



## CAPABLE – Enhancing Capabilities? Rethinking Work-life Policies and their Impact from a New Perspective

### CAPABLE Newsletter May 2022

#### Project update

With so much going on, it's been quite a while since we've given an update on the CAPABLE project! During the last year, we've continued to make the most out of the continually evolving situation with the pandemic. As we slowly come to terms with the ongoing uncertainty that remains, we also look forward to being able to meet up face-to-face more often.

These 12 months have also been very busy for the project, with data collection taking place for the survey and the first round of two

wave, in-depth interviews with working parents and working carers in four countries.

The CAPABLE survey, that focuses on understanding the role of local relationships, locality, and local policies and services in men and women's capabilities for work-life balance, finally went into the field in September 2021! Dr. Karen van Hedel, postdoc on the CAPABLE project, coordinated the survey and all of our work with Dr. Katharina Meitinger and external experts. We are especially grateful to Professor Barbara Hobson, Dr. Erik Jansen and Dr. Femke Abma for their assistance in developing new measures of capabilities. Karen, Katharina and I presented a first paper on the development of the survey at the annual European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAnet) conference last September. This paper, now under review, outlines the application of the so-called 3MC



Universiteit Utrecht



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission

approach to create high quality measures comparable across four country contexts. Other papers evolving from the survey data include two master's theses (one on lone parenthood and health in relation to capabilities for social support and one on variation in full-time and part-time work related to ethnic minority differences and values and capabilities of adapting working hours) and a paper on capabilities for work-life balance across gender and class, with Professor Tracey Warren (University of Nottingham).

While the survey was being fielded, we were busy gearing up for interview fieldwork in four countries. We continued our work with research assistants in all the countries (see Team updates below) and the PhD students finally had the opportunity to live and work abroad while doing face-to-face interviews. Throughout the fieldwork phase, I thoroughly enjoyed our weekly meetings, discussing the interview guide and everyone's fieldwork experiences. I also greatly admire the PhD students and our research assistants for their flexibility, as we were continually adapting to the changing circumstances of the pandemic in four countries. We now have more than 100 interviews from the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and the UK and have begun the process of coding the data. We will soon be sending out 'one-pagers' with key findings from the first round of interviews for both parents and carers, so stay tuned!

The past year has also been a year of changes for the team, with goodbyes for several interns, research assistants, and our project assistant, Robin Buning, but we've also been able to welcome a new research assistant, new intern, and project assistant on the project. Read more on these new additions to the CAPABLE team below!

The coming months will be an exciting time for the team, as we continue with the analysis of our survey and interview data, work on multiple papers for the upcoming Work and Family Researcher's Network conference in New York (June 2022), and gear up for round 2 of interview data collection, which will kick off in November of this year. We'll keep you posted! For now, be well, and we look forward to sharing more results with you soon.

All the best,

Mara Yerkes

## New members to the CAPABLE team

### Yujie Hu



Yujie Hu is a Lecturer in Work, Employment Relations and HRM and Deputy Programme Director for MA Human Resource Management at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom. She focuses on data collection on working parents and caregivers in Leeds for the CAPABLE project. Yujie holds a MA in Human Resource Management and a PhD in Business Studies. Her research interests cover social inequalities in the labour market, discrimination in employment, Chinese migrants and the longitudinal qualitative methodology.

Yujie has assisted with the CAPABLE project research interviews in Leeds for the UK country case through finding respondents and carrying out interviews.

[Read more about Yujie's work here.](#)

### Rozafa Jahaj



Rozafa Jahaj is an intern for the CAPABLE project. She is 25 years old and from Kosovo. She is a graduate student of Politics and Public Administration from the University of Constance in Germany. In her past she has had professional experiences in international organizations, the public sector and the private sector. She is currently enrolled in the Master of Science in Social Policy and Public Health at the University of Utrecht where she is happy to be deepening her knowledge on her passions: social justice, gender equality and policy making.

Some words from Rozafa about her internship:

*"During my internship I was able to gain insights into a variety of academic work tasks. I had the opportunity to start off my internship by helping in the organization of the Stakeholder Event. This provided me with a great way to understand the work done in the CAPABLE project up until that*

point, including all the different stakeholders that are involved in local policy-making. I was also lucky enough to be part of analyzing the interviews gathered during the pandemic. For this, I mainly checked transcriptions and helped out in the coding process. Especially the latter was a great addition to both my skillset and personal interests. Being able to examine these interviews combines my main areas of interest: qualitative research of social and gender inequality.”

---

## Louise O'Meara



**Louise O'Meara** is the new project assistant for the CAPABLE project. Louise is Irish and has an educational background in Psychology. She studied her BA at NUI Galway, Ireland and Salzburg, Austria (Erasmus) and completed her MSc in Work and Organizational Psychology at Utrecht University, graduating in 2019. For the last two years Louise has been working on two EU Horizon 2020 funded projects, with MUSSI,

carrying out research, project management and administrative tasks. She is looking forward to joining the CAPABLE team!

---

## Team Changes

The CAPABLE project benefits greatly from a dynamic and multidisciplinary team. Two of our team members have left the project to continue the next steps in their professional development. We are grateful for their work and wish them all the best!



## Robin Buning

Robin Buning was the project assistant for the CAPABLE project from April 2019-February 2022. Robin has recently moved on to a new coordinating position in research support at the University of Amsterdam and his last day with the project took place in mid-February. Robin has been invaluable to the project for the past 3 years, and although we're sad to see him go, we wish him the best of luck with this new opportunity!



## Dewi Lemmens

Dewi Lemmens is a researcher within the field of post-colonial studies and gender and within the CAPABLE project she has been working on conducting the qualitative fieldwork, focussing on carrying out the in-depth interviews in the Netherlands. Dewi has been offered and accepted a new job position as a junior researcher and advisor at DRIFT, the Dutch Research Institute for Transition located in Rotterdam and so, will be leaving the CAPABLE project. Drift is determined to make fundamental changes for a sustainable future through research, consultancy & education for transition. It's a dynamic job, interdisciplinarian and a little activist. Dewi herself will work on issues regarding social inequality and inclusiveness concerning policies on sustainability and climate change adaptation.

Dewi: "I have learned a lot during my time at CAPABLE and will miss the warm team. I am looking forward to the results of the CAPABLE research and am more than open to future collaborations. Thank you for the great time and I hope our paths cross again!"

We wish Dewi all the best of luck in her new role, DRIFT are very lucky to have her!

## International stakeholder event: held 11.02.2022

By Rozafa Jahaj

The ERC CAPABLE Stakeholder Event "Local policies and services: Moving communities forward in post-covid times" took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 and was organized by Dr. Mara Yerkes and the CAPABLE project team. Although held in an online format due to COVID-19 restrictions, it served as an occasion to bring together multiple stakeholders to discuss and reflect on the changes local policy and service providers have experienced and continue to experience during the pandemic. We welcomed three keynote speakers: Karin de Roo (POSITION, Markant, the Netherlands) started off by providing insights into Markant, an organization that supports informal caregivers in the Amsterdam region. She was followed by Eva Kreslin (director of Mala Ulica, Slovenia), an interactive space for parents (to-be) and their children. Eva shared their experiences of transitioning their services throughout the pandemic while continuing to reach families. Lastly, Sonia Ruiz (POSITION, Barcelona City Council) spoke about the gendered impact of COVID-19 and the aims and measures to counteract the burden that falls on women. She emphasized the "Concilia Project" in Barcelona, which is going to offer free childcare services as an attempt to reconcile work,

family and personal life. Following the keynote speakers, participants were invited to share their experiences in working with and reaching out to parents and carers during the pandemic in an interactive discussion. The stakeholder event offered an opportunity to identify cross-national similarities and differences and to exchange challenges and opportunities in providing local policies and services to parents and carers.

More details about the programme and guiding questions for the event can be found [here](#).

Key findings from the session will be available soon in a policy brief.



---

## European Population Conference

Karen van Hedel, CAPABLE postdoc researcher, will participate and present at the upcoming European Population Conference in Groningen this year. This year's keynote Speaker, Prof Pearl Dykstra (who is also on

CAPABLE's advisory board) will talk about bridging science and policy and the challenges for population scholars. Karen's paper focuses on perceived stress in relation to working hours and caring responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

More information on the presentation can be found here: <https://epc2022.eaps.nl/abstracts/210840>.

---

## First wave of qualitative interviews finalized!

By Samuel Briones Barrales

The Capable Project team finalized the first wave of interviews for the qualitative study of the project. Team members interviewed 109 working parents and carers in four countries about their work-life balance. Interviewees were invited to share their experiences combining paid work and other activities while also taking care of someone else and how their current situations took shape across time.

Fieldwork took place between October 2021 and March 2022 in each of the eight cities studied in the project: London and Leeds in the UK, Amsterdam and Nijmegen in the Netherlands, Barcelona and Pamplona in Spain and, Ljubljana and Maribor in Slovenia. Two members of the team were in charge of fieldwork activities in each country.



A first stage of fieldwork consisted of recruiting participants in each city through local organisations and public services. Team members travelled to these cities to meet with stakeholders working in childcare services, community centres, day care services for adults, nursing homes, social movements and other relevant associations. In these meetings, we would explain the objectives of the project, what it meant to participate and request collaboration in spreading the word. Potential participants were invited to register through an online sign-up form and provide us with contact data to schedule an interview. Team members also distributed and posted flyers in relevant and strategic locations, inviting people to participate in the study.

Interviews took place at the location and time preferred by the interviewees. Due to the more relaxed COVID restrictions the team members encountered in almost all the countries at the beginning of fieldwork, it was possible to conduct some interviews face-to-face following local safety guidelines. The changing situation in many of the cities where interviews were taking place, however, led the team to decide to move the remaining interviews to an online setting. During the interviews, respondents discussed the various challenges they face in combining working, caring and maintaining a home and how other people and local services facilitated or hindered the combination

of these different spheres. Interviewees were invited to participate in a similar interview with a team member at the end of this year, and most participants accepted to continue participating in the study. The project team is working hard on transcribing the interviews and translating them into English for analysis. For the next wave of interviews, respondents will be invited to share how their lives have changed during the past year and to further explore their experiences as parents or carers.

