Eurofound

Industrial relations and social dialogue
# Hybrid work: Definition, origins, debates and outlook

*Hybrid work in Europe: Concept and practice*

*Research carried out prior to the UK's withdrawal from the European Union on 31 January 2020, and published subsequently, may include data relating to the 28 EU Member States. Following this date, research only takes into account the 27 EU Member States (EU28 minus the UK), unless specified otherwise.*

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# Abstract

This study answers the question 'What is hybrid work (HW)?' The concept was studied by reviewing meta-analyses and literature reviews on remote work and telework, empirical research reports and journal articles summarising COVID-19-related telework findings, and professional publications, reports and articles focusing on common challenges in and expectations for future hybrid work. Most data were collected through a standardised questionnaire circulated to the Network of Eurofound Correspondents (NEC) covering all EU-27 Member States from 15th December 2021 to 7th January 2022. The questionnaire generated data from each country about definitions, debates, policies, and practices related to hybrid work. Literature analysis was carried out by reading the material, focusing first on what hybrid work is from the perspectives of traditional remote work and telework concepts, and then looking for expectations concerning hybrid work. The analysis of the country reports was carried out using Atlas.ti software, which is a workbench for qualitative analysis. Based on these analyses, hybrid work (HW) is defined as **any type of work arrangement** where a worker operates in a sustainable manner alone or with others, **as agreed upon between the worker and organisation**, based on the latter's purpose, the former's needs and tasks, and the context, with flexibly regarding the time and place of the work – on the employer's premises or default location or remotely at home, other locations or on the road – using digital technologies such as laptops, mobile phones and the internet.

*'Hybrid is something that is formed by combining two or more things.'*

*BUT THE QUESTION IS:*

*What are these 'two or more things'?*

# Contents

# Introduction

## What is hybrid work?

The discussion, definition and development of 'hybrid work' (HW) started soon after the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in autumn 2020 and has continued since. This discussion touched on the time after the pandemic and what working life and workplaces would be like. "Hybrid work" was initially understood from the perspectives of the organisation and the individual as work defined by flexibility in terms of the situation, place and time, where the work is done partly from the employer's premises and partly from home or elsewhere with the help of digital tools and platforms as a medium for work, communication and cooperation. This resembles the traditional notion of telework. However, after two years, it is still an open question exactly what the elements, content and implications of hybrid work are in practice at the individual, organisational and societal levels, and whether this form of work reflects an evolution of earlier remote work and telework or a transition to a qualitatively new form of work? The issue is very much 'under construction'. This report offers relevant information for answering this question as well as guidance for the implementation of remote work policies.

The various 'new ways of working', such as telework and ICT-based mobile work, have been continuously implemented over the last several decades and have therefore been thoroughly reviewed and previously discussed. However, it can be asked if the present definitions and their operationalisations will be valid in the post-pandemic context. For example, Eurofound publications (Eurofound, 2015; Eurofound and the International Labour Organization, 2017; Eurofound, 2020, p. V), define remote work and telework thus:

> Telework and ICT-based mobile work (TICTM) is any type of work arrangement where workers work remotely, away from an employer's premises or fixed location, using digital technologies such as networks, laptops, mobile phones and the internet.

The definition is comprehensive, although it seems that the COVID-19 pandemic and the experiences of societies, organisations, and people in general 'forced' to telework from home have changed the situation and especially the expectations of how to organise and conduct remote work in the future. In addition, developments in technologies such as deepening digitalisation, wider bandwidths, the application of artificial intelligence and the metaverse, which are new tools for collaboration platforms offering online communication and interaction opportunities, potentially impact how we work from afar in practice. Overall, the question of what hybrid work and its elements and features are remains open, as does that of whether a new concept is needed to understand and develop the reality of working life now and in the future or whether we can operate using traditional concepts.

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, large differences in the levels of remote work and telework among countries were driven by factors such as the profession types, gender, organisation of work and deep-rooted practices and regulations in common use, as well as management culture in various organisations and countries themslves. As far as working from home on a permanent basis, ILO data (ILO, 2021a) indicate that 7.9% of the global workforce – approximately 260 million workers, including artisans and self-employed business owners – worked from home on a permanent basis prior to the pandemic. Company employees accounted for 18.8% of the total number of fully home-based workers worldwide. However, in high-income countries, this number was as high as 55.1% (ILO 2020a), mostly comprising teleworking employees. A global survey (N= 208,807, from 190 countries) by the Boston Consulting Group and The Network between October and early December 2020 (Strack et al, 2021) showed a global shift to full or part-time work from home (WFH) models from an average of 31%

before the COVID-19 pandemic to 51% during the pandemic. There was very large variation among countries (e.g., 90% in the Netherlands; 37% in China) and job types (e.g., IT and technology, 77%; manual work and manufacturing, 19%) worldwide. However, today, employees in many countries are unable or not allowed to work remotely. According to Hatayama, Viollaz and Winkler (2020), the amenability of employers to allowing employees to work from home increases with the level of economic development in the country. The authors found job characteristics and internet access at home to be important determinants of working from home. There are also differences among so-called developed countries.

Sostero et al. (2020) estimated that 37% of dependent employment in the EU is teleworkable, which is very close to the number of teleworkers indicated in real-time surveys during the COVID-19 crisis, although the figures fluctuate (the number of workers returning to the office has increased). Because of differences in employment structures, the portion of teleworkable employment ranges between 33% and 44% across the EU. According to Sostero et al. (2020), even starker differences in teleworkability emerge between high-income and low-income workers, between white- and blue-collar workers, and among genders. However, the enforced closure of workplaces during the pandemic also resulted in many new teleworkers among low- and mid-level clerical and administrative workers who previously had limited access to such working arrangements. Dingel and Neiman (2020) found that 37% of jobs in the United States can also be performed entirely at home, with significant variation across occupations. Managers and those working with computers and in finance and law are largely able to work from home, whereas frontline employees such as health care practitioners and cleaning, construction, and production workers cannot. Those who can work from home typically earn more. This divide is not new, as a 2002 review by Bailey and Kurland (2002) already mentioned of it.

Overall, the number of people working from home (WFH) and working from anywhere (WFA) is expected to increase, as is the use of digital tools and collaboration platforms. Barrero et al. (2021) suggest five reasons for the popularity of WFH: better-than-expected experiences with such work during the pandemic, new investments in physical and human capital, diminished social stigma regarding such work, lingering concerns about crowds and contagion risks, and technological innovations that support remote work. In the future, the increasing use of digital technologies and AI-based software will probably permeate new fields of work and increase opportunities for flexible arrangements in fields that are not yet teleworkable.

This report presents observations and findings that explore the potential of hybrid work as a new way of working and attempt to bring more clarity over the concept of hybrid work:

1. **Examining, identifying, and describing the main elements and features of hybrid work**

    - What is hybrid work from the perspectives of traditional remote work and telework, and what have been the experiences with remote work and telework from home during the pandemic?

2. **Examining hybrid work in national policy debates**

    - How has hybrid work been addressed in national policy debates among governments, social partners and at the company level?

3. **Identifying the expected hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities (HCBOs) of hybrid work**

    - What are the HCBOs, and what should be the focus when implementing hybrid work?

4. **Outlining methods and good practices in implementing hybrid work**

5. **Constructing a conceptual and analytical framework**

    - A description of relevant concepts and a teleworking framework and its features are

developed based on European and global experiences asking what hybrid work is and what it could be.

# How this study was conducted

The methodological approach of this study was hermeneutic (Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014), and the available literature was examined to build an understanding of contemporary hybrid work. The study was also abductive by nature, as we were looking for antecedents of the concept of hybrid work. The literature review process comprised a literature search and then classifying, mapping, critically assessing, and developing an argument about the findings. This was combined with an analysis of the empirical data collected through a standardised questionnaire circulated to the Network of Eurofound Correspondents (NEC) covering all EU-27 member states. The body of hybrid work knowledge continuously and gradually developed even as the study progressed, which increased our understanding and insights as well as helped in developing the concept of hybrid work and the research framework herein.

## Literature

Extensive previous literature on flexible forms of working is available. It consists of both conceptual and empirical studies and professional literature. The conceptual studies enabled us to identify the potential characteristics of hybrid work to be used in constructing the research framework. Empirical studies on companies' behalf provided knowledge to anticipate the impacts of hybrid work on employees, organisations, and society. Professional literature typically raises challenges and proposes guidelines for implementing and working in flexible work arrangements.

### Data

The available literature material was divided into three categories:

(a) *Meta-analyses and literature reviews* of remote work, telework, mobile multilocational work, online telework and others. This material included only literature reviewing, integrating, and summarising earlier empirical studies and theoretical papers that aim to define these forms of work. It is expected that future hybrid work will incorporate at least some of these same features.

(b) *Empirical research reports and journal articles* with published methods summarising COVID-19-related telework findings were used. For example, after the pandemic started in 2020, several global, European, and national studies were launched, such as the EuroFound "Living, working and COVID-19" study (Eurofound 2020a). In addition, many professional associations for management and organisation scholars, such as the Academy of Management (AOM); for general psychologists, such as the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP); and for work and organisational psychologists, such as the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP), have gathered material and resources on new ways of working before and during the pandemic and published it in their journals. The analysis of this material focused particularly on the impacts of 'forced' remote work and telework in society.

(c) *Professional publications, reports and articles* often focusing on challenges and expectations for future hybrid work were consulted. These included, for example, McKinsey and Gallup reports, the Harvard Business Review and the MIT Sloan Management Review. It was expected that this material would particularly focus on management's beliefs and expectations regarding hybrid work and how it should be organised.

Analysis

The literature analysis was carried out by reading the collected material, focusing first on how hybrid work and related concepts are defined from the perspectives of traditional remote work and telework concepts, and then identifying expectations concerning hybrid work.

(a) *Meta-analyses and literature reviews* and p*rofessional publications, reports and articles* were used for this purpose. Information concerning national debates about hybrid work concepts was obtained through observations from the literature. Meta-analyses and literature reviews were also analysed to build a tailored SWOT analysis, i.e., following the HCBO (hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities) framework.

(b) The findings of *empirical research reports and journal articles* on remote work and telework during the COVID-19 pandemic were analysed in the same ways as in (a). This analysis showed the hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities of forced telework from home during the pandemic. The findings were synthesised and shown as a part of the literature analysis report.

(c) The *professional publications, reports and articles* examined typically reported challenges in telework during the pandemic and provided guidelines for implementing and organising hybrid work in organisations. This material was thematically reviewed from the viewpoints of hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities. In addition, the recommendations and guidelines for hybrid work were compared, as they reveal expectations regarding hybrid work from an organisational standpoint.

## Country reports

The data for each country were collected through a standardised questionnaire circulated to the Network of Eurofound Correspondents (NEC) covering all EU-27 member states from 15th December 2021 to 7th January 2022. The questionnaire, which was accompanied by a short note informing recipients of the context of the questionnaire, asked correspondents to collect data from their country about hybrid work and its definitions, related debates, and relevant policies and practices (Annex 1). The respondents for each country were asked to:

- Provide existing definitions of hybrid work or similar concept(s) referring to the situation in which work is performed partly from the employer's premises and partly from other locations. Respondents were asked to indicate the original context and definition of such work as well as its development and changes over time, if applicable.
- List existing national sources of data that (may) capture the phenomenon of hybrid work and (may) contribute to a better understanding its consequences for firms/organisations, employees (including managers) and society in general.
- Describe the extent to which hybrid work is being debated in their country and the main subjects of such debate.
- Describe who the main actors driving the debates are and what their positions are regarding hybrid work. Additionally, they were asked to specifically describe the views of trade unions, business or employers' associations, and other organisations or communities such as HR managers.
- Provide examples of hybrid work in practice or experimented with in companies or other organisations in their country. They were asked to describe the main features of the models being implemented and tested.
- Note any other relevant information regarding implementation of hybrid work in their country (e.g., success stories, challenges, other observations).

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Data

Data were received for all 27 EU member countries and included the correspondents' summaries based on available statistics, regulations, legislation documents, court decisions, collective agreements, media discussions, extant literature, as well as interviews in the case of some countries. In addition, the country reports included *links to various documents* that were downloaded by the authors of this report. This material consisted of 246 documents, including research reports by various research institutes and other public and private organisations, guidelines and statements by social partners and government organisations, descriptions of telework practices by the government and other public and private organisations, information on updates to telework legislation, and online articles discussing the related experiences, plans and views of organisations and HR professionals. To give a few examples, the documents included, among others, an employment prospects survey carried out by ManpowerGroup in Greece, a proposal for changes in teleworking legislation by a Finnish trade union (AKAVA), and an online article published by Ireland's National Television and Radio Broadcaster, RTÉ, on HR professionals' views on hybrid work.

Analysis

The analysis of the country reports was carried out using Atlas.ti software, which is a workbench for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of text, graphics, and audio and video data. The country reports were analysed from four different perspectives described below. The analysis in each phase began with an inductive approach, followed by reflection with theoretical knowledge obtained from the literature analysis. Detailed descriptions of the coding procedures in each phase are described in the respective subchapters.

*Existing definitions of hybrid work.* The first phase of the analysis of the country reports focused on the hybrid work definitions presented by different actors. The core content of each definition was coded into basic and sub elements, and the features of hybrid work. The potential key elements of HW identified through the literature analysis were used as a framework for the analysis of the definitions. This process generated an understanding of how the concept of HW is construed in different ways by different actors and what the main elements of HW are in current discussions in EU member states.

*National policy debates.* The analysis of the content of HW was followed by an analysis of national policy debates concerning HW among governments and social partners and at the company level. This phase of analysis focused on identifying the subjects and actors as well as their views on HW issues that are the subject of debate. This phase of analysis was data driven, which means that no framework was used in coding the content of the debates. The coding focused on the issues identified as contentious in the reports by the country correspondents.

*Hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities (HCBO).* In the third phase of the country report analysis, the reports were once again carefully read to identify the implications of HW at different levels, including the individual, team, organisational, and societal levels. First, the implications were identified and inductively coded. The HCBO (hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities) classification was used as a framework for categorising the identified implications. In addition to coding and categorising the implications, the actor mentioning each implication and the level at which the implication was considered were coded. Through this, an understanding of the expected hindrances and challenges that should be addressed and the benefits and opportunities of HW that should be considered while designing HW systems were identified.

*Implementation of HW.* The last phase of the country report analysis focused on examples of how HW has been implemented in specific organisations during the pandemic and what factors have been considered critical for the successful implementation of HW. The examples were analysed inductively,

focusing on the aspects of hybrid work that were brought up in the case descriptions without predetermined frameworks or categorisations. This analysis yielded information about the support structures, policies and spatial arrangements considered important for the success of HW and managerial challenges related to its implementation in organisations.

The development of the hybrid work model followed an abductive research process, which refers to the step-by step development of the elements and features of the model during the whole research process iteratively using both the review-based and empirical-data-based findings.

## Building the hybrid work framework

The hybrid work concept shows the systemic manifestations of hybrid work and its requirements, elements, and features. A lively debate about hybrid work has emerged since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Any implementation of a hybrid model is expected to consider the complexity of the job, its context (i.e., physical, virtual and social demands) and necessary resources (i.e., technological, personal, social, organisational, and societal), and the expected well-being and productivity outcomes. Hybrid work can take many forms depending on the job being done and its characteristics, the specific operating environment and hybrid work arrangements (e.g., location, schedule, hours), the work process and its management. The proposed model was built based on the findings of the literature study and the analysis of national reports using feedback received from the managers of the project. Finally, the outcomes of the expert validation workshop in September 2022 and close interaction with Eurofound were used to develop this report on the hybrid work model.

# Structure of the report

The **first chapter** introduces flexibility as the fundamental paradigm underlying hybrid work and discusses flexibility from the perspectives of the organisation, social relations, and individual autonomy.

The **second chapter** addresses the first objective of this study by discussing the concept of hybridity and describing the main elements and features of hybrid work, drawing on existing remote work and telework literature and the definitions of HW presented in the country reports. The chapter introduces a preliminary description of the concept of hybrid work.

Drawing on the country reports, the **third chapter** focuses on how hybrid work has been addressed in national policy debates among governments and social partners and at the company level.

The **fourth chapter** discusses current hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities (HCBO) related to remote work and telework and identifies the expected HCBOs in the country reports to understand what should be considered when designing HW schemes.

To identify and discuss success factors for HW implementation, in the **fifth chapter,** we review the literature on conditions for successful telework and present findings regarding the ways in which European organisations are currently implementing or planning to implement hybrid work.

The **sixth chapter** presents the conclusions of the study and the conceptual framework of HW, drawing on the remote work and telework literature and findings from the empirical analysis. In addition, suggestions are made to fill gaps in the research.

# 1 – Flexibility paradigm

'Hybrid work' can be – as seen below – characterised as a type of 'flexible work', as opposed to permanent, fixed work arrangements such as office work, remote work, telework at home, and home-based work. It can be understood as an interplay of different elements and an adaptive form of work based on what tasks need to be done in situ. Therefore, it is beneficial to first describe flexible work approaches. As shown by numerous recent studies, often based on representative samples of the workforce (e.g., Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017), many aspects of working life have changed, and these changes have been further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This requires more flexibility than before in organising and completing work. Therefore, flexibility is a necessary resource in many operations, incorporating individuals, teams, management, networks, and whole societies, in responding to changing environmental demands. It is beneficial to acknowledge the differences between these levels of operation and distinguish how flexibility manifests in them in practice. Flexibility in various job-related factors, for example, the division of work, enables adaptive work processes in organisations and fluent actions among teams and individuals. In addition, flexibility is often a leading principle in business strategies during the implementation of new ways of working, thus affecting many aspects of working life, organisational structures, management and leadership practices, work processes, and working conditions and dictating what resource changes are needed for individuals to complete their work.

Flexibility is also a *controversial* issue, as it can represent different things for employers and employees, therefore potentially creating disputes between them, between social partners in general, and in the work–life balance of individuals. There has been a long debate characterised by two perspectives on flexible working arrangements (Lewis, 2003, p. 2): one perspective considers flexible working as a productivity or efficiency resource and a strategic issue for organisations, and the other perspective emerges from the work–life literature depicting flexible working initiatives as tools for reducing work–family conflict and enhancing work–life integration. These two perspectives have also been referred to as the organisational perspective and the worker perspective (Hill et al, 2008). The challenge is finding a balanced solution that both serves the needs of individuals and enables flexible working arrangements dictated by the company's objectives and the specific circumstances of such work.

Flexibility is also a *paradoxical issue* from both the employee and the manager perspectives. Chung (2022) refers to this phenomenon as the *flexibility paradox* – closely related to the autonomy paradox (Mazmanian et al, 2013) – arguing that when employees have more autonomy and control over their work, they end up working more hours and in more places. Empirical studies, for example, show that teleworking from home during the pandemic has frequently increased feelings of conflict between work and family and working hours rather than improving workers' work–life balance. Chung states that this pattern of exploitation is also gendered; women's unpaid working hours increased because the time they spent on housework and childcare, in adherence with the social norms around their roles as caregivers, increased. Managerial flexibility is the ability to adapt to situations with reference to time and scale to take advantage of business decisions. Shukla et al. (2019) discuss the *paradoxes* related to *management flexibility*, such as when a manager tries to apply flexibility in managing business complexity and uncertainty, reorienting the organisation or structuring decisions in different functions of the organisation. The paradox appears when both benefits and concerns and hurdles are noticed in implementing flexibility initiatives. Shukla et al. identified three types of paradoxes in their literature review. The first paradox concerns the benefits of flexibility and how to reap them. The second paradox reflects the differing attitudes of lower and higher management towards flexibility.

Top management determines where such flexibility will be implemented, whereas lower- and middle-management must seek practical advice for implementing it and thus have a different perception than their superiors. The third paradox appears when management must identify relevant forms of flexibility and define optimal flexibility on a spectrum between total flexibility, at a much higher cost, and rigidity, at minimal cost, in the absence of support for defining such optimality. Shukla et al. conclude that ignorance, due to the limited availability of information on work practices, guidelines, operating procedures, and strategies for the effective implementation of flexibility, leads to paradoxical behaviour.

The controversial and paradoxical perspectives have also been widely discussed in the present literature on the challenges and benefits of teleworking from home during the pandemic and of hybrid work now and in the future. The topic of flexibility emerges during times of crisis and turbulence and during transition periods when a reactive, adaptive style is insufficient to meet challenges, so readiness for change, anticipation, proactivity, and renewal are needed. As for the future, it is also possible that the need for flexibility is a transient phenomenon that has appeared during a transition from old 'normal', for example, remote work and telework, to a new, more structured and stabilised flexible 'new normal', for example, hybrid work.

## Organisational flexibility

From an organisational perspective, the goal of flexibility is to enable the organisation to overcome rapidly changing hindrances and challenges related to internal or external resources. Flexibility in organisations and their networks is practised in many ways. Korunka (2021, pp. V-VI), for example, distinguished four forms of workplace flexibility: flexibility in terms of time, location, the organisation, and work relations. These forms of flexibility are interrelated.

### Flexibility in terms of time

This is also called working time (or temporal) flexibility (e.g., Van Eyck, 2003). Temporal flexibility concerns the following time-related issues: when something happens ('timing'), how often ('frequency'), and how long ('duration'). For example, this flexibility ranges from flexible time schedules, i.e., schedule flexibility, usually with core times where employees need to work in their default workplace, to part-time work and trust-based working hours. In this last case, fixed work durations and schedules are dropped, and work is regulated by agreed-upon and monitored work targets. For example, working hours may be reduced when product or service demand is particularly low, which is a strategy commonly used in restaurants. Temporal flexibility is a common defining feature of remote work and telework. Two critical issues in hybrid work, for example, are first, who – the employer or the employee or his or her representative – is authorised to decide what hours, days, and weeks are permissible for teleworking, and second, what hours and duration of work are required each day. Time continuity, including breaks and interruptions, is also an important consideration from the perspectives of permanence vs. temporality in terms of contextual requirements and available resources.

### Flexibility in terms of location

Spatial flexibility depends on the needs in one's current situation and the nature of one's work. For example, a maintenance crew must be mobile and go to distant work locations. The same applies to temporary agency workers. An employee's willingness and need to telework from home and other locations vary depending on his or her assignment, tasks, working conditions and family situation. Flexible work arrangements may require different kinds of physical spaces for home and other working locations when they are used as workplaces. Spatial flexibility was implemented in some organisations

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during the early days of telework decades ago, but usually only for small numbers of telecommuting employees (Nilles, 1976). In traditional telework, employees had a clearly defined second workplace, in addition to their main workplace, usually in or near their homes. More recently, facilitated by new digital mobile technologies, workplace mobility has undergone great changes for some, with the idea of a default workplace, such as a main office, being abandoned. Work may now be performed anywhere (work-from-anywhere, WFA) and, usually, at any time. In both remote work and telework, the physical location of an employee is the main criterion used to categorise basic types of workplaces and work. A critical issue in this kind of flexibility is who or what makes the ultimate decision regarding the location where the work takes place.

## Flexibility in terms of the organisation

Organisational flexibility refers to functional flexibility (Reilly, 1998) that is typically sought by restructuring work; reallocating tasks; reorganising employees; implementing job rotation, role expansion, and enrichment opportunities; recruiting new employees; increasing competences; and adopting tools and technologies. There are also several other concepts involved in the principles of agile management. For example, project work, which until a few decades ago meant only narrowly defined projects, is today a widely used form of work management. Temporary projects and teams, e.g., fast teams, have permanently replaced the conventional line structure within and across many organisations (Tannenbaum et al, 2012). Typically, temporary teams execute a single task or, at most, a few tasks with a definite deadline or a finite time limit to accomplish their goal (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Saunders and Ahuja, 2006). An example of flexible organisation is a temporary, virtual team (VT) collaborating via computers within multisite and multinational organisations. Overall, organisations are increasingly adopting multi-team systems, where knowledge workers are concurrently members of multiple temporary teams (Wageman et al, 2012).

## Flexibility in terms of work relations

Triggered by the 2008 economic crisis, many permanent work contracts with benefit packages were replaced by temporary and/or part-time work contracts using temporary staff or an 'expanded workforce' (Kane et al, 2021). An extreme form of such contracts is 'work on demand', i.e., a 'zero-hour contract' where employees only work when they are needed and do so on an hourly or daily basis. This is also called 'numerical flexibility' (Reilly, 1998). Many companies have also moved from permanent contracts to using labour leasing contracts and outsourced workforces. In the most extreme global form of such developments, in the 'gig economy', people all over the world work on a pay-per-piece basis, with neither job security nor traditional employment benefits. While such contracts might offer positive opportunities for some workers (e.g., in low-income countries), for many others they result only in high levels of uncertainty. For employers, this kind of financial flexibility allows wages and associated benefits to rise and fall with economic conditions such as service demand.

It has long been acknowledged (e.g., Tregaskis et al, 1998) that both the concept and practice of flexibility are controversial issues, especially in regard to work relations in the labour market (Reilly, 1998). For example, a part-time worker may be seen by a manager as a valuable source of flexibility as he or she gives work input when needed, while from the point of view of a typical part-time worker, this may appear inflexible because he or she needs to fit other aspects of his or her life, such as education and family time, around such work. Accordingly, flexibility in time and location and ways of adaptive organising include not only opportunities/enablers and benefits but also challenges and hindrances (threats) to both organisations and their employees.

# Social flexibility

In addition to the above types of flexibility, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed other critical types of *flexibility,* especially related to *social relations,* i.e., meeting people by chance or intentionally and obtaining advice, help and support. Social flexibility is the ability to combine face-to-face synchronous contact with virtual synchronous and asynchronous contact. Working face-to-face with others is beneficial because of the ability to immediately ask for advice, help, and support from other people. In addition, friends and family are important social resources for overcoming hindrances and challenges at work. However, a Microsoft study (Yang et al, 2022) showed that firm-wide remote work has caused the collaboration network of workers to become more static and siloed during the pandemic. This may be a recurring issue with hybrid work in the future. Forced telework from home during the pandemic broke down the flexible mixture of face-to-face and remote solo work and collaboration with peers and managers, although many workers' family ties were strengthened. The work days of many teleworkers may be blurred, as there is no specific time or place for the work to start or end. People can now work all day in solitude or in asynchronous or synchronous collaboration with others either online or face-to-face.

A traditional way to increase social flexibility in work-related interactions between two or more people is teamwork, i.e., individuals working interdependently towards a common goal and viewing themselves as a team (Hackman, 2003). The concept of a virtual team (VT) has added new meaning to the definition; a VT is a group of people who work interdependently with a shared purpose across space, time, and organisational boundaries using technologies (e.g., Lipnack and Stamps, 2000). However, mediated interaction makes collaboration more challenging when it comes to interaction between VT members and their leaders.

Social relations at work are under pressure from the transformation to hybrid work. This means that in a hybrid work system, the forms and means of social interaction must be stabilised in some way. How can face-to-face and virtual meetings and synchronous and asynchronous work be balanced? The nature of organisation is also expected to change. Some researchers (for example, Ancona et al, 2021) claim that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a disruptor and radically changed certain elements of collaboration. Previously stable teams are changing to have dynamic membership, and team membership changes frequently as part-time and part-cycle members come and go and as membership changes to include customers, suppliers, and partners. Clear social boundaries become fuzzy because of the fluidity of teams, often leaving individuals with differing understandings of who is on the team. Ancona et al. claim that the internal focus of a team is changing to both internal and external focuses because the external context requires more attention than before and requires balancing multiple memberships. This naturally increases psychological pressure on individuals, who face challenges such as fragmented attention, task switching, conflicting demands, and work overload. On the organisational level, such developments are prompting organisations to switch from a team-based orientation to an ecosystem consisting of teams collaborating across organisational boundaries towards a common, overarching goal.

# Autonomy enables individual flexibility

Individual job autonomy that enables flexibility refers to an individual's need, ability and opportunities to make choices and act, influencing where what, when, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks. Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) split autonomy into three interrelated aspects: freedom, independence, and discretion. Such autonomy can be exercised over (Kubicek et al, 2017) work schedules (scheduling autonomy), task-related decisions (planning autonomy), and work methods (methods autonomy). In addition, individuals may also have autonomy in deciding

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where they do their jobs (workplace autonomy). Managerial autonomy is the ability and opportunity to adapt to situations with respect to time and scale in response to business decisions. Remote or teleworking from the individual perspective is not necessarily autonomous in the sense that the decision to begin such work may not be voluntary but be obligatory due to workplace policy or conditions. For example, COVID-19 forced hundreds of millions of people around the world into remote work and teleworking from home; what used to be voluntary and agreed upon became an obligation.

As noted above, individual flexibility as autonomy is a paradoxical phenomenon. Mazmanian et al. (2013) observed in the context of mobile technology use in workplaces that although the individual use of mobile email technology offered knowledge workers location flexibility, peace of mind, and control over their interactions in the short term, it also intensified collective expectations regarding their availability, thus increasing their work activity and reducing their ability to disconnect from work. This phenomenon is called the autonomy paradox.

Individual autonomy with respect to where to work has a long history. This location-based interpretation of autonomy was anticipated and realistically described 50 years ago by well-known futurist Alvin Toffler (1980) in his book The Third Wave. Based on the work by Nilles et al. (1976), Toffler envisioned a new production system that would shift millions of jobs out of the factories and offices into homes and local work centres. There are numerous terms used to describe an individual's ability to work from a place other than an office or company premises (e.g., Allen et al, 2015). These include 'telecommuting', 'telework,' 'remote work,' 'home-based work,' 'flexible work,' 'distance work,' 'multilocational work,' 'mobile work,' and even online work or 'crowdwork.' Historically, there has been a slight difference between the concepts of 'telework' and 'remote work'. The difference stems from the development and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the locations of workplaces. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020b, p. 6), the basic difference between telework and remote work is that a teleworker uses his or her personal electronic devices while working remotely.

Estimates of the exact numbers of different remote types of remote work and telework vary due to different ways of collecting data and formulating the questions that measure them. For example, Kässi et al. (2021) estimated the size of the global online freelance population by gathering data from globally relevant online freelance platforms and using public data sources. According to them, 163 million freelancer profiles were registered on online labour platforms globally in 2021. They conclude that today, online workers represent a nontrivial segment of labour that is clearly growing but still spread thinly across countries and sectors. Such hybrid work arrangements may grow in the future. Table 1 shows the main types of individual remote work and telework in different locations.

**Table 1: Definitions of the main types of traditional remote work and telework (based on Vartiainen, 2021a, p. 3)**

**Remote work** is a work arrangement in which an employee resides and works at a location outside the local commuting area for his or her employer's worksite (e.g., Mokhtarian, 1991). A remote worker can be self-employed or dependent on an employer. Remote work is a comprehensive concept and does not require visits to the main workplace or the use of electronic personal devices, thus allowing many types of and locations for work, and it can involve mobile work.

**Telework** is fully or partially carried out at an alternative location rather than the default place of work, and personal electronic devices (i.e., telecommunications) are used to perform the work (e.g., Eurofound, 2020b; ILO, 2020b). A teleworker can be a self-employed or a dependent worker. Teleworkers who use multiple locations are called **mobile multilocational workers** (Andriessen and Vartiainen, 2006; Lilischkis, 2003, p. 3) or **mobile teleworkers** (Hislop and Axtell, 2007, 2009)**.** They are employees who spend some paid work time

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away from home or their main workplace, for example, on business trips, in the field, while travelling, or on a customer's premises.

**Home-based telework** occurs at home using electronic devices. **'Permanent teleworkers'** spend more than 90% of their work time working from home. **'Supplementary teleworkers'** or **'regular teleworkers'** spend one full day per week working at home. **'Occasional teleworkers'** work from home at least once in a 4-week period (e.g., ILO, 2020b).

**Home-based remote work** is carried out at home**.** Home-based workers do not use electronic devices. They can also work at home 'permanently,' 'regularly,' or 'occasionally.'

**Digital online telework** is a common form of employment across the globe that uses online platforms to enable individuals, teams, and organisations to access other individuals or organisations from anywhere and at any time to solve problems or provide services in exchange for payment (e.g., Berg et al, 2018).

The goal of workplace flexibility from the employee perspective is to enhance the ability of individuals to meet all their personal, family, occupational, and community needs (Hill et al, 2008). The 'what', 'where', 'when', and 'how' of flexibility are closely related to personal autonomy, which some consider a basic human need (Deci and Ryan, 2012). Self-determination theory suggests that all humans have three basic psychological needs that underlie growth and development: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The need to be autonomous affects goal setting, what is seen valuable at work, decisions about what actions to take, tool selection, the location and time of work, collaboration, and voluntary initiative.

Indeed, granting individuals the ability and opportunity to manage their time seems to yield some positive outcomes. For example, Claessens et al. (2007) reviewed 32 empirical studies demonstrating that individuals' effective time management behaviours relate positively to perceived control over work time, job satisfaction, and health and negatively to stress. However, the relationship between autonomous work and performance is not clear. On the other hand, Van Yperen et al. (2014) found that the perceived personal effectiveness of blended working, i.e., time- and location-independent working enabled through ICT, was dependent on the strength of employees' psychological need for autonomy. Specifically, the perceived effectiveness of both time-independent and location-independent working was positively related to individuals' need for autonomy at work. However, it was negatively related to their need for relatedness and structure at work. It can be concluded that satisfying these basic needs requires that flexible ways of organising work consider individuals' needs, strengths, and available resources.

Studies on the 'dark' side of autonomy have shown that although flexible workers record higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment than their nonflexible counterparts, there is evidence that those who work flexibly, i.e., work remotely from home for part of the working week or doing reduced hours, experience work intensification (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010). Kelliher and Anderson proposed that employees respond to the ability to work flexibly by exerting additional effort to return benefits to their employer. Therefore, flexibility may have detrimental effects on the individual level, and both autonomy as a resource and performance as an outcome can be curvilinearly linked to each other; 'too much' autonomy can result in increased stress because of an associated increase in effort. One recent study (Chung 2022) calls this phenomenon the flexibility paradox, in which autonomous workers voluntarily take on more work and work longer hours. This has given rise to a debate about whether regulations on working hours are needed to ensure the 'right to disconnect' (Eurofound 2021).

## Flexibility enables resilient activities

Why are both organisational flexibility and individual autonomy needed? The recent turbulence experienced in working life and the world have raised discussions about the need to develop resilience as the future key capability and competence for individuals, teams, organisations, and society at large. It could be a springboard for scalable practices to navigate external disruptions like the pandemic in the future. Flexible remote work and teleworking arrangements and using flexibility as a key resource could be crucial for developing such competence. Giustiniano et al. (2018, p. 3) define resilience as the

> *Capacities to absorb external shocks and to learn from them, while simultaneously preparing for and responding to external jolts, whether as organizations, teams or individuals. Resilience is claimed to be necessary to protect actors and agencies from shocks, crises, scandals, and business fiascos that generate fear and create dissonance. Resilient people and organizations get knocked down and get up again, ready to learn from events and to be ready for future challenges: The ultimate connotation of resilience.*

Studies on team and organisational resilience vary considerably in terms of their empirical context and disciplinary perspective. West et al. (2009, p. 253) suggest that *team resilience* provides teams with the capacity to bounce back from failure, setbacks, conflicts, and other threats they may experience. Giustiniano et al. (2018) mention that resilience can manifest in two different ways that complement each other, as either an adaptive or a reactive response to external jolts and stressors. According to Duchek (2020, p. 215), *organisational resilience* can be conceptualised as a meta-capability and inspired by process-based studies suggesting three successive resilience stages: anticipation, coping, and adaptation. To these three reactive stages, a fourth stage of formative innovative transformation could be added. This would mean an innovative and creative attitude and actions that will shape work contexts and work targets in a transformative manner.

Individual, team, and organisational resiliencies are interdependent. Building resilience on the individual level can spread within an organisation and beyond, and collective cultural resilience can also make individuals more resilient. *Resilient individuals* can bounce back from stressful experiences quickly and efficiently, just as resilient metals bend but do not break (Fredrickson, 2001). Referring to psychological coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), Fredrickson (2001, p. 222) suggests that positive emotions may fuel psychological resilience. Those studying organisational behaviour define resilience as the 'positive psychological capacity to rebound, to "bounce back" from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility' (Luthans, 2002, p. 702). The Finnish concept of 'sisu' (Lahti, 2019) similarly refers to the enigmatic ability of individuals to push through unbearable challenges. As an attitude, individual resilience can be dated back to the stoic teaching (Russell, 1945) that the development of self-control, fortitude and calmness are the means to overcoming destructive emotions – in our case, related to turbulence at work.

# 2 – What is hybridity?

*A hybrid 'is something that is formed by combining two or more things.' (The Britannica Dictionary)*

Many things, such as plants ('a hybrid of two roses'), vehicles ('a hybrid car'), and ethnicities ('a Finnish-Congolese background'), are made of 'two or more things', but this report focuses only on hybrid work, organisations and workplaces. The basic concepts of *'hybridity'*, 'hybrid work', 'hybrid organisations' and 'hybrid workplaces' are still evolving, leading to the following question: *What are these 'two or more things' that justify using the term 'hybrid' in relation to work?* Typically, a systemic approach is used to identify basic, designable, functional, and concrete elements of a system; this involves analysing the differences among a system of activity, its environment, and their interaction. The meaning of hybridity in each case is determined by the observer's understanding of the nature of the system and they ways it adapts to its environment, utilises its features and resources productively and successfully develops work processes, including creating new processes. Work processes are goal- or purpose-driven and individually or collectively regulated. Those managing, designing, implementing and conducting process in the post-pandemic, flexible workplaces must understand this. Using the systemic approach opens possibilities to discuss 'hybridity' on the individual, team, organisation, and societal levels, as these can all be seen as active 'systems' in their respective environments. A hybrid workplace is 'systemic' in that it consists of 'two or more things' that interplay with each other. As Besharov and Mitzinneck (2020, 3) argue that 'to achieve both analytical rigor and real-world relevance, research must account for variation in how hybridity is organizationally configured, temporally situated, and institutionally embedded.' Therefore, in this chapter, the concept 'hybrid' is considered from these different perspectives and levels, and the ways in which hybrid work has been identified and debated in EU member states during the pandemic are described.

## Elements and features of hybrid work

### Organisational perspective

Discussions on hybrid organisations typically focus on the collaboration demands of networked organisations and on what a hybrid organisation must consider when implementing, organising, and managing hybrid work from the perspectives of organisational performance and employee engagement. An example of a boundary-spanning hybrid organisation is a social-commercial hybrid (Radoynovska and Ruttan, 2021) consisting of non-profit, for-profit, or born-hybrid organisations that combine social and commercial goals and identities to meet the needs of their common customers. Besharov and Mitzinneck (2020, p. 4) explain that organisational hybridity is created when 'complex, intractable social problems continue to intensify, organizations increasingly respond with novel approaches that bridge multiple institutional spheres and combine forms, identities, and logics that would conventionally not go together.' Hybridity is needed and implemented when there are external hindrances and challenges that need new types of actions and collaboration from diverse actors. Besharov and Mitzinneck also note that the configuration of organisational hybridity can vary but also persist, evolving over time, and it both shapes and is shaped by the institutional environment (Figure 1). Hybrid organisations are heterogenous. Besharov and Mitzinneck suggest that the configuration of organisational hybridity can vary along the following dimensions (pp. 5-8):

- The **compatibility** of a hybrid's constituent elements: to what extent do they entail consistent versus contradictory cognitions and actions? For example, ICT enables communication in a

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dispersed organisation; however, it simultaneously increases costs. Compatibility can influence whether hybridity generates tensions between constituent elements or offers opportunities for synergy.

- **Centrality**, which is defined as the extent to which constituent elements are regarded as equally important versus one element being dominant with others play a peripheral role. For example, when an organisation has different customer strategies to submit a service, this can influence the "stickiness" of hybridity as well as the speed and difficulty of change.
- **Multiplicity**, or the number of constituent elements, which can bring together two or more conventionally distinct elements. A higher number of constituent elements may provide more choice and flexibility when making decisions or justifying proposed courses of action. On the other hand, the presence of more than two constituent elements can create instability and prove difficult to manage.
- **Structure**, as organisations may relatively flexibly combine and recombine integration and differentiation in the structures they develop. In the former, individuals and subgroups, as well as organisational practices and divisions, combine and blend various elements of hybridity, whereas in the latter, they carry and enact just one element. The structure can affect the risk of conflict and mission drift in hybrid organisations.

Figure 1 - A configurational, situated, and dynamic framework of organisational hybridity.
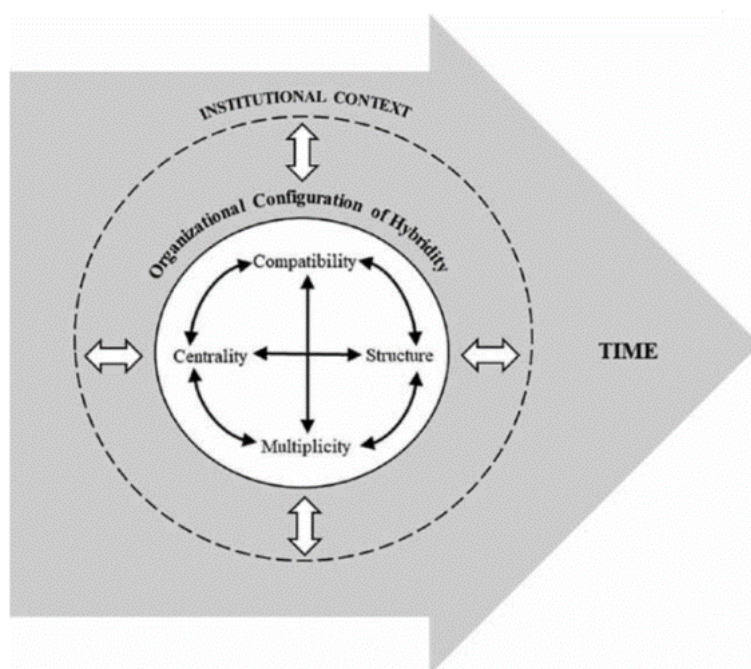


*Source: Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2020, p. 6.*

Hybridity has also been discussed as a *feature* of greater interaction and collaboration in a broader ecosystem consisting of cross-boundary interaction and collaboration among individuals and teams (Ancona et al, 2020). It is evident that the blending of different modes and styles of working introduces practical complications in arranging working conditions and organising work in these spaces.

Some writers have outlined what the future of post-pandemic work means for organisations and individuals. For example, Malhotra (2021) expects that knowledge work will increasingly be performed virtually, continuing from a switch to telework during the pandemic. The structure of organisations is expected to become more open, engaging external independent freelancers outside the organisation

to work together on an ad hoc basis. An individual may work as part of multiple teams and on temporary projects. Therefore, individuals can and will have multiple reporting lines, and organisations will become more matrixed. For individuals, Malhotra highlights changes in locational, temporal and goal-related autonomy. However, according to him, the future of work will create challenges for organisations – and individuals – such as how to maintain organisational culture and identity, monitor performance, motivate dispersed employees, provide feedback for learning, enable work–life balance and foster social inclusion.

Recent developments have resulted in several new types of organisations and jobs – some of which are hybrids of old elements, and some of which are completely new. On the organisational level, there are examples of 'all remote', dispersed companies. For example, Choudhury and colleagues (2020, p. 2) describe the company 'GitLab', which does not have a physical office but employs 1,000 people located in more than 60 countries.

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**Case GitLab**

"GitLab was incorporated in 2014 and operates in the software development tools industry. In September 2019, after its Series E round of funding, GitLab was valued at $2.7 billion.

GitLab is an "all remote" company, in that all 1000+ company employees located in 60+ different countries work remotely and typically asynchronously, often without ever coming into contact with each other in the physical world. The organisation has expanded significantly in 2019 from about 374 employees just a year ago.

GitLab develops tools that allow software engineers to automate many parts of the software development cycle—from initial planning to final deployment and monitoring of new code in use. It is widely recognised for its "continuous integration" (CI) product, which enables teams of coders to slice a complex project into chunks, work in parallel on specialised tasks, then put the pieces back together again into a functioning whole. Specifically, GitLab's CI tools automates verification of compatibility of new contributed code to the existing code base. They thus represented the automation of the coordination work previously conducted by a human coder.

Apart from its "all remote" model, GitLab is noteworthy to organisation designers for at least three other reasons. First, like many technology companies, it uses its own tools—GitLab (the company) uses GitLab (the product) to make improvements in GitLab (the product). Second, it also uses the same set of tools to organise and manage itself—for example, the company handbook which exhaustively documents its formal organisational structure and processes, is itself developed, maintained, and edited as if it were a code repository. Third, the handbook is public; anybody can view it inside or outside the company."

Choudhury et al, 2020

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A common feature in fully virtual organisations is the multipurpose use of digital technologies, especially for communication, collaboration and the search for new knowledge. In a similar vein, although the number of platform workers is still low, it is growing, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic (ILO, 2021b). For example, the Online Labour Index (OLI) produced by Kässi and Lehdonvirta (2018, see also Kässi et al, 2021) showed that in May 2021, the number of projects started on platforms increased by 93% from May 2016.

## Hybridising mechanism

When a hybrid work unit, for example, a team, is seen as a work system within a larger environment, its specific mandate, structure, form, and work process itself, with its outcomes are largely determined by three intertwined and partly embedded factors: the purpose of the work, the hindering or enabling features of its context, and the available resources (Hacker, 2021). These factors hinder or/and facilitate the unit's fluent work process and its regulation (Figure 2). The purpose of the work is the main driving force in initiating the work process. For example, the

assignment of a team within an organisation may be determined based on the intraorganisational division of labour. In turn, the team redefines that mandate by dividing it into tasks assigned to each team member.

Figure 2 - Hybridising mechanism: factor sets (i.e., purpose, context, resources) and their elements and features influence the configuration of a hybrid work unit (e.g., a team working in a hybrid manner) and its potential outcomes

**Contextual demands**

Location  Mobility
Social contacts  ICT
Time
Societal regulation  Management
Etc.

**Purpose, assignment, tasks**

Regulation of individual, team, organisational, and societal activities

**Configuration of hybrid work unit**  Outcomes

Personal  Digital
Physical  Societal
Job-related
Social  Etc.
Organizational

**Enabling resources**

SUCH AS:
Engagement, well-being
Performance
Functionality of spaces
Fluency of group processes
Organization functionality
Productivity
Commuting time
Urban planning (e.g., suburbanization)
Sustainability potential (e.g., energy use)
.....

*Source: authors' own conceptualisation*

Common objectives describe the organisation's purpose, which generates joint efforts and commitment to their achievement. On the individual level, the organisational objective is reflected in the complexity of individual and collective assignments and tasks, i.e., is routine or creative task execution required at work? Bell and Kozlowski (2002) claimed that task complexity also has critical implications for the structures and processes of virtual teams. Similarly, the content of its tasks influences the structure and workflow of a hybrid work unit as well as what kinds of resources are needed to regulate work activities.

The complexity of the contextual demands, i.e., the elements of physical, virtual or digital and social spaces in work environments, affect the design of a particular features of a work unit and what resources it requires from the organisation.

Purpose and context together influence what kinds of internal and external resources individuals or collective subjects, such as a team, need to regulate work processes, relations and boundaries among subjects, the relevant objects and tasks, and the environment and influence what outcomes are possible.

The outcomes of an individually or collectively regulated work process can be used as evaluation criteria showing the functionality and quality of performance outcomes, as well as their effects on employees' well-being and commitment. These criteria can also inform the values followed in planning and developing hybrid work and the best fit between demands and resources.

Communication is a critical and necessary driver of social interaction and collaboration in hybrid teamwork. The basic types of interaction in collaborative efforts, i.e., task- and group-oriented processes, are based on communication among individuals (for example, Andriessen, 2003, p. 144-145). Task-oriented processes in interactions include information sharing and mutual learning, cooperation, and coordination processes between interaction participants. Information is shared by providing and developing information and knowledge. Cooperation refers to working together in practice, for example, designing a product or service together. Coordination is needed to adjust the

work of each group member to the work of others and to the goal of the whole group. For example, simple tasks require less coordination, and their competence requirements are lower than in the case of complex tasks. Group-maintenance-oriented processes or social interaction refers to team building for developing trust and cohesion. Factors that enable hybrid work at the team level should support these processes. The main criterion when selecting collaboration technologies is often also the complexity of communication and collaboration tasks. To navigate such complexity, various adaptation mechanisms that are available include, for example, providing recruitment or training or changing the tasks, context, or tools used.

## Construction elements

Next, potential basic elements and sub elements of hybrid work and their interplay and features are reviewed and discussed based on the literature. These basic elements are considered the constituent building blocks of hybrid work. They can be used when designing and changing work, for example, when job crafting. Affordances, i.e., the action potential of the basic elements, are evident in the features of the sub elements. For example, the temporal sub element includes the features of 'timing', 'duration', and 'time frequency'. 'Timing' refers to when something is done or comes about, for example, whether one works at the office every Friday afternoon or whenever one wants to. 'Duration' refers to how long something exists or lasts, for example, whether one works at the office for a full day or only part of a day. 'Time frequency' refers to how often something happens within a unit of time, for example, whether one works at home twice a week or every day. How these elements interplay and intersect depends on the concrete needs of work arrangements, i.e., hybridising mechanisms. The proposed basic elements of hybrid work are physical space, virtual or digital space, social space, and temporal space, i.e., time. These elements and their sub elements are interconnected and each have adjustable features. Next, the potential basic elements, sub elements, and their features will be described. In chapters three and four, the impacts of critical features based on empirical research will be discussed. Finally, in the concluding chapters, the proposed hybrid work framework will be presented.

### Physical space

It is beneficial to differentiate between *'workplace'* and *'location'* as sub elements of physical space. They are related to each other conceptually and in practice, as workplaces are physical spaces or sites for work. Both a workplace and its location are designable spatial elements; for example, they may be a desk in an open office space or a private room and may involve working mainly at an office or somewhere else. A physical space turns into a workplace when it is used for work and is a physical setting for work. The availability of workplaces in different locations and the opportunity to choose which workplaces to use are powerful enablers of hybrid work.

*Mobility* is a sub element of determinable physical spaces because a person can move both within and between workplaces to benefitting from the variety of locations and workplaces available. In addition, moving from one location to another always happens in some materialised context, usually in a vehicle, which can also be used as a working and living environment. Moving regularly within and between different locations is called multimobility, and continually moving among different sites is called full or total mobility. To identify physically mobile employees, Lilischkis (2003) used a still-valid topology based on the dimensions of physical and temporal spaces. Physical s*pace criteria* include (a) the number of locations, (b) the similarity among locations, (c) whether there is a default workplace to return to, (d) whether work takes place while moving or at a destination, (e) whether work can take place at fixed locations without changing between them, (f) whether there are limitations in the work area, and (g) the distance between locations. *Time criteria* include (a) the frequency of location changes, (b) the time spent moving among work locations, and (c) the time spent at a certain work

location if not moving. Each type of mobile work has its own basic physical space and time criteria. *On-site movers* work in a limited work area, *yo-yos* return to a main office, *pendulums* have two recurrent work locations, *nomads* work in more than two places, and *carriers* cannot do their work at a fixed location and must work while moving.

The more locations and workplaces there are to visit, and the more distant they are from each other, the higher the pressure felt from work demands to regulate work processes. The features of both location and workplace as spatial elements are multilinearly interdependent. As shown in Figure 3, distance between workplaces increases the need for physical mobility if a teleworker wants to meet a colleague or customer in-person. The need for a physical meeting can potentially be eliminated using ICT if the task permits it. An actor's contextual complexity also increases when there are several locations to visit and when the location changes often because in each location, the physical working conditions, digital infrastructure and people are different. Challenges also arise in the design and development of the organisation. How should work be coordinated when people are working in different locations? Are new competences needed? What are the ergonomic and working conditions in each place? The relationships of such features are quite sensitive and fluid, and their balance is thus precarious. If a group and its members are physically mobile, this affects other features of their work. Mobility means that there are more locations at which work takes place, more people to meet, and a greater need to coordinate joint actions. The combination of spatial elements may determine, for example, whether a team is temporary and fluid teams.

**Figure 3 - An example of the interdependence of the features of the location sub element and work-related challenges.**
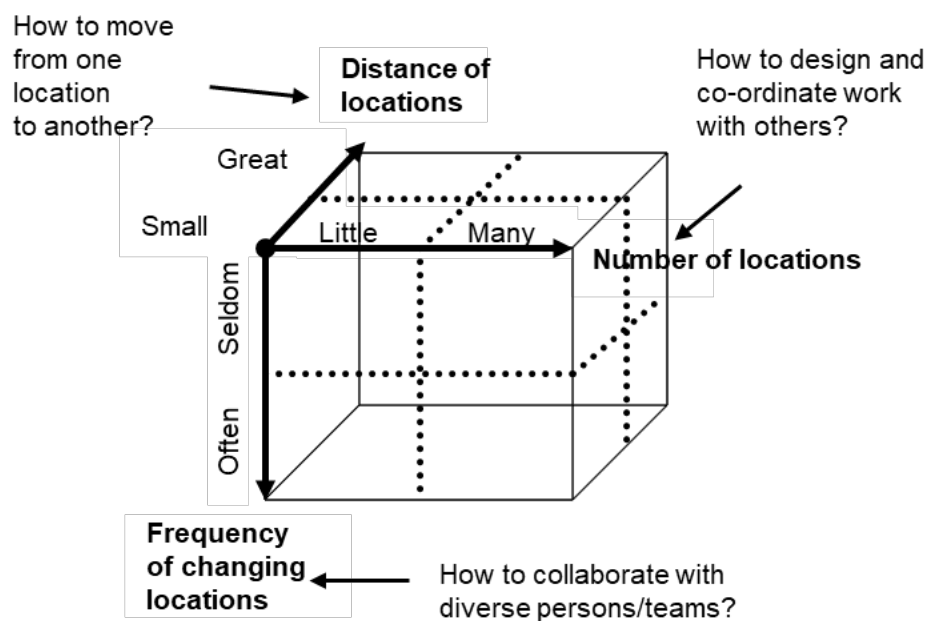


*Source: authors' own conceptualisation.*

Potential workplace *locations* in hybrid work include (Vartiainen, 2007, p. 29): (1) the employee's home, (2) the main workplace (the employer's premises), (3) vehicles, such as cars, busses, trams, trains, planes, and ships, (4) a customer's or partner's premises or an alternative premises of the company ("other workplaces"), and (5) hotels, cafés, parks, etc. ("third workplaces"). Oldenburg (1989), for example, listed cafés, coffee shops, community centres, general stores, bars, and hangouts

as "third workplaces". Critical questions about hybrid work in such locations are how these places differ as working contexts or workplaces, what places are actually used in practice, and how such places should be physically and virtually equipped.

In discussions on post-pandemic *workplaces*, physical arrangements have dominated the discussion, including how employees can be attracted back to the office and what kinds of offices there should be. For example, Kane et al. (2021) suggest that physical workplaces should enable flexibility by, for example, providing spaces appropriate for a group to brainstorm, host a workshop, or conduct daily meetings. Holtham (2008, p. 455) lists seven core affordances an office should offer: it should function as (1) a formal meeting place for colleagues and business associates, (2) a base for mobile and remote workers, (3) a base for static workers, (4) a base for information intensive work processes, (5) a base for knowledge intensive work process, (6) a space that provides opportunities for serendipitous human-to-human contact, hence stimulating creativity and innovation, and (7) a symbol of the organisation to both external and internal audiences. At the same time, employee preferences should be considered, for example, a preference for a dedicated desk in the workplace.

Other types of locations can and should be evaluated similarly based on the physical affordances they offer. However, a question arises: what kinds of features should each workplace in the organisation have to enable smooth working? Blomberg and Kallio (2022), in their recent review on the physical context of creativity, suggest using McCoy's (2005) five spatial elements, which are also related to social dynamics and behaviour in each workplace. *Spatial organisation* defines the spatial aspects of the work environment, such as the size, shape, arrangement, and division of space. These features can affect privacy, control, flexibility and so on. *Architectonic details* include fixed or stationary aesthetics and materials or ornaments such as decorative styles, signs, colours, and artwork. These features may be important from the standpoint of a group's identity. *Office or workstation views* include what can be seen from windows and adjacent workspaces. These views can contain either relaxing or stressful elements. Important *workplace resources* for employees, such as access to equipment, parking and food services, and ambient conditions, including heating, illumination, ventilation, and acoustics, are important aspects of the work environment.

In addition to increased autonomy in decision-making, the content of tasks and jobs impact workplace functionality; work requiring deep focus is easier in a silent place at home or a private room at an office, whereas face-to-face interaction with others during lunchtime is easier at an office. However, the quality of working conditions in the workplace is even more important than the location itself, be it the main workplace, the home or any other place, as good working conditions facilitate work completion. During the pandemic, homes have been converted into workplaces in various ways, depending greatly on, for example, the size of the space available and the technologies in use, while workspaces in the main offices have often been empty.

### Virtual space

Computer-mediated communication and digital tools enable organisation members to work alone and together both offline and online even if employees are physically dispersed across multiple locations. The pandemic has not only forced many to telework from home but also to learn to use digital technologies for the first time of their lives, as the use of communication tools and collaboration platforms became a necessity. New tools and applications were put into use; for example, online meetings became routine, and many restaurants adopted virtual ordering and delivery services. In the future, the development and growth of telework and remote and digital online work will be tightly integrated with the development of technologies, expanding 5G bandwidths and emerging 6G bandwidths, artificial intelligence (AI) applications and ever-smarter mobile devices. Through broadband mobile internet and digital labour platforms, there is access to multiple communication

functions, including email, the internet, instant messaging, text messaging, and company networks. It is evident that digitalisation changes the working environment; impacts working processes, tasks, and job content; and affects structures and organisations, products, and services in many ways, resulting in the need for new competences, organisation, and ways of working (Schaffers et al., 2020).

Halford (2005) related her concept of the 'hybrid workspace' to the development of information and communication technologies that enable remote working outside organisational settings, usually from home in addition to other places without face-to-face contacts. According to her:

> *'There is a hollowing out of the fixed organisational workspace and a polarisation towards the relocation of work into domestic space on the one hand and the dislocation of work into cyberspace on the other.'* (p. 19) … *'These individuals work at home and engage in embodied organisational spaces; they conduct relationships virtually and in close proximity. How does this combination of organisational and domestic spaces, mediated in cyberspace, impact on practices of work, organisation and management?'* (p. 20)

In her study, Halford shows that spatial hybridity changes the nature of work, organisation and management in domestic space, cyberspace, and organisational space. It can be said that 'spatial hybridity' results from combining physical, virtual, or digital spaces with social spaces[1] in use; spaces put into use for work then turn into workplaces in concrete terms.

In this early definition, the differentia specifica of hybridity and its elements are *'place' or location* (e.g., home, other places) as a physical space, and *'cyberspace'* as virtual or digital space for both doing solo work and interacting with others in a *social space*, i.e., enabling collaboration. This definition is closely related to the concept of a 'blended workplace' as, for example, described by Tredinnick and Laybats (2021, p. 108): '*Blended work combines the advantages of physical and virtual work environments, allowing hybrid modes of work where individuals dip in and out of virtual and physical spaces.'*

### Social space

A social space is one of the defining elements in hybrid work, as social relations must be organised somehow. Social space covers communication and social interaction with other people in both physical and virtual settings. For example, social support such as advice and help can come from a variety of sources, including coworkers, supervisors, customers, family, and friends (Taylor 2011). People may have the option to work in solitude, doing remote work alone or in face-to-face collaboration with others, online or offline, asynchronously or synchronously, and at the main workplace or any other location. Figure 4 provides an example of an individual's work events during one day. A working day starts at home alone with reading and responding emails asynchronously.

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[1] Lewin (1972) introduced the idea that everyone exists in a psychological force field called the 'life space' that determines and limits his or her behaviour. 'Life space' is a highly subjective environment that characterises the world as the individual sees it, while remaining embedded in the objective elements of physical and social fields. According to Lewin (1951), behaviour (B) is the function (f) of a person (P) and his environment (E), B = f (P, E). Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (2000) developed further life space concept with the concept 'Ba'. It refers to a shared context in which knowledge is shared, created, and utilised by those who interact and communicate there. Ba does not just refer to a physical space, but a specific time and space that integrates layers of spaces. Ba unifies the physical space (such as an office space), virtual space (such as email), the social space (such as colleagues), and the mental space (such as common experiences, ideas, and ideals shared by people with common goals in a working context). Modern work contexts, either for individuals or groups, are combinations of physical, virtual, social, and mental working environments.

After a bus ride to the main workplace, preparations for an online meeting start there. Discussions with colleagues at the office are face-to-face during lunch and in two previously arranged meetings. Then comes a period of exchanging emails with distant team members, and finally, the working day ends in two minor face-to-face meetings before the worker returns home. Hybridity consists of working remotely at home, virtually and asynchronously with others, and synchronously with others at the main workplace. A workday for a hybrid worker is a mixture of working in different spaces.

**Figure 4 A mobile multilocational worker's work day is a blurred mixture of working alone and asynchronously and synchronously with others**
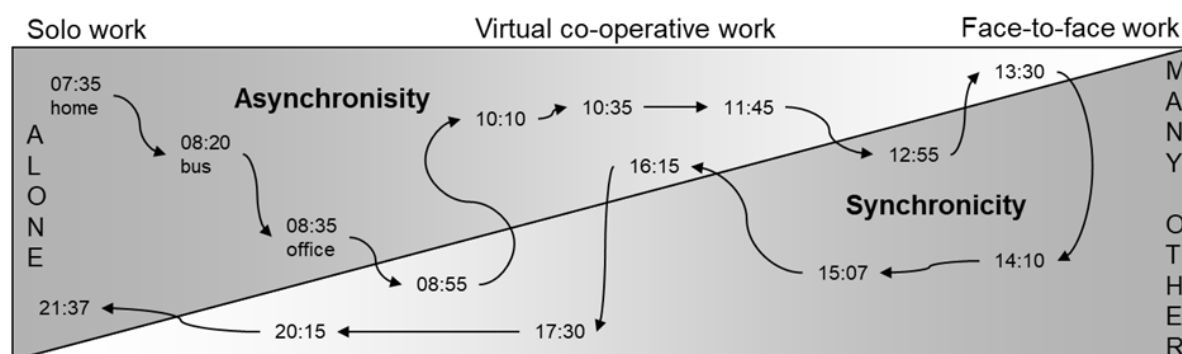


*Source: based on Vartiainen, 2007, p. 50.*

In the hybrid work context, the flexible use of places generates variance in face-to-face social contact, for example, with one's family at home and one's colleagues at the main workplace. In practice, it is often difficult to separate solo working from collaborative work, even when physically isolated at home. In this type of "pseudoprivacy" (Becker and Sims, 2000, p. 15), working is often interrupted by e-mails, text messages, calls, and online virtual meetings. Thus, the nature of work requires presence at several levels, creating a need to be 'multipresent'. This 'multipresence' (Koroma and Vartiainen, 2017) is mobile workers' urge to be simultaneously present in physical, virtual, and social spaces while working across boundaries from multiple locations and on the move. States of presence arise from different combinations of physical, virtual, and social spaces ranging from absence to presence, both socially and virtually. However, this increasing findability and awareness of other people's locations and their availability on the internet can reduce the feeling of autonomy and increase that of external control, resulting in a paradoxical situation. Leonardi et al. (2008) called this the 'connectivity paradox', as teleworkers sometimes use their advanced ICTs strategically to decrease, rather than increase, the distance they feel from colleagues.

## Temporal space
In addition to the flexible use of physical, virtual, and social spaces, the determining factor in hybrid work is the flexibility of time. The temporal element has three sub elements: duration, timing, and time frequency. 'Duration' concerns *how long something happens in units of time*, i.e., minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, or years. For example, a hybrid employee may be allowed to work two weeks per month remotely or can work four weeks abroad. 'Timing' refers to *when something is done or comes about*, that is, whether something happens during certain hours of the day or certain days in a week. For example, a hybrid employee may work at home during the morning and on the employer's premises the whole day on Monday and Friday. 'Time frequency' is *how often something happens during a period of time*, that is, whether something happens every hour, daily, weekly, monthly or constantly and whether it happens regularly or occasionally. For example, a hybrid employee may occasionally work at home.

In knowledge work, the use of technological tools allows collaborating employees to operate around the clock and enables individuals to complete their portion of the work at any time. In a more complex situation, collaboration is needed across countries and time zones. The temporal element also has other features that impact the configuration of a hybrid work unit. Temporariness is one such feature, dictating the formation of new work units for one-time projects, the time individuals can disconnect, and what work schedules will be followed; for example, time allocations for individuals vary as a result of participating in multiple projects. One critical issue in hybrid work, is who – the employer or the employee – is authorised to decide what days in a week or weeks in a month are teleworking days/week or what the daily hours for teleworking are.

### Physical and temporal spaces

Gratton (2021) describes the interplay of workplace and time from the viewpoint of their flexible use (Figure 5). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of physical space and time were limited because most employees were expected to work in the office for a specific period of time. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a sudden shift from being place-constrained (working in the office) to being place-unconstrained (working anywhere, though mainly at home). Simultaneously, there was a shift in time use, going from being time-constrained (working synchronously with others) to being time-unconstrained (working asynchronously whenever the worker chose). Grotton defines this situation as an anywhere, anytime model of working – the hybrid model, shown in the upper-right quadrant of Figure 5.

### Figure 5 - Work arrangements in terms of location and time
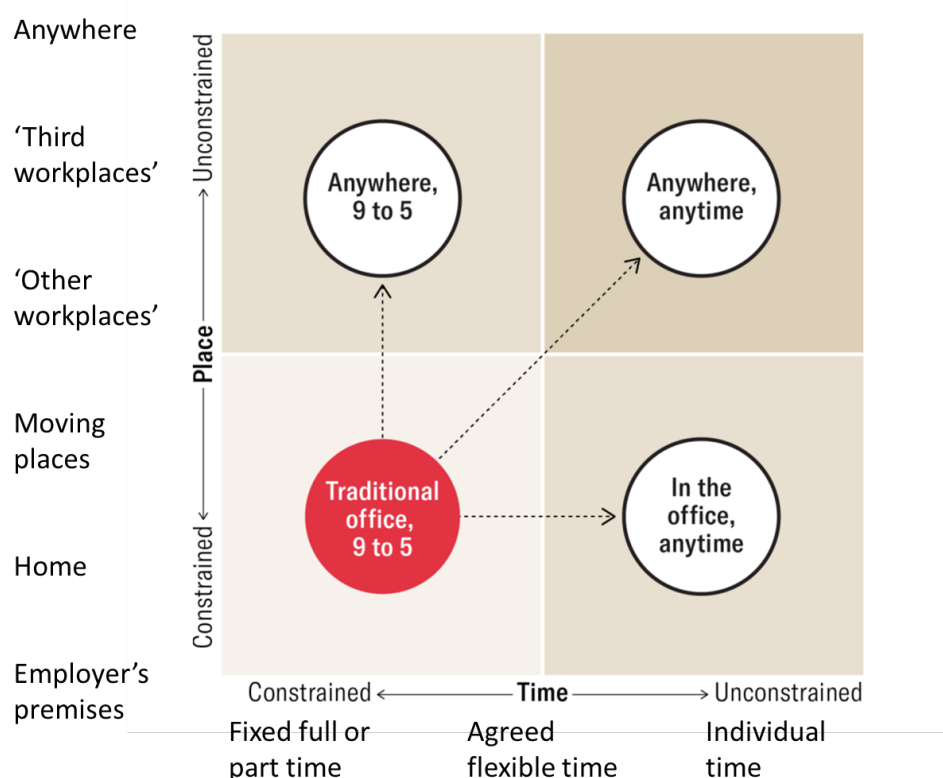


*Source: modified based on Gratton, 2021*

It is also important to note that both the duration and timing of workplace use vary, which impacts how these elements are managed. The demands of the business and the needs of the individuals change over time. This increases the fluidity and transiency of the mixture of hybrid work elements

needed.

The interplay of physical, social, and virtual elements in hybrid work is shown, for example, when creativity and innovativeness are necessary to a given job. Some companies have been worried about the repercussions of forced WFH on innovation and innovativeness. For example, Arena et al. (2022) warn that there is now a long-term threat to the ability of organisations to innovate. According to them, research shows that face-to-face interactions in teams are critical to innovation because they often develop and persist through casual microinteractions during lunchtime in the workplace. Drawing on social network theory, they show how each of the three stages of innovation (idea generation, idea incubation, and scaling) can be undermined by virtual work. They propose an alternative organisational design that leaders can adopt to overcome these limitations—the adaptive hybrid model. The model builds on a blend of intentionally virtual and face-to-face work to avoid the loss of social connections and suggests diverse types of connections for each of the three stages of innovation. The model is adaptive and flexible, as employees must be in the office for the 'moments that matter'.

## Four basic elements and some features

The concepts of hybrid work and of workplace embody the flexibility paradigm, as they are aimed at balancing varying individual needs with organisations' performance goals. A hybrid entity is formed by combining two or more things to provide stability in a certain context. The basic elements of hybrid work are physical, virtual/digital, social, and temporal. These elements are interconnected, and each has designable and actionable properties. The purpose of work, the working context, and the regulation of work processes and the expected outcomes will determine what features of an organisation's practice will be combined for hybrid work.

The main adjustable elements of a hybrid work system are based on the interplay of the four basic elements mentioned above (Figure 6). *Location, workplace,* and *mobility* and their features are the sub elements of physical space. Work can be done in various workplaces in different locations in neighbourhoods, urban and rural areas, different parts of the same country, multiple countries, and globally. The workplaces in each location vary as physical premises and working contexts according to the needs of an organisation and its employees. Mobility brings about the change of both locations and workplaces. The *virtual* element affords various tools and software to seek information and knowledge, produce products and services, and communicate and collaborate synchronously and asynchronously with others or alone. The *social* element includes arrangements to guarantee fluent collective processes face-to-face, virtually, or in a mixed manner. The *temporal* element has time-related features that help determine when, for how long and often work is done. A hybrid work system is a new type of space that merges physical, virtual, social, and temporal elements, along with their features. How these elements and their features should be organised and combined in each concrete hybrid work arrangement depends on the job content and the psychological and organisational outcomes. These issues will be addressed in the following chapters.

Figure 6 - Adjustable basic elements, their sub elements and some features of hybrid work.
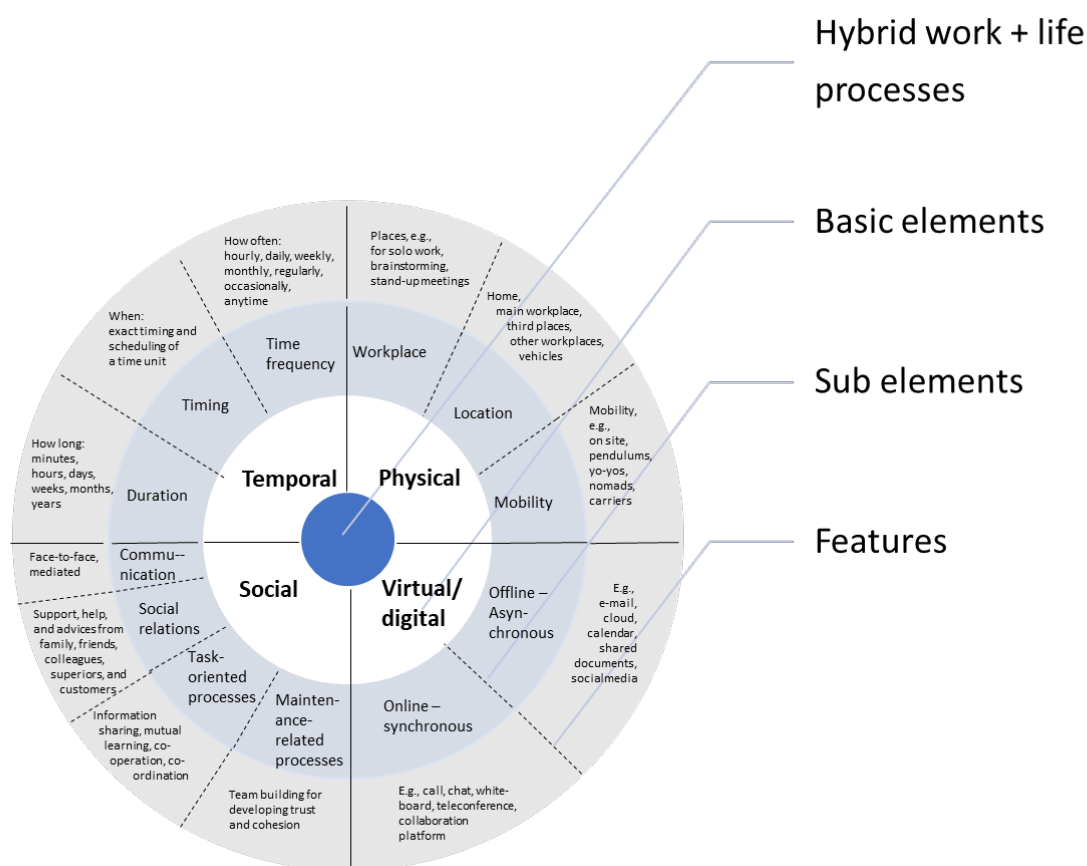


*Source: authors' own conceptualisation.*

# The concept of hybrid work in the literature during the pandemic

During the early phases of the pandemic in 2020–2022, hybrid work concepts started to emerge in business journals and the reports of consulting and other companies. A sample of such works was collected to determine how hybrid work has been defined (Table 1). The articles were read, paragraphs mentioning the definition of hybrid work were searched, and the content was described in terms of the basic elements and sub elements of hybrid work and their features (Figure 6). The resulting comparison shows that the physical space element was commonly used in the definitions of hybrid work as the use of a flexible mixture of locations – working both on the employer's premises and elsewhere remotely. In addition, the temporal element was used, i.e., to indicate when, how often and long hybrid work is employed. Social and virtual spaces were seldom mentioned. Other characterisations, such as flexibility, agility, and the use of autonomy by both employers and employees, were mentioned. These features enlarge the elements and features of the hybrid work concept beyond physical space, time, and social elements.

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Table 1 - Examples of hybrid work definitions by consulting companies, business journals and international organisations during the pandemic

| SOURCE | DEFINITION: hybrid work, hybrid worker | ELEMENTS | SUB ELEMENTS, FEATURES |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Consulting company publications** | | | |
| Capgemini 2020, The Future of work: From remote to hybrid, (Crummenerl et al, 2020) | 'A hybrid workforce essentially refers to a workforce that is distributed across different locations, from traditional office and factory spaces to remote locations, including within employees' living space, be it a family home or shared apartment. A hybrid working model is characterized by the flexibility and choices it offers employees, and it can be an innovative way of driving new approaches to agility, collaboration, and ways of working.' | Physical space  Social space | Main workplace, multiple locations, home, social relations, flexibility, autonomy |
| BCG 2021, Decoding Global Ways of Working, March 2021, (Strack et al, 2021) | 'It is indeed flexibility that most people are interested in, not a 180-degree turn in the traditional model that would have everyone working from home all the time and never going to a physical work location.' | Physical space | Home, main workplace, flexibility |
| McKinsey & Company 2021 (Alexander et al, 2021) | 'As the pandemic eases, executives say that the hybrid model – in which employees work both remotely and, in the office – will become far more common.' | Physical space | Main workplace, multiple locations |
| Microsoft New Future of Work Report 2022 (Teevan et al, 2022) | 'For individuals, hybrid work refers to working part of the time in the office and part time from somewhere else. For organizations, hybrid can also refer to having a mix of fully on-site and fully off-site employees.' | Physical space  Temporal space  Social space | Multiple locations, duration, face-to-face |
| Gallup, The Future of Hybrid Work March 15, 2022, (Wigert, 2022) | 'Employees with the ability to work remotely are largely anticipating a hybrid office environment going forward – one that allows them to spend part of their week working remotely and part in the office.' | Physical space  Temporal space | Multiple locations, duration |
| **Business journals** | | | |
| Harvard Business Review (e.g., Gratton, 2021) | 'To design hybrid work properly, you have to think about it along two axes: place and time … an anywhere, anytime model of working – the hybrid model.' | Physical space  Temporal space | Multiple locations, time frequency (anytime) |
| MIT Sloan Management Review (e.g., Kane et al, 2021) | 'The anticipated gradual return to colocated work in the coming months provides opportunities to experiment with hybrid ways of working … gives managers the ability to critically consider the ways in which a hybrid workplace might be more effective.' | Physical space | Main workplace, effectiveness |

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| International organisations' reports | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ILO, 2021c | 'Pre-pandemic research (Eurofound and ILO, 2017) suggests that the 'sweet spot' for teleworking is some combination of work at the employer's premises and teleworking. During the pandemic, this approach has come to be known as the 'hybrid model'— working part-time in the office combined with part-time telework.' | Physical space<br><br>Temporal space | Main workplace, multiple locations, duration |
| OECD, 2021 | "In particular, proximity to employers' premises still plays a role for workers in hybrid models, which combine teleworking and office presence, whereas this factor becomes negligible in work-from-anywhere models, which primarily rely on online communication, with personnel distributed across locations and, often, time zones." | Physical space<br><br>Virtual space<br><br>Temporal space | Main workplace, multiple locations, online, timing |

The comparison of hybrid work definitions in consulting company publications, professional journals and international organisation reports shows that the physical space element – working remotely and in the office – and the temporal element were the most frequent elements used to characterise hybrid work. Other features, such as flexibility, autonomy, agility, and the choices autonomy offers an employee, were also included.

# Hybrid work concepts in the EU-27

Next, the question, of how hybrid work has been defined during the pandemic in EU member states, is answered by analysing the hybrid work definitions in the country reports. The country correspondents were asked to find:

- *Existing definitions of hybrid work or similar concept(s) referring to the situation in which work is performed partly from the employer's premises and partly from other locations, indicating the original designation(s), its source(s), and the main differences among different concepts, if applicable.*

## Analytical approach

Altogether, 93 definitions of hybrid work and 16 definitions concerning similar concepts were identified in the *country reports* (N=27). The content of these definitions was analysed using Atlas.ti software. The analysis proceeded in three phases. First, the sources mentioning hybrid work or a similar concept and who mentioned them were identified (Figure 7). Not all reports explicitly mentioned 'hybrid work'; instead, traditional remote work and telework definitions were often used[2].

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[2] According to the European framework agreement on telework, teleworking is 'a form of organising and/or performing work, using information technology, in the context of an employment contract/relationship, where work that could be performed at the employer's premises is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis.' See https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/telework

The following **actors** were identified as the sources of definitions: private sector companies, research institutes, government, public/media, employers, social partners (employers and unions together), unions, consultants, and political parties.

Figure 7 - Example of a hybrid work definition by a research institution in Belgium. In all, 25 quotations were coded from Belgian sources. Altogether, fourteen definitions from research institution reports were identified.

HW research institution – N=14

BE = Belgium – N=25

The Vlerick Business School has defined hybrid work as follows in one of its whitepapers on the topic: *'Hybrid work relies on the possibility of choosing flexibly the location from which the work is done. It is not the building or office that is decisive, but the type of work to be done, the necessary communication possibilities and the degree of interaction. In a hybrid work environment, work at the office is combined with work from home, or from any other location.'*

Second, the **core content** of each **hybrid work** definition and definitions related to **similar concepts** was coded based on the **basic elements and sub elements of hybrid work and their features**, as shown in Figure 6. The basic elements are physical, virtual, social, and temporal space. Each basic element and its sub element can include adjustable features such as working at home, using online technologies, communicating face-to-face, and working fixed days at the office each week. For example, some definitions used the location as the defining characteristic of hybrid work: 'working in [the] office and [at] home', 'not [a] dedicated workplace in [the] office', and 'working elsewhere'; others referred to time: 'two home days', 'three office days', and 'occasional telework'. One definition could include one or more features. Table 3 shows the elements and sub elements of hybrid work and their features in the collected definitions, and Table 4 shows those of similar concepts.

Third, the features that define hybrid work were also grouped into three categories based on flexibility concepts, flexibility in time, work organisation and location, in addition to the emphasis on technology.

## Findings: Hybrid work definitions in country reports

### Hybrid work definitions

Physical space and time were the most common basic elements used to define hybrid work (Table 2). Social space, virtual space, and their sub elements were sometimes used. However, the definitions included many additional features. Physical space was described in terms of working in multiple locations, especially at the main workplace and at home. The quality of workplaces in different locations was almost not discussed at all. Time was another defining element in answer to the questions of when, for how long and how often work took place. This meant typically working at fixed times during the week, month, or year at the office and remotely, for example, three office days and two telework days each week. Social space was discussed in terms of how communication and collaborative interaction were arranged. Usually, the meaning and significance of face-to-face contact were underlined and were sometimes related to building trust and leadership and avoiding social isolation and alienation. Virtual space was also sometimes – though not in all cases – referred to as the basic element of hybrid work. Autonomy, flexibility, agreements, and contracts were considered additional features of hybrid work. It was also expected that in organising hybrid work, job content

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and performance, employees' needs and organisational culture as well as well-being and ecological issues should be considered.

Table 2 - Examples of typical hybrid work definitions (N=93) and the number of elements, sub elements, and features mentioned in the excerpts from the correspondents' reports

| EXAMPLE QUOTES | SUB ELEMENTS | FEATURES |
|---|---|---|
| **PHYSICAL SPACE (N=79)** | | |
| 'Employers' organisation AWVN uses the following definition in a news publication on their website: Hybrid work: "partly at home and partly in the office or elsewhere".' | 72 x location<br><br>3 x workplace<br><br>3 x mobility | 48 x multiple locations<br><br>28 x main workplace<br><br>23 x home<br><br>1 x shared office |
| **TEMPORAL SPACE (N=43)** | | |
| 'It has already introduced its '60/40' hybrid working model in Ireland. This allows employees to work 60% of their time remotely and 40% in the office which will allow employees to maintain the flexibility they had during the pandemic.' | 22 x timing<br><br>13 x duration<br><br>9 x time frequency | 18 x fixed time,<br><br>5 x part-time<br><br>4 x days/week<br><br>3 x mixed time, occasionally<br><br>2 x regularly, weekly<br><br>1 x always, hours/day, anytime |
| **SOCIAL SPACE (N=11)** | | |
| 'The Fraunhofer Institute also calls for the hybrid model as an attractive and socially acceptable work arrangement, on the one hand to better ensure the exchange of information and social cohesion in teams/departments, and on the other hand to ensure leadership tasks.' | 11 x communication<br><br>2 x group maintenance<br><br>2 x task-orientation<br><br>1 x social relations | 10 x face-to-face<br><br>2 x mediated communication<br><br>1 x alienation, social isolation, trust, leadership |
| **VIRTUAL SPACE (N=10)** | | |
| 'Hybrid work is result-oriented work and leadership based on trust and dialogue. You collaborate with others from different work locations and stay connected through technology and physical meetings.' | 10 x virtual space<br><br>1 x online | 1 x ICT, online tools |
| **ADDITIONAL FEATURES (N=38)** | | |
| 'The office space and how it can be organised in a way that it supports both face-to-face interaction and privacy for online meetings and video calls; the technical equipment necessary to make a hybrid work organisation possible; the organisational culture or working culture are also topics covered in the debate on hybrid work; an ecological perspective, as less work at the office might mean less commuting; debated is also an 'alienation' and a loss of creativity.' | - | 11 x autonomy<br><br>6 x flexibility<br><br>5 x agreement<br><br>3 x job content, performance<br><br>2 x based on needs, based on company decisions, contract<br><br>1 x creativity, ecology, organisation culture, well-being |

## Similar concepts

Smart working, agile work, flexible work, blended working, and similar concepts were defined with the same basic elements as hybrid work and mostly in terms of the physical space, time and virtual space elements, as shown in Table 3 (Annex 2). The physical space of work in the future was characterised as working in multiple locations, at home, and at the main workplace. In terms of time, this was characterised by decisions about *when* work would take place ('timing') and for *how long* time ('duration'). Virtual space was only referred to in terms of data safety. In addition, future work was defined as having different forms and being autonomous, flexible, and nonhierarchical. In some definitions, it was also described as being based on the organisation's goals, values and written agreements and as crossing the organisations' constraints and boundaries.

For example, one respondent defined 'workation', referring to working in distant locations, as follows:

> *A work model in which the employer arranges for employees to work abroad or in a resort city in the same country, where part of the time is devoted to doing work, part of the time is devoted to professional self-development, and part of the time is for rest.*

Table 3 - Examples of similar concepts and the number of elements, sub elements, and features in the correspondents' reports (see details in Annex 2)

| SIMILAR CONCEPTS (N=16) | EXAMPLE QUOTES | SUB ELEMENTS | FEATURES |
|---|---|---|---|
| Full-time telework organisation, agile work, 'crossbreed' work, smart working, forms of telework, a mixed work model, partial teleworking, workation, flexible organisation, boundless work, working from home, blended working, flexible ways of working, regular telework | 'Hence, what in the international debate and legislation is expressed more generically with the term Remote Work or Hybrid Work, implying a work carried out outside the office, whether stably, at regular or occasional intervals, in Italy is referred to as Smart Working or Agile Work.' 'The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar, said that blended working will involve working sometimes from the office and other times from home, a hub or on the go.' 'There are no other official definitions of hybrid work nor other similar definitions. In parallel to hybrid work, a term 'flexible work' (a flexible way of working) (in Swedish 'flexibelt arbetssätt') is sometimes used to describe not only to non-place-based work but also the wider flexibilization of work (e.g., in terms of working hours).' | **PHYSICAL SPACE (N=15)** | |
| | | 12 x location 5 x workplace | 12 x multiple locations 2 x home 2 x work as environment 1 x main workplace |
| | | **TEMPORAL SPACE (N=11)** | |
| | | 4 x timing 2 x duration 2 x time frequency | - |
| | | **SOCIAL SPACE (N=1)** | |
| | | | 1 x organisation constrains and contexts |
| | | **VIRTUAL SPACE (N=1)** | |
| | | | 1 x data safety |
| | | **ADDITIONAL FEATURES (N=15)** | |
| Full-time telework organisation, agile work, 'crossbreed' | 'Hence, what in the international debate and legislation is expressed more generically with the term Remote Work or Hybrid Work, implying a work carried out outside the office, whether | - | 5 x flexibility 3 x autonomy 1 x written agreement, |

| work, smart working, forms of telework, a mixed work model, partial teleworking, workation, flexible organisation, boundless work, working from home, blended working, flexible ways of working, regular telework | stably, at regular or occasional intervals, in Italy is referred to as Smart Working or Agile Work.'<br><br>'The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar, said that blended working will involve working sometimes from the office and other times from home, a hub or on the go.'<br><br>'There are no other official definitions of hybrid work nor other similar definitions. In parallel to hybrid work, a term 'flexible work' (a flexible way of working) (in Swedish 'flexibelt arbetssätt') is sometimes used to describe not only to non-place-based work but also the wider flexibilization of work (e.g., in terms of working hours).' | | organisational objectives, variety of forms, nonhierarchical, work–life balance, organisational constrains and boundaries, value-based drivers |
|---|---|---|---|

### Flexibility perspective on hybrid work

The hybrid work definitions were also categorised into flexibility in time, flexibility in work organisation, flexibility in using different locations to work, and technology options-related issues (Table 5, Annex 3). The use of ICT was mentioned only seldom as a feature of hybrid work. The most interesting were the definitions that added new features to time and physical space elements and organisation. Actors such as representatives of private sector companies, governments, and research institutes were the main sources of definitions. In addition, representatives of trade unions and news in public media provided definitions.

### Flexibility in time

Flexibility related to time was referred to most often. Temporal flexibility indicators varied from generic 'occasional and part-time' telework and a fixed number of days per week at the office to adjustable time shares between the office, home, and elsewhere, for example, two days at home and three days at the office; 50% in-office work and 50% at-home work scheduled between 7 am and 8 pm; rotating amounts of office work between 30% and 70%; a maximum of 35 days of working from home per year; or alternating between one week at office and one week elsewhere.

### Flexibility in work organisation

Flexibility in organising refers to ways of flexibly organising features of hybrid work. The definitions included several elements and features, such as who has the decision-making power, e.g., the employee, the manager, or the company; the location where the work takes place; and the work schedule. In addition, other options influencing the manifestation of hybridity were mentioned, such as flexible choices and agreements based on job responsibilities, the need for communication and interaction, and company and job needs.

### Flexibility in location

In many quotes, the flexible choice of location was the main element of hybrid work, referring quite often to only the employer's premises and some other places. Location flexibility indicators varied from generic, such as 'working elsewhere' or at on-site and off-site locations to more specific, such as offices and homes and mobile, multilocational and hub work inside one country; teleworking abroad for a certain period of time was also mentioned.

Technological options

Technology played only a minor role in these definitions. However, the need to enable presence, awareness of others, and virtual connectivity from anywhere and the need for the employee and employer to agree about who bears responsibility for providing ICT use opportunities were emphasised.

Table 4 - Example definitions of hybrid work and related concepts in terms of flexibility in the correspondents' reports (see details in Annex 3)

| TYPE OF DEFINITIONS (N=79) | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| Flexibility in time (N=32) | 'Under the new model, 50% of working time must be spent in the office, but employees can schedule their working time between 7am and 8pm as they please when working from home.' |
| Flexibility in work organisation (N=22) | 'Hybrid work relies on the possibility of choosing flexibly the location from which the work is done. It is not the building or office that is decisive, but the type of work to be done, the necessary communication possibilities and the degree of interaction. In a hybrid work environment, work at the office is combined with work from home, or from any other location.' |
| Flexibility in location (N=20) | 'Hybrid work is mostly defined as a combination of working on the employers' premises and in other locations.' |
| Technological options (N=5) | 'The hybrid organization combines physical presence with work from other locations, such as homework. This means that some parts of the company's tasks are performed virtually, while others are performed by meeting physically.' |

It can be concluded that the definitions of hybrid work and similar concepts at the member state level typically mentioned physical space and time elements and features. Even when the concepts differed, their content was similar. For example, 'blended working' was defined as involving working sometimes from the office and other times from home, at a hub or on the go. This definition is clearly reminiscent of the concept of multilocational work. The analysis of the definitions in the excerpts from the viewpoint of flexibility confirms this conclusion.

## Evolving concept of hybrid work?

The analysis of hybrid work definitions presented in the literature and country reports during the pandemic shows that the physical space element – remote work in multiple locations and working at the main workplace – and the temporal element, i.e., when, for how long, and how often work is done in each location and workplace, were the elements most frequently used to characterise hybrid work. In these definitions, social and virtual elements were used only occasionally. The same pattern of elements was found for definitions of similar concepts. When the hybrid work definitions in the recent literature and country reports are compared with the earlier definitions of remote work and telework, we can see that they use the same basic elements.

In the European framework agreement (2002), telework is defined as:

> *A form of organising and/or performing work, using information technology, in the context of an employment contract/relationship, where work, which could also be performed at the employer's premises, is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis.*

This definition of telework includes physical space (location), virtual space (ICT) and time (time frequency) elements in addition to referring to a feature of an employment contract/relationship.

Later, telework and ICT-based mobile work were defined (Eurofound, 2020, p. V) as

> *Telework and ICT-based mobile work (TICTM) is any type of work arrangement where workers work remotely, away from an employer's premises or fixed location, using digital technologies such as networks, laptops, mobile phones and the internet.*

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020c, p. 6) defined telework as

> *A subcategory of the broader concept of remote work. It includes workers who use information and communications technology (ICT) or landline telephones to carry out the work remotely. Similar to remote work, telework can be carried out in different locations outside the default place of work. What makes telework a unique category is that the work carried out remotely includes the use of personal electronic devices.'*

These definitions of remote work and telework and ICT-based mobile work include only physical space (excluding the main workplace) and virtual space (ICT) elements in addition to referring to the feature of flexible arrangements.

It can be concluded that virtual and social elements are almost entirely missing from the definitions of hybrid work produced during the pandemic, which are evocative of the 'classical' definitions of remote work and telework and ICT-based mobile work, although the newer definitions include virtuality. The main differences between the definitions of hybrid work and similar concepts and earlier definitions of remote work and telework are evident in the *additional features* they propose and use (Figure 8). First, the newer definitions underline the flexibility and autonomy in arrangements of physical and temporal spaces. Second, they characterise hybrid work with more detailed – but individualised – features. These features highlight the need for developing contracts and agreements; preventing isolation and alienation; providing support for well-being, work–life balance, and creativity; and investing in developing leadership. This indicates that changing job responsibilities and working environments impact how hybrid work is actually designed and implemented in organisations and practised in a localised and flexible manner. Finally, the additional features also reflect the potential and opportunities of hybrid work.

Figure 8 - The main elements, sub elements, and features of hybrid work (inner circles) and related characterisations in country reports and in the literature on traditional remote work and telework and the proposed additional features (outer circle).



*Source: authors' own conceptualisation.*

# 3 – Debates on hybrid work

The quick transition to teleworking from home at the beginning of 2020 was mostly perceived positively, even by those who had no previous remote work experience. Then, critical observations about the associated challenges began to emerge; these challenges included poor working conditions such as poor ergonomics in home spaces, which made both solo work and collaboration difficult. The scarcity of proper ICT tools and their limitations were evident, for example, in the form of increasing Zoom fatigue (for example, Nadler, 2020) due to prolonged use of digital tools. There were difficulties in reconciling work and family life when children and spouses were also often at home, many felt isolated from colleagues and managers, and those working alone experienced loneliness. This started a discussion in late 2020 and early 2021 about how organisations, social partners, and society could support and enhance the experience of teleworking from home. Hybrid work began to be addressed in the media and in national policy discussions by governments and social partners about concepts such as the 'right to disconnect' and, at the company level, about what kinds of agreements and guidelines are needed in workplaces. Later, in late 2021 and early 2022, the debate moved to what would happen after the pandemic, asking what hybrid elements and features would be needed and how they should be combined and implemented.
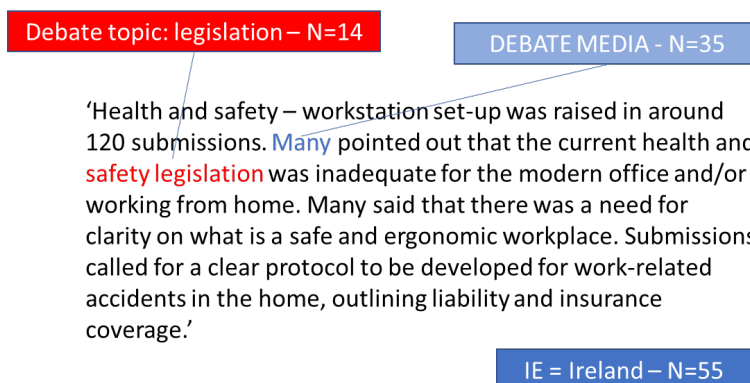
## Debates in country reports

Next, the debates among different actors in the EU were analysed by focusing on the following questions in the Network of Eurofound Correspondents' reports:

- *To what extent is hybrid work being debated in your country, and what are the main subjects of such debates?*
- *Who are the main actors driving the debates, and what are their positions regarding hybrid work? What are the views of trade unions, business or employer associations, and other organisations or communities such as HR managers?*

### Analysis

In a similar vein as in the analysis of the hybrid work concept in chapter three, debates on hybrid work were first identified and then analysed by using three codes in Atlas.ti. First, **country codes** were assigned to the quotations; second, the main topic of each citation was inductively identified. The following **debate topics** were identified: hybrid work (HW), organising HW, HW consequences, regulation, legislation, HW agreements, costs, office premises, control, employment relationships, working conditions, ICT, health and well-being, leadership, work culture, competences, equality, risks, time, and work–life balance. Third, the **actors** participating in the debates were identified as employee unions, employers' associations and representatives; the public/media (newspapers, websites); the government; researchers; companies; consultants; political parties; and HR managers. An example of the analysis unit is shown in Figure 9.

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Figure 9 - An example of a debate taking place in Irish media

Debate topic: legislation – N=14    DEBATE MEDIA - N=35

'Health and safety – workstation set-up was raised in around 120 submissions. Many pointed out that the current health and safety legislation was inadequate for the modern office and/or working from home. Many said that there was a need for clarity on what is a safe and ergonomic workplace. Submissions called for a clear protocol to be developed for work-related accidents in the home, outlining liability and insurance coverage.'

IE = Ireland – N=55

*Note: N refers to the frequency of each code. For example, in the country reports, legislation-related issues were brought up as a topic of debate 14 times, and the media was identified as an actor 35 times. In all, the Irish report produced 55 excerpts.*

*Source: authors' own conceptualisation*

# Findings

## Main debate topics

The quotes (N=140) of the reports describe lively debates on various topics related to telework from home and hybrid work (Table 6). The main topics of debates about telework from home and hybrid work and their arrangements concerned the type of regulation needed. Questions such as what kinds of changes in legislation are needed, whether a contract between social partners is sufficient, and whether contracts should be made at the organisation level arose. In addition, it was asked what hybrid work is, how it should be organised, and what kinds of consequences it has. 'Who pays the bill' was discussed, as were the kinds of costs that will appear, the kinds of office premises and technologies that are needed, and how these elements should be changed. Questions about the employment relationship in hybrid work and how to control and manage it were discussed as well. Health, well-being and leadership issues, competences, equality, risks, work–life balance, and the organisation's work culture were addressed to some extent. Illustrative quotes from the analysed reports are presented in Annex 4. The debate **topics** included the following:

- *What kind and level of regulation* is needed? Is the telework legislation on the national level up to date? Is a contract between social partners sufficient? Should hybrid work agreements and contracts be made only on the organisational or team level? (N=43)

- *How should hybrid work be organised and what are its consequences*? (N=34)

- What is the *actual definition* of hybrid work? (N=21)

- Who is responsible for the *costs*, *office premises,* proper *working conditions* and *ICT* in a hybrid workplace? (N=19)

- How should *employment relationships* be arranged? What kind of *management* system (control) is needed? (N=13)

- What are the *risks* of hybrid work and its consequences for *health* and *well-being*? (N=4)

- What kind of *leadership* and new *competences* are needed? (N=4)

- How can *equality*, *work–life balance*, and a good work culture be maintained? (N=2).

## Actors and their positions

The main actors in debates were the public/media (N=35), employee unions (N=33) and employers' associations and representatives (N=31), followed by government representatives (N=12), researchers (N=11), and companies (N=10). HR, political parties, and consultants only seldomly participated in the debates (Table 6), although both international and global consulting companies and local consultants on the country level quickly started to offer their solutions and services for those who needed them.

Social partners discussed the level of regulation. Trade unions and employers' organisations were both generally in favour of the hybrid work model and did not see many problems in its implementation, although many things yet to be reconciled came up in the discussion. Government representatives only seldomly participated in the debates about legislation. The discussion in the media about the measures regulating remote work was affirmative and highlighted the possible need to address what the legal provisions for these arrangements should be.

Table 5 - Debate actors and topics in the country reports

| TOPICS | CITATIONS (N=140) FROM THE ACTORS | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Public/media (N=35) | Employee unions and representatives (N=33) | Employer associations and representatives (N=31) | Government (N=12) | Researchers (N=11) | Companies (N=10) | HR, political parties, consultants (N=8) |
| Regulation, legislation, agreement (N=43) | 6 | 14 | 12 | 6 | 3 | - | 2 |
| Organising and consequences of HW (N=34) | 9 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| HW definition (N=21) | 10 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | |
| Costs, premises, working conditions, ICT (N=19) | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Employment relationship, control (N=13) | 1 | 4 | 6 | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Risks, health, well-being (N=4) | 2 | | | | 1 | | 1 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Leadership, competences (N=4) | 2 | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Equality, Work-Life balance, work culture (N=2) | 1 | 1 | | | | | |

*Employees union representatives* underlined the need to regulate telework through legal measures and collective agreements for sectoral-specific provisions for telework and encouraged the government to initiate the dialogue. Updating the present telework legislation – if available – was brought up. For example, AKAVA, the Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland, suggested that the definition of teleworking should be enshrined in the legislation. The rights and obligations relating to teleworking should be specified as necessary in the Working Time Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Accident at Work Act. Union representatives also raised some concerns. For example, an employee should have the right to end a telework contract depending on his or her life situation. In addition, many specific issues to discuss were suggested, such as the right to disconnect, the allocation of bonuses, forms of managerial control and surveillance and the overall remuneration of workers.

*Employers' representatives* generally suggested that telework should be regulated among social partners within the process of the definition or the renewal of collective agreements and not through legal means. For them, the European Framework on Telework (2002) was found to work well, and no additional legislation was needed, only good examples and best practices. It was stated that many companies have already made good progress with their employees by applying internal company regulations to hybrid work. Employers' concerns focused on unilateral decisions by public authorities regarding the compulsory character of telework during the pandemic crisis. Other concerns were also reported; for example, the right to reversibility, benefits, and the right to privacy were regarded as already sufficiently detailed in existing legislation.

In speeches, *companies* focused on the concrete issues of telework from home and hybrid work. Many companies expected that new forms of work will continue when the pandemic ends. Benefits and possible positive impacts were expected in terms of work efficiency, better adjustment of work obligations and private life, a reduction in stress felt by employees and lowered business costs. One of the issues discussed was the reduced need for office space due to options like desk sharing. It was expected that a reduction in the office space needed by a company would generate a substantial reduction in costs. Some companies also had a clear tendency to occupy office buildings in more central areas than before to be close to employee housing, as this arrangement would save them time in commuting. Companies often used such opportunities to inform the public about their flexible working arrangements to attract young employees. Concerns were related to the availability and quality of equipment for workers to use at home (laptops, mobile phones) and the work–life balance of employees.

In *public* discussions in the *media*, many challenges and hindrances as well as the benefits and opportunities of these new work arrangements were presented. Telework and hybrid work were discussed in a manner that considered the hybrid work concept as an evolved version of telework. Overall, the debates revolved around positive and negative characteristics of telework from home and

hybrid work and the continuation of telework on a regular basis in a post-pandemic era. It was agreed that the crisis showed that remote work can be an advantage for both employers and employees. However, the hybrid work concept was considered an uncommon term that is only used by academics/practitioners who study the subject or are engaged with the subject. The lack of specific mentions of hybrid work in public authorities' documents and pieces of legislation or proposals was also noticed.

## Fluctuating debates and expectations

The main debate topic was the level of regulation. The social partners agreed that hybrid work would increase in the future, whereas their opinions about the level and content of regulation varied. The employees' unions and representatives expected legislation to be developed and contracted between social partners regarding the risks, health, safety, rights, and obligations of employees. Employers' representatives mostly did not see the need to develop legislation but favoured contracting flexibly on the organisation level.

The content of such contracts arises from the changing job demands when work and workplace transformation happen. The main challenge is determining how to arrange work so that both companies and employees are satisfied, combining increased efficiency and considering human issues before turning to the technological and emotional challenges of hybrid work. The challenges also include arranging the physical work environment, e.g., who should cover the costs when working from home and be responsible for ensuring the health and safety of employees when they are working from their home. In addition, challenges include the organisation of teamwork and communication among remote workers in organisations, as well as taking care of employees' mental health and well-being. In the discussion, some suggested that mental health support should be provided to counteract workers' feelings of isolation, loneliness and difficulty switching off. Importantly, balancing professional and personal life requires attention, as this form of work is frequently characterised by constant availability and longer working hours. One area of challenge is related to the digital perspective and includes access to the employer's digital infrastructure, information security and data safety. If these challenges are not solved, they can easily become hindrances.

Opportunities noted in the discussions included access to training platforms that can develop employee and supervisor skills involved in remote and hybrid work. Mentoring and coaching for remote workers were also mentioned. It was also claimed that in the future, the work would depend on the way human resource departments manage hybrid work. One other issue raised was tax and financial incentives. This concerned the cost of utilities such as broadband, heating, and phones for those working from home. It was pointed out that the existing tax relief systems for those working at home are not suitable for modern work practices and are difficult to apply for.

At whatever level the agreement takes place, it can be used in designing future hybrid work. Grzegorczyk et al. (2021), for example, suggest that European trade unions and business federations should start a dialogue in the EU among employers, employees, and governments. The dialogue should lead to the adoption of a new Framework Agreement on Hybrid Work that would supersede the 2002 Framework Agreement on Telework. The new framework could set out the conditions for a general increase in teleworking and not aim to dictate employers' internal work organisation or workers' choices. However, it should aim to facilitate the implementation of flexible working conditions, ensuring equal minimum protection levels for on-site and hybrid workers while fostering harmonization within the EU single market and making it easier for workers to be geographically mobile.

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In a recent ILO report (Social Dialogue Report, 2022), collective bargaining was suggested to include work organisation, decent teleworking conditions (working time, occupational health and safety, and inclusion), and skills development. The report draws attention to the fact that the pandemic has already prompted considerable changes to legislation related to remote work in many countries. During 2020 and 2021, there were collectively negotiated responses concerning the following (Social Dialogue Report, 2022, pp. 177-180): facilitating transitions in work organisation, ensuring decent teleworking conditions, and promoting skills development. Agreements related to organisational transitions have concerned the voluntary nature of remote work arrangements, equipment and the associated costs, cybersecurity, and data protection. To guarantee decent teleworking conditions, there have been agreements concerning working time regulation, workers' control over their own work schedules, the times they are reachable, time monitoring, and the right to disconnect. There were also agreements addressing occupational safety and health standards and the equal treatment of on-site and off-site workers with respect to earnings and opportunities for career development. Skills development agreements have included access to training to ensure the use of technologies and the acquisition of digital skills.

# 4 – Expected hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities related to hybrid work

In this chapter, we discuss hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities (HCBOs) related to remote work and telework and explore what kinds of expectations there are in terms of HCBOs in hybrid work among actors in different EU member states. Potential hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities are first studied by reviewing the available remote work and telework literature, after which, the country reports are analysed to shed light on the expectations regarding HW.

During the pandemic in 2020–22, many local, national, and global surveys were conducted concerning the expectations of both employees and management about the post-pandemic hybrid work outlook. In a global survey (Strack et al, 2021) in late 2020, nine out of ten respondents said they want to work remotely at least some of the time, and only a small proportion of workers—one in four—would switch to a completely remote model if they could. This wish for continuing remote work and telework options is not limited to those with digital, knowledge, or office jobs but includes social care, services, and manufacturing. In regard to temporal flexibility, 36% of respondents wanted a traditional 9-to-5 job with fully fixed hours, 44% would prefer a combination of fixed and flexible time, and 20% would like to have complete time flexibility. In a survey by Microsoft[3] in early 2022, the number of people engaging in hybrid work was up by seven percent year-over-year (to 38%), and over half of respondents (52%), especially Gen Z and Millennials, said they were likely to consider shifting to hybrid or remote work in the year ahead. From an organisational viewpoint, this may result in challenges if not properly considered. A survey conducted by McKinsey suggests that the majority of organisations also see value in hybrid work and are planning to combine remote and on-site working after the pandemic (Alexander et al, 2021). Most executives expected that employees will be on-site between 21 and 80 percent of the time or one to four days per week.

While the shift to remote work during the pandemic has had positive effects, for example, on productivity, in some organisations (Alexander et al, 2021), management has observed differences in managing remotely versus in person and has experienced difficulties in leading their organisations. For example, in their interview study of 50 executives on their experiences with leading their organisations during the pandemic, Kane and colleagues (2021) uncovered several challenges. In managing remote workers, innovation capability has been weakened because serendipitous connections in collaboration with others has dropped off precipitously. In addition, there have been challenges in starting new projects relying on virtual collaboration, and establishing and maintaining organisational culture has been difficult, if not impossible, in a virtual setting. Employees, particularly younger employees, have received less mentoring and coaching during the shift to remote work than they did before the pandemic.

While these benefits and challenges are related to the extreme case of forced telework during the pandemic, they provide important insights into the management of telework and what needs to be considered when planning and implementing the hybrid model. In addition, prepandemic research on remote work and telework as well as expectations of hybrid work based on the experiences of remote

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[3] The Work Trend Index survey was conducted by an independent research firm, Edelman Data x Intelligence, among 31,102 full-time employed or self-employed workers across 31 countries between January 7, 2022 and February 16, 2022.

work during the pandemic are central in building understanding of the requirements of HW organisation. Therefore, in this chapter, we focus on the following question:

- *What are the expected hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities related to hybrid work, and what should be focused on when implementing hybrid work?*

# Hindrances and challenges as job demands and benefits and opportunities as resources

The expected hindrances and challenges of hybrid work are work demands that can be influenced, compensated for, and strategically navigated. Its benefits and opportunities are potential resources for designing, implementing, and carrying out hybrid work. The crucial questions for designing and implementing hybrid work are what kinds of constituent elements, sub elements, and current and potential features such work has as well as the kinds of resources that are available for an operating subject, be it an individual, a team, the management of an organisation, their network, or a society, to adapt, use, benefit from and develop.

Work demands in hybrid work are objective, determinable elements and features of work and the working context. For example, location flexibility can allow high mobility if needed, and time flexibility can offer the possibility of scheduling work autonomously within certain limits. However, demands can also set some hindrances and challenges if actors do not have enough resources to meet them. Demands can also become benefits and developmental opportunities for actors when additional resources are granted. These issues are studied in this chapter from the viewpoints of hindrances and challenges as potential contextual work demands identified in hybrid work and the benefits and opportunities that hybrid work arrangements provide as developmental resources.

The HCBO model is built on the job demands–resources (JD–R) model (Demerouti et al, 2001; Bakker and Demerouti, 2017), which is applied as a generic framework in this study. In the JD–R model, job demands are defined as the physical, psychological, social, organisational, and other aspects of work that require sustained efforts from an actor and are, therefore, associated with certain costs. Hybrid work will change the physical, virtual, social, and time-related organisational conditions of a job and require the adjustment of employees, managers and organisations to a new context and a new psychological orientation and collective ways of coping. Two types of job demands have been identified (Cavanaugh et al, 2000; LePine et al, 2005; Van den Broeck et al, 2010): hindering and challenging job demands. Hindering job demands in work circumstances involve excessive or undesirable constraints that interfere with or inhibit an actor's ability to achieve important goals. For example, changing work contexts often includes encountering interruptions in shared workspaces, disturbances in communication with other people, and other hurdles that hinder work actions. Challenge demands are those work characteristics that prompt individuals to put effort into the task at hand and that help achieve goals. They create opportunities for personal growth, learning and achievement. Challenging job demands require efforts from an actor that potentially promote the development and achievement of the set goals. Challenge demands are not inherently a negative aspect of hybrid work, but they may result in hindrances if the resources an employee has at her or his disposal are not sufficient to support the worker in meeting the challenges (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

The JD–R model states that the resources needed to meet the hindrances and challenges of working from home can also be found in physical, virtual, social, and organisational aspects of the home context that are functional in achieving work goals. The model suggests the need to reduce job demands, and the associated physiological and psychological costs stimulate personal growth,

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learning, and development. Job resources are the physical, social, organisational, or other aspects of the job that reduce hindering and challenging job demands and the associated costs (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). It can be expected that in hybrid work, the usefulness and functionality of digital tools and proper working conditions at any location act as technological and physical resources, and colleagues and leaders at the workplace and family and friends at home act as social resources. In addition to these contextual resources, hybrid working employees can rely on their own *personal resources.* These refer to a remote worker and teleworker's positive self-evaluations and competences that manifest as proactivity and an individual's sense of his or her ability to successfully control and impact his or her environment (Hobfoll et al, 2018). For example, prior experiences and learned practices involving telework before and during the pandemic can increase personal resources in hybrid work.

## Teachings from remote work and telework literature

As hybrid work inevitably has similarities with the elements and features of traditional remote work and telework, the existing understanding of the hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities of teleworking informs the design of different elements of hybrid work. Moreover, empirical studies and surveys carried out during the pandemic inform us about issues and questions related to the implications and management challenges of telework that have become particularly prominent in situations where many workers are simultaneously engaged in high-intensity teleworking. A table including the review articles and their main conclusions can be found in Annex 5.

Earlier research has identified various individual and organisational challenges and benefits related to telework and explored their relationship with specific individual- and organisation-level outcomes. To identify the most central demands and benefits associated with telework, we analysed existing reviews of telework literature, using the HCBO analysis (i.e., hindrances, challenges, benefits, opportunities) as our framework. The reviews discuss research evidence on the influence of remote work and telework on productivity, commitment, work–life balance, social relationships, emotions, and physical and mental well-being, as well as on professional isolation and perceptions of career advancement. In addition, some organisational and societal implications have been discussed, although the focus of earlier research has primarily been on individual-level implications (Raghuram et al, 2019).

The reviews also include a few recent studies on telework that have been conducted during the pandemic to understand the experiences and implications of high-intensity telework mainly from home. Several studies have sought to explore the implications for motivation, productivity and retention and collaboration during the period of involuntary telework. In addition, of special interest have been both the level of telework employees are willing to continue after the pandemic and organisations' willingness to provide such opportunities. As a research context, the pandemic has provided an extreme case, as telework has been enforced in many countries, and organisations and family members have been also forced to stay at home at least for some period of time, which has created a very challenging environment for managing the work–family/life boundary. Experiences with teleworking during the pandemic have also been overshadowed by concerns related to the spread of the virus and personal and family members' health as well as broader societal consequences. This research, covering broad sets of data from various contexts, nevertheless provides important perspectives to complement the earlier telework literature and inform organisations in implementing hybrid work practices.

# HCBOs in the remote work and telework literature

## Hindering and challenging demands

One's home also being one's workplace is implicit in a telework context (Raghuram et al, 2019). A central challenge discussed in the telework literature is thus the management of the work-family interface (Beauregard et al, 2019; Biron and Veldhoven, 2016; Boell et al, 2013; Tremblay and Thomsin, 2012) and the potential hindrances resulting from the blurring of the spatial and temporal boundaries of these two areas of life. Allen et al. (2015) found a small positive association of telecommuting and work–family conflict. Work-related hindrances associated with the blurring of work and family life include *stress* and *concentration issues* due to distractions from the home environment (Galanti et al, 2022). In addition, Camacho and Barrios (2022) found that two techno-stressors (work–home conflict and work overload) generated strain in teleworkers, which in turn decreased their satisfaction with telework and perceived job performance.

Teleworkers experience the challenge of *social isolation* because of decreased in-person interaction with colleagues and increased reliance on technology-mediated communication (Beauregard et al, 2019; Biron and Veldhoven, 2016; Boell et al, 2013; Charalampous, 2019; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Raghuram et al, 2019; Tremblay and Thomsin, 2012). Such social and professional isolation in an organisation has been identified as hindering informal learning and feedback and resulting in perceived career stagnation, emotional exhaustion, cognitive stress and weakening of social relationships (Beauregard et al, 2019; Biron and Veldhoven, 2016; Charalampous, 2019).

In addition, *trust* issues reflected by increased *monitoring* by management have been reported (Boell et al, 2013; Charalampous, 2019). This has led to a proposal (Suder and Siibak, 2022) to draft national laws to strengthen the possibility for employees to opt out of such applications and technologies after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, issues related to *physical well-being,* such as musculoskeletal problems due to poor ergonomics (Charalampous et al, 2019), are identified by researchers as potential hindrances in telework. Working outside the company premises has also been associated with *increased interruption*s and *technical problems* hindering work (Boell et al, 2013).

At the organisational level, central challenges include the monitoring of employees (Beauregard et al, 2019) and thereby the need for management approaches focusing on outcomes rather than presence (Aloisi and De Stefano, 2022), means of ensuring knowledge transfer (Beauregard et al, 2019), organisational teamwork and the facilitation of interactions among employees as well as challenges related to the maintenance of ICT infrastructure and data security (Boell et al, 2013).

Reviews on telework studies carried out during the pandemic have found that many of the hindrances and challenges associated with telework, such as the blurring of the work and family spheres, spatial constraints, technostress[4] and the implications of inadequate technologies, intensified during the period of involuntary high-intensity telework (Shirmohammadi et al, 2022). Fauville and colleagues (2021) found while developing and validating the Zoom Exhaustion & Fatigue Scale (2021) that the higher the frequency, duration, and burstiness of Zoom meetings were, the higher the level of fatigue experienced, and fatigue was associated with negative attitudes towards Zoom meetings. In addition, experiences related to social isolation, including loneliness, increased compared to time before the pandemic, and the quality of social relationships deteriorated (Buecker & Horstmann, 2021). A survey

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[4] Technostress refers to a situation of stress that an individual experiences due to her or his use of IT (Tarafdar et al., 2019). Technostress resulting, for example, from constant floods of notifications can have a negative influence on well-being and impair cognitive abilities (Salo et al., 2022).

study (Ipsen et al, 2021) from 29 European countries on knowledge workers' (N = 5748) WFH experiences during the early stages of lockdown confirmed that the main concerns were home office constraints, work uncertainties and inadequate tools.

## Benefits

The benefits of telework outlined in earlier research include increased *autonomy* (Boell et al, 2013; Charalampous, 2019; De Menezes and Kelliher, 2011; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007) and increased job satisfaction. However, the relationship between the extent of telework and job satisfaction can be curvilinear, such that satisfaction and amount of telework are positively related at lower levels of telecommuting, but satisfaction plateaus at higher levels of telecommuting (approximately 15.1 hours per week) (Allen et al, 2015). In addition, lower work–family conflict and *increased work–life balance* (Ipsen et al, 2021) have been reported, as well as increased work engagement during the pandemic (Mäkikangas et al, 2022). High levels of organisational support, the functionality of the home as a work environment, job-related self-efficacy, and job crafting characterised situations in which work engagement remained at a high level during the remote work period. Telework has also been associated with better concentration and productivity, as impromptu conversations and the burdens of social interaction and other distractions can be avoided (Beauregard et al, 2019, Biron and Veldhoven, 2016). In some studies, increased productivity from homeworking has been explained by suggesting that employees are merely putting in uncounted hours when working from home (Beauregard et al, 2019; Charalampous et al, 2019). In Ipsen et al.'s (2021) study during the first phase of the pandemic, work–life balance, improved perceived work efficiency and greater control over work were considered the main advantages of WFH arrangements.

Although social isolation has been reported to weaken social relationships with coworkers, teleworking, on the other hand, has been reported to improve the quality of the employee–supervisor relationship (Beauregard et al, 2019). As telework often denotes working from home, it is associated with less commuting and thereby the mitigation of stressful demands (Biron and Veldhoven, 2016). The reviews suggest that individual-level benefits at the organisational level include increased work morale (Boell et al, 2013), lower turnover intent (Beauregard et al, 2019; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007), more opportunities to attract talented employees (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007), less absenteeism (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011), and financial advantages, for example, through decreased real estate costs (Raghuram et al, 2019).

Findings concerning organisational outcomes are, however, controversial. Martin and MacDonnell (2012), in their meta-analysis, found telework to increase productivity, increase retention, strengthen organisational commitment, and improve performance within the organisation. Earlier, Gajendran and Harrison (2007) suggested that telecommuting is positively associated with supervisor-rated or objectively measured individual job performance. However, the performance benefit can depend on the characteristics of work. Golden and Gajendran (2019), in their theoretical framework, proposed that two job characteristics, namely, job complexity and problem solving, and two social characteristics, specifically, interdependence and social support, moderate the extent of the telecommuting–job performance relationship. By testing the issue empirically, they found that for telecommuters doing complex jobs, for those in jobs involving low levels of interdependence and for those in jobs with low levels of social support, the extent of telecommuting had a positive association with job performance. Overall, it seems that the productivity outcomes of telework are moderated by several factors, as shown in a study in Asia (Gibbs et al, 2021). The study used data from over 10 000 IT professionals working from home during the pandemic. Working outside normal business hours rose 18% from levels before the pandemic, and average output declined slightly; thus, productivity fell 8-19%. Employees with children at home increased their work hours more and had a larger decline in productivity than those without children. Women had a larger decline in productivity, while those

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with longer company tenure fared better. One source of these changes in productivity was higher communication and coordination costs; time spent on coordination activities and meetings increased, while uninterrupted work hours shrank considerably.

Telework has also been suggested to have benefits at the societal level through a reduction in carbon emissions and in wear and tear on roads, bridges, and highway systems from decreasing commutes (Biron and Veldhoven, 2016). In addition, Schur et al. (2020) found in their study on the potential for the pandemic to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities that workers with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities both to work primarily from home and to do any work at home. This was true for both employees and self-employed workers.

### Opportunities

Opportunities are discussed more broadly in Chapter 5, which focuses on the factors of success in implementing telework and hybrid work arrangements. To identify opportunities as resources for telework requires the identification of hindrances and challenges, the removal of hindrances, and then overcoming challenges by developing practices, guidelines and principles when designing and implementing telework. The resources include the principles and managerial and HR practices needed to develop and sustain teleworking arrangements, communication practices related to collaboration with particular attention to specific cultural features, and technologies and tools available to support telework.

## Ambivalent and contradictory implications of traditional remote work and telework

The analysis of the review articles shows that research on telework has primarily focused on individual-level outcomes (Raghuram et al, 2019). In addition, the findings are sometimes ambivalent, contradictory, and varied and most often lack consistent evidence. This is explained by the different contexts in which telework has been studied and the multitude of moderating factors that influence the outcomes (see, e.g., Menezes and Kelliker, 2011). One significant factor influencing the outcomes is the intensity of telework. Many of the hindrances and challenges identified in earlier telework literature are associated with high-intensity telework, in which telework is the primary mode of working, while low intensity refers to a maximum of 2.5 days of telework/week (Gajendra and Harrison, 2007). Some benefits have a curvilinear relationship with telework intensity, whereas some challenges and benefits are accentuated as the intensity of telework increases. For example, Biron and Veldhoven (2016) demonstrate that in high-intensity teleworking, isolation negatively influences performance, but in part-time teleworking, the influence of isolation on performance is negligible. In a similar vein, the review by Beauregard et al. (2019) indicates that high-intensity teleworking is associated with negative implications for career advancement, whereas low-intensity telework has not been found to influence social relations and career advancement. Studies also show some positive implications of telework levelling off as the intensity of telework increases. For example, Biron and Veldhoven (2016) show how increases in job satisfaction drop off as teleworking becomes more extensive. The same phenomenon has been found in relation to autonomy. Gajendra and Harrison's (2007) meta-analysis shows how both high- and low-intensity telecommuters experience similar levels of autonomy, which suggests that after an initial increase in the perception of autonomy accruing from 1–2 days of telework, there is only a marginal increase in feelings of autonomy as time spent telecommuting increases.

Telework reviews also point out several inconsistent arguments and ambivalences related to the implications of telework, illustrating how the same aspect of telework may be considered a demand or an advantage. For example, as pointed out above, physical distance from colleagues may result in

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social and professional isolation and thus have negative implications on relationships and well-being (Bentley et al, 2021). While the opportunity to work in a distraction-free environment is considered to increase concentration and thereby productivity, the implications of the lack of interaction and knowledge sharing with colleagues on productivity may be harmful (e.g., Beauregard et al, 2019). In addition, using one's home as one's workplace may also lead to distractions (Boell et al, 2013). To maintain contact and meet job expectations, teleworkers rely on ICT, which enables them to stay connected with their work community when working from different locations. This, however, may result in technostress (Beauregard et al, 2019) and exhaustion, longer working hours and difficulties in switching off from work, thus intensifying a culture where individuals are expected to be constantly available (e.g., Derks et al, 2015). Technostress is the mental outcome of increased use of ICTs and occurs when a teleworker is not able to cope with the situation because using technologies can lead to application multitasking, constant connectivity, information overload, and technical problems (for example, Camacho and Barrios, 2022). In the long run, this can translate into health issues if individuals have difficulty switching off from work and allocating time for recovery (Biron & Veldhoven, 2016). Thus, temporal and spatial autonomy, which is associated with various positive implications for individuals, may result in the intensification of work and thereby hamper well-being, leading to the autonomy paradox (Mazmanian et al., 2013) that stems from working and using technologies everywhere and all the time, thus diminishing autonomy in practice.

As seen in the above studies on telework, interesting findings have been reported in recent studies on hybrid work. For example, the study by Bloom et al. (2022) in a globally operating corporation shows that hybrid work can be defined as working part-time from home, with reduced hours worked on home-based days but increased hours on other days and on weekends. In addition, HW employees show increased time spent engaged in individual messaging and group video call communication, even when in the office. The findings also show reduced attrition rates and increased work satisfaction and no significant impact on performance ratings or promotions, which is in line with earlier studies on low-intensity telework (see, e.g., Beauregard et al, 2019). The study by Choudbury and colleagues (2022), on the other hand, compared different levels of working from home (WFH) intensity and found that workers in the intermediate-WFH category reported greater satisfaction with working from home, greater work–life balance, and lower isolation than workers in the high- and low-WFH categories. The findings of the study also suggest that intermediate levels of WFH may result in the enhanced novelty of work products and greater work-related communication.

## Expected HCBOs of hybrid work in Europe

In this section, the expectations of different actors regarding the HCBO impacts of HW on the individual, team, organisation, and society levels are shown and discussed based on an analysis of the country reports and the linked documents.

### Analysis

A tailored SWOT analysis, i.e., HCBO (hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities), was used as the framework for categorising the expected impacts. First, the type and content of impacts were identified, after which, the actor presenting the HCBO and the level of impact, i.e., employee (workers, superiors), organisation (management, owner), and society, were coded using the definitions listed below:

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- **Actors:** the stakeholder presenting the HCBO, i.e., company, consultant, public/media, employee union, researcher, employer association, government, municipality, HR, international association, or political party.
- **Hindrances**: the kinds of hindrances implementing HW arrangements could present for individuals, teams, organisations, etc.
- **Challenges**: the kinds of challenges implementing HW arrangements could present for individuals, teams, organisations, etc.
- **Benefits**: the kinds of benefits implementing HW arrangements could offer as resources for individuals, teams, organisations, etc.
- **Opportunities (enablers)**: the kinds of opportunities some features of successful HW can offer to avoid or remove hindrances (threats) and overcome challenges.
- **Level of impact**: who is impacted by implementation of HW: individuals (employees, superiors), teams, organisations (management), and society.

An example of the analysis is shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10 - An example of an employer expecting reduced costs to be a benefit of hybrid work in a Danish organisation
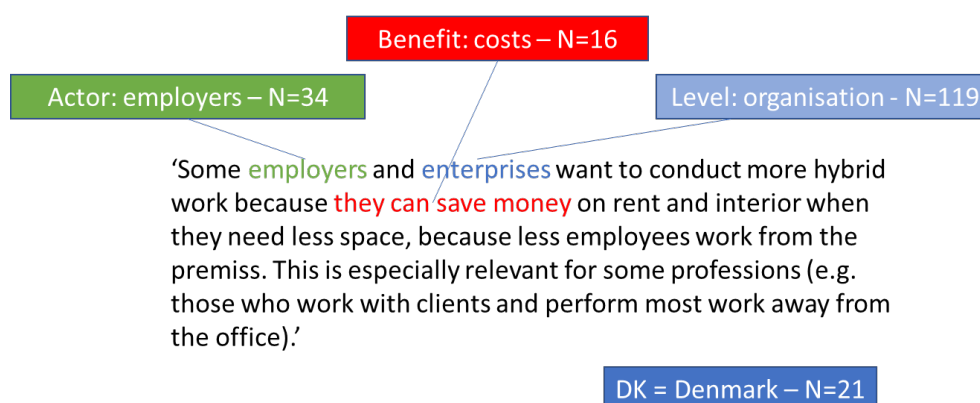


*Note: N refers to the frequency of the codes. For example, reduced costs as a benefit was referred to in 16 excerpts, and employers were identified as relevant actors 34 times. In all, the report from Denmark produced 21 excerpts, and across all excerpts, the organisational level was cited 119 times. Source: authors' own conceptualisation.*

## Findings

Mostly opportunities and benefits, but also a few challenges and hindrances, were expected to result from hybrid work, and this could impact the implementation of HW, especially at the individual level (Table 7). On the employee level, hindrances were related to social relations, well-being, and work–life balance. However, benefits were seen in these very same areas. Individual-level challenges were related to HW agreements and social relations at work and opportunities were related to leadership development, working conditions, and ICT. Only a few HCBOs could be observed on the team level. On the organisation level, a few hindrances were mentioned, but tensions related to challenges and opportunities to develop agreements, ICT, physical premises, and leadership were mostly identified. Cost reductions – especially related to working premises – recruitment and productivity were seen as areas of organisational benefits resulting from hybrid work. On the societal level, employment relationships, health and well-being and cost issues were identified as challenges, and developing legislation and agreements were viewed as opportunities for HW.

The categories and frequency of the expected hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities of hybrid work for individuals, teams, organisations, and society are summarised in Table 7, and example citations are presented in Annexes 6-9.

Table 6 - The topics and number of expected hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities in hybrid work on the individual, team, organisation, and society levels

| HINDRANCES (N=38) | CHALLENGES (N=99) |
|---|---|
| **Employees (workers, superiors)** | |
| Social relations (N=4), health and well-being (N=4), work–life balance (N=3), inequality (N=3), workload (N=2), costs (N=2), ICT (N=2), other: loss of creativity, motivation, data security, precarity, availability of knowledge, surveillance, alienation, taxes | HW agreements (N=11), social relations (N=8), employment relations (N=5), leadership (N=5), work–life balance (N=4), workload (N=4), working conditions (N=3), career (N=2), ICT (N=2), inequality (N=2), other: mindset, communication, competence, health and well-being, legislation, location, office, productivity, recruitment, trade union membership, work culture |
| **Team** | |
| Alienation | HW agreements (N=2), communication (N=2), workload (N=2) |
| **Organisation (management viewpoint)** | |
| Social relations, motivation, work-life-balance, health and well-being, surveillance | Leadership (N=4), HW agreements (N=4), social relations (N=4), working conditions (N=2), employment relationship (N=2), other: communication, costs, health and well-being, ICT, inequality, office, privacy |
| **Society** | |
| Inequality, costs, taxes, knowledge | Employment relationship (N=3), health and well-being (N=2), costs (N=2), other: social relations, working conditions, mindset, communication, implementation, knowledge, office, productivity |
| **BENEFITS (N=97)** | **OPPORTUNITIES (N=126)** |
| **Employees (workers, superiors)** | |
| Work–life balance (N=13), autonomy (N=8), reduced commuting (N=7), efficiency (N=5), costs (N=4), health and well-being (N=3), motivation (N=3), productivity (N=3), working conditions (N=3), creativity (N=2), knowledge (N=2), leadership (N=2), other: career, equality, flexibility, job satisfaction, leisure, recruitment, safety, social relations, trust, working location, workload | Leadership (N=5), working conditions (N=4), ICT (N=4), HW agreements (N=3), training (N=3), autonomy (N=2), costs (N=2), flexibility (N=2), guidelines (N=2), other: work–life balance, physical activity, monitoring, employment relationship, data security |
| **Team** | |
| Self-leadership | HW agreements |
| **Organisation (management viewpoint)** | |

| Costs (N=12), recruitment (N=5), productivity (N=4), learning (N=2), other: working location, new business | HW agreements (N=13), ICT (N=10), office (N=9), leadership (N=7), training (N=6), communication (N=5), costs (N=3), health and well-being (N=3), recruitment (N=3), guidelines (N=2), HR (N=2), other: concentration, competence, control, employment relationship, participation, working conditions, work culture, working location |
|---|---|
| **Society** ||
| Commuting (N=4), other: working location | Legislation (N=5), HW agreements (N=4), tax (N=3), other: training, working conditions, working location, recruitment, ICT, data security |

## Hindrances

Hindrances (N=38) form the smallest of the four categories (Table 7, Annex 6). Most of the expected hindrances are at the individual level, and the majority are related to a lack of social interaction (e.g., feelings of isolation), negative effects on health and well-being (e.g., mental health problems), work–life balance issues (e.g., difficulties in managing the boundaries of these two domains), and inequality (e.g., women's dual role in domestic work and occupation). In addition, increased workload and increased costs, for example, inability to purchase work desks and ICT at home, were identified as hindrances associated with hybrid work. On the team and organisation levels, some remarks about the lack of social relations, reduced motivation, problems maintaining work–life balance and negative effects on health and well-being, as well as surveillance exercised by the employer through technologies, were made. On the societal level, inequality, knowledge about employees' rights and responsibilities and the costs and taxes associated with telework from home were highlighted. In a survey from Romania in February 2021, four out of ten women said that their work–life balance had deteriorated; in some cases, they had had to work harder, including overtime, to meet the requirements but also because some housework took up more time than usual. In a Dutch financial daily newspaper, a professor of leadership and organisational change found that hybrid working increases women's housework and that women in Dutch academia began publishing fewer articles than usual during forced telework periods.

## Challenges

Challenges (N=99) in hybrid work also appeared mostly at the *individual level* and included issues related to agreeing on the conditions of hybrid work, e.g., work expenses outside office to create proper working conditions, including ICT; employment relationships, including the rights and responsibilities of teleworking employees; and career prospects (Table 7, Annex 7). The expected challenges in social relations concentrated on maintaining relations with coworkers. In addition, the quality of leadership, increased workload and balancing work and other areas of life were expected to be challenges in hybrid work. On the *team level*, maintaining a sense of community, ensuring appropriate workload, and lacking agreement between employees and employers concerning, e.g., working time, appeared as challenges. On the *organisational level,* challenges were mostly related to the quality of the management and leadership of remote workers, work contracts defining the employment relationship and proper working conditions, including social ties with coworkers. Similar challenges to be solved, i.e., how employment relations, working conditions, and their expenses should be arranged and how to guarantee the well-being of remote workers and teleworkers, were found at the societal level.

## Benefits

Benefits (N=97) appear when working remotely, especially at the *individual level* (Table 7, Annex 8). Although maintaining work–life balance was seen as both a hindrance and a challenge, it was also considered a benefit due to increased autonomy and because it also possibly increased the health and well-being of individual employees. The ability to balance work and family life and reduced management control seemed to be particularly important. Time and cost savings from reduced commuting and observations about increased efficiency and productivity when working from home were other expected individual-level benefits of hybrid work. In addition, motivational and creativity-related benefits were mentioned. On the *organisational level*, cost savings, especially due to reduced office space needs, and new opportunities in recruiting new workers, new practices, and productivity increases were commonly expected benefits. At the *societal level*, the identified benefits were related to sustainability issues such as reduced commuting, avoiding traffic jams, and saving time for employees.
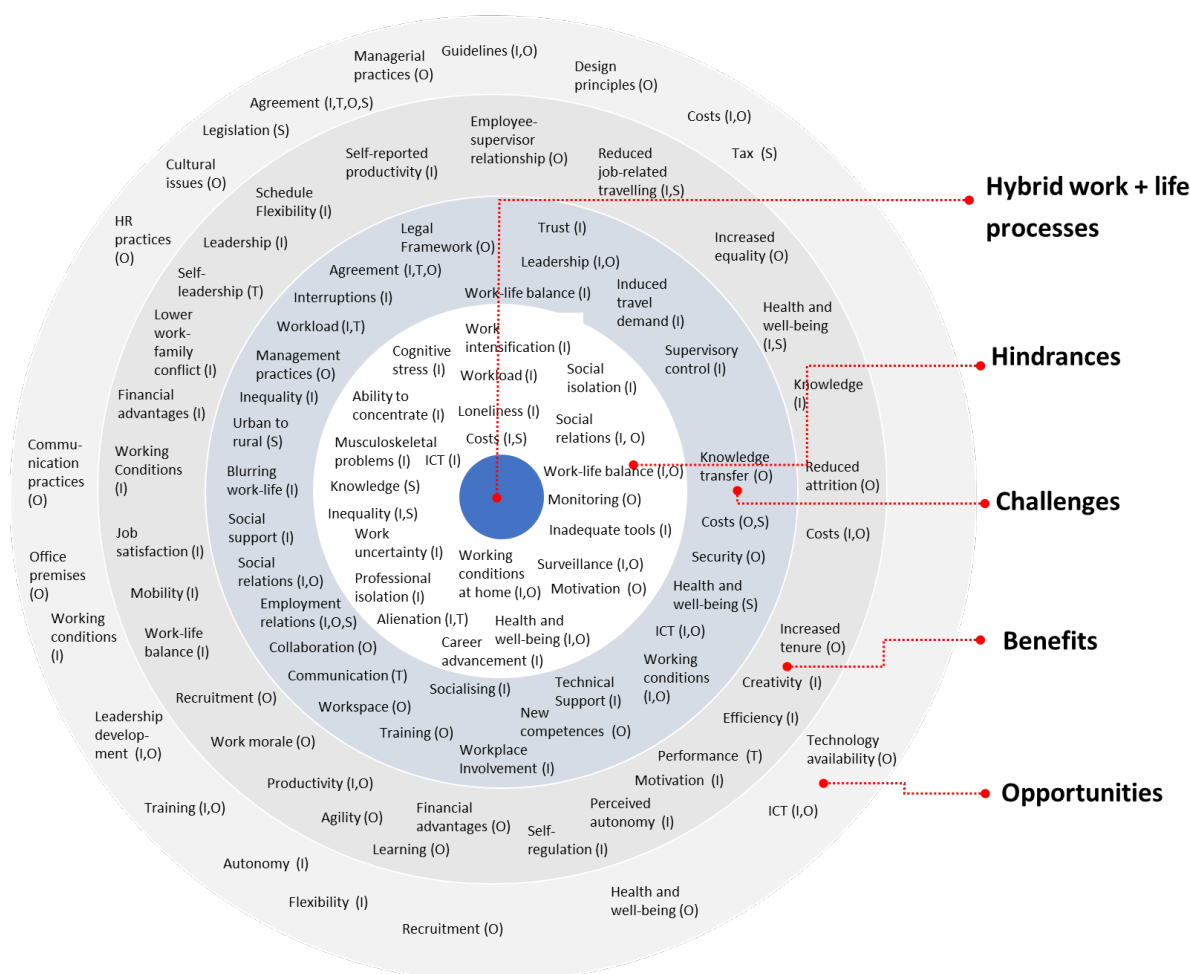
## Opportunities

Opportunities (N=126) was the largest of the four categories and included practices, guidelines and principles identified as important resources when implementing hybrid work (Table 7, Annex 9). This reflected an orientation of preparation for the post-pandemic period. From the *individual* perspective, it was considered important to concentrate development efforts on developing leadership practices and working guidelines, working conditions, and ICT as enablers of hybrid work, agreements on work arrangements, e.g., costs, training new competences, and increasing autonomy and flexibility. Most of the expected opportunities were, however, related to the *organisational level*. From the perspective of organisations, hybrid work was expected to provide an opportunity (but also a requirement) to among other elements, reconsider and redesign types of work contracts, digitalise work processes and procedures by diversifying ICT use, develop office spaces to better meet the needs of hybrid employees, and develop human resources (HR) and managerial practices and guidelines. The need for new competences requires training, and collaboration requires communication. The perceived *societal-level* opportunities were mostly related to the need to develop and change labour legislation, collective agreements, and taxation to incentivise remote work. It is worth noting that in practice, there were no opportunities to develop team-level issues identified.

# Expected features of hybrid work

The hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities (HCBO) of remote work and telework identified in earlier literature and those brought up in country reports have – as expected – several similarities. They also have differences in terms of which HCBOs are accentuated and what perspectives consider them most relevant. The main HCBOs of remote work and telework and related expectations concerning hybrid work are outlined in Figure 11.

Figure 11 - Summary of hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities on different levels



*Note: Summary of hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities on different levels (I = individual, T = team, O = organisation, and S = society) in the remote work and telework literature and country reports regarding expected HCBOs of hybrid work in Europe.*

*Source: authors' own conceptualisation.*

In terms of *hindrances*, social isolation and the resulting negative impacts, the blurring of work and family life and issues related to health and well-being were highlighted both in the telework research and the reported expectations related to HW. However, while the telework literature primarily discusses health issues resulting from poor ergonomics, the HW discussion also brings up issues related to mental well-being, which has become a growing concern during the pandemic. In addition, issues related to ICT, such as technical problems, technostress and Zoom fatigue, were brought up as hindrances in both discussions. The hindrance of inequality was specific to the HW discussion, which viewed it from both the individual and societal levels. For example, it was highlighted that employees working from home may feel overlooked and 'forgotten'. Moreover, the HW discussion considered how individual-level hindrances such as social isolation are reflected at the level of teams and organisations. The lack of knowledge regarding employees' rights and responsibilities as well as costs and taxes related to telework from home were raised as societal hindrances in the HW discussion, a level that is rarely discussed in the telework literature.

At the individual level, both discourses highlighted the *challenge* of managing work–family or work–life boundaries. At the organisational level, the management, monitoring, and assessment of work

was discussed as a challenge in both the telework literature and in the HW expectations outlined in the country reports. Interestingly, maintaining social relations among employees was primarily discussed as an organisation-level challenge in the telework literature, but in the hybrid work discourse, it was discussed more frequently as an individual-level challenge. Moreover, the HW discussion brought up agreements regarding working conditions as an individual-level and organisation-level challenge. While societal-level challenges were rarely discussed in the telework literature, in the HW discussions, challenges related to the arrangement of employment relations and working conditions and to guaranteeing the well-being of employees were frequently raised.

The *benefits* discussed in the telework literature and expectations regarding HW were very similar at the individual, organisational and societal levels. The telework literature, however, discussed the inclusion of disabled people as a societal benefit of telework, while this was not discussed in the context of HW expectations cited in the reports.

In terms of *opportunities*, which refer to the practices, guidelines and principles identified as important resources when implementing telework, the telework literature and the HW expectations highlight the importance of developing supportive leadership and HR practices and providing working guidelines and technologies for the successful implementation of these work arrangements. The telework literature and HW discussions both address the need to develop an organisational culture and communication patterns that are supportive of telework. What is highlighted in the HW expectations and not discussed in the telework literature is the need for agreements on work arrangements and the redesigning of work contracts as well as, at a more macro level, changes to labour legislation and collective agreements. Office spaces must be developed to better meet the needs of hybrid employees who may use them only occasionally and, in addition, to attract them to come to the office when needed.

As earlier studies on low-intensity telework suggest, many of the negative implications of telework do not materialize when telework is carried out only a few days a week. With well-organised hybrid work, the benefits of both telework and in-office work can be secured. Thus, in hybrid work, for example, the risk of social isolation and career stagnation is likely not as high as the HW expectations suggest. Recent studies on HW also indicate that, for example, instead of increasing the total amount of work, HW shifts the temporal organisation of the work week.

In addition, many of the expected hindrances, such as issues related to costs, can be addressed through agreements on the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees. In the next chapter, we discuss how telework-related HCBO and expected hybrid-work-related HCBO are addressed in implementing hybrid work.

# 5 – Implementing hybrid work

This chapter shows, first, what is known about success factors in implementing remote work and telework. It is expected that although hybrid work can differ in form from earlier remote work and telework, it can benefit from prior implementation experiences with such work arrangements. In addition, experiences with the first hybrid work implementation initiatives in European organisations during the pandemic are reported. The first cases took place in 2021 during the second wave of the pandemic.

Research on telework has proposed several factors underlying the successful implementation of working from home, including planning, managerial approaches and HRM practices, characteristics of organisational culture that support telework, and required tools and technologies. In this chapter, we will review this literature and discuss findings regarding the ways in which European organisations are implementing or planning to implement hybrid work. Finally, we discuss these findings by reflecting on prior literature. Table 7 provides a summary of the factors identified in earlier literature as facilitating telework implementation.

## Successful implementation of telework

Assessing the organisational environment and organisational and job suitability for telework and establishing telework policies and agreements are fundamental for the successful implementation of telework (Bernardino et al, 2012; Overmyer, 2011; Pyöriä, 2011). The assessment of the external environment entails understanding the requirements outlined in labour legislation and how they will be implemented in the organisation. The assessment of the internal environment refers to the analysis of fit among different occupations, task descriptions and individual characteristics and preferences and telework (Overmyer, 2011; Pyöriä, 2011). A telework agreement between an employee and the organisation outlines the specific work arrangement agreed upon by both parties (Overmyer, 2011).

Specific individual characteristics and capabilities have been proposed as particularly suitable for teleworking, such as self-management skills, the ability to communicate efficiently by using technologies, and the ability navigate with cultural diversity (Blackburn et al, 2003). One challenge can be that not all employees who are skilled at their job are in teleworkable jobs, and teleworking employees may not have the necessary skills. The telework literature suggests that these characteristics and competences should be considered when recruiting personnel for positions in which teleworking is possible and encouraged (Bernardino et al, 2012; Offstein et al, 2010). Training in remote work practices and technologies has also been identified as one of the human resources management (HRM) success factors in telework (Greer and Payne, 2014; Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Martínez-Sánchez et al, 2008; Pérez et al, 2005). Relatedly, the successful implementation of telework sets requirements for technologies and data security that need to be addressed when planning, budgeting, and training for work outside an organisation's premises (Overmyer, 2011).

Even if organisations have flexible work policies, the organisational culture may still discourage employees from working remotely if physical presence is considered a sign of productivity (Gonsalves, 2020) and if remote work is perceived as risky from the perspective of career advancement (Mello, 2007). Therefore, organisational culture significantly influences employees' willingness to telework (Mello, 2007). Specific cultural characteristics such as trust (Offstein et al, 2010), a culture that supports change and innovation (Pérez et al, 2005) and a culture that recognises the legitimacy of remote work (Gonsalves, 2020; Greer and Payne, 2014) have been

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identified as important cultural characteristics supporting the adoption of telework. Here, managerial approaches are critical in creating a sense that telework is valued equally to work on company premises. Earlier research highlights the need to focus on performance-based evaluation as opposed to presence-based evaluation (Bernardino et al, 2012; Martinez-Sanchez, 2007; Mello, 1999; Overmyer, 2011). This requires the establishment of clear performance objectives and measures for both employees and managers (Illegems and Verbeke, 2004). Moreover, management needs to be attentive to the equal treatment of individuals working remotely and those working in company premises (Morganson et al, 2010). Telework also requires additional effort from management to establish and maintain social ties within the team (Offstein et al, 2010) and the willingness and skills to engage in the remote monitoring, mentoring, and managing of employees (Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Pérez et al, 2005). Rich communication, which can be achieved using different forms of communication, is central in strengthening employee commitment to the organisation and maintaining trustful relationships between managers and employees (Offstein et al, 2010).

While autonomy to adjust the time and place as well as work practices according to personal needs and preferences is inarguably one of the central advantages of remote work from the employee perspective, studies emphasise the importance of having clear structures and guidelines provided by management, for example, in the formation of well-functioning collaboration practices (Bartsch et al, 2020). The need for clarity and guidelines was also reflected in a recent study by van Zoonen et al. (2021), who found that employees who reported higher levels of independence and clarity of job instructions were better able to adjust to remote work than other employees. Thus, according to that study, to facilitate telework, organisations should ensure clear objectives and goals and minimise interdependencies among organisational members where possible. However, decreasing the interdependency of the group in completing their tasks can lead to working alone and, in turn, could open the way to feelings of loneliness. Moreover, ensuring an adequate workspace at home (good ergonomics, free from distraction and noise) was identified as a key to employees' successful adjustment to remote work and to work–life balance during the pandemic (Akuoko et al, 2021; Carillo et al, 2021).

The visible part of organisational culture (Schein, 1990), the physical environment, may also influence employee attitudes towards flexibility. In a recent study, Gonsalves (2020) found that changing from a traditional office setting to a multispace office[5] increased employees' willingness to work remotely. Without assigned desks in the office, the physical environment signalled flexibility, and an individual's presence, or absence, was not monitored, which encouraged them to be more flexible in terms of the physical location where their work took place.

Table 7 - Organisational factors facilitating the successful implementation of telework

| DOMAINS | SUPPORTING FACTORS |
| --- | --- |
| **Planning** | • Analysis of the external environment and labour laws (Bernardino et al, 2012; Pyöriä, 2011)<br>• Analysis of the internal environment (Bernardino et al, 2012)<br>• Telework strategy (Overmyer, 2011) |

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[5] Multispace office comprises of different types of working areas employees can choose from depending on their task at hand. These include, for example, different types of collaboration spaces, open office spaces and quiet areas for tasks that require concentration (e.g., Boutellier et al., 2008).

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Written telework policies and telework agreements (Beauregard et al, 2013; Meadows, 2007; Overmyer, 2011; Pyöriä, 2011) |
| **Management approach** | • Evaluation based on performance (Bernardino et al, 2012; Braga, 2006; Martinez-Sanchez, 2007; Mello, 1999; Overmyer, 2011)<br>• Results orientation (Offstein, 2010)<br>• Proactive and inclusive management style (Overmyer, 2011)<br>• Promoting both enabling and managing leadership styles (Bartsch et al, 2020)<br>• Decentralised decision-making and middle managers' willingness to monitor remotely jobs suitable for teleworking (Perez et al, 2005)<br>• Effective remote mentoring and management (Kurland and Cooper, 2002)<br>• Clear performance objectives and measures for employees and managers (Illegems and Verbeke, 2004; Mello, 2007)<br>• The use of a variety of forms of communication (Offstein et al, 2010)<br>• Creation of social ties and bonds within team (Offstein, 2010)<br>• Balancing governance with flexibility (Strack et al, 2021) |
| **HRM practices** | • Decentralisation of HRM practices (Bernardino et al, 2012)<br>• Recruiting individuals with teleworking capabilities (Bernardino et al, 2012; Offstein et al, 2010)<br>• HR commitment practices (Martinez-Sanchez et al, 2008)<br>• Training management to supervise telework (Gascoigne, 2021; McCarthy et al, 2020)<br>• Telework training (Bernardino et al, 2012)<br>• Training in ICT use and remote work practices (Greer and Payne, 2014; Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Martínez-Sánchez et al, 2008; Pérez et al, 2005; Shirmohammadi et al, 2022).<br>• Holistic approach to employee well-being (Strack et al, 2021)<br>• Offering a range of remote work options (Shirmohammadi et al, 2022)<br>• Ensuring access to development opportunities and mentoring (Gascoigne, 2021)<br>• Experimentation and monitoring of HW practices (Strack et al, 2021) |
| **Tools and technologies** | • Including telework technologies in budgets (Overmyer, 2011)<br>• Access to technological tools that support telework (Golden and Raghuram, 2010; Meadows, 2007; Mello, 2007; Strack et al, 2021)<br>• Focus on security issues while implementing telework policies (Overmyer, 2011)<br>• Ergonomic and distraction free workspace at home (Akuoko et al, 2021; Beauregard et al, 2013; Carillo et al, 2021; Craig 2020; Mello 2007). |
| **Communication practices** | • Forums and tools for informal interaction accessible to telecommuters and non-telecommuters (Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Shirmohammadi et al, 2022; Strack et al, 2021)<br>• Reduction of social isolation through synchronous video meetings and informal communication (van Zoonen et al, 2021) |
| **Organisational culture** | • Pro-telework culture (Greer and Payne, 2014)<br>• Culture that supports innovation and change (Perez et al, 2005)<br>• Culture of trust (Offstein et al, 2010)<br>• Culture that emphasises interpersonal relationship and societal values (Strack et al, 2021)<br>• Organisational culture and practices that focus on well-being and appreciate boundary setting (Gascoigne, 2021)<br>• Office space that signals flexibility (Gonsalves, 2020) |

# Experiences with implementation of hybrid work during the pandemic

Next, early experiences with implementing hybrid work in organisations based in Europe are reported. *The focal question is how have companies implemented hybrid work or are planning to do so?* The data were collected at the end of the second year of the pandemic, 2021, when many companies and other organisations started to design, implement, and test hybrid work arrangements. Most companies did not yet have much experience with hybrid work systems at the time of data collection but were planning hybrid work arrangements based on their experiences with company-wide remote work during the pandemic. First, the data analysis process is described. Following this, the findings subsection focuses on the ways HW has been organised or is planned to be organised in companies and other organisations in Europe; what kinds of support structures, policies and spatial arrangements are considered important for the success of HW; and what kinds of managerial challenges have been identified in these organisations that should be considered when implementing hybrid work.

# Analytical approach

The country reports (N=27) from each country and other online documents that were linked to the country reports contained examples of the implementation of hybrid work from 80 organisations. These organisations represented 21 different sectors, including finance (N=23), IT and telecommunications (N=19), insurance (N=6), public administration (N=6), utilities (N=6), online retail (N=3), and others (N=17). Examples of how hybrid work has been implemented included information on the motivation for implementing HW, support structures and practices that facilitate HW, agreements and policies related to HW, how office space has been adapted to HW, and managerial challenges related to HW. The examples were analysed with a data-driven approach focusing on the aspects of hybrid work that were brought up in the case descriptions (Figure 12). The aspects were coded based on the topic they were describing; for example, when the document contained explanations related to the reasons hybrid work was implemented, this was coded as "motivation for implementation: xx", where xx refers to the given reason in each case. For example, "motivation for implementation: to attract new employees". Finally, all quotes related to the motivation for implementing HW were organised into subgroups based on the specific driver. This approach resulted in five general themes:

- Agreements and policies related to HW (N=108).
- Support structures and practices that facilitate HW (N=53).
- Managerial challenges related to HW (N=30).
- Motivation for implementing HW (N=27).
- How office space has been adapted to HW (N=22).

Quotes related to these themes were organised into 5-12 subcategories. In addition, countries and industries were coded for each quote.

Figure 12 - Example of an app-based system as a support structure to facilitate hybrid work from a Maltese gaming company
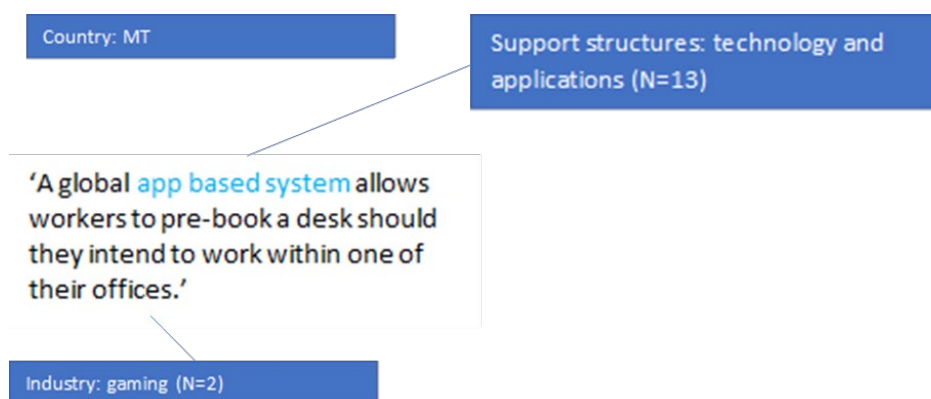


*Source: authors' own conceptualisation.*

# Findings – Implementing hybrid work

Based on the above analysis of the country reports, this subchapter describes how European organisations have implemented or are planning to implement HW. The examples include information on agreements and policies related to HW, support structures and practices that facilitate HW, managerial challenges related to HW, information on the motivation for implementing HW, and how office space has been adapted to HW. The frequency of each of these themes and their subcategories are summarised in Table 8. Example citations illustrating the content of each subcategory are presented in Annex 10.

Table 8 - Critical factors in implementing HW: summary of themes and subcategories

| THEME | SUBCATEGORY |
|---|---|
| **Agreements and policies (N=107)** | • Specific number of days/weeks at the office required (N=40)<br>• General policies related to space and location (N=22)<br>• Employees' freedom to choose location (N=15)<br>• Policy regarding working hours (N=7)<br>• Specific percentage of monthly work time spent at the office or remotely defined (N=7)<br>• Specific number of days per year allowed for working abroad (N=6)<br>• Local, team-level agreement (N=5)<br>• Conditions for HW (N=5)<br>• Costs (N=3) |
| **Support structures and practices (N=53)** | • Technology and applications (13)<br>• Training and guidelines (N=13)<br>• Communication and virtual events (N=12)<br>• Grant for furnishing home office (N=9)<br>• Support for mental and physical well-being (N=6) |
| **Managerial challenges (N=30)** | • Communication and information sharing (N=6)<br>• Interpersonal relationships and sense of community (N=5)<br>• Ensuring well-being (N=4)<br>• Adaptive management approach (N=4)<br>• Addressing employee needs (N=4) |

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| | |
|---|---|
| | • Creating a culture of trust (N=4) <br> • Other (N=3) |
| **Motivation for implementation HW (N=27)** | • To increase employee productivity, motivation, and well-being (N=8) <br> • To maintain organisational culture and cohesion (N=4) <br> • To attract new employees (N=3) <br> • To provide structure & stability for employees (N=2) <br> • To maintain flexibility & autonomy (N=2) <br> • To reduce office space costs (N=2) <br> • To eliminate commute (N=2) |
| **Office space adaptation (N=22)** | • No assigned desks (N=5) <br> • Multifunctional office (N=5) <br> • More meeting rooms (N=3) <br> • Less office space (N=3) <br> • Community space (N=3) <br> • Other (N=5) |

## Agreements and policies

The agreements and policies discussed in the reports were mainly related to organisation-specific solutions in terms of the required number of days in the office when adopting HW (Annex 10, Table 1). Most organisations required employees to spend 1–3 days at the office per week, but there were various ways this was defined. In some organisations, for example, a minimum number of telework days were defined, whereas in others, the policies defined the minimum number of days spent at the office. This did not apply to all personnel, however, as not all jobs are compatible with remote working. In many organisations, employees were grouped into those who are permanently at the office, those who were permanent remote workers, and those who could adopt a hybrid model. In several examples, employees who could work remotely had complete freedom to choose where they worked; in others, their work needed to be conducted within the country, but otherwise, it was flexible. In some organisations, a specific number of working days that an employee could work abroad was defined. In some cases, teams were given autonomy and responsibility to agree, based on team-specific needs, on the number and organisation of office workdays. Additionally, general policies regarding the use of office space were presented. For example, one German company, which reduced the number of workstations did not offer fixed stations, agreed that if no working spaces were available, the employee would be free to leave after one hour and end his or her working day.

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**Agreeing on scheduling**

'The model of hybrid work implemented in the Municipality permits workers whose functions allow them to telework a maximum of four days per week, requiring, in all situations, that at least one of the weekly working days must be in-person and that on one of the days of the week the team must work together in-person.' [Portugal, public administration]

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## Support structures and practices

Organisations implementing HW identified supporting practices and structures that were considered to facilitate its success (Annex 10, Table 2). Technological tools and applications were the most central category of support structures. Technologies, such as different virtual platforms that facilitate online collaboration, were considered valuable types of communication tools when meeting face to face is

not possible. In addition, companies have developed novel systems, for example, for monitoring the availability of and reserving workstations at the office. Management and employee training and guidelines were mentioned in several cases as important support structures. For example, training for managing remote teams, health, and safety guides for working from home and employee training in digital skills and data security have been provided. Regular formal and informal communication practices and virtual events to ensure a sense of community and organisational culture have been put in place. In several organisations, an allowance was provided for furnishing an ergonomic home office. Finally, novel support structures for maintaining physical and mental well-being in HW were put in place. For example, in a Cypriot consultancy, a psychologist is available 24/7 for employees.

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**Using collaboration technologies**

'When previously most of the communication and activities were face-to-face, then now they have started using different virtual platforms like Slack, Confluence and Google products to facilitate communication.' [Estonia, finance]

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## Managerial challenges

The company cases included some specific HW-related managerial challenges that companies had identified and particular issues managers should address when managing and leading employees working in hybrid mode (Annex 10, Table 3). These challenges require new competences and training for managers. Based on their experiences, the companies found that they should pay specific attention to communication and information sharing and facilitate the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Relatedly, a culture of trust was considered a prerequisite for the HW model to work. Additionally, the companies believed that the managerial approach should be flexible, that employee experiences should be constantly monitored and the organisation and its HW practices and policies should be adjusted according to employee- and team-level needs. A leader can share power, put the needs of the employees first and help people develop and perform as well as possible. Another challenge for managers is ensuring employee well-being when managers do not have the ability to ascertain their subordinates' situation at any time.

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**Developing management and leadership practices**

'For the workplace of the future to contribute to a strong employee experience, managers and leadership need to create the conditions for and encourage strong collegial interaction in both the physical and digital environment. Maintaining and strengthening collegial interaction when we are not always physically on site becomes even more important. This requires a strategic focus on maintaining and strengthening interaction, both by staff and managers.' [Sweden, research]

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## Motivation for implementation HW

The motivation to implement hybrid work was based on one hand on the positive experiences gained from remote work during the pandemic and, on the other hand, on the negative implications of not meeting in real time (Annex 10, Table 4). The main driver for implementing HW was the positive experience of remote work, which had been found to increase employee motivation, productivity, and well-being during the pandemic. Additionally, it was considered a crucial factor in attracting new employees. The opportunities to reduce office space costs and eliminate commutes were also mentioned as motivating factors for introducing HW and thereby maintaining the opportunity to work remotely. Additionally, organisations justified their motivation to implement HW as a way to maintain organisational culture and group cohesion as well as to provide structure and stability to employees by encouraging them to spend time at the office. Face-to-face meetings were also considered

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important from the perspective of knowledge sharing and organisational innovativeness. Thus, HW was justified as an opportunity not only to maintain autonomy and flexibility but also to maintain social relationships and provide structure and stability for employees.

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**Increasing flexibility**

'In the past, you had to take a day off when the chimney sweeper came. Now I'm logging out for ten minutes. This leads to more satisfaction and productivity.' [Austria, energy]

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Rather seldomly, excerpts underlined environmental sustainability issues as the benefits and opportunities of implementing telework. They emphasised time savings due to less commuting and avoiding traffic jams and thus reduced $CO_2$ emissions. For example, Greenpeace Germany commissioned a study published in August 2020 that concluded that 5.4 million tons of carbon emissions could be saved if 40% of the employees worked from home regularly two days per week. This would amount to reducing the emissions caused by commuter traffic by 18%.

## How office space has been adapted to HW

In some companies cases, the changes to office space already made or considered necessary to better support HW were described (Annex 10, Table 5). Many examples highlighted the need for more meeting rooms as opposed to single workstations, as the office would be used primarily for meetings and spending time with colleagues. Some organisations have been transforming their spaces into multifunctional offices to better cater to individual- and team-specific work needs and to make the space more efficient and attractive. The need for attractive community spaces was highlighted. Additionally, some organisations reported moving to smaller spaces, as most of the workforce would be working remotely for a significant portion of the week, and thus individually assigned desks were not needed. The office space was, in many cases, described as a community space and a place for meeting colleagues, rather than for concentrating in a traditional office setting. Accordingly, the office designs featured group work elements and more meeting rooms than in a traditional office. Some organisations reported establishing working hubs in more remote areas for those employees who live further away from the main office but who wish to work outside their homes. As an interesting example of municipality-level support for HW, the city of Vilnius has set up mobile workstations in the city centre equipped with Wi-Fi for anyone to use free of charge.

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**Case example – implementation of hybrid work**

'A Hungarian financial institution with 3300 employees made the decision to switch permanently to a hybrid working model once the pandemic situation allows a return to the office. This means that in jobs where remote work is possible, employees must spend at least half of their monthly working hours in the office. Working hours are flexible. Employees are free to allocate their working time between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. Meetings can only be organised between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The decision to implement HW was driven by the employees' general need for flexibility and the increasing shortage of labour in the banking sector. Moreover, based on an internal survey, 90% of the employees considered working from home to be as effective as working at the office. With this arrangement the company seeks to maintain trust and loyalty among existing employees and to attract talented young employees.

In the hybrid work arrangement, the primary function of the office building is to serve as a community space and a place for maintaining personal relationships and team cohesion. The office has been prepared for hybrid work by updating the meeting rooms with video and audio technologies to support the involvement of remote workers in meetings.'

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# Core issues in the implementation of hybrid work

The motivation to implement HW is driven, on the one hand, by the positive implications of telework, such as the employer's opportunity to apply flexible working structures and the employee's increased autonomy and decreased need to commute, which have been associated with employee productivity, motivation, and well-being. In addition, the possibility of attracting new employees and reduced costs related to office space have been discussed as motivators for implementing HW. These are indeed familiar implications related to telework and thus expected to apply to HW as well. On the other hand, the implementation of HW is also justified by highlighting the opportunity to provide structure and stability for employees and to maintain organisational culture and cohesion by ensuring face-to-face interaction at the organisation's premises.

Much of the HW discussion revolves around the questions of what constitutes an optimal number of telework days per week and what kinds of company-wide policies are needed to ensure that the benefits of both telework and office work are achieved. In addition, the need for support structures and practices that ensure productivity and well-being, as well as the maintenance of organisational culture and a sense of community, are central issues considered when planning how HW will be organised. For many organisations, the shift to HW also seems to be an opportunity to change the organisational culture towards agility and flexibility by allowing employees more influence over the time and place of their work based on their tasks and personal preferences. This requires initial trust, but it also contributes to building a culture of trust if implemented in a way that provides employees with supportive structures (e.g., training for managing remote teams, health and safety guidelines for working from home, training in digital skills and data security, regular formal and informal communication practices, and support structures for maintaining physical and mental well-being) that enable them to organise their work autonomously in a way that sustains individual- and team-level productivity and well-being. This also entails the flexibility of management in monitoring the employee- and team-level experience and adjusting the organisation and its HW practices and policies according to changing needs.

While in the telework literature the focus has been primarily on the individual, and, for example, task independence has been highlighted as one of the success factors of telework, the HW discussion considers a team-level agreement a viable approach for ensuring functional HW organisation. Moreover, team-level needs are also central in developing the physical environment. In many companies, the office space is adapted to facilitate teamwork and maintain a sense of community by providing more spaces for serendipitous interaction than before. Overall, the meaning of the office seems to be shifting from the primary place of work to a community space in which the main purpose is to meet and work with colleagues.

There are multiple options for implementing the temporal, physical, social, and virtual elements of hybrid work, and the feasibility of different arrangements depends on legislation, organisational and team-level objectives, task descriptions, and individual needs and preferences. In the next chapter, we will present conclusions about the findings from the literature and the observations from country reports and introduce a conceptual framework of HW to guide the development of context specific HW arrangements as well as decision-making for the development of societal conditions that support a sustainable working life.

# 6 – Future of hybrid work

This final chapter concerns the essence of hybrid work. First, we introduce and compare the main elements and features of the traditional remote work and telework literature with those that have arisen during the pandemic in terms of hybrid work and describe the most important topics of debate. Then, the critical hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities that should be considered in implementing good hybrid work practices are discussed. Finally, the conceptual and analytical framework and topics worth focusing on in the future are presented alongside an exploration and further development of hybrid work practices and their effects.

## Hybrid work in the literature and debates

Hybrid work is a type of 'flexible work', in contrast to permanent, fixed work arrangements such as 'office work', 'remote work and telework' and similar concepts. From the viewpoint of employers and employees, flexibility is a *controversial* issue, as it can represent different things to different parties. For employers, flexible working is usually an asset of productivity or efficiency and a strategic alignment in the organisation and management of production and service processes and people as human resources. For employees, flexibility is often seen as enabling individual or team autonomy and self-management and leadership at work and as a way to reduce conflicts between work and family and enhance work-life integration. These two perspectives have been referred to as the organisational perspective and the worker perspective (Hill et al, 2008).

Flexibility is also a *paradoxical issue* from both managers' and employees' perspectives. When a manager tries to apply flexibility in managing business complexity and uncertainty, reorienting the organisation and structuring decisions in different functions of the organisation, hurdles can be noticed when flexibility initiatives are realised in practice. For example, lower and middle managers seek workable strategic advice and may have a different perception than top management. The flexibility paradox (Chung, 2022), or the autonomy paradox (Mazmania et al, 2013), appears on the individual level when an autonomous and self-managing employee ends up working all the time and everywhere, often with negative impacts on work–life balance, well-being and health. The challenge is to find a balanced solution that both serves the needs of individuals without jeopardising their health and wellbeing and enables flexible work arrangements dictated by organisational objectives and specific situations and circumstances in its search for resilience.

Our analysis of the contents of hybrid work definitions presented in the literature and country reports during the pandemic shows that the physical space element – work at the main workplace and remote work in some other location – was the most often used element to characterise hybrid work, followed by the temporal element, i.e., when, how long and how often work is done in each location and workplace. The social and virtual elements were used only occasionally. In particular, social-interaction-related issues received little attention. The same elements were also used when defining closely related concepts such as 'blended work' and 'mobile' and 'multilocational work'.

The main differences between the hybrid work definitions used during the pandemic and the earlier remote work and telework definitions were found in the additional features that have been proposed and used during the pandemic. These features, first, underline the flexibility in such arrangements in terms of physical and virtual space and time. Second, they characterise hybrid work in a more detailed manner, such as using multiple and different types of locations for working. In addition, autonomy and written agreements on how working can be arranged on the individual, team, and organisational

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levels were underlined. Attention was also given to organisational values and objectives as drivers when deciding on which form of hybrid work would be implemented and applying it; nor were organisational constraints and boundaries, data safety, and work–life balance forgotten. This indicates that different job content and working environments impact how hybrid work is designed and implemented in organisations in practice in a localised, flexible, and contextualised manner. Finally, the ability to adjust multiple features also reflects the future potential of hybrid work; there are not only two or three forms of hybrid work – more options are available.

The *main topic of debate* concerned regulation. The main actors in debates were public/media, trade unions, and employers' representative organisations. Both trade unions and employer representative organisations agreed that hybrid work would increase in the future, whereas their opinions on the level and content of regulations varied. Trade unions often expected that legislation would be developed and negotiated between social partners regarding the risks, health, safety, rights, and obligations of employees. Employer representatives did not see the need for developing legislation but preferred the idea of relying flexible contracts at the organisation level. Regardless of the level at which such agreements take place, they can be used in designing future hybrid work. For example, the recent ILO Social Dialogue Report (2022) states that balancing employers' and workers' preferences for flexibility and autonomy and ensuring decent conditions for virtual work will require collective bargaining regarding topics such as work organisation, decent teleworking conditions (working time, occupational health and safety, and inclusion), and skills development.

# Hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities of hybrid work

Potential hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities (HCBO) were first studied by reviewing available remote work and telework literature and then by analysing the country reports concerning the expectations expressed by the various actors concerned, including social partners, managers, and the media. As expected, there were many similarities.

In terms of hindrances, social isolation, and the resulting negative impacts, such as the blurring of work and family life, feelings of loneliness, and issues related to health and well-being, were highlighted both in the telework research and the expectations related to HW stated in the country reports. In addition, issues related to ICT, such as technical problems and technostress, were brought up as hindrances in both discussions. The hindrance of inequality was specific to the HW discussion at both the individual and societal levels. This was especially related to the gender issue of the unequal working and household obligations between women and men working at home. Moreover, the HW discussion considered how individual-level hindrances such as social isolation would be reflected at the team and organisational levels. The lack of knowledge regarding employees' rights and responsibilities as well as costs and taxes associated with telework from home were raised as societal hindrances in the HW discussion, and these issues are rarely discussed in the telework literature.

At the individual level, both discourses highlight the challenge of managing the work–family – or more broadly, the work–life – boundary. At the organisational level, the management, monitoring, and assessment of work was discussed as a challenge in both the telework literature and in the HW expectations outlined in country reports. Interestingly, maintaining social relations among employees was primarily discussed as an organisation-level challenge in the telework literature, but in the hybrid work discourse, it was discussed more frequently as an individual-level challenge. Moreover, the HW discussion brought up agreement on working conditions as an individual-level and organisational-level challenge. While societal-level challenges are rarely discussed in the telework literature, in the HW discussion, challenges related to the arrangement of employee relations, working conditions and ways to guarantee the well-being of employees were frequently raised.

The benefits discussed in the telework literature and expectations regarding HW were very similar at the individual, organisational and societal levels. At the *individual level*, although keeping work and life balanced was seen as both a hindrance and a challenge, it was also considered a benefit due to increased autonomy and because it could also increase the health and well-being of individual employees. Time and cost savings from the reduced amount of commuting and increased efficiency and productivity when working from home are other expected individual-level benefits of hybrid work. However, more evidence is needed for these savings to be proven realistic. At the *organisational level*, cost savings, especially due to the reduced need for office space; opportunities to recruit new workers; the development of new practices; flexibility; and productivity increases were commonly expected benefits. At the *societal level*, the identified benefits are related to sustainability issues such as reduced commutes, fewer traffic jams, and time savings for employees. The telework literature, also discusses the inclusion of disabled people as a societal benefit of telework, but this was not discussed as a HW expectation in the reports reviewed in this study.

Opportunities refer to beneficial practices, guidelines and principles that have been identified as important resources when implementing telework. The remote work literature and the expectations for HW in organisations emphasise the importance of developing management and HR practices and providing working instructions and sufficient technologies for the successful implementation of these work arrangements. Telework literature and HW discussions both bring up the need to put more effort into developing an organisational culture and communication patterns supportive of telework. What is highlighted in HW expectations but not discussed in the telework literature is the need for agreements regarding work arrangements and the redesigning of work contracts in organisations. In addition, changes in labour legislation and collective agreements could facilitate the identification of balanced forms and implementations of hybrid work arrangements. The development and renewal of office spaces to foster community and support creative and innovative interactions could be an opportunity to attract employees back to office. It also seems that when recruiting new – young – employees, offering a hybrid work option would be an attractive factor in every way.

## Critical features in implementation

Critical features in the implementation of HW were studied by exploring the literature on the preconditions of successful telework and remote work and analysing examples of specific companies in the country reports on how HW was already implemented or was planned to be implemented.

The most central question concerning the implementation of HW is related to the temporal element: how often, when, and how long are teleworking hours. The focus is most often the optimal number of telework days per week and what kind of company-wide policies are needed to ensure that the benefits of both remote work and in-office work are achieved. Most organisations require employees to spend 1–3 days at the office per week, but there are various ways to time the days; for example, perhaps Mondays and Fridays are office days. In some organisations, a maximum number of telework days are defined, for example, ten telework days per month. In others, the number of days, their timing and frequency are left to the team to decide based on its needs.

The need for support structures and practices that ensure productivity and well-being, as well as maintain organisational culture and a sense of community, are other central issues considered when planning the organisation of HW. Support structures and practices include technologies, such as different virtual platforms that facilitate online collaboration when meeting face to face is not possible. Management and employee training and guidelines, such as training for managing remote teams and employee training in digital skills and data security, in addition to health and safety guides for working from home, are needed. Maintaining the organisational culture and a sense of community

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is addressed by establishing regular formal and informal face-to-face communication practices and virtual events. Several organisations have granted support for equipping an ergonomic workstation at home office, and new support structures, such as guided physical exercises and psychological support for those suffering from stress, have been introduced to maintain physical and mental well-being among HW employees.

For many organisations, the shift to HW provides an opportunity to change the organisational culture towards agility by providing employees more influence in deciding on the time and place of their work based on their tasks and personal preferences. The right to determine schedules, make task-related decisions, and select work methods increases individual agility resources. An agile organisational culture also requires trust between actors, which helps build a culture of trust in organisations if HW is implemented in a way that sustains individual- and team-level productivity and well-being. Agility also entails the flexibility of management – monitoring the employee and team-level experience and adjusting the organisation, practices, and policies of HW according to changing needs.

While in the telework literature, the focus has been primarily on the individual, and task independence, for example, has been highlighted as an enabler and one of the success factors of telework, the HW discussion considers team-level agreement to be a viable approach for ensuring the functional organisation of HW. The increase in the number of remote workers means changes in team-level operations, which should be agreed upon among the team members. Moreover, team-level needs are also central when developing the physical environment in the office for face-to-face meetings. In many companies, the office space has been adapted to facilitate teamwork and maintain a sense of community by providing more spaces for serendipitous interaction.

There are multiple options for combining the physical, social, virtual and temporal elements and features of hybrid work, and the feasibility of different arrangements depends on legislation, organisational and team-level objectives, task descriptions, working contexts, and individual needs and preferences.

In the next section, we will present conclusions of the findings from the literature and the observations from country reports by introducing a conceptual framework of HW. This framework can guide the development of context-specific HW arrangements as well as decision-making for developing societal conditions that support a sustainable working life.

## Hybrid work concept and framework

Etymologically, 'hybrid' refers to something that is formed by combining two or more things. Because so many things are made up of two or more things and especially because our interest is in looking at the potential of hybrid work, this report uses the concept only in the context of individual work, workplaces, and organisations. A hybrid work entity is something that is formed by combining two or more things to act resiliently in both stable and turbulent environments and situations. Based on the conceptual analysis, we suggested in the theoretical introduction that the 'two or more things' in hybrid work and workplaces are the four basic physical, virtual/digital, social, and temporal elements. These elements are interconnected, each having sub elements and adjustable features. The content analysis of the remote work and telework literature, of HW definitions in the literature and country reports, and of debates on these subjects and the expected demands and resources during the pandemic show that many new features are available for use when designing and implementing hybrid work in practice (Figures 8 and 11).

The hybrid work definitions in the literature and country reports during the pandemic typically referenced only location and temporal elements. The comparison with the concepts used in earlier

remote work and telework definitions shows that the elements are similar, though in a more compact form, and with different weights. For example, the European Framework Agreement's (2002) definition of telework includes physical space (location), virtual space (ICT) and temporal (time frequency) elements in addition to referring to the need for an employment contract/relationship as a feature. Later, in the definition of telework and ICT-based mobile work (Eurofound, 2020, p. V), the physical (excluding the main workplace) and virtual (ICT) elements, in addition to being a feature of flexible arrangements, were used. In the definitions of hybrid work during the pandemic, the virtual element played a minor role. These definitions were reminiscent of 'classic' definitions of telework and ICT-based mobile work, although they included virtuality in their definitions. The social element seemed to be missing in all of them despite being part of the discussion in terms of challenges and opportunities.

Some think that hybrid work is just a form of remote work or telework work, as it is possible to combine the abovementioned elements in different ways depending on the needs of the organisation. For example, traditional telework is a combination of certain physical, temporal, and virtual elements and their features. It could thus be logical reasoned that other types of remote work and telework (Table 1) are just specific types of hybrid configurations, and even manual work can include hybrid elements; for example, an artisan might design her products using 3D design software and manufacture them by hand at home. The potential for variety in hybrid work increases even more when considering hybridity at the team and organisational levels. A summary of hybrid work is provided below.

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**WHAT IS HYBRID WORK?**

- *HW is a systemic entity, and its type and form are dependent on the purpose of activities and the needs of actors and their contextual demands and available resources (see hindrances, challenges, benefits, and opportunities).*
- *HW is built on basic elements, sub elements and their features on the individual, team, organisational, and societal levels (see Figures 13a and b).*
- *HW is a dynamic entity transforming in time (see Figures 14a and b) driven by changes in the purpose, needs, context, and resources of an actor. Stable conditions tend to freeze the HW configuration.*
- An individual level formulation of HW is as follows: *'Hybrid work (HW) is any type of work arrangement where a worker operates in a sustainable manner alone or with others, as agreed upon the worker and organisation, based on the latter's' purpose, the former's needs and tasks, and the context, with flexibly regarding the time and place of the work – on the employer's premises or default location or remotely at home, other locations or on the road – using digital technologies such as laptops, mobile phones and the internet.'*
  - *'Any type of work arrangement' means that HW is any configuration of two or more basic elements, and their sub elements and features.*
  - *'In a sustainable manner' means that the purpose of the work, the needs of actors, contextual and situational demands, and the available resources fit with each other.*
  - *'As agreed' means that the identification of needed elements, sub elements, and features, as well as their design and implementation, are based on agreements and contracts between stakeholders on different levels (team, organisation, society)*

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- o *'Operates … alone or with others' means that an actor (individual, team, or organisation) works independently and/or collaborates with other actors.*
- o *'Based on an organisation's purpose' means that HW contributes to the organisation's purpose and goals when it produces products, provides services, or generates knowledge.*
- o *'Based on … the former's needs and tasks, and the context' means that HW accounts for the varying needs of an individual, which impact on his/her motivation to do the tasks involved in his or her current context-dependent job demands.*
- o *'With flexibly regarding the time and place of the work' means that HW can make flexible use of time and location, including the workplace, as agreed between the stakeholders.*
- o *'Using ,digital technologies' means that technologies, including hardware and software, are used in HW when needed to process and search for information and to collaborate.*

## Hybridising mechanism

Now, a question arises: are the four elements discussed here – physical, social, virtual, and temporal – enough to define, design and implement hybrid work? It helps to consider hybrid work as a process from a given actor's viewpoint. An actor – on different levels (an individual, a team, an organisation, a society) – strives to operate in this environment purposefully by regulating its actions, balancing present demands and available resources as an acting system in its environment. Therefore, the current content, structure, form, and outcomes of hybrid work are largely determined by three intertwined and partly embedded factors: the purpose of the work, the hindering or enabling features of contextual demands, and the available resources. These factors hinder or facilitate the fluent work process and its regulation. The practical implication of this reasoning is that each organisation or even team can build its own model and implement its own hybrid work practices by combining and integrating the basic elements, sub elements and their features, as well as additional ones if needed. Figure 9 shows the generic hybridising mechanism, while Figure 10 illustrates the same from an individual perspective.

The common objectives characterise the purpose of an organisation and are expected to generate joint efforts and engagement in their achievement. Usually, the objectives are set by the organisation's management, with or without consulting employees, and are related to productivity and economic outcomes. Often, profit expectations are justified by the organisation's values, such as sustainability. On the individual and team levels, the organisational objectives affect the complexity of individual and collective assignments and tasks, i.e., is routine or creative task execution required in work? Bell and Kozlowski (2002) claimed that *task complexity* also has critical implications for the structure and processes of teams. In an analogous manner, the content of tasks influences the structure and workflow of the hybrid work unit and what kinds of resources are needed to regulate work activities. In addition, individual actions are driven by their basic needs, such as the need for autonomy, the use of competences, and social relations with others (Deci and Ryan, 2012). It is evident that goal setting, values and needs impact what kinds of elements and features are needed in the hybrid work arrangements to be developed and implemented.

From the hybrid work design and implementation viewpoints, the complexity of the contextual demands is determined by the combination of physical, virtual, or digital and social elements,

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temporal arrangements and their features needed for operating the work unit. The purpose and context together influence what kinds of internal and external resources individuals or collective subjects such as a team or an organisation as a whole need to enable the regulation of work processes, relations and boundaries between subjects, objects, tasks, and the environment, and what kinds of outcomes there are.

The outcomes of an individually or collectively regulated work process can be used as evaluation criteria showing the functionality and quality of performance outcomes, as well as their effects on employees' well-being and commitment.

Table 9 - The form and content of a hybrid work unit is determined by its purpose, contextual demands, and available resources
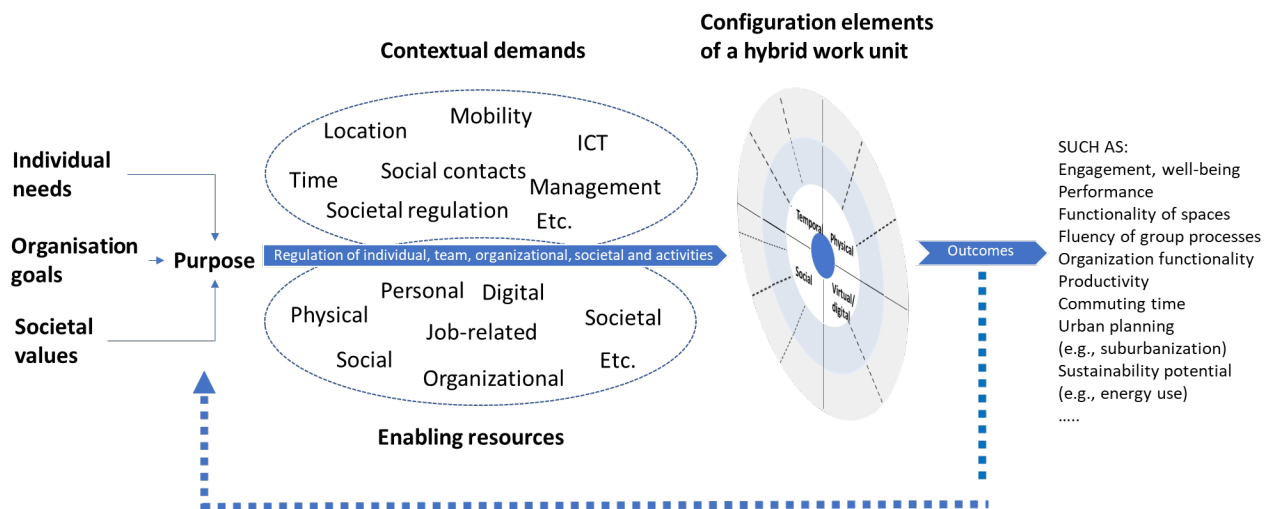


*Source: authors' own conceptualisation*

Table 10 - An individual-level hybridising mechanism
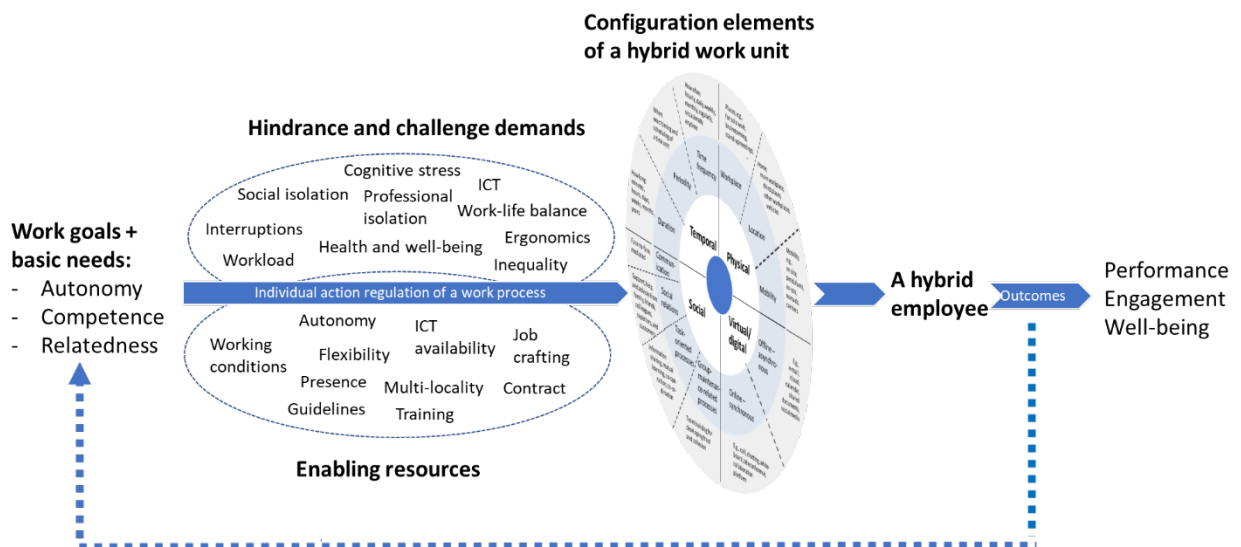


Source: authors' own conceptualisation

## Design and implementation of hybrid work

The characteristics involved in designing a hybrid work system can be clustered into the following:

- *Designable objective elements* such as the location and physical premises of the workplace, time arrangements, social structure and relations, and available digital tools and platforms.
- *Negotiable features* such as how decisions are made about arrangements and implementation, including agreements about relevant mechanisms, management styles, leadership and working practices, and necessary competences.
- *Emergent features* appearing from hybrid work processes and their implementation, such as tensions and controversies.
- *Outcome features* such as performance, effectiveness, productivity, and well-being are based on how the primary, secondary and tertiary features elements are realised.

How and in which order design and implementation finally happen depend on an organisation's culture and values, decision-making traditions, and present practices. This implies that the design and implementation can start from the expected outcome features, for example, by aiming to identify the best hybrid work composition to ensure the effectiveness and well-being of employees.

The role of basic elements

The main adjustable elements of a hybrid work system are based on the interplay of the four basic elements. For example, *location, workplace, and mobility,* along with their features, are the sub elements of physical space. Various workplaces in different locations in neighbourhoods, urban and rural areas, in different parts of the country, in other countries, and across the globe can be used as working locations. The workplace in each location, as physical premises and a working context, varies according to the needs of the organisation and its employees. Mobility brings with it contextual change in both location and workplace.

The element of *virtual* space affords various tools and software to seek information and knowledge; produce products, services, and knowledge; and communicate and collaborate synchronously and asynchronously with others if needed; and to do remote solo work.

The element of *social* space includes communication- and social-relation-related arrangements between actors to guarantee fluent group processes face-to-face, virtually or in a mixed manner.

The *temporal* element includes time-related features, which are needed to decide when, how long and how often work is done.

### HW transforms over time

Time is also a critical element in the sense that hybrid work, along with the contextual demands and available resources, can be in a state of continuous change. It is expected that the work environment will change across time – sometimes slowly, but also unexpectedly – pressing an organisation to change. An example of an unexpected external reason experienced across the globe was the pandemic that began in early 2020. It forced millions of people to swiftly shift to remote work and telework from home. However, other minor reasons can initiate change, for example, changes in service and product demand. The reasons for change are multiple; they are often external but can also be internal, such as missing expertise in an organisation. Change reflects the needed configuration of the basic elements, sub elements, and features. Figures 14a and 14b illustrate how the use of multiple locations, working mostly alone, and using digital tools to access data sources change during a given period into working both in office and at home, daily with others, and through virtual collaboration.
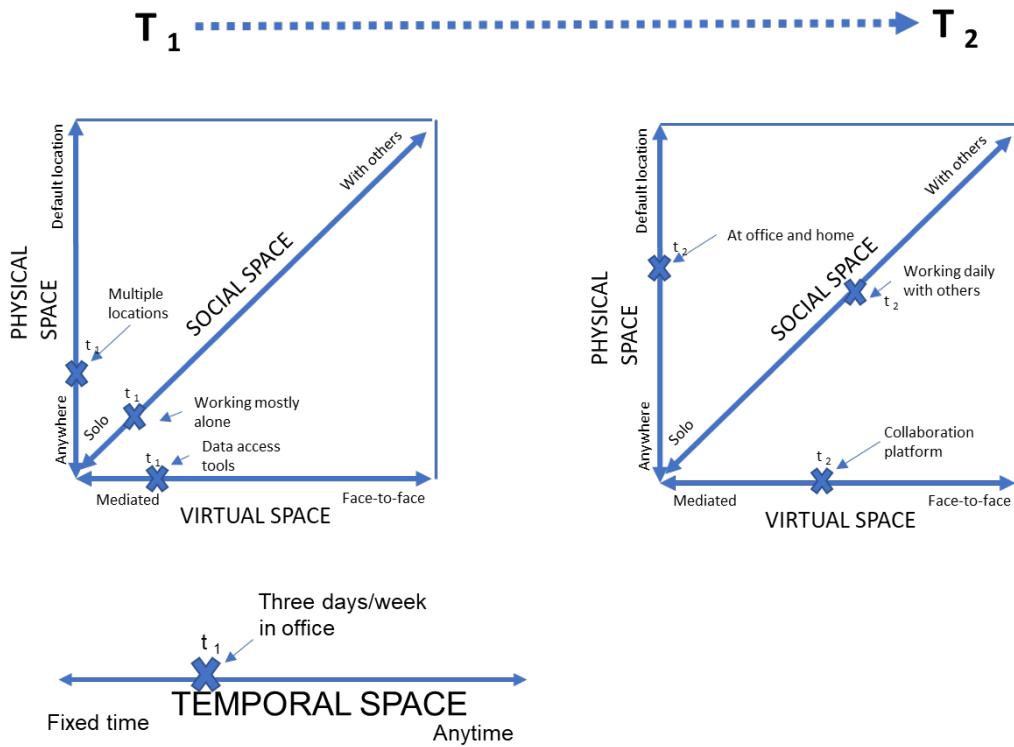
Figure 14a: The use of basic elements, sub elements and features is dependent on time and contextual demands. Source: authors' own conceptualisation
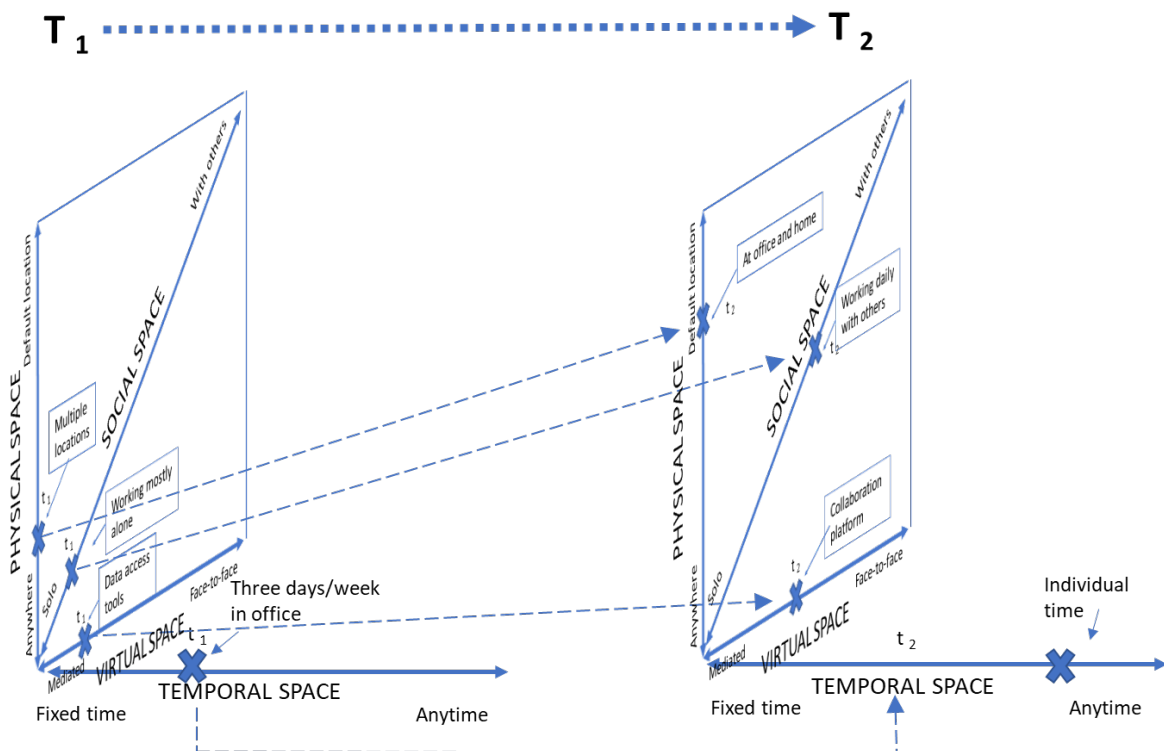


Figure 14b: Changing goals and contexts bring dynamism to hybrid work. Source: authors' own conceptualisation

HW is a heuristic way to flexibly organise work and its preconditions to meet the challenges of unexpected changes such as pandemics, natural disasters, and conflicts. The flexibility involved and

the need hybrid solutions for specific jobs, tasks and working contexts for individuals, teams, projects, and whole organisations require tailoring HW elements and their features on a case-by-case basis. The key principles in future job design are, on the one hand, removing, reducing or changing the abovementioned challenges of job demands and, on the other hand, utilising and developing the available benefits and opportunities as resources.

The types of HW that persist or appear after the pandemic will determine what resources are needed to address the current situation. It seems evident that hybrid work will be a flexible mixture of using various places – including the home and main office – as digitalised workplaces. Flexible work models have many forms, as their implementation depends on the purpose and goals of the work and the work processes involved. The *location* and *workplace* are important: work is done flexibly in both physical and virtual spaces. *Time* is important as well: work is done from 8–16h or any time 24/7 as synchronous and asynchronous solo work or with one or more people. Leaders should not only manage their own time but also ensure that their employees do not overload themselves and can cope with their job demands. *Communication* in hybrid work will occur both face-to-face and in a digital manner. In this regard, the role of *technology* is crucial as an enabler of collaboration and of knowledge seeking and elaboration in solo work. Hybrid work essentially includes collaboration consisting of both task- and relationship-related communication. Members of the same or of different organisations will work interdependently in purely virtual or in hybrid contexts in which individuals communicate via e-mail, videoconferencing, teleconferencing, and several other means of virtual interaction.

## Attention to the future

Today, the transformation of hybrid work continues, and it is a moving target. However, some 'normalisation' is occurring. Employees are returning to their main workplace after being forced to engage in remote work from home, many times blending remote work flexibility with on-site work and typically working two days a week remotely. Many large companies and state and municipal organisations have formulated organisation-wide HW policies, giving some framework to tailored and localised forms of work arrangements on the team and individual levels. Micro-, small and medium-sized companies have quickly adapted to the new reality and organised activities in a flexible manner. Surveys from around the world show that the trend of flexible hybrid work arrangements is expected to continue.

The transition is not always smooth, and some jolts are expected, as are some unanswered questions. Many of the current open questions are presented above as challenges and ambivalent tensions, such as feelings of isolation, loneliness, and longing for colleagues. An example of a tension is the question of whether online interaction is a substitute for face-to-face interaction or whether the two are complementary. In HW, at least some of the collaboration occurs online using still developing technologies. Another tension is that HW and fully remote work leads to lower office demand. This is a challenge – at least to property owners: what should be done with extra office premises? One of the societal challenges is that remote-capable or teleworkable jobs constitute only part of the workforce because of their responsibilities, and not all workplaces can organise their activities in a flexible manner. Many frontline employees in service positions, such as nurses in health care and salespersons in shops, need close, face-to-face contact with their clients. Manufacturing products on the shop floor often requires the full-time presence or at least keen attention of an employee. This difference may lead to the 'hybrid work divide', creating a group of privileged professions that enjoy autonomy and flexibility while other groups are strictly tied to in-person work processes. However, from the perspective of HW as a combination of 'two or more things', these kinds of professions could also benefit from considering work content as a combination of basic work elements, sub elements, and

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their features. It is possible to reformulate such jobs by rebuilding their structure to include previously missing elements and their features.

HW, as a flexible way of organising work, has many manifestations. We do not yet exactly know what the functionalities and outcomes of different combinations of hybridity are. At present, rather few studies about this topic have been conducted and published, although many are coming. Most of them concern remote work and telework from home and at the office, with a lack of attention to other elements of HW. There is a need to cluster, measure and evaluate hybrid work solutions, even though they are heterogeneous. What common indicators can be used? A reality test of implemented HW solutions could provide a starting point to consider various indicators. In each case, the basic elements, sub elements and features used should be described. In addition, data should include information about performance and well-being outcomes on the individual, team, and organisation levels; about job demands and available resources used; about organisational goals, purpose, and values; and about individual needs and resources. Based on this kind of information, conclusions for team- and organisation-level agreements can be established and refined, as can the need for relevant regulation and legislation.

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# Annexes

## Annex 1: Hybrid Work – Challenges, opportunities and risks post-pandemic questionnaire

The questionnaire was prepared by Jorge Cabrita and Franz Eiffe from Eurofound

*Name of the correspondent*:
*Email address*:
*Name of the national centre*:
*Date*:

*1.  Hybrid work definitions and data*

1.1 Please provide existing definitions of hybrid work or similar concept(s) referring to the situation in which work is performed partly from the employer's premises and partly from other locations, indicating the original designation(s), its source(s), and the main differences between different concepts, if applicable. Sources can include public authorities' documents, pieces of legislation or proposals for legislation, but also statements by social partners or by individual companies, academic publications, or debates, etc.

1.2 Please list existing national sources of data which (may) capture the phenomenon of hybrid work and (may) contribute to better understand its consequences for firms/organisations, employees (including managers) and society in general. This may refer to (official) statistics, surveys, or polls, for example. For each source identified, please indicate what kind of data is collected, data collection method, periodicity, population, sample, institution commissioning the data collection, etc.

*2.  Debates about Hybrid Work*

2.1 To what extent is hybrid work being debated in your country and what are the main subjects of such debate? Please provide a description of the current state of affairs, developing the main topics of discussion.

2.2 Who are the main actors driving the debates and what are their positions regarding hybrid work? What are the views of trade unions, business or employers' associations, and other organisations or communities such as HR managers?

*3.  Hybrid work policies and practice*

3.1 Please report on examples of hybrid work put in practice or experimented in companies or other organisations in your country. What are the main features of the models being implemented and tested? Please provide details.

3.2 Is there any other relevant information regarding implementation of hybrid work in your country (e.g., success stories, challenges, other observations)? Please provide details.

## Annex 2: Definitions of concepts similar to hybrid work in the correspondents' reports

| SIMILAR CONCEPTS (N=16) | QUOTES | ELEMENTS | FEATURES |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Full-time telework organisation** | '"Full-time Telework Organisation" means the work organisation which allows the employee to perform his/her duties away from the Company's premises; the employee may, where appropriate, be present at these premises on an occasional basis to participate in events or meetings. In this work organisation, telework will be carried out either at the employee's home or at a third location to be defined by the parties.' | Physical space  Temporal space | Multiple locations, timing |
| **Agile work, or smart working** | 'Agile Work (or Smart Working), defined as a way of executing a subordinate employment relationship through a written agreement between the parties involved (employee and employer), without specific space and time constraints for the execution of the tasks, with the use of technological tools to support this flexibility, and according to an organization of work by objectives.' | Physical space  Virtual space  Temporal space | Written agreement, flexibility, organisational objectives |
| **'Crossbreed'** | 'Defining hybrid work can be a complicate task. The very notion "hybrid" means "crossbreed". There may be different crossbreed situations at work, not only doing the same work sometimes in office and sometimes outside office. Hybrid work is characterised by large variety of forms, and conditions how it is organised, and even with the best efforts, it would be difficult to describe this variety by a single definition and normative regulation.' | Physical space  Temporal space | Main workplace, multiple locations, timing, variety of forms |
| **Smart working** | 'Employers highlight younger employees increasingly demand a combination of remote, flexible and non-hierarchical work organisation. However, this model can successfully apply to high-qualified workplaces requiring autonomous work (e.g., engineering). But that model, sometimes called "smart-working" …' | Physical space | Flexibility, non-hierarchical, autonomy |
| **Agile work** | 'The company agreement applies to all the 6,000 employees of Vodafone, by providing the possibility to perform remotely 80% of the monthly working time for employees working in customer service areas and 60% for employees of the remaining business areas. In the days of agile work, the choice of the place from which to work remotely is left to the employee.' | Physical space  Temporal space | Multiple locations, duration, autonomy |

| Smart working, agile work | 'Hence, what in the international debate and legislation is expressed more generically with the term Remote Work or Hybrid Work, implying a work carried out outside the office, whether stably, at regular or occasional intervals, in Italy is referred to as Smart Working or Agile Work.' | Physical space  Temporal space | Multiple locations, time frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| A form of telework | 'Hybrid work has been debated in Portugal as a form of telework.' | Physical space | Home |
| Mixed work model, partial teleworking | 'In addition, there are other frequently used definitions related to the HW model, such as "mixed work model", "partial teleworking", etc. For example, Government Resolution No 1226 Declaring Quarantine on the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania of 4 November 2020 (no longer in force as the quarantine/lockdown has been lifted as of 1 July 2021) included a recommendation to organise work in public and municipal institutions and in the private sector in a "remote or partially remote" form (telework or partial telework)' | Physical space | Multiple locations |
| Workation | 'It is also worth mentioning that with the spread of teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic, a new form of HW – workation – became a growing phenomenon in Lithuania, where an employee can work from another city or a foreign country for a certain period of time per year (e.g., for one month). The most common locations are resort countries where it is possible to combine work and vacation (Simeleviciene, 2021[6]).' | Physical space  Temporal space | Multiple locations, duration, work–life balance |
| Flexible organisation | 'Smart Working is the Anglicism mostly used in Italy to refer to the concept of Hybrid Work, meaning a flexible organisation of work, without a strict schedule established by the employer, that can be performed in any location, including meeting rooms, office, home, and even temporary external workstations such as cafeteria and co-working spaces, at the discretion of the employee, as long as personal safety and data confidentiality is guaranteed.' | Physical space  Temporal space  Virtual space | Multiple locations, timing, workplace as environment, flexibility, autonomy, data safety |
| Boundless work | 'The Authority presented a report and held a seminar in 2018 regarding the concept of "boundless work" (gränslöst arbete) which, in the report (2018, p.12), is defined as "Boundless work is a metaphor that denotes that activities and tasks have been freed from spatial, temporal and organisational constraints and contexts. The metaphor does not primarily refer to boundless performance requirements, but to a working life in which boundaries of physical as well as non-physical – | Physical space  Temporal space  Social space | Multiple locations; workplace as environment; flexibility; organisation constrains and contexts; technology-, |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | are constantly under being re-examined, transcended and changed. Technological development, structural change, competition and changing values are individually and in combination, driving forces in this process.' | | structural-, competition- and value-based drivers |
| **Working from home** | 'The Swedish Work Environment Authority does not define hybrid or flexible work on their website, instead the Authority discusses the principles of "work from home": "We use the term "working from home" to refer to workers who are advised not to work from their regular offices or workplaces.' | Physical space | Home, multiple locations |
| **Blended working** | 'The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar, said that blended working will involve working sometimes from the office and other times from home, a hub or on the go.' | Physical space<br><br>Temporal space | Multiple workplaces, time frequency |
| **Flexible way of working** | 'There are no other official definitions of hybrid work nor other similar definitions. In parallel to hybrid work, a term 'flexible work' (a flexible way of working) (in Swedish 'flexibelt arbetssätt') is sometimes used to describe not only to non-place-based work but also the wider flexibilization of work (e.g., in terms of working hours).' | Physical space<br><br>Temporal space | Multiple locations, timing, flexibility |
| **Regular telework** | 'There is no definition of "hybrid work" but a definition of "regular telework", which can, according to us, be a partial definition of "hybrid work". According to the inter-professional agreement of 20 October 2020 signed by the social partners (UEL, OGBL and LCGB) on legal system for [1], telework is "a form of organization or performance of work, usually using information and communication technologies, so that the work, which would normally have been performed at the employer's premises, is carried out outside of these premises". The agreement distinguishes occasional telework from regular telework.' | Physical space<br><br>Virtual space<br><br>Temporal space | Multiple locations, timing |
| **Blended work** | 'Whilst the term 'hybrid work' or related terms like 'blended work' feature in related documents and statements of social partners, as discussed below, the term is rarely defined and instead the meaning is implied.' | | |

# Annex 3: Definitions of hybrid work and similar concepts from the viewpoint of the flexibility paradigm in the correspondents' reports

| TYPE OF DEFINITIONS | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| **Flexibility in time (N=32)**<br><br>- Two home days, three office days<br><br>- Occasional telework<br><br>- Part-time telework<br><br>- Fixed number of days per week at office<br><br>- 50% in-office working, 50% home working scheduled between 7am and 8 pm<br><br>- Office working from 30%–70%, rotating<br><br>- Teleworking for a certain period in another country allowed<br><br>- Two days at office, elsewhere, inside country<br><br>- In-office working, from 2 to 3 days elsewhere, max. 35 days per year<br><br>- Office working, home working, mobile working, alternating one week at office and one week elsewhere<br><br>- Less than half a day per week elsewhere | 'There is a possibility of occasional telework for the execution of specific and punctual activities linked to the mission'. It is this form of occasional teleworking that is described as "hybrid working".'<br><br>'Hybrid work is part-time telework, and thus the same principles as in case of telework are in place in relation to hybrid work.'<br><br>'60% of Finnish companies plan to introduce a fixed number of days per week when employees are on site.'<br><br>'In response to employee preferences, the company currently uses the HW model in which employees work two days in the office and the remaining three days from home or another location convenient to them.'<br><br>'Under the new model, 50% of working time must be spent in the office, but employees can schedule their working time between 7am and 8pm as they please when working from home.'<br><br>'A nationwide ratio of 30% to 70% was imposed, meaning that the activity is performed on a rotating basis at the employer's premises by about one third of the employees.'<br><br>'The car manufacturer Renault proposed to its French trade unions a "hybrid work organisation" agreement providing for two to three days of remote work per week with, in addition, thirty-five days to be spread over the year.' |
| **Flexibility in work organisation (N=22)**<br><br>- Office working, home working, elsewhere, employee decides where and when<br><br>- Office working, home working, elsewhere, flexible choice based on job contents, and need for communication and interaction<br><br>- Office working, home working, combinations: 50/50, 70/30, 90/10 based on company and job needs<br><br>- Office working, elsewhere, agreement needed<br><br>- Mixture of working in office, at home and at another location , company decides | 'Hybrid work is a combination of working in the office, at home and elsewhere. Hybrid working gives government employees the space to make conscious choices in where and when they do their work.'<br><br>'Hybrid work relies on the possibility of choosing flexibly the location from which the work is done. It is not the building or office that is decisive, but the type of work to be done, the necessary communication possibilities and the degree of interaction. In a hybrid work environment, work at the office is combined with work from home, or from any other location.'<br><br>'Factorial (Delpueche, 2021) defines hybrid work as "a combination of remote and face-to-face working that can imply different combinations: 50-50 or 70-30 or even 90-10 ways, depending on the needs of the company and the occupational profile".'<br><br>'It gives staff the opportunity to combine on-site and remote working where feasible and if approved.'<br><br>'The concept of a hybrid schedule suggests that an employee would be in the office on certain days and |

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| | working remotely on other days, whether in his or her home or somewhere else. However, almost always the decision on which days each of those things happens is determined by the company, not the employee…' |
|---|---|
| **Flexibility in location (N=20):**<br><br>- Working in office and at home<br><br>- No dedicated workplace in office<br><br>- Working elsewhere<br><br>- Office working, factory working, home working, elsewhere<br><br>- Multilocational work<br><br>- Office working, home working, hub working<br><br>- On-site working, off-site working | 'Hybrid Organisation': means the work organisation which allows the employee to perform his/her duties both on and off the Company's premises.'<br><br>'The company will continue to provide the employee with an office, but it will no longer be a dedicated office. The employee then agrees to give up the benefit of an individual office. This office will be shared with the members of his team'.<br><br>'Capgemini (2020) offers an even wider definition: 'a hybrid workforce essentially refers to a workforce that is distributed across different locations, from traditional office and factory spaces to remote locations, including within employees' living space, be it a family home or shared apartment.''<br><br>'Hybrid work is mostly defined as a combination of working on the employers' premises and in other locations.'<br><br>'Future work is hybrid work – combining work from different places'<br><br>'It offers staff the option of combing work from home and on-site. The Bank has also established 11 working hubs in local towns where employees can work from assuming that it is closer to their home than their current on-site location.'<br><br>'XX has defined hybrid work as "combined work on company premises with work at a distance, usually at home".' |
| **Technological options (N=5)**<br><br>- Physical presence, home working, elsewhere, virtual work<br><br>- Using ICT, based on contract and conditions, home working, elsewhere<br><br>- Partial home working or elsewhere, ICT, agreement between an employee and employer needed<br><br>- Office working, elsewhere, ICT | 'The hybrid organization combines physical presence with work from other locations, such as homework. This means that some parts of the company's tasks are performed virtually, while others are performed by meeting physically.'<br><br>'Remote work shall be work involving the performance of work in whole or in part in the place of residence of the employee or in another place agreed upon by the employee and the employer, in particular using means of direct communication at a distance.'<br><br>'Telework Law no. 81/2018[1] defines telework as the form of work organization through which the worker, regularly and voluntarily, fulfils his specific duties in another place than the employer's premises, using information and communication technology. The employees working in a hybrid system are also considered teleworkers.' |

## Annex 4: The main topics of debate in the correspondents' reports

| MAIN TOPICS OF DEBATES | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| - Organising (N=26) | 'How to arrange it so that the companies and employees are satisfied. It includes physical work environment, teamwork organisation and communication and mental health topics.' |
| - Hybrid work (HW) (N=23) | 'Current public debates focus on home office/telework and mobile work. Hybrid work is a term which is not common and only used by academics/practitioners who study the subject/are engaged with the subject. Furthermore, in labour market research the term hybrid work is also used to describe multiple jobholding.' |
| - Legislation (N=19) | 'The legal right to work from home was an issue in political and public debates mostly in 2019/2020 (the minister of XX proposed a new law but failed because of the coalition partner at the time).' |
| - Regulation (N=17) | 'On the other hand, according to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the Labour Code provides sufficient regulation of hybrid work and there is no need to adopt further legal regulations. Individual companies regulate implementation of hybrid work by internal rules, which consider their specific conditions.' |
| - Costs (N=8) | 'Who should cover the costs when working from home?' |
| - HW consequences (N=8) | 'Current debates about home office/telework and mobile work revolve around on the consequences of these work arrangements for employees' health/well-being/work–life balance and necessary measures to regulate these arrangements.' |
| - Control (n=8) | 'Discussions between local trade unions and the company management are ongoing as one side believes it is a form of control that can be misused by the employer.' |
| - Employment relationship (N=7) | 'Do employees working remotely have the same rights and enjoy the same labour protections as in-office employees?' |
| - Office (N=7) | '... the office space and how it can be organised in a way that it supports both face-to-face interaction and privacy for online meetings and video calls.' |
| - HW agreement (N=5)- | 'According to the employers' organisation for service companies, Almega, it is important that employers and employees establish clear rules on how to apply teleworking and hybrid work (Arbetsliv, 2021).' |
| - Working conditions (N=4) | 'The organisation stresses that the Occupational Safety and Health Act (738/2002) should specify the employer's obligation to ensure the worker's ergonomics during telework.' |
| - Leadership (N=3) | 'It is important to redefine leadership and teamwork. Hybrid work will need a new form of leadership, which is more understanding, personal and inspirational.' |
| - Work culture (N=2) | 'The organisational culture or working culture are also topics covered in the debate on hybrid work.' |
| - Other: competences, equality, HW in SMEs, ICT, risks | |

# Annex 5: Summary of telework reviews and studies of hybrid work

| REVIEW AUTHOR(S) | FOCUS AND SAMPLE | CONCLUSIONS |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Bailey and Kurland, 2002 | Review of 80 academic articles on telework (= work away from the office) from different disciplines.<br><br>RQ: Who participates in it, why, and what happens when they do? | Who: male professionals and female clerical workers predominate. Why: employees' motivations for teleworking are unclear, as commonly perceived reasons such as commute reduction and family obligations do not appear instrumental. What happens: mostly self-reported increases in productivity; also lacking support for the claim that telework increases job satisfaction. |
| Gajendran and Harrison, 2007 | Meta-analysis of 46 studies of telecommuting (= flexible work location) in natural settings.<br><br>RQs: What are the positive and negative consequences of telecommuting? How do these consequences come about? When are these consequences potent? | Small beneficial effects on perceived autonomy and (lower) work–family conflict, no generally detrimental effects on the quality of workplace relationships. Outcomes, such as job satisfaction and performance were mediated by perceived autonomy. High-intensity telecommuting (more than 2.5 days a week) accentuated telecommuting's beneficial effects on work–family conflict but harmed relationships with coworkers. |
| Andreev et al, 2010 | Review of 35 telecommuting and teleconference studies.<br><br>RQ: What are the impacts of ICT on telecommuting (= flexible work location and working virtually)? | In the short-term, telecommuting leads to a reduction in various travel characteristics, e.g., morning peak hours and number of commuting trips. In the long term, the reduction would be much lower due to the induced travel demand and residential relocation. On the other hand, some aggregate studies show a small but still significant substitution effect. |
| De Menezes and Kelliher, 2011 | Review of 148 studies on flexible working arrangements (FWA) and performance.<br><br>RQ: What is the relationship between flexible working arrangements and performance or related outcomes? | Schedule flexibility is associated with job satisfaction.<br><br>The empirical evidence largely failed to demonstrate the relationship between FWA and outcomes in general. |
| Boell et al, 2013 | Review on telework (= working anywhere and anytime) in information systems literature.<br><br>RQ: What is the nature and impact of telework and its potential challenges and advantages for employees and their organisations? | *Challenges*<br>Individual: work–life boundary blurring, socialisation, career and workplace involvement, trust, technical support, interruptions.<br>Organisation: management practices, legal framework, teamwork and collaboration, expertise and training, infrastructure and technology, security, costs. |

| | | *Benefits*:<br>Individual: financial advantage, increased work–life balance, spatial mobility, increased autonomy, increased productivity, increased job satisfaction.<br><br>Organisation: increased work morale, recruitment and retention, productivity gains, improved agility, financial advantages |
|---|---|---|
| Charalampous et al, 2019 | Review including 63 articles on remote knowledge e-workers' well-being at work.<br><br>RQ: What is the relationship between e-working and well-being at work? | Lack of social support increases emotional exhaustion, perceived negative impact on career advancement, trust issues, supervisory control, concentration issues, cognitive stress, musculoskeletal problems, professional isolation.<br><br>Remote e-working is associated with individuals' positive emotions, increase in job satisfaction and organisational commitment levels, and the amelioration of emotional exhaustion through increased autonomy. Social isolation can be mitigated by individual proactivity. |
| Beauregard et al, 2019 | Comparison of findings on high-intensity and part-time telework.<br><br>RQ: What are the outcomes of part-time telework and facilitators for employees? | *Hindrances & challenges*<br>Individual: social and professional isolation (high-intensity telework), negative effect on quality of relationships (high-intensity telework), low engagement, work–life conflict, career advancement (high-intensity telework), management of work–life balance. Organisation*:* monitoring workers, ensuring knowledge transfer.<br><br>*Benefits*<br>Individual: job satisfaction (low-intensity telework), engagement (low-intensity telework), better employee–supervisor relationships<br>Team: improved team performance<br>Organisation: increased productivity, less absenteeism and turnover, better management of work–life balance |
| **Reviews and studies on telework during the pandemic** | | |
| ILO, 2021b | Literature reviews, overview documents, and empirical research using primary data published between 01/04/2020 to 15/10/2021.<br><br>RQ: How is the pandemic impacting the workforce, workspace and well-being of people? | *Workforce*: in the areas of the overnight transition to remote work, the emergence of hybrid workforce, temporariness, limited and inconclusive evidence on productivity, increased inequality and polarization, the adoption and spread of automation, need for new skills. |

| | | *Workspace*: in the area of the optimisation of office space. |
|---|---|---|
| | | *Well-being*: bringing both benefits and challenges to employees and employers (see below), a threat of a global mental-health crisis, emerging monitoring and surveillance issues. |
| | | *Societal impacts*: relocation from urban centres to rural areas, the impact on the carbon footprint is controversial (e.g., reduced commuting vs. increased non-work-related trips). |
| Buecker and Horstmann, 2021 | The prevalence and correlates of loneliness and social isolation during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (k=53 studies). <br><br> RQ: Daily changes in the perceived quality and quantity of social relationships before and during the pandemic (N = 4,823). | The few longitudinal studies mainly reported increases in loneliness, especially when the prepandemic measurement was done months or years before the COVID-19 pandemic. <br><br> On average, the quality of social relationships was perceived to be worse during the pandemic than before. |
| Ipsen et al, 2021 | Data from 29 European countries on the experiences of knowledge workers (N = 5748) during 11 March to 8 May 2020. <br><br> RQ: What are the main advantages and disadvantages of working from home? | The main advantages: (i) better work–life balance, (ii) improved work efficiency, and (iii) greater work control. <br><br> The main disadvantages: (iv) home office constraints, (v) work uncertainties, and (vi) inadequate tools. |
| Shirmohammadi et al, 2022 | Review of 40 empirical studies carried out during the pandemic. <br><br> RQs: Have the images of remote working as a desirable work arrangement been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic? What has been learned from the widespread involuntarily remote work imposed on employees? | Involuntary remote work during the pandemic intensified challenges related to remote work, including work intensification, excessive workloads, and low work–life balance, space limitations, technostress, isolation, lack of appropriate tools. |
| Yang, 2022 | The sample contains all US Microsoft employees (N = 61 182) except for those who hold senior leadership positions and/or are members of teams that routinely handle particularly sensitive issues. Data from December 2019 to June 2020 before and after the shift to firm-wide remote work. Data were analysed by using a modified difference-in-differences (DiD) model. <br><br> RQ: What are the causal effects of firm-wide remote work on collaboration and communication? | The collaboration networks of workers became more static and siloed, with fewer bridges between disparate parts. There was a decrease in synchronous communication and an increase in asynchronous communication. Overall, switching to remote work caused workers to spend less time attending to sources of new information, communicate more through asynchronous media, e.g., sending emails and IMs and working longer hours. |
| **Studies on hybrid work** | | |
| Bloom et al, 2022 | The study evaluated hybrid working from home (WFH) through a randomised control | HW reduced attrition rates by 35% and improved self-reported work satisfaction scores. HW reduced hours worked on home days but increased it on other |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | trial in a globally operating corporation (N=1612).<br><br>RQ: What are the impacts of hybrid working from home (WFH), whereby employees work a mix of days at home and at the office each week? | workdays and the weekend. HW employees increased individual messaging and group video call communication, even when in the office. No significant impact on performance ratings or promotions. Findings also suggest a small positive impact on productivity. |
| Choudbury et al, 2022 | RQ: By comparing high-, intermediate- and low-intensity WFH, the study explored how the number of days worked from home relative to the number of days worked in the office affects intrafirm communication and novelty of work output. | Workers in the intermediate-WFH category reported greater satisfaction with working from home, greater work–life balance, and lower isolation than workers in the high- and low-WFH categories<br><br>The findings of the study suggest that intermediate levels of WFH may result in enhanced novelty of work products and greater amounts of work-related communication. |

# Annex 6: The expected hindrances of hybrid work on the individual, team, organisational, and societal levels

| HINDRANCES (N=38) | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| **Individual (N=28)** | |
| - Social relations (N=4)<br><br>- Health and well-being (N=4)<br><br>- Work–life balance (N=3)<br><br>- Inequality (N=3)<br><br>- Workload (N=2)<br><br>- Costs (N=2)<br><br>- ICT (N=2)<br><br>- Other: loss of creativity, motivation, data security, precarity, availability of knowledge, surveillance, alienation, taxes | 'However, on the other hand, working in isolation deflates the feeling of being a part of a team.'<br><br>'A.Y. of consultancy, XX, said that early evidence suggests elements of remote working have led to mental health problems.'<br><br>'On the negative aspects, 51% cited difficulty in separating work from home life.'<br><br>'The article highlights the risk of employees that work from home will experience inequality, because they feel overlooked and some of the measures that can be taken to avoid this.'<br><br>'A significant number of the respondents…mentioned that remote/hybrid work had increased their workload.'<br><br>'Domestic legislation is not clear enough in regulating the specific measures or reimbursement of costs that a teleworker is entitled to claim. This situation is to the benefit of employers and to the detriment of employees.'<br><br>'Limited availability of technological solutions for all.' |
| **Team (N=1)** | |
| - Alienation | 'Working only from home is considered to have disadvantages, as more than 50% of the respondents shared, for example, a monotonous day, alienation of the teams.' |
| **Organisation (N=5)** | |
| - Social relations<br><br>- Motivation<br><br>- Work–life balance<br><br>- Health and well-being<br><br>- Surveillance | 'Communication failures due to the individualisation of some tasks previously shared face-to-face with colleagues.'<br><br>'Reduced motivation'<br><br>'It further destroys the balance between their professional and personal life.'<br><br>'Prevent professional burnout associated with remote and hybrid working.'<br><br>'The surveillance exercised by the employer through technologies used by the employee to work and the right to disconnect.' |
| **Society (N=4)** | |
| - Inequality<br><br>- Costs<br><br>- Taxes<br><br>- Knowledge | 'Four out of ten women (41%) say that their work–life balance has deteriorated; in some cases, they have had to work harder, including overtime, to meet the requirements, but also because some housework took up more time than usual.'<br><br>'Most importantly, we are totally unaware whether the labour rights and benefits of workers are secured or violated, and to which extent, within this unstructured labour environment.' |

## Annex 7: The expected challenges of hybrid work at the individual, team, organisational, and societal levels

| CHALLENGES (N=99) | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| **Individual (N=53)** ||
| **- Agreement (N=11)** | 'It is more difficult to reach an agreement with the employer on the reimbursement of work expenses as compared to remote work only.' |
| **- Social relations (N=8)** | 'On the other hand, some employees report missing the daily informal interaction with co-workers that happens when getting coffee or eating lunch. They report that missing co-workers is the hardest part of working at home.' |
| **- Employment relationship (N=5)** | 'Do employees working remotely have the same rights and enjoy the same labour protections as in-office employees?' |
| **- Leadership (N=4)** | '39% of managers consider that they have less visibility of their employees' work when they telework.' |
| **- Work–life balance (N=4)** | 'It is difficult for them to delimit their professional life from their personal life (43%).' |
| **- Workload (N=4)** | 'On the days they work from home, 52% say that they end up allocating more than eight hours per day of professional activity.' |
| **- Working conditions (N=3)** | 'Just over half of the representatives (51%) thought that the conditions for systematic health and safety management would deteriorate with hybrid offices.' |
| **- Career (N=2)** | 'Seven out of ten managers believe that teleworkers may be disadvantaged by a reduction in their opportunities for development and involvement in the workplace.' |
| **- ICT (N=2)** | 'Companies report difficulties encountered by their employees: digital tools (38%).' |
| **- Inequality (N=2)** | 'The employees who work from home might be overlooked and experience some disadvantages. It is thus important for employers to implement a practice that is fair and include all employees equally.' |
| **- Other: mindset, communication, competence, health and well-being, legislation, location, office, productivity, recruitment, trade union membership, work culture** | |
| **Team (N=6)** ||
| **- Agreement (N=2)** **- Communication (N=2)** **- Workload (N=2)** | 'The conflict here is that there are no strict rules about how to track working time when working from home if it is not in a fixed working schedule (that requires written agreement between employer and employee.' 'A more specific issue in case of international workers is navigating the time zone differences and cultural differences (especially when not seeing face-to-face); again, effort in maintaining team spirit was emphasised by the HR managers.' |

| | 'These adjustments have led to an increased workload, but managers are still in favour of teleworking for their teams, under certain conditions', stresses the study.' |
|---|---|
| **Organisation (N=24)** | |
| - Leadership (N=4)<br><br>- Agreement (N=4)<br><br>- Social relations (N=4)<br><br>- Working conditions (N=2)<br><br>- Employment relationship (N=2)<br><br>- Other: communication, costs, health and well-being, ICT, inequality, office, privacy | 'The burden of team leaders/managers have increased considerably, as they are the ones who should propose solutions.'<br><br>'Only 6% of companies have amended employment contracts with regard to changes to a remote work setup.'<br><br>'The consequences, on the other hand, can [include] isolation...'<br><br>'Other issues to emerge include the suitability of some homes, particularly younger workers who may be living in shared accommodation.'<br><br>'I wonder if we might inadvertently be moving in the direction of the loosening of the employment relationship towards a more episodic and commercial arrangement.' |
| **Society (N=16)** | |
| Employment relationship (N=3)<br><br>- Health and well-being (N=2)<br><br>-Costs (N=2)<br><br>- Other: Social relations, working conditions, mindset, communication, implementation, knowledge, office, productivity | 'Small and medium sized employers are receiving queries from employees on changing terms and condition of employment to reflect reduced working hours or working from home.'<br><br>'According to the institute, one of the biggest challenges is how to improve labour productivity and well-being at work in multi-location working life.'<br><br>'… has stressed the cost implications for smaller businesses, particularly regarding having to equip employees to work from home.'<br><br>'The main challenges of hybrid work identified in the Municipality of XX relate to … delay in the integration of new workers in the teams.' |

## Annex 8: The expected benefits of hybrid work on the individual, team, organisational, and societal levels

| BENEFITS (N=97) | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| **Individual (N=67)** | |
| - **Work–life balance (N=13)**<br><br>- **Autonomy (N=8)**<br><br>- **Commuting (N=7)**<br><br>- **Efficiency (N=5)**<br><br>- **Costs (N=4)**<br><br>- **Health & well-being (N=3)**<br><br>- **Motivation (N=3)**<br><br>- **Productivity (N=3)**<br><br>- **Working conditions (N=3)**<br><br>- **Creativity (N=2)**<br><br>- **Knowledge (N=2)**<br><br>- **Leadership (N=2)**<br><br>- **Other: career, equality, flexibility, job satisfaction, leisure, recruitment, safety, social relations, trust, working location, workload** | 'Almost 74% said they felt they had more time on their hands because of their ability to work remotely including doing more domestic tasks and spending more time with family and friends.'<br><br>'I feel unconstrained and less controlled; I take on more responsibilities, and my autonomy is growing faster - 3.7/5.'<br><br>'As people work partly from home, there is also less traffic, which in turn means less traffic jams, less exhaust gases and a better life.'<br><br>'The participants found the hybrid format effective, as it allows them to choose a way of working that fits the purpose, instead of following old routines.'<br><br>'In addition to the employee saving resources (reduced commute costs)'<br><br>'I feel safe and secure in this form of work'<br><br>'Danske Bank has experienced advantages with employees working from home such as higher motivation and engagement.'<br><br>'90% said they were just as productive as when in the office.'<br><br>'Change of working environment increases creativity and reduces routine.'<br><br>'Hybrid work models allow employees to be better informed about workplace matters of interest as compared to remote work only'<br><br>'85% were working just as well with their superiors, as before.' |
| **Team (N=1)** | |
| - **Self-leadership** | 'In addition, in the teams where there was special attention given and the teams were guided, the clarity and feeling of control over priorities, plans and decision-making processes increased, which is an important variable having an impact on work efficiency/productivity.' |
| **Organisation (N=26)** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **- Costs (N=12)**<br><br>**- Recruitment (N=5)**<br><br>**- Productivity (N=4)**<br><br>**- Learning (N=2)**<br><br>**- Other: working location, new business** | 'The employer can save resources by having a smaller office and finding cost-effective solution.'<br><br>'Amongst those that offer remote and hybrid arrangements, a number advertise such arrangements in the effort to attract employees.'<br><br>'Telework is also according to some managers, a source of better productivity.' |
| **Society (N=4)** ||
| **- Commuting (N=4)**<br><br>**- Other: working location** | 'Greenpeace Germany commissioned a study published in August 2020 which concluded that 5.4 million tons of carbon emission could be saved if 40 % of the employees would work from home regularly on two days per week. This would amount to 18 % of the emissions caused by commuter traffic (Greenpeace 2020).'- 'The central governments' campaign is focussed on three topics around hybrid work: traffic jams, sustainability and time saving for employees.' |

# Annex 9: The expected opportunities/resources related to hybrid work at the individual, team, organisational, and societal levels

| OPPORTUNITIES (N=126) | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| **Individual (N=33)** ||
| **- Leadership (N=5)**<br><br>**- Working conditions (N=4)**<br><br>**- ICT (N=4)**<br><br>**- Agreement (N=3)**<br><br>**- Training (N=3)**<br><br>**- Autonomy (N=2)**<br><br>**- Costs (N=2)**<br><br>**- Flexibility (N=2)**<br><br>**- Guidelines (N=2)**<br><br>**- Other: Work–life balance, physical activity, monitoring, employment relationship, data security** | 'Moreover, they will not be checked for spending a required number of hours on each task, rather their performance will be results-based'.<br><br>'CODAN will induce the expenses for the employees who will have to work partly from home, so that they have an opportunity to furnish a proper workspace at home. The sum given to workers is 8,000 DKK.'<br><br>'Many workplaces have experimented with online Friday-bars or similar initiatives. That everyone is joined online make the work hierarchy more level, and it is reported that meeting, when different departments and countries are meeting, are more equal when online. Furthermore, some employees are more open and less shy when online.'<br><br>'In particular, for people with disabilities or particular health conditions, caregivers, new parents, single parents, and employees who are victims of domestic violence, the agreement allows for a different customized modulation of the percentage of agile work, compatible with their personal needs.'<br><br>'Emphasis is being placed on further education which, in the vast majority of cases, is provided online.'<br><br>'They strongly believe that telework/hybrid work should always be on a voluntary basis and that no employees can be forced to telework if they don't have to (excluding during lockdowns when working at the office was prohibited in non-essential sectors).'<br><br>'Another issue also brought up by the GWU is that employers should compensate workers for costs related to the home-work environment (e.g., office ergonomics, electricity, VPN etc).'<br><br>'We have seen the possibility of more flexibility, as it makes our employees more innovative and happier. It provides better products and better customer experiences.<br><br>'These guidelines include issues such as a transparent calendar containing information about when employees are working remotely and when they are working at the office or rules for (digital) communication.'<br><br>'When it comes to teamwork, they established regular online meetings so that everyone felt included and to ensure a sense of fairness, efficiency, affiliation, etc. which is crucial for teamwork.' |
| **Team (N=1)** ||
| **- Agreement** | 'In addition, employees must create team-charters that stipulate how they will work and where they will perform which tasks.' |
| **Organisation (N=71)** ||
| **- Agreement (N=13)**<br><br>**- ICT (N=10)**<br><br>**- Office (N=9)**<br><br>**- Leadership (N=7)**<br><br>**- Training (N=6)** | 'Hybrid working could lead to different types of work contracts in the future, with employers stating the minimum number of hours/days an employee should be present within the workplace.'<br><br>'The fact has also been emphasised that hybrid working is effective only once all the company's processes and procedures have been fully classified and digitalised and when it is possible to share information via, for example, special cloud platforms with all those involved in the implementation of work tasks, and to follow all the stages involved in the completion of projects.' |

| | |
|---|---|
| **- Communication (N=5)**<br><br>**- Costs (N=3)**<br><br>**- Health & well-being (N=3)**<br><br>**- Recruitment (N=3)**<br><br>**- Guidelines (N=2)**<br><br>**- HR (N=2)**<br><br>**- Other: concentration, competence, control, employment relationship, participation, working conditions, work culture, working location** | 'Many experts emphasize the need to develop new offices that provide something which employees do not get at home, otherwise there is a huge risk that employees don't see the reason for coming into the office at all.' |
| | 'HR managers point to the need to adopt completely different procedures in terms of team leadership and communication.' |
| | 'Training should be provided to both employees and managers to educate and inform them on how to work and collaborate in a hybrid working context.' |
| | 'In 2020, in case of total or partial telework activity, employers were granted a financial support of RON 2,500 for each teleworker, in order to purchase technological goods and services necessary for carrying out the activity.' |
| | 'Increase the importance of health and safety in the company's business strategy … Support employees on cyber security... Monitoring mental health of employees.' |
| | 'It is noted that successful companies have recognised the flexibility of working hours and working at home/telework/hybrid work as crucial benefits in recruiting (young) talents.' |
| | 'The benefits of the hybrid model can only be achieved if the organisation itself changes alongside the new model of work, i.e., defines new ways of communication and decision-making, digitises internal processes.' |
| | 'The future of work depends on the way human resource departments manage hybrid work. That is, how they do combine better efficiency and human issues before technological and emotional challenges of hybrid work.' |
| **Society (N=19)** | |
| **- Legislation (N=5)**<br><br>**- Agreement (N=4)**<br><br>**- Tax (N=3)**<br><br>**- Other: training, working conditions, working location, recruitment, ICT, data security** | 'Legislation on telework needs to change to ensure employees' labour rights and accident insurance.' |
| | 'The trade union movement favours the regulation of telework through legal measures and through collective agreements for sectoral specific provisions of telework.' |
| | 'On financial arrangements to support working from home, IBEC said it has sought that the e-working tax allowance be increased and extended and that benefit-in-kind (BIK) support be provided for employer supported capital spend which, it said, would help to incentivise remote working.' |

# Annex 10: The implementation of HW

Table 1: Agreements and policies regarding HW

| AGREEMENTS & POLICIES (N=108) | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| **Specific number of days/weeks required at office (N=40)** | 'Enagás has established a hybrid model of three days of face-to-face work and two days of voluntary teleworking per week.' [ES, energy]<br><br>'The model of hybrid work implemented in the Municipality permits workers whose functions allow them to telework a maximum of four days per week, requiring, in all situations, that at least one of the weekly working days must be in person and that on one of the days of the week the team must work together in person.' [PT, public administration] |
| **General policies related to space and location (N=22)** | 'According to the company, employees cannot decide on their own, but in dialogue with their manager all employees can discuss their wishes and needs. The company tailor solutions that work for both the individual and the company based on the individual's and company's needs.' [SE, information technology]<br><br>'Different teams will discuss the coordination of remote work and office work on their own.' [LT, finance]<br><br>'Location with purpose: Work from the employer's premises shall be justified by a sound purpose such as company meetings, coordination among employees of departments, boosting or finalizing projects, following training seminars.' [CY, consulting] |
| **Employees' freedom to choose location (N=15)** | 'Several months ago, they announced that they have decided to opt for a loose and flexible approach and let each employee individually decide when and how much they would prefer to work from home (or another location than the office).' [BE, finance]<br><br>'Amongst the measures implemented, their hybrid system allows workers to choose on a day-by-day basis if they would like to work from the workplace, from home, or a combination of both.' [MT, gaming] |
| **Specific percentage of work time at office or remotely each month defined (N=7)** | 'BBVA has also established its new plan of hybrid work, implementing flexible model whereby its central services employees work at least 60% of their time in the office and up to 40% remotely.' [ES, finance] |
| **Policy regarding working hours (N=7)** | 'Since October, there has also been New Work as a working model with three days of mobile working and two days of office, with flexitime between six and 22 o'clock.' [AT, energy]<br><br>'It is also guaranteed the disconnection coinciding with the lunchtime, i.e., corresponding to the timeslot 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.' [IT, telecommunication] |
| **Specific number of days/years allowed to work abroad (N=6)** | 'In addition, the company appreciates flexible working opportunities – currently it gives all employees the choice to work up to 90 days a year from anywhere in the European Union.' [LT, information technology] |
| **Local, team level agreement (N=5)** | 'Director of the Personnel Department of SEB Bank says that different teams will discuss the coordination of remote work and office work on their own. The decision, he said, was made after employees asked to be allowed to plan their workplace more flexibly.' [LT, finance] |

| Conditions for HW (N=5) | 'The arrangements will need to work with business cycles, work priorities, performance management, and management of services.' [IE, public administration] |
|---|---|
| Costs (N=3) | 'Operational costs at home (electricity, water, internet connection etc.) will not be compensated by the employer.' [DE, information technology] |
| Other (N=1) | 'Results based performance evaluation.' [Country, industry] |

Table 2: Support structures and practices for HW

| SUPPORT STRUCTURES & PRACTICES (N=53) | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| Technology and applications (13) | 'A global app-based system allows workers to pre-book a desk should they intend to work within one of their offices.' [MT, gaming]<br><br>'When previously most of the communication and activities were face-to-face, then now they have started using different virtual platforms like Slack, Confluence and Google products to facilitate communication.' [EE, finance] |
| Training and guidelines (N=13) | 'Eurobank is already implementing new guidelines for the duration of teleconferences and workshops. At the same time, it implements training initiatives for managers so that they can manage their teams during the transition to the new way of working (remote work bootcamp), but also for all employees, taking care of their digital upskilling.' [GR, finance]<br><br>'A guide for the use of working time in the mobile New Normal gives orientation for work organisation, e.g., time slots for group meetings, availability, rules for part-time workers.' [DE, information technology] |
| Communication and virtual events (N=12) | 'The company's management regularly and transparently addresses and inform its employees through YouTube, and the internal social network Jenz - an application that they developed in-house to share official information and to help them to be connected.' [HR, information technology] |
| Grant for furnishing home office (N=9) | 'To ensure people have as good working conditions at home as they do in office, Wise supports the purchases of necessary office equipment for home use.' [EE, finance] |
| Support for mental and physical well-being (N=6) | 'The company also runs a new scheme entitled 'Employees Assistance Programme', which provides access for psychological support to professional psychologists available for all employees 24 hours a day and 7 days per week. The scheme also provides that employees are allowed to arrange up to five supporting sessions with the professionals for each problem that they encounter.' [CY, consulting] |

Table 3: Managerial challenges when implementing HW

| MANAGERIAL CHALLENGES (N=30) | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| Communication and information sharing (N=6) | 'The main challenges of hybrid work identified in the Municipality of Cascais relate to delay in the integration of new workers in the teams; knowledge and information sharing between team members, as well as problem solving strategies.' [PT, public administration] |

| Interpersonal relationships and sense of community (N=5) | 'For the workplace of the future to contribute to a strong employee experience, managers and leadership need to create the conditions for and encourage strong collegial interaction in both the physical and digital environment. Maintaining and strengthening collegial interaction when we are not always physically on site becomes even more important. This requires a strategic focus on maintaining and strengthening interaction, both by staff and managers.' [SE, research] |
|---|---|
| Ensuring well-being (N=4) | 'Individual policies must have regard to mental health, work–life balance/integration and the need for a safe and productive working environment.' [IE, public administration] |
| Adaptive management approach (N=4) | 'The new hybrid model needs to adapt to corporate culture, change the system of assignment and accountability for managers, adopt a different management style, and a different kind of communication.' [HU, information technology] |
| Addressing employee needs (N=4) | 'What is highlighted is that one size does not fit all, and the companies need to make the arrangements in collaboration with their employees.' [DK, insurance] |
| Creating a culture of trust (N=4) | 'This [corporate culture supportive of HW], as written, is based on trust, employee empowerment and results, not on the time we spend in the office.' [SI, insurance] |
| Other (N=3) | 'Delay in the integration of new workers in the teams.' [PT, public administration] |

Table 4: Motives for and purposes in implementing HW

| MOTIVATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION HW (N=27) | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| To increase employee productivity, motivation, and well-being (N=8) | 'In the past, you had to take a day off when the chimney sweeper came. Now I'm logging out for ten minutes. This leads to more satisfaction and productivity.' [AT, energy] |
| To maintain organisational culture and cohesion (N=4) | 'We have seen that the possibility of more flexibility makes our employees more innovative and happier. It provides better products and better customer experiences.' [country, industry]<br><br>'We will return to work in the office because it is very important for the culture of our organization. Events, meetings, live communication help to generate ideas productively and increase engagement.' [LT, finance] |
| To attract new employees (N=3) | 'The company said this [HW] also allows a form of connection and sense of belonging that comes from being in the office.' [IE, telecommunication]<br><br>'Vodafone said its hybrid working model also supports the attraction and retention of talent.' [IT, telecommunication] |
| To provide structure & stability for employees (N=2) | 'Working in the office helps to maintain a certain rhythm, which is also extremely important for emotional health.' [LT, finance] |
| To maintain flexibility & autonomy (N=2) | 'This allows employees to work 60% of their time remotely and 40% in the office which will allow employees to maintain the flexibility they had during the pandemic.' [IE, telecommunication] |
| To reduce office space costs (N=2) | 'The initiative [hybrid work] will save the company's office spaces, and thus save money on rent and interior.' [DK, insurance] |

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|---|---|
| **To eliminate the of commute (N=2)** | 'And it relieves the burden of not having to drive to work during rush hours.' [AT, energy] |

Table 5: Office space adaptations for HW

| OFFICE SPACE ADAPTATION (N=22) | EXAMPLE QUOTES |
|---|---|
| **No assigned desks (N=5)** | 'Moreover, employees have no longer a fixed desk in the office, but they have an app through which they book a physical desk on the days they work in person, known as the 'hot desking'.' [ES, finance] |
| **Multifunctional office (N=5)** | 'Accordingly, employees working from the office can choose more closed spaces for work-related workflows that require immersion and silence, but they have also created group set of tables optimized for group collaboration, placed in open spaces, and, of course, traditional office workstations. In addition, the office provides community spaces where all three types of work are possible.' [Country, industry] |
| **More meeting rooms (N=3)** | 'The main functionality of the venues will be to help people work better together, so the number of meeting rooms will be doubled, and they will be equipped with state-of-the-art technology to facilitate mixed meetings – online & offline.' [RO, online retail] |
| **Less office space needed (N=3)** | 'From January, Codan's 1,000 employees will share 575 office spaces.' [DK, insurance] |
| **Community space (N=3)** | 'The office will now be more of a community space, a place of personal relationships and team cohesion, rather than a classic workstation.' [HU, finance] |
| **Other (N=5)** | 'The Bank has also established 11 working hubs in local towns where employees can work from assuming that it is closer to their home than their current on-site location. These 'hubs' are in fact former Bank of Ireland branches that have been closed down.' [IE, finance] |

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