

ID: MSCA—22-Dury[01]. – note: if you are submitting more than 1 abstract, please increase number after your last name

Title: Projects related to community and settings approaches to the social challenges of serious illness, death, dying and loss (Compassionate communities)

Description:

The Compassionate Communities Centre of Expertise (COCO) is an interdisciplinary research consortium of 8 research groups across 4 faculties at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. COCO conducts research into community approaches to serious illness, death, dying, loss and grief. Throughout our lifetime we are all confronted by situations of serious illness, death, dying, loss and grief. There is a growing awareness that solely engaging more professional caregivers and improving health or social services will be insufficient toward guaranteeing good healthcare or social care for all those in need. Furthermore, serious illness, death, dying and loss are increasingly recognized as social challenges with a medical component, rather than vice versa. Health and wellbeing, including at the end of life, are increasingly considered not products of absence of illness or of medical care, but rather holistic social, political, economic and ecological processes. In response, Compassionate Communities – emerging from public health approaches to palliative care – aim to strengthen community ties and networks and promote power-sharing, ownership of care, and community support to improve and maintain the health and well-being of people and communities confronted by serious illness, death, dying and loss. Compassionate Communities encompass a collection of possible approaches that apply the health-promoting principles of prevention, harm reduction, and early intervention to the challenges of serious illness, death, dying, and loss. This may be done via top-down, whole-system approaches that reorient settings and institutions through policy interventions or that extend health services to local governments, workplaces, and schools. It may also be done via bottom-up, community development approaches that leverage local assets to answer local needs and mobilize community members and local organizations in the social and cultural sector (e.g., art institutions, popular culture, and media).

COCO welcomes project proposals in the following broad, interdisciplinary themes:

- **Operationalizing and measuring compassion:** More work is needed to develop the concept at the group and societal level and to operationalize these concepts (e.g., outcome and process indicators for measuring compassion at the individual, group, and societal level) and evaluate their cross-cultural and social validity.
- **Studying transitions towards and the sustainability of Compassionate Communities:** We want to explore the policies, structures, processes, and practices that stimulate compassion, and how compassion manifested at one level can influence it at others. For instance, how do community members internalize, sustain, and reconfigure new practices over time? How can communities be reoriented to provide space for serious illness, death, dying, and loss, and how can different media (policy, art, and space) shape this process?
- **Compassionate workplaces:** Dealing with serious illness, death, dying, and loss not only influences employees' personal lives and well-being but also impacts their work-family interaction and even work performance. We want to explore how serious illness, death, dying, and loss influence employee's job insecurity, employment opportunities, and work-family interaction and gain a better insight into the characteristics of a compassionate workplace and the needs and responsibilities of the different parties involved (i.e., employees, supervisors, colleagues, human resources).
- **Compassionate schools and learning environments:** We want to explore what role educational and cultural institutions play in fostering compassion and supporting community experiences of serious illness, death, dying and loss.
- **compassionate housing, design and city planning:** We want to explore how to create or use existing infrastructure and living environments for hosting and treating serious illness, death, dying and loss with dignity.

We welcome highly innovative and interdisciplinary study proposal with the aim or strong potential to achieve social impact. COCO offers a large, interdisciplinary consortium and international network within which Fellows and their research will be embedded. Depending on the particular

nature of the proposal a suitable supervisor will be selected and a project group can be constructed together with the MSCA Fellow.

Supervisor: Sarah.Dury@vub.be; steven.vanderstichelen@vub.be

Research Group: <https://coco.research.vub.be>

To apply: <https://elo.paddlecms.net/en/how-to-apply>

Potential supervisors in COCO

- Social Health Sciences / Public Health Palliative Care
 - o Prof. Dr. Joachim Cohen
 - o Dr. Steven Vanderstichelen
- Adult Educational sciences / Ageing
 - o Prof. Dr. Liesbeth De Donder
 - o Prof. Dr. Sarah Dury
- Labour Sociology
 - o Prof. Dr. Deborah De Moortel
- Work & Organisational Psychology
 - o Prof. Dr. Sara De Gieter
- Arts & Cultural Education
 - o Prof. Dr. Free De Backer
 - o Prof. Dr. Koen Lombaerts
- Sociology of Education
 - o Prof. Dr. Filip Van Droogenbroeck
- Clinical Psychology
 - o Prof. Dr. Peter Theuns
- Critical Geography / Urban Research
 - o Prof. Dr. Nele Aernouts