



VSR STUDY DAY

Inspirational concepts in socio-legal research on migration and diversity

Thursday 15 May 2025

Ghent University

This study day will focus on socio-legal research related to migration and diversity. A central theme of the event is the question: which concepts have inspired your work or helped you better understand empirical realities? Presenters are encouraged to showcase their research, emphasizing how these concepts have shaped their approach.

Wednesday 14 May

20h00 To ensure a relaxed travel and enjoy the beautiful city of Ghent: come early and meet informally in café [VierNulVier](#), Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23, Ghent.

Thursday 15 May

Venue: Faculty Board Room, Voldersstraat 3, Ghent

10h00: Registration and coffee/tea

10h30: **Welcome**
Ellen Desmet, Ghent University

10h40: **Panel 1: Socio-legal research on migration: inspirational concepts**

Chair: Ellen Desmet, Ghent University

Respondents: Iris Sportel, Radboud University Nijmegen, and Ruben Wissing, Ghent University

- Freedom and unfreedom from the perspective of refugees.
Shahin Nasiri, University of Amsterdam
- Lost in Transit: Negotiating Legal Knowledge at the Franco-British Border
Maud Martens, Ghent University
- A 'rights-making' approach to the human rights of migrants
Jordan Dez, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam



12h00: Lunch

13h00: **Panel 2: Sociolegal research on diversity: inspirational concepts**

Chair: Pieter Cannoot, Ghent University

Respondent: Ashley Terlouw, Radboud University Nijmegen

- Decolonisation of intellectual property
Devanshi Saxena, University of Antwerp
- Article 14 under review: Investigating the lack of systematic review of discrimination complaints by the ECtHR.
Cathérine Van de Graaf (Ghent University) and Beril Onder, University of Cologne
- The (in)visible gender dimension in EU migration management: operationalizing masculinity, intersectionality and vulnerability
Sophie Bols, Ghent University

14h20: Walk to Auditorium N *(on the way to the train station)*

14h45: **Keynote lecture: "Combating discrimination through litigation? Questioning the Belgian Experience"**

Venue: Auditorium N, Rozier 44, Ghent

14h45: Keynote by Julie Ringelheim and Jogchum Vrielink; UC Louvain

15h15: Response by Betty de Hart, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

15h25: Q&A

15h45: End



Registration

Attendance is free, but places are limited and registration is required by 8 May via <https://event.ugent.be/registration/VSR2025>

Scientific and organizing committee:

Iris Sportel (Radboud University Nijmegen), Cathérine Van de Graaf, Pieter Cannoot, Ruben Wissing & Ellen Desmet

Friday 16 May

Continue your stay in Belgium, with a book launch and study day in Antwerp on "[Feministische en queer onderzoeksmethoden in het recht](#)" (eds. Pieter Cannoot, Elise Goossens and Marie Spinoy).

ABSTRACT of keynote

Our presentation explores how Courts handle employment discrimination cases in Belgium. In a first section, we present the findings of a quantitative study of a dataset of 612 cases issued by Belgian labour courts between 2009 and 2019. This study identifies significant differences in plaintiffs' success rates depending on factors such as grounds of discrimination (e.g., gender, race, disability, religion), type of discrimination (e.g., direct, indirect, harassment, denial of reasonable accommodation), nature of the dispute (e.g., hiring, dismissal, working conditions), and the involvement of an equality body. In a second section, based on a qualitative analysis of 257 judgments, complemented by interviews with judges, lawyers, and equality body representatives, we highlight 3 key explanatory factors for these differences. First, certain variations reflect varying attitudes of economic actors toward different grounds of discrimination and types of workplace disputes, which influence the evidence available to plaintiffs (1). Second, other variations stem from variations in legal provisions addressing different forms of discrimination (2). Third and finally, certain variations derive from divergent judicial interpretations of key legal concepts. Our study reveals systemic and interpretive challenges in addressing discrimination through litigation and offers a foundation for refining legal frameworks and judicial practices.



BIOS

Julie Ringelheim is Senior Researcher with the Fund for Scientific Research (FRS-FNRS) and Professor at the Law Faculty of Louvain University (UCLouvain). Her areas of research include international human rights law, antidiscrimination law, and sociology of law. She has been involved in several socio-legal empirical research, relating, among others, to the handling of discrimination cases by courts and the use of strategic litigation by NGOs. Between 2020 and 2024, she coordinated with Jogchum Vrielink the research project *Combating discrimination through law: Questioning the Belgian Experience*. A socio-legal investigation, funded by the FNRS. Among her recent publications, lie 'Workers with Disabilities between Legal Changes and Persisting Exclusion: How Contradictory Rights Shape Legal Mobilization', *Law & Society Review* 53(4), 2019, 983-1015 (with A. Lejeune); 'The Differential Use of Litigation by NGOs: A Case Study on Antidiscrimination Legal Mobilization in Belgium' (with Aude Lejeune), *Law & Social Inquiry*, Nov. 2022, 1-34; and "L'enjeu de la preuve dans le contentieux de la discrimination au travail: une analyse systématique de cinq années de jurisprudence des juridictions du travail", *Revue trimestrielle des droits de l'homme*, 2025 (with O. Struelens and J. Vrielink). Graduate in law from the ULB (1998), LLM from Cambridge University (Trinity Hall College) (1999), she holds a PhD from the European University Institute (Florence) (2005).

Jogchum Vrielink is professor of discrimination law and fundamental rights at UCLouvain Saint-Louis Bruxelles (law faculty) and of law and religion at KU Leuven (faculty of Canon law). His expertise spans human rights law, anti-discrimination law, law and religion, and the anthropology of law. He has contributed to numerous socio-legal empirical research projects, addressing topics such as hate speech, cyberviolence, disability rights, terrorism, and non-discrimination. From 2020 to 2024, he co-coordinated, alongside Julie Ringelheim, the FNRS-funded research project "*Combating Discrimination Through Law: Questioning the Belgian Experience. A Socio-Legal Investigation*". Jogchum Vrielink earned his PhD in law in 2010 and also holds master's degrees in public administration (University of Twente, 1999) and social and cultural anthropology (KU Leuven, 2000).