European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

The tripartite EU agency providing knowledge to assist in the development of better social, employment and work-related policies

Living and working in Europe – Building on the past, shaping the future

Shaping the future of work: Inside Europe's hybrid work strategies

Eurofound policy brief - Forthcoming

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Outline

- Eurofound
- Methodology
- Hybrid work - drivers
- Hybrid work - models
- Implications for job quality
- Implications for performance
- Policy pointers

Fun(damental) facts

- Established in 1975
- Based in Dublin
- Brussels Liaison Office
- Budget of c. € 24 million
- c. 100 staff members
- Tripartite EU agency

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Eurofound 2025–2028

Mission

- To provide knowledge to support the development of better informed social, employment and work-related policies

Vision

- Being Europe's leading knowledge source for better life and work

Strategic objective

- To provide scientifically sound, unbiased, timely and policy relevant knowledge that contributes to better informed polices to improve living and working conditions and strengthen cohesion in a changing Europe

RESEARCH REPORT

Eurofound

Working conditions
The rise in telework:
Impact on working conditions
and regulations

RESEARCH REPORT

Eurofound

Anticipating and managing the impact of change
The future of telework and hybrid work

RESEARCH REPORT

Eurofound

Working conditions and sustainable work
Hybrid work in Europe:
Concept and practice

WORKING PAPER

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Working conditions and sustainable work
Understanding the management
challenges in hybrid work:
A literature review

Hybrid work in Europe: Concept ar

Disclaimer: This working paper has not been subject to the full Eurofound evaluation, editorial and publ

WORKING PAPER

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Working conditions and sustainable work
Hybrid workplaces in the EU: Lessons
from case studies in the public and
private sectors

The hybrid workplace in the post-COVID-19 era

Disclaimer: This working paper has not been subject to the full Eurofound evaluation, editorial and publication process.

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Methodology

Case studies

- 10 - private and public companies and organisations
- Spain, Lithuania, Austria and Finland
- Interviews of org. reps, employee reps, line-managers and employees
- 75 participants in total

Statistical analysis European Working Conditions Survey 2024 data

- Pan-European working conditions survey
- Employees only, in the EU
- Comparison of six categories of workers: FT teleworkers, hybrid workers, occasional teleworkers, from employers' premises in teleworkable jobs, from employers' premises in non-teleworkable jobs, other workers.

Main drivers of hybrid work

Organisations
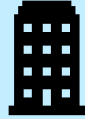
- Labour market **competitiveness**: attract & retain
- **Digital** transformation (public sector)
- Cost **efficiency**: Downsizing and reorganising office space
- Improved employee **engagement**
- **Sustainability** goals

Workers

- Commuting **time savings**
- Improved **work-life balance**
- Improved **productivity**
- Greater **autonomy** over time and place of work
- Enhanced **well-being**

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Three (emerging) models of hybrid work
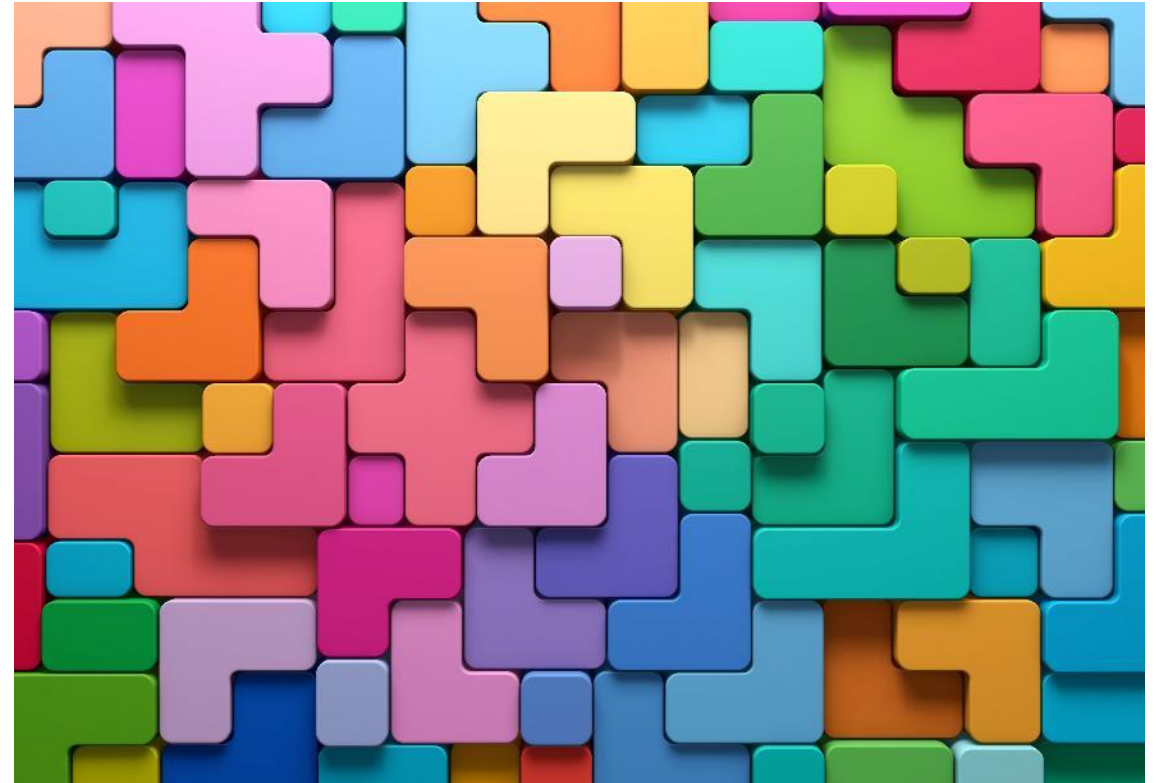
- **Structured** regulation with **balanced** remote frequency -> central policies allowing team-level discretion (n=5)

- **Flexible** regulation with **unconstrained** remote frequency -> individual autonomy, with few formal restrictions (n=4)

- **Rigid** regulation with **office-first** approach -> tightly controlled and limited (n=1)
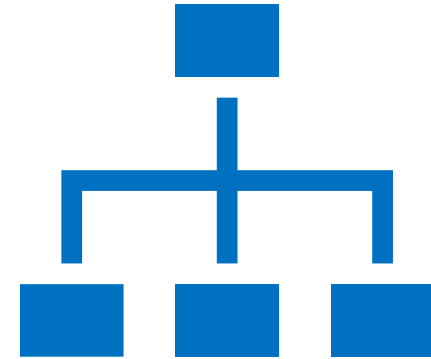
Implications for selected aspects of job quality

Working time and work-life balance

- Does increased working time flexibility enhance workers' ability to accommodate job demands and personal life?

- EWCS 2024 –> hybrid work is associated with:

  – Long weekly hours (=>48h / week)

  – Long days (=>10h / day)

  – Working during free time to meet work demands

  – Weekends

- Case studies

  – No evidence of '*always-on*' culture

  – Less commuting time => better work-life balance BUT

  – Blurring of work and non-work boundaries may contribute to longer hours / longer days
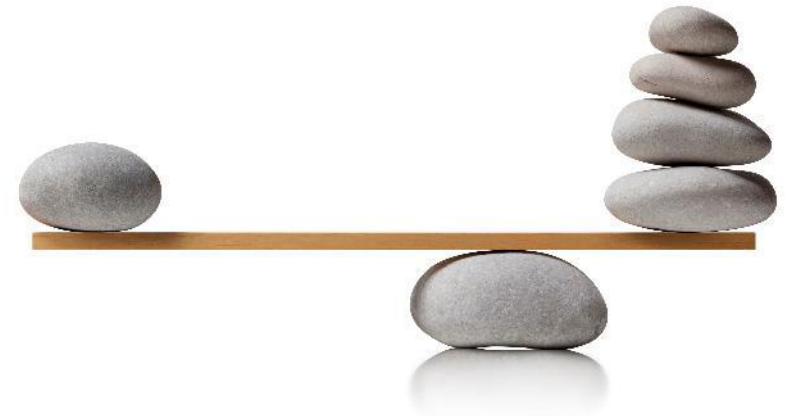
Physical environment

- Most remote work is done from home

- Positive effects -> physical and mental well-being from **reduced stress**, more **rest**, longer **breaks**, increased **physical activity**, **healthier habits** in general

- Lack of adequate space or resources to set proper home workstation => **ergonomic risks**

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

- Risk assessment and enforcement of OSH standards more difficult

- Most of the organisations studied DO NOT provide support for home workstations

Social environment - communication and support

- EWCS 2024 -> support from colleagues and managers does not differ between hybrid workers and others

- Potential overlapping of information and communication tools/channels, and the multiplication of virtual meetings => sense of work intensification and fatigue

- Good and effective communication and collaboration in hybrid settings requires more effort especially to ensure social support from colleagues and supervisors

Autonomy

- Two main mechanisms:
  - workers' discretion on how to organise **tasks** with colleagues, clients, suppliers, etc.
  - workers decision latitude on whether to **meet** in person or virtually.

- Working from home is associated with tasks requiring more focus and individual work

- Working at the office is more related to collaborative tasks, including regular team meetings:
  - collaborating with colleagues, discussing progress, making decisions at meetings;
  - exchanging on work matters and clarifying tasks;
  - dealing with intricate or delicate issues where the potential for misinterpretation is greater

Work intensity

- EWCS 2024 -> hybrid workers are significantly more likely to report higher work intensity in their jobs than all other groups:
  - tight deadlines
  - not having enough time to get the job done
  - situations, while working, that are emotionally disturbing

- Could be the result of compression of more work into the workday or skipping breaks ('*extension of grey overtime*' - workers' representative from Finland)

- Presenteeism: in seven case studies, hybrid work was often associated with individuals working while sick (confirmed by the EWCS 2024 data)

Job prospects

- EWCS 2024 -> remote work better than average career prospects

- Case studies confirm that hybrid workers don't lose out in terms of prospects

- EWCS 2024 -> remote workers have more access to training

- **CAUTION**!! Young workers and new recruits!!

- Potential for more equitable employment and career opportunities for women

Organisational participation and workplace voice

- EWCS 2024 -> hybrid workers are more likely to influence decisions that are important for their work and to be involved in improving the work organisation and/or work processes than others

- EWCS 2024 -> hybrid and full-time teleworkers are more likely to be **consulted** before objectives are set for their work and to place more **trust** in their management

- Limited evidence of organisational participation being affected, in the case studies

- Concerns about detachment and reduced cohesion, are more pronounced in organisations with extensive remote work

Implications for performance

Individual performance

- Better workload management

- Better task management

- EWCS 2024 -> slightly larger likelihood of disruptive interruptions for hybrid workers

- Greater engagement as a token of appreciation for the opportunity to work in a hybrid arrangement

- Greater trust

- Lower absenteeism

Organisational performance

- Organisations did not develop performance indicators to monitor how hybrid workers' performance compares to others

- Enhanced role of line managers – increased responsibility and discretion BUT not all organisations provide specific training

- Retaining and recruiting employees

- Workplace reduction and/or reorganisation

Policy pointers

- Hybrid work -> established form of work organisation

- Hybrid work models -> no one size fits all

- Hybrid working can improve work-life balance and productivity, but it also increases the risk of longer hours and blurred boundaries between work and personal life

- Hybrid working can improve physical and mental well-being, but employers and employees must be aware and guard against the risks of non-ergonomic home workstations

- Careful approach to communication practices - avoid inflation of virtual meetings and ensure professional and social support

- Efforts are needed to ensure remote workers remain visible

- Ensure line-managers are properly equipped (skills and competences)

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FORTHCOMING

- Policy brief – JUST PUBLISHED!!

- Ongoing research on management challenges of hybrid work (results in 2026)

For more information, data and findings

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