

## Call for PhD Candidates – RE-CONNECT - Interuniversity Research Consortium on Emotional Connectedness

The [RE-CONNECT Interuniversity Research Consortium](#) is currently hiring four fully funded 4-year PhD candidates. RE-CONNECT is one of only 15 synergy grants nationally awarded in Flanders to top research across disciplines; it is the only one in its kind in the Behavioral Sciences (iBOF project number 21/090).

### **RE-CONNECT**

RE-CONNECT pools different fields of expertise to study the dynamics of interpersonal emotional interactions in the domain of work, family, mental health, and across cultures, and to establish what healthy and productive emotional interactions look like in each domain. The work packages within the consortium focus on (1) the development of statistical methods to capture emotional connectedness in dyadic data, (2) emotional connectedness in leader-follower dyads (from different cultures), (3) emotional connectedness in couples (across cultures), and (4) emotional connectedness in relation to mental health problems.

The RE-CONNECT consortium is a collaboration between five PI's (at three Flemish universities) with different domains of expertise, who are each at the top of their field: methodology and statistics, emotion research, organizational psychology, cultural psychology, clinical psychology, and family psychology. The consortium PI team consists of: Eva Ceulemans (KULeuven), Peter Kuppens (KU Leuven), Joeri Hofmans (VUB), Batja Mesquita (KULeuven), Lesley Verhofstadt (University of Gent).

In the run-up to this project, we have inspired and complemented each other. We very much hope that our future team members will equally enjoy, as well as benefit from, the complementarity of available expertise. PhD's will have a principle advisor (indicated below), but will become part of the larger consortium.

### **Open positions**

The 4 PhD student positions that are currently open are the following:

- 1) Position 1: Statistical methods for capturing Emotional Connectedness (position at KU Leuven; principal advisor: Eva Ceulemans)  
The aim of this PhD project is to develop, evaluate and apply new time series models for studying whether and how emotional connectedness in close relationships fluctuates across time in daily life and in the lab. At the same time, attention will be paid to designing future longitudinal studies (e.g., their sampling scheme) such that the models can be estimated optimally. Finally, we will develop open source software and apps (building on for instance R) to allow other researchers to use the new sample size calculation methods and time series models. Further information about this position can be obtained from Eva Ceulemans ([eva.ceulemans@kuleuven.be](mailto:eva.ceulemans@kuleuven.be))
  
- 2) Position 2: Emotional Connectedness in couples (position at UGhent; principal advisor: Lesley Verhofstadt)  
This PhD project will focus on the dynamics of emotional connectedness in intimate relationships. First, the idea will be tested that the dynamics of emotional connectedness in couples can be understood from relationship goals that are being pursued (e.g., independence vs. interdependence). Second, the predictive validity of different types of emotional connectedness dynamics for individual and relational well-being will be examined. A combination of ESM and observational lab methods will be used. Further information about this position can be obtained from Lesley Verhofstadt ([Lesley.Verhofstadt@UGent.be](mailto:Lesley.Verhofstadt@UGent.be))

- 3) Position 3: Cultural differences in emotional connectedness (position at KULeuven; principal advisor: Batja Mesquita)

The focus of this PhD-project will be on establishing and understanding cultural differences in the dynamics of emotional connectedness. We expect that these dynamics can be understood from cultural differences in relationship goals; and that the dynamics associated with the highest wellbeing are different for different cultures. In this project we will closely collaborate with researchers at the UGhent and the VUB to study couples and leader-follower dyads respectively. The cultural comparison will involve Belgium and Japan for the couples, and Belgium and China for the leader-follower research. For this position, proven interest in and experience with different cultures, or with these cultures in particular, is an advantage. Further information about this position can be obtained from Batja Mesquita ([mesquita@kuleuven.be](mailto:mesquita@kuleuven.be)).

- 4) Position 4: Emotional connectedness in mental health (position at KULeuven; principal advisor: Peter Kuppens)

In this Phd project, we aim to study the role of interpersonal emotional processes and connectedness in the etiology, maintenance, and recovery of mood disorder. While most existing psychopathology research focuses on intrapersonal factors and mechanisms, in this Re-Connect project we strive to uncover how mood disorder and its symptoms is at least in part a function of the way emotions are exchanged and shared or not shared between people. As such, we aim to elucidate how personal well-being and symptoms of individuals suffering from mood disorder develop and manifest in close relationships. The Phd research involves the re-coding and -analyses of existing data and the collection of new (lab and daily life) data both in healthy and mood disorder diagnosed individuals and their significant others. Further information about this position can be obtained from Peter Kuppens ([peter.kuppens@kuleuven.be](mailto:peter.kuppens@kuleuven.be)).

### **Job Information and Required Qualifications**

The successful applicants for positions 2 to 4 will be collecting data by means of experience sampling and observational lab methods, and coding and analyzing (existing/newly) collected data. The successful applicant for position 1 will develop and evaluate statistical methods for analyzing these data and will provide open source software that implements these methods. All hired applicants will be preparing high-quality scientific papers, and presenting research findings at (inter)national expert meetings and conferences. For positions 2 and 3, candidates should be prepared to spend several months (not necessarily at one time) in Japan during their 4-year project.

We are looking for highly motivated and enthusiastic candidates, with a degree in Behavioral Sciences (for position 1 other degrees that imply a profound knowledge of statistics, data analysis and programming also qualify), excellent statistical skills, good communication and organizational skills, excellent level of English. Candidates should be willing to work in an interuniversity team of researchers, and should be open to an interdisciplinary perspective on their research topic. Familiarity with emotion research, couples or dyadic research, and speaking the Dutch language are assets.

We offer fully funded full-time PhD positions for 1 year, with expected extensions up to 4 years. Salary is competitive and in line with university standards. The successful PhD candidate will become member of a consortium of top-level researchers in emotion, relationships, work, and culture, and work with cutting edge science and methods.

### **Application Information**

Application deadline: May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Job interviews: to be announced

Expected starting date: October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

Applications should consist of a motivation letter (including contact information of 2 referees) and a CV (including copies of diploma certificates and transcripts at university level). Application materials have to be submitted to the [RE-CONNECT Website](#) (in pdf format). The review of applications will start on May 19, and continue until a suitable candidate is found for each position.