

Call for Papers

DIFIS International Scientific Workshop

“Public Opinion and Social Policies.

Legitimacy and Acceptance of the Welfare State and Specific Life Course Policies”

University of Bremen, February 12-13, 2026

Against the background of large societal trends such as demographic change, labour market flexibilization, migration, and technological change, the traditional model of the welfare state has increasingly been challenged. Current political debates particularly evolve (again) around the ideas of welfare state retrenchment and the relocation of welfare responsibilities from the state to either the market or individuals and families. Such debates are often intertwined with discussions about a declining trust in the welfare state and the question of how it can be maintained in an increasingly digital, diverse and ageing society.

At the same time, fundamental public discussions often focus on welfare state responsibilities in specific policy fields. E.g., how can family policies adapt to the increasing labour market participation of women and ensure gender equality in both paid and unpaid work? How can working times adapt to meet the increasingly diverse demands of individuals? How can public policies ensure the provision of sufficient and high-quality care services in times of demographic change? How can labour market and welfare policies provide adequate levels of security for the entire population when flexibilization increasingly erodes the standard employment relationship on which many welfare states were based?

Social policy research has often addressed these and similar challenges from an institutional perspective, i.e., by discussing how welfare state reforms can help to provide possible solutions. Yet, in addition to institutional factors, the successful implementation of such policies equally relies on sufficient public support within the population. **The planned workshop aims to shift the focus to the subjective perspective of individuals, by analysing public perceptions of and attitudes towards social policies in a changing welfare landscape.** Potential contributions may focus on either the general legitimacy of the welfare state or attitudes towards policies, or on reforms in specific policy fields. Comparative papers as well as country-specific case studies are welcome. While the focus of the workshop will primarily be on quantitative studies with large-scale social surveys, qualitative in-depth analyses of public opinion, as well as studies with an institutional analysis or mixed-methods design, will also be considered.

Abstracts of papers of up to 300 words can be submitted to miriam.laschinski@difis.org by **September 21, 2025**. Presenters will be notified about their **acceptance** by **October 24, 2025**.