

Call for Papers

What reforms does the welfare state need?

The modernisation of social policy amidst austerity, war and deindustrialisation.

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The welfare states of all developed societies are under growing pressure to adapt: demographic ageing, weak economic growth, rising social inequality, migration, and the digital and ecological transformations are compounding strained public finances and dwindling confidence in the effectiveness of state institutions. In this situation, social policy is often viewed primarily as a cost factor – or, at best, as an indispensable prerequisite for social cohesion. Even the model of the social-investment welfare state, which promised answers to so-called ‘new social risks’, has in many places been associated with economisation, privatisation and a strong preference for individual protection. At the same time, the question of how inclusive the ‘old’ welfare state – with its collective protection and redistribution – can and should be is intensifying the political debate. The Scandinavian countries continue to be regarded as the most successful examples of combining social investment with comprehensive social security. Yet even there, the welfare states are by no means immune to social polarisation and authoritarian right-wing populism.

Countries with larger populations and greater social and structural heterogeneity have, in the past, found it more difficult to make this shift towards social investment, not least because a social policy consensus is much harder to achieve or maintain. The German government is currently undertaking a new reform initiative, which is sometimes compared to Gerhard Schröder’s Agenda 2010, yet cannot simply be a rehash of that programme. The conditions for this are worse today than they were then, whilst at the same time the problems and political challenges are all the more pressing.

The *Leviathan* invites a socio-political debate on the role and functioning of the developed welfare state – one that does not erode solidarity or further entrench inequality, but rather contributes to the modernisation of the state, social cohesion and economic development.

Possible topics include:

- Agenda 2010 – revisited
- The welfare state and tax policy – what are the benefits of inheritance and wealth tax?
- Social rights and discourses on justice
- Opportunities and risks of digitalisation – the digital divide, opportunities and limits of personal responsibility
- Pension reform: between redistribution and investment in the future
- A fresh start in the debate on flexicurity in Germany?
- Comparative perspectives
- Interfaces between the European Union and its Member States
- Social Policy and Ecology

We look forward to receiving your abstracts (approx. 500 words) by **15 October 2026**.

Please send them to Katharina Bluhm: katharina.bluhm@fu-berlin.de and Anke Hassel: hassel@hertie-school.org

Following a selection process by the editors, the final manuscripts must be submitted by 15 March 2027 for *double-blind peer review*. The issue will be published in *Open Access* in September 2027.