

Health and social welfare



The area of research of this new program covers social welfare and health policies. For our research center, the initial focus of this field of study was the evolution of local skills.

Since the 1980s, the structure of social welfare has mainly developed through planning institutions. Gradually, the law has shaped the care offering of social and medico-social establishments. This structuring process led to the creation of the social and medical-social sector, “a new field of public activity which gradually built its own legal framework and, at the same time, its own regulatory approach” (R. Lafore, *Law and poverty: shifts in the French care model*, the *Revue de droit sanitaire et social* 2008 p. 111).

The structuring of the sector required, on the one hand, the creation of a public offering via new administrations, professions and specialties (social work and healthcare management professions, middle managers for social administrations as well as social and medico-social structures, etc.) and, on the other hand, the regulation of the private offering in the field.

Today, the health, social and medical-social sector represents a singular form of public policy and has even become the subject of dedicated studies at GRALE-CNRS and one of the current priorities of the Delegation for Strategic Foresight at the French Ministry of the Interior in terms of research.

The GRALE has developed the health and social welfare theme through the creation of the Social division. This division is managed by Hervé Rihal and Martine Long, Professor and Associate Professor at the University of Angers, specialized in local social policies, in particular relating to the elderly and disabled. Our center has already expressed an interest in this thematic network by meeting with the heads of the Social division and confirming its desire to commit to these themes.

The Delegation for Strategic Foresight has also expressed its interest in continuing with the “National Observatory for Devolution” and stepping up its partnership with the GRALE’s teams, in particular on the subject of “The aging population and services for the elderly”. This topical issue is likely to attract increasing attention from local authorities: current reforms (the HPST act (Hospital, Patient, Health and Territories) and 5th risk) which will have a major impact on procedures, the possibility of associating research teams with professionals and those on the ground: Development council, CCAS (local social welfare center).

The sensitive issues of health and social welfare, which are the focus of the GRALE’s Social division (with which our team currently cooperates on a large scale), are therefore among the Ministry’s current priorities. With their mix of different disciplines, they are seeing a surge in regulations and continue to experience major changes on which the local Pau-based public



law center intends to work. This will involve – as part of this new program and in collaboration with the GRALE’s Social division – attempting to decipher this ever-changing, enriched health and social backdrop to better understand the challenges of the new governance currently being introduced.

The entry-point of this new program is threefold: public intervention and in particular that of local authorities (local policies, exclusion, etc.) and their public bodies, that of health and social welfare reform professionals and, thirdly, that of the users.

The idea of making this sector the focus of research, reform and reflection makes sense in that:

- * The national and European setting is constantly changing.
- * The expertise of professionals is changing, financial and managerial constraints heightening and responsibilities increasing.
- * Users, who play an important role, are enjoying new rights.