

## Discussion Forum

# The Swedish Platform for Sustainable Work in Horizon2020: in retrospect

**Elisabeth Lagerlöf**

**Maria Albin**

## Abstract

The nationwide Swedish advocacy platform “Sustainable work as a resource for health, innovation and growth” started in 2013, with the aims of i) identifying possible openings for the research area within Horizon 2020, ii) implementing a strategy to impact Horizon2020, and iii) to connect Swedish and European researchers. The basis for this agenda was that, although work and working conditions have a major influence on the health, wellbeing and prosperity, these aspects were lacking or extremely fragmented in Horizon2020. Since this is a strong research area in Sweden, and seen as strategically important by the Social partners, it should be a Swedish priority for Horizon2020. The initiative was funded by Vinnova, co-funded by the participating universities, and supported by the Social partners and other stakeholders. The platform has extended the dialogue on the European research agenda within the Swedish research community, and gradually built a strategy to impact H2020. Over the years, our advocacy has also developed in interaction with the EU Agencies Eurofound and EU-OSHA, and with PEROSH. The focus has been on the pillars of Leadership and Societal Challenges (Horizon2020). The impact on the early calls in Horizon2020 was minor, while work and working life is much more visible in the later calls, and on the agenda in the drafts for Horizon Europe (FP9). The focus will now be on making the opportunities known to Swedish researchers, and on facilitating participation in applications.

**Keywords:** sustainable health, occupational safety and health, work environment, working life, H2020 impact

## Introduction

Horizon 2020, the EU research and innovation programme for 2014 - 2020, was a mind-bending encounter for the European research society. Instead of the thematic approach used in previous EU Frameworks for Research and Innovation, the H2020 programmes was presented as Challenges to drive economic growth and create jobs, and thus was an investment in EU's future. It was placed at the centre of the EU's blueprint for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth and jobs, *Europe 2020*.

In 2013, a strategy for increasing the Swedish participation in H2020 was developed by Vinnova, the Swedish Innovation Agency. Through financing national advocacy platforms, they wanted to stimulate mobilisation and co-operation between different Swedish actors with common visions, goals and to formulate causes to position strong Swedish research areas on the European level.

The focus of the platforms was to have an impact on upcoming Work Programmes (WPs) in H2020, and enable the actors to network and co-operate in the competition about Calls. This should be done by presenting EU relevant and convincing Swedish proposals, either by themselves or together with partners in Europe.

A group of Swedish researchers applied for the funding of a platform on *Sustainable work as a resource for health, innovation, and growth*. The aim for the trial term of six months were

- Highlighting key research areas applicable to different “windows” in H2020
- Outlining a roadmap for an advocacy strategy on national and European level and a framework for an advocacy platform
- Identify other EU-funding possibilities for research and implementation of sustainable work

The long-term aim of the platform was to

- contribute to the inclusion of research about sustainable work, as a resource for health, innovation, and growth, in H2020
- strengthen the co-operation between strong research environments within the research field and the social partners and other actors in Sweden and abroad
- promote synergy and co-operation between OSH-research, sustainable work and innovation models in private and public environments
- create possibilities for interdisciplinary science meeting places in the public and private sectors, and strengthen the Swedish research for applications of EU-funding

## Sustainable work - a strong Swedish research area

The research focus of the platform on sustainable work was based on the concept of Good Workplace; a research tradition that started decades ago in Sweden. Already in 2009, during the Swedish EU Presidency, the two main work life research funding agencies, FAS Research Council and Vinnova, organised an international conference that resulted in a joint declaration:

“European policymakers need to include sustainable work systems and work-oriented innovation in the growth strategy if Europe 2020 visions is to be achievable. However, this is not sufficient; policymakers together with enterprises have to create the conditions under which more advanced forms of workplace innovation will occur on a large scale.” (FAS 2009)

To include sustainable work research in H2020 should be an important resource for health, innovation and growth in EU. A healthy working environment includes important factors that contribute to growth, value processing and development, and has importance for long-term competitiveness. A bad work environment does not only lead to losses of production and thus great costs for companies and businesses, but also generates ill health, loss of income and loss of quality of life for the individual, as well as long-term social costs and a burden on social security, most of which will harm already socioeconomically vulnerable groups.

To drive economic growth, it is not enough to create job, without taking into consent how the concepts of work and jobs has changed. By creating not only jobs, but also sustainable work, could be a resource for health, innovation and growth.

Sustainable work is a generic policy concept to describe the dynamic fit between employees and working conditions. Underpinned by a commitment to promote continual growth and regeneration of human, social, economic and ecological resources, sustainable work promotes health, wellbeing, learning and influence. See article in this issue by K. Abrahamsson: “Sustainable work in transition. Policy background, concepts, and research arenas”.

Thus, the *first* aim of the platform was to boost work environment research in a broad sense (including accidents, chemical and physical health risk, ergonomics, psychosocial factors) based on prevention. Swedish research on working environment was at that time, together with the other Nordic countries, among the most prominent research centres in this field. However, few projects were EU-funded.

*Secondly*, research was needed on the organisation of work, productivity, and performance, both in Sweden and in other European countries. Important was also to better understand the dynamic relation between co-determination and the social dialog, the digitalisation of work, and factors that drive innovation. There was a need to analyse and strengthen the basic conditions for a prolonged working life. The Nordic countries also had a long tradition of

comparative studies on work, welfare and health. Furthermore, there was substantial experience of research on work organisation, workers co-determination and involvement.

*Thirdly*, even though sustainable working life was strategically important both for the Swedish Social partners, and Government, the Swedish national report about the content of H2020 did not at all cover this research field. However, sustainable work was emphasised in the European Innovation Strategy, and also by the EU Social partners.

*Fourthly*, since the Swedish National Institute for Working life was abolished in 2006, no national institution existed for this research area. The researchers at the Institute were transferred to smaller university units all over Sweden (with a 3-year grant). Many of the senior researchers at the Institute were in the age group of 60+, and when they retired, no means for replacements were granted by the government. This had resulted in a lack of leading research profiles, a reduction of the total funding in this field and the number of international contacts, networks and collaboration projects had decreased. The research had become more discipline-oriented, and thus there were fewer big interdisciplinary projects.

Thus, it was timely to apply to Vinnova for an advocacy platform. The platform could be an important tool to promote synergy and co-operation in the research area of sustainable work and health. A network platform was based on four working life research University centres in Umeå, Gävle, Stockholm and Lund, which also co-founded the platform. A consortium was also formed with the Social partners and some representatives for private and public enterprises. Hence the platform structure could provide good opportunities to position national interests in relation to H2020, as well as to coordinate national actors and interests in order to tie in at a European level.

## The roadmap to an advocacy strategy

The grant was approved in October 2013. The main target for the platform in H2020 was the work programme of the Societal Challenge *Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing*. It was too late to influence the focus areas of this topic, but the proposed Calls were described in a rather open way, and it could be important that terms relevant for work were included. Proposals were sent to include words such as “labour” and “work environment” in the different Calls and thus the platform did have some impact on the final Calls.

When the other WPs were presented, the platform carried out a detailed search for openings of sustainable work and health. In many of them a few specific Calls could be found that might cover our field of research, see figure 1. But further explorations of the Specific Challenges of each Call showed that the Calls were rather narrow in scope (covered only factory work, but not the service sectors, or that health risks of new technologies were not included, e.g., nanotechnology, biotechnology).



Figure 1. Horizon2020 programme sections and specific programmes of interest for Sustainable work (SWH) based on a picture by the European Commission.

The *first* step in our advocacy strategy was to identify the decision-making process of H2020, both at national and EU level. Independent experts from the member states assist the Commission with tasks in connection with H2020. First the focus areas of a programme are decided by experts in an Advisory Group, and then the work programme is decided by a Programme Committee: both with a member from all member states.

Then every Member State also have a Committee for each programme with additional experts. Every programme also has a National Focal Point to give advice about the specific programme. Grants offices to help with H2020 applications were organised at the larger Swedish universities.

The platform had a resource demanding task to identify the organisations, relevant experts and members of the Swedish as well as the Commissions H2020 Programme Committees, since the broad research area of the Platform covered many programmes. The absence of a Swedish national institution with close contacts with government experts and the Social partners did not improve the situation.

The *second* step was to identify and contact European researchers and organisations with interest in sustainable health. At European level, contacts were identified in relevant European network, such as the newly started European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN), but also with other EU-funded networks, such as "Work-In-Net" and "ERA-OSH". Contacts were also made with the Partnership for European Research and Occupational Safety and Health (PEROSH), a federation of fourteen European OSH-institutes in thirteen Member States. Important contacts in European institutions, such as DG Research, DG Employment, DG Sante, DG Research, and DG Connect, were also identified.

The *third* step of importance for the advocacy work was to provide an overview of on-going working life research in Sweden, Nordic and other EU countries. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) in Bilbao was of great help, since they just had carried out a review of current occupational and safety (OSH) research areas and highlighted new emerging risks. One representative from the platform was invited to their conference in October 2013 and presented the aims of the platform. Both EU-OSHA and Eurofound (the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) welcomed the Swedish initiative, since both Agencies had worked intensively for the inclusion of research on working life and work environment in H2020.

Based on our information the platform decided on the following roadmap to H2020:



Figure 2. The initial advocacy strategy

The Swedish Social partners endorsed the platform and offered possibilities for intervention research as well as support to implement the results at the workplaces. The platform also had assistance from the Swedish Work Environment Authority, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, as well as the Swedish Association of the Swedish Engineering Industries.

## Platform activities 2014 - 2016 and the impact on Work Programmes 2016-2018

The application about the prolonged platform to Vinnova for 2014 to 2016 was approved. The main activities were aimed at three programmes:

- Industrial leadership: Nanotech, materials, manufacturing and processing, and biotechnology

- Societal Challenge no 1: Health, demographic change and wellbeing
- Societal Challenge no 6: Europe in a Changing World - Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies.

The main advocacy approach was via Swedish contacts, but also via joint approaches with the European research community, and the EU Agencies responsible for sustainable work issues. A website was developed for the platform to inform about focus areas, work programmes, upcoming Calls in H2020, as well as conferences and meetings of importance for researchers interested in H2020.

The platform had a good relationship with the experts of the national Programme Committee on *Health, demographic change and wellbeing*, and had the possibility already from start to send them proposals regarding the draft versions both for the WP 2015 and 2016- 2018 WP. In addition, the platform exchanged these proposals with other European researchers to try to co-ordinate the input. The proposals were well received by research institutions in Denmark, Spain and the UK, and the comments were forwarded, as their own, to their national Programme Committees.

In collaboration with the EU-OSHA, the platform took part in the development of three “Position Papers”, which were sent to the Commission describing high risk areas in need of research. In addition, the platform proposed a focus area for 2016-2018 “Europe at Work: sustainability, productivity and human growth” to the Swedish Ministry in Education and Research in co-operation with the Grant office at Lund University.

The purpose of the collaboration with different networks, both in Sweden and EU, was to gather information, and contribute to boosting research with a focus on sustainable working life and sustainable development. The contacts with the Joint Programming Initiative More Years Better Lives helped to introduce the concept “sustainable work” in the EU scientific review *Understanding employment participation of older workers* (Apt 2015). DG CONNECT was very helpful in providing contacts and opening doors. This led to a small seminar in Brussels 2015 to present the platform at *the European Summit of Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing*.

The platform took part in two meetings about Eurofound’s project on Sustainable work, and participated in two seminars organised by the European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN). To improve international collaboration outside EU, the platform was presented at international conferences, i.e., Collegium Ramazzini and Well-being at work in 2014, and the ICOH conference and the epidemiological network EPICOH in Seoul 2015.

In Sweden, the concept “Sustainable work” was early recognised and adopted among policymakers and researchers. Already in 2014, the platform organised a conference, *Sustainable working life in Sweden 2020*, together with the Swedish Work Environment

Authority and the Swedish Social Insurance Office. The message from the participants, consisting of about 120 researchers, Social partners, and companies, was:

- re-establish a national platform for work environment research, co-operate at all stages, and disseminate the available knowledge. To strengthen the knowledge supply, more Swedish and European research funding is needed.
- Co-operation between research and development should be strengthened with support from the European Social Fund (ESF).
- researchers and organisations should improve the use of international networks. A national contact point should be created for international co-operation.

The sustainable work concept, the platform, and H2020 was presented at major Swedish conferences, such as the Forum for Working Life Research (FALF) 2015 and 2016, as well as at FORTE Talks 2014 and 2015, arranged by the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare. Of importance was also the collaboration with the Platform for “Nanosafety and Nanomaterials” regarding the impact on workers’ health, and with the newly started Swedish AFoU network: Workplace-related R&D for Sustainable Working Life. The network is an initiative for national co-operation to increase research and development for sustainable work and sustainable development in organisations.

Co-operation with the European Social Fund (ESF) led to the development of an ESF-funded national thematic platform on sustainable working life. The thematic platform was launched in 2017, and our platform and the AfoU network for workplace-related R& D were assessed as strong fellow actors.

## The impact of the platform’s advocacy

1. *Impact on Calls 2014-2015 and Work Programmes 2016-2017.* The Platform considered the impact to be limited for the WP 2016 – 2018, as there were no Calls with a direct focus on sustainable work. On the other hand, terms like work, working conditions, and sustainable work appeared in the texts as aspects of importance among other key issues in some Calls through the advocacy work. The proposals had been well received by the Swedish Programme Committees and co-ordinated efforts with via the European contacts also helped. The expected synergies of our attempts to influence the national Programme Committees in other member states was limited. Other activities, such as the Position Papers, took a long time to finalise. Therefore, the proposals reached the Commission too late to be taken into consideration for the 2016-2018 WPs.

The platform was able to follow SC1’s work programme step by step, and discovered that once the first draft version had left the Commission the scope for impact was limited. The platform proposed that focus areas such as “Ageing at large”, “Sustainable health and prevention”, “Environment and Health” should include the ageing worker, workplace health promotion, and that environment should also explicitly include the work environment. The

proposals were included in the draft Calls, but they disappeared in the final version. The main part of the WP was instead directed toward “prevention of diseases”.

*2. Strengthen the dialogue with businesses, Social partners and public authorities.* The attempt to present the concept “sustainable work” as an important research and policy area in Sweden resulted in better co-ordination between the platform and the official Swedish channels. Examples were the conferences with the Work Environment Authority and the Social Insurance office and a new Government Declaration. Sustainable work was further promoted by the European Social Fund as a national thematic project area in Sweden. The dialogue with business, social partners and authorities was improved. However, the dialogue with companies was still in its infancy.

*3. Contact point for Nordic and European researchers.* The platform had strengthened the international network, and served as a contact node for European researchers. The website was improved by a community-function and a newsletter via e-post. But very few Swedish sustainable work and health researchers were actively looking for international partners or were asked to co-operate in EU-funded H2020 projects. One reason was that it was difficult to find Calls that included sustainable work research, but many researchers, used to looking for risk at work, were also confused by the terminology of the Calls, where the Specific Challenge, not the health risks, of a project should be presented.

At the end of the first grant period, the platform realised that the impact so far was slight, but there were good possibilities to improve the situation, and thus applied for a continuation of the grant for 2016 – 2018. However, the evaluation of the platform by two external experts engaged by Vinnova were doubtful about the possibility of making an impact on H2020 by the sustainable work platform:

“The thematic area of this platform is very broad and not addressed by any specific part of the H2020 work programme. Although still expansive, areas have been targeted by the platform for emphasis: sustainable work health and development. (...) There is no SIO/SIP (Swedish government paper re H2020) for this area, but a strong research tradition in Sweden” (<https://www.vinnova.se/en/>). The Platform is driving efforts to structure the Swedish work/life discipline through examining knowledge gaps and pinpointing research needs. Thus, the effort of making a more visible presence in H2020 (work life issues) is still in its infant stages, with a long and difficult way ahead.”

The new grant was approved for 2016 – 2018, and Vinnova should be commended for recognising the strength and potential of the area, as well as supporting the platform, in spite of recognising the difficulties of impacting the European research agenda.

## Platform activities 2016 – 2020 and the impact on Work Programmes 2018-2020

The aims for the Platforms advocacy work 2016 - 2018 were:

1. Impact on relevant Work Programmes in H2020 for 2017 and 2018 - 2020 resulting in at least one Call about sustainable work in the most relevant programmes. The goal was also that sustainable work and work life should be more visible in the next Framework programme for Research and Innovation 2021- 2027, *Horizon Europe*
2. Increase participation as co-applicants in WPs 2018 -2020 among Swedish work life researchers
3. Strengthening the concept sustainable work, by anchoring and spreading it widely to make an impact on research and labour market policies

The advocacy strategy needed to be improved. The new plan for the Focus areas and Work Programmes for 2018-2020 was three-fold.

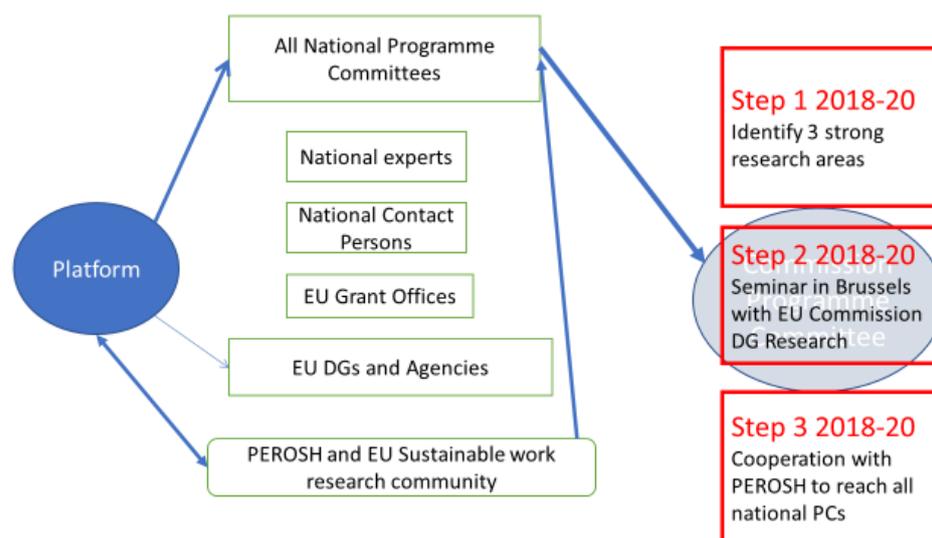


Figure 3. The most effective strategy for impact

*The first step* was to identify strong research areas, by producing Position Papers covering broad strategic topics for sustainable work. The four papers were produced in co-operation with PEROSH, and other European researchers:

- *Novel technologies and sustainable work*, i.e., the impact on digitalisation on work
- *Workplace health strategies for sustainable and inclusive growth*, particularly targeting the ageing working population with chronic illness and long-standing health problem
- *Sustainable work and the increasing work force diversity*, i.e., unemployed, migrants and older workers, including increasing health disparities between socioeconomic groups

- *Integrated health and safety concepts for large infrastructure projects and new working environments*, i.e., develop a preventive culture in large European infrastructure projects.

*The second step* was to use the position papers at the consultation stage for the WPs 2018-2020, before the issue of Focus areas and first drafts of WPs. The platform increased the contacts with the Commission, both by contacting members of the most important H2020 Advisory Groups, and by organising a seminar in Brussels in April 2016 to present the four concrete examples of how sustainable work could be included in the WP 2018 - 2020.

The purpose of the workshop was to improve the research proposals, and relate them to the current EU policy context of smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. The contributors and participant of the workshop were from the Commission, i.e., DG Research and DG Employment, the Parliament, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, the Swedish Ministry of Labour and a few research organisations represented by PEROSH. The seminar was followed by a visit to the DG Research to further discuss the proposals.

Conclusions from the workshop and the visits were:

- A general acceptance of the four presented tracks of research. Relevant comments to consider were that
  - the fourth proposal about OSH risks in large infrastructure project did unfortunately not fit into the present structure of Horizon2020. The platform was advised to drop it.
  - since the present accepted projects within the Societal Challenge of *Health, demographic change and wellbeing* had been more directed toward illness than health, and thus proposals towards prevention of health and wellbeing could be welcome in the 2018 – 2020 WP.
- The impact by the development of technologies, i.e., digitisation, was to be balanced via a strong link between the Leadership pillar and the request of “technology neutrality” in the Societal challenges pillar. So far it had not been the case, and the impact of digitalisation on the work force needed to be included.
- The platform was advised to take an approach where, instead of presenting sustainable work as *one* programme area, the presence should be found in as many of the present WPs as possible.
- The importance of the proposals by the Platform may increase due to the launch of the *European Pillar of Social Rights*, that covers the future labour market in Europe, quality of work and new forms of work, and the need for social protection.

*The third step* was to try to present the same proposals to the national Programme Committees in as many Member States as possible. In co-operation with PEROSH, at least 14 of the Members states could be included. Once a first version of a work programme was published, proposals were exchanged, and a final joint proposal was then sent to the contact

persons in the member states. They in turn contacted their expert in their national Programme Committee. In this way, the same proposals for change arrived from several Member States, and resulted in a high number of sustainable work-related issues in the Work Programmes of 2018-2020.

The activities of the platform increased the efforts to exchange ideas and to present the new programmes, and how to apply for an EU-project among Swedish researchers and companies, for instance at the yearly FALF-conferences and the meetings with the AFOU-network.

A “search conference” *EU-funding for sustainable work and health-related research projects* was organised in Stockholm, together with PEROSH for about 50 researchers in the autumn 2017 to present the new 2018-2020 Programmes. The speakers were from DG Research, PEROSH, EU-OSHA and Eurofound. Examples of successful EU- projects co-ordinated by Swedish and European researchers were presented. Parallel workshops for potential matchmaking were included.

Furthermore, co-ordinating efforts and networking at a global and European level took place at international conferences such as ‘Work 2017’, the EUWIN meeting in Leiden, the EPICOH-meeting in Edinburgh the Nordic Work Environment Meetings, the Nordic Work Life conference in Finland, and at a Nordic meeting on the future of work “Opportunities and challenges for the Nordic model”. EU-OSHA organised meetings about the future of work, and presented the report 2017 on “The impact of ICT and work localisation on OSH 2025”. The results of the co-operation between the platform and PEROSH were presented for the PEROSH members at their yearly meeting in Rome 2017.

The final activity of the platform in 1918 was to organise the conference “Nordic approach to sustainable work – towards new EU Challenges”, where more than 100 researchers and representatives for the Social partners took part. The focus was on Nordic research, and how to succeed in creating sustainable work in a European context. The mission was to present the platform’s approach to impact H2020, but also to focus on Horizon Europe, the next research and innovation framework programme.

## The impact of the platform’s advocacy 2016-2020

1. *Impact on Calls 2018- 2020.* The new advocacy strategy of the platform resulted in more than 25 Calls covering sustainable work-related issues in the final H2020 Work Programmes, such as

- The Leadership programme included seven Calls, among them Risk Governance of Nanotechnology or Skills needed for new Manufacturing jobs.
- The Societal Challenge (SC1) of Health, demographic change, and wellbeing had six Calls, for instance Mental Health at the workplace, or Adaptive smart working and living environments supporting active and healthy ageing.

- SC 2 Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Marine etc, had three Calls, i.e., Integrated health approaches and alternative to pesticide use.
- SC 3 Smart Green and Integrated Transports had four Calls, such as Marine Accident Response or Demographic change and participation of women in transport.
- SC 7 Europe in a Changing World had five Calls, such as Social and economic effects of migration in Europe and integration policies or Research for inclusive growth: the socioeconomic effects of technological transformation.

The new advocacy strategy really paid dividends. The work with position papers and comments on draft documents have also been highly appreciated by the European colleagues. The co-operation will continue in the new research and innovation framework programme for 2021 – 2027, *Horizon Europe*. The efforts have mainly been directed at the second pillar, the Global Challenges and European Industrial competitiveness pillar, that supports research into societal challenges, reinforces technological and industrial capacities, and sets EU-wide missions with ambitious goals tackling some of EUs biggest problems (health, climate change, clean energy, mobility, security, digital, materials, etc.).

*2. Increased participation as co-applicants.* Even though the WP 2018-2020 made sustainable work research more visible, the Swedish participation in H2020 projects was still low. But what obstacles do the Swedish working life researchers experience? According to the match-making conference in 2017, the main difficulties with H2020 Calls were

- the demands for big interdisciplinary projects, aimed at European problems and solutions,
- how to find and include prominent researchers from other Member States, and
- in addition, it was too complicated to apply, the administrative support to the projects was not fully financed, the projects were too big, and it was too time-consuming to find and apply.

To overcome these difficulties Vinnova supported the platform with a grant for 2019-2021 principally aimed at increasing Swedish participation in H2020 and Horizon Europe. Several search-seminars have taken place in co-operation with Swedish Grant Offices, and side events to increase international collaboration and networking have been planned and organised at international conferences. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this activity has unfortunately now been reduced.

Instead, a miniweb survey (Håkansta et al., 2020) was distributed in in June 2020 to over 300 Swedish researchers active in sustainable work and health research in Sweden. They had been project leaders, or had taken part, during the last decade, in projects funded by the main Swedish Research Councils in this field. 303 surveys were sent out via email, and 132 fully answered questionnaire were received. 22 % of the respondents were professors, 37% senior researchers, and 39% were PhDs or post-doctorates.

About half of them had applied for or participated in EU-funded research projects or networks during the last decade. Presently 26 researchers are involved in EU-funded projects. 20 of them were in H2020 projects or earlier framework programmes, four in Cost Actions, three in education-oriented projects, such as Erasmus, and one researcher had a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action.

The majority of the respondents with EU-funded projects said that international collaboration was important for their own research, and almost 40% of them needed the grant to fund their own research. The EU-project had a positive impact on their personal career, and resulted in an increased number of contacts and opportunities. However, the survey also revealed that most of the respondents had rather small networks: one to five persons, and it was mainly through conferences and meeting they established and maintained their network: not through joint research or co-applications. These results are important to take into account when improving the collaboration strategy. The survey will be followed up at the end of 2021.

The aim to inform the industry and increase the collaboration between researchers and companies about H2020, was not as successful as the other Vinnova platforms. The broad area covered by our platform necessitated that projects are carried out in almost all sectors, and therefore made it difficult to reach and inform the companies. One exception was the mining industry, where good co-operation already existed between companies and researchers.

*3.Strengthening sustainable working life as a concept.* The positive impact by the platform on the content of H2020 was mainly depending on the improved advocacy strategy, but the outcome should also partly be ascribed to the revival of the policy discussions about the future of work. During the past two decades, jobs and labour market structures have been subject to fundamental changes. Increasing digitalisation, the new wave of automatization and robotics, and new ways to organise work has led to a new debate on job losses, job destruction, job redesign and job creation. A major change had occurred within jobs, with increasing demands of new skills, on the job training, and transition skills to meet frequent structural or organisational changes.

The Commission also saw the need to integrate digitisation in all Industrial technologies and Societal Challenges programmes. It was essential to combine digital technologies with other advanced technologies and service innovation, such as big data, internet of things, 5G etc. Digitalisation also alters the conduct of research, such as open science, skills need and user involvement. Thus digital-physical integration was substantially increased in the last H2020 programmes, and the research should address the societal impact, including on the workforce, of the digital transformation.

The political dialogue and national consultations within EU about the *European Pillar of Social Rights* played a part of the outcome. Well-functioning and fair European labour markets,

effective and sustainable social protection systems, and the promotion of social dialogue at all levels is at the heart of the policy.

On the global scene, ILO, OECD, IMF and the World Bank and independent policy think tanks also made significant contributions to the debate and policy formations regarding the future of work. ILO emphasised its longstanding policy commitment to full and decent employment. These goals were shared at the European level, with a strong commitment for full employment, social inclusion, and safe and sustainable work. The quality of jobs, the need for social protection, and improvement of living conditions are major policy missions in the *UN Sustainable Development Goals*.

## Concluding remarks

### 1. The right input at the right time.

The aim of the project was to have an impact on the H2020 different programmes by presenting “the visions and goals and to formulate causes to position a strong Swedish research area”. To promptly have an impact, it was vital that the causes were proposed already at the consultation stage of a H2020 programme. To be able to do that, you needed to have authoritative, high-level contacts in the Commission, and knowledge of major European research priorities, as well as support from a national institution with close ties to your scientific field. A strong interest in the research area among relevant ministries and social partners would also help, as well as a high ranking on the government’s policy agenda.

This was not the case for the advocacy platform for Sustainable work when it was established. Sustainable work research: a strong Swedish research area, no longer had a responsible authority on national level. The research field has been depreciated by the then current government, and the research was mainly conducted at rather small, discipline-oriented units at Swedish universities. Thus, the platform’s actions had to be accomplished as a complement to the formal structures.

As a result, the platform had to spend a lot of time and efforts to find the appropriate programmes in H2020 and contacts at the Commission and the EU Agencies. Due to the broad concept of “sustainable”, the provision of an overview of on-going research was also time-consuming.

The impact was limited on the first and the second H2020 programmes, but concepts such as “work”, “working conditions” and “sustainable work” began to appear in the Calls as one aspect of importance among other key areas. In Sweden, the concept of sustainable work started to have a generic policy impact, as it highlighted the dynamic fit between employees and working conditions. It was also a theme for the European Social fund in Sweden.

Finally, in the third programme 2018-2021, the efforts of the platform were successful. At the consultation stage, position papers about sustainable work adapted to the EU strategy were

presented, and they were likewise presented to the relevant Directorates. In addition, once a draft of a Work Programme was presented, the proposals for change were coordinated and proposed from many Member States. The impact on the third H2020 programme was of considerable proportions: more than 27 Calls in five different programmes. Of importance for the outcome was also the Commission's decision that Calls should address the societal impact of the digital transformation including *on the workforce*, and the policy discussions about the European Pillar of Social Rights.

## **2. A need for a more active Swedish role in EU research and international collaboration**

It is too early to evaluate the progress of the platform regarding EU collaboration. It was first in the third H2020 programme 2018-2020, that one could easily find Calls of interest concerning sustainable work. Therefore, the focus of the platform to the end of 2021 will be to increase the international research collaboration in this field. Some obstacles to and proposals for reaching this goal are

- Many of the Swedish research groups within the sustainable work and health area may be too small to be able to apply to large EU projects. As a co-ordinator you need to take a widespread role in research co-operation of large projects, bridging natural sciences, technological development, and societal issues.
- The funding in Sweden for sustainable work research is still sufficient for smaller projects and consequently, lack of funding is not a strong driver for increasing international collaboration. It is mainly when a researcher estimates that there is an obvious chance to get EU-funding, that they are willing to apply to EU-projects, as they see them as big, complicated, and administratively heavy. The Grants offices at the universities could make a difference here.
- Swedish universities should promote more interdisciplinary research, methodology and education to expand the impact of innovative and sustainable work research.
- There is a need for a European postdoc school on innovative and sustainable work including resources for networks, arenas and meeting places for young scholars and postdocs.

## **3. Horizon Europe, European Pillar of Social Rights, and the Green Deal as driving forces for future research on innovative, including and sustainable work.**

There is still a significant lack of attention to the dramatic changes that are taking place nowadays in the world of work within Europe and globally. Effects on work and work patterns in society should be a vital part of all new technologies and developments appearing in the European research programs, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Green Deal. Digitisation and climate change will seriously impact employment across economic sectors and regions, such as job losses, impact on business assets and business interruptions, impact on working conditions and OSH, and forced short-term and long-term migration. Therefore, the proposals in Horizon Europe must focus on impacts, exemplified by the following issues:

- The new world of work will lead to a growing diversity in forms of employment, and it will deeply influence the quality of jobs and work environment, health and safety at the workplaces, as well as workplace learning and career development
- At the same time, the new narrative of work also offers unprecedented opportunities in terms of autonomy for the individual, healthier and longer life, and more innovative and open cities. These opportunities should be available to all individuals to avoid increasing polarization between good jobs and bad jobs, disruption, and insecurity for the lives of many, and broader inequity and inequality.

To summarise, the concept of work plays an important role in the new research and innovation framework Horizon Europe. The Union wants to maintain its lead in innovation and research through strengthening the response to global challenges in areas such as the environment, health, the Social Pillar or the economy.

But how can we evaluate the impact our platform on Horizon Europe? We and our European research Colleagues have at least been part of, or maybe even reinforced, the process to enhance the concept of sustainable work as an important challenge in the new world of work.

**Fact sheet:**

**Advocacy Platform for Sustainable work in Horizon 2020**

Project ledare: Maria Albin, professor, Karolinska Institute (KI), Stockholm,

Project coordinators: Theo Bodin, PhD, KI, 2015-2017, Carin Håkansta, PhD, KI, 2018-2021,

Northern Node: Bengt Järvholm, professor, Umeå University,

Middle Node: Svend Erik Mathiassen, professor, University of Gävle

Southern Node: Anders Gudmundsson, professor, Lund University

Senior consultants: Kenneth Abrahamsson, adj. professor, Luleå University of Technology, Elisabeth Lagerlöf, Senior consultant, former Head of Information, Eurofound

Contact person Vinnova: Anna Halldén, National Focal Point SC8, Vinnova

## References

Apt, W. (2015). Understanding employment participation among elderly.

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/active-healthy-ageing/apt.pdf>

Arbetsmiljöverket (2014). *Hållbart Arbetsliv i Sverige 2020. Sustainable working Life in Sweden*. Dokumentation från en idékonferens 1 december 2014.

Eurofound (2017). *Living and working in Europe 2016*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

Eurofound and the International Labour Office (2017). *Working anytime, anywhere. The effects on the world of work*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg and the International Labour Office, Geneva.

Eurofound (2017). *Working time patterns for sustainable work*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2016). *Sustainable work throughout the life course: National policies and strategies*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2015). *Sustainable work over the life course: Concept paper*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2020). *Back to the future: Policy pointers from platform work scenarios*, New forms of employment series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

- Eurofound (2020). *Living, working and COVID-19*, COVID-19 series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Eurofound and International Labour Organization (2019). *Working conditions in a global perspective*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, and International Labour Organization, Geneva.
- Eurofound (2020). *Regulations to address work-life balance in digital flexible working arrangements*, New forms of employment series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Eurofound (2020). *Living and working in Europe 2019*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (1998). *Managing change*. High level group on economic and social implications of industrial change. European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial relations and Social Affairs, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2014). *Enabling synergies between European Structural and Investments Fund, Horizon 2020 and other research, innovation and competitiveness-related Union programmes*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2015). *Strategic Foresight: Towards the 3rd Strategic Programme of Horizon 2020*. European Commission Directorate General for Research and Innovation. RTD-PUBLICATION@ec.europa.eu
- EU-OSHA (2014). *Scoping study. Foresight on new and emerging occupational safety and health risks*. <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/scoping-study-foresight-new-and-emerging-occupational-safety-and-health-osh-risks-and/view> . Downloaded 2021-02-10.
- EU-OSHA (2017). *Foresight of new and emerging occupational safety and health risks associated with information and communications technologies and work locations by 2025*. <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/foresight-new-and-emerging-occupational-safety-and-health-risks-associated/view>
- EU-OSHA (2017). *Key trends and drivers of change in information and communication technologies and work location*. <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/key-trends-and-drivers-change-information-and-communication-technologies-and-work/view>
- EU-OSHA (2017). *Protecting Workers in the Online Platform Economy: An overview of regulatory and policy developments in the EU*. <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/protecting-workers-online-platform-economy-overview-regulatory-and-policy-developments/view>
- EU-OSHA (2019). *Digitalisation and occupational safety and health - An EU-OSHA research programme*. <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/digitalisation-and-occupational-safety-and-health-osh-eu-osha-research-programme/view> .
- FAS (2009). *Sustainable work – a challenge in times of economic crises*. Conference in connection with the Swedish EU Presidency, Stockholm 2009. Conference report.
- FORTE (2015). *Swedish Research on Work Organization 2007-2013*. Evaluation report, Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare.
- Håkansta, C., Abrahamsson K., Bodin T. & Lagerlöf E. (2020). *How international is Swedish working life research? Results from a survey about internationalization and EU-funding carried out by the Platform for Sustainable work in Horizon2020*. Karolinska Institute.
- INRS (2018). *Platformisation 2027. Consequences on occupational safety and health*. Institute National de Recherche et de Sécurité.
- Kansliet för strategi-och framtidsfrågor (2017). *Arbetet i framtiden*. The future of work. Slutrapport, Arbetsgruppen för arbetet i framtiden.
- OECD (2017). *Policy Brief on the future of work - Going Digital: The Future of Work for Women*. <https://www.oecd.org/employment/Going-Digital-the-Future-of-Work-for-Women.pdf>. Downloaded 2021-02-10.
- OECD (2018). *Policy Brief on the future of work - Putting faces to the job at risks of automation*. <http://www.oecd.org/future-of-work/Automation-policy-brief-2018.pdf>. Downloaded 2021-02-10.

Strömvik, M. (2020). *Hur väl förankras Sveriges EU-politik?* How firmly established is Sweden's EU-policy? Viewpoint Europe. Lunds Universitet, Centrum för Europaforskning No 1, 2020.

The platform for sustainable work as a resource for health innovation and growth (2014).  
[www.sustainablework2020.se](http://www.sustainablework2020.se).

Totterdill P. (2013). *The future we want? Work and Organisations in 2020*. A report by the Advisory Board of the UK's Work and Organisation network. UK WON.

## About the authors

**Elisabeth Lagerlöf**, M.A. Senior Consultant since 2008. Has worked as Head of Information, Eurofound, Ireland 2001-2007; Director, NIVA Education, Finland 1998 - 2001; Project manager, EU-OSHA, Spain 1996 -1998, and Work Environment Attaché, Swedish Embassy, Washington DC, USA 1984 -1987; In Sweden as researcher 1968-1984 and as Director Information and International Affairs, Swedish Institute of Working Life 1987 – 1996.

**Maria Albin**, M.D. Professor of occupational health, Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institute, former MD and Docent in occupational and environmental medicine at the Medical faculty in Lund. Before that she was the project leader of the "Metalund", a research and competence centre to increase knowledge and understanding of different environmental factors´ influence on health. She is also the initiator of the Swedish platform for sustainable work in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe.