

Summary

This PhD aims to study how cantonal parliaments and governments deal with international norms in Switzerland. It focuses on international law obligations as well as on soft law, which should be implemented by cantonal parliaments. It hopes to find out whether parliaments actually engage with such norms and what role, if any, cantonal governments play in that regard. Furthermore, it aims to analyze the role played by specific mechanisms in this process, notably the consultation procedure and intercantonal conferences.

From a theoretical point of view, this PhD will draw on studies on multi-level governance, federalism and parliamentary processes, as well as on the legal scholarship on the implementation of international norms and soft law. All these literatures address some of the issues at stake, but the specific question of how sub-national entities engage with international norms has not been directly studied yet. This PhD ambitions to fill this gap.

To achieve this objective, we selected five international norms that fall under cantonal competencies and for which we will observe cantonal engagement. Each international norm will constitute a case study and we will use a combination of cross-case and within-case methods. Each case will be intensively studied through an analysis of official documents and interviews with members of cantonal parliaments, governments and administrations. The cases were selected following the “diverse case” method, in order to enhance the representativeness of the sample. A sample of four cantons has been selected according to the same method.