

## PhD position (4 years full-time)

We are recruiting a PhD student to join our research team, which will be working over the next five years on the project entitled '[Rethinking work beyond productivism from labour law and its uses](#)' (*RethinkingWork*) (funded as part of an ERC Starting Grant awarded to [Elise Dermine](#), professor at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles*). The project aims to develop concrete proposals for public policies and trajectories to emancipate work from productivism, based on a comparative and international study of labour law and its social uses.

The PhD student's thesis will more specifically focus on case studies in Belgium, France and/or the Netherlands. It will aim to document the strategic, even illegal, uses of labour law developed by individuals in order to provide themselves with the opportunity to carry out activities that have little or no economic value but which they consider to have social or ecological value. The person recruited holds a Master's degree in law or sociology (or will hold it by the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2025) and must have an interest in field surveys and qualitative research methods. He or she will join the [Centre for Public and Social Law at the Université Libre de Bruxelles](#).

### The project

In the face of the ecological crisis, it is essential to rethink work beyond the traditional productivist model. However, current research on the future of work is developed at a very conceptual and abstract level, and its results are therefore not very actionable. The *RethinkingWork* project will explore how the mechanisms and practices of labour law can facilitate the emancipation of work from productivism. The project will begin with a large-scale European survey aimed at identifying national labour law institutions that break with the logic of productivism in that they support the development of activities that have little or no economic value but are considered to have social or ecological value. Through detailed case studies, we will then study how individuals develop strategic uses of labour law for non-productivist purposes. From the study of labour law and its social uses, *RethinkingWork* ultimately aims to articulate concrete proposals for public policies and trajectories aimed at emancipating work from productivism, which can then be debated and reappropriated by policymakers and social, economic and environmental actors.

### Your job

You will have a full-time doctoral scholarship starting on 1 September 2025 and lasting 4 years (gross monthly amount indexed to June 2024: €3,561.24/net monthly amount: €2,462.53). You will carry out a doctoral research project and follow a doctoral training programme. Your PhD thesis is part of a wider research project, the ERC *RethinkingWork* (2025-2030).

More specifically, during these 4 years:

- You will be involved in carrying out the ERC *RethinkingWork* project, in close and sustained collaboration with the research team, which will be composed of Elise

Dermine (principal investigator), two post-doctoral students and one other doctoral student

- You will be working more specifically on the empirical part of the project, which aims to document the strategic, sometimes illegal, uses of labour law developed by workers, employers and recipients of social security benefits - who combine work and social benefits - in order to develop a post-productivist project, when its possibilities are not formally secured for them by the law.

Further information:

The fieldwork will take place in three countries - Belgium, France and the Netherlands - and will be realized in collaboration with a post-doctoral student who will work with you on the empirical part of the project. Three case studies will be carried out in each country. You will work on two case studies, to be determined according to your preferences and in agreement with the research team. The first case study analyses the practices of individuals who seek to develop a post-productivist project outside the institutions of work, which they explicitly reject (for example, groups supporting undocumented migrants or LGBTQIA+ people, self-managed collective squats in urban areas, militant land occupations against housing projects in the countryside). By contrast, the second case study focuses on individuals who seek to build their post-productivist project within labour institutions, more specifically within the social and solidarity economy. The third case study will not have as its point of entry individuals who present themselves as pursuing a post-productivist project. The aim of this last case study is rather to study how recipients of unemployment or social assistance benefits who have been punished for welfare fraud because they were carrying out a side activity justify their actions, and in particular whether post-productivist considerations appear in their discourse, so that social fraud was, in their view, the only way to carry out an activity that has little or no economic value, but does have - in their view - a social or ecological value.

- You will contribute to the results of the ERC project, including speaking at national and international conferences, writing scientific articles and coordinating a special issue or book.
- You will work with the other members of the research team, for example in organising seminars, conferences and other academic activities.
- You will be assisting Elise Dermine, *principal investigator*, with administrative tasks related to your PhD.
- You will be involved in the activities of the research centre you will be joining, the *Centre de droit public et social*, for example by presenting your research at the centre's seminars or helping to organise our "mise au vert".

## Your profile

What do we want from you?

- You hold a Master's degree in law or sociology (or will hold it by 1 September 2025), and you have distinguished yourself during your academic career.

- You have an excellent knowledge of at least one of these two languages: French or Dutch.
- You have a good knowledge of written and spoken English.
- You have a keen interest in sociology and empirical research methods.
- If you have experience in using qualitative research methods, this is an advantage.
- If you have a good knowledge of labour law and social security law in one or more of the three countries surveyed (Belgium, France, the Netherlands), this is an advantage.
- You have excellent problem-solving skills and enjoy working both independently and as part of a team.
- You have excellent written and verbal communication skills.

### **The research environment**

You will join the [Centre for Public and Social Law](#) of the [Faculty of Law and Criminology](#) of the [Université Libre de Bruxelles](#), which is located on the Solbosch campus 20 minutes from the centre of Brussels.

It is a dynamic centre that brings together a large number of researchers in human rights law, constitutional and administrative law, social security law and labour law, as well as researchers in sociology and philosophy. It is the ideal place to conduct research into the role of social law in the ecological transition. On the one hand, it brings together a large number of researchers specialising in the various branches of social law and, on the other, it has several members who have recently undertaken to develop research on the relationship between law and the ecological transition.

We offer an attractive and stimulating working environment, with committed and highly qualified people. As a research centre, we attach great importance to a pleasant and welcoming working environment. In recent years, our team of doctoral and post-doctoral students has grown considerably, and we take great care to ensure their development both within our centre and in their subsequent professional careers. In your day-to-day work, you will report to Professor Elise Dermine, but you will also contribute to the life of the centre.

### **Your application must include :**

- A detailed CV,
- A letter demonstrating interest, motivation and qualifications for the project (maximum two pages),
- A certified copy of the master's degree,
- A letter of reference,
- Written work produced as part of your studies, for example your master's thesis.

Applications must be sent by e-mail to Elise Dermine ([elise.dermine@ulb.be](mailto:elise.dermine@ulb.be)) by 28 February 2025, 23.59 CET, at the latest.

**For more information about the research project and the job offer**, please contact Elise Dermine ([elise.dermine@ulb.be](mailto:elise.dermine@ulb.be)).