WORKING PAPER

Working conditions and sustainable work

Hybrid workplaces in the EU: Lessons from case studies in the public and private sectors

The hybrid workplace in the post-COVID-19 era

Authors: Maria Caprile and Juan Arasanz (Notus); Jan Bednorz, Austėja Makarevičiūtė and Audronė Sadauskaitė (Visionary Analytics); Pablo Sanz (University of Zaragoza)

Research manager: Jorge Cabrita

Contributors: Eurofound and the authors of this report would like to thank the authors of the case studies analysed in this report: Georg Adam and Philip Schörpf (FORBA) conducted two case studies in Austria and Elina Härmä (Oxford Research) two case studies in Finland. The remaining case studies were carried out by some of the authors of the analytical report: Austėja Makarevičiūtė, Jan Bednorz and Audronė Sadauskaitė (Visionary Analytics) conducted three case studies in Lithuania and Juan Arasanz (Notus) conducted three case studies in Spain.

Eurofound reference number: WPEF25001

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency established in 1975. Its role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies according to Regulation (EU) 2019/127.

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Telephone: (+353 1) 204 31 00

Email: information@eurofound.europa.eu

Web: www.eurofound.europa.eu

Abstract

This report provides a comparative analysis of ten exploratory case studies on hybrid work in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period. Organisations implement hybrid work in different ways, although in all cases, it is a voluntary option for workers, established through a consistent set of rules, which relies on individual agreement with the line manager. Hybrid work is often perceived as a win-win arrangement. In workplaces with strong social dialogue practices, attention is drawn to terms and conditions as well as ensuring voluntary and equitable access to the employees. While the analysis indicates positive impacts on both performance and working conditions, certain challenges must be addressed to foster the development of sustainable hybrid work rules and practices that are mutually beneficial for employers and workers. This requires coordinated action from a wide range of actors, including policymakers and social partners.

Contents

Introduction

This report presents a comparative analysis of ten exploratory case studies on hybrid work in the post-pandemic period. The case studies were conducted in public and private organisations in Austria, Finland, Lithuania and Spain, between October 2023 and April 2024. The objective of these studies was to describe the main characteristics of the hybrid work model in each organisation and to analyse the implications on different aspects of individual and organisational performance, and notably on the working conditions of hybrid workers.

Hybrid work trends

Hybrid work, where employees alternate between working in the office and working remotely, is an enduring legacy of the pandemic. This was anticipated by Barrero et al. (2020) shortly after its outbreak. Many organisations and employees had to make substantial investments in technology and equipment and adapt swiftly to the new situation, learning as they went, particularly those with no prior experience with remote work. Nonetheless, the experience of full-time work from home during the lockdowns yielded 'better-than-expected' outcomes for a large number of employers and employees, including many who were engaging with remote work for the first time. Once the restrictions on social distancing were relaxed, it became clear that such experiences were going to have a lasting impact.

Labour force survey data[1] reveal that the percentage of EU27 employees with work from home arrangements nearly doubled during the pandemic (from 11.1% in 2019 to 21.9% in 2021) and subsequently showed only a slight decline (19.8% in 2023). The prevalence of usual[2] work from home (at least half of the working time), which had remained stable at around 3% throughout the 2010s, peaked at 12.2% in 2021 before gradually declining to 7.4% by 2023. Concurrently, the share of employees who work from home sometimes[3] (less than half of the working time) steadily increased, from 7.9% in 2019 to 12.4% in 2023. Despite the lifting of social distancing measures and a return to relative normality, a considerable number of workers have continued to work from home at least for part of their time, indicating a growing acceptance of hybrid work arrangements by both employers and employees. Such expansion of work from home is linked to greater diversity in the occupational profiles of remote and hybrid workers, with a higher proportion of medium-skilled

[1] Eurostat, European Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) [lfsa_ehomp]. The survey only refers to 'work from home', excluding other locations for working remotely (e.g. working at coworking spaces, while commuting or while travelling).

[2] EU LFS defines 'usual' as working from home for at least half of the days within a reference period of four weeks preceding the end of the reference week. Therefore, this includes full-time work from home.

[3] EU LFS defines 'sometimes' as working from home less than half of the days worked, but at least one hour within a reference period of four weeks preceding the end of the reference week. Therefore, very different patterns of work from home are classified under this label: from occasional, ad-hoc work from home (e.g. 1 day in the last month, or some hours a few days in the evening) to regular work from home for less than 50% of the working time (e.g. 1 or 2 days per week).

employees in clerical and technical roles compared to the pre-pandemic period, although still far below the potential 'teleworkability'[4] of such jobs (Eurofound, 2022d, European Commission, 2024).

Thus, the pandemic not only accelerated pre-existing trends towards the digitalisation of work and the de-standardisation of working time but also prompted a disruptive and generalised shift towards the de-location of work. Crucially, as noted by Countoris et al. (2023), this shift opened the use of remote work to greater choice and deliberation, with more employers and employees willing to agree (both individually and collectively) on how remote work should be regulated and used in the 'new normal', post-pandemic workplaces. This is leading to the expansion of hybrid work across sectors and countries through highly diverse organisation-based and individual agreements. In the scope of such agreements, time flexibility is most often included, while the discretion over which digital tools to use is addressed less frequently (Eurofound, 2023a).

A sizeable proportion of employees and employers in the EU and beyond prefer hybrid work to fully remote or on-site work (Criuscolo et al., 2021; Aksoy et al., 2022; Eurofound, 2022b, European Central Bank, 2023, Bloom, 2023). The most recent Flex Index study[5] reveals that hybrid work continues to be widely adopted in US firms: in the third quarter of 2024, 61% of companies offered hybrid work (with an additional 6% operating entirely remotely). This percentage was over 90% in technology and insurance sectors and between 80%-90% in telecommunications, professional services, and media and entertainment.

Evidence also indicates a gap between employees' preferences for hybrid work and employers' willingness to implement it. According to a study by the European Central Bank (2023),[6] in 2022, around two-thirds of employees wished to work remotely at least one day per week, and approximately 25% reported a preference for two to four days per week. However, the study indicates that employers do not always meet employees' expectations: approximately one-third of workers reported in 2021 preferences for hybrid work that exceeded what their employers offered. A worldwide KPMG report (2024)[7] suggests that such a gap might be widening, with chief executives (CEOs) adopting a firmer stance on reverting to pre-pandemic work practices. The report indicates that in 2024 83% of CEOs expected a complete return to on-site work within the next three years, marking a significant increase from 64% in 2023. There is evidence that some businesses are

[4] The teleworkability of a job is the technical feasibility of performing its tasks remotely. While there are jobs that cannot be performed remotely and others that can be performed fully remotely, a large share of jobs involve a mix of teleworkable and not teleworkable tasks. Not teleworkable tasks are those that require physical presence to interact with persons or to operate particular devices or machines (e.g. nursing or driving a bus). Tasks that require a high degree of social interaction can be performed remotely but usually with a loss of quality because in-person interaction is important for the quality of service provided (e.g. teaching). In contrast, information-processing tasks are those that can be carried out remotely without loss of quality (e.g. most tasks carried out by clerical workers or finance professionals) (Sostero et al., 2020).

[5] https://www.flexindex.com

[6] The study analyses data from the Consumer Expectations Survey (CES) in Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Italy and the Netherlands.

[7] 10th edition of the KPMG CEO Outlook, conducted with 1,325 CEOs in July and August 2024. All companies surveyed have over 500 million US dollars in annual revenue. The survey included CEOs from 11 countries (Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Spain the United Kingdom, and the United States) and 11 sectors (asset management, automotive, banking, consumer and retail, energy, infrastructure, insurance, life sciences, manufacturing, technology and telecommunications.

requiring workers to return to the office and always work on-site, including top companies such as Goldman Sachs and Amazon (Gratton, 2023; Luke, 2023; Messenger, 2023; Dale and Tucker, 2024; Countouris and De Stefano, 2024). Nevertheless, Bloom et al. (2023) argue that 'remote work is not going away — and CEOs know it'. They highlight that according to US survey[8] results in July 2023, CEOs predict that the percentage of hybrid workers among full-time employees in their companies will increase from 14.1% in 2023 to 16.3% in 2028 (and fully remote workers from 10.2% to 11.2%). This is in line with monitoring reports showing a large number of top companies transitioning from full-time remote work to hybrid work.[9] Overall, evidence indicates that 'hybrid work is here to stay' but may evolve in very different ways.

Hybrid work debates

There is a large consensus that hybrid work will persist, as it potentially offers enduring benefits for both organisations and workers. A recent study notes that both employers' organisations and trade unions across countries and sectors address hybrid work as a 'win-win' with potential benefits for both organisational performance and employees' well-being (Sanz et al., 2024).[10] Building on a large body of pre-pandemic empirical research and more recent studies, Eurofound (2023a) summarises such potential benefits as follows:

- Hybrid work brings the opportunity to depart from traditional work organisation and managerial practices, increase work autonomy, adopt a result-oriented approach, build trust, and improve working conditions.
- Employees may benefit from reduced commuting time and increased autonomy over where and when to work. The result may be an increased ability to align job demands and private needs and preferences, with positive implications for work-life balance, job satisfaction and individual performance.
- On the employers' side, hybrid work may entail substantial cost savings through the reduction of office space and contribute to retaining employees and enlarging the recruitment pool. It may also be instrumental for achieving more strategic organisational objectives, including more efficient work organisation practices, improved quality of products or services, enhanced resilience, and increased capacity for innovation.

However, hybrid work may evolve in different ways depending on organisational and contextual factors (Eurofound, 2023b). First, it is widely agreed there is no ideal balance between on-site and remote work and no 'one-fits-all' way to implement hybrid work. The success of any hybrid work model depends on a range of organisation-specific factors, including management approaches and skills, nature of tasks and work organisation practices, technology adoption, and employee involvement. After the experience of remote work during the pandemic, each organisation has to

[8] Data from 'Survey of Business Uncertainty', which is jointly run by the Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank, the University of Chicago, and the University of Stanford. It surveys senior executives at roughly 500 US businesses across industries and regions each month.

[9] https://tech.co/news/companies-ended-fully-remote-work-2024

[10] The study analyses social dialogue and collective bargaining on telework in four sectors (ICT, banking, chemical industry and public administration) and six countries (Austria, Estonia, Finland, Spain, Poland and Portugal).

find the best way to embed hybrid work into their work organisation. Second, the prevalence and patterns of hybrid work are also influenced by external contextual factors such as regulation, infrastructure, and public investment. Building on this, Eurofound's foresight study (2023b) depicts four possible scenarios for remote and hybrid work in 2030 in the EU, with different implications for employers and employees:

- *Equitable expansion* - Wide implementation of remote and hybrid work runs in parallel with organisations' investment in increasing work autonomy, upskilling managers and employees, adopting technological innovations, and expanding teleworkable jobs, leading to positive outcomes for both workers and organisations.
- *Selective expansion* - Remote and hybrid work is offered primarily to highly skilled workers and is often viewed as a perk to attract and retain 'talent'. Less effort is put into reorganising work and adopting technological solutions.
- *Decline and polarisation* - Remote and hybrid work is mainly implemented by large companies, and only for a small number of jobs, with scarce investment in skills or technological innovation. Small and medium-sized (SMEs) companies miss the opportunity to implement these work arrangements, and a large share of workers are not offered the possibility to work hybrid or remotely.
- *Back-to-office and disengagement* - It is the most restrictive scenario, where most organisations fail to invest in remote and hybrid work, missing the benefits that such arrangements may bring to both employers and employees.

Managers' preference for on-site work often arises from a perceived need to closely monitor employees, particularly when outputs are difficult to measure, and frequently stems from a lack of trust in staff (Eurofound, 2023b). A study by Ding and Ma (2023) indicates that managers tend to implement back-to-office mandates to regain control over staff and not because they believe on-site work has a more positive impact on performance. Indeed, their study finds that such mandates did not increase individual and organisational performance. Additionally, Dennison (2024) highlights the connection between back-to-office mandates and downsizing strategies, with a quarter of CEOs and a fifth of HR professionals admitting they hoped for some voluntary turnover after implementing such mandates.[11]

However, there are more substantive operational and managerial factors that may hinder employers' adoption of hybrid work, as indicated by the body of literature on remote and hybrid work (Golden and Gajendran, 2019; van Zoonen et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022; Gratton, 2023).

First, hybrid work may prove challenging for certain constellations of tasks and work organisation methods. It is especially so when there is a need for synchronous and intensive team collaboration based on task interdependence, or when a substantial part of work is based on interaction with clients or beneficiaries, and service quality hinges on in-person engagement.

Second, transitioning to hybrid work requires considerable managerial effort. To a greater or lesser extent, implementing hybrid work entails reorganising work and adapting methods of coordination,

[11] Survey results by BambooHR. The survey was conducted in March 2024 and collected data from 1,504 adults in the US who were full-time employees and work in a desk position and included a subgroup of 504 HR professionals who had a manager title or above. Available at https://www.bamboohr.com/resources/data-at-work/data-stories/2024-return-to-office

communication, supervision and performance management. Crucially, it also requires involving employees and their representatives in this transition, which may not always align with the prevailing managerial culture and practices.

Third, as with any substantial change in work organisation, adopting hybrid work entails risks. Among others, managerial literature refers to difficulties in sustaining corporate culture and smooth collaboration across different areas and departments. Overall, the transition might be deemed excessively costly and risky if the potential benefits of implementing hybrid work are not widely recognised within the organisation.

In this context, workers' 'right to request' remote work has gained relevance at the policy level and in academic debates (Chung, 2022; Koslowski et al., 2021). The experience of mandatory remote work during the pandemic contributed to widespread expectations to keep working hybrid among groups of workers that had no previous experience with such work arrangements. The right to request remote work typically requires employers to provide a written explanation with valid reasons when denying an employee's request to work remotely (Eurofound 2022d; EU-OSHA, 2023). Thus, the right constrains employers' discretion in offering remote work arrangements and may contribute to removing potential bias in the offer and uptake of hybrid work. This is especially relevant in view of the evidence of persisting 'flexibility stigma' against workers willing to use hybrid work and flexible time arrangements to cope with job and family responsibilities (Chung, 2022). The flexibility stigma is rooted in gender and social class prejudices and inequalities, and has a disproportionate impact on women and workers in lower positions within the workplace hierarchy (Williams et al., 2013). Management reluctance to offer hybrid work to those employees - on the assumption their performance will decrease because they will give priority to family responsibilities - is coupled with workers' fear of taking up hybrid work when offered - on the assumption it will have negative consequences for their professional assessment and career progression. The current situation of clerical support workers, most of whom are women, suggests that such stigma persists. Clerical support jobs are highly teleworkable (Sostero et al., 2020), and workers in these positions express the highest preference for hybrid work (European Central Bank, 2023).[12] However, this is the occupation with the largest gap between the share of teleworkable jobs and the share of employees working remotely or hybrid, even though such a gap has been reduced post-pandemic. While more than 85% of such jobs are teleworkable, only 19% of employees in these positions were working from home at least part of their time in 2022 (7% in 2019) (Eurofound, 2022d; Sostero et al., 2023).

The right to request remote work aligns with the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, which recognises workers' right to request flexible working arrangements for work-life balance purposes. However, these right challenges prior regulatory approaches that were exclusively based on the voluntary principle recognised in the social partners' 2002 EU Framework Agreement on Telework[13] (EU-OSHA,

[12] The study analyses data from the Consumer Expectations Survey (CES) in Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Italy and the Netherlands. Estimation results of OLS regression with the dependent variable being the number of working days per month that a worker wants to work from home (max. 20). The regression controls for age, gender, children in the household, commute time, level of education, self-employment status, firm size, sector, and country. In 2022, clerical workers indicate the highest number of preferred days to work remotely (almost 50%), followed by professionals, managers and technicians (above 40%).

[13] https://resourcecentre.etuc.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Telework%202002_Framework%20Agreement%20-%20EN.pdf

2021). A study by Eurofound (2020a) indicates that the purpose of implementing this right is diverse within the EU. In some countries, the right to request remote work is primarily aimed at facilitating access to this work arrangement to specific groups of workers (employees with caregiving duties, disabilities or health conditions) with the intention of improving their employment opportunities, work-life balance, or health. In other countries, the right is framed more universally, seeking to mitigate potential employer biases by promoting transparency and objectivity in the offer of hybrid work on the basis of the assessment of the teleworkability of tasks.

Other concerns around voluntariness and reversibility of remote work arrangements have also emerged post-pandemic. Some businesses require employees to work hybrid (or remotely) rather than offering this as an option (Messenger, 2023). In a survey of employees[14] conducted in the EU in 2022, approximately one-third of respondents who teleworked stated that they teleworked because they were asked to do so by their employers (European Commission, 2024). This suggests that the voluntary nature of remote work may be compromised in certain situations, particularly when companies drastically minimise office space. Employees who asked to work hybrid (on the grounds of reversibility) might encounter difficulties returning to on-site work if the number of office workstations has been substantially reduced, or when some offices have been closed. Ensuring that no worker should be forced, directly or indirectly, to work remotely is one of the current trade unions' claims (ETUC, 2024).

Policy and academic debates on 'the right to disconnect' have also gained relevance post-pandemic, driven by the increased use of digital technologies that allow employees to work 'anytime, anywhere' and the potential negative impacts on working conditions (Chung, 2022; Eurofound, 2023c). Both before and during the pandemic, Eurofound provided evidence that, compared with on-site workers in similar jobs, remote and hybrid workers are more likely to work longer hours and with more irregular work schedules, including unsocial hours (evenings, nights, weekends) (Eurofound and ILO, 2017; Eurofound, 2020a, Eurofound 2022d). Most often, additional hours performed remotely are not paid or compensated with time off (Eurofound, 2022d). Against this background, the right to disconnect aims to protect workers' health and work-life balance by preventing workers from addressing work-related requests during their rest time, while ensuring that disconnection does not entail a risk of adverse consequences, such as dismissal or other retaliatory measures.

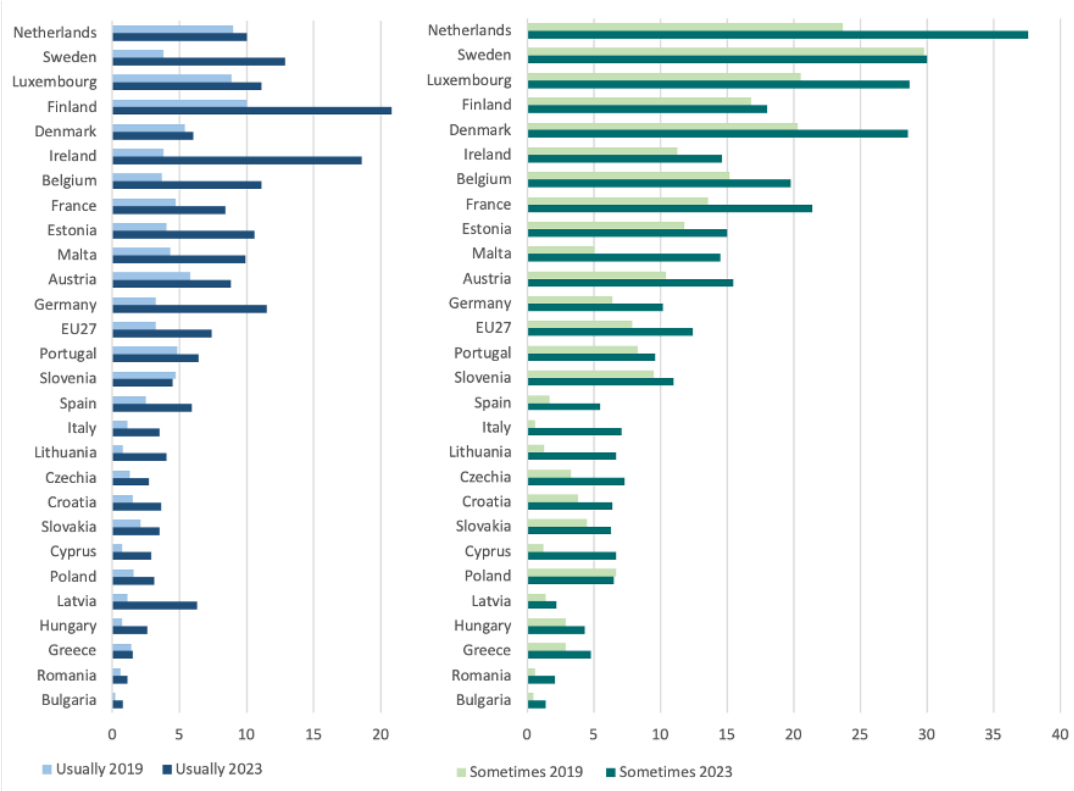
The expansion of remote and hybrid work post-pandemic has also raised other concerns and debates about working conditions and their implications for workers' health and well-being. Challenges refer to ensuring Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) when working remotely; supporting remote work (extent of employers' obligation to provide equipment and compensate other costs incurred by the employee); and guaranteeing workers' right to privacy and personal data protection in the implementation of digital surveillance and monitoring (European Commission, 2024). In all these fields, it remains challenging to find a fair balance between employers' and employees' duties, needs, and expectations.

[14] Non-probabilistic survey carried out in 2021 in all EU Member States, with 11,010 respondents.

National and EU level regulatory developments

There are important differences in the regulation of remote work across EU27 Member States. This is in part related to the fact that the prevalence and patterns of this work arrangement differ widely across countries (Figure 1). In 2019, work from home was marginal or almost non-existent in most Southern and Eastern countries, whereas in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, over a quarter of employees worked from home at least part of their time. In 2023, the prevalence of work from home continues to be higher in the Nordic and Western countries (namely, Luxembourg, Ireland, Belgium and France) than in the Southern and Eastern[15] countries. The share of employees working from home at least part of their time ranges from over 40% in the Netherlands and Sweden to less than 5% in Romania and Bulgaria. There are also differences when the frequency of work from home is considered: in Finland and Ireland the share of employees working from home at least 50% of the time is far higher than in other countries (around 20% of employees), and the same applies to the Netherlands as regards working from home less frequently (over 35%).

Figure 1. Share of employees (%) working from home usually and sometimes, by country (EU-27, 2019-2023, 15-64 years)



Note: Countries are ranked from the highest to the lowest share of employees working from home at least part of their time in 2023. 'Usually' refers to working from home for at least half of the days, 'sometimes' refers to working from home less than half of the days, but at least one hour (in both cases, within a reference period of four weeks).

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (lfsa_ehomp).

Differences in the national regulation of remote work are also related to differences in institutional factors, such as the employment regulatory framework and the industrial relations system. In the Nordic countries, there is no statutory (that is, specific) legislation on remote work, which is instead

[15] The main exception is Estonia, where the prevalence of work from home was 25.6% in 2023.

regulated through general legislation and collective bargaining. In the remaining countries, statutory legislation addresses at least some specific aspects of remote work, with general legislation and collective bargaining playing diverse roles (Eurofound 2022d).

In several Member States, there has been a surge in legal changes and policy initiatives on remote work over the past years, particularly after the outbreak of the pandemic (EUOSHA, 2021, 2023; Eurofound, 2020a, 2022d; European Commission, 2024). The new regulations include the following:

- adoption of a statutory definition of remote work or changes in the pre-pandemic definition;
- clearer definition of rights and responsibilities concerning digital surveillance and data privacy;
- strengthened OSH risk assessment and enforcement procedures, and new rules to prevent psychosocial risks and physical health issues;
- employers' obligation concerning the provision of equipment and compensation for remote work expenses (e.g. energy costs, internet costs, or costs of purchasing equipment such as office furniture or IT devices);
- right to request remote work; and
- right to disconnect (which may apply to all workers).

The statutory definitions of remote work tend to follow the 2002 EU Framework Agreement on Telework. However, national regulations differ in the approaches towards regularity. The Agreement applies to regular telework, which is defined as at least one teleworking day per week. Most countries continue to follow this approach, although, in many cases, there is no precise statutory definition of regular telework. However, some countries have different rules for regular and non-regular remote work (e.g. Belgium), and in other countries the regulation of remote work encompasses all types of arrangements (e.g. France, Portugal). In the context of the extension of hybrid work arrangements, further regulatory developments can be expected on this matter (EUOSHA, 2023).

National regulations also differ widely in other aspects, including digital surveillance, OSH, and employers' provision of equipment and cost compensation. There are also important differences in the extent to which there are enforcement measures to ensure compliance with regulation (Eurofound, 2022d, 2023b).

Six Member States had specific provisions to support remote work for work-life balance purposes before the outbreak of the pandemic (Germany, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, and Romania) (Eurofound 2020a, EU-OSHA 2021). Since then, the right to request remote work[16] has been established in four countries (Croatia, Greece, Ireland, and the Netherlands), and its scope has been expanded in three (Lithuania, Poland, and Portugal). The approaches differ, with some countries focusing more on facilitating access to remote work for particular groups of workers (mainly workers with care responsibilities), whilst others have adopted a more universal stance.

The right to disconnect has been adopted in 13 Member States.[17] Legislation containing this right was passed before the pandemic in Belgium, Italy, France and Spain, in 2021 in Greece, Portugal and

[16] Based on latest comparative data, June 2023 (EU-OSHA, 2023).

[17] Based on Eurofound (2023c), which provides comparative data until June 2023, and additional sources for recent developments in Cyprus (https://www.internationalemploymentlawyer.com/news/cyprus-passes-remote-working-and-right-disconnect-bill), Slovenia

Slovakia, in 2022 in Croatia, in 2023 in Luxembourg, Cyprus, and Slovenia, and in 2024 in Bulgaria. Moreover, in 2021 Ireland adopted a Code of Practice on the right to disconnect, which has no formal status in law but can be used by the courts when assessing a case. The definition of the right to disconnect and its regulation differs widely across these countries, including whether this right applies only to remote workers or all workers (Eurofound, 2023c). Moreover, only three countries (Greece, Portugal and Spain) have regulated enforcement measures aiming to ensure compliance (EU-OSHA, 2023).

Relevant developments in the regulation of remote work are also noted at the EU level. The European Parliament resolution of 21 January 2021[18] called upon the Commission to propose a directive establishing standards and conditions regarding the right to disconnect, and a legislative framework to establish minimum requirements for remote work and clarify working conditions, hours, and rest periods, among other potential aspects to be addressed.

European cross-industry social partners launched negotiations to update their 2002 Framework Agreement on Telework in 2022. Following their inconclusive negotiations, they asked the issue to be addressed by the European Commission, which launched the formal consultation of the EU social partners, as per the rules and procedure for social policy legislation. The first stage of the consultation ended in June 2024, and a subsequent round of consultation will follow.

Overall, changes in the regulatory framework may support organisations, workers, and their representatives in managing the transition to mutually beneficial and lasting hybrid work rules and practices, but change is taking place slowly and in a fragmented way. Evidence from management experts (Gratton, 2023; Lake, 2023) shows that some organisations lack a sense of how best to move forward, while others have realised that change will entail a longer period of learning and experimentation than initially expected. Importantly, Gratton (2023) notes that change will require more intentional efforts than expected to address the potential negative effects that hybrid work can have when employees rarely work on-site. The main challenges are ensuring the transmission of formal and (especially) informal or tacit knowledge; facilitating socialisation, training and career prospects of new employees, and in particular young employees; and promoting corporate culture and sustained cooperation within teams and across teams in order to enhance strategic discussion and decision-making, resilience and innovation.

This study aims to fill this gap by providing new knowledge and practical insights to organisations and workers, namely human resources managers and employee representatives, as well as social partners and policymakers at national and EU levels.

Key definitions

Hybrid work

The term hybrid work has gained relevance since the pandemic as a potential 'new normal', amid debates around a general shift in work culture and work organisation practices which could bring

(https://taxslovenia.eu/resources/2024_wts/EN_WTS_Right_Disconnect.pdf) and Bulgaria (https://kpmg.com/xx/en/our-insights/gms-flash-alert/flash-alert-2024-078.html)

[18] European Parliament resolution of 21 January 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on the right to disconnect (2019/2181(INL)).

long-lasting benefits to employers, employees, and society at large (Gratton, 2021; Zamani, 2022; Smite et al., 2023). Since then, the term has become widely used in business consultancy circles, and its usage has extended to social dialogue and collective bargaining, policy making, and academic research. However, hybrid work is interpreted in different ways, and conceptual clarity is further obscured by the use of other close terms such as 'agile work' or 'smart work' in business consultancy, which have more normative connotations (e.g. Lake, 2023).

This study builds on the concept of hybrid work developed by Eurofound (2023a, 2023b). Hybrid work is a way of organising work in a way that can be performed partly on-site and partly remotely. On-site work refers to work carried out from the employer's premises or other locations designated by the employer, such as clients' premises or beneficiaries' homes. Remote work refers to work carried out from home or other locations chosen by the employee.

Importantly, Eurofound's approach does not only look at the individual hybrid work arrangement or the portion of work performed remotely. Instead, the focus is on work organisation, encompassing on-site and remote work, and including all workers, those who work hybrid and those who work only on-site or only remotely. With the incorporation of remote work, the scope of work organisation has broadened, and work organisation practices have changed. The main features are increased flexibility of space and time, more intense use of technologies and digital tools, and rearrangement of team coordination, communication and collaboration practices in both physical and virtual settings. Hybrid work is therefore conceived as a form of work organisation that results from the interplay of four main elements (Eurofound, 2023a):

- The physical element refers to the place where work is carried out.
- The temporal element mainly addresses the allocation of time between remote and on-site work, and when work is performed.
- The virtual element refers to the use of technologies and digital tools that enable individuals to work alone and together, in synchronous or asynchronous ways, although they are physically dispersed.
- The social element encompasses the way communication and collaborative interaction are arranged in both virtual and physical settings.

These four elements are interconnected and are ‘actionable’, meaning they can, and should be, arranged in different ways when designing and implementing hybrid work.

The report uses the term 'hybrid work model' to refer to the set of rules and procedures that establish employees' access to hybrid work, and the terms and conditions of individual hybrid work arrangements. Models can provide more or less leeway to workers, teams, and line managers in the organisation of hybrid work. Furthermore, within any given model, different individual hybrid work arrangements coexist depending on employees' needs and preferences, the nature of their tasks, and line managers’ approaches to work organisation and hybrid work, among other aspects.

Job quality

The analysis of hybrid workers’ working conditions draws on Eurofound’s framework of job quality (Eurofound 2022c). This framework is based on the analysis of data from the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) and refers to key job dimensions that influence employees’ health and well-being and some aspects of working life such as work-life balance. The relevant job dimensions investigated in this study include working time patterns, the physical and social environment, and

the conditions under which hybrid workers carry out their tasks, with a particular focus on work intensity and work autonomy. The implications on organisational participation and workplace voice are assessed from two perspectives: employees' involvement in decision-making processes and collective voice, focusing on the role of workers' representatives in hybrid work environments. Furthermore, the analysis extends to the implications of this work arrangement on training opportunities and career prospects, as well as intrinsic rewards, motivation, and overall satisfaction with hybrid work.

Methodology

This report draws on ten case studies of selected organisations in the public and private sectors in four EU countries (Austria, Finland, Spain, and Lithuania). Fieldwork was conducted between October 2023 and April 2024.

Interviews and focus groups

Each case study consisted of interviews with individuals representing three profiles - employer representative, employee representative, and line manager - and a focus group with at least four hybrid workers. Employer representatives were either Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) or human resources (HR) managers; employee representatives were members of the works council, other representative bodies, or trade unions; and all line managers had supervisory responsibility over a working team or department. Employee representatives were present in all selected organisations except in a Lithuanian medium-sized company.[19] In a few instances, the focus group had to be replaced by individual interviews with workers because of the difficulties in setting a suitable date for all participants within the timeline of the research. The case studies were informed by 47 one-to-one interviews and seven focus groups with workers, involving a total of 75 participants (see Table 1). The information collected through fieldwork was supplemented by documentation made available by the organisations investigated and desk research to gather relevant contextual information.

Table 1. Number of interviews by type of interviewees

Role of interviewee	Number of participants
Employer representative	11
Employee representative	12
Line manager	10
Employee (interviewed in a focus group or individually)	42
Total	75

Source: Authors elaboration based on the case studies.

The interviews with the management and workers' representatives were conducted at the organisation level because, in all instances, this is the level at which the hybrid work model had been designed and adopted. However, identifying the unit of analysis for interviews with line managers

[19] Employee representation is very rare in Lithuanian SMEs.

and focus groups required a more focused approach, particularly in large organisations, due to variations in hybrid work across areas and departments (see Table 3). The unit of analysis was agreed upon with management representatives on a case-per-case basis. In some case studies, the unit of analysis is the whole organisation; in others, it is a department or a specific group of employees. Participants in the focus group were selected to represent the diversity of socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. age, gender), occupational profiles, and hybrid work arrangements in the selected unit of analysis. This multi-layered approach was intended to provide a balanced account of how hybrid work had been designed, managed, and experienced in each organisation, involving different actors in the assessment of its implications on performance and working conditions.

The interviews and focus groups were conducted in accordance with a semi-structured interview guide for each type of actor interviewed. [20] The interview guides rely on previous Eurofound's research on telework and hybrid work, authors' knowledge of the topic, and discussion with the Eurofound's team in charge of the study, without additional desk research. The guides focus on three main aspects: regulation and management of hybrid work, organisational performance and related outcomes, and working conditions. Questions are adapted to each type of actor interviewed. The interviews with management and workers' representatives addressed these topics from a general organisational perspective, the interviews with line managers focused on their own experience in implementing and managing hybrid work within their own teams, and the focus groups (or interviews) with workers placed emphasis on their individual hybrid work arrangements and their perceptions of how working hybrid had affected their performance and working conditions. Most interviews and all focus groups were conducted online.[21] The fieldwork took place in an open atmosphere in all cases, but great importance was attached to anonymisation in some instances.

Selection criteria

To be considered for selection, organisations had to have implemented some form of hybrid work, but there were no specific requirements regarding the nature or extent of hybrid work arrangements. Instead, selection criteria were established based on the broader goal of increasing diversity in terms of contextual and organisational factors that impact the design and management of hybrid work, as identified in the relevant literature. This sampling technique aimed to capture a diverse range of approaches to the design and implementation of hybrid work across the EU.

Contextual diversity

To ensure diversity in contextual factors, four countries were selected for recruiting organisations (Austria, Finland, Lithuania, and Spain). As summarised in Table 2, these countries differ markedly in several aspects relevant for hybrid work.

Prevalence and patterns of remote and hybrid work. Finland stands out as the EU country with the highest share of employees working from home at least 50% of the working time in 2023 (20.8%), and working from home less frequently is also comparatively extended (18%). The records for

[20] The interview guides are presented in the Annex.

[21] Seven one-to-one interviews were conducted in-person, 40 were conducted online.

Austria are slightly above the EU27 average (7.4% and 12.4%, respectively), whereas those for Spain and Lithuania are below the average.

Regulation of remote work (Eurofound, 2022d). Legislation is the prevalent form of regulation in Spain and Lithuania, whereas collective bargaining has traditionally played a more prominent role in Finland and Austria (although specific legislation was enacted in Austria in 2021). Furthermore, the four countries differ largely in the regulation of core aspects of remote work, including OSH, working time, provision of equipment and cost compensation.

Industrial relations model. According to Eurofound (2018), Finland illustrates the 'organised corporatism' model characteristic of Nordic countries, Austria the 'social partnership' in Central-Western Europe, Spain the 'state-centred governance' in Southern Europe, and Lithuania the 'voluntarist associational governance' in the Baltic countries. Differences in industrial relations models have a potential impact on the role of social dialogue and collective bargaining in the design and implementation of hybrid work.

Table 2. Characteristics of the selected countries for recruiting organisations

	Share of employees working from home (2023)		Regulatory framework of remote work	Industrial relations model
	Usually	Sometimes		
Austria	8.8%	15.5%	Specific legislation and important role of collective bargaining	Organised corporatism
Finland	20.8%	18.0%	General legislation and important role of collective bargaining	Social partnership
Spain	5.9%	5.5%	Specific legislation and increasing role of collective bargaining	State-centred governance
Lithuania	4.0%	6.7%	Specific legislation and marginal role of collective bargaining	Voluntarist associational governance

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey [lfsa_ehomp] (share of employees working from home); Eurofound, 2022d (regulatory framework of remote work); Eurofound, 2018 (industrial relations model).

Organisational diversity

Organisation-specific criteria were established to ensure a diverse sample of organisations (public/private sectors, economic activity, and size). The sample criteria included recruiting four public organisations (one per country) and six private companies operating in different knowledge-intensive service activities and with different sizes (one large company per country and one SME company in Spain and Lithuania).

Table 3 presents an overview of the main characteristics of the selected organisations and provides further details about the unit of analysis of each case study.

Table 3. Characteristics of the selected organisations and units of analysis of the case studies

	Country	Organisation	Ownership structure	Sector (NACE)	Total number of employees (circa)	Employee representative body	Unit of analysis (number of employees in the unit of analysis; circa)
AT1	Austria	Bank	Joint stock company	NACE 64 Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding	>40,000	Works council	Headquarters (3,000)
AT2	Austria	Federal ministry	Public	NACE 84 Public administration and	1,700	Staff council	Central administration

				defence; compulsory social security			(1,000)
FI1	Finland	State agency	Public	NACE 84.11 General public administration activities	>5,000	Trade union association and OSH representative	Whole organisation
FI2	Finland	Temporary employment company	Limited company	NACE 78.20 Temporary employment agency activities and other human resource provisions	12,000	OSH representative and committee	Internal staff (170-250)
ES1	Spain	Insurance company	Limited company	NACE 65 - Insurance, reinsurance and pension funding	320	Works council	Central services (70)
ES2	Spain	Pharmaceutical multinational	Stock company	NACE 21.20 Manufacture of pharmaceutical preparations	>1,800	Works council	Head office and R&D centre (580)
ES3	Spain	Regional public entity	Public	NACE 74.90 Other professional, scientific and technical activities not elsewhere classified	170	Works council	Whole organisation
LT1	Lithuania	Bank	Publicly listed company	NACE 64.19 Other monetary intermediation	1,000	Works council	Credit department (13)
LT2	Lithuania	Software publishing company	Private company	NACE 58.2 Software publishing	80	No employee representation	Software development team (13)
LT3	Lithuania	State agency	Public	NACE 84.11 General public administration activities	180	Works council	Policy group (12)

Note: The case studies are coded using the country abbreviations (AT: Austria, FI: Finland, ES: Spain; LT: Lithuania) followed by a number. These codes are used throughout the report to refer to the case studies.

Source: Authors based on the case studies.

Case study design, challenges and potential biases

The case studies carried out were exploratory in their nature. In contrast to an explanatory case study design, exploratory studies aim to gain a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon or topic without testing theoretical propositions (Yin, 2018). The primary focus is on real-life contexts and situations, while the findings can contribute to the existing knowledge in a field and provide a foundation for supporting further research. Such an exploratory case study design, followed by cross-case comparative analysis, was considered a sound methodological approach to address the relatively under-researched topic of hybrid work and its implications on performance and working conditions in post-pandemic workplaces.

Conducting exploratory case studies is a useful approach for delving into complex real-world phenomena, but this method also presents certain inherent challenges and potential biases that require not only consideration in the analysis but also transparency when reporting the findings. First, the low number of case studies and their exploratory nature limit the generalisation of the findings. It must be emphasised that case studies should not be deemed representative of other organisations, but rather illustrative of diverse approaches and practices. Second, the design of the research and the development of fieldwork may have introduced potential biases:

- A potential source of bias is the exclusion of non-hybrid workers from the focus groups. Non-hybrid workers were excluded under the assumption that including them could skew the

discussion towards eligibility issues and potential grievances, ultimately hindering the exchange of views on the characteristics of hybrid work arrangements and their implications for performance and working conditions. Instead, it was agreed to raise the matter of equity and fairness between hybrid and non-hybrid workers in the interviews with management and workers' representatives. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the absence of direct information from non-hybrid workers is a caveat of this study that must be considered.

- Organisations were contacted through diverse means (collective bargaining databases, web searches, social partners, etc). While access to organisations is not considered a potential source of bias, a number of organisations declined to participate in the research for diverse reasons including coincidence with collective bargaining negotiations, internal conflicts, and time constraints. This may have resulted in self-selection of some of the participating organisations, leading to potentially biased outcomes. The organisations that eventually consented to participate in the study may be organisations with more positive experiences with hybrid work than the average, or more generally, organisations in a more favourable situation than others, including work climate and industrial relations.
- Access to line managers and workers was arranged in different ways, which may have introduced an additional layer of bias into the study. Managers may deliberately propose participants who will present hybrid work in a positive light, whereas employee representatives may suggest more critical workers. The research aimed to counterbalance these potential biases by involving both management and employee representatives in the selection of participants, but it was not always possible. Out of nine organisations with employee representation, in three case studies, the line manager was proposed by management and approved by the workers' representatives, designated by management in five cases, and suggested by the works council in one case. Regarding workers, in one instance, both management and workers' representatives provided suggestions for the focus group, whereas in four cases, the list of potential participants proposed by the management was accepted by the workers' representatives without making further suggestions. However, in four organisations, access to workers was facilitated either by the line manager (two case studies) or by employee representatives (two cases).

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned caveats, the collection of case studies is expected to offer valuable knowledge into the design and implementation of hybrid work in post-pandemic settings, and the main implications for performance and working conditions. Ultimately, this research aims to furnish practical information and relevant insights to support the development of sustainable hybrid work policies and practices that benefit both employers and workers.

Details of the case studies are available as working papers on the Working papers tab of the publication page for the associated policy brief The hybrid workplace in the post-COVID-19 era.

Report structure

This report offers a comparative analysis of ten case studies that investigated the features of the hybrid work model in each organisation and analysed its implications on different aspects of organisational performance and the working conditions of hybrid workers.

Chapter 1, 'Hybrid work models across sectors and countries', starts by analysing the evolution of hybrid work in the organisations studied and the main employers' and workers' drivers. The focus is

then placed on the regulation, management and uptake of hybrid work post-pandemic, identifying the main types of hybrid work models, and analysing the role of social dialogue and collective bargaining in its design and implementation. Finally, the chapter analyses hybrid work in practice, with a focus on the interplay of the physical, temporal, virtual, and social elements of this form of work organisation.

Chapter 2, 'Hybrid work and its Implications for job quality', analyses the impact of hybrid work on those working conditions that are more relevant for workers' health and well-being, and other important aspects of working life such as work-life balance. It explores the impact of hybrid work on working time patterns, the physical and social environment, work intensity and autonomy, career prospects, and employees' involvement in decision-making. It concludes by examining the intrinsic rewards that hybrid work offers and the overall satisfaction with this work arrangement.

Chapter 3, 'Hybrid work and its implications for performance and organisational outcomes', analyses the impact of hybrid work on employees' performance and organisational outcomes such as absenteeism, and presenteeism. This is combined with the examination of how employers are adapting work organisation practices to hybrid settings (role of line managers, communication and coordination) and related changes in other policies (recruitment and retention, OSH, restructuring of office spaces).

Chapter 4 provides conclusions and policy pointers derived from the analysis of the case studies.

1 – Hybrid work models across sectors and countries

For the purposes of this study, hybrid work models are the sets of rules that establish who can access hybrid work and how individual hybrid work arrangements are regulated.

First, a hybrid model sets the 'who', that is, the eligibility rules which define who can work hybrid. These rules can be egalitarian or restrictive. In an egalitarian model, access to hybrid work is based on teleworkability. Accordingly, hybrid work is an option for any employee in a job in which at least some tasks can be performed remotely. In such models, the main issue at stake is who assesses teleworkability and how. On the contrary, restrictive rules impose additional constraints. For instance, hybrid work can be limited to certain groups of workers (such as employees in high-skilled positions or managers) or certain departments or areas (e.g. central services).

Second, the hybrid model also regulates the 'how'. This includes voluntariness and reversibility, procedures to access hybrid work, when and where remote work is allowed, as well as employer's provision of equipment and compensation for other costs related to remote work, among other aspects.

This chapter starts by analysing the evolution of hybrid work in the ten studied organisations, taking as a point of departure the pre-pandemic experience with this work arrangement. Then, it examines similarities and differences in the current regulation and management of hybrid work in the studied organisations, identifying the main types of hybrid work models and the role of workers' representatives in its design and implementation. Finally, the chapter analyses hybrid work in practice, with a focus on the interconnection of the physical, temporal, virtual, and social elements of this form of work organisation, highlighting similarities and differences across the organisations analysed.

Evolving hybrid work models

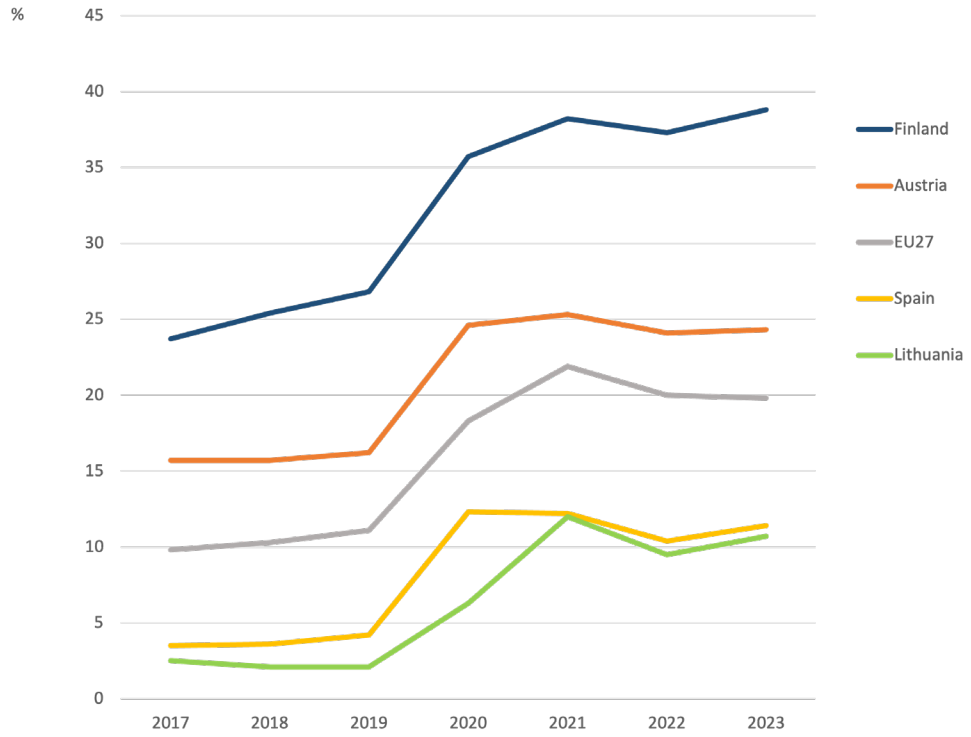
Hybrid work models are not static; rather, they are subject to change and evolution, as are other features of work organisation. In seven out of the ten studied organisations (AT1, AT2, FI1, FI2, ES3, LT2, LT3), hybrid work was adopted one or two decades ago, and its regulation, management, and uptake underwent gradual changes before the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, three organisations (ES1, ES2, LT1) were compelled to rapidly shift to remote work due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Despite these differences, in all the studied organisations, the experience of mandatory remote work during the lockdowns influenced the post-pandemic implementation of hybrid work. Current hybrid work models also reflect recent shifts in the labour market, as well as changes in the regulation of remote work which was fuelled by the pandemic.

This section begins by outlining some features relevant to contextualising the evolution of hybrid work in the analysed organisations. The focus is then placed on changes in the regulation of hybrid work before and after the pandemic in each organisation. Finally, the drivers of hybrid work are analysed, considering both employers' and workers' perspectives.

Context

Hybrid work shows different trends in the countries where the studied organisations are placed: Finland, Austria, Spain, and Lithuania (Figure 2). In these countries, the share of employees with work from home arrangements has substantially increased since 2019, driven by a sharp surge between 2019 and 2020 due to the outbreak of the pandemic. However, since 2020, trends differ, with barely any change in Austria, fluctuations in Spain and Lithuania, and an upward trend in Finland (which started before the pandemic). There are also persisting cross-country differences in the prevalence of this work arrangement, with almost 40% of employees working from home at least part of their time in Finland in 2023, around 25% in Austria, and slightly above 10% in Spain and Lithuania.

Figure 2. Share of employees (%) working from home at least part of their time, by country (2019-2023, 15-64 years)



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (lfsa_ehomp).

Cross-country differences are also noted when the analysis considers whether work from home is usual (at least half of the working time) or less frequent. In Austria and Lithuania, these two work arrangements experienced similar relative increases between 2019 and 2023; in Spain, the increase was more marked for occasional work from home; conversely, usual work from home doubled in Finland while occasional work from home barely increased. In 2023, two out of five employees worked from home in Finland, and one of them at least half of the working time.

Beyond these national differences, it is important to note that the prevalence of work from home follows some general patterns. Both before and after the pandemic, prevalence varies mainly according to four factors: occupation, sector, firm size, and type of area (urban/rural)**.** Work from home is more prevalent among managers and professionals, especially in knowledge-intensive

service sectors, large companies, and urban areas. The expansion of work from home post-pandemic has mitigated such differences, but they remain salient (Eurofound, 2022d).

The evolution of hybrid work in the ten organisations examined partly reflects such general and national trends and patterns. In all cases, organisations belong to knowledge intensive-service sectors,[22] where pay and working conditions are above the national average. These sectors also tend to have a high share of women among staff, and this is reflected in all organisations except the Lithuanian SME. This company works in software development, a sector which remains male-dominated: only 35% of its employees are women. In the other organisations, more than half of the staff are women, and in five cases the share of women is over 70% (FI1, FI2, ES1, ES3, LT1). Sector-specific trends are also important. Before the pandemic, the uptake of hybrid work in public administration was very low in all countries except Finland. The case studies illustrate this pattern, showing clear differences between the Finnish state agency (FI1) and the other public organisations (AT2, ES3, LT3). Hybrid work was also widespread before the pandemic in the Austrian banking sector, as exemplified in the Austrian bank (AT1). Finally, Information Technology (IT) is one of the sectors where the uptake of hybrid work was highest before the pandemic and continues to be so afterwards. Over the years IT firms have consolidated a range of specific approaches and methods to embed hybrid work in their work organisation practices. This is important for understanding the evolution of hybrid work in the Lithuanian software firm (LT2), with a quick but smooth transition from a pre-pandemic office-first approach to a remote-first approach.

Regulatory changes

The regulation of remote work before the pandemic was similar in Finland and Austria. In both countries, there was no statutory (specific) legislation, and remote work was regulated through general legislation and collective bargaining. In contrast, statutory legislation played a more prominent role in Spain and Lithuania. The pandemic fuelled substantial legal changes in Austria, Spain, and Lithuania. It also had significant impacts on collective bargaining, with sectoral and company-level agreements playing a more prominent role in Spain. Such changes are important for contextualising the evolution of hybrid work in the organisations examined. For comparative purposes, cross-country differences in the regulation of remote work must also be considered. A summary of the national regulatory frameworks is presented below, paying attention to the differences between the private and public sectors.

Finland

In Finland, the regulation of remote work has not substantially changed post-pandemic. Remote work continues to be covered by general legislation (employment contracts, working time, OSH, data protection) while the specificities of this work arrangement, as many other provisions on employment, are regulated by collective bargaining. The 2019 Working Time Act was already adapted to remote work because it disentangled working time from the employers' premises (‘working time is time spent on work regardless of the place’). In 2020, following the pandemic, the government issued guidelines to implement remote work in the public sector and recommendations were also given to private-sector employers. Although not legally binding, they were widely followed

[22] The exception is the Spanish pharmaceutical company (ES2). However, this organisation has implemented hybrid work only in the knowledge-intensive service areas (central services and research and innovation). The agreement on hybrid work does not apply to the production centres.

in both the public and the private sectors. The main focus was placed on working time and OSH, in particular the employer's right to manage work under the Working Time Act and the employer's obligation to ensure the health and safety of their employees under the OSH Act. Furthermore, in the state administration, the guidelines for the promotion of 'multimodal' (hybrid) work had the objective to harmonise the design and implementation of hybrid work rules across the central administration and the different public entities. These guidelines highlighted that the expansion of remote work aligns with the increasing digitalisation of customers' and business partners' needs, while also stating that physical workplace interaction is required for innovation, communication, learning, and a 'sense of community'. However, how hybrid work should be promoted is decided by each firm or organisation, as exemplified in the analysed state agency (FI1). Concerning the private sector, recent sector-level generally applicable collective agreements only include specific provisions for remote work on accident insurance coverage. The specificities of hybrid work are instead regulated at the company level, as illustrated in the analysed Finnish company (FI2).

Austria

In Austria, before the pandemic, the regulatory framework of remote work was similar to the Finnish one. However, statutory legislation was adopted in 2021. The 'Home Office Law', which came into effect on 1 April 2021, is not a stand-alone law, but rather a package of amendments of several pieces of legislation (including labour law, tax law, income law and social security law) to include specific clauses on remote work that apply to the private sector. In line with collective bargaining, a home office is defined as work carried out from home (including secondary residences or those of close relatives).[23]

The law focuses on a set of specific aspects of remote work. It establishes the obligation of the employer to provide the 'necessary digital work equipment', which includes IT devices and internet connection (or to reimburse employees for using their own equipment). However, the law does not define precisely what is meant by 'necessary' equipment, and this is regulated through collective bargaining (including aspects such as the provision of IT ergonomic equipment). Other aspects regulated by the law are coverage of OSH obligations to be observed by the employer, insurance protection in the event of an accident, and liability in case of damage to work equipment.

Organised labour and some experts have voiced concerns about this law, deeming it too narrow and failing to address other important aspects of remote work. Concerning working time monitoring, it is criticised that the current regulation in the Working Time Act allows for 'reduced' working time records when working remotely, which contain only the number of hours worked without recording the start/end of working time or rest breaks. Furthermore, there is disapproval that the new law misses the opportunity to address the right to disconnect (Gruber-Risak 2021).

Many aspects of remote work continue to be addressed by general legislation and collective bargaining continues to play a prominent role in the regulation of the specificities of this work arrangement, especially through works agreement concluded by the employer and the works council at the company level. The Austrian bank (AT1) illustrates this pattern. The sectoral collective

[23] This definition will be broadened as of 2025 to encompass work done while travelling or from other places such as hubs or coworking spaces (Home Office im Wandel: gesetzliche Neuerungen und steuerliche Implikationen - BDO)

agreement only contains general clauses on home office work which essentially replicate the law, and the details of hybrid work in the company are regulated by the works agreement.

In the Austrian public administration, the possibility to work remotely on a regular basis (fixed days per week) has existed since the late 1970s and was further regulated in 2004. In 2019, the possibility of carrying out occasion-based remote work (ad-hoc days requested on short notice) was introduced. Furthermore, before the pandemic, most Ministries had specific guidelines for remote work, which typically was only granted to employees with special conditions, such as childcare responsibilities or long distances between home and the office. In 2021, amendments to the laws regulating public employment relationships introduced the notion of 'home office' and adapted the 2021 'Home Office Law' to the public sector. According to the new legislation, the employer must provide the ICT equipment necessary to perform work from home. A tax-free lump-sum allowance of up to EUR 300 is granted if private ICT equipment is used at the request of the employee. Under this legal framework, new ministry-specific guidelines enable almost all employees in all ministries to work hybrid on a regular or ad-hoc basis, and the uptake of hybrid work has substantially increased. Such specific guidelines are - in formal terms - unilaterally laid down by each Ministry. This is because employees are excluded from the right to conclude collective agreements in the public administration. However, the guidelines are de facto agreed with the staff councils. This is exemplified in the Ministry investigated (AT2).

Spain

In Spain, the regulation of remote work mainly relies on statutory legislation and was substantially changed post-pandemic on the basis of a tripartite agreement with the social partners. The Royal Decree-Law 28/2020 of 22 September 2020[24] on distance work regulates remote work in the private sector. Unlike the former law, it only applies to 'regular' remote work, that is employees who work remotely at least 30% of their working time within a three-month reference period. The new law is oriented to protect workers against potential negative impacts of remote work on working conditions, health and well-being.

The regulation of working time builds on the right to disconnect, which was established pre-pandemic by Law 3/2018 of 5 December 2018. This right applies to all employees (not only remote and hybrid workers) and is defined in broad terms, leaving its implementation to collective bargaining and company policies. According to this law, the employer, after consulting with workers' representatives, must prepare an internal policy for employees, including those in management positions, defining the modalities for exercising the right to disconnect and setting out training and awareness-raising actions for staff on the reasonable use of technological tools. The Spanish Data Protection Agency has the authority to impose fines on employers who do not comply with their obligations under this law (fines range from 7€ to 225,018€).

Furthermore, the new law on remote work includes new OSH provisions to strengthen risk prevention, with a focus on the organisation of working time and disconnection from work (the law refers to OSH psychosocial risks including overtime, irregular schedules, insufficient breaks, and extended availability). According to the new law, the employer is obliged to carry out a risk assessment of the remote workplace and to inform the employee of the identified risks. The law also provides that workers must not bear the costs related to remote work (equipment, tools, and all

[24] The Royal Decree-law was subsequently replaced by the Law 10/2021 of 9 July 2021 on distance work.

means concerned with the performance of the work), leaving the regulation of the provision of equipment and compensation of other costs to collective bargaining.

In the context of the post-pandemic expansion of remote and hybrid work, such legal changes have fuelled sectoral and company collective bargaining on these work arrangements. This is illustrated by one of the companies analysed (ES2). This multinational pharmaceutical adopted a company collective agreement to regulate hybrid work and working time flexibility, including clauses for equipment and cost compensation established in the sectoral level agreement. Conversely, the new law does not apply to the other Spanish company analysed (ES1) because, in this case, the frequency of allowed remote work (1 day per week) is below the statutory definition of remote work. The evolution of hybrid work in this company illustrates the path followed by other companies in Spain, which have returned to on-site work or maintained remote work below the statutory threshold. The potential trade-offs of providing increased protection only for regular hybrid workers have been highlighted in the literature (Conde-Ruiz et al., 2022).

As regards the public sector, remote work in Spain is regulated through the general clauses of the 2015 Civil Servants Act, which have to be further developed by the different public administrations. As of July 2024, there was no specific legislation for the state general administration, but several regional governments[25] had issued legal provisions, including Catalonia, where the public organisation studied (ES3) is placed. Law 77/2020 enacted in August 2020 regulates remote work in the Catalan administration and its public entities. This law differs substantially from the Spanish law applicable in the private sector: it applies to all hybrid workers regardless of the frequency of remote work, and the employer is not obliged to provide equipment. However, neither this law nor the private law apply to the public organisation studied, because the organisation is a public entity governed by private law.[26] In this case, the organisation, taking both laws as reference, has regulated hybrid work post-pandemic through a company level collective agreement which also addresses working time flexibility.

Lithuania

In Lithuania, the regulation of remote work has evolved significantly since its introduction in 2010, with updates in 2017 and, notably, in 2022. It applies to both the public and the private sectors. Initially, remote work was regulated as a distinct employment contract type, enabling employees to work from locations other than the employer's premises. In 2017, the new Labour Code defined remote work as a work arrangement, under the principle of voluntariness, in line with the 2002 EU Framework Agreement on Telework. The new regulation also established the employer obligation to ensure OSH for remote workers, including training for employees, as well as the employee responsibility to comply with OSH regulation.

One of the distinct features of the Lithuanian regulation concerns working time. The 2017 law established that on-site working time schedules do not apply to remote work. Employees working remotely are only required to be reachable (e.g. by email or phone) within the work schedule and they can self-manage their working hours within the maximum work and rest requirements

[25] Spain is a largely decentralised state although regions (Autonomous Communities) have different degrees of competences.

[26] Public sector entities governed by private law are established for conducting activities such as providing public services or producing goods and services. These entities operate in the market alongside other private entities.

established by law or collective agreement. Another relevant feature was the establishment of the right to request remote work for certain groups of workers (pregnant, recently given birth, or breastfeeding employees, as well as employees with certain childcaring responsibilities). The law established that these workers had the right to request remote work for at least 20% of their working time, and the employers were obliged to accommodate their requests unless they could demonstrate that doing so would result in significant costs.

In response to the pandemic, further amendments to the Labour Code came into effect on August 1, 2022. Additional groups of workers were granted the right to request remote work due to disability, health issues, childcaring, and caring responsibilities for dependent adult people. Furthermore, these workers are now entitled to request to work remotely for up to 100% of their time. The law also established the employer obligation to compensate the employee's additional expenses related to remote work, such as acquiring or arranging work tools, although it did not establish what specific expenses must be compensated. Concerning working time, attempts were made in 2021 and 2022 to establish a right to disconnect, but these proposals were rejected by Parliament.

In Lithuania, collective bargaining is mainly conducted at the company level in large private companies and the public sector and plays a minor role in the regulation of hybrid work. This is illustrated in the cases of the Lithuanian bank (LT1) and the public entity (LT3). Furthermore, most SMEs, such as the software firm analysed (LT2), do not have employee representation.

Other aspects

In all the analysed countries, the general principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination between on-site and off-site workers apply, although, there are no further specific provisions.

In three countries (Austria, Spain, and Lithuania) individual remote work arrangements have to be established in writing (in the employment contract or a written agreement); conversely, in Finland, there is no legal provision on this, and most arrangements are established verbally.

As regards OSH risk assessment, the privacy of workers' homes is protected in the four countries. The employer is not entitled to enter a worker's home unless the worker provides explicit consent. In practice, it is very rare that an employer considers this possibility within OSH policy. Instead, the employer usually provides operating instructions and workers are required to collect the information needed to conduct the risk assessment.

Concerning financial support, workers in Finland and Austria benefit from tax deductions in the costs born for working remotely.

Finally, none of these countries have developed specific legislation on digital surveillance and privacy for remote work.

Changes in the rules and practice of hybrid work

Table 4 summarises the pre-pandemic experience with hybrid work in each organisation and the main changes implemented post-pandemic. In two organisations, hybrid work was already consolidated before the COVID-19 outbreak. The Austrian bank (AT1) had a hybrid work model in place since the company moved to new headquarters about two decades ago, allowing employees to work remotely for up to half of their working time. In the Finnish state agency (FI1), the expansion of hybrid work also started in the early 2010s, with the digitalisation of work processes and the

closing of some offices due to the merging of some administrations. Positive experiences during the pandemic led to the removal of previous restrictions on full-time remote work in 2021.

In five organisations, the pre-pandemic uptake of hybrid work was limited, and the pandemic had a more disruptive impact. In the Austrian federal ministry (AT2), hybrid work has been regulated since the early 2000s but was mainly granted to employees with specific socio-demographic circumstances (age and care responsibilities). Hybrid work only became widespread during the pandemic and remained in high demand post-pandemic. In the Lithuanian and Spanish public organisations (LT3, ES3), hybrid work was introduced some years ago in combination with other organisational innovations, but uptake was very low and only expanded after the pandemic outbreak. Similarly, hybrid work was barely used before the pandemic in the Lithuanian software firm (LT2) and the Finnish temporary work company (FI2). However, in both cases, positive results during the pandemic catalysed a cultural shift prompting both companies to adopt a 'remote-first' approach that favours remote work by default.

Three organisations had no previous experience with remote work. In two cases, the Lithuanian bank (LT1) and the Spanish pharmaceutical company (ES2), the current hybrid work model allows employees to work remotely for a substantial part of their time (40%-50%). The insurance company in Spain (ES1) followed a different trajectory. Once the pandemic lockdown was over, a 'contingency' hybrid work system was implemented to minimise the risk of contagion, consisting of rotating weekly shifts for all staff. The system was in place for two years and led to positive results in terms of performance and job satisfaction. However, the company decided to return to 'normal' in 2023, restricting remote work to one fixed day per week for employees in central services.

Table 4. Pre-pandemic experience with hybrid work and current hybrid work model

	Country	Organisation	Pre-pandemic experience with hybrid work	Current hybrid work model
AT1	Austria	Bank	Yes. Hybrid work was regulated since the 2010s. Uptake was high	Revised post-pandemic (minor changes). Remote work allowed up to 50% of working time: fixed days of remote work, no possibility to work remotely an entire week.
AT2	Austria	Federal ministry	Yes. Hybrid work was regulated since mid-2000s (for workers with certain age or care circumstances). Uptake was low	Revised post-pandemic (substantial changes). Removal of age and care requirements for accessing hybrid work. Two schemes of hybrid work: regular (3 fixed days of remote work per week) and occasional (up to 2 days per week on short notice).
FI1	Finland	State agency	Yes. Hybrid work was regulated since the 2010s. Uptake was high	Revised post-pandemic. Main change: 100% remote work allowed.
FI2	Finland	Temporary employment company	Yes. Uptake was low	Revised post-pandemic. Main change: 100% remote work allowed.
ES1	Spain	Insurance company	No	Adopted post-pandemic. Remote work allowed 1 fixed day per week.
ES2	Spain	Pharmaceutical multinational	No	Adopted post-pandemic. Remote work allowed up to 2 days per week.
ES3	Spain	Regional public entity	Yes. Uptake was low	Revised post-pandemic. Remote work allowed up to 3 days per week.
LT1	Lithuania	Bank	No	Adopted post-pandemic. Remote work allowed up to 50% of working time.
LT2	Lithuania	Software publishing company	Yes. Uptake was low	Revised post-pandemic. Main change: 100% remote work allowed.
LT3	Lithuania	State agency	Yes. Uptake was low	Revised post-pandemic. Main change: 100% remote work allowed.

Source: Authors based on the case studies.

The pandemic had a disruptive impact on the three organisations with no previous experience with this form of work organisation, which have consolidated a hybrid work model in a short period of time (ES1, ES2, LT1). However, the pandemic experience also substantially altered hybrid work rules and practices previously in place in the other organisations. The maximum allowed frequency of remote work has increased in six cases (all except AT1), with four organisations removing former restrictions to full-time remote work (FI1, FI2, LT2, LT3). In parallel, the uptake of hybrid work has substantially expanded in all organisations except AT1 and FI1, where it was already very high.

The rapid pace of change in hybrid work rules and practices in the aftermath of the pandemic was an aspect emphasised by interviewees in all case studies. Furthermore, most interviewees, either managers, workers' representatives or employees, stressed the importance of learning and experimenting over this period, either at the individual, team, and/or organisational level. This aligns with recent literature on hybrid work (Eurofound 2023a, 2023b).

Drivers of hybrid work adoption

Management drivers

The drivers fostering organisations to introduce hybrid work vary between early adopters (pre-pandemic) and late adopters (post-pandemic). In seven cases (AT1, AT2, FI1, FI2, ES3, LT2, LT3), hybrid work was in place before COVID-19. These organisations strategically embraced it (with no external push) to enhance performance, attract skilled workers, and/or save costs. However, in most organisations (AT2, FI2, ES3, LT2, LT3) the uptake of hybrid work pre-pandemic faced internal challenges (tradition of on-site work, access to hybrid work restricted to certain groups of employees, discretional managerial practices, lack of digital tools) as well as external constraints (need to cooperate with other organisations that were not prepared for remote work; clients or beneficiaries not used to remote provision of services). The pandemic, therefore, had a disruptive impact on the regulation and uptake of hybrid work in these organisations. The ensuing large-scale shift to remote work in all jobs in which it was technically feasible, alongside the adoption of digital tools and new work organisation practices, facilitated the adoption of new hybrid work rules and increased uptake of this work arrangement, embedding hybrid work in the organisation of work.

In the case of late adopters (ES1, ES2, LT1), the initial (and only) trigger was the pandemic, which forced organisations to introduce emergency remote work to ensure business continuity. However, there has been a learning curve over time, and two organisations (ES2, LT1) recognised additional drivers more strategically linked to organisational objectives, such as cost savings, employee recruitment and retention, and employee satisfaction as key reasons for retaining hybrid work.

Only ES1 shows a different path of returning to pre-pandemic routines, reducing remote work to the minimum. This is because the company management did not find that hybrid work was instrumental to achieving any organisational objective (despite positive performance results and employees' satisfaction with hybrid work). On the contrary, management considers that work has to be carried out primarily on-site to sustain social relations, motivation, and corporate culture. Management also wanted to avoid potential grievances among employees, because, due to the variety of tasks, there are large differences in the extent of job teleworkability within the company. Reducing remote work was also driven by the wish to maintain it below the new statutory definition of remote work in Spain (at least 30% of the working time performed remotely within a period of three months). Otherwise, it would have entailed negotiating changes in employment contracts and the obligation to comply with the new legal provisions of equipment support, cost compensation and OSH enforcement (see Box 1 for further details about management drivers).

Box 1. Management drivers for adopting hybrid work

Five distinct drivers for introducing or retaining hybrid work were identified in the case studies.

Cost savings. Hybrid work allows for the downsizing of office space and results in decreased costs for companies and public organisations (see Chapter 3). By enabling employees to work remotely for a portion of their time, organisations can optimise the use of physical office space, leading to lower overhead costs such as rent, utilities, and maintenance. Although these savings can sometimes be mere 'side effects' of the implementation of hybrid work, they have been identified as the initial trigger for adopting hybrid work pre-pandemic in one organisation (AT1) and as a direct driver for retaining hybrid work post-pandemic in four organisations (AT2, ES2, ES3, LT1). In one case, downsizing the office space even allowed for leasing some parts, resulting in additional revenue (ES2). Moreover, hybrid work allows for accommodating an increasing number of employees without enlarging office space and incurring additional expenditures (AT2, ES3). In one instance, it was stressed that hybrid work did not help save costs in the short-term, as the company had to invest in new digital tools and space restructuring (which had costs attached to them) (LT1).

Innovation and digitalisation of work processes. Particularly in three public sector institutions (FI1, ES3, LT3), the initial trigger for implementing hybrid work was a willingness to innovate and digitalise work processes in search of improved efficiency and quality of services. Public sector institutions typically have a moderate level of autonomy in decision-making, with budget and management contingent upon government decisions and subject to political changes. In the Finnish institution (FI1), a state-level initiative focused on digitalising services resulted in merged administrations and offices, fuelling the uptake of hybrid work among employees facing longer commutes due to their relocation to other workplaces (FI1). In the Lithuanian and Spanish institutions (LT3, ES3), change in leadership willing to explore new work methods fostered the introduction of hybrid work, although, in ES3, further institutionalisation of hybrid work was hindered by successive changes in management.

Labour market dynamics. The competition for skilled employees in a tight labour market has been highlighted as an important driver in eight case studies (AT1, AT2, FI1, FI2, ES2, LT1, LT2, LT3). With ongoing digitalisation processes and hybrid work increasingly becoming the new norm, offering the opportunity to work hybrid contributes to attracting (especially highly skilled) employees (ES2, LT1, LT2). In some cases, the extension of hybrid work arrangements has been part of a broader organisational strategy to attract qualified workers (AT2, ES2). By offering hybrid work, organisations appeal to a broader pool of candidates who increasingly prioritise work-life balance (AT2, FI1, FI2, LT1, LT2, LT3). Organisations can also appeal to younger workers too - a 'generational shift' has been highlighted, as younger workers exhibit different mindsets and expectations about work-life balance, prompting organisations to adopt hybrid work (ES2). Lastly, hybrid or fully remote work enables organisations to recruit skilled labour from locations beyond the immediate commuting zone of their offices (LT1, LT2, LT3).

Increased employees' motivation and job satisfaction. Once introduced, hybrid work tends to increase employees' motivation and job satisfaction. In four organisations (AT1, AT2, ES2, LT3) hybrid work has also been cited as instrumental in retaining existing staff, as it caters to the evolving preferences and lifestyle needs of employees wishing to achieve a better work-life balance, travel, or relocate, who might otherwise leave their jobs in the absence of hybrid work. This aspect was particularly salient in one of these organisations (ES2), which experienced strong competition for skilled employees and high staff turnover before adopting hybrid work.

Sustainability goals. In one organisation (FI2), hybrid work was also introduced as a means to decrease commuting time, contributing to the company's commitment to reducing carbon emissions, which are monitored at the company level.

Workers' drivers

A large share of employees in the analysed organisations did not 'choose' to work hybrid, rather, they were compelled to work from home during the pandemic lockdowns. After such experience, a majority of employees have the option to continue to work hybrid and wish to do so. Furthermore, in some organisations (ES2, ES3, FI2, LT2), a substantial number of employees were directly employed as hybrid or remote workers post-pandemic.

In all case studies, employees identified commuting time savings as the primary driver of hybrid work. Across all interviews, this driver emerged as the most significant factor shaping preferences for the frequency of remote work. Employees residing far from the office tend to opt for more frequent remote work and report a broader range of benefits from working hybrid. Substantial time savings are associated with enhanced work recovery, increased opportunities for attending to personal responsibilities and leisure, and more freedom for choosing the place of residence (or conversely, access to more job opportunities without the need for relocation). This is hardly a new finding, as the importance of saving commuting time ('telecommuting') has been emphasised since the early use of remote work in the US in the 1970s. A study by the European Central Bank (2023) found that workers' commuting time is the most important sociodemographic factor influencing preferences for work from home. Workers who commute more than one hour each day prefer ten days of remote work per month, which is four days more than workers commuting less than 15 minutes.[27]

Saving commuting time is widely seen by employees as a factor that directly improves work-life balance and overall well-being. Employees perceive time spent commuting as enforced 'around the work' time (only a few employees with long commutes record it as working time, although they refer to hindrances for focused work). This time is not only non-productive, but it is also time which is not intrinsically enjoyed. Employees refer to stress during long commutes and anxiety to arrive late at work due to traffic congestion (car) or crowded spaces and delays (public transportation). This is in line with findings from the literature, which shows that longer commutes are associated with greater fatigue, lower satisfaction with rest time, and increased strain (Clark et al., 2020; Giménez-Nadal et al., 2022).

In most instances, employees also referred to improved work-life balance due to higher autonomy over where and when to work. Importantly, hybrid work is especially appreciated when it is combined with working time flexibility. This allows to better accommodate job demands and private life, a positive aspect particularly highlighted by employees with young children or other care responsibilities. In some instances, employees also refer to other positive implications of hybrid work such as the possibility of combining work and leisure (workstation)[28] or the feasibility of relocating while maintaining the job.

[27] Estimation results of Ordinary Least Squares regressions with the dependent variable being the number of working days per month that a worker wants to work from home (max. 20). Regression controlled for all other factors (age, gender, children in the household, level of education, self-employment status, firm size, occupation, sector, and country).

[28] A mode of travel (both long- and short-term) that combines leisure with work. A typical example of workstation is to spend summer, when children do not have to attend school, in a cottage or in the home of relatives, which allows to accommodate work with childcare and leisure activities.

Interviews indicate there is a learning curve among workers, with a large share of workers referring to work-intrinsic benefits of this work arrangement that are increasingly appreciated over time. Among others, employees refer to better focus at home and the ability to work when and where one is most productive, leading to higher efficiency in the management of working time and improved performance. As extensively addressed in Chapters 2 and 3, hybrid work also tends to enhance motivation and job satisfaction and also contributes to building trust when it is adequately managed.

Some interviewees also stressed that working hybrid must be learned, emphasising the need to better manage the boundaries between work and private domains, and contain self-imposed behaviours such as working longer hours or being responsive to work-related communications at any time, as a kind of reciprocal exchange for the possibility to work remotely (as analysed by Menezes and Kelliher, 2017).

In some instances, working hybrid does not appear to be a genuine employee's choice, but rather a way to accommodate office transformations. As analysed in Chapters 2 and 3, this may be because of the closing of offices, shortage of office workstations, or poor physical and social environments at the office.

Main types of hybrid work models

Similarities and differences

The post-pandemic hybrid work models of the ten studied organisations are underpinned by three core pillars:

- Hybrid work is defined as a voluntary option for employees in job positions where remote work is technically feasible.
- The implementation of hybrid work is formulated as a policy (coherent set of rules), not as an ad hoc practice. Such policy is adopted through agreement with employee representatives or at the unilateral initiative of the employer. The policy defines the general rules of hybrid work in the organisation, including eligibility criteria, the maximum frequency of remote work allowed, the procedure for accessing hybrid work, and means of support for remote work, among others.
- The individual hybrid work arrangement relies on agreement with the line manager, which presupposes some sort of exchange between the employee and the line manager.

Table 5 summarises the main characteristics of the current hybrid work models. The main similarities concern eligibility rules and means of support. In contrast, the models exhibit great diversity in the design and implementation of hybrid work.

Eligibility criteria

Eight out of ten organisations have adopted an egalitarian approach, with teleworkability as the only criterion for eligibility (except for trainees and temporary employees in AT1 and AT2). Additional restrictions apply in two organisations (ES1, ES2).

As a general criterion, hybrid work is an option for employees in job positions where at least some tasks can be performed remotely. Employees ineligible for this arrangement are those whose duties require constant presence in the office, such as those providing on-site facility management or in-person services. These workers constitute a small part of the staff (ranging from 0% to 10%) in all

organisations except the Lithuanian bank (LT1). In this case, approximately 30% of employees are exclusively engaged in delivering in-person customer services.

In some instances, HR managers and workers' representatives noted that the pandemic led to a change in mindsets, extending the range of tasks considered teleworkable. This particularly concerns medium-skilled clerical workers (ES1, FI2). Mandatory remote work during the lockdowns urged the digitalisation of administrative work processes, making it evident that many tasks could be performed remotely, even when dealing with sensitive data from clients or staff. In the Lithuanian public agency (LT3), a refined task-focused approach has allowed the expansion of hybrid work to employees whose tasks mainly require on-site work (customer support and IT services). A rotating shift allows these workers to use hybrid work on a need basis (e.g. around medical appointments, home repairs, or other personal punctual needs), coordinating remotely with team members to ensure that in-person functions are consistently fulfilled. In practice, these employees work remotely approximately 10% or 15% of their time.

In the Austrian bank and the Ministry (AT1, AT2), employees in temporary or training contracts are not entitled to work hybrid. This is because on-site work is preferable in the early career stage as it facilitates the process of formal and informal learning and the establishment of social relationships at work. The hybrid work policy of the Lithuanian bank (LT1) also allows line managers to deny hybrid work to new employees during their first three months at the company, and it is a usual practice to work on-site during this period. Other organisations have no formal rules for new employees. However, it is widely acknowledged that onboarding is a critical period and there is a broad range of practices in place to facilitate this process, either at the organisational or team level, as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3.

In addition to teleworkability, two Spanish companies apply other criteria which restrict access to hybrid work. In ES1, restrictions apply to managers (who decide to self-exclude) and employees in commercial positions. This approach is consistent with a managerial culture that emphasises on-site work for enhancing social relations at work, motivation, and corporate values. Commercial employees support this view and highlight the importance of frequent in-person contact with clients and employees in the commercial branches of the company. In contrast, restrictions in ES2 can be understood in the context of the negotiation of the company-level agreement which introduced hybrid work. During this process, the works council had to contend with initial managerial reluctance to broaden eligibility. The restrictions apply to lab assistants (a small group of approximately 20 employees). Further details can be found in the section discussing the role of social dialogue.

Equipment, cost compensation and other means of support

The ten organisations have rather similar approaches concerning means of support to hybrid work, with differences primarily due to national regulations.

In all cases, the employer provides basic IT equipment (laptops, headsets, VPN connections) to all hybrid workers. The provision of smartphones varies depending on corporate rules. However, IT ergonomic equipment (e.g. special keyboard, footrest, and raised computer screen) is only provided in one company (AT1), on the condition that it is approved by the occupational physician. If requested, the company also grants a small subsidy for purchasing extra-large screens every four years.

Cost compensation is only provided by two companies (AT1 and ES2) due to legal provisions for the private sector in Austria and Spain. In both cases, cost compensation is aimed at reimbursing regular

costs incurred by the employee when working remotely (such as energy and internet connection costs). However, the amount of the compensation does not allow to cover the purchase of home office equipment (for instance, an ergonomic chair or a large screen).

Some organisations provide some support for the setting up of a home workstation. The Austrian bank (AT1) has cooperation agreements with furniture suppliers which allow employees to purchase ergonomic office furniture at low prices. The same initiative was launched by the Finnish company (FI2), although some employees expressed dissatisfaction because it was not clearly communicated, and the prices of selected stores and brands were high. The Finnish agency (FI1) allows employees to purchase old office equipment at a reduced price when it is replaced, such as external monitors or adjustable office desks (FI1).

Finally, as noted in the previous section, hybrid workers benefit from tax deductions on the costs of working remotely in Finland and Austria.

Design and implementation of hybrid work

There is great variation in the design and implementation of hybrid work in the studied organisations. First, there are marked differences in the core physical and temporal aspects of hybrid work: maximum allowed frequency of remote work, regulation of remote workplaces, and degree of working time flexibility. Second, the procedure for accessing hybrid work and the leeway of line managers in granting and organising hybrid work differ largely across models. The next section delves more in-depth into these differences, suggesting three main types of hybrid work models.

Table 5. Characteristics of post-pandemic hybrid work models: similarities and differences

Character	Hybrid work is voluntary in all cases.
Eligibility	Employees in job positions where at least part of the tasks can be performed remotely in eight organisations (with the exception of trainees and temporary employees in AT1 and AT2). More restrictive criteria in ES1 (exclusion of commercial employees and managers) and ES2 (lab assistants), although in ES2 the restriction affects a small group of workers.
Equipment, cost compensation and other means of support	Basic IT equipment is provided by the employer (laptop, headsets, VPN connections) in all organisations. In AT2, according to legal provisions for the public sector in Austria, employees using at their own request private IT equipment receive a tax-free allowance of EUR 300 per year. One organisation (AT1) provides special IT ergonomic equipment if approved by the occupational physician (e.g. special keyboard, footrest, raised screen). If requested, the company provides a small subsidy for the purchase of extra-large screens every four years. Three organisations have measures in place to support the acquisition of office equipment: second-hand equipment at low price in a public agency (FI1); discounts at specific stores or brands in two companies (AT1, FI2). Cost compensation is provided in two companies (AT1, ES2) due to legal provisions which apply to the private sector in Austria and Spain. In AT1 the amount is EUR 1 per remote workday (up to EUR 100 per year); In ES2, EUR 7 per remote workday (as established by the sector-level collective agreement). In Austria and Finland, hybrid workers benefit from tax deductions in the costs born for working remotely (AT1, AT2, FI1, FI2).
Access to hybrid work	Individual hybrid work arrangement relies on agreement with the line manager in all organisations. The procedure is very diverse (from verbal agreement to a highly institutionalised process of request and approval ratified by the HR department). In LT2, remote work is the default norm for most of the staff (IT professionals) and formal permission is only required for working from abroad. The leeway of line managers in granting and organising hybrid work differs significantly across the ten organisations.

	In two cases (FI1 and ES3) agreement between team co-workers plays also an important role in the organisation of hybrid work (organisation of in-person meetings in FI1, which is demanding because of geographically spread teams and offices; rotating shifts in ES3 due to space constraints).
Maximum frequency of remote work allowed	Highly diverse: 20% of working time in one case (ES1); 40%-60% of working time in five cases (AT1, AT2, ES2, ES3, LT1); no restrictions in four cases (FI1, FI2, LT2, LT3). The maximum of remote working time is established by number of days per week (AT2, ES1, ES2, ES3) or per month (AT1, LT1). Employees' flexibility in the choice of days they work remotely varies across and within organisations.
Remote workplaces	The Austrian organisations (AT1, AT2) follow the national statutory definition of remote work[29] (home office work) with restrictions to other in-country locations and excluding work from abroad. Similar restrictions are in place in ES1 (only work from home is allowed). There are no restrictions to in-country locations in the remainder of organisations, but diverse rules apply to work from abroad. There are schemes favouring this option in four organisations (FI2, LT1, LT2, LT3) subject to agreement with line manager and usually higher management levels. In ES2, work from abroad is forbidden without previous authorisation, but the agreement does not further elaborate on this point. In FI1 work from abroad is explicitly forbidden. There is no reference to work from abroad in the agreement of ES3.
Working time	Hybrid work follows the same formal working time rules as on-site work except in the Lithuanian organisations (LT1, LT2, LT3) due to legal provisions (employees working remotely self-manage their working hours and only must be reachable by phone or email within the on-site work schedule). The degree of working time flexibility varies: Low (ES1, LT3); medium (LT1); high (AT1, AT2, FI2, ES3, LT2); very high (FI1, ES2). Considering the regulation of working time for remote work in Lithuania, working time flexibility is high for remote workers in LT1 and LT3. In two cases (ES2, ES3) the agreement on hybrid work included an increase in working time flexibility for all employees; flexibility also increased by allowing workers to combine on-site and remote work on the same day. In FI2, flexible working time rules are assessed every year in connection with the experience of hybrid work. In the remainder of organisations, the adoption of hybrid work did not change the regulation of working time.
Role of social dialogue and collective bargaining	In seven out of the nine cases in which there is employee representation, the hybrid work model relies directly or indirectly on agreement between the employer and the employee representation, and hybrid work rules and practices have been developed with the participation of workers' representatives (AT1, AT2, FI1, FI2, ES2, ES3, LT1). In one public organisation (LT3), the works council was formally consulted but was little involved in practice. In one private company (ES1), the adoption of hybrid work was unilaterally decided by the employer (in line with low involvement of the works council in other aspects).

Source: Authors based on the case studies.

Typology of hybrid work models

Dimensions

The ten post-pandemic hybrid work models differ substantially in three dimensions:

- Maximum frequency of remote work allowed: from one day per week to no restrictions.

[29] As explained earlier, in 2025 the regulation of remote work in Austria will not be limited to work from home.

- Regulation and management of hybrid work: from a rigid model (equal and detailed rules for all staff agreed at the highest organisation level) to more decentralised approaches, where the model sets general rules, and the uptake and organisation of hybrid work are managed at the team level.
- Degree of working time flexibility: from very low (0.5h start/end) to very high (self-management of working hours with minor constraints).

The importance of these dimensions in the design, implementation, and assessment of hybrid work rules and practices appears to be well grounded in the literature. It has been emphasised by academic research (Chung, 2022; Smite, 2022, 2023), human management and business consultancy (Gratton, 2021, 2023; Lake, 2023), and organised labour literature (Countouris and De Stefano, 2024).

The first dimension (share of working time allowed to be spent remotely) is a continuum from an office-first approach to a remote-first approach. As a general rule, the more a hybrid work model departs from on-site work, the more management and work organisation practices have to be adapted to achieve the objectives that fuelled the adoption of hybrid work.

The second dimension (regulation and management of hybrid work) primarily refers to whether decisions regarding approval of hybrid work are centralised or decentralised, allowing for flexibility at the team level. Furthermore, decentralised models differ in the extent to which employees can decide on relevant aspects of hybrid work at both the individual level (namely, when to work on-site and when to work remotely) and the team level (such as how best to organise communication and collaboration in on-site and remote settings).

Based on a thorough analysis of hybrid work policies in tech companies, Smite (2022, 2023) highlights the inherent trade-offs between centralised and decentralised models. Centralised models, where decisions about hybrid work are made at the highest management level, apply the same rules to all employees. Therefore, they miss the opportunity to cater to the different operational needs of the teams as well as the different individual needs and preferences of the employees (which may arise from the specificities of their tasks and/or individual circumstances). Conversely, decentralised models can easily adapt hybrid work to different needs across and within teams, ideally maximising performance and well-being. However, precisely because they ultimately lead to different individual hybrid work arrangements and organisational practices, such decentralised models face the risk of being perceived as unfair. In fact, they may be unfair and not just perceived as such. In these models, line managers have a large leeway to grant and organise hybrid work within their teams, which may lead to discretionary decisions and bias when the organisation does not adequately support line managers in implementing a consistent hybrid work approach.

Regarding the third dimension (working time flexibility), the literature highlights the potential benefits of combining hybrid work and working time flexibility for both organisations and workers. Gratton (2021, 2023) argues that assessing the operational constraints that limit working 'anywhere, anytime' is the foundation for redesigning jobs and work organisation practices to reap the potential benefits that place and time flexibility can bring. Similar to the distinction between teleworkable and non-teleworkable tasks (in terms of place), tasks can be synchronous or asynchronous in terms of time. Synchronous tasks must be performed at given times, either because they require different people to work together within the same hours or because they consist of providing services to

customers or beneficiaries within a given schedule. Asynchronous tasks have no time-bound operational constraints. Their timing is only tied to office schedules insofar as they are performed on-site. However, most of these tasks can be performed remotely.[30] The implementation of hybrid work allows workers to perform remotely asynchronous tasks at any time.

In such a situation, regulating working time flexibility can prove beneficial for both workers and organisations. Regulation would provide institutional support for workers' autonomy in managing work schedules, enhancing their capacity to balance job demands with personal needs and preferences (such as working early in the mornings or late in the evenings or working more hours one day and fewer hours another day). This approach may improve both work-life balance and individual performance. It would also contribute to addressing the employer's need for flexibility in the event of workload peaks or emergencies. Workers would be more willing to work additional hours in these instances, and regulation would contribute to making this effort transparent, acknowledged, and properly compensated with time off or other means. The option to perform additional work from home or any other place further facilitates this effort.

Main types of hybrid work models

The analysis of differences between the ten hybrid work models shows a clear connection between two dimensions: 'maximum frequency of remote work allowed' and 'regulation and management of hybrid work'. As shown in Table 6, these dimensions group the hybrid work models into three types: 1) rigid, office-first; 2) structured, balanced; and 3) flexible, unconstrained. To some extent, this typology is also consistent with the variation in working time flexibility, which is low in the first type, high or very high in the second, and diverse in the third.

Table 6. Distribution of hybrid work models according to two dimensions: allowed frequency of remote work and regulation and management of hybrid work

		Regulation and management of hybrid work		
		Rigid	Structured	Flexible
frequency of remote work allowed	Office-first	**ES1**		
	Balanced		**AT1, AT2, ES2, ES3, LT1**	
	Unconstrained			**FI1, FI2, LT2, LT3**

Source: Authors based on the case studies.

The main characteristics of the three types of hybrid work models are outlined below and summarised in Table 7.

Rigid, office-first (ES1). The rules are equal for all employees and have been established at the highest management level. The frequency of allowed remote work is low (20%), and remote workdays are fixed (once they are established by agreement between the line manager and the worker). There is almost no time flexibility regardless of where employees are working (0.5h start/end).

[30] Most asynchronous tasks can be performed remotely (e.g. preparing administrative documentation, analysing data, drafting a report). However, there are also asynchronous tasks that have to be performed on-site, such as facility maintenance.

Structured, balanced (AT1, AT2, ES2, ES3, LT1). There is a balanced frequency of allowed remote work (40%-60%). The approach towards regulation and management can be defined as 'structured'. The hybrid work model sets the general rules, and hybrid work is managed in a decentralised way. Line managers have significant leeway in granting access to hybrid work, the amount of remote work granted to each worker, and/or the organisation of hybrid work within their teams (such as allocating remote days within the team or establishing regular in-presence meetings). Remote workdays tend to be fixed, although rules and practices differ across organisations and teams, partly depending online manager's views and space constraints. Working time flexibility is high or very high in all organisations. This flexibility is largely regarded (by management, workers' representatives, and employees) as a crucial factor in enhancing both individual and team performance.

Flexible, unconstrained (FI1, FI2, LT2, LT3). There are no formal restrictions on full-time remote work. The regulation and management of hybrid work can be defined as 'flexible'. Hybrid work is granted almost by default, and the frequency of remote work depends largely on individual preferences. In two organisations (FI1, FI2), there is a large share of employees working fully (or almost fully) remotely. Line managers play a prominent role in the coordination of hybrid teams (either because of the diversity of individual hybrid work arrangements or the large share of employees working most or all of their time remotely). In formal terms, working time flexibility differs across organisations, from low to very high. In practice, there are also substantial differences within organisations, depending on job profiles and hybrid work arrangements.

Table 7. Types of hybrid work models: defining features

	Rigid, office-first (ES1)	Structured, balanced (AT1, AT2, ES2, ES3, LT1)	Flexible, unconstrained (FI1, FI2, LT2, LT3)
Management of hybrid work	Rigid (equal rules)	Structured (high leeway of line managers)	Flexible (mainly relies on individual preferences)
Maximum frequency of remote work allowed	Office-first (up to 20% of working time)	Balanced (up to 40%-60% of working time)	Unconstrained (full-time remote work allowed)
Working time flexibility	Low	High or very high	Diverse

Source: Authors based on the case studies.

Further remarks

The importance of the three dimensions that underpin the typology appears to be well grounded in the literature. However, before delving further into the analysis of hybrid work rules and practices in the ten organisations studied, two points must be noted.

Firstly, as highlighted in the methodological section, the case studies illustrate diverse hybrid work approaches and practices but should not be deemed representative of the situation in other, even if similar, organisations. It is important to consider this when the results of the typology are analysed. Although the typology is based on three dimensions that are well established in theoretical and empirical terms, the outcome of applying these dimensions to the ten case studies (distribution of cases across categories) is by no means representative. For instance, the analysis shows a connection between a centralised regulation of hybrid work and an office-first approach, which is

clearly illustrated in one organisation. While this makes sense in this particular case, there is evidence that organisations may regulate a higher frequency of remote work in a rigid way.[31]

Secondly, it also must be noted that equity is completely missing in the typology, although it is a crucial dimension in the analysis of hybrid work. Most empirical studies refer to differences in the extent to which both the offer and uptake of hybrid work depend on the level of authority, skills, and work autonomy. Eurofound's foresight study (2023b) acknowledges the importance of such aspects, pointing out that hybrid work may expand in either an egalitarian or a selective (biased) way, with different implications for organisational performance and working conditions. However, the hybrid work models studied do not show consistent differences in this dimension. As explained previously, an egalitarian approach towards eligibility prevails, and eligibility has been controversial in only one organisation (ES2). Concerning uptake, equity issues reported in the case studies appear to be mainly a result of a quick and decentralised post-pandemic expansion of hybrid work in some organisations (ES2, LT3), reflecting the trade-offs and potential risks highlighted by Smite (2022, 2023). From a methodological perspective, it is also important to recall that equity issues may not be properly acknowledged because on-site workers were not included in the fieldwork.

The next sections examine the regulation and management of workplace and working time flexibility, with a focus on the differences between the three main types of hybrid work models and their rationale. While equity issues are also identified, other sections of the report further elaborate on the analysis, including the role of social dialogue in enhancing equitable access to hybrid work opportunities.

Regulation and management of workplace flexibility

Workplace flexibility refers to the regulation and management of remote work in general (frequency, access procedure, reversibility) and also the specificities of allowed remote workplaces (home, other in-country locations, work from abroad). These two aspects are analysed separately in the sections below and summarised in Table 8 and Table 9.

Remote work

Rigid, office-first

ES1 illustrates a very restrictive and rigid hybrid work model in which remote work is reduced to the minimum. Remote work is allowed for one fixed day per week, from Tuesday to Thursday. The choice of day is decided within each department by agreement with the line manager and by ensuring that part of the team is always present at the office each day. Employees are not allowed to accumulate remote days. Ad-hoc requests for additional flexibility are rare but are usually granted according to all interviewees.

In this company, there are no explicit mechanisms for reversal. The amount of remote work falls below the legal threshold of the statutory definition of remote work in Spain, and therefore, the adoption of hybrid work has not entailed changes in labour contracts. Although there is a works

[31] For instance, since November 2022 Uber requires their employees to spend at least half of their working time on-site, with Tuesday and Thursday as the 'anchor days' where all employees are expected to work in the office (https://www.uber.com/en-ES/blog/our-return-to-the-office/). Similarly, Deutsche Bank allows for two remote days per week, with mandatory presence in the office on either Monday or Friday (https://www.thewealthadvisor.com/article/partial-return-office-sparks-dissent-deutsche-bank)

council, hybrid work has been implemented at the individual initiative of the employer and can be reversed at the employer's will.

Structured, balanced

Five organisations (AT1, AT2, ES2, ES3, LT1) show different ways of regulating hybrid work following a structured and balanced approach. The allowed frequency of remote work ranges from 40% to 60% of the working time.[32] In all cases, the model builds on agreement between the employer and the employee representatives that ensuring a balanced amount of on-site and remote work is best for individual and organisational performance, and also for working conditions.

A factor that facilitates this balanced approach is that hybrid work has been adopted in a single establishment, a single office (ES3) or the headquarters of large organisations (AT1, AT2 and ES2[33]). The exception is the Lithuanian bank (LT1), which, aside from headquarters, has three other administrative offices that are geographically distributed in the country, and a number of multi-located teams. Partly for this reason, and partly because of recruitment strategies (see Chapter 3), the bank offers the possibility of working remotely for more than 50% of the working time if the employee lives far from the office.

Hybrid work is managed in a decentralised way, and line managers have a high leeway in granting access to hybrid work and organising hybrid work within their teams, including the allocation of remote days and the establishment of regular in-presence meetings (for teams or individuals). In these organisations, staff is composed of a mix of medium- and high-skilled workers, with very different job profiles, alongside marked differences in work processes and methods across areas, departments and teams. In practice, the uptake of hybrid work differs largely across teams, depending on the nature of tasks, the extent of task interdependence, work organisation practices, and line managers' preferences towards hybrid work.

Apart from eligibility rules that exclude job positions which require permanent physical presence, there are no criteria for assessing the extent of 'teleworkability' of eligible job positions. In all cases, access to hybrid work relies on agreement with the line manager. In AT1 and AT2, line managers have a large say in granting hybrid work and the number of remote days allowed. Employees may approach HR and employee representatives if their request to work hybrid is refused, and the final decision is made by HR. In practice, issues around hybrid work are rare. Employees first agree informally with the line manager on the specificities of their individual hybrid work arrangement and then proceed to formalise the request. In both organisations, the share of employees entitled to hybrid work who use this work arrangement is very high (nearly 100% in AT1 and around 90% in AT2), although, there are differences in the number of remote days granted. Hybrid work uptake is also 90% or above in ES3 and LT1, where space constraints lead to more similar hybrid work arrangements. For ES2, there is no uptake data, although interviews suggest that some employees encounter difficulties in implementing their individual hybrid work arrangements due to line managers' reluctance (see Chapters 2 and 3).

[32] In ES2, the agreement on hybrid work allows for 1 or 2 days of remote work per week. However, almost all hybrid workers are allowed 2 remote days.

[33] ES2 has adopted hybrid work in two different establishments (the headquarters and the R2D centre) but the rationale is the same (employees are attached to one of these establishments).

In AT1, employees are required to agree on the fixed days to work remotely with the line manager, with some flexibility to adapt the arrangement at short notice or to agree upon additional remote days on an ad-hoc basis. A similar scheme of up to three fixed days per week is in place in AT2. However, this organisation also allows for occasional remote work (up to 2 days per week) that can be arranged at very short notice with the line manager and is by far the preferred option (72% of hybrid workers). Occasional remote work is also in place for managers, who are allowed to take 2 remote days per week without in practice requiring permission from superiors. In ES3, flexibility in the choice of days is limited by space constraints. Most teams have been compelled to establish shifts, and the allocation of remote days is usually decided with the participation of all team members. Changing a day is possible but needs to be arranged with the line manager and usually with another employee. In ES2 and LT1, rules on fixed days are more flexible (although in LT1 overcrowding in some offices limits this flexibility).

The company level agreements on hybrid work of the two Spanish organisations (ES2 and ES3) explicitly allow the combination of on-site and remote work within the same day, provided that 'core hours' are carried out in the same location. In practice, this means higher workplace flexibility, because restrictions to remote work only apply to the 'core hours' and not to workdays (see below how 'core hours' are regulated).

Hybrid work arrangements are usually established for one year in AT1 and AT2 (in some cases, six months). The company level agreements in ES2 and ES3 provide that the minimum duration of hybrid arrangements is one year, with the possibility of renewal based online managers' approval. There is no reference to the duration of hybrid arrangements in the LT1 agreement.

In all cases, the adoption and regulation of hybrid work relies on agreement with workers' representatives, either directly or indirectly, and the mechanisms of reversal are explicitly defined: either at the employee's will or at the employer's request for performance reasons or due to productive, technical or organisational needs.

Flexible, unconstrained

Four organisations (FI1, FI2, LT2 and LT3) have no formal restrictions limiting remote work. In LT3, there is a management recommendation of working remotely up to 20% of working time, unless the line manager decides otherwise. In fact, in the department analysed, employees used to work remotely 70-80% of their time. Conversely, in FI1 there is a management recommendation to work on-site at least 1 day per month, although it is not strictly enforced.

Compared with the rest of the organisations studied, the organisations within this group show some distinct occupational traits. Most employees are highly skilled workers and there is less diversity in job roles and tasks than in the other cases. In FI1, FI2 and LT3, there is a predominance of solo work. In LT2, most employees are IT specialists and work is very interdependent, but software development is well suited for collaborative work in virtual settings. In these organisations, most tasks can be done remotely.

A factor that contributes to the extension of the high frequency of remote work is the geographical dispersion of offices, with many employees working in multi-located teams and/or living far away (namely in FI1 and FI2, and to a lesser extent in LT3). In LT2, where there is only a single office, the adoption of hybrid work has enhanced the hiring of remote employees who live far away or work from abroad.

In FI1 and FI2, the uptake of hybrid work is high (nearly 100%), with a large share of employees working remotely most or all of their time. Constraints on full remote work were found in two occupational profiles. Employees working in customer services (FI1) have to carry out part of their work at the office or on customer premises, while some professionals (FI2) are involved in frequent travel or in-person work with customers.

There are no available data on the uptake of hybrid work in LT2 and LT3. In these organisations, only a few job positions have limitations to work hybrid due to the nature of their tasks. Interviews suggest that uptake is high in LT2, with differences in the frequency of remote work due to individual preferences, whereas it varies in LT3 depending online managers' views on hybrid work.

In FI1 and FI2, agreement on hybrid work with the line manager is easily achieved, based on individual preferences and needs, and a large share of employees work most of their time remotely. In LT2, an SME, remote work is the 'default' norm for most employees (IT professionals) and does not even require any special request if it is performed in Lithuania. In contrast, the uptake of remote work in LT3 varies across departments and teams due to differences in line manager approaches towards hybrid work, even though most tasks can be done remotely (see Chapters 2 and 3).

Within this group, the two private companies (FI2, LT2) have adopted a 'remote-first' approach, combined with restructuring of office space (see Chapter 2s and 3). Moreover, since the pandemic, both companies have hired employees under hybrid or remote work arrangements (including workers located from abroad in LT2). However, the uptake of hybrid work differs substantially: most employees in FI2 work fully or almost fully remotely (aside from professionals frequently travelling or working at clients' premises); in contrast, hybrid work uptake among IT professionals varies significantly in LT2, including fully (or almost fully) onsite or remote arrangements.

In the four organisations within this group, there are no rules on the typical duration of hybrid work arrangements or conditions for renewal. Reversibility mechanisms are also loosely regulated. The employment contracts in FI2 state that the employer can request on-site work for performance reasons. In other instances, limiting hybrid work is under the general managerial prerogative of line managers. Interviews referred to potential causes such as being unresponsive during working hours (LT3) or concerns about employee well-being (FI1), although no specific cases were reported.

Table 8. Maximum frequency of remote work allowed, access to hybrid work and uptake

		Maximum frequency of remote work allowed	Access to hybrid work	Uptake of hybrid work (% of eligible employees)
Rigid, office-first	ES1	1 fixed day per week (from Tuesday to Thursday). Days cannot be accumulated.	Verbal agreement with the line manager. No formal rules for renewal.	Around 90%.
Structured, balanced	AT1	50% of monthly time. Working remotely for an entire week is not allowed. Days are fixed.	Based on objective criteria and agreement with the line manager. Written request and written individual arrangement formalised by HR, usually for a year.	Nearly 100%, with differences in the frequency of remote work depending on the nature of tasks and work organisation methods at the team level.
	AT2	Two schemes. Regular: 3 fixed days per week; occasional: 2 days per week. Managers can work remotely 2 days per week on ad-hoc basis.	Based on objective criteria and agreement with the line manager. Written request and written individual arrangement formalised by HR, usually for a year.	Nearly 90%, with differences in the frequency of remote work. The closer the position to the Ministry, the lower the frequency of remote work.

	ES2	1 or 2 days per week. Days cannot be accumulated.	Verbal agreement with the line manager (formalised in the labour contract). The majority of employees are allowed 2 days. Minimum duration of hybrid work arrangement is one year, renewal depends on agreement with the line manager.	No available data. Interviews suggest that hybrid work arrangements are generalised, but actual use is sometimes hindered by line managers practices.
	ES3	3 days per week. Days cannot be accumulated.	Verbal agreement with the line manager (formalised in the labour contract). Agreement with team co-workers plays an important role in the organisation of hybrid work (e.g. rotating shifts at team level) due to space constraints. Minimum duration of hybrid work arrangement is one year, renewal depends on agreement with the line manager.	Around 90%.
	LT1	50% of monthly time (except in cases where the employee's workplace is distant from the company's location, in which this limit does not apply).	Verbal agreement with the line manager, formalised through written arrangement by HR. There is no minimum duration nor formal rules for renewal.	Around 95%.
Flexible, unconstrained	FI1	No restrictions. Recommendation of 1 day of on-site work per month.	Verbal agreement with the line manager. Agreement with team co-workers plays an important role in the organisation of hybrid work, as teams and offices are geographically dispersed (e.g. on-site meetings). There is no minimum duration nor formal rules for renewal.	Nearly 100%. A large share of employees works remotely most or almost all of their time.
	FI2	No restrictions.	Verbal agreement with the line manager. There is no minimum duration nor formal rules for renewal.	Nearly 100%. A large share of employees works remotely most or almost all of their time.
	LT2	No restrictions.	Remote work is the default option for most staff (IT professionals). No request and approval needed if it is performed within Lithuanian territory.	No available data. Interviews suggest that uptake of hybrid work has increased substantially, with large differences in the frequency of remote work due to workers' preferences.
	LT3	No restrictions. Recommendation to work remotely up to 20% of monthly time unless the line manager decides otherwise.	Verbal agreement with the line manager, formalised through written agreement by HR. There is no minimum duration nor formal rules for renewal.	No available data. Interviews suggest uptake varies depending online managers views towards hybrid work.

Source: Authors based on the case studies.

Remote workplaces

The main differences in the regulation of remote workplaces stem from variations in the national regulation of remote work (see Table 9). In Austria, according to the statutory definition of 'home based work',[34] the law establishes as remote workplaces the employee's own main and secondary

[34] This regulation will change in 2025 to include work from other places.

residence, as well as the residence of the partner or that of close relatives in Austria, excluding other in-country locations and work from abroad. The Austrian bank (AT1) follows this regulation, while the Ministry (AT2) restricts remote workplaces to two residences in Austria.

In the other countries, the regulatory framework does not restrict in-country locations or work from abroad. The only nuance is that according to the Lithuanian Labour Code, employees must include the address of the remote workplace in the hybrid work agreement, with updates required if the location changes. This rule is formally in place in all Lithuanian organisations, although it is not always strictly enforced. Therefore, differences in the regulation of remote workplaces are organisation-specific and mainly refer to work from abroad. This option, subject to additional permissions, appears to be favoured in the three Lithuanian organisations (LT1, LT2, LT3) and the Finnish private company (FI2). In contrast, work from abroad is strictly forbidden in the Finnish state agency (FI1) following the guidelines of the agency and the state. The main reason behind this is to ensure data security and compliance with OSH requirements. However, the agency representative explained that this prohibition is under discussion, considering its discrepancy with the fact that employees who are abroad on official work travel are allowed to work remotely.

Table 9. Regulation of remote workplaces

Rigid, office-first	ES1	Only home. Other locations in Spain and work from abroad are not allowed.
Structured, balanced	AT1	Home office workplaces are exclusively the employee's own main and secondary residence as well as the residence of the partner or that of close relatives in Austria. Work from abroad is not allowed.
	AT2	Two home office workplaces in Austria. Work from abroad is not allowed.
	ES2	Any location in Spain. Work from abroad is explicitly forbidden without prior authorisation, although the agreement on hybrid work does not further elaborate on this point.
	ES3	Any location in Spain. There is no reference to work from abroad in the agreement of hybrid work.
	LT1	Any location in Lithuania. Work from abroad (within the EU, the European Economic Area, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) is allowed upon agreement with the line manager and the administrative representative, with a maximum duration of 6 months per year. Work from other countries requires additional permission from the administrative representative.
Flexible, unconstrained	FI1	Any location in Finland. All employees enjoy access to all the agency's offices around the country. Work from abroad is not allowed.
	FI2	Any location in Finland. Work within the EU is allowed upon agreement with the line manager for up to 10 days. An additional 10 days can be approved by the manager's manager. Longer periods need to be approved by the HR department. Work outside of the EU is strictly forbidden.
	LT2	Any location in Lithuania. Work from abroad is allowed upon agreement from the line manager and signing a remote work agreement overseen by the HR department.
	LT3	Any location in Lithuania. Work from abroad is allowed upon agreement from the line manager.

Source: Authors based on the case studies.

Regulation and management of working time flexibility

Working time and hybrid work

In seven organisations, working time rules are the same for all employees regardless of where they work. In the three Lithuanian organisations (LT1, LT2, LT3), according to national legislation,

employees working remotely only have to be reachable by e-mail or phone within the work schedule that applies to on-site work and therefore enjoy higher time flexibility than on-site workers.

Degree of working time flexibility

The degree of flexibility of working time differs widely across organisations (see Table 10). It is lowest in ES1, with only half an hour of flexibility at entry/end time for all employees, including those working remotely. The on-site work schedules are also rather rigid in LT2 and LT3. However, even though in Lithuania employees working remotely have to be reachable during the on-site work schedule, this request is not strictly enforced in these organisations. In fact, in LT2, there is minimal control over work hours for both on-site and remote work, except when tracking work hours is a client's request. Moreover, flexibility has been further enhanced because several employees work remotely from abroad in different time zones, only being required to ensure a minimum overlap with the company's schedule.

In the rest of the cases (AT1, AT2, FI1, FI2, ES2, ES3, LT1) the degree of flexibility depends on flexitime rules and how these rules apply to different job roles and hybrid work arrangements. Under flexitime, employees have to meet daily 'core hours' of mandatory work (if they are established), but otherwise, they can decide when they start/end their workday within the timeframe stipulated by the employer. Such schemes also allow employees to flexibly distribute their work hours across days. Longer hours one day can be compensated by shorter hours another day, and there are rules for balancing actual/contracted hours in a reference period (e.g. a month, six months, a year) and compensating excess hours with time off.

In all cases, except AT1, core hours are set at the organisation level and apply to all employees. The length of core hours varies from 4 hours in FI1 (including lunch break) to 7 hours in LT1 (including lunch and other breaks), being similar in the other organisations (5 or 6 hours, depending on whether lunch break is included or not). In AT1, the organisation does not establish core hours, but line managers can establish them in their teams.

The adoption of hybrid work has not entailed formal change in the regulation of working time except in three cases (ES2, ES3, FI2). In the two Spanish organisations, flexitime was introduced or expanded by the collective agreement that adopted hybrid work post-pandemic. Prior to the agreement, in ES2 there was a flexitime scheme with entry times between 7:30 and 9:30, and exit time from 16:30. The agreement reduced the mandatory work hours to 10:00 to 16:00 and established that offices would be open at 6:30 to facilitate higher flexibility in the starting time. Furthermore, no formal limits were set for the workday. The only requirement is to meet the total annual hours established by the sectoral collective agreement, leaving the responsibility to ensure compliance with the breaks and maximum daily hours set in the collective agreement to employees. In ES3, the former work schedule was the typical one for public services (from 8:00 to 15:00). The agreement established a minimum of 5 work hours per day (from 9:00 to 14:00) and flexibility to distribute the rest of the workday either before or after these core work hours (from 7:30 to 9:00, and from 14:00 to 19:00). Finally, in FI2, flexible working time rules are assessed every year in connection with the experience of hybrid work.

Table 10. Regulation of working time

		Degree of flexibility	Working time arrangements
Rigid, office-first	ES1	Low Same rules for on-site and remote work	08:00-17:30. Half hour flexibility at start/end.
Structured, balanced	AT1	High Same rules for on-site and remote work	Flexitime (regulated by a specific works agreement). No core hours established; line manager can set core hours. Timeframe for start/end hours has not been disclosed.
	AT2	High Same rules for on-site and remote work	Flexitime (regulated by a specific ordinance after agreement with employee representatives). Core hours: 08.30-12.30 and 14.30-16.00. Timeframe for start/end hours: 6:00 or 07:00 to 19:00 in the public sector.
	ES2	Very high Same rules for on-site and remote work	Flexitime (regulated by the same company collective agreement that introduced hybrid work). Core hours: 10:00-16:00 Monday-Thursday; 10:00-14:00 Fridays. No limits to daily working day. The only rule is to respect total annual working hours set in the national sectoral collective agreement (1,752 hours).
	ES3	High Same rules for on-site and remote work	Flexitime (regulated by the same company collective agreement that introduced hybrid work). Core hours: 09:00-14:00. Timeframe for start/end hours: 7:30-19:00.
	LT1	Medium for on-site work High for remote work	09:00-16:00h. Start/end flexible.
Flexible, unconstrained	FI1	Very high Same rules for on-site and remote work	Flexitime (following the state collective agreement for working time). Core hours: 09.30h-13.30h. Timeframe for start/end hours: 06:15-20:00. All employees are formally entitled to flexitime, but customer service employees have regular schedules because they have to work during customer service hours.
	FI2	High Same rules for on-site and remote work	Flexitime (regulated by a specific agreement with employee representatives). Core hours: 09.00-15:00. Timeframe for start/end hours: 07.00-21:00.
	LT2	Low for on-site work Very high for remote work	09:00-18:00. There is minimal control over working time, unless requested by clients.
	LT3	Low for on-site work Medium for remote work	08:00-17:00.

Source: Authors based on the case studies.

Management of working time flexibility

The management of working time flexibility encompasses the implementation of rules concerning flexitime (balancing actual and contractual hours) and overtime (in the strict sense of additional hours required by line managers and paid or compensated with time off). These aspects differ widely across organisations, especially when remote work is considered. Importantly, the management of working time appears to be organisation-specific, with no consistent connection with the degree of working time flexibility or the hybrid work model. The only exception is ES1. In this organisation, there is almost no working time flexibility and according to interviews, workload peaks are rare. Moreover, hybrid work is only allowed one fixed day per week and employees tend to follow regular work schedules.[35]

The systems for recording and monitoring work hours also vary, and some organisations have different rules for on-site and remote work. Such differences do not appear to be closely related to national legislation. In the four countries, legislation that applies to the private sector establishes the employers' obligation to keep a record of employees' working hours, regardless of where employees work. This general provision includes nuances in Austria and Finland. As previously explained, the Austrian Working Time Act establishes a simplified recording obligation for employees who work predominantly at home or can largely determine their place of work. In those cases, only the number of daily working hours is to be recorded but not the start and end times or breaks. The law also states that self-recording is possible in the case of flexitime. In Finland, the Working Time Act sets up that employees who are subject to flexible working time arrangements must provide the employer with a list of the regular work hours for each pay period. The list must show their weekly work hours and free time. The legal requirement of recording working time also applies to the public sector in Austria,[36] Finland, and the Spanish region in which the analysed public entity is placed.

Table 11 provides a summary of the situation in each organisation. In some instances (e.g. AT1, FI1) systems for balancing actual/contractual hours have been long in place and rely on well-established time recording systems, whereas they are relatively new in other cases (e.g. ES2, ES3). However, most organisations face specific challenges in recording and monitoring remote work hours, with potential negative implications for the recognition and compensation of additional work. Concerning overtime, in all cases where rules are disclosed (AT1, AT2, FI1, LT1), it has to be pre-ordered by the line manager (and accepted by the worker) and is typically expected to be carried out on-site.

[35] This applies to the post-pandemic period. During lockdown and the two years of 'contingency' hybrid work, the situation was more uncertain and required additional work more frequently.

[36] In Austria, the law establishes that working time of public sector employees have to be recorded using "automated procedures" unless official interests conflict with this.

Table 11. Recording and monitoring of working time, balancing actual and contractual hours, and overtime

Rigid, office-first	ES1	Same on-line recording system for all employees. Employees have to record the start and end of the workday. Overtime rules not disclosed.
Structured, balanced	AT1	Same recording system for all employees. Flexitime arrangements have been long in place and the system for balancing actual and contractual hours is well established. Overtime has to be pre-ordered in written by the line manager. Remote workdays have to be formally recorded ('home office' days). Additional hours worked from home are most often not reported and not compensated.
	AT2	Same recording system for all employees. Flexitime arrangements have been long in place and the system for balancing actual and contractual hours is well established. Overtime has to be pre-ordered by the line manager. Working time spent outside organisation's premises must be documented in the system. In principle, overtime when needed and preordered, is expected to be carried out onsite. Additional hours worked from home are most often not reported and not compensated.
	ES2	Same on-line recording system for all employees. Employees have to record the start and end of the workday, and whether work is performed on-site or remotely. HR monitors monitor these records quarterly and contacts employees when there is imbalance between actual and contractual hours. Company agreement allows employees to balance work hours over a four-month period in the subsequent year. Overtime rules not disclosed.
	ES3	Same on-line recording system for all employees (the same system used by the regional public administration). HR monitors employees' total working hours quarterly. Employees are expected to compensate for additional hours with time off. Regulation of overtime is not disclosed. When working remotely, the system automatically logs a standard 7.5 hours workday. This measure was introduced in company-level collective agreement to simplify recording. Therefore, additional hours worked at home cannot be formally recorded. These hours can be compensated through informal agreement with the line manager.
	LT1	There is no recording system. Line managers rely on informal checks (online status). Overtime has to be preordered by the line manager. When working remotely, employees enjoy higher formal flexibility than on-site workers (they have to be only reachable during the regular on-site work schedule). However, internal rules on hybrid work do not indicate how actual and contractual hours are balanced.
Flexible, unconstrained	FI1	Same on-line recording system for all employees. It allows for precise registration of work hours. Flexitime arrangements have been long in place and the system for balancing actual and contractual hours is well established. A working time account (time bank) is used to balance actual and contractual hours. Line managers regularly monitor working time and address potential imbalances with employees. Overtime requires managerial approval and is compensated by payment.
	FI2	Different recording systems. Employees in managerial roles (customer relationship and key account managers) are expected to track their own hours. The rest of employees have to use an automatic time stamp system, which activates when they log on to their work computer. The organisation favours the balancing of actual and contractual hours. Regulation of overtime is not disclosed.
	LT2	There is no recording system. Self-recording is only used when the client requires it to monitor project development. Regulation of overtime is not disclosed. The organisation enhances workers' self-management of working time, regardless of where they work.
	LT3	There is no recording system. Regulation of overtime is not disclosed. When working remotely, employees enjoy higher formal flexibility than on-site workers (they have to be only reachable during the regular on-site work schedule). However, internal rules on hybrid work do not indicate how actual and contractual hours are balanced.

Source: Authors elaboration based on the case studies.

Role of workers' representatives in the regulation and implementation of hybrid work

Research has placed little attention on the influence of workers' representatives and collective bargaining in the regulation and implementation of hybrid work. This lack of focus may be attributed to the perception that hybrid work offers a seemingly balanced and mutually beneficial flexibility to employers and employees (Sanz et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, research on hybrid work (and flexible working in general) has stressed potential tensions between employers' and employees' needs in regard to flexibility (Chung, 2022). Some studies highlight that hybrid work is part of a more general trend of individualisation of managerial practices, with ambivalent implications for working conditions (Taskin and Devos, 2005; Countouris and De Stefano, 2024). Such ambivalence relies on two main aspects (Sanz, et al., 2024). First, certain elements of the employment and working conditions are contingent upon individuals' negotiating capacity, and therefore there is a risk of higher inequality among employees if hybrid work is left to individual negotiations. Second, hybrid work entails a transfer of risks and responsibilities for some work aspects from employers to employees (such as complying with working time and OSH regulations). Such transfer raises questions about the balance of power between employers and employees in the context of hybrid work and might be particularly detrimental for those employees in a more vulnerable situation, either for job-related or individual sociodemographic factors (e.g. high work overload, high work time pressure, high care demands, poor ergonomic conditions at home).

Against this backdrop, the case studies offer some insights into the role of social dialogue and collective bargaining in the design and implementation of hybrid work. Workers' representatives have been actively involved through negotiation in Austria, Finland, and Spain (except ES1), and to a lesser extent in Lithuania (see Table 12). This is in line with different traditions and recent trends in industrial relations. The analysis indicates that social dialogue and collective bargaining have been especially relevant in four aspects: equity; voluntariness and reversibility; desirable frequency of remote work; and equipment and cost compensation.

Table 12. Role of social dialogue and collective bargaining in the design and implementation of hybrid work

Rigid, office-first	ES1	Unilaterally adopted by the employer post-pandemic, with no involvement of the works council.
Structured, balanced	AT1	Agreed upon between employer and employee representatives through works agreement since the 2010s. Amended several times, last version post-pandemic.
	AT2	Agreed upon between employer and employee representatives post-pandemic; unilaterally issued as an ordinance by the Ministry in formal terms.
	ES2	Agreed upon between employer and employee representatives through company-level agreement post-pandemic.
	ES3	Agreed upon between employer and employee representatives through company-level agreement post-pandemic.
	LT1	Agreed upon between employer and employee representatives post-pandemic.
Flexible, unconstrained	FI1	Agreed upon between employer and employee representatives in the Co-operation body of the agency since the adoption of hybrid work in the 2010s. Last version post-pandemic.
	FI2	Agreed upon between employer and employee representatives post-pandemic, following legal requirements.
	LT2	Unilaterally adopted by the company post-pandemic (there is no employee representation).
	LT3	Unilaterally adopted by the institution post-pandemic. The works council was consulted, but not strongly involved in the design process.

Source: Authors elaboration based on the case studies.

Equity

Social dialogue and collective bargaining have played a crucial role in establishing transparent and equitable criteria concerning access to hybrid work. In the Austrian bank (AT1), hybrid work was initially restricted to high-skilled IT professionals. Hybrid work arrangements were individually negotiated and formalised in the labour contracts. Workers' representatives initiated negotiations on hybrid work in the early 2010s when management informed them about the plan to change the location of the company's premises, reduce office space and extend hybrid work. The works agreement established egalitarian eligibility rules and objective procedural criteria for limiting line managers' discretion in granting hybrid work. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that high-skilled IT professionals continue to negotiate individually their hybrid work arrangements, with no restrictions to full-time remote work (although the works agreement establishes a maximum of 50% of remote work). Otherwise, as explained by the works council representatives, many IT professionals would relocate to other companies offering better remote work options. A similar approach of adopting egalitarian eligibility rules and objective procedural criteria has been adopted more recently in the Austrian Ministry agreement on hybrid work (AT2).

In the Spanish pharmaceutical company (ES2), management and workers' representatives highlighted that eligibility criteria were the most challenging issue in the negotiations of the company agreement that introduced hybrid work. The works council had to navigate the initial managerial reluctance to agree on clear eligibility rules. In the end, the works council agreed to exclude a small group of lab assistants, who had been working hybrid previously. Unions' demands for the extension of hybrid work opportunities were left to future negotiations to ease the conclusion of the agreement. In practice, however, the controversy has been informally addressed,

with some lab assistants working remotely one day per week upon the agreement with their line manager.

The Spanish public entity (ES3) provides a notable example of how to address equity between workers in teleworkable and not teleworkable positions. The collective agreement addressed potential comparative grievances by introducing a pay supplement for workers in non-managerial roles who were required to work fully on-site due to the nature of their tasks. The measure was justified by the organisation's representative on the grounds that hybrid work is a 'right, not an obligation' and therefore it is fair to compensate workers who do not have this option.

Works agreements in Austria (AT1, AT2) and collective company agreements in Spain (ES2, ES3) have also set transparent and equitable rules concerning the duration of hybrid work arrangements and conditions for renewal. The existence of such agreements has also contributed to counteract potential line managers' reluctance and discretion in granting hybrid work, giving more internal legitimacy to the 'right' of working hybrid. However, in ES2, workers representatives and employees stated that although most employees have individual arrangements of two remote days per week, the reluctance of some line managers continues to hinder the implementation of hybrid work through practices such as organising unnecessary in-presence team meetings at short notice in days where part of the team members are supposed to work remotely. It must be noted that employees in LT3 also expressed perceptions of substantial line managers' discretion in granting hybrid work. However, in this organisation, employee representatives were only consulted in the design of the hybrid work model and were not actively involved in its implementation.

Voluntariness and reversibility

Social dialogue has addressed the consequences of office space reorganisation on the voluntary nature and reversibility of hybrid work arrangements. In some organisations (AT1, AT2, FI2, ES3) workers' representatives argue that maintaining an adequate ratio of workstations is essential for ensuring voluntariness and, more generally, job quality. In the Austrian bank (AT1) the use of office workstations is regularly supervised by the company's risk prevention department, and workers representatives are consulted on any change in the established rate of available workstations per employee, which has remained stable in the last decade. The workers' representative in the Austrian Ministry (AT2) voiced similar concerns in connection with ongoing discussions for the reduction of office space. Workers' representatives in other organisations (FI2 and ES3) shared similar views, although they were not officially involved in or consulted on this matter.

Desirable frequency of remote work

In Austria, trade unions appear to favour a balanced hybrid work model, with a substantial part of working time spent on-site, as the best approach for ensuring the quality of working conditions. In this aspect, workers' representatives in both the Austrian bank (AT1) and the Ministry (AT2) are aligned with management. They do not wish to increase the maximum frequency of allowed remote work (40-50%), although it is demanded by some of the employees. In principle, Finnish trade unions are more open to higher frequency of remote work. However, similar debates are taking place in the Finnish public agency (FI1), where post-pandemic removal of restrictions to full-time remote work entailed that a large share of employees work fully or almost fully remotely. Management and, to a lesser extent, employee representatives are advocating for some increase in on-site work, although employees are opposed.

Equipment and cost compensation

Unions are increasingly prioritising equipment and cost compensation in their hybrid work strategies, particularly concerning employers' provision of ergonomic equipment. This trend is exemplified by the Finnish agency (FI1), where a large share of employees lack access to nearby offices yet receive no support in enhancing ergonomic conditions at home, even when health issues arise. Workers' representatives voiced their disapproval, considering this a shift of responsibility from employers to workers, potentially harming job quality and health. Only one organisation provides, when needed, IT ergonomic equipment (AT1), partly due to the strength of the works council.

Agreement on cost compensation has only been reached in two private companies (AT1, ES2), primarily due to existing legal provisions. The works councils deem the agreed rates insufficient, while the workers' representative from the Spanish public agency (ES3) expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of legal provisions in the public sector.

However, it is important to note that differences in equipment and cost reimbursement between management and worker representatives are not a significant source of contention, in the sense that they do not put at risk achieving an agreement on hybrid work. Most employees seek the option of hybrid work, and many workers and their representatives believe that this model results in cost savings for employees (as well as for organisations). Consequently, employee representatives do not exert too much pressure on employers to provide support for remote work.

> *The truth is that with hybrid work we have all gained a lot because, with the current salaries and inflation rates, it is a form of compensation at zero cost for the company. This arrangement not only saves you time but also eliminates the cost for commuting.* (Employee representative 1 — ES2)

These views align with recent experimental studies on 'willingness to pay', which examine workers' readiness to accept lower wages in exchange for the opportunity to work from home. Findings indicate that this willingness is strongly linked to the duration of commuting time (Nagler et al., 2024; Lewandowski et al., 2023).[37] Furthermore, cost-benefit analyses of the impact of remote work during the pandemic revealed substantial cost savings for employees, with the reduction in commuting expenses likely outweighing the increase in heating and electricity costs (Williamson et al., 2023).

Hybrid work models in practice

Previous sections have highlighted a set of contextual and organisation-specific factors that contribute to explaining the differences between post-pandemic hybrid work models. This section

[37] Nagler et al. (2024) conducted a post-pandemic stated-preference experiment among German employees to estimate workers' valuation of working from home and its impact on their willingness-to-pay to avoid commuting. It shows that workers would give up on average 7.7% of their earnings for full remote work, and 5.4% for 2-day remote work. Similarly, a study employing discrete choice experiments by Lewandowski et al. (2023) over a large sample of Polish workers found that employees would forgo 2.9% of their wages for the opportunity to work from home. The willingness-to-pay steeply increased with commuting costs, with a general preference for hybrid work arrangements (two to three remote days per week).

starts by providing a summary of these factors and then develops some additional insights delving into the diversity of hybrid work models in the studied organisations.

Contextual factors

The pandemic fuelled the extension of hybrid work arrangements and raised workers' expectations towards hybrid work, especially among high-skilled employees with a high capacity of individual negotiation of their employment and working conditions. This labour market trend is one of the factors that facilitated the retention of a hybrid work model in organisations with limited or no previous experience with this work arrangement. Furthermore, in Finland, the increase of hybrid work arrangements with a high frequency of remote work was a pre-pandemic trend which continued post-pandemic. This 'normalisation' may contribute to explaining the smooth shift towards flexible, unconstrained hybrid work models in the two Finish organisations (FI1, FI2).

Sectoral trends in banking, IT, and public administrations also play a salient role. Before the pandemic, a structured and balanced hybrid work model was already in place in several Austrian banks, as illustrated in the studied company (AT1), while the Lithuanian bank (LT1) adopted a similar model post-pandemic despite having no previous experience with this work arrangement. Similarly, the Lithuanian IT company (LT2) relied on international and well-established experiences of hybrid work in the sector to design its model. National policies for public administrations on digitalisation of services and hybrid work guided the design and implementation of hybrid work models in some of the public organisations studied (AT1, FI1). The extension of hybrid work was also facilitated by large state initiatives setting up online platforms to digitalise work processes in the public administrations (such as the electronic file system - *elektronischer Akt* - in Austria and the platform *'Avilys'* in Lithuania).

Finally, the national regulation on remote work in the private sector in Austria and Spain has been a determinant for ensuring cost compensation (AT1, ES2).[38] In fact, no organisation provides cost compensation unless it is legally required. Furthermore, support for ergonomic equipment largely depends on the strength of social dialogue and collective bargaining (AT1), as it is not specifically stated by law as an employer's obligation in any of the countries.

Organisation-specific factors

Three organisation-specific factors appear to be highly relevant for explaining differences between the hybrid work models observed: physical characteristics of the employers' premises, nature of tasks and work organisation practices, and the main rationale for implementing hybrid work.

Physical characteristics of employer's premises

In the organisations that have adopted either a rigid, office first or a structured, balanced model,[39] hybrid work is implemented in a single and large office. Regardless of the extent of restructuring, this office maintains its 'centrality'. Workers are expected to work at this place regularly, and this is the place where in-person social relations and collaborative work happen. In contrast, in flexible, unconstrained models, there is a network of smaller offices geographically dispersed, and most

[38] Legal provisions and collective bargaining also account for the restriction of remote workplaces to in-country 'home-offices' in Austria. As previously stated, the statutory definition of remote work in Austria will be expanded to other locations as of January 2025.

[39] See nuances for the Lithuanian bank (LT1) in the section on workplace flexibility.

teams are multi-located. In some instances, the closing of offices and restructuring further dilute the centrality of these physical spaces for work purposes, alongside the hiring of remote workers who live far away or work from abroad.[40]

Nature of tasks and work organisation methods

In the organisations that have adopted either a rigid, office first or a structured, balanced model, there is a mix of medium- and high-skilled workers, with very different job profiles, alongside marked differences in work processes and methods across areas, departments and teams. Overall, the extent of teleworkability and the extent of task interdependence varies substantially within the organisation. In flexible, unconstrained models, most employees are high-skilled workers in teleworkable positions, there is less diversity in job roles and tasks, and solo work prevails (with the exception of the IT company, LT2, where software development work is very interdependent, but well suited for virtual collaboration).

Rationale for implementing hybrid work

The rationale for retaining or expanding hybrid work post-pandemic varies. In the organisation which illustrates a rigid, office-first model, hybrid work plays a residual role with no link to any strategic organisational objective. Work organisation has returned to pre-pandemic practices, although maintaining one remote day per week to accommodate workers' expectations. Structured, balanced models are based on agreement between employers and workers' representatives that ensuring a substantial share of on-site work (at least 40% of the working time) is best for individual and organisational performance and also for working conditions. In these models, management adopts hybrid work to accommodate different strategic objectives (saving costs through office restructuring, attracting and retaining high-skilled workers) while hybrid work in connection with working time flexibility plays a central role for enhancing individual and team performance. In flexible, unconstrained models, the removal of restrictions to full-time work is facilitated by the lack of operational constraints to work remotely (most jobs are highly skilled and fully teleworkable without a rearrangement of tasks, most teams are already multi-located). Thus, extending hybrid work does not appear to be a risky change in view of its potential benefits for both organisations and workers.

Physical, temporal, virtual, and social elements of hybrid work

Table 13 summarises the main characteristics of the studied hybrid work models according to different aspects, including relevant features related to the physical, temporal, virtual and social elements of this form of work organisation (Eurofound, 2023a).

[40] See nuances for the Lithuanian IT firm in the section on workplace flexibility.

Table 13. Main features of hybrid work models

		Types of hybrid work models		
		Rigid, office-first (ES1)	Structured, balanced (AT1, AT2, ES2, ES3, LT1)	Flexible, unconstrained (FI1, FI2, LT2, LT3)
Main differences (typology dimensions)	Management of hybrid work	Rigid (equal rules)	Structured (high leeway of line managers)	Flexible (mainly relies on individual preferences)
	Maximum frequency of remote work allowed	Office-first (up to 20% of working time)	Balanced (up to 40%-60% of working time)	Unconstrained (full-time remote work allowed)
	Working time flexibility	Low	High or very high	Diverse (across and within organisations)
Uptake of hybrid work		High	High (unless line manager's reluctance towards hybrid work)	
Frequency of remote work		1 day per week	Differs across teams for operational reasons (unless there are space constraints)	High share of employees working full-time (or almost) remotely
Nature of tasks		Mix of diverse medium and high-skilled job profiles with varying degrees of teleworkability, extent of task interdependence varies across teams		Few high-skilled teleworkable job profiles, solo work prevails (high task interdependence in LT2)
Physical element	Remote workplaces	Home		Home and other locations, including work from abroad
	On-site workplaces	Single, unrestructured office	Single, restructured office	Geographically dispersed restructured offices (single, restructured office in LT2) Multi-located teams
	Mobility	Regular, pendular (home-office). Distance allows regular on-site work		Occasional, varied (home-other remote workplaces-office). Distance not always allows on-site work
Temporal element	Duration and timing of remote work	Fixed days	Days or core hours, in principle fixed, with varying degrees of flexibility across organisations and teams	No constraints, aside in-presence individual or team-level meetings
Virtual element	Synchronous tools	Used intensively for communication (either on-site or remotely)		Used almost exclusively for communication
	Asynchronous tools	Used intensively for communication, collaboration and coordination		
Social element	Communication	Primarily in-presence	Mix of in-presence and remote	Primarily remote
	Social relations at work	No substantial changes	Extent of change (and related efforts) varies	Substantial change. Needs more oriented efforts to ensure support and advice from colleagues and supervisors
	Task-oriented processes			Substantial change. Needs more oriented efforts to ensure transfer of tacit knowledge, namely for new hires
	Maintenance-related processes			Substantial change. Needs more oriented efforts to build or maintain trust and cohesion
	Social relations and work-life balance	Hybrid work entails a substantial change in the physical and temporal boundaries between work and private life. This needs individual efforts and additional support in avoiding interferences and blurring of boundaries between the two		

Source: Authors elaboration based on the case studies.

The three main types of hybrid work models (rigid, office first; structured, balanced; flexible, unconstrained) reflect a diverse combination of the physical, temporal, virtual, and social elements:

- As already explained, the characteristics of the employers' premises (an aspect of the physical element) play a crucial role in the adoption of a specific type of hybrid work model.

- There are significant differences in the temporal element, mostly related to the frequency of remote work (maximum frequency allowed and actual frequency in individual hybrid work arrangements). Furthermore, high working time flexibility is a distinctive characteristic of balanced, structured models.
- As regards the virtual element, the use of digital tools is extended in all cases. The adoption of such tools was partly fuelled by the pandemic and they continue to be extensively used, regardless of where work is performed. The main difference concerns the use of synchronous virtual communication tools. In flexible, unconstrained models, this is the primary means of communication, while other models combine on-site and virtual communication.
- There are significant differences in the social element across the three types of hybrid work models. Change in this element can be seen as a continuum, depending on the frequency of remote work. Most features of the social element are rather similar in a fully on-site setting and a hybrid office-first setting. In contrast, a hybrid remote-first setting requires substantial changes and more oriented efforts to ensure support and advice from colleagues and supervisors, transfer of tacit knowledge, and building and maintaining trust and cohesion.
- Finally, there is a feature of the social element which is similar in all models. Working hybrid, regardless of the frequency of remote work, entails a substantial change in the physical and temporal boundaries between work and private life. This entails substantial, additional tensions between work and private life and requires individual efforts in avoiding and managing interferences and blurring of boundaries between the two. Additional support to balance work and private life may be required from the professional sphere (social relations with coworkers and supervisors) and the private sphere (family members, other relatives, and friends).

As a final remark, it can be argued that except in the case of a rigid, office-first model, where hybrid work is rather residual, an effective combination of the physical, temporal, virtual and social elements requires changes in work organisation practices and human resource management policies. This not only entails new tasks and more responsibilities online managers but also requires the organisation to develop common management approaches and provide effective support to line managers in their new role. These aspects are further developed in Chapter 3.

In brief

- The pandemic had a disruptive impact on hybrid work rules and practices in seven out of ten organisations (with either limited or no previous experience with hybrid work). These organisations have adopted a new post-pandemic hybrid work model in a short period of time and starting to implement it. Changes have been less substantial in the two organisations where hybrid work was already consolidated before the pandemic. One organisation without previous experience with hybrid work has returned to pre-pandemic practices, although maintaining one remote day per week to accommodate workers' expectations.
- Hybrid work is predominantly perceived as a win-win approach. For managers, the initial trigger to implement hybrid work varies across organisations (saving office costs, attracting highly skilled workers, increasing internal flexibility, or, especially in the public sector, digitalising service delivery). The reasons for embedding hybrid work within the organisation of work tend to diversify over time. For workers, the main driver is saving commuting time and its positive impact on work-life balance, as well as related cost savings. Hybrid work paired with working

time flexibility is also highly appreciated for improving work-life balance. Other work-intrinsic benefits tend to emerge over time.

- The ten hybrid work cases studied are based on three pillars: the voluntary nature of hybrid work, a consistent set of rules (not ad hoc practices), and agreement with the line manager for accessing hybrid work. The main differences across models refer to three dimensions: maximum frequency of allowed remote work, degree of decentralisation in the regulation and management of hybrid work, and working time flexibility. The first two dimensions group the hybrid work models into three types:
  1. Rigid, office-first: equal rules agreed at the highest management level; low frequency of remote work (20% of working time).
  2. Structured, balanced: the model sets general rules and line managers have a large say in granting and/or organising hybrid work; balanced frequency of remote work (40-60%).
  3. Flexible, unconstrained: the model sets general rules, and the uptake of hybrid work depends largely on individual preferences, while line managers play a prominent role in organising hybrid teams; no restrictions on full-time remote work.

  Working time flexibility is also consistent with this typology: it is low in the first type, high or very high in the second, and diverse in the third.
- Workers' representatives have been actively involved in the design and implementation of hybrid work through negotiation in the organisations placed in Austria, Finland, and Spain (two out of three), and to a lesser extent in Lithuania. This is in line with different traditions and recent trends in industrial relations.
- The role played by social dialogue and collective bargaining has been especially relevant in two aspects: ensuring equitable access to hybrid work (and compensation for workers in job positions that require continuous physical presence), ensuring voluntariness and reversibility (through the monitoring of office spaces and agreement on the duration and renewal of hybrid work arrangements). Moreover, there are two aspects that are gaining relevance in social dialogue and collective bargaining: ensuring a certain balance between remote and on-site work and reinforcing employer's support for ergonomics.
- Workers' representatives have different views on the optimal frequency of remote work (Austrian trade unions call for a balance between on-site and remote work, whereas Finnish representatives are more open to near full-time remote work). In both cases, they are aligned with management in defending a certain balance between on-site and remote work, although some employees request the option of working full-time remotely.
- In general, workers' representatives consider employers' provision of equipment and cost compensation insufficient (especially when workers are almost compelled to work remotely because offices are far away). In particular, trade unions have expressed concerns about employers' lack of support for adequate ergonomic workstations at home. However, these concerns have not been an important issue in negotiations in the sense that they have not put at risk the possibility of reaching an agreement on hybrid work.

Key takeaways

Several implications for managers, workers' representatives, practitioners, policymakers, and social partners can be drawn from the analysis of hybrid work models across sectors and countries:

- *Managing hybrid work*: hybrid work can be implemented in different ways depending on the context, organisation-specific factors, and rationale behind its adoption. The three main types of hybrid work models (rigid, office first; structured, balanced; flexible, unconstrained) reflect a diverse combination of the main elements of this form of work organisation (physical, temporal, virtual, social). Except in the case of the rigid, office-first model, where hybrid work is rather residual, an effective combination of these elements requires broader changes in work organisation practices and human resource management policies. This not only places new tasks and more responsibilities online managers but also requires the organisation to develop common management approaches and provide effective support to line managers in their new role.
- *Working time flexibility challenges*: organisations face challenges in the regulation and management of working time flexibility in the context of remote work. This mainly concerns the implementation of flexitime rules (balancing actual and contracted hours) and the regulation of (pre-ordered and paid) overtime. Systems for recording work hours are not always appropriate for supporting transparency and recognition of hours worked remotely. It is an aspect that requires particular attention from management and workers' representatives. Policymakers and social partners should also assess whether existing legal regulations are sufficiently clear for remote work and whether they are adequately enforced.
- *Content and clarity of legal frameworks*: organisations have adopted and implemented new hybrid work models in an uncertain context marked by important legal changes in Austria, Spain, and Lithuania. However, national regulatory frameworks still insufficiently cover or lack clarity in certain aspects, namely OSH, equipment, and cost compensation. Only two organisations provide cost compensation due to legal provisions in the private sector in Spain and Austria. Only one organisation provides IT ergonomic equipment and support, primarily because of the strength of the works council. Policymakers and social partners should ensure that minimum conditions in terms of OSH and support are adequately established in legal frameworks and sectoral collective bargaining.

2 – Hybrid work and its implications for job quality

This chapter analyses the impact of hybrid work on those working conditions that are more relevant for workers' health and well-being, and other important aspects of working life such as work-life balance. It explores the impact of hybrid work on working time patterns, the physical and social environment, work intensity and autonomy, career prospects, and organisational participation. It concludes by examining the intrinsic rewards that hybrid work may offer and the overall satisfaction with this work arrangement.

Working time

Working time is a crucial dimension of job quality in hybrid work settings. The main point of debate is whether increased working time flexibility associated with hybrid work enhances workers' ability to accommodate job demands and personal life with positive impacts on work-life balance and well-being.

Pre-pandemic research on remote and hybrid work provided mixed evidence (Beauregard and Canonico, 2019), stressing that these work arrangements might turn out to be a ‘doubled-edged sword’ for work-life balance (Den-Nágy, 2014). This was related to limited and polarised use of remote and hybrid work arrangements before the pandemic (Chung, 2022), with occasional remote work for managers and highly skilled professionals in highly demanding jobs, and regular 'family-friendly' schemes for ad-hoc accommodation of caregiving responsibilities for other employees, mainly women, often under stigma and poor career prospects.

The post-pandemic extension of hybrid work arrangements to more diversified occupational profiles poses a debate under a new lens. Moreover, in most studied organisations, hybrid work has been adopted as a win-win arrangement, with the explicit objective of improving both performance and working conditions. This contributes to the 'normalisation' of hybrid work and counteracts potential stigmatisation.

Overall, the analysis of the case studies shows that hybrid work may increase workers' ability to accommodate job demands and private life, especially when working time flexibility is substantial and formally regulated. However, there are substantial nuances and challenges, which are addressed in the following sections.

Increased ability to accommodate job demands and private life

Workers in hybrid work arrangements benefit from commuting time savings with positive impacts on work-life balance. Even when hybrid work is limited to a single fixed day per week and working time flexibility is low (ES1), time savings significantly contribute to improving work-life balance. This time may be used for increased rest or dealing with personal issues, such as picking up children from school, medical appointments, or running errands, without the need to ask for a day off.

> *These things may seem trivial, but it makes it much easier for me to have at least one day for these things that otherwise would be unattainable*. (Employee 1– ES1)

A similar situation is found when working time flexibility is constrained by operational reasons that are out of the scope of hybrid work models. Employees who provide support services (FI1), for example, are bound to regular schedules and cannot enjoy the level of working time flexibility

regulated in the institution. Nevertheless, hybrid work saves commuting time, which is a salient advantage.

Overall, hybrid work models that provide employees with substantial time flexibility are highly valued. According to most workers interviewed, flexitime schemes allow for more control over work schedules and improve the ability to accommodate work and non-work domains according to individual needs and preferences. This results in diverse working time patterns among employees. Some hybrid workers may opt to distribute daily working hours in a broader time span, starting earlier and finishing later, and have longer breaks. Other employees may opt to 'compress' their working hours and finish earlier.

> *You might start work at half past seven in the morning and finish at half past three in the afternoon. Or you can do one or two things over lunch and finish work at five. In the best case, there will still be enough time for leisure activities if you start early in the morning. So, I think those are decisive advantages. And if you ask around, most employees see it that way too.'* (Employee representative - AT2*)*

> *I officially start working at 9 AM Lithuanian time, and it coincides with about 20 minutes until my child leaves for school. So then, at the same time, I work and see my child off to school. In my case, I often finish my active work around 4 PM when my child returns, and then I return to work in the evening, so sometimes I work until 9 PM-11 PM, or even after midnight.* (Employee 2 - LT3).

In other cases, employees adhere to regular schedules and make only occasional use of working time flexibility. This is the pattern that prevailed in the Finnish company (FI2), once understaffing issues were solved. Workload is stable, most employees work almost always remotely, and regular work schedules are well fitted to meet private needs.

Workers also stressed the importance of having a supportive organisational environment that values work-life balance in order to benefit from working time flexibility without fears of stigmatisation. For instance, an employee (ES2) noted that she no longer feels the need to work until six o'clock, just because that is the time managers leave. Instead, she feels confident starting and finishing the workday when it is most convenient for her. Similar feelings were expressed by other employees regarding taking breaks or combining work and other activities:

> *I might work a little longer at home than in the office. In return, I can take longer breaks in between* […] *If I'm not available for a long period of time, like an hour or two, I send an email to my line manager or make a quick phone call to sign off, but anything less than half an hour doesn't even need to be reported. That's all a great advantage.* (Employee 1 - AT1)

> *In the beginning, you could feel a bit guilty for doing something else during the workday, but then I asked directly if it was ok. Now I sometimes take, for example, a walk during a meeting, which [provides a chance for] recovery already during the day.* (Employee 3 - FI2)

Challenges for managing work and life boundaries

Commute time savings and working from home make it easier to work for longer. Instances where this had been needed to address rare and unexpected work issues were found in all organisations. In other cases, working longer is more related to workers' difficulties managing work and life domains.

Employees of the Austrian Ministry (AT2) reported working longer hours from home "without knowing the reason". In the absence of work overload and time pressure, this pattern can be interpreted as a self-imposed reciprocating behaviour, where employees feel compelled to work longer in exchange for the possibility of working remotely. The lack of social routines enacted in the office environment may also explain why some workers find it more difficult to adhere to regular work schedules and breaks when working remotely and sometimes end up working more hours than intended (Menezes and Kelliher, 2017; Kelliher and Anderson, 2010). In this regard, a member of the works council of a Spanish company (ES2) reported that many employees lose track of time when they work from home and end up working longer hours because they are "passionate" about work, echoing Chech's (2021) analysis of the passion principle reinforcing a culture of overwork.

> *Many people tell me that they start working at 8 in the morning and do not realise that it is 8 at night. This is indeed a problem… What happened?* (…) *This is a type of job that you are passionate about, you keep on working and do not realise until your wife arrives home from work and asks you 'what you are doing here?'* (Employee representative 1–ES2).

Significantly, in both cases (AT2 and ES2), the adoption of hybrid work is rather recent, and workers may not have had sufficient time to have learned how to set boundaries between work and private life. There is a wide consensus on the need to learn how to work as a hybrid. Greater discretion over work schedules may have positive or negative implications on work-life balance depending on workers' ability to manage the boundaries between work and private domains.

> *Hybrid work has the potential to have a very positive impact on work-life balance, but it's something that needs to be learned. I work with boundaries to define my working hours. At home, you might end up working an extra half-hour; it's harder to feel the boundaries. But having a hybrid work regime is a big plus for me - I can take care of my family and also spend more time with my partner and child. (*Employee 2, LT2)

Expectations of extended availability

None of the organisations studied showed evidence of having an 'always on' culture where employees are expected to be responsive to attending work requests beyond regular working hours. Spanish organisations adhere to legal provisions concerning the right to disconnect. In the Austrian bank (AT1), the workers' representative stated that flexitime rules make explicit that workers are not expected to work outside regular hours, and this is reflected in general compliance with not sending requests or messages during off-peak hours. Similarly, the employee representative of the Finnish private company (FI2) emphasised that employment contracts stipulate clearly that no employee is expected to send or attend work-related requests outside work regular hours, and this is widely accepted in Finland's work culture. In Lithuania, the right to disconnect is high in policy debates, but no relevant discussion was found in the studied organisations. In one of them (LT2), there was only a general recommendation to limit any virtual communication outside office hours.

However, enforcement of these 'soft' rules is not always ensured. While an always-on culture is not openly promoted, workers may end up practising it at their own initiative or encouraged by other workers. Several employees reported that they engaged in work-related communication outside of regular working hours, although none perceived this to have a negative impact on work-life balance. Typically, engaging in work-related exchanges is framed as a matter of personal preferences and communication practices among team members. Many workers have installed corporate

applications on their personal mobile devices, and many also participate in informal WhatsApp groups with their colleagues, which can blur the line between personal and professional matters.

> *When using tools like MS Teams or corporate email, the recipient receives the message as soon as they connect, and if they choose to connect at inconvenient times, that is their problem. The issue is always with WhatsApp groups. When you use WhatsApp on a private device, it's difficult to set boundaries, isn't it?* (Employee representative - ES3).

> *Over time, you notice that some people are more inclined and willing to answer questions or calls after work hours. It's simply a choice, there are all the technological means and opportunities to not see or hear emails or calls. It really depends on the person's attitude and how they want to handle it.* (Employee 3 - LT3)

Irregular workload and working time flexibility

In some organisations, hybrid work has been adopted in combination with an increase of working time flexibility (ES2 and ES3). This is grounded in the fact that workload tends to be irregular, and employees are expected to work additional hours when needed and compensate them with time off in less busy periods.

> *I tend to work longer hours at home when deadlines are very tight. At the office I could stay until 19:30h, but then I think, 'Oh dear, that's quite late and there's no one else around'. However, at home, it's already 21:00h, I have dinner, and I continue working up to 23:00h. This is a common issue for those who work in grant management when deadlines are tight.* (Employee 2 - ES3)

However, as indicated in Chapter 1, there is a lack of clarity in flexitime rules for balancing actual and contractual hours when working remotely, and the systems for recording work hours do not contribute to transparency. In ES3, the system automatically records 7.5 hours on remote days. The line manager in ES2 stated that she and all team members see recording as a "mere legal requirement that must be fulfilled". Therefore, in both institutions, balancing actual and contractual hours relies on an informal agreement with the line manager. Whereas the interviewed line managers were fully aware of workload peaks and showed support for balancing hours, this was not always possible because workload tends to be "on the edge" and there are often understaffing issues.

Excessive workload and additional work

More serious issues around excessive workload and additional work were identified in other organisations (FI1, AT1) by workers' representatives and employees, and corroborated by the representative of the public institution (FI1).

The Finnish public sector agency (FI1) illustrates how such issues can be tackled. The basis is a system in which working time is registered precisely, line managers monitor working time regularly, and imbalances are addressed through discussions with employees. According to the organisation representative, the excessive workload was due to "big projects" launched by the institution before the pandemic. The employee representative partly connected this to the experience of work from home during the pandemic. When a sustained and widespread excess of work hours was identified, the agency launched campaigns to raise employee awareness of the need to balance their actual and contractual work hours. These campaigns were in place for two years, and, according to the

employer and employee representatives, had a positive effect. The number of hours worked and registered by employees has declined since then and has been more in line with contractual hours. In the focus group, employees noted that their main experience was that their working time remained stable or evened out.

The Austrian bank (AT1) illustrates an opposite way of handling overwork. Workload has increased since the pandemic, and employees tend to work more hours at home than stipulated in the employment contract. This pattern emerged during the pandemic and is still present, according to workers' representatives. An employee expressed this as follows:

> *What has increased, especially since the pandemic, is the work pressure. That doesn't mean that bosses have become more unpleasant. But in contrast to other industries, the workload has increased for us during and since the pandemic. After all, banking business hasn't stopped during the pandemic, but rather has become more and more complex ... And we are feeling the effects of this very keenly'* (Employee 1 - AT1)

As work during off-peak hours or on weekends is not covered by flexitime rules, and overtime has to be pre-approved by the line manager, excess work performed at home is not usually recorded, measured, or paid, and thus remains formally invisible to the company. Interestingly, the workers' representative highlighted that employees carry out additional work from home precisely because it remains unnoticed. In the office, there is a *'more immediate expectation from colleagues and superiors that the laptop is closed and the office left at the end of official working hours'*. Thus, organisational culture does not formally reward working longer, but working longer is in fact required, according to workers' representatives. This illustrates how the possibility of working remotely anytime may conceal instances of excessive workload and understaffing, resulting in additional work hours that remain under-reported and non-compensated.

Physical and social environment

Hybrid work entails significant changes in the physical and social environments of work. This section starts by analysing the physical environment of remote and on-site work (the home and the restructured office) and their impact on working conditions and social relations at work. This is followed by an analysis of communication and collaboration patterns in hybrid work settings, with a focus on the main changes and challenges.

Home physical environment

Most hybrid workers work from home when they are not working on-site, although working from second residences and 'workations'[41] are relatively common in Finland and Lithuania, where most studied organisations allow full-time remote work and favour these types of arrangements (FI1, FI2, LT2, LT3). In contrast, there were no examples in the case studies of working from 'third spaces' such as coworking or hubs.

[41] The term 'workation' is a combination of 'work' and 'vacation'. Employees in workation combine leisure and remote work, usually from a holiday location. This arrangement is more common when schools are closed and workers wish to spend more time with their children and other relatives while keep working remotely.

Positive implications for health and well-being

Work from home can have many positive implications for workers' health and well-being. Employees refer to a wide range of positive impacts on physical and mental well-being resulting from commuting time savings and increased autonomy over their work schedules, such as less stress, more time for rest, recovery after busy days or work travel, longer breaks, more physical exercise, and healthier food habits.

> *You do not have the same pressure as when leaving the office, knowing that you have nearly an hour or whatever it takes you to get home, you are already at home, and firstly, you have also had much more rest, because you get up much later in the morning. So, you don't start the day with the stress of commuting either in the morning or the afternoon, that you're already stressed and angry.* (Employee 4 – ES1).

> [Working from home] *is a good possibility because these work trips are so heavy, so I get that one hour more sleep time. Also, the fact that often you're tired when you've been away for 5 days as I was last week* […] *I stayed home on Friday for telework. Then it's easier for me to concentrate and read all the emails and everything when there is no talk around*. (Employee 5 – FI2)

> *At home, where I mostly work, I have a work desk in the bedroom; I would like to have a separate home office, but we cannot afford a larger house. But I feel good. Now, I use breaks for exercises at home, or I attend sports. Also, one big plus of remote work is that during meetings, I can go for a walk outside while we talk.* (Employee 2– LT2)

Higher exposure to ergonomic risks

However, workers are also more exposed to ergonomic and other physical health risks when working from home. This is mostly because they may lack adequate space at home or lack the resources to set their home workstation according to OSH standards. In addition, working from home or alternative locations makes the risk assessment and enforcement of OSH standards more complex. This is clearly stated in the literature (e.g. European Commission, 2024) and is widely reflected in the case studies. Either workers' representatives or employees in all organisations studied referred to instances of lack of adequate space at home, lack of ergonomic equipment, poor working postures, or insufficient breaks. Several workers referred to poor ergonomics at home as the main reason for working more frequently at the office (FI2, ES2, LT1, LT2, LT3).

> *I don't have a dedicated workspace* [at home], *so that's one of the reasons why I work from the office. I don't want to work on a regular table, a regular chair where I have to clear the table every time for lunch.* (Employee 5 – LT1)

> *I almost always work from the office. I move around more when I commute to and from work, sometimes I choose to walk to the office. In the office, I also have an adjustable desk, so I can work while standing, which is better than sitting all day.* (Employee 1 – LT2)

> *When it comes to working space, such as chairs and desks, it's definitely 100% better in the office. There are comfortable conditions there, with adjustable desks*. (Employee 4 – LT3)

> *My work ergonomics are really bad at home, so that's why it's nice to be in the office. I have solved my raisable desk problem by having the laundry basket upside down on top of the ironing board.* (Employee 4 – FI2).

However, the case studies also indicate a lack of awareness of the importance of ergonomics from both managers and workers. As later indicated in Chapter 3, organisations lack instruments to collect evidence and monitor and assess basic aspects of working conditions and well-being in the context of remote work. The lack of OSH data in connection with hybrid work is particularly salient in two large organisations with the longest (and overall, positive) experience with this arrangement (AT1, FI1). In the Austrian bank (AT1), the assessment of office workstations every two or three years does not include home stations (e.g. by means of a survey). In the Finnish agency (FI1), an OSH survey is carried out every year, but it does not include information on hybrid work arrangements. The latest survey indicated an increase in musculoskeletal disorders, insufficient breaks, poor working posture, and weight issues, which were attributed to work from home due to the extension of remote work in the agency. However, employees in the focus group were not aware of such issues and only highlighted the positive impacts of hybrid work on well-being, such as a quiet work environment at home and the opportunity for mid-day walks (FI1). Several employees in other organisations appear to be unaware of potential long-term health issues caused by poor ergonomics, and instead enjoy the possibility of working in different places, such as the kitchen, living room, terrace, or bed (AT1, ES2, LT2, LT3).

> *I'm generally not inclined to work from home much, but when I do, I have a work desk, although I hardly ever sit at it, only during official calls; often, I work either in bed or on the couch. So, my spine really doesn't thank me when working from home.* (Employee 1 – LT2)

> *A laptop allows me to adapt and work comfortably anywhere, even from the terrace, as I prefer. At home, I can also move around more.* (Participant 1- LT3)

Lack of employer's support to set up ergonomic workstations

As reported in Chapter 1, seven out of ten organisations do not provide support for setting up an ergonomic workstation at home. Only one company provides IT ergonomic equipment if requested by the employee and approved by the occupational physician (AT1). Additionally, this company has agreements with stores to offer other office equipment at a low price. The same initiative is in place in the Finnish company (FI2), while the Finnish agency offers the possibility of buying second-hand equipment (FI1). It must also be noted that employees are compensated for remote work expenses only when required by law. This applies to two companies (AT1, ES2), but the amount of compensation is not sufficient for purchasing ergonomic furniture, such as adequate office chairs and desks. Rather, it aims to cover regular costs incurred for working at home, such as IT connection and energy costs.

The lack of organisational support to ensure adequate ergonomic conditions at home is usually justified on the basis that hybrid work is a voluntary arrangement. As the office provides good ergonomic conditions, employers do not see the need to incur additional costs (FI1, ES3, LT3). Typically, employers provide guidelines for setting up ergonomic workstations at home, but it is the worker's responsibility to follow these guidelines and bear its costs. While the importance attached to ergonomics varies among workers, there are also different views on how to distribute these costs.

Some workers do not view bearing these costs as problematic because hybrid work serves as a form of non-wage compensation that results in significant cost commuting savings (ES1, ES2, ES3, LT1).

> *I personally believe that even if the company does not help me financially* [with teleworking], *I would not ask for it either.* (Employee 3 – ES1)

> *As I see it, telework is perceived as such a positive thing that the worker seeks out the means to carry it out. If you have to buy a chair, you buy it yourself. If you must pay for lighting, you cover these expenses. The benefit you receive is so great that you don't care about assuming the costs, that is why workers do not ask for reimbursement for these costs.* (Employee 3 – ES3)

> *For a long time, I sat on a very bad chair, my back hurt, and I couldn't understand why I was in pain. And then someone commented on the chair I was sitting on. Now I have a better chair than in the office. I have also a separate room where no one disturbs me.* (Employee 3 – LT1)

As indicated in Chapter 1, these views echo recent studies indicating that hybrid work would entail substantial cost savings for workers due to the reduction in commuting expenses (Williamson et al., 2023), and that workers would be 'willing to pay' for the opportunity to work hybrid, depending on the duration of commuting time (Nagler et al., 2024; Lewandowski et al., 2023). This would contribute to explaining why support for ergonomic equipment and cost compensation has not been a priority in the negotiations of hybrid work agreements, especially in organisations with no or limited experience with this arrangement before the pandemic. This can be illustrated by the statement of a member of the works council in a Spanish company which adopted hybrid work for the first time after the pandemic (ES2).

> *There are many people here who are committed to teleworking. At first, some people told me 'even if I have to pay'. There are many people who live outside of Barcelona and commuting takes an hour or an hour and a half. Three hours a day, that's a lot of time! They save time and fuel.* (Employee representative 2 – ES2).

However, in other organisations, the lack of organisational support raises criticism from some employees and their representatives. Although this point was not issued as a formal proposal in the negotiations of hybrid work agreements, it was stressed that hybrid work should not be considered a 'perk', highlighting that legal provisions oblige employers to provide support in other sectors or in other countries (ES3, LT3).

> *I do not view hybrid working as a perk, and* [the organisation] *shouldn't pretend that it's non-wage benefit. In fact, they should compensate us for the use of our connections, resources, and supplies.* (Employee 5 – ES3).

The extent of employer support is becoming more contentious in some organisations (FI1, FI2), where offices are geographically dispersed and, following the adoption of hybrid work, some offices were closed. A large share of employees work remotely most of the time, and for many, returning to the office is not feasible because they live far away. Moreover, some employees have been directly hired as remote workers in areas without nearby offices. In these instances, the lack of employers' support for ergonomic equipment is more widely criticised, especially when improving ergonomics at home is a must because a worker is experiencing a health issue. In these cases, workers and their representatives stressed the employer's legal responsibility to ensure an adequate ergonomic work environment, alongside the potential long-term negative implications for health if nothing was done.

> *The company could be more proactive in finding out and making sure that everyone has good ergonomics because it is not so widely asked nowadays. It may even show up in sick leaves later on.* (Employee 2 – FI2).

> *An employer is legally responsible for the fact that their employees have a good work environment. Something ought to be done regarding work equipment. Perhaps a government treaty or similar to provide an ergonomic working environment* [for employees]*, wouldn't require that much* (Employee representative – FI1).

Office physical environment

As later developed in Chapter 3, eight out of the ten organisations studied have transformed their offices following the adoption of hybrid work, either closing some offices, reducing office space, or accommodating a higher number of employees in the same space. The exceptions are the Spanish company which only allows one remote workday per week (ES1), and the Austrian Ministry (AT2), where restructuring is under discussion.

In the cases studied, the office transformations typically entailed a reduction in the relative number of workstations (around six workstations for every ten employees in all cases where it is disclosed) and other changes in the office design, such as an open office layout and shared working spaces alongside areas of individual booths. In some organisations (FI2, LT1, LT2), employees who work mainly on-site have a designated workstation, while in others, hot-desking applies to all employees (AT1, ES2,[42] ES3). In some organisations, specific spaces for meetings and socialisation had just been created (LT1, LT3) or were under refurbishment (ES3) at the time of the interviews.

Space constraints

In some cases, the reduction in the ratio of workstations, alongside hot-desking, requires special arrangements for accommodating hybrid workers in office premises, such as rotations and prior arrangements with the line manager and co-workers (ES3, LT1), resulting in occasional tensions due to overcrowding (FI2, ES3, LT1).

> *Currently, I do not have a designated workspace and I am compelled to sit in different places every day, which is highly uncomfortable. Sometimes, I even had to relocate because someone arrived after 9:00h and thought that the desk was theirs, despite the fact I got in much earlier.* (Employee 2 – ES3).

> *Those who have indicated that they would prefer to be in the office, have their own desk and then there are these flexi-desks for us who visit the office from time to time. Of course, it's a bit exciting when you never know if there are a lot of people or not* [at the office]*, but so far, I've been lucky that only once it was like, 'Oh I got the last available desk'* (Employee representative – FI2).

In some organisations, maintaining some kind of in-person communication and collaboration is increasingly challenging due to the scarcity of office spaces, the geographical dispersion of offices, and the multilocation of working teams (FI1, FI2). In such cases, line managers perceive an increased preference for full remote work.

> *The guidelines are excellent and work well, but reclusion is on the horizon, they don't want to come to the office anymore. One has to use pressure to get them to come to the office. They make up reasons not to come. The hybrid work model does not mean only home-based work.* (Line manager – FI1)

[42] Hot-desking has been implemented in the Head Office premises, but not in the R&D centre.

> *In my team, everyone does telework almost 100% of the time.* (…) *They don't want to work even a day at the office. The practice is roughly the same everywhere, there is no great will to return to the office. Over 50% want to work from home at all times.* (Line manager – FI2)

However, some workers would welcome more frequent on-site work and in-person interactions in these organisations (FI1, FI2).

> *You hear many people longing back to an office culture a bit, but* [what do you do] *when there is no office to go to in the first place* [because offices have been closed]*? We have recruiters in places where there is no office, so it would not even be* possible [to go to an office]*, or if there is an office, there is no one there*. (Employee 4 – FI2)

As pointed out in Chapter 1, restructuring has raised concerns among some workers' representatives (AT1, AT2, FI2, ES3). The main point at stake is ensuring that the voluntary nature of hybrid work is not undermined by the lack of sufficient office workstations, highlighting the need for carefully planning the optimisation of office space. However, only the works council of the Austrian bank (AT1) is formally involved in the planning and management of the office space.

Ergonomics, teamwork and social relations

Research has identified potential challenges of restructured office spaces for workers' physical health and social environment at work (Colenberg et al., 2021; Morrison and Macky, 2017). Shared working spaces and, in particular, hot-desking, can lead to worse ergonomic conditions and deterioration of social relations, along with perceptions of decreased support from co-workers and supervisors. Although these concerns were not a central aspect in the interviews and focus groups with employees, there were some remarks pointing to the negative implications of office restructuring on workplace ergonomics, teamwork, and social relations at work.

In one instance, it was noted that hot-desking can deteriorate ergonomic conditions. When employees hot-desk, they no longer sit at workstations customised by the OSH department to meet their individual needs (e.g. with footrests or the height of the screen and chair) (ES2). Moreover, in this company (ES2), the implementation of hot-desking in the Head Office was not primarily driven by space optimisation purposes but intended to foster flexible and adaptable cooperation within and between teams, in accordance with project-specific requirements. However, interviewees noted that this initiative did not yield the expected results due to the reluctance of both managers and employees to alter their conventional working practices, resulting in uneven implementation across the various departments and areas of the company.

> *In our department, this is not working because although my stakeholders are the neighbouring departments, I have tried to sit near them, but they are used to sitting together all the time. Thus, we always sit in the same area, and although we can move around, each person has their designated seat, and no one will sit there even on a day I am teleworking.* (Employee 4 – ES2).

Other interviewees refer to (and regret) the loss of the 'social added value' of working at the office. This may arise from high levels of noise in open spaces and the need to isolate, as well as other aspects related to the organisation and content of work. Examples are the absence of teammates at the office because the team is multi-located or having to spend all day sitting alone in a booth because most work is conducted through online meetings.

> *We are now all sitting in the office with noise cancelling headphones so that we can filter out the ambient noise a little, which in turn means that the advantage of the office is lost if I then isolate myself again so that I have my peace and quiet.* (Line manager – AT1)

> *Some people do not have teammates in the office and sitting alone may not bring them joy. Or even if you have all-day meetings and sit in a booth in the office, it's not as if it's any more social.* (Employee 4 – FI1)

Communication and collaboration

The organisations studied appear to have effectively adopted virtual communication and collaboration tools for both asynchronous and synchronous work, even when the extent of remote work is limited (ES1). In particular, online meetings have become standard practice, regardless of where employees are working, and they tend to be more efficient (i.e. shorter and more focused) than in-presence meetings.

Nonetheless, the case studies suggest that achieving effective team communication and collaboration in hybrid settings requires more effort and intention than in on-site settings, particularly to ensure adequate social and emotional support from colleagues and supervisors. Furthermore, not all teams effectively integrate in-person and remote communication or make optimal use of the range of available virtual communication tools, which can adversely affect job quality in terms of obtaining support from managers and colleagues when needed or having the feeling of work well done.

Support from colleagues and supervisors

Case studies suggest that achieving effective team communication and coordination in a hybrid work environment requires more effort and intention than in an on-site setting. The lack of informal and face-to-face communication is found to be challenging, specifically in situations requiring more intense cooperation across team members (LT2).

Case studies point to difficulties which may lead to uncertainties and misunderstandings when using digital communication channels. In particular, case studies show that some hybrid workers refrain from seeking assistance or support from managers and colleagues due to uncertainties surrounding the appropriate time and manner for approaching them and depending on the level of familiarity or personal acquaintance.

> *In my experience, working fully online during the pandemic created a lot of suspicion among team members since not everyone had the same level of rapport. It was difficult to determine who had communicated with whom, resulting in the loss of information and you didn't feel at ease when approaching your supervisor, as it was uncertain whether they were occupied and wished to be left undisturbed. Thus, you ended up taking on all the problems by yourself.* (Employee 3 – ES3)

> *We sometimes experience such discomfort, for example, like messaging a colleague with a small question would be an interruption. In such cases, it seems easier if they were sitting in the office, and you could ask them a question directly. However, if a person overcomes that barrier and realises that our usual communication is remote, then there would be no such discomfort. Although, of course, sometimes it would be easier to come to the computer, show how to do something, without needing to share screens and so on.* (Employee 2 – LT3)

In organisations where offices are geographically dispersed, teams are multi-located, and a large share of employees work almost fully remotely, there are increasing difficulties in sustaining in-person exchanges and meetings (FI1, FI2). In such cases, line managers perceive an increased preference towards full remote work, with potential negative impacts on social relations and collaboration.

However, such a preference for remote work is not shared by all employees. Some express a wish for more face-to-face interaction and social relationships with co-workers at the office. Other case studies also show that older employees and new hires are more likely to experience feelings of isolation and lack of social and emotional support from colleagues and supervisors in hybrid settings (AT2, LT2). Nonetheless, these feelings are rarely addressed as an organisational issue. Line managers tend to adapt virtual communication practices to encourage more informal exchanges. As examined below (section on career prospects), more serious challenges are perceived when it comes to supporting informal training of new and younger workers.

> *Some limits now exist, and if I create social relationships at work, they are different. My social life happens more with people who are closer to me. If a person does not have much social life elsewhere, then it could have negative effects, but I haven't experienced that.* (Employee 3 – FI2)

> *I notice that remote workers more often complain about lacking communication with people because they sit alone, there is no colleague nearby with whom they could talk about life, the weather. Sometimes they miss that. To avoid this, we have agreed that during our weekly team meetings, we can talk about oneself informally.* (Line manager – LT3)

> *I've always held the opinion that those who don't like to communicate also end up being isolated at work, sitting alone in their office and not engaging with the team. But those who want to communicate find a way to do so even in remote setting, for instance, arranging virtual coffee meetings to chat.* (Employee 2– LT3)

Inefficient virtual communication practices

Challenges related to inefficient use of virtual communication practices are mainly found in two areas, overlapping of different information and communication channels, and the multiplication of virtual meetings, with negative impacts on job quality (and performance, as later highlighted in Chapter 3).

Information and communication overload arise from increased difficulties in the handling and processing of information from multiple and overlapping sources, resulting in feelings of being 'overwhelmed' (ES1, FI1, FI2).

> *I understand that some people prioritise their immediate issues above all else, but the fact that I am available and reachable does not mean I can handle multiple issues at the same time, and there is little I can do to control this situation, because someone can reach you [on MS Teams] 'let's talk when you can', and I may not respond, but they call you anyway, so I have no choice but to answer.* (Employee 1 - ES1)

The multiplication of virtual meetings was raised by several interviewees with implications in terms of work intensification and fatigue due to lack of breaks, physical movement, and informal interactions typically associated with face-to-face meetings.

> *It is a remaining from COVID-19 days, with still quite many meetings that can be back-to-back. There are also no colleagues coming to remind you that you have been sitting there for two hours now and it's time for a break. Maybe it's a bit like one is responsible for one's coping all the time* (Employee 4 - FI1).

> *Previously, when we had a meeting, you used to leave your seat and go to another room. Now, you just remove and put on your headphones. After one meeting, I press the button and get into another meeting. This has also resulted in us moving around less. Now it's all about more meetings.* (Worker representative 3 - ES2)

In line with the literature (Dragano and Lunau, 2020) an employee working in the Finnish agency (FI1), who was part of a risk-prevention project focused on ergonomics and information-related risks, summarises these concerns stating that more attention should be placed on 'information ergonomics', in addition to technical and physical ergonomics, pointing to growing risks involved by the use of digital technologies employees have to handle as part of their jobs.

Some organisations have established guidelines to tackle these issues by imposing restrictions on the scheduling and maximum duration of meetings and allowing brief breaks between successive meetings. However, the implementation of these measures may prove challenging during dense workdays with consecutive meetings (FI1), or when line managers fail to enforce these recommendations by scheduling meetings outside the agreed time slots (ES2).

Work organisation, autonomy and work intensity

The adoption of hybrid work has not entailed substantial changes in the allocation of tasks, task performance, or output measurement and assessment. Managers and workers agreed on this point in all studied organisations. Nevertheless, hybrid work has some implications for work autonomy and work intensity which are addressed in this section, and which also examines sickness presenteeism as a manifestation of work intensification in hybrid settings.

Work autonomy

Hybrid work enhances autonomy in the order and scheduling of tasks, the pace of work, and in organising the tasks to be performed on-site or remotely, including working with other workers, clients, or beneficiaries. These impacts depend on two main factors: the extent of place and time flexibility enabled by the hybrid work arrangement, and the extent to which the worker already enjoys some level of work autonomy in these aspects.

As already outlined in the section on working time, when tasks are predominantly asynchronous and there is some discretion in managing deadlines, hybrid work can substantially increase the level of autonomy in the organisation of work schedules and the pace of work. In contrast, hybrid work has a limited impact on work autonomy when tasks are highly routine, the pace of work is largely pre-established, or tasks consist of providing services at given times, either on-site or remotely.

Moreover, hybrid work also enhances the autonomy of workers who enjoy some discretion in deciding how best to organise their work with other workers, clients, or beneficiaries. They can decide what tasks are better suited for either on-site or remote work and whether they favour in-presence of virtual communication.

Typically, working from home is associated with tasks requiring more focus and individual work, whereas working at the office is more related to collaborative tasks, including regular team

coordination meetings. In organisations with a structured, balanced hybrid work model, where it is required to work on-site part of the time, workers tend to accommodate on-site workdays to attend regular in-presence meetings and perform other collaborative tasks. In some organisations (LT2, LT3) with more flexible models, most tasks are carried out remotely, regardless of whether they are individual or collaborative tasks. In these models, employees have higher autonomy to decide when to work on-site or remotely, and on-site work is not only more sporadic but also more intentional and purpose oriented. Overall, employees appreciate working on-site for holding in-person meetings and having casual exchanges at the office, as they perceive they are more effective and less time-consuming. There is also a preference towards in-presence meetings when dealing with intricate or delicate issues, where the potential for misinterpretation is higher.

> *I decide it* [when to work remotely] *based on the meetings I have during the week. There are some meetings I prefer to hold in person, because sometimes you lose quality information when it is conducted through a video call, and it is better to do it face-to-face.* (…) *We handle sensitive matters in the financial area, and sometimes I do not take my two telework days to meet with some people.* (Employee 4 – ES2).

> *Working from home or the office depends more on the daily agenda for me. I go to the office if there are many meetings scheduled, and I use the gaps between meetings to clarify small matters with team members, which helps save time because I don't need to separately organise meetings when I'm in the office. However, when I need concentration and focus, I stay at home. I am much more productive this way.* (Employee 3 – LT2)

In organisations in which the frequency of remote work is very high and most teams are multi-located (FI1, FI2), on-site work is mostly reserved for in-presence meetings with supervisors or team members, and its frequency depends on the circumstances (from once a month to a few times per year). However, there are also instances in which workers agree to work on-site together to support each other (FI1).

Workers in managerial roles enjoy high autonomy in deciding how to perform their managerial tasks in hybrid settings.[43] In some cases, managers mainly work on-site because they consider regular in-presence meetings and exchanges to be the best way to support hybrid workers and teamwork. For instance, the interviewed line manager of the Finnish agency (FI1) reported that most of her work consisted of moving to different offices to hold in-presence meetings with geographically distributed hybrid workers. Similarly, the line manager of the Spanish public entity (ES3) usually works at the office and holds individual meetings with the team members who are working on-site. In the Lithuanian public entity, a different pattern was found, with leadership and line managers predominantly working in the office because of their communication-intensive roles with other departments and foreign counterparts. In other instances (AT1, AT2, LT1, FI2), line managers follow similar patterns to other hybrid workers.

Work intensity

Hybrid work can act as a moderator of work intensity through increased efficiency and greater discretion over work schedules. Under hybrid work arrangements, workers have a higher ability to

[43] The exception is the Spanish company in which hybrid work is very limited (ES1) and managers decided to work always on-site.

select the most productive and convenient place and time to work, according to task requirements and personal preferences or needs. Efficiency is also enhanced because remote work allows fewer undesired interruptions and more concentration. In this regard, some employees stated that they commonly mute or log off from communication channels when working from home (FI2, ES1). Similarly, the company agreement of the Spanish public entity (ES3) entitles workers not to attend corporate communications when working outside core work hours, allowing them to focus on their own work and, if needed, communicate with beneficiaries.

It is also important to note that perceptions of time pressure may stem from work schedules that make it difficult and stressful to meet care responsibilities or other private life commitments (Chung, 2022; Wajcman, 2015). In this regard, hybrid work combined with working time flexibility enables employees to better accommodate their job demands with their family or personal needs and responsibilities, leading to a perception of reduced time pressure. Supporting working parents in collecting their children from school was one of the objectives of the agreement on hybrid work and working time flexibility, as stated by the employer representative of a Spanish company (ES2).

> *I believe that this can help alleviate stress, for instance, if you have to pick up your child from school at a certain time* (…) *the stress that someone might experience from this could be greater, because you know that you can go to pick up children and then you can continue working at home, right?* (…) *The capacity to organise oneself or to know that one can work from home the following day to focus on a task without being disturbed can be beneficial in minimising stress if used effectively*. (Line manager – ES2)

However, as indicated in the section on working time, the increase in place and working time flexibility cannot compensate for situations of understaffing and sustained excessive workload, as experienced in some organisations (AT1, ES3).

It must also be noted that hybrid work is associated with increased time pressure and work intensification owing to factors related to the implementation of this work arrangement. Some of these have been highlighted in the previous sections. First, inefficient virtual communication practices (multiple and overlapping communication channels, the 'multiplication' of virtual meetings to replicate casual in-presence exchanges) require additional time and effort, frequently leading to feelings of being overwhelmed.

> *Virtual contacts have multiplied since the pandemic, and that has continued to this day. The conversations that used to be held informally in the office between door and door are now being arranged online. All of this takes up an enormous amount of time, which is then lacking for the actual work. It's stressful and I wonder what the point is.* (Employee 3 – AT2)

Second, hybrid work is sometimes linked to perceptions of work intensification because employees compress their workdays, skipping coffee breaks or lunch breaks when working from home. This phenomenon was referred to as the extension of 'grey overtime' by a workers' representative (FI1). The lack of typical social routines at the office may also explain why some workers find it more difficult to adhere to regular work schedules and breaks and sometimes end up working more hours than intended. The statements below show how some employees struggle to enact boundaries between work and personal time when working from home, resulting in perceptions of increased work intensity and/or longer work hours. These views also highlight how social interactions at the office and at home help individuals enact and manage these boundaries. This is something that

needs to be learned through practical experience, although organisations also have a role in supporting healthy work habits and work-life balance.

> *Perhaps we should set an alarm that force you to take regular breaks.* (…) *I always have the same feeling that I have spent the entire morning here without moving from my seat. In contrast, in the office, it is different. You engage in conversations with others, and you also force yourself to take breaks.* (Employee 4 – ES2)

> *I believe that you are not aware of it, but you are already at home, sitting in front of your laptop, and have been working for over eight hours without realising it. In my situation, I have a daughter that force me to stop working, depending on how my partner and I organise our schedules. Otherwise, I think I would work for longer hours.* (Employee 2 – ES3)

Presenteeism

An increase in presenteeism – working while sick - associated with the adoption of hybrid work has been noted in several organisations (AT1, AT2, FI1, FI2, ES1, ES3, LT3). Steidelmüller et al. (2020), detected this phenomenon in pre-pandemic times in connection to home-based work, based on EWCS 2015 data. More recent research suggests that the presenteeism of hybrid workers is related to high workload and time pressure, although this relationship is moderated by a supportive organisational climate, in particular, the extent to which employees perceive that line managers are committed to preventing stress and promoting psychosocial well-being (Biron et al., 2021).

Presenteeism encompasses quite different situations in the studied organisations. In some instances, interviewees highlighted that employees tend to work from home instead of taking a day off when facing mild symptoms or minor illnesses (FI1, FI2, ES3, LT3). This pattern was partially attributed to the experience of the pandemic and the desire to protect workers from potential infections. Provided that there is no serious health condition, management tends to see it as a positive phenomenon that allows work continuity, albeit at a reduced capacity.

> *Thus, our assumption is that everyone takes responsibility for their work and completes it without needing to be monitored. Consequently, from the organisation's perspective, it is in our best interest for you to work either a lot or a little from home, rather than taking leave or absence*. (Organisation representative – ES3).

In organisations with a large share of employees working full or almost full-time remotely, line managers are recommended to be alert for signs that an employee may be experiencing some health problem and to hold a personal conversation to prevent further issues (FI2).

However, the boundaries between mild and serious health conditions can become more blurred in the context of hybrid work. In some instances, employees and their representatives emphasised that many workers continue working from home when seriously ill. They opt to take only brief periods of sick leave or no sick leave at all, or even continue to work during sick leave, so that they can perform at least the most fundamental tasks from home, avoiding, for instance, placing additional workload on their co-workers.

> *In fact, I've been with bronchitis from Tuesday, and I have teleworked until today. And I was not well able to work from home, but it is up to each one's responsibility. You have the option. So, my thought is, well, even if you don't give 100%, you give 50%. But it is true that what I really wanted was to get into bed.* (Employee 1 – ES1)

> *Since the pandemic, however, it has often been much more difficult to clearly distinguish between sick leave and working time. Formally, it's clear that if you're on sick leave, you're not allowed to work. But as soon as you do it anyway, you're in a legal grey area. And many people do exactly that.* (Employee representative - AT2)

Workers' representatives highlighted the spread of these practices in the context of intense and individualised work pressure, calling for closer monitoring of employees' health and recovery status to prevent the risk of 'self-exploitation' (AT1, AT2).

Job prospects

The case studies provide insights into the implications of hybrid work on equitable career prospects. In some organisations, hybrid work decreased the gender gap in contractual hours and enhanced the employment opportunities of workers in rural areas. However, some challenges were found, namely related to informal on-the-job training, socialisation, and career prospects for young and new workers.

More equitable employment and working opportunities

In two organisations (AT2, ES2), the adoption of hybrid work in combination with flexible schedules enabled the extension of contractual working hours for employees, mostly women, who were previously working part-time for care reasons. In these cases, hybrid work has enabled employees to better accommodate their professional and care obligations, with positive implications for their wages and career prospects. Thus, case studies show that hybrid work has the potential to counteract some gender inequalities. This finding is in line with previous research based on pre-pandemic panel data, which indicates that hybrid work can contribute to the reduction of the gender gap in contractual hours, although other gender inequalities may persist (career progression and wages) due to entrenched gendered stigma against women with care responsibilities (Arntz et al., 2022). In a similar vein, other studies point to wage penalties for working mothers in full-time remote work (Matsiak et al., 2023).

Against this background, it is worth stressing that the case studies did not provide evidence of negative implications of hybrid work on the career and wage progression opportunities of working mothers. The representative of the Austrian bank (AT1) elaborates on this point, indicating that structured and balanced hybrid models, which require that a substantial part of the work is performed on-site, decrease the likelihood of gender segregation and stigma towards women working hybrid. Otherwise, due to the persistence of traditional gender roles, there would be more women than men in full-time remote work arrangements, reinforcing segregation and stigma.

> *I think it's extremely detrimental to your career and promotion opportunities if you're just holed up at home. I don't think it's good for you. You don't realise anything: The conversations in the coffee kitchen are gone, you're cut off (...) I really see the danger of women becoming even more invisible by working from home. I always say to the mums at work: You don't have to be there five days a week, but be there for the important appointments, show your face, say: I'm here, I've got this under control.* (Company representative – AT1).

Hybrid work may also contribute to more inclusive workplaces in other ways. In the Finnish agency (FI1), the possibility of working remotely all or most of the time was reported to benefit employees residing in remote locations outside the capital city.

While managerial reluctance continues to hinder egalitarian access to hybrid work arrangements in some organisations (ES2, LT3), in other organisations high uptake and 'normalisation' of such arrangements, supported by the adoption of transparent rules and procedures through social dialogue and collective bargaining, has counteracted discretionary line manager's practices in granting hybrid work. Such discretional practices consisted of granting hybrid work as a 'gift' or reward for higher-ranking employees with high dedication at work, or allowing hybrid work as a way of accommodating personal or family circumstances, often under the pressure of stigma.

> *I believe what is most appreciated by employees is the ability to decide for themselves when, how, and why. In the past, when you needed flexibility, you had to request it explicitly, and there had to be a reason behind it. But now, I do not need to tell a reason.* (Employee 2– ES2).

Promotion and access to managerial roles

The lack of proximity with supervisors and other coworkers is generally perceived as a potential risk to hybrid workers' career advancement. In this regard, interviews indicate that the consequences of this situation depend on the quality of rapport between employees and managers, rather than the frequency at which they meet in the workplace (AT1, ES2, LT1). The analysis of case studies also shows that the discretion of line managers in promotion decisions tends to be more restricted in public sector organisations, where more transparent procedures are established and the likelihood of biases is minimised (AT2, ES3).

Some interviews suggest that hybrid work may be detrimental to access to managerial positions, as these roles require specific communication and leadership abilities, which, according to some interviewees, are more effectively demonstrated when working on-site. This is expressed in the statement below, from the organisation representative of the Lithuanian public entity (LT3), where managers tend to always work on-site due to the need to collaborate with other departments or other organisations. Other interviews in the same institution did not agree with these views.

> *It depends on what level of promotion you are aiming for. From a junior to a senior specialist, essentially, you're doing the same thing – there's no difference whether you work hybrid or in person. Promotion is only affected by the pace of work and the quality of results. For an experienced specialist aiming to work as a department head and working remotely – that's more complex. Because it requires different competences, a head of department needs to engage, be communicative, have management knowledge, demonstrate leadership in person. It would be more challenging for those working remotely to demonstrate that enthusiasm and skills.* (Organisation representative – LT3)

No examples of measures or policies designed to enhance equal career prospects for hybrid workers have been reported, with the exception of a line manager initiative in a Spanish company (ES2). The line manager organises individual presentations of projects and achievements to enhance the visibility and recognition of employees' efforts within upper management. Two of the three team leaders working under his supervision were promoted internally. However, there is no policy or

guidance by the company in this regard, and the practice is taken at the initiative of the line manager.

Informal training, socialisation and career prospects of young and new workers

Hybrid work can have an indirect but negative influence on career progression through reduced opportunities for informal learning in the workplace, particularly for new and young recruits. This is the main reason why these employees are typically required to work on-site in structured and balanced hybrid models (AT1, AT2, LT1, ES3). In more flexible models, where the frequency of remote work is high (FI, LT2), supporting these employees is more challenging, as later indicated in Chapter 3.

According to the line manager interviewed in the Finish agency (FI1), organisational procedures for onboarding and basic training remain insufficient for some workers. When knowledge or skill gaps come to the surface, it is up to her as a line manager to help the employee fill the gap. She also considered that in-presence meetings with new employees are especially important for establishing interpersonal relations and building trust. A senior IT professional in the IT Lithuanian company also expressed difficulties in supporting and monitoring the performance of new recruits when there was no face-to-face interaction (LT2).

> *When a new team member comes, what often happens remotely is that they don't say when they're stuck and try to solve the problem themselves. For employee evaluations, peer feedback is important, not only from the team but also from other team leaders. Sometimes it's difficult to assess an employee when you haven't even met him or her in person.*
> (Employee 2 – LT2)

It is important to note that challenges for informal training (or transfer of tacit knowledge) are of a cognitive and relational nature, intrinsically linked to workplace socialisation and social and emotional support from colleagues and supervisors (Taskin and Bridoux, 2010). The literature is paying increasing attention to the potential negative impacts of limited in-person interaction for new and young workers. Gratton (2023) places special emphasis on challenges concerning cultural and relational aspects, and in particular, long-term consequences for young employees who may lose the opportunity to build long-lasting connections and networks in the early stage of their careers. Emanuel et. al (2023) demonstrated empirically the 'power' of physical proximity to senior coworkers for young employees' training and future career prospects.

In contrast, no issues were reported regarding access to formal training for hybrid workers. All organisations guarantee that hybrid workers have the same opportunities for attending training initiatives as on-site workers. Nevertheless, in the two Finnish organisations, where there is a high frequency of remote work and most training is delivered online, interviewees raised issues about the quality of the training (which is typically recorded and made accessible for employees to view at their own convenience). Specifically, employees requested more on-site training and opportunities for discussion (FI1) or a reconfiguration of online training activities to be more inclusive and engaging (FI2).

Organisational participation

Several empirical studies on remote and hybrid work arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic show that workers reinforced ties within their team while loosening contact with other workers,

resulting in more fragmented and siloed collaboration patterns (Yang et al., 2022; Zuzul et al., 2024). According to Tsipursky (2023), this loss of connections can negatively impact long-term organisational success, since achieving corporate goals often requires cross-functional collaboration. Davis et al. (2022) also elaborate on this, warning that 'us and them' dynamics may undermine organisational culture. They also argue that hybrid arrangements may entail tensions between 'me and we', with employees prioritising individual work-life balance or personal productivity over accepting a higher frequency of on-site work or more coordinated schedules.

The case studies did not provide clear evidence on these aspects. The extent of workers' participation in decisions at the team level depends primarily on work organisation and management practices, rather than the specificities of hybrid work arrangements. Moreover, implications on organisational participation are difficult to assess because it is not clear whether hybrid workers actually participate in decisions that are relevant to their work but are not taken at the team level, and whether hybrid work has had any impact on this. Nevertheless, some managers, and to a lesser extent some workers' representatives, voiced the concern that hybrid work might hinder workers' participation in decisions or processes that are beyond their immediate teams, while also losing touch with organisational culture and values. To articulate these concerns, they used vague terms such as insufficient integration in organisational processes, detachment, lack of cohesion, or lack of community spirit.

These concerns appear to be more marked in organisations with a higher frequency of remote work. As already explained, in both Austrian organisations (AT1, AT2), management and employee representatives agree that a structured and balanced hybrid work model with a substantial share of on-site work is necessary to maintain social relations at work, collaboration across different departments and areas, and enhance both organisational performance and working conditions. This is in contrast with the views expressed by some employees, who would prefer more flexibility and work full-time remotely. A similar perspective was put forth by the representative of the Spanish public institution (ES3), who emphasised the significance of social relations and personal acquaintances in the workplace for fostering smoother coordination across departments, especially considering the rapid growth experienced by the organisation in recent years (ES3).

Similar debates are reported in more flexible hybrid work models where there are no formal constraints to work full-time remotely. In the Finnish public sector agency (FI1), management, and, to some extent, workers' representatives see the need to somewhat increase the extent of on-site work due to concerns over the loss of organisational engagement. However, this is challenged by most employees, who advocate maintaining an individual and team-based approach.

In the Lithuanian IT company (LT2), which has adopted a 'remote-first' approach, management has devoted strong efforts to keep ties across different departments, with weekly online meetings and other initiatives to ensure the sharing of practical knowledge and updated information on achievements and overall organisational performance. Crucially, the company anticipated that maintaining organisational involvement would be a challenge when transitioning to a remote-first arrangement, and this strategy has proven to be effective, with high levels of participation.

Finally, it must be noted that the adoption of hybrid work does not appear to have hindered the capacity of works councils and other employee representatives to engage workers and participate in social dialogue and collective bargaining. In some instances, as illustrated in Box 2, some improvements were reported. It must be noted, however, that such a smooth transition may have

been facilitated by a well-consolidated social dialogue in the organisations before the transition to hybrid work, alongside interpersonal relations between managers, employee representatives, and workers.

Box 2. Articulating collective voice in hybrid work settings

Works councils, trade unions, and other workers' representatives have adapted to hybrid work settings to develop their functions of employee representation. While some emphasise the need to maintain a substantial share of on-site work to facilitate social relations at work, engage employees, and articulate collective voice (AT1, AT2, ES2), others are more open to full or almost full-time remote work (FI1, FI2). In all cases, reaching employees in the transition to hybrid work has been challenging. However, workers' representatives reported making full use of virtual tools and even highlighted some significant improvements.

Union representatives in a Spanish company (ES2) stressed that the use of new communication platforms contributed to increasing the visibility of trade unions' activities in the company and made it easier for workers to attend union events. This is especially relevant considering the low unionisation levels in the company. In particular, they referred to an innovative way to approach employees through "information pills" (ranging from 15 to 45 minutes) providing concise information on specific topics of interest, which are recorded and made available online to employees at any time.

Similarly, an employee representative in the Finnish public organisation (FI1), where employees and offices are geographically distributed, noted that the shift to virtual meetings facilitated communication and sharing information with other employee representatives.

> *The time and money saved by no longer having to travel is a positive aspect. This facilitates participation in trade union activities. The downside is, of course, the creation of groups or teams, which takes up more time in remote meetings. It is also more work for the chair of the meeting to get everyone's views across (meaning remembering to ask separately if someone is quiet)* (Employee representative – FI1).

According to an employee representative in the Lithuanian bank (LT1), there has been a more intense relationship between workers and management since the implementation of hybrid work. The representative claimed that due to the time and cost savings of virtual meetings, heads of departments are more willing to engage with the works council and discuss matters. Moreover, the representative stated that the HR department is now more willing to attend meetings called by the works council.

> *Now, on the contrary - there's a better relationship* [between the works council and the employer], *you can invite each other more often. They* [managers] *gladly agree, especially the HR department. If the works council invites them for meetings, they always attend. Previously, we had to travel, now we save time, when it's not necessary to be present in person, decisions can even be made more efficiently.* (Employee representative - LT1)

Overall satisfaction with hybrid work

An increase in job satisfaction linked to the adoption of hybrid work was reported, with nuances, in all organisations studied. In some cases, this finding is grounded in survey evidence. The representative of the Lithuanian bank (LT1) quoted the results of an internal survey (with approximately 95% employee participation). Hybrid work was highly appreciated by employees, with an average of 8.7 out of 10 points, and was identified as the company's primary advantage as an employer. The representative from the Austrian Ministry (AT2) shared similar results from an

internal survey in which 85% of the staff stated that working from home was very important to them, and 74% stated that they were satisfied with the home office regulation. A high level of satisfaction with hybrid work was highlighted by managers in other organisations through more indirect survey evidence and qualitative assessments.

> *From annual employee surveys, it is evident that the feeling of employee satisfaction is mostly influenced by the salary, which does not depend on whether one works onsite or remotely. However, despite this, in surveys, everyone notes that they enjoy hybrid work.* (Line manager– LT3)

> *The strong thing is that if you tightened* [the rules around hybrid work] *it would have an impact* [on job satisfaction]*, it comes up so strongly in discussions* (Company representative – FI1).

High levels of general job satisfaction are undoubtedly related to overall good employment and working conditions in the organisations analysed, with wages and job stability above average. In this context, interviews with employees show that most primarily appreciate hybrid work because of its advantages in terms of saving commuting time and increased autonomy in selecting the most suitable place and time to work. This enhances workers' ability to perform their tasks according to their preferences and private life commitments, resulting in feelings of enhanced self-realisation at work due to improved ability to handle work and personal demands.

> *Indeed, hybrid work allows for balancing personal life which adds significant value to the work.* (Employee 4– LT3)

Hybrid work does not fundamentally change the intrinsic features of the job, as it neither impacts employees' perceptions of their work's value nor requires the substantial acquisition of new skills or knowledge. Nonetheless, hybrid work can act as a source of intrinsic reward through the promotion of mutual trust and recognition between managers and workers. Mutual trust is considered both a prerequisite and an outcome of hybrid work. It could be argued that hybrid work arrangements involve a reciprocal relationship, in which managers trust employees to work in a more autonomous way, and employees find in this trust a source of intrinsic motivation to meet performance expectations.

> *I usually work from home two days a week, but I sometimes take a third day at short notice. I am on very good terms with my line manager in this respect, there is complete trust. And I believe that I give a reliable work performance in return for this trust.* (Employee 1 – AT2)

> *I feel acknowledged that I can independently make decisions, achieve the necessary results, and work from home.* (Employee 4 – LT1).

> *Because the company trusts you, they trust you to do what you are expected to do. And you also have to reciprocate*. (Employee representative – ES2).

> *The feeling of trust is strong in this type of work model. It has a strong effect on work satisfaction and motivation. I do my job best at home and I go to the office when there is a reason to do so* (Employee – FI1).

Conversely, employees viewed the decision to restrict hybrid work in one of the Spanish companies (ES1) as an indication of a lack of trust by the employer, which was not justifiable based on performance concerns. Moreover, employees felt that their efforts and accomplishments during the pandemic were not adequately acknowledged.

> *Based on the results we have had and the way we have been working over these two years, I think we deserve more confidence than what seems to be the case* (…) *I do not think that granting just one day of telework without any flexibility is equivalent to showing trust in us.* (Employee 1 – ES1).

Finally, high levels of overall satisfaction with hybrid work should not overshadow its drawbacks, which have already been highlighted in the previous sections, and provide a more nuanced picture of the overall assessment of this work arrangement among employees and their representatives. Foremost among these concerns are perceptions that the flexibility provided by hybrid work risks obscuring a pattern of work intensification, with employees potentially working additional hours that are not compensated to cope with excessive workload. Satisfaction with hybrid work is also conditioned by the extent of organisational support in setting an ergonomic workspace at home and the compensation of costs incurred by this work arrangement. In addition, concerns have been raised about the potential long-term implications of poor ergonomics at home for workers' health and well-being, and the need to ensure the voluntary nature of hybrid work arrangements.

In brief

- A large majority of workers highly appreciate the option of working hybrid. Commuting time savings, related positive impacts on work-life balance, and related cost savings are the most significant advantages of hybrid work for most workers in all the organisations studied. On this basis, the implications of hybrid work on job quality vary depending on a range of individual and organisational factors. Moreover, hybrid work has uneven implications for the different dimensions of job quality, with more relevant impacts on working time and the physical and social environment.
- The main individual factors that influence the impact of hybrid work on job quality are as follows:
    - The length of commuting time is a crucial factor influencing workers' preferences for hybrid work. The longer the commuting time, the higher the preference for hybrid work and the higher the preferred frequency of remote work.
    - Personal circumstances and traits, including care responsibilities, household characteristics, and the quality of the working environment at home, along with individual preferences on the management of boundaries between work and private domains.
    - Job-related factors, in particular, the nature of tasks and work autonomy. In highly interdependent teams, the positive impacts of hybrid work on job quality require additional communication, collaboration, and coordination efforts from line managers and co-workers. There are different views and practices regarding managerial tasks. Some workers express a preference to carry out managerial tasks on-site, while others have successfully shifted to hybrid work. Moreover, the higher the extent of work autonomy, the higher the impact of hybrid work on job quality, with either positive or negative implications depending on workers' ability to manage the boundaries between work and private domains.
- The main organisational factors that influence the impact of hybrid work on job quality are the hybrid work model adopted in the organisation and how it is managed and implemented at the team level. More autonomy over when and where to work is associated with a more positive impact on job quality. At the same time, the impact on job quality also depends on the hybrid

work agreements of other co-workers and how work is organised in hybrid settings. In particular, the positive impact on job quality is enhanced when the line manager effectively supports hybrid work and implements adequate virtual team communication, collaboration, and coordination procedures.

- Hybrid work arrangements are most often linked, to varying degrees, to higher working time flexibility. This enhances workers' ability to accommodate job demands and personal life according to individual needs and preferences, with general positive implications on work-life balance, job satisfaction, motivation, and overall well-being. Moreover, remote work, along with commuting time savings, makes it easier to address occasional workload peaks or work emergencies. However, the possibility of working remotely anytime also conceals instances of excessive workload and understaffing, resulting in additional work hours that remain under-reported and non-compensated, as well as working while sick from home. These issues were reported in six out of ten organisations, and in two of them were successfully addressed.
- Hybrid workers benefit from reduced commuting stress, which may improve their well-being, but poor ergonomic conditions at home and increased sedentarism entail risks to workers' health and safety. The greater the frequency of remote work, the greater the OSH risks. These risks are exacerbated by the lack of organisational support for setting the home station. Furthermore, organisations lack effective systems for assessing and preventing OSH risks in the context of remote work, including ergonomic conditions at home and healthy working habits.
- The voluntary nature of hybrid work is at risk when the reduction in office space is not well planned and managed. This is particularly the case when the space is insufficient to accommodate all the employees who wish to work on-site occasionally, or when some offices are closed, and some employees are compelled to commute much longer. Issues of insufficient space were reported in two organisations, where employees had to follow a rigid allocation of on-site and remote days or had to demand well in advance to work on-site. Issues related to a drastic reduction in the number of offices were reported in two other organisations, where some workers were in fact obliged to work remotely full-time (or almost full-time) because they lived far away from the closest office.
- Issues related to informal socialisation in the workplace and transfer of tacit knowledge were reported in instances of high frequency of remote work, being especially relevant for new workers in onboarding processes. Issues related to the lack of effective social and emotional support from managers and colleagues were also more frequently reported in hybrid settings with a high frequency of remote work. As evidenced by one organisation with a flexible and unconstrained hybrid work model, these issues can be successfully addressed when the organisation supports managers to devote more effort and planning in the management of virtual team communication and coordination.
- In four out of ten organisations, the implementation of hybrid work led to more equitable employment and working conditions. Hybrid work arrangements in two organisations enabled workers (mostly women) with part-time contracts due to care responsibilities to increase their contracted work hours and, consequently, their pay. Moreover, in two other organisations, hybrid work enhanced the employment opportunities of workers living in rural and isolated areas.

Key takeaways

Several implications for managers, worker representatives, practitioners, social partners, and policymakers can be drawn from the analysis of the impacts of hybrid work on job quality:

- *Regulation and implementation of working time flexibility*: increased working time flexibility, formally regulated and/or in practice, is a key feature of most hybrid work arrangements. However, the lack of clarity in flexitime rules for balancing actual and contractual hours when working remotely has negative implications for job quality. While overtime must be requested by line managers, workers may be left with the individual responsibility of working additional hours from home to cope with excessive workloads. Most often, workers do not record these additional hours, fearing to be perceived as underperforming, and these hours remain invisible for the organisation. In some cases, workers compensate for these additional work hours with time off through informal agreements with line managers. However, this depends online managers' attitudes, and crucially, it is not possible when excessive workload is sustained over time. Managers and workers' representatives should devote more efforts to adopting clearer flexitime rules in the context of hybrid work and encourage transparency in the recording of work hours at the individual, team, and organisational levels. This would make it easier to address issues related to excessive workloads and understaffing.
- *Presenteeism and work intensity*: the high prevalence of presenteeism in hybrid work settings is an issue that deserves greater attention at the organisational and team levels (HR managers, workers' representatives, and line managers). There is an increasing risk of blurring the boundaries between minor health issues, where employees still have the capacity to work and enjoy the possibility to do so from home, and more severe health conditions that would require sick leave. Working when sick (or when sick leave should have been requested) has adverse effects on recovery and overall health. Presenteeism appears to be associated with work intensification as an individual coping strategy for minimising performance losses and/or avoiding placing additional workload on co-workers.
- *Home office ergonomics: g*ood ergonomic working conditions at home are a prerequisite for healthy and productive remote work. However, there is a lack of organisational support in setting up home offices according to OSH standards, as in most cases studied the employer only provides the basic IT equipment needed to work remotely. The lack of organisational support can be critical in contexts where workers do not have a nearby office or are directly hired as remote workers. In these cases, employers shall make more efforts to meet their responsibilities and ensure a healthy and safe workplace at home, particularly for employees dealing with health issues. This is an aspect that deserves greater attention in the negotiation of hybrid work agreements at the organisation level. Social partners and policymakers should also discuss how best to protect the health and safety of hybrid workers. This includes the regulation of employers' obligations to ensure adequate ergonomic working conditions at home, as well as initiatives to increase the supply of alternative remote workplaces.

Other implications for working teams and line managers can also be drawn from the analysis of the impact of hybrid work on job quality.

- *Adapting communication practices: t*he management of team communication is more demanding in hybrid than in fully on-site settings because of the need to blend on-site and remote practices and balance synchronous and asynchronous virtual channels. This creates the

need to establish clear procedures for effective communication to avoid the risks of information overload, virtual fatigue, and work intensification due to unnecessary time devoted to virtual communication, while also minimising potential communication gaps, feelings of isolation, and more fragmented collaboration patterns. The need to adapt communication practices is more pressing in teams with a higher frequency of remote work or highly diverse hybrid work arrangements.

- *Equal career opportunities: h*ybrid workers risk remaining less visible to upper-level managers, potentially limiting their opportunities for promotion to more skilled positions or managerial roles. Moreover, in hybrid settings with a high frequency of remote work, there are challenges for informal on-the-job training, alongside other forms of support from co-workers and managers, with potential negative effects on career opportunities which are especially relevant for new workers. There is a need to adapt onboarding, training, and promotion practices to the specific characteristics of hybrid settings.
- *Job satisfaction, fairness, and trust: h*ybrid work has an overall positive impact on job quality and increases workers' satisfaction with various aspects of their jobs. Employees often perceive it as a form of non-wage compensation and a win-win arrangement for organisations and workers. It also contributes to the development of trust relationships in the workplace, as employees feel that their managers have greater confidence in their ability to work in a more autonomous way. However, in some instances, hybrid work may be perceived as an attempt to shift costs to employees, especially in contexts of high work pressure, where additional work hours are not compensated, or in the light of the limited cost compensation and organisational support in setting home office. Issues of fairness around hybrid work deserve greater attention at the team level, potentially contributing to better design of hybrid work rules at the organisational level.

3 – Hybrid work and its implications for performance and organisational outcomes

Individual performance encompasses employees' productivity - efficiency in completing tasks and achieving goals within a specific timeframe - and other aspects related to employees' effectiveness, such as quality and creativity.

This chapter starts by analysing the implications of hybrid work for individual performance. Following this, the scope of the analysis turns to the implications of hybrid work for organisational performance, with a focus on work organisation and management practices, human resources policies, and office transformation.

Individual performance

The organisations studied do not specifically monitor or evaluate the impact of hybrid work on individual performance because they do not see the need for it. In all cases, 'hard' organisational indicators (e.g. revenue, profit, Key Performance Indicator (KPI)) related to financial stability, the ability to meet deadlines, or client satisfaction, show either no change or positive evolution in the transition towards hybrid work. Individual performance assessments continue to be conducted by line managers, and it is their responsibility to address (rare) cases of individual underperformance that may be related to hybrid work.

This is expressed very straightforwardly by the HR Manager of the Austrian bank where hybrid work has been in place for years (AT1). Performance goals are pre-set for all management levels and all departments of the group. This means that line managers translate the performance goals from the department level to the individual employee. As long as the respective team led by the line manager achieves the benchmarks according to the performance goals targeted by the management board, and in most teams these goals are largely achieved, there is no reason for the management board to intervene and curtail the respective line manager's leeway in autonomously shaping the work organisation of the team and monitoring individual performance:

> *I believe that every department and every team has found its own great way of dealing with hybrid work. And some of these ways look very different. We don't have any precise data on this, so you can see that we don't look at it very closely, in fact, we deliberately don't (...). And that is always a very good indication that this very free regulation is the right one (...) I think it's a marvellous tool for managers to be able to determine the way in which they can work with their teams. And they do this very well: namely by making good arrangements for the teams and thus achieving a good model of cooperation.* (Company representative – AT1)

Despite no quantitative measurements of individual performance being collected by the organisations, qualitative evidence gathered through the case studies from employers, line managers and workers suggests either no perceived impact or a slightly positive impact on performance for most employees. In particular, the analysis reveals the impacts of hybrid work on individual performance through two main channels: (1) adapting individual work practices, primarily resulting from increased employees' worktime and workplace flexibility; and (2) changes in the work environment at the team or company level that affect how individuals work. The next sections addressed these aspects.

Impacts related to individual work practices

The introduction of hybrid work has altered how individual employees organise their work, namely because employees have an increased ability to select the place and time of work. In most of the studied organisations, this change has been found to generally enhance individual performance, as perceived by employees and line managers.

Selecting the most suitable time and place of work

Findings from the literature suggest that hybrid work provides employees with some degree of place and working time flexibility, increasing workers' autonomy in deciding how to meet job demands, potentially resulting in improved performance (Tran, 2022). In line with the literature, most employees interviewed for the case studies said that the increased flexibility of working time and place leads to increased individual performance due to the ability to select the most suitable working arrangements (time and place of work when and where the employee is most productive).

The case studies reveal a nuanced perspective on workers' decision-making regarding their work organisation practices between remote and on-site settings. Employees tend to work from home on tasks requiring deep concentration to avoid interruptions of the office environment, while opting to work on-site for collaborative activities and team meetings. This pattern is more salient in hybrid work models with a balanced frequency of on-site and remote work (AT1, ES2), or where employees have high autonomy to decide where to work (FI1, LT3). Moreover, in terms of working time, employees in hybrid work models with higher time flexibility can choose to work when they are most productive, whether it is during early mornings or late evenings (AT2, ES2, ES3, LT3). Higher working time flexibility also helps employees to better cope with their workload and effectively balance work and family responsibilities without compromising performance.

> *It is easier for individuals to achieve their goals when they can be more relaxed and leave their children at school, pick them up at a specified time, and concentrate on being productive during the hours when they are most productive, thanks to this flexibility. Ultimately, everyone knows what objectives they have to achieve and the responsibilities of their position.* (Company representative – ES2).

Other aspects

Some literature suggests that the relationship between flexible working and individual performance is rather indirect and mediated by its effects on (longer) work hours, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Beauregard et al, 2019; Kelliher and de Menezes, 2019). To some extent, this is confirmed by two trends observed in the studied organisations: increased workers' ability to cope with occasional workload peaks and reduction in occasional absenteeism.

Employees in all organisations reported occasionally working additional hours, which was made easier by their hybrid work arrangements. They specifically mentioned the time saved on commuting and the ease of working from home as contributing factors. Workers also expressed a willingness to put in additional effort as a way of reciprocating the organisation for offering the opportunity to work hybrid work. In some instances, the need to work longer is exceptional (e.g. ES1, FI2) while in other organisations adapting working time is crucial for individual and team performance (e.g. AT1, ES2, ES3). As flexitime rules and practices for remote work differ widely across organisations (as indicated in Chapter 2), this raises concerns about irregular work schedules and long work hours in some cases.

Concerning absenteeism, workplace and worktime flexibility allows employees to work from home in case of family or private needs or when they feel moderately unwell, or work 'around' medical appointments. This can contribute to a reduction of absenteeism (e.g. ES3, LT1). However, as indicated in Chapter 2, the issue of presenteeism – working while sick - raises concerns in several organisations.

Impacts related to work environment

Apart from individual work practices, hybrid work models change how work is organised at the higher levels (team, organisation), impacting individual performance.

Minimised interruptions

The perceived increase in individual performance resulting from hybrid work settings compared to on-site work mainly stems from minimised interruptions during remote work, especially in hybrid work models where more work can be performed remotely (AT1, AT2, FI1, FI2, LT1). Employees working in offices often report being distracted by external factors such as interruptions caused by telephone calls or colleagues rushing into the office room, hindering focused and concentrated work.

> *Then* [in the time of the first pandemic-induced lockdown] *came the home office and then I really sat at home exclusively for a few months and realised how much progress you can make if you can work in a focused and concentrated way and in peace and quiet and not sit in an open-plan office. (...) So if I really want to work in a focused, concentrated way, I'd much rather do it in my home office because it's loud in the office, it's restless, there's always something happening, I get distracted much more easily*. (Line manager – AT1)

When work is performed at the company's premises in the hybrid work setting, interruptions persist, especially in cases where the introduction of hybrid work led to office restructuring (see below) and the introduction of shared workspaces. Various employees pointed to implications on individual performance from working in shared workspaces where employees sit next to each other without separation. They highlighted difficulties arising from interruptions or intrusions caused by colleagues and noted the general increase in ambient noise in the office due to more intense virtual communication in hybrid work environments. This environment can make it more challenging to concentrate when trying to do 'deep work' at the office (AT1, ES3, FI1, LT1), although it can have its upsides in terms of social interactions and knowledge sharing (see the section on organisational performance).

> *We all require a certain level of concentration in our work. I've seen other workspaces in the field of the public administration that served as paradigmatic examples, and it seemed like a henhouse, everyone with their laptops and headphones.* (…) *That is, telework currently provides a level of privacy and concentration that is not possible in the workplace due to the integration of technology.* (Employee representative – ES3)

Increased efficiency through virtual communication and collaboration tools

Furthermore, the shift to online meetings has been generally perceived to have increased the efficiency of those meetings. Most online meetings tend to run faster, requiring less time to join and exit, thereby allowing more time for focused and undisturbed work (AT2, FI2). More broadly, the adoption of digital tools for communication and collaboration has been seen as improving individual performance. While interruptions during concentrated work may still occur in a hybrid work setting,

they are typically better managed compared to fully on-site work, as they can be adjusted and limited by turning off notifications in the various devices or indicating a 'deep work' status on communication platforms (FI2, ES3, LT2).

> *Tools also help - we use Slack option to avoid receiving notifications; scheduling messages is also possible.* (Employee 2 – LT2)

The importance of using effective virtual communication and collaboration tools was an aspect highlighted in all case studies. Both line managers and employees provided insights on how an inefficient use of these tools hinders performance. Typical examples are an excessive frequency of online meetings, and overlapping of different communication and information channels. In some instances, there were also references to negative impacts due to the need to devote more time and effort to replicate casual in-person exchanges and meetings by virtual means (see the section on organisational performance for more details).

Challenges for interdependent remote work

Some studies suggest that the effects of hybrid work on individual performance are contingent on the frequency of remote work and the nature of the tasks involved. In this regard, a high frequency of remote work may be detrimental to the performance of complex tasks in highly interdependent and iterative work processes that demand intense team cooperation (Golden and Gajendran, 2019; Van der Lippe and Lippényi, 2019).

Case studies lack sufficient empirical evidence to analyse potential challenges for interdependent remote work. All studied organisations with flexible, unconstrained hybrid work models involve large degrees of solo work or operate in a field (software development) where remote team collaboration is well-established. However, there are insights that support the view that the extent of task interdependence either limits the adoption of hybrid work at the team level or poses challenges for individual and team performance.

The representative of the Austrian bank (AT1) observed that on-site work is preferable for collectively created strategies and the development of innovative business ideas or processes, which require highly interdependent and iterative work processes. In fact, this was highlighted as one of the main reasons for implementing a hybrid work model with a balanced share of on-site and remote work. In a similar vein, the representative of the Lithuanian bank (LT1) noted that hybrid work posed challenges for team performance in project-based teams or those in the human resources department that require closer collaboration. In this company, the case study focused on a department where solo work prevails and, before the adoption of hybrid work, employees were already distributed across cities and accustomed to remote collaboration using email and phone calls. Under such circumstances, the transition to hybrid work was smooth and had either positive or no implications for individual performance. It must be also noted that collaborative remote work is well-established in software development, and this facilitated the adoption of a flexible, unconstrained hybrid work model in the Lithuanian IT firm (LT2), which indeed favours a remote-first approach. Nevertheless, employees referred to challenges for effective team collaboration during busier periods.

> *The biggest challenges arise when there's a project deadline that requires extensive collaboration because remote work doesn't provide real-time updates on who's doing what at any given moment. In those moments, we don't have a tradition of gathering before deadlines.* (Employee 3– LT2)

Increased trust under a result-oriented approach

The literature also suggests that hybrid work might be associated with decreased feedback and a loss of social support due to reduced face-to-face interaction with co-workers and supervisors. This might make hybrid workers more exposed to risks of ambiguities and uncertainties regarding their performance expectations, contributing to job exhaustion and stress (Sardeshmukh et al, 2012; Weinert et al, 2015). While hybrid work can pose challenges for social support (as indicated in Chapter 2), most case studies to some extent link improved individual performance to a sense of increased trust from the employer, allowing employees to choose the most suitable working patterns. This trust is facilitated by a results-oriented approach that empowers and enhances employees' performance.

In some cases, employees emphasised that when employees are trusted to freely choose their place and time of work, they demonstrate increased responsiveness or visibility and availability for work, even beyond regular working hours if necessary to accomplish tasks (e.g. ES3). Such impact is also acknowledged by managers, who observe that employees experience increased job satisfaction, trust, and recognition due to the increased work time and place flexibility, which in turn enhances feelings of competence and motivation among employees (FI2).[44] On the flip side, employees think that granting only one predetermined day for remote work without time flexibility is an indication of a lack of trust (ES1), which may decrease employee motivation and performance.

Balance between remote and office work

Overall, employers, line managers and workers in the analysed organisations note little impact or a slightly positive impact of hybrid work on individual performance (either through adaptation of personal work practices or changing work environment).

However, it must be nuanced that this perceived impact depends on the nature of tasks, specific work organisation practices, and the personal circumstances of the employees. For example, not all employees have suitable remote workplaces. In most cases, organisations provide only work equipment, such as laptops and monitors, but do not finance a fully ergonomic workplace with chairs and desks that would increase productivity and support long-term health. Moreover, adequate space at home and a calm environment are also needed. In some examples shared by the employees, productive work at home might be interrupted, for example, by children (LT1). However, overall, these drawbacks seem to be outweighed by the possibility of choosing the most suitable working time and place.

Finally, most case studies seem to indicate that some balance between on-site and remote work is beneficial for individual performance. This balance allows, for instance, for focused deep work to take place in remote settings and for activities involving collaboration and social relationships to be organised on-site.

[44] Although specific measures detailing how this impact is recognised were not provided but rather expressed as personal sentiment by the line manager.

Organisational performance

Two organisations (ES2, ES3) adopted hybrid work in combination with higher working time flexibility. In both cases, this change has been crucial for improving organisational performance because there are frequent workload peaks to meet deadlines. Moreover, in the case of the public entity (ES3), the change has substantially improved the quality of the services provided. The entity gives support to applicants for public grants and the adoption of hybrid work has allowed to extend the work schedule beyond the traditional one in the public sector (8h-15h) until 19h, which is highly appreciated by applicants when deadlines are near.

In addition, the impact of hybrid work on organisational performance can be analysed from three key angles. First, hybrid work triggers changes in work organisation and management practices, such as the changing role of line managers, and the patterns of communication, collaboration and coordination of work. Second, the shift to a hybrid work model affects organisational performance through changes in personnel management related to recruitment, retention, and the implementation of occupational health and safety (OSH) policies. Lastly, organisational performance is generally positively affected by hybrid work's direct effects on company outcomes, namely through cost reductions due to office restructuring.

Implications for work organisation and management

First and foremost, the shift to hybrid work necessitates the adaptation of certain work organisation practices. This is observed in all studied organisations except the Spanish company which adopted a rigid, office-first hybrid work model, where hybrid work plays a residual role (ES1). Furthermore, as anticipated in Chapter 1, the extent of change in work organisation practices varies across hybrid work models, depending on the frequency of remote work and the diversity of hybrid work arrangements.

Role of line managers

One cross-cutting impact identified across the case studies is that, in the context of hybrid work, the line managers' autonomy in work management increases. In all the organisations, access to hybrid work relies on agreement with the line managers. Therefore, a considerable degree of responsibility falls online managers to make individual agreements regarding the extent of remote work and internal work processes for their teams.

In structured, balanced hybrid work models (AT1, AT2, ES2, ES3, LT1), where there is a limit for the frequency of remote work, and operational constraints for working remotely differ within the organisation, line managers play a prominent role in accommodating the individual hybrid work agreements to the requirements of work processes and methods. This encompasses, to varying degrees, allowing access to hybrid work, deciding on the frequency of remote work of each individual agreement, allocating remote workdays within the team, and blending on-site and remote work communication and collaboration practices (for instance, deciding regular in-presence meetings at the individual or the team level). In several organisations, hybrid work arrangements change across areas, departments and teams for a variety of operational reasons. In the Lithuanian bank (LT1), one department predominantly works from the office because their tasks require multiple screens, frequent teamwork, and collaborative decision-making. In the Austrian ministry (AT2), as a general rule, the more closely a section works with the minister's office, the less home office is used. In other cases, the uptake of hybrid work is similar within the organisation due to space constraints (LT1, ES3).

In flexible, unconstrained models, where there is no limit to the frequency of remote work and there are no operational constraints for fully remote work in most jobs, line managers tend to accommodate the individual preferences of employees, unless there is a reason for not having trust in their ability to work hybrid. In one of the cases (LT2), the company operates under a remote-first approach, where IT professionals only need to obtain permission from their line manager to work from abroad. With this autonomy to set rules and procedures for the manager's team also comes greater responsibility to manage the benefits and drawbacks of the chosen arrangements. For instance, the share of full-time or almost full-time remote work is very high in the Finnish organisations (FI1, FI2) and line managers have to put more effort into virtual communication and coordination and effective (and feasible) face-to-face practices. Such efforts are crucial not only to organise work but also for building trust and team cohesion.

The prominent role played by the line manager in hybrid work settings can yield mixed results on organisational performance, contingent upon the individual strategies employed by different managers. In instances where managers prioritise clear communication, trust-building, and proactive support for employees working remotely, the hybrid work model can foster a culture of collaboration, enhancing employee satisfaction and performance (AT1, FI2).

> *In some cases, this [hybrid] model can contribute to more discussions because one has to keep in touch with everyone. There is no risk of someone being forgotten. Many managers also have one-to-one discussions with employees about work tasks.* (Line manager – FI2)

While line managers' autonomy allows for tailored approaches to suit work processes, team dynamics and performance goals, it can also result in inequitable access to hybrid work across the organisation due to reluctance towards this work arrangement. Employees and workers' representatives noted inequalities in two organisations (ES2, LT3).

> *You could say it's the manager's preference how they like to organise work. Generally, everyone's functions allow for hybrid work, as we don't produce anything on-site, we circulate documents not in paper form, but electronically. (…) However, there are certain departments that work in-person all the time because their department manager likes it that way.* (Employee 2 – LT3)

While the impact of hybrid work online managers' autonomy in organising the work of their teams is relatively large (though dependent on hybrid work type), work autonomy (i.e. worker's ability to decide about the content and methods of their work) does not significantly change. Employees do enjoy (different degrees of) workplace and worktime flexibility, but the nature of their jobs - what tasks they perform and how - is generally not altered by the shift to hybrid work.

Collaboration and coordination

Another important change brought about by hybrid work lies in the collaboration and coordination of tasks among employees. This may entail more managerial efforts in hybrid work settings, depending on the specificities of the hybrid work model and the extent of task interdependence, but is not seen as a hindrance to organisational performance (AT1, FI2, ES3, LT1, LT2).

In the flexible, unconstrained hybrid work models, there are fully remote employees working from different locations and, in some cases, different time zones. This requires more organisational effort to schedule meetings and share tasks among employees (LT2). As highlighted by the line manager, achieving effective coordination in highly flexible hybrid work settings necessitates increased

collaboration to establish a schedule that allows for a few hours of overlapping working time between an employee working abroad and the rest of the team (LT2).

Moreover, in hybrid settings, spontaneous collaboration is also limited when there is a need to discuss urgent matters (LT1, LT2). Additionally, there is less interaction between employees of different departments or teams compared to on-site work, where casual encounters often occur, potentially limiting opportunities for broader collaboration (LT2).

However, different case studies show various ways to mitigate the impact of coordination changes on organisational performance, arguing that hybrid work can maintain or even enhance performance (ES2, LT3, FI2, LT2). In this regard, the integration of virtual collaboration platforms has facilitated collaboration among employees regardless of their physical location, positively impacting team coordination and performance (AT2, ES2, LT3). Such platforms can help ensure efficient information flows between employees and information dissemination to a broader group of employees (FI2). Additionally, the elimination of paperwork allows digital documents to easily travel to different employees regardless of their location (ES2). Tasks are also predominantly assigned and managed through online platforms, facilitating better monitoring, contrasted to onsite work where managers had to directly inquire with employees about the status of task completion (AT2, FI1, LT3).

However, the introduction of too many digital tools has also been seen as making collaboration more fragmented when it is done mainly digitally and through several channels (AT1, FI2).

> *The reason why I like to be in the office when we are with a colleague is the fact that we can go through our client cases together, so it is much easier. And it becomes so fragmented when people are in different places, so you get WhatsApp messages, you get Teams messages, you get e-mails, then at the same time the phone rings, customers call, friends call.* (Employee 5 – FI2)

The impact of hybrid work on collaboration seems to depend on the nature of the work within the company or the particular team. In particular, teams with predominantly independent tasks or multi-located teams accustomed to using coordination tools such as emails or phone calls before adopting the hybrid work model experience a smoother transition and quick positive impact on organisational performance despite lack of experience with this way of organising work (FI2, LT1).

Knowledge transfer

Hybrid work also impacts knowledge transfer, especially when place of work flexibility is very high (FI1, FI2, LT2). The physical distance between team members in different locations can create barriers to spontaneous exchanges of information and impromptu collaboration sessions, which are often vital for sharing tacit knowledge. In remote settings, serendipitous encounters become less frequent or even non-existent, hindering the transfer of tacit knowledge among colleagues (FI2).

> *The learning aspect* [is very important] *especially as we get a lot of new recruiters, but otherwise also. I would benefit from listening to some of the other Key Account Managers or salespeople from other industries being on their customer calls. So, you learn quite involuntarily even.* (Employee 4 – FI2)

Moreover, the hybrid work option may require more effort to obtain information, as it involves messaging and waiting for advice from different colleagues, compared to direct conversations in the office. Communication in a remote or digital setting generally necessitates that individuals know how and what to ask (LT2, FI2), but is not prone to spontaneous exchanges of knowledge.

Additionally, hybrid work settings can inhibit onboarding and on-the-job training for new employees if the frequency of remote work is very high. It has been noted that some information does not get transferred to newer colleagues when they are not physically sitting next to more experienced colleagues and being shown how to use certain work tools (FI2). In this company, the line manager expressed that new employees need more support, but there are no common guidelines within the organisation, and ultimately it depends on the line manager. In contrast, in structured and balanced models, new employees are either encouraged to work on-site (LT1) or formally excluded from hybrid work (AT1, AT2).

Communication

Lastly, the change in communication patterns in hybrid work settings has also been highlighted. It is recognised that face-to-face interactions (both formal and informal) play an important role in fostering stronger links among staff members, which in turn contribute to smoother coordination within the organisation (FI1, LT3, LT1, AT2, ES3). With most employees working from home, in-person interactions and informal communication become rare, possibly impacting team and organisational engagement (FI1, LT3, ES3).

> *At the beginning [after the lockdown] people used to say that they did not see the need to come to the office since they could accomplish the same tasks from home. However, over time, they realised the importance of meeting face-to-face again, because before they used to know how your children or your partner were and what you did on weekends, and now they may find themselves in the cafeteria with other people they don't even know.* (Organisation representative – ES3)

As such, some measures have been taken to foster stronger links among staff members. For instance, some teams agree to have team meetings on-site for at least some specified time and training and guidance are provided to managers by the HR department aimed at reinforcing social links and personal acquaintance among employees (AT1, AT2, ES2, ES3). In one case, both the employee representative and an employee raised the fact that communication and connection among team members and between managers and workers have improved as a result of flexible hybrid work (FI2).

> *Connection has improved because we talk more with my manager today than when we were sitting on different floors of an office building.* (Employee representative – FI2)

Overall, the shift to hybrid work has impacted how work is organised and managed in organisations. However, the magnitude of the impact of these changes depends on the specific hybrid work model adopted and the implantation of mitigation practices that address some of the challenges associated with the evolving roles of line managers, collaboration, communication, and knowledge transfer. Selected practices are outlined in Box 3 below.

Box 3. Examples of work organisation practices tailored for hybrid work

Embracing and supporting the changing role of line managers

It was agreed to have frequent one-on-one conversations between employees and line managers to establish strong, trusting relationships. Moreover, frequent training is provided for line managers on how to identify issues, conduct discussions with employees about them, and take appropriate actions, particularly in cases of absence. As part of the managers' training module, the company included a specific topic focused on hybrid work management in 2022. (FI2)

Mandatory online training courses on decentralised management that are specifically related to managing individuals working from home are provided for (prospective) line managers and department managers. There are also voluntary courses for line managers on "digital leadership" or "leadership in the home office". Participation in voluntary courses is high. (AT2)

Facilitating team collaboration

To mitigate the challenge of time zone differences, tasks are initiated or delegated during the regular working hours of team members in the 'home' time zone. As these team members sign off during their day, they pass on the tasks to those abroad, who continue working during their local daytime hours to maintain task continuity. Employees abroad are intentionally assigned tasks that require minimal collaboration, thereby reducing any potential negative impact on workflow. (LT2)

The Human Resources Department recommends scheduling meetings during core working hours from 10:00 to 16:00 and reducing their maximum duration to allow for a 10-minute break between sessions. Fridays are also designated as meeting-free to facilitate planning and individual reflection. (ES2)

Using virtual tools for coordination, collaboration and performance monitoring

Lithuanian public sector institutions, including the studied organisation, use their own online document management platform '*Avilys*'. Here, employees gather information, prepare legal documents, upload required files, send them to different entities, and electronically sign them. This system also enhances monitoring capabilities, allowing line managers to track document movement, monitor information updates over time, and oversee the signing process. (LT3)

The institution uses the 'situation room' platform, a digital system employed for task management and performance monitoring within teams. This platform tracks task progress based on available workdays, strives for consistent performance over time, identifies anomalies in performance rates, and enables line managers to review team performance weekly and address any issues collaboratively with employees. (FI2)

Encouraging knowledge transfer at the organisation level

The line manager highlighted regular "lunch and learn" sessions where employees present their current projects, which have proven to be more popular than pre-pandemic in-person meetings. The company also holds a weekly meeting open to all employees and with high attendance, during which teams present their results. Additionally, the company has established "guilds," which are online communities of practice that bring together workers working in similar fields, such as Android or iOS development, but for different clients. These guilds serve as a valuable platform for the exchange of specialised knowledge and mutual learning across different departments. An employee who frequently works abroad also cited the guilds as an effective learning space. (LT2)

Fostering communication and engagement

The institution has implemented specific guidelines emphasising the importance of community and placing responsibility on managers to ensure that connections within the work community remain strong despite high workplace flexibility. Line managers are also directed to conduct frequent face-to-face meetings with their teams at local offices, thereby reinforcing interpersonal connections and organisational unity even in a hybrid work environment. (FI1)

Implications for human resources management

Besides changes in work organisation practices, the adoption of hybrid work can influence HR practices and strategies, including recruitment, retention, and the implementation of occupational health and safety (OSH) policies.

Recruitment and retention

Literature highlights that hybrid work can benefit organisations by expanding their recruitment area, potentially attracting workers who may be better suited and/or more skilled to meet employers' needs, but reside outside commuting areas of the organisation's offices (Korkeakunnas et al., 2023; Vartiainen, 2021). This effect has also been observed in practice, especially in flexible, unconstrained hybrid work models, as hybrid work enables the recruitment of qualified employees from different locations (including abroad or in different cities than the company's location). This flexibility in hiring expands the 'talent pool', allowing organisations to access individuals with specialised skills that may not be readily available locally.

> *In our case, hybrid work allowed us to attract people from Klaipėda because we work with water transport and Klaipėda has a seaport. This gave us the opportunity to specifically attract specialists from there.* (Employee 2 – LT3)

Research also suggests that hybrid work can improve employee retention (Allen et al, 2015, Harker et al, 2012). According to Sokolic (2022), hybrid work has led employees to value flexibility in their occupational choices, making it a prerequisite for retaining 'talent'. In practice, most employees see hybrid work as a valuable employment benefit and a reason to remain with the organisation (AT1, AT2, ES2, FI1, FI2, LT1, LT2, LT3). In some instances, hybrid work facilitated employees to remain with the company despite changes in their personal circumstances (AT1, ES2, LT3).

> *I specifically started working after the first wave of the pandemic and then fully relocated to the Netherlands. Since then, I have been working remotely, except during the summer when I work in person. I considered that if I couldn't work remotely, I would have to leave my job. However, the hybrid work option allowed me to remain with the institution in this way.* (Employee 2 – LT3)

Health and safety

The introduction of hybrid work has also altered OSH policies. Employers remain legally responsible for the health and safety of hybrid workers, and in nearly all cases, this obligation is outlined in agreements on individual work arrangements, contingent upon the employee declaring the availability of an adequate workspace at home, as well as meeting other requirements such as connectivity and data safety (AT1, AT2, ES2, ES3, FI1, FI2, LT1, LT2, LT3).[45]

Following the introduction of hybrid work, the risk assessment of remote workplaces is conducted by the employees, as their homes are excluded from risk assessment procedures conducted by organisations. Organisations provide training and recommendations issued by HR or OSH departments, which offer guidance on setting up home workstations both technically and ergonomically. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of employees to ensure compliance with these recommendations. For example, in the Austrian Ministry (AT2), the occupational physician verifies home office agreements and provides advice on how to organise workstations at home, but

[45] The exception is a Spanish company exempt from this obligation due to a remote work frequency below the legal threshold (ES1).

only upon the employees' request. Similarly, in the Finnish company (FI2) there are regular training activities for both line managers and employees. A representative from the Spanish public entity (ES3) noted the possibility of conducting home visits upon employees' request, though no such requests have been made.

Furthermore, hybrid workers might be encouraged by line managers to take breaks and engage in physical activity. However, in one case, employees stated that there is no monitoring of the follow-up of these guidelines, and no assistance was provided by the company in this regard (FI2). Similar approaches are found in other organisations, in which hybrid workers are required to get familiar with general guidelines on ergonomics and healthy habits when working from home but responsibility for compliance rests on themselves (ES2, ES3, FI1, LT1, LT2, LT3).

Finally, it must be noted that no organisation includes information on respondents' hybrid work arrangements in their regular surveys on OSH, job satisfaction and work climate. Even in large organisations where hybrid work has been in place for decades (AT1, FI1) this information is absent, and there are no specific questions for assessing OSH risks in the context of remote work. Moreover, this lack of monitoring tools seems to go hand in hand with insufficient support for ensuring adequate ergonomic conditions at home. As mentioned earlier, the provision of ergonomic equipment is only regulated in one company, and two companies provide cost compensation to comply with legal provisions, but the amount is considered insufficient to set up an ergonomic workstation.

Transformation of office spaces and cost-savings

The case studies focused primarily on hybrid work implications for job quality (see Chapter 2) and those areas of performance that are closely linked to work organisation and employee well-being. Financial outcomes of the organisations involved were beyond of scope of this study. Nevertheless, one important implication for organisations' balance sheets was discovered when exploring the implications of hybrid work on the use of office spaces - namely, cost reductions due to office restructuring.

The introduction of hybrid work can lead to significant changes in office organisation. Several organisations have adjusted the number of workstations based on projections of the number of employees working on-site each day.[46] Among the organisations studied that disclosed such information, the ratio tends to be around six workstations for every ten employees. This change has led to a reduction in the overall amount of available office space, and also in the distribution adapted to the needs of hybrid work teams, with offices transformed into open and shared workspaces, and dedicated rooms for team meetings and private booths to ensure that employees can focus on their work or phone calls (AT1, FI1, ES2, ES3, LT3). The restructuring of office spaces also typically involves changes in the allocation of workstations among employees, with implications for working conditions that were analysed in Chapter 2.

More specific changes in office organisation in each case study are summarised in Table 14.

[46] The employees not working on-site include hybrid workers who are working remotely, and employees that are absent for other reasons (e.g. sick leave, holidays, work travels, work at client's premises).

Table 14. Changes in office spaces due to hybrid work

Rigid, office-first	ES1	No change.
Structured, balanced	AT1	Reduction of office space. The average ratio is 6.5 workstations for every 10 employees. It has not changed in the last 10 years. It corresponds to the evidence that no more than 60% of employees work on-site on any given day. Desk-sharing for all employees (irrespectively of whether they work hybrid or only on-site). The workstations are either in open office layout or individual booths.
	AT2	Reduction of office space has been discussed but not implemented.
	ES2	Two of the five plants of the R&D centre were leased, partially due to the adoption of hybrid work. Conversion to open office layout. Recent introduction of hot-desking for employees at the Head Office premises.
	ES3	No change in office space, but hybrid work has allowed to hire new staff. This entails a hot-desking system for each team, which is mainly managed through rotating shifts. Undergoing refurbishment project to create an open office layout with designated spaces for meetings and for hot-desking.
	LT1	Substantial reduction of office space but not quantified. In one of the locations, office attendance requires rotation and advance notification to line managers. New space areas for socialising have been designed. Hot-desking for all employees, except those that work on-site over 75% of the time.
Flexible, unconstrained	FI1	Reduction in the number of offices and space initiated by the merging of two entities in the 2010s. 6 workstations for every 10 employees.
	FI2	In the capital, the company went from renting three floors in a building to only one. Hot-desking as the default norm, with designated workstations for those employees who have expressed a preference for on-site work. Restructuring of space planned yearly according to employees' preferences; occasional overcrowding in some offices.
	LT2	50% reduction of office space. 6.3 workstations for every 10 employees. 70% of workstations are designated for employees who work on-site more regularly; 30% hot-desking.
	LT3	Some space reorganisation, introducing group workspaces without assigned seating. Team meeting rooms were established to accommodate hybrid meetings.

Source: Authors based on case studies.

The literature suggests that these changes can have a direct impact on organisational outcomes, mainly by cutting rental costs (Korkeakunnas et al., 2023; Vartiainen, 2021). This has been validated through the case study analysis. In one case (FI2), the company faced high rental costs; the introduction of hybrid work allowed them to substantially reduce spending by limiting the office space from three floors in a building to only one. In another case (ES2), downsizing of the office space allowed for leasing some parts, resulting in additional revenue.

In other cases, the adoption of hybrid work allowed for business expansion (in terms of number of hired staff) without enlarging the available office space. For example, one organisation faced increasing difficulties in accommodating a growing number of staff within its facilities (ES3). Therefore, the extension of hybrid work arrangements, with teams rotating between on-site and remote work, solved the issue and maintained or increased organisational performance.

> *In my department, we started with around 14 or 15 persons, and now there are 26 of us, including myself. Without telework this would not have been possible, as we only have 15 workstations. Thanks to telework, we have also expanded in terms of management, as work did not stop during the pandemic. We have all benefited from this arrangement*. (Line manager – ES3).

Nevertheless, in one instance, it was questioned whether hybrid work indeed helped to save costs as new systems and tools had to be implemented during the establishment of hybrid work to support the shift from on-site to remote setting (LT1).

In brief

- None of the organisations studied quantitatively monitors the direct impact of hybrid work on individual or organisational performance. Organisation-level indicators (e.g. revenue, profit, KPI) show either no change or positive evolution in the transition towards hybrid work. Individual performance assessments continue to be conducted by line managers, and it is their responsibility to address (rare) cases of individual underperformance related to hybrid work.
- Qualitative, subjective, assessments of employers, line managers, and workers suggest that hybrid work either has no direct impact on individual performance or is slightly positive.
- The main factors that enhance individual performance in the context of hybrid work are as follows:
  - Higher workers' ability to choose the time and place where they are most productive.
  - Higher workers' availability to carry out additional hours occasionally (if requested, or perceived as needed) due to the reduction of commuting times and the ease of working from home.
  - Higher efficiency due to the use of both synchronous and asynchronous virtual communication and collaboration tools (e.g. online meetings and collaborative software).
- The main factors that hinder individual performance in the context of hybrid work are as follows:
  - Inefficient use of digital communication tools (e.g. excessive online meetings, overlapping of communication and information channels).
  - Increased time and effort required to replicate casual in-person exchanges and meetings by virtual means.
- Other positive impact areas include reduced occasional absenteeism (due to flexibility to deal with personal and family responsibilities), observed in seven out of ten organisations, and a sense of increased autonomy and trust that increases motivation, noted in nine out of ten organisations.
- Overall, the direction and magnitude of these impacts depend on the nature of tasks, work organisation practices, and personal circumstances.
- The adoption of hybrid work has led to the adaptation of work organisation practices in nine out of ten organisations (the exception is the organisation that has a rigid, office-first hybrid work model). The scope of these changes depends on the type of hybrid work model. While some adaptations (e.g. the introduction of virtual communication, collaboration, and coordination tools) were noted across the board, some changes (e.g. new practices for knowledge transfer and supporting new employees, extensive use of digital communication tools) were found to be much more relevant for flexible, unconstrained models, where there is a higher frequency of remote work or hybrid work arrangements are more diverse.
- The adoption of hybrid work gives more prominence to the role of the line manager, with specificities depending on the type of hybrid work model. In structured, balanced models, the line manager plays a key role in granting and organising hybrid work. In flexible, unconstrained models, the focus is on the organisation of the hybrid team, which is often multi-located, and usually groups employees with very different hybrid work arrangements, or a large share of fully

or almost fully remote workers. In this case, additional efforts must be implemented to build trust and team cohesion.

- From the human resources perspective, while hybrid work can expand the geographical reach of hiring and improve employee retention (in seven out of ten organisations), it also presents challenges in ensuring compliance with occupational health and safety (OSH) standards in remote workplaces (for nine out of ten organisations).
- Lastly, while the assessment of financial performance was beyond the scope of this study, the direct impact of hybrid work on organisational performance was noted through cost reductions related to office downsizing or restructuring (in seven out of ten organisations).

Key takeaways

Several implications for managers, workers' representatives, practitioners, policymakers, and social partners can be drawn from the analysis of the impact of hybrid work on individual performance.

- *Longitudinal and multi-faceted perspectives*. In general, employers and employees have a positive view of hybrid work. However, there is no monitoring of key aspects (such as OSH, or the impact on working conditions) in connection with hybrid work, even in organisations where hybrid work has been widely used for decades. Over time, some drawbacks of hybrid work may emerge. Management, in collaboration with workers' representatives, should devote more effort to monitoring the impact of hybrid work arrangements on working conditions and workers' health and well-being. In particular, organisations should assess the balance between short-term productivity gains (e.g. reduced absenteeism as employees work during mild sickness) and long-term sustainability (e.g. deterioration of employees' health due to such practices, which sometimes entail work during serious sickness).
- *Individual variations*. The direction and magnitude of impacts on individual performance depend on the nature of tasks, work organisation practices, and personal circumstances. While hybrid work may benefit the majority, HR practitioners should pay attention to outliers whose performance might suffer, for example, due to inadequate remote work environments. Social partners and policymakers might play a role in protecting those who might lose on hybrid work adoption (e.g. ensuring higher support for setting up adequate home workstations and/or promoting alternative remote workplaces)

Likewise, some takeaways can be drawn from the analysis of the impacts of hybrid work at the organisation level:

- *Work organisation adaptations*. Depending on the type of hybrid work model and the scope of time and place flexibility, organisations might need to adapt their work organisation practices to varying degrees (working time, virtual communication and collaboration, performance assessment). Examples of such adaptations have been identified in this study, but social partners could work further to identify good practices and develop guidelines designed to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks of hybrid work for organisations.
- *Evolving OSH responsibilities.* While employers remain legally responsible for the health and safety of their staff, in practice, employees are the ones who must take steps to ensure the ergonomics of their remote workplaces. Whereas guidelines and recommendations might be offered, few organisations provide concrete support (e.g. financing) to help guarantee that OSH standards are met. This is a field where social dialogue and collective bargaining at sectoral and company levels could take steps to ensure that employee rights are respected in this context.

Policymakers and social partners should also assess whether existing legal provisions are adequate.

- *Implications for competitiveness* Though the analysis of financial outcomes is out of the scope of this study, a significant 'trigger' for or 'side effect' of hybrid work has been noted: saving costs due to office restructuring. This requires closer attention from industry leaders (e.g. considering the potential competitive edge of firms that opt for more flexible hybrid work models and can significantly reduce costs) and policymakers (e.g. implications of lower demand for office spaces for urban planning).
- *Hybrid vis-a-vis remote work*. A balanced approach between on-site and remote work seems to be beneficial for both individual and organisational performance in most contexts, allowing for focused deep work remotely while sustaining social relationships and facilitating knowledge sharing through face-to-face interactions.

4 – Conclusions

This report presents a comparative analysis of ten exploratory case studies on hybrid work in post-COVID-19 pandemic settings.

The selection of organisations was guided by the aim of maximising diversity in contextual and organisational factors that influence the design and implementation of hybrid work. The sample encompassed organisations from four countries (Austria, Finland, Lithuania, and Spain), each with distinct characteristics as regards the prevalence of hybrid work, regulation of remote work, and industrial relations. The selection also ensured variety in terms of public and private sectors, economic activities, and size.

The small number of case studies and their exploratory nature limit the generalisation of findings. It is important to note that case studies should not be deemed representative of other organisations, but illustrative of diverse approaches and practices in the EU. Moreover, the research design and fieldwork development may have introduced biases which must be considered in the analysis. As on-site workers were not interviewed, there is limited information on potential grievances and equity issues. Furthermore, the organisations that participated in the study may have a more favourable situation than average, leading to limited information on the potential challenges and negative outcomes.

Despite these caveats, the report is expected to offer valuable practical knowledge into the design and implementation of hybrid work and its implications on individual and organisational performance, and notably on hybrid workers' working conditions.

Trends

Overall, the analysis of case studies supports the view that 'hybrid work is here to stay'. In organisations where hybrid work was already extended pre-pandemic, compulsory remote work further consolidated it, with some adaptations. The pandemic has had a more disruptive impact on organisations with limited or no previous experience with this arrangement. All but one adopted a new, post-pandemic hybrid model favouring substantial remote work (from 40% of working time to no restrictions). One organisation mainly reversed to pre-pandemic practices, although maintaining one remote day per week to meet workers' preferences.

Hybrid work is predominantly perceived as a win-win approach. For managers, the initial trigger to implement hybrid work varies across organisations, while the reasons for maintaining hybrid work tend to diversify over time, including saving office costs, attracting and retaining workers, increasing internal flexibility, or improving work processes and service delivery through digitalisation. For workers, the main driver to take up hybrid work is saving commuting time and its positive impact on work-life balance, as well as related cost savings. Hybrid work paired with working time flexibility is also highly appreciated for improving work-life balance. Other work-intrinsic benefits tend to emerge over time, deriving from increased autonomy over when and where to work, including the opportunity for more focused work, higher efficiency in carrying out tasks and meeting objectives, and an increased sense of recognition and trust.

Characteristics of hybrid work models

In all organisations, hybrid work is a voluntary option for workers, established through a consistent set of rules, which relies on individual agreement with the line manager. The design and management of hybrid work differs widely across organisations, depending on the context and organisational factors, and the rationale behind its adoption. Three main types of hybrid work models were identified:

1. Rigid, office-first (adopted in one organisation). Equal rules agreed at the highest management level; low frequency of remote work (20%); low working time flexibility;
2. Structured, balanced (adopted in five organisations). The model sets general rules and line managers have a large say in granting and/or organising hybrid work; balanced frequency of remote work (40-60%); high working time flexibility;
3. Flexible, unconstrained (adopted in four organisations). The model sets general rules and the uptake of hybrid work depends largely on individual preferences, while line managers play a prominent role in organising hybrid teams; no restrictions on full-time remote work; working time flexibility differs.

Overall, nine out of ten organisations have adopted a decentralised model with flexibility to implement hybrid work across and within teams. While these models can accommodate different operational and individual needs, they also entail the risk of discretionary line managers' practices. In this regard, equity issues were reported in two organisations with little or no previous experience with this arrangement before the pandemic.

Role of social dialogue

Workers' representatives have been actively involved in the design and implementation of hybrid work in line with different traditions and recent trends in industrial relations. In seven out of nine organisations in which there is employee representation hybrid work was adopted through direct or indirect agreements with workers' representatives.

Social dialogue has played a key role in ensuring voluntary and equitable access. In one organisation, the works council participates in the monitoring of office restructuring, including the ratio between office workstations and employees. In another organisation, it was agreed to provide compensation to workers in non-managerial positions who cannot work hybrid due to the nature of their tasks.

As managers, workers' representatives have different views on the optimal frequency of remote work. In the organisations studied, they are aligned with management in defending a certain balance between on-site and remote work, although some employees would prefer full-time remote work.

In the analysed organisations, some sort of cost compensation is only provided when legally required, while three organisations facilitate workers' purchase of ergonomic equipment at a low price. In general, employees and worker representatives consider employers' support for ergonomic equipment and cost compensation insufficient. These issues are gaining prominence, but they have not been the primary focus in the negotiation of agreements on hybrid work.

Implications for job quality

The main and most direct benefits of hybrid work for workers are saving commuting time and its positive impact on work-life balance, as well as related cost savings. Hybrid work has different

implications for job quality, with more relevant impacts on working time and the physical and social environment. The analysis also shows that hybrid work can lead to more equitable employment and working conditions by decreasing the gender gap in contracted hours and enhancing employment opportunities for workers living in isolated areas.

The implications of hybrid work for job quality vary depending on a range of individual and organisational factors. The main individual factors are:

- Length of commuting time. The longer the commuting time, the higher the preference for hybrid work and the higher the preferred frequency of remote work.
- Personal circumstances and traits, including care responsibilities, household characteristics, and the quality of the working environment at home, along with individual preferences on the management of boundaries between work and private domains.
- Job-related factors, in particular, the nature of tasks and work autonomy. In highly interdependent teams, the positive impacts of hybrid work on job quality require additional communication, collaboration, and coordination efforts from line managers and co-workers. Moreover, the higher the level of work autonomy, the higher the impact of hybrid work on job quality, with either positive or negative implications depending on workers' ability to manage the boundaries between work and private domains.

The main organisational factors that impact job quality are the hybrid work model adopted in the organisation and how it is managed and implemented at the team level. More autonomy over when and where to work is associated with a more positive impact on job quality. Positive impacts are also boosted when the line manager actively supports hybrid work and implements effective virtual team communication and collaboration practices.

The combination of hybrid work with working time flexibility is highly appreciated by workers, especially those with care responsibilities, as it enhances their ability to accommodate their job demands and personal lives. However, the possibility of working remotely anytime also conceals instances of excessive workload and understaffing, resulting in additional, not reported, and not compensated work hours, and even leading sick employees to work from home. In some instances, these issues remain invisible to management, while other organisations were able to recognise and address them.

Hybrid workers benefit from reduced commuting stress and improved well-being, but poor ergonomic conditions at home and increased sedentarism pose risks to their health and safety. While a higher frequency of remote work increases OSH risks, these risks are exacerbated by a lack of organisational support for setting ergonomic home stations.

While most employees highly appreciate the option of working hybrid, the voluntary nature of this arrangement is at risk when the reduction in office space is not well planned and managed. Issues of overcrowding were found in some organisations, while others have closed some offices, making it not feasible for employees residing in distant locations to return to on-site work.

In instances of limited on-site work and in-person interaction, issues related to socialisation in the workplace, support from colleagues and supervisors, and informal job training (transfer of tacit knowledge) were reported, being especially relevant for young and new workers. Management in one organisation recognised the importance of these challenges, promoting regular online meetings

and initiatives to foster exchange across teams and supporting line managers to improve virtual communication and collaboration among team members.

Implications for performance and organisational outcomes

In all cases, organisation-level indicators (e.g. revenue, profit, and KPI) show positive results in the transition towards hybrid work. In seven organisations, hybrid work improved financial performance through cost reductions related to office restructuring.

None of the studied organisations quantitatively assesses the direct effect of hybrid work on individual or organisational performance, as management does not perceive the need for such metrics. It is the responsibility of line managers to address (rare) cases of individual underperformance due to hybrid work. In fact, there is a wide consensus among employers, workers' representatives, line managers, and employees that hybrid work does not undermine individual performance and, in some cases, improves it. It is also widely agreed that hybrid work brings a sense of increased autonomy and trust, which increases motivation.

The main factors that enhance individual performance are:

- Higher workers' ability to choose the place and time when they are most productive.
- Reduction of commuting time, which facilitates increased availability of workers to carry out additional work on an occasional basis, if requested, or perceived as needed.
- Higher efficiency due to the use of both synchronous and asynchronous virtual communication and collaboration tools (e.g. online meetings and collaborative software).

The main factors that hinder individual performance are:

- Inefficient use of virtual communication tools, such as overlapping communication and information channels.
- Increased time and effort required to replicate casual in-person exchanges and meetings by virtual means.

Overall, the direction and magnitude of these impacts depend on the nature of tasks, work organisation practices, and personal circumstances.

Except in the case of the rigid, office-first model, where remote work is rather residual, the adoption of hybrid work requires the adaptation of work organisation practices. Some changes, such as the use of virtual tools, were noted across the board. Other changes proved to be more significant for flexible, unrestricted models where there is limited face-to-face interaction. Specifically, these included the extensive use of virtual communication tools and new approaches for transferring tacit knowledge and supporting young and new employees.

The adoption of hybrid work also gives more prominence to the role of line managers. In structured, balanced models, the line manager plays a key role in granting and organising hybrid work, such as the allocation of remote workdays and the organisation of in-presence meetings. In flexible, unconstrained models, there is a stronger focus on the organisation and cohesion of the hybrid team, which is often multi-located and usually groups employees with very different hybrid work arrangements or a large share of fully or almost fully remote workers.

Other impacts of hybrid work have been found in terms of recruitment and retention of employees. Hybrid work can expand the geographical reach of hiring and improve employee retention. However,

it also presents challenges in ensuring compliance with occupational health and safety (OSH) standards in remote workplaces.

Policy pointers

Several implications for managers, workers' representatives, practitioners, policymakers, and social partners can be drawn from the analysis, with a view to support sustainable hybrid work practices that are beneficial for both organisations and workers.

While hybrid work is widely perceived as a win-win arrangement, there are potential tensions between the needs and expectations of employers and employees. Hybrid work relies on individual arrangements that, in principle, are contingent upon workers' negotiating capacity. Therefore, if hybrid work is left to individual negotiations, there is a risk of higher inequality, with potential negative impacts on organisational cohesion and performance. Moreover, hybrid work entails a transfer of risks and responsibilities for some aspects of work from employers to employees, such as complying with OSH and working time regulations. This might be particularly detrimental for employees in more vulnerable situations, such as those who have to cope with high work overload or time pressure, or those who have care responsibilities or a poor working environment at home. For these reasons, the development of hybrid work policies and practices that benefit both organisations and workers requires the participation of employees and their representatives. In most of the organisations studied, social dialogue and collective bargaining have proven to play a key role in establishing clear, equitable and transparent rules for accessing hybrid work and enhancing equitable uptake of hybrid work arrangements.

The regulation of remote work is a decisive factor in enhancing voluntary access to productive and healthy hybrid work while ensuring equity and fairness. Although there have been important legal changes in the aftermath of the pandemic, national regulatory frameworks still insufficiently cover or lack clarity in certain relevant aspects. There is a need for policymakers and social partners to assess the content, clarity, and enforcement of existing national regulations and take coordinated action to better support organisations through legal change, collective bargaining, social dialogue, monitoring, and exchange of good practice in the following aspects:

- *Voluntariness and equity*. In line with other studies, this report has shown that the voluntary nature of hybrid work is at risk when the restructuring of office space is not well planned and managed. Moreover, equity issues may arise if eligibility rules are restrictive or the uptake of hybrid work is hindered by discretionary practices and stigma. The regulation of remote work could play a crucial role in enhancing voluntary and equitable access to hybrid work.
- *Ergonomic conditions.* Good ergonomic conditions are a prerequisite for healthy and productive remote work, but most workers lack organisational support in setting up home offices according to OSH standards. Most employers only provide basic IT equipment, while cost compensation is only provided when legally required and its amount is insufficient for purchasing ergonomic equipment. The lack of organisational support is critical when workers are almost compelled to work remotely owing to distant office locations or office space constraints. The provision of ergonomic equipment is a crucial aspect to address.
- *Working time flexibility.* Most organisations face challenges in the regulation and management of flexitime rules (balancing actual and contracted hours) in the context of remote work.

Systems for recording work hours are not always appropriate for supporting transparency and recognition of hours worked remotely. While additional work hours should be effectively recorded and compensated, the enforcement of OSH and working time regulations (rest time and breaks) should be strengthened to protect workers' health.

- *Assessment and prevention of OSH risks*. While employers remain legally responsible for the health and safety of hybrid workers, there is a lack of instruments to collect evidence and assess basic aspects of working conditions and well-being in the context of remote work, including OSH risks. It is important to clearly identify those ergonomic and psychosocial risks that are more prevalent for hybrid workers, such as poor working posture, insufficient breaks, isolation, or poor self-management of working time, and pay attention to the risks related to intensive use of virtual communication. Improving risk assessment and engaging hybrid workers more effectively in preventing OSH risks should be prioritised. This would also contribute to identifying and addressing instances of sickness presenteeism while preventing the extension of this phenomenon.

Coordinated action in the above-mentioned aspects would facilitate organisations to address their own specific challenges in these fields. Moreover, the positive impacts of hybrid work on performance and working conditions would be enhanced if organisations, workers and their representatives consider the following aspects:

- *Management of hybrid work*. Hybrid work can be implemented in different ways, but ultimately, it is the line manager's responsibility to achieve individual agreements with workers. The line manager also plays a crucial role in identifying and addressing potential issues that may be less visible in hybrid settings, such as excessive workload and time pressure, isolation, stress, or other health problems. This not only places new tasks and more responsibilities online managers but also requires the organisation to develop common management approaches and provide effective support to line managers in their new role. This is especially needed when hybrid work is implemented in a decentralised manner. While flexibility allows for better alignment with operational and individual needs, it also entails the risk of line managers' discretionary practices. In contrast, where managers prioritise equity, proactive support, and mutual trust, hybrid work can foster a culture of collaboration, enhancing employee motivation and performance.
- *Team communication and collaboration*. Hybrid work settings require an effort to blend in-presence and virtual team communication and collaboration practices. It is important to avoid the risks of work intensification, information overload, and fatigue that stem from ineffective use of virtual channels, while also minimising potential communication gaps, feelings of isolation, and fragmented collaboration patterns. The need to adapt communication and collaboration practices is more pressing in teams with little in-person interaction, being especially relevant for supporting informal training, socialisation and career prospects of young and new workers.

Finally, it is important to refer to developments in EU remote work regulation. On 21 January 2021, the European Parliament issued a resolution calling for the Commission to propose a directive that would establish standards and conditions regarding the right to disconnect, as well as a legislative framework to establish minimum requirements for remote work and clarify working conditions. In 2022, European cross-industry social partners initiated negotiations to revise their 2002 Framework Agreement on Telework. Following their inconclusive negotiations, they requested the European Commission to address the matter. In accordance with the established rules and procedures for

social policy legislation, the Commission has launched the formal consultation of the EU social partners. Hopefully, the outcome of this process will complement coordinated action at the national level and support organisations in the implementation of productive and healthy hybrid work.

References

All Eurofound publications are available at www.eurofound.europa.eu

Aksoy, C. G., Barrero, J. M., Bloom, N., Davis, S. J., Dolls, M. and Zarate, P. (2023), 'Time savings when working from home', National Bureau of Economic Research. Working Paper 30866, January 2023.

Aksoy, C. G., Barrero, J. M., Bloom, N., Davis, S. J., Dolls, M., & Zarate, P. (2022), 'Working from home around the world', Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, 2022(2), 281-360.

Allen, T.D., Golden, T.D. and Shockley, K.M. (2015), 'How Effective Is Telecommuting? Assessing the Status of Our Scientific Findings', *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 16(2), pp. 40-68.

Arntz, M., Ben Yahmed, S. and Berlingieri, F. (2022), 'Working from home, hours worked and wages: Heterogeneity by gender and parenthood', *Labour Economics*, 76, 102169.

Barrero, J.M., Bloom, N. & Davis, S.J. (2020), 'Why working from home will stick', Becker Friedman Institute for Economics Working Paper, (2020-174), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago

Beauregard, T. A., Basile, K. A., and Canónico, E. (2019), 'Telework: Outcomes and facilitators for employees', in Landers, R. N. (Ed.) The Cambridge handbook of technology and employee behaviour, Cambride University Press, Cambridge, 511-543.

Biron, C., Karanika-Murray, M., Ivers, H., Salvoni, S. and Fernet, C. (2021), 'Teleworking while sick: a three-wave study of psychosocial safety climate, psychological demands, and presenteeism', *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 734245.

Bloom, N., Barrero, J. M., Davis, S. J., Meyer, B., & Mihaylov, E. (2023). Survey: Remote Work Isn't Going Away–And Executives Know It. *Harvard Business Review*, 28.

Borge, R. H., Johannessen, H. A., Fostervold, K. I., & Nielsen, M. B. (2023), 'Office design, telework from home, and self-certified sickness absence: A cross-sectional study of main and moderating effects in a nationally representative sample', *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, *49*(3), 222.

Chung, H. (2022), *The Flexibility Paradox: Why Flexible Working Leads to (Self-) Exploitation.* Policy Press.

Clark, B., Chatterjee, K., Martin, A., & Davis, A. (2020). How commuting affects subjective wellbeing. *Transportation*, *47*(6), 2777-2805.

Colenberg, S., Jylhä, T., & Arkesteijn, M. (2021), 'The relationship between interior office space and employee health and well-being–a literature review', *Building Research & Information*, 49(3), 352-366.

Countouris, N., De Stefano, V., Piasna, A., Rainone, S. (2023), 'Introduction', in Countouris, N., De Stefano, V., Piasna, A., Rainone, S. (Eds.) *The future of remote work,* European Trade Union Institute, Brussels.

Crawford, J. (2022). Working from home, telework, and psychological wellbeing? A systematic review. Sustainability, 14(19), 11874.

Criscuolo, C., Gal, P., Leidecker, T., Losma, F., & Nicoletti, G. (2021), 'The role of telework for productivity during and post-COVID-19: Results from an OECD survey among managers and

workers', *OECD Productivity Working Papers*, No. 31, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/7fe47de2-en.

Davis, M.C., Hughes, H.P.N., Rees, S.J., Wu, C., Gritt, E., Collis, C., & Fang, L. (2022) Where is your office today? A research-led guide to effective hybrid working. Leeds, UK: University of Leeds. https://futureworkplace.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/86/2022/05/UoL_Adapting_Offices_Interactive_Report-Where_is_Your_Office_Today_May_2022.pdf

De Menezes, L. M., & Kelliher, C. (2017), 'Flexible working, individual performance, and employee attitudes: Comparing formal and informal arrangements', *Human Resource Management*, *56*(6), 1051-1070.

Dennison, K. (2024) "How Return To Office Policies Are Impacting Employees In 2024", Forbes https://www.forbes.com/sites/karadennison/2024/07/10/how-return-to-office-policies-are-impacting-employees-in-2024/

Ding, Y., & Ma, M. (2023). Return-to-Office Mandates (December 25, 2023) http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4675401

Dragano, N. and Lunau, T. (2020), 'Technostress at work and mental health: concepts and research results, *Current opinion in psychiatry*, 33(4), 407-413.

Emanuel, N., Harrington, E., & Pallais, A. (2023), 'The power of proximity to coworkers: training for tomorrow or productivity today?', National Bureau of Economic Research, Working paper 31880.

ETUC (2024),ETUC response to the Commission's first-phase consultation of the European social partners on possible action in the area of telework and workers' right to disconnect https://www.etuc.org/en/document/etuc-response-commissions-first-phase-consultation-european-social-partners-possible-0

EU-OSHA (2021), *Regulating telework in a post- COVID-19 Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

EU-OSHA (2023), *Regulating telework in a post-COVID-19 Europe: recent developments*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2018), *Measuring varieties of industrial relations in Europe: A quantitative analysis*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2020a). *Regulations to address work-life balance in digital flexible working arrangements*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2020b), *Employee monitoring and surveillance: The challenges of digitalisation*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2021), *Right to disconnect: Exploring company practices*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Eurofound (2022a) *Overtime in Europe: Regulation and practice*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2022b), *Fifth round of the Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey: Living in a new era of uncertainty*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2022c), *Working conditions in the time of COVID-19: Implications for the future*. European Working Conditions Telephone Survey 2021 series. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2022d), *The rise in telework: Impact on working conditions and regulations*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2023a), *Hybrid work in Europe: Concept and practice*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2023b), *The future of telework and hybrid work*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2023c), *Right to disconnect: Implementation and impact at company level*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

European Central Bank (2023), 'How people want to work – preferences for remote work after the pandemic', ECB Economic Bulletin, Issue 1/2023, 50-56.

European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Martinaitis, Ž., Sadauskaitė, A., Garbašauskaitė, A. et al., *Study exploring the social, economic and legal context and trends of telework and the right to disconnect, in the context of digitalisation and the future of work, during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic* – Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/532522

Giménez-Nadal, J. I., Molina, J. A., & Velilla, J. (2022), 'Trends in commuting time of European workers: A cross-country analysis', *Transport Policy*, 116, 327-342.

Golden, T. D., and Gajendran, R. S. (2019), 'Unpacking the role of a telecommuters' job in their performance: examining job complexity, problem solving, interdependence, and social support', *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 34(1), 55-69.

Gratton, L. (2021), How to do hybrid right. *Harvard Business Review, 99*(3), 65-74.

Gratton, L. (2023). Redesigning How We Work. *Harvard Business Review*, *101*(3-4), 68-75.

Gruber-Risak, M. (2021). Homeoffice-Maßnahmenpaket 2021 (Stand IA 1301/A). Eine erste Einschätzung der arbeitsrechtlichen Inhalte. RDB.at. Manz.

Hackney, A., Yung, M., Somasundram, K. G., Nowrouzi-Kia, B., Oakman, J., & Yazdani, A. (2022), 'Working in the digital economy: A systematic review of the impact of work from home arrangements on personal and organizational performance and productivity', Plos one, 17(10), e0274728.

Harker Martin, B., & MacDonnell, R. (2012), 'Is telework effective for organizations? A meta-analysis of empirical research on perceptions of telework and organizational outcomes' *Management Research Review*, *35*(7), 602-616.

Hodzic, S., Kubicek, B., Uhlig, L., & Korunka, C. (2021), 'Activity-based flexible offices: effects on work-related outcomes in a longitudinal study', *Ergonomics*, *64*(4), 455-473.

Homewood Health (2023), 'Thriving in Hybrid Work Environments'. Vitality [newsletter], retrieved from: https://www.ufv.ca/media/assets/human-resources/benefits/employee-and-family-assistance-program-/VITALITY-January-2023-Thriving-in-Hyrbrid-Work-Envrionments.pdf

Hong, Q. N., Li, J., Kersalé, M., Dieterlen, E., Mares, A., Ahmadian Sangkar, Z., ... and Coutu, M. F. (2024), 'Work Disability and Musculoskeletal Disorders Among Teleworkers: A Scoping Review', *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 1-13.

Hopkins, J. and Bardoel, A. (2023), 'The future is hybrid: how organisations are designing and supporting sustainable hybrid work models in post-pandemic Australia', *Sustainability*, *15*(4), 3086.

Johnston, S. (2023), *The Impact of the Corporate Workspace on Employee Happiness and Turnover Rate*. Management Undergraduate Honors Theses https://scholarworks.uark.edu/mgmtuht/23

Kelliher, C., & Anderson, D. (2010), 'Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work', *Human Relations*, 63(1), 83–106.

Kilcullen, M., Feitosa, J., & Salas, E. (2022), 'Insights From the Virtual Team Science: Rapid Deployment During COVID-19', *Human Factors: The Journal of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society*, *64*(8), 1429-1440.

Knoll, M., Feldt, M., & Zacher, H. (2022), 'Effects of Technology-Enabled Flexible Work Arrangements on Employee Voice: Toward a Nuanced Understanding', *mrev management revue*, *33*(3), 303-334.

Korkeakunnas, T.; Heiden, M.; Lohela-Karlsson, M.; Rambaree, K. (2023), 'Managers' Perceptions of Telework in Relation to Work Environment and Performance'. Sustainability 15, 5845.

Koslowski, A., Blum, S., Dobrotić, I., Kaufman, G., & Moss, P. (Eds) (2021). 17th International reviewof leave policies and related research 2021. International Network on Leave Policies and Research.

Lake, A. (2023), *Beyond Hybrid Working: A Smarter & Transformational Approach to Flexible Working*. Taylor & Francis.

Leonardi, P. M., Parker, S. H., & Shen, R. (2024), 'How Remote Work Changes the World of Work', *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *11*, 193-219.

Lewandowski, P., Lipowska, K. and Smoter, M. (2023), 'Mismatch in Preferences for Working from Home–Evidence from Discrete Choice Experiments with Workers and Employers', IZA Insitute of Labor Economics, DP No. 16041. https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/16041/mismatch-in-preferences-for-working-from-home-evidence-from-discrete-choice-experiments-with-workers-and-employers

Lunde, L. K., Fløvik, L., Christensen, J. O., Johannessen, H. A., Finne, L. B., Jørgensen, I. L., ... & Vleeshouwers, J. (2022), 'The relationship between telework from home and employee health: a systematic review', *BMC public health*, *22*(1), 47.

Matysiak, A., Kasperska, A. and Cukrowska-Torzewska, E. (2023), 'Mechanisms Underlying the Effects of Work From Home on Careers in the Post-Covid Context', No. 2023-28.

Messenger, J. (2023), 'Some reflections on the experience of teleworking during the Covid-19 pandemic: a paradigm shift and its implications for the world of work', in Countouris et al. (Eds.) The future of remote work. European Trade union Institute, Brussels, 19-29.

Morrison, R. L., & Macky, K. A. (2017), 'The demands and resources arising from shared office spaces', *Applied ergonomics*, 60, 103-115.

Mutiganda, J. C., Wiitavaara, B., Heiden, M., Svensson, S., Fagerström, A., Bergström, G., & Aboagye, E. (2022), 'A systematic review of the research on telework and organizational economic performance indicators', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1035310.

Nagler, M., Rincke, J., & Winkler, E. (2024), 'Working from home, commuting, and gender', *Journal of Population Economics*, *37*(3), 1-23.

Oakman J, Kinsman N, Stuckey R, Graham M, Weale V. (2020), 'A rapid review of mental and physical health effects of working at home: how do we optimise health?', *BMC Public Health*, 20(1), 1825.

Richardson, A., Potter, J., Paterson, M., Harding, T., Tyler-Merrick, G., Kirk, R., Reid, K., & McChesney, J. (2017), 'Office design and health: A systematic review', *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 130(1467), 39–49.

Sardeshmukh, S. R., Sharma, D., & Golden, T. D. (2012), 'Impact of telework on exhaustion and job engagement: A job demands and job resources model', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 27(3), 193-207.

Scharf, N., Lükemann, L., Schubert, P., Williams, S., Abendroth, A., and Schwarz, A. (2023), 'Is the Structure of "Regular Working Days" about to Dissolve? Changes in Employees' Time-Use Patterns Working in Enterprise Collaboration Systems During the COVID-19 Pandemic', *Procedia Computer Science*, 219, 431-438.

Skountridaki, L., Lee, W. V., & Rouhani, L. (2024), 'Missing voices: Office space discontent as a driving force in employee hybrid work preferences', *Industrial Relations Journal*, *55*(1), 54-77.

Smite, D. et al. (2023b), 'The Future Workplace: Characterizing the Spectrum of Hybrid Work Arrangements for Software Teams', *IEEE Software*, 40(2).

Sokolic, D. (2022), 'Remote work and hybrid work organizations'. Conference: Economic and Social Development Volume: 78th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development (Book of Proceedings). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359056200_REMOTE_WORK_AND_HYBRID_WORK_ORGANIZATIONS

Sostero, Matteo & Milasi, Santo & Hurley, John & Macias, Enrique & Bisello, Martina. (2023), 'Teleworkability and the COVID-19 crisis: potential and actual prevalence of remote work across Europe', *IZA Journal of Labor Policy,* vol.13, no.l.

Steidelmüller, C., Meyer, S. C., & Müller, G. (2020), ,Home-based telework and presenteeism across Europe', *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 62(12), 998-1005.

Taskin, L. and Bridoux, F. (2010), 'Telework: a challenge to knowledge transfer in organizations', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21 (13), 2503-2520.

Tran, L. (2022). 'The Impact of Hybrid Work on Productivity: Understanding the Future of Work: A case study in agile software development teams' (Dissertation). Retrieved from http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:kth:diva-318133

Tsipursky, G. (2023), 'The importance of a tailored hybrid work model decision framework for different departments and roles', Leader to Leader, 109, 56-62.

Van der Lippe, T. and Lippényi, Z. (2020). 'Co-workers working from home and individual and team performance', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 35(1), 60-79.

Van Zoonen, W., & Sivunen, A.E. (2021), 'The impact of remote work and mediated communication frequency on isolation and psychological distress', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 1-12.

Vartiainen, M. (2021), 'Telework and remote work' in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology,* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Waizenegger, L., McKenna, B., Cai, W., and Bendz, T. (2020), 'An affordance perspective of team collaboration and enforced working from home during COVID-19'. *European European Journal of Information Systems*, 29(4), 429-442.

Wajcman, J. (2015), *Pressed for Time: The Acceleration of Life in Digital Capitalism*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Weinert, C.; Maier, C.; Laumer, S. (2015), 'Why are teleworkers stressed? An empirical analysis of the causes of telework-enabled stress', in Thomas. O.; Teuteberg, F. (Hrsg.): Proceedings der 12. Internationalen Tagung Wirtschaftsinformatik (WI 2015), Osnabrück, S. 1407-1421

Williamson, H. (2022), An evaluation of the impacts of Remote Working. Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service. Available at: https://assets.gov.ie/224572/d637c09f-d97e-4a75-8852-a3b7f215b57b.pdf

Yang, L., Holtz, D., Jaffe, S., Suri, S., Sinha, S., Weston, J., Joyce, C., Shah, N., Sherman, K., Hecht, B., & Teevan, J. (2022), 'The effects of remote work on collaboration among information workers', *Nature Human Behaviour*, 6(1), 43-54.

Yin, R. K. (2018), *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zamani E. et al. (2022), 'Information Systems Journal: Special Issue The new wave of "hybrid work": An opportunity to revise assumptions and build theory '. Retrieved from: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/pb-assets/assets/13652575/SI%20HW%20CFP%20FINAL-1-1659455572190.pdf

Zuzul, T., Cox Pahnke, E., Larson, J., Bourke, P., Caurvina, N., Parikh Shah, N., ... and Priebe, C. E. (2024), 'Dynamic Silos: Increased Modularity and Decreased Stability in Intraorganizational Communication Networks During the COVID-19 Pandemic', *Management Science*. https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2022.02797

Annex - Interview guides

Interview guide for organisation and workers' representatives

1. Hybrid work model in the organisation

1.1 Please briefly describe the hybrid work policy of your organisation. When was it established? What was the main rationale? How does it fit in the overall work organisation practices in the organisation?

1.2 How are hybrid work arrangements managed in the organisation? Are these informally/individually agreed within working teams or organisation areas or are regulated as part of an organisation's internal policy or collective agreement? Is it still in its first iteration or have amendments been made (and if so, why)? Was the policy/agreement in place pre-pandemic or was it introduced as a result of COVID/Did it change as a result of COVID? Is there a (pre-planned) regular review process for hybrid work arrangements?

1.3 Who has access to hybrid work arrangements? Are differences among groups of workers on the grounds on their functions or responsibilities or depending on employee's tasks and 'teleworkability'? Is hybrid work available from day 1 of starting at the organisation? What is the procedure for obtaining access?

1.4 Can you specify the terms and conditions of individual hybrid work arrangements, and which aspects are covered in terms of voluntariness and reversibility, frequency and duration, cost-sharing, the provision of equipment? Is hybrid work mainly about working from the office or home? Are remote hubs in place? Does the hybrid work policy include an explicit right to disconnect?

1.5 Please provide an overview of the numbers and profiles of workers in hybrid work arrangements in the organisation and how these have changed in recent times. What are the main characteristics (gender, age, job functions) and the average frequency of work outside regular office/main premises? Are there differences within the organisation (areas or business units) in the prevalence of hybrid work?

1.6 Please assess the influence (if any) of recent changes in the regulation of remote work (or telework) through any form of legislation or high-level collective bargaining (at sectoral or organisation level) in the management of hybrid work arrangements in the organisation.

1.7 Does the organisation get any financial incentive from public funds, government agencies, business associations, etc. regarding hybrid work (e.g. access to remote work hubs, financial relief for purchased office equipment for use by employees working remotely, etc.)?

2. Implications for performance and organisational outcomes

2.1 Please indicate what are the main motivations for the adoption of hybrid work arrangements in the organisation (e.g. is it used by the organisation to support recruitment and retention? Is it used to reduce the costs with the office?) In what way do you think hybrid work can contribute to improved employee performance?

2.2 Do you have any evidence of how hybrid work affects organisational outcomes (e.g. work environment, job satisfaction, organisational culture, work climate, sickness absence,

attractiveness, recruitment and retention of certain groups of workers, such as women with caring responsibilities, or workers with disabilities)? In your opinion, what are the main challenges and opportunities of hybrid work for organisational performance or related organisational outcomes (knowledge transfer within organisation, team coordination, and innovation capacity)?

2.3 Were there any changes in the work organisation practices in order to implement hybrid work? Has there been any training for managers concerning remote/virtual management and team coordination? Were there any changes in the processes and tools that team leaders or line managers use to monitor workers performance? Please indicate other aspects in which the adoption of hybrid work has had an impact, such as the restructuring of office spaces.

3. Implications for working conditions

Physical and social environment - OSH

3.1 What are the main risk factors associated to hybrid work (e.g. poor ergonomic conditions at home, repetitive movements, isolation, work-family conflict, work intensity, technostress)? Are there differences among hybrid workers? Which workers are more exposed to these risks?

3.2 Are you aware of the prevalence of health issues (physical or psychosocial) related to the practice of hybrid work in the organisation?

3.3 Is there any link between hybrid work and sick leave in the organisation? Are hybrid workers more or less likely to take sick days than regular workers?

3.4 What are the OSH risk assessment and management strategies in the organisation with regard to hybrid work? Does the organisation have a document in place that explains responsibilities or procedures on health and safety of hybrid workers? Which aspects are covered? Do risk assessments cover workplaces at home? Who is responsible for assessing OSH at the home/remote workplace? Do team leaders and line managers receive any training on how to manage health and safety in their teams? Do employees receive any training or guidelines on how to deal with health and safety at home? Does the organisation provide some form of assistance for the enforcement of OSH standards among hybrid workers?

Working time and work-life balance

3.5 What are the working time patterns of hybrid workers and which ways these differ from that for regular workers? Do hybrid workers tend to work longer hours? Are they more likely to work on irregular work schedules? Are there any differences depending on workers' characteristics? (e.g. job functions or family responsibilities) Why? Do employees under hybrid work arrangements enjoy more autonomy over the allocation of their working time? Are there any limits to this flexibility (e.g. core hours in which workers need to be available).

3.6 How is working time of remote workers monitored? Is there any organisation policy or guidelines relative to the 'right to disconnect' or regulating the use of communication channels beyond regular working hours? What is its content; does it apply to all workers; how is its implementation and impact monitored? Is there any link between such policies and the distribution of work (i.e., management of workload)?

3.7 Please, assess in which ways hybrid workers benefit from improved work-life balance opportunities than regular workers, and to what extent hybrid work is granted for work-life balance purposes. Are there differences between men and women in terms of improvements in work-life balance experienced (is there any evidence from staff surveys on this)?

Work organisation, autonomy and work intensity

3.8 Do you think that hybrid work provides more discretion to workers to organise their tasks and cope with their workload? if so, in which ways?

Job prospects

3.9 Do you think that hybrid workers have the same access to training and career progression opportunities than regular workers? And among hybrid workers, between men and women? Is there any measure or organisation policy on this issue? Is any data gathered to monitor this systematically?

Organisational participation and workplace voice

3.10 How do you think that hybrid work affects employees' engagement with their job and their involvement in decision-making processes within the organisation or their respective working teams? Is there any policy in place to address these risks?

Intrinsic job features and overall job satisfaction

3.11 Do you have any indicator or idea on the overall satisfaction with the job of hybrid workers compared to regular workers? Do you think that the possibility of working hybrid is an incentive (intrinsic reward) for employees' motivation and job satisfaction? Do you think that employees feel more trusted and recognised by managers and the organisation by having the opportunity to work in a hybrid way? Do you think of hybrid work as a component of the organisations' overall compensation package?

4. Contextual information

Missing aspects about the contextual information of the organisation, not available before the interview, were asked at the end of the interview.

Contextual information includes: 1) Type of organisation (for profit, public, NGO) and ownership; 2) Type of employee representation body; 3) Sector (NACE code); 4) Year of establishment; 5) Geographical coverage/operation: multinational (which other countries), national, regional, local; 6) Number of establishments; 7) Total number of employees, number of employees in the selected unit of analysis; 8) Gender and age profile of workers; 9) Predominant types of employment contract; 10) Main occupational profiles.

Interview guide for line managers

1. Contextual information

1.1 Please briefly introduce yourself, indicating your job position, main functions in the organisation, and the size and main characteristics of the working team under supervision.

2. Features of hybrid work model

2.1 What are your main roles and responsibilities in the management of hybrid work arrangements within your working team?

2.2 Can you specify the eligibility criteria for hybrid work? Are there any organisational guidelines or procedures on this? Do the organisational guidelines provide any leeway for line managers to implement them according to the requirements of their specific teams? If so, describe the leeway available and whether differences between teams in terms of implementation are monitored? Do you think these criteria are perceived as fair and equitable by workers?

2.3 What are the characteristics of hybrid workers in your working team or organisation area under your supervision? Which is the average frequency of remote work and how is distributed throughout the working week? What is the degree of workers' autonomy to decide on when and where to work outside the office?

2.4 Based on your experience, what are the main motivations for working hybrid? How these have changed in recent times, and notably since the pandemic. Do you think that access to telework has been eased following the pandemic? If teleworking was in place prior to the pandemic, has the experience of the pandemic had an impact on how willing/keen and prepared workers are to work in hybrid arrangements?

3. Implications for individual and team performance

3.1 In which ways do you think that hybrid work contributes to employees' performance and other organisational outcomes? In your opinion, what are the main benefits and challenges of hybrid work in terms of team coordination and engagement? What do you do to ensure that employees learn from each other and contribute with new ideas about improvement of products, service, processes, problem-solving, etc?

3.2 How do you think that hybrid work impacts the performance of managerial functions (i.e., coordination and monitoring)? How have you adapted to the implementation of hybrid work in your organisation and working team under you supervision? Have you received specific training or guidelines? In which aspects? How do you manage the coordination of working teams in a hybrid work context? In your view, what is different in terms of managing onsite and offsite staff? How has the team workflow been adapted to hybrid work?

3.3 How do you assess and monitor the performance of hybrid workers? What are the main tools and practices in use? Are these different from those in place for regular workers? Do you think that the experience of hybrid work has altered overall work organisation and the way in which workers' performance is assessed in the organisation (for instance, from a presence- to output-based system)? Would you agree that hybrid work needs to be based in a trust relationship with employees?

4. Implications for working conditions

Physical and social environment – OSH

4.1 What is the role of line managers in the implementation of risk management strategies in the organisation? What are the specific provisions for hybrid workers? Have you received specific training or advice about the risks of telework and hybrid work? Are you aware of the main physical and psychosocial risks factors associated to this way of working? What are the workers profiles more exposed?

4.2 Are you aware of the prevalence of health issues in connection with hybrid work among workers under your supervision? How do you address these issues? Please, provide some examples of the actions undertaken as part of your managerial functions (supervision and coordination). Do you think that the specific features of hybrid work demand particular strategies to support hybrid workers?

4.3 Do you think that hybrid work can improve workers' health and wellbeing? For all or particular groups of workers? According to your experience, what are the managerial skills or capabilities required for managing OSH issues in hybrid work contexts?

Working time and work-life balance

4.4 Do you think working time patterns of hybrid workers differ from those working on site? In which ways? Have you adopted any guidelines or practices regarding the management of working time of hybrid workers? Otherwise, have you been involved in defining the guidelines and practices regarding the management of working time of hybrid workers? For instance, regarding working time control to prevent overtime or the establishment of availability time and meeting schedules.

4.5 What can be the role of line managers for helping hybrid workers to manage their work and non-work family boundaries?

Work organisation, autonomy and work intensity

4.6 Do you think that hybrid work provides more discretion to workers to organise their tasks and cope with their workload? if so, in which ways? Do you think that hybrid work contributes to reduce job strain?

Job prospects

4.7 Do you think that hybrid workers have the same access to training and career progression opportunities than regular workers? And among hybrid workers, between men and women?

Organisational participation and workplace voice

4.8 Would you say that hybrid workers are less involved or engaged in decision-making processes or normal information and communication flows? Is there any measure in place for ensuring involvement of hybrid workers on decision-making processes on equal footing with rest of the workers?

Intrinsic job features

4.9 Do you think that workers feel more trusted and recognised by the organisation since they are given the possibility to work hybrid? Would you say that this possibility has improved their sense of competence and their motivation to perform at their best?

Interview guide for employees (focus group)

1. Contextual information

1.1 Please briefly introduce yourself, indicating your job position, department and main functions in the organisation. What are the main tasks you carry out, which is the degree of autonomy in performing your tasks and the extent to which the performance of your tasks is dependent on teamwork?

2. Main features of hybrid work in the organisation

2.2 When did you start working hybrid? What are the main reasons for working hybrid? In case it was an option and not a contractual requirement, which procedure did you follow to request hybrid work? And what is your pattern of hybrid work (where, how many days)? Do you have flexibility to decide when and where to work outside office premises? Has this changed over time?

2.3 Do you think that all workers in the organisation have the same opportunities to hybrid work? On what does it depend?

3. Implications for individual and team performance

3.1 How do you assess your individual performance when working outside office premises? What elements of hybrid work are positively associated to performance improvements (e.g. reduction of idle times and interruptions, improved focus at work)? What elements are associated with a negative impact of hybrid work on individual performance (e.g. connectivity issues, increased distractions)? Do you think that managers and colleagues assess your performance in the same way when you are working on remote? Why?

3.2 Do you think that hybrid workers are more or less exposed to managerial control? In which ways? Have you perceived changes in line managers attitudes and approaches to performance management? Are you aware of the use of specific software for the monitoring of hybrid workers?

3.3 How do you think that hybrid work affects team coordination and performance? How have you adapted your team communication practices to this new work organisation? Have you received any specific training or advice by managers?

4. Implications for working conditions

Physical and social environment – OSH

4.1 What are the main places from where you use to work outside the regular office? And more specifically, can you describe your workspace and work environment when working outside the office? Have you received any material support or financial help for setting this workspace?

4.2 Has someone evaluated you work-related risks or the extent to which you are following the risk strategy prevention of the organisation? Who? Have you received some guidance or assistance for meeting OHS standards when working outside the office? Do you think that the features of hybrid work would require more attention by the organisation?

4.3 Do you take special measures in terms of OSH when working remotely? When doing this, do you follow guidelines issued by the organisation? Over the last 12 months, have you experienced any health issue in connection with hybrid work (physical, psychosocial)? What features of your work environment and working conditions would you say may have a negative impact in your health or general wellbeing? Why?

Working time and work-life balance

4.4 Could you please describe your normal working time patterns? Do you have autonomy to adapt your normal schedule according to your personal needs or to decide when (and where) to work remotely? Do your working time patterns change in the days you work outside employers' premises? Please, provide some examples.

4.5 Do you think that working remotely entail working longer hours or on more irregular schedules (during evenings or weekends)? Why? How do your working time patterns are recorded and monitored? Is there any practice or policy to guarantee the 'right to disconnect' in your organisation or working team? Does this apply to you? What does it entail; is it respected? Are you contacted outside your working hours?

4.6 Would you say hybrid work allows you to better conciliate your work with your personal responsibilities or, on the contrary, do you experience negative interferences between your personal life and work? Why? Can you provide some examples?

4.7 In case you have family responsibilities, does this arrangement improve your possibilities to deal with them or, on the contrary, are you experiencing work-home conflicts? Why?

Work organisation, autonomy and work organisation

4.8 Do you think that you have more autonomy and decision latitude over the organisation of your tasks under hybrid work arrangements? Otherwise, do you think that your work becomes more intense or time demanding when working outside the office? Why?

Job prospects

4.9 Do you think that hybrid work may affect your training and career progression opportunities in the organisation?

Organisational participation and workplace voice

4.10 Do you feel excluded or less involved in the decision-making processes within your area or working team? Have you ever felt less connected or detached from your colleagues since you started working hybrid? Do you sometimes have experienced the feeling of missing relevant information or being less involved in decision-making processes within your area or working team? Do you think that hybrid work affects workers involvement in team or organisation's decision-making processes? Why?

Intrinsic job features

4.11 Would you agree in that hybrid work has improved your satisfaction with the job and your motivation to perform your tasks well and achieve your goals? Do you feel more trusted and recognised by managers (and colleagues) by working in this way? How important is hybrid work for you? Do you think hybrid work works for all workers?

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency established in 1975. Its role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies according to Regulation (EU) 2019/127.