

b uilding the workplace of tomorrow



“ *Demographic changes and the reorganisation of workplaces do not stop at political borders. This allows us to enter into a new European dimension of collaboration.* ”

Innovation in work organisation is important to both employers (with its potential to increase productivity and competitiveness) and employees (creating better jobs and better social conditions). Information remains fragmented on how best to adapt workplace organisation to developments in information and manufacturing technology, and to factors of social change. The WORK-IN-NET Coordination Action (CA) will collect and analyse information on existing national programmes, opening the way for joint, transnational initiatives in the future. Only by increasing the quality of work, the creativity of employees, and the flexibility of work organisation will Europe be able to meet the demands of the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century.

Modernisation of the workplace is vital if the European Union is to achieve the goal set by the Lisbon European Council – to be the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010, capable of sustainable economic growth and with greater social cohesion. Successful performance depends on many workplace factors. IT applications are perhaps the most obvious, but also crucial are changes in social conditions and work organisation. These include availability of skills, the ageing of the workforce, equality of opportunity for women and minority groups, lifelong learning, and many more.

A new broom is needed

Organisational innovation generates what the Commission refers to as ‘high-trust, high-performance’ workplaces, and is essential to reap the full benefits of new technologies. The WORK-IN-NET CA focuses on work-related innovation by bringing together 12 partners from seven countries, with another seven possible future partners. The partners are ministries or project management agencies, all involved in the funding of research and innovation. They will consult other interest groups via national coordinators, and also with the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, and the European Agency for Safety and Health.

The aim of WORK-IN-NET is to set up sustainable communication links between national research programme managers on work-related innovation, and to raise awareness of its value. The focus will be on the key themes of innovation in human resource management for improving the quality of working life and productivity, corporate social cultures for innovative work organisation, and forming broad alliances for implementing sustainable regional innovation. Information will also be shared with the other Member States of the EU where innovative work organisation is less advanced, contributing to reducing the economic and social differences between north and south, and Eastern and Western Europe.

Two ways of working

WORK-IN-NET will take two complementary approaches throughout to improve the coordination of the national research programmes in this area. The ‘RTD management approach’ is concerned with establishing joint and transnational research programmes to develop innovative methods of work organisation. In parallel, the ‘RTD thematic approach’ will set up pilot models, primarily to identify the key challenges affected by strong interactions between markets, social partners, work-related organisations and public bodies. Each theme will be examined against the broadest background of work in relation to societal and other issues, such as sustainable (economic) development and aspects of the environment.



Coordination Action WORK-IN-NET



Full title:

Labour and innovation: Work-oriented innovations – a key to better employment, cohesion and competitiveness in a knowledge-intensive society

Research field:

Innovation in work organisation

Coordinator:

Germany: Project Management Agency of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research at DLR

Partners:

- Finland: Ministry of Labour – TYKES Finnish Workplace Development Programme
- Finland: Work Environment Fund
- Germany: Gesellschaft für Innovative Beschäftigungsförderung
- Germany: Ministry of Economy and Labour Affairs of the Land Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Greece: Secretariat for Research and Technology, Ministry of Development
- Italy: Istituto per il Lavoro
- Italy: Regional Government of Emilia Romagna
- Norway: Research Council Norway
- Poland: Ministry of Scientific Research and Information Technology
- Sweden: Swedish Agency for Innovation Systems
- Sweden: Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research

Further information:

Dr Claudio Zettel, Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e.V. (Projekträger)
Südstr. 125
D-53175 Bonn
Fax: +49 228 3821 248
e-mail: claudio.zettel@dlr.de
website: www.pt-dlr.de/PT-DLR/ad

Duration:

48 months

EC funding:

€1 929 000

Project reference:

CA-011738-WORK-IN-NET

“ It is a huge advantage to share the manifold experience of different European countries and research management to build up a joint research base and joint activities with a transnational und multidiverse perspective. ”

Main outcomes

In phase one of WORK-IN-NET, the partners and national coordinators will exchange information concerning their research programmes. The three key themes will be elaborated with representatives of business, labour organisations and public bodies as well as the research communities in all partner countries. The various management approaches will also be documented and benchmarked. In phase two, this information will contribute to an electronic database. By exchanging programme managers and other experts, and identifying similarities between national research programmes, the project partners will be able to develop the core elements for an integrated European strategy. Good management practice models in differing types of workplace will be evaluated, and regional policies examined. Phase three will develop training resources

and foresight studies, and will refine the database to show indicators for innovative policies. A joint action plan will identify areas of mutual interest, e.g. joint evaluation criteria; to implement joint approaches for selected projects; to identify gaps and problems in developing joint research concepts; and to explore new challenges for work-oriented innovations.

Finally, in phase four, all these studies will lead to structures to continue the work after WORK-IN-NET, including training, a final conference, and a joint benchmarking board to update knowledge of good practices. A joint R&D programme on 'Sustainable work life in Europe' will be constructed. Bilateral and multilateral pilot joint calls in selected thematic areas will lead to joint research, development and dissemination projects, and a methodology will be agreed for transnational programme evaluation.