ID: MSCA-19-DeDonder01

Discipline: Educational Sciences

Title: Inclusive communities and civic engagement in later life

Abstract: The Belgian Ageing Studies team at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel has more than 15 years research experience on societal aspects and challenges of aging. The research team enjoys national and international recognition on these topics (cf. nomination European Foundations Award for Responsible Research & Innovation (EFARRI)). The Belgian Ageing Studies is composed of 4 thematical units: Political participation, Care, Inclusive Communities and Civic Engagement.

The unit Inclusive Communities embraces studies on the social environment (social relations, networks, cohesion, active caring communities, compassionate communities, social inclusion, elder abuse), cultural environment (diversity, migration, ageism) and physical environment (housing, urban planning, unsafety).

The unit “Civic Engagement” focuses on topics such as civic and social participation, volunteering, civil society, cultural participation, education, Active Ageing, transition from work to pension.

In researching these topics, the research group often focuses on vulnerable groups among older people, a life course perspective, and incorporates a critical view on socio-structural and economic inequalities. Following the European Commission and the World Health Organizations’ policy agenda of Age-friendly environments and Active and Healthy Ageing, more research is crucial on how to remove barriers to participate within society and how to be all-inclusive towards vulnerable groups.

The research team has a lot of expertise in performing mixed-methods, (community-based) participatory research. Quantitative survey research is combined with qualitative research, while concepts such as peer-research, co-creation, co-production and social innovation prevail. By including the (vulnerable) target groups as researchers, social change, policy change and impact can be facilitated.

The Belgian Ageing Studies research group at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel is a dynamic and vibrant group and welcomes international researchers open to research challenges related to inclusive communities and civic engagement in later life. The candidate might suggest a specific own topic, or together a specific proposal can be developed.

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