

Stream #29

Policy engagement, knowledge exchange, and impact: strengthening evidence-based social policy research

Conveners:

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Evidence-informed social policy, an idea firmly embedded in the European policy landscape, remains difficult to implement across welfare states. Contemporary social policy scholarship is increasingly expected to demonstrate real-world impact, engage meaningfully with policy communities, and contribute to addressing complex social issues. Yet, while policymakers seek research that is timely, rigorous, and accessible, the academic-policy engagement processes often remain challenging, undervalued, and inconsistently recognised.

This stream responds directly to the demand expressed during last year's ESPAnet discussions, where colleagues highlighted the need for a dedicated forum to enable academics, policymakers, analysts, and research intermediaries to exchange experiences, reflect on shared challenges, identify good practices, and explore new models of collaborative academic-social policy knowledge production. This stream is intended to provide an opportunity to learn from both peers and policy professionals about how policy engagement functions across welfare state and political-administrative contexts, as well as how researchers and policy practitioners can work together to strengthen evidence-informed social policy, build trusted relationships, and co-produce knowledge.

By bringing together voices from multiple sectors, this stream aims to foster a shared understanding of what meaningful, high-quality, ethical, and sustainable policy engagement and collaborative knowledge production look like within different social policy systems. We welcome contributions from academics (in both the social policy and social work fields), policymakers, third-sector and think-tank researchers, government analysts, and research intermediaries. Submissions may include case studies of engagement or impact; comparative analyses of policy-research relationships; methodological innovations in knowledge exchange;

reflections from policy professionals on research use; and discussions of institutional enablers/barriers.

Formats: short papers, reflective pieces, practice-focused presentations, or co-presented work across sectors.