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## Staying Connected in Europe



In common with many other people and organisations, the referendum result has forced us to think hard about the future and about our own values and identity. It has raised profound questions about the future of the UK's economy, society and constitution. Yet, as we often

argued, the debate largely sidestepped vital issues such as the way in which migration policy will inevitably be shaped by the UK's ageing workforce and low productivity.

Companies in the UK and beyond have told us that they want an open Europe in which they can exchange good practices and learn and innovate together, unconstrained by national borders. Europe is an amazing learning resource, full of innovative companies keen to share experiences with each other. Our strength and passion has always been to help this to happen.

UK WON, and its sister company Workplace Innovation Limited, have their origins in some thirty years of EU-funded projects and programmes. Around half of our work takes place in Europe as a whole. During this time we have brought companies together from nearly thirty countries to share ideas and experiences of 'what works'; we have created tools and resources that draw on international research to provide the practical knowledge needed in the workplace; we have highlighted the role of trade unions and employers' organisations as "knowledgeable participants" in workplace innovation; we have worked directly with the European Commission to support better and more productive workplaces; we have supported regional and national policymakers in settings as diverse as Scotland, Estonia and the Basque Country; and we have helped countless individual companies combine high performance with high quality of working life.

The Brexit vote won't prevent us from continuing our work across Europe. In doing so we will strengthen opportunities for companies in the UK and internationally to build connections, learn from each other and innovate together.

[Fresh Thinking Labs](#), our new platform to be launched later this summer, creates unique opportunities for companies to exchange ideas and experience *Online* and to visit each other's workplaces *In Person* as critical friends.

Within the next month we will establish **Workplace Innovation Europe** as a sister company in at least one EU Member State. And we are exploring new ways of working even more closely with our partners in Europe.

***These are challenging and uncertain times but staying connected in Europe will be a source of resilience and strength.***

[Share your thoughts](#)

# Invitation to Saint-Gobain with Fresh Thinking Labs



Launching Fresh Thinking Labs means an array of opportunities for the first wave of members to meet *In Person* and *Online*, build relationships, share experiences and create Communities. Fresh Thinking Lab partners are working on a 12 month programme of member-only *Open Events* hosted by companies across Europe.

## Launching the Programme at Saint-Gobain

We're delighted to invite you to the launch of our *Open Event* programme, to be hosted by Fresh Thinking Lab Founder Member **Saint-Gobain** at its new Bristol FabLab on 5th-6th October. Saint-Gobain, an advanced manufacturing company, was founded in 1665 and employs over 200,000 people worldwide. The Bristol plant has built a powerful approach to self-managed teamworking and employee-driven innovation, supported by a senior management team highly committed both to sharing their experiences and to learning from other leading companies. Its FabLab, opened in 2016, exemplifies the company's belief in releasing the creativity and knowledge of its entire workforce. Read the article by Tom Francis, Saint-Gobain's Business Manager, below.

Its experience of transformation raises important questions, for example:

*How do you link employee driven innovation with customer focussed innovation?  
How do you balance employee-driven innovation with the daily running of the business?  
How can you make effective decisions, especially on a global scale, involving self-directed teams?*

Saint-Gobain is keen to share its considerable achievements and to learn from the experiences of others in order to help take the next steps.

[Find out more](#)

## Making it personal



It's hard to pinpoint a time when our transformation started and when we began to get clarity on what we wanted to achieve, but for the “aha” moment came when I heard the term “fit for future, fit for people”. I think the phrase has been plagiarised from Gary Hamel’s [Fit for the Future, and for Human Beings](#)? but for me it sums up what we are trying to do – yes, of course we want to focus on the business (profitability etc.) to ensure that we are here in 350 years (we just had our 350th birthday), but it also puts in equal balance that it has to be a place that is fit for people. By this I mean we want to provide an environment that the whole person can turn up to and contribute, and not just a portion of the person.

*Tom Francis offers a personal account of the journey that he and his senior team colleagues are undertaking as they make their business ‘fit for the future and fit for people’. Tom is Business Manager at Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics in Bristol and a Founding Member of [Fresh Thinking Labs](#).*

[Find out more](#)

# Challenging Times: Developing Workplaces for Sustainable Work and Retaining an Ageing Workforce



By 2030 the number of people aged 55 or over in high-income countries will grow to 500 million. The benefits to individuals, businesses and the economy of retaining older, experienced people in work are increasingly evident, becoming a key concern for EU and national policymakers as well as many employers.

Until now policymakers have sought to retain older people in employment by raising the retirement age and, in some countries, by legislating against age discrimination in the workplace. At the same time, many employers and pension funds have reduced retirement benefits, especially during the recession. Such measures have made an impact but they also ignore the nature of work itself. Experience shows that forcing older people to remain in unsatisfying jobs, or to remain in jobs that they are no longer able to perform, is not the best solution for anyone involved.

**Workage** is a three year EU-funded project led by Nottingham Trent University and Workplace Innovation Limited. It tests the proposition that the engagement and retention of employees aged 50+ will be improved by creating workplaces in which people of all ages exercise more discretion in their day-to-day tasks, share ideas for improvement and innovation, and help shape the decisions that affect their work. There is long-established evidence that health, job satisfaction and engagement are enhanced when employees are empowered and respected at work.

Workage suggests that these factors also influence the retirement decisions of older workers. ***Workage is organising two interactive conferences designed to share finding from its work and that of other key partners and stakeholders.***

[Read more about Workage and book your place at the upcoming events](#)

# ***Please Forward***

## **About Workplace Innovation**

***Workplace Innovation*** helps enterprises and their employees to improve organisational performance and working lives by releasing the full knowledge, skill and creativity of people at every level.

Contact us at [contact@goodworkplaces.net](mailto:contact@goodworkplaces.net)



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