



GLOBAL RISK ASSESSMENT DATASET AND THE EU'S ROLE
IN THE GOVERNANCE OF GLOBAL RISKS

GRADEU JEAN MONNET MODULE – 2022- 2025
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Research Note - 1

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Research Note 1 – The Transformation of Global Threat Perceptions: COVID-19 and Beyond

The origins of the GRADEU Jean Monnet Module can be traced back to the profound transformation in how global threats began to be perceived after the outbreak of COVID-19. The pandemic was not only a public health emergency but also a moment of collective realization about the interconnected nature of global risks. Traditional security paradigms, focused on military power and state-centric threats, proved inadequate for managing crises that transcend borders and sectors. This experience prompted renewed academic interest in global risk governance and the mechanisms through which institutions, including the European Union, frame and respond to such challenges. Our first publication related to this topic, the op-ed “The Transformation of Global Threat Perceptions: COVID-19 and Beyond” (Global Panorama, 2020), served as both a conceptual and motivational foundation for the GRADEU project. It emphasized the need for interdisciplinary approaches that combine political science, economics, environmental studies, and technology governance to understand emerging risks in the 21st century. The article also identified a critical research gap: while global risks were widely acknowledged, systematic analyses of their political framing, institutional responses, and long-term implications were still missing.

This early phase of the project explored how global threats evolved in both discourse and policy between 1990 and 2020. The research team began by collecting and coding key institutional reports, which later formed the backbone of the Global Risk Assessment Dataset (GRAD). The preliminary results revealed a marked shift from state-centered concerns (nuclear conflict, regional instability) toward complex, multi-dimensional risks such as climate change, pandemics, and digital vulnerabilities. From a European perspective, the study noted that the EU’s crisis responses, especially under frameworks such as the European Green Deal, the EU Health Union, and the Digital Strategy, began to reflect a more integrated understanding of security. Rather than treating climate, health, and technology as separate policy areas, EU institutions increasingly adopted the language of resilience and interdependence.

This first research note thus marked a conceptual entry point into the GRADEU Module’s broader inquiry into global risk governance. It demonstrated that the pandemic acted as a catalyst for rethinking the architecture of international cooperation and provided a unique opportunity to study how the EU adapts to systemic threats. The insights gathered during this initial phase shaped both the design of the GRAD dataset and the later structure of the Module’s teaching and

seminar programmes. In a broader sense, the note highlights that risk perception is not merely a technical or scientific issue, but also a deeply political process.

Further Readings:

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. (2020). Doomsday Clock Statement: Closer than Ever. Chicago, IL.

European Commission. (2020). Communication on the EU Strategy for COVID-19 Response. Brussels.

Sula, İ. E. (2020). Küresel tehdit algısının dönüşümü: COVID-19 ve ötesi. Global Panorama. <https://www.globalpanorama.org/2020/10/kuresel-tehdit-algisinin-donusumu-covid-19-ve-otesi>

WHO. (2020). Managing the COVID-19 Infodemic: Promoting Healthy Behaviors and Mitigating the Harm from Misinformation and Disinformation. Geneva.