

Congress of the Swiss Sociological Association 2024
University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland, Basel (MuttENZ),
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Call for Papers

Workshop Session: Social vulnerabilities and resources of destitute European migrants in Switzerland and the response of the Swiss welfare state

Organizers:

Zsolt Temesvary (Hochschule für Soziale Arbeit FHNW), Sabrina Roduit (University of Geneva)

Social vulnerabilities arise when social reserves (e.g., secure housing, income, and employment) are missing or insufficient. Cumulated vulnerabilities lead to a state of social weakness and hinder the development of an individual's social status. The intense migration of European citizens with multiple and severe social vulnerabilities, especially (but not exclusively) from the Central and Eastern European region, is a significant social challenge in Switzerland. Half of all homeless people living in Swiss cities arrived from Europe, and the proportion of European migrants among sex workers and beggars is even higher. Mobile destitute Europeans living without a residence permit in Switzerland are not eligible for social assistance and are often rejected by welfare services and punished by the police. They frequently face social exclusion, institutional discrimination, and economic marginalization. Many of them are affected by frequent transnational mobility, either to seek better healthcare, housing, or social support, or to send money to their families. The transborder territories in Switzerland offer opportunities but also barriers to this mobility. The workshop seeks contributions from the fields of sociology, social work, social policy, cultural anthropology, and law, focusing on the social vulnerabilities and coping strategies of destitute Europeans living in Switzerland, from both individual and systemic perspectives. In conclusion, the organizers seek answers to the following questions: What are the main vulnerabilities and resources of destitute European migrants? What coping strategies are applied in overcoming vulnerabilities? And what are the systemic responses of Swiss welfare services to these vulnerabilities?

The abstracts (maximum 2000 characters) for the workshop must be submitted in English by the 5th of January 2023. Contributions must be submitted directly to the organizers: Zsolt Temesvary (zsolt.temesvary@fhnw.ch) and Sabrina Roduit (sabrina.rodut@unige.ch).