

# Review of workplace innovation and its relation with occupational safety and health

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Cataloguing data can be found on the cover of this publication.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2012

ISBN: 978-92-9240-025-5

doi: 10.2802/50497

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## Executive summary

In 2012–13 the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), as part of the Healthy Workplace Campaign, is aiming to achieve better occupational safety and health by promoting 'better health and safety at work through prevention'. The campaign's focus is on both leadership and worker participation, in recognition of the role both employers and employees have to play in prevention. This is taking place against a background of economic crisis and an increased urgency for continuous innovation and sustainable growth within the European Union (EU) to maintain its global competitiveness. It is recognised within the EU that this cannot be achieved through the introduction of new technologies or by cutting costs alone. It will require making the best use of the available workforce and creating flexible work organisations. To meet these challenges a number of European countries have started national programmes or initiatives under the heading of 'social innovation' or 'workplace innovation'. Throughout the literature these terms are used interchangeably but more recently there has been a move towards using the term 'workplace innovation', as it relates to the EU2020 Strategy goals of smart and inclusive growth at the organisational level.

To provide a background for European policymakers, this state-of-the-art review was commissioned to:

- Provide an overview of the European policy framework conditions regarding the need for workplace innovation, human performance and quality of working life.
- Provide evidence that high levels of occupational safety and health (OSH) performance (low accident rates and absenteeism, OSH culture) correlate with workplace innovation and human performance. The term 'OSH performance' in this case is a limited understanding of OSH, which, if related to workplace innovation, can be extended to include well-being (participation and management – labour cooperation, reduction of work-related stress risks, learning opportunities).<sup>1</sup>
- Develop indicators that could convince enterprises to use workplace innovation strategies (for example, cost–benefit analysis, shareholder value, innovative capacity, motivation of staff).

This review uses the term 'workplace innovation' and whilst there is currently no uniform definition of workplace innovation, the definition used in this report is:

- workplace innovations are strategy induced and participatory adopted changes in an organisation's practice of managing, organising and deploying human and non-human resources that lead to simultaneously improved organisational performance and improved quality of working life.

Workplace innovation includes aspects of management and leadership, flexible organisation, working smarter, continuous development of skills and competencies, networking between organisations and the modernisation of labour relations and human resource management. Workplace innovation is not directed at and cannot be expected to have direct effects on diseases, injuries, absenteeism and accidents, although it might help indirectly. However, there is evidence that it may help to improve the quality of working life and productivity, especially in projects that involve employee participation.

Three dimensions: work organisation, labour relations and network relations were used as a framework to identify national programmes and initiatives whose aim is to promote workplace innovation. Many of the initiatives identified through the review were founded on the need to make efficiencies in the workplace and increase organisational competitiveness rather than as a direct result of European policy. Examples of the changes that organisations had made as a result of their involvement with the national programmes or through other initiatives were also identified. The organisations that engage in workplace innovation appear to use a number of different interventions but it is unclear from the available information whether those interventions have been maintained over a period of time. Interventions that seek to improve labour relations are common, such as increasing worker involvement in company decision-making (Gedeon

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<sup>1</sup> In the light of workplace innovation this aim was rephrased as follows: provide evidence that high levels of quality of working life (low stress risks, high job autonomy, less physical workload, continuous development of competences, better labour relations) correlate with workplace innovation and human performance.

Richter Group – Hungary, HeidelbergCement Group – Romania, AMEY – United Kingdom). The importance of engaging employees in order to create support for workplace innovation appears to be a key theme running through all the organisational examples.

It is clear that there is a need for further research into the effects of workplace innovation programmes and in particular to identify whether workplace innovation can improve OSH performance, in respect of quality of working life and psychosocial well-being. It would be relevant to investigate the enablers and barriers that help or hinder an organisation engaging in workplace innovation interventions and to understand what are the effective combinations of interventions and their impact on leadership, organisational culture and decision-making. This is where case studies and detailed surveys could be helpful. Amongst the suggestions for EU-OSHA is that the organisation should take a lead in determining a uniform definition of workplace innovation and build up and disseminate good examples of the combined effects of OSH policy and workplace innovation.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 EU-OSHA and social innovation as workplace innovation

Within the 2012–13 Healthy Workplace Campaign theme of ‘better health and safety at work through prevention’, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) will directly address one of the overarching goals of the Community Strategy, namely the promotion of prevention as the cornerstone of the European approach to achieving better occupational safety and health (OSH). The campaign is being developed around the twin concepts of leadership and worker participation, the implication being that both employers and employees have a role to play in prevention. At the same time, European economies are facing a period of economic crisis and there is a political urgency for continuous innovation and growth in productivity in order to realise sustainable growth and welfare provision within the European Union (EU). To achieve this, it is not sufficient just to introduce new technologies and seek competitive advantage by means of cutting costs. It will require the full utilisation of the potential workforce and creation of flexible work organisations. Recently, a number of European countries (such as Finland, Germany, Ireland, United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands) have started national programmes or initiatives to meet these challenges. These programmes have been launched under the heading of ‘social innovation’ or ‘workplace innovation’.

Social innovation is usually defined as methods or processes of societal renewal in a broad sense with reference to issues ranging from social inequality to environmental pollution (e.g. Caulier-Grice et al, 2010; Howaldt and Schwarz, 2010). It refers to socioeconomic topics of various kinds. This report, however, will focus on social innovation in the workplace. The term used for renewal in this domain is ‘workplace innovation’. Since no uniform definition of workplace innovation is at hand, the following working definition is proposed: ‘workplace innovations are strategically induced and participatory adopted changes in an organisation’s practice of managing, organising and deploying human and non-human resources that lead to simultaneously improved organisational performance and improved quality of working life’. In this definition economic and social goals are combined. This definition is proposed as an ‘ideal type’, because the practice of workplace innovation is heterogeneous and different definitions are used. Workplace innovation can be seen as an essential condition at the organisational level to achieve the EU2020 Strategy goals of smart and inclusive growth.

## 1.2 Goal of the project

The idea behind this project as commissioned by the Agency (EU-OSHA) is that policies and programmes on OSH and social innovation could reinforce each other. The subsequent text refers to workplace innovation when referring to social innovation within organisations.

The aims of this state-of-the-art review are to:

- Provide an overview of the European policy framework conditions regarding the need for workplace innovation, human performance and quality of working life.
- Provide evidence that high levels of OSH performance (low accident rates and absenteeism, OSH culture) correlate with workplace innovation and human performance. OSH performance in this case is a limited understanding of OSH, which, if related to workplace innovation, can be extended to include well-being (participation and management – labour cooperation, reduction of work-related stress risks, learning opportunities).<sup>2</sup>
- Develop indicators that could convince enterprises to use workplace innovation strategies (such as cost–benefit analysis, shareholder value, innovative capacity, motivation of staff).

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<sup>2</sup> In the light of workplace innovation this aim was rephrased as follows: provide evidence that high levels of quality of working life (low stress risks, high job autonomy, less physical workload, continuous development of competences, better labour relations) correlate with workplace innovation and human performance.

## 1.3 Methodology

This state-of-the-art review aims to identify national programmes and initiatives that promote workplace innovation and human development (or quality of working life). It also seeks to develop clear indicators for the concepts of workplace innovation and human performance and how they are related to good OSH performance. Research centres on establishing whether or not EU Member States have a coherent national policy that fits within the definition of workplace innovation and on identifying national programmes and initiatives whose aim is to promote workplace innovation and human development. A summary of these initiatives is provided. The review also identifies programmes and initiatives that, whilst they might share the same aims and aspirations, are not directly attributable to European policy. The search also looks for evidence that high levels of OSH performance (low accident rates and absenteeism, OSH culture) correlate with workplace innovation and human performance.

The method involved an extensive search of both published and unpublished research in the journals, institutions and Internet sites of the countries of the EU. The search was undertaken by obtaining literature from a range of authoritative specialist databases that covered peer-reviewed journals and monographs as well as a search of 'grey' literature.<sup>3</sup> A comprehensive list of search terms and sources of information is found in Annex 1.

## 1.4 Structure of the review

Chapter 2 of this review firstly clarifies the different concepts applicable to social innovation and workplace innovation. From this discussion, a conceptual model is derived which can be used in analysing the different national programmes (review model). The review continues in Chapter 3 by outlining the European policy framework conditions regarding the need for social innovation, human performance and quality of working life (QWL). The focus is on social innovation in the sense of workplace innovation. It thus looks at how social innovation is transferred to the workplace via national programmes and how these relate to good QWL, and if possible, to good OSH performance. Included in Chapter 4 are concise descriptions of several programmes and initiatives from most European Union (EU) Member States that support the development of innovative approaches in the workplace. Many of these do not appear to be directly related to EU or national policy initiatives but they provide a useful overview of activity taking place within the EU. More detailed descriptions of the programmes and initiatives can be found in Annex 2. Chapter 5 provides an overview of how organisations use the programmes and initiatives. Included in Annex 3 are 11 examples of workplace innovation practices adopted by individual organisations. Recommendations are proposed to encourage more research on the impact of workplace innovation on OSH performance, and conclusions are drawn.

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<sup>3</sup> Grey literature is authoritative primary scientific report literature in the public domain, often produced in-house for government departments, university departments, or large research organisations but not usually included within major commercial bibliographic databases.



## 2 Conceptual clarifications and methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter first describes the theoretical coherence of workplace innovation and OSH performance. It then explores the use of 'social innovation' as a term in EU policies and tries to make it clear that in fact three concepts of innovation are being used interchangeably: social innovation of work and employment, non-technical innovation and workplace innovation. They all have some relation to both social innovation in its more restricted meaning related to work and organisation and to variations of workplace innovation. A next step is to select an existing definition of social innovation that is proposed by the Netherlands Centre for Social Innovation. It comes close to the defined 'ideal type' working definition in Chapter 1. With the help of this definition a 'review model' will be constructed with which to study the literature.

### 2.2 Workplace innovation and social innovation

Workplace innovations were defined as strategically induced and participatory adopted changes in an organisation's practice of managing, organising and deploying human and non-human resources that lead to simultaneously improved organisational performance and improved quality of working life. Workplace innovation includes aspects of management (absorption of external knowledge), flexible organisation, working smarter, continuous development of skills and competences, networking between organisations and the modernisation of labour relations (including human resource management) and industrial relations (Totterdill et al, 2009; Totterdill, 2010; Pot, 2011). Workplace innovation is regarded as complementary to and conditional on technological innovation. Empirical findings suggest that technological innovation accounts for 25% of the success in radical innovation, whereas workplace innovation accounts for 75% (Volberda et al, 2006 cited in Pot and Koningsveld, 2009a). Research indicates that through workplace innovation a simultaneous improvement in quality of working life and productivity is possible, in particular in projects with strong employee participation (Ramstad, 2009). Companies exhibiting high levels of workplace innovation and human performance are thought to have a better quality of working life as well.

Workplace innovation runs the risk of remaining a vague concept, unless some of its elements can be determined. In the first place workplace innovation refers to how people are deployed in order to improve performance and also to create good quality jobs, which might be called the mobilisation of human resources (De Sitter, 1995). Secondly, workplace innovation is related to the development and implementation of coherent interventions in the areas of work organisation, control structure and employability of staff. These areas deal with the design of the organisation, the design of management tasks, and the design of jobs, with the objective of simultaneous improvement of organisational performance and quality of working life. The theoretical foundation of these ingredients can be derived from various theoretical backgrounds, namely, the 'job-demand-control model' (Karasek and Theorell, 1990), 'modern sociotechnology' (Van Eijnatten, 1993; De Sitter et al, 1997; Van Hooteigem et al, 2008), action regulation theory (Hacker, 2003), theory of democratic dialogue (Gustavsen, 1996), configurational approach of strategic human resources management (Stavrou and Brewster, 1995; Kaarsemaker and Poutsma, 2006), theory of lean manufacturing (Womack and Jones, 2003),<sup>4</sup> resource-based view of the firm (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Armstrong and Shimizu, 2007), theories of the innovative firm (Totterdill et al, 2002; Sabel, 2006), models of knowledge development and innovation (Ramstad, 2008b) and conceptualisations of social innovation (Murray et al, 2010; Howaldt and Schwarz, 2010).

Most of these theories cannot be discussed here. However, it is important to note that the discussion on workplace innovation shows that there are both broad and narrow definitions of the term. This report stresses workplace innovation as renewal of work organisation, labour relations (employment relations) and network relations. It is distinguished from 'non-technical innovation', which is broader and includes business models, marketing strategies, and open innovation, and from 'social innovation of work and

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<sup>4</sup> Contrary to what many observers believe, 'lean thinking' as originally conceived is an integral view on redesigning work processes and creating good quality jobs. Instead it is often perceived as a cost-effective way of making organisations leaner and meaner and not showing much concern about the consequences for employees.

employment', which is even broader than 'non-technical innovation', and includes labour market and social security policymaking (see Section 2.3). Workplace innovation or social innovation in the workplace is regarded as renewal at the organisational level. Of course, organisations operate within an open environment ('open systems'). Workplace innovations therefore affect not only the internal functions of an organisation (work organisation, labour relations) but also the external functions (network relations); and in turn workplace innovations will be affected by environmental flux.

Workplace innovation does not cover the whole range of OSH topics and OSH performance, but it does include low stress risks, high job autonomy, lower physical workload, continuous development of competences and better labour relations (Pot and Koningsveld, 2009a and b; Ramstad, 2009; Westgaard and Winkel, 2011). This can be called 'quality of working life' (QWL). There is a need for more research to develop this association. The systematic review of Westgaard and Winkel (2011) is the first to give an overview of the possible relationship between workplace innovation and OSH topics. The rationalisation strategy known as the 'high performance work system' (HPWS) was associated with the highest proportion of positive studies. Worker participation, resonant management style, information, support, group autonomy and procedural justice were modifiers with a favourable influence on OSH outcomes. The main advantage of this assumption is that it might help companies to see QWL not solely as a cost factor, but also as a strategic benefit. In the Community Strategy for OSH 2007–2012 (European Commission, 2007) 'improving quality and productivity at work' are mentioned. However, productivity in this document relates primarily to the costs of absenteeism. Research shows that OSH interventions pay off (EU-OSHA, 2004; Tompa et al, 2008a and 2008b). The cost factor is also important in those countries where economic incentives improve OSH (EU-OSHA, 2010b). In the OSH community less attention is paid to the potentially positive performance effects of a good quality of working life. But there are strong indications that this correlation exists under certain conditions. Good ergonomics, for example, not only prevents musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) but also facilitates the operational process (Koningsveld et al, 2005; Vink et al, 2006; Koningsveld, 2008). The prevention of stress risks by organising the work in high demand, high control jobs provides learning opportunities that might enhance innovative work behaviour and productivity (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). Direct employee participation in organisational change (EPOC) appears to have a significant impact on economic performance – in the case of quality nine out of ten respondents reported a strong impact (Eurofound, 2005).

Within the context of European policy (see Chapter 3), social innovation is conceived as a broad topic, as it is a means to combat both social and societal challenges such as the financial and economic crisis, unemployment, participation, social cohesion, climate change and innovation, productivity and growth through societal innovation. 'Social innovation refers to new responses to pressing social demands, by means which affect the process of social interactions. Social innovations are characterised by the production of a social return and the creation of new social relationships or partnerships which involve the end users and thereby make policies more effective' (European Commission, 2010; European Commission, 2009). A study on social innovation by the Social Innovation eXchange (SIX) and the Young Foundation (Caulier-Grice et al, 2010, pp. 17–18) provides another definition of social innovations as being: 'social both in their ends and in their means. Specifically, we define social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) *and* create new social relationships or collaborations. In other words they are innovations that are both good for society *and* enhance society's capacity to act.' The EC has embraced this definition (European Commission, 2010, p. 2), arguing that just as stimulating innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge society was at the core of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, social innovation should now be part of a new strategy to reach sustainable growth in the EU.

Three categories of social innovation have been identified by the EC:

- 'Grassroots social innovations' as a response to pressing social demands, which are not addressed by the market and are directed at vulnerable groups in society.
- 'Broader' social innovations, which address societal challenges where there is a blurring of the boundary between social and economic challenges and are directed towards society as a whole.
- 'Systemic'-type innovations, which relate to fundamental changes in attitudes and values, strategies and policies, organisational structures and processes, delivery systems and services. Initiatives related to actions to make citizens aware of climate change and recycling are examples of this last category.

Unfortunately workplace innovation programmes have been overlooked in these documents. But the relation between work organisation, competence development, QWL and social innovation has recently been mentioned in the draft guidelines for employment policies (European Commission, 2010b) and in the accompanying document for the Flagship Initiative Innovation Union (European Commission, 2010c). At the launch event of Social Innovation Europe (SIE), initiated by DG Enterprise and Industry, on 16/17 March 2011 a workshop on Workplace Innovation was organised. In other words, it is observed that Europe seems on the brink of uniting the concepts of social innovation and workplace innovation.

## 2.3 Innovation and OSH

Before one can select a model to review any findings on effects of innovation on OSH performance, the theoretical coherence of QWL, innovation and performance should be discussed to clarify the relationship between workplace innovation and OSH performance. Individual and group performance is not directly the result of employee satisfaction or motivation, but through the involvement and commitment of workers' representation, HRM practices and work organisation (Judge et al, 2001; Taris et al, 2008). For instance, organisational commitment can be brought about by an organisational design that provides job autonomy, the opportunity to consult others, learning opportunities and so on (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). These are exactly the same measures that are recommended to reduce psychological stress risks as a way of 'prevention at the source' (Pot et al, 1994; EU-OSHA, 2000). People do not suffer from severe strain because of problems and disturbances in their work, but because they are not able to solve them (De Sitter et al, 1997). Such problems reveal discrepancies, for example, between quantitative job demands and available time or staff; between qualitative job demands and education or training; between problems and disturbances on the one hand, and support from supervisors and colleagues on the other hand; between complexity of the job and capacity to control it (De Sitter et al, 1997).

Such reasoning has found a theoretical home in the so-called 'job demand–control model'. This model argues that with regard to performance a proper work organisation is more important than satisfaction (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). 'High demands and high control' provides opportunities for learning, whereas 'high demands and low control' is a stress risk and stress inhibits learning. Design and implementation of active jobs (high demands, control/autonomy and support) is an important sub-dimension of workplace innovation. A recent review of 83 studies between 1998 and 2007 shows that there is almost always a positive effect on general psychological well-being where the sample size of the study was sufficient to calculate effect. For effects to job-related well-being (job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion) there was consistent evidence in cross-sectional studies, but support rates were lower in longitudinal data (Häusser et al, 2010).

The relationship between work organisation and learning opportunities can be extended further. In much research, control is only measured by job autonomy (freedom of action within a specific job). Job autonomy makes it possible to learn how to do the job better. This could be called 'internal control capacity', which is related to 'single loop learning, doing things better' (Argyris and Schön, 1978). Without job autonomy an employee can solve problems only in a standardised manner, without really learning anything new. Another question, however is 'are we doing the right things?' For the worker this requires control of another kind, which could be called 'external control capacity' (participation in decision-making, consultation on the shop floor, codetermination) as elaborated in 'modern sociotechnology' (De Sitter et al, 1997; Kira and Eijnatten, 2008), the 'action regulation theory' (Hacker, 2003) and in theories of the 'learning organisation' (Senge, 1990), 'high road organisations' (Totterdill et al, 2009), 'the flexible firm' (Oeij et al, 2006; Eurofound, 2009) and the 'innovative firm' (Sabel, 2006).

The same kind of reasoning concerning autonomy, learning and control holds for ergonomic design of workplaces. This serves not only the objectives of the reduction of physical workload, prevention of MSDs (allowing better postures and movements; reducing lifting) and health improvement (physical exercise), but also that of enhancing productivity (easier and faster handling and processing; better layout) particularly if the design and implementation processes are characterised by a participatory approach (Koningsveld et al, 2005; Vink et al, 2006).

In this sense, workplace innovation as an ideal is directed at both improved organisational performance and improved QWL. Workplace innovation serves both economic goals, namely performance and productivity (as is the case with non-technological innovation), and social goals (human performance and,

eventually, OSH performance). Those countries that have installed national programmes to innovate workplaces pay attention to both economic performance and QWL, as is the case in Finland, Germany and Belgium (Alasoini et al, 2005, 2008a, 2008b; Kalmi and Kauhanen, 2008). Countries without such a programme focus on one of the two, as can be seen in Ireland – underscoring QWL – and the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, where it is observed that either one or both goals are sought (Pot, 2011; Totterdill et al, 2009; Flood et al, 2008).

Although a comprehensive concept is not being put forward explicitly to cover all these policy topics in the literature, it is the view of this report that workplace innovation is an outstanding candidate to fill that gap. The next step is to aim for a work definition that is more practical than the ideal type definition formulated in Chapter 1. When looking at the debate thus far, one can distinguish three concepts of innovation, namely ‘social innovation of work and employment’, ‘non-technological innovation’ and ‘workplace innovation’ (or social innovation in the workplace). These concepts refer to common needs and societal challenges. They are complementary and have a functional overlap regarding levels of action and policy dimensions. They differ in that ‘social innovation of work and employment’ operates at the level of society as a whole (policymaking), whereas ‘workplace innovation’ operates at the level of work organisations. ‘Non-technological innovation’ operates in between, but inclines to shift towards the organisational level. As mentioned above, this study will underscore workplace innovation. More or less synonymous concepts for workplace innovation in the literature are ‘innovative workplaces’, ‘innovative work design’, ‘workplace development’, ‘sustainable work’, ‘working smarter’, ‘high performance workplaces’, ‘high involvement workplaces’ and ‘organisational innovation’. Table 1 summarises the central elements of the three concepts of innovation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> It should be mentioned that Table1 has excluded social innovation as societal innovation, the broad and all-encompassing definition of social innovation. Chapter 3 discusses how social innovation is taken up in recent EC policy documents, amongst them the recent document on the EU2020 flagship initiatives. The elements (in the left-hand column) of the table are aligned with how the Flagship Initiative Innovation Union addresses social innovation.

Table 1: Three concepts of innovation

Elements	Social innovation of work and employment	Non-technological innovation	Workplace innovation
Needs	Increased labour productivity, development of competences, flexible organisation, and innovative capacity	Increased labour productivity, development of competences, flexible organisation, and innovative capacity	Increased labour productivity, development of competences, flexible organisation, and innovative capacity
Societal challenges	Global competition, knowledge economy, decreasing/ageing workforce, technology gap	Global competition, knowledge economy, decreasing/ageing workforce, technology gap	Global competition, knowledge economy, decreasing/ageing workforce, technology gap
Values	Sustainable, smart and inclusive growth	Competitiveness and performance	Competitiveness and performance, optimal utilisation of the workforce, quality of working life
Process dimensions	New forms of collaboration with social partners, governments and research institutions, and industrial relations on national and sector level	Dynamic management, external cooperation	Participation of stakeholders, trust
Levels of action	European, national regional and sector	Public and private organisations, sector, region	Public and private organisations, sector, region
Content dimensions	(National/European) Policy measures on labour market, social security, education, flexicurity, systems and infrastructure innovation and innovation programmes (e.g. Social Innovation Europe (SIE) and Flexicurity as active labour market & social protection policy (European Commission)); and competencies & training (ESF), promotion of non-technological innovation and workplace innovation (Flagship Initiatives)	Sectoral and organisational measures on strategy, business, knowledge management and local/ regional/ sectoral innovation infrastructure (e.g. organisational innovation, the introduction of new business models, marketing strategies, and service delivery modes, absorption of new knowledge and open innovation)	Organisational measures on work organisation, labour relations and network relations (e.g. the combination of organisational innovation, ergonomics, development of competences, employment relations within the organisation)

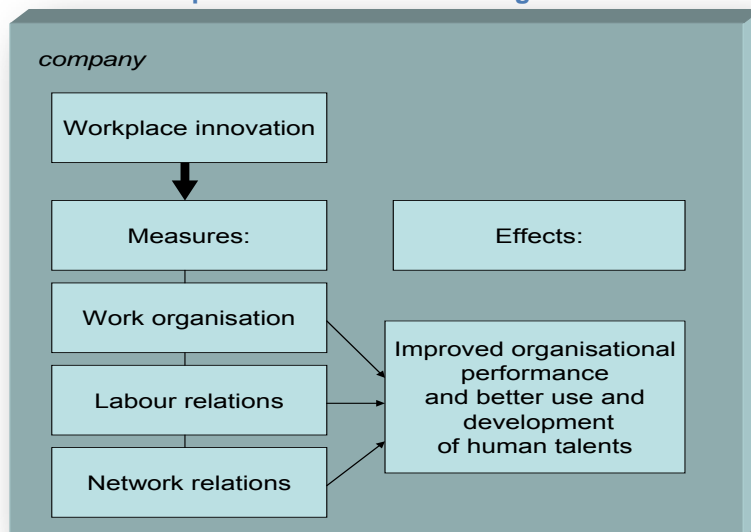
## 2.4 Review model for workplace innovation and OSH

This report investigates the relation between workplace innovation policies and practices on the one hand and OSH performance and practices on the other. To help understand and assess how European policy and national programmes and initiatives promote workplace innovation, a review model is needed that will provide a frame of reference for the investigations. Ideally, such a model would map workplace interventions onto work organisation, labour relations and network relations that are beneficial to OSH performance either directly or indirectly. It seems unlikely that research has already been carried out to investigate the direct relationship between workplace innovation and OSH performance. There is a practical reason for this: OSH policies and performance cut through elements of workplace innovation, which makes OSH an integral element of workplace innovation, not something that can be easily distinguished conceptually in a model. There may be indirect links between workplace innovation and OSH, which could emerge in the research findings as the implementation of OSH policies and measures at organisational level and / or as improvement of the OSH of employees (for example, low accident rates and absenteeism, OSH culture, good quality of working life). In discussing the national programmes and initiatives, it is informative to look at the degree to which OSH has been distinguished, but it is not essential to bring this into one model.

The definition by the Netherlands Centre for Social Innovation (NCSI) is used to conceptualise workplace innovation, because the NCSI definition is congruent with the earlier way of describing workplace innovation, and more practical than the presented ideal type definition. In the first place, it sees workplace innovation as a necessary complement to technological innovation, because technological innovation on its own is often unsuccessful. In a skill-based or knowledge economy it is crucial to link technology and new knowledge in order to innovate successfully (Acemoglu, 2002), which requires attention to be paid to both economic and social or human aspects. In the second place, the NCSI definition focuses on the organisational level at which organisations and employees are performing. Therefore, the model allows users to investigate the effects of workplace innovation measures on the OSH performance of organisations, and in doing so, enable the formulation of recommendations at company level and develop indicators to measure effects as well. The NCSI definition is absorbed into the review model (see Figure 1). The definition that NCSI proposes is that social innovation (i.e. workplace innovation) is:

- a renewal in work organisation and labour relations leading to improved performance by the organisation by which we mean enhanced productivity, economic growth, the capacity to innovate and better use and develop human talents through improvements in the quality of working life, safe and healthy working conditions, enhanced job satisfaction, worker participation, social dialogue and sustainable employment (NCSI, 2009, p. 1).

Figure 1: Review model of workplace innovation at the organisational level



Source: Netherlands Centre for Social Innovation (NCSI)

NCSI identifies measures applied to work organisation, labour relations and network relations that can be used to review the findings of workplace innovation initiatives. These measures are supposed to form an important category of interventions that can improve organisational performance and make for a better use and development of human talents (De Sitter et al, 1997; Karasek and Theorell, 1990; Totterdill et al, 2009; Hacker, 2003). The effects include an improved QWL (in other words, low stress risks, high job autonomy, continuous development of competences and better labour relations), as will be seen below.

The measures or initiatives within the model of workplace innovation can be first divided into the three elements mentioned, namely work organisation, labour relations and network relations.

- In approaches focusing heavily on work organisation:
  - the organisation provides jobs with high autonomy
  - the organisation provides opportunities to work (together) independently of time and place
  - the organisation allows employees to determine their working hours (in consultation)
  - the organisation facilitates flexibility by using ICT, among other things<sup>6</sup>
  - the organisation allows employees to spend part of their working hours on developing new ideas
  - the organisation has a diverse workforce and uses this effectively
  - the (logistical) processes are organised as effectively as possible in consultation with employees.
- In organisations that give high priority to the labour relations approach:
  - employees and management jointly formulate the organisation's ambitions
  - employees have a say in the organisation and its decisions
  - management and employees encourage each other to (learn to) innovate and to show creativity and daring
  - management and employees trust each other
  - employees have autonomy in managing their tasks
  - employees and managers are allowed to make mistakes and dare to admit them.
- In organisations that prioritise network relations (in other words, relations with other parties outside the firm):
  - the organisation works on innovation with partners (suppliers, clients, people in the community)
  - the organisation works with knowledge organisations
  - the organisation is involved in the community and with social issues

The model then looks at the goals or desired effects of workplace innovation. These effects can be of direct benefit to the organisation and/or employees or be indirectly beneficial to society, for example:

- Goals of organisations:
  - To improve performance by increasing labour productivity
  - To use the organisation's knowledge, competencies and technology more effectively
  - To accelerate development of new products and services
  - To employ motivated and committed employees
  - To make the organisation more attractive in a tight labour market.
  - Goals of employees
  - To improve job satisfaction
  - To find balance between work and private life
  - To promote personal development opportunities and lasting employability.
- Societal goals
  - Smart, inclusive and sustainable growth
  - To maintain prosperity and encourage its growth
  - To improve the competitive position of the private sector
  - To overcome the shortage of skilled labour in the future
  - To increase the number of people becoming/remaining active in the labour market
  - To make technological innovation possible.

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<sup>6</sup> It is contestable whether it should also include functional flexibility and mobile working.





## 3 Social innovation, workplace innovation and occupational safety and health

### 3.1 Introduction

It is clear from the discussion of concepts (Chapter 2) that it is complicated to bring social innovation or workplace innovation and OSH together. From a policy perspective, there is a need to study whether policymakers do see these two concepts as linked. Within the (European) policy context, it can be observed that the two concepts are still quite far apart. Social innovation could be seen as a set of concepts fruitful for the further development of European social policies. If this is the case, there will be an impact on OSH policies. Next to this effort to broaden the European policy dimension, social innovation can also be seen to set the European social initiatives apart from other initiatives such as the Millennium Goals, Decent Work and the European Employment strategy. This chapter means to clarify this policy context and the (historical) initiatives for the further social improvement of Europe. This 'policy landscape' can help to show why OSH policies need to position themselves within this debate and claim a role at the forefront. Social innovation and OSH policies can best be bridged by workplace innovation, because workplace innovation can be linked directly to OSH performance, whereas social innovation links seem much more indirect. The chapter starts with an assessment of European initiatives in the field of workplace development and workplace innovation. Secondly, it looks at the position of this debate with regard to the international initiatives in various countries. A third element is to describe how social innovation is being defined in policy documents and how it serves to pave the way for workplace innovation. The chapter concludes by taking a look at the issue of how OSH policies could have their place in the debate on social innovation.

### 3.2 Workplace development as a new policy area

Until the middle of the 1990s, the social terrain of the European Commission seemed neatly organised. Social issues were left to the social partners (European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)). Research questions were directed at what has now become Eurofound. Occupational and safety issues were directed at the newly created European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health (now EU-OSHA). But the reality of the workplace is broader than the areas regulated by these institutions and as a result several initiatives were launched by external bodies.

The Commission's initiative to prepare a 'Green Paper on Partnership for a new Organisation of Work' (European Commission, 1997) was a first attempt to organise the field of work organisation as a separate policy goal. In the framework of that paper, Totterdill et al (2002) investigated 100 cases in six countries and developed the concept of 'the high road of organisational innovation'. This so-called 'high road' aims at sustainable innovation by employee involvement and a high quality of working life. The alternative for this strategy is characterised in this study as 'mainly oriented at cutting costs'. The authors also list several benefits of the high road, which can be measured: productivity, quality of products and costs. Less tangible effects were: knowledge, innovation, technological efficacy and quality of working life (Totterdill et al, 2002).

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions used the concept of 'workplace innovation' as early as the 1990s in relation to the survey 'Employee direct participation in organisational change' (<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/1997/11/feature/eu9711202f.htm>). In 2005 Eurofound organised a seminar on 'Workplace innovation – fostering productivity and QWL' (<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/content/source/eu05013a.htm>). Further attention was paid to workplace innovation in the 'European Company Survey', which featured topics such as working time flexibility, human resources practices (e.g. autonomous teamwork and contractual flexibility), variable pay, workplace social dialogue and company performance (Eurofound, 2010), and more in-depth studies on 'teamwork and performance' (Eurofound, 2007) and functional flexibility (Eurofound, 2009).

At the beginning of the new millennium, the European Commission launched its Lisbon Agenda (2000). Europe wanted to become the leading knowledge economy of the world and set clear goals for the European Employment Strategy (EES). This Agenda showed an interest in new forms of work organisation, in which the Green Paper was instrumental. In 2001, the Commission adopted a

communication titled 'Employment and social policies: a framework for investing in quality' (European Commission, 2001) that provides a broad framework for promoting quality in work. The communication defines a concept of quality in work that includes 10 dimensions specifying relevant indicators. The communication was followed by a review of the progress in improving the quality of work in the EU (European Commission, 2003). The communications on job quality stress the importance of synergies and the other main objectives of the European Employment Strategy. This strategy focused on more and better jobs in the Member States.

The European Commission saw to it that this interest in QWL was supported by empirical surveys such as the Labour Force Survey (LFS).<sup>7</sup> The concept of job quality for research goals has since been further elaborated (European Commission, 2008b).

The European Commission also provided funding for ESF programmes to support initiatives aimed at QWL and new forms of work organisations. In 2007 an ESF programme (DG EMPL) focused on a more flexible labour market (flexicurity strategy), the adaptability of companies, work, participation, social inclusion and partnerships. One of the main areas proposed for investment was the 'design and dissemination of innovative and productive methods of work organisation'. The European Social Fund (ESF) invests in social innovation: more than €2 billion in institutional capacity building; another €2 billion in mutual learning between the Member States 'and a further €1 billion is spent on innovative activities related to new forms of work organisation, better use of employees' skills and resources, productivity improvement, new approaches to lifelong learning and new ways of combating unemployment through entrepreneurship. Overall, however, activity levels are sub-critical and most authorities involved in social innovation activities recognise the need for experimentation and "scaling-up" (European Commission, 2010c, p. 67).

Social partners at the European level also discussed the issue of workplace innovation. The European Economic and Social Committee stressed that in its opinion, 'The idea that quality and social innovations implemented in the workplace have a major impact on business success must be actively promoted'. The EESC urged the Commission to commission further research on the relationship between the quality of working life and productivity, saying 'the Committee believes it would be useful to give emphasis to workplace innovation and new kinds of professional skills and management practices in EU innovation and training initiatives' (European Economic and Social Committee, 2007). Recently the EESC published a second opinion on this topic, saying that:

- although the concept of 'innovative workplaces' is not mentioned in the Commission document, it is at the heart of the EU2020 strategy ... Workplace innovation is used to try and sustainably improve the productivity of organisations, while improving the quality of working life ... The EESC recommends that, in order to improve the balance of the EU2020 strategy, the Commission should launch a pilot project on innovative workplaces as part of the 'Innovation Union' flagship initiative. The main thrust of the project should be improving the quality of working life. The EESC believes that further studies should be initiated without delay on the relationship between the quality of working life, innovativeness and productivity, and that a European index should be introduced describing the quality of working life and its effects on innovativeness and productivity (European Economic and Social Committee, 2011, pp. 1–4).

### 3.3 Decent work: the bottom or the top?

The European Employment Strategy builds on the goal of making Europe the leading knowledge economy in the world. In this sense, the policy initiatives formulate the 'high end' of quality of working life in Europe. A new form of work organisation is seen as instrumental to this goal. But there are also initiatives at the European level that set 'bottom limits' to quality of working life. Such initiatives are a

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<sup>7</sup> In the development of these new instruments, much attention was directed at the way Eurofound collected information about working conditions in the whole of Europe. The European Working Conditions Survey (1992, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2010) remains the main source of information about contracts, OSH risks, working time, health, etc.

reaction to actions by the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation. In 2000, 189 world leaders at the United Nations Millennium Summit promised the 'end of poverty by 2015' and signed the Millennium Declaration agreeing to meet the 'Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)'. The MDGs make up an eight-point roadmap with measurable targets and clear deadlines for improving the lives of the world's poorest people. World leaders have agreed to achieve the MDGs by 2015 (<http://www.endpoverty2015.org>).

The ILO translated these goals into the Decent Work Programme (International Labour Organisation, 2005) emphasising the importance of making decent work a strategic international goal and promoting fair globalisation. Based on the analyses of the consequences of globalisation for impoverished people the ILO underlined work as an instrument to alleviate poverty and confirmed the organisation's role in helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including cutting world poverty in half by 2015. The ILO World Commission for the Social Dimension of Globalisation was initiated to respond to the needs of people as they cope with the unprecedented changes that globalisation has brought to their lives, their families, and the societies in which they live. The commission studied the various facets of globalisation, the diversity of public perceptions of the process, and its implications for economic and social progress. It searched for innovative ways of combining economic, social and environmental objectives, based on worldwide expertise. It has made its recommendations seeking to build upon a broad understanding among all key actors. The commission's final report was released on 24 February 2004.

At the UN World Summit in 2005, 150 global leaders agreed to place full and productive employment and 'decent work' as a central objective of relevant national and international policies, spelling out the central role of decent work in development strategies and poverty reduction. In this context, the promotion of decent work around the globe has become a central issue. The wide, holistic and internationally endorsed concept of decent work requires an integrated approach of four pillars:

1. Productive and freely chosen work
2. Rights at work including core labour standards
3. Social protection
4. Social dialogue.

On top of this it also includes the horizontal objective of gender equality, which should feature in each of the four pillars. No mention is made of work organisation.

The Decent Work Agenda from the ILO has been strongly promoted by the European Commission, as it provides an appropriate framework for promoting the European social acquis on the international stage. 'Decent work' refers to opportunities for women and men to obtain work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. According to the ILO, decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace, social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decent\\_work](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decent_work)). The Decent Work Agenda thus serves as a staging post for promoting elements of the European Social Model and the EU 2020 Strategy in a universal context.

The European Commission has been keen to develop initiatives related to the promotion of the social dimension of globalisation and the Decent Work Agenda (European Commission, 2006). These contributed to the mobilisation of the international community on these issues via an integrated strategy incorporating both EU internal and external policies (such as development, external cooperation, trade, enlargement and bilateral and multilateral external relations) to promote decent work. A follow-up of this communication was released in 2008 (*Report on the EU contribution to the promotion of decent work in the world*) (European Commission, 2008a). As part of the Renewed Social Agenda 'Opportunities, Access and Solidarity', the report placed a strong emphasis on the EC's contribution to strengthening the social dimension of globalisation. It reaffirmed its commitment to promoting the internationally agreed Decent Work Agenda, through cooperation with the ILO and other partners, and the mobilisation of all relevant policies.

The Decent Work programme developed by ILO and UN is essentially a minimalist approach to the EC's quality at work typology.

### 3.4 Social innovation as an integrating concept

Since 2008 the term ‘social innovation’ has been used increasingly amongst European policymakers, seeping through, directly, into documents related to the European Social Fund (ESF) and the EQUAL initiative or, indirectly, into social aspects of innovation and change. While the G8/20 and the ILO continued to pay more attention to social aspects of change and decent work, without mention of the term social innovation, the EU started activities related to social innovation but with less reference to workplace development.

In November 2008, the EU Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) organised a European meeting on social innovation and transnational cooperation. The end of the EQUAL initiative was celebrated at the Social Innovation International Conference in December 2008. The event, entitled ‘Powering a New Future’, not only looked back on eight years of EQUAL activities; it also began a debate on the future of social innovation within the EU, as a start-up for the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. Among the topics were empowerment, gender equality, diversity and innovation in the workplace and community. In January 2009, the European Commission’s Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) organised a workshop on social innovation, involving several Directorates-General (namely Employment (EMPL), Enterprise and Industry (ENTR), Regional Policy (REGIO), Research and Technical Development (RTD), Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI), Education and Culture (EAC), Health and Consumer Protection (SANCO) and Information Society (INFOS)). Since then an argument has developed to include social innovation more prominently in the Europe 2020 framework. In line with exploring policy options in this realm another workshop and roundtable discussion, entitled ‘Social innovation mobilising resources and people’, was held in March 2010 in Brussels, instrumental to the preparation of the forthcoming European Social Fund (ESF) 2013–2020 programme.

A new step in workplace innovation was taken with the Innovation Union initiative undertaken by the European Commission in 2010. In the main document of EU2020 (European Commission, 2010a) social innovation and workplace innovation are not included, which some argued was a missed opportunity, ‘a missing dimension’ (Totterdill, 2010). Fortunately, social innovation and related concepts are mentioned in the Flagship Initiatives that elaborate on the main strategy. The Flagship Initiative ‘Innovation Union’ stresses ‘the increasing importance of non-technological innovation, especially in the burgeoning service sector’, such as organisational innovation and the introduction of new business models, marketing strategies, service delivery modes, etc. The document recalls the historical importance of “organisational innovation” in the manufacturing sector involving changes in the way work flows and production have been organised’ (European Commission, 2010c, pp. 28–29), and goes on to say that:

- Social innovation is of particular importance for policy development because of the important role that governments are expected to play in the resolution of societal problems. Social innovations can be defined in terms of both ends (new solutions to societal problems) and means (the new forms of social organisation needed to ensure their delivery) (European Commission, 2010c, p. 29).
- Social innovations address a social demand or need (e.g. care for the elderly), contribute to addressing a societal challenge (ageing society) and, through their process dimension (e.g. the active engagement of the elderly; the provision of new services) they contribute to reshaping society in the direction of participation, empowerment and learning. This implies that social innovation requires significant changes in behaviour at many levels (European Commission, 2010c, pp. 28–29).
- Europe also lacks a strong human resource base with the right mixture of skills to innovate. Skill sets need to be adapted to foster creativity, entrepreneurship and other transversal skills (‘T-skills’) such as teamwork, risk-taking and project management, all of which are essential for the generation, development, commercialisation and diffusion of innovation. The availability of these specific skills is essential in order to increase innovation performance of individuals, to improve the competence of private and public organisations, to facilitate knowledge and technology transfer, and thus to improve the overall competitiveness and the attractiveness of Europe as a region (European Commission, 2010c, p. 34).

There is also support for workplace innovation in another important and recent international document, 'The OECD innovation strategy', which is the culmination of a three-year multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder effort. The OECD emphasises that 'empowering people to innovate' and 'fostering innovative workplaces' is important for creativity, innovation and productivity. Although these topics are the subject of firms' decisions, 'governments may be able to shape national institutions to support higher levels of employee learning and training in the workplace' (OECD, 2010a, pp. 74–80). The relationship between types of work organisation and organisational learning to foster innovative workplaces is further elaborated by the OECD and partners, making use of the data of the European Working Conditions Survey of Eurofound, Dublin (OECD, 2010b).

'Innovative workplaces' can be considered as equivalent of 'workplace innovation'. Referring to Table 1 in Chapter 2, it fits into the 'social innovation of work and employment' at the macro level, although the OECD, since the OECD LEED Programme in 2000, available at: (<http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/forum/socialinnovations>), stresses that social innovation, which is meant to solve complex societal problems, is distinct from economic innovation. Contrary to this view, in the proposed definition in this report the two can go together perfectly. In the forthcoming publication of the OECD, 'Innovation to address social challenges', social innovation is said to refer to new strategies, concepts, ideas and organisations that meet social needs of all kinds, from working conditions and education to community development and health. Social innovation can take place within the government, within companies or within the non-profit sector, according to a draft version of the publication.

In other words, the OECD embraces a broad definition of social innovation. It is worth mentioning, however, that in other areas of European policymaking the debate on innovation is shifting towards workplace development as well, and there are documents at the EU level where these or related concepts do appear. Preparing the next financial framework for the ESF an ad hoc expert group recommended in June 2010 'that social innovation should be enhanced in the next programme period in employment and active inclusion politics' (ESF Committee, 2010). And in the draft 'Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States' we find the following text in proposed guideline 7:

- Work–life balance policies with the provision of affordable care and innovation in work organisation should be geared to raising employment rates, particularly among youth, older workers and women, in particular to retain highly skilled women in scientific and technical fields. Member States should also remove barriers to labour market entry for newcomers, support self-employment and job creation in areas including green employment and care and promote social innovation (European Commission, 2010b, p. 8).

Guideline 8 is mainly on developing a skilled workforce: 'Investment in human resource development, up-skilling and participation in lifelong learning schemes should be promoted through joint financial contributions from governments, individuals and employers' (European Commission, 2010b, p. 9). Unfortunately 'promoting job quality' is only mentioned in the title of guideline 8. Finally, some additional texts have been proposed by the Employment Committee on the guidelines, including these citations: 'Together with the social partners, adequate attention should also be paid to internal flexicurity at the work place' and 'The quality of jobs and employment conditions should be addressed' (Council of the European Union, 2010, p.12). A recent literature study on social innovation even states that a paradigm shift in innovation is becoming manifest: as economic and technological innovation are proving to be insufficient in effectively combating broad societal issues, it is necessary to turn to social innovation, including the renewal of workplaces (Howaldt and Schwarz, 2010).

In conclusion, one can say that despite the use of broad concepts of social innovation in many of the EC policy documents and related studies, it can be discerned that the way has been paved for workplace innovation as well.<sup>8</sup> In the opinion upheld in this study, workplace innovation is an appropriate concept

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<sup>8</sup> The launch event of the 'Social Innovation Europe' initiative, which was held on 16 and 17 March 2011 in Brussels – an initiative supported by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry which aims to become a meeting place for social innovators, entrepreneurs, non-profit organisations and policymakers in Europe – explicitly put 'workplace innovation' on the agenda in a session on 'targets of social innovation'.

that covers all these activities on innovation related to work, organisation and employment at the level of organisations.

### 3.5 Workplace innovation reinforces OSH policy

This approach of analysing the contribution of OSH to other policy fields promises more than just cost savings to organisations and society by decreasing absenteeism, occupational injuries and diseases. In the Community Strategy 2007–2012 on health and safety at work ‘improving quality and productivity at work’ is indeed mentioned, but productivity in this document refers only to cost saving. The same holds for economic incentive systems in Europe to reduce accidents, absenteeism and sick pay (EU-OSHA, 2010b). Although cost saving remains important, the OSH community has a much stronger case than one based merely on financial considerations. Even in situations with low absenteeism a better quality of working life can contribute to performance and innovation, as explained in the theoretical part of Chapter 2. OSH is a major factor in enhancing economic and human performance; therefore, social innovation as workplace innovation is expected to improve both productivity and OSH performance goals.

## 4 National programmes and initiatives on workplace innovation

### 4.1 Overview

An increasing number of countries are supporting or developing national programmes to promote workplace innovation. This is happening not only in Europe, but also in other parts of the world, in countries as diverse as Canada, Singapore and South Korea (Pot, 2011). This section provides an overview of the national programmes across Europe that have been set up specifically to support the introduction of workplace innovation interventions. The search for national programmes also identified that there were other initiatives taking place that promote workplace innovation. Whilst their respective governments do not fund these initiatives directly, they still offer organisations a range of advice and practical solutions to make changes to their working practices. These initiatives have been included to provide a comprehensive overview of the activities being undertaken within the EU Member States to make their workplaces more competitive. Some of these programmes and initiatives are promoted as a means of creating ‘high performing workplaces’ or ‘working smarter’ rather than creating innovative workplace practices. These terms seem to have more appeal for the business community than either ‘social innovation’ or ‘workplace innovation’, particularly in Eastern Europe, where the term ‘social innovation’ is more usually associated with ‘social protection’ issues. Details of all the programmes and initiatives identified in the review can be found in Annex 2.

### 4.2 Programme approaches to social innovation in the workplace

Using the model of workplace innovation described in Chapter 3, the content of the programmes and initiatives to promote ‘workplace innovation’ or social innovation in the workplace was analysed to see how they mapped against work organisation, labour relations and network relations. The programmes and initiatives were also studied for evidence that they had been explicitly set up to improve OSH performance as well as for any indirect evidence of OSH performance improvement.

Due to constraints within the project not all the EU Member States could be examined, but the researchers have been able to investigate a significant number. Table 2, ‘National programmes and related activities’ shows the countries investigated and the ticks represent the approaches to workplace innovation supported by the content of the programmes and initiatives in each of those countries. The gaps indicate that either no programmes or initiatives were found during the search or where they were found the content of the programmes or initiatives does not match the aims and aspirations of a workplace innovation approach.

A number of programmes and initiatives were identified that help bring businesses together to share good practice. This appears to be a common approach across the programmes. There are a number of formal and informal arrangements that bring business people together from different sectors. For instance, in Malta the Chamber of Commerce has introduced 'Linking Enterprise', which brings small and medium-sized businesses together to provide them with an opportunity to benchmark their performance against others and to learn new ways in which they can enhance their business processes. The information about this initiative does not indicate whether it has been set up to meet the EU agenda on workplace innovation but it does have compatible aims and aspirations to improve the competitiveness of Maltese businesses. Similarly in France the 'Innov'acteurs' programme provides companies with an opportunity to share and develop good practice. These two initiatives both have a central point of contact or a hub responsible for driving the agenda forward and ensuring it meets the needs of its members.

What this mapping exercise has highlighted is how few if any of the programmes or initiatives are designed or contain elements to improve OSH performance. The countries with programmes with explicit motives to improve OSH performance include Belgium, which concentrates on improving work-life balance, adapting job content to make better jobs and improving work conditions to prevent stress. Finland's programmes are interested in improving quality of working life and ensuring mental well-being whilst in Germany there are a range of healthy workplace initiatives. In other countries, the promotion material for some of the programmes and initiatives includes examples of experiences of organisations that appear to suggest that they have indirectly experienced improvements to their OSH performance through introducing innovative workplace practices, engaging and consulting their workers and networking with other organisations. This finding would appear to support the conclusion reached by Pot and Koningsveld (2009a) that OSH is no longer seen as a cost factor, but as a benefit factor – although there is a need for further evaluation of the programmes and initiatives and their benefits.

**Table 2: National programmes and related activities**

Country	National programme and activities	Work organisation	Labour relations	Network relations	Implicit OSH performance	Explicit OSH performance
	Flanders Synergy – Innovatie van werk en organisatie (Innovation of work and organisation)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No evidence of national programmes/strategies found					
	Public Employment Services (PES)					
	Inovace (Innovation), Enterprises and Innovations Programme					
	The Workplace Innovation Fund	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Tykes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Innov'acteurs, ANACT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Initiative Gesundheit und Arbeit (IGA)					
	Working_Learning_Developing Skills (WLDS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	INQA – Die Initiative für eine Neue Qualität in der Arbeit					
	No evidence of national programmes/strategies					
	Some evidence of activity			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

Country	National programme and activities	Work organisation	Labour relations	Network relations	Implicit OSH performance	Explicit OSH performance
	Malta Chamber of Commerce – Linking Enterprise			☑		
	No evidence of national programmes found					
	No evidence of national programmes found					
	National Productivity and Competiveness Improvement Programme					
	'Family Friendly Company' initiative					
	Working Life	☑	☑	☑	☑	
	Netherlands Centre for Social Innovation					
	ESF2 Action E Social Innovation MyCompany2.0	☑	☑	☑	☑	
	Workplace Innovation					
	ACAS Model Workplace	☑	☑	☑	☑	
	Investors in People (IIP)					

## 5 How organisations use workplace innovation – A case study approach

### 5.1 Overview

This section looks at 11 examples of workplace innovation practices that have been adopted by organisations in the EU to improve performance. Detailed descriptions of these 11 examples can be found in Annex 3. The respective examples were collected from the available material and selected on the basis of references to workplace innovation interventions and OSH. The authors are aware that this search strategy is likely to have generated some biasing effects particularly as eastern and southern European countries are not fully represented. In addition to this selection bias, this selection is also subject to a 'publication bias', in that only successful interventions tend to be described and published (see for example Neumann et al, 2010).

The examples (Annex 3) comprise 11 interventions from seven EU Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom). It was not possible, with the resources available, to conduct an exhaustive and complete compilation of innovative and evidence-based preventative examples. These examples should therefore be viewed as illustrations of how innovative workplace practices are being used within these companies and are by no means representative.

Since the examples are heterogeneous and often do not include exhaustive information on the kind of interventions and the drivers for these interventions, the material is rather anecdotal and does not allow for conclusions to be drawn about their potential transferability within other sectors or countries. Any discussion on best practices is made difficult by their context-dependent and system-dependent nature (Alasoini, 2009). More investigation is required to discover and describe how interventions worked (their implementation process) as well as why they worked (Egan et al, 2009; Nielsen et al, 2010). Although it is not mentioned explicitly in all the examples, the final aim of an intervention is an improvement in performance, whether it is OSH-related performance, organisational performance or human performance.



## 5.2 Effects of workplace interventions

From these examples we can distinguish four types of improved performance during and after an intervention: organisational performance, human performance, OSH performance and societal performance. Table 3 provides an overview of the different enterprises from the case studies and the nature of the intervention effects.

**Table 3: Overview of case studies and the nature of their effect**

	Nature of effect	Project (Company)	Country
	More effective processes	Grontmij Industry	Belgium
	More effective use of time	Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd	Ireland
	Better productivity	Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd	Ireland
		Gedeon Richter Group	Hungary
	Greater business flexibility	Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd	Ireland
	Better quality of processes	MCA Renault	France
	Maintained (economic) performance	MCA Renault	France
	Improved quality of products	HeidelbergCement Group	Romania
		Brent Council	United Kingdom
<b>Organisational performance</b>	Increased commitment and motivation of staff	AMEY	United Kingdom
		KCM Plovdiv	Bulgaria
	Reduced costs for medical care	KCM Plovdiv	Bulgaria
	Better economic results	Grontmij Industry	Belgium
		Gedeon Richter Group	Hungary
KCM Plovdiv		Bulgaria	
Reduced absenteeism	Valéo Reims	France	
	AMEY	United Kingdom	
	Brent Council	United Kingdom	
<b>Human</b>	Increased control capacity of	Tyco Electronics	Belgium

	Nature of effect	Project (Company)	Country
<b>performance</b>	teams, self-managing teams	Grontmij Industry	Belgium
		Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd	Ireland
	Better collaboration and relations	Tyco Electronics	Belgium
		HeidelbergCement Group	Romania
		Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd	Ireland
	Improved knowledge sharing	Grontmij Industry	Belgium
	Better worker involvement	Gedeon Richter Group	Hungary
		Tegral Metal Forming	Ireland
	Safer work behaviour	HeidelbergCement Group	Romania
		Gedeon Richter Group	Hungary
	Increased worker responsibility	Gedeon Richter Group	Hungary
		KCM Plovdiv	Bulgaria
	Healthier employees	Valéo Reims	France
		AMEY	United Kingdom
	Reduction of absenteeism	Tyco Electronics	Belgium
		Valéo Reims	France
		Brent Council	United Kingdom
		KCM Plovdiv	Bulgaria
	Closer to the client, better communication and transparency with client	Grontmij Industry	Belgium
	<b>Quality of working Life/OSH Performance</b>	Healthier workplaces	KCM Plovdiv
Brent Council			United Kingdom
Ergonomically improved workplaces		MCA Renault	France
		Valéo Reims	
Reduction of OSH risks, safer workplaces	Gedeon Richter Group	Hungary	

	Nature of effect	Project (Company)	Country
	Reduction of occupational accidents	HeidelbergCement Group	Romania
	Improved working conditions	MCA Renault	France
	Improved 'safety culture'	Gedeon Richter Group	Hungary
	Reduction of overtime	Tegral Metal Forming	Ireland
	Improved work organisation	HeidelbergCement Group	Romania
<b>Societal performance</b>	Physical rehabilitation of employees	KCM Plovdiv	Bulgaria
	Improved community relations	Gedeon Richter Group	Hungary
	Better protection of environment	Gedeon Richter Group	Hungary
	Better employment security	Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd	Ireland

### 5.3 Intervention measures

In Chapter 2.4 three different types, content dimensions or interventional measures linked to social innovation were distinguished: work organisation, labour relations and network relations.

Organisations that engage in workplace innovation seem to use a combination of different types of interventions to reach their aim. Workplace innovation is used at the same time as a means (short term) as well as an outcome (long term). Most case studies include more than one interventional measure linked to workplace innovation. It is often unclear from the case descriptions whether the workplace innovation measure is maintained after the conclusion of a project.

### 5.4 Labour relations and work organisation

Improvement of labour relations during or after the process seems to accompany all interventions and especially the ones targeted at improved work organisation. This is shown for example in the endeavour to increase the motivation of staff by:

- providing employees with regular health check-ups (KCM S.A. Plovdiv – Bulgaria);
- maintaining motivation by taking up specific needs of the workforce (ageing workers) (MCA Renault – France);
- providing fair and equal opportunities (AMEY – United Kingdom);
- offering profit sharing and productivity agreements (Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd – Ireland);
- improving learning opportunities (HeidelbergCement Group – Romania; AMEY – United Kingdom);
- developing worker involvement by including them in company decisions (Gedeon Richter Group – Hungary; HeidelbergCement Group – Romania; AMEY – United Kingdom);
- showing trust in employees by implementing self-managed teams (Tyco Belgium; Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd – Ireland);
- improving relations between employees (Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd – Ireland).

Talent development and management of competences (Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd – Ireland, Grontmij Industry – Belgium) and performance appraisal (Brent Council and AMEY – United Kingdom) are also used to improve labour relations.

During the process of implementing workplace innovative measures considerable attention is paid to ways of engaging the employees in order to create wide organisational support for the innovation. This is done via all sorts of participative processes and structures, such as:

- the inclusion of employees (MCA-Renault – France) or worker representatives (Tyco – Belgium);
- setting up partnership forums including unions, management, joint task teams (Tegral Metal Forming – Ireland);
- using worker questionnaire surveys (Tyco – Belgium; Valeo Reims – France; MCA-Renault – France);
- setting up an Observatory with representatives from workers and management (MCA – Renault – France);
- giving feedback to management (AMEY – United Kingdom);
- using incentives and awards to increase motivation (HeidelbergCement Group – Romania).

Work organisation practices include flexible working, arrangements with regard to working time (Tegral Metal Forming – Ireland; Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd – Ireland), self-managed teams and knowledge sharing (Grontmij Industry – Belgium), enhancing control over work (Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd – Ireland), or the development of an ‘Enterprise resource planning system’ (Optimisation of efficiency of internal processes, reduction of overtime and introduction of work flexibility – Tegral Metal Forming – Ireland).

Innovative measures are taken to improve OSH performance and to provide a healthier workplace for employees. Most of the interventions also target mainly the improvement of labour relations and a change in behaviour of employees, for example by:

- increasing participation and motivation (Tegral Metal Forming – Ireland; Gedeon Richter Group – Hungary; MCA-Renault – France);
- improving ownership (Brent Council – United Kingdom);
- taking stock of workers’ needs (MCA-Renault – France);
- performance appraisal and incentives (Brent Council – United Kingdom; HeidelbergCement Group – Romania);
- learning and development (HeidelbergCement Group – Romania);
- self-assumed safety behaviour by increasing motivation instead of controlling safety behaviour (HeidelbergCement Group – Romania).

In some cases work organisation measures are taken, such as improving work–life balance via flexible working, diversity measures (Brent Council – United Kingdom), improved learning opportunities, or team working (HeidelbergCement Group – Romania).

## 5.5 External relations

Interventions are in some cases directly driven by the aim of improving external relations with the client. This is the case with Grontmij Industry (Belgium). The project is targeted towards a better relationship with the client because of a perceived need from the client’s side and a perceived gap in work organisation processes that prevent the company from reacting adequately to new challenges.

Few cases mention proactive anticipation of new needs. A case that is more proactive in creating new approaches and is paying attention to relations with all stakeholders (clients, suppliers, subcontractors, distributors and the community) is the case of Gedeon Richter (Hungary), which actively looks for innovative ways to interact with the community.

It is unclear from most of the descriptions whether companies seek external knowledge to set up their interventions. The two Belgian cases are part of the Flanders Synergy project aiming at giving companies the opportunity to network and exchange visions and knowledge with other companies. In the case of Tegral Metal Forming in Ireland an external facilitator was used at the beginning to start up the process, and withdrew as management became more confident to take over the process. Since the company is part of a national network, they also relied on external knowledge from other companies involved in the workforce innovation programme. Based on this knowledge they came up with Key Performance Indicators targeting innovation work organisation processes to improve the relations with the customer (customer complaints and delivery time).

## 5.6 Drivers for workplace innovation

A recent Dutch study (Oeij et al, 2010a) includes the three aforementioned content dimensions and distinguishes four types of interventions that are linked to workplace innovation as a means to accomplish better organisational performance. This division provides some insight into what the drivers for workplace innovation can be, and includes economic as well as human and social aspects. The four intervention types are:

1. Strategic orientation: in order to be innovative and competitive, organisations need to react to developments in their environment such as client and competitor behaviour, new technological developments and legislation, etc. This requires purchasing of new knowledge from outside, networking and cooperation with external partners.
2. Organising smarter: the ability of the company to invent new combinations of organisation, staff deployment and technical applications with a clear focus on the renewal or improvement of work processes.
3. Flexible work: increasing flexibility of work through the increasing of employability of the staff, facilitating flexible working time and/or contracts, self-rostering, etc. with attention to individual arrangements on working time, work performance, personal development and flexible employment.
4. Product-market improvement: innovation by searching for new markets and clients, and the improvement of products and services.

Whilst the strategic orientation and product-market improvement are focused on external conditions and developments in the direct environment of the company and how to respond to these, organising smarter and flexible work tends to focus on internal organisational issues.

The drivers for workplace innovation mentioned in the cases can be characterised according to these four aspects, namely strategic orientation, organising smarter, flexible work, and product-market improvement. It seems that most of the cases collected in this report are motivated by a drive for innovation on the level of the internal organisation after carrying out a needs analysis and in order to maintain its competitiveness in a changing market (Oeij et al, 2010a).

Only one case example explicitly mentions the changing relationship with the client and the need for more global solutions as a reason for social innovation (Grontmij Industry – Belgium). This might be due to the biasing effect of selection of the examples linking workplace innovation interventions and OSH. The selected examples are not primarily focused on the market, service/product and client, but on the improvement of organisational processes (Oeij et al, 2010a).



## 6 Can workplace innovation and improved OSH performance be measured?

The different aspects of workplace innovation have been outlined in previous chapters, and although work has been carried out that links workplace innovation with improvements in the quality of working life (Pot, 2011), few studies have been identified that evaluate the effectiveness of workplace innovation in relation to OSH performance. The areas of OSH performance that are likely candidates to share common ground with workplace innovation include work organisation, stress and well-being.

Some of the reasons for the lack of research into the link between workplace innovation and OSH performance may in part be attributed to the difficulties in agreeing a set of indicators that measure the effectiveness or otherwise of workplace innovation. The 2010 OECD paper 'Measuring Innovation: A New Perspective' discussed the challenges that this presents and the fact that the elements that should be included within the domain of workplace innovation had yet to be agreed. Although the MEADOW<sup>9</sup> Guidelines (2010) went some way towards providing 'a measurement framework for collecting and interpreting internationally harmonized data on organisational change and its economic and social impacts on both private and public sector organisations' the OECD did not come to an agreement on a set of measurable indicators. In 2011 The OECD PIACC (Programme for the International Assessment for Adult Competencies) carried out a survey across a series of EU Member States as well as non-EU countries such as Canada, Chile, Japan, Korea, the Russian Federation and the USA. The survey was designed to identify a way of measuring 'skills for innovation in the workplace', thus linking 'skills in the workplace' with innovation outcomes. Researchers in the Netherlands have investigated workplace innovation (formerly referred to as social innovation) using a set of agreed indicators and, since 2009, the Netherlands Employer Work Survey (NEWS) has systematically collected data on work and employment in approximately 5,000 profit and non-profit organisations in the Netherlands. The NEWS uses a construct of workplace innovation that includes four sub-constructs: strategic orientation, flexible work, smart organising and product-market improvement. Thus far, findings indicate that workplace innovation has a positive effect on organisational performance but that it has no effect on sickness absence, possibly because sickness absence is a multifaceted phenomenon (Oeij et al, 2010a, 2010b). In a study of 650 small and medium-sized enterprises (van der Hauw et al, 2009) it was found that companies with workplace innovation projects achieve higher levels of productivity and financial gain compared to companies that do not implement these kinds of projects. However, outcomes related to quality of working life have not been measured.

Overall, this suggests that there is still much work to be done before workplace innovation and improved OSH performance can be measured. However, based on current understanding it is likely that such measures may include:

- Workplace innovation: work organisation, HRM, work relations, innovation.
- QWL effects: job autonomy, participation in decision-making, development of skills and competencies, reduction of stress risks, less physical workload, work-life balance.
- Psychosocial effects: well-being.
- Organisational performance: staff engagement, labour productivity, innovative culture, innovative behaviour.

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<sup>9</sup> MEADOW stands for 'Measuring the dynamics of organisations and work' and is a coordinated action funded by the European Commission under Priority Seven.





## 7 Conclusions

OSH policy is about creating and maintaining 'healthy and productive jobs' and about interventions in the workplace to reduce health and safety risks, aiming at a reduction of occupational diseases, accidents, injuries and sick leave, and an increase in well-being. Workplace innovation aims at 'organisational performance and quality of working life' through the implementation of new and combined interventions in the fields of work organisation, human resource management and work relations, aiming at better organisational performance and quality of working life. Compared to workplace innovation 'non-technological innovation' also covers dynamic management, new business and marketing models and external collaboration. Although these extra interventions may have important effects on the innovativeness of the organisation they cannot be expected to affect OSH performance. The concept of non-technological innovation is not elaborated on in the context of this report.

Within OSH policy the concept of 'productivity' is not very well defined, and mainly refers to productivity loss and the costs of absenteeism. As far as workplace innovation is concerned, the concept of productivity also implies the enhancement of productivity and organisational performance and covers financial indicators and innovativeness as well. However, the concept of quality of working life is not clearly defined.

Although the origins of these policies may differ, there is an overlap of the supporting theories, interventions and effects. Awareness of this overlap makes it possible that OSH policy and workplace innovation could reinforce each other. This is made even more likely because both policies face a number of societal challenges that have to be addressed, such as 'sustainable employment' and the ageing and shrinking workforce.

Comparing 'OSH policy' and 'workplace innovation', the overlap in interventions mainly concerns work organisation. The overlap in effects can be found in 'well-being' (learning opportunities, reduction of stress risks, participation, work-life balance) and sometimes physical workload (easier handling, lifting, etc.). The theoretical foundation of the relation between work organisation and well-being is the same in both definitions (e.g. 'job demand-control model', modern sociotechnology). Workplace innovation is not directed at and cannot be expected to have direct effects on diseases, injuries, absenteeism and accidents – although it might help indirectly. The importance of work organisation in OSH management can also be found in the data of EU-OSHA's European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (EU-OSHA, 2010a). The survey results reveal that while most of the measures taken to follow up risk assessments focus on more traditional issues (equipment, work environment and training), a significant proportion are also directed at work organisation issues, which could suggest an increasing concern with new and emerging risks typical of the modern work environment.

Examples of work organisation interventions are: structure of the division of labour, job content, decision latitude, skill discretion, teamwork, cooperation, (flexible) working times, work location and supporting ICT tools and accompanying human resource management measures (skills and competences, terms of employment).

### **Research findings**

The sample of programme approaches to workplace innovation revealed that some of their activities focused on quality of working life, in particular well-being (learning opportunities, reduction of stress risks, participation, work-life balance) Examples of this can be found in the programme examples from Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and the United Kingdom. Some programmes only emphasised organisational performance, such as in North-Rhine Westphalia (Germany) and Ireland (although Ireland uses employee turnover as an indicator for well-being). OSH performance indicators such as diseases, injuries, absenteeism and accidents were not part of any programme, as had been expected.

Research into the effects of recent workplace innovation programmes has been very limited until now. Only in Finland, the Netherlands and Ireland have systematic surveys have been conducted. Of these investigations only Finland included quality of working life, in particular well-being. The evaluation research in the Netherlands and Ireland shows that social innovative organisations have significantly better organisational performances. The Finnish evaluation shows that simultaneous improvement of quality of working life and organisational performance can be achieved, in particular if workplace

innovations are prepared and implemented with the participation of employees or initiated by employees (employee-driven innovation). Projects that did not achieve either of these goals appeared to be top-down. Besides these surveys there is support for the idea of better jobs and performance in many case studies. This is in line with findings from the ESENER 2009 survey. Managers recognise that employee participation is a key success factor both for OSH and for psychosocial risk management and, therefore, the role of the social partners remains crucial for the implementation of effective measures. Employee participation, whether formal (through works council or shop floor trade union) or informal (direct involvement, job autonomy), is associated with better quality management of health and safety in general and psychosocial risks in particular. However, this potential win-win situation does not lead to mass implementation. Stakeholders such as employers and trade unions have to deal with a number of dilemmas such as short-term versus long-term orientation, exploitation versus exploration, routine versus creativity, control versus trust, centralisation versus decentralisation, efficiency versus employment, and flexibility versus security.

There is hardly any workplace innovation research that uses other OSH performance indicators, such as sick leave, as a dependent variable. Regarding our clarification of concepts, this is according to our expectations. This research shows little or no evidence of a direct link between workplace innovation and absenteeism.

Research in Finland and the Netherlands indicates that the existence of a national programme (in the case of Finland, led by the government) or national centre (Netherlands: led by social partners) is helpful to generate activities in the field of workplace innovation. The best condition seems to be collaboration between government, social partners and research institutes. National programmes on workplace innovation can be found in the Nordic and some western European Member States. The same goes for formalised procedures on related topics, as psychosocial risk management is also limited to the same areas in Europe. ESENER data show that more formalised procedures to manage psychosocial risks appear widespread in only a few countries, such as Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries.

## 8 Directions for policymakers

Towards the end of the review the authors discussed what conclusions they reached from a review of the available literature that might guide future research in the area of workplace innovation and OSH performance. These conclusions have been considered from different perspectives to guide future researchers, EU-OSHA, policymakers and organisations interested in workplace innovation and OSH performance.

### *From a research perspective*

The review has highlighted the need for more research, particularly case study evidence, into the effects of workplace innovation programmes, especially with regard to the impact on the QWL and employee well-being. From a methodological point of view a combination of surveys and robust case studies is preferable. Further research is required to understand the barriers organisations face when considering workplace innovations and whether there are effective combinations of interventions. It might be helpful for future researchers to consider the question, ‘Which innovative workplace interventions are appropriate to achieve simultaneous improvement of organisational performance and employee well-being?’

### *For EU-OSHA*

EU-OSHA should initiate research to establish a uniform definition of workplace innovation or stimulate the European Commission and Member States to initiate research into workplace innovation.

To accumulate a body of knowledge this research should be connected to concepts, variables and analyses in, and results from, surveys such as EU-OSHA’s ESENER and Eurofound’s European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) and European Company Survey (ECS). Acquiring data at an organisational and individual level would be an extra challenge.

EU-OSHA could build up and disseminate good examples of combined effects of OSH policy and workplace innovation.

Closer collaboration could also be developed with the PEROSH-group ‘Towards better work and well-being’ and the next opportunity for joint presentations could be the PEROSH-conference on Well-being and Work on 21–23 May 2012 in Manchester, England.

In view of the new campaign on leadership and worker participation as well as into ‘Practical solutions for psychosocial risks’ as the theme for the 2014–2015 edition of the Healthy Workplaces Campaign, EU-OSHA could emphasise in its policies and programmes the mutual benefits of OSH policy and workplace innovation.

### *For policymakers*

Whilst OSH is an understood concept within EU policies, workplace innovation is not. There is confusion about different concepts such as ‘innovative workplaces’, ‘sustainable work systems’, ‘high performing workplaces’, ‘quality of working life’, etc. Consistency in the use of a concept and its definition could help to enhance the policy profile. Looking at the use of concepts in different countries this concept should preferably be labelled ‘workplace innovation’ (the term used in Finland, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the USA and South Korea).

OSH policy and workplace innovation are conducive to the achievement of the EU 2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Combined they are even more so.

Workplace innovation and OSH management can both be considered as part of the initiative Social Innovation Europe that was launched on 16–17 March 2011. The concept of Social Innovation of Work and Employment refers to challenges and solutions on the level of society whereas OSH management and workplace innovation refer to related challenges and solutions on the organisational level.

The EU and Member States can extend their activities and funds (research, European Social Fund etc.) for capacity building (new coalitions), for research into the success factors, obstacles and problems, for

demonstrator projects and for dissemination. A broad deployment of such programmes across the EU should be encouraged, in particular in those countries that have less experience than other countries. This is particularly important as workplace innovation and OSH are rarely mentioned in the new strategies and there is an opportunity to make these concepts into the mainstream through the new programmes.

In the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (2011) a number of recommendations were made that confirm the findings from this state-of-the-art review. Policymakers should consider the recommendations made in the EESC report which include:

- Ensuring there is a clear definition of workplace innovation
- Conducting a pilot project on innovative workplaces as part of the Innovation Union Flagship initiative with the main focus being on improving the quality of working life
- Carrying out further studies on the relationships between quality of working life, innovation and productivity and a European index describing the quality of working life and its effects on innovation and productivity
- Focus on the relations between different partners to promote innovative workplaces to improve the EU's effectiveness and well-being.

### ***For public and private organisations***

Due to increased global competition, the knowledge economy and ageing workforce, organisations should consider what benefits can be gained from workplace innovation. Successful innovations start with management and employee engagement. OSH management can prevent productivity loss, accidents and absenteeism, and promote employee health and well-being. Workplace innovation can enhance productivity, financial results and innovativeness as well as employee well-being. The combination of OSH management and workplace innovation probably provides the best results. However, stakeholders have to deal with a number of obstacles to taking initiatives. Leadership of social partners, management and employee representatives is needed. It is recommended to take a closer look at the successful examples and ask the stakeholders involved how they became successful.

## 9 Annex 1 – Literature search

Details of information sources

Five OSH databases were searched:

- HSELINE
- OSHLINE
- NIOSHTIC
- RILOSH
- CISDOC

Also searched were more specialised databases, including:

- Web of Science
- ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts)
- Wilson Social Sciences
- Business Source Corporate

And specific sites, including:

- <http://www.flanderssynergy.be/>
- <http://www.workinnet.org/>
- [https://www.werk.be/beleid/div/praktijk/toolbox/innovatieve\\_arbeidsorganisatie.htm?SMSESSIO N=NO](https://www.werk.be/beleid/div/praktijk/toolbox/innovatieve_arbeidsorganisatie.htm?SMSESSIO N=NO)
- <http://www.mvovlaanderen.be/zoeken/q/sociale+innovatie>
- <http://www.serv.be>
- <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/content/source/eu05013a.htm>
- <ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu>
- <http://www.fas.se>
- <http://www.vinnova.se>
- [http://www.mol.fi/mol/en/01\\_ministry/05\\_tykes/index.jsp](http://www.mol.fi/mol/en/01_ministry/05_tykes/index.jsp)
- [www.inqa.de](http://www.inqa.de)
- <http://www.ncsi.nl/>
- <http://www.agentschap.szw.nl>
- [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)
- [www.ukwon.co.uk](http://www.ukwon.co.uk)
- [www.theworkfoundation.com](http://www.theworkfoundation.com)
- <http://www.innovateurs.asso.fr/>
- <http://www.anact.fr>
- <http://www.astrees.org>
- <http://metiseurope.eu/>
- [www.ncpp.ie.nws](http://www.ncpp.ie.nws)
- [www.etc.gov.mt](http://www.etc.gov.mt)
- <http://www.flanderssynergy.be/>
- <http://www.workinnet.org/>
- [https://www.werk.be/beleid/div/praktijk/toolbox/innovatieve\\_arbeidsorganisatie.htm?SMSESSIO N=NO](https://www.werk.be/beleid/div/praktijk/toolbox/innovatieve_arbeidsorganisatie.htm?SMSESSIO N=NO)
- <http://www.mvovlaanderen.be/zoeken/q/sociale+innovatie>
- <http://www.serv.be>
- <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/content/source/eu05013a.htm>

The following key words and phrases were used in the searches:

- Sociale innovatie (social innovation)
- Arbeidsorganisatie (work organisation)
- Sociotechniek (sociotechnique)
- Sociale innovatie + MVO  
(maatschappelijk verantwoord  
ondernemen) (social innovation +  
corporate responsibility)
- Activerende arbeidsorganisatie  
(activating work organisation)
- Innovation + sociale
- Innovation + participative
- Mutation + changements  
organisationnels
- Innovation du travail
- Innovation + Conditions du travail
- Innovative workplace practices
- Social Innovation + OSH performance
- Social Innovation + work organisation
- Social Innovation + Labour relations
- Social Innovation + Network relations

## 10 Annex 2 – Programmes and initiatives

### 10.1 Belgium

#### Flanders Synergy – Innovatie van werk en organisatie (Innovation of work and organisation)

Belgium has developed a national programme for the promotion of workplace innovation and development in response to the Lisbon Strategy and continuing under a new pact (PACT 2020). The programme, Flanders Synergy, was launched in 2006 and is a work organisation development programme funded through the European Social Fund Agency (ESF) of Flanders. The programme was seen as an important breakthrough in policy thinking as it is the first time social (work) innovation has been accepted as a target of policy intervention as well as part of a global innovation strategy.

In order for Flanders to boost its economy, workplace innovation was seen as a vehicle to increase sustainable economic growth and to keep more people at work in active and attractive jobs. As part of the long-term vision for the socioeconomic development of the Flemish region, the pact of Vilvoorde (2001) also stressed the importance of improving QWL, work organisation and labour in order to improve the level of workability ('werkbaarheid') by 2010.

The programme for more jobs by the Flemish government (Meerbanenplan, 2006) incorporated financial resources for an ESF call. The Flanders Synergy taskforce was set up with the support of the social partners. Twelve pilot projects were also developed within priority 6 of the Flemish ESF programme.

In 2008, the ESF Call 112 on the Activating Work organisation (2009–2011) was launched, promoting the design and diffusion of methods for an enhanced innovative and productive work organisation (code 63 of the Lisbon Strategy).

On 19 January 2009, the Flemish government and social partners signed a new mission statement: the so-called Pact 2020 is considered to be the successor to the Vilvoorde Pact and is linked to the EU 2020 Strategy.

The purpose of the programme is to promote and initiate organisational innovation in Flemish companies and organisations in order to improve the resilience of organisations and the QWL. A taskforce of experts from universities, government, social partners and companies monitor and support the company projects funded by the ESF in order to develop a competence pool of innovative work organisation, to develop a large network of experienced experts and learning community of workplace development, and to make policy recommendations to the government on the next steps and measures to take. The programme is directed at employers, HR and employees within the private and non-profit sector, small, medium and large-scale enterprises. The programme has an intermediate target group consisting of policymakers, researchers and social partners.

The strategic aims of the Flanders Synergy task force are to:

- Create new models, insights and tools for social innovation;
- Support companies, organisations and institutes in the preparation and implementation of projects;
- Disseminate and promote knowledge on the innovative work organisation to a wide audience.

The Flanders Synergy task force supports companies to undertake the process of organisational change and innovation. As part of this initiative it has developed a 10-day training course for individuals hoping to become a Senior Consultant on innovative work organisation. At the end of the course the trainee is qualified to give advice in projects financed by the competence pool 'innovative work organisation'.

#### **Innovative work organisation 2006–2007:**

The projects funded within this strand addressed the following topics:

- Reduction and prevention of work stress (increasing learning opportunities, autonomy)
- Increase of work–life balance (e.g. via telework)
- Adaptation of the job content depending on the person (e.g. coaching of young workers by older and more experienced workers)

- Adaptation of the working conditions to the person (e.g. shift from heavy to lighter job).

### **Social innovation 2007–2009**

Overall goal: improving QWL (workability, 'werkbaarheid'), organisational performance (productivity, quality, flexibility, innovation, sustainability) and labour relations.

Projects within this strand targeted one or more of the following aims:

- Streamlining of processes: from task-oriented to service-oriented with the aim of improving service to clients
- More control (decision latitude) for workers, e.g. with autonomous teams, self-leadership
- Development of organisational culture that supports human growth and potential.

Projects targeting improved workability ('werkbaarheid') and QWL for older workers are considered an asset.

Target group:

- Employees with special focus on older workers.
- Intermediate target group: HR managers, entrepreneurs, senior management teams, quality managers etc., chosen freely by the project managers.

Expected effects: workers will enjoy better workability ('werkbaarheid') and an improved QWL.

In order to be selected, company-level projects financed by ESF had to include aspects of social innovation such as autonomy for workers, self-managing teams, increased competence development, and employee participation. In the approved project pool, projects focusing on new forms of work organisation as well as projects on work content and the knowledge base of the company are common. Projects targeting the improvement of working conditions and OSH are more rare.

### **Approach to improving OSH performance**

Desired effects of the programme were to improve the workability ('werkbaarheid') by reducing and/or preventing stress, improving work–life balance, and adapting the job content and working conditions to the worker. The 12 pilot projects mostly aimed at new forms of work, organisational change and better performance (see also below). Although the OSH performance was often a secondary result, it was not always explicitly mentioned as a primary project goal in most of the projects.

Aims related to OSH performance included:

- decrease in workload and stress
- decrease in absenteeism
- improvement of working conditions
- better health and well-being
- improvement of well-being
- better work–life balance.

Managers participating in the programme reported that their businesses saw:

- better and more efficient performance
- increase of motivation
- higher productivity
- more job satisfaction
- better QWL
- higher product and service quality.

### **Evaluation**

The projects assessed their results by themselves, which makes it difficult to measure the evaluation of the project results in the larger context of the project. The development of a process of organisational change has brought about a better understanding of workplace innovation in the participating companies and of the possible pitfalls in organising a workplace development project.



The project has also been reviewed by the WORK-IN-NET (<http://www.workinnet.org/>), according to the revised evaluation criteria of Naschold (1994).

## 10.2 Bulgaria

No evidence of national programmes/strategies for setting up social innovation in the workplace.

## 10.3 Cyprus

Whilst there is no evidence of national programmes/strategies for setting up social innovation in the workplace there is some indication that the Public Employment Services (PES) in Cyprus has been working with employers to apply policies to reconcile the balance between work and family life. Some of these policies include flexitime arrangements, which could be recognised as a social innovative practice (Fsadni, 2009).

## 10.4 Czech Republic

### INOVACE (Innovation)

INOVACE (Innovation) is part of the 'Industry and Enterprise' Operational Programme launched by the Ministry of Industry and Trade for the period 2004–2006. Although not directly set up in response to the European social innovation agenda it is supported by EU Structural Funds. The programme aims are to implement advanced management methods, execute significant changes in organisation structure, changes in strategy and/or other non-technical innovation. It was introduced in recognition that the Czech national innovation system was lagging behind other EU Member States. Czech industrial policy is focused on strengthening the qualitative side of the development process that has to shift from competing on the basis of low labour costs to a highly qualified workforce, developing industrial potential whilst increasing productivity and production quality.

There is no specific information about the social innovative approaches this programme has adopted, although the programme has an emphasis on technological innovation. Although INOVACE was not introduced to directly improve OSH performance, it might lead indirectly to improved OSH performance through increased investment in employee training.

### Evaluation

No programme evaluation has been identified.

### 'Enterprises and Innovations' Programme

The 'Enterprises and Innovations' Programme is set up as part of the Convergence objective, and co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) This programme involves Community support in the Czech regions except for Prague and has a total budget of around €3.6 billion and the Community investment through the ERDF amounts to €3.04 billion (representing approximately 12% of the total EU investment in the Czech Republic under the Cohesion policy 2007–2013). Although not directly related to the EU agenda on social innovation under Priority 4 of the Cohesion Policy for 2007–2013, it supports technical innovations (products and processes) and non-technical innovations (organisational and marketing) in enterprises including the development of links with research and development institutions and of internal research and development capabilities. It also focuses on expanding innovative activities within small and medium-sized enterprises and increasing the number of enterprises engaging in their own research and development.

No information was identified about how this programme supports the workplace innovation agenda. The development of cooperation relations with research and development institutions is mentioned as a factor meant to increase the innovative capacity of the undertakings but it is not discussed in relation to workplace innovative practices as a whole. Again, in relation to OSH performance, the programme

was not introduced in order to directly improve that area of activity, although non-technical innovations, such as organisational innovation, may lead indirectly to improved OSH performance.

### Evaluation

No programme evaluation has been identified.

## 10.5 Ireland (Eire)

In Ireland a national programme for setting up social innovation in the workplace has been identified. The Workplace Innovation Fund (WIF) operates under the auspices of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance ([www.ncpp.ie](http://www.ncpp.ie)) and is administered by Enterprise Ireland.

### The Workplace Innovation Fund (WIF)

The Workplace Innovation Fund (WIF) was launched in 2007 and has a budget of €6 million to support workplace innovation in Irish enterprises. The Workplace Innovation Fund is designed to help Irish firms improve their productivity and performance through greater levels of employee involvement and engagement, and supports initiatives that:

- Encourage employee empowerment and participation
- Support workplace learning and creativity
- Improve communications and consultation with employees
- Development management and leadership capacity to facilitate workplace innovation
- Introduce human resource processes to support business and employee needs.
- Promote team working
- Facilitate a collaborative approach to decision-making and problem solving

The programme is designed to meet the needs of individual businesses within the scope of the objectives outlined above. It encourages employee empowerment and participation, the improvement of communications and consultation with employees as well as a collaborative approach to decision-making and problem solving. The programme also encourages collaboration and the sharing of information between businesses (National Centre for Partnership and Performance, 2007). Although there is no explicit information within the programme details of how it can be used to improve OSH performance, the search of the wider literature suggests that there may be some implicit improvements through greater worker participation.

### Evaluation

In an important report on 'high performance work systems' in Ireland, evaluating the results of the NCPP programme, employee well-being was measured by employee turnover only. Nevertheless, the conclusions of this investigation among 132 medium to large companies in the manufacturing and services industries are relevant. The results of HPWS confirm that 'strategic human resources management practices are clearly associated with business performance outcomes, including labour productivity, innovation levels, and employee well-being. The more novel findings relate to the discovery that other factors, including diversity and equality systems, and workplace partner systems, are positively and synergistically associated with significantly higher levels of labour productivity, workforce innovation, and reduced employee turnover' (Flood et al, 2008).

## 10.6 Finland

Finnish innovation and policy has undergone a number of reforms in the past few years. In 2008 a new national Innovation Strategy ([www.innovaatiostrategia.fi](http://www.innovaatiostrategia.fi)) was launched and for the first time it identified organisational development as one of its key themes, stating that organisational development needs to be seen as part of a broader innovation policy put on a par with finance and expert services. It suggested that more funding should be directed towards research development and

innovative activities that take into account new methods of work organisation. It also asked for new techniques to disseminate organisational innovations. In addition, the strategy emphasises the importance of promoting 'quality of working life'. In 2009 the Research and Innovation Council replaced the Science and Technology Policy Council, thus emphasising the importance of a horizontally orientated innovation policy in Finland. With this reform, the government-organised Finnish Workplace Development Programme (TYKES) was transferred from the Ministry of Labour to the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation. TYKES, which is the main governmental finance organisation for research and technological development, has broadened its scope from the funding of pure technology development and innovations to include more broad-based innovation. The promotion of organisational development and quality of working life has now been added to its charter. A new technology and research area, 'Workplace Innovation and Development' has also been established. The TYKES programme ran until the end of 2009 and was replaced with a follow-up programme in 2010.

### **TYKES Workplace Development Programme**

The Finnish TYKES Workplace Development Programme (2004–2009) supported research-assisted work organisation development based on cooperation between management and staff, to promote qualitatively sustainable productivity growth in Finnish workplaces. Between 2004 and 2009 about 1,000 development projects involving approximately 250,000 employees took place. The programme focused on practical applications, but also promoted research linked with organisational development. TYKES ([www.TYKES.fi](http://www.TYKES.fi)) is based on the view that the most effective way of generating new innovative workplace solutions is close cooperation and interaction between workplaces, researchers, consultants, public authorities and social partners. For a country the size of Finland the capacity for different partners to join forces is one way of coping with the globalising economy where success in the new competitive environment increasingly calls for workplace innovation.

The programme's main forms of activity are to:

- support workplace development projects
- support method development projects
- support learning networks
- disseminate information on workplace development
- reinforce expertise on workplace development

Development projects typically focus on one of the following:

- the organisation of work
- work processes
- working methods
- cooperation and interaction within the work community
- external networking
- leadership and human resource management
- wage and working time systems
- working environment

The majority of the projects within the programme are workplace development projects. The programme can also grant funding for basic analyses in preparation for development projects. Typically, it is the workplaces themselves that apply for development projects and basic analyses. Funding granted by the programme focuses on the input of experts such as researchers and consultants for the projects.

Once a development project has ended, one representative of the management, the staff and an expert who worked on the project each produces a self-assessment of the project. This reflects their opinions on the results, success and implementation method of the project, and the importance of the support received from the programme for the implementation of the project. The programme maintains real-time monitoring of the results of self-assessment.

Representatives of the management and staff also evaluate the project's effect on the mode of operation at their workplace through a questionnaire at the beginning and the end of the project. The programme maintains a database on the development of the modes of operation in Finnish workplaces, which is based on these questionnaires and is freely accessible to the public.

#### *Method development projects*

The purpose of method development projects is to promote qualitatively sustainable productivity growth in Finnish workplaces by producing new working, organisation and management practices, and new development methods, models and tools. The emphasis in method development is on tangible methods, practices and solutions which are designed for an increasingly knowledge-intensive and networked economy, and which are widely applicable and suitable for dissemination. Projects are required to present a plan for how the results will be passed on for use by workplaces, educational institutions and consultants.

Method development projects focus on

- the potential of new technologies, such as ICT, in developing management practices and forms of work organisation
- companies' changing business models (e.g. from being a producer of material goods to becoming a producer of services)
- operating models based on collaborative development of products and services by the producer and the client
- production partnership from the perspective of the different parties to the value chain
- cross-sectoral (private sector – public sector – third sector) cooperation in service production

The applicants for method development projects are typically research and development (R&D) units such as universities, research institutions, polytechnics or other educational institutions.

#### *Learning network projects*

Learning networks in TYKES represent a new form of project activity aimed at enhancing the ability of the programme to produce generative results. The learning networks in the programme are joint learning forums of workplace R&D units and workplaces. A number of researchers and developers with common interests take part in the learning networks together with a number of workplaces, whose operations are supported by external experts. The learning networks may include other participants as well, for example consultancies and development agencies or regional actors.

The purpose of the learning networks is to increase the developmental expertise of the participants, to create and experiment with new forms of development cooperation between R&D units and workplaces, and to generate new, innovative solutions for Finnish working life. Each learning network has a regularly updated development plan that shows the development targets of the network for the short term (about a year) and the long term (about 3–4 years). Precedence is given to those networks that

- aim at the creation of new knowledge and expertise on qualitative sustainable productivity growth which has wide applicability
- aim at learning and the creation and dissemination of new forms of cooperation at several different levels
- include a large number of expert organisations and workplaces of many different kinds as active participants
- have obvious potential for development

The applicants for learning network projects are typically R&D units.

One of the goals of the programme is to reinforce the innovation environment of workplaces, especially where expertise on the development of work organisations is concerned, in accordance with the TYKES vision. The programme is designed to improve and develop activities in the following areas:

- the organisation of work
- work processes

- working methods
  - working environment
- cooperation and interaction within the work community
- leadership and human resource management
- wage and working time systems
- external networking

One of the programme targets is for 70% of projects to generate improvements in well-being at work.

## Evaluation

'The 'Finnish Workplace Development Programme' has been widely reported on. Due to the methodological difficulties in evaluating this kind of programme, any conclusion about its effectiveness should contain a caveat. However, there seems to be evidence that the development projects promote performance and the quality of working life simultaneously (Ramstad, 2009). The empirical data of the first evaluation consist of the results of the self-assessment by management, employees and experts of development projects implemented at workplaces from 1996–2005. This evaluation concerns 312 human resource management projects in different sectors, in particular municipalities and industry (Ramstad, 2007). It is argued that simultaneous improvements are made when both management and staff at the workplace agree that both the performance and the quality of working life have improved.

The factor 'performance' comprised:

- a) Productivity of work;
- b) Quality of goods and services;
- c) Quality of operations;
- d) Flexible customer service; and
- e) Smooth running of operations.

The factor 'quality of working life' comprised the following variables:

- a) Cooperation between management and staff;
- b) Team-inspired working processes;
- c) Social relations in the workplace;
- d) Mental well-being; and
- e) Development of vocational skills.

The results indicate that the projects had a positive effect on performance and quality of working life. Both management and experts saw effects more often in quality of working life than in performance. In contrast, the staff considered that they had improved by about the same amount. Generally, staff were more critical about the effects of the project on performance and quality of working life than management and experts. These differences were statistically significant.

In a more recent evaluation of 115 projects (Ramstad, 2009) both quality of working life and performance were improved (called 'best' group); in 31 projects neither quality of working life nor performance improved (called 'weaker' group). In all other projects either quality of working life or performance improved. The results showed a significant difference between the 'best' group and the 'weaker' group concerning the implementation process. Personnel in the 'weaker' group were never the initiators and participated poorly in the development process. In spite of more detailed analyses, the researchers were not able to separate any clear clustering between the various practices that could be generalised. Rather, it seems that combinations vary from workplace to workplace depending on their specific needs and past development.

## 10.7 France

There is no general strategic plan to promote workplace innovation in the workplace per se, but a number of initiatives in France involve the gathering and sharing of information on workplace innovation undertaken by several associations in parallel (federations, companies, agencies focused on working conditions).

### Innov'acteurs

Founded in 2002, Innov'acteurs brings together more than 80 companies, associations, communities and governments from all over France, each with the same objective: to develop participatory innovation in organisations. The association was created from three existing initiatives designed to promote participatory innovation. Participatory innovation is a structured management approach that aims to stimulate and promote the development, implementation and dissemination of ideas by the workforce in order to create value and move the organisation forward.

Innov'acteurs is funded by its members. The level of membership depends on the amount paid, and membership provides access to additional services. Founding members make up the Board. Each member company signs a charter that indicates the willingness of the organisation to develop an innovation culture and to allow every employee to be recognised via their activities and proposals for innovation no matter their rank.

The main aims of Innov'acteurs are to:

- Promote Participative Innovation in France
- Link activities contributing to the development of Participatory Innovation
- Contribute to the methodology and professionalism
- Organise the exchange and sharing of experiences between organisations and companies
- Stimulate discussion and motivate thinking.

Innov'acteurs has a self-diagnostic tool that organisations can use to assess their strengths and areas for improvement in participatory innovation. A distinction is made between the fundamentals (essentials) and the recommendations (factors of excellence). It consists of eight dimensions:

1. Values – Vision-Ambition
2. Organisation of Participatory Innovation
3. Spontaneous Participative Innovation
4. Provoked Participative Innovation
5. Synergies with Institutional Innovation (R&D marketing)
6. Listening to customers and suppliers
7. Human Resources and Recognition
8. Communication and outward openness

The employees in the member organisations are encouraged to develop new ideas regarding workplace innovation and better performance, although it remains unclear to what extent organisations use these ideas. The programme was introduced to directly improve OSH performance as such. Nevertheless, it stimulates the entire organisation to reflect on improving the performance of the organisation as a whole, which also includes OSH performance, management procedures, work organisation, etc. The company cases described do, however, link to OSH performance as a result of participatory innovation.

### **ANACT (National Agency for the Improvement of Working Conditions ('Agence Nationale pour l'amélioration des conditions de travail'))**

ANACT is the National Agency for the Improvement of Working Conditions ('Agence Nationale pour l'amélioration des conditions de travail'). The Agency shares information on participatory innovation via its website and carries out studies on innovation (see below). Created in 1973, this public

administrative body aims to help companies put into practice initiatives that can improve their efficiency and the working conditions of their employees. ANACT develops innovative projects in the area of working life. Together with the Regional Associations for the Improvement of Working Conditions (ARACT, 'Action Régionale pour l'Amélioration des Conditions de Travail') it forms a network that covers the whole of France.

ANACT has carried out a study on employee participation in 95 investment projects in SMEs (Chevallet, 2008). A project group within the ANACT network involved ergonomists, organisation specialists, sociologists and labour economists. The group focused on three major types of investment:

- the establishment or development of new information and communication technologies
- the design or development of buildings and
- industrial investments to convert production facilities.

The study was financed by the regional council of Picardy and was composed of a quantitative phase via a questionnaire distributed to 95 SMEs, and a qualitative phase via semi-direct interviews held in 15 SMEs within the sample. The study was not designed to be representative but provides an *exploratory* means to identify invariances in terms of incorporating the human dimension in the implementation of investment projects in small and medium-sized enterprises. The study found that:

- Future users are rarely involved in the design and implementation of a project. While only 18% of companies consider that the primary goal of investing is to improve the work organisation, 75% consider that the investment has had an impact on the organisation and observed a change in the skills of the employees.
- 48% of the organisations noticed an important change in the work procedures and practices.
- 15% noticed a change in the competences of the employees.

The research highlighted the risks of corporate underperformance due to a lack of employee participation and insufficient acknowledgement of the actual work activity, and pleads for a greater involvement and empowerment of employees throughout the development and implementation of a project. The study also shows that every investment should take into account the (desired) impact on work organisation. Based on these conclusions guidance was developed to support SMEs in their change management processes.

The study wanted to investigate the consequences of the lack of employee involvement in investment projects within SMEs. Following the results, ANACT produced a practical guide for SMEs on how to invest successfully in their company taking into account not only the economic benefits but also the improvements in working conditions. The researchers plead for a holistic approach integrating organisational aspects from the design phase of a project.

The guide, called 'Implementing a successful project in SMEs, the issue of working conditions', covers the integration of health at work as an opportunity in every investment project (eliminating risks when introducing new production processes, replacing dangerous products, limiting manual handling, ergonomic solutions, eliminating physical risks). It indirectly links the OSH aspects and better working conditions in a technical modernisation process with a better performance. Neglecting social innovation topics is directly linked to the opposite: high costs due to ill-health, a fall in the motivation of workers and decreased performance due to underutilisation of resources and defective quality. In this context social innovation is always linked to a technological intervention/investment (and not applied for the benefit of social innovation itself), although it is promoted as a necessary step along with the technical innovation.

Elements of the programme that relate to work organisations are: promotion of task enrichment and complete tasks, increasing job control, eliminating repetitive tasks, facilitating coordination and communication between the workers, and taking ageing workers into account. Employee involvement and consultation in modernisation processes is one of the main points of this project. The project promotes real consultation of the end users on the technical as well as the organisational changes, instead of including the workers to simply validate the solutions developed by management. It also mentions the end user as an important element in the technical and organisational change. The project focuses here on the workers within the company and the relations with the technical experts

within or outside the company. We did not come across specific information on the approach with regard to the relations with the client or end user outside the company. In the guidance, ANACT focuses on the following principles to make sure that investments lead to better performance. Even projects that are based on technological investments have to include other aspects such as necessary skills for employees, and work organisation changes. The organisational culture will be affected and ANACT emphasises that economic, social and organisational parameters should all be taken into account. Inclusion of the workers and effective communication is deemed crucial. Besides the technical specifications, the workers should be heard in order to guarantee that the real needs of the company are covered within the project. A modernisation project also has to take into account the necessary resources to carry out the change (recruitment, internal mobility, necessary training and information e.g. worker representatives).

## 10.8 Germany

Germany has a long tradition of projects and research which would fall under the definition of 'workplace innovation' and which were sponsored by the research ministries of the central government (Pot and Koningsveld, 2009b; Ramstad, 2008a). The research and development programme 'Humanisierung des Arbeitslebens' ('humanisation of work') lasted from 1974 to 1989. This provided a framework for subsequent programmes: 'Arbeit und Technik' (1989–2001), the framework programme 'Innovative Arbeitsgestaltung – Zukunft der Arbeit' (from 2001), but also programmes oriented at training in the new society ('Lernen für den wirtschaftlichen Wandel' (1996–2000) and 'Lernkultur Kompetenzentwicklung' (2001–2007)). The most recent programme, which was started by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, was 'Working – Learning – Developing Skills: Potential for innovation in a modern working environment'. It consists of several smaller-scale programmes. There are also initiatives sponsored by non-government bodies including 'Initiative Gesundheit und Arbeit' which is sponsored by insurance companies ([www.iga-info.de](http://www.iga-info.de)); the 'Initiative neue Qualität der Arbeit' (INQA) is sponsored by a whole set of ministries and Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin (BAuA) ([www.inqa.de](http://www.inqa.de)). There are also programmes sponsored by regions but we have restricted the discussion to those with the greatest reach.

### Initiative Gesundheit und Arbeit (Health and Work Initiative; IGA)

IGA is part of a long line of programmes that started in the 1980s ([www.bmbf.de](http://www.bmbf.de)) In 2002, the Federal association of company health insurance funds (BKK Bundesverband) and the German Federation of institutions for statutory accident insurance and prevention (Hauptverband der gewerblichen Berufsgenossenschaften) cooperated to continue these programmes with the IGA and every year more organisations have supported the initiative. From 2005, the AOK-Bundesverband developed an approach to decide on work related prevention goals. The Arbeiter-Ersatzkassen-Verband (AEV) became the fourth member in 2007. The participating partners underwent various changes. Apart from these partners operating at the national level, there are also regional and sector-related cooperative projects between health insurance funds and accident insurance institutions.

One of the targets of the German government is to promote health in working life, which due to the complex demands of today's working environment calls for cooperation and concerted action. For this reason the separate systems of statutory health and accident insurance funds are obliged to work together on the prevention of work-related health risks. This requirement for cooperative work is being realised in IGA.

IGA develops solutions within specific projects and provides stimuli in the following five main areas:

- Prevention aims and objectives
- Changes in the sphere of work
- Healthy work
- Effectiveness of prevention and
- Networking and exchange of information



This cooperation works to the advantage of employees and companies since the activities always aim to promote the workers' health and safety. Productivity and the cost-effectiveness of companies and organisations is enhanced by the reduction in time off due to accidents and illness as well as through consultation with workers on ways to optimise the organisation of work. In this way, prevention and health promotion support the competitiveness of companies.

IGA sees itself as a motivator for statutory health insurance funds, institutions for statutory accident insurance and prevention, and other actors in workplace prevention. Existing methods and findings are put into practice and prevention approaches developed across the boundaries between different social security agencies.

The central topics are to develop solutions or suggestions along the following themes:

- Prevention,
- The changing world of work,
- The creation of healthy work,
- And the results of prevention (Wirksamkeit von Prävention).

The focus of the programme is on changing company policy rather than promoting actual workplace practices. It impacts on OSH performance by introducing preventive policies in a great number of areas. Although IGA does have a two-yearly barometer to monitor developments, there is insufficient data to assess the direct impact of the programme on OSH performance.

### **Working Learning Developing Skills (WLDS): Potential for innovation in a modern working environment**

Managed by the German Aerospace Centre (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR) this programme fits within the Federal Ministry of Education and Research's national research programme. In 2006 the programme financed 350 work-oriented projects with a budget of over €26 million. Research institutes and universities ran most of the projects, while the combined projects also included consultancies and development agencies. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) was granted additional funds of approximately €850 million in 2009 to strengthen research and development in Germany in the future. It aims at developing new solutions for working life in a knowledge-based and service-oriented society. It has three main goals:

- To close knowledge gaps
- To stimulate change processes
- To support political decisions for these goals.

The key areas supported within the programme include the promotion of competence, health and employability, sustainable corporate development, equal opportunities and demographic change. It also encourages new implementation methods and interregional alliances.

There is no information about the impact this programme has on social innovative practices in the workplace. However, within the main WLDS project there is one strand of projects oriented towards prevention and OSH. This is one of the main focuses of the 'Präventiver Arbeits- und Gesundheitsschutz' (Preventive work and health protection) programme. This programme saw the investment of approximately €17 million in 18 projects over a four-year period. The 'Aachen Impulse'<sup>10</sup> (Aachener Impuls) coordinates this research focus. Within this programme there is currently a meta-project collecting data from other projects, but the results are not yet available.

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<sup>10</sup> Network set up after a conference in Aachen of occupational health providers and other stakeholders defining the research priorities in occupational safety and health in Germany and promoting such research.

**INQA – Die Initiative für eine Neue Qualität in der Arbeit (the initiative for new quality in work)**  
[www.inqa.de](http://www.inqa.de)

Begun in 2002, INQA is the responsibility of the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin; BAuA) and is not directly related to the EU agenda on workplace innovation. It receives its funding from the national government, the regions, social partners, social insurance institutions, foundations and companies. INQA recognises the competitive advantage for the German economy that comes from having healthy, qualified, motivated and experienced workers. It operates with approximately 13 members of staff whose activities are focused on coordination, project management and developing a database of good work. INQA organises networks of specialised groups providing a platform for the development, exchange and transfer of practical knowledge. Approximately 94 projects have been undertaken on a range of subjects, some of which are still current. The projects are mainly centred on helping companies find new ways to progress. Any solutions developed through the projects have to be cost-effective and have positive benefits for workers.

INQA works within five key areas:

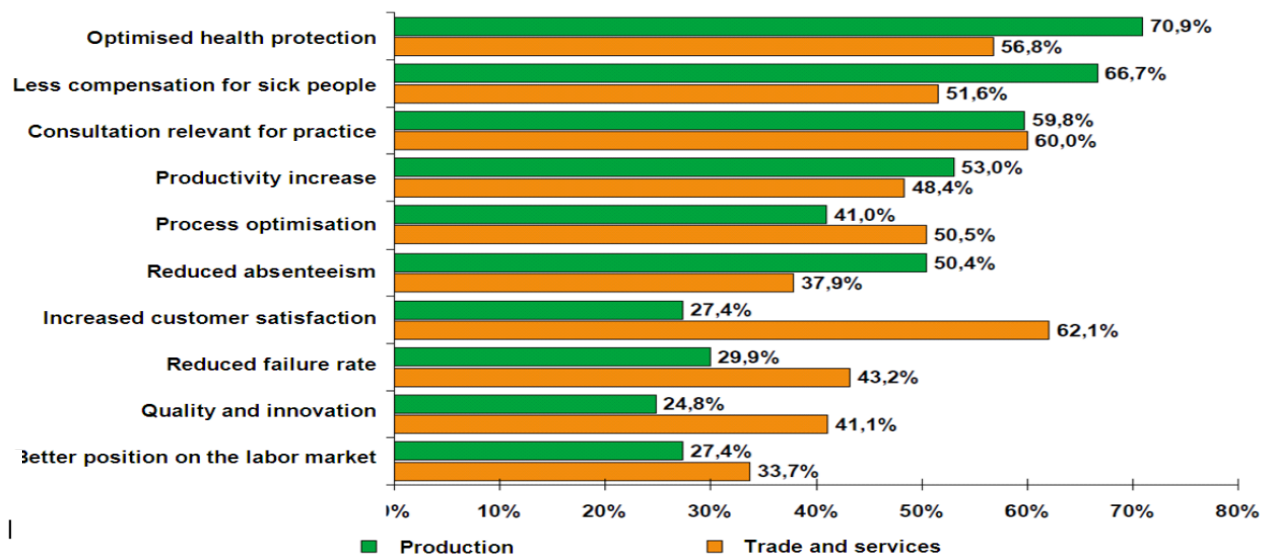
- Company culture
- Demographic changes.
- Health workers, healthy company
- Good SMEs
- Sectors with high health risks

There is no information about how this programme supports innovative approaches to work organisation. With over 1,500 companies (all sizes) organised into approximately 30 expert and company networks, INQA also distributes 190 brochures, guides and multi-media products. Its website is widely consulted and the 'good practice' database receives around 11,000 visits a month. The database includes 330 examples of good company practices. These projects contain valuable and practical know how about security and health at work

**Evaluation**

Within the available evaluations of this programme, the economic element is usually restricted to the costs of sick leave. The cost–benefit ratio varies between 1:2.3 and 1:10.1 (Sokol et al, 2006). **One exception is the management survey of AOK (an insurer) among 212 partner companies. These companies operated in production sectors as well as in trade and services. They monitored a number of issues ranging from physical workload (91.5% of production companies; 80% of trade and services) to sick leave, ergonomics, work organisation, safety, style of leadership, up to stress management (30.8% production; 50.5% trade and services (Bonitz et al, 2007). Performance results as assessed by management were substantial (Figure 2).**

Figure 2: Performance effects as assessed by management



Source: Bonitz et al, 2007, p. 23

Further analysis shows that higher productivity goes hand in hand with better communication, smoother processes and higher employability, as a result of both a decrease in absenteeism and an increase in social and vocational competences (Bonitz et al, 2007, p. 34).

The research project by Balzert et al (2003), 'Konzepte innovativer Arbeitspolitik', makes some interesting points about the ambivalences of modern teamwork. Task and job integration as well as team self-management imply better jobs and the leeway to regulate the workload, but they bring with them high expectations for performance and increased levels of responsibility. This suggests that creating good or better jobs does not reduce the risk of psychological stress. The teams have to establish a balance between performance demands, performance capacity of the employees, and the willingness to perform. This is even more difficult because the teams have no or little say in the performance goals (Balzert et al, 2003). In the 'good practices' it is suggested that teams involved in process optimisation and the planning process achieve improved levels of production.

Similar results were found at the Touran production site of Volkswagen, where a special compromise between management and trade unions was reached in 2002. On the one hand, there were deteriorating terms of employment (pay, working hours), and on the other hand the employment of unemployed people in the region and the introduction of an 'anti-tayloristic' work organisation (against the worldwide trend of re-taylorisation).<sup>11</sup> Besides successes in several areas (work organisation, learning, productivity), one of the shortcomings of the project so far has been the lack of involvement of employees in target setting and company decisions (Schumann et al, 2005).

## 10.9 Greece

No evidence of national programmes/strategies for setting up social innovation in the workplace.

<sup>11</sup> The tayloristic model of work organisation involves considerable task specialisation.

## 10.10 Hungary

No evidence of national programmes/strategies for setting up social innovation in the workplace. However, a survey carried out in the Dunaújváros region by the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2001 and 2003 to map and describe the general pattern of manpower and knowledge use by firms operating in the region has led to a special government support scheme to diffuse different types of cooperation amongst SMEs, such as team working and teleworking, to develop a high-performance workplace organisation.

## 10.11 Malta

The Employment and Training Corporation in Malta took part in a project entitled 'Creating Innovative Working Arrangements through the Support of Public Employment Service (PES) for a better Work-Life Reconciliation' during 2008 and 2009. Co-funded by the European Commission under PROGRESS as part of the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007–2013), its aim was to develop innovative services for employers in relation to work–life balance (WLB) measures. Employers in Malta are supported through a number of organisations including the Malta Employers' Association, which has as one of its objectives the 'creation of economic and social conditions favourable to the profitable growth and competitiveness'. The Salvinu Spiteri Foundation within the Union Haddiema Maghqudin ([www.uhm.org.mt](http://www.uhm.org.mt)) was set up in 2003 to promote and develop human resources in Malta. One recent development through the Malta Chamber of Commerce that may be a vehicle for the promotion of workplace innovation and development is Linking Enterprise ([www.maltachamber.org.mt](http://www.maltachamber.org.mt)).

### Linking Enterprise

Linking Enterprise is an initiative provided by the Malta Chamber of Commerce and whilst open to any employer to take part, it is primarily targeted at small and medium-sized enterprises to enable them to gain knowledge to improve their business performance. It aims to achieve this by:

- Providing an opportunity for employers to benchmark their performance against others
- Promoting new ways to enhance business processes
- Sharing good practice
- Providing an opportunity to network with others to discuss challenges and opportunities
- Helping companies identify practical solutions to specific problems by gaining insight from employers in other sectors.

There is no evidence that membership of this group has an influence on the participants' approach to their work organisation, internal labour relations or OSH performance. It does appear to be a useful approach to improve network relations, particularly amongst SMEs, although currently no evaluation of the initiative is available.

## 10.12 Poland

No evidence of national programmes/strategies for setting up workplace innovation.

## 10.13 Romania

No evidence of national programmes/strategies for setting up social innovation in the workplace.

## 10.14 Slovakia

The Slovak Productivity Centre (Slovenské centrum produktivity, [www.slcp.sk](http://www.slcp.sk)) was established at Zilina Technical University in 1997 and this organisation was given the role of preparing and

implementing the National Productivity and Competitiveness Improvement Programme in 2002 as part of the preparations for Slovakia's accession to the EU in 2004.

### **National Productivity and Competitiveness Improvement Programme (NPCIP), 2002**

The National Productivity and Competitiveness Improvement Programme was in response to EU policy on accession requirements rather than a response to the social innovation agenda. It did, however, go some way towards creating a business environment that accepted that improvements in productivity would require the appropriate approach and incentives to motivate employees and employers to engage in new working practices. The major goal of the programme, though, was that of 'improving productivity' and in a declaration made at the National Productivity Forum in Zilina on 2 September 2002 it stated the aim to 'create a positive environment for long-term productivity and competitiveness in Slovakia'. Assistance was also provided by the Brussels-based European Association of National Productivity Centres ([EANPC](#)) – a European body that 'facilitates the exchange of information and cooperation among national productivity organisations'.

No direct references are made within the programme to specific elements of work organisation approaches. 'Higher levels of labour organisation' are generally stipulated among the main goals of the programme. In terms of labour relations approaches, only general comments under the heading 'Employment growth and human resource development' are mentioned. General statements are made within its objectives about improving cooperation between government, employers and trade unions, but there is no mention of how this can be achieved. The programme includes environmental measures; for example, 'the National Programme will implement ecological principles in all sectors and an "ecolabel" scheme will help to increase ecological awareness in society as a whole'. Improved cooperation with research and academic institutions is also envisaged. In terms of OSH performance, only general objectives are mentioned; for example, 'improving working conditions and living standards' as topics for further projects to be carried out based on this framework programme. Further on, the programme mentions 'Higher levels of "labour organisation" and OSH. The goal is to harmonise the National Programme with company programmes aiming to improve productivity in management, OSH, and workforce motivation.'

## **10.15 Slovenia**

Whilst there is no evidence of national programmes/strategies for setting up social innovation in the workplace there is an initiative called the 'Family Friendly Company' initiative. This initiative seeks to improve and promote equal opportunities within the company and the wider community (Fsadni, 2009).

## **10.16 Sweden**

The Swedish Agency for Innovation System, VINNOVA (Verket for innovations system) was established in 2001 and focuses on growth, innovation and regional dynamics with the emphasis on cooperation between industry, academia and the political/public sectors. VINNOVA has seven departments including the Working Life Department, and this is currently running several programmes in the field of organisational development related to long-term sustainable working life. The programmes focus on management, competence and learning, innovation systems, health and safety, democracy and gender equality, dynamic labour markets and the environment.

In 2004 the first innovation strategy, titled 'Innovative Sweden', was created jointly with the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Sweden's goal is to be Europe's most competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy (Ramstad, 2008a). The strategy focuses on the long-term promotion of growth and emphasises the importance of promoting flexible production, better skill utilisation, networks, diversity and participation leading to creative and dynamic labour markets. The strategy also recognises the need for a more comprehensive exchange of knowledge amongst researchers studying working organisations, and that the role of societal partners also needs to be taken into account.

## Working Life

VINNOVA's Working Life initiatives aim to strengthen innovative capacity in industry and the public sector. They contribute to sustainable growth by improving organisational conditions for competitiveness and growth. The ultimate goal is to enhance global competitiveness. VINNOVA's efforts in this area involve companies and organisations from various sectors. Central to this are processes of innovation and change, including various aspects of work organisation and operational management plus industrial and organisational change. Working Life's initiatives are implemented under five programmes:

- Dynamic Innovation Systems in Change
- Innovation Processes and Entrepreneurship
- Management and Work Organisation Renewal
- Needs-Driven Gender Research for Innovation
- Dynamic Innovation Systems in Change

**Dynamic Innovation Systems in Change** deals with the impact of globalisation and structural change plus labour market dynamics such as mobility, skills supply, adaptability and job creation. Its goals are to improve companies' and organisations' capacity to manage structural changes through research and development. These initiatives increase access to practical and scientific knowledge and use this in new models and methods.

The overall aim of the **Innovation Processes and Entrepreneurship** programme is to contribute to improved capacity for innovation in companies – in terms of both renewal and practical expertise in running effective innovation processes. The emphasis is on management of innovation processes and conditions for the development of new products and businesses.

The **Management and Work Organisation Renewal** programme focuses on the importance of strategic management and work organisation for well-functioning workplaces and thus the efficiency and long-term development of operations. The goal is new or improved working methods and organisational solutions that safeguard and develop ideas generated within the organisation or by other actors. In the long run, it is anticipated that these will result in new or improved work processes, products or service offerings.

The programme also involves a number of calls for proposals and initiatives:

The **Competent Workplace (2007–2011)** aims to increase the chances of organisations reaching their goals by improving the conditions for strategically relevant competence. This involves aspects such as the division of knowledge, collective competence, relationships and networks.

**Managerial Task: Conditions, Ways of working and Results (2008–2012)** aims to elucidate, further develop and renew the leadership that is practised in Swedish workplaces. Focusing attention on the formal position of manager emphasises the organisational affiliation and operational mission to achieve results. A presentation of the project appears in the publication, 'Research on Managerial Tasks: Conditions, Ways of working and Results' (VINNOVA, 2009).

**Winning Services (2009–2013)** relates to R&D projects on the organisation and management of service activities. Its aim is to develop work organisation and strategic management so that the experience, expertise and development ideas of staff are fostered and utilised within the organisation. Part of the preliminary work for this call is the knowledge overview, *Managing and Organising for Innovation in Service Firms* (Schilling and Werr, 2009)

**Swedish Management** is an initiative focusing on the advantages of the Swedish leadership tradition's advantages and its need to adapt to working globally. The initiative complements the unit's ongoing research project in this area. One of its publications is 'Leading Companies in a Global Age' (Isaksson-Affarsvarlden, 2008).

The **Innovative Work Organisation (2009–2012)** is a joint initiative for European partners of Work-In-Net, an ERA-NET project aiming to raise awareness of the importance of research into workplace innovations. The pilot project is concentrating on innovative aspects of work organisation that lead to increased productivity, competitiveness and good working conditions.

The Management and Work Organisation Renewal programme is also linked to other programmes where VINNOVA is partnered with other funders:

VINNVÅRD is a research programme whose aims include developing innovative work organisations in health and social care. The programme is run in collaboration with the Vårdal Foundation, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

Fruitful Flourishing Firms (3F) is programme for value creation in personnel development run by the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences and funded by VINNOVA in partnership with AFA, an insurance organisation owned by Sweden's labour market stakeholders and Alecta, an occupational pension company.

There is no information about how this programme supports social innovative workplace practices.

### **Evaluation**

Whilst no specific evaluation of this programme has been identified, there is a general evaluation of Swedish working life in Järvholm et al, 2009.

## **10.17 The Netherlands**

According to Pot and Vaas (2008), because of the particularities of the Dutch situation the government in the Netherlands will either hold back or facilitate where it deems necessary. As a result there is no coherent programme or policy on social innovation, although there are a number of initiatives that are seeking to disseminate socially innovative workplace practices across the country.

### **NCSI, Netherlands Centre for Social Innovation**

Although not a programme, the NCSI aims to promote job satisfaction and productivity in the Netherlands. The Centre is an initiative of the Dutch 'Innovation platform' – a government-initiated platform to boost innovation – in cooperation with employers' associations (AWVN and FME), trade unions (FNV Bondgenoten and CNV Bedrijvenbond), academic institutions (RSM Erasmus University in Rotterdam and AIAS University of Amsterdam) and a knowledge institution (technological research centre TNO, the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Research).

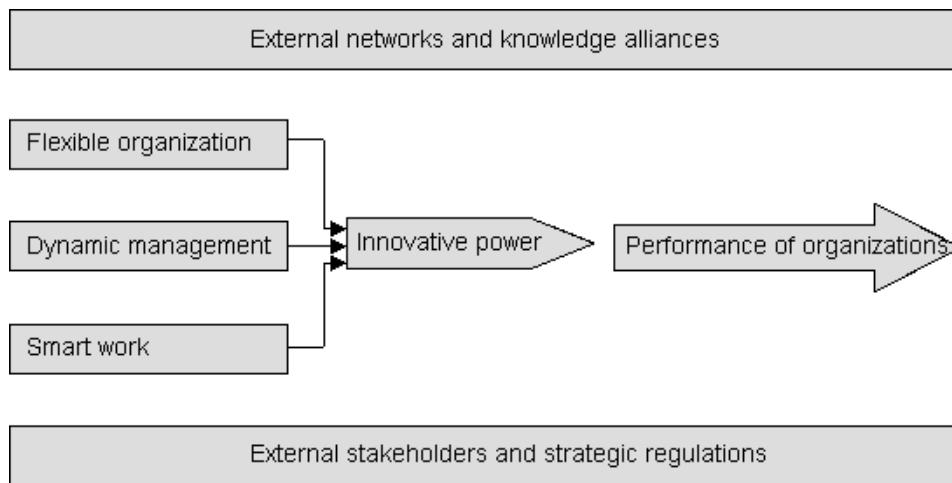
The core function of the NCSI is promoting and initiating social innovation in the fields of management, organisation and labour. The NCSI defines 'social innovation' as a systematic attempt to develop within work organisations:

1. Innovative organisation principles
2. New management skills.

Social innovation also refers to the development of high-quality work processes between work organisations, including:

1. External networks and knowledge alliances
2. External stakeholders and strategic regulations
3. Monitoring and feedback systems to improve and develop both competitiveness and human resources.

Figure 3: External networks and knowledge alliances



Source: Erasmus Concurrentie & Innovatie Monitor 2005

The NCSI supports private companies and public organisations by carrying out concrete actions and experiments, disseminating knowledge, supporting practically applied research and formulating relevant questions for academic research in order to combine efforts for better use of technology and talents. The NCSI is very much a networking organisation. It unites groups of different backgrounds, such as: trade unions, employers' associations, private companies, public organisations, knowledge institutes and consultants, each of which brings with them their own specific expertise and experiences

NCSI is involved in five activities:

9. Dissemination of knowledge/knowledge transfer
10. Activities and experiments
11. Agenda-setting
12. Dialogue and alliances on knowledge/knowledge networks
13. Formulating scientific research questions

NCSI disseminates its knowledge about social innovation via its website ([www.ncsi.nl](http://www.ncsi.nl)), a knowledge bank (databank) and newsletter, publications, working papers and the issue of a 'definition map' of social innovation (NCSI, 2009). It also organises conferences, courses and lectures (trainee pool, seminar series). An example of a conference is the event 'Destination Innovation' during which organisations can learn about ways of making their own organisations more socially innovative and listen to talks on topics such as 'using talents of older and younger employees', 'innovative time management', 'open innovation', 'internal flexibility', and 'innovative organisational models'.

NCSI also initiates projects and initiatives at company and sector level including:

- competitions between teams of young trainee professionals on best plans for 'working smarter' ('City Hunt', 'Coffe4dateinnovation')
- SME-Powerhouse (MKB-Krachtcentrale), an joint initiative to reach 1,000 companies with the aim of enhancing their productivity and meaningful work through 'working smarter' projects
- 'Team brain', a game involving brainstorming to think of ways of 'working smarter', which can be downloaded from the Internet for free.

NCSI is an official partner of Work-in-net, the Workplace Innovation Network, and shares knowledge and experience of social innovative approaches with partners from Finland, Germany and Ireland. NCSI has played a significant role in placing social innovation on the agenda. Its definition of social innovation (often also referred to as 'working smarter' by those who regard the term 'social innovation')



as too abstract), focusing on enhancing productivity and the development of talents and pleasant work, has been widely accepted.

The activities covered within this programme are supportive of a social innovative approach. Any effects of these activities on OSH performance are indirect. Overall, the focus is on enhancing labour productivity and work satisfaction and optimising the use of talent.

### Evaluation

The NCSI database contains descriptions of over 180 organisations that have carried out practical interventions on social innovation. Effects that benefit employees are heterogeneous and scattered. The indications are that such effects concern: improved work schedules (rosters), improved work–life balance, and autonomy/sovereignty with regard to terms of employment (decentralisation, empowerment). The impression from the cases that were published in the database is that these social innovative organisations distinguish themselves from organisations with only enhanced labour productivity and cost saving, and consequently more work intensification and stress risks. Research by the *Economic Institute for SMEs* in 2008 in 650 Dutch SMEs indicated that companies with workplace development projects achieve higher productivity and financial results compared to companies that do not implement this kind of projects. However, the outcomes regarding quality of working life have not been measured except for employment, which in most cases increased (Van der Hauw et al, 2009).

**Table 4: Working smarter and performance**

Performance criterion	% change in performance previous 2 years	
	SMEs without working smarter	SMEs with working smarter
Company results	2	18
Company turnover	7	15
Productivity	5	14
Employment	6	11

Economic Institute for SMEs. Source: Van der Hauw et al, 2009

The Erasmus Competition and Innovation Monitor (ECIM) of the Erasmus University Rotterdam (2009 edition) included 910 Dutch companies of different sizes in various private business sectors. The broad concept of social innovation of the ECIM covers dynamic management, flexible organisation, working smarter and external cooperation. Compared to non-socially innovative companies the socially innovative companies perform better regarding an increase in turnover, profit and market share, and regarding innovation, productivity, new clients and reputation. Consistent with earlier results of the ECIM, technological innovation by means of R&D and ICT investments determines 25% of innovation success, whereas social innovation (management, organisation and work aspects) determines 75% (Jansen et al, 2009).

**Table 5: Social innovation and performance:**

Performance	Performance social innovative versus non social innovative organisations
Increase in turnover	15% higher
Increase in profits	14% higher
Innovation	37% higher
Productivity	22% higher
New clients	20% higher
Reputation	12% higher

Erasmus Competition and Innovation Monitor. Source: Jansen et al, 2009

In the Netherlands Employers Work Survey (2008 edition) the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) includes four aspects in social innovation: strategic orientation, product-market improvement, working flexibly and organising more smartly. In various sectors, 3,468 employers with 10 or more employees filled in the questionnaire. Company performance was measured as a combination of an increase during the last two years in turnover, profit and labour productivity. This combined performance was significantly better in organisations with more social innovation. This is also the case for the four different aspects of social innovation. The employer respondents in innovative companies were more contented with the terms of employment and HR practices in their companies. Concerning the quality of working life: no correlation existed between social innovation and job autonomy, except for the determination of working times and breaks (Oeij et al, 2010a and b).

### **ESF (ESF2 Action E Social Innovation)**

The ESF 2007–2013 programme has three priorities:

- 1) To increase the size of the labour force,
- 2) To promote the social inclusion of the disadvantaged in the labour force, and
- 3) To increase the adaptability of workers and enterprises and invest in human capital.

Action E was designed to address concerns related to social innovation. Funds are directed at enterprises, sectors, SMEs and employees. The ESF finances 75% and the applicant pays the remaining 25%. Social innovation refers to the innovation of the professional organisation (by innovating the professional methods, processes and relations) and maximising the competences of employees in order to achieve higher productivity. ESF funding is used to create implementation plans for social innovation, which are drafted and tested, in every participating labour organisation.

This project targets four particular areas:

- Working smarter (optimising professional processes to achieve better results from the same resources).
- Organising tasks more flexibly. For example, making the combination of work and private life or changes in role within the organisation more flexible.

- New relations in professional organisations: This could be realised by improving work through using the talents/competences of employees in other/more tasks, giving more responsibility to employees.
- Social innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): innovative entrepreneurship.

### Evaluation

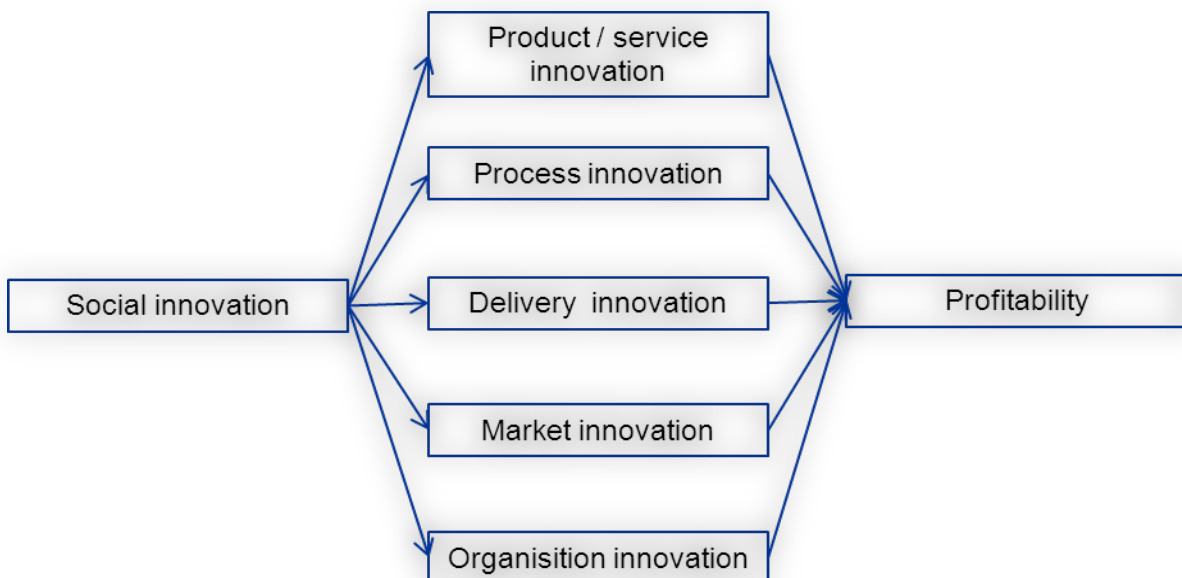
The ESF programme subsidised about 150 projects in 2008 and 2009 and another 120 in 2010. No cases have been published yet. The 2008–2009 year evaluation is expected around mid-2011.

### (MyCompany2.0)

MyCompany2.0 (in Dutch MijnBedrijf2.0) is a project within the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) framework that aims to enhance the innovative capacity of SMEs in the Utrecht region under the banner of social innovation / working smarter. MyCompany2.0 is a joint initiative from Utrecht College (Hogeschool Utrecht), TNO, Syntens (a subsidised organisation to stimulate regional innovation) and the Taskforce Innovatie Regio Utrecht (a subsidised organisation to stimulate innovation in the Utrecht region). ERDF, Province Utrecht, a regional governmental body in the municipality of Utrecht, finances MyCompany2.0. All participants (partners, employers' organisations, trade unions, chamber of commerce, consultancy firms) support the project financially. The central aim is to enhance the innovative capacity of SMEs by social innovation / 'working smarter' interventions. The definition of social innovation was adopted from Volberda et al, (2006): 'Social innovation is defined as changing a firm's organisation, management and labour in a way that is new to the organisation and/or the industry, with the effect of leveraging the firm's technological knowledge base and improving organisational performance.'

Figure 4: Social Innovation Model used by MyCompany2.0

The programme adopted the following model:



Individual firms fill in an innovation scan (Scan MijnBedrijf 2.0) to determine their needs, get advice from consultants on how to enhance their innovative capacity through a plan to implement social innovation / working smarter initiatives / measures; and are subsequently supported to implement initiatives by consultants. Companies receive practical (self help) instruments, guidelines, step-by-step

plans, etc. SMEs get access to a network of companies, knowledge institutions and consultants. The project is anticipated to have two main effects. At company level it should enhance productivity and competitiveness. For the SME sector it should improve its innovation capacity, increase the number of innovations and promote sustainable innovation growth; for the Utrecht region (Utrecht is part of the West Region in this programme) it should, for example, enhance its economic position and remain attractive for SMEs, enhance trust in the region among entrepreneurs, and improve employment.

The (main) target is to service 300 individual companies with a scan diagnosis and the support of an implementation trajectory. The timeline for this service is 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2011.

The topics are not specified, but all relate to 'work organisation', 'labour relations' and / or 'network relations'. About 160 firms filled out the MyCompany2.0 scan, with a few of them then going on to produce an intervention plan with the help of consultants.

The approach encourages working smarter by organising work processes and conditions more intelligently, so that a better result can be reached with the same input (people, resources and materials). It creates more flexible labour organisations and better organisation of work; new relationships in labour organisations (optimal utilisation of talents, task rotation, new consultation forms, etc.) OSH has no priority as the emphasis is placed on labour productivity.

## 10.18 United Kingdom

There are three programmes, which have national coverage. Only 'Workplace Innovation' is directly related to social innovation.

### Workplace Innovation

The United Kingdom Work Organisation Network (UKWON) Ltd was set up in 1997 as a not-for-profit organisation to promote new ways of working that improve performance and quality of life. In response to the EU social innovation agenda it has launched a sister organisation, 'Workplace Innovation' ([www.workplaceinnovation.eu](http://www.workplaceinnovation.eu)). The aims of the programme are to engage the 'workforce through better job design, team working and decision-making, creating a culture of creativity, innovation and achievement'.

The main elements that relate to 'workplace innovation' include job design, which seeks to maximise employee performance and create 'good jobs', and team working. Team working encourages self-organised teams within the workplace to take responsibility for the day-to-day running of their work. As the Workplace Innovation consultants work closely with the organisations that sign up for the programme, there is scope within the Workplace Innovation programme to improve and develop processes through the main UKWON site. They have developed an assessment tool, OIL (Organising, Involving, Learning) that is designed to evaluate the extent to which organisational structures and practices facilitate workforce engagement and effectiveness. Workplace Innovation recognises that engaged employees are key to the success of an organisation and the programme encourages organisations to enable their workers to use their knowledge, skills and creativity. However, the programme recognises that many organisations find this difficult to achieve. The Workplace Innovation programme has set up a learning and benchmarking network of up to 20 organisations in partnership with ACAS (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service). The focus of this programme is on workplace practices 'to develop versatility through engagement'. Workplace Innovation has organised a 12-month programme of four afternoon forums where key speakers share their knowledge and experience with members of the network. Informal networking follows these forums. Workplace Innovation was not introduced to directly improve OSH performance, but there are a number of elements within the programme that research tells us can enhance the quality of working life and the well-being of employees. Indirectly these elements include improving job satisfaction through better job design and team working, improving employee motivation and commitment through involving workers in decision-making, and creating an environment of learning and continuous improvement that seeks to develop the competencies of employees to do their job.

## Evaluation of the programme

There is no evaluation currently available.

### ACAS Model Workplace

ACAS (the Advisory, Conciliatory and Arbitration Service) was founded in 1975 and is largely funded by the United Kingdom Department of Business Innovation and Skills. The Service promotes the 'ACAS Model Workplace' throughout the United Kingdom. The ACAS model requires:

- Formal procedures for dealing with disciplinary matters, grievances and disputes that managers and employees know about and use fairly.
- Ambitions, goals and plans that employees know about and understand.
- Managers who genuinely listen to and consider their employees' views so everyone is actively involved in making important decisions.
- A pay and reward system that is clear, fair and consistent.
- A safe and healthy place to work.
- People to feel valued so they can talk confidently about their work and learn from both successes and mistakes.
- Everyone to be treated fairly and valued for his or her differences as part of everyday life.
- Work organised so that it encourages initiative, innovation and people to work together.
- An understanding that people have responsibilities outside work so they can openly discuss ways of working that suit personal needs and the needs of the business.
- A culture where everyone is encouraged to learn new skills so they can look forward to further employment either in the same business or elsewhere.
- A good working relationship between management and employee representatives who in turn help build trust throughout the business.

ACAS believes that flexible working has benefits for both the organisation and its workers. Organisations can respond to changing demand in their business by offering part-time work, annual hours and shift work. Flexible working also allows workers to achieve the balance they need between their work and home life. ACAS recognises that at least half the United Kingdom workforce is made up of women, some of whom will be lone parents, and with an ageing demographic many workers are also caring for elderly dependants. The ACAS Model Workplace suggests that good internal communications are important for maintaining labour relations. It advises that employees be given a written statement of their main terms and conditions, information on how to do their job effectively and personal objectives that are in line with business plans. It also suggests that 'well informed employees can make a greater contribution to better decision-making'. Also important is an organisational culture where employees feel confident to talk about their work and where they are not blamed when things go wrong. Valued employees are more likely to be motivated and productive and to use their initiative. The ACAS Model Workplace does not cover any elements that encourage inter-organisation networking or benchmarking. However, since 2009 ACAS has been working with UKWON in the East Midlands and is carrying out a project called 'Innovative Workplaces – Developing Organisations for the Future' with 10 businesses in the East Midlands region. The project works with these businesses over a year to improve employee engagement, innovation and business performance, but they meet together and have an opportunity to share ideas and good practice amongst themselves.

The ACAS Model Workplace seeks to create a safe and healthy place of work so in that respect it is a direct response to improve OSH performance. The Model Workplace assessment tool asks organisations to review health and safety measures regularly, and to consult with employees, trade unions or health and safety representatives on health and safety issues. It also asks organisations to consider promoting health education in the workplace, in particular whether they have considered if workers are able to maintain a healthy work–life balance, as well as encouraging them to take steps to tackle the problem of work-related stress. If organisations can answer 'Yes' to any of these questions it provides guidance on how they can take further steps to improve their procedures. If organisations

answer 'No' they are given information about relevant United Kingdom laws and regulations so they understand their responsibilities under the law as well as basic advice about where they can start.

## Evaluation

Employees who are committed to their work and their boss are more likely to behave in a positive way for the benefit of the firm and themselves. They are also less likely to take sick leave or quit (ACAS, 2010). The MacLeod Review (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009) suggests that four main drivers are key to gaining employee engagement: **leadership**; **engaging managers** who offer clarity over what is expected from individuals whilst treating them with respect and fairness; **employee voice**: seeking out the views and opinions of employees; and **Integrity**.

Evaluation is currently being undertaken but the researchers anticipate difficulty accessing a full range of performance and economic data from the participating companies and this may affect the robustness of their findings. The evaluation was due to be published on their website after January 2011.

## Investors in People (IiP)

Investors in People was launched in 1991. In April 2010 it became the responsibility of the United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills as part of the strategy to encourage innovation and improve productivity. Indirectly related to the EU social innovation agenda, it seeks to ensure the United Kingdom can maintain its prosperity in the global economy.

Investors in People is a framework that businesses can follow that is designed to improve performance and help them realise their organisational objectives through the management and development of their people. The main elements of the framework include:

- Business Strategy
- Learning and Development Strategy
- People Management Strategy
- Leadership and Management Strategy
- Management Effectiveness
- Recognition and Reward
- Involvement and Empowerment
- Learning and Development
- Performance Measurement
- Continuous Improvement

A new Health and Well-being Award has recently been added to the framework in an attempt to get employers to see health and well-being as a business performance issue. The framework does not prescribe how an organisation should go about reaching the standard. The importance of having a clear set of organisational and personal objectives is emphasised, ensuring that all workers receive a comprehensive induction to make them aware of their responsibilities as an employee and what they need to do to get the job done. Investors in People places an emphasis on developing relationships between employer and worker using human resource management practices that get the best out of people and processes. There is a strong focus on employee engagement and communications that creates an environment of trust, commitment and cooperation within an organisation.

Investors in People selects the organisations that achieve the highest ratings in their assessments to be eligible for Champion status. The role of the Investors in People Champion is to share and promote best practice. They do this by delivering four best practice activities per year in the form of presentations, mentoring or hosting open days. They should encourage suppliers to work with Investors in People. The Investors in People logo should be used on company websites or newsletters and they are asked to contribute a case study. The new Health and Well-being Award is aimed at improving OSH performance in this area. Its framework encourages organisations to

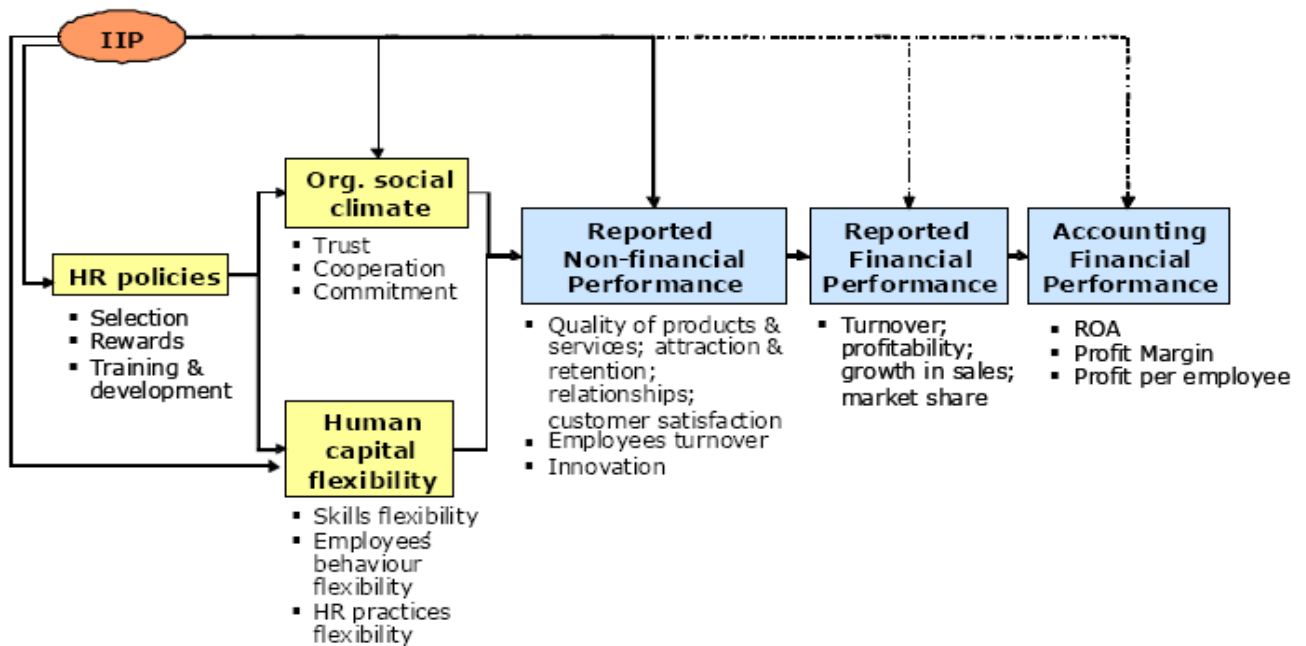
- Develop a health and well-being strategy involving workers and representative groups in the planning.

- Make resources available to meet health and well-being needs and ensure that workers' health and well-being is supported in an appropriate and fair way. This includes
  - a work–life balance strategy that meets the needs of the workforce
  - leadership and management strategies to ensure that managers have the competence and knowledge to support the health and well-being of the workers
  - regular discussions of health and well-being issues with workers
  - recognition and reward systems to show the value employers place on their workers
  - empowering workers by involving them in decision-making and taking their views into account
  - holding inductions that include information about the organisation's approach to health and well-being
  - measuring the impact of relevant factors on health and well-being
  - evaluation of measures so that improvements can be made and good practice shared and recognised.

**Evaluation**

Cranfield School of Management has carried out an extensive study of the impact of the Investors in People standard on business performance (Bourne et al, 2008). It analysed financial and economic performance data from Companies House, where all United Kingdom companies have to register their accounts, as well as case studies and a survey of over 400 companies. The research found that IiP sets up a chain of impact ending in better financial performance. Organisations that adopt the practices embedded in the IiP standard tend to adapt their HR policies and these create a positive organisational social climate with higher levels of trust, cooperation and people engagement. They also increase 'Human Capital Flexibility', the skills and behaviours needed for the organisation to change. The latter has an impact on non-financial performance. Their conclusion is that people perform better when they have clear goals and supportive HR practices. The IiP Standard has a positive impact on the achievement of the company's strategic goals. They have a positive effect on effective communication practices and an indirect effect on company profitability.

Figure 5: The IiP Standard and performance: the proposed framework



Source: Cranfield School of Management, 2008, p. 3

## 11 Annex 3 – Organisational examples

### 11.1 Belgium

#### Example 1: Improving control within teams

##### *Introduction*

Tyco Electronics in Oostkamp (Bruges area) is a division of an American multinational with 720 workers producing car parts. The company switched from the telecom sector to the automotive sector. This re-conversion led to a more knowledge-intensive enterprise. There is a diversity of age within the staff, with many young people and a large number of workers over 50 years old who will leave the company within the next 10 years. A company survey pointed out the need for increased worker responsibility and appreciation.

##### **Aims**

Tyco wanted to improve the control capacity of its teams.

##### **What was done, and how?**

The teams now carry out as many control tasks as possible. The team is collectively responsible for achieving a maximum level of quality and productivity and each team has responsibility for the quality of the product, costs, turnaround, tidiness, safety and human aspects. One of the team members acts as a team leader. Five teams are now operating directly under the head of department. As the head of department works the day shift he is not always available to his teams but he is ultimately responsible for the Key Performance Indicators and the long-term vision of his department. A 'supervisor' has been designated to coach, follow-up and motivate the team leaders and support the problem solving of the teams. The management and middle management have been included in a two-year awareness-raising process to make them sensitive to the need for change. Training sessions and personal guidance were used to train and coach the management towards the new organisation.

##### **What was achieved?**

The involvement of the workers and collaboration with co-workers in this pilot department has increased considerably. Due to the positive reactions and the results, the union representatives have asked that self-managing teams be implemented across the entire company. The company also has registered a 13% fall in sick leave in self-managed teams.

##### **Success factors**

- A bottom-up approach that included all workers, interviewing them on key issues regarding organisational development
- Inclusion of the workers' representatives in an early stage
- A pilot department was selected to serve as a benchmark for the rest of the company departments
- The end result was not a fixed and static outcome. The actions evolved around principles determined in conjunction with the workers. This was an important step in taking control of their own work and team.

##### **Further information**

Flanders Synergy, <http://www.flanderssynergy.be> ++32/(0)16/29 83 07, [info@flanderssynergy.be](mailto:info@flanderssynergy.be).

##### **Transferability**

The project is based on acknowledged principles of organisational development and change management, such as:

- Process driven organisation with teams as a fundamental key
- Including the people that feel the change: creating support on all levels, beginning with management and union representatives
- Investing the appropriate time and resources



- Effective communication and training support and guiding the workers in the change process.

## **Example 2: Enhancing communication**

### **Introduction**

Grontmij Industry Belgium is a multidisciplinary engineering company with approximately 300 employees. They design process and production installations and buildings for industrial companies. In recent years the company has grown significantly. Since 2000 the number of workstations has doubled, leading to calls for a more formal and structured approach in order to facilitate and guarantee an efficient and flexible client service. Clients are increasingly requesting global solutions for their problems, which calls for new forms of cooperation and communication.

### **Aims**

The aims of engaging with Flanders Synergy were twofold: getting 'closer' to the client, so that employees would be able to relate more to the client's problems and challenges. In some cases this has to be understood literally: workers will work at the client's premises. Secondly, structural attention is devoted to competence development. This is not only important in ensuring that the worker feels challenged; it will also be crucial in enabling the company to stay competitive in the long run.

### **What was done, and how?**

The company changed from being a matrix organisation to one that was more process-orientated. The change process was developed step by step, starting in 2006–2007 (Phase 1) with the staffing of the units and the appointment of coaches responsible for knowledge development and standardisation. Role, tasks and responsibilities and competences were defined. A questionnaire was used to get the employees' opinions and ensure their involvement. Phase 2, named Prometheus (2008–2009), was dedicated to the training of the collaborators and knowledge sharing.

The following measures were taken:

- A new system with procedures regarding self-management was developed.
- A new system of knowledge sharing was launched.
- A system of experts was developed functioning as a contact point for colleagues and various types of technical training.

The company put additional investment into training for new managers who came from a more technical background. Every department and discipline now has a coach and the employees are monitored regarding competences. An 'evolution interview' goes deeper into the desires and potential of the individual worker. The third phase will be carried out during 2010–2011. This phase will focus on the development of the units into self-managing teams.

### **What was achieved?**

Communication and involvement with the client has increased, leading to greater transparency in the relationship between client and company. The second part is still in progress but seems promising. It has led to good economic results. The organisation is able to launch new departments to deal with emerging market segments.

### **Success factors**

- Process-driven change in the organisation with teams as a fundamental key
- Investing the appropriate time and resources
- There was clear support from management
- Communication and training were crucial during the entire process.
- Bottom-up approach that included all workers via an employee satisfaction survey.

### **Further information**

Flanders Synergy, <http://www.flanderssynergy.be>, ++32/(0)16/29 83 07, [info@flanderssynergy.be](mailto:info@flanderssynergy.be).

## Transferability

The project is based on acknowledged principles of organisational development and change management and can be transferred to other organisations with similar organisational challenges.

## 11.2 Bulgaria

### Example 3 – Eliminating risk of occupational diseases

#### Introduction

KCM S.A. Plovdiv operates in the non-ferrous metallurgy sector and has Bulgaria's largest lead and zinc smelter. Work in this sector implies high risks in terms of employees' health. The company embarked on a policy to promote a management approach that was focused more on the employees' health than on the profit motive.

#### Aims

One of the major goals of the company was to attempt to eliminate the risks of occupational diseases among its employees through improved OSH performance. The aim was healthier workplaces, reduced costs for the employees' medical fund and a slowdown in workers leaving for jobs in safer and healthier industrial sectors.

#### What was done, and how?

The company initiated an important health promotion programme entitled 'Koprivkite, Rodopi Park', dedicated to the physical rehabilitation of employees facing high risks to their health at the workplace. Adequate medical care including physical therapy procedures and rehabilitation techniques were provided as part of this programme. The programme takes a preventive approach as it is meant to promote regular employees' health surveys, focused mainly on workers from the most exposed workplaces. The natural environmental framework of the Rodopi Park smelter and the investments made by the company in terms of modern medical facilities and highly qualified personnel contributed to the success of the programme.

#### What was achieved?

The above programme resulted in healthier employees, less sick leave, higher staff motivation and increased stabilisation of the workforce.

#### Success factors

The key success factor was the management commitment to make considerable investments in the employees' health, e.g. modern medical facilities and equipment, and highly qualified medical personnel familiar with the work-related risks present in the company.

#### Further information

[www.kcm.bg](http://www.kcm.bg)

#### Transferability

The programme implied significant costs both in terms of medical endowments and equipment, qualified personnel and employees' health rehabilitation programmes. On the other hand, a cost-benefit analysis showed that the investments made in staff health resulted in higher productivity, motivated and stable workers, and higher production parameters. Therefore, adapted models can be applied to other companies confronted with similar employee health risks.

## 11.3 France

### Example 4 – Integrating people and processes

#### Introduction

Valéo Reims is a group of companies in the automotive sector. The company would like to increase its production capacity while reducing manufacturing costs. Three production lines are involved in the project. They sought the intervention of ANACT to partner them in the project. Two major areas for intervention were chosen: the integration of human and social dimensions in a technical project and anticipating future work activities.

#### Aims

The aims are to ensure compatibility between the technical system and the specifics of the work activities.

#### What was done, and how?

A project manager carried out studies based on interviews with different people: staff responsible for quality, methods, HR, training and safety coordination. This integrated approach allows the development of a shared vision of the project, to better take into account the safety aspects and health, training and development of skills, which were not integrated into the project at first due to a lack of time. A joint committee with worker representatives was launched to hear their expectations and inform them on the progress of the project. Ad hoc working groups focused on specific questions including the necessary equipment and staff competences.

#### What was achieved?

No specific information or figures were found concerning the detailed results of the intervention project. The project leader acknowledged that the integration of OSH, training and competence aspects in the investment project reduced the OSH risks and costs attributable to absenteeism or a disorganised workplace. This has facilitated the start-up of the new installations within the planned time frame and improved the quality of the social relations.

As projects were in different phases of progress, the last project could benefit from the lessons learned during the first two projects.

#### Success factors

The joint committee with worker representatives was crucial to include the feedback of the workforce at an early stage of the project.

The consultation between project team and the interventions has led to the adjustment of some of the planned interventions. There have been compromises between the challenges of the modernisation process and the improvement of the working conditions. Simulations of the new work situation were carried out to investigate how to improve the work organisation.

The external support of ANACT served as a ‘thread’ ensuring consistency throughout the process.

#### Further information

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#### Transferability

The approach could be transferable across sectors dealing with production lines and with a strong presence of worker representatives.

### Example 5 – Improving workplace ergonomics

#### Introduction

MCA-Renault in Maubeuge launched a process to improve their workplace ergonomics and working conditions.

## Aims

The aim was to ergonomically improve all workstations taking into account the ageing workforce and the expectations of the workers. All workstations had to be reorganised. All parties were consulted during the design phase. The company aimed at conciliating company performance with well-being at work. The motivation of the staff is considered extremely important to stay competitive with other enterprises in the automotive sector.

## What was done, and how?

The company initiated a participatory process including operational units as well as management, physician, social partners and ergonomists. The workers' perceptions of the workplace were studied and an ergonomic analysis of the workplace was carried out.

## What was achieved?

An observatory was created where representatives of the management as well as the workers discussed progress every two months to create transparency. All workstations were changed according to different needs. Thanks to these measures, the working conditions of the workers improved and the company performance has been maintained. The process has led to an improved accountability of workers and increased quality of processes.

## Success factors

- Inclusion of all stakeholders.
- A participatory inquiry of the workers at the workplace, combined with an ergonomic analysis of the actual workstation.
- Observatory monitoring the progress.

## Further information

ANACT, Béatrice Sarazin, +33 4 72 56 13 13

## Transferability

The approach could be transferred to other factories wanting to carry out an ergonomic intervention process.

## 11.4 Hungary

### Example 6 – Improving OSH performance through labour relations

#### Introduction

Gedeon Richter Group is the leading pharmaceutical company in central/eastern Europe with more than 100 years' experience in the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector. The company's products are distributed in over 100 countries through its own distribution network. Given the profile of the company, most of its activities imply the use of dangerous chemicals. Therefore, health and safety at work constitutes a key point within the company's senior management policy in order to eliminate/minimise the risks arising from these potential hazards. The case study mainly focuses on a particular OSH performance and labour relations innovation within Gedeon Richter Group, namely an **Equitable Labour Protection Board** that functions at the highest levels of the organisation.

#### Aims

'Safety culture' plays a crucial role in the management policy, which provides a series of innovative approaches. Some of these innovative approaches are meant to improve the OSH performance to ensure safer workplaces and a healthier workforce. Labour relations approaches are meant to encourage greater worker involvement in the company decision-making processes. Meanwhile, the continuous improvement of the network relations approaches is promoted by the company management given the large number of its distributors in over 100 countries, the implications of its activity profile on the community and environmental issues, as well as the relations with its customers.

### What was done, and how?

**OSH performance:** the company activity involves the use of dangerous chemicals, thus implying high responsibility in order to minimise the risks arising from these potential hazards, both on behalf of the management and on each of the workers at their workplace. The company OSH policy is not directly oriented to innovation in this area but the management commitment to constantly improve the working conditions has resulted in innovative approaches such as: increasing the 'responsibility of the work supervisors to become familiar with the risks of a given job and to manage and oversee work processes accordingly'; encouraging the workers to demand safer workplaces and working conditions; having members of the Work Safety Committee elected rather than appointed by the management.

**Labour relations approaches:** the Equitable Labour Protection Board is an innovative aspect within Gedeon Richter Group. It numbers eight regular members (four from the employer and an equal number representing the employees). Its role is to provide better communication between the workers and the employer, and to ensure effective participation by employees in the senior management decision-making process. **Network relations approaches:** Gedeon Richter Group is heavily involved in implementing innovative approaches in the relations with its suppliers, subcontractors, distributors and the community members. Strong concern is shown for environmental issues and the company states that: 'Richter Gedeon takes its responsibility to protect the environment very seriously indeed. Environmental considerations are an integral part of decision-making processes, and the focus is always on prevention.'

### What was achieved?

Safer workplaces in the area of the pharmaceutical sector confronted with high chemical risks; healthier and motivated employees; an environmental friendly presence within the community; better results in terms of productivity and turnover obtained by the company.

### Success factors:

- Senior management constant commitment in adopting innovative management approaches, particularly as regards employees' involvement in almost all the decision-making processes;
- Employees' increased awareness and responsibility on the workplace related risks;
- The particular concern on environmental and community issues.

### Further information

Richter Gedeon Nyrt, Budapest 10, Pf. 27. H-1475, Hungary

**Transferability:** Gedeon Richter Group represents a realistic model of risk management and innovative approaches for other undertakings, especially as the statistics and a cost-benefit balance have demonstrated the benefits of its approaches.

## 11.5 Ireland

Ireland's National Workplace Strategy has pinpointed workplace innovation as a priority area. A High Level Implementation Group has been established to oversee the implementation of the Workplace Strategy. Strand 1 of the Workplace Innovation Fund provides approximately €6 million for workplace innovation initiatives for small and medium-sized enterprises in the private sector. The fund is designed to help Irish firms improve their productivity and performance through greater levels of employee involvement and engagement. It is co-managed by Enterprise Ireland and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance. Their website provides a number of case studies where the fund has been used to make organisation change.

## Example 7 – Using partnerships

### Introduction

Tegral Metal Forming Ltd is part of the trans-national ETEX group based in County Kildare and employs 80 people. Its main activities include cold steel forming and supplying steel roofing, cladding and flooring products, mainly to the Irish market.

### Aims

The company relies heavily on overtime working, and the introduction of the EU Working Time Directive and a number of other factors caused it to take stock. It needed to find a new way of working.

### What was done, and how?

The company brought together representatives from management and unions, including external union officials, into a partnership forum. They established a steering group of eight key union and management decision-makers and various joint task teams to tackle specific issues highlighted by the steering group. The literature does not make it clear what those specific issues are. An external facilitator was employed initially but his role reduced as the partnership developed and the steering group became confident enough to take over the role. One team looked at the strategy for making use of its scrap, another at a new IT system. On the basis of this process they went on to develop a team-based system across the plant and agreed a pay system based on skills levels. The company has also networked with other companies involved with the workforce innovation programme. They introduced four Key Performance Indicators for the teams including cost per tonne (productivity), hours lost (safety), customer complaints (quality) and delivery time (customer service). Changes made included contact with other companies in work organisation initiatives. Overtime has been mostly eliminated in the plant and length of working week decreased for most employees, leading to a significant improvement in quality of life. Managers and union representatives spend less time on industrial relations issues. The company has implemented an Enterprise Resource Planning system, the costs of the organisation have been stabilised and employees have input into their work including flexibility, an innovation gain-sharing arrangement and reduced hours of work.

### What was achieved?

The employees had a significant say in the organisation of their workplace. Quality of life has improved for employees as the length of the working week has decreased for most employees and overtime is no longer the norm.

**Success factors** – Created a steering group to drive the initiatives forward within the company.

**Further information** – [www.ncpp.ie/nws](http://www.ncpp.ie/nws)

**Transferability** – This approach can be transferred to most production environments seeking to put self-managing teams in place.

## Example 8 – Self-managing teams

### Introduction

Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd is one of Ireland's main food companies, employing 3,100 people. It focuses on dairy products such as cheese, butters, milk powders and ingredients, beef, pork, agricultural products such as fertilisers, feeds and farm requisites and its own chain of retail coop stores.

### Aims

It needed to improve its working relationship with other parts of the business.

### What was done, and how?

The group sought to develop a range of partnership type initiatives. One such partnership was at the Galtee Meats pork processing plant in Mitchelstown employing 420 people. Management and unions developed an initiative to create a self-managed work team to manage and run the maintenance function within the plant rather than reducing the size of the maintenance workforce.

The team has responsibility for budgeting, planning work and liaising with production. They can schedule their holidays and working hours within certain constraints. They have a team leader who negotiates the annual maintenance budget with management. The financial savings on budget are shared between the company and employees. Since the introduction of this initiative:

- The employees have come in below budget every year whilst doubling performance.
- Employees have more control over their own work.
- There has been only one disciplinary problem in the last ten years within the group.
- Employees are more discerning about how they spend their resources, with training courses they attend being assessed for the added value they bring to the group.

The initiative has been extended to other parts of the organisation and these partnership-type arrangements have led to a number of benefits including:

- Facilitating organisation change towards enhanced performance in particular business areas.
- Promoted adaptability and flexibility as a key to business success
- Introduced structured gain-sharing/productivity agreements
- Assistance in guaranteeing security of employment in competitive markets
- Increased employee involvement and the ability to influence business decisions.

#### **What was achieved?**

The employees have come in below budget every year and have doubled productivity in the last ten years whilst employing just one additional worker. The maintenance manager has been able to concentrate on more strategic issues. The workers benefit financially from their efficiency measures. The group looks more closely at whether any training courses they attend will add value. In the last ten years they have only experienced one disciplinary problem within the group.

Further information – [www.ncpp.ie.nws](http://www.ncpp.ie.nws)

**Transferability** – This approach can be transferred to most production environments seeking to put self-managing teams in place.

## **11.6 Romania**

### **Example 9 – Increasing Worker Participation**

#### **Introduction**

HeidelbergCement Group has been present on the Romanian cement market since 1998, following the purchase of Bicaz Cement Factory. In 2002 the group became the cement market leader in Romania. During the early years, a significant number of work accidents occurred. In 1999, 19 work accidents were reported (two of which were fatal) and 1,483 days of sick leave were registered. From 2000 to 2003, significant improvements were made in terms of OSH but the situation was still far from ideal. The major change came in 2004, with the amalgamation of the three cement factories of the Group into Carpatcement Holding and the implementation of a single OSH management system at Group level. At present, Carpatcement Holding has 900 employees.

#### **Aims**

In the view of the company's senior management, the major goal was the elimination/reduction of the workplace-related risks and work accidents, fewer sickness absences and a healthier workforce. Other aims were: better communication between all levels of the company management and the employees, increased worker participation in the decision-making process on OSH, and improved well-being at work.

#### **What was done, and how?**

On the initiative of the senior management, a single **OSH policy** was drawn up for all the undertakings of the Group within an integrated management system. This policy started with an updated risk assessment of all workplaces and detailed record-keeping of all the work accidents/incidents and

occupational diseases that occurred. An ambitious goal was set: 'zero work accidents'. The management team realised that to reach this goal there was a need for major changes in terms of OSH responsibilities and procedures. OSH performance was significantly improved due to considerable investments in modern technologies and equipment, interactive OSH training, and enhanced attention to young workers' training and career opportunities. Employee motivation was enhanced by switching the emphasis from the observance of safety measures at work to self-motivated safety behaviour. Electronic monitoring panels were mounted in each of the sections for registering work accidents/incidents and the number of days' sick leave per section. The sections with the best results were rewarded and their outcomes discussed at the senior management meetings also attended by workers' representatives. The employees were further motivated through contests on OSH topics and the sections/employees with the best results won prizes such as household appliances and trips.

#### **What was achieved?**

The company's consistent policy on OSH and the prevention measures introduced have resulted in a drop in the number of work accidents in all units of Carpatcement Holding since 2004. The most important result for the company was that, for two consecutive years, 2006 and 2007, no work accident occurred and thus the major priority objective of the company, 'zero work accidents', was attained. Alongside the improvement in the quality of products and safer workplaces, a series of improved work organisation approaches can be mentioned. These included team working, encouraged by employees' increased responsibility and motivation, increased awareness of workplace-related risks, better training and skills. Progress in labour relations was seen through increased workers' participation in the OSH decision-making process at all levels, with employees able to discuss any concerns openly and/or make suggestions on the improvement of working conditions and the work tasks.

#### **Success factors**

In this case, the senior management initiative played a crucial role as it constantly encouraged improvement in OSH based on increased employee participation in the decision processes on OSH and motivated working behaviour. Their creativity in providing incentives and awards helped motivate employees to improve safety and health at work.

#### **Further information**

<http://www.heidelbergcement>

#### **Transferability**

This approach can be successfully applied to similar undertakings, as the key factor for success in this company was its human resources policy. Without this, the investments made in modern technology and equipment are unlikely to have resulted in the expected outcomes.

## **11.7 United Kingdom**

### **Example 10 – Managing sick leave**

#### **Introduction**

The Investors in People website provides access to 100 case studies (for information about this programme see Annex 2). This example comes from Brent Council, which is a Local Authority Borough of London. Brent employs over 5,000 people and provides services to around 280,000 residents.

**Aims:** One of the primary aims of engaging with Investors in People was to create a healthier workplace. In 2003 Brent had been recognised as having one of the worst rates of sick leave in the public sector in the United Kingdom with an average of 12 days' sick leave taken per worker per year.



### **What was done, and how?**

A team of experienced human resource advisers was appointed and people management systems and processes were put in place across the Council. Each department worked towards accreditation to Investors in People so that they could focus on those issues that were of concern to them, which in turn gave them a greater sense of ownership. Overall, there was an improvement in internal communications so all workers had a greater understanding of council issues; departmental, team and individual objectives were clearly aligned to Council strategic aims; a new approach to performance appraisal was taken and central training initiatives were developed. The Council also introduced Staff Achievement Awards whereby people could be nominated for an award, either by colleagues or members of the public. By 2004, the Council had achieved corporate recognition under the programme and it had its first review in 2007. Brent also took part in the pilot Health and Well-being at Work framework. As part of this framework they took a new approach to managing sick leave, including clear policies on flexible working and training for managers on how to have difficult conversations about sickness absence. Brent Council's work-life balance initiative provides a range of flexible working options such as compressed hours, flexitime, part-time working, time off in lieu, home working and job sharing, and is open to anyone who wishes to pursue sports, hobbies, studies or religious commitments. The initiative is also aligned with the Council's diversity policy. In addition, all specialist training budgets have been centralised and a high-level training team appointed. Learning and development planning is integrated with business planning.

### **What was achieved and how**

By 2006, absence levels had fallen to 8 days a year, putting Brent ahead of the local government average in London of 10.6 days off sick and a national local government average of 11.6 days. A recent staff survey found two-thirds of workers were proud to tell people they worked for Brent and the same percentage agreed that they had a strong sense of loyalty towards the Council. The number of industrial tribunal cases has fallen. The Council regularly wins external awards including one for its approach to e-learning and another for its approach to flexible working. The changes to the Council's approach to training and development have led to 'considerable cost savings', although they have not been able to provide precise information as to the scale of savings. However, Brent has one of the lowest council tax levels in outer London and the Council has met all government efficiency targets.

### **Success factors**

Strong leadership by senior management contributed to their success.

### **Further information**

[www.investorsinpeople.co.uk](http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk)

### **Transferability**

Their approach is transferable across public sector organisations, or organisations with a bureaucratic structure.

### **Example 11 – Improving worker participation**

#### **Introduction**

Another example of a company that has used Investors in People as a framework is AMEY. AMEY provides integrated public services from defence and health to transportation and education. It has been in business since 1920 and operates from 200 different sites across the United Kingdom employing over 10,000 people. It was acquired by the Spanish conglomerate Ferrovial in 2003 and has gone through a period of significant growth, with a turnover in 2008/9 of £1.5 billion, up 15% from 2006/7.

#### **Aims**

AMEY saw achieving the Investors in People Standard as an integral part of their overall employee engagement strategy. Their belief was that 'engaged people will result in increased productivity and reduced labour turnover'. They wanted to ensure that all parts of the business operated to the same standards and that all employees regardless of where they were based within the company would benefit from the same opportunities. It provided AMEY with a mechanism to give workers an

opportunity to provide feedback to managers about what was working and what was not working and coming up with solutions to improve the work environment. AMEY's customers were also asking for IIP accreditation in their tender documents as a pre-qualifier and having Investors in People meant that AMEY could tender for opportunities that they might otherwise not be able to.

#### **What was done, and how?**

The company developed approximately 40 Champions across the business who could then promote and achieve the standard. They also created a network of employee engagement champions to drive any initiatives forward within the company. AMEY also developed a number of initiatives on the basis of the staff feedback the company received. One of the initiatives was to help identify employees with more to offer the business (Talent Tracker Programme).

#### **What was achieved?**

There has been a 'dramatic' increase in the number of employees who feel actively engaged in the business. In the latest survey over 80% of staff surveyed said they felt engaged with the business. Between 2007 and 2009 there was a 14% increase in the number of employees who agree with the statement 'I have good opportunities to learn and develop at AMEY'. AMEY believe higher levels of employee satisfaction have played a 'significant role in reducing both the levels of staff turnover and absenteeism' Voluntary staff turnover across the Group fell from 16% in 2007 to under 10% in 2009, with savings in recruitment and training costs. They have also identified reductions in absenteeism, which has fallen from 3.4% of employee days lost in 2008 to just 2.7% in 2009, and seen high levels of growth. AMEY met its 2009 order book target after only six months.

#### **Success factors**

- Integrating Investors in People into its employee engagement strategy.
- Developing 40 champions.
- Putting in place network champions to drive the initiative forward and increase employee engagement with the process, creating a culture that encourages constructive feedback and innovation.

#### **Further information**

[www.investorsinpeople.co.uk](http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk)

#### **Transferability**

The approach taken by the IIP Standard is adopted by a range of industries and sectors.

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