

## **Preface**

The capability to produce innovations on a continual basis is a crucial condition for sustainable socio-economic development and sustainable economic growth. In this process, there has been a fundamental shift in the understanding of innovation in scientific, economic and political terms. The traditional focus on products and technology was expanded in favor of a holistic understanding by adding the social and organizational aspects of innovations. People and their working conditions are of crucial importance in this view and become the key enablers and therewith also the central drivers of innovations.

The question as to how the innovative capability of individuals, networks and companies can be increased is thus not just a question of technological developments – it is equally important to ask how to design personnel, organizational and skill development that is conducive to innovation. What constitutes an innovative company? Which skills do people need to initiate and manage innovative processes? How can human potentials be used as factors of innovation and be regarded as organizational assets? The expanded focus on the role of people and their everyday working lives leads to new insights being gained into the nature of, and preconditions for, innovations that reach far beyond product- and technology-oriented views.

The book which follows emphasizes the fundamental significance of, and analyses the opportunities for, personnel, organizational and skill development to strengthen innovative capability. To provide a wide interdisciplinary, international and practice-related perspective, the “International Monitoring” project funded by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) has combined key findings of the German research and development program on “Working – Learning – Developing Skills. Potential for Innovation in a Modern Working Environment” with contributions from international experts from the academic, business and political worlds. The result is a collection of essays which explains and presents this still new topic of study from a transdisciplinary and also international perspective. The findings show that the effective linkage of research, business and politics is coming to exercise ever more leverage in strengthening innovative capability.

**Ilona Kopp**  
**Project Management Agency DLR**  
**Development of Work and Services**

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Jeschke, S.; Isenhardt, I.; Hees, F.; Trantow, S. (Eds.)

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