

The Belgian Short-Time Work Scheme: Economic and Psychological Impacts, Pathways to a More Effective and Human Policy

The Belgian Federal Science Policy Office has supported a research project entitled «The Belgian Short-time Work scheme: Economic and Psychological impacts (BESWEP)», as part of its research programme BRAIN-be 2.0.

This project was coordinated by Professor Muriel Dejemeppe (UCLouvain), in collaboration with Professors Bart Cockx (UGent), Nele De Cuyper (KU Leuven), Hans De Witte (KU Leuven), and Florence Stinglhamber (UCLouvain), with key contributions from researchers Natalia Bermudez (UCLouvain & UGent), Charlotte Rodriguez (KU Leuven & UCLouvain), and Giulia Tarullo (UCLouvain & UGent).

The aim of this study morning is to present and discuss the results of this collective work

The Short-Time Work (STW) scheme allows firms facing a temporary decline in business activity to reduce employees' working hours while providing partial income replacement. This research examines to what extent the scheme has preserved jobs -and under what conditions for workers' well-being- in both the short and medium run, during major crises in Belgium, such as the 2008 financial downturn and the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the scheme's broad and prolonged use, even outside recessionary periods, raises economic and social questions. How can the system better target firms genuinely affected by shocks while avoiding costly support for jobs not truly at risk? Should companies be made more financially accountable for frequent or excessive use, in ways that strengthen both economic efficiency and workers' well-being?

Beyond targeting and incentives, how can reforms protect workers' well-being, reduce stress linked to STW, and support training and career development? By showing how efficient use of resources and psychological protection are interconnected, the BESWEP project highlights pathways toward a system that benefits both firms and employees.

STUDY MORNING

The Belgian Short-Time Work Scheme: Economic and Psychological Impacts, Pathways to a More Effective and Human Policy

PROGRAMME

8.45 : 9.15 Welcome, coffee

9.15 : 9.30
Opening & Introduction - Belgian Science Policy

9.30 : 10.05
Presentation of findings by the team of economists

10.05 : 10.40
Presentation of findings by the team of psychologists

10.40 : 11.10 Coffee break

11.10 : 11.30
Synthesis & Policy Recommendations

11.30 : 11.45
Reaction by Prof. Pierre Cahuc (Sciences Po, Paris)

11.45 : 12.00
Reaction by Prof. Tinne Vander Elst
(IDEWE, Tilburg University)

12.00 : 12.15
Reaction by David Rozenblum & Marie-Noëlle
Vanderhoven (FEB)

12.15 : 12.30
Reaction by Hugues Ghenne (FGTB)

12.30 : 12.55
Q&A with participants

12.55 : 13.00
Closing remarks

13.00 : 14.00 Lunch

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

When?

Monday, 8 December 2025, from 8:45 AM to 2:00 PM

Where?

Room SAMAN,
Federal Public Service for Social Security Administrative Centre
Botanique – Finance Tower
Boulevard du Jardin Botanique 50, box 100
1000 Brussels
Access map: <https://socialsecurity.belgium.be/fr/contact>

Language

The presentations will be in English. However, the discussion with participants may also be held in French and/or Dutch.

How to register?

Participation (including coffee and lunch) is free of charge.
Please register before Tuesday, 25 November 2025:
[Fill the form here.](#)

In-person attendance is preferred to allow full participation in the discussions, but remote participation is also possible.

Publications

On 8 December 2025, a non-technical summary of the research findings will be published in two academic reviews:

- [Gentse Economisch Inzichten](#) (in Dutch)
- [Regards économiques](#) (in French)

For more information:

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