



*University of Ljubljana*



## **EAWOP Small Group Meeting - Call for papers**

### **The "great rethink"**

#### **Understanding work engagement, performance, and well-being in the new work normal**

September 21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

Ljubljana, Slovenia

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#### **Meeting theme and scope**

The present SGM will deal with the question of “the great rethink” and is aimed to encourage scholarly debate and insights from practice on work engagement, performance, and well-being in the context of crises, changes, and transitions. Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine (and associated energy supply crisis), and worsening economic outlook have had a tremendous impact on the nature, organization, and location of work, on employees’ professional and private lives, on organizations, their assets and profit as well as whole industries. More precisely, work is changing in terms of content due to increasing automation and digitalization. Employees are increasingly connected through ICTs and telecommuting as well as hybrid work arrangements have become widespread. Stimulated by times of crisis, employees started to reconsider and reevaluate their work and lives in general. What organizational scholars have termed “the great rethink”, “the great resignation”, or “the great reset” (Carbonaro, 2022; Fuller & Kerr, 2022; Gulati, 2022), has been visible across the globe. Large numbers of employees are leaving their current employer, discontent with the workplace is spreading, and work-life balance, as well as well-being have become decisive factors in job transitions (Fox, 2022). Employees feel even less connected with their employers, identify less with their organizations, and even feel their possibilities may become too restricted when working for the same employer in the long term (Ashforth et al., 2020). In their quest for freedom, some started to combine

their work with leisure and perform their work remotely from various locations all over the world (i.e., digital nomads). At the same time, a substantial number of employees are left unemployed or in fear of losing their jobs in the future. In some industries, experiences of job insecurity are peaking. Organizations are changing as well. Some are facing a drastic talent shortage and difficulties replacing departing employees (Fox, 2022). They are increasingly questioning their strategies of attracting, retaining, and engaging employees and extensively building their employer brands. Others, however, have been plagued by downsizing, furloughs, layoffs, and work hour reductions. Although in different directions, industries such as hospitality and tourism, construction, and healthcare underwent tremendous changes.

In times which are characterized by several forms of “un-ness” – unexpected, unscheduled, unimaginable, unprecedented, uncertain, undesirable, unpleasant, and often unmanageable” events (Zacher & Rudolph, 2022, p. 7), we as work and organizational psychologists, need to gather relevant insights for securing a motivated, productive, satisfied, and healthy workforce and to give these insights to practice. In order to gather relevant insights for securing a motivated, productive, satisfied, and healthy workforce, several important gaps need to be addressed:

- (a) What are the major trends and challenges associated with the "new work normal"?
- (b) Which factors contribute to engagement, performance, and well-being in the context of the "new work normal"?
- (c) Which mechanisms link antecedents with engagement, performance and well-being outcomes and what factors represent boundary conditions?
- (d) Which interventions can facilitate engagement, performance, and well-being in the context of the "new work normal"?
- (e) How can theoretical insights and methodological approaches be extended to address workplace changes and transitions (i.e., the "new work normal")?

Applicants are invited to submit their abstracts to any of these topics.

## Meeting program and location

The EAWOP SGM titled "The great rethink" will be held for two days (September 21 - 22, 2023). The meeting will include approximately 20 interactive oral presentations from researchers and presentations from practitioners working as WO psychologists, HR managers etc. in organizations about current organizational realities and challenges. Dr. Evangelia Demerouti (Eindhoven University of Technology) and dr. Kristen M. Shockley (University of Georgia) have agreed to provide keynote lectures on changes in nature, organization, and location of work, in employees' attitudes toward professional and private lives, and organizations in general.

The provisional program is depicted below:

### Day 1

Registration and welcome	8:30-9:00
Organizational realities and challenges (Input from practice)	9:00-10:00
Individual presentations (Input from academia)	10:00-10:30
Coffee break	10:30-11:00
Keynote (Input from academia)	11:00-12:00
Lunch	12:00-13:00
Individual presentations (Input from academia)	13:00-14:30
Coffee break	14:30-15:00
Keynote (Input from practice)	15:00-16:00

Reflection of the day	16:00-16:30
Get together and guided tour through the city	17:15-18:30
Dinner	18:30-21:00

## Day 2

Individual presentations	9:00-10:30
Coffee break	10:30-11:00
Keynote (Input from academia)	11:00-12:00
Lunch	12.00-13:00
Individual presentations	13:00-14:30
Coffee break	14:30-15:00
Reflection, Summary and Conclusions (Panel debate)	15:00-16:30

The meeting will be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and the SGM will be hosted by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (or alternatively by the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana – depending on the number of participants). Although Ljubljana is one of the smallest capitals in Europe, with a population of 293,000, it is one of Europe's greenest and most livable capitals. According to TripAdvisor, Ljubljana offers the perfect blend of Slovenian, German, and Mediterranean cultures. Although Ljubljana is small, it has a lot to offer. The pedestrian-only old town offers Baroque, Renaissance, and Art Nouveau architecture, combined with lively cafes and restaurants next to the emerald-green Ljubljanica river. The gardens of Tivoli park or the National Museum of Contemporary History are only a short walk away. In addition, a medieval castle can be visited on a hill above the city, offering beautiful views and exhibitions. Thus, it is not surprising that Ljubljana was voted a hidden gem and one of the best European destinations in 2022 by Forbes magazine. The city also has airport connections to all major European airports.

## Conference fee

Following the EAWOP requirements for SGM organization, the overall costs for the participants will be kept at a minimum. The general conference fee is 40 EUR, students can attend the meeting at a reduced fee of 20 EUR. This registration fee covers two lunches, all coffee breaks, and a conference dinner.

## Submission of abstracts

Applicants should submit their abstracts (up to 500 words) by **May 1, 2023** to [sara.tement@um.si](mailto:sara.tement@um.si) and [katja.kerman1@um.si](mailto:katja.kerman1@um.si). Participants will be notified about the acceptance of their paper by **June 15, 2023**. Each abstract should contain the following information: a) Statement of problem(s); and b) How addressing the problem enhances our understanding of "the great rethink" or "the new working normal" and contributes to the aims of the small group meeting. Empirical abstracts should contain information on methods, sampling and sample size, measures, and results. Conceptual abstracts should pose specific and unanswered questions and/or make specific and novel predictions. To make the insights of the SGM accessible to a broader group of researchers, we plan to edit a special issue in one of the prominent academic journals (presumably, European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology - EJWOP). Details on the special issue and other dissemination activities will be discussed at the meeting.