



Institut suisse de droit comparé
Schweizerisches Institut für Rechtsvergleichung
Istituto svizzero di diritto comparato
Swiss Institute of Comparative Law

Annual Report



A word from the President

I have, since 1 April 2025, had the honour of chairing the SICL Council. I would like to express my gratitude, in particular, to my predecessor, Professor Franz Werro, for his remarkable commitment and for agreeing to extend his term of office to ensure a smooth transition. Thanks to his dedication, the Council has been able to continue its activities without interruption.

I would also like to thank the members of the Council, the Management Team and the staff of the SICL for their warm welcome and the support they have shown me at the start of my term of office. Their professionalism and commitment are essential assets for the smooth running of the Institute.

The year 2025 was a period of transition for the SICL. A strategic reorganisation is being prepared. Its main objective is to increase the efficiency of internal processes, improve coordination between teams and develop new perspectives in the area of projects and cooperation. These measures should make it possible to better meet the expectations of stakeholders and improve the impact of the SICL's activities.



In parallel with this reorganisation, which represents the Institute's main challenge in the short and medium term, the Board and Management Team have taken measures to strengthen the SICL's network. In this regard, we would like to highlight the first online meeting in September 2025 with the new Academic Advisory Council, composed of eminent Swiss and foreign specialists, as well as the increase in the number of scholarships enabling promising young researchers to spend time at the Institute. The numerous conferences organised under the auspices of the SICL, in particular the 35th Private International Law Day, held in November 2025 with great success, also enabled the Institute to establish and deepen contacts with scientists from all over the world.

The prospects for the SICL's development are promising. The Council looks forward to continuing its commitment to developing the Institute's mission and meeting the challenges of the coming years with ambition and a keen sense of responsibility.

Michel Heinzmann

President

A word from the Director

For the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law, 2025 was a year of continuous development. It was a year of in-depth reflection on the Institute's mission, its role in the Swiss legal system and how to raise the profile of its many services, both internally and externally.

This work was structured around two intrinsically linked areas of development. On the one hand, we took a close look at the SICL's external image with the aim of communicating its mission, services and expertise more clearly and presenting its position within the federal and academic landscape in an understandable way. The work carried out to develop a new communication strategy and a modern website reflects this process and aims to create new opportunities for visibility.

On the other hand, 2025 was also an opportunity to rethink the Institute internally. As a hybrid institute with various legal functions, it operates at the interface between academia, administration and practice. Reflection on the organisation – roles, responsibilities and forms of cooperation – led to a long-term restructuring process in 2025.



In this context, we also considered how best to present our activities. For this reason, the 2025 annual report is being published for the first time in a modular format, which allows the Institute's work to be viewed in context. Representing the main functional areas, the modules highlight the close links between expertise, services, knowledge infrastructure, exchange formats and organisation.

This annual report provides an overview of the activities and services of the SICL in 2025 according to this structure. It documents a busy year and shows how comparative law expertise is used in different contexts to serve state institutions, courts, the administration and academia.

I would like to thank the Federal Department of Justice and Police and the Institute's Board for their unfailing support and trust. I would particularly like to thank all the Institute's staff for their patience, open-mindedness and participation in the ongoing development processes.

Nadjma Yassari

Director

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1/ Mandate and mission

The Swiss Institute of Comparative Law (SICL) is part of Switzerland's legal infrastructure. It was created because in a globalised world, government action must be based on reliable and independent knowledge of foreign and international law. The SICL provides this knowledge.



The Institute's legal mandate is enshrined in the Federal Act on the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law (SICL Act). The Federal Council's 1976 message emphasised the need for an institution responsible for collecting, examining and comparing knowledge on foreign and international law. This political and legal basis still characterises the Institute today: it systematically monitors legal developments abroad and analyses their significance for Switzerland. It provides information to the government when it needs legally viable and internationally compatible solutions and ensures that official decisions are based on a solid foundation of international knowledge.

The SICL fulfils this mission as the Confederation's centre of expertise and knowledge, combining scientific methodology with practical application. Regularly commissioned to carry out comparative analysis of important and complex regulatory issues, it highlights the approaches adopted by other legal systems and the resulting options for action in Switzerland. The Institute thus works at the interface between academia and practice to support the Confederation and the cantons in their core work, enabling them to understand challenges in the light of other legal systems and to develop concrete and legally reliable courses of action.

The SICL also provides sound information on foreign law in cases where Swiss private international law requires its application. As the only public institution with the expertise and infrastructure necessary to examine foreign law, the SICL researches and analyses the law applicable to specific cases so that Swiss courts and authorities can apply it directly and reliably.

As a public law institution with legal personality, the SICL is legally independent, while being integrated into the institutional architecture of the Swiss Confederation. This unique position allows it to operate in a way that cannot be replicated either structurally or technically within the federal administration. Moreover, its outputs cannot be provided with the same depth, breadth and neutrality by higher education institutions.

During 2025, examples of the implementation of this mandate can be seen in the following three areas: preparatory comparative law work relating to a new federal law on the examination of foreign investments; cross-border inheritance matters; and analysis of the possibilities for state action in response to transnational repression – that is, attempts by foreign states to intimidate persons living in Switzerland.

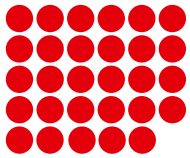




2/ Key points

SICL staff

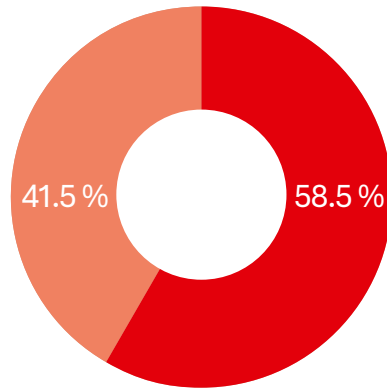
Proportion of women and linguistic diversity

29
full-time positions

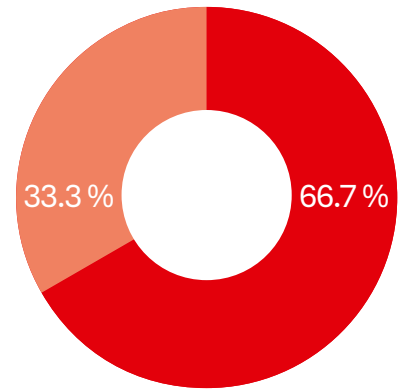


Women 
Men 

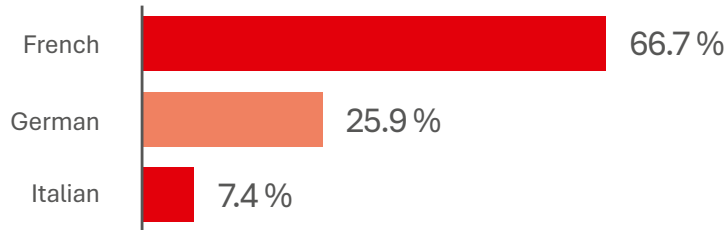
Total number of employees



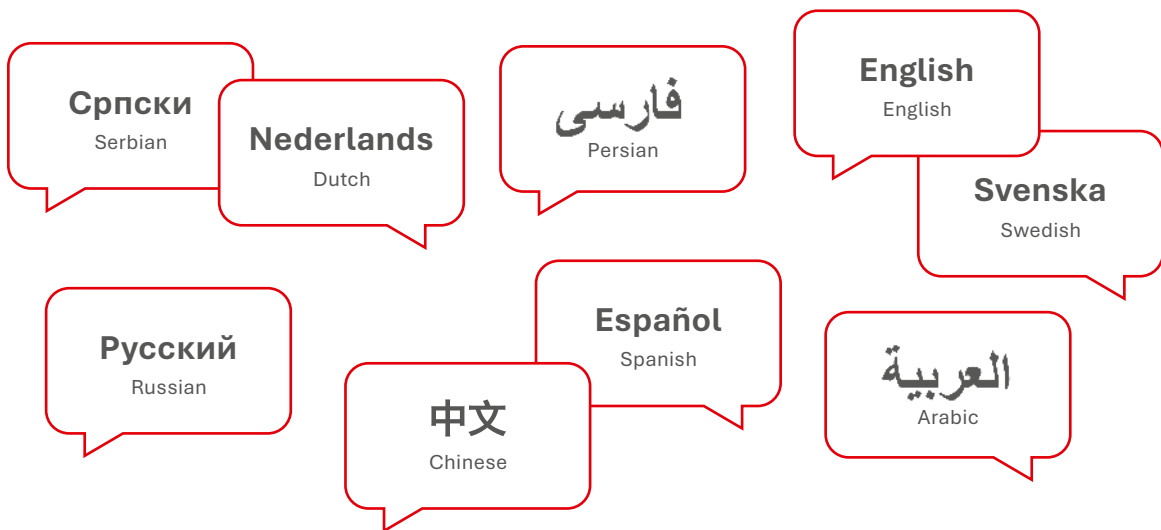
Senior management



Membership of national linguistic communities



Other languages represented



Services

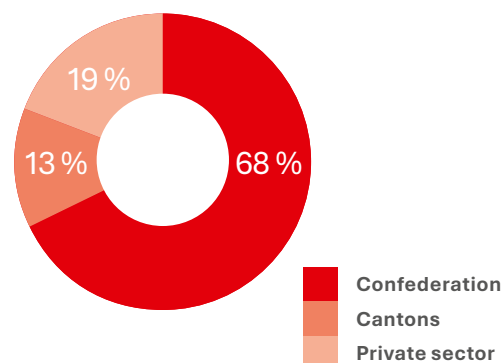
Legal opinions



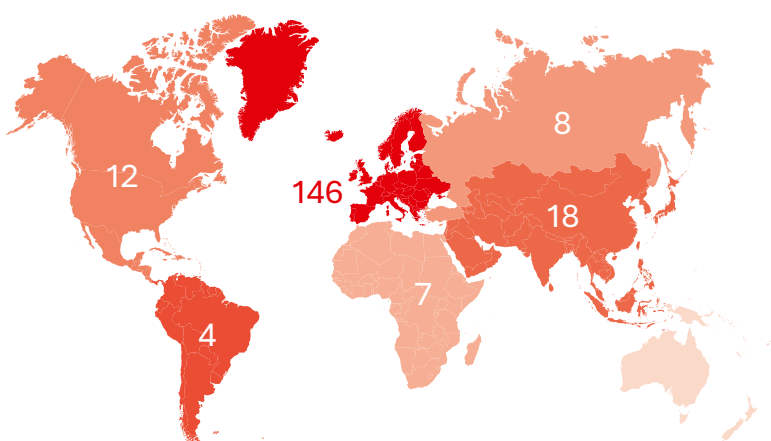
Reviews compiled

- 8 comparative studies for the Confederation
- 3 legal opinions for the Confederation
- 6 legal opinions for cantonal authorities and courts
- 19 commercial opinions: transfers of registered offices
- 9 other commercial opinions

Hours worked on opinions (as a percentage of the clientele)



International coverage of opinions and studies



Publications



Most publications addressed private international law, family law, comparative law methods and international economic law

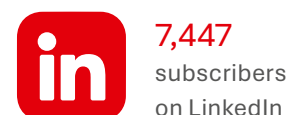
Library statistics

- 11,000 library visits
- 15,561 loans made
- 2,856 enquiries answered
- 164 new users introduced to the library

Symposiums and events

- 9 conferences
- 12 guest lectures
- 5 events for legal practitioners and young researchers

Digital presence



3/ Services in figures

The Swiss Institute of Comparative Law fulfils its legal mandate by providing reliable information on foreign and international law to the Confederation, the cantons, the courts and the criminal prosecution authorities. Its expertise in comparative and foreign law is particularly useful when public authorities have to take foreign law into account in their decisions, whether for political reasons or because of the legal requirements of Swiss law. Public clients – the federal administration, courts and criminal prosecution authorities – are therefore the main users of the SICL's reporting services.

The key figures presented below illustrate the services provided by the SICL during the year under review. They provide information on the number, type and scope of requests, the structure of clients and the use of resources within the framework of the basic legal mandate.



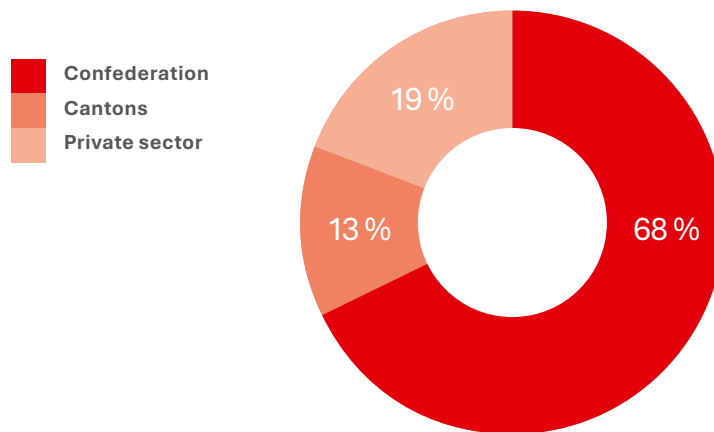
Use of resources by client

In 2025, the SICL provided most of its services to the public sector. The majority of requests came from the federal administration, which consulted the SICL in particular in connection with various legislative processes.

The number of requests from the federal administration increased significantly compared with the previous year. At the same time, the total volume of resources used was below the average level of previous years due to a decline in requests from the private sector. The distribution of resources by client shows that the Institute devotes those resources primarily to the Confederation, the cantons, the courts and the criminal prosecution authorities. Commercial opinions play only a minor role in our resource expenditures.

Working hours devoted to opinions

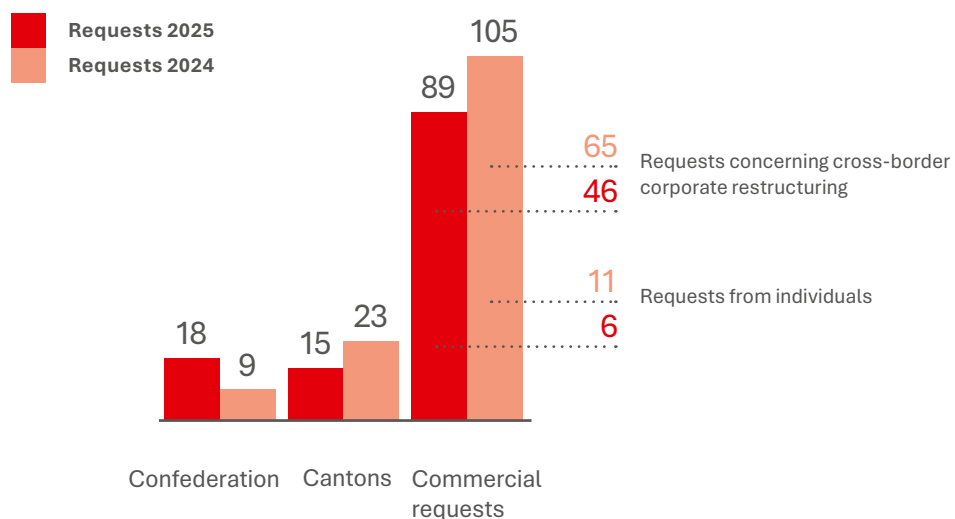
(as a percentage of the clientele)



Requests by client: comparison with the previous year

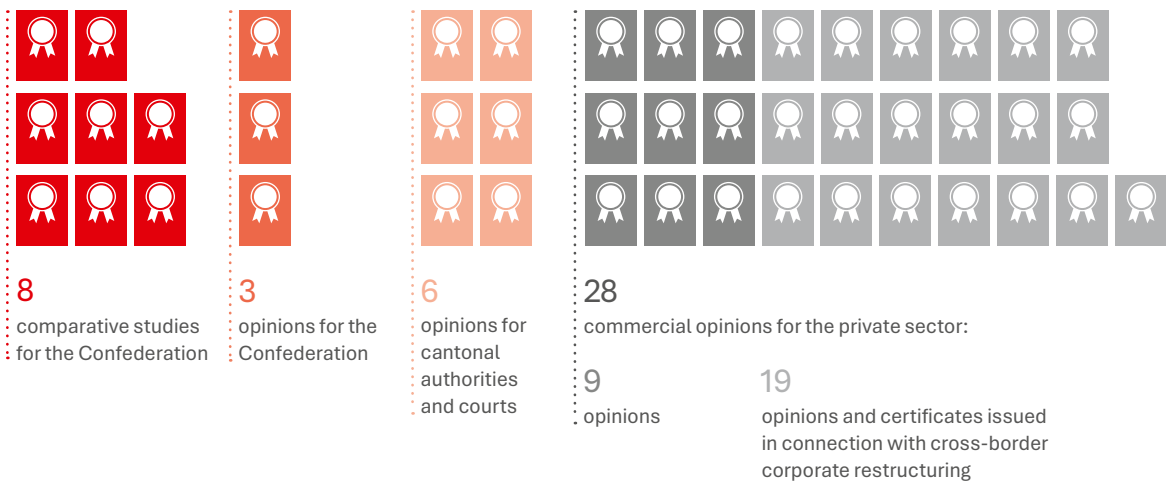
The number of requests from the Confederation doubled compared with the previous year. In contrast, the number of requests from cantonal authorities and courts was lower than in the previous year. Since 2019, requests from public authorities have remained stable compared with the long-term average (16 requests per year from the Confederation and 20 requests per year from cantonal authorities and courts).

The decrease in the total number of requests is mainly attributable to the strategic reorientation undertaken following the 2018 total revision of the SICL Act, which stipulates that commercial services should only be provided on a subsidiary basis. The decline was particularly marked in requests related to international corporate restructuring.



Opinions issued during the year under review by client

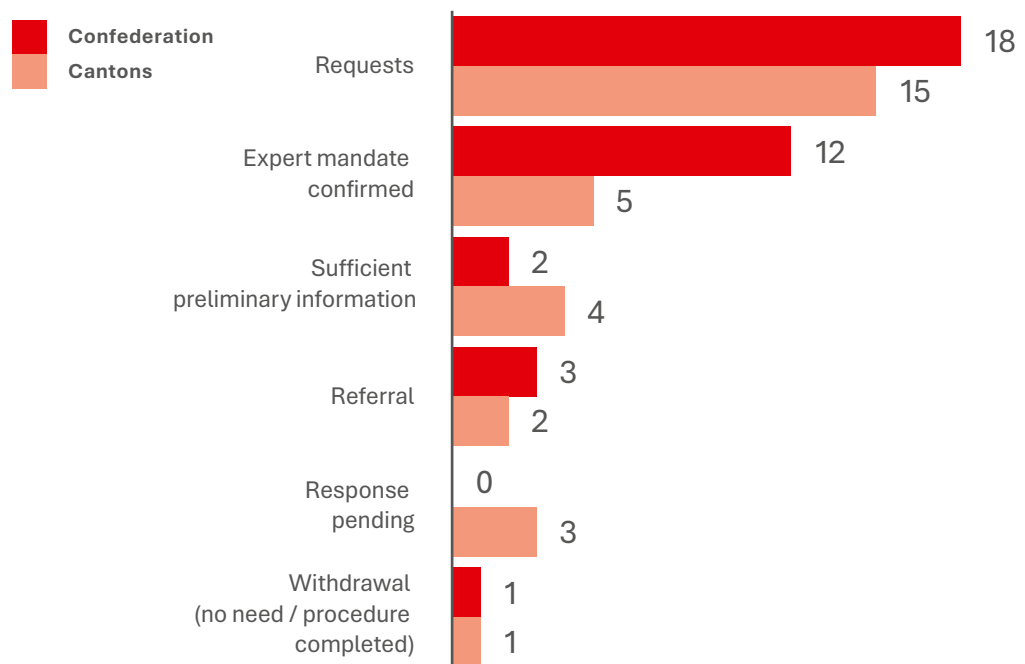
45 opinions distributed as follows:



The State, a legal client of the SICL

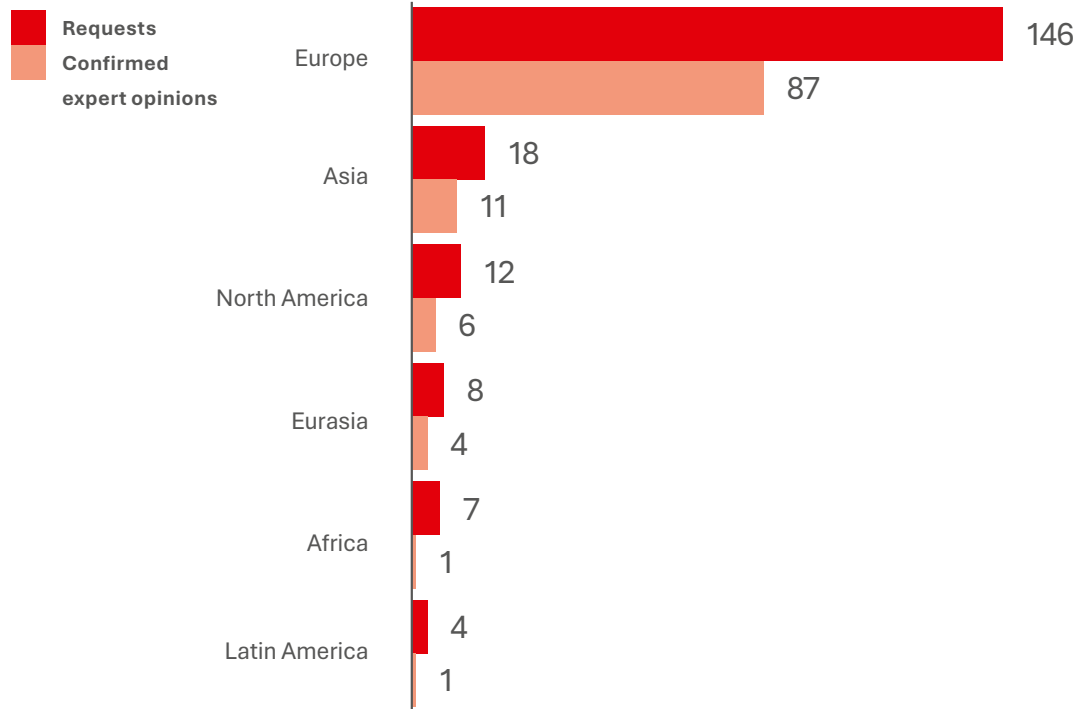
The SICL gives priority to requests from its legal clients. However, not all requests result in an opinion. In several cases, requests from the Swiss Confederation were forwarded to persons or institutions better placed to respond than the SICL. In two cases, it was sufficient to provide the requesting administrative unit with current bibliographical references to respond to its request satisfactorily and to save resources.

With regard to requests from cantonal authorities and courts, the initial information provided was sometimes sufficient, making a formal opinion not necessary. In other cases, the SICL referred the matter to institutions or individuals who were directly instructed by the court to prepare an opinion. In some cases, the court's decision on the assignment of the mandate is still pending, or the proceedings have continued without an opinion being requested.

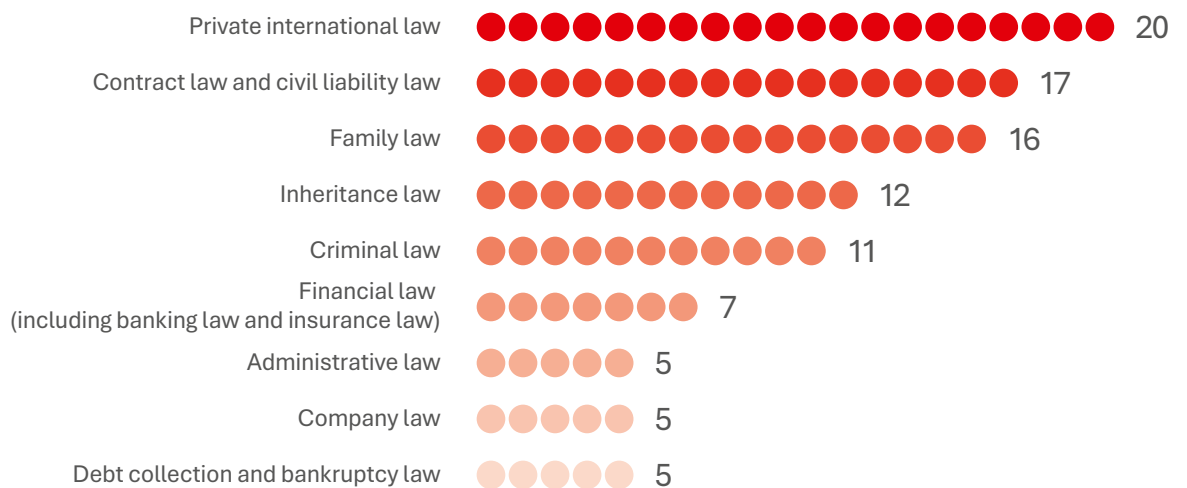


Thematic and geographical spread of requests

In 2025, the SICL received requests covering a wide range of legal systems and topics. There was nevertheless a certain focus on European legal systems and matters of private law. However, cantonal authorities and courts also regularly require information on foreign criminal law in order to address questions of double criminality.



Legal field



Financial income from commercial services

During the financial year under review, the Institute’s revenue developed in line with its strategic orientation. As only commercial opinions are invoiced in full and demand for these has declined, total revenue has also fallen. The SICL is not financially independent. Therefore, it does not charge the Confederation for its services. The increase in its activities for the Confederation is therefore not reflected in its financial income.

The reduction in the number of commercial opinions has freed up time and human resources. These have been used in a targeted manner for academic work and the development of specialist skills with a view to strengthening the quality and efficiency of comparative law expertise activities in the medium and long term.

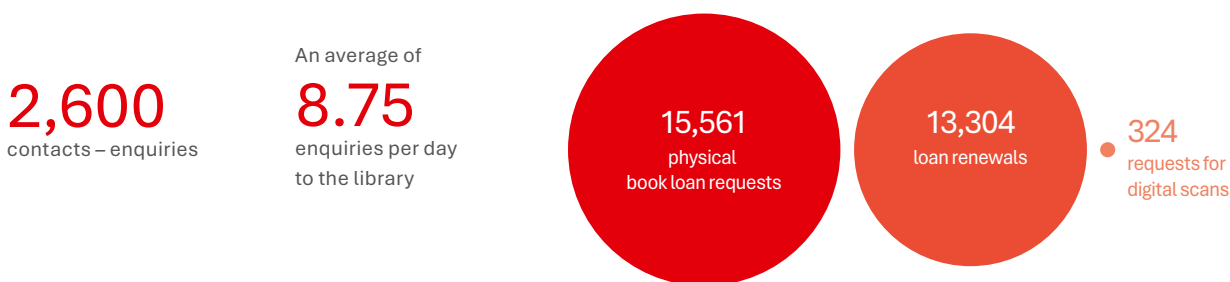
Revenue from legal opinions

	Financial income in CHF	
	2025	2024
Legal opinions for cantonal authorities and courts	74,939	63,409
Commercial opinions (legal opinions for the private sector)	227,757	257,132

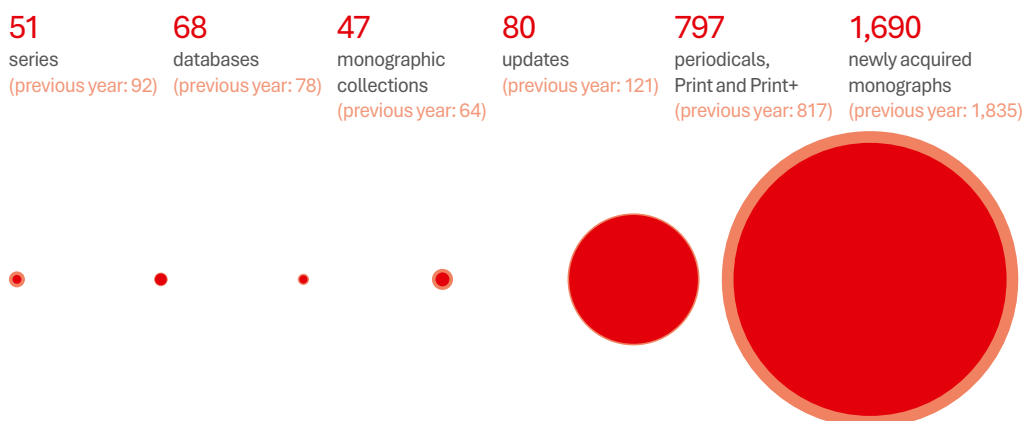
Library services

The SICL’s specialised public library was very popular, as evidenced by the number of enquiries made to library staff, requests for digital scanning and the number of loans. With regard to the development of the collections, limited financial resources along with changes in cost structures and usage patterns (subscriptions and monographs) made it necessary to prioritise the services offered.

Uses



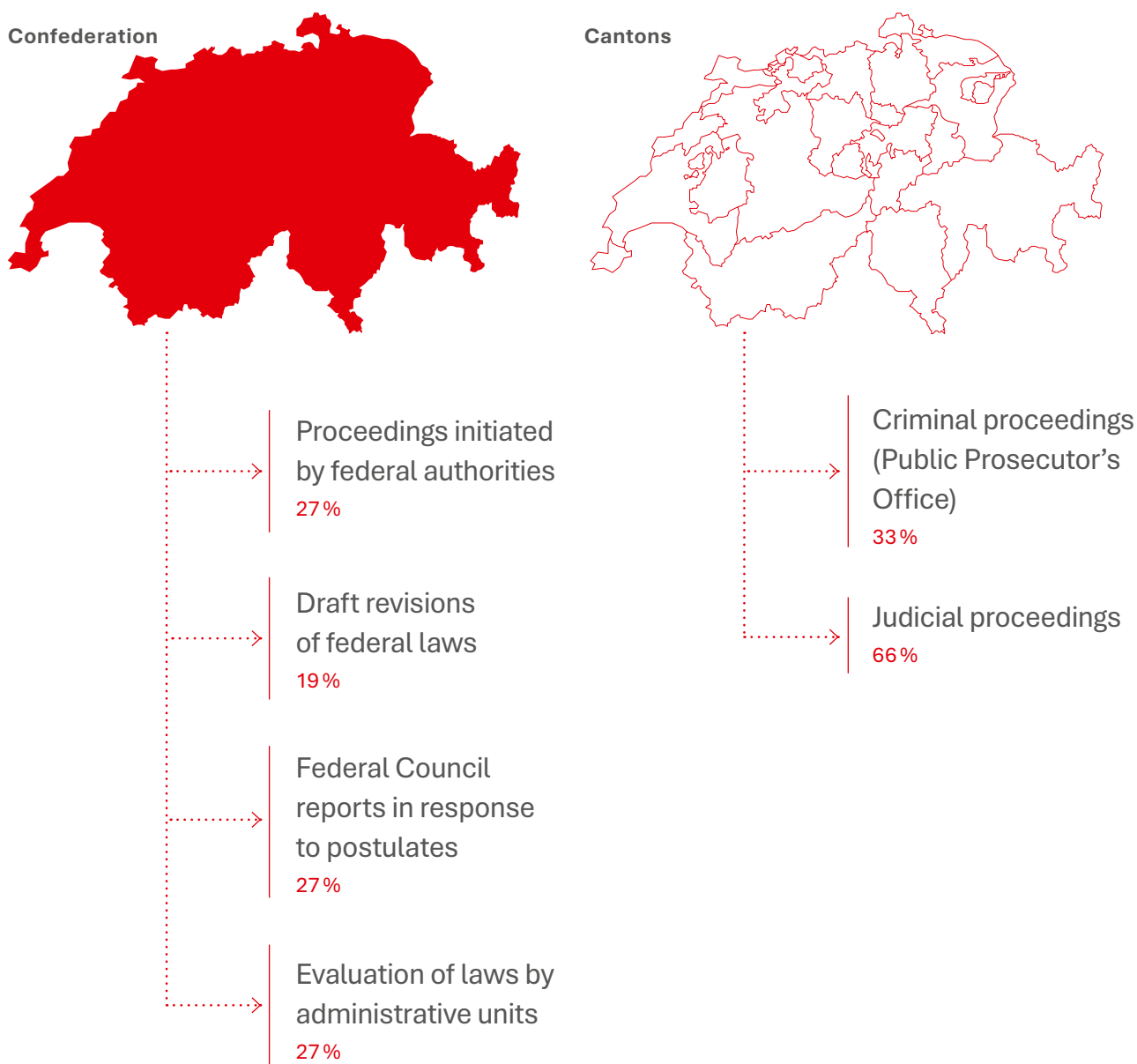
Collection development



4/ Impact

The opinions and legal analysis undertaken by the SICL enable legislators, courts and the Swiss administration to take foreign and international law into account in a reliable manner. In this way, the SICL helps them to make informed decisions in proceedings where knowledge of foreign legal systems is crucial, both in strategic political processes and in individual cases where Swiss law requires it.

In which areas did the opinions issued in 2025 for public authorities have an impact?



The following examples show in which areas and to what extent the opinions and studies of the SICL had an impact in 2025, and how the Institute's expertise in comparative law enabled the Confederation to deal with complex international issues and strengthen its capacity for action.



Transnational repression

On 12 February 2025, the Federal Council adopted its report – already widely discussed in the media – on the situation of Tibetans and Uyghurs in Switzerland and, in particular, on the transnational repression to which they are subjected. Transnational repression refers to cross-border attempts at influence and intimidation by which (mainly authoritarian) states exert pressure on their nationals living in another country. This repression aims to suppress dissent, activism and opposition by creating a climate of fear beyond national borders.

The Federal Council's report was drafted in response to a postulate from the National Council's Foreign Affairs Committee, which was accepted by the latter. It is largely based on a comparative law report prepared by the Institute in 2023 at the request of the Federal Office of Justice. This report analyses the strategies and measures implemented by other states to combat this phenomenon of transnational repression.

The comparative study carried out by the Institute shows that the nine legal systems examined follow very different approaches. The United States, for example, has put in place specific legal mechanisms that are expressly aimed at combating transnational repression directly. Other states use legal instruments which, although not directly tailored to transnational repression, cover activities that can be traced directly or indirectly to foreign states (e.g. espionage). Others still treat the acts in question as ordinary criminal offences, but are debating the need for more targeted measures.

After reviewing the report, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council adopted a motion that has since been approved by both chambers of Parliament. This motion instructs the Federal Council to strengthen measures to protect communities living in Switzerland from foreign influence activities. The SICL organised an internal workshop in 2025, during which several administrative units and the Institute discussed the state of Swiss law on the topic and other possible regulatory approaches as part of an interdisciplinary exchange. The Institute's study has attracted considerable international interest, with the subject being discussed in particular within the Council of Europe.

The Investment Screening Act

In December 2025, Parliament adopted the Investment Screening Act. The purpose of this Act is to prevent foreign investors from acquiring Swiss companies when such acquisitions compromise or threaten public order or security in Switzerland. It is the result of a long process of analysis and evaluation that required a solid comparison of foreign legal regimes in order to understand the international context and determine the regulatory options.

From the outset, the SICL was tasked with conducting a comparative law study to show how other states organise investment control and what mechanisms they use for this purpose. This expertise provided an essential basis for responses to various postulates in 2018 and was directly incorporated into the Federal Council's draft bill.

According to the 2018 SICL opinion, concerns about the influence of foreign investors on security issues had led to the establishment of control mechanisms in most of the 13 jurisdictions studied. At the time, only four of these jurisdictions had no such mechanisms in place. Notably, control mechanisms were also introduced in economies traditionally open to investment, such as Germany, the Netherlands and Norway. The trend towards investment control has since strengthened worldwide. The opinion enabled the Federal Council and Parliament to take international practice and the regulatory context into account when drafting legislation.

Foreign succession certificates

In March 2025, the Swiss Federal Court ruled on a dispute concerning an entry in the land registry (judgment 5A_595/2024). It had to determine whether a German inheritance contract between spouses was sufficient to register the transfer of ownership to the surviving spouse in the Valais land registry or whether a certificate of inheritance was required. In their arguments, both parties referred to an opinion on the scope of foreign certificates of inheritance that the SICL had prepared for the Federal Office of Justice. The national reports prepared by the Institute supplement the guidelines of the Federal Office responsible for land registry and land law.

In this case, the cantonal authorities had refused to enter the contract in the land register on the basis of the inheritance contract between the spouses alone. However, the Institute's opinion showed that such a contract may be sufficient for registration if 'the factual and legal situation is completely clear'. The appellants considered that the situation was indeed clear. The lower courts, and ultimately the Federal Supreme Court, nevertheless concluded that several relevant circumstances were not sufficiently clear for the contract to be accepted as evidence of succession. Even though the decision ultimately required an assessment of the specific circumstances, it appeared that a legally sound assessment would not have been possible without the information provided by the Institute on the content of foreign law, to which all parties referred.



5/ Knowledge infrastructure



5.1 The importance and role of the knowledge infrastructure

The SICL's knowledge infrastructure is the backbone of the Institute. It provides the structural conditions necessary for the creation, updating, sharing and sustainable use of comparative law knowledge. It links spatial, digital and human components into a coherent system that ensures the quality, sustainability and accessibility of comparative law work.

It manifests itself in the way we collect, classify and transmit knowledge: in our knowledge spaces, in research and in professional exchanges. The infrastructure ensures that this knowledge remains available on a daily basis – that it is reliable, verifiable and usable for new legal issues.

5.2 Knowledge spaces

5.2.1 The library, a knowledge space

The library provides the central knowledge infrastructure for foreign and international law. It is a place for collecting, indexing and processing legal sources, as well as a space for professional exchanges where knowledge circulates and is enriched.

Its main asset lies in its ability to systematically classify knowledge and make it usable in the long term: its collections are classified by theme, geographical area and method, according to current and foreseeable legal developments. As such, it guarantees reliable, academically sound and impartial access to knowledge in the field of comparative law and legal systems around the world.

The library thus links the essential processes of knowledge development – documentation, research and application – and ensures that comparative law

knowledge is systematically developed within the Institute and is permanently available for legal decisions taken in Switzerland.

The Library Committee

The effectiveness of the library in providing the infrastructure for knowledge depends not only on the extent of its collections, but also on its targeted development and continuous updating. The Library Committee was established in 2024 to systematise professional exchanges between lawyers and librarians and thus ensure the long-term quality and relevance of the collections.

The Committee's main task is to formulate clear documentation guidelines for legal collections – national legal systems, thematic collections and interna-

tional law. The collection development plans and weeding concepts form the binding framework for collection management. Their joint development ensures that the collections meet both legal requirements and library quality standards and keep pace with foreseeable legal developments.

In 2025, collection development plans for the Chinese, Spanish and Polish law collections and a weeding policy for dictionaries and reference works were defined. Collection development plans for American and Egyptian law are currently being finalised.

The weeding measures planned on this basis have already been partially implemented: adjustments have been made to the collections devoted to Chinese and Polish law, as well as to Swiss journal titles that are no longer subscribed to. The weeding of updates, dictionaries and reference works is currently underway.

Legal classification in French-speaking Switzerland

The legal classification system in French-speaking enables law libraries to harmonise the classification of their collections. It is used by universities and courts across French-speaking Switzerland, as well as by the Universities of Basel and Lucerne.

The working group of libraries using the legal classification system in French-speaking Switzerland was re-activated in 2024 and continued in 2025 to revise and update the reference document that serves as a common basis for the thematic classification of legal publications. This work has made it possible to consolidate previously fragmented classification practices and to significantly improve the consistency of the indexing of legal documents in the joint catalogue of participating libraries. The reference document, written in French and serving as a central working basis for librarians, sets out the definition of legal fields and contains the systematic cross-references which are essential for uniform classification. It is also available in German.

Thanks to this jointly developed update, the legal classification system for French-speaking Switzerland can be directly applied by affiliated institutions.



5.2.2 Researchers and scholarship holders

Every year, the Institute welcomes researchers, scholarship holders and specialists from Switzerland and abroad who use its resources and expertise for their comparative law work. This context fosters encounters that lead to lasting professional and personal relationships – relationships which are maintained thanks to the network of the *Association of Alumni & Friends of the SICL (AiSDC)*. As such, the Institute is a place where specialists from different countries and disciplines come together to carry out joint projects and where lasting collaborations are formed. In doing so, it strengthens Switzerland's academic standing and international influence.

Visiting researchers

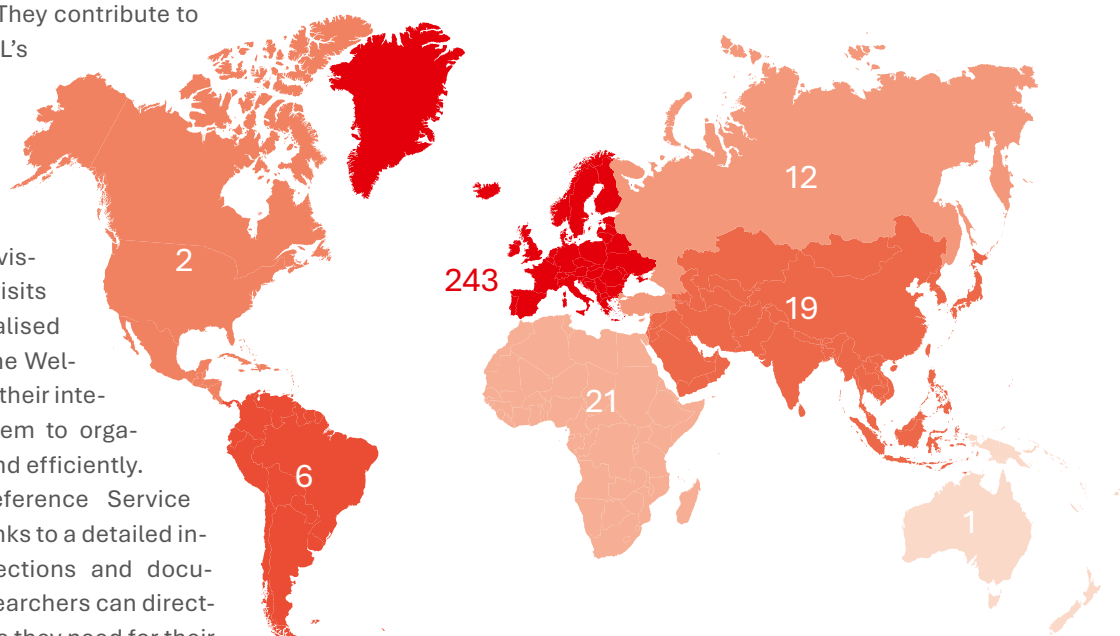
Swiss and foreign visiting researchers use the Institute's infrastructure and expertise for their own comparative law work. They contribute to the expansion of the SICL's knowledge and bring new methodological and thematic perspectives.

In 2025, the library recorded 11,000 visits, an average of 910 visits per month. The personalised welcome provided by the Welcome Centre facilitates their integration and enables them to organise their stay quickly and efficiently.

The library's Reference Service plays a central role: thanks to a detailed introduction to the collections and documentary resources, researchers can directly access the collections they need for their projects. This enables many of them to structure their work from the outset, allowing them to make effective progress. In 2025, the Institute introduced 164 new users to the library.

As well as individual research, researchers also benefit from the academic exchange formats offered by the Institute. In 2025, two contributions in particular which illustrate the scope of the research work in progress were: *Elisa Stracqualursi* (University of Pisa, Italy), who presented her study on *expert systems and extra-judicial divorce and separation procedures*, and *Paul Francis Ohandja* from the University of Buea, Cameroon, who presented his analysis of *the harmonisation of economic law in Africa*. Both presentations generated considerable interest and led to lively discussions with the guest researchers and Institute staff.

Researchers by continent



The figure shows the geographical origin of all researchers who had a work post at the library in 2025. The majority come from Europe, which can be explained by geographical proximity. In addition, as the Institute is located very close to the University of Lausanne, it is regularly used by its researchers and students. The length of stay also reveals a clear trend: most Swiss doctoral students work at the Institute for long periods, while international researchers generally stay for one to two months, renewing their stay if necessary.

Research projects cover a wide range of topics. Many researchers work on inheritance law, private international law and family law, areas in which the Institute's collections and expertise are traditionally strong.

Scholarship recipients

Each year, the Institute awards several van Calker scholarships to support research stays in the field of international, foreign and comparative law. Funded by external funds allocated for this purpose, these scholarships are intended for young Swiss and foreign researchers at master's, doctoral or postdoctoral level who wish to carry out their own research project at the Institute. Particular attention is given to applications from regions where opportunities for legal research are limited. The scholarships thus promote diversity of perspectives and methods in comparative law and international academic dialogue.

In 2025, the Institute welcomed eleven scholarship recipients from the following seven countries: France, India, Iran, Italy, Mongolia, Romania and Turkey. These stays enabled them to continue their research in comparative law in an international environment, while benefiting from the Institute's expertise and infrastructure.

For many of them, this scholarship was an essential step in their research careers. Thanks to this support, *Kimia Hajpirry*, a doctoral student at Tarbiat Modarres University in Tehran, completed her first research stay abroad, an important step that enabled her to advance her work in an international environment. She is studying the legal tensions between foreign investment protection and the prohibition of performance requirements, a highly relevant topic for states in the context of modern investment and trade agreements. At the SICL, she was able to deepen her analysis and benefit from an environment in which several lawyers are working on related issues, including the Vice Director *Krista Nadakavukaren Schefer*, who conducts research in international economic law and investment protection law.

10 van Calker scholarships

1 Petar-Šarčević scholarship

Fellowship recipients
from 7 countries



The fellowship programme is not only for young researchers however, but also for experienced academics. *Chiara Favilli*, a professor at the University of Pisa, emphasised how valuable the library was in furthering her work. Her research project focuses on autonomy, self-determination and freedom of movement for vulnerable adults in European law. It is a prime example of how comparative approaches can contribute to the development of coherent European protection mechanisms.

This underlines the importance of the van Calker Fellowship as a catalyst, both for doctoral students and for experienced researchers who wish to expand their projects in the field of comparative law.

The main themes of scholarships in 2025

Legal framework in the fields of economics and technology

Isik Asli Han

Pamukkale University, Turkey

Tokenisation of assets

Abhishek Thommandru

Alliance University, India

AI models in embedded finance on ‘innovation competition’ in antitrust: a comparative legal perspective

Kimia Hajpirry

Tarbiat-Modarres University, Iran

Legal challenges in seeking the balance of the foreign investment protection framework with emphasis on performance requirement prohibition

Varda Mone

Alliance University, India

Balancing privacy and data protection: state and non-state actor obligations in the digital age

Transnational legal developments and legal pluralism

Esra Tekin

Dicle University, Turkey

Cross-border portability of personal status validly obtained abroad

Maryam Ghanizade

Kharazmi University, Iran

Alternative models of the traditional marriage: a comparative study in Muslim countries

Legal protection structures and institutional conflict resolution

Yulia Mukha

Aix-Marseille University, France

Protection of environmental defenders by human rights and environmental due diligence mechanisms: an international and comparative law study

Chiara Favilli

University of Pisa, Italy

Enhancing the autonomy, self-determination and free movement of vulnerable adults in the EU: a comparative perspective

Mandakh Tsogtsaikhan

National University of Mongolia

Mediation as a non-judicial grievance mechanism concerning labour disputes arising from business-related human rights abuse

Silviu-Dorin Şchiopu

Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu, Romania

Protecting the memory of the deceased in the 21st century

Mr Francesco Rana

University of Turin, Italy

Harmful deception: a comparative analysis of the interplay between compensatory remedies in tort and contract law



5.3 The development of knowledge

Knowledge development at the Institute is achieved through a combination of research, documentation and analysis. It includes both independent projects carried out by the Institute and its staff and collaborations with national and international partners.

These research activities deepen and broaden knowledge in the field of comparative law and form the basis for opinions, publications and new methodological approaches.

5.3.1 Research at the SICL

The legal staff of the SICL conduct research to understand legal developments in Switzerland and abroad and to classify them through comparative analysis. They examine how different legal systems respond to common social, economic or technological challenges and what conclusions can be drawn from this to develop forward-looking legal solutions.

The research undertaken at the SICL is aimed at identifying proven approaches and detecting new legal trends at an early stage, thereby creating a solid basis for the development of law – both in Switzerland and in the context of international exchanges.





Projects

Family Justice Project

Looking beyond courts for resolving disputes on the breakdown of marriage

Project management: John Curran and other SICL lawyers
 Project duration: 2025–2028
 Cooperation: international experts from academia and practice
 Duration: multi-year project (starting in 2025)

Many countries are relying on a greater variety of procedures to resolve family law disputes outside the courts when a marriage breaks down: these range from alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods, such as mediation, collaborative law or family group conferences, to informal or institutionalised models. However, there is currently no systematic comparative analysis of these approaches. The Family Justice project fills this gap by conducting a comprehensive study of the legal basis, institutional structures and practical implementation of these mechanisms.

National reports from selected legal systems, which have been developed according to a jointly developed analysis model, form the methodological basis. They are the foundation for an in-depth comparative analysis of central themes: interaction between judicial and extrajudicial procedures, protection of vulnerable parties, institutional support mechanisms, and conflict resolution practices influenced by culture and society.

The SICL coordinates the drafting of the national reports, develops the analytical framework and systematically integrates the empirical findings into the comparative analysis. The library supports the project with specialist research and access to international sources.

The aim of the project is to highlight the diversity of extrajudicial dispute resolution mechanisms in family law and to study their functioning in a comparative manner. The results form a solid basis on which academics, practitioners and political and administrative decision-makers can rely in current discussions on strengthening amicable dispute resolution in the context of the revision of family procedural law.



Projects

Latin American Network of Comparative Law

Fostering Regional Comparisons

Project director: Rodrigo Polanco

Project duration: since 2023

Cooperation: University of Chile, Universidad de los Andes (Colombia), University of São Paulo, international experts from academia and practice

Funding: SICL, State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) – Research Partnership Grant (2025–2026)

Duration: multi-year project

Since 2023, the SICL has been actively involved in setting up a Latin American network dedicated to comparative law. The aim is to strengthen academic exchanges in the region and promote the development of an independent ‘Latin American’ discourse. Until now, comparative law in Latin America has been heavily influenced by the former colonial powers of Spain and Portugal or the United States. The network therefore aims to develop an autonomous conception of comparative law for both research and teaching.

On the initiative of *Rodrigo Polanco Lazo*, Legal Adviser for Latin America, and thanks to his unfailing commitment, the SICL is playing a decisive role in designing the content and organising exchanges. Following conferences in Chile (in 2023) and Colombia (in 2024), a symposium on comparative law issues in public law was organised in 2025 in collaboration with the University of São Paulo and the University of Chile.

That same year, the project was selected by the Latin American ‘Leading House’ as part of bilateral cooperation in training, research and innovation to receive start-up funding. This will enable the organisation of the workshop *How to Teach Comparative Law?* in 2026, at which Swiss and Latin American researchers will discuss the educational challenges associated with teaching comparative law. In addition, this funding lays the foundations for a regular online publication, which will enhance the visibility and accessibility of comparative law research in the region.

Thanks to the *Latin American Network of Comparative Law*, the SICL is in contact with the region’s leading universities and can closely monitor the regionalisation of comparative law in Latin America. Partners benefit from exchanges with a neutral institution without historical ties and from access to European debates and networks.



Projects

Just Bonding

Filiation in Private International Law between biology, law, and society

Project director: Ilaria Pretelli

Co-project

director: Thalia Kruger
(University of Antwerp, Belgium)

Project duration: 2025–2028

Cooperation: University of Antwerp (Belgium);
University of Macedonia (Greece);
University of Genoa (Italy); University
of Cambridge (UK); University of
Barcelona (Spain); University of Bonn
(Germany); Paris Dauphine University
(France); University of Silesia in
Katowice (Poland); University of
Osijek (Croatia)

Funding: Weave/Lead Agency Funding
Programme Swiss National Science
Foundation (SNSF, CHF 567,878)

The *Just Bonding* project examines how private international law deals with increasingly heterogeneous regulations on legal parentage. It is based on profound changes in family law, which are reflected in growing divergence in national regulations on assisted reproductive technologies (ART), same-sex parenting, surrogacy and adoption. This divergence weakens the legal basis for cross-border parent-child relationships and leads to significant problems of recognition within the European legal area.

The central question is under what conditions parent-child relationships established legally in one state can be recognised in others. The project takes a comparative approach to analysing how different legal systems take into account the biological, social and legal dimensions of parentage and how this is reconciled with fundamental and human rights, in particular the best interests of the child and the right to identity and knowledge of one's origins.

Methodologically, the *Just Bonding* project combines a comparative analysis of the law with a systematic assessment of the interactions between substantive family law regulations, the limits of recognition through public policy reservations, and criminal counter-strategies to cross-border parenthood, for example in the case of reproductive tourism. Using this as a basis, the project develops a model for the recognition of parentage in an international context, guaranteeing the continuity of family relationships while ensuring protection against exploitation and abuse.

The *Just Bonding* project thus makes an essential contribution to knowledge acquisition in the field of international family and filiation law. It establishes a structured comparative foundation for the development of recognition mechanisms in European and international private law and guides legislation, case law and administration in dealing with transnational family configurations. The analysis also takes into account gender and power dimensions in the field of procreation – in particular, issues of protection against exploitation and structural vulnerability in a transnational context.



5.3.2 Publications

The Institute’s publications document the results of its research and analysis and make comparative law knowledge accessible to a wide audience.

They are published in specialist academic journals, collective works and institutional collections, as well as in digital format.

Selection of publications by staff members

Nadjma Yassari

Underage Marriage:
Legal and Social Practice
in Muslim Jurisdictions,
Arab Law Quarterly 2025

1–49 (in collaboration with Dörthe Engelcke
and Dominik Krell)
DOI: 10.1163/15730255-bja10184, 26.03.2025.

This article examines, from a comparative law perspective, the **regulation of early marriage in different Islamic legal systems**. Based on the historical evolution of the rules governing marriage, it shows how religious sources, colonial legislation and modern reform efforts have given rise to various ap-

proaches to setting the minimum age. It appears that legal norms such as age-related barriers to marriage, judicial exemptions, and the role of the guardian are closely linked in practice to socio-economic conditions, family structures, and local power relations.

The article emphasises that the regulation of early marriages cannot be explained solely by legal texts, but is also influenced by a complex interaction of legal, social and economic factors. The analysis shows why reforms in this area can have different effects depending on their institutional anchoring and thus provides a basis for understanding the formation of norms and the capacity for reform of family law regulations in Islamic states.

Mariia W. Pribytkova

The distribution of benefits under personal insurance policies in the Russian matrimonial property regime

Российская юстиция (Russian Justice) 2025, No. 3 (part 1) and No. 4 (part 2), DOI: 10.52433/01316761_2025_04_26.

This two-part article examines an issue in **Russian matrimonial law** that has not been systematically addressed to date, but which is relevant in practice: the allocation of personal insurance benefits taken out by only one of the spouses. The author shows that case law on this subject is not harmonised and establishes the key criteria for distinction: in particular, the purpose of the insurance, the origin of the premiums and the designation of the beneficiary.

On this basis, she develops a control scheme based on the fundamental principles of Russian matrimonial law: the presumption of community property, the distinction between personal property and the functional consideration of the purpose of the insurance. The analysis shows that a clear dogmatic approach is essential in matters of property and family law, as personal insurance policies often represent considerable assets and their classification has direct economic consequences for the persons concerned.

Published by the Supreme Court and the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, the journal *Russian Justice* (Российская юстиция) is one of the most influential specialist legal publications in the country and is regularly cited by academics, practitioners and the judiciary.

Mathias Wouters

Investor Responsibility and Labour Rights: the iuf-Lombard Odier Case

11/1 International Labor Rights Case Law Journal 2025, 21-26, DOI: 10.1163/24056901-11010005.

This article examines a case in which a Cambodian workers' association accused a Swiss private bank of violating **minimum labour standards in its investment activities**. It emphasises the importance of the choice of procedure: depending on the institution hearing the dispute, changes to the angle of analysis of the content can occur and, with it, the legal assessment.

In this case, the Swiss National Contact Point (NCP) examined the complaint on the basis of the OECD Guidelines, which

focus primarily on companies' due diligence and monitoring obligations. If the same complaint had been filed with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the collective rights of workers and the possibilities for trade union action would have been highlighted and would probably have led to a different legal assessment.

This article is particularly relevant for Switzerland, as it exemplifies how international soft-law mechanisms interact with national procedures and how the institutional framework influences the assessment of labour and human rights issues in the context of international investment. It therefore provides a valuable basis for assessing similar cases that Swiss authorities and the financial sector are increasingly confronted with.

Rodrigo Polanco Lazo (ed.)

The Challenges of Comparative Law in Latin America: Methodologies and Interdisciplinarity

15 *Latin American Law Review* 2025, Special Issue, Universidad de los Andes, <https://revistas.uniandes.edu.co/index.php/lar/issue/view/750>

This special issue of the *Latin American Law Review* shows how key areas of legal development in Latin America are currently undergoing change and which issues are particularly relevant to comparative law. It highlights concrete issues, such as the economic repercussions of new fiscal instruments, the political and legal consequences of failed constitutional reforms,

and structural deficiencies in legal education. It also shows that comparative law analyses today depend on empirical data, social science methods, and the study of actual regulatory processes.

The articles reveal that comparative law in the region does not merely compare norms, but also focuses on social issues, ranging from food and health policy to the functioning of political institutions. They also show how foreign law is presented in the media, universities and public debates, and what role this presentation plays in understanding global legal developments.

This publication explains how the *Latin American Network of Comparative Law* opens up new thematic perspectives and fields of observation that directly feed into the Institute's comparative law knowledge base.

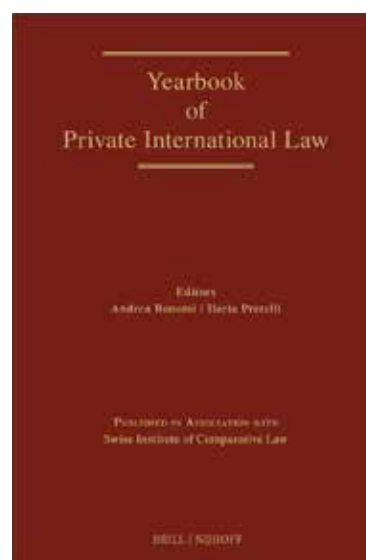
Institute publications

The *Yearbook of Private International Law* is an annual publication in English that analyses the main developments in private international law around the world. The 26th edition – published for the first time in 2025 by the new publishing house Brill Nijhoff – is devoted to fundamental issues of supranational harmonisation of private international law and the effectiveness of choice of court agreements. It also addresses current issues such as the sale of nationality, the determination of a company's actual place of business in the sometimes delicate context of freedom of establishment, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on international family law, and the application of the European Succession Regulation in Member States.

With contributions from various legal systems, including those of Mongolia and Bangladesh, this volume continues to illustrate the broad international scope that the *Yearbook* has always featured.

Web reference: the complete list of electronic opinions, publications and online contributions is available on the Institute's website:

www.isdc.ch/en/publications/news



5.4 Knowledge exchange: networking and transfer

Knowledge exchange is the link between research, legal practice and the general public. It makes comparative law knowledge effective by facilitating understanding and cooperation between institutions, disciplines and legal systems, and by transmitting this knowledge to where it can be used by legislators, case law and the administration of the Confederation and the cantons.

Knowledge is shared, developed and transferred to new contexts through events, cooperation and networks. Knowledge exchange thus contributes to ensuring that the knowledge generated at the SICL is not only collected and analysed, but also communicated, applied and integrated into international academic and legal discourse.

5.4.1 Events

Each year, the SICL offers a varied and international programme of colloquiums, conferences, workshops and webinars on current issues in international, foreign and comparative law. These events promote exchanges between academics, politicians, practitioners and the general public, while highlighting the Institute's interdisciplinary and comparative law expertise. In collaboration with partner universities and organisations, the SICL thus strengthens its role as a Swiss centre of excellence in national and international legal discourse.



International colloquiums and conferences

35th Private International Law Day

Lausanne, 19/20 November 2025

The *Private International Law Day* is almost forty years old. It was created by Alfred von Overbeck, the Institute's first director and co-architect of the Federal Act on Private International Law (PILA), as an informal meeting of Swiss teachers of private international law (PIL). Since the mid-2000s, it has gradually opened up to the administration, the judiciary, lawyers and international specialists. This small academic circle has become an international forum where diverse legal cultures, methodological approaches and comparative law perspectives come together.

The 35th edition, held on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Federal Court, drew inspiration from Alfred von Overbeck's original idea of exchange, honouring the actors who shape this discipline today: courts, lawyers and litigants. The central question was how judicial practice, strategic litigation and innovative arguments are changing private international law and how these developments are reflected in the interaction between national and supranational legal systems.

Prof. Dr Frank Klinkhammer, judge at the 12th Chamber of the German Federal Court of Justice, kicked off the day. Drawing on German case law on international surrogacy, he showed how courts balance recognition, the interests of the child and the fundamental values of national law, reconciling these values with public policy norms and conflict of law rules. His comparison of Californian and Ukrainian cases illustrated how, depending on the facts and the international context, the same legal issue can lead to different outcomes, and how new judicial practices, partly adapted to European recognition procedures, are emerging in Ukraine. His analysis clearly highlighted the close links between case law, legal policy expectations and the transnational context.

The following contributions echoed these observations: today, international situations are less influenced by abstract rules than by concrete judicial practice and, increasingly, by the procedural strategies of the legal profession. Private international law often arises in implementation, in the way courts structure complex international disputes and relate them to constitutional, political or technological frameworks.

Henrik Saugmandsgaard Øe, former Advocate General at the Court of Justice of the European Union, explained how the Court methodically rules on key issues of classification, such as the distinction between contract and tort. Using examples, he explained how supranational case law structures the scope for action of national courts and the importance of precise legal argumentation in a multi-level European system.

Finally, Caterina D'Ousualdo (European Commission, DG Justice) discussed the effects of the new EU anti-SLAPP Directive, which requires national courts to quickly detect and stop abusive cross-border complaints. Here too, a new interaction is being created between European law standards, national judicial practice and legal strategies.

The discussions clearly showed how rare it is for academia, the judiciary and practitioners to have the opportunity to engage in direct dialogue. When these perspectives are brought together, the issues become clearer, more precise and sometimes more fundamental. The fact that such discussions were able to take place at the SICL is consistent with its role as defined in the SICL Act: a place where different legal communities meet to discuss current international developments.



In brief**What the 35th Private International Law Day showed**

- Today, private international law is evolving mainly through judicial practice and advocacy.
 - New topics are changing interpretations: digital assets, family status issues and constitutional limits require new methodological approaches in private international law.
 - Direct exchanges between academia, the judiciary and practitioners provide guidance and clarify the main methodological principles.
-



Symposium: Interpreting from text and principles in international arbitration: identifying challenges

Washington, D.C. (United States), 20 November 2025; webinar on 4 December 2025

For the past six years, the Institute and the Centre on International Commercial Arbitration at American University have jointly organised a symposium highlighting key developments in international dispute resolution. The aim is to analyse current issues in arbitration from a balanced perspective, both academic and practical, and thus contribute to understanding how it functions in the global economic law system. These events underscore the SICL's focus on international economic law and are widely recognised in practice and academia.

The 2025 symposium focused on the interpretation of legal texts and principles by international arbitral tribunals in commercial arbitration and investment dispute proceedings. The growing use of arbitration, new generations of investment agreements and the global debate on the role of international law provided the backdrop for the discussions.

The first part of the event took place on 20 November in Washington, D.C. Experts from government agencies, practice and academia addressed key issues in the interpretation of international arbitration law. Krista Nadakavukaren Schefer presented the evolution of international investment agreements and the different methods of interpretation applied by arbitral tribunals. She also explained why differences between legal systems can influence the outcome of proceedings.

David Bigge (US Department of State) detailed how government lawyers apply rules of interpretation in disputes and how these considerations are already taken into account in contract negotiations. Luke Sobota (Three Crowns LLP) presented the approach taken by lawyers to interpreting general principles of international law, particularly in commercial arbitration proceedings. Mark Kantor, one of the world's most prominent arbitrators, highlighted, from a judicial perspective, the tensions between methodological requirements and their practical implementation. The event was moderated by Björn Arp (American University Washington College of Law). The interactive format and keen interest shown by practitioners, academics and government representatives led to a lively debate.

The second part of the symposium offered an academic and European perspective. During an online event held on 4 December 2025, Professor Horacio A. Grigera Naón moderated a panel discussion with Krista Nadakavukaren Schefer, Björn Arp, Tarcisio Gazzini, Panos Merkouris and Kirsten Schmalenbach. Kirsten Schmalenbach used the example of the general principle of effectiveness to show how different interpretations of legal principles can influence the outcome of a case. Panos Merkouris explained the importance of general principles of international law for the proper functioning of the systematic integration of the international legal system. Tarcisio Gazzini analysed the interpretation of the principle of fair and equitable treatment and the possible changes brought about by new contractual texts. These contributions highlighted the close link between methodological issues of interpretation and fundamental developments in international economic law and international investment law.



In brief**Relevance for Switzerland**

- Interpretation is crucial to the procedure: minor methodological differences can lead to completely different results.
 - New contractual texts set different criteria: modern investment agreements define cases of violation of the principle of fair and equitable treatment more restrictively.
 - Principles are gaining in importance: legal principles such as effectiveness or systematic integration can prove decisive, particularly when the contractual text lacks clarity.
-



Overview of events in 2025

The events which took place in 2025 reflect the thematic diversity of the Institute's work, addressing current developments in foreign, international and comparative law. They covered international economic and trade issues, legal challenges arising from societal developments, transnational themes and private law issues, as well as methodological and fundamental aspects of comparative law. These four themes illustrate the areas in which the Institute collects, deepens and mobilises its knowledge through professional exchanges.

International economic law

The legal trade regime of critical raw materials and the reorganization of global value chains: designing a legal strategy for Brazil

Guest Lecture, Karla C. M. Borges Furlaneto
SICL, Lausanne, 28 January 2025

Protection of environmental defenders by human rights and environmental due diligence mechanisms: an international and comparative law study

Guest Lecture, Yulia Mukha, University of Aix-Marseille,
SICL, Lausanne, 13 February 2025

Comparative trade law workshop

Georgetown Law, Washington, D.C., 17/18 March 2025

Legal challenges in seeking the balance of the foreign investment protection framework with emphasis on performance requirement prohibition

Guest Lecture, Kimia Hajpirry, Tarbiat-Modarres University
SICL, Lausanne, 15 May 2025

IEL and subnational governments

Online webinar
SICL, 28 May 2025

Innovation competition in AI-driven embedded finance: a comparative antitrust perspective

Guest Lecture, Abhishek Thommandru, Alliance University
SICL, Lausanne, 18 June 2025

Resisting digital colonialism: balancing privacy and data protection through state and non-state actor obligations in the global south

Guest Lecture, Varda Mone, Alliance University
SICL, Lausanne, 14 August 2025

IEL and non-governmental actors

Online webinar
SICL, 1 October 2025

IEL and regional economic integration organizations

Online webinar
SICL, 12 November 2025

Interpreting from text and principles in international arbitration: identifying challenges

American University
Washington, D.C., 20 November 2025

Interpreting from text and principles in international arbitration: identifying challenges

Online webinar
SICL, 4 December 2025

Family law, social complexity

Neurotechnological advances, human rights and the elderly

SICL, Lausanne, 11 June 2025

The legal challenges of recognising gender neutrality

ASICL webinar, Guillaume Kessler, University of Savoie Mont Blanc, 12 June 2025

Empowering the autonomy of vulnerable adults: problems and challenges

Guest Lecture, Chiara Favilli, University of Pisa
SICL, Lausanne, 18 June 2025

The portability of family status of Syrian Arab Republic citizens under temporary protection status in Turkey: polygamy and minor marriages

Guest Lecture, Esra Tekin, University of Dicle
SICL, Lausanne, 10 July 2025

Alternative models of the traditional marriage: a comparative study in Muslim countries

Guest Lecture, Maryam Ghanizade Bafghi, Kharazmi University
SICL, Lausanne, 23 September 2025

Mediation as a strategic imperative: bridging the gap between legal principle and small-state reality

Guest Lecture, Mandakh Tsogtsaikhan, National University of Mongolia
SICL, Lausanne, 5 August 2025

Transnational law, foreign law and private international law**Shareholder agreements in Turkish private international law**

Guest Lecture, Nedime Tuğçe Yigit, Selçuk University
SICL, Lausanne, 10 July 2025

Protecting the memory of the deceased in the 21st century

Guest Lecture, Silviu-Dorin Şchiopu, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu
SICL, Lausanne, 28 August 2025

The role of judicial actors in shaping private international law: a comparative perspective

35th Private International Law Day
SICL, Lausanne, 20/21 November 2025

Events for legal practice**Messages from home: exploring transnational repression (and how to counter it)**

Federal Office of Justice, Bern, 21 May 2025

Marriage contracts here and elsewhere

Vaud Bar Association
Lausanne, 25 September 2025

Knowledge transfer formats

In 2025, the SICL presented its services, in particular its library, to numerous groups of Swiss and foreign students and organised seminars. These visits provided an opportunity to promote the Institute's resources and strengthen exchanges with the academic world.

Comparative law methods and fundamental research**Shaping tomorrow's law on the strength of tradition – a joint celebration**

SICL, Lausanne, 5 February 2025

Harmful deception: a comparative analysis of the interplay between compensatory remedies in tort and contract

Guest Lecture, Francesco Rana, University of Turin
SICL, Lausanne, 25 February 2025

Workshop in comparative law methods

SICL, Lausanne, 10 June 2025

The challenges of comparative law in the field of public law in Latin America

Faculty of Law, University of São Paulo
São Paulo, 13/14 November 2025



5.4.2 National and international networks and cooperation

Anchored at the national level, the SICL is also part of an international network. It monitors relevant legal developments around the world and mobilises this knowledge for Switzerland through targeted cooperation and specialised dialogue. Thanks to this network, the Institute strengthens the quality, relevance and international reach of its comparative law work.

These collaborations are diverse, ranging from project partnerships, international research networks and university partnerships, as already mentioned, to specialist working groups and library collaborations. They give the Institute direct access to sources, expertise and comparative data. They also help to identify relevant legal developments at an early stage and to systematically document them. At the same time, they enable the SICL to contribute its expertise to international scientific exchanges and participate in joint projects.

The library plays a central role in the SICL's networking strategy.

International network and library cooperation

Through its integration with specialised networks and cooperation structures, the SICL library contributes to access to relevant legal sources, the development of library standards and the early identification of new technological developments. This helps it to enhance the quality of library services and supports the Institute's comparative law work.

Swiss Library Service Platform (SLSP)

The Swiss Library Service Platform (SLSP) is the national service platform for Swiss scientific libraries. It provides shared infrastructure and services.

In March 2025, the president of the SLSP and two members of its staff visited the SICL library. This visit gave them a better understanding of the specific needs and characteristics of the Institute's library and its position in the Swiss library landscape.

The SICL library also participated in the SLSP forum, which brings together the directors of Swiss scientific libraries every year. The forum contributes to professional exchanges and the dissemination of information on current technological developments in the library field. In 2025, participants were also invited to take part in discussions on the future strategic direction of the platform.

International Association of Law Libraries (IALL)

The International Association of Law Libraries (IALL) is a global network of law libraries and legal information specialists. Its 43rd Annual Course was held from 19 to 23 October 2025 in Houston, Texas (United States), and was organised by South Texas College of Law Houston.

The head of the Institute's library, Nathalie Matthey, is a member of the IALL Steering Committee. Accompanied by her assistant, Sophie Chapuis, she attended the 2025 IALL Annual Conference in Houston. The Institute's library is therefore directly integrated into the international network, both at the institutional level and in the context of professional exchanges.

This networking also has an immediate practical effect: the contacts established within the IALL facilitate international interlibrary loans and improve access to foreign legal sources – a service regularly used by the Institute's researchers.

Federal Administration Library Exchange Group (CDC)

The SICL library is part of the Federal Administration Library Exchange Group (CDC), a coordination and exchange forum that focuses specifically on electronic resources. These exchanges enable the Institute's library to stay informed about the federal administration's shared resources, including ongoing digitisation projects, institutional repositories and the scope of national licences.

At the same time, the CDC provides a framework for highlighting the specific characteristics and needs of the SICL library in relation to partner libraries in the federal administration and integrating them into professional exchanges.



5.4.3 Alumni and Friends of the Institute / AiSDC

The Association of Alumni and Friends of the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law (AiSDC) connects former researchers, scholarship recipients and staff of the Institute. Established as a financially independent association, this network aims to cultivate professional and personal exchanges and helps to maintain the relationships forged during stays at the SICL. It regularly organises events, discussions and digital formats that enable it to keep in contact with alumni and ensure the continued transfer of knowledge. Thanks to its members spread across the globe, it also acts as a catalyst for the Institute’s visibility and helps to disseminate its current activities and publications internationally.

As of 30 November 2025, the AiSDC had 143 members on all continents. The association brings together legal specialists from various fields – doctoral students, professors, practitioners and students. In this way, it serves to strengthen the Institute’s international presence.

In 2025, the network contributed significantly to the dissemination of the Institute’s activities, in particular the programme of events and the call for applications for the van Calker scholarship.

The Petar Sarcevic Scholarship

Each year, the AiSDC awards the Petar Sarcevic Scholarship to a person whose application for the van Calker Scholarship was not successful, but whose application was considered to be of outstanding quality.

In 2025, the scholarship was awarded to Abhishek Thommandru, assistant professor at Alliance University, India. He presented his project “Innovation Competition in AI-Driven Embedded Finance” as part of Compare to Connect, an Institute format that highlights work in progress and enables direct professional exchanges from a comparative perspective.

In his contribution, he showed how the integration of financial services into digital platforms is blurring the traditional boundaries between the technology and finance sectors. This embedded finance poses challenges in terms of competition law, particularly with regard to data-based market power and possible exclusionary practices.



6/ The organisation

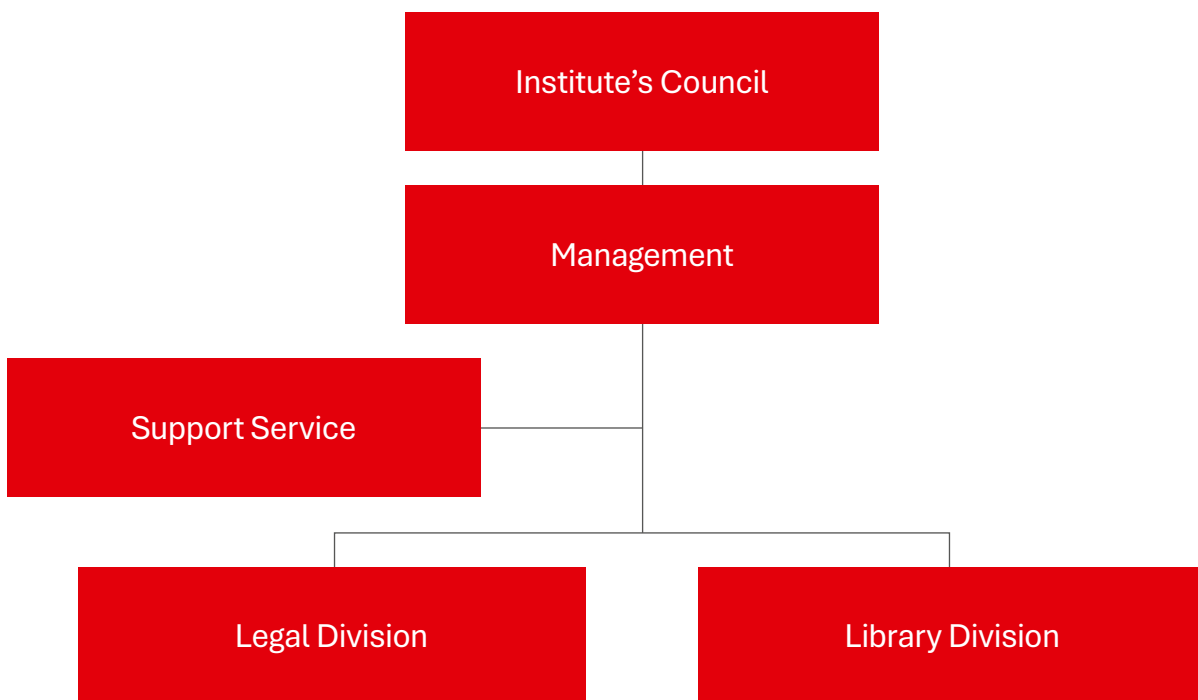
6.1 The structure

The organisation of the SICL reflects the two main types of services it provides: on the one hand, the production and processing of knowledge on foreign and international law and, on the other hand, the provision of information in its publicly accessible library. For this reason, the SICL is organised into two divisions which are assisted by a support service.

Service orientation is its guiding organisational principle. This is also reflected in its work processes, which are systematically geared to the needs of its clients. For opinions on foreign law, a lawyer trained in Swiss law ensures that the content is comprehensible to the Swiss authorities and that they can use it.

In addition to its two specialist divisions, the SICL has a support service that assists the divisions with specialists in finance, human resources, IT, logistics, bookbinding and public relations. It ensures the smooth running of the Institute in administrative, technical and organisational terms.

The Institute's organisational structure (organisation chart)



6.2 Staff and their skills

The 29 full-time equivalents (FTE) (not including one apprentice and one post-doctoral position funded by third-party funds) are characterised by exceptional linguistic diversity. In addition to the national languages (French: 66.7 %, German: 25.9 %, Italian: 7.4 %), Arabic, Chinese, English, Dutch, Persian, Russian, Swedish, Serbian and Spanish were represented in 2025.

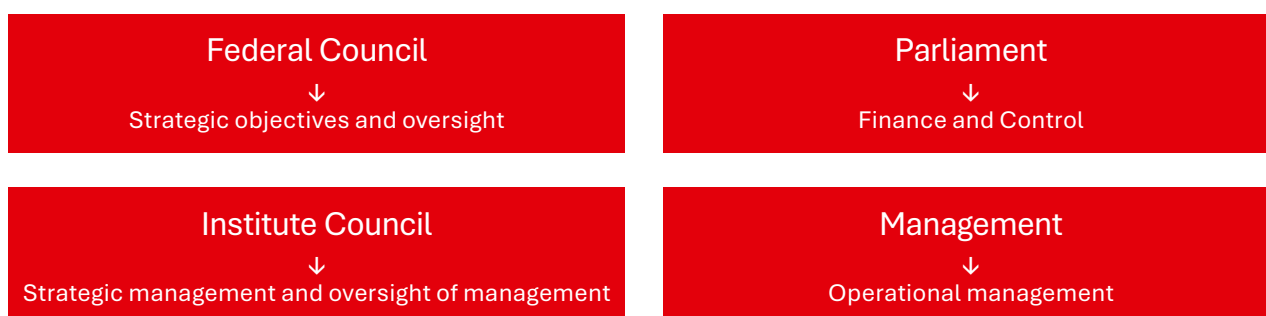
In the same year, the twelve legal advisors were tasked with developing knowledge relating to foreign and international law. They have practical experience in their national legal systems and, for most of them, also meet the requirements to practise as lawyers. In addition, the majority of them have completed additional legal training (that is, an LL.M degree) and half of them hold a doctorate and teach regularly. Four of them have obtained their habilitation. The Institute's legal staff therefore combines practical experience with academic expertise.

Geographically, the staff cover not only the main European legal systems, but also those of English-speaking, Spanish-speaking and Russian-speaking countries, the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, the SICL regularly works with external correspondents who provide expertise on their respective legal systems on an ad hoc basis.

The library staff have a variety of backgrounds: the Institute's librarians hold apprenticeship diplomas, CAS or university degrees in information science, or master's degrees in law. This diversity enables them to carry out both day-to-day activities and larger-scale projects. In addition, the staff are able to develop specialised collections in a targeted manner, for example on Chinese, Eastern European or Arab law, and to meet the specific requirements of a specialised law library. Finally, the library is actively involved in training the next generation by taking on an apprentice.

In 2025, women accounted for 58.5 % of the staff (including trainees; without trainees, the figure was 57.6 %), exceeding the target set by the Swiss Confederation. The proportion of women was 66.7 % among senior management and 58.3 % among middle management.

Governance at a glance



6.3 Operational management



Management Team (from left): Nadjma Yassari, Lukas Heckendorn Urscheler, Nathalie Matthey, Krista Nadakavukaren Schefer

The Management Team is responsible for the operational management of the Institute. It consists of the **Director, Prof. Dr Nadjma Yassari**, the **Deputy Director, PD Dr Krista Nadakavukaren Schefer**, and the **Deputy Director, Dr Lukas Heckendorn Urscheler** (shared position). It manages the Institute's affairs, represents the Institute externally and prepares the basis for decisions by the Institute's Council.

The extended Management Team also includes the **Library Director, Nathalie Matthey**, a librarian and team leader with a federal certificate. In this capacity, she is involved in conceptual and operational aspects, particularly in matters relating to knowledge infrastructure and institutional development.

6.4 Strategic management: the Institute's Council

The Institute's Council is the Institute's supreme governing body. It is responsible for its strategic management. Its members represent the fields of justice, federal administration, education and academia. One member represents the canton of Vaud, where the Institute is based.

In 2025, the Institute's Board was composed of the following members:

Prof. Dr Franz Werro

President until 30 March 2025
University of Fribourg

Prof. Dr Michel Heinzmann

University of Fribourg
President since 1 April 2025

Natascia Nussberger

Federal Office of Personnel, Bern
Vice-Chair

Dr Daniel Alder

Lawyer, Zurich

Elena Balzardi

Swiss National Library, Bern

Prof. Dr Eva Maria Belser

University of Fribourg

Eric Cottier

Former Attorney General
of the Canton of Vaud

Prof. Dr Cordula Lötscher

University of Basel

Prof. Dr Pascal Mahon

Professor Emeritus,
University of Neuchâtel

Dr Konrad Sahlfeld

Federal Department of Justice
and Police, Bern

The Federal Council has extended the term of office of the former President, Prof. Dr Franz Werro, which was due to expire at the end of 2024, by three months – until 31 March 2025 – in order to ensure a smooth transition to the presidency of the Institute's Board. Professor Werro had been at the helm of the Institute since the entry into force of the completely revised SICL Act and led the Institute's Council with great commitment during this period of transition.

The Institute's Council met five times during the year under review. In addition, the President of the Institute's Council and the Director held regular bilateral meetings.

The interests of the members of the Institute's Board are published on the website of the Confederation's extra-parliamentary commissions. The Vice-Chair has the authority, on behalf of the Institute's Council, to raise awareness of conflicts of interest. At its meeting on 8 May 2025, the Institute's Council discussed a working paper on this subject, which it adopted on 10 September 2025 as a guide to managing conflicts of interest.

6.5 The Academic Advisory Council

Designed as a network, the Academic Advisory Council is composed of renowned experts from Swiss universities and foreign institutions on several continents who work in fields that are particularly important to the Institute's research interests.

As a network of experienced individuals with expertise and international contacts, the Council complements the in-house knowledge of the Institute. In particular, it supports the Institute in the development of its projects. Council members may be called upon in various ways: to co-organise conferences, propose topics or speakers for conferences or projects, contribute to publications, provide feedback on texts and relevant bibliographical references for new projects.

Members of the Academic Advisory Council are invited to all Institute events and are kept informed of its publications. Where possible, they are also involved in the design of its programme. An online meeting of the Academic Advisory Council is held once a year. In addition, thematic meetings with Institute staff are planned.

The inaugural meeting of the Academic Advisory Council was held on 23 September 2025 in the presence of the President of the Institute's Board and the Management.



The Academic Advisory Council is composed of the following members:

Prof. Dr Anne van Aaken

Faculty of Law,
University of Hamburg, Germany

Prof. Gary Bell

National University of Singapore, Singapore

Prof. Dr Mira Burri

Faculty of Law, University of Lucerne

Prof. Dr Michelle Cottier

Faculty of Law, University of Geneva

Prof. Dr Raphaela Cueni

Faculty of Law, University of St. Gallen

Prof. Dr Julia Eckert

Institute of Social Anthropology,
University of Bern

Prof. Dr Florian Eichel

Institute of Private International Law and
Civil Procedure, University of Bern

Prof. Dr Marie-Claire Foblets

Max Planck Institute for Social
Anthropology, Halle (Saale), Germany

Prof. Dr Mark Goodale

Institute of Social Sciences,
University of Lausanne

Prof. Dr Andreas Heinemann

Faculty of Law, University of Zurich

Prof. Dr Fabienne Jault-Seseke

Paris-Saclay University, France

**Prof. Dr Ramon Olivier Mabillard
LL.M.**

Faculty of Law, University of Fribourg

Prof. Dr Makane Moïse Mbengue

Faculty of Law, University of Geneva

Prof. Dr Daniel Moeckli

Faculty of Law, University of Zurich

Prof. Dr Andreas Müller

Faculty of Law, University of Basel

Prof. Dr Yuko Nishitani

Kyoto University, Japan

Prof. Dr Anne Peters LL.M.

Max Planck Institute for Comparative
Public Law and International Law,
Heidelberg, Germany

Prof. Dr Anselmo Reyes

University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Prof. Dr Gregory Shaffer

Georgetown University Law Centre,
United States

Prof. Dr Andreas R. Ziegler

Faculty of Law, University of Lausanne

Prof. Dr Nesa Zimmermann

Faculty of Law, University of Neuchâtel

6.6 The Confederation: strategic management and oversight

The SICL is a legally independent entity of the Confederation. Its legal independence gives it the credibility and flexibility it needs to carry out its mission effectively. At the same time, the Confederation has various management tools at its disposal, in accordance with its corporate governance principles. While respecting the scientific independence of the SICL, the Federal Council assigns it strategic objectives every four years (Art. 20 SICL Act).

For the period 2024–2027, the Federal Council expects the Institute to:

- continue, as far as possible, to pursue a corporate strategy based on principles of sustainability and ethics;
 - be recognised in Switzerland and abroad as a centre of scientific excellence in research and documentation in the fields of comparative law, foreign law and international law;
 - offer Swiss and foreign scientists an attractive research environment;
 - strive to achieve a high level of client satisfaction and staff loyalty and enjoy a good reputation among the public.
-

In the specific areas of activity of the SICL, the Federal Council also expects it to:

- ensure the high quality and visibility of its services;
 - conduct recognised academic research which, through publications and flagship events, contributes to academic discourse in Switzerland and abroad;
 - tailor its services to the needs of its clientele, while respecting its scientific independence;
 - use the quality and diversity (particularly geographical) of institutions as the main criteria for establishing collaborations with universities and research institutes, as well as their libraries and other partners in Switzerland and abroad;
 - digitise its processes and services where this can be expected to increase efficiency and/or facilitate access to its services.
-

The Federal Council approves the SICL's annual reporting on the achievement of strategic objectives in the form of summary reports to the Swiss Parliament. In 2025, the Institute's Council also defined a series of indicators to quantify the achievement of strategic objectives.

As a decentralised entity of the federal administration within the meaning of Art. 2, para. 3 of the Government and Administration Organisation Act (GAOA), the SICL is attached to the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP). For this reason, meetings are held twice a year with the FDJP Directorate.

6.7 Resources, finances and risk management

As a public law institution of the Confederation, the SICL accounts are integrated into the accounts of the Swiss Confederation (Art. 1 para. 1 SICL Act). Its annual accounts are integrated into the Confederation's accounts and, like its budget, are approved by Parliament. Its financial and personnel management processes comply with the guidelines and systems of the central federal administration. It is therefore subject to the provisions of the Federal Finance Act and the Federal Finance Ordinance, as well as the guidelines and instructions of the Federal Finance Administration (FFA) on budgetary and accounting management at federal level. Exceptions are regulated in specific laws or ordinances. For example, the Institute is excluded from the scope of the Ordinance on the Organisation of Public Procurement in the Federal Administration (Org-OMP).

The SICL is also integrated into the Confederation's risk management and internal control system. The identification, analysis, assessment, control and monitoring of risks follow the guidelines and system of the FFA for risk management at the federal level. The focus is on measures to ensure the quality of legal opinions (reducing liability risk) and to prevent personal injury and property damage (building safety, emergency exits).

The SICL receives support from the canton in which it is based. The canton of Vaud provides it with premises free of charge, while the University of Lausanne supplies part of the IT infrastructure. The canton of Vaud and the University of Lausanne also support the SICL in the maintenance of its buildings. In 2025, this included the implementation of various energy-saving measures (lighting) and building security measures.



Imprint

This annual report has been drafted in accordance with the guidelines on the use of gender-neutral language in official federal texts, which are set out in the Federal Chancellery's guide to gender-neutral language.

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Schweizerisches Institut für Rechtsvergleichung
Istituto svizzero di diritto comparato
Swiss Institute of Comparative Law