



OSLO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
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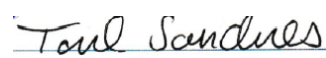
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Tematiske innspill til EUs kommende rammeprogram for forskning og innovasjon - 24/5497

The Work Research Institute (AFI), a research institute at the OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, would like to thank the Ministry of Education and Research for the opportunity to provide input on the thematic areas for the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and for sending out an advance notice of this hearing. This has made it possible for AFI to better anchor our hearing response in our own organisation. Our hearing response is attached.

Yours Sincerely,


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Work Research Institute's Hearing Response

Thematic areas for the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10)

About Work Research Institute, AFI (Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet, AFI)

Work Research Institute (AFI) is an interdisciplinary research institute organized under the Centre for Welfare and Labour Research, Oslo Metropolitan University, delivering state-of-the-art research and policy relevant knowledge on Norwegian and international working life and welfare policies; workplace democracy, the Nordic model, social dialogue, participation and co-determination; organization and leadership; innovation, digitalization, and management; work inclusion, health, diversity, equality, discrimination, and aging; sustainability, migration, and the welfare state; regulation, policy and labour law; workforce mobility and flexibility; labour market crime; security and safety management, etc. Our interdisciplinary team of 60 researchers with backgrounds in sociology, anthropology, organizational psychology, management, criminology, social work, history, economy, and political science and using qualitative, quantitative, and experimental methods as well as RCTs, is on the cutting-edge of working life research, nationally and internationally. AFI manages a large portfolio of research projects spanning from fundamental research, commissioned research, evaluations, to action-oriented research, and continues to build every day on the research and experiences gained over the past 60 years of its existence. Our funders include the Ministry of Education and Research, The Research Council of Norway, the European Union R&I funding schemes, Norwegian ministries, public sector bodies and agencies, interest and non-profit organizations, and private sector organizations. We are, therefore, uniquely positioned to comment on the thematic areas for the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10).

Our Key Recommendation

Working Life and Welfare Research as a Cross-Cutting Theme in EU Calls

We are living in times of polycrisis, facing multiple and intertwined challenges, threats and security risks that are affecting our world, societies, governments, organizations, individuals and our working life, *simultaneously*. We are affected by the return of total war on the European territory, tense geopolitical situation, geoeconomic confrontation and weaponization of the economy; by the effects of climate change and unsustainable rates of extraction of natural resources; by large-scale involuntary migration driven by conflicts and climate change; by polarization, disinformation, and erosion of trust in institutions and of social cohesion; by demographic change, aging populations, and employment crises; by the rise of mental health issues and chronic health conditions; by digital power concentration and threats posed by new technologies; by our dependency on digital infrastructures and increased vulnerability of critical infrastructure and public services to cybersecurity threats; by the cost of living crisis and more.

We could go on, but **our key point is that every element of this polycrisis manifests itself in the working life, in our workplaces, in our organizations and challenges our welfare system** – new security practices are introduced in the workplace to protect society at large, we integrate climate and war refugees through the labour market and within our workplaces, our workplaces are key to building social cohesion and building resilience to disinformation, and to protecting ourselves from cyber and other threats depends increasingly on the capacity building in our workplaces. We spend half of our waking life at work. **Despite this, research on working life has not been prioritized. But we believe that research at the intersection of work, welfare, and organizations holds the key to addressing this polycrisis and should be integrated as a cross-cutting theme in relevant calls,** in a similar way we consider ethics or social impacts a cross-cutting element in EU funding calls.

Our workplaces are key to addressing the polycrisis. **We therefore urgently need more working life and welfare research at the intersection of the various elements of the polycrisis we are facing. Addressing the polycrisis can be done only in international collaboration; the polycrisis is not bound by national borders. We believe that the Nordic excellent research on working life has much to contribute to research across EU's member states, and simultaneously, Norwegian research milieus and society have much to gain from EU projects. We cannot address the polycrisis alone; there is a clear added value for both parties.** AFI's position thus fully supports the Norwegian government's preliminary input on the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10), which states that 'FP10 should contribute to tackling global and European societal challenges and help build a Europe that is excellent in cutting edge research and technology, competitive and resilient. FP10 also needs to be prepared for a more challenging geopolitical context and unforeseen crises and challenges that will require an immediate response.'

In the following, we outline what we see as key research themes in the decades ahead, both for society and for the advancement of research. We also demonstrate why research on working life and welfare should be integrated into relevant research funding calls: **working life research is key to addressing the polycrisis and has great potential to contribute to solving the proliferating societal challenges. Ideally, this should be achieved through 1) fundamental research and interdisciplinary collaboration with other fields and through 2) applied research, science-society collaboration, citizen science, action and policy-oriented research and other forms of research involving stakeholders to which EU R&I funding is key.**

Recommendations for Thematic Areas

The Intersection of Polycrisis and Working Life Research

1. Shifts in Geopolitical Landscape, Security Threats and Working Life Research

Shifts in geopolitical landscape, geopolitical fragmentation, the rise of geoeconomics and the weaponization of the economy both by allies and enemies, is felt not only in our economies at large, but also in our workplaces. Nation states seek to leverage internal managerial and corporate infrastructures for their own strategic and security interests. Public sector organizations, corporations, SMEs and other organizations are implementing security management measures, spanning from personnel security, physical security, object security, to cybersecurity; they also invest increasingly in crisis preparedness and training; security is becoming an integrated part of everyday working life across virtually all professions. **Working life research is well positioned to answer the question of what kind of security management/governance can be developed in the future, what competencies and labour market tools are needed to ensure that security within organizations contributes to security at a societal level and simultaneously protects core European values and workers' rights.**

2. Increasing Regulatory and Technological Complexity and Working Life Research

We live in times of rapidly increasing technological and legal and regulatory complexity. Organizations are implementing generative AI technologies; there is ever deeper digitalization, automation of tasks and jobs, and dependence on complex and vulnerable digital infrastructures. This techno-regulatory complexity trickles down to the workforce, increasing the need for competence building and fast organizational transformation while altering power relations in the workplace as well as professions and their missions. We are still at the initial stages of fully grasping the joint impacts, risks and threats posed by the increasing regulatory and technological complexity on our societies, organizations, working life and workers. At the individual level, this complexity can feel overwhelming and result in feelings of powerlessness, disengagement, mental health issues. Aggregated, this can have serious societal impacts. At the societal and market level, the increasing techno-regulatory complexity is rapidly transforming the labour market while shifting power to large

corporations. Yet, the European Union member states as well as Norway, depend on small and medium sized enterprises. **International collaboration in working life and welfare research must be mobilized to address the challenges springing from the techno-regulatory complexity and it must be integrated into an interdisciplinary study of regulatory and technological change.**

3. Algorithmic Management, Generative AI and Working Life and Welfare Research

Related to the aforementioned trends, we see the growth of algorithmic management technologies and implementation of generative AI in both flexible and standard employment, from platform work to the white-collar workers in the financial industry. The recent regulatory efforts from the EU, from the AI Act to the Platform Directive have contributed to addressing the potential harms of these technologies. While there is emerging research on the impacts of these technologies on the labour market, on the workforce, on professions and on social dialogue around the issues of technology implementation, this research is still only emergent. **In order to ensure socially equitable, just, safe, and human- and worker-centred digitalization and implementation of algorithmic technologies and AI, we need more working life and welfare research in this field. This includes research on participation and the role of social partners, as well as welfare technologies.**

4. Demographic Trends, Aging Populations, Health, and Working Life and Welfare Research

Working life and welfare research will be crucial for addressing the pressing demographic challenges: the ageing population, and hence also shrinking work-age population and related labour shortages; the social integration of conflict, climate and labour migrants; the rise of mental health issues and chronic illnesses; increased dependence on welfare schemes and youth unemployment; and brain drain. Working life and welfare research can find solutions for these societal challenges: from designing workplaces to accommodate elderly workers, integrate migrants, and support youth struggling with mental health issues and falling outside of the labour market. **We need to invest in international fundamental and policy-oriented research, as well as citizen science that is capable of generating innovative solutions and increase well-being and satisfaction while promoting mental health, social integration and societal trust.**

5. Climate Crisis, Sustainability and Working Life and Welfare Research

Working life and welfare research has also great potential to contribute to addressing the various challenges springing from climate crisis and to contribute to developing both environmentally and socially sustainable organizations, workplaces, and communities. Working life research has much to contribute to addressing questions of what organizations and workplaces can do to act sustainably in reality – and not only on paper. **Working life research has much to contribute to the often-neglected dimensions of *social* sustainability which is also key to social welfare – what changes are needed to achieve not only environmental but also social sustainability? Without doubt, our companies, organizations and workplaces should play a central role in this mission and working life research can contribute to redesigning our institutions in ways that align with these goals. More EU collaborative research with multiple stakeholders and citizens is needed.**

6. Democracy, Disinformation, Social Cohesion, Trust and Working Life and Action Research

We must strengthen existing science with and for society missions, citizen science, the universities' third mission and stimulate the participation of citizens in tackling the polycrisis. Working life research, with its tradition of action research and its role as a driver of social innovation has much to contribute here. Working life research builds on interdisciplinary social science approaches, combining a wealth of qualitative, quantitative and experimental methods, while including citizens, students, youth, and workers in research. **Working life and action research should be leveraged as a transformative social force in tackling the larger challenges of building social cohesion, trust, protecting our democracy and building resilience towards disinformation.**