

Where is the sovereignty in Switzerland's health policy?

Federal Council tightens its course of adjustment to the requirements of supranational organisations

by Dr. med. Sabine Vuilleumier-Koch*

"At its meeting on 20 June 2025, the Federal Council decided to accept the amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005)."¹ This news did not come as a surprise, but it was still shocking. With its actions, the Federal Council has once again made it clear that the international stage is more important to it than Switzerland's sovereignty in its health policy.

However, the final word has not yet been spoken, writes the "Aktionsbündnis freie Schweiz" (ABF, Action Alliance for a Free Switzerland), a broad alliance of people from all walks of life who are committed to freedom and self-determination. The Federal Council's decision is not yet binding. It can be reversed before 19 July with an "opt-out", which 48,000 people have already signed up for – and the collection of signatures is continuing.² ABF Switzerland is also calling on the sovereign to hold a national assembly on 5 July 2025.

No say for parliament

The Federal Council made the decision to accept the amendments to the IHR on the last day of the summer session. However, the motion "No WHO agreement without parliamentary approval" had been passed by the National Council and the Council of States in 2024.³ Approval of this motion would have enabled parliament to comment on the amendments to the IHR before 19 July. Lawyer and National Councillor Rémy Wyssmann drew attention to this omission in a supervisory complaint on 21 May 2025.⁴ The fact that Parliament was nevertheless unable to have a say on whether to accept or reject the IHR represents a further step in the dismantling of democratic debate!

Is compliance with obligations voluntary?

In approving the amendments to the IHR, the Federal Council argues in a press release dated 20 June in a manner that is nothing short of grotesque: "... It is up to individual countries such as Switzerland to decide how to implement these obligations in their national context." Sovereignty has been "explicitly guaranteed in the IHR since 2005." At the same time, it makes it clear that the IHR are a "legally binding instrument of the WHO."

With good will, it is immediately apparent that the implementation of *obligations* cannot be voluntary but is in fact a duty. Independent lawyers have repeatedly demonstrated in numerous reports that the new IHR represent an expansion of the WHO's power and thus severely restrict the sovereignty of the signatory states.

Not "only" has the Director-General of the WHO already been able to determine the existence of a "public health emergency of international concern" on his own and initiate appropriate measures for himself and the WHO's financial backers. Now, this is also to be possible in the case of vaguely defined "high risks" of a "pandemic emergency." An "opt-out" would therefore be only logical.

Federal Council follows WHO guidelines

The Federal Council allowed itself to be dictated to by the WHO during the coronavirus pandemic and did not act independently in the same way as Sweden, for example. Why this stark contrast between words and deeds? In January 2022, Federal Councillor Cassis made it clear on the TV programme "Arena" that Switzerland would adhere to the WHO guidelines: anyone who dies in an accident and tests positive for coronavirus must be counted as a coronavirus death – that is what the WHO wants... Or does the Federal Council's action mean that it is "voluntarily" following the WHO guidelines, i.e. that it agrees with everything?

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Lack of resistance

The new IHR will increase the pressure on Switzerland to implement the WHO's measures. And the Federal Council's resistance will be weak: Switzerland has countless "WHO Collaborating Centres" that carry out specific tasks in line with WHO programmes under strictly regulated, contractually binding cooperation agreements.⁵

Following EU guidelines

The Federal Council is also increasingly relinquishing Switzerland's independence in shaping its health policy in other ways. This is the case in the "Agreement between the Swiss Confederation and the European Union on health", which, like the other new agreements in the "Switzerland-EU package", was submitted for consultation by the Federal Council on 13 June. It is intended to regulate "in particular the prevention of and response to serious cross-border health issues, ..."⁶ This wording is fatally reminiscent of

the IHR, which aims to "prevent the cross-border spread of infectious diseases ...". We have seen and suffered how this is being implemented in the coronavirus pandemic. A detailed analysis of the 81 pages of this EU-Switzerland agreement on health is still pending.

The question to the Federal Council remains unanswered: Where is the sovereignty in Switzerland's health policy?

¹ https://www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch/de/newnsb/Mk25bhNcE9_80o1N_LVVI

² <https://opting-out-igv.ch>

³ <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20223546>

⁴ <https://abfschweiz.ch/wp-content/uploads/Aufsichtsanzeige-und-Bericht.pdf>

⁵ https://abfschweiz.ch/wp-content/uploads/Artikel-29_04_25.pdf

⁶ <https://backend.europa.eda.admin.ch/fileservice/sdweb-docs-prod-europaedach-files/files/2025/06/12/42a92d18-73cf-4f97-bd9b-e1d38a4d47f8.pdf>