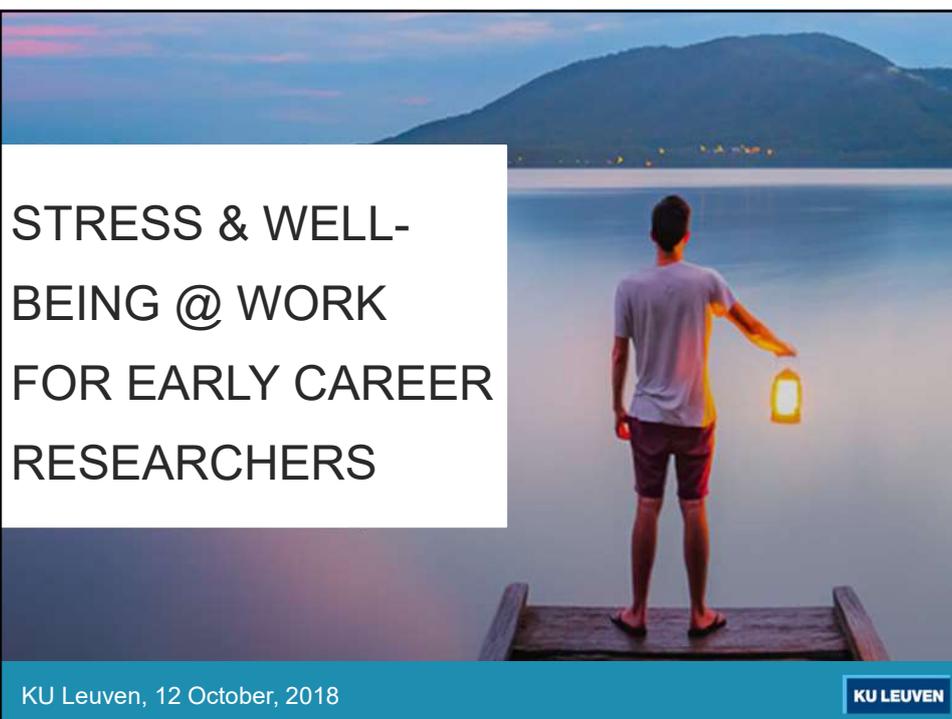


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# The pursuit of happiness

Optimising student experience at KU Leuven

John Creemers  
Director Doctoral School Biomedical Sciences  
KU Leuven, Belgium



**STRESS & WELL-  
BEING @ WORK  
FOR EARLY CAREER  
RESEARCHERS**

KU Leuven, 12 October, 2018

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## Many PhD researchers experience severe stress



Research Policy  
Volume 46, Issue 4, May 2017, Pages 868-879



### Work organization and mental health problems in PhD students

Katia Levecque <sup>a, b, d, e</sup>, Frederik Anseel <sup>a, b, c</sup>, Alain De Beuckelaer <sup>d, e, a</sup>, Johan Van der Heyden <sup>f, g</sup>, Lydia Gisle <sup>f</sup>

- Problematic relation with **supervisor**
- Job and financial **insecurity**
- Negative image of academics in **the media**
- Self-doubt and **'imposter syndrome'**

<http://re.ukri.org/documents/2018/mental-health-report/>

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Welcome and Introduction

**Improving the well-being of young researchers**  
**Gareth O'Neill** (President EURODOC)



What does KU Leuven have to offer you?

4 parallel **workshops on stress and wellbeing**

Feedback from Workshops

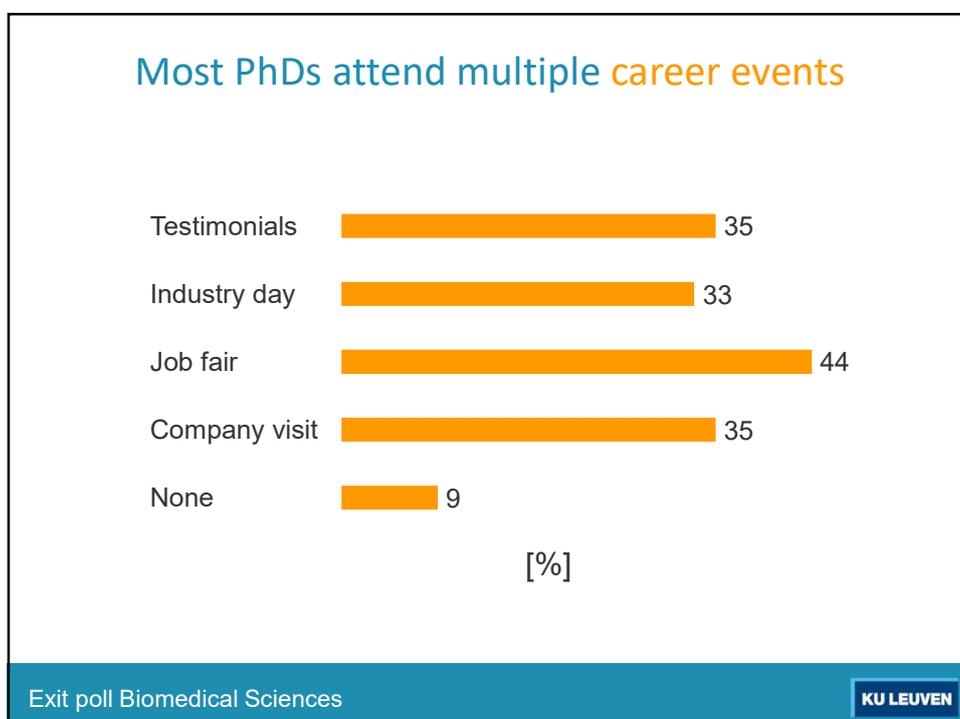
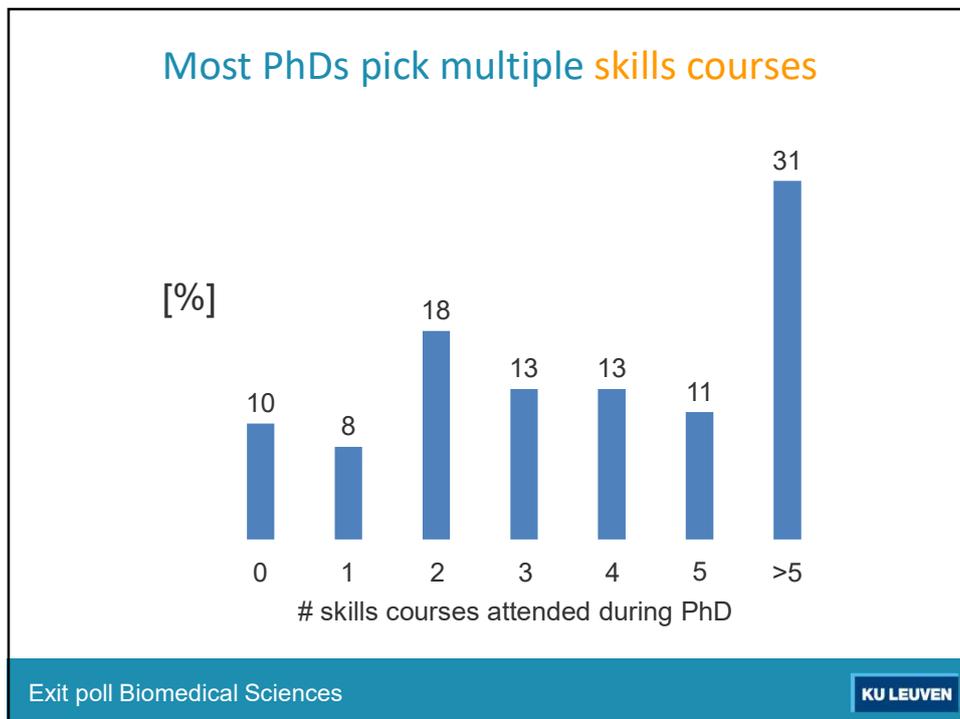
Reception & Networking Drink



KU Leuven, 12 October, 2018

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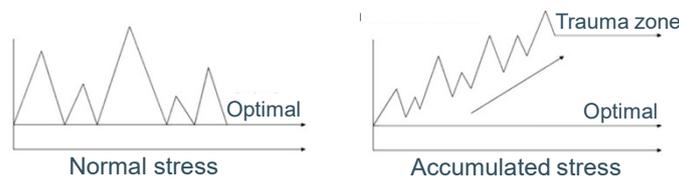




YouReCa career center offers the course  
 “Stress and Resilience”



- What is stress (normal & accumulated)
- The 3 stages of stress: Stress, Overworked, Burnout
- The need for de-stressing & setting boundaries
- Resilience, and positive thinking

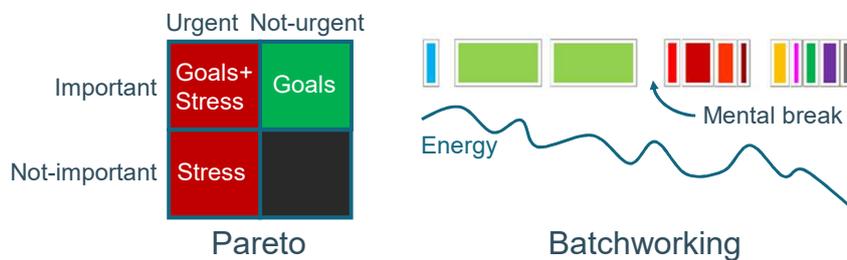


<https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/mentalhealth/stress-resilience.pdf> **KU LEUVEN**

YouReCa career center offers the course  
 “Time & Self-management”



- Important vs urgent; Pareto principle
- Multi-tasking vs Switch-tasking; Batchworking
- Disconnect



<https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/mentalhealth/slides-well-being-time-self-management.pdf> **KU LEUVEN**

YouReCa career center offers the course  
 “Career prospects”



- Self-assessment (RDF vitae.ac.uk)
- Current situation – exploration – matching
- IDP – networking – planned happenstances



<https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/mentalhealth/career-prospects.pdf>

YouReCa career center offers the course  
 “The rush hour of life”



- work-life balance vs life@work
- Improve personal effectiveness at work
- Improvement is a long-term project; focus on small steps
- Set boundaries between work and private life



<https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/mentalhealth/career-prospects.pdf>



## Social contacts are stimulated

- The **PhD society** organises social event
- Pangaea organises a **buddy program**
- Thematic programs organise a **Docs-day**
- Every department has a **'confidente'**



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## ...and let's not forget the postdocs



It is bitter irony that universities destroy human capital like no other

Knack 14/02/18: article-opinion-963793

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## Conclusions

A passion for research drives PhDs. Additional training should be offered and encouraged on a needs basis

Stress and pressure are the major threats for wellbeing. Workshops may help building resilience

Stimulating (off-line) social networks may improve work-life balance and life@work

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[john.creemers@kuleuven.be](mailto:john.creemers@kuleuven.be)

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