

2021

LISER ANNUAL REPORT



**BETWEEN
2018 AND
2021 LISER'S
EXTERNAL
FUND RAISING
– AND HENCE
SOCIAL
RETURN –
INCREASED
BY 45%**

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SURPASSING YOURSELF

Research, like many other areas, is a competitive environment. If you choose to be a researcher, you imagine that one day you will make a decisive discovery and gain worldwide recognition. Generally speaking, research seems to be an environment where individuals compete against each other. In reality, however, teamwork is essential to the success of any given research project.

In order to be successful, the challenge is to motivate and manage teams. Nowadays, teams tend to become more interdisciplinary which entails a structural shift and a different mind-set. Luxembourg is excellent at attracting talent from all around the world and LISER creates an international research environment which is truly exceptional. LISER has succeeded in bringing together researchers from various countries and disciplines to create thriving interdisciplinary teams. Researchers from LISER have thus obtained over the years very prestigious grants, have pushed the frontiers of research and have surpassed themselves and the objectives of LISER.

I am very proud of our researchers at LISER and the wider research community that has grown over the last years and that puts the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on the map as a well-recognised competitive centre of public research.

Véronique Hoffeld, Chairwoman of LISER

IN A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

THE HEART OF OUR

Over the last multiannual 2018-2022 period, LISER has surpassed its objectives and strategic goals and seen the success rates of its projects dramatically improve. Inspired by our collective vision and empowered by our continuously developing distinctive skills, we are today embracing our 2022-2025 strategy.

Our enthusiasm and trust in LISER's future development is solidly grounded in the awareness of all the potential that can be generated through our highly collaborative and interdisciplinary activities and of the energy that is continuously spreading from sharing and cross-fertilizing our knowledge, methods and insights.

The value that we offer to society is increasingly about identifying new ways to cross perspectives, combine expertise and connect across disciplines and stakeholders. As complexity continues to rise in societal challenges and tensions continue to prevail in every corner of our socio-economic environment, we are more than ever committed to engage in novel forms of collaborations and co-creation to produce scientific innovation that impacts society.

The harmonious evolution of LISER is a deeply collective endeavor dedicated to our mission of serving society and pushing together the frontiers of knowledge. Aware of our humble role in the evolution of science and societal innovation, surpassing ourselves is furthermore all about creating the conditions for the future generation of researchers to reach the highest summits.

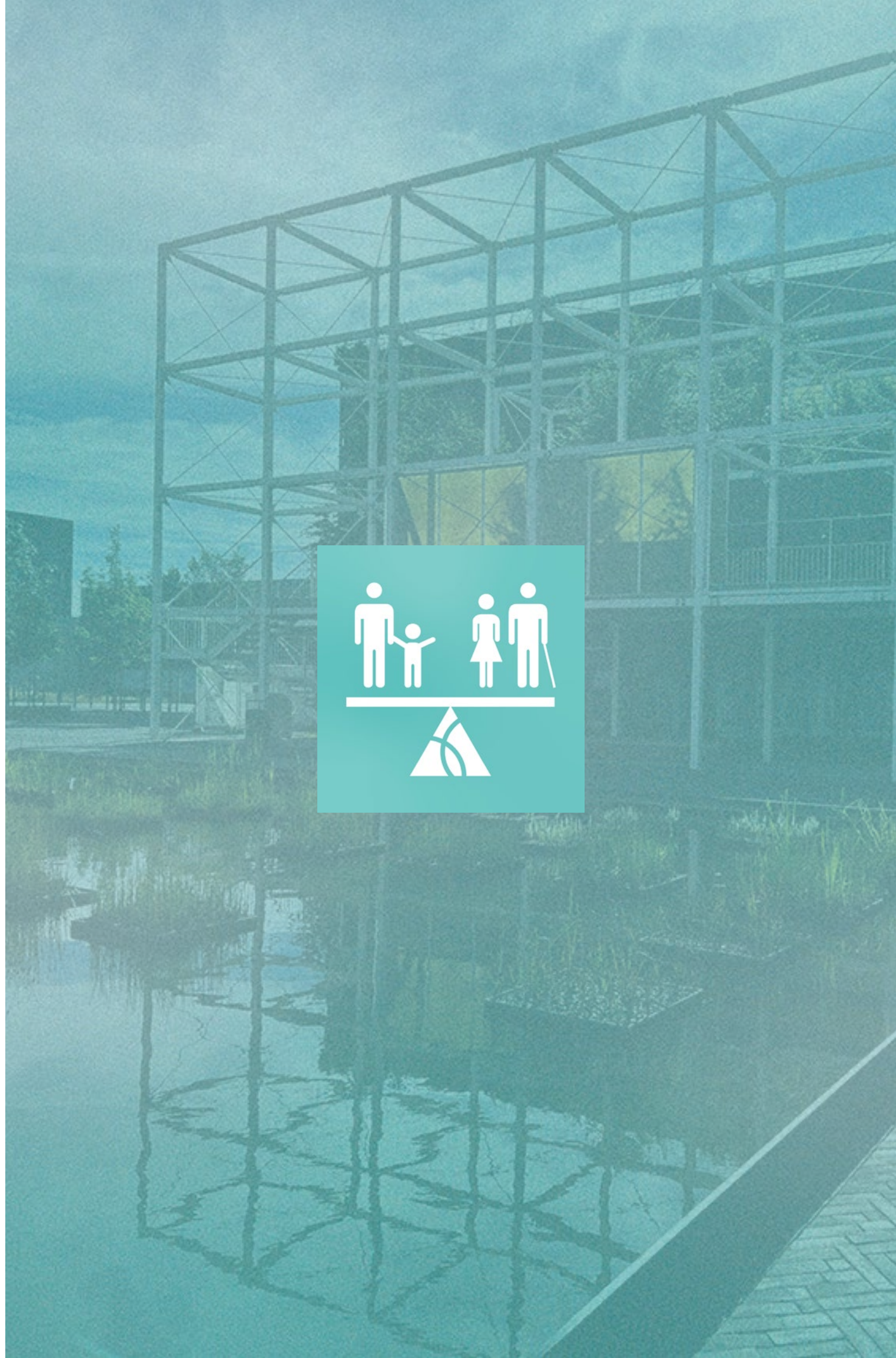
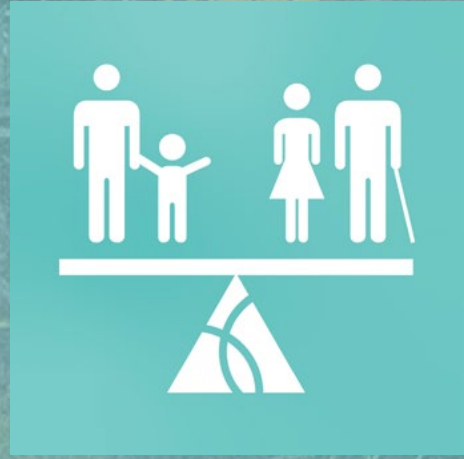
We are extremely happy to share with you in this annual report our passion for our research work and mission.

Aline Muller, CEO of LISER

JOURNEY IS COLLECTIVE



LIVING CONDITIONS LIVING CONDITIONS



EUGENIO PELUSO

— Head of Living Conditions department

Expanding the frontiers between scientific research and societal impact

The Living Conditions (LC) department aims to achieve excellence in scientific research and societal impact. Often considered as separate missions, in the past years, the department has succeeded in getting these two missions to converge by generating increasing synergies between academic research and impact on policy-makers and society.

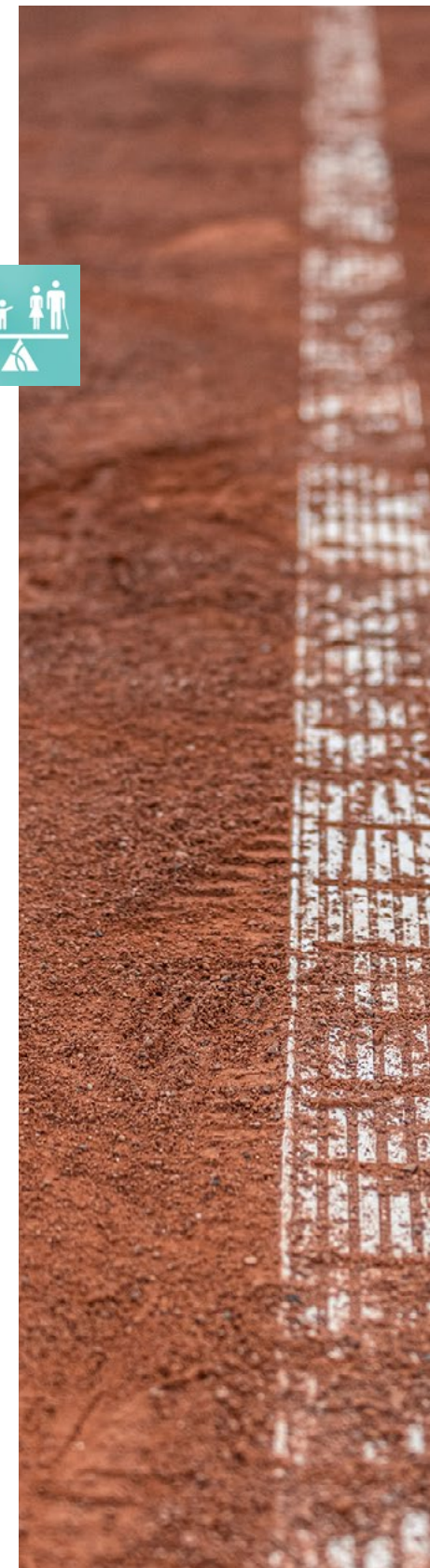
What are the ambitions of the department concerning its societal impact?

Eugenio Peluso : *Our objective is to promote and reinforce the societal impact of our research, by increasing the visibility of our outputs and prioritizing policy-relevant topics in our project's portfolio. Our strategy aims to generate "streams of funded projects", which generate complementarities and synergies between competitive/contractual/doctoral research. We have reached this objective mainly in the fields of "fiscal and social policy" and "childhood, family, education", with several projects on parental leave policy, social assistance, education and children well-being, among others.*

What do you think are the keys of this success?

Eugenio Peluso : *The members of the department have developed a great ability within the local and international landscape, by cultivating excellent relationships with stakeholders and developing an impressive network and research infrastructure with almost all the Luxembourgish Ministries and some EU Institutions. The department puts strong efforts to support its well-known partners in policy evaluation, to answer parliament's questions, and to reform and create new laws. At the same time, we try to develop synergies through co-creation with our stakeholders, by identifying key-issues for research and policy-making. We also ask for their support to collect new data and make it available for academic research.*

Our strategy to develop new collaborations includes two steps. First, we identify current societal needs and anticipate future ones to promote the co-creation of projects. Second, we increase the visibility of the diversity of the topics covered and the tools developed within the department. In fact, the LC department is traditionally known for its work on poverty and social exclusion, but has extended its domain of research in recent years.



To implement this approach, we created the Societal Impact Committee (SIC), which is in charge of studying the best way to promote the work carried out within the department, to find new opportunities for collaboration, and to analyse the best strategy to do this.

What are the objectives of the SIC?

Maria-Noel Pi Alperin : *The SIC was created in 2019 to develop a systematic strategy in terms of societal impact and improve the department's visibility. Its strategy revolves around the following : the development and strengthening of existing relationships and contracts with stakeholders; the development of new partnerships and projects; the valorisation of outputs; and the identification of the potential for improvement of societal impact.*



How is the strategy of the SIC implemented?

Maria-Noel Pi Alperin : *With Kristell Leduc, Audrey Bousselin, and the collaboration of Axelle Depireux, we detect the societal impact opportunities during the design and the realization of projects, in order to “catch” and value the results that could be turned into opportunities for the society. Moreover, we guide the researchers and inform them about the most appropriate tools of valorisation and channels of dissemination available, according to the type of outputs produced. To reach these goals, we systematically participate in the department meetings, establish a continuous dialogue with the leaders of the main research projects and with people in charge of the Societal Impact mission at the Institute level, in order to offer guidelines and put the experience developed at the LC department at the service of the Institute.*

María Noel Pi Alperin,
Research Department
Living Conditions

EXPLORING THE MANY FACETS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Living Conditions department devoted a significant amount of research to studying the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic since its outbreak in February 2020. While **2020 was an example of research in a 'state of emergency'**—concerned with monitoring developments of the disease and attempting projections of what was likely to happen in the short-run—**2021 was the year to start looking with some more distance at how the pandemic unfolded and at its social impacts.**

In “Santé pour Tous”, conducted with the Ministry of Health, STATEC and the General Inspectorate of Social Security, we drew a comprehensive picture of the social gradient of health outcomes after the first eighteen months into the pandemic. We highlighted a number of striking differences in how much the virus hit socio-economic groups. We uncovered, for example, large differences in infection rates and in the risk of developing severe forms of the disease according to the country of birth of Luxembourg residents—differences that persist after adjusting for differences in the age and family structures or in labour market status of the population. We also showed that part, but not all, of these differences can be attributed to differences in vaccination rates, which also vary with socio-economic characteristics.

Philippe Van Kerm,
Research Department
Living Conditions



In collaboration with the Ministry of Equity between Women and Men, COVID-19 and Gender Equality in Luxembourg investigated more specifically the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on gender inequalities. Three domains of the living conditions of adult residents have been considered : their health, their labour market opportunities and their perceived financial insecurity. All dimensions exhibited gender inequalities, albeit not always to the disadvantage of women. Notably, men have been much more likely to develop severe forms of COVID-19. We showed how individual traits affected gender differences in complying with the prevention policies. Attitudes towards social distancing, testing and vaccination depend on socio-demographic factors, but also on deep personality traits such as risk aversion. These characteristics are similar between women and men, with the exception of the perception of COVID-19's danger and risk aversion, which are more pronounced among women. Like in many countries, women lost their job more often than men during the pandemic. Mothers were also twice more likely than fathers to take up the special leave for family reasons at the beginning of the pandemic and have been more likely to be in temporary unemployment in the Spring of 2021.

The Family Response and Well-being effects of Covid-19 focused on the role of the family as a place that can both buffer and amplify the shockwave. The project concentrated on impacts of the pandemic on families with children—illustrating notably on how the pandemic put stress on parental time and resources and surveying how children experienced the extraordinary times of school closures.

These projects illustrate a range of research activities that emerged from the pandemic. For many of us, **engaging in this research required the acquisition of a new skill set, we exploited new online survey instruments, we queried large-scale population-wide registers put together by public administrations, and we needed to learn new models and methods.**

SCIENCE SERVING SOCIETY



Education and inequalities are among the key areas of the Living Conditions (LC) department's long-term research agenda, as well as the National Research Priorities for Luxembourg outlined by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the Luxembourg National Research Fund. Both institutional support and staff dedication resulted in a steady growth of competitive and commissioned projects in LC department. One of such examples is the *"PIONEERED : Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities"* project funded in the framework of Horizon 2020 RIA. It was initiated at the LC department and prepared jointly with the University of Luxembourg (UL) as the principle coordinator, led by Prof. Andreas Hadjar. The motivation to join forces was to foster collaboration among national partners, bring together the expertise of researchers in the field, and to gain experience and knowledge in preparing large-scale proposals for competitive European funding schemes. The project focuses on innovative policies and practices that help overcome inequalities in access and uptake of both formal and informal education from childhood to young adulthood. It provides an important outlet in further increasing the international visibility of LISER and the LC department, as well as the fostering of close collaboration with national policy and academic partners. Among the national partners are the Luxembourg Centre for Educational Testing (LUCET) and the National Observatory for School Quality (ONQS). The international network of the project includes thirteen partners in nine European countries¹, invited based on their research excellence in social inequalities, educational policies and systems.

Aigul Alieva,
Research department
Living Conditions

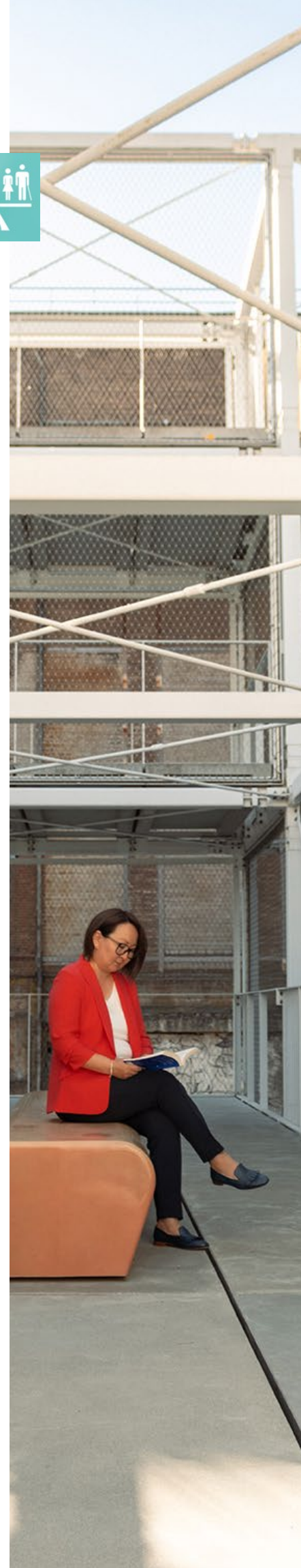


Another example of successful collaboration with the national stakeholders in education through the policy evaluation and methodological expertise of the LC team is the currently ongoing project *"ES-ICS : Evaluation of the application of the social index in the framework of contingent allocation by the municipality in primary education"*², led by the ONQS. The project evaluates the methodology used in computation of the educational contingency (*"contingent scolaire"*), a national policy since 2009 designed to ensure a more equitable allocation of resources across the municipalities with heterogeneous primary school population. The project goes a step further and proposes the ways to improve the calculation methods, and also focuses on an important relationship between the contingency mechanism and academic achievement of children in primary education. Main collaborators include LC at LISER, LUCET and the Institute of Education and Society at UL, with the substantial data support provided by the Service de coordination de la recherche et de l'innovation pédagogiques et technologiques (SCRIPT) at Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth, and the General Inspectorate of Social Security of the Ministry of Social Security.

The PIONEERED and ESICS projects are amongst the LC department's exemplary projects on how science and research-based evidence can serve policies supporting vulnerable school population. **Their success allows the LC department to enhance, on the one hand, current and future collaborations with the academic and policy partners and to reinforce, on the other hand, its role in solidifying the national network in its mission of supporting the society through science.**

¹ Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain, and Switzerland

² « Évaluation de l'application de l'indicateur social dans le cadre de l'attribution du contingent par commune dans l'enseignement fondamental »



HEALTH & HEALTH SYSTEMS HEALTH



MARC SUHRCKE

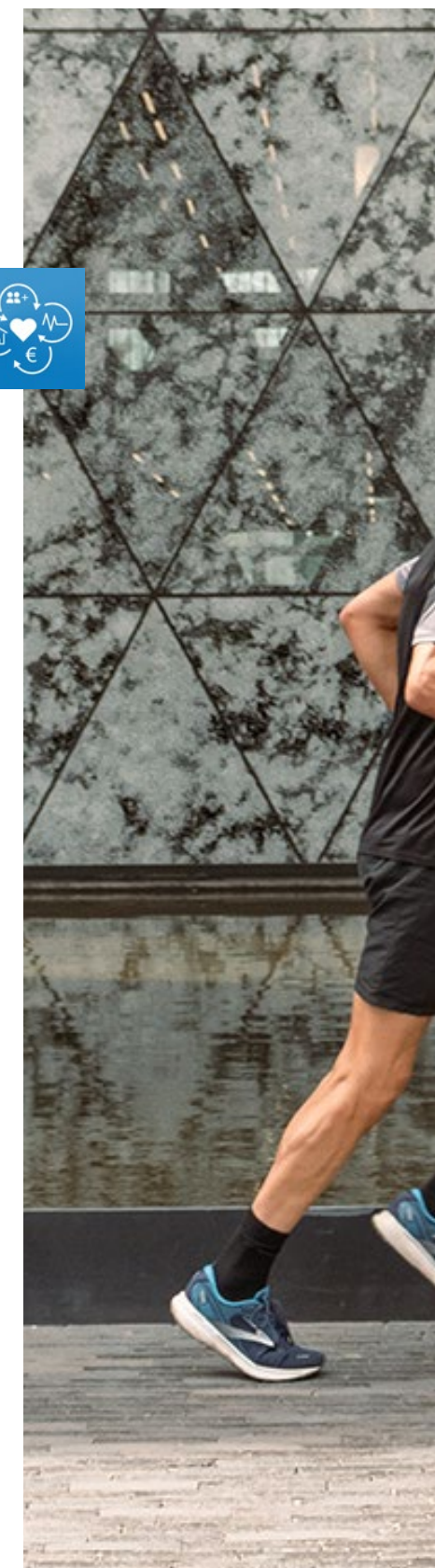
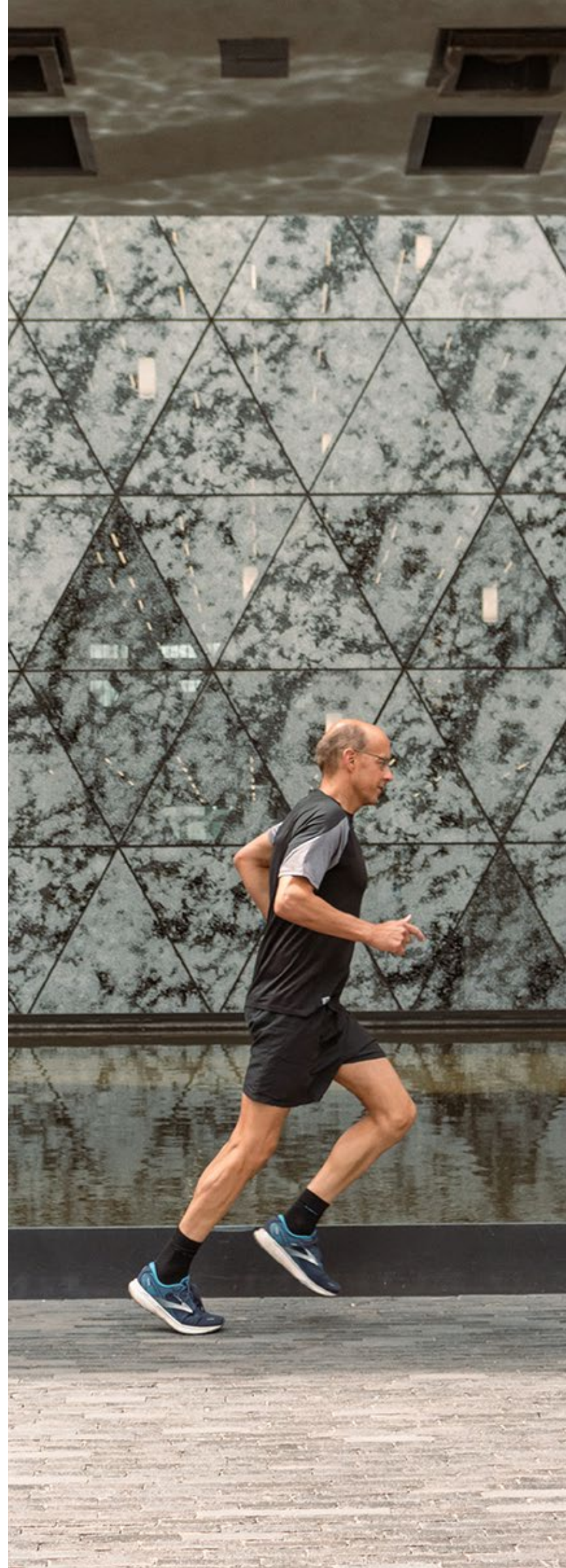
— Research programme leader Health & Health Systems

Since its inception in 2017/18, the transversal HHS research programme has sought to coordinate, stimulate and contribute to the health-related work carried out within and across any of the three departments of LISER. Our work focuses on a wide range of primarily quantitative, social, economic & environmental aspects of health, by harnessing the expertise and infrastructure throughout LISER and by overcoming barriers to collaboration that may have existed in the previously vertically organised institute.

In 2021, LISER researchers have published a total of 38 peer-reviewed articles in the area of socioeconomic aspects of health, in a range of high-ranking journals from different social science disciplines (incl. the Journal of Health Economics, Experimental Economics, Social Science & Medicine, Nature Scientific Reports, Health Policy, etc.) – continuing the growing trend from previous years.

The core HHS team has seen the award of a prestigious EU Marie Curie fellowship to Dr Till Seuring in 2021, on a two-year research project of “Uncovering and understanding differences in health behaviours in people with diabetes (CASCARA)”, while we have proceeded with the implementation of previously acquired national and international project research grants (incl. H2020 and FNR CORE projects), and major national Ministry-funded work (esp. on “Personal assistance for people with disabilities in Luxembourg”, with MIFA) as well as WHO-funded work on the impact of economic sanctions on health. HSS has also been coordinating – in close collaboration with UL– the new Doctoral Training Unit (DTU) on Experiments, Ethics and Economics (“3E”).

In terms of societal impact, all our funded projects have embedded a close stakeholder engagement process, involving national and international policy-makers and -advisors at multiple stages of the work. We have also represented the Ministry of Health in the Health System Performance Assessment (HSPA) Expert Group hosted by the EC’s DG SANCO and in the HSPA sub-group on prevention, and contribute to several high level advisory groups of the World Health Organization (WHO), including the WHO Europe Scientific Advisory Group on Health Equity, the WHO Europe “New Economics Alliance”, and the WHO Europe Technical Advisory Group on Behavioural and Cultural Insights. In addition, we have provided advice to the European Investment Bank’s update of its economic appraisal guidance. As HSS develops further, we expect to see a further strengthening of the links with national ministries and key international institutions, as well as the institutionalisation of our collaboration with LIH.



JUGGLING WITH MULTIPLE PROJECTS WITHOUT LOSING MY CREATIVITY

**Matteo, you joined LISER in October 2019.
What have you been working in these years?
Can you give us a couple of examples?**

The two main projects I've been working on relate to the epidemiology of conflict and the economic cost of climate extremes.

*With Marc Suhrcke, I looked at a type of coercive measure that is currently much in vogue, but rarely considered as a threat to health : economic sanctions. Comprehensive trade embargoes imposed in the early Nineties against Haiti and Iraq sparked intense debate, as limited but consistent evidence suggested that the burden of isolation could fall on the civilian population. Even if food and medicines are exempted, more specialized items may not – think of water treatment chemicals, laboratory reagents, pesticides, or spare parts for x-ray machines. Moreover, a trade slump can lead to dramatic GDP contractions – with potential implications for health. After recent measures against countries like Venezuela, Syria, Iran, and Russia, the WHO wanted an updated picture, and commissioned an evidence review and impact assessment guidelines. **It was a difficult task : we had to make sense of a highly heterogeneous literature based on often incomplete data.** It is also a contentious topic, as sanctioning and sanctioned states regularly blame the opponent. However, if sanctions prevent ordinary citizens to access life-saving treatment, this must be known, and all involved parties pressured to do what they can to prevent and minimize harm. We concluded that the risks are real, and call for making independent monitoring procedures a customary element of sanction policy.*



THE CREATIVE INSPIRATIONS OF OUR WORK

ARE THE EXPRESSION OF OUR PASSION FOR RESEARCH

Matteo Pinna Pintor,
Research Programme
Health & Health Systems



With Till Seuring and Marc, I've also been part of EXHAUSTION, a major project¹ bringing together many European research institutions to cast light on the implications of extreme climate events – mainly heatwaves and air pollution- on health and the economy. We focused on the effect of high temperature on workers' productivity, linking socio-economic surveys to high-resolution climate data. In advanced economies with temperate climates, heat may make most people work less intensely, without fully debilitating them. Yet, spread over large populations and projected into a warmer future, these effects may substantially reinforce the economic case for climate action.

It must be really exciting to work on such topics. To conclude with a final question: how would you define the concept of “overcoming” through your professional/personal experience ?

*Overachievement is a rare animal to meet. In a sense, by definition – one can't be always above his own average. It is also a moving target, as you learn and grow professionally. But sometimes you do go through a phase of unexpected progress. **A big challenge I faced in my first year at LISER was to switch from the single-project focus of the PhD to a more flexible attitude – juggling with multiple projects. You need to subdivide and plan your workflow more carefully, without losing creativity and taste for detail. This raises the bar significantly, and at the beginning, I did not see myself jumping over it... However, eventually it happened – as is often the case, by a combination of personal dedication and support from others, especially my colleagues Till and Marc, to which I owe a special tribute.** However, let me stress that achievements often emerge from periods of apparent quietness. Developing intuitions, gestating research projects, deepening your understanding of some technique – these things pave the way towards achievements, perhaps especially unexpected ones.*

¹ EXHAUSTION is a Horizon 2020 project



WHEN CHALLENGES BRING OPPORTUNITIES

I started working at LISER in 2019. Starting a new job always presents a range of emotions: enthusiasm, excitement, trepidation. For me, one could say that these emotions were doubled, as my new position at LISER was a joint position with the Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH).

As this was a newly created position, it brought with it responsibility as well as opportunity – the responsibility to bring the two institutions closer together and to make this new collaboration successful. One of the first tasks I set myself was to apply for research funding from the FNR. I felt that a CORE Junior research grant would not only fulfil my personal career goals but would also provide a tangible output of the collaboration between LISER and LIH. The prospect of applying for the funding in a time-period of less than four months was daunting. Not only had I to formulate the scientific detail, I also had to identify a research team and develop a project budget in each institution. At times the task appeared too ambitious and unattainable. However, **I reminded myself that undertaking the process was as important as achieving the goal.** I also received strong support and encouragement from my managers and colleagues. I quickly became acquainted with the different scientific expertise and competences of LISER and LIH as well as the necessary administrative processes.

Valérie Moran,
Research Programme
Health & Health Systems



The submission of the application brought not only huge relief but also a personal sense of achievement. Six months later, I was delighted to learn that I had been awarded the funding and the APPEAL (Assessment of Primary care PErformAnce in Luxembourg) project began in January 2020. Soon afterwards, the COVID-19 pandemic presented a new challenge that overturned all my project planning and carefully constructed Gantt chart! While I could proceed with some parts of the project, other work packages were delayed due to data access and availability issues arising from the pandemic. Nevertheless, challenges always bring opportunities and I have learned to be flexible and to adapt to changed circumstances. Once again, the inputs and support of my colleagues have proved to be invaluable. More than three years on, I am still realizing the opportunities that come from working across two institutions. While there can also be challenges, I feel that these are outweighed by the benefits of joint working. It is particularly satisfying to be able to bring together colleagues with mutual interests and complementary skills to work together on joint projects and papers.

Above all, my experience of working in LISER to date has provided me with the self-belief and confidence that I can face and overcome the challenges that invariably arise, no matter how large or small they may be.

LABOUR MARKET



CHRISTINA GATHMANN

— Head of Labour Market department

The Labour Market Department has sharpened its research agenda around four core areas: the impact of the digital and green revolution on the human capital base and skill needs; analyzing worker mobility and regional labour markets; analyzing differential opportunities and outcomes across workers; and evaluating social and economic policies affecting the labour market.

Under the leadership of its new head, the Labour Market Department has launched many new activities, both internally and externally, to advance its research excellence and societal impact. A few examples illustrate the type of activities launched. Internally, the Labour Market Department has established a reading group to provide feedback on research papers to researchers in order to improve the publication potential and hence, LISER's international visibility. The Department also has relaunched a visitors program to bring excellent labour economists to LISER in order to improve the exchange of ideas and build new collaborations.

Externally, the Labour Market Department has co-organized several conferences, including the IAB-LISER conference on “Digitalisation and the Future of Work”, the “Congress on Cross-Border Workers” and the “1st LUX-ERC workshop”. The LUX-ERC workshop brought recent ERC winners, the most prestigious research grant given by the EU, from Spain, Belgium, Germany, Norway to Luxembourg to talk about their research agenda and to provide detailed feedback to doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers on their ongoing research projects.

Moreover, the Labour Market Department has jumpstarted several new collaborations. To name a few examples, researchers have joined consortia for Horizon Europe grants to analyze the digitalization of the labour market; collaborate with LIST and the Department of Computer Science on big data and machine learning techniques; work on new projects with several ministries to provide advice on working time, telework arrangements or consumption patterns; and researchers provide expert advice on various social and economic policy issues to European consortia. Together with the Data Centre, the Labour Market Department made a first big step for improving access to high-quality administrative data. A contract was signed with the Institute for Employment Research, the research institute of the Federal Employment Agency in Germany, to open a saferoom with access to German social security records over more than four decades as well as matched employer-employee data. The data access will provide novel opportunities to analyze labour market topics with rich and high-frequency data.



FROM LUXEMBOURG TO EUROPE : MORE THAN RESEARCH, A COMMITMENT TO THE WELL-BEING OF WORKERS

Consequences of digitalization for employees' well-being in Luxembourg

My initial research concerned the assessment of the impact of digitization on employees' well-being. I focused mainly on Luxembourgish labour market. Thanks to data collected from employees working in Luxembourg, my studies contribute to reducing the research gap in the role of digital tools affecting employees' motivations and well-being. First, my empirical findings revealed that Information Technologies (such as workflow, Enterprise Resource Planning) and mixed technologies (such as e-mail, web-conference) were the ones that most contributed to the development of a motivational work environment. Second, with co-authors, we showed that it is better for employees' well-being to invest in information technology to improve remote access to the company's network after office hours and avoid professional contacts by phone or e-mail after these hours. Third, we found that the user profiles of teleworkers' digital tools during the spring 2020 lockdown induced by COVID-19 led to diverse consequences in subjective well-being and job productivity.

Ludivine Martin,
Research Department
Labour Market



"Nothing ventured, nothing gained", a jump to European funding as the enabler

My research experiences have accumulated over the last years and enabled me to search for international funding. With the expansion of my research network at the international level and thanks to fruitful internal collaborations, I am now involved in various research grants (e.g. H2020 UNTANGLED, Horizon Europe WeLaR).

There is also a challenge to obtain good quality data at the European level, and I am now in the process of expanding my research interests at this European level. For instance, with the H2020 UNTANGLED team, we are investigating what skills are in demand in occupations that are in shortage or surplus in European labour markets. We are also investigating how digitalization and globalization affect European workers' feeling of being under-skilled and more broadly the impact of digitalization and globalization on job quality.

From darkness to light to provide concrete and direct results in the field

Recently, a new challenge that I am taking up is to work with active actors in the labour market. I am currently working with a public/private partnership (FNR BRIDGES LOWSKIM) to co-develop a job matching solution to help low-skilled workers to thrive in a disrupted labour market. I also participate in an Erasmus+ project (LMI-EUniv) aiming to help European Universities to better identify the skills that they have to provide to their students.

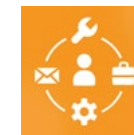
PORTRAIT

Your research has currently focused on two main subjects : youth unemployment and related labour market policies, and technological change. Have you encountered the idea of surpassing in those research areas ?

Youth unemployment is not a new phenomenon and unemployment rates of young job seekers already increased in the 1990s. However, during the 2007/2008 international financial and economic crisis, as well as during the Covid-19 pandemic, governments in the EU were reminded that youth unemployment increased faster (and in some countries more dramatically) than overall adult unemployment. At times when the socio-economic situation is again back on the positive track due to a conjunctural reprise, youth unemployment is not a policy priority anymore. What is also new is that an increasing number of high-skilled young people have been facing spells of unemployment, as their skills do not always match available jobs. It is true that Luxembourg's labour market has faced serious skills mismatches, especially as regards digital skills, which are not readily available. One reason is that niche skills and competences have come to increasingly reflect socio-economic developments. IT cyber security experts and compliance officers are good examples of this evolution, as the requirement to implement strong IT systems (or adapt businesses to stricter EU legislation and norms) have become a priority.

For young job seekers, registered at the national employment agency or the so-called NEET group (young people not in education, employment or training, or generally not on the radar), the consequences of unemployment are worrying: they range from cycles of inactivity (moving from one temporary measure to another) and precarious forms of unemployment to potential long-term wage scars. The main question for policymakers is to **surpass** these consequences and see how to bring young job seekers back into

**Patrick Thill,
Research Department
Labour Market**



stable and quality employment. In this respect, youth unemployment should be regarded as a recurring phenomenon and be addressed by preventive measures, when jobs and funding are available. My research finds for example that a strong social partnership (involving schools, trade unions, employer associations and youth associations) should work hand in hand and pool forces. Professional support, guidance and patience are relevant aspects to **surpass** the phenomenon of youth unemployment.

My second research field concerns the impact of technological change at the sector level, such as in banking which is one of the most important and digitalised activity sectors in Luxembourg. My research results indicate where **surpassing** is essential. The sector (as other sectors too) has been impacted over the last couple of years by restructuring processes, as companies adjust to an increasingly competitive international environment. There have been high risks of mass lay-offs, especially if we look back at the Covid-19 crisis. Those potential lay-offs have been, as my research has found in publications in 2018 and 2022, cushioned by the particular way of governing social relations in Luxembourg (social scientists refer to this as **neocorporatism** or sometimes **competitive corporatism**) with mobilised instruments such as social plans, early retirement schemes or company mobility and training schemes.

In terms of technological change, all sectors will be affected by increasing digital skills requirements and related changing working conditions. While employees and clients have generally got used to technological tools, technological change also redefines the classical work relationship, as many employees interact with robots or deal with high-tech digital tools. These new relationships are part of the future of work and their consequences are yet not fully tangible. My research here focuses on how to **surpass** the negative consequences and create an employee-friendly and employee-participating work environment.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT & MOBILITY U



MARTIN DIJST

— Head of Urban Development
& Mobility department

In sports is surpassing oneself by pushing individual frontiers part of the game. Intensive training, strong believe in one's abilities, and a stimulating coach are some of the ingredients of success. Personally, I am not a big fan of competitive sports. I get my inspiration and motivation for sports activities intrinsically and not by comparing my performances with other's achievements. For me, hiking is an important part of my life. Walking a trail for 20-25 kilometers a day in a varied and contrasting landscape gives me a lot of energy. Being in nature and in contact with historical places and accompanied by a good companion brings me back to myself and allows me to enjoy life.

With hiking one can also push the frontiers. Quite some time ago, I was walking the Camino from Vézelay in France to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. A trail of 1800 kilometers, which I followed for three months. It was for me the first time to walk alone for such a long period. Since the 11th century people take this pilgrimage route. For me it was not a religious pilgrimage but a way to get via walking a stronger embodied experience with the environments of the trail and to get closer contacts with others and also with myself. Pushing the frontiers in a physical sense was not important for me. I met people who were walking 40-50 kilometers daily. I experienced, they have pushed their frontiers for themselves too far and from a different perspective than most hikers on the Camino. Weeks later, I saw many of them again, this time suffering from injuries.

Why do I share these experiences with you? I see parallels between hiking and work performance. Although we are part of a competitive research system in which impact factors of journals and becoming selected for research funding are dominating, these can never compete with an intrinsic motivation to do research. Being curious to know what people experience in their daily lives in geographical environments and to identify solutions to improve their experiences seem to me much more important. In that respect, writing papers and getting research funding and 'being the best' can never be goals in their own right. Being part of a collegial team and as such creating knowledge relevant for society is what should count. With the right intrinsic motivation and training, staff can push their frontiers. In the UDM team, we are offering training to everybody to improve academic and societal performance. However, we are setting realistic frontiers. Like the hikers on the Camino, pushing too hard goes at the cost of mental and physical well-being and a healthy work-life balance.



ERC COMPETITION FOR TWO RESEARCHERS FROM THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT & MOBILITY RESEARCH DEPARTMENT !

Véronique, tell us about you at LISER...

After having had postdoc positions at Ghent University (Belgium) and the University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands), I joined LISER in October 2016. At that time, I was offered a kind of tenure track position. This meant that I had five years to achieve certain criteria in terms of, among others, obtaining research funding and publishing research results in high-quality scientific journals. I achieved these criteria by the end of 2019, and was then offered a permanent position at the start of 2020. This meant a lot to me : after almost 12 years of working on temporary contracts in academia, I had finally found a place where I could develop a stable career and strengthen my research agenda on sustainable mobility, travel behaviour and travel satisfaction without having to worry about the next contract. Since then, LISER has not only offered me opportunities to hone my research skills, but also my management skills. I am now a member of the management board of the UDM department and I am heading the research team 'Living with urban dynamics' in UDM.

Camille, tell us about you at LISER...

I joined LISER in September 2016, after graduating from a PhD in public health epidemiology, and having experienced a first post-doctoral position in Lyon (France), in research laboratory on Human Nutrition and Physical Activity (CRNH-RA), with a strong multidisciplinary approach. At that time, the LISER offered me the perfect opportunity to strengthen my multidisciplinary background in geography and epidemiology by conducting innovative research in an already funded international project (e.g., Contrasted Urban environments and Healthy Ageing), and to develop my own research agenda over the years. Today, the Urban Development and Mobility (UDM) department offers a rich context to develop innovative projects using cutting edge-methodologies in collaboration with researchers and experts from the department, and to complement our expertise of urban health with national (e.g., LIH, Uni-lu) and international (e.g., INSERM, CRCHUM, Zurich University, HUI, etc.) collaborations.

The ERC's (European Research Council) mission is to encourage the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, on the basis of the scientific excellence.

Camille & Véronique, you both have written a project proposal to apply for a ERC grant. What motivated you to start this adventure?

Camille: *I believe that committing to an ERC grant application should be carefully considered in view of the high implication of the researcher's time that such an application requires, and the intense selection process ahead. However, having the opportunity to spend meaningful time reflecting on innovation in your field of research is important and a source of satisfaction, regardless of the outcome of the proposal selection. For me, the initial impetus came from Martin Dijst, our UDM department head, who encouraged us to consider this funding program, and provided guidance throughout the entire submission process. During the writing phase, imagining the outline of the project, the innovations and collaborations that this could bring gave the second strong impetus to go through this adventure.*

Véronique: *When I was working at the University of Amsterdam, I already tried to get an ERC Starting Grant. I got as far as the interviews, but my proposal was not selected in the end. Nevertheless, it was a good learning experience about how to write such a large and innovative project. Depending on when you have obtained your PhD, there are different types of ERC grants. I have now applied for an ERC Consolidator Grant which will allow me as a researcher to consolidate my expertise but also, and more importantly, to further expand my research group.*



You applied to two different types of grant, may you explain us the differences between the both.

Camille: *The Starting grant is aimed for researchers who defended their PhD thesis between 3 to 7 years before applying to the ERC. Therefore, it targets researchers at earlier stage of their career to give them the opportunity to establish themselves as internationally recognized researchers in their research fields, and to develop a research team to conduct your research.*

Véronique: *The Consolidator grant is the 'successor' of a Starting grant, and is for researchers with 7 to 12 years of experience since completion of their PhD. It therefore targets researchers who already started creating an independent, excellent research team and who want to strengthen their team further. The budget of a Consolidator grant is also somewhat larger than that of a Starting grant, allowing you to think really 'big'.*



In order for us to have an idea of the project you have submitted, may you explain it to us in a few words?

Camille: *Stress is ubiquitous in our daily life, and is a major contributor of numerous mental and physical illness, as well as unhealthy behaviours. The “FragMent” project aims to evaluate to which extent the exposures to our geographic environments in daily life influence physiological and psychological stress, as well as social inequalities in stress. Some environments provide more stressful or restorative qualities. This project starts from this premise to investigate the characteristics of these environments, and how momentary, daily and regular exposures to these environments relate to momentary, daily and chronic stress. We further aim to investigate the role of spatiality and temporality of environmental exposures, as well as the contribution of daily activity patterns on stress and stress inequalities among social groups.*

Véronique: *Social cohesion is at risk because of socio-economic segregation, fragmentation of society, and recently rising distrust due to COVID-19. Social cohesion starts with diverse people having at least friendly interactions. Studies have already examined the role of geographic environments, mainly at the level of the residential neighbourhood. However, people have also activities outside their neighbourhood and thus need to travel to these other activity places, each with its specific geographic environment. At both the activity place and while travelling, one can be exposed to social diversity, and may or may not interact with other people. I thus wanted to use my expertise on daily activities and travel behaviour to enrich studies of social cohesion.*





If we consider the surpassing as the exploration of the field of the possible and the attainable outside of what seems to us possible and attainable, outside of the limits, the limits of the conceivable, to what extent do you consider that you have surpassed yourself?

Camille: *An ERC grant proposal invites to think “big”, both in terms of innovation in the research questions and in terms of the means and methods to answer them. Two aspects of this proposal were challenging to develop and will produce new knowledge in the field of neighbourhood and health. Conceptually, this project builds on, and challenges, a corpus of evidence from neighbourhood and health research, to create a bridge between Time Geography, with the concept of space-time activity fragmentation, and epidemiology, to develop a new analytical framework of spatial and temporal exposure effects on health. As regard to the methodology, FragMent will make use of cutting-edge methodologies in exposure and stress measurement using Ecological Momentary Assessment, GPS, and vocal biomarkers of stress, biosensors, and Virtual Reality technology, which all together will deepen our understanding of urban stress.*

Véronique: *ERC projects are considered as ‘high risk, high gain’ projects, and innovation in terms of research questions and methodologies is indeed key. In my case, one of the challenges was to find a way to measure social interactions among people. You can, of course, organize a survey about this but I wanted to map social interactions in a more objective way. Therefore, I propose to make use of different sensors integrated in your smartphone, combining sound recordings, Bluetooth sensing, smartphone usage, and GPS and accelerometer data. However, another and perhaps more important challenge this time was the combination of writing this ERC proposal with my other daily research activities. When I wrote my Starting Grant at the University of Amsterdam, I had no other research projects and I could focus entirely on my ERC. But now I have 2 research projects as Principal Investigator, some additional projects as collaborator, 4 PhD students to supervise, and several international collaborations. I cannot simply stop these. So, it took some while before I could free up enough time to focus on my ERC. Usually you try to take six months time to prepare for your ERC, but I could not start working on my ERC until three months before the submission deadline. Fortunately, I could count on the support and regular feedback of colleagues at UDM. We met almost every week, but this also meant I only had a week time to process their comments each time. This often resulted in very long working days and short nights.*



Camille, you have been positively evaluated in January 2022 and have received a funding. Does this imply a new surpassing? If so, which one?

Camille: *The granting of the FragMent proposal means that important moments are ahead. The implementation of such a project, due to its scale and its methodological advances, will certainly not be trivial. Once again, we will have to surpass ourselves in order to live up to the responsibility we have to make good use of this funding and this opportunity to create new knowledge in the field of neighbourhood and health. However, the duration of the project, which will begin in October 2022 and will last 5 years, leaves us the time to develop serenely our research in optimal conditions.*

**Camille Perchoux
& Véronique Van Acker,
Research Department
Urban Development & Mobility**

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF 'SURPASSING ONESELF'



Surpassing oneself is generally defined as the action of pushing one's limits beyond what one imagines is attainable and achievable. Many psychologists and experts in personal development often put forward the benefits of surpassing oneself : building self-confidence, managing difficult situations, improvement of one's attention, memory and concentration. They also remind us that surpassing oneself does not only concern high-level athletes or workers of the extreme (such as astronauts or rescue workers), but everyone, including researchers

The work of a researcher is a rich activity because of the encounters it brings, the subjects treated and the reflections that are deployed, and because of a certain form of renewal through the problems investigated. However, surpassing oneself in such a profession is not always solely experienced as self-fulfilment. It can produce exhaustion and nervousness in individuals, who are no longer able to step back and reflect calmly on a situation, as well as affect work-life balance.

This situation is quite common today, as the search for competitiveness has led to the emergence of a new standard: that of performance and of constant self-improvement. According to Gilles Lipovetsky, these two notions form the central values that seem to underlie the functioning of our 'hypermodern' society. In this context, the prefix 'hyper' is not insignificant and highlights the excessive, the beyond. Therefore, going beyond oneself must be considered as going beyond what is expected, usual or possible.

TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF TOMORROW,

**OUR PUBLIC
RESEARCH
MISSION
IS COLLECTIVE**



In general, we follow Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in distinguishing between the 'limit' and the 'threshold'. For them, the limit designates the penultimate, the point at which one must stop in order to be able to replicate the current arrangement. The threshold, on the other hand, is the ultimate point, which inevitably brings with it a change in the way in which one operates. There is thus always a risk involved in crossing a threshold, in the sense that it marks a departure from the everyday, in which one tries to stay within the limit of what is possible under the current arrangement. This dimension seems to be absent from the notion of surpassing oneself.

As researchers, we experience these contradictory dimensions of the notion of 'surpassing oneself' especially as we navigate our contributions to science and our involvement in policy-focused thematic (housing, spatial planning) and social (Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg, Schiffflange) observatories. These two missions can be synergetic, but oftentimes mobilise different aspects of our theoretical and methodological toolsets, as well as different temporalities.



Indeed, involvement in a thematic or territorial observatory requires one to be on the lookout for any news likely to influence the situation. It means finding patterns in the context of a complex and fast-changing society. It requires deep knowledge of the operation of policy-making. This necessity to react quickly is opposed to the long term nature of scientific research, which requires careful analysis of the state of scientific knowledge, the identification of key questions and societal issues, and the development of a rigorous methodological approach.

Researchers must therefore be increasingly versatile, responsive, and able to multi-task, producing and disseminating relevant information to policy-makers and the general public on the one hand, while contributing to the international academic debate on the other. These contradictory injunctions are difficult to articulate and sometimes push the researcher beyond his limits, to the threshold of his competence.

**Antoine Decoville, Frédéric Durand
& Antoine Paccoud**
Research Department
Urban Development & Mobility

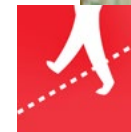
CROSSING BORDERS CROSSING BORDERS



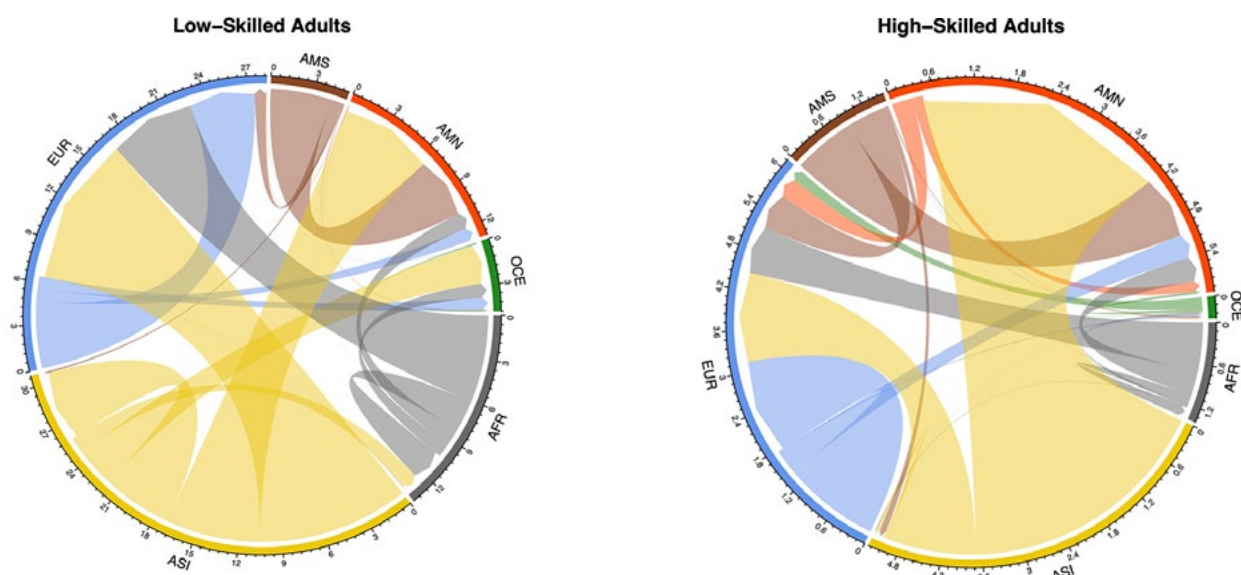
FRÉDÉRIC DOCQUIER

— Research programme leader Crossing Borders

The transversal program on “Crossing borders” seeks to coordinate, develop and contribute to the cross-border research works carried out within and across any of the three departments of LISER. The program has considerably expanded its activities in the year 2021, with the dual objective of academic excellence and societal impact. Besides the coordination of research activities conducted at the department level, the transversal program has given impetus to new research projects addressing the link between international mobility of people and the surge of populism in Europe, the link between international migration and global inequality, the determinants of immigrants’ location decisions in Luxembourg, the role of cross-border mobility in propagating the COVID-19 disease across regions, and the assessment of the extent of racism and ethno-racial discrimination in Luxembourg. Some of these activities involved partnerships with Luxembourg ministries and other governmental institutions, and generated high societal impact and media exposure. The transversal program also coordinates a doctoral training unit gathering the partners, LISER, the University of Luxembourg and STATEC. Linked to this doctoral training unit, we launched a successful visiting program, which attracts renowned researchers from all over the world and involves them in our training, research and dissemination activities. With international partners (such as the OECD, the World Bank, the French Development Agency and world renowned universities), we also organized a twin-webinar series and two international conferences on the Economics and Migration. In particular, annual CEPII-LISER-OECD conference examines the economic aspects of international migration in OECD countries by mapping the migratory flows and analyzing their socio-economic determinants and consequences; the 14th edition of the International Conference on “Migration and Development” uncovered interdependencies between sustainable development and international migration, as well as the way they are impacted by development aid, climate change, conflicts and other components of globalization. These activities have contributed to increasing visibility beyond publication records as well as LISER’s academic rankings. According to the RePEc/IDEAS ranking, LISER has joined the world top-10 institutions in the field of Economics of Human Migration.



AN INNOVATIVE COMBINATION BETWEEN ECONOMICS, GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE MIGRATION



For many years, it was my dream to join the passion for modeling economic systems with my childhood interests in geography and climatology. In May 2020, as a part of a research team lead by Frédéric Docquier, I received an once-in-a-lifetime chance to make it happen. Our working paper “Climate Change, Inequality, and Human Migration” was awarded a revision in a top general interest journal in economics. Normally, this is when the story of a research project approaches its end. In our case, it was exactly the opposite. We decided to revise the paper thoroughly in a way that no one has attempted in economic literature, by developing a pixelated model of the world economy, in which land is divided into millions of tiny geographical locations.



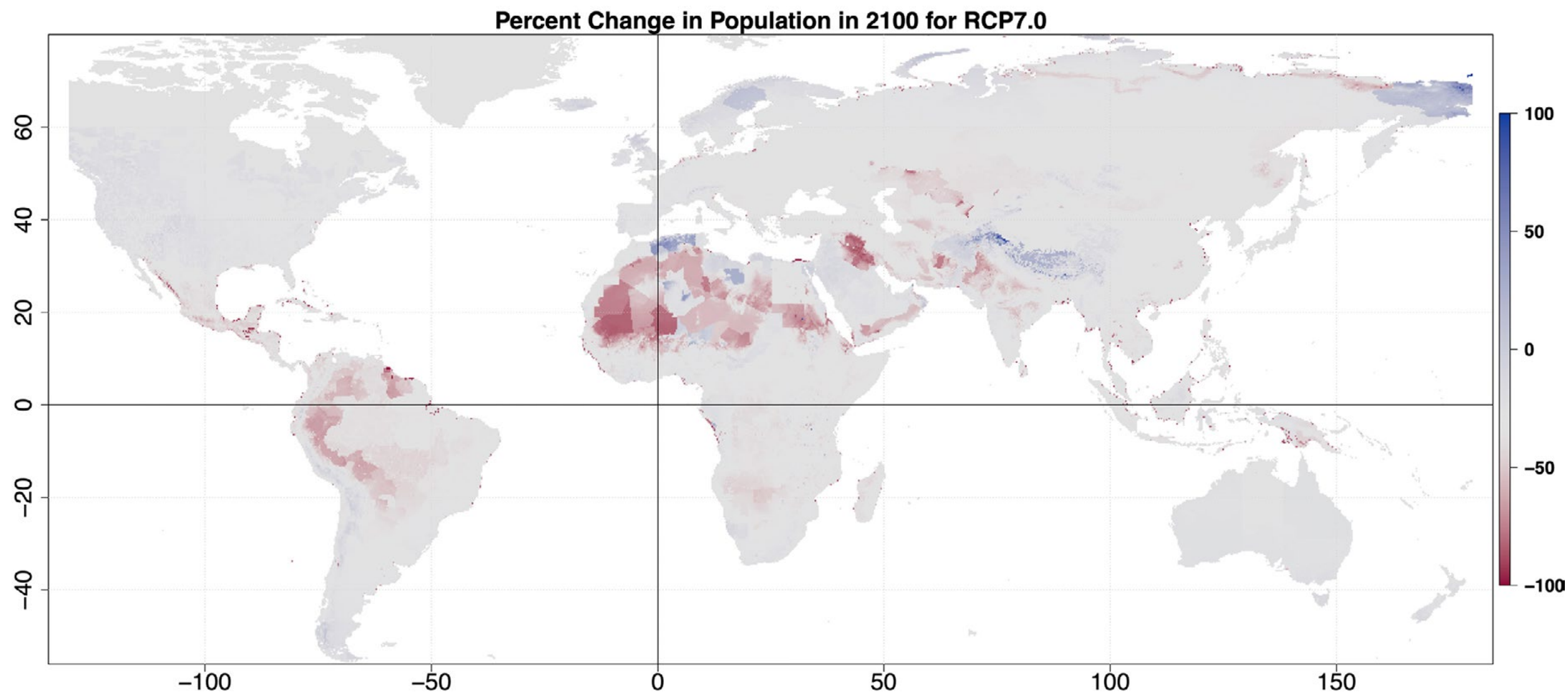
Michał Burzynski,
Research Programme
Crossing Borders

Climate change and its various dimensions (e.g. future deviations in temperature levels, extreme heat, intensity and frequency of natural disasters, the rise of the sea level) have a very unequal distribution across the globe. Until the end of this century, some areas will almost certainly be impossible to live in (the Gulf countries), other places will probably gain attractiveness (Scandinavia or Iceland). When modeling the economic consequences of global climate change it is vital to acknowledge this immense spatial heterogeneity. Therefore, we joined this detailed distribution of climate damage with precise data on population, production and urbanization, and we managed to develop a map of who, how, and to what extent will be affected by the changes in climate. Embedding these estimations into a state-of-the-art theoretical model of global economy, we answer questions about the impact that predicted climate changes has on global poverty, inequality and growth. Finally, our pixelated model of world economy enabled us to speak about climate migration, as we produce a set of projections of human mobility across country borders, within countries across administrative regions, and across pixels, caused by climate shocks over the 21st century. Our main message postulates that although climate migration is worrying, it is climate-induced global poverty that seems truly frightening. The majority of people are forced to suffer losses without a chance to afford fleeing them.

Even though our paper was accepted for publication in October 2021 in the Journal of European Economic Association, we are convinced that our scientific journey is at its infancy stage.



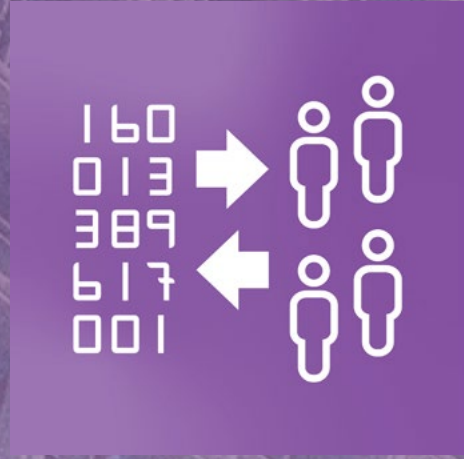
64



**OUR NEW SPATIAL-
ECONOMIC MODEL IS AN
EXCITING AND POWERFUL
TOOL IN PROJECTING
FUTURE DYNAMICS OF
GLOBAL ECONOMIC
SYSTEMS. WE WANT TO
EXPLOIT IT TO ITS LIMITS.**

65

INFORMATION SYSTEMS PLATFORM



THIERRY KRUTEN

— Head of Information Systems platform

It is commonly admitted that organizations need to change to survive...

...And LISER is no exception. To position LISER at the forefront of international organizations for societal research, a methodological framework has been defined in its 2022-2025 strategic plan consisting mainly of the development of two competence centres for data, methodologies and expertise, as well as an IT and data management platform to support these two centres.

The LISER Information Systems Platform, resulting from the merger of the former Data Centre and the IT department, was therefore born with the main objective of providing the technology, skills and support capacities to operationalize the services around the data value chain with and for the LISER research community.

Implementing such an ecosystem obviously relies on a solid and holistic roadmap covering the redefinition of governance, the establishment of a sustainable but agile technological infrastructure, the design of training plans and the reorganization of internal and/or outsourced technical and human capacity to meet needs of the scientific community.

However, it is also well understood that organizations do not change, people do...

Beyond these organizational changes, it is essential, in order to build an effective platform, to eventually make all the stakeholders, ISPs and researchers, day-to-day partners.

A change of mindset is therefore the key element to address during this transformation journey to succeed: going beyond old practices, breaking down silos, moving from a customer-supplier relationship to a co-creation paradigm where all parties effectively combine their expertise to deliver the level of excellence expected from LISER research projects.

Establishing the right mindset is not necessarily quick and easy, but the important thing is to already recognize its necessity. I am convinced that LISER is ready for this change.



POOLING OF SKILLS TO OVERCOME TIME AND ACHIEVE PRECISION

At the initiative of the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies, the Department of Integration at the Ministry of Family and Integration and the Greater Region (MIFA) mandated the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER) to assess the extent of racism and ethno-racial discrimination – on the basis of skin color, nationality, country of origin, surname, religion, etc. – in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. This is the first time that the country is collecting such sensitive data at national level. The mission was to conduct the project within twelve months. The LISER team started from scratch and faced a textbook case of reconciling timeliness and accuracy. The challenge was to produce accurate indicators both at national and subnational levels, in particular within sociodemographic subgroups, some of which are often hard to reach with surveys.

Our team opted for an online survey and designed the questionnaire in five languages, namely Luxembourgish, French, German, Portuguese and English. The smooth collaboration between LISER, the General Inspectorate of Social Security (IGSS) and the Government IT Centre (CTIE) helped to define the reference population, to draw a stratified sample, to send out the invitation to participate to individuals at their home addresses, to code responses and, after the survey, to compute extrapolation weights.

**Maria Sanz Guadarrama
& Jean-Yves Bienvenue,
Information Systems Platform**

**Michel Tenikue,
Research Programme
Crossing Borders**



The online survey ran over two months and was carefully managed by our call-centre team. The response rate of about 20% proved greater than those of most surveys conducted in the country. The importance of the topic reinforced our commitment to produce reliable survey data, and compelled the team to devise a sound procedure to correct for the important rate of nonresponse. These procedures are required to avoid producing biased and imprecise estimates.¹ Fortunately, we had access to high-quality auxiliary information that allowed us to address this issue. At this stage, we learned a lot about the importance of wording and adequate translation of questionnaires too. Moreover, we got further evidence on how difficult it is to reach some population groups and characterize them. This experience will be helpful to improve future surveys.

After adjusting the data, we proceeded to an in-depth analysis of attitudes and perceptions towards racism, immigration and discrimination. We had to deliver more than 250 estimates together with their intervals of confidence and interpretation. That was all of a challenge since there was one month left to finalize the report. After an enormous work on programming to generalize the calculus, our report was produced on time. The Ministry has indeed evaluated the project very positively. Further publications on the determinants of attitudes and perceptions will come up in the coming months. Coordination, cooperation and receptiveness between different skills from researchers, statisticians and research technicians have been the key ingredients to deliver a great job.

¹ Low bias and precision are key to evaluate if the data collected provides reliable estimates of a variable of interest in the reference population. If we compare estimation of a parameter to a game of darts, precision means throwing all darts in the same point, low bias means that this point is very close to the center.



**Aleksa Uljarevic
& Frédéric Docquier**



GOVERNANCE

**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS
NOMINATED BY THE GOVERNMENT
AND IS COMPOSED OF NINE
EXTERNAL MEMBERS OF DIFFERENT
PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS.
ITS MISSION IS TO OVERSEE
LISER'S ACTIVITIES AND
TO DEFINE ITS STRATEGIC
ORIENTATIONS.**

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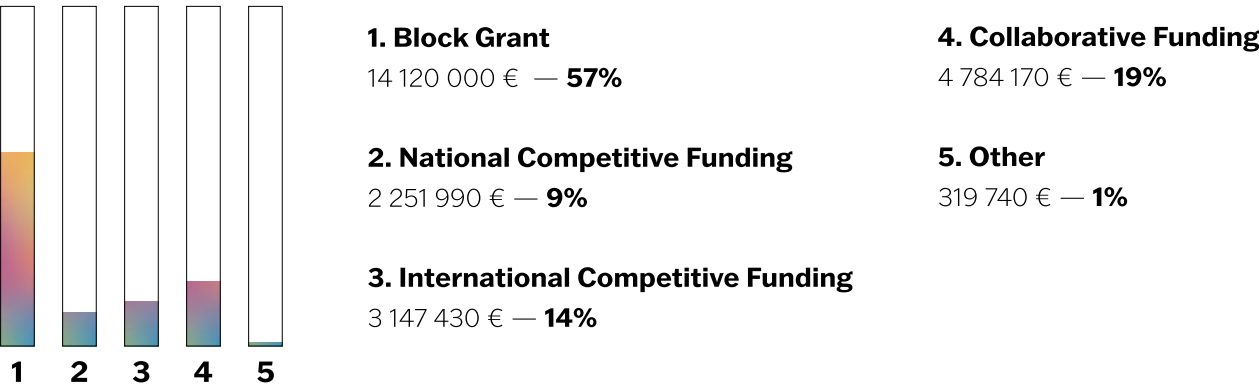
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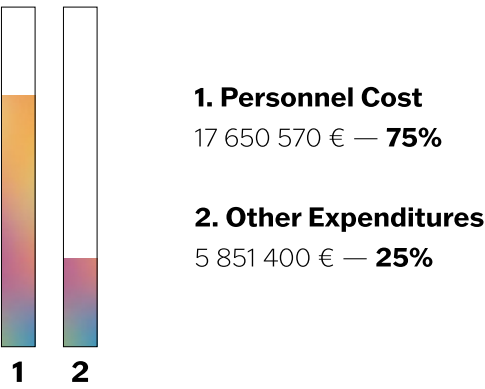
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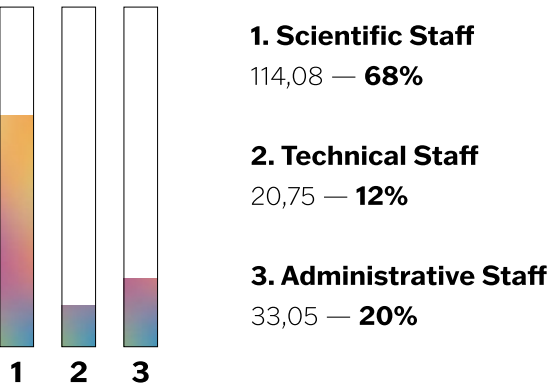
SOURCES OF FUNDING



COST CATEGORIES



STAFF CATEGORIES



PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT

- Net Turnover

• Other income

• Use of merchandise and consumables

• Other expenses

• Staff costs

Salaries and wages

Social security on salaries and wages

• Value adjustment on tangibles and intangibles

• Other operating expenses

• Interest payable and similar financial expenses

Profit of the year

2021	2020
24.615.417,41	22.661.342,43
7.920,03	3.845,93
-120.454,31	-71.564,43
-5.129.380,02	-4.638.548,76
-15.442.890,06	-14.614.599,34
-2.207.679,93	-2.053.983,64
-200.221,10	-236.125,97
-394.361,47	-150.145,72
-6.986,06	-6.074,17
1.121.364,49	894.146,33

LUXEMBOURG INSTITUTE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESEARCH

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
31 december 2021 (in EUR)

ASSETS

FIXED ASSETS

Intangible fixed assets
Tangible fixed assets
Financial fixed assets

CURRENT ASSETS

Debtors

Trade receivables due and payable within one year

Other receivables due and payable within one year

Cash at bank, cash in postal cheque accounts,
cheques and Cash in hand

Deferred charges - Prepayments

TOTAL ASSETS

LIABILITIES

CAPITAL AND RESERVES

Retained earnings
Profit/(Loss) of the financial year
Investment

PROVISIONS

Other provisions

NON SUBORDINATED DEBTS

Trade creditors due and payable within one year

Other debts

Tax debts
Social security debts
Other creditors due and payable within one year

Deferred income

TOTAL LIABILITIES

2021	2020
71.911,85	89.948,20
505.275,31	531.165,93
4.100,00	4.100,00
581.287,16	625.214,13
3.227.493,43	2.776.878,72
275.526,69	175.673,76
10.163.627,76	10.147.471,78
13.666.647,88	13.100.024,26
276.177,27	254.231,73
14.524.112,31	13.979.470,11
4.597.410,89	3.703.264,56
1.121.364,49	894.146,33
577.187,17	621.114,13
6.295.962,55	5.218.525,02
825.836,70	592.146,31
2.495.932,73	2.053.903,54
433.374,86	393.304,52
473.251,05	445.578,06
711.341,99	3.115.973,41
4.113.900,63	6.008.759,53
3.288.412,43	2.160.039,25
14.524.112,31	13.979.470,11

IMPRESSUM



**PRODUCTION
& GRAPHIC DESIGN :**
Chloé Nicolas — CN Graphic

**EDITING
& CONTENT :**
Luxembourg Institute of
Socio-Economic Research (LISER)

PHOTOS :
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PRINTING :
REKA print+

This report is also available
for download on www.liser.lu

ISSN : 2716-7496

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