

You are kindly invited to the public defense to obtain the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

of Ms. Laura Gypen

Which will take place on the 27th of september 2023, 17h00

VUB Main Campus Brussels - E.005

Pleinlaan 2 – 1050 Brussel

Or if you wish to attend online, click [here](#) to join the meeting

**EXPLORING OUTCOMES OF CARE LEAVERS IN
FLANDERS: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY**

JURY

INTERN:

Prof. dr. Veerle Soyez (VUB) (VUB – Chair)

Prof. dr. Pieter Meurs (VUB)

Prof. dr. Frank Van Holen (VUB)

EXTERN:

Prof. dr. Séverine Euillet (Université Paris Nanterre)

Prof. dr. Nuria Fuentes (University of Barcelona)

PROMOTOR(S)

Prof. dr. Johan Vanderfaeillie

Are you coming by car? Please [register your licence plate](#) in advance to have access to the campus.

You are invited to the reception afterwards.

Please confirm your attendance **before the 19th of September** by filling out this [form](#).

How to reach the VUB? Click for [directions](#).

SUMMARY

An out-of-home placement is one of the most far-reaching interventions targeted at children who are abused or neglected by their parents, or who are engaged in anti-social behavior. The large number of children in out-of-home care and the high cost of child welfare, made the outcomes of former out-of-home placed youth a trending topic in research for decades. However, quantitative longitudinal research that combines results on different extents (education, employment, wages, housing and mental health) is sparse and in Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium, inexistent.

International research consistently shows that both foster- and residential care leavers achieve lower levels of educational qualification, employment rates, monthly wage, housing circumstances and mental wellbeing in comparison to peers from the general population. Returning contributing factors to these lower outcomes are multiple replacements, limited support and a lower level of education.

The current longitudinal study explores and predicts educational achievement, employment, monthly wages, housing circumstances and mental health of care leavers in Flanders compared to the general population. The effect of educational attainment on other outcomes (employment, income and housing) is examined and the impact of placement characteristics on all domains is studied. Finally, it is explored if there is an improvement of outcomes over time and if this improvement could be attributed to certain factors.

For the current study, 364 Flemish care leavers from both residential- and foster care filled in a questionnaire regarding multiple topics. The response group is between 17 and 27 years old at the first measurement. Of the same sample, 175 care leavers filled in the same questionnaire four years later.

Results indicate that education is a key factor to improve outcomes regarding employment, wages and housing circumstances. Limiting placement changes and providing individual support or therapy during placement is another returning factor to improve outcomes on nearly all domains. In almost all domains, no significant differences were found between foster- and residential care leavers. Placement characteristics seem to be more influential than only the type of care. Finally, giving more time seems to be promising as in almost all domains, as care leavers grow older, their outcomes improve.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Laura Gypen graduated as a clinical psychologist from Vrije Universiteit Brussel in 2014 and has been working at the university as a research associate since then. In addition to this position, Laura has performed various tasks within the university since 2014. She has co-taught the 3rd bachelor and 1st master students as a practice assistant for a long time and since 2018 she is co-responsible for supervising the 2nd master students doing their clinical internship.

In addition to her work at the university, Laura has worked for several years with youth placed in residential care by the juvenile court. In this way, she has had a direct contact with young people who were in a situation of out-of-home placement.

Laura has also been working in her own group practice 'De Mast' since 2015 where she works as a clinical psychologist and client centered therapist with adolescents with eating disorders.