



The European Centre has launched 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.

## Challenges of long-term care in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans face demographic ageing, marked by declining birth rates, longer life expectancies, and rural-urban migration to Western Europe. With a life expectancy of 76.28 years and healthy life expectancy at 67.26 years, the region's demand for care of older persons (65 years and older) is high (25.6% in North Macedonia to 51.6% in Bosnia and Herzegovina). In addition, also a high share of persons with disabilities aged 16-64 need support and long-term care (64% in Serbia and 89% in Albania). However, the capacities to provide these services are insufficient, with less than 10% of those with severe disabilities receiving formal care. While a small percentage relies on professional support (8.1% in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to 17.6% in North Macedonia), a large majority of citizens in need of long-term care depend on informal caregivers, underrepresented in relevant public policies. It is therefore of utmost priority to invest in the development of long-term care systems in the Western Balkans towards person-centred and integrated care to enhance accessibility and quality of life, including decent working conditions for formal carers and support of informal carers.

The seventh BBinar will focus on the situation of long-term care systems in the Western Balkans and discuss main questions, based on findings of recent research by the Red Cross of Serbia. This study included a desk analysis of regulations and publicly available data, quantitative research involving 3,900 older persons and persons with disabilities at working age as well as qualitative interviews with service providers, institutional representatives, and long-term care service users: What is the current state of long-term care in the Western Balkans? What are the expectations of persons in need of care and their informal carers? How can the accessibility and the quality of services be improved? Which policies are needed to develop long-term care systems in the Western Balkans and which initiatives have shown to be sustainable?

**Time & Date: 20 February 2024, 10:00 – 11:30 (CEST); online (via Zoom), English.**

### **Agenda:**

**10:00 – 10:15: Welcome and introduction**

- Kai Leichsenring, European Centre

**10:15 – 10:45: Challenges of long-term care in the Western Balkans – Results of an empirical study**

- Nataša Todorović and Milutin Vračević, Red Cross of Serbia

10:45 – 11:00: **Comments**

**TBD**

11:00 – 11:30: **Q&A and discussion with audience**

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