

Stream #23

The Politics of Welfare State Reform

Conveners:

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Linking politics and social policy is key for better understanding of the causes of policy outputs and outcomes. Political ideologies are one of the main drivers of social policy reform and their legacies often determine the level and shape of social welfare provision. Political actors hereby play a crucial role as they shape the course of political action and thus affect citizens' social security, and ultimately liberal and economic freedoms. Although partisan and power resource theory has sometimes been declared "dead", recent developments such as recurring recessions and high inflation show that politics remains one of the most important and consistent drivers of social policy reform. In line with the overall theme of the conference, we will therefore explore the question of how partisanship puts the European social model under pressure in the 21st century.

We invite contributions that show how political actors and their underlying ideologies influence the design of social policy and their reform trajectories. In particular, we are interested in contributions that shed light on the role of international and (sub-)national actors, political parties, institutional veto players, and individual or organized interests in social policy reform processes. Possible contributions could examine these links in relation to all areas of social policy, e.g. benefits related to working life, pensions, health, child and elderly care, etc. In light of recent political and economic developments, we are particularly interested in studies that examine the extent to which a potential comeback of partisanship can be observed.

We aim to bring together contributions from different neighbouring disciplines (e.g. political science, political economy, social policy research, and sociology) to stimulate discussion on complementary theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of the politics of social policy reform. Contributions may have either an empirical or a more theoretical focus emphasizing the link between politics and social policy reform. Methodologically, we are open to a range of

different contributions including small and large-N comparative designs, single case studies or process-tracing analyses, and mixed methods.