

Preface

Editorial

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Editor in Chief

Sweden has a strong tradition of research in Working Life, which has been seen as central to the successful Swedish Model of consensus, social equity, respect for work, and ongoing economic and social development. Generations of researchers and partner organisations have been accustomed to a stable policy framework extending over several decades.

When Sweden joined the European Union in 1995, priority was given to introducing perceived benefits of the Swedish tradition into policies and programmes of the EU. Sweden held the rotating Presidency of the EU in the first six months of 2001 and saw this as the focus for a major initiative, “Work Life 2000: Quality in Work”, which was financed by the Swedish government and co-ordinated by the Swedish National Institute for Working Life. Swedish researchers led 64 specialist research workshops, with invited international participants. They were laying the foundations for an EU Presidency Conference in Malmö In January 2001. Each workshop led to publications by the lead researchers, by journalists, and by rapporteurs, who focused on the dialogues at the workshops. I was the rapporteur for most of the workshops. I edited a series of three Yearbooks (Ennals, 1999, 2000, 2001) which provided insights into the rich and diverse field of Working Life Research.

Following their election in 2006, the new Swedish Liberal and Conservative government and the Swedish Parliament (Riksdagen) closed the National Institute for Working Life on 30th June 2007, thus removing the focus for ongoing research and policy development. The research community has continued to be active and productive, as is demonstrated in this Special Double Issue of the European Journal of Workplace Innovation, which draws on Swedish and EU initiatives and institutions.

The majority of the articles in this Special Double Issue are by members of the Swedish Working Life Research community. There are also a number of articles by authors from other European contexts, some of whom work at EU or transnational organisations (Eurofound, EU-OSHA and PEROSH). The background of the work is also a Vinnova-financed network on promoting sustainable work in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. In July 2018 a new agency was launched by the government to disseminate knowledge on work environment research, and also to evaluate national policies for better working life, the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise.

The Special Double Issue looks ahead to new policies and programmes, building on traditional values and research. From experience of “Work Life 2000: Quality in Work”, together with many projects and programmes with diverse organisations, I suggest that there are some fundamental questions to be considered:

- Is there a unified view of knowledge about Working Life?
- What are the links between research, policy development, and practice?
- How are Swedish initiatives now linked with the wider EU context?

The Special Double Issue brings together veterans in the field and younger researchers. It provides an important reference point for Working Life Research in Sweden and the EU, with implications for Sweden, the EU and the wider world.

The EJWI editorial team are grateful to the team of Swedish guest editors for their efforts. It is notable that most of the papers come from Swedish researchers, who work increasingly in the context of the EU. The final editorial and production process is coordinated by Norwegians in the Department of Working Life and Innovation at the University of Agder, where I am an adjunct professor. My own home country, the UK, left the EU in January 2000.

I find it tragic that in many countries, including the UK, public health and the economy are now being devastated by the Covid pandemic, with over 100,000 deaths from Covid in the UK. We have entered the deepest recession for over 300 years. In a future Special Issue of EJWI, we plan to address the resulting issues for work. This Special Double Issue, with papers largely written before the pandemic, stands as a memorial to principles of Sustainable Work, which are now under extreme pressure.

Reference

Ennals R. (ed.) *Work Life 2000: Yearbooks 1, 2, 3*. London, Springer 1999, 2000, 2001.