

Editorial

Diana Rus

We are happy to present our second 2024 issue of InPractice. The key theme in this issue is mental health and well-being. Whether addressing mental health issues in Finnish workplaces, workplace burnout in Malta, supporting PhD students during their journey, or fostering resilience in youth, the focus on mitigating stress, anxiety and other mental health challenges is central. Each contribution underscores the value of collaboration and community-building via structured interventions like coaching, mentoring or strategies designed to empower individuals such as flexible work arrangements and organizational support. Furthermore, all contributions highlight the need for interventions that are context-sensitive, designed to meet the specific needs of their target groups, whether those be employees, PhD students or marginalized young people. The articles in this issue also share a commitment to translating research in work and organizational psychology (WOP) into practical solutions to foster well-being and improve mental health whether that be via tangible tools or policy recommendations. All in all, the contributions in this issue collectively point to a shared understanding that addressing well-being, fostering resilience, and creating supportive environments are critical for sustainable personal and organizational success.

This issue begins with a fascinating interview with *Jaana Vastamäki*, a Senior Specialist in mental health and psychosocial workload at Finland's Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Jaana explains in detail her efforts to enhance mental health and address psychosocial workload factors in the workplace. For example, her involvement in the Mental Health at Work Programme aims to proactively reduce mental health-related sickness absences, particularly those linked to anxiety and depression. These include creating tools for identifying strain, supporting young workers, and facilitating collaboration between workplaces and occupational healthcare. The program integrates research, policy, and practice, leveraging strategies like burnout assessment models and return-to-work initiatives. Jaana also emphasizes the importance of translating research findings into practical, cost-effective workplace interventions to enhance employee well-being and productivity amidst Finland's demographic challenges.

Next, we continue with an empirical piece by *Kenneth Farrugia* and *John Chan* that examines the prevalence and causes of burnout among the Maltese workforce and provides insights into how organizations could develop effective and sustainable

policies to combat it. The research highlights the increasing prevalence of workplace burnout, with 38% of Maltese workers affected, particularly younger employees aged 20–29. It also identifies key contributors, including workload and inadequate rewards, and suggests that burnout may be more organizational than individual in origin. The study calls for systemic workplace interventions, including flexible work arrangements, organizational support, manageable workloads and fair compensation to foster a sustainable work culture. In short, the research highlights that addressing burnout in a systemic fashion, benefits not only individuals, but also organizations and society at large by fostering productivity and well-being.

The next piece, a practice spotlight by *Marna van der Merwe* and *Dieter Veldsman*, pivots into a different direction by exploring the internal diversity challenges within Human Resources (HR) teams and their impact on the broader implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. The study, conducted in the United States of America, highlights significant gender imbalance (68.2% female representation), underrepresentation of Hispanic professionals, and limited diversity in leadership roles, emphasizing the need for HR to "walk the talk" on diversity. While HR is essential in shaping inclusive workplaces, these disparities undermine the credibility of DEI efforts. The article underscores the need for HR to lead by example through targeted recruitment, mentorship, and structured career development to foster a more representative workforce. It calls for addressing systemic barriers, redefining HR's image, and enhancing career pathways to ensure HR's internal diversity aligns with its organizational DEI mission. The findings emphasize the importance of a diverse HR function in enhancing policy authenticity and organizational trust.

The next contribution, a case study authored by *Kathryn Waddington* and *Karl Donaldson*, explores the application of compassion-based coaching within a youth justice social enterprise in London which supports vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. The authors introduce a compassion-based framework for critically reflective practice in coaching and WOP and highlight their journey of supporting young individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds through creative media and mentorship. The study emphasizes the transformative potential of coaching psychology in reframing self-perceptions and fostering authentic expression among youth. By combining personal narratives, such as Karl's experience with late-diagnosed dyslexia, with coaching strategies, this case underscores the value of integrating reflective and creative practices into coaching to maximize social impact and foster well-being.

As such, the article emphasizes the importance of combining compassion with evidence-based coaching techniques to drive meaningful change, especially in contexts that support vulnerable populations. This is a must read for those who are new to coaching psychology and are interested in understanding how these skills and approaches can be applied in their practice.

We close this issue with a tools piece, authored by *Luisa Solms* and *Lara Solms*. The authors developed the PhD Coach kit, a self-coaching resource designed to support PhD students in managing the unique challenges of academic life, such as publication pressures, work-life balance struggles, and career uncertainty. The kit features 80 reflective questions covering 10 key topics relevant across the PhD lifecycle. By encouraging self-reflection and solution-focused thinking, the kit aims to enhance mental health, well-being, and personal development. It is flexible for individual or group use and can complement mentoring and professional coaching. The initiative seeks to normalize discussions about mental health in academia and provide accessible tools for fostering resilience and actionable insights for early-career researchers.

As we look ahead to future issues of InPractice, we invite you to seize the opportunity to publish with us. We are particularly interested in contributions that deepen our understanding of the practical applications of WOP. Submissions may include practice-oriented tools, whether introducing new ones or showcasing their use in interventions. We also welcome empirical studies, case studies, reflections on career journeys, conference or event reports, and book reviews. If you have an idea, please reach out to us at InPractice@eawop.org with a brief outline of your proposed paper. We would be delighted to collaborate with you to bring your work to publication.



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