

# Re-InVEST.be

## Investing in basic rights, capabilities and anti-poverty policies in Belgium

**DURATION**  
15/12/2019 – 15/3/2024

**BUDGET**  
1 530 000 €

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Context:**

25 years after the *General Report on Poverty*, and despite efforts of successive governments, it appears that poverty persists in Belgium. This means that efforts to reduce poverty in some areas have been outweighed by the (re)production of poverty in others. A more comprehensive and preventative approach is needed.

**General objectives and key research questions:**

The research will focus on the nexus between social protection, housing and health. Key research questions in all three areas will relate to accessibility and adequacy of rights, as well as the (mutually reinforcing) effects of social (dis)investment on the 'beings and doings' of households and individuals. The research will also include an evaluation of existing policy packages and recommendations for more effective anti-poverty strategies.

**Theoretical framework and methodology:**

The theoretical framework builds on capabilities and human rights as building blocks for the social inclusion and wellbeing of individuals. Poverty can result from a lack of resources, constraining conversion factors, and/or lack of rights and free choice. From a dynamic perspective, poverty can in turn constrain households' investment in their own resources (housing, education, health etc.), thus ending up in vicious circles of deprivation.

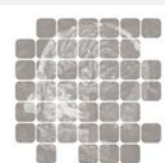
Social investment-related measures may therefore affect individual capabilities in many ways: by investing in (tangible or intangible) assets, by transferring financial resources that allow households to invest in themselves, by strengthening their rights and freedoms through regulations, or indirectly, by strengthening the agency of collectives that interact with vulnerable people.

We will combine quantitative analyses on a variety of (linked) STATBEL datasets with participatory qualitative research. The research in each area (social protection, housing, health) consists of three pillars:

- the socio-juridical aspects (legal basis as well as implementation and enforcement of rights) will be examined mainly by CrIDIS;
- the socio-economic aspects (adequacy, distribution/exclusion, and (cost-) effectiveness of social investments) will be examined mainly by HIVA;
- the participatory approach (dialogue with associations and people at grassroots level) and policy aspects (proposals for future policies) will be ensured by the Combat Poverty Service.

**Potential impact:**

- The scientific purpose of Re-InVEST.be is to re-frame the main federal policies and instruments from a remedial into a proactive mode – from a '*survival*' to a '*social investment*' perspective, and to uncover open and hidden discrimination processes that risk 'locking in' some population groups into persistent poverty. Our main focus is on the role of social protection, but from an innovative, multidimensional social investment perspective. The interactions between social protection, housing and health will be analysed in detail both quantitatively and qualitatively to illustrate the social investment dynamics.
- Beyond the scientific objectives, there is a clear societal objective. Our *participatory* approach (merging of knowledge) aims to build capacity, particularly among representative associations of people experiencing poverty, while at the same time guaranteeing a maximum validity of our research. We also aim to build support in the public opinion for a more ambitious and effective national strategy to combat poverty.



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- The third objective is *policy-oriented*. The social investment approach – if adopted - should result in a genuine break in the trend of poverty reproduction in Belgium. Concrete and implementable policy recommendations will be drawn from the research findings of Re-InVEST.be. They will relate to the level, coverage, conditionality and time patterns of social benefits, the balance between short- and long-term protection, the linkage between social benefits and tenancy status, anti-discrimination policies, the legal and institutional framework of public social services, access to justice, dispute settlement, and the synergies between federal and regional policies – with a focus on housing and health care.

## Expected outputs:

### *Scientific output*

- For each dimension examined (social protection, housing and health) an integrated report will be published that combines the findings from the socio-economic, socio-juridical and socio-constructivist perspectives. The reports will be published in *book* format by the end of the project, either as a single volume, or as a set of three volumes;
- 6 international *peer-reviewed* articles;
- 6 *presentations* at scientific seminars / conferences organised by scientific institutes / associations.

### *Policy-oriented output*

- 6 Policy-oriented journal articles;
- 6 Policy briefs;
- A policy-oriented seminar for social partners and policy makers.

### *Civil society / professionals / public opinion*

- The participatory approach of the project should act as a forum for 'mutual learning'. It should contribute to (a) capacity building among vulnerable groups of citizens, (b) the professional development of other participants, (c) networking and consensus building between stakeholders.
- Policy briefs will be advertised via social media, websites of the research partners, and newsletters
- Press articles, radio interviews
- 2 interactive seminars in collaboration with representative organisations (associations of people in poverty, stakeholders in the housing sector, stakeholders in the health sector).
- The final conference will explicitly target a mix of all target groups mentioned above.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## LINKS

[www.hiva.kuleuven.be](http://www.hiva.kuleuven.be)