



CALL FOR PAPERS

Workshop

Compliance with Soft Law: Assessing and Explaining Compliance with Legally Non-Binding Global and Regional Governance Instruments

April 22-23, 2021

Workshop Convenors:

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Legally non-binding governance instruments (NBIs), often addressed under the label “soft law,” are being employed in virtually every issue area in international relations. Ranging from conference outcome documents and summit communiqués to resolutions of the bodies of international organizations to pronouncements concerning concrete cases, soft law instruments and the rules, decisions, and commitments contained in them are being used to steer actors in desired directions. While not legally binding and thus not subject to the rules of state responsibility in case of violations, such instruments are nonetheless normative in character and create expectations of compliance among stakeholder audiences, removing the issues they seek to regulate from the unconstrained decision-making discretion of their addressees.

A good twenty years after the publication of the first comparative review of the role of non-binding norms across different issue areas and policy fields—Dinah Shelton’s edited volume *Commitment and Compliance* (2000)—this workshop seeks to take a fresh theoretical and empirical look at the impact of non-binding instruments on outcomes beyond the state. Approaching impact from the vantage points of compliance and effectiveness, it seeks to bring together papers that address soft law in a variety of international settings and issue areas as well as works that specifically compare the impact of soft law with that of legally binding treaties, decisions, and judgments. Among the questions to be addressed are the following:

- » How can we assess compliance with, and effectiveness of, NBIs? What measurements are currently being used, with what advantages and disadvantages?
- » How do rates of compliance differ between binding and non-binding instruments in the same issue area or institutional context?



- » What causal factors condition the effectiveness of NMIs within the same and across different policy fields?
- » What roles do cultural, social and political norms play in this context?
- » What specific part does legally binding status, or the absence thereof, play in affecting compliance and non-compliance? At what stages in compliance-related decision-making, and with respect to what types of actors, do differences in legal status matter most?
- » To what extent does the particular identity of an NBI-issuing institution affect subsequent compliance and effectiveness, why, and how?

Since compliance and effectiveness are best examined from an interdisciplinary angle, contributions on these and related questions from different (sub-)disciplines—including, but not limited to, international relations, comparative politics, EU studies, law, and anthropology—are welcome and encouraged.

Submissions

Please send an abstract of 300–500 words with your contact details and institutional affiliation to compliance-workshop.wiso@uni-hamburg.de. The **deadline** for submissions is **February 15, 2021**. Decisions on acceptance will be communicated by February 22, 2021. Draft papers/notes are expected to be submitted two weeks prior to the workshop for circulation among participants.

Venue

Given regulations presently in force at Universität Hamburg, combined with the outlook on the corona pandemic, we plan to hold the workshop as an online event, using the videoconferencing service Zoom. (In the event that future developments permit, holding the workshop as a physical or hybrid event may be considered; funds to cover travel expenses for all paper-presenting participants are available).

Planned Publication

We intend to pursue publication of select workshop contributions as an edited volume with Oxford or Cambridge University Press or, alternatively, as a special journal issue. As a result, we appreciate in particular submissions that have not been published yet and that could be included in such a volume or special issue. (If your proposed contribution is already published, under consideration or to be submitted elsewhere, please kindly let us know; it will not affect the acceptance decision, but will help us plan the publication project.)