

Call for Papers: Special Issue of the Journal of Social Policy Research (*Zeitschrift für Sozialreform*): “Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the welfare state, its actors and benefit recipients”

The COVID-19 pandemic has enormous consequences for many European countries and can rapidly become a global crisis. Far-reaching health policy measures to contain the virus affect our social life and economic relationships on the national and global level. The consequences for the labour market and society are unforeseeable in their extent and duration. The success of national governments in combating the pandemic and its economic and social consequences also depends on political factors and national institutions. Especially welfare state institutions and social policies, which play a central role in ensuring social security and stabilising the economy, face major challenges.

To promote research on the short-term consequences of the COVID-19 crisis for different welfare systems as well as the longer-term implications for the further development of the welfare state the Journal of Social Policy Research (*Zeitschrift für Sozialreform*) intends to publish a special issue on implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the welfare state, its actors and benefit recipients.

We welcome contributions from various disciplines including sociology, economics or political science and theoretical analyses as well as contributions based on qualitative or quantitative empirical data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on one or more of the three following levels:

1. Effects on the delivery of welfare benefits and services

The COVID-19 pandemic strongly influences the duties of welfare state organisations ensuring fast access to welfare payments and offering extensive measures of job security like short-time allowance. The pandemic might also change the goals, the design and implementation of social and labour market policies. Furthermore, it has consequences on the street-level of public services. While most processes of counselling and assistance were conducted on a face-to-face basis, the pandemic will result in new ways of communication and collaboration enforcing a trend to more digitised public services.

2. Benefit recipients

At the same time, the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have dramatic effects on benefit recipients who are known to include particularly vulnerable groups who might lack resources to cope with the crisis. Many recipients of welfare benefits top up their incomes with marginal employment or in low-paid jobs that are likely to be affected by the crisis and are not eligible for short-time allowance. For participation in active labour market programmes there is a great risk that programmes are interrupted or terminated. It is therefore crucial to investigate the differential effects of the pandemic on different groups of recipients, e.g. with respect to indicators like job loss, life satisfaction, social inclusion or mental health, and which strategies or attributes distinguish resilient households who manage to cope with the crisis from those who do not.

3. Welfare state institutions

The existing welfare state institutions play a major role in coping with the crisis. Protecting jobs and ensuring access to income support for those losing their jobs seem to be appropriate initial policy responses to deal with the crisis. The effectiveness and efficiency of social protection will vary across countries due to differences in the generosity of the welfare state and the specific institutional setting. We are interested in papers dealing with the role of welfare institutions during the crisis and with the impact of the crisis on welfare institutions. Increasing fiscal pressure after the crisis could lead to a recalibration of welfare systems from universal social protection to austerity driven social investment policies. However, the crisis could also highlight the need to strengthen social protection of various groups not covered by strictly means-tested systems or benefits related to standard employment. As a result, the idea of a universal basic income could become more popular. The effects of the crisis on the development of the welfare state can also be significantly different than in previous crises, since the current crisis is not only an economic downturn, but could also question social and economic models.

If you wish to publish your work in the special issue, please submit an extended abstract of no more than 1,000 words to IAB.ZSR-SI-COVID19@iab.de no later than **September, 30th, 2020**. The extended abstract should contain names and affiliations of all authors. Make sure the extended abstract provides information on the background/motivation, the research question(s), the theoretical and methodological approach, data (if applicable), results and conclusions/limitations of your paper. Authors of abstracts that are selected for submission to the special issue will be notified no later than October, 15th, 2020. They are then asked to submit a full paper adhering to all standards of the Journal of Social Policy Research (https://www.degruyter.com/view/journals/zsr/zsr-overview.xml?language=en&tab_body=latestIssueToc-75061) until February, 15th, 2021. Papers will undergo double-blind peer review.

Special issue editors: Kerstin Bruckmeier, Martin Dietz, Mark Trappmann