

Information on the DIFIS International Scientific Workshop

12-13 February 2026, Bremen

Public Opinion and Social Policies

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

Against the background of large societal trends such as demographic change, labour market flexibilization, migration, and the digital transition, the traditional model of the welfare state has increasingly been challenged. Current political debates particularly evolve (again) around the **ideas of reorganising welfare and the relocation of responsibilities** from the state to either the market or individuals and families. Such debates are often intertwined with **discussions about 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, **public discussions often address welfare state responsibilities in specific policy fields**. How can, for example, family policies adapt to the rising 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 stable employment relationship?

Social policy research has often addressed these and similar challenges from a structural perspective, i.e., by discussing how reforms of welfare state institutions can provide possible solutions. Yet, the successful implementation of such policies equally relies on sufficient public support within the population. **The planned workshop aims to shift the research focus to the subjective perspective of individuals, by analysing public perceptions of and attitudes towards social policies in a changing welfare landscape.**

Within the two days, **we will discuss findings from 24 papers** on either the general legitimacy of the welfare state or attitudes towards reforms in a broad array of **specific policy fields, including migration, family and care, pension and labour market and eco-social policies.**

Two introductory presentations will open the workshop.

Dr. Natalie Herdegen and Dr. Philipp Kugler will provide an overview of the data landscape on attitude indicators. **Dr. Magnus Brosig** will provide some insights into the results of a recent German online survey on attitudes towards health, long-term care and pension policy: the “Sozialstaatsradar”.

The **keynote of Prof. Dr. Giuliano Bonoli**, which will address perceptions of legitimacy of social investment types of social policies, will be another highlight of the workshop.

The workshop will also feature a **panel discussion**, bringing together highly relevant **representatives from academia, politics and practice**. In addition to **Prof. Dr. Giuliano Bonoli**, these include **Dr. Mareike Bünning, Dr. Dina Frommert, Prof. Dr. Frank Nullmeier, and Dr. Wolfgang Strengmann-Kuhn.**

We welcome everyone who is interested in the event. Please click [here](#) for registration. We are looking forward to the workshop.

Prof. Dr. Dirk Hofäcker, Dr. Achim Schmid und Miriam Laschinski

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Thursday, February 12, 2026

1:30 p.m. **Registration/Lunch Snack** (Room: Kleiner Saal/Foyer)

2:30 p.m. **Welcome** (Room: Olbers-Saal)

Dirk Hofäcker | DIFIS, University of Duisburg-Essen

Frank Nullmeier | Deputy Director of DIFIS, University of Bremen

2:45 p.m. **Introductory Presentations** (Chair: *Simone Scherger* | DIFIS, University of Bremen) (Room: Olbers-Saal)

Natalie Herdegen & Philipp Kugler | Institute for Applied Economic Research at the University of Tübingen (IAW):

Attitudes towards social policy: What can we know from surveys and the literature? – A Data Review

Magnus Brosig | Chamber of Employees Bremen

Pay more not to get less: Sozialstaatsradar - a nationwide survey of welfare state preferences in Germany

4:15 p.m. **Coffee Break** (Room: Kleiner Saal/Foyer)

4:30 p.m. **Parallel Sessions I-III**

**Parallel Session I:
General Social Policies**
(Room: Olbers-Saal)

Chair: *Dirk Hofäcker*
(DIFIS, University of Duisburg-Essen)

**Parallel Session II:
Immigration Policies**
(Room: Sitzungsraum 1. OG)

Chair: *Shweta Mishra*
(DIFIS, University of Duisburg-Essen)

**Parallel Session III:
Family and Care Policies**
(Room: Sitzungsraum DG)

Chair: *Miriam Laschinski*
(DIFIS, University of Bremen)

4:30 p.m. **Welfare state experiences and welfare state criticism
in Germany. A mixed methods study**

Christopher Grages / Timo Wiesner /

Patrick Sachweh | SOCIUM, University of Bremen

4:30 p.m. **Public Opinion on Immigrants' Welfare
Deservingness across Benefits and Services:
Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Germany.**

Elias Naumann / Sophia Hamdorf | GESIS Leibniz Institute
for the Social Sciences; University of Mannheim

4:30 p.m. **Unpacking Narratives on Work-Life Balance:
Barriers in Shifting from Breadwinner to
Dual-Earner Model**

Pedro Manuel Bellón-Jiménez | Autonomous University of
Barcelona

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General Social Policies**
(Room: Olbers-Saal)

**Parallel Session II:
Immigration Policies**
(Room: Sitzungsraum 1. OG)

**Parallel Session III:
Family and Care Policies**
(Room: Sitzungsraum DG)

5:15 p.m. Clarifying complexity or building legitimacy? Experimental Evidence on public responses to the Polish defined contribution pension system
Janina Petelczyc | Warsaw School of Economics

5:15 p.m. Lifestyle Poverty and a Caring State? Causal Attributions of Economic Success and Support for Redistribution Among First-Generation Migrants
Margherita Cusmano | Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

5:15 p.m. Public opinion and support for families: Unravelling perceptions about families' deservingness
Sophia Landzettel | BIGSSS, Constructor University Bremen

6:00 p.m. Eligibility, benefit level or activation? What drives public fairness perceptions and take-up intentions of minimum income benefits?
Monika Senghaas / Christopher Osiander | Institute for Employment Research, Nuremberg

6:00 p.m. Retirement income worries among migrants in Germany
Sara Marcora | Utrecht University

6:00 p.m. The Effects of Health Problems in the Social Environment on Support for Social Expenses
Simon Lütkevitte | Research Institute Social Cohesion (RISC), IKG Bielefeld, Bielefeld University

7:15 p.m. Dinner (*at own expense; Participation only possible with prior registration*)
'Bremer Ratskeller'
Am Markt (im Bremer Rathaus), 28195 Bremen

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8:15 a.m. Registration/Coffee and Snacks (Room: Kleiner Saal/Foyer)

8:30 a.m. Parallel Sessions IV-VI

**Parallel Session IV:
General Social Policies**
(Room: Olbers-Saal)

Chair: Achim Schmid
(DIFIS, University of Bremen)

8:30 a.m. **Solidarity in question? How the upper-middle class perceives welfare recipients – qualitative insights from Germany**
Sebastian Jürss / Arne Koevel | FGZ, University of Bremen

9:15 a.m. **Healing the Achilles' Heel of Welfare State Legitimacy? Survey Evidence on the Existence and Malleability of Benefit Overuse Beliefs among Adolescents**
Jakub Sowula | University of Tübingen

10:00 a.m. **From Workfare to Welfare Legitimacy: Public Narratives of Work, Deservingness and Social Citizenship in Germany**
Klaus-Uwe Gerhardt | Independent Researcher, Obertshausen

10:45 a.m. Coffee Break (Room: Kleiner Saal/Foyer)

11:00 a.m. Keynote (Chair: *Dirk Hofäcker* | DIFIS, University of Duisburg-Essen) (Room: Olbers-Saal)

Giuliano Bonoli | University of Lausanne:

Deservingness perceptions in the social investment welfare state

12:15 p.m. Lunch Break (Room: Kleiner Saal/Foyer)

**Parallel Session V:
Pension Policies**
(Room: Sitzungsraum 1. OG)

Chair: Dirk Hofäcker
(DIFIS, University of Duisburg-Essen)

8:30 a.m. **Trust in old-age provision and attitudes towards pension reforms in Germany: The role of knowledge, norms, and behavior**
Ulrich Brandt / Christin Czaplicki | German Pension Insurance, Berlin

9:15 a.m. **Public Perceptions of Fairness in Pension Provision: Longitudinal Evidence from the German Ageing Survey (2008–2023)**
Michael Weinhardt | German Centre of Gerontology

10:00 a.m. **Public Preferences for Old-Age Support Systems in Great Britain: Evidence from a New Survey**
Olena Nizalova / Lavinia Mitton | University of Kent

**Parallel Session VI:
Eco-Social Policies and General Social Policies**
(Room: Sitzungsraum DG)

Chair: Felix Bernshausen
(DIFIS, University of Bremen)

8:30 a.m. **Labour market exposure to the green transition and public support for welfare state policies in Europe**
Ana Milinković | Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Belgrade

9:15 a.m. **Public opinion towards redistributive environmental taxing: regional and social divides across Europe from a longitudinal perspective**
Maurizio Schulz | University of Hamburg

10:00 a.m. **Emotions and social policy: How can an emotion-centered perspective enrich the study of public opinion?**
Johanna Ritter | DIFIS, University of Bremen

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1:00 p.m. **Panel Discussion: The Significance of Attitudes and Public Opinion in Social Policy Research** (Chair: *Traute Meyer* | University of Southampton) (Room: Olbers-Saal)
Giuliano Bonoli (University of Lausanne), *Mareike Bünning* (German Centre of Gerontology), *Dina Frommert* (German Pension Insurance, Berlin), *Frank Nullmeier* (DIFIS, University of Bremen), *Wolfgang Strengmann-Kuhn* (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Institute for Social Ecology)

2:15 p.m. **Coffee Break** (Room: Kleiner Saal/Foyer)

2:30 p.m. **Parallel Sessions VII-VIII**

**Parallel Session VII:
General Social Policies**
(Room: Olbers-Saal)

Chair: *Anna Hokema*
(DIFIS, University of Bremen)

2:30 p.m. **Welfare State Boundaries in Flux: How Healthcare Expansions Shape Welfare Attitudes in the Global South**
Tobias Schillings | University of Oxford

3:15 p.m. **Do social (cash) transfers in the Global South shift preferences on redistribution?**
Heiner Salomon | DIFIS, University of Bremen

4:00 p.m. **Who Deserves Maternity Protection? Deservingness, Policy Feedback, and Public Acceptance of Employment-Based Welfare in China**
Zhe Yan / Tobias ten Brink | Constructor University, Bremen

5:00 p.m. **Wrap-Up and Closing of the Workshop** (Room: Olbers-Saal)
Dirk Hofäcker | DIFIS, University of Duisburg-Essen

**Parallel Session VIII:
General Social Policies**
(Room: Sitzungsraum 1. OG)

Chair: *Thurid Eggers*
(DIFIS, University of Bremen)

2:30 p.m. **Class of Origin and Voting – The Activating Role of Volunteering During Youth**
Clara Weißenfels | Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Siegen

3:15 p.m. **Lay Conceptions of the German Pension System**
Carmela Aprea | University of Mannheim, Mannheim Institute for Financial Education

4:00 p.m. **Changes in Class-based Network Diversity Shape Public Support for Commodified Welfare Services: Longitudinal Evidence from Chile**
Julio Iturra-Sanhueza | BIGSSS, Research Center Social Cohesion Bremen

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Event organiser

German Institute for Interdisciplinary Social Policy Research (DIFIS),
represented by the Institute for Work, Skills and Training (IAQ), Duisburg and the
SOCIUM Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy, Bremen.

Venue Address

Haus der Wissenschaft
Sandstraße 4/5
28195 Bremen

Bus/tram stop: Schlüsselkorb

Parking spaces:

Car: BREPARKhaus Am Dom

Bicycle: Fahrradparkhaus Am Dom

Contact / Event organisation

Miriam Laschinski
Mary-Somerville-Straße 7
28359 Bremen

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miriam.laschinski@difis.org
Room 7.4520

Further information

Registration Link

<https://eveeno.com/266640386>

Photo, film and audio recordings

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