

The Global Psychology Alliance (GPA), in collaboration with the Learning Leadership Institute (LLI), was honored to host Dr. Ritsa S.J. Fotinatos-Ventouratos, Professor of Psychology at The American College of Greece, for a timely and thought-provoking lecture in Spring 2025. Her presentation, *Improving Health & Wellbeing at Work: An Agenda for the Future*, addressed the urgent need to reimagine the modern workplace in light of global challenges and shifting workforce demographics.

Dr. Fotinatos-Ventouratos emphasized how recent crises - from the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturns to refugee movements and ongoing wars - have transformed the nature of employment worldwide. Workers today face unprecedented stress levels, with wellbeing and mental health now central concerns in organizational life. These disruptions, she argued, require employers, psychologists, and policymakers to rethink how workplaces can better support resilience, trust, and flexibility.

A major focus of the lecture was the rise of new generational expectations, particularly from Generation Z and Millennials. These groups are actively demanding healthier work cultures that prioritize flexibility, work-life balance, and transparency, while moving away from outdated models of strict control and constant availability. Dr. Fotinatos-Ventouratos called for leaders to adopt more inclusive, trust-based management styles, supported by strong communication, emotional intelligence, and organizational transparency.

Looking to the future, Dr. Fotinatos-Ventouratos highlighted the importance of fostering flexible working arrangements, cultivating open dialogue between employees and management, and embedding mental health and diversity into workplace culture. By embracing these principles, organizations can not only adapt to changing times but also thrive, creating healthier, more sustainable environments for employees and their families.

Global Psychology Alliance (GPA) – Learning Leadership Institute (LLI) – APA.

Synopsis of Lecture: Spring 2025.

Title of Lecture: *Improving Health & Wellbeing at Work: An Agenda for the Future.*

Speaker: Dr. Ritsa S. J. Fotinatos-Ventouratos,

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Synopsis of Lecture:

Citizens across the globe are being faced with numerous challenges, as multiple and ongoing crises have aboded in recent years, leading to severe turbulence being felt in the world of work (Fotinatos-Ventouratos, Cooper, & Antoniou, 2024). To name but a few critical incidences that employees on an international scale have been faced with include, a Global Health Pandemic, a recent World Economic Crisis, an International Refugee Crisis, and ongoing and severe International Wars. These crises have resulted in individuals and families being faced with new and massive demands in the workplace, thereby requiring employees to ‘rethink-readjust and realign in the face of adversity’ (Fotinatos-Ventouratos & Cooper, 2023). Statistical evidence concurs to such claims, with a recent Gallup poll (2022), for example, stating that the pandemic and its shock waves continue to disrupt the workplace, with stress amongst workers being at an all-time international high since Gallup began surveying adults in 2005. For most of the working population, it was indeed Covid-19 Health Crisis, with its subsequent multiple effects, that has resulted in the world of work severely changing, and literally ‘employment’ perse has a completely different connotation today. As stipulated, very recently, (BPS, Psychologist, 2025), *“Covid-19 was an Earth-Shattering Experience”*. Overnight, lockdown was installed, and by mid-January 2021, the number of reported Covid cases had already reached 95 million globally, with two million deaths (de Klerk et al, 2021). For Organizational Psychologists, therefore, this specific crisis has brought important and sensitive issues to light, primarily related to job insecurity, and new job demands. One must also be vigilant that citizens across the globe are still on the ‘tail end’ of the worst health crisis ever experienced in the living memories of most people, and consequently, organizations and employees, will be subject to major upheavals and readjustments in the employment arena, and for many years to come.

These subsequent workplace changes require scientists and epidemiologists to re-evaluate what is needed for a *healthier* work environment to emerge, placing worker wellbeing at the top of our agenda, despite turbulent times. Further, and ‘under the lens’ are important and new demographics emerging: Highly evident is the ‘*new generation shift*’ that has manifested, primarily in western societies. Today, the workforce is heavily comprised of Generation Z, which are “*People born between the mid-1990s and mid 2000s*” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024), and it is indeed, this generation that is now openly requesting that organizations adhere to new and ‘healthier’ standards of work: Unlike previous generations, this particular cohort of workers are requesting that their voices are heard, their opinions considered – and without penalization from management! Further, issues that have been brought to the forefront include requesting a more compatible home-work life balance, ensuring more flexibility in the job, and with fewer restrictions overall. Taken together, therefore, it appears that the old abrasive managerial style

of 'control and demand', that we once knew, will no longer sustain in tomorrow's working environment, given an agenda of wellbeing being paramount. According to many scientists (see for example, Felstead, 2022), to move forward in a steadfast and healthier manner, a new '*Leadership Style*' may even be subject to arise, which will require managerial practices to align to *new cultural changes and shifts*, thereby endorsing some forms of flexibility in the job to emerge. Clearly, the new generational shift, will not work in the same format that their parents once did, whereby we saw a surge in technology, email abuse, working from the office five days a week, and employees available in a 24/7 mode, with overuse of emails, technology, and a fusion of home-work boundaries occurring (Fotinatos-Ventouratos & Cooper, 2015).

Moving on, one may suggest that in our new time eras, and with a wellbeing agenda of the future manifesting, a new '*flexibility curve*' will be required for organizations to adhere to: As a consequence of the health pandemic, and the new age group entering the workforce, new behaviours are emerging, and subsequently in the next few years, we will hopefully see the rise of a 'new culture' permeate.

Further, and as we navigate in these transformative times, organisational psychologists and leaders alike must also grapple with the intricate dynamics at play between cultural variances and universal behavioural trends. The workforce, increasingly globalized, demands an intersectional approach that recognizes individual and collective identities. It is not merely about implementing policies but fostering an ethos of inclusivity where mental health, diversity, and equality are not just keywords but integral facets of workplace culture. Addressing these issues will undoubtedly shape the blueprint for workplaces of the future.

Thus, attention and action from a global psychology community is imperative, whereby *installing trust*, and allowing a *flexibility curve* to be installed in the business setting is something that we need to train managers of tomorrow to understand and to do in reality. For this to abide, two important pillars need to be in place – one focuses on the theme of '*trust*', and one around the theme of '*flexible working arrangements*.' The new generations, (both generation z, and millennial groups), are requesting greater trust, and more flexible working arrangements, often away from the physical presence in the office. One may suggest that this is ironic given that organizational psychologists have been advocating for such changes for many years now, although it took a world pandemic to occur for such initiatives and requests to be heard! Indeed, very early on, Cooper (2013), cited Fotinatos-Ventouratos & Cooper (2015), boldly stated that "*if you trust a worker enough to hire them, then trust them enough to get the job done*". Similarly, and in any basic Organizational Psychology textbook, the introduction of new working patterns, such as 4-40 work mode was suggested by our science, and yet often ignored in practice. So, at the epicentre of a new health and wellbeing agenda, installing trust and allowing a flexibility curve to be installed in the business setting is top priority. For this to permeate, however, it is clearly something that we need to train managers of tomorrow to accept and practice.

Our wellbeing agenda of the future will include a transformation of other important thematic issues, such as the increase of *working in teams*, and further, working in teams ~ away from the office premises ~ which may in fact become the '*new norm*' of tomorrow. Indeed, Brough & Kinman, 2024, have recently noted that Gen Z and Millenials will be asking to have the ability to work partially from home, or, for some form of different work patterns to materialize. Worrying for us, as Organizational Psychologists, is whether managers of tomorrow will be able to align with such new demands, and further, will management be able to leverage the *Emotional*

Intelligence that may be needed to steer such requirements into ‘new’ working arrangements (Covington 2024).

Last, but certainly not least remains the issue of ‘*Transparency in the job*’. Critical for any workplace agenda of the future, is the constant and consistent requirement of informing people at work of *all changes and modifications* that may occur: Not only is it *ethical* to inform workers every step of the way, but moreover, and as stipulated by scientists several years ago (Dewe & Cooper, 2021), there is a ‘*duty of care*’ to keep workers informed, and not to keep people in the dark. Thus, an *organizational structure and climate*, must have *transparency, trust and strong ongoing communication* at all levels of the organization – from shop floor to top floor. This will only materialize if good and frank *open dialogues* are installed in company policies and practices.

Companies that are mindful of all such issues, ultimately will install trust and transparency in the job, thereby allowing important life changing issues such as flexibility and work-life balance to be readdressed and realigned, in an organizational culture that will be more compatible with each worker and their respective family needs. Ultimately, Health & Wellbeing will be incorporated in its entirety, thereby ensuring an agenda of wellbeing at work to flourish.

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