

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

ESPAnet/AIPRIL Workshop

Zero poverty world: Minimum income protection across the globe

University of Antwerp, Belgium

16th – 17th September, 2025

Organizers: Ive Marx, Sarah Marchal, Julia Shu-Huah Wang, Ninke Mussche

Topic

The notion that every person living amidst the relative affluence has a right to a minimum income enabling social participation, be it frugally and soberly, holds as a fundamental matter of social justice to most people. But how can we ensure decent minimum incomes allowing for a life with dignity in societies rich enough to afford such a right? How can we ensure that this is cost-effective and compatible with other goals such as promoting work effort, self-reliance, and upward mobility? How can political support for such schemes be fostered and made robust?

These questions have occupied social policy scholars for decades. In the recently published volume *Zero Poverty Society* (OUP, 2024), Sarah Marchal and Ive Marx assess the current state of minimum income protection in the rich world. They discuss key issues in minimum income policy design including, optimal targeting and means-testing, administrative complexity, non-take-up, the political economy of minimum income protection, and more. Many of these issues still have open questions. Is there a viable way forward towards minimum income provisions that protect against poverty? What can the role be of public services and in-kind benefits? What can we expect from the breathtaking advances in timely administrative data, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in terms of reducing non-take-up and expediting benefit payments? What is the (remaining) role for social workers and how much discretionary power should they have? What is the impact of migration on minimum income schemes and political support for such schemes?

Meanwhile efforts are underway to examine many of the same issues at a global scale. Julia Shu-Huah Wang at National Taiwan University has brought together a group of social scholars from all six inhabited continents for a project that seeks to compare income protection policies all over the world in a systematized fashion using the model family approach. Through collaborating with scholars from the University of Antwerp, the project has yielded a unique data set on social policies in more than 50 countries across the globe. This project allows us to revisit many of the issues just listed in a much broader comparative setting. Furthermore, it allows us to explore in greater depth the extent to

which social policy development in the Global South follows distinct logics, and whether the driving forces behind these developments align with or diverge from existing theoretical understandings.

For that reason we are organizing a workshop to take stock where we stand in the field of minimum income support across the globe and how we can move forward. These are some issues that we propose to focus on:

- The role of cost compensations in minimum income protection and challenges in measuring/comparing them
- Minimum income protection and migration, including issues of accessibility to migrants and deservingness perceptions
- Boosting the take-up of benefits: the potential and dangers of AI
- The role of minimum income protection in the context of crisis
- ...

The workshop is a joint initiative of ESPAnet and AIPRIL (the Antwerp Interdisciplinary Platform for Research into Inequality). The workshop is aimed at scholars working on minimum income protection, including advanced doctoral students and early career scholars. Keynote speakers will also act as discussants.

We are open to a wide range of papers relating to minimum income protection (also for workers). We particularly welcome contributions drawing on rigorous qualitative and/or quantitative evidence. We will not require finalized papers but a first (even if not fully complete) draft is essential if we want to have a substantive and fruitful discussion. You will also have the chance of course to present your paper.

Please send an abstract of up to 500 words by **15 June 2025** to ninke.mussche@uantwerpen.be, 'mentioning Espanet/ AIPRIL Workshop' as the subject. We will respond by **1 July 2025**.

Two lunches and one dinner will be provided to presenters but travel and accommodation are at your own expense.

Provisional schedule

	First day: Tuesday 16 September	Second day: Wednesday 17 September
9:00	Minimum income protection: where do we stand? (Sarah Marchal, Ive Marx, Julia Shu-Huah Wang)	Keynote: Kenneth Nelson
10:00		Session 4
11:00	Session 1	Wrap-up and general discussion
12:00		
13:00	Lunch	Lunch
14:00	Keynote Marcello Natili	
15:00	Session 2	
16:00		
17:00	Session 3	
18:00		
19:00	Dinner	
20:00		