

Editorial

Richard Ennals

Editor in Chief

The sudden Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the influx of millions of refugees into other European countries, with major economic and social implications, has prompted fresh reflections on what it is to be “European”. This umbrella label covers citizens of many countries, with different political circumstances. We have in common our history of opposition to totalitarianism and top-down command and control. Our preference is for peace, dialogue, and bottom-up initiatives.

The *European Journal of Workplace Innovation* (EJWI) has contributors and readers around the world and takes a pluralist editorial approach. Issue 7.1 comprises articles from Europe. Issue 7.2 largely comprises articles from outside Europe.

Taking the countries represented by contributors to EJWI 7.1, Norway did not join the European Union, but is a member of NATO. The UK left the EU but continues in NATO. Sweden and Finland are members of the EU, but not of NATO. The Netherlands and Spain are members of both the EU and of NATO.

European countries, despite these different circumstances, have in common a commitment to self-determination, independence and democracy, which take varied political forms. That also affects approaches to work, employment and society, with varied national traditions of industrialisation and social partnership. There was a strong tradition of Industrial Democracy in Norway, which was not matched in the UK. The European Commission developed EU policy on Partnership for the Organisation of Work, Social Partnership and Social Dialogue. EJWI Issue 7.1 provides insights into some of the debates and reveals shared principles.

“Workplace Innovation”, with strong roots in Europe, and growing interest internationally, is increasingly a focus for workplace practice and development, as well as for theory and policy making. It has brought together previously distinct national traditions of research and practice, building an ongoing process of dialogue, in which we seek to “learn from differences”. In this issue, we do not try to provide a single precise definition of Workplace Innovation. Rather, we can identify the emergence of a common language and a set of shared concepts, which are used across borders of countries and sectors. We realise how much we have in common, as we face new global challenges.

In previous issues of EJWI, we have published accounts of a number of managed national programmes in the field of Workplace Innovation, including Sweden, Norway, Germany,

Finland and Scotland. Each provides the basis for lessons to be learned in other countries, and for possible future programmes at a European level.

In a detailed study at national level in Finland, with lessons for possible future EU funded programmes, Tuomo Alasoini reports on a major managed programme of workplace development in Finland: one of a series of such programmes in Finland. How do programmes cope when policy objectives change?

This programme is then evaluated by Steven Dhondt from the Netherlands, who argues the case for such public investments. Steven leads a number of collaborative projects in the Netherlands and in the EU Horizon Europe programme.

Perhaps the most interesting articles in this issue present particular workplace cases, and academic perspectives across Europe. They suggest that since EJWI 1.1 was published in 2015, there has been a culture change in European workplaces, which provides evidence of some positive results from a movement to develop Workplace Innovation.

Garazi Carranza, Giacomom Petrini, Begofia Sanchez and Oihane De La Rúa consider the comprehensive application of Workplace Innovation in the management of Spanish railways. There are clearly implications for transport system across Europe.

Three articles, from different Nordic countries and academic disciplines, show how the culture of Workplace Innovation provides common links and academic references, spanning previously distinct traditions.

Øystein Tønnessen explores employee creativity in coworking spaces in Norway. His systematic literature review, covering publications over 15 years, highlights synergies in recent alternative approaches. I am reminded of research in the UK on “Healthy Working Centres” in 2003, when lack of trust by managers stood in the way of developing coworking spaces. The advent of the Covid pandemic since 2020 has brought major change.

Linda Lidman, Maria Gustavsson and Anna Fogelberg Eriksson discuss approaches to managing Workplace Innovation, with three cases in the Swedish public sector. Managers in the public sector recognise that they have to learn to combine exploration and exploitation, in order to be innovative.

Salla Karima, Satu Uuslautti and Kaarina Määttä look ahead, and define the core of successful millennial leadership in Finland, through detailed interviews. The paradigm of Workplace Innovation seems to fit the needs and aspirations of young managers and business leaders. We can see how the process of culture change can continue, with a new balance between technological and organisational issues.

EJWI works in close association with the European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN), which links partners in ten countries in a self-financing organisation, with members from across Europe, combining researchers and practitioners.

The Discussion Forum section in this issue includes publication of the EUWIN Manifesto, authored by members of the EUWIN Board. The manifesto aims to set out a collective position, based on long and extensive practical experience, and linked to processes of policy development which is intended to set the scene for continued collaboration in Europe. Workplace Innovation is viewed as central to European policy, and a key source of European collaborative advantage in the context of the global economy. EJWI and EUWIN will welcome responses.

We recognise that there is no “one best way”, within this new paradigm of work and society, in which collaboration is valued, as well as the pursuit of competitive advantage. We have learned to respect alternative perspectives and traditions, with diverse patterns of argument. Self-determination is a shared value, operating at many levels: individuals, organisations, regions, nations and the EU. There are common frameworks, such as Socio-Technical Systems Thinking and Human-Centredness, which provide a common language and set of concepts. We have a shared humanity in difficult times: together we can hope to bring about improvement in our one fragile world.