

Stream #33

Teaching Social Policy in Higher Education

Conveners:

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Teaching and learning social policy often remain overlooked when discussing the future of social policy research. However, they are essential for training the next generation of researchers and equipping future professionals with the skills and knowledge needed to address complex societal challenges. Social policy education, from undergraduate to postgraduate (including doctoral research training), is delivered in various ways and within diverse institutional contexts across Europe.

By bringing together researchers and lecturers of social policy, this panel aims to explore forms and institutional contexts of social policy teaching across Europe and beyond. It aims to identify the general and country-specific challenges that social policy teaching programmes face while also discussing innovative approaches, pedagogical practices, and curriculum development in social policy education.

Possible questions the panel could address:

- How is social policy taught in higher education in different national contexts? What disciplines are involved? How can these national differences be explained?
- What challenges and trends do social policy programmes face (decreasing student demand, marketisation, attacks on academic freedom)?
- How can teaching and research effectively be intertwined so that the research field can be stabilised and developed to answer current challenges (such as social inequality, climate change, or public health crises)?
- How can programmes be designed and innovated to cater for a diverse student body and incorporate diversity into the curriculum?
- In what ways can AI applications, digital tools, and interactive learning options enhance social policy teaching while fostering critical thinking? What specific challenges does AI pose particularly in the field of social policy education and training?

- How can practical forms of learning—such as job placements and involving practitioners as lecturers—be integrated to better prepare graduates for the labour market?

The panel invites papers from all types of social policy higher education systems. We are particularly interested in empirical surveys of the state of social policy teaching in different national contexts but equally welcome papers focusing on practical innovations and best practice that other social policy programmes might learn from.