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# Newsletter 3 • April 2007

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## Editorial

*By Monique Ramioul, HIVA-K.U.Leuven,  
WORKS project co-ordinator*

To study the broad area of changes in work, the key goal of WORKS, is a particularly ambitious goal. The long and rich history of the science on work in Europe has resulted in a huge diversity of the European research traditions. But also the diversity of the world of work itself has to be addressed because indeed there is no such thing as the European labour market, the European social system or the European citizen. This diversity of Europe can be a challenge and a wealth; the fragmentation in research in our domain, is however still an obstacle to overcome.

The first working year of WORKS was primarily focused on contributing to this integration of the knowledge on changes in work. Next to this, it was necessary to prepare the ground for innovating this knowledge in the next phases, with our empirical research programme that started at the beginning of the second year.

This third edition of the WORKS Newsletter reports on the some of the diverse results of the first project phase. We are happy to announce that the conference proceedings of the first international WORKS conference, that was held on September 21-22, 2006, are available online. This international conference was a major milestone of the project. From our start it was obvious that even a consortium three times bigger than WORKS would require the assessment and peer review of concepts, analysis and results in

order to address the research objectives to their full extent. With this aim, we brought together a wide variety of experts from Europe and beyond for a mutual exchange of our insights and approaches.

The second workshop on 'Measuring changes in work by organisation surveys' basically started from a similar philosophy. Here recent developments and future challenges of organisation surveys were discussed in depth with acknowledged experts from diverse disciplines and institutions throughout Europe. Further, we present in this Newsletter two non-scheduled, but undoubtedly valuable outcomes of the first working year. First, an online glossary on key concepts and terms on which we found it necessary to share a common understanding when studying changes in work with 17 EU partners from 13 EU countries. Secondly, another spin-off result of the project was the publication of the first issue of a new peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal called 'Work organisation, labour and globalisation'.

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In the second year of WORKS, the project is on cruising speed. Although it is too early to report on results, we clarify the main focus and selection of the cases that are included in our case study phase, where most of the WORKS partners are involved. This will result in 58 organisational case reports and equal numbers of occupational studies. More on these will with no doubt be included in future issues of this Newsletter.

Finally, the partners of the WORKS consortium have successfully invested in new research proposals that are closely related to the WORKS themes, both at the national and the EU level. Two such projects are presented in this edition.

We hope that this Newsletter gives you a good taste of what the WORKS project is about and that it invites you to learn more about our future results.

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## New publication

*By Ursula Huws, WLRI*



The first of two international conferences planned by the WORKS project was held in Chania, Crete on September 21-22, 2006. Including speakers from Brazil, Canada, Colombia, India and the United States as well as from across the EU, the conference brought together

leading experts from a range of different disciplinary backgrounds with the aim of developing a conceptual framework for studying the relationship between global forces and working life, recognising that global corporate strategies may both shape and be shaped by local practices. In particular, it aimed to address such ambitious questions as:

- How are global forces mediated by national and regional institutions?
- What are the spatial impacts of global corporate restructuring?
- What are the impacts of corporate restructuring on workers' skills and knowledge?
- What are the impacts of flexibilisation strategies on the organisation of work?
- What are the impacts on working time, on work-life balance and the quality of life?
- What are the gender impacts?
- What is happening to occupational identities and career structures?
- What are the implications for workers' organisation and representation and for the social dialogue?

The presentations from this conference have now been edited and published as an online publication which is available from [http://www.worksproject.be/Gen\\_project\\_results.htm](http://www.worksproject.be/Gen_project_results.htm). It can be downloaded free of charge in pdf form.



*Conference Center MAICH  
Mediterranean Agronomic  
Institute of Chania*



## The second WORKS workshop on 'Measuring changes in work by organisation surveys'

By Rik Huys, HIVA-K.U.Leuven

One of the aims of the quantitative pillar of WORKS is to improve the collection of data on changes in work in a quantitative and comparable way by organisation surveys. In this framework, HIVA-K.U.Leuven organised its second WORKS workshop on organisation surveys on March 19th and 20th in Leuven. Some fifty experts involved in designing and executing organisation surveys as well as those who use survey results for research and policy purposes discussed three future challenges for organisation surveys:



- *international organisation surveys*: engaging in international organisation surveys is a way to assure better comparability. Experiences from and future prospects for organisation surveys at the European level (CIS, ICT-Usage & E-commerce, ESWT) were discussed;
- *linked employer-employee surveys*: linking data from the organisation with additional information from its employees delivers richer data for understanding changes in work. The possibilities for analysis were discussed from Linked Employer – Employee surveys (COI, REPOSE, WERS) as well as from the combination of organisation data with administrative data on employees (IAB);
- *measuring inter-organisational changes*: what is the continuing relevance of the 'organisation' as observation unit? How can surveys measure inter-organisational changes as outsourcing, networks and changes in the value chain? Research was discussed using survey results to analyse inter-organisational relationships.



A further description and comparison of the organisation surveys presented in this workshop can be found on the 'digital toolkit' section of the

WORKS website (<http://www.worksproject.be/entry->

[page.php](http://www.worksproject.be/entry-)). Presentations and papers from the speakers at the workshop can also be consulted at the ([http://www.worksproject.be/Rel\\_publications.htm](http://www.worksproject.be/Rel_publications.htm)).

At the closing panel discussion involving producers and users of organisation survey data, there was agreement on the growing awareness of the importance of organisational practices for innovation in the economy. Expenditures for R&D and available skills require an appropriate work environment in order to be effectively applied and developed.

The current lack of harmonised data on organisational practices in Europe, makes it difficult to identify and support the diffusion of organisational practices that support innovation. Yet, despite the relevance of such data, the practical difficulties in implementing such a survey at the European level, as well as mobilising the necessary support from policymakers were considered tremendous tasks.

A useful contribution was seen in drawing up a manual on organisational practices along the lines of an 'Oslo manual'. This would identify the basic concepts and definitions on organisational practices as agreed upon by the research community.



Such a manual would form a basis for further translation into specific questionnaires. It would also inspire current organisation surveys at the European level. While they are convinced of the necessity to include questions on organisational practices, there is a lack of available good measures on which there is broad agreement. Inversely, the attention paid to organisational practices in current European surveys will also increase if researchers made not merely use of the data on technological innovation, but also on organisational practices, limited as they may be at present.

The results of the workshop will feed into the European MEADOW project (Measuring the Dynamics of Organisations and Work) that started in March 2007 (see article further in this Newsletter). This project brings together fourteen research organisations in Europe with experience of carrying out organisation surveys with the aim to establish a set of guidelines for collecting and interpreting harmonised data on organisational change as a first step towards implementing a harmonised European survey instrument.

one of the first tasks that the WORKS project set itself was to develop a glossary of key terms and concepts. This task was carried out collaboratively, with inputs from all the WORKS partners, and formed a vital underpinning of the first project publication 'The transformation of work in a global knowledge economy: towards a conceptual framework' now available as a book or free pdf download from [http://www.worksproject.be/Subgroup\\_1\\_proj\\_reports.htm](http://www.worksproject.be/Subgroup_1_proj_reports.htm).

Reactions to this glossary were so positive that we have now revised and edited it and will be placed soon on the project website so that others may benefit from it too.

## The WORKS jargon-buster

By Ursula Huws, WLRI

'Outsourcing', 'in-sourcing', 'offshoring', 'inshoring', 'upskilling', 'deskilling', ... One of the barriers to making sense of current workplace trends is simply coming to terms with the terminology.

As part of its mission to develop a clear conceptual and analytical framework for understanding the restructuring of work in a global knowledge economy,

*Preview of the WORKS glossary of key terms and concepts*

The screenshot shows a web page for the WORKS glossary. At the top left is the 'works CHANGES IN WORK' logo. Below it is a navigation menu with sections: HOME AND NEWS, PARTNERS ONLY, MANAGEMENT (with sub-items: Calendar, Project management information, Scientific Board, General Assembly, Contractual issues, Financial issues), PROJECT PILLARS (with sub-items: Theories and concepts, Quantitative analysis, Qualitative research, Policy, institutions and social dialogue), and DISSEMINATION MONITORING. The main content area is titled 'PARTNERS ONLY - Glossary and definitions' and includes an alphabetical index (A-Z) and three entries: '24-hour society', 'Absenteeism', and 'Accidents'. Each entry has a brief definition and a 'Read more' link. The page is updated as of 8 december 2005.

## WORKS case studies

### The research sample

By Jörg Flecker, FORBA

In this second year of the WORKS project most attention en resources are devoted to the organisational and occupational case studies. While it is obviously too soon to have results from this part of the research, we can already inform you on the choices of business functions as an appetiser.

The research covers a number of generic business functions that represent a wide variety of activities and work in the knowledge society ranging from highly skilled knowledge work to semi-skilled manual tasks. The business functions are:

- research and development;
- production;
- logistics;
- customer service;
- information technology.

To study the restructuring of value chains these business functions need to be located in specific sectors. The selection of sectors reflects the emergence of global value chains in different historical stages: sectors where vertical disintegration and internationalisation is already a rather old fact, and sectors where these developed only very recently. The sectors under study are:

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#### *the clothing industry ...*

... is an example of an 'old' industry where restructuring of global commodity chains was already an issue in the 1970s. Recently, the changing trade relations with China have resulted in a new wave of restructuring mainly affecting production in Southern Europe and the CEE countries. Finally, the sector provides interesting examples of 'head and tail' companies which within Europe focus on high-skilled work.

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#### *the food industry ...*

... was subject to major restructuring after the completion of the single market in the European

Union in the early 1990s which allowed companies to replace their country by country organisation with a pan-European structure. In contrast to parts of the clothing industry, food production is by and large highly automated. Both industries are interesting in view of the link with the retail trade.

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#### *the IT industry ...*

... saw a major wave of restructuring during and after the boom years in the late 1990s and around 2000 partly resulting in off-shoring. Internationally, this has contributed to the emergence of a 'new breed of TNCs', global companies that supply services of other companies. To a large extent the IT service provider companies have grown through large outsourcing contracts that included the transfer of personnel from the client company of public sector organisation, a tendency highly relevant for the research questions of WORKS.

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#### *public sector organisations and services of general interest ...*

... are currently subject to far-reaching restructuring due to liberalisation and privatisation policies. As a consequence, the lengthening of value chains there is a most recent phenomenon. The consequences for the quality of work are highly influenced by the traditional differences in the regulation of work between the public and the private sector.

Each business function located in a particular sector is being studied in a range of countries showing diverse employment and welfare regimes (liberal, conservative, socio-democratic etc). This will make it possible to investigate the influence of institutional frameworks on the consequences of restructuring through a comparative analysis.

## The Spark in the Engine

By Ursula Huws, WLRU

We are proud to announce the publication, in close association with the WORKS project, of Volume I No 1 of the new international, interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal, *Work Organisation, Labour and Globalisation*, also published independently as a book entitled *The Spark in the Engine: Creative Workers in a Global Economy* in association with Merlin Press. ([http://www.merlinpress.co.uk/acatalog/THE\\_SPARK\\_IN\\_THE\\_ENGINE.html](http://www.merlinpress.co.uk/acatalog/THE_SPARK_IN_THE_ENGINE.html)).

*Work Organisation, Labour and Globalisation* brings together insights from the fields of Political Economy, Communications Studies, Labour Sociology, Gender Studies, Economic Geography, Trade Union Studies and Development Studies to further our understanding of the new international division of labour that is emerging in a global knowledge economy.

To find out more or to subscribe, go to <http://www.cybertariat.com> and take advantage of special introductory rates.

Or to read online go to <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/analytica>.

Submissions to future issues are welcomed, especially from contributors in the global South. Future topics

will include: towards a critical understanding of the new global division of labour; trade union responses to globalisation, the role of global corporations in the privatisation of public services, informalisation and migration.

## From WORKS to MEADOW


By Nathalie Greenan, CEE

There is presently no infrastructure available at the European level to measure changes of work and organisations. The quantitative pillar of the WORKS project has provided a comparative overview of the main employer level surveys available at the national level in Europe and uses European sources such as the European Working Conditions Survey to assess trends in work organisation and working conditions for the European labour force.

The MEADOW project builds up on this methodological benchmark on the data available at the European level. It is a coordination action funded by the European Commission under Priority 7 (Citizens and Governance) of the Sixth RTD Framework Programme. It aims at setting out Guidelines for collecting and interpreting harmonised data at the European level on organisational change and work restructuring and their economic and social impacts. These Guidelines will constitute a first step towards implementing a harmonised European survey instrument.

Such a project requires a diverse range of competences and the fourteen partners, from nine European countries, have been selected for their specific areas of expertise in relation to the project's goals. The project integrates the perspectives of both producers and users by including research teams that have designed





and implemented national survey instruments for measuring organisational change and innovation at the employer level and work restructuring at the employee level, as well as experienced users of such surveys. The conceptual framework draws on internationally recognised scholars with proven track records in the study of the micro-level processes of creating, implementing and diffusing new organisational practices within and between firms or establishments, the way such micro dynamics are linked to corporate structure and governance, and the way company-level processes are shaped by the wider sectoral and institutional contexts.

The project's co-ordination activities are composed of seven interrelated workpackages that will be carried out over a 3-year period. After a state of the art in surveys on organisational and work's changes, and concepts of the organisational change, priorities in measurement and basic definitions will be fixed; then the measure of organisational change in employee surveys, and in employers surveys, in different countries will be analysed, and different statistical methods will be identified; a harmonised questionnaire developing core indicators will finally be tested and revised.

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## KEROSINE

### Knowledge Economy and Regional Strategies for Organisational and Sustainable Innovation

*By Karen Geurts, HIVA-K.U.Leuven*

The HIVA-K.U.Leuven partner of WORKS is involved in a national research project, KEROSINE, which can build synergies with the WORKS project through a common conceptual framework and research objective, i.e. to obtain a better understanding of economic restructuring and organisational innovation. The perspective of KEROSINE though is how the regional economy of Flanders responds to the challenges of glob-

alisation, and the research focus is on the position Flemish organisations within the world-wide economy.

'Changing organisations in a globalised economy' is the point of departure of KEROSINE, and 'globalisation' here refers to the (re)organisation of the social division of labour, within economic value chains and on an international level, and to the growing networking and integration of communication-, production- and market processes.

Apart from its research aims, KEROSINE also has a major strategic social objective. It examines the feasibility of pro-active, regional, socio-economic management in view of sustainable social and economic development. The assumption of the project, which is theoretically underpinned, is that globalisation is manageable by well-informed and strategically-oriented decision makers. Thus, starting from an in-depth understanding of how economic activities are influenced by the institutional environment, the project will explore if it is feasible to develop practical and specific applications that can be used beyond the project. These applications should enable regional, sectoral, and governmental policymakers to actively manage a sustainable development of the Flemish economy, more specifically by sustaining the competitiveness and organisational-innovation capacities of Flemish companies, and by empowering the employability of the workforce.

KEROSINE has three major innovative perspectives, which are:

- *the micro- and meso-level approach*: while a purely macro-economic and statistical approach can only provide limited insights into the globalisation of value chain restructuring, empirical micro- and meso-level research can have a major and innovative contribution;
- *the linking of economic changes to the institutional context*: the project aims at a system-

atic investigation of the correlation between the Flemish economic structure and the institutional context and covers four policy domains, which are employment, economy, education and innovation;

- *the focus on strategic, organisational decision making*: the project aims at understanding the drivers of economic restructuring and the decision making processes at the level of the organisation.

The research of the project is organised in four major empirical routes, each of them addressing different dimensions of economic and organisational globalisation, and following complementary methods:

- a first part will yield a comprehensive inventarisation and analysis of events of economic restructuring in Flanders, such as outsourcing, delocalisation, start-ups and growing companies, downsizing and other forms of restructuring;
- at the centre of a second workpackage lies in-depth case study research into the transfer of business activities in multinational companies;
- a third section is designed to detect and evaluate the emergence of fast growing start-up companies in Europe;
- in a last part, a large-scale survey in Flemish establishments is planned. Here, the objective is to detect the location of business functions and to describe the characteristics of the transactions that take place when these business functions are restructured and relocated.

## **K E R O S I N E**

Restructuring organisations in the Knowledge Economy

KEROSINE is a four-year project, July 2006-July 2010, funded by IWT, the Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders. As a Flemish public institution, IWT stimulates innovation through research and development and through the dissemination of technological know-how in Flanders.

KEROSINE is a multidisciplinary project with three research partners involved:

- HIVA (Higher Institute of Labour Studies), sector Work and Organisation, K.U.Leuven;
- CESO (Centre for Sociological Research), section Work and Organisation, K.U.Leuven;
- Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, University of Gent and Vlerick Management School.

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<http://www.kerosineproject.be/>

## Keep yourself informed

The WORKS consortium aims to ensure that the project results are disseminated in a well-targeted, appropriate and user-friendly way.

The WORKS **website** includes all the latest project news: <http://www.worksproject.be>.

Six WORKS **newsletters** will present key findings from the project.

The international WORKS **conferences, workshops and trainings** will target policymakers, scientists, representatives of statistical bodies and all relevant users.

Keep yourself informed, and join the WORKS news mailing list at <http://www.worksproject.be/registration.htm>.

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- Centre d'Etudes de l'Emploi (CEE), France
- Centre for Social Morphology and Social Policy – KEKMOKOP, Panteion University of Political and Social Sciences, Greece
- Fondation Travail-Université (FTU), Belgium
- Forschungs- und Beratungsstelle Arbeitswelt (FORBA), Austria
- Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), University of Essex, United Kingdom
- Institute for Technology Assessment and System Analysis (ITAS), Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe, Germany
- Institute of Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IS), Bulgaria
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- Institut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung (ISF), Germany
- Istituto di Ricerche Economiche e Sociali (IRES), Italy
- Public Administration and Technology, School of Business, University of Twente, The Netherlands
- Research Centre on Enterprise and Work Innovation, Fundação da Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia (IET), Portugal
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<http://www.worksproject.be>