

European Centre BBinars: Social Policies in Eastern Europe: Social spending in times of Covid-19

Time & Date: **30 November 2021, 14:00-15:30**, online (via Zoom).

Agenda:

14:00-14:15: **Introductory input by Mihail Arandarenko**, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Economics (Serbia)

14:15-14:50: **Brief reflections by:**

- **Bernd Wild**, European Commission, DG NEAR (Belgium)
- **Amira Ramhorst**, RCC (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- **Rahel Kahlert**, European Centre (Austria)
- **Veronica Sandu**, European Centre (Austria)

14:50-15:30: **Q&A and discussion with the audience**

Moderator: **Magdi Birtha** (European Centre)

The inaugural BBinar (short for Bridge-Building Webinar) focused on social spending in times of Covid-19 in the Western Balkan region. Members of the [Eastern European Social Policy Network \(EESPN\)](#), European Centre colleagues, and a wider audience participate in these BBinars to exchange at a practical level about common challenges and progress on different social policy areas.

Mihail Arandarenko (University of Belgrade) gave an introductory input on social spending in Serbia. While Serbia has a high percentage of government spending in the Region, the public measures used still do not correlate with much vertical redistribution. **Veronica Sandu** (European Centre) took a comparative look on social spending in the Western Balkan Region. Measures such as the universal one-off cash grants may not be sufficient in reducing inequalities within society and reducing poverty due to the enormous social challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic and other factors.

Amira Ramhorst (Regional Cooperation Council) and **Rahel Kahlert** (European Centre) presented the status quo of the Western Balkan region regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights, building on the recently published [country reports](#) and the [cross-country overview report](#). A highlight was the showcasing of the newly developed interactive [Social Scoreboard](#) that allows for a comparative perspective.





This BBinar fostered a lively discussion on the impact of social assistance programmes in the Western Balkan region and concluded with ideas how to overcome challenges exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis.

The next BBinar will take place in February 2022 and will focus on social policies in the Eastern Partnership region. Please stay tuned for the exact time and topic!

