

Wennberg International Collaborative Spring Policy Meeting 2018 (Zurich)

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Title: Still not expensive enough? - Non-economic considerations and inter-cantonal cooperation in the Swiss hospital sector

Abstract text:

Your abstract

Since 2009, cantons are legally obliged to coordinate their hospital planning. Yet, the health insurance law and the corresponding decree are short on specifics, which leaves ample room for manoeuvre to the cantons and the coordinative body reuniting all cantonal health ministers (GDK). Little systematic knowledge about the extent of coordination measures and cooperation between cantons exists. The last encompassing inventory dates back to 2006.

Despite seemingly advantageous preconditions (e.g. institutions favourable to horizontal coordination, legal requirement, economic pressure caused by rising health expenditures), the impression prevails that little has happened since the introduction of the coordination article in 2009. This study addresses the question of why there is (seemingly) little inter-cantonal coordination and cooperation and how the cantons deal with the lately introduced obligation to coordinate their hospital planning.

The study first elaborates why considerable coordination and cooperation should be expected using the literatures on historical institutionalism and horizontal federalism. Second, it systematically maps the current landscape of inter-cantonal coordination measures and cooperation projects. To that end, 27 semi-structured interviews with cantonal officers were conducted. Third, the study contrasts the findings of the mapping with the theoretical expectations and the legal requirements.

The analysis shows that there is extensive exchange of information (a pre-form of coordination) among cantons, especially among neighbours. However, when it comes to decision-making, the cantons are keen to safeguard their sovereignty and prioritize regional interests. Particularly within GDK-regions, more advanced forms of coordination do exist. The GDK and the rulings of the Federal Administrative Court play an outstanding role as the drivers and the forum for inter-cantonal coordination. Significant cooperation projects, however, remain rare.

Keywords: inter-cantonal coordination, inter-cantonal cooperation, hospital planning, horizontal federalism, Swiss health politics