

Call for papers

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The non-take-up of health and social benefits: What implications for social citizenship?

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The sociology of welfare tends to focus on welfare regimes, welfare institutions or welfare beneficiaries. However, since the 1960s a specific stream of literature highlights the phenomenon of *non-take-up* of welfare benefits in the European context. Indeed, many people who are eligible for welfare benefits, both in the field of health and social care, *do not receive them*. Understanding the reasons accounting for this phenomenon of non-take-up is essential for the design of adequately inclusive social protection frameworks, all the more so that the issue of non-take up is presently gaining salience and reaching policy agendas, both at national and local levels.

In Switzerland, the scientific literature on this topic has long been scarce. However, some new researches have been conducted during the last few years on this topic. This special issue wants to provide a first overview of this emerging research field. A better understanding of the mechanisms of non-take-up of health and social benefits in the Swiss context, also in comparison with other countries, can contribute to better identify the specificities of the Swiss welfare system. In particular, this will shed light on how poverty is subjectively experienced in Switzerland, how social inequalities are created in this context, how citizens and recipients relate to public institutions and the State, as well as to the impact of institutions, norms and practices on social citizenship.

The international literature shows that the non-take up of social benefits is a complex phenomenon. Among the reasons that have been identified across various welfare regimes are, firstly, *lack of information*: potential beneficiaries do not have adequate information or fail

to understand their rights, or how to claim benefits. Secondly, vulnerable people are discouraged from claiming benefits by the number and complexity of *administrative requirements*. Finally, it also appears that some people want to keep their distance with welfare institutions and prefer not to claim benefits, which points to the role of *social norms*. This list is however not exhaustive. Besides, explanations of non-take-up vary in different historical times, as well as in different ideological, social and institutional contexts, and at different levels of the welfare system (local, cantonal or national).

This special issue invites proposals drawing on a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches that help gain a better understanding of non-take up in Switzerland, but also in other countries by analysing local, cantonal/regional or national issues and cases, and/or by putting Switzerland in a comparative perspective. We also welcome contributions tackling the situation of non-take-up in other countries that address one or many of the issues listed below.

Questions that could be investigated include (but are not limited to) the following:

- How does the non-take-up of social or health benefits relate to the characteristics of the welfare state, with a specific emphasis on the features of the Swiss welfare state (such as federalism, or increased conditionality of access to benefits)?
- How does the non-take-up of social or health benefits relate to changes in welfare state policies (e.g. shift towards activation with an increased pressure on inactive people, etc.)?
- What are the alternative practices or resources and/or the main representations that are associated with the non-take-up of health or social benefits?
- To what extent do social and cultural inequalities between regions, genders, ages, social classes, etc. translate into varied forms of non-take up of social or health benefits?
- To what extent do social norms, welfare stigma or public exposure contribute to explain non-take-up?
- What are the consequences of non-take-up for the individuals concerned and for society at large?
- To what extent does the non-take-up of social and health benefits question the legitimacy and effectiveness of social rights, as well as their articulation with fundamental rights ?

Please submit your proposal for a contribution to the three guest editors by **20 September 2019**: Barbara.lucas@hesge.ch; jean-michel.bonvin@unige.ch; oliver.huembelin@bfh.ch

Your submission for the special issue should include the following:

- name, email address, and affiliations of all the authors
- title of the paper
- abstract of around 500 words, structured as follows: topic, aim, methods, results, discussion, conclusion.

The guest editors will decide on the acceptance or rejection of the abstract until **20 October 2019**.

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*Selected authors will be invited to submit their manuscript (max. 8,000 words, 50,000 characters including tables, figures and references) by **15 March 2020**. The manuscripts will go through the usual peer-review process of the Swiss Journal of Sociology. Accepted languages are English, German or French. More information about the Swiss Journal of Sociology and the submission process are available in www.sgs-sss.ch/sociojournal.*

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For any queries, please contact the guest editors at the e-mail addresses mentioned above.