coherence thus making more difficult to slow down the spreading of the disease in care homes.

The third axis of analysis of our paper focuses on the weaknesses in the links between the healthcare systems, and the LTC domain in charge of the care homes. This institutional distance implied that the sanitary side of the response to the pandemic was very disconnected from the “care” approach to the crisis. Instructions to care home personnel and managers did not elaborate on the different dimensions in which a serious centres had to change protocols (closure of centres, segmentation of patients by health status, interactions between professionals and interns). The deficits in communication channels, and the lack of clear messages on how to prevent the spreading of the disease increased the severity of the contagion in care homes.

The development of this STSM shall lead to the design of a shared research agenda, as well as theoretical concepts and research methods related to the study of the implementation of healthcare policies, to enhance the capacity of the scholars participating in the Action to engage beyond their academic community with public policy professionals and practitioners, and most notably to potentiate the analysis of the interrelations between argumentation and policy-making and communication in the healthcare domain.