

# Challenges of Multilevel Governance

## Summary

This course provides a set of analytical tools that will help students understand and engage critically with debates that revolve around the operation of multi-level governance systems. The course is divided into three modules. The first section will present the theoretical foundations of multi-level governance studies and examine their applicability to the European Union context. The second part will expand the analytical focus of the course by examining how multi-level governance works in non-European settings. The final module will review the strengths and weaknesses of multi-level governance with the aim to stimulate critical thinking around the performance of multi-level governance systems.

### **The Course's Place in the Programme of Study**

This course offers a detailed account of the functioning of multi-level governance in European and non-European contexts. Hence, the course provides students with a powerful theoretical toolkit to analyze the interplay between different levels of governance in a varied range of policy settings. This course will present the academic debate around multi-level governance by including a plurality of theoretical approaches, as well as frequent explicit references to relevant perspectives on the operation of international politics, such as global governance or European integration.

### **Content**

#### **Module 1: What is Multi-Level Governance?**

The dispersion of authority across different levels of governance has captivated the attention of academics and policymakers alike in recent years. Scholarly efforts have been devoted to understanding how the process whereby sovereign states have gradually lost their monopoly of policy-making has been paralleled with the increasing weight of supranational and subnational bodies in governing tasks. While the idea of multi-level governance was originally conceived to describe the functioning of the European Union, to what extent does this polity work as a multi-level governance system? Under which circumstances did a group of sovereign states in Europe decide to give up part of their sovereignty by increasing cooperation at the supranational level?

- Competence 1: Acquire the conceptual and theoretical knowledge that will establish a basis for the production of original thinking on multi-level governance in a research context.
- Competence 2: Study the relevance of multi-level governance systems in Europe.
- Competence 3: Analyze critically and independently the development of multi-level governance in Europe.

## **Module 2: How Do Different Multi-Level Governance Systems Work?**

COVID-19 has put the intricacies of multi-level governance at the forefront of political science research. While some decades ago the assumption of managerial competences by national governments in such an emergency situation would have been taken for granted, several subnational and supranational administrations across the world have been responsible for the design and implementation of policies aimed at minimizing the negative effects of the pandemic. In this module, you will learn how multi-level governance works in practice by taking a look and discussing a series of sector-specific case studies. Its analytical focus is expanded beyond the confines of Europe, and will also pay attention to the role of non-state actors in the governance process.

- Competence 1: Identify the dynamics, processes and factors that intervene in multi-level governance systems.
- Competence 2: Develop arguments related to the applicability of multi-level governance theory to different polities.
- Competence 3: Show the ability to work within a team and coordinate discussions regarding the operation of multi-level governance systems in specific policy sectors.

## **Module 3: What Sorts of Challenges Do Multi-Level Governance Systems Face?**

Phenomena such as Brexit, the adoption of the euro, or the rise of Eurosceptic parties in a handful of European Union Member States remind us of the limitations of multi-level governance, and stimulate reflection upon the strengths and weaknesses of multi-level structures. For example: to what extent do existing multi-level governance arrangements discourage or empower regional and national identities across the world? By applying the theoretical and practical tools acquired in previous modules, in this module you will produce clear, critical, and concise arguments regarding the performance of multi-level governance polities. You will also engage with academic

debates regarding the future evolution of multi-level governance, and assess the feasibility of different proposals for its reform.

- Competence 1: Understand key concepts to evaluate the performance of multi-level governance systems from a critical and original perspective.
- Competence 2: Prove the ability to produce an independent and critical analysis of the performance of multi-level governance systems.
- Competence 3: Acquire the skills that will allow for continuous self-sufficient learning about multi-level governance.