

Changing Welfare States: Beyond distributive politics towards social crisis prevention?

2nd Term, Academic Year 2024-25

Instructors: Anton Hemerijck and Waltraud Schelkle

Thursdays, 09:00-11:00

Seminar Room: tbc

First Seminar Session: 9th January 2025

Last Seminar Session: 13th March 2025

This class will be held as an on-site seminar,
online participation only in exceptional circumstances.

Contact: claudia.fanti@eui.eu

Aims

The course offers a comparative analysis of welfare state performance and reform in Europe, against the backdrop of lingering social crises. They are the legacy of systemic financial and fiscal stress as well as first emergencies that indicate the vulnerability to pandemics and climate change.

The aim is to introduce researchers to the state of the art in comparative welfare state research literature, with a special emphasis on repeated systemic crises since 2008 that presumably created new social problems. A theme that will run through this course is whether this legacy poses new challenges related to the knowledge economy, climate change and multiculturalism; or whether it has put into sharp relief old problems that welfare states have always been expected to mitigate, such as extreme income and wealth inequality, material deprivation and social immobility.

In the first part, the Seminar aims to provide researchers with advanced knowledge of debates that motivated welfare state research even before the long crisis decade since 2008 but have been revisited since. We will look at the comparative evidence and discuss how it can help us to evaluate empirically how well national welfare systems have performed, what external interventions like Troika programmes achieved and whether welfare states have recovered, reformed and become more preventative in their approach to social risks. Each time we ask, who could be the political drivers for the outcomes of interest. In the second part, the focus of the sessions will shift to state-of-the-art approaches in welfare state research, ranging from electoral studies on the popularity of welfare provisions, the spatial dimension of the welfare state when looking at places and communities left behind, as well as analyses that see the middle-class welfare state or promoting social investment as the way

out of the scarring that crises inflicted. This prepares the final session in which we debate whether welfare states need to get ready for continuous social crisis prevention, given the reality of climate change but also the political fallout of repeated social crises that lead to political polarisation and can jeopardise democracy.

Each of the seminars is led by one or two participants on the basis of pre-discussions with the course convener responsible for the session.