



BRUSSELS INSTITUTE
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BRISPO Newsletter

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

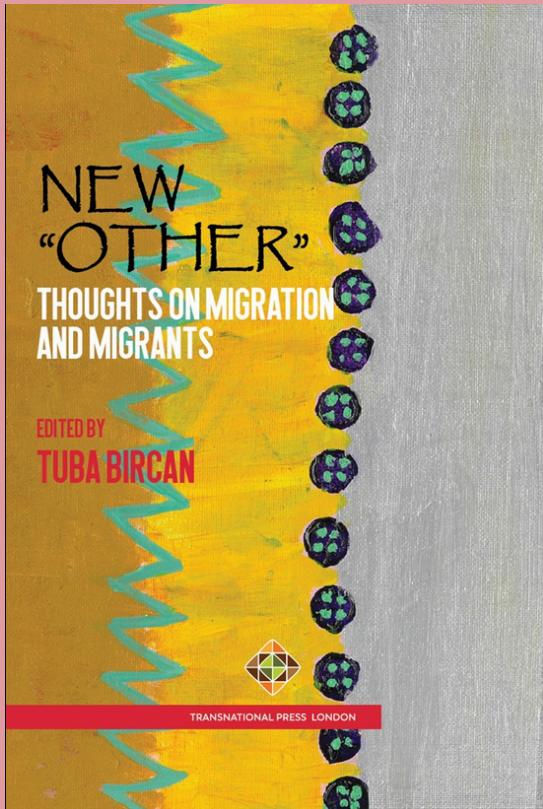
This edition of the BRISPO Newsletter highlights a wide range of new publications, media contributions, and project updates from across our research units. From advancing theoretical frameworks on employment quality and migration policy to exploring digital engagement among older adults and promoting compassionate workplaces, our members continue to produce research that bridges science, policy, and society. You'll also find recent media features, PhD milestones, and updates from BRISPO-led or affiliated projects. Scroll down to discover more about recent papers, events, and tools developed by our teams.

Publications @ BRISPO

Applying a global lens for application of the employment quality framework

Julie Vanderleyden and Deborah De Moortel recently published a paper in *Sociology Compass*, titled: "Employment Quality as a Framework to Understand Precarious Employment and Beyond in Cross-National Contexts: Conceptual, Methodological, and Practical Recommendations". In this paper, the authors discuss various considerations and provide practical tools when studying precarious employment through a comparative, cross-national lens.

Read more [here](#).



Exploring migration and integration in the book new "other"

AIMS Lab researchers have published the book *New "Other" - Thoughts on Migration and Migrants*, a collection that looks at migration as more than just movement across borders. Edited by [Tuba Bircan](#), with chapters by [Damini Purkayastha](#), [Duha Ceylan](#), [Ahmad Wali Ahmad-Yar](#), and [Marie Alice Mosuse](#), the book explores gendered experiences of skilled migrant women, gaps in irregular migration data, and how media shape refugee narratives. Mixing theory, fieldwork, and data analysis, it offers fresh perspectives for anyone working on migration and integration. Learn more and order [here](#).

Reconceptualising skill in EU migration policy

New article in *International Migration* by [Anton Neronov & Tuba Bircan](#). The article “Beyond Economic and Educated: Reconceptualising Skill in EU Migration Policy Through Contextual Adaptability” examines how “skill” is defined in EU migration policy. Moving beyond the narrow focus on formal education, Anton and Tuba introduce the concept of contextual adaptability - the ability of migrants to transfer and apply competencies across social, cultural, and institutional settings.

Read more [here](#).



Bridging research and community: Iris Egea Quijada shares insights locally

[Iris Egea Quijada](#) has published a reflective piece in *Western People*, the local newspaper of Ballyhaunis, Ireland, where she conducted her fieldwork. The article aims to give back to the community that welcomed her, making her research accessible beyond academic circles. Moving beyond analysis and critique, Iris shares key insights, concrete recommendations, and everyday suggestions that support positive change in the town. By writing for a local audience, she bridges research and daily life, highlighting the value of collaboration between scholars and the communities they study.

Read more [here](#).

Exploring big data's role in tracking and understanding migration

Ahmad Wali Ahmad Yar and Tuba Bircan have published an article “New Frontiers in Migration Statistics: A Narrative Review on Big Data’s Role in Frontiers in Human Dynamics” in the journal *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*. The paper explores how emerging data sources—such as social media, mobile phone records, and satellite imagery—can complement traditional migration statistics. It reviews how big data is used to track flows, forecast trends, and study integration, while also highlighting key challenges of privacy, representativeness, and data access. The authors call for hybrid methods and ethical frameworks to ensure that big data strengthens, rather than distorts, migration governance.

Read more [here](#).



Is there discrimination in public sector recruitment?

Bert Leysen, prof. Pieter-Paul Verhaeghe, and prof. Eva Derous (UGent) published an article titled “Even grounds: assessing discrimination in recruitment in the public sector” in the *International Journal of Public Sector Management*. They examine whether hiring discrimination contributes to the underrepresentation of ethno-national minorities and people with different health statuses in the public sector, more specifically, the Flemish government. A correspondence field experiment with fictitious applications found no significant discrimination based on ethnicity or health during the CV-screening phase. However, they did find a significant gender bias, with male recruiters favoring male applicants. The study suggests that resources should be redirected to attracting and retaining

underrepresented groups rather than the CV-screening stage of recruitment and selection.
Read more [here](#).

Internet use among older adults

A new study by Jorrit Campens, Petrus te Braak, Myo Nyein Aung, and Nico De Witte, on behalf of the Digital Ageing Consortium, has been published in *Exploration of Digital Health Technologies*. The article, “*Multidimensional frailty as a predictor of older adults’ internet use: moving beyond the use/non-use dichotomy*”, explores how different dimensions of frailty - physical, psychological, social, and environmental - relate to variations in internet use among older adults. Drawing on data from over 2,300 participants in the Belgian Ageing Studies, the authors show that while multidimensional frailty plays a role in shaping digital behavior, sociodemographic factors such as age and education remain even stronger predictors of internet use.

Read more [here](#).



Compassionate workplaces: Deborah De Moortel on illness, loss, and caregiving in professional life

Deborah De Moortel has published an opinion piece in the Dutch journal “Knack”: *“Ziekte en dood zijn universeel menselijke ervaringen, ook tijdens de professionele loopbaan”*. The article examines how illness, loss, and caregiving inevitably intersect with professional life. It calls for “compassionate workplaces” that recognize these experiences and support employees through them, while also reflecting on the shortcomings of recent Belgian pension reforms.

Read more [here](#).

News from Team Members @ BRISPO



Congratulations to Tulya su Guven and Edith Walravens who were granted FWO PhD Fellowships!

Tulya will be working on her PhD project titled "["Navigating Life in Migration: Socio-Spatial Integration of Newcomers"](#)", under the supervision of [Veerle Buffel](#) (promotor) and [Eva Van Belle](#) (co-promotor). As migration continues to shape European societies, understanding migrant integration remains a pressing challenge. While existing research has largely focused on structural dimensions such as labour market participation, education, and housing, Tulya's research highlights the underexplored socio-spatial aspects of integration.

Edith's PhD project, titled "["A Seat for Every Class? The Representation of Class-Based Work Logic in European Democracies"](#)", will be supervised by [Pieter-Paul Verhaeghe](#) (promotor) and [Karen Celis](#) (co-promotor). Her research addresses the persistent underrepresentation of the working class in national parliaments by moving beyond traditional class categories and focusing instead on distinct work logics—technical, organisational, and interpersonal—as conceptualised in Oesch's occupation-based framework.

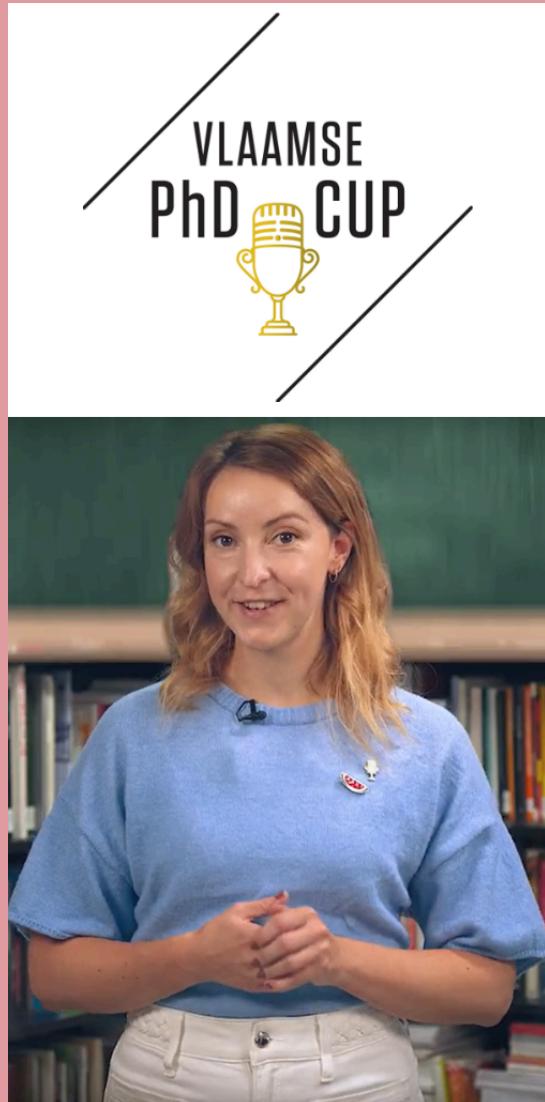
For more information, click [here](#).

Marloes Hagenaars selected as finalist of the Flemish PhD Cup 2025

Marloes Hagenaars has been selected as one of the 8 finalists of the Flemish PhD Cup 2025. She obtained her PhD in Sociology at Ghent University with a dissertation on how teachers handle ethnic diversity in the classroom. Her research shows that even small, everyday choices made by teachers can have a significant impact on whether students feel included or excluded at school. To support teachers, she developed RE:flex, a free and practical tool that helps them to reflect on their own behaviour towards ethnic diversity. The final of the PhD Cup will take place on 21 October 2025 in Ghent and can also be followed via livestream at phdcup.be.

In addition to the main prize, the People's Choice Award will be also presented. You can vote for your preferred candidate until October 21st, 5 p.m., using this [link](#).

For more information, click [here](#).



PhD public defense of Wanru Xu

Wanru Xu successfully defended her PhD thesis "Escaping the System? Chinese Middle-Class Parents Negotiating Educational Privilege in Alternative Schools" on September 5, 2025. The thesis was supervised by Prof. Bram Spruyt. Wanru's research investigates the phenomenon of Chinese middle-class families opting for innovative schools in Dali, a scenic tourist city in southwest China that has emerged as both a destination for lifestyle migration and a hub for alternative education. The abstract of Wanru's work as well as publications related to her PhD are available [here](#).

Media Highlights @ BRISPO

Spotlight interview with prof. Dieter Vandebroeck on the 'primary prejudice' project

Prof. Dieter Vandebroeck gave an interview to Brussels Interdisciplinary Research Centre on Migration and Minorities (BIRMM) about 'Primary Prejudice' (Vroeg Geleerd), the innovative SBO project he is leading, which examines social well-being and identity-based bullying in Flemish preschools and primary schools and aims to provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers. Watch or read the full interview [here](#).



Prof. Eva van belle discusses long-term unemployment in Het Kwartier podcast

A large number of people who have been unemployed for 20 years have recently received notice that they will lose their benefits. In a recent episode of the Het Kwartier podcast, [Prof. dr. Eva Van Belle](#) (VUB, BRISPO & BIRMM) addresses this pressing question: who are these people, and why have they been out of a job for so long? In the podcast, she provides an explanation and gives insight into the circumstances of long-term unemployment. You can access the podcast [here](#).

Past Events @ BRISPO



Citizens with African roots in Belgium - forthcoming study & webinar

On 16 October 2025, the King Baudouin Foundation will publish a new study on how people of Sub-Saharan roots in Belgium navigate and experience life in society. Building on a previous study from 2017, the research now covers all communities of Sub-Saharan origin. Prof. [Fanny D'hondt](#) will co-present the key findings during the webinar (in Dutch). Interested? Register [here](#).



The vroeg geleerd research project launched its website

The interdisciplinary SBO-FWO research project Vroeg Geleerd ('Primary Prejudice'), led by Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), KU Leuven, and AP University of Applied Sciences (AP Hogeschool), has officially launched its website www.vroeggeleerd.be. Vroeg Geleerd investigates relational well-being and bullying in primary schools, focusing on identity traits such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, body shape, and physical disability. With a team of 11 researchers from sociology, psychology, pedagogy, and criminology, the project explores how relational well-being and bullying develops from a young age, visiting schools across Brussels, Antwerp, Limburg, and West Flanders to collect valuable insights. The project addresses a key gap in research: while much is known about relational well-being and bullying among older children, Vroeg Geleerd examines the early origins of prejudice and social exclusion, providing important knowledge for educators and policymakers.

We encourage everyone interested in education, child well-being, and

inclusive school practices to explore the [website](#) and follow Vroeg Geleerd on [LinkedIn](#) as the project continues.



Final conference of MIRREM project on irregular migration measurement and policy

The final conference of the [MIRREM](#) (Measuring Irregular Migration) project took place on 11 September at the Residence Palace in Brussels, with BRISPO as one of the consortium partners. The event brought together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to discuss how irregular migration can be measured, what policy responses exist, and the role of regularisation. Through panels and dialogue, the conference highlighted MIRREM's contributions to data collection, methodological innovation, and evidence-based policymaking on irregular migration in Europe. For more information about the event click [here](#).

Tools @ BRISPO

Making hybrid work workable: three checklists available

Hybrid work has become rapidly mainstream, but how do we make sure that the policies on hybrid work actually contribute to wellbeing and workability? In collaboration with ULB and on behalf of the FOD WASO, researchers from the [Sustainable Work Unit](#) have developed three checklists for employers and HR-teams to implement or enhance their hybrid work policy. The checklists support them to: map the psychosocial risks, plan preventive measures, and set-up sustainable solutions in collaboration with employees. The accompanying casebook with inspirational best practices is also published. More information on the casebook can be found [here](#).



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