



**allwiss**

arbeiten\_lernen\_leben  
in der wissensarbeit

## Project "Allwiss – work – learn – life balance in knowledge work"

### Problem statement

Knowledge work has increasingly become a key resource for German corporations to innovate and gain competitiveness. Typically, knowledge work involves finding solutions to new and complex problems. On the one hand, knowledge workers' tasks are associated with irregular work flows, planning uncertainty and indefinite goals. On the other hand, knowledge workers enjoy considerable freedom of action. Therefore, knowledge work has so far primarily been seen as a high-demand and high-control job. It is an accepted fact that great demands are placed on knowledge workers to organise their own working and learning life, to cope with uncertainty and to act flexibly and creatively. Up to now it has hardly been assumed that these demands should result in stress or any associated adverse mental, psychosomatic social or economic effects. The few studies that have looked at stress-related conditions specific to knowledge workers suggest that assertions on the basis of conventional resource theories of stress, which are valid in other spheres of work, cannot be transferred to the field of knowledge work. However, knowledge workers do indeed report that they suffer from stress and a lack of work-learn-life balance, and this imbalance could jeopardise their ability to foster innovation in this key economic area, with far-reaching consequences for the individual, the firm and the economy as a whole.

### Project goals and sought-for results

The research network project "Allwiss – work – learn – life balance in knowledge work" aims

- to discover which specific **work-learn-life balance (WLLB) situations** occur in view of the ever-growing demands on companies and staff in the field of knowledge work for achieving a balance between flexibility and stability,
- to find out which stress factors and resources in the various phases of the life-cycle characterise WLLB situations at individual, social and organisational levels,
- to analyse the impact of WLLB situations on various groups of workers and companies,
- to develop, test and publish, on the basis of these findings and as a result of an interactive collaboration between researchers and practitioners, useful work-learn-life models and work-learn-life **interventions** in the form of **tools for various fields of activity** for corporate practice (especially in SMEs).

### Approach

Action research forms the methodological background to the interdisciplinary project set up by academic partners from the fields of work and organisational psychology, staff and occupational education and business studies. The aim of the project is thus not primarily

theory development, but the initiation of change processes based on academic input. Initiatives and measures are to be induced that will enable the partner companies and their staff to bring about sustainable changes at the personal, team and organisational levels. A total of six companies are involved in the action-based research programme, all of which are participating in the project as practice and value partners. The investigation focuses on these companies' IT knowledge workers.

The research project is divided into five phases: (1) The **survey phase**, comprising qualitative and quantitative interviews and questionnaire surveys in six companies on the current WLLB status quo. (2) The **conceptional phase**, in which, based on the results of the company surveys, important spheres of activity are identified and tools for enhancing the balance between working, learning and living are developed. (3) The **implementation phase**, with its testing of the WLLB tools in a pilot project in collaboration with the two practice partner companies operating in the IT sector. (4) The **evaluation phase**, during which the tools employed, will be assessed by the researchers. (5) The **transfer phase** for publishing the academic findings and the WLLB tools developed. Besides academic publications, the project is designed to develop measures and materials that have a wide range of application for achieving an enhanced balance of working, learning and living, beneficial for companies and their staff. To this end, the companies will be provided with guidelines and an "Allwiss tool box" which, in addition to an internet-based WLLB self-assessment, will also include an "Allwiss score card" for measuring the impact of the implemented measures. Furthermore, the selection and training of work-learn-life balance coaches within the companies is part of the intended change processes towards a better WLLB.

### Project home page

[www.allwiss.de](http://www.allwiss.de)

### Network co-ordination

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