

PhD candidate in the spotlight:

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My name is Karen and I have been working for the research group 'Interface Demography' (Dpt Sociology) since the end of 2011. I am currently in the final year of my PhD trajectory. My research concerns the relationship between the quality of employment and health and well-being. More specifically, I try to use information about individuals' job features to distinguish different types of jobs in Europe and Belgium. These ideal-typical job types can be seen as packages of employment characteristics that often occur together in the European or Belgian labour market. Results from my analyses show that these job types are clearly related to individuals' health and well-being situation.

Have there been times where your research wasn't really working out the way you expected it to be? How did you cope with this difficulty? Or: What kept you motivated to continue nevertheless.

Writing a PhD has proven to be more of a challenge than I initially thought when I started. I found it particularly difficult to cope with rejections from journals and I was sometimes at risk of losing confidence in myself and my work. Luckily, I have great colleagues who have been a real help to me in that regard. They succeeded in cheering me up and restoring my motivation using a combination of motivational speeches, distraction tactics, sharing their own worries and humour. Now when I'm having a difficult time writing my PhD, I find that it helps me to imagine the look on people's faces when I obtain the degree. It makes me realise that I want to make them and myself proud!

Do you have a healthy work-life balance? If so, could you share the secret ingredient(s)?

I do my best to have a healthy work-life balance and I think I succeed fairly well. It certainly helps that I know from my own research how important a good work-life balance is for your health and well-

being! I also have a young son who helps me to put things into perspective. Since his birth I find it easier to put my research out of my mind when I'm home.

According to you, what's an important lesson (..) every PhD student should keep in mind.

When writing a PhD, it's easy to focus on things that went wrong or that didn't work out the way they were planned. It is more difficult, but at the same time more important, to see the small and large achievements that you have already made! Keep believing in your work and keep in mind that it's going to be worth it in the end!