

A New Takeoff for EUWIN!

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The European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN) was created in 2013 at the request of the European Commission (DG GROW), and initially led by TNO and Workplace Innovation Limited (now Workplace Innovation Europe CLG).

Our aim since then has been consistent: to promote the concept of workplace innovation throughout Europe as a way of enhancing capacity for product, service and process innovation, increasing business competitiveness and creating better working lives for our citizens.

The European Commission's goal was to challenge the idea that innovation is only about R&D investments. Many innovative ideas originate in the minds of frontline workers and, equally, more than half of innovations fail because they have failed to engage employees in the process of development. The difference lies in the workplace practices and cultures found in each company – the extent to which they empower workers to share their ideas, knowledge and experience to improve the business. The European Commission recognised an enormous opportunity to boost the innovative potential of Europe by closing the gap between really good workplaces and the rest. So EUWIN was born!

EUWIN grew rapidly as did its impact, reaching over ten thousand people and companies through conferences and workshops. Hundreds of thousands found inspiring cases, articles and evidence on the Knowledge Bank curated by Workplace Innovation Limited. Hundreds of experts and collaborators pushed the message across to thousands of companies all over Europe. EUWIN also guided the development of major new policy initiatives for workplace innovation in the Basque Country, Scotland and elsewhere.

Even the European Commission was impressed by the network effect EUWIN had created, and went on to publish a call for proposals in 2019 for five new workplace innovation networks focusing on SME support at regional level. Workplace Innovation is becoming embedded throughout Europe.

So where now?

European Commission funding ran out at the end of 2017 but, as its coordinators, we were not about to walk away from such a dynamic (and much needed) network. Since then EUWIN has functioned as a loosely coupled network, supporting activities in several countries and being supported by partners such as the University of Agder who organised a major event in Norway.

For us as coordinators of the EUWIN-network, we remain contacted by so many persons from all over Europe. With the partnership that originally supported EUWIN, we had made an agreement not to be

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too formal about all the activities. EUWIN would function as a loosely coupled network to support any action at the EU-level on the topic of workplace innovation.

Gradually, it became clear to the core partners that EUWIN needed a more formal grounding. As the concept of workplace innovation becomes more and more deeply entrenched in business and public policy vocabularies, demand for information and expertise grows. EUWIN partners are receiving ever-increasing numbers of requests to co-ordinate European initiatives, train and accredit workplace innovation specialists, advise on the development of national and regional programmes and support workplace innovation initiatives in companies.

We're delighted by our own success in ensuring that workplace innovation is receiving so much attention all over Europe – and even globally. That's why we have taken the initiative in enabling EUWIN to take off once again – not funded by the European Commission this time but as a fully independent network actively supported by partners in 16+ European countries!

So we're back in force – and you can expect workplace innovation to feature even more prominently at European level, supporting the national and regional work of all our network members. Look out for conferences, webinars, a completely redesigned Knowledge Bank and our relaunched Bulletin.

And that's just the start – there are many new ideas in the pipeline including Europe-wide plans to train and accredit workplace innovation specialists.

This is where you yourself come in! EUWIN depends on the help of so many individuals and organisations, and we need your ideas and suggestions. Our contact details can be found below - please let us know what you think!

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EUWIN was established by the European Commission in 2013 and is now entirely supported by contributions from an international network of partners co-ordinated by HIVA (University of Leuven). EUWIN also functions as a network partner for the H2020 *Beyond4.0* project.

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