

Health policy in Switzerland: An introduction

2-Day Workshop for PhD students

Friday, 5 September 2025 in Lucerne

Monday, 8 September 2025 in Berne

Instructor: Ass.-Prof. Dr. David Weisstanner (david.weisstanner@unilu.ch),
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in collaboration with the Swiss Learning Health System (slhs.ch) (slhs@unilu.ch)

Credits (ECTS): 1	Contact hours: 15	Self-study hours: 15
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Workshop description

The workshop offers an introduction into the basics of the Swiss health system and current issues in Swiss health policy. **Day 1** defines the concept of health policy and gives an overview about the historical development of Swiss health policy. We then discuss the main actors of Swiss health policy, their interest constellations, and the patterns of political conflict when the different actors disagree. Two guest presentations will provide practical insights into current issues in Swiss health policy (topics TBD). Groups of students will develop and discuss potential policy proposals to address current issues in Swiss health policy.

Day 2 focuses on the political process in Switzerland. We discuss how health policy reforms can come on the agenda of policymakers, how exactly the decision-making process works, and how health policy reforms get implemented. We pay particular attention to the institutional context, such as federalism and direct democracy, and how it affects health policy-making in Switzerland. In the afternoon, we will visit the Federal Palace of Switzerland to attend a parliamentary debate in the National Council. We will also have the opportunity to talk to a member of the National Council and president of the Social Security and Health Committee (SGK-N), Barbara Gysi, and finally, we will receive a guided tour through the Federal Palace.

Learning objectives

- Understand the main elements of the Swiss health system and health policy context.
- Discuss specific current issues in Swiss health policy, including the situation of health care professionals and sustainability in the healthcare system, and potential policy proposals to address these issues.
- Analyse how the specific political context in Switzerland, such as federalism and direct democracy, affects health policy-making and health policy reforms.

Required reading in preparation for the workshop

- Trein, Philipp, Christian Rüefli, Adrian Vatter. 2023. "Health Policy." In *Handbook of Swiss Politics*, eds. Yannis Papadopoulos, Pascal Sciarini, Adrian Vatter, Silja Häusermann, Patrick Emmenegger, Flavia Fossati. Oxford University Press, Oxford. 714–732.

Credits and type of examination

PhD students will receive 1 ECTS for actively participating in both days and reading the required literature in advance. There will be no exam (grade: pass or fail).

Detailed schedule

Day 1: Friday, 05 September 2025, 09:15-17:00 in Lucerne

Room: University of Lucerne, Frohburgstrasse 3, room 4.B54 ([map](#))

09:15-09:30	Welcome and introduction
09:30-11:00	The basics: What is Swiss health policy? What were the main historical milestones? Who are the key actors of Swiss health policy?
11:00 - 11:15	Break
11:15-12:15	TBD Guest input TBD
12:15-13:45	Lunch in the Mensa of the University of Lucerne (https://www.unilu.ch/uni-leben/mensa/)
13:45-14:30	Actors, interests, and political conflict: What do the actors in Swiss health policy want? Where do they agree and disagree?
14:30-15:30	TBD Guest input TBD
15:30-15:45	Break
15:45-16:30	Group workshops: Elaborating own policy proposals to address current issues in Swiss health policy
16:30-17:00	Plenary discussion, short presentation of the policy proposals, wrap up

Day 2: Monday, 08 September 2025, 09:15-17:00 in Berne

Room: Berner Fachhochschule (BFH), Murtenstrasse 10, room 123 ([map](#))

09:15-09:30	Introduction
09:30-11:00	The political process in Switzerland (agenda-setting, decision-making and implementation) and the institutional context (federalism, direct democracy, parliament and government)
11:00-11:15	<i>Break</i>
11:15-12:45	Go back to the policy proposals from Day 1: How would they go through each stage of the policy-making process in Switzerland. Preparation of questions for the interview with Damian Müller in the Federal Palace.
12:45-14:00	<i>Lunch at SITEM Flavour Kitchen, Freiburgstrasse 3, 3010 Bern (opposite the BFH), flavourkitchen.ch</i>
14:00-14:30	Transfer to the Federal Palace (by foot)
14:30-15:00	Check in at the Federal Palace – please keep your identification ready!
15:00-16:00	Visit to the parliamentary debate in the National Council Chamber during the Autumn Session
16:00-16:30	<i>Conversation with Barbara Gysi, Member of the National Council (Canton of St. Gallen, SP, https://barbara-gysi.ch/)</i>
16:30-17:00	Guided tour in the parliament building and wrap up