

Call for Papers

zfwu 27/2 (2026): Social Welfare and Business Ethics

Call for Papers by September 1, 2025

Social welfare has a long tradition in Germany, with independent organizations having been central pillars of the welfare state system for over 100 years. They provide infrastructure in the social sector and provide services that would otherwise have to be taken over by the state itself. Their work is non-profit and not for profit; their services are largely refinanced by the state. However, increasing economization, rising cost pressure and an acute shortage of skilled workers have greatly changed the third sector in recent years. The major welfare organizations in Germany continue to be one of the largest employers and provide a significant share of care in the areas of nursing, childcare and youth work, as well as in working with people with disabilities. Despite some negative headlines, they enjoy a high level of trust in society. This applies in particular to Diakonie and Caritas, which have a significantly higher reputation among the general population than the two major Christian churches.

In view of social challenges such as demographic change, the demand for social and counseling services has risen sharply in recent years. As a result, welfare organizations have taken on more and more tasks that many companies can hardly manage due to the acute shortage of skilled workers. At the same time, the struggle for financing is intensifying: state funding is becoming scarcer and the competitive pressure on the social market is growing. Many social enterprises are no longer able to continue their work adequately because their own aspirations and the reality of their work are too far apart. But how can major social issues such as inclusion and sustainability be adequately implemented if the resources for this are lacking? What practical experience is there in this regard? Which concepts could help to develop new solutions and sustainable concepts for the future? This normative and practical area of tension is to be examined in a special issue of the ZfWU. Contributions on the following key questions are invited:

- How does the increasing economization of the third sector affect charitable values and the quality of social services?
- How do the shortage of skilled workers and cost pressure affect the long-term stability and performance of independent welfare organizations?
- What effects does the growing competitive pressure in the social market have on the culture of cooperation and solidarity of independent organizations?
- How can charitable organizations maintain their charitable status in practice when financial and human resources are becoming scarce?
- Which models and approaches to sustainable financing could help independent organizations to ensure their services in the long term?
- How could charitable organizations promote social issues such as inclusion and sustainability, even under difficult economic conditions?
- How can values such as public benefit and social responsibility be preserved in the third sector even under economic pressure?

The questions listed are intended to exemplify the topics of the special issue. We welcome any contributions that address the topics of Social Welfare and Business Ethics in theoretical, methodological or empirical terms.

The special issue is edited by Anika Albert (Bielefeld University) and Alexander Brink (Bayreuth University).

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Author Guidelines

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