

Jean Monnet Newsletter No. 2, March 2020:

Dear readers,

I hope you are all fine. Who would have thought that between the first and second edition of this newsletter the world would change so much? Covid-19 (as the new coronavirus has officially been named) has had a big impact on our lives: economically, socially, and politically.

Schools, offices, and factories around the world have been closed, big events have been called off, and governments on all continents discourage social gatherings.

Also in the EU, where this JMM's focus is on, people's lives have changed: most national governments have imposed severe restrictions on social gatherings and some even implemented complete 'lockdowns' of entire regions. The EU's external and internal borders are, for the first time in history, largely closed. The freedom of movement, one of the cornerstones of the EU integration process, can no longer be executed.

How is Covid-19 linked to our topic of shrinking rural areas in Europe?

Italy, the country most impacted by Covid-19 on a per capita basis, has already lost over 10,000 citizens during this pandemic. Many of the deceased were elderly patients, often living in areas with insufficient access to healthcare. The Corona crisis, in our age of population ageing, has once more shown that many ageing European societies are not equipped with sufficient hospitals and medical care. Over the next years, it is of utmost importance to strengthen the medical care systems in many ageing European societies, where, especially in rural areas, fast access to doctors and hospitals cannot be taken for granted. Only by providing sufficient medical support for all citizens, European nations can secure acceptable living conditions for all citizens.

However, the Covid-19 crisis in Europe also revealed several positive social aspects. While academics have often claimed a lack of solidarity among the generations and between urban and rural populations, the recent crisis has shown that citizens across EU countries support each other. Both in rural and urban areas, younger generations offer help to the elderly, buying food and medication for them so they do not need to expose themselves to crowds. Let's hope such efforts to bridge the gap between old and young, between

urbanites and the rural population, remain in place even after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Past & planned developments:

Events:

Due to the coronavirus, some planned research activities by the JMM holder, Dr Anna Schrade, had to be postponed.

However, preparations for teaching and events are in full swing. In June, this JMM will support the EU-Japan Friendship Week, focusing on Germany (society, economy, politics). Further information will be provided in the next newsletter but we would highly appreciate if you could mark June 2 in your calendar for our lecture on Germany.

At our EU cooking event on June 27, you will have the chance to cook and eat several dishes from EU member states. Learn how to cook European delicacies and enjoy a full self-cooked European lunch for only 1,000 yen.

Teaching:

The KGU syllabi for the spring semester 2020 are now online. KGU students interested in taking an EU-related course are encouraged to look for the diverse courses offered by Dr Schrade and Prof. Bungsche as well as by other faculty members.

Research:

During the next two semesters, Dr Schrade will focus on research on demographic change and rural populations in Germany and Italy.

If you are interested in contributing to this research, please get in touch with Dr Schrade (schrade@kwansei.ac.jp<mailto:schrade@kwansei.ac.jp>)

Reading suggestions:

In order to make 'social distancing' easier, here are some reading suggestions (related to rural regions). How about using your spare time to read on the EU and shrinking regions?

Espon (2017), Policy Brief: Shrinking rural regions in Europe,

<https://www.espon.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/ESPON%20Policy%20Brief%20on%20Shrinking%20Rural%20Regions.pdf>

European Parliament (2019), Demographic trends in EU regions,

<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/eprs-briefing-633160-demographic-trends-eu-regions-final.pdf>

That's it for now. Stay healthy and safe!

Anna Schrade & the KGU JMM Team

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