

Swiss decision-making under international pressure

SPP „Switzerland - Towards the Future“ – Module: Evolution of Political Institutions

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Goal

Since the early eighties, a growing number of domestic decisions are affected by political developments at the international level. On the one hand, inter- and supranational organizations such as the European Union, the World Trade Organization or the United Nations exert both a direct (international negotiations), as well as an indirect (“autonomer Nachvollzug”) influence on the Swiss decision-making process. On the other hand, rising economic globalization and a heightened concern for competitiveness of the national economy in the international markets also impact Swiss politics and policies. The goal of this research project, conducted in parallel by two research teams, is to evaluate the influence of internationalization on the characteristics of the Swiss decision-making process (cf. figure 1)

Methods

- Three complementary approaches are used:
 - Before-after analysis: quantitative comparison (mainly regression analysis) of the features of all the legislative acts voted by the Parliament and submitted to the referendum between two periods: 1971-1976 (180 acts; generally low degree of internationalization) and 1995-1999 (211 acts; differentiated according to their degree of internationalization).
 - In-depth qualitative (documentary analysis, interviews with the main actors of the decision-making process) and quantitative (network analysis) study of eight legislative reforms differing with regard to their degree of internationalization:

Degree of internationalization	
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two reforms of basic pension system Reform of unemployment insurance
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fiscal consolidation plan 2001 Introduction of the Value Added Tax
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public procurement liberalization Free movement of persons Telecommunications liberalization Real estate reform (Lex Friedrich)

- Comparative qualitative analysis of the effects of internationalization in Switzerland and in three other small European countries (Austria, the Netherlands and Norway).

	Traditional model	Highly internationalized	Weakly internationalized
Pre-parliamentary consultation	++	--	++
Role of government and administration	-	++	-
Role of Parliament	-	--	++
Importance of the referendum threat	++	+	++

Figure 2: The relative importance of the different phases of the decision-making process. Intermediary results taken from the project Papadopoulos / Mach / Häusermann, based on five case studies.

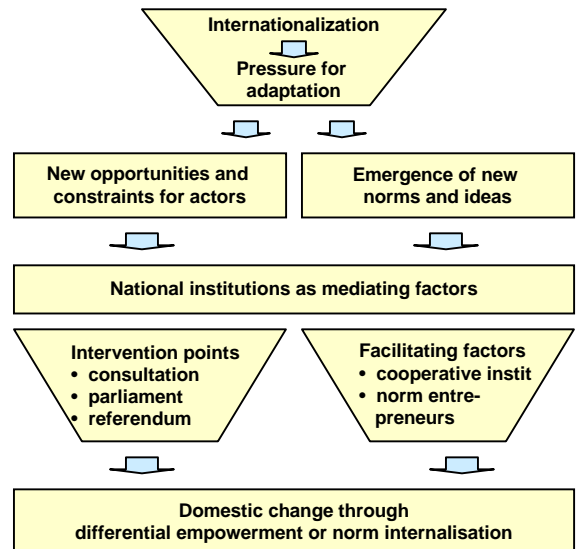


Figure 1: Analytical framework inspired by Börzel and Risse (2002)

Results

Does internationalization matter?

- Limited impact of the direct internationalization, but important indirect effects.

What are the effects of internationalization?

- Lower degree of consultation:
 - Expert committees: less frequent; consultation is more informal and/or more selective
 - Consultation procedure: shorter, sometimes replaced by hearings
- Lower level of conflict in the Parliament
- Reinforcement of the Government, but
- Importance of national institutions (direct democracy, federalism, etc.), which enable political actors to counterbalance the weight of the executive.
 - By using these institutions, actors can
 - oppose the Government and try to block reforms
 - force the Government to make concessions in order to avoid opposition.

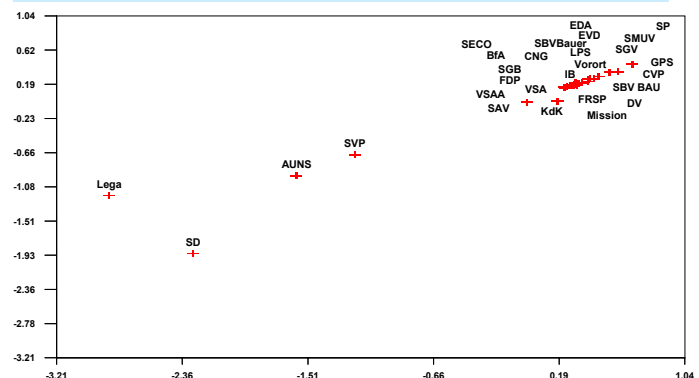


Figure 3: Example of a result of the network analysis: The graph shows a two-dimensional scaled image of the conflict in the policy network of the free movement of persons after the issue of flanking measures was solved.