



The European Centre is launching BBinars, a series of webinars, on social policy in Eastern Europe. The aim of this series of webinars is to offer [members of the Eastern European Social Policy Network \(EESPN\)](#), European Centre colleagues and a wider audience, especially interested in the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership region a possibility to exchange and learn among peers.

The format includes input by our research partners, policy makers from the region, policy experts, civil society organisations or from international organisations, reflections from relevant actors from the region and European Centre staff, as well as a moderated discussion with the audience.

## The social investment approach Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries

Following the “golden age” of welfare state expansion the adjustment of social policies to globalisation and neo-liberal governance in Western Europe coincided with the collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. During the post-communist transition phase, developing social welfare policies therefore remained of minor importance for East European governments (and their consultants) as an area of public expenditure to be avoided, rather than as an area of investment in the future. Namely, social inclusion of vulnerable groups, active labour market policies, social services for children and older people were perceived as unnecessary. Also in the accession processes, EU institutions placed lower priority on candidate countries’ progress in social and employment policies.

However, in parallel to the expansion of the EU to Eastern Europe, social policies have received some additional attention under the notion of ‘social investment’. Central to the idea of social investment is that social policies can have positive economic and fiscal consequences. As such, social policy expenditure – rather than a cost to be minimised – can contribute to or even be necessary to achieve ‘inclusive and sustainable growth’.

This BBinar will focus on what role the social investment approach to social welfare policies can and should play in supporting sustainable development in the Western Balkan and the Eastern Partnership countries: What can be learned from ‘social investment’ theory and practice? What are the preconditions and potential pitfalls for successful social investment policies? How can social investment policies contribute to inclusive growth and fiscal sustainability? How can the ‘return on social investment’ be quantified?

**Time & Date:** 13 June 2023, 10.00-12.00 (CEST); to register, please click [here](#).

### Agenda:

- The welfare state and the social investment approach  
*Adi Buxbaum, Chamber of Labour, Vienna*
- Social investment from the perspective of Western Balkan welfare states  
*Sonja Avlijas, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Economics, Belgrade University*
- Comments by  
*Leonard Geyer, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy, Vienna*

If you have any questions, please contact Kai Leichsenring ([leichsenring@eurocentre.org](mailto:leichsenring@eurocentre.org)) or Monika Hunjadi ([hunjadi@euro.centre.org](mailto:hunjadi@euro.centre.org)).