

3 PhD positions in Digital Media Use, Gender Narratives, and Adolescents' Development and Mental Health

PHD POSITIONS - 100% (3 available)

Department of Information and Communication Sciences (ReSIC) – Université libre de Bruxelles

INFORMATION ABOUT THE POSITION

Faculty/Department: Faculty of Arts, Translation, and Communication, Department of Information and Communication Sciences (ReSIC)

Director : Laura Calabrese

Promotor : Chelly Maes

Title of the position: PhD researcher

Contract type: PhD Fellowship

Contract length: The initial contract offers a one-year research position for each PhD student, extendable to a total duration of four years after approval by the doctoral jury.

Work Time: Full time (100%)

Funding : European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant (GENSCOPE project)

Salary: about 2,100-2,200 euros/month (net salary)

JOB DESCRIPTION

Prof. Chelly Maes, part of the Department of Information and Communication Sciences (ReSIC) at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), is hiring **three fully funded PhD positions** within project GENSCOPE (*Gender Narratives and adolescents' Socialization across Contexts, Platforms, and Engagements*). This project is funded by the **European Research Council (ERC)** through a prestigious **ERC Starting Grant**. GENSCOPE seeks to fundamentally transform our understanding of how media shape adolescents' gender beliefs, body image, sexuality, and mental health. GENSCOPE recognizes that adolescents simultaneously navigate diverse, and often conflicting, gender narratives across social media, television, and video games. The project will combine innovative quantitative (e.g., longitudinal research, daily diary research, and data donation with automated coding) and qualitative approaches (e.g., focus group interviews) to explore adolescents' real-time interactions with gender narratives in their digital world. The project will be conducted simultaneously in **Belgium, Italy, and Czechia**, allowing the comparison of countries with different levels of gender equality indices. Rather than working on isolated studies, the **three PhD researchers will jointly collaborate on the GENSCOPE project**. Each PhD candidate will develop an **independent doctoral dissertation** with its own research questions, publications, and expertise, while collaborating with the other PhD researchers, the postdoctoral researcher, and Prof. Maes. The three PhD projects will focus on complementary developmental outcomes in relation to their media use: 1) gender beliefs, attitudes, and related behaviors; 2) body image development; and 3) sexuality development. Additionally, mental health and psychological well-being will be jointly studied with the postdoctoral researcher. PhD candidates will be enrolled in ULB's 4-year doctoral programme, in which they acquire many other important career skills.

PROFILES

Prof. Maes is looking for **three highly motivated**, intellectually curious, and collaborative researchers who aspire to pursue an international academic career. Successful applicants are enthusiastic about conducting rigorous research, enjoy working in multidisciplinary teams, and are eager to contribute to an ambitious research programme funded by the **European Research Council**.

Applicants should **hold** (or obtain before the start of the appointment) a **Master's degree** in Communication Science, Psychology, Sociology, Behavioural Sciences, or another relevant discipline with an excellent academic record. Applicants should have previously demonstrated **an interest in research** (e.g., writing your master's thesis or other research experience). They should possess a strong interest in the role of digital media in youth's development. Applicants should genuinely enjoy working as part of a team. Excellent **interpersonal and communication** skills, openness to feedback, and a collaborative mindset are therefore essential.

An important requirement for these positions concerns the international design of the project. GENSCOPE will be conducted simultaneously in **Belgium, Italy, and Czechia**. As the project relies heavily on collecting data from adolescents, schools, youth organisations, and national stakeholders in each country, we are specifically seeking **one PhD researcher from Belgium, one from Italy, and one from Czechia**. The successful candidates are expected to **relocate to Belgium** for the duration of the PhD project and enroll in ULB's doctoral programme, where they will receive advanced research training and professional development opportunities. Excellent command of English, both written and spoken, is required. Knowledge of **Dutch** or **French** (for the Belgian position), **Italian** (for the Italian position), or **Czech** (for the Czech position) is essential.

Candidates should have a **solid foundation in quantitative and/or qualitative research methods** and be willing to further develop expertise in advanced methodologies. Experience with survey research, content analysis, statistical software (e.g., R, SPSS, Mplus, or similar), or qualitative data analysis is advantageous. Familiarity with computational methods, automated content analysis, experience sampling, diary studies, or longitudinal research is considered an asset but is **not** required. Throughout the PhD trajectory, researchers will receive extensive training in the innovative methodological approaches employed within GENSCOPE.

Strong organisational skills, scientific integrity, and excellent academic writing and presentation skills are expected. Given the scale and ambition of the ERC project, candidates should be **proactive, well-organised, resilient under pressure, and motivated** to contribute to an internationally visible research programme. They should also be able to **work effectively under pressure and meet demanding deadlines**.

OFFER

The initial contract offers a one-year research position for each PhD student, extendable to a total duration of four years. The commencement date will be on **March 1, 2027**. The compensation and benefits are in line with the university's salary scales for PhD candidates and are highly competitive in accordance with international standards. We provide a nurturing, collegial, and supportive research environment. Located in the **heart of Europe**, Brussels offers a vibrant and highly multicultural environment, with an exceptional diversity of cultural, social, and professional opportunities.

INTERESTED?

Interested candidates are asked to send the following documents **before 12 October 2026** when applying for the position (**in a single PDF document**) :

- CV
- A motivation letter explaining your personal background, interest in an academic career, and general interest in the project.
- A short statement on how the candidate envisions framing the PhD project within GENSCOPE
- A sample of your academic writing (e.g., your master's thesis, a paper, ...).

Interviews with shortlisted candidates will take place during the week of **19 October 2026, online or in-person.**

For more information, please contact:

Prof. Dr. Chelly Maes

chelly.maes@ulb.be

+32 484 812 618

Applications must be submitted via email before **12 October 2026** to chelly.maes@ulb.be.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY

ULB's personnel policy is based on diversity and equal opportunity.

We recruit candidates on the basis of their skills, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, origin, nationality, beliefs, disability, etc. More details on the ULB gender and diversity policy are available at <https://www.ulb.be/en/about-ulb/gender-equality-at-ulb>.