

Department of Demography, University of Vienna
 Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital
 +43 (0) 650 79 64 633
sonja.spitzer@univie.ac.at

Links:
[Website](#)
[Google Scholar](#)
[ORCID](#)

Research Interests

Health and socio-economic inequalities across the life course • Measurement of mortality, health, and ageing • Human capital (skills) • Gender inequality • Parental leave • (Health) data reliability • Healthy ageing

Research Positions & Appointments

University of Vienna, Department of Demography • Postdoctoral researcher and lecturer	07/2020-present
Karolinska Institutet • Research affiliate	04/2025-present
Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology • Research affiliate	10/2024-present
Vienna Yearbook of Population Research • Editor	07/2021-present
International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, World Population Programme • Research assistant	01/2019-06/2020
Vienna Institute of Demography, Economic Demography group • Research scientist	03/2017-06/2020
Chamber of Labour for Vienna, Division of Business Economics • Several short-term consultancy contracts	12/2014-02/2017

Education

Ph.D. with specialisation in Demography and Economics (with distinction) • Vienna University of Economics and Business • Thesis: <i>Health measures and healthcare utilisation in ageing populations: Demographic and economic perspectives</i> • Supervisors: Prof. Wolfgang Lutz and Prof. Alexia Prskawetz	03/2017-04/2020
Master's Degree in Applied Economics (Top of the class) • Vienna University of Economics and Business	10/2014-08/2016
Study abroad (with distinction) • University of Sydney, Australia	07/2015-12/2015
Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Socio-Economics (Top 5% of the class) • Vienna University of Economics and Business	04/2011-09/2014

International Research Visits & Invitations

Karolinska Institutet, Sweden - Host: Prof. Agneta Herlitz (planned)	06/-07/2025
University of Chicago, US - Host: Prof. James Heckman	03/-05/2025
Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology, Japan - Host: Yuliya Kulikova	10/2024-01/2025
Hertie School, Germany - Host: Prof. Mujaheed Shaikh	9/2022
University of Hohenheim, Germany - Host: Prof. Alfonso Souza-Posa	5/2022
Norwegian Univ. of Science and Technology, Norway - Host: Doriane Mignon	10/2021
Max Planck Inst. for Demographic Research, Germany - Host: Christian Dudel	10/2018
Paris School of Economics, France - Hosts: Prof. Hippolyte d'Albis & Prof. Angela Greulich	04/2018

Grants & Fellowships

Data:Research:Austria Grant from the Austrian Academy of Sciences <i>Skill loss during parental leave and its role for gender disparities in earnings</i> € 334,228, PI	2024-2026
COI-NEXT Grant from the Japan Science and Technology Agency <i>Life is about timing: Health shocks and socioeconomic inequality across the life cycle</i> ~ € 180,000, Co-Author and lead of the Austrian research team (PI: Yuliya Kulikova)	2024-2026
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Postdoctoral Fellowship <i>Age at cardiovascular health shocks, survival, and labour market outcomes</i> ~ € 11,000	2024
Strategic Partnership Mobility Fellowship to visit the Center for the Economics of Human Development at the Univ. of Chicago	2024-2025
Kaiserschild Advance Grant <i>The effect of parenthood on human capital and income trajectories over the life course</i> € 9,600, Co-PI with Claudia Reiter	2023-2024
postdoc:muv Fellowship at the University of Vienna	2021-2022
Mobility grant for Ph.D. candidates to visit the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Rostock, Germany	2020
Austrian Ministry of Education, Science, and Research € 4,000 for the YSSP at IIASA	2018
Scholarship from the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand € 2,500 to attend the workshop <i>Demographic analysis with applications to ageing societies</i> at the College of Population Studies in Bangkok, Thailand	2018
Foreign Studies Scholarship Julius Raab Scholarship to study at the University of Sydney, Australia	2015

Awards, Honours & Recognitions

Selected member of the Research Network “Health in Society” at the University of Vienna	2024-present
Invited Population Europe Expert	2022-present
Health Expert Advisor for the Austrian Socio-Economic Panel survey	2022-present
Dr. Maria Schaumayer Foundation Award	2021
Emerging Scholar Award at the Aging & Social Change Interdisciplinary Conference	2021
Award for Outstanding Research Achievements from the Vienna University of Economics and Business	2020
Honourable mention at the AK Science Award on <i>Challenges in public healthcare and long-term care</i>	2020
Top 10% most cited papers in PLOS ONE for <i>Reporting biases in self-assessed physical and cognitive health status of older Europeans</i>	2019
Poster winner at the Population Association of America Annual Meeting Poster titled <i>The subjective cost of young children: A European comparison</i>	2019
1st rank out of 112 in the student ranking Vienna University of Economics and Business, Master’s Programme in Economics	2017

Publications

Journal Article (Peer-Reviewed)	JCR IF 5 years	Area(s)	JIF Quart.
Renner, A.-T., Shaikh, M., and Spitzer S. (forthcoming): Absence from work and lifetime smoking behavior: Evidence from European maternal leave policies, <i>The Journal of Health Economics</i>	4.0	Health Policy & Services	Q1
Di Lego, V., Spitzer S. , and Lazarevic P. (2024): Mismatches in Health: A Global Analysis of Discrepancies Between Self-Reported and Tested Mobility and Cognition , <i>Comparative Population Studies</i>	2.0	Demography	Q2
Spitzer S. , Di Lego V., Kuhn M., Roth C., and Berger C. (2022): Socio-economic environment and survival in patients after ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI): A longitudinal study for the City of Vienna , <i>BMJ Open</i>	2.7	Medicine, General and Internal	Q1
Scherbov S., Spitzer S. , and Steiber N. (2022): Thresholds for clinical practice that directly link handgrip strength to remaining years of life: Estimates based on longitudinal observational data , <i>BMJ Open</i>	2.7	Medicine, General and Internal	Q1
Spitzer S. , Shaikh M., and Weber D. (2022): Older Europeans' health perception and their adaptive behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic , <i>European Journal of Public Health</i>	3.9	Public, Environmental, and Occupational Health	Q2
Spitzer S. and Shaikh M. (2022): Health misperception and healthcare utilisation among older Europeans , <i>The Journal of the Economics of Ageing</i>	2.1	Demography & Economics & Gerontology	Q2
Spitzer S. , Greulich A., and Hammer B. (2022): The subjective cost of young children: A European comparison , <i>Social Indicator Research</i>	3.2	Sociology & Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary	Q1
Lutz W., Striessnig E., Dimitrova A., Ghislandi S., Lijadi A., Reiter C., Spitzer S. , and Yildiz D. (2021): Years of good life is a well-being indicator designed to serve research on sustainability , <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)</i>	10.8	Multidisciplinary Science	Q1
Hammer, B., Spitzer S. , and Prskawetz, A. (2021): Age-specific income trends in Europe: The role of employment, wages, and social transfers , <i>Social Indicator Research</i>	3.2	Sociology & Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary	Q1
Spitzer S. (2020): Biases in health expectancies due to educational differences in survey participation of older Europeans: It's worth weighting for , <i>The European Journal of Health Economics</i>	3.6	Economics & Health Policy and Services	Q1
Hammer H., Spitzer S. , Vargha L., and Istenic T. (2020): The gender dimension of intergenerational transfers in Europe , <i>The Journal of the Economics of Ageing</i>	2.1	Demography & Economics & Gerontology	Q2
Reiter C. and Spitzer S. (2020): Wellbeing in Europe: Decompositions by country and gender for the population 50+ , <i>Vienna Yearbook of Population Research</i>	NA ¹	NA ²	NA ³
Spitzer S. and Weber D. (2019): Reporting biases in self-assessed physical and cognitive health status of older Europeans , <i>PLOS ONE</i>	3.3	Multidisciplinary Science	Q1

¹Not listed in JCR, but in SJR

²Not listed in JCR, but area Demography according to SJR

³Not listed in JCR, but Q1 according to SJR

Book Chapters (Peer-Reviewed)

Greulich A. and **Spitzer S.** (forthcoming): The cost of children. In: Zimmermann K. F. (Ed.), *Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics*

Spitzer S. and Reiter C. (2024): [Demographic change, health care, and long-term care](#). In: Renner A.-T., Getzner M., and Plank L. (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Infrastructure*. Edward Elgar Publishing

Edited Special Issues

Spitzer S., Di Lego V., Greulich A., and Muttarak R. (Eds.) (2021): [Demographic aspects of human wellbeing](#), *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research*

Policy Reports

Spitzer S., Hammer B., and Reiter C. (2023): [Intergenerational inequalities: How to close the gaps?](#), *Eurofound Policy Brief*

Spitzer S. and Wieser C. (2017): [Women on boards \(Frauen.Management.Report – Aufsichtsrat, Geschäftsführung und Prokura\)](#), *Chamber of Labour Report*

Spitzer S. and Wieser C. (2015): [Women on boards \(Frauen.Management.Report – Frauen in Geschäftsführung und Aufsichtsrat der Top 200 Börsennotierten Unternehmen\)](#), *Chamber of Labour Report*

Other Publications

Spitzer S. (2022): [How healthy are you really? Cross-country comparisons of wellbeing with survey data](#), Contribution to the *Population-Environment Research Network (PERN) Cyberseminar*

Spitzer S., Di Lego V., Greulich A., and Muttarak R. (2020): [A demographic perspective on human wellbeing: Concepts, measurement and population heterogeneity](#), Introduction *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research*

Spitzer S. and Reiter C. (2020): [Years of Good Life: A novel indicator to measure wellbeing](#). In: *European Demographic Datasheet 2020*. Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital

Spitzer S. and Hammer B. (2016): [The division of labour within households: Fractional logit estimates based on the Austrian Time Use Survey](#), *AGENTA Working Paper*

Media Coverage & Dissemination Activities

2024	Medianet Der Falter • Radio Ö1 • Daily Mail • Hindustan Times • ORF ZIB Magazin (TV Interview) • Podcast Baby & Job • Der Standard • Die Presse • Kronen Zeitung • Ö1 Mittagsjournal • Tiroler Tageszeitung • Heute • Gazzetta • Poradnik Zdrowie • Femme Actuelle • ÖAW SciencePop • ORF.at • Kurier • Salzburger Nachrichten • Puls24 • Wiener Zeitung • Der Standard • PopDigests • Mein Bezirk • Voice Philly • Kurier • APA • Portal Hospital
2022	Brasil VOL.at • Radio Wien Stadtjournal • ORF.at • New Business • Vienna.at • Kronen Zeitung • Newsweek • News18 • ScienceDaily • Studium.at • IIASA News • WIC Fact Sheet • The Hill • European Demographic Data Sheet • Kurier • SciTechDaily • Hello Zdrowie • Mediafax • News Medical • Mdienoticias • lrytas • Mint Lounge • Deine Apotheke • Wiener Zeitung • ygeia mou • Kurier • medinlive.at • Zeitung der Arbeit • MedMedia • Dolomiten • Der Standard • Ö1 Nachrichtenjournal • Clarín
2021	OEAW ScienceBites Video • Kurier • European Researchers' Night
2020	Wiener Zeitung • Population Europe PopDigest • Nexus Blog
2019	Die Presse • Nutraingredients.com • ScienceDaily • MedicalXpress • Generational Economy • IIASA News • Generational Economy • Nemokennislink.nl

Teaching, Supervision, & Mentoring

Teaching at the University of Vienna (four courses per academic year)	2021-present
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mortality, health, and ageing (Master level, with Marc Luy)• Advanced quantitative data analysis and microeconometrics (Master level)• Human capital and economic demography (Master level)• Scientific working (Master level, with Ester Lazzari and Nicholas Gailey)• Statistics for social scientists II (Master level)	
Teaching at the Austrian Academy of Sciences	2022
Where do demographers get their data from? (Bachelor level, workshop with Dilek Yildiz and Claudia Reiter)	
Supervision at PhD level	
<i>The causal effect of schooling on obesity and diabetes in low- and middle-income countries</i> Lili Liwin, Co-supervision with Daniela Weber during YSSP at IIASA	2022
Supervision of Master theses	2024-present
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jana Ströbinger: <i>Socioeconomic differences in the onset of cancer and its role for labour market outcomes</i>• Constantin Kumaus: <i>Gender differences in family, childcare, and retirement policies</i> (with Adèle Lemoine)• Nina Marie Dippold: <i>The effect of maternity leave duration on retirement income</i>• Luke Juday: <i>The spatial redistribution of human capital: Demographic drivers and shifts in the US and EU</i>	
Supervision of Research Assistants	2024-present
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• University of Vienna• Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology	
Mentoring	2020-2021
VrauWL mentoring programme for female economics students	

Academic Services & Institutional Responsibilities

Selected member of the Research Network “Health in Society” at the University of Vienna	2024-present
Examinor for the Master programme “Global Demography”	2024-present
Health expert advisor for the Austrian Socio-Economic Panel survey	2022-present
Editor of the Vienna Yearbook of Population Research	2021-present
Selection Committee for the Master programme “Global Demography”	2021-2023
Co-Organiser of the Demography PhD Club at the University of Vienna	2021-2022
Development of the curriculum for the Master programme “Global Demography” in collaboration with the teaching team	2020-2021
Guest Editor of the Vienna Yearbook of Population Research	2021
Coordinator of the Wittgenstein Centre Colloquium Series	2017-2020
Coordinator of the Wittgenstein Centre Conference on <i>Demographic aspects of human wellbeing</i>	2019
Organiser of the Wittgenstein Centre Workshop on Health and Wellbeing	2018

Referee activities

Demography • The Journal of Health Economics • Social Science & Medicine • Health Economics • Ageing & Society • Vienna Yearbook of Population Research • Special Report on *Health, Demography, and Climate Change* by the Austrian Panel on Climate Change • The International Population Conference 2025 • European Health Economics Association conference on *Opening up perspectives on health economics* • 5th Asian Population Association Conference • Wittgenstein Centre Conference on *Demographic aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences* • Fondazione Cariplo Funding Programme • Best Paper Award of the Young Scientist Summer Programme at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis

Presentations

Invited Talks & Panel Discussions

<i>Delaying Cancer: The Effect of Education on the Age at Cancer Diagnosis</i> The University of New South Wales, Australia (planned)	2025
<i>TBD</i> Stockholm University, Sweden (planned)	2025
<i>Health inequalities across the life course: Preliminary results from Austrian register data</i> University of Southern California, US (online)	2025
<i>Absence from work and lifetime smoking behavior: Evidence from European maternal leave policies</i> National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), Japan	2024
<i>Skill loss during parental leave and its role for gender disparities in earnings</i> Nihon University Population Research Institute (NUPRI), Japan	2024
<i>Absence from work and lifetime smoking behavior: Evidence from European maternal leave policies</i> Chung-Ang University, Korea	2024
<i>Parental leave and smoking behaviour: Causal evidence from 14 European countries</i> University of Hohenheim, Germany	2022
<i>Leave duration after childbirth and smoking behaviour in later life</i> Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil (online)	2022
<i>Women in leadership in a COVID-19 world</i> IIASA, Austria (online)	2021
<i>Biased health perception and health behaviour: An overview of Europe and China</i> Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway	2021
<i>How healthy are you really? Health misperception and healthcare utilisation among older Europeans</i> Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria (online)	2020
<i>Who is telling the truth? Biases in self-reported health status of older Europeans</i> European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Austria	2019
<i>The subjective cost of young children: A European comparison</i> Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Germany	2018

Presentations at Conferences & Workshops

2025	International Population Conference, Brisbane, Australia (planned)
2024	European Population Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland • European Health Association Conference, Vienna, Austria
2023	REVES Meeting (talk by co-author Vanessa di Lego), Padua, Italy • American-European Health Economics Study Group, Boston, US • International Health Economics Association Congress, Cape Town, South Africa
2022	Population Association of America Annual Meeting, Atlanta, US • European Health Association Conference, Oslo, Norway
2021	International Population Conference, Hyderabad, India (online) • Population Association of America Annual Meeting, St. Louis, US (online) • Austrian Health Economics Association Conference, Vienna, Austria • Annual Meeting of the Austrian Economic Association (NOeG), Innsbruck, Austria (online)
2020	Global Meeting on Population and the Generational Economy, Honolulu, US (online) • European Population Conference 2020, Padova, Italy (cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic) • European Health Economics Association 2020 Student-Supervisor Conference, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (online) • Annual Meeting of the Austrian Economic Association (NOeG), Vienna, Austria

2019	International Workshop on the Socio-economics of Ageing, Lisbon, Portugal • Population Association of America Annual Meeting, Austin, US • Wittgenstein Centre Conference, Vienna, Austria • National Conference on Health Economics, Lisbon, Portugal (talk by co-author Mujaheed Shaikh) • German-Austrian-Swiss Demographer's Meeting, Vienna, Austria (talk by co-author Daniela Weber) • Austrian Health Economics Association Conference, Vienna, Austria
2018	British Society for Population Studies Conference, Winchester, UK • European Population Conference, Brussels, Belgium (talk by co-author Bernhard Hammer) • Austrian Health Economics Association PhD Workshop, Vienna, Austria • Wittgenstein Centre Conference, Vienna, Austria • YSSP Final Colloquium, Laxenburg, Austria • Wittgenstein Centre Workshop on Health and Wellbeing, Vienna, Austria • Young Economists Conference, Vienna, Austria
2017	British Society for Population Studies Conference, Liverpool, UK • Wittgenstein Centre Conference, Vienna, Austria • Young Economists' Meeting, Brno, Czechia

Additional Training

Multistate Models: Analysis from event histories and panel data , one week Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Rostock, Germany	2020
Digital and computational demography , one week Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Rostock, Germany	2020
Data visualization – the art/skill cocktail , one week International Advanced Studies in Demography Research Training Program Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Rostock, Germany	2020
Microsimulation for multidimensional population projections , half day International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Laxenburg, Austria	2019
Demographic analysis with applications to ageing societies , two weeks College of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand	2018