

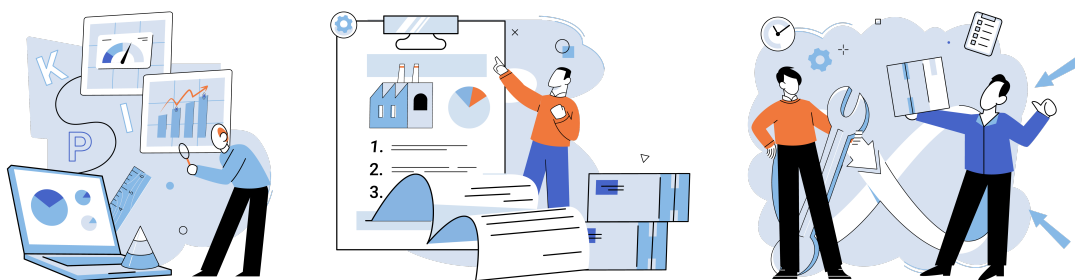
BRISPO Newsletter July 2026



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

In this summer edition of the BRISPO Newsletter, we highlight recent research publications on job quality, occupational inequalities in dementia mortality, and participatory research with rural children in Latin America. We also share updates from our team, including a new FWO Postdoctoral Fellowship, an international scholarly article award, and an open call for a photography project exploring hybrid work. This issue also features recent media contributions by BRISPO researchers, highlights from past events and seminars, and information about upcoming activities, including the joint INEQKILL & Quetelet Conference on health inequalities.

Publications @ BRISPO



BRISPO Sustainable Work Unit maps job quality in Flanders and Belgium

The BRISPO Sustainable Work Unit recently contributed to two major research outputs on job quality. In Flanders, the three-part report *Quality of work* was published as part of the VIONA labour market research programme,

commissioned by the Flemish Minister responsible for Work and the Department of Work, Economy, Science, Innovation and Social Economy. The research developed new surveys to monitor job quality among employees, organisations and self-employed workers. VUB researchers Kim Bosmans, Karen Van Aerden, Jens Doms, Mattias Vos, Ella Oelbrandt and prof. Christophe Vanroelen contributed to the reports. Their contributions focused in particular on hybrid work, employment quality and precarity, and the organisation survey.

At the Belgian level, a new report analysing the Belgian data from Eurofound's European Working Conditions Survey 2024 is now available on the website of the Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue. VUB researchers [Julie Vanderleyden](#), [Kim Bosmans](#) and prof. [Christophe Vanroelen](#) contributed to this report with a chapter on precarious work and vulnerable workers. Christophe Vanroelen presented this chapter at the FOD WASO conference *Job quality in Belgium in 2024*, where the main findings of the report were discussed.

Together, these publications contribute to a better understanding of the quality and sustainability of work in both Flanders and Belgium. The publications are available at the following links:

[VIONA reports](#), [EWCS report](#), [EWCS conference material](#)



Occupational Inequalities in Dementia Mortality in Belgium

Using Belgian census-linked mortality data, [Janna Dinneweth](#), [Laura Van den Borre](#), and prof. [Sylvie Gadeyne](#) examine inequalities in dementia mortality across occupational classes in their study titled 'Occupational class and dementia mortality: evidence from Belgian census-linked data' published in *BMC Public Health*. Their findings reveal substantially higher dementia mortality risks among lower-skilled workers, economically inactive individuals, and self-employed workers without employees, even after accounting for educational attainment. Read more [here](#).

New Review Paper Highlights Gaps in Participatory Research with Rural Children in Latin America

A new article by [Jazmín Mazó](#), [Camila Jiménez-Sánchez](#), prof. [Gerrit Loots](#), and Marcela Losantos has been published in Behavioral Sciences as part of the Special Issue Action Research, Methods and Measures in Community Psychology-2nd Edition. Entitled “A Critical Review of Children in Rural Latin America: Toward Meaningful Engagement in Complex Research Contexts,” the article critically examines how participatory research with children and adolescents is being implemented across rural Latin America. Read more [here](#).



News from Team Members @ BRISPO

 VISUAL SOCIOLOGY PROJECT

Hoe netjes of chaotisch is jouw home office?

Geef ons een inkijkje in jouw thuiswerkplek



BRISPO (VUB) start een fotografieproject over hybride werken.



Geschoolde fotografe en sociologe Ella Oelbrandt wil **visueel in kaart brengen** hoe home offices 'spreken' over hoe we omgaan met thuiswerk.



We zoeken kandidaten die hun home office willen laten fotograferen.

 Looptijd project: **juni – september 2026**



We maken duidelijke afspraken en respecteren je privacy.



Contacteer
Ella.Oelbrandt@vub.be



Meer info over het onderzoek:

<https://brispo.research.vub.be/en/sushy-towards-sustainable-hybrid-work-the-study-of-hybrid-work-effects-on-well-being-productivity>



Open Call for Photography Project on Home Offices

From 2023 onwards, BRISPO researcher [Jens Doms](#), [Karen Van Aerden](#) and prof. [Christophe Vanroelen](#) were involved in the project on hybrid work, SUSHY

(Towards Sustainable Hybrid Work: the Study of Hybrid Work Effects on Well-Being, Productivity and Environment). During the final phase, a photography project on the same theme is now getting underway. The main aim is to examine how the evolution of hybrid working manifests itself in different contexts. Specifically, BRISPO researcher **Ella Oelbrandt** who's also a photographer will photograph the physical characteristics of office environments, and home workspaces in order to analyse how different people and companies organise their working environments. With this open call, we aim to encourage participants to share their home office. If you're interested, please get in touch via researcher Ella Oelbrandt: ella.oelbrandt@vub.be

New FWO Postdoctoral Fellowship Awarded to Marloes Hagenaars: From Print to Pupil

We are pleased to announce that **Marloes Hagenaars** has been awarded an FWO Postdoctoral Fellowship for her new research project "From Print to Pupil" (2026-2029). The project investigates how social identities are represented in primary school textbooks and how these representations ultimately shape pupils' experiences in the classroom. The project will be supervised by prof. **Fanny D'hondt** (BRISPO), with prof. Peter Stevens (Ghent University) as co-supervisor. Read more [here](#).



ASA Distinguished Scholarly Article Award for Bryan Boyle and Dieter Vandebroeck

Bryan Boyle and prof. **Dieter Vandebroeck** are co-winners of the American Sociological Association (ASA) Labor and Labor Movements Section's Distinguished Scholarly Article Award for their article "The Labor of Distinction: Butlers, Service Work, and the Production of Elite Lifestyles" published in *American Sociological Review*. In the paper, the case is made for a new type of labour, termed the 'labour of distinction', in order to better elucidate how elite lifestyle practices are supported by the employment of specialised labour power. This is grounded in a case study of the recently revived 'butler' profession, drawing from an 'enactive' ethnography where Bryan trained and worked as a butler himself in the UK. Read more [here](#).

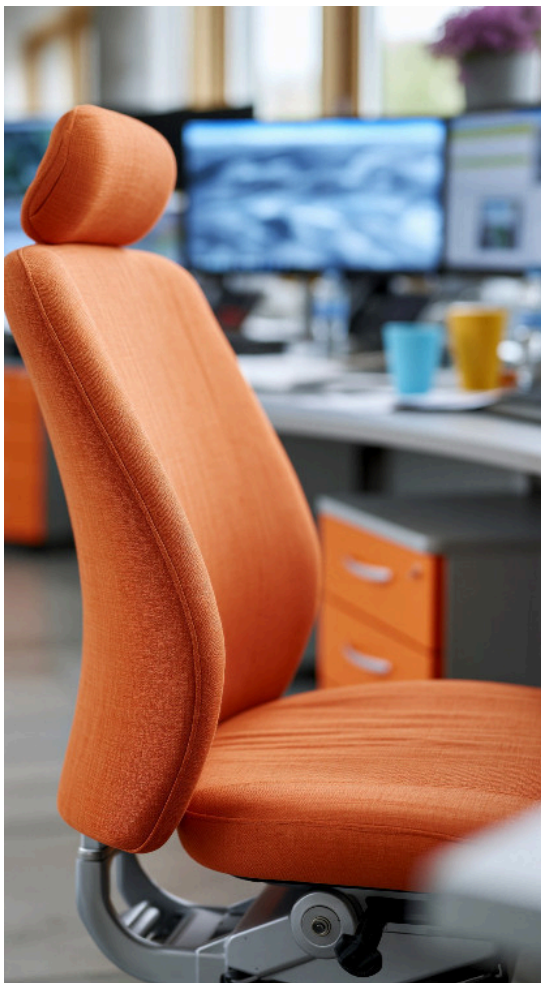
Media Highlights @ BRISPO

Interview with Prof. Vanroelen and Prof. Hofmans on Mental Health Problems at Work

The interview was conducted to mark the launch of a new project, the **HELIOS-VUB Chair for Mental Well-being at Work**, funded by the HELIOS Foundation. With an investment of around €3.2 million, the VUB will have the opportunity over the next five years to investigate one of today's major societal challenges: mental wellbeing in the workplace. The Helios Chair brings together VUB researchers from different disciplines who will collaborate with Belgian organisations on evidence-based prevention strategies. According to co-chairs Professors **Christophe Vanroelen** and Joeri Hofmans, the key lies not only in supporting employees who are already struggling, but above all in organising work in a healthier way.

The article is available in **English** and in **Dutch**.





New Comment in Knack: Long-Term Sick? Prevention Is the Best Reintegration (in Dutch)

New commentary by Prof. **Christophe Vanroelen** highlights the importance of shifting attention from reintegration to prevention in the workplace. According to Prof. Vanroelen, reducing long-term sickness cannot rely only on supporting people who are already absent from work. The key challenge starts earlier - in creating more sustainable working conditions through stronger primary prevention. Full text of the comment (in Dutch) in "Knack" is available [here](#).

Interview with Deborah De Moortel on Sustainable Working Environments for Women (in Dutch)

In an interview with prof. **Deborah De Moortel**, conducted in the context of the current reforms of the pension legislation, the idea of a "behavioral change" among employed women is questioned. Instead, De Moortel argues that attention should be directed toward structural causes of labour market inequality, such as gender-based discrimination, segregation in the labour market, prevailing gender norms, and related socialization processes. She stresses the importance of raising awareness of these factors, which contribute to women being placed in a more vulnerable position in society. The interview (in Dutch) is available [here](#).



Past Events @ BRISPO



Looking Back on the Photovoice Symposium “From Camp to Campus”

On 21 May, the “From Camp to Campus” symposium brought together researchers and stakeholders at HIVA in Leuven to reflect on access to higher education in Flanders. Organised as part of the FWO-SBO “From Camp to Campus” project, the symposium was held in collaboration with the project's partners: KU Leuven, UCLL, Hogeschool PXL, and **BRISPO-AIMSLab**.

The symposium featured a photovoice exhibition in which refugees and newcomers shared their journeys to, within and after higher education through photographs and personal stories. Their contributions highlighted not only the barriers and challenges they encounter, but also their aspirations, resilience, and perspectives on how higher education can become more inclusive. The exhibition was followed by dialogue tables, creating space for participants and stakeholders to exchange ideas and discuss possible solutions.

A sincere thank you to the keynote speakers, Ides Nicaise, Dries Dingenen and Maria Mocanu, as well as all participants, contributors and attendees for sharing their experiences and engaging in meaningful conversations. Read more about the project [here](#).

Successful Expert Workshop “Degrees in Transition”

The expert workshop *Degrees in Transition: Higher Education and Labour Market Integration of Newcomers and Refugees* was successfully held on **11-12 June 2026** at the **VUB**, as part of the FWO-funded SBO research project **From Camp to Campus**. The event brought together international scholars working at the intersection of higher education, labour market integration, and newcomer trajectories. Over the course of two days, participants engaged in intensive academic exchange focused on comparative perspectives, methodological approaches, and emerging empirical findings.

Seminar “Be My Voice: Stories from Gaza and What We Owe”

The seminar “Be My Voice: Stories from Gaza and What We Owe” was held at the VUB as part of its academic and public engagement programme on 19 May 2026. The event brought together researchers, students, and members of the university community to reflect on narratives emerging from Gaza and the ethical responsibilities of listening, representation, and academic engagement in contexts of conflict and humanitarian crisis. Through presentations and discussion, the seminar explored how storytelling, testimony, and mediated voices shape public understanding of ongoing violence and displacement. It also addressed broader questions about what individuals and institutions “owe” in terms of solidarity, scholarly responsibility, and critical engagement with contemporary crises.



BE MY VOICE

Stories from Gaza, and what we owe

For more than 880 days, Alhassan Selmi, a Palestinian journalist from Gaza, reported from the Gaza Strip through social media, Italian media, and other international outlets. Now living in Italy through a government scholarship, while his family, friends, and fellow journalists remain trapped in Gaza, he joins us via video link to speak about war, loss, resilience, and the burden of bearing witness.

The seminar will be followed by a short contribution from journalist **Raffaele Oriani** and illustrator **Marcella Brancaforte** on the BeMyVoice project.

An open conversation on testimony, responsibility, and solidarity.

19 May 2026 16:00-17:00 VUB Campus Etterbeek Room X.X.X.
In-person event with the speakers joining via video link.

A seminar organised by VUB BRISPO BRUSSELS INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND POPULATION STUDIES

Register here!



LONELY BUT NOT ALONE: LONELINESS AMONG CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Seminar with
prof. Marlies Maes
(Utrecht University, the Netherlands)

04/05/2026 14:00-15:00

Pleinlaan 5, room 4.21 4th floor

In-person event
Free entry, no registration required

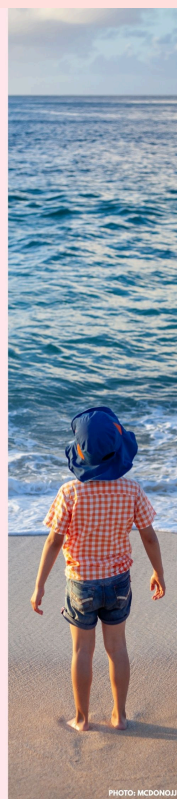


PHOTO: MCDONALD

Seminar with Marlies Maes: “Lonely but Not Alone: Loneliness Among Children and Adolescents”

BRISPO hosted a seminar featuring Marlies Maes titled “Lonely but Not Alone: Loneliness Among Children and Adolescents” on Monday 4 May 2026. The seminar focused on the growing issue of loneliness among young people, particularly children and adolescents, and explored its social, psychological, and developmental dimensions. Drawing on current research, the presentation highlighted how loneliness manifests in different life contexts and how it relates to broader questions of well-being, social connection, and mental health. The discussion also addressed risk factors and protective factors influencing loneliness in youth, as well as the role of schools, families, and peer networks in shaping social integration. The event contributed to ongoing academic and public debates

Future events @ BRISPO



Joint INEQKILL & Quetelet Conference “How Inequality Kills”

The conference will take place **on-site only** at the Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain), Belgium, from 18-20 November 2026. The event focuses on health inequalities as one of the most persistent and consequential forms of social inequality. It examines how long-term historical processes, spatial structures, and socio-economic transformations shape unequal health outcomes across populations and regions. From pre-industrial mortality regimes to contemporary health transitions, the conference highlights the role of colonial legacies, institutional arrangements, environmental conditions, and demographic and epidemiological change in producing and sustaining these disparities. Read more [here](#).

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More Information on
BRISPO

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