

## **Policy Evaluation in the Swiss Political System – Roots and Fruits (SynEval)**

The Swiss National Science Foundation is supporting the Sinergia project “Policy Evaluation in the Swiss Political System – Roots and Fruits”. The Sinergia programme offers a platform for inter-, multi- and multidisciplinary projects brought into being through the initiative and collaboration of different research groups.

The Sinergia project SynEval is a cooperation of political scientists from the Universities of Zurich, Bern, Lausanne, Geneva and Lucerne. The project addresses the questions of how policy evaluation in Switzerland is influenced by the Swiss political system, and how policy evaluation in turn influences the Swiss political system. This topic is of great theoretical significance for political science and public administration theory, because until now, research on the relationship between specific attributes of political systems and the practice and institutionalization of policy evaluation is missing. It is also of great practical relevance, because considerable resources are invested in evaluations each year, and we need to know how to best make use of this investment and how to avoid negative consequences. To link attributes of policy evaluation with policy, polity, and politics in a comprehensive approach is considered as an innovative and fruitful research track.

The Swiss political system is ideal for studying this question: Firstly, it has a high degree of internal heterogeneity that allows for within-system comparisons. Secondly, two attributes of the Swiss political system are of special relevance for policy evaluation, namely: federalism and direct democracy. Some scholars claim that federalism increases the demand for evaluations, others argue the opposite, and the same is true for direct democracy. A similar lack of consensus exists with respect to the influence of policy evaluation on the Swiss political system. In addition, a systematic analysis of interdependencies between attributes of the Swiss political system and evaluation is lacking, especially at the subnational level. Therefore, the Sinergia project analyzes these relationships through comparisons at the cantonal level, and by using longitudinal and cross-sectional, inter-policy comparison.

In detail, the following four subprojects constitute the Sinergia project:

Subproject 1, led by A. Balthasar (University of Lucerne) and F. Varone (University of Geneva), asks about the relevance of policy sector and administrative unit attributes for policy evaluation by comparing twenty cases (1990-2011) in education, health, energy and public transport policy from four cantons and the Federation.

Subproject 2, directed by K. Horber-Papazian (IDHEAP Lausanne) and A. Flückiger (University of Geneva), analyzes the reasons for and the consequences of evaluation clauses in federal and cantonal laws. The study consists of a comprehensive survey and analysis of current (2011) obligations to conduct evaluations in all federal and cantonal laws.

Subproject 3, managed by F. Sager and V. Friedrich (both University of Berne), concentrates on direct democracy and asks about the use of evaluations in direct democratic campaigns. The focus is on education and health policy at the cantonal and federal level. An extensive survey of all votes at cantonal and federal levels from 1990 to 2011 will be conducted, as well as eight case studies of selected campaigns.

Subproject 4, run by T. Widmer and K. Frey (both University of Zurich), analyses the relationships between policy evaluation and parliaments at the cantonal and federal levels by conducting a survey

among the about 3'000 members of parliament at both levels. Multi-level data analyses will be conducted, as will a comparison of 27 cases (3 policies from 3 policy sectors (education, health and energy policy) in 3 cantons).

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