

Co-creating Compassionate Workplaces

**Collectively exploring challenges and opportunities in
initial stages of participatory research in workplaces
across four European countries**

**Deborah De Moortel, Hanne Bakelants and Carol
Tishelman**



**Funded by
the European Union**

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101137223.

Agenda

- Introduction to the EU-COWORK project
- Challenges related to PAR in EU-CoWork
- Interactive group discussions
- Joint discussion

DEVELOPING COMPASSIONATE WORKPLACES

A matter of occupational health

Decline in individual resilience, energy, social support, coping, etc.

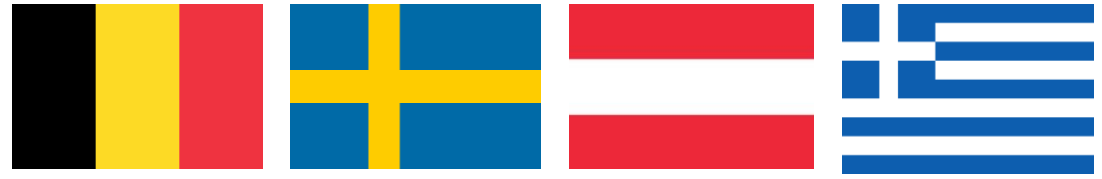
- loss of concentration
- loss of ability (or willingness) to take responsibility
- loss of creativity
- risk of social isolation
- Risk of occupational accidents and stress

A matter at the organisational and societal level

- Loss of productivity
- High cost on society through sick leave or leaving or permanent exit from workforce
- High pressure on health care systems



**A Compassionate Workplace is one where
serious illness, dying, caregiving and grief is
everyone's business**



Methods

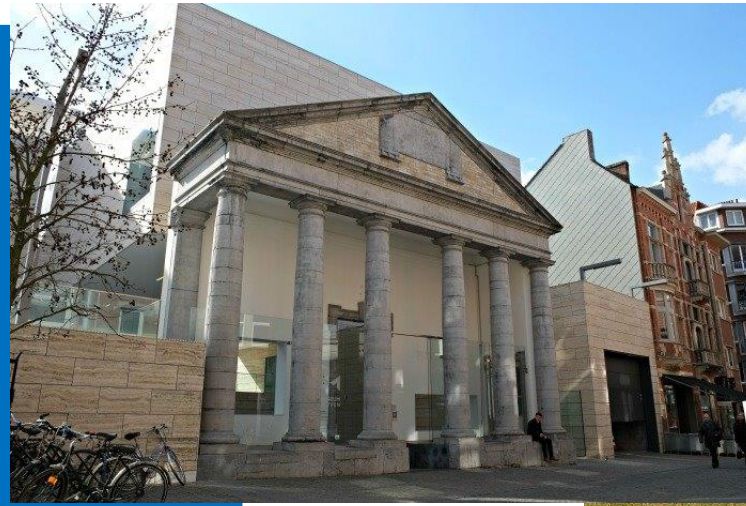
4-country cross-national mixed-methods intervention study with an embedded process and impact evaluation.

1. An international **co-creative and co-developmental evaluation** of tailored CWP
2. An international mixed methods **process and impact evaluation**

More information?
www.EU-CoWork.eu

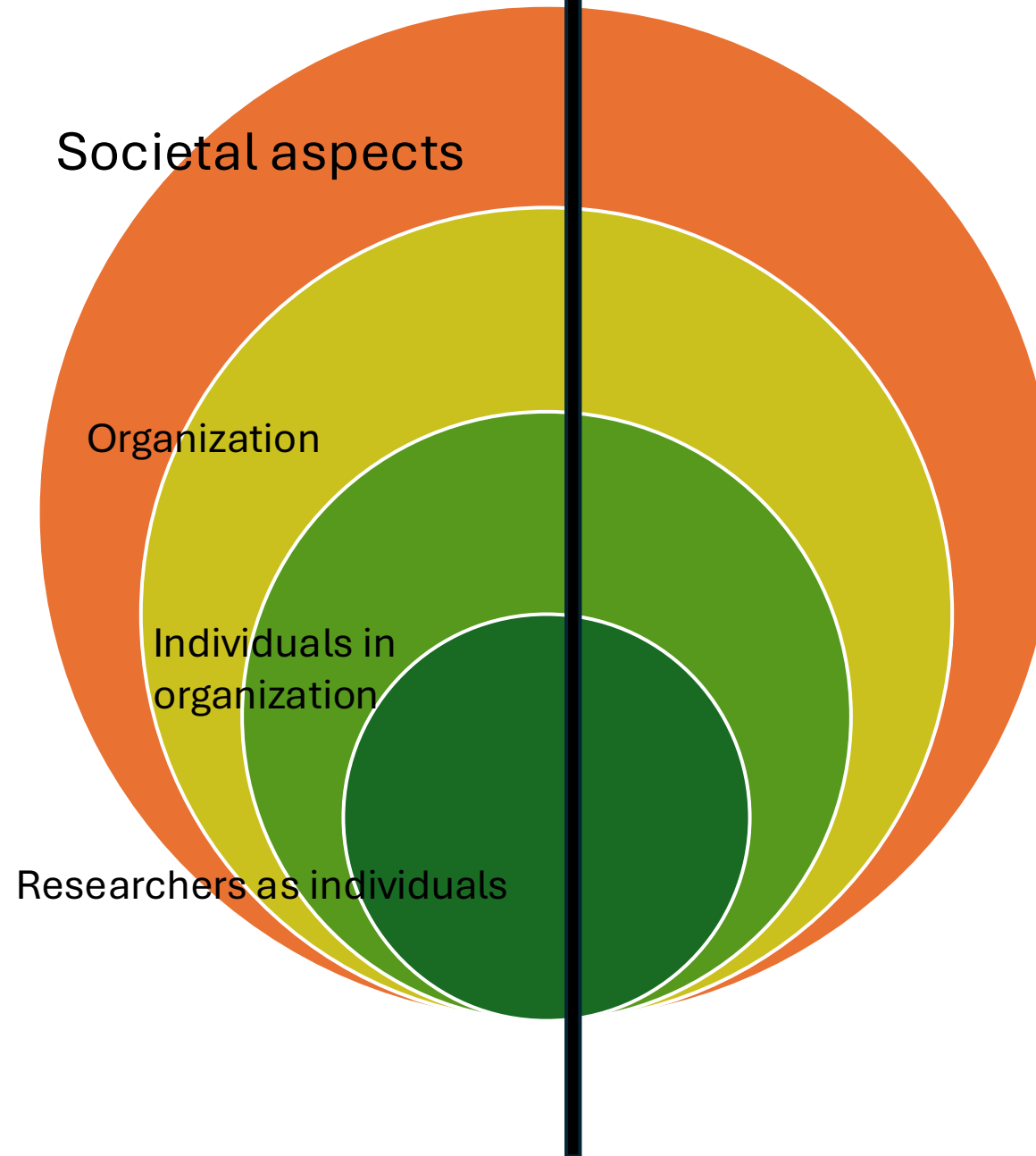


Variety of workplaces



Amenable to change

- (Long-term) Changes in regulations



NOT amenable to change

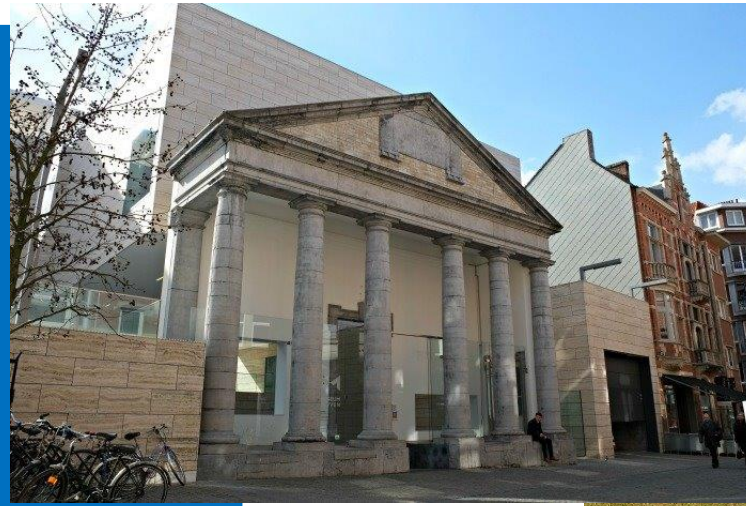
- New tariffs
- Political shifts

Challenge: Societal Aspects

NOT
amenable
to change
(via this
project in
any case)



Variety of workplaces



Challenge:

When is an organization 'unrecruitable'?

- Precondition of the EU-CoWork project: **regular work group meetings**
- Workplace characteristics:
 - High staff burn-out & turn-over → chronic understaffing
 - Many long-term absences without clear understanding of underlying causes
 - “interpersonal tensions” characterizing meetings
 - Ineffective past interventions
 - Management internally not on the same page (leadership conflict)

Why the project didn't start in the organizations

- Dilemma: step back or step in?
 - Are we seeing red flags — or facing an important research opportunity?
- Risk that the work group may lose focus on the project concerning serious illness, death, bereavement, and informal caregiving, and instead become a forum for airing all organizational problems
- No leadership engagement, buy-in
- Sometimes, *not acting* is better?
- Saying “not now” ≠ “never”

Discussion in smaller groups

Inspirational questions for discussion

- What does 'readiness' mean in this context? Is there such a thing as "too early" for compassionate workplace program?
- What boundaries do you hold as an external partner?
- How do you balance ambition with integrity in complex workplace contexts?
- At what point does "meeting people where they are" become enabling dysfunction? What is the relationship between a compassionate workplace project and other forms of organizational repair?

Thank you!

hanne.eline.bakelants@vub.be
deborah.de.moortel@vub.be
carol.tishelman@ki.se