

BRISPO Newsletter

April 2025



Newsletter of the Brussels Institute for Social
and Population Studies, VUB

We are sharing the spring edition of the BRISPO newsletter, which includes recent publications, team achievements, and upcoming events from the Brussels Institute for Social and Population Studies. This edition covers new research on job quality, migration, mental health, and environmental influences on well-being, as well as studies on digital inclusion and social participation. You'll also find updates on recent awards, conferences, and upcoming discussions on aging, digitalization, and social challenges in Europe.

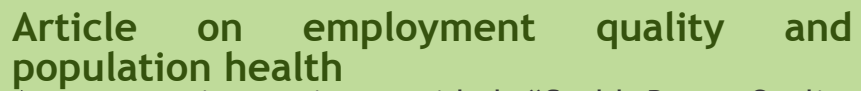
Publications @ BRISPO

Paper on migrants' conditional inclusion in rural areas

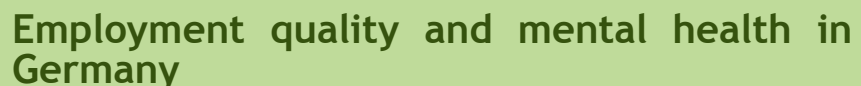
BRISPO PhD student [Iris Egea Quijada](#) and one of her supervisors, prof. [René Kreichauf](#), published an article titled "Regeneration, predatory inclusion, and migrant experiences in declining rural areas in Spain and Germany" in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. The paper critically explores migrant experiences of conditional inclusion in rural areas, highlighting how their active roles as rural place-makers are often sidelined in regeneration processes. The article is part of Iris's PhD [project](#).

Read more [here](#).





Publication on patient-reported outcome and experience measures



Deborah De Moortel and Julie Vanderleyden, along with Rebeka Balogh and Miriam Engels, published their research in *Social Science and Medicine*. The paper, titled "Employment quality and mental health in Germany: The mismatch of low employment quality with work and family values by gender" explores what job types with varying levels of employment quality are present in the German labour market and how they relate to worker mental health, depending on gender and the importance a person attributes to being successful at work and having children. Read more [here](#).

Working hours and income volatility in public sector employment

Eva Van Belle et al. recently published an article titled "Working hours, income volatility and public sector employment as insurance" in *Labour Economics*. This study finds that poorer economies tend to have longer working hours per adult due to the income effect, but this weakens when accounting for resource abundance and public sector employment. In resource-rich countries with volatile incomes and little social insurance, workers prefer lower-paying but secure public sector jobs, leading to longer working hours to compensate for lost income. Read more [here](#).



Paper on support for elitism in the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Greece

A new paper titled "Backlash among the dominant: Assessing support for elitism in four European countries" was published in *Political Psychology* by Bram Spruyt and his co-authors, among whom Leandros Kavadias and Jochem Van Noord represent BRISPO. The paper starts from the observation that populism has gained traction in many Western countries, elevating the political significance of "the people". This rise may provoke a backlash among dominant social groups, particularly the higher educated, leading to increased support for elitism. Survey data from the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Greece show that support for elitism is more common among members of dominant social groups (i.e., higher education and subjective income). The study also finds that education-based identity, but not income-based identity, amplifies these differences. Finally, elitist attitudes are embedded in a broader worldview that represents the status quo as fair and opposes measures aimed at increasing social equality. Read more [here](#).

Article on students' sexual activity during the pandemic

A new study titled "Sexual Activity and Mental Health in Higher Education Students in Antwerp, Belgium during the COVID-19 Pandemic" by Veerle Buffel and co-authors was published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. The study found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, students engaged less in physical sexual acts and more in non-physical ones, impacting their sexual satisfaction and mental health. The findings suggest that changes in sexual behavior influenced depressive feelings, highlighting the pandemic's broader psychological effects on young adults. Read more [here](#).





Teachers' workload and job satisfaction

In their chapter, as part of the edited volume *Teaching and time Poverty*, [Petrus te Braak](#), [Filip Van Droogenbroeck](#), [Joeri Minnen](#) and [Theun Pieter van Tienoven](#) analyse time-diary data from 7,500 teachers in Flanders to explore not just how much they work, but how they work, under the title "Dissecting the effects of workload and work intensification on teacher job satisfaction". They find that job satisfaction is less affected by total workload and more by work intensification—characterised by fragmentation, time pressure, and task diversity. These insights challenge the focus on working hours alone. Effective policies should target the quality, not just the quantity, of teachers' work. Read more [here](#).

How people perceive their residential living environment

It is well-known that air pollution, noise, and green spaces influence our health. But what about the way we perceive our living environment? A new study titled "Perception of the Residential Living Environment: The Relationship Between Objective and Subjective Indicators of the Residential Living Environment and Health" by [Joachim Gotink](#) and [Sylvie Gadeyne](#) was published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. The study shows that not only do objective environmental factors matter, but our personal perception of them also plays a role in mortality risk. Read more [here](#).



Neurodegenerative disease mortality in Belgian municipalities

A recent BRISPO Working Paper titled "Linking Social and Environmental Indicators to Neurodegenerative Disease Mortality in Belgian Municipalities Using Spatial Regression Analysis" by [Janna Dinneweth](#) and [Sylvie Gadeyne](#) has shed light on the complex relationships between air pollution, socioeconomic factors, and mortality rates for dementia and Parkinson's disease (PD). Their research is conducted at the municipality level and highlights the importance of considering spatial patterns in health outcomes.

Read more [here](#).

Opinion piece on education-based prejudice

[Bram Spruyt](#) co-authored an opinion piece in *De Volkskrant*, reacting to a previous column in the same newspaper, arguing that education-based prejudice doesn't exist. Bram Spruyt and two other sociologists ([Toon Kuppens](#) and [Jochem Van Noord](#)) argue differently based on 15 years of sociological research. Read more [here](#).



Future Events @BRISPO



Study Day on digital inclusion among older people (in Dutch)

On Friday, May 16, 2025, the SBO [Digital Ageing research team](#), in collaboration with Mediawijs, VVSG, and Vlaamse Ouderenraad, is organising a study day on digital inclusion and empowerment among older adults. The event will provide insights into research on digitalization and inclusion while introducing practical tools to empower seniors in the digital world. The event takes place at the Hendrik Conscience Building in Brussels. Participation is free, but registration is required in advance. For more information, click [here](#).

EUROPEAN SOCIAL AND POPULATION ISSUES

LECTURE SERIES 2025



- 25/02 Prof. Tuba Bircan, VUB
Beyond the Hype: What Can and Cannot Do AI for Social Research
- 04/03 Prof. Patrick Deboosere, VUB
World Population Dynamics and Our Planet
- 18/03 Dr. Laure Tall, Ipar Think Tank
Human Mobility and Agricultural Resilience in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change (ONLINE)
- 25/03 Prof. Alina Sirbu, University of Bologna
Big Data and Cultural Integration (ONLINE)
- 01/04 Dr. Johan Surkyn, VUB
Irregular Migration: Combining Existing Datasets and Demographic Methods to Tackle a Debated Issue
- 22/04 Dr. Franz-Ferdinand Rothe, VUB
Automated Inequalities: Questioning the sanctity of data in the age of AI
- 25/04 Prof. Caroline Zickgraf, University of Liège
Climate Change, (Im)mobility and Migration [Keynote speaker at the Belgian Demography Day] (KULeuven)
- 29/04 Prof. Carlos Arcila-Calderón, Universidad de Salamanca
From Hate Speech to Hate Crime: Detecting Harmful Messages at Scale (ONLINE)
- 06/05 Dr. Haodong Qi, Malmö University
Modeling Climate-Induced Migration with Big Data and Explainable Machine Learning
- 13/05 Prof. Alejandra Vives, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile
Extreme Heat at Home, at Work and in Between

Tuesdays, 14:00-16:00, Etterbeek Campus

Lecture Series: European Social and Population Issues

Every year from February until May, BRISPO organises a series of lectures as part of the course European Social and Population Issues. We invite you to join all or selected lectures, online or in person. Participation in the lecture series is free, but registration via this [link](#) is mandatory. After processing your registration, participation details will be provided. The complete programme of the lecture series is available [here](#).

News from Team Members @ BRISPO



Paul De Vroede Award for Jessie Gevaert awarded the

Jessie Gevaert has been awarded the Paul De Vroede Prize by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel's Scientific Support Fund for her doctoral research on job quality and mental well-being among (solo) self-employed workers. The award highlights research with societal relevance in the humanities and was presented during a ceremony at the Etterbeek Campus on March 26th.

Photo: award ceremony; from the left: Joël Branson (Dean at Faculty of Social Sciences and Solvay Business School), Jessie Gevaert (the laureate), Pieter Ballon (Vice-Rector for Research of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and Johnny Van Steen (Secretary of the VUB Scientific Support Fund).

All photos provided by Adobe Stock, except for the last one, provided by Jessie Gevaert.

More Information on
BRISPO

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