

The impact of Covid-19 on global player networks in health research: implications for industrial and innovation policies

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A growing body of literature looks at research networks as indicator of larger collaboration networks fostering knowledge spread and innovation in the context of production. Such aspects has been underlined both in the case of local networks and, more importantly, in relation to networks involving actors spread in different countries. As such networks have a potential to generate and diffuse innovation, the policies aiming at supporting them can be regarded as industrial and innovation policies.

Health research is one of those areas in which international collaborations assume a strategic role. In this work, we look at the role that Covid-19 pandemic, an unprecedented event in recent history of global health, has played in affecting these transnational collaborations, focussing on the case of China - an emerging global player in research - and comparing it with the U.S. - the current global leader. We focus on the different behaviors that the partners have assumed in the participation in the two networks, before and after the pandemics, but also in Covid-related research sectors vs sectors not massively addressing the phenomenon.

Two possible trends might be in place (increase in cooperation vs competitive/selective approaches to research). We discuss these aspects and draw relevant policy implications.