

Abstract

What Factors Lead to Policy Change in the Cantonal Alcohol Policy?

A Systematic Comparison of Cantonal Policy Profiles

Three quarters of all action aiming at the prevention of harm caused by alcohol consumption in Switzerland take place at the two lower federal levels of the Swiss political system, i.e. the Cantons and the communes. It is therefore highly relevant to know which factors cause political action at the cantonal level, especially in view of a Federal Alcohol Program yet to come.

The proposed research project aims at answering this question by way of a comparison of the 26 member states. First, a review of the existing literature on policy change will lead to a set of theory driven hypotheses (Advocacy Coalition Framework, Neo-Institutionalism, Policy Diffusion approach etc.) which will be operationalized in order to be able to collect comparable data. Second, an existing overview over the 26 cantonal alcohol policies in Switzerland (commissioned by the Swiss Alcohol Board and the Federal Office of Public Health) will be coded along this operationalization. The resulting data will be (1) combined with the results from an earlier survey of the Cantons conducted in 1999 and then (2) compared in a cross sectional analysis using appropriate statistical methods as well as the still young method of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). The hypotheses test will be completed with three selected in-depth case studies.

We expect the results from this study to be highly relevant on both the theoretical and the practical level in that not only hypotheses from the actual policy analysis theory will be tested aiming at the development of the theory, but also results will be gained that help the public actors at the federal level to plan their alcohol policy activities to be successful in cooperating with the cantons.

The research will take place between July 2005 and February 2006 at the Institute of Political Science of the University of Bern.