

Working conditions and sustainable work

The shift to hybrid working: Management challenges



The shift to hybrid working: Management challenges



When citing this report, please use the following wording:

Eurofound (2026), *The shift to hybrid working: Management challenges*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Authors: Sara Riso and Jorge Cabrita

Research manager: Sara Riso

Research project: Hybrid work: The challenge to manage (240501)

Contributors: Eurofound colleague Stavroula Demetriades contributed to the quality control of deliverables informing this report.

Provider: This overview report draws on 11 expert interviews conducted jointly by Eurofound and the project contractor (Ecorys), as well as 7 case studies coordinated by the contractor. The case studies were conducted by Agnieszka Górniak; Aleksandra Skoczylas; Ewelina Wołosik, Mirna Makovac and Vedrana Knežević (Ecorys); Frédéric Turlan, Ambre Grenier-Boley and Laura Renucci (IR Share); and Matti Vartiainen (Aalto University).

Peer reviewer: Christine McCarthy (TEC Leadership Institute)

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank the experts who participated in interviews and contributed to this research by sharing their insights and expertise; a list of these experts is included in Annex 2.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2026

Print: ISBN 978-92-897-2576-7 doi:10.2806/0169267 TJ-01-26-016-EN-C

PDF: ISBN 978-92-897-2575-0 doi:10.2806/1938813 TJ-01-26-016-EN-N

This report and any associated materials are available online at <https://eurofound.link/ef25006>

© European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2026

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not under Eurofound copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.

Cover image: © Kornkanok/Adobe Stock

Any queries on copyright must be addressed in writing to: copyright@eurofound.europa.eu

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

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Tel. (+353 1) 204 31 00

Email: information@eurofound.europa.eu

Internet: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu>

Contents

	Executive summary	1
	Introduction	3
	Background to the report	3
	Research objectives	4
	Methodology	4
	Report structure	9
1.	Evolving hybrid work arrangements and drivers of change	11
	Defining features of hybrid work	11
	Prevalence of hybrid work	12
	Typology of hybrid work arrangements	15
	Employee representation and voice	21
	Key learning points from the case studies	21
	Drivers of hybrid work adoption	22
	Summary	24
2.	Organisational changes and management challenges	25
	Organisational changes	25
	Management challenges	30
	Changing role of the line manager and its implications	39
	Summary	44
3.	Management practices and good practice elements	45
	Balancing trust, autonomy and performance management	45
	From manager-led coordination to organisation-supported communication	46
	Capacity building to support managerial role transformation	47
	Approaches to overcoming organisational and management challenges	49
	Summary	54
4.	Takeaways, lessons learned and policy pointers	55
	Prevalence and typology of hybrid work: EWCS 2024 evidence	55
	Learning from the case studies	56
	Expert insights in a nutshell	56
	Policy pointers	58
	References	59
	Annexes	61
	Annex 1: EWCS 2024 regression results	61
	Annex 2: Experts interviewed	66
	Annex 3: Expert interview guide	67
	Annex 4: Interview guides for case study interviews	68

Executive summary

Introduction

Hybrid work is a workplace arrangement that combines work from the employer's premises with work from other locations, most commonly employees' homes. It encompasses a wide variety of arrangements, from fixed schedules for on-site and remote work to more flexible set-ups. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many organisations have formalised hybrid work policies to establish a sustainable balance between remote and on-site work.

Line managers play a central role in translating hybrid work policies into concrete workplace practices. From a policy perspective, examining management challenges is essential to ensure that hybrid work arrangements are workable in practice; support effective, sustainable and trust-based management; and contribute to productivity growth, while also enabling a flexibility that improves employees' work-life balance. Yet, despite line managers' pivotal role in the success of hybrid work, much of the post-pandemic research on this topic has focused on employees' experiences.

The limited available evidence suggests that hybrid work reshapes managerial tasks, creating challenges in communication, coordination and team cohesion and raising concerns about trust and digital monitoring. It also highlights the need to ensure fairness and equal treatment between remote and on-site staff and to adapt management approaches, calling for flexible rather than one-size-fits-all policy responses.

Building on prior work carried out by Eurofound on hybrid work and drawing on case studies, expert interviews and survey data, this report seeks to address the research gap by foregrounding managerial perspectives. The report identifies areas where additional guidance, support or policy initiatives could strengthen hybrid work frameworks and outlines practices and approaches to address emerging management challenges.

Policy context

Several EU legal instruments are relevant to managing hybrid work. They cover issues including occupational health and safety, working time and work-life balance, and information and consultation. Such instruments were largely developed for traditional co-located workplaces and, therefore, provide only indirect guidance on the day-to-day management of hybrid teams.

In 2021, the European Parliament called for EU legislation on the right to disconnect – that is, the

right of workers not to engage in work-related activities or communications by means of digital tools outside working time. The European Commission consulted the social partners, who expressed divergent views. While workers' representatives highlight the risks associated with an 'always on' culture, employers emphasise the importance of flexibility, caution against overly prescriptive regulation and call for supporting workers in appropriate ways to manage connectivity.

In parallel, the 2020 framework agreement on digitalisation concluded by the European social partners has contributed to shaping the policy debate. One of its key pillars addresses the modalities of connecting and disconnecting, encouraging negotiated solutions at national, sectoral and company levels to define rules on availability, workload management and the use of digital tools. Although the agreement does not establish binding rights, it provides an important reference framework for addressing these issues through social dialogue. It also served as a blueprint for company-level ad hoc arrangements when COVID-19 struck.

Key findings

- According to the 2024 European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS 2024) data, about 24 % of the employees in the EU workforce can be classified as hybrid employees, combining remote and on-site work. When considering the degree of autonomy over working-time arrangements and work location, employees in hybrid work arrangements can be grouped into categories: 48 % are in fully flexible arrangements, 17 % in location-flexible arrangements, 13 % in time-flexible arrangements and 22 % in controlled hybrid arrangements. The case studies show that hybrid work is not a fixed model but an evolving practice, shaped by pandemic legacies, employee preferences, managerial discretion and broader strategic goals, such as talent retention, digital capacity and, in some cases, environmental sustainability.
- Hybrid work is driving organisational reconfiguration; the case studies indicate an intended functional differentiation of locations (home for focused work and office for collaboration). This differentiation is more explicit in more flexible arrangements. The survey data highlight some constraints, such as limited home workspaces, continued reliance on traditional offices, and the increased use of digital and algorithmic tools in both contexts (working outside the employer's premises and in-office work).

- The case study evidence shows that hybrid work introduces new complexities in how work is coordinated and managed. The case studies point to coordination difficulties in fragmented digital environments and tensions between trust and monitoring. The survey data suggest associations between the types of hybrid work arrangements and a range of outcomes. Location-flexible arrangements are associated with greater use of computer-based performance monitoring. Fully flexible arrangements are associated with higher levels of reported cognitive demands, particularly among supervisors. More controlled arrangements are linked to higher stress levels for both non-supervisors and supervisors. Perceived fairness appears to be lowest in controlled hybrid arrangements, but the gap between supervisors and non-supervisors is largest in location-flexible settings.
 - The research proposes a framework, derived from expert insights, for effective hybrid work arrangements structured around five key steps: strategic alignment, workflow redesign, team co-design of hybrid arrangements, experimentation, and deliberate efforts to maintain strong social ties and a sense of belonging among employees. These elements provide a structured approach to the design and implementation of hybrid work. Gaps in these areas can lead to inconsistent implementation, equity issues and potential inefficiencies.
- ## Policy pointers
- Hybrid work should be task driven, with decisions about work location and scheduling based on the nature of tasks and desired outcomes rather than fixed routines. Structured dialogue and co-design between employers and employees can strengthen legitimacy, flexibility and consistency among roles and teams.
 - While public policy does not determine how work is organised at company level, it can shape the frameworks wherein such decisions are made. Public policy can support organisational approaches that focus on outputs rather than where, when or how long people work. This can be achieved through regulatory arrangements that are sufficiently flexible to support diverse forms of work organisation. This may include flexible working-time regimes, such as task- or results-based systems. Yet overly rigid rules can limit the ability of organisations to adapt their working practices to their specific needs or those of the sector in which they operate.
 - Hybrid work requires investment in managerial capabilities, including outcome-based management, coordination and performance management. In practice, this involves setting clear objectives, structuring workflows around tasks and collaboration needs and using communication channels intentionally. Managers must engage in regular dialogue and feedback, ensure inclusive participation across teams and shift from task supervision to coaching and supporting employee autonomy. Alongside these managerial capabilities, employees require digital and self-management skills to operate effectively in more flexible and autonomous arrangements. Policymakers have a role in supporting training, reducing capacity gaps and ensuring that appropriate frameworks exist for the responsible and transparent use of digital tools.
 - Hybrid work requires a broader approach to occupational risk that includes psychosocial factors, such as stress, isolation and digital overload. Managers play a key role in identifying, preventing and managing these risks. Health and safety frameworks should support this by moving beyond ergonomics towards more proactive well-being measures, with policies that clarify protections against hybrid-specific risks.

Introduction

Background to the report

In hybrid work arrangements (i.e. structured ways of organising where and when work is performed), work from the employer's premises is combined with work from a different location, often, although not exclusively, the employee's home. Hybrid work is characterised by the intentional and regular combination of on-site and off-site work. This deliberate blending of work locations is its defining feature and has direct implications for how work is coordinated and managed.

Various hybrid work models (i.e. specific configurations of these arrangements) exist. The most standard form of hybrid work typically involves set days or times when employees work remotely and set days or times when they work from the employer's premises. More flexible hybrid models allow greater discretion over work location or working time, or both, to varying degrees, rather than relying on fixed schedules. These are tailored based on factors such as organisational culture, employee roles, technological capabilities and client requirements.

In the post-pandemic world of work, many organisations have begun to develop their hybrid workplace policies (i.e. formal rules and guidelines governing hybrid arrangements), considering how to implement a lasting and effective blend of remote and on-site work. Although there is evidence of an increase in the proportion of workers subject to in-office requirements in recent years, these mandates do not signal a return to full-time office work as before the pandemic; rather, they reflect increased structure within hybrid work arrangements, typically involving more required office days and reduced flexibility in scheduling (Cisco, 2025). Return-to-office mandates can be understood, in part, as responses to managerial challenges associated with hybrid work, which are sometimes exacerbated by limited managerial resources and support.

These managerial challenges manifest in several distinct areas. They relate particularly to monitoring performance; coordinating teams, including onboarding new employees; and sustaining organisational culture. At their core, these challenges reflect a fundamental tension between employee autonomy and organisational control (Eurofound, 2020, 2025a). They also reflect broader tensions between traditional, visibility-based management practices and more flexible, outcome-oriented approaches in the hybrid context (McKinsey & Company, 2023; Cisco, 2025). Simply transposing management practices designed for on-site work to hybrid or remote contexts may be insufficient to sustain

performance and employee engagement. According to some authors (Elliott et al., 2025), tightening in-office requirements can erode employee trust and engagement and may serve as a misguided response that addresses visible issues, such as reduced in-person presence or perceived declines in collaboration, rather than underlying management capability issues.

Eurofound's review of the literature on management challenges in hybrid work identifies a broad set of challenges (Eurofound, 2025a). These include the need to ensure equity and inclusiveness between on-site and remote workers, to manage increased work intensity and blurred working-time boundaries and to adapt management practices to the evolving needs and preferences of more diverse and geographically dispersed teams. The literature also highlights a continuum between trust-based and control-based management approaches, with hybrid work requiring organisations to recalibrate this balance. The review acknowledges that these challenges may be influenced by the wide variety of hybrid work arrangements and the different combinations of remote and on-site work in place. This variability has concrete implications for managerial approaches: managers must adjust coordination mechanisms, communication practices and performance evaluation methods depending on the specific hybrid work arrangement, which can reduce organisational consistency across teams. At the same time, existing research remains largely normative or conceptual, with limited empirical evidence linking specific management challenges to particular hybrid work configurations. This represents a key research gap that the present report seeks to address through comparative case study analysis complemented by expert insights and survey data. The diversity of hybrid work arrangements has important implications for regulation and policy design, as it limits the suitability of uniform regulatory responses and highlights the importance of adaptable policy approaches rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, there has been a surge of regulatory and policy initiatives on remote work across EU Member States (Eurofound, 2022a). While these initiatives are not specifically designed to assist managers in addressing the challenges of overseeing a hybrid workforce, they do provide guidelines and standards for managing hybrid work arrangements. For instance, they may clarify the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees concerning issues like data privacy, workplace safety and compensation for remote work expenses, and establish health and safety standards for remote work environments. They may establish clearer

procedural requirements, which can translate into additional administrative tasks for managers, such as documentation, monitoring compliance and reporting. They may also mandate equitable policies for hybrid work, ensuring equal access to remote work opportunities where job tasks are teleworkable and preventing discrimination based on remote work status.

However, regulations alone are insufficient to address the full range of challenges associated with managing a hybrid workforce and, in some cases, may even add complexity, as compliance issues can be more difficult to manage in hybrid work settings. This is because legal obligations were largely designed for co-located, employer-controlled workplaces, while hybrid work disperses work across locations, time and digital systems. This creates ambiguity about how responsibilities should be fulfilled in practice, particularly for line managers. It raises questions about what organisational measures and support are needed to enable managers to effectively implement hybrid work arrangements while ensuring compliance and performance and supporting employees' work-life balance and well-being across diverse hybrid work settings. Understanding the specific challenges managers face in this context is essential to inform evidence-based policies and organisational practices that can support the sustainable and effective management of hybrid work.

Research objectives

Much of the post-pandemic research on hybrid work conducted by Eurofound has primarily centred on employees' experiences. Drawing on evidence from the 2024 European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS 2024) and organisational case studies, this body of work has explored how workers experience hybrid arrangements. It highlights key challenges such as blurred work-life boundaries, longer working hours, work intensification, communication difficulties and risks of isolation, alongside opportunities including flexibility, autonomy, improved well-being and time savings from reduced commuting (Eurofound, 2025b).

What has received less attention is the experience of managers, particularly line managers and supervisors, who are responsible for implementing hybrid work in practice. The existing literature reflects this research gap: although employee-related challenges are widely documented, research on the organisational and managerial challenges of hybrid work remains more limited and often treats the topic in a broad or fragmented way, without sufficient focus on how managers enact and sustain hybrid arrangements in day-to-day practice (Eurofound, 2025a). This gap has important practical implications: without a clearer understanding of managerial challenges, organisations may struggle to design effective hybrid work policies, potentially undermining both employee outcomes and organisational performance.

This report seeks to redress this imbalance by foregrounding managerial perspectives. It aims to give voice to line managers and supervisors who operationalise hybrid work, shedding light on the specific challenges they encounter in managing hybrid work teams. By explicitly examining these issues, the report also provides insights that can inform both organisational practices and public policies, such as the development of or support for targeted managerial training and policy guidance on good practices. The report also contributes to a more holistic understanding of hybrid work, one that recognises not only how it is experienced by employees but also how it is enacted, mediated and sustained by those responsible for managing hybrid teams on a day-to-day basis.

Methodology

Conceptual framework

Eurofound's conceptual framework on hybrid work (Eurofound, 2023) identifies four core elements: the physical, temporal, social and virtual (Figure 1). The physical element concerns where work takes place; the temporal element covers how time is allocated between remote and on-site work; the social element relates to how communication and collaboration are organised; and the

Data caveats

Because hybrid work is new – recognised as a distinct form of working arrangement only in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic – comparative EU-wide data on it, and particularly on the subgroup of managers working in hybrid environments, is limited. The EWCS provides a representative sample of workers in the EU, and from this sample, workers with the status of supervisor, a close proxy for manager status, can be identified, enabling the experiences of individuals responsible for pay increases, bonuses or employee promotion to be captured.

It is equally challenging to gather qualitative data from which to develop a detailed understanding of the real-world challenges of managing hybrid employees. But, while the number of case studies conducted for this project is small and cannot be assumed to be representative of the broader population of managers of hybrid employees, they are nevertheless among the few sources providing situated insights into hybrid work derived from a diversity of organisational settings.

Figure 1: Hybrid work conceptual framework



Source: Authors.

virtual (or digital) element encompasses the technologies and tools that enable individuals to work independently and collaboratively, both online and offline.

Building on this foundation, this research treats hybrid work as an organisational arrangement in which these elements are combined and reconfigured in different ways in different contexts and within different hybrid work arrangements.

To operationalise the framework in the empirical analysis, each element is used as a distinct analytical lens through which evidence from case studies, expert interviews and survey data is examined. In practice, this means that:

- the **physical element** guides the assessment of how different workplace locations (e.g. home, office or third spaces) affect coordination, the visibility of work and access to resources;
- the **temporal element** structures the analysis of working-time arrangements, including the synchronisation of schedules, availability and flexibility, and how these create challenges for line managers and workload management;
- the **social element** informs the evaluation of communication patterns, team cohesion, knowledge sharing and inclusion, particularly where co-presence is reduced;
- the **virtual element** frames the analysis of the role of digital tools and infrastructure in enabling or constraining collaboration, monitoring and information flows.

In the case studies investigated, management challenges were identified by examining where tensions or misalignments emerge within and between these four elements. For example, case studies and interview data were analysed to detect situations where temporal flexibility conflicts with team coordination (temporal–social misalignment) or where reliance on digital tools alters managerial oversight and employee autonomy (virtual–social and virtual–temporal interactions). In the research summarised in this report, themes from interviews with management representatives in the case studies were matched, where possible, with variables from the EWCS 2024. This was done (dependent on data availability) to strengthen the empirical basis of the analysis and to contextualise and complement the qualitative insights.

In this way, the framework not only describes hybrid work arrangements but actively structures the analysis of management challenges. These challenges are therefore understood not as isolated problems but as the results of misalignments between the physical, temporal, virtual and social elements of work. They are closely linked to broader issues highlighted in the literature – particularly in areas such as communication and collaboration, performance management and managerial control, equity and inclusion, and occupational health and safety (Eurofound, 2025a) – and contribute to reshaping the role of line managers.

Throughout the report, the term ‘line manager’ is used in the qualitative sections to refer to individuals with direct responsibility for overseeing employees’ work and performance. However, the survey analysis refers to the term ‘supervisor’, based on the question ‘How many people work under your supervision, whose pay increases, bonuses or promotion depend directly on you?’ This definition captures respondents with formal authority over pay and career progression. As a result, ‘line managers’ in the case studies may not always correspond directly to ‘supervisors’ as defined in the survey data. This distinction should be borne in mind when comparing findings across the qualitative and quantitative strands of the research.

The term ‘workers’ is used as an umbrella concept to denote a broad and inclusive category of people in work, particularly in relation to EU-level frameworks, as well as rights, protections and risks, or when discussing hybrid work at a systemic level. The term ‘employees’ is used more specifically when reporting findings from the different strands of this research, reflecting a focus on dependent employment relationships.

Expert interviews

An important first building block of this research consisted of 11 in-depth qualitative interviews with experts (see Table 1), including:

- representatives of employer bodies that advise organisations at a strategic level and advocate for employer interests in shaping hybrid work policy and regulation;
- representatives of human resources (HR) bodies focused on people management, organisational culture, leadership capability and workforce development in hybrid settings;
- research and consultancy bodies that provide evidence and applied guidance through research, benchmarking and advisory services;
- academic scholars specialising in hybrid work and labour law.

Table 1: Number of expert interviews by type of affiliated organisation

Category	Number of interviews
Employer organisation	2
HR organisation	3
Research and consultancy	2
Academia	4

Source: Authors.

The expert interviews were conducted in the second half of 2025 using a semi-standardised interview guide (see Annex 3), with each interview lasting approximately one hour and with at least two interviews per expert category. The aim of these interviews was to generate insights that could help contextualise and deepen the understanding of the case studies and address gaps identified in the prior desk research, as summarised in a companion literature review, *Understanding the management challenges in hybrid work: A literature review* (Eurofound, 2025a).

The findings from these interviews informed the development of the case study interview protocol, helped refine the analytical framework used in the empirical analysis and identified good practice elements for more resilient and effective hybrid work arrangements. These were then used to assess practices in the organisations studied.

Case studies

This report draws on seven case studies of organisations of varying sizes located in Member States, operating in knowledge-based sectors, which have implemented a range of formal hybrid work arrangements. The case studies focus on organisations operating in sectors classified under the EU statistical classification of

economic activities (NACE) in Section J (information and communication), Section M (professional, scientific and technical activities) and Section O (public administration and defence). These sectors are particularly well suited to the study of hybrid work, as they are characterised by knowledge-intensive activities, high levels of digitalisation and significant potential for work to be performed remotely (see Table 2 for the main characteristics of the organisations studied).

As part of the selection criteria, organisations were required to have a dedicated HR function and established governance structures, ensuring that hybrid arrangements were sufficiently formalised for systematic analysis. As a result, the cases predominantly reflect medium-sized to large organisations with more developed organisational capacities. While some medium-sized enterprises are included, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with less formalised structures are not directly represented. In these settings, hybrid work is often more informal, with managerial responsibilities frequently combined with ownership roles, and more limited resources for policy design and implementation. Given these differences and the importance of SMEs to European employment, hybrid work in such contexts warrants a separate follow-up study.

The sample included two Member States with well-established collective bargaining systems in place (Finland and France) and three with less institutionalised bargaining structures (Ireland, Poland and Slovenia). The selection of Member States was influenced in part by pragmatism and feasibility considerations.

The research employed an opportunistic sampling technique, whereby cases were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate. This approach may introduce selection bias, as participating organisations are more likely to be those with the capacity or inclination to engage with the research. Limited participation among the establishments initially identified also extended the time required to secure eligible cases. Despite these limitations, the case studies provide valuable insights by illustrating the variety of hybrid work arrangements and organisational practices, capturing both strengths and weaknesses. They offer learning points that may inform responses to the management challenges associated with hybrid work arrangements identified in this study.

Fieldwork was carried out in 2025 through semi-structured interviews following a semi-standardised interview protocol. Each case study included interviews with one HR manager, at least two line managers and, where available, an employee representative, either from a formal body (e.g. a works council or trade union) or through an informal arrangement (see Annex 3 for the interview guide for each type of stakeholder interviewed). The interview protocol was organised

Table 2: Main characteristics of the case studies investigated

Case study label, country	NACE economic sector	Public or private sector	Organisation size (number of employees)	Form of employee representation
Organisation A, Poland	Professional, scientific and technical activities (72.1)	Public	Large (250+)	Works council and trade union
Organisation B, Slovenia	Information and communication (61.1)	Public	Large (250+)	Works council and trade union
Organisation C, Poland	Information and communication (63.12)	Private (for profit)	Small (10–49)	Employee committee (*)
Organisation D, Ireland	Public administration (85.42)	Public	Large (250+)	Trade union
Organisation E, Finland	Public administration (84.12)	Public	Large (250+)	Trade union
Organisation F, France	Professional, scientific and technical activities (70.22)	Private (non-profit)	Medium-sized (50–249)	Works council
Organisation G, Finland	Professional, scientific and technical activities (69.2–70.2)	Private (for profit)	Large (250+)	Elected employee representative (**)

(*) Non-statutory employee representation body.

(**) The status and role of ‘elected representative’ are defined in the 2001 Employment Contracts Act.

Source: Based on information extracted from individual case studies.

around key thematic areas and tailored to the different categories of interviewees. Each group of interviewees provided distinct perspectives shaped by their specific roles and experiences within the organisation.

The interviews were preceded by preliminary data collection using publicly accessible materials, including company websites, press releases and executive statements on hybrid work, and preliminary conversations with the primary contact person for each case study regarding the specific hybrid policy. This process was conducted to assess the relevance of each case study and determine eligibility for inclusion in the research. These initial engagements served to gather background information on the organisation’s profile, which was subsequently validated and further elaborated during the formal interview process.

The case studies conducted for this research are illustrative in nature. While they provide rich, context-specific insights into how hybrid arrangements are experienced and managed in practice, they are not intended to be representative of organisations of similar size, sector or country and therefore cannot support broader generalisation on their own. Given the limited number of cases, the findings should be treated as illustrative evidence to inform further discussion rather than a basis for drawing general conclusions.

As outlined above in this methodology section, these limitations are partly addressed through a triangulation approach that integrates case study findings with survey data and 11 expert interviews, thereby strengthening the robustness of the analysis and enabling a more comprehensive understanding of hybrid work and the challenges faced by line managers.

Empirical analysis

The quantitative analysis in this report draws on data from the eighth edition of the EWCS, which took place in 2024 (see Eurofound, 2026). The EWCS is Eurofound’s longest-running survey (ongoing since 1991) and in 2024 covered more than 36 000 workers aged between 16 and 74 in all Member States plus eight other European countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Switzerland. The fieldwork of conducting face-to-face interviews ended in November 2024, with data becoming available in 2025. The EWCS provides a comprehensive picture of people’s everyday reality at work, combining self-reported experiences with a range of more objective indicators.

An important caveat of using the EWCS for this analysis is that it is a worker-based survey and was not specifically designed to explore or capture managerial practices or management perspectives. In light of this, insights into management issues are derived primarily from respondents in supervisory roles (i.e. those who have at least one person working under their supervision and determine their pay increases, bonuses or promotions).

Despite this limitation, the EWCS offers distinctive benefits, including its large-scale, cross-national coverage and a rich set of variables on working conditions, work organisation and elements of management quality. This enables comparison and the identification of patterns associated with different work arrangements, including contrasts between employees in supervisory and non-supervisory roles. Given that the EWCS 2024 is a cross-sectional survey, the analysis

presented in this report identifies associations between hybrid work and various outcomes. It does not establish causal relationships.

The empirical analysis of the EWCS 2024 data was primarily based on descriptive statistics. It was conducted exclusively on employees in Member States; in this context, ‘employees’ were defined as respondents who are paid a salary or wage by an employer ($n = 24\,079$). Post-stratification calibration weights were applied to reduce sampling errors.

Self-employed workers were excluded from the analysis. This reflects both conceptual and empirical considerations. Unlike employees, self-employed workers are not in a relationship of subordination and typically have autonomy over how work is organised and performed, even when they operate within certain external constraints. Some may choose to align their practices with clients, platforms or cooperative arrangements, but such choices cannot be systematically distinguished in the dataset. The exclusion of the self-employed therefore reflects an analytical decision to focus on organisational and managerial dynamics within employment relationships, ensuring greater comparability and clarity in interpretation.

The analysis focuses on employees who, based on their responses to the EWCS questionnaire, can be classified as employees in hybrid work arrangements (hereafter, ‘hybrid employees’). For the purposes of this research, hybrid employees result from the combination of two groups identified in the EWCS 2024 overview report, referring to the arrangements in which employees divide their working time between the employer’s premises and home (see Eurofound, 2026, for more details):

- **regular telework**, covering respondents who said they use information and communication technology (ICT) at least half of the time and said either (1) that they work always from home and often or always from the employer’s premises or (2) that they work often from home and sometimes, often or always from the employer’s premises ⁽¹⁾,
- **occasional telework**, covering respondents who said they use ICT at least half of the time and said that they work sometimes or rarely from home.

A key underlying assumption of this typology is that access to ICT constitutes a precondition for hybrid work, as this technology enables work tasks to be performed across multiple locations and supports remote coordination and communication. This assumption is

consistent with the broader literature, which identifies ICT access and use as a fundamental enabler of telework and hybrid work arrangements (e.g. OECD, 2020; Eurofound, 2020). Without such technologies, the feasibility of alternating between on-site and remote work locations would be significantly constrained. Accordingly, hybrid work was defined as work in which employees use computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones or other mobile digital devices for at least half of their working time, enabling work to be carried out remotely, away from the employer’s premises.

The EWCS does not specifically ask about hybrid work, so a proxy must be used to capture location variation, the core feature of hybrid work. In this case, it captures the combination of working from the employer’s premises with working from home, with varying degrees of regularity, which is, according to empirical studies and the experts interviewed, the most common combination. This approach may not cover fully the conceptual definition of hybrid work, but it covers the vast majority of cases.

The EWCS 2024 data were also used to develop a typology of hybrid work arrangements along two core dimensions: (1) employee autonomy in determining working-time arrangements (corresponding to the temporal element in the conceptual framework) and (2) the ability to choose work location when working in more than one location, defined as employees’ discretion over where work is performed (corresponding to the physical element in the conceptual framework).

The resulting four stylised types of hybrid work (described in Chapter 1) were compared both with one another and with non-hybrid work arrangements. Whenever meaningful and possible, the analysis considered and compared those who have supervisory roles with those who do not.

When required, regression analyses were carried out to establish if the differences in results between employees working in the different hybrid arrangements or in supervisory roles hold when accounting for confounding variables that may better explain those differences. These include individual characteristics, such as gender and age, and job attributes, such as occupation, sector of activity and workplace size (the number of people working in the same establishment as the respondents).

In this report, the survey data also serve as the contextual background for the case studies, providing information on, among other aspects of working

⁽¹⁾ Respondents were free to choose any of the responses (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never) when asked whether they worked from home and whether they worked from an employer’s premises. Hence, for example, a respondent might choose ‘always’ for both questions on work location to indicate that they spent part of their working day at home and part of the working day at their employer’s premises.

conditions, space to work at home and on-site, the use of workplace technology, exposure to aspects of work intensity, employees' self-reported assessment of management quality, social support and access to training across different hybrid work arrangements.

Report structure

The report is structured around **three main content chapters**.

Chapter 1 reports on the prevalence of hybrid work arrangements, combining different degrees of time and location flexibility, in the EU. The chapter also presents a typology of hybrid work arrangements, operationalised for the purposes of empirical analysis using EWCS 2024 data. It illustrates case studies of organisations exemplifying some of the most recurrent hybrid work arrangements and identifies the key drivers behind the adoption of hybrid work.

Chapter 2 draws on evidence from the case studies, expert interviews and survey data to explore the key organisational and management challenges associated with hybrid work. It also examines how the role of line managers (and employees in supervisory positions) is evolving within hybrid work settings.

Chapter 3 identifies management strategies adopted by organisations in the context of hybrid work and outlines key principles derived from the expert interviews, against which the case study practices are assessed. This chapter also proposes a five-step framework that could guide the design and implementation of hybrid work arrangements.

The report concludes with **key takeaways, lessons learned and policy pointers** derived from all the strands of research underpinning the study. It also identifies avenues for future research and policy attention based on the research findings.

1 Evolving hybrid work arrangements and drivers of change

Hybrid work is a relatively recent form of work arrangement and one of the most enduring legacies of the COVID-19 pandemic. It typically involves a combination of work locations, such as the office, home or other spaces, and may also include flexible or adaptable working-time arrangements. Crucially, unlike telework, hybrid work is defined not simply by the location of work but by the structured alternation and coordination between multiple work settings. The extent of employee autonomy within hybrid work depends not only on organisational policies but also on national regulatory frameworks, which play a key role in shaping how hybrid work is defined, implemented and supported in practice.

In the EU, there is no common or comprehensive legal definition of hybrid work. In most Member States, hybrid work arrangements emerge indirectly from the interaction of existing telework provisions, working-time regulation, and collective or contractual agreements, rather than from legal frameworks explicitly designed to regulate hybrid work as such. As a result, national regulatory approaches tend to address individual elements of hybrid work, such as flexibility in working time or work location, rather than treating hybrid work as a unified concept.

Drawing on EWCS 2024 data, this chapter examines the prevalence of hybrid work throughout the EU, analysing how it varies depending on sociodemographic characteristics and by country, sector of economic activity, occupation and workplace size. It also explores the levels of discretion hybrid employees have over work location and autonomy over working time, in comparison with non-hybrid employees. These variations have direct implications for management, as differences in flexibility over scheduling and work location shape the complexity of coordinating, supervising and supporting employees in hybrid settings.

Using the EWCS 2024 data, the report proposes a typology of stylised hybrid work arrangements, defined by differences in employees' discretion over work location and autonomy over working time. Developing such a typology is an essential first step in systematically analysing hybrid work, as it provides a structured framework for examining how different configurations of hybrid work may give rise to distinct managerial challenges and for identifying issues common across arrangements. The case studies conducted for this research are mapped onto the proposed typology, serving as illustrative examples of

how these different forms of hybrid work operate in practice in organisational contexts and exploring the drivers behind the adoption of hybrid work arrangements.

Defining features of hybrid work

In line with Eurofound's conceptual framework, the hybrid model enhances the adaptability of work by combining physical and temporal elements – where and when work is carried out – with virtual and social elements that enable collaboration and support team cohesion (Eurofound, 2023). The most recurring defining features of hybrid work identified in the literature are physical and temporal flexibility (Eurofound, 2025a). At its simplest, hybrid work involves alternating between on-site and remote work for a set portion of time, either determined by the employer or agreed upon with employees.

The experts consulted for this study highlighted that traditional organisational thinking often restricts the workplace to just two locations: the office and the home. They stressed the importance of adopting an expanded understanding of the workplace – one that includes a broader range of settings, such as client sites, co-working spaces, public venues and mobile locations like transport hubs or conferences. This broader interpretation is more commonly embraced by large multinational organisations. All the same, most employers still require some in-person presence at a company office.

Furthermore, high-profile cases reported in the media – often involving large US-based companies, such as Amazon, AT&T, JPMorganChase and Ford, introducing stricter return-to-office requirements or scaling back hybrid arrangements (RTÉ, 2024; Business Insider, 2025; Murphy, 2025) – may suggest a broader shift back to office-based work. However, the experts interviewed for this study consistently indicated that full return-to-office mandates do not represent an emerging trend in the EU; they reflect organisation-specific strategies rather than wider structural change.

Hybrid work patterns appear to have stabilised since the pandemic, with two to three days in the office emerging as a sustained norm. In practice, hybrid arrangements are often structured around set on-site requirements, most commonly designated 'anchor days', when all team members are expected to be present to support collaboration and team cohesion.

While such arrangements can be beneficial for activities requiring real-time interaction, the experts cautioned that reliance on fixed weekly office days may limit flexibility and fail to reflect differing task requirements. This can place undue emphasis on physical presence over effectiveness, potentially disrupting workflows, particularly for work requiring concentration or asynchronous collaboration, and leading to inefficiencies, especially in roles that benefit from autonomy and focus.

Prevalence of hybrid work

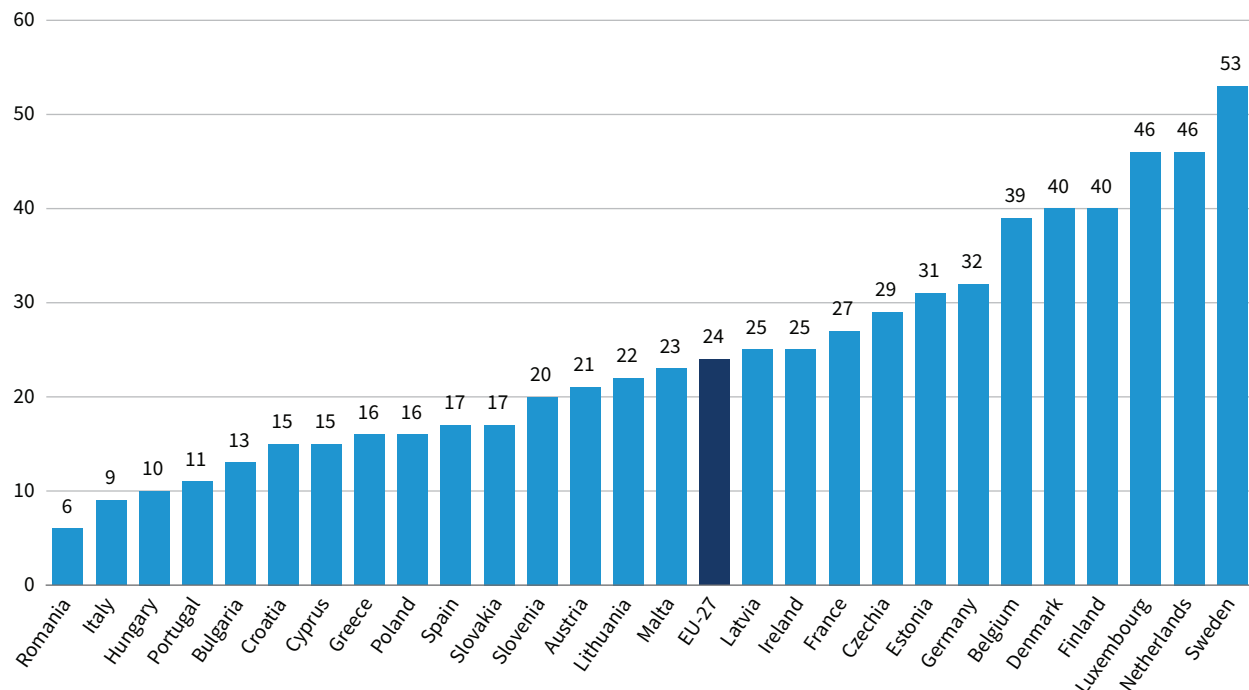
EU and Member State levels

According to the EWCS 2024, about 24 % of the employees in the EU can be classified as having a hybrid work arrangement (see the definition given in the section ‘Empirical analysis’ in the Introduction). As shown in Figure 2, this share varies greatly across the Member States, from as low as 6 % in Romania and 9 % in Italy to 46 % in Luxembourg and the Netherlands and more than 50 % in Sweden.

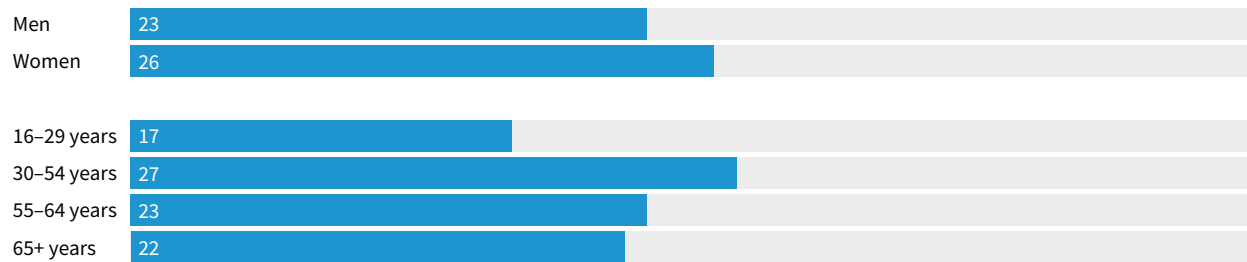
Box 1: Key characteristics of hybrid work in practice

- Concentration in knowledge-intensive and managerial roles**
 Hybrid work is most prevalent in jobs involving high levels of skills, autonomy and responsibility. In this context, line managers may rely more on outcome-based performance management and less on direct supervision.
- Greater prevalence in larger organisations and among senior staff**
 Hybrid work is more common in complex organisational settings. This may increase demands on line managers to coordinate dispersed teams and manage across hierarchical levels.
- Association with higher employee autonomy over working time and discretion over work location**
 The greater flexibility employees enjoy in hybrid settings requires managers to balance autonomy with coordination, ensure clear expectations and mitigate risks, such as reduced visibility and blurred boundaries between work and personal life.

Figure 2: Share of hybrid employees in the EU by Member State, 2024 (%)



Source: EWCS 2024.

Figure 3: Share of employees in hybrid work arrangements by gender and age, EU, 2024 (%)

Source: EWCS 2024.

Gender and age

Hybrid work is slightly more common among women (26 %) than men (23 %). Its prevalence is lowest among employees 29 years of age and under (17 %) and highest among those aged between 30 and 54 years old. After that, it decreases as employees approach retirement (Figure 3).

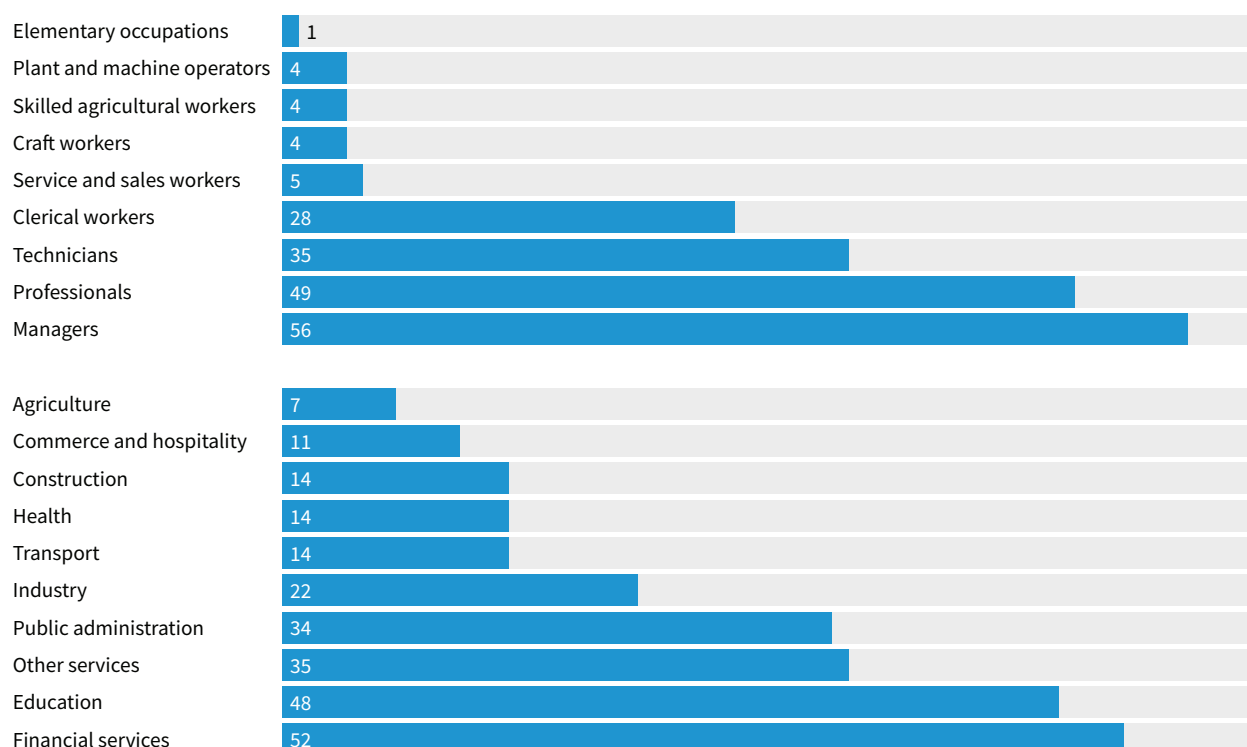
Occupation

The prevalence of hybrid work also varies by occupation and sector of activity. As shown in Figure 4, hybrid work has been adopted predominantly by employees in highly skilled occupations, including clerical workers, technicians and professionals. It is most prevalent among managers, being reported by 56 % of the employees in this occupational group. It is much less common among employees in occupational groups requiring lower skill levels, being reported by only 5 % or less in each group. It is reported by just 1 % of employees in elementary occupations. A more detailed overview –

using the two-digit international standard classification of occupations (ISCO) – shows that hybrid work has been taken up by more than 60 % of employees working as administrative and commercial managers; science and engineering professionals; business and administration professionals; and chief executives, senior officials and legislators. This concentration among managerial and highly skilled roles suggests that hybrid work is closely linked to jobs involving higher autonomy, responsibility and task complexity.

Sector

In fact, hybrid work is more prevalent in sectors of activity with larger shares of employees in highly skilled occupations. It is reported by approximately one third of the employees working in public administration or other services, by nearly half of those in education and by more than half of those working in financial services (Figure 4). Only 22 % of employees working in industry

Figure 4: Share of employees in hybrid work arrangements by occupation and sector, EU, 2024 (%)

Source: EWCS 2024.

have a hybrid arrangement, and far fewer in all other sectors. As expected, it is least prevalent in agriculture.

Looking at a more detailed sectoral level, hybrid work is particularly prevalent among employees in the sectors of scientific research and development (71 %); computing infrastructure, data processing, hosting and other information service activities (70 %); activities auxiliary to financial services and insurance activities (67 %); and publishing activities (66 %).

These findings are consistent with previous Eurofound research on teleworkability (Eurofound, 2022b) – defined as the extent to which job tasks can be performed remotely using digital technologies – and point to an overlap between hybrid work and knowledge-intensive employment. The research indicates that occupations with higher teleworkability tend to be better paid, require advanced skills or qualifications, and involve greater levels of autonomy.

Seniority

Hybrid work is more common among more senior employees. It is reported by 29 % of those with a tenure of 10 years or more, compared with only 17 % of those who have been in their organisation for less than 1 year (Figure 5).

Supervisory status

Hybrid work is also more prevalent among those employees with supervisory roles. It is reported by 37 % of supervisors of up to 10 staff members and 48 % of supervisors of 10 or more staff members, but only 22 % of those without supervisory responsibilities (Figure 5).

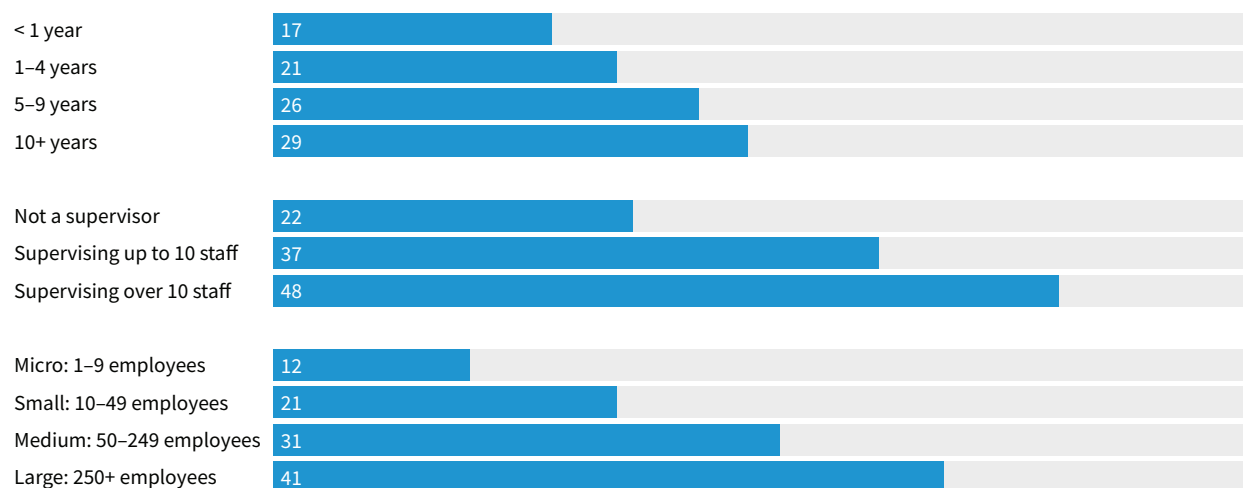
Workplace size

The prevalence of hybrid work increases with size of workplace, being reported by more than three times as large a share of those working in large workplaces (41 %) as those working in micro workplaces (12 %).

Autonomy over working time

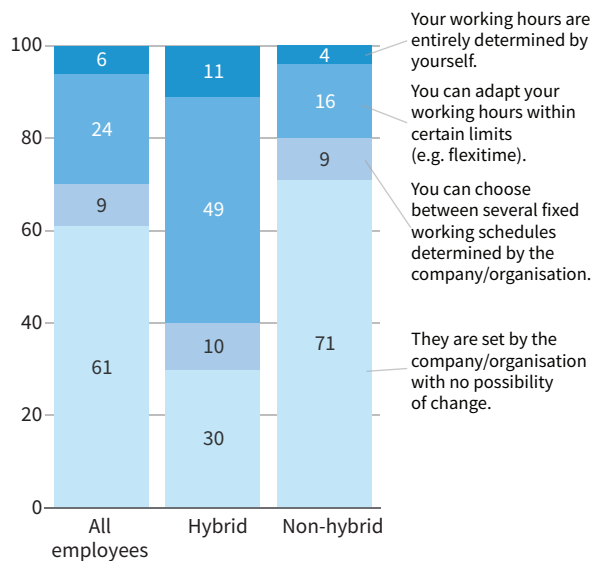
As briefly mentioned above, two of the most important dimensions characterising the type of hybrid work arrangements under which employees operate are the physical (where work is carried out) and the temporal (when work is carried out). How do employees in hybrid arrangements fare in terms of autonomy over their working-time arrangements and discretion over the location of their work? As shown in Figures 6 and 7, employees in hybrid work arrangements tend to enjoy greater autonomy over both their working time and their work location (when working in more than one location) than non-hybrid employees.

Figure 5: Share of employees in hybrid work arrangements by seniority, supervisory status and workplace size, EU, 2024 (%)



Source: EWCS 2024.

Figure 6: Autonomy over working-time arrangements, comparison of hybrid and non-hybrid employees, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: Responses to the question 'How are your working time arrangements set?'
Source: EWCS 2024.

Autonomy over working time can be interpreted as working-time flexibility. It was operationalised in the EWCS 2024 using items measuring employees' control over working-time arrangements in their main job, ranging from arrangements fully set by the company to those entirely determined by the employee. Past analyses of EWCS data have consistently found that both full autonomy over working-time arrangements and access to flexitime are strongly associated with better work-life balance outcomes (see, for instance, Eurofound, 2017).

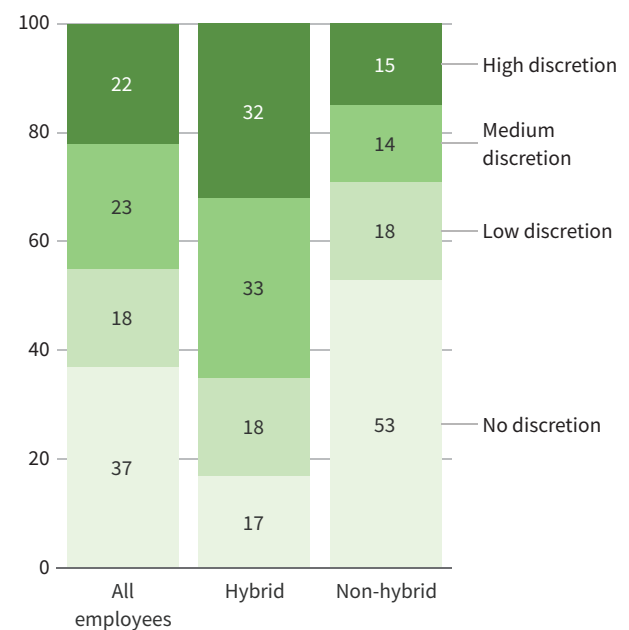
Discretion over work location

Having the latitude to adapt their working hours within certain limits, such as through flexitime, enables employees to adjust their start and end times on an ongoing basis within an agreed framework. These arrangements provide greater day-to-day autonomy and represent a high degree of working-time flexibility. By contrast, the lack of the possibility to change working-time arrangements, or to choose between fixed working schedules determined by the company or organisation, represents a low degree of flexibility.

The discretion over work location corresponds to the flexibility that is given to employees in relation to their work location(s) (Figure 7). It was captured through an EWCS question assessing the extent to which respondents who work in more than one location are able to choose when they work from each of those locations. It was measured using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 'not at all' (no discretion) to 'to a large extent' (high discretion). As expected, the share of

employees with no discretion over their location is much greater among those in non-hybrid arrangements. The share of employees in hybrid arrangements with no discretion over their work location is, nevertheless, also substantial (17 %). This corresponds to situations in which employees are formally in hybrid arrangements but are not able to choose when they can work from a different location (namely the employer's premises or home), meaning that the variation in work location is predetermined.

Figure 7: Discretion over work location, comparison between hybrid and non-hybrid employees, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: Responses to the question 'To what extent are you able to choose when you work from each of these locations?' from those who reported working from more than one location (e.g. employer's premises, locations sent to by employer, car or vehicle, home, other location). The response options were 'To a large extent' (high discretion), 'To some extent' (medium discretion), 'To a small extent' (low discretion) and 'None at all' and 'Doesn't apply to work situation' (no discretion).
Source: EWCS 2024.

Typology of hybrid work arrangements

Using the distribution of hybrid employees according to their discretion over work location (or work location flexibility, in columns) and autonomy over working-time arrangements (in rows), Table 3 presents four distinct types of hybrid arrangements identified in the EWCS 2024 data.

- **Controlled hybrid** (22 % of all hybrid employees). These employees report low or no discretion over their work location. Either their working time is fully determined by their employer, or they can choose only between several fixed working schedules

Table 3: Distribution of hybrid employees according to discretion over work location and autonomy over working-time arrangements (% of total)

		Discretion over work location				
		None	Low	Medium	High	Total
Autonomy over working-time arrangements	Your working hours are entirely determined by yourself.	0	1	3	7	11
	You can adapt your working hours within certain limits (e.g. flexitime).	4	7	19	19	49
	You can choose between several fixed working schedules determined by the company or organisation.	2	2	3	2	9
	Working hours are set by the company or organisation with no possibility of change.	11	8	8	4	31
	Total	17	18	33	32	100

Source: EWCS 2024.

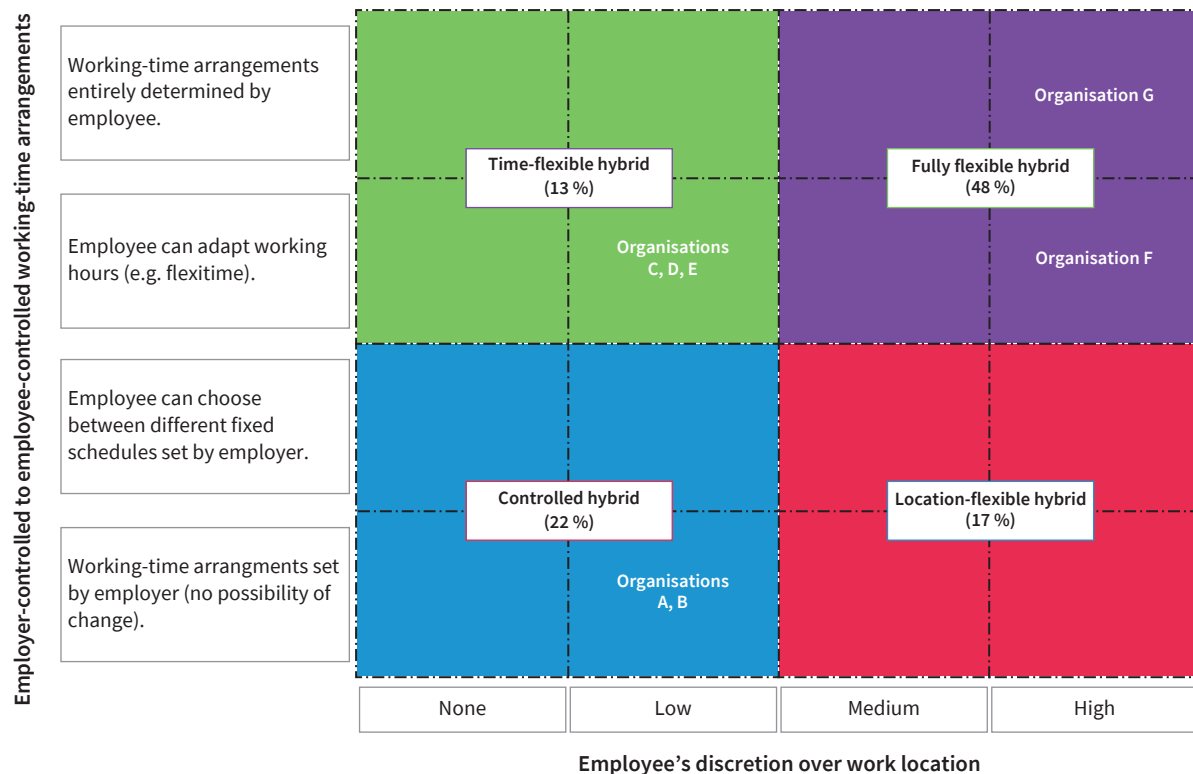
determined by the company or organisation. They have limited control over when and where they work, with both aspects largely set by the employer, potentially leading to more rigid and structured hybrid work arrangements.

- Location-flexible hybrid** (17 % of all hybrid employees). These employees report medium or high discretion over their work location and little or no autonomy over their working-time arrangements. In practice, they can choose where they work (e.g. home or the office) but have limited say over their schedules, meaning flexibility is spatial rather than temporal.
- Time-flexible hybrid** (13 % of all hybrid employees). These employees report low or no discretion over their work location. Their working hours are either entirely determined by themselves or adaptable within certain limits (e.g. flexitime). They have flexibility in organising their working hours but limited discretion over when to work from the various locations.
- Fully flexible hybrid** (48 % of all hybrid employees). These employees report medium or high autonomy over their work location. Their working hours are either entirely determined by themselves or adaptable within certain limits (e.g. flexitime). They enjoy high levels of autonomy over both when and where they work, resulting in the most flexible and self-directed work experience among the four groups.

In the analysis that follows, these four groups are conceptualised as stylised types of hybrid work arrangements mapped onto a typology structured around the two core dimensions (i.e. employee autonomy over working-time arrangements and discretion over work location). Case studies conducted in organisations as part of this research illustrate how these hybrid work arrangements are implemented in practice (Figure 8). It should be borne in mind, however, that hybrid work exists along a continuum, with multiple configurations combining varying degrees of employee autonomy over working time and discretion over work location.

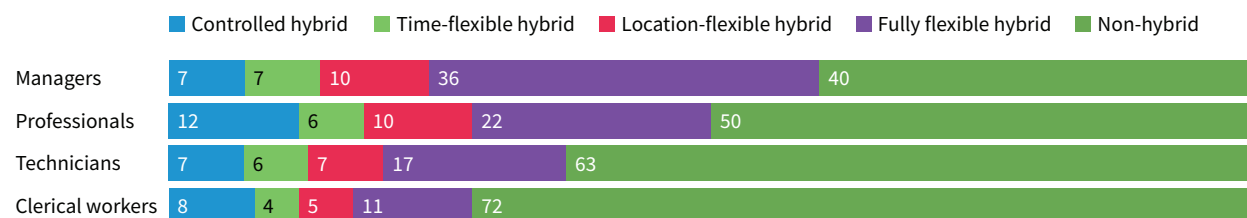
As shown in Figure 9, the different types of hybrid work arrangements identified are not distributed equally across the occupational groups in which hybrid arrangements are most common. Employees in occupations requiring higher levels of skills tend to have more autonomy over their working time and location of work, and this is reflected in the prevalence of the various hybrid work arrangements across these occupational groups. Fully flexible hybrid arrangements are most common among managers (36 % of all managers), whereas controlled hybrid arrangements are most prevalent among professionals (12 % of all professionals). Location-flexible hybrid arrangements are relatively more common among managers and professionals (10 % each), whereas the share of those in time-flexible hybrid arrangements does not differ much between the four occupational groups. Overall, the more skilled the occupations are, the more prevalent hybrid work is and, within it, the more prevalent the fully flexible hybrid arrangement becomes.

Figure 8: Typology of stylised hybrid work arrangements



Sources: Based on EWCS 2024 data and case studies.

Figure 9: Hybrid work type by occupational group, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: Includes only the ISCO occupational groups in which employees working in hybrid arrangements represent more than 5 % of the total employees in the group.

Source: EWCS 2024.

Controlled hybrid work

This model refers to hybrid work whereby employees divide their time between on-site work and other locations (typically their home) but have little or no influence over either their work location or the scheduling of their working time. Both spatial and temporal parameters are largely defined by the organisation, with working time centrally determined and only limited scope for individual adjustment. In the EWCS 2024, this category corresponds to employees with (1) low or no discretion over work location and (2) little or no autonomy over their working-time arrangements.

The two public sector organisations investigated in this research exemplify a controlled form of hybrid work in which flexibility is permitted but tightly regulated and

primarily mediated through line management. Organisations A and B have both implemented hybrid work within strongly formalised and top-down regulatory frameworks that prioritise organisational control over individual discretion. In both cases, hybrid arrangements are governed by written agreements or internal regulations that define eligibility, procedures and mutual obligations, with the employer's premises remaining the default workplace. Employees cannot unilaterally determine their work location or remote working days, as managerial approval is required for any deviation from established arrangements.

This model can reduce coordination challenges and provide clarity and predictability in scheduling, but it may also increase managerial workload due to the need

Case study illustrations

Organisation A – Polish research and development institute

Organisation A is a Polish independent national research and development (R&D) institute, specialising in telecommunications and information technology (IT). It formally adopted its hybrid work model in 2023 following the signing of a remote work agreement between management and employee trade union representatives, aligned with the Polish Labour Code. The agreement defines eligibility, permitted forms of remote and hybrid work, designated work locations, approval procedures, and mutual rights and obligations.

Work location and scheduling are governed by a top-down regulatory framework; employees cannot change their work location and work schedule without managerial consent. Both partial and fully remote arrangements require explicit approval from line management. While different forms of remote work are permitted in principle, the employer's premises remain the default workplace, particularly for roles involving sensitive information or requiring physical presence. Employees are not permitted to unilaterally determine their place of work, and any deviation from the designated workplace requires prior managerial authorisation.

Organisation B – Slovenian telecoms operator

Organisation B is a Slovenian public provider of ICT services. In 2021, the organisation introduced a hybrid work strategy governed by an internal regulation that sets the overall framework for its implementation. This framework allows employees to work remotely for up to two days per week, typically from their home, based on a general guideline of three days per week working from the employer's premises and two days remotely. Remote work is subject to detailed occupational health and safety requirements.

The specific days and location for remote work are determined through mutual agreement between employees and their line manager, taking into account departmental needs. While the guideline applies across the organisation, its implementation varies by department and team. Line managers are responsible for determining team-specific arrangements, including the designation of mandatory in-office days where required. Employees cannot unilaterally decide their remote working days, and managerial approval remains decisive in all cases. Limited exceptions are possible, such as additional remote work for employees with disabilities or in exceptional cases.

to oversee and approve individual arrangements. Limited employee autonomy can constrain flexibility and responsiveness to individual needs, potentially affecting motivation and job satisfaction.

Location-flexible hybrid work

This model is characterised by hybrid work with limited or no autonomy over working-time arrangements but substantial discretion over work location. In the EWCS 2024, this category corresponds to employees with (1) medium or high discretion over work location and (2) little or no autonomy over their working-time arrangements.

While work in knowledge-intensive sectors often combines some degree of location flexibility with high levels of working-time autonomy, there are occupations within these same sectors where working-time arrangements are more constrained due to the nature of the tasks performed. Typical examples include IT support specialists and help-desk analysts providing real-time assistance during set service hours; customer service managers required to be available during core business hours; and certain public administration or regulatory compliance officers operating within defined service windows.

In the case study sample, although none of the organisations have fully adopted arrangements resembling the location-flexible hybrid work model, such an approach is nevertheless evident among employees in certain departments. In particular, staff in IT and customer service roles exhibit this pattern, combining discretion over work location with more limited autonomy over their working-time arrangements. The absence of this model at the organisational level in the case studies therefore reflects the selection of organisations rather than the absence of such arrangements in practice. It also suggests that this type of hybrid work may be more likely to emerge at the level of specific roles or functions, particularly where operational requirements constrain working time, rather than as an organisation-wide design choice.

In practice, hybrid work models are often implemented in a differentiated or hybridised way within organisations, varying across roles and functions, rather than applied uniformly. As a result, this model should be interpreted as a partial or role-specific configuration, reflecting task requirements and operational constraints rather than an organisation-wide strategy. This also has implications for management, as it requires coordinating heterogeneous arrangements within the same organisation and ensuring consistency

and fairness across roles with differing levels of autonomy.

Time-flexible hybrid work

This model combines medium to high autonomy over working time with limited discretion over work location. In the EWCS 2024, this category corresponds to employees with (1) low or no discretion over work location and (2) medium or high autonomy over their working-time arrangements. Among the case studies investigated, three fall within the broad category of time-flexible hybrid work but represent its more

constrained variant: although employees retain substantial temporal autonomy, it is exercised within clearly defined organisational frameworks governing office attendance, eligibility and managerial approval.

Across Organisations C, D and E, agreements are formalised with line managers and linked to role requirements to ensure operational alignment. Although employees have discretion over their daily schedules, they operate within established parameters, such as contractual hours, availability expectations and compliance obligations. Fully remote work remains exceptional and granted only in specific cases.

Case study illustrations

Organisation C – Polish consultancy

Organisation C is a privately owned for-profit consultancy operating in Poland and specialising in daily briefings and analytical content on political and socioeconomic affairs. It applies a time-flexible hybrid work arrangement, referred to internally as the 3–2–1 model, under which employees work three days per week from the employer's premises and two days remotely, with one of the three on-site days designated as an anchor day. Under this framework, the three in-office days are fixed at the organisational level, limiting employee discretion over work location.

The model establishes a shared framework for work organisation, including a common team day in the office determined at team level. Within this framework, employees plan their schedules on a monthly basis in agreement with their line managers and make informal adjustments where necessary, including requesting additional remote work in justified circumstances. At the same time, employees retain substantial autonomy over their working hours, organising their daily start and finish times in line with operational needs. Fully remote arrangements are granted on a case-by-case basis for roles or personal situations that are incompatible with regular office presence.

Overall, the model functions as a guiding framework rather than a rigid policy, offering structured flexibility consistent with a time-flexible hybrid arrangement.

Organisation D – Irish academic institution

Organisation D is an Irish academic institution that introduced a pilot blended-working policy in 2022. The policy primarily applies to professional and support staff, enabling them to divide their working time between the institution's premises and a remote location, typically the employee's home. Academic staff had already benefited from a higher degree of informal flexibility prior to the introduction of the policy.

Although the blended-working policy is principles-based, arrangements are formalised between employees and their line managers within these organisational parameters, taking into account role requirements and unit needs. The institution operates a formal flexitime system, allowing staff to organise their daily working schedules within broad limits, provided that overall weekly hours and essential operational requirements are met.

Access to blended working remains subject to eligibility criteria and formal application procedures, as well as compliance with health and safety, insurance, data protection and IT security requirements. All arrangements are documented and reviewed periodically, ensuring structured flexibility within clearly defined organisational boundaries.

In practice, almost 90 % of employees attend the office at least once per week, while approximately 10 % work fully remotely under exceptional provisions. The number of mandated on-site days ranges from one to four per week, depending on roles and responsibilities. Although the hybrid work policy is formally defined through organisational policy, its day-to-day implementation across departments may display some variation within the established framework.

Organisation E – Finnish municipality

Organisation E is a Finnish municipality that introduced hybrid work in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The adopted arrangement is based on individual remote work agreements between employees and line managers or supervisors. Depending on job roles and operational requirements, employees are generally permitted to organise

their daily working hours with some degree of autonomy, rather than adhering to strictly prescribed start and end times. This flexibility operates within defined parameters, however; employees are expected to fulfil their contractual hours, ensure availability during agreed coordination windows and meet performance requirements.

Employees may work remotely, generally from home, up to three days per week, corresponding to an average maximum of 60 % of working time. In-person days are agreed at team level, with office presence encouraged when collaboration or creativity is required. Hybrid work is primarily available for expert and office-based roles and is not applicable to occupations requiring a continuous physical presence. Agreements specify availability, data security requirements and conditions for workplace attendance, if needed.

Fully flexible hybrid work

The fully flexible hybrid model represents the highest degree of autonomy in the typology, combining medium to high discretion over work location with self-determined or flexibly arranged working hours. In the EWCS 2024, this category corresponds to employees with (1) medium or high discretion over work location and (2) medium or high autonomy over their working-time arrangements. Two organisations – both in the private sector – investigated as case studies in this research broadly align with this hybrid work arrangement.

Both organisations operate highly autonomous trust-based hybrid systems characterised by substantial employee discretion over both work location and working time. Both cases prioritise outcomes, autonomy and adaptability over physical presence and fixed scheduling. Work is predominantly performed remotely, with office presence optional and primarily

oriented towards collaboration rather than mandatory attendance. Employees largely self-manage their schedules and locations within broad organisational frameworks, without fixed hours or compulsory on-site days. Formal policies or frameworks exist, but they mainly support and structure flexible practices rather than constrain them.

These highly flexible arrangements involve important trade-offs. Greater employee autonomy over working time and discretion over work location can increase coordination complexity, particularly where interdependent tasks require alignment across teams, and entail greater reliance on employees' self-management capabilities. In addition, the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life may pose challenges for workload regulation and well-being. These dynamics highlight a key managerial challenge in such systems: maintaining flexibility and trust while ensuring sufficient coordination and clarity about expectations.

Case study illustrations

Organisation F – French non-profit organisation

Organisation F is a French non-profit organisation supporting local authorities and businesses in their green transition. It operates under a flexible hybrid work model characterised by significant employee autonomy over work location and scheduling. Employees work from home, client sites or the employer's premises, reflecting the organisation's project-based and travel-intensive activities.

For most roles, remote work represents a substantial share of working time, with office presence being occasional rather than mandatory. Employees determine their working hours autonomously within broad organisational parameters and may adjust their remote working patterns from week to week without prior approval. A formal charter signed in 2021 defines procedural aspects of remote work but largely formalises pre-existing practices and does not impose fixed schedules or mandatory on-site days.

While some roles require continuous on-site presence, the overall model reflects high flexibility and trust-based management, consistent with a fully flexible hybrid arrangement.

Organisation G – Finland-based multinational consultancy

Organisation G is the Finland-based branch of a multinational consultancy firm operating in the Nordic region. It applies a fully autonomous remote-first arrangement in which employees rely on ICT for virtually all of their working time and work predominantly outside the employer's premises.

Introduced in 2021, the model has evolved into a mature, trust-based approach that prioritises autonomy, flexibility and outcomes over physical presence. The model is characterised by a high degree of discretion over both work location and working time.

Employees largely self-manage their working hours and locations in dialogue with their teams, with work carried out from home, client sites or the company office. There are no fixed schedules or mandatory core hours, and in-office presence is not required; working arrangements are guided by non-binding recommendations.

In 2023, hybrid work was further strengthened through the introduction of a strategic, integrated organisational framework, which supports new ways of working by aligning physical workspace renewal, digital solutions and cultural change. Within this framework, the office primarily serves as a collaborative hub, supported by non-binding recommendations for occasional in-office presence.

Employee representation and voice

An important aspect to account for when studying hybrid work is the extent to which those involved in such work organisation have access to formal representation and the possibility of expressing their views in collective settings. The presence of such structures can shape how managerial decisions are negotiated and implemented in hybrid work settings, influencing both the effectiveness of management practices and the quality of workplace dialogue. The EWCS 2024 data show that those engaged in hybrid work are more likely to report the presence of collective forms of employee representation in their workplace, such as a trade union, works council or similar employee representative body, or a health and safety delegate or committee. They are also more likely than other employees to report that a regular meeting is held in which employees can express their views about what is happening in their organisation.

As shown in Figure 10, 69 % of hybrid employees report the existence of a trade union or similar, 75 % report a health and safety delegate or committee and 80 % report a regular meeting where they can express their views. These proportions do not vary greatly by hybrid work arrangement, but the shares of employees reporting a trade union or similar, a health and safety delegate or committee, or regular meetings are relatively larger among those in fully flexible

arrangements. Overall, only 7 % of hybrid employees do not have any form of collective representation nor regular meetings in the workplace, whereas this is the case for 26 % of non-hybrid employees.

Key learning points from the case studies

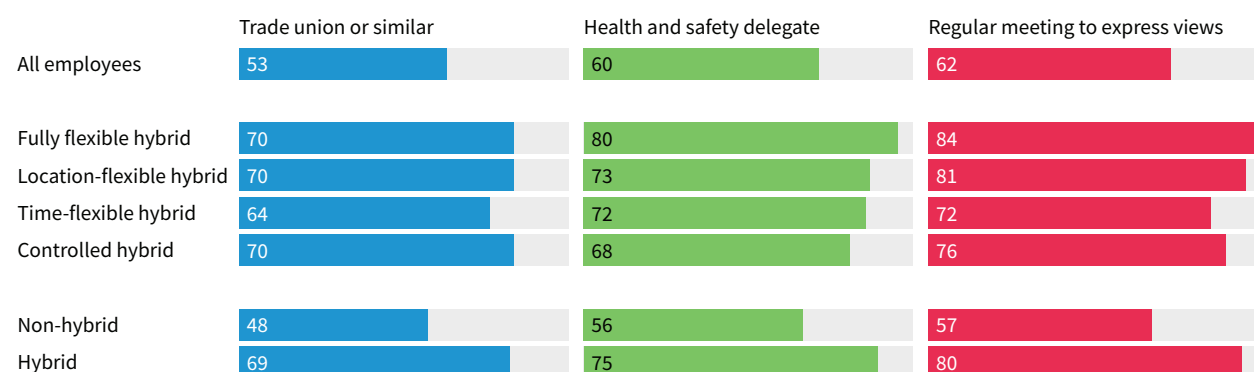
Managerial discretion and people management are central to hybrid work.

Hybrid work is implemented through a combination of formal rules and managerial discretion. Line managers play a central role in interpreting policies, approving arrangements and tailoring hybrid practices to team and project requirements. This involves rethinking task allocation within hybrid settings; determining which activities require physical presence, which can be carried out remotely and how responsibilities are distributed to maintain fairness; coordination; and ensuring continuity across locations. This places greater emphasis on people-focused management practices to ensure that hybrid work functions effectively beyond formal regulations.

Hybrid work arrangements function as formalised yet adaptable frameworks.

Hybrid work arrangements are not fixed systems but flexible frameworks that evolve over time. While written policies, agreements and regulatory guidelines provide

Figure 10: Employee representation and voice in the workplace by hybrid status and type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Source: EWCS 2024.

clarity, legal certainty and organisational consistency, they often codify existing practices and serve primarily as guiding principles. Day-to-day implementation remains fluid, requiring operational flexibility to respond to changing work demands. As a result, organisations may simultaneously exhibit characteristics of multiple hybrid arrangements, with practices adapting to specific roles, teams and contexts.

The feasibility of hybrid work depends on roles, tasks and organisational context.

Hybrid work's viability is strongly role- and task-dependent. Jobs requiring physical presence, direct service delivery or on-site infrastructure are less compatible with remote work, while knowledge-based, project-oriented or administrative roles allow greater flexibility. As a result, hybrid work is rarely applied uniformly and must be adapted to organisational missions, sectoral constraints and service requirements. This underlines the need to avoid rigid one-size-fits-all rules and instead establish a flexible framework that sets general principles, while leaving the most appropriate arrangements to be designed at the workplace level through dialogue between employers and employees.

Drivers of hybrid work adoption

Previous Eurofound research on hybrid work in the post-COVID-19 period found that hybrid work is primarily driven not by a single factor but rather by a bundle of strategic considerations, including competition for talent, digital readiness, cost rationalisation, employee well-being and, to a lesser extent, sustainability, all accelerated and legitimised by the pandemic (Eurofound, 2025b). These findings are largely confirmed by the case study research and expert interviews carried out for this study.

Across the organisations investigated, the drivers of hybrid work adoption can be broadly grouped into primary drivers – namely, the pandemic shock, employee preferences, and talent attraction and retention – and secondary or enabling drivers, such as regulatory frameworks and sustainability considerations. Two dominant patterns emerge across cases: first, hybrid work as a response to external shocks that becomes institutionalised over time; and second, hybrid work as a negotiated arrangement that balances organisational and employee needs.

Across the organisations examined, the **COVID-19 pandemic** was the primary driver behind the introduction and continued adoption of hybrid work. Although initially perceived as a temporary emergency response, the pandemic demonstrated that remote and hybrid work were both feasible and effective. What began as a crisis-driven adjustment thus evolved into a catalyst for longer-term organisational change, with organisations testing and institutionalising their own

versions of what hybrid could look like. Because of this diversity, managers often face uncertainty about whether their decisions and approaches are effective. This places managers in a central role as interpreters of emerging practices, requiring them to make ongoing decisions about the appropriate balance between flexibility, performance and coordination in the absence of fully established benchmarks.

In this research, the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F) differs from the other cases in that its employees were already accustomed to hybrid work well before the COVID-19 pandemic. This is largely due to the nature of the organisation's activities, which require many employees to travel regularly to clients' premises. As a result, remote work – whether undertaken from home, while travelling or between client visits – was already embedded in everyday work practices for a significant share of the workforce. Rather than triggering the adoption of hybrid work, the pandemic primarily reinforced and expanded an existing arrangement based on self-organisation, flexibility and trust, consolidating hybrid work as a stable and long-standing feature of the organisation's work.

Beyond the pandemic, **employee preferences and expectations** emerged as a major driver in most case studies, shaping post-pandemic hybrid work. Eurofound research on hybrid work shows that it is most successful when voluntary and negotiated, with employees actively opting in and valuing flexibility, autonomy and reduced commuting. In most case studies (Organisations A, B, D, F and G), employee consultation occurred at the design stage of hybrid work policies or frameworks via surveys, written feedback, works councils, trade unions and team-level discussions. Hybrid work arrangements were often designed as a compromise between differing preferences, balancing employees' desire for flexibility and remote work with managers' perceived value of face-to-face interaction.

Focusing on questions like 'How can we empower our people to perform at their best?', 'How do we define and measure success in this new way of working?' often helps to inform the optimal on-site time to achieve organisational goals.

HR expert

For managers, this requires actively mediating trade-offs between individual autonomy and collective coordination and ensuring that flexibility does not come at the expense of team cohesion or knowledge sharing. For example, the Polish consultancy (Organisation C) introduced a more structured arrangement with a

mandatory joint office day (determined at the team or unit level) in response to concerns among employees about insufficient social interaction.

If employees are required to return to the office only to sit in cubicles with headphones on, spending their day in virtual meetings, they are neither collaborating in person, innovating nor strengthening company culture.

Consultancy expert

Talent attraction and retention are increasingly shaping hybrid work arrangements, particularly in tight labour markets, across both the private and public organisations investigated. Most organisations investigated identified hybrid and flexible working arrangements as critical for recruiting and retaining skilled employees. For instance, the Polish R&D institute (Organisation A) emphasised the ability to recruit specialists from a wider geographical area, while the Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G) explicitly positions hybrid work as a defining element of its employer brand. At the Irish academic institution (Organisation D), flexibility was seen as especially important for staff facing long commutes or specific personal constraints. As noted by the experts interviewed, poorly implemented hybrid work arrangements or rigid return-to-office mandates can be counterproductive, often leading to employee disengagement and dissatisfaction when they are required to be on-site without seeing a clear or meaningful purpose.

Legal and regulatory frameworks can act as key enablers for both public and private sector organisations. However, as observed in the cases of the

Polish R&D institute, Irish academic institution and Finnish municipality (Organisations A, D and E), the absence of clear national legislation prior to or during the early stages of the pandemic constrained the formalisation and expansion of hybrid work arrangements. Subsequent regulatory developments facilitated the adoption of comprehensive agreements, ensuring compliance with labour law and data protection requirements. The case of the Polish consultancy (Organisation C) further illustrates how an existing regulatory framework can actively enable and shape hybrid work practices. The company operates under a ‘task-based working system’ (*system zadaniowego czasu pracy*), regulated by the Polish Labour Code, whereby work performance is assessed based on completed tasks and achieved results rather than hours worked. This system has directly influenced the design and functioning of the organisation’s hybrid work model, making it particularly well suited to project-based, creative and consulting activities where outcomes and deliverables are prioritised over physical presence. At the same time, across all organisations, regulation alone does not determine how hybrid work functions in practice, as day-to-day implementation continues to depend on managerial discretion and organisational context.

Finally, broader strategic and normative considerations also influenced the adoption of hybrid work in several organisations. **Environmental sustainability** emerged as a secondary yet increasingly important driver in both Finnish cases (Organisations E and G), where the organisations opened new modern and technologically advanced office buildings. In these cases, reduced commuting, increased digitalisation and more efficient use of office space were explicitly linked to broader organisational sustainability objectives and were intended to promote environmentally responsible behaviour.

Summary

- **According to the EWCS 2024, about one quarter of the employees in the EU work in some form of hybrid arrangement.** Among these employees, nearly half (48 %) report having a high level of discretion over both work location and working time. By contrast, more than one fifth (22 %) are in more controlled hybrid work, with limited or no discretion over these aspects. Interview insights help to contextualise these figures. The experts interviewed for this study indicated that two to three days per week in the office has emerged as the prevailing hybrid work arrangement across the EU. They also noted that mandated full return-to-office policies remain uncommon.
- **Across the case studies, hybrid work emerges not as a fixed organisational arrangement but as a dynamic and negotiated mode of work organisation.** Its implementation is shaped by a combination of formal frameworks and managerial discretion, strongly influenced by the nature of roles and tasks. Rather than fitting neatly into discrete categories, hybrid arrangements evolve over time and often combine elements of multiple arrangements, reflecting contextual constraints and operational needs. The case study evidence further suggests that public sector organisations tend to operate within more formalised and standardised frameworks, which can result in hybrid arrangements being more rule-based.
- **In most case studies, the COVID-19 pandemic was the primary catalyst for the adoption and consolidation of hybrid work,** transforming emergency remote arrangements into longer-term organisational practices after demonstrating their feasibility and effectiveness. However, post-pandemic hybrid work has not crystallised into a single standardised arrangement but has instead evolved into a wide variety of arrangements shaped by organisational context, employee preferences and operational needs, allowing flexibility and adaptation. This diversity is not unexpected but, rather, reflects a natural development given the wide range of organisational settings and work arrangements. It is further shaped by factors such as talent attraction and retention considerations, legal and regulatory frameworks and, particularly in larger and more digitally advanced organisations, broader strategic priorities. This is illustrated by the two Finnish case studies, where environmental sustainability goals were also an important factor.

2 Organisational changes and management challenges

This chapter examines the organisational changes associated with the transition to hybrid work and how these unfold across the different hybrid work types or arrangements identified in the report. These changes can be mapped onto the four elements underpinning Eurofound's conceptual framework on hybrid work (the physical, temporal, virtual and social elements) (Eurofound, 2023). The reconfiguration of where work is performed reflects changes in the physical and temporal dimensions, as work is redistributed across locations and coordinated across different time arrangements. Developments in digital infrastructure relate to the virtual element, highlighting the growing role of digital tools and systems in enabling access, coordination and collaboration. The move towards more organised and intentional communication reflects changes in the social element, as interaction becomes more structured in the absence of regular co-presence.

The chapter then turns to the management challenges arising from these organisational changes, in particular where misalignments emerge across these interconnected elements. For instance, organisations may introduce flexible hybrid arrangements and digital tools, but managerial expectations and performance systems may remain rooted in office-based visibility. This creates tensions for line managers, who are especially exposed to such inconsistencies as they translate strategic frameworks into everyday work practices.

Drawing on the areas identified in the literature review accompanying this report (Eurofound, 2025a), the analysis examines how hybrid work affects communication and collaboration, performance management and control, equity and inclusion, and occupational health and safety. By linking these organisational transformations to key management domains, the chapter provides a structured explanation of how hybrid work reshapes managerial roles.

Organisational changes

Reconfiguring where work is done

Across all the case studies, the office is no longer the unquestioned centre of daily work. Rather than simply reducing physical presence, hybrid work encourages organisations to reconsider where different types of work are most effectively carried out and how work is organised. Across contexts, a consistent pattern emerges. Hybrid work leads to a functional differentiation of space. Offices are increasingly used for

collaboration and coordination. Home is more often associated with focused individual work. However, this shift is not always supported by deliberate spatial redesign. The extent of such redesign remains uneven among organisations.

Expert interviews suggest that this rethinking can extend to the design and use of physical office space. Activity-based workspaces, rather than fixed desks or traditional open-plan layouts, are increasingly seen as a way to support hybrid work by enabling employees to select work settings aligned with specific tasks, such as collaboration, coordination or focused work. At the same time, the experts emphasised that organisational decisions regarding office space are strongly shaped by financial and strategic constraints, particularly in larger organisations with long-term real estate commitments. These constraints may limit the scope for spatial transformation and necessitate maintaining a minimum level of office occupancy. As a result, while most organisations acknowledged the need for some degree of adaptation, the scale and nature of workspace redesign vary.

Hybrid work increases the importance of clear rules, explicit arrangements and predictability in communication.

HR manager, Organisation A

In most organisations studied, the office is no longer treated as the default workplace but is instead redefined as a space primarily dedicated to coordination, collaboration and social interaction, while home-based work is reserved for tasks requiring sustained concentration. Management representatives, particularly in public sector organisations and those with less flexible hybrid arrangements, emphasised the importance of clear rules and predictable arrangements. In these cases, the functional redefinition of the office is not accompanied by a fundamental redesign of physical layouts. Instead, existing infrastructure is retained, and hybrid work is primarily organised through scheduling practices, such as anchor days.

The case of the Finnish municipality (Organisation E) illustrates a hybrid work policy shaped largely by operational efficiency and financial constraints, as is typical of the public sector. Remote work is framed as a

pragmatic means of reducing commuting and managing workloads rather than as part of a broader redesign of workplace practices. Nevertheless, some workspace reconfiguration has taken place, notably through the opening of a new office building in early 2025. The building provides shared and adaptable workspaces for approximately 200 employees, including multipurpose common areas, quiet library spaces, and bookable meeting and training rooms. Occupancy sensors indicate persistently low utilisation, making underuse of the new building an organisational concern. In response, fully remote work is not permitted without a specific justification, such as health-related reasons.

In contrast, hybrid work in the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F), which introduced its policy prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and has since developed it into a fully flexible arrangement, functions less as a reorganisation of work locations and more as a flexible overlay on an already mobile, travel-intensive mode of working. Office presence varies widely across employees and agencies, with attendance largely left to individual discretion. Some adaptations to office space have been made, particularly to accommodate the increased use of virtual meetings. For example, phone booths have been installed alongside the adoption of new collaboration tools to support employees working on-site.

In the old headquarters, the average occupancy rate was 30 %, while in December 2023 it was 60 %. The occupancy rate during peak hours increased from 40 % to 83 %.

Line manager 2, Organisation G

Finally, the Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G) links its fully flexible hybrid arrangement to a deliberate redesign of its physical workspace. Rather than enforcing attendance requirements, the organisation invested in renovated, technologically enhanced office premises, which opened in September 2023, to reposition the office as a purposeful setting for collaboration, learning and social interaction. Sustainability considerations were integrated through energy-efficient solutions. Office use is coordinated between employees and line managers based on task requirements, resulting in purpose-driven presence for activities that benefit from co-presence, while focused individual work is primarily conducted remotely. Employee feedback on the functionality of the new premises was actively collected and used to inform adjustments. While the redesigned office was positively received and led to increased attendance, reduced capacity based on hybrid work assumptions resulted in occasional overcrowding and shortages of available workstations.

Overall, while expert perspectives highlight the potential of workspace redesign as a means of supporting hybrid work, the case studies suggest that hybrid work is more often implemented through temporal coordination, managerial practices and the alignment of tasks with locations rather than through large-scale transformations of physical office environments. Although Organisation G represents a notable exception with its targeted investment in redesigned and technologically enhanced office space, financial constraints and long-term real estate commitments continue to limit the scope of physical workspace change in most organisations.

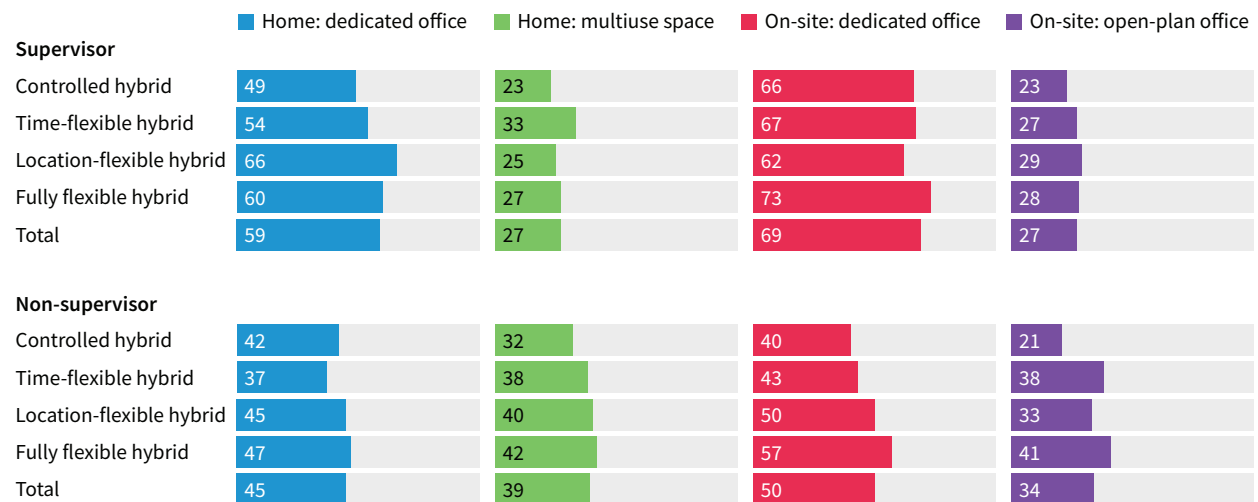
Survey evidence provides additional insight into how these arrangements are experienced in practice. While the case studies suggest an intended functional differentiation between home (for focused work) and the office (for collaboration), even without major workspace redesign, the survey data paint a more mixed picture. A substantial share of employees report lacking a fully dedicated workspace at home or relying on multipurpose rooms, potentially undermining the assumption that remote work consistently enables concentration.

EWCS 2024 insights: organisation of workspaces

According to the EWCS data, 48 % of all employees working in hybrid arrangements have a dedicated room (alone or shared) to work from at home. An additional 35 % have a dedicated space when working from home, but the room is also used for other purposes apart from work, meaning that it can be a bedroom, a living room or even the kitchen. Some 16 % of the whole group of hybrid employees report not having a specific space for work at home. When working at their employer's premises, 54 % of hybrid employees report having a dedicated office, while 33 % report working in an open-plan office.

As shown in Figure 11, access to specific spaces to work from at home varies according to whether or not the employee has a supervisory role and the type of hybrid arrangement in place. Overall, supervisors are more likely to have access to dedicated offices at home and on-site than non-supervisors. Some 60 % of supervisors in fully flexible arrangements and 66 % of supervisors in location-flexible arrangements have dedicated spaces to work from at home, but this is the case for only 54 % of those in time-flexible arrangements and less than half of those in controlled arrangements. Employees in non-supervisory roles working in controlled and time-flexible hybrid arrangements are the least likely to report having a dedicated space to work from at home (42 % and 37 %, respectively).

Figure 11: Employees with dedicated space to work at home and on-site according to supervisory status by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: The percentages of respondents who replied ‘Yes, in a dedicated room (alone or shared)’ or ‘Yes, in a room also used for other purposes’ to the question ‘When you work from home, do you have a dedicated space to work?’ In addition, the percentages of respondents who replied ‘you have a dedicated office (alone or shared)’ or ‘you work in an open-plan office’ to the question ‘When you are at your employer’s premises, do any of the following apply?’
Source: EWCS 2024.

Many employees in non-supervisory roles report using rooms that serve multiple purposes when working from home, which can contribute to additional distractions and stress: 42 % of those in fully flexible arrangements and 40 % of those in location-flexible arrangements. Overall, it is important to note that 28 % of supervisors and 25 % of non-supervisors in controlled hybrid arrangements report not having a dedicated space from which to work at home, the largest shares among all groups.

These differences are particularly relevant in light of the available empirical evidence that employees in hybrid settings strongly prefer having a dedicated, non-shared workspace, alongside access to shared spaces for collaboration (Aboagye et al., 2026). If employees lack a dedicated workspace at home, they may be lacking a key condition for effective hybrid work.

When working on-site, most of those with full flexibility enjoy the use of a dedicated office, especially if they have a supervisory role (73 %). This is the case for only 40 % of those in a non-supervisory role operating in a controlled hybrid arrangement. This finding can be explained by the fact that employees with full flexibility are more likely to hold roles that require or retain dedicated offices, whereas those in controlled hybrid work arrangements are required to attend on set days and typically are asked to share desks through specific arrangements. Some 41 % of non-supervisors in fully flexible arrangements and 38 % of those in time-flexible arrangements carry out their work in open-plan offices, whereas this is the case for 33 % of those in location-flexible hybrid work arrangements and 21 % of those in controlled hybrid work arrangements.

A boost to digital infrastructure

The experts consulted highlighted two interconnected barriers to the effective implementation of hybrid work: shortcomings in digital infrastructure and a persistent managerial mindset anchored in traditional practices. A further consideration is the effective use of digital tools, which extends beyond technical proficiency and requires the ability to select the most appropriate medium for different types of communication and collaboration.

It’s not just about knowing how to use platforms like Teams or Zoom – it’s about understanding which tool is appropriate for different types of communication and collaboration.

Research expert

On the technological side, many organisations are still lagging in fully optimising their digital infrastructure for hybrid work environments. While remote access tools may be in place, systems are often fragmented, poorly integrated or inconsistently used across teams. This lack of technological coherence makes it more difficult for managers to facilitate seamless communication, effective collaboration and genuine inclusivity, particularly for employees working remotely. When digital platforms are not strategically aligned with hybrid workflows, managers are required to compensate through additional coordination efforts, which can lead to inefficiencies.

These expert insights are reinforced and further nuanced by the findings from the case studies. In all the organisations investigated, digital infrastructure emerges as a necessary but not sufficient condition for hybrid work. Its organisational consequences are shaped primarily by how it is embedded within specific hybrid work arrangements.

At the Polish R&D institute (Organisation A), which operates under a controlled hybrid work arrangement type, the digital infrastructure has evolved significantly since the pandemic as part of efforts to modernise administrative processes. However, operational capacity and digital maturity vary across units, resulting in parallel systems and differentiated working practices. Strict security requirements associated with the institute's public mandate further constrain flexibility, reinforcing a cautious and compliance-oriented approach to remote work. Consequently, workflow disruptions experienced by remote employees stem not only from technical issues but also from how digital tools are set up and managed in the hybrid work model.

Three of the other organisations investigated – the Slovenian telecoms operator, the Polish consultancy and the Irish academic institution (Organisations B, C and D) – also exhibited fragmentation in the use of digital tools. At the Slovenian telecoms operator (Organisation B), different teams used tools in various ways, with preferences aligned more closely with individual or team needs than with inter-team collaboration. In Organisations C and D, the use of multiple platforms raised concerns about digital overload and frequent disruptive interruptions arising from messages across different channels.

A different configuration emerges in the Finnish municipality and the French non-profit organisation (Organisations E and F). In the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F), digital tools support a highly mobile and travel-intensive mode of work,

enabling flexibility in work location. At the Finnish municipality (Organisation E), digital systems support task management and coordination but are increasingly complemented by more advanced monitoring tools for specific functions.

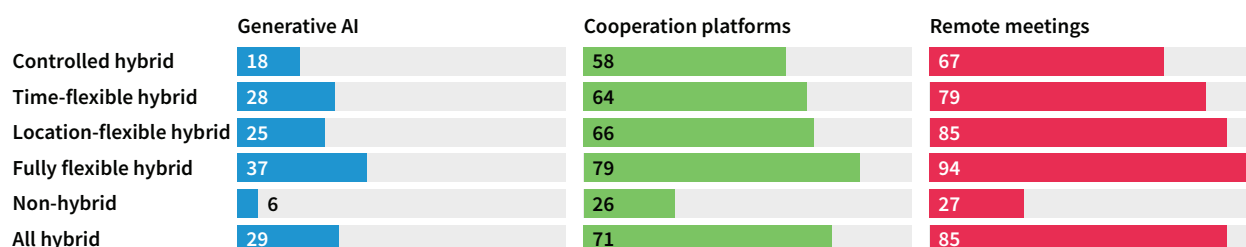
In the Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G), the shift to a fully flexible, remote-first hybrid work arrangement led to the development of a more advanced digital infrastructure, described by interviewees as a 'digital jungle'. While this infrastructure enables flexibility and coordination, it also places increasing pressure on employees to navigate a growing number of tools and develop the skills required to use them effectively. Ensuring awareness of the available tools and building digital competences have become ongoing organisational challenges, requiring more structured and continuous approaches to training.

Survey evidence supports the case study observation that digital infrastructure is a precondition of hybrid work. Hybrid employees are significantly more likely to use advanced technologies, including electronic collaboration platforms, online meeting tools and AI, with the highest uptake observed in fully flexible arrangements.

EWCS 2024 insights: use of digital collaboration technologies

As expected, employees working in hybrid arrangements are much more likely to use AI, electronic cooperation platforms and tools enabling online meetings and teleconferences than those in non-hybrid arrangements (Figure 12). The EWCS 2024 data show that, across the four types of hybrid work, those in fully flexible hybrid work arrangements are more likely to report using the mentioned technologies, whereas those in controlled arrangements are less likely to do so.

Figure 12: Employees reporting the use of specific technology at work according to type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: The percentages of employees who replied 'Yes' to the question 'Do you use the following equipment in your work?' for 'Artificial intelligence that simplifies complex mental tasks or makes recommendations on how you should be working (ChatGPT, Llama, DALL-E, Midjourney, Jasper)' (generative AI); 'Electronic workspaces or cooperation platforms, where multiple users can edit data or documents (e.g. Google Docs, OneDrive, customer relationship management tools (Salesforce))' (cooperation platforms); and 'Tools that enable online meetings or teleconferences' (remote meetings).

Source: EWCS 2024.

From spontaneous to organised and intentional communication

The experts consulted agreed that the shift to hybrid work transforms communication from spontaneous proximity-based interactions into a process that is planned, intentional and more explicitly structured. Informal exchanges that previously occurred naturally in the office are increasingly replaced by scheduled meetings, digital check-ins and deliberately organised social interactions. How successfully organisations manage this transition varies considerably.

Both the Slovenian telecoms operator and the Polish consultancy (Organisations B and C) actively compensate for the loss of spontaneous interaction by embedding structured communication and collaboration routines into everyday work. Regular anchor days, regular scheduled team meetings and shared planning moments provide stable opportunities for exchange, while informal digital practices, such as virtual coffee breaks and social channels, help maintain a sense of collegiality. The expert feedback emphasised the importance of such deliberate design, noting that one of the central challenges for managers in hybrid environments is finding the right balance between synchronous and asynchronous collaboration. Teams are better able to collaborate efficiently without unnecessary interruptions or expectations of constant availability when communication routines are well defined, for example through regular team planning meetings, shared digital task boards, clear response-time expectations and designated no-meeting time blocks.

Effective hybrid meetings require more preparation and more deliberate moderation than fully online or fully in-person formats.

Line manager 2, Organisation A

The Polish R&D institute (Organisation A) reported a relatively smooth adaptation to more intentional communication practices. The managers interviewed emphasised clarity, responsiveness and planning as key enablers of hybrid work. At the same time, increased reliance on scheduled meetings and formal channels means that cross-unit communication has become more structured and, in some cases, slower. Informal exchanges across departments are less frequent, and coordination increasingly depends on formalised processes rather than personal networks. The expert interviews echo this pattern, highlighting that, as communication becomes more intentional, it also becomes more managerial and process driven, which can improve clarity but can reduce opportunities for informal interaction.

The Irish academic institution (Organisation D) has experienced a more pronounced erosion of informal ties. Despite mandatory office days, reduced spontaneity limits opportunities for casual and unplanned social interaction, particularly between different units. Employees report weaker social bonds with colleagues outside their immediate teams, and onboarding new staff has become more challenging in the absence of everyday informal contact. Expert insights help explain why formal meetings struggle to compensate for this loss, pointing to the psychological barrier many employees experience when initiating quick virtual check-ins instead of relying on in-person conversations. Informal communication, the experts noted, is significantly harder to sustain in hybrid settings, especially when some team members are co-located while others remain remote.

The risks associated with diminished informal communication are most evident in the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F). Here, fully remote workers in particular report feelings of isolation, weaker organisational integration and asymmetries in visibility and engagement compared with office-based colleagues. Informal exchanges often concentrate among those who are physically present or travel together, reinforcing divides that are difficult for managers to address. The expert interviews highlighted that such hybrid asymmetries pose particular challenges for trust building and cooperation, especially when employees have limited or no visual contact with one another.

In the Finnish municipality (Organisation E), these challenges are explicitly recognised and addressed. Weekly in-person meetings, regular one-to-one conversations and deliberate check-ins are used to counteract isolation and sustain morale in a dispersed workforce. Informal communication is not left to chance but actively fostered through managerial practices that aim to maintain personal connections alongside task coordination.

We are instructed to hold weekly one-on-one conversations with each team member.

Line manager 1, Organisation E

In the Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G), which operates a remote-first hybrid work arrangement, informal communication is primarily organised through digital channels. While opportunities for spontaneous in-person interaction are limited, making remote work the default reduces visibility gaps by placing all employees on the same communication footing. Because no group benefits systematically from physical co-presence, access to information, interaction and informal exchange are more evenly distributed.

The expert feedback aligns with this finding, noting that, when remote participation is the norm rather than the exception, organisations are better positioned to sustain inclusion through shared digital practices, complemented by carefully planned in-person gatherings held outside the regular office environment.

Overall, both the case studies and the expert interviews indicate that informal communication does not disappear in hybrid work but becomes less evenly distributed and more dependent on organisational design choices, managerial practices and deliberate rituals. Where synchronous collaboration and informal interaction are intentionally designed, across physical, digital and hybrid spaces, organisations are better able to sustain cohesion and inclusion. Where such practices are absent or inconsistent, hybrid work risks amplifying fragmentation, social distance and unequal access to informal networks.

The analysis of survey data highlights the role of digital technologies in supporting interaction in hybrid work settings. Most hybrid employees, particularly those in more flexible hybrid work arrangements, report that technology is associated with enabling more interaction with colleagues, particularly in more flexible arrangements, suggesting that digital tools can partly compensate for reduced physical proximity.

 EWCS 2024 insights: technology's role in enabling social interaction

According to EWCS 2024 data, technology enables more interaction with colleagues for a much larger share of those in hybrid work than in non-hybrid arrangements (Figure 13). Among non-hybrid employees, 41 % reported that technology did not enable more interaction with colleagues, compared with 18 % among those in hybrid arrangements. The greater the autonomy in hybrid work settings in terms of working time and work location, the larger the share of employees who report increased interaction due to the use of technology: 59 % of those in controlled hybrid arrangements reported more interaction due to technology to some or a large extent, but the proportion goes up to 72 % for those in fully flexible hybrid work.

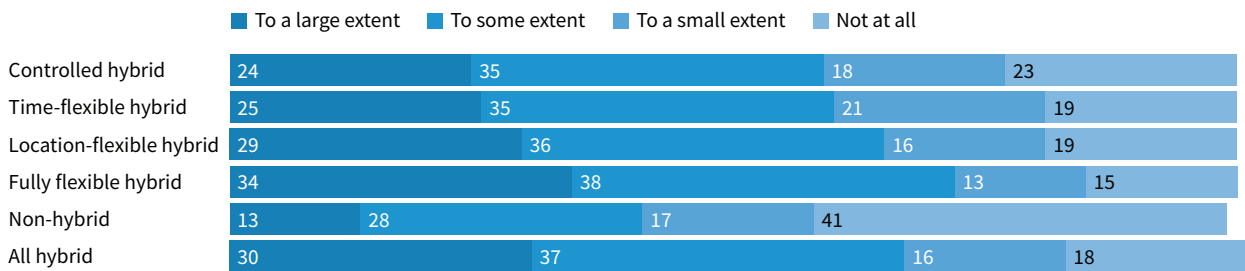
Management challenges

According to the experts interviewed for this study, hybrid work is experienced differently across management levels due to each level's distinct roles and responsibilities. Effective hybrid work requires stronger coordination and collaboration across all levels of management. However, a central tension may emerge across these perspectives: a potential misalignment between strategic intent at senior levels and the operational realities faced by middle and line managers, which could complicate the consistent implementation of hybrid work practices. While these distinctions are important, the analysis that follows focuses on line managers, as they constitute the main unit of analysis in both the expert interviews and the case studies. They are also the most directly involved in the day-to-day implementation of hybrid work.

Top management shows mixed attitudes towards hybrid work, according to experts advising organisations transitioning to hybrid work. Some leaders remain cautious about hybrid work, often influenced by 'proximity bias' – the tendency to favour employees who are physically present and more visible over equally productive remote workers – and by limited personal experience with remote work. Others, however, view hybrid work as a strategic opportunity to improve efficiency, innovation and adaptability in response to digital and workforce changes. Top management typically defines the strategic direction, with implementation delegated downwards.

Middle management operates in a particularly pressured position, tasked with implementing strategic decisions, while addressing concerns from both senior leadership and line managers or team leaders. In large or multinational organisations, globally defined hybrid policies may conflict with local realities, leaving middle managers with limited autonomy and contributing to frustration and reduced motivation. This layer is therefore pivotal in mediating the disconnect between strategy and practice, often without sufficient authority or support to fully resolve it.

Figure 13: Extent to which technology has allowed more interaction with colleagues by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Source: EWCS 2024.

Line managers, such as team leaders or immediate supervisors, are central to the day-to-day implementation of hybrid work. Their close contact with employees gives them insight into operational challenges but also places high demands on them to balance productivity, engagement and individual needs. The case studies in this study highlight particularly the management challenges faced by line managers, reflecting their crucial role in the implementation of hybrid work. At this level, the practical implications of any misalignment are most visible, as line managers must reconcile organisational expectations with employees' lived experiences.

In this context, employee feedback can play an important role in understanding how management practices are perceived and experienced in hybrid working arrangements, helping organisations identify areas for support, development and alignment with intended policies. Addressing gaps between strategic intent and operational realities requires not only feedback mechanisms but also deliberate efforts to better integrate strategic objectives with operational conditions across management levels.

Coordination and managerial support in fragmented hybrid systems

In hybrid work settings, coordinating everyday tasks becomes more complex because information, communication and problem-solving are no longer shared in the same physical space. Issues that could previously be resolved quickly through informal interaction, such as clarifying a task, checking progress or solving a technical problem, now unfold across multiple digital tools, access systems and locations. For example, an on-site employee may resolve a system issue through a quick exchange with a colleague, while a remote worker must submit a request and wait for IT support; updates may be shared in chat channels that not all team members follow; or key decisions may be documented in one platform but discussed informally in another. As a result, information becomes unevenly distributed, delays emerge, and coordination requires more deliberate effort. Line managers play a central role in addressing these gaps by reconnecting information, aligning communication and ensuring that work progresses smoothly across dispersed teams.

In all the case studies, digital infrastructure is broadly functional but fragmented in everyday use, creating persistent coordination challenges for line managers. Importantly, this fragmentation is not uniform: in some organisations it is structurally embedded in regulatory, security and procedural constraints, while in others it emerges more from tool proliferation and informal work practices. This places managerial support in a particularly critical role, especially within more constrained hybrid work models, where flexibility is limited and inconsistencies in access are more

pronounced. Although hybrid work relies heavily on digital tools, access to information, speed of problem resolution and opportunities for informal clarification differ between remote and on-site staff. In such contexts, the ability of managers to actively bridge these gaps through communication, coordination and support becomes essential. These asymmetries are reinforced not only by technological factors but also by differences in digital skills, local practices and communication norms across teams.

When IT systems are not functioning, the team's work is stalled. Someone has to reorganise everything in the meantime, and that someone is usually the line manager.

Line manager 2, Organisation A

These challenges are most pronounced in the controlled hybrid work arrangement illustrated by the case of the Polish R&D institute (Organisation A). While standardised systems exist, strict security protocols and centralised IT control limit flexibility and slow problem resolution. In this case, fragmentation is largely structurally embedded, as access restrictions and compliance requirements systematically differentiate employees' ability to work remotely and use digital tools. Fragmentation stems from differentiated access and uneven digital capacity across units (e.g. HR and Finance compared with project or IT teams). On-site staff often resolve issues informally, while remote workers rely on formal channels and IT support, creating information gaps that line managers must bridge. As a result, managers act not only as coordinators but also as mediators of institutional constraints and translators of organisational rules into workable practices.

A different form of fragmentation appears in time-flexible hybrid arrangements, as in the case of the Polish consultancy in this study (Organisation C), where coordination problems arise less from restricted access than from tool proliferation. Multiple and overlapping platforms are used in parallel, meaning that information is distributed across email, chat tools, online meeting tools and shared systems. As a result, some updates circulate quickly through chats or informal exchanges, while others remain buried in platforms or meeting notes, requiring managers to structure communication more actively and prevent information overload. Here, fragmentation is primarily operational rather than structural, requiring managers to define communication norms, clarify platform use and reduce duplication rather than manage formal constraints.

In other time-flexible hybrid arrangements, such as those adopted by the Finnish municipality and the French non-profit organisation (Organisations E and F), fragmentation takes a different form. Digital tools are central to coordination but do not fully capture the conditions of everyday work. At the Finnish municipality (Organisation E), digital tracking systems provide task-level visibility but fail to reflect learning effort, disruptions or stress caused by dealing with digital tools. With fewer informal cues available, managers must interpret partial system data and rely on dialogue to prevent hidden overload. At the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F), standardised time-recording practices obscure extended working hours linked to business travel, workshop attendance and client-based work. In these cases, fragmentation stems from the limits of the digital representation of work rather than access constraints or tool multiplicity, increasing reliance on managerial judgement and interpretation.

Large public organisations with formal governance structures, such as the Slovenian telecoms operator and the Irish academic institution (Organisations B and D), attempt to mitigate fragmentation through shared platforms and procedural solutions. In Organisation D's context as an Irish higher education institution, reliance on access protocols, booking systems and approval processes enhances clarity and standardisation. However, during peak demand periods, such as exam weeks, these systems are vulnerable to delays and information asymmetries, necessitating managerial intervention to reallocate work and manage communication.

Finally, the case of the Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G), operating a fully flexible, remote-first work arrangement, illustrates fragmentation driven by digital complexity rather than access or procedures. Coordination depends entirely on digital tools, yet employees face a dense and varied set of platforms that can be difficult to navigate. Although information is abundant, key updates and responsibilities are not always easy to locate, increasing the risk of missed information and duplicated work.

Line managers therefore play a central role in helping teams orient themselves within the digital environment and ensuring information is shared consistently across the fully remote teams.

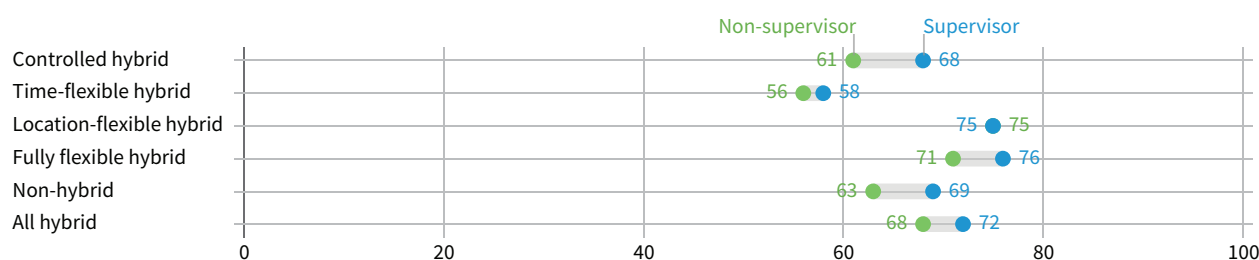
From the case studies, a key distinction emerges between public and private organisations. In public sector settings, fragmentation is more likely to be structurally embedded in regulation, security requirements and formal procedures, positioning managers as mediators of constraints, whereas in private sector settings, fragmentation more often results from tool diversity and loosely standardised work practices, requiring managers to actively design and enforce coordination mechanisms.

These qualitative findings point to the importance of managerial and peer support in addressing coordination challenges in fragmented hybrid systems, particularly where such challenges are more pronounced or unevenly distributed. The survey results presented below suggest that, among supervisors, access to managerial and peer support tends to be higher in more flexible hybrid arrangements.

EWCS 2024 insights: managerial support

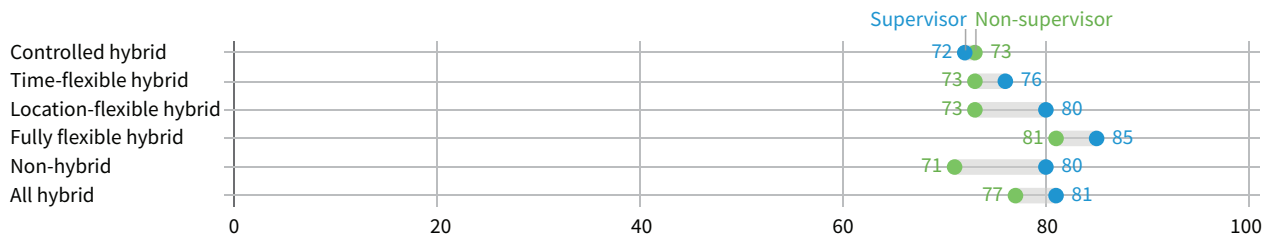
Support from managers and colleagues – through the provision of help and feedback – is an important psychosocial working condition. In conceptual frameworks examining the relationship between job demands and job resources, such support is part of the social resources that have a strong positive relationship with workers' health and well-being through a motivational process of engagement (Eurofound, 2019). The EWCS data indicate that supervisors, in general, are more likely to receive support from their managers than non-supervisors in similar hybrid arrangements. This support is relatively more prevalent among supervisors in fully flexible and location-flexible arrangements and much less prevalent among those in controlled and time-flexible arrangements, even if in supervisory roles (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Employees receiving support from their manager according to supervisory status by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: The percentages of respondents who replied either 'Always' or 'Most of the time' to the question 'How often do you experience the following situations at work: your manager helps and supports you?'
Source: EWCS 2024.

Figure 15: Employees receiving support from colleagues according to supervisory status by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: The percentages of respondents who replied either 'Always' or 'Most of the time' to the question 'How often do you experience the following situations at work: your colleagues help and support you when you need it?'
Source: EWCS 2024.

Managers and supervisors receive even more support from colleagues, who are co-workers likely to be in supervisory roles too (Figure 15). Overall, the share of respondents reporting support from colleagues is larger than the share reporting support from their managers. Again, those in fully flexible hybrid arrangements are clearly the ones benefiting the most from such support, especially if they are in supervisory roles: 85 % receive help and support from colleagues always or most of the time, compared with 72 % of supervisors in controlled hybrid arrangements.

A binary logistic regression was carried out to examine the likelihood of receiving support from managers and from colleagues, while controlling for age, gender, occupation, sector and workplace size. The results show that supervisors in fully flexible arrangements are 1.9 times more likely to receive support from colleagues and 1.5 times more likely to receive support from managers than those in non-hybrid jobs in non-supervisory roles. At the same time, those in time-flexible hybrid arrangements and in controlled hybrid arrangements have significantly smaller chances of receiving support from managers and colleagues, regardless of being in a supervisory role or not (see Annex 1 for more details).

Balancing trust and monitoring

According to the experts interviewed, the transition to hybrid work requires a fundamental shift in managerial focus. Rather than overseeing specific tasks or monitoring employees' physical presence, managers are increasingly expected to prioritise performance outcomes. This represents a move away from time-based supervision towards results-oriented leadership. However, many managers have been accustomed to systems that equate visibility with productivity, making this transition more difficult. This

shift requires new performance frameworks and clearer definitions of output and accountability, which are often still underdeveloped in practice.

Across the case studies, digital infrastructure is closely intertwined with questions of trust, responsibility and control. At the Polish R&D institute (Organisation A), digital systems – while formally introduced to support coordination and efficiency – also generate indirect insights into how work is carried out in practice, for example through delays, system bottlenecks or inconsistencies in how tasks are completed. Line managers may draw on these insights when exercising discretion over remote work arrangements. As a result, an emphasis on trust and output-based work coexists with reinforced managerial oversight and conditional autonomy.

The feedback from the expert interviews suggests that increased reliance on digital visibility (e.g. online status or activity data) is not inherent to hybrid work itself but often reflects some managers' concerns about performance and accountability. In some cases, managers may use enabling technologies in more controlling ways, particularly when they feel overwhelmed, unsupported or uncertain about leading dispersed teams. Such practices are often interpreted as stress responses or confidence issues rather than deliberate attempts at micromanagement.

When I write to an employee and receive a response in a reasonable time frame, I feel reassured that they are performing as we agreed.

Line manager 1, Organisation C

Managers who are accustomed to supervising through direct observation may find this shift particularly challenging.

Academic expert

In the Polish R&D institute, the Polish consultancy and the Irish academic institution (Organisations A, C and D), trust in employees was emphasised, with digital tools reportedly not used for direct performance monitoring and responsibility for coordination increasingly shifting

to line managers. However, the narratives reveal a tension between the discourse of trust and the practical challenges of ensuring coordination and accountability in hybrid work arrangements. In particular, the absence of clear and consistently applied performance metrics often leads managers to rely on informal proxies, such as responsiveness, availability or perceived engagement.

The fundamental question is: is the person actually working at home, or are they doing something else?

Line manager 2, Organisation E

In the Finnish municipality (Organisation E), ostensibly trust-based task management increasingly coexists with more advanced forms of digital monitoring, particularly in technical and field services. Systems such as time tracking, task logging and real-time vehicle monitoring make it possible to compare how much work employees complete, how long tasks take and the associated costs, and, in some cases, link these differences to performance evaluation or pay. This makes tensions between trust and control more explicit. In the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F), limited working-time tracking reinforces autonomy but also creates ambiguities around workload boundaries, recognition and visibility.

In the Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G), despite the technical capacity to monitor work digitally, the infrastructure is primarily designed to support coordination and self-management rather than managerial oversight. Trust is embedded in organisational norms, and responsibility for organising work is largely devolved to employees.

Across the case studies, a persistent tension emerges between stated trust in employees and the organisational requirement to ensure that work remains visible, accountable and productive through digital

means. Given that productivity in cognitive work is inherently difficult to measure directly, organisations often rely on proxies, such as online presence, responsiveness or digital activity logs. While most management representatives stressed the need to safeguard productivity as a condition for granting flexibility, they rarely articulated clear or consistently applied criteria for its evaluation.

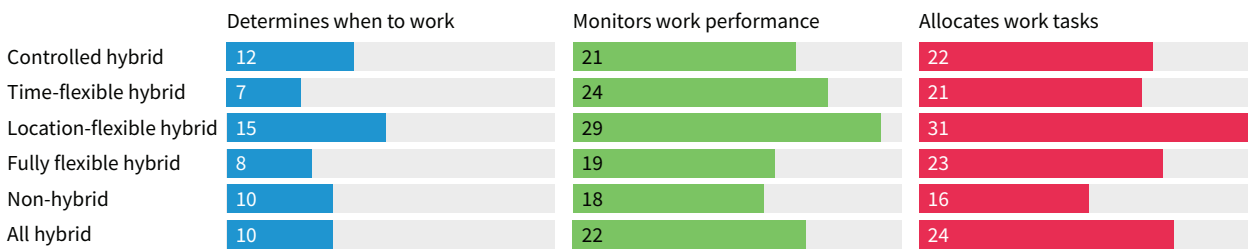
Overall, digital infrastructure enables hybrid work and can enhance coordination and transparency. However, whether it ultimately supports autonomy and outcome-based performance or evolves into mechanisms of control depends less on the technology itself than on managerial practices, leadership capability and organisational culture.

Survey evidence further substantiates these dynamics by showing that hybrid work is associated with greater exposure to algorithmic management. All forms of algorithmic management are underpinned by the digital monitoring of work processes and behaviours, including indirectly, as in the automated allocation of tasks and work scheduling. This reinforces the case study finding that digital infrastructure not only enables coordination but also introduces new forms of visibility and control.

EWCS 2024 insights: exposure to algorithmic management, including performance monitoring

According to the EWCS 2024 data, employees engaging in hybrid work appear to be more exposed to algorithmic management in terms of having a computer program monitor their performance and allocate work tasks, but not necessarily in terms of determining when they have to work (Figure 16). More employees in location-flexible hybrid work arrangements report experiencing the three types of algorithmic management than those in any of the other types of arrangement: 31 % have tasks allocated by a computer program, 29 % have a computer program monitoring their performance and 15 % have a computer program determining when they have to work. This may be the result of the greater discretion over work location in such arrangements, which reduces direct in-person

Figure 16: Employees reporting exposure to aspects of algorithmic management by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: The percentages of respondents who replied ‘To a large extent’ or ‘To some extent’ to the question ‘To what extent does a computer program do the following things: (1) it determines when you have to work, (2) it monitors your work performance and (3) it allocates work tasks to you?’
Source: EWCS 2024.

supervision. In response, organisations may rely more heavily on algorithmic management tools to schedule, coordinate and monitor work.

A slightly larger share of non-hybrid employees, however, report their working hours being determined by a computer program than those in fully flexible and time-flexible hybrid work. The difference probably reflects occupational and organisational structures: non-hybrid work is more often embedded in digitally managed shift systems, whereas time-flexible and fully flexible hybrid work – often associated with professional, knowledge-based or project-oriented roles – tend to grant employees greater temporal autonomy.

Managing equity and perceived fairness

Across the case studies, hybrid work gives rise to persistent equity and fairness challenges that line managers must address in practice, often without being able to change the underlying organisational rules, systems or role requirements that produce them. These challenges are multifaceted, encompassing not only access to remote work but also differences in visibility, workload distribution, digital capabilities and recognition.

In the Polish R&D institute (Organisation A), these challenges are embedded in the design of the hybrid model itself. Security requirements, data protection rules and task-specific system access mean that some roles, particularly in HR, Finance and Payroll, cannot be performed remotely to the same extent as others. These constraints are built into the organisation's technical and regulatory framework rather than stemming from managerial choice. Although formally justified, they are often experienced as unfair, placing line managers in the position of having to explain and legitimise unequal access to flexibility rather than resolve it. In this case, equity challenges are structurally embedded and largely non-negotiable at the managerial level.

At the Slovenian telecoms operator (Organisation B), equity concerns are addressed through collective governance structures. A works council, staff surveys and formal feedback mechanisms serve as channels for identifying exclusion risks and promoting fairness in hybrid arrangements. The managerial challenge lies less in detecting inequities than in translating feedback into concrete changes in everyday work practices, making equity an ongoing, negotiated process rather than a fixed outcome. This reflects a more institutionalised approach to fairness, where responsibility is distributed across governance structures rather than resting solely on line managers.

A similar emphasis on formal systems is evident at the Irish academic institution (Organisation D), albeit with different effects. Operating in an academic context, Organisation D relies on shared infrastructure, standardised procedures and clear approval processes, which limits overt inequities. However, coordination frictions, such as access delays or desk-booking constraints during peak periods, still create small but recurring disadvantages, particularly for remote staff. Line managers are therefore required to smooth over these disparities by reallocating tasks and managing expectations.

Moving beyond formally embedded constraints, the case of the Polish consultancy (Organisation C) illustrates a more subtle and less visible form of inequity. Here differences arise from employees' varying capacities to manage multiple tools and informal messaging norms. For example, some employees actively participate in chat discussions, respond quickly and remain visible on platforms, while others rely more on email or structured communication and may miss updates or be less visible in ongoing exchanges. Similarly, when information is shared through multiple channels, such as intranet updates, team discussions or informal exchanges, not all employees receive the same information at the same time, leading to coordination gaps. These differences can result in uneven access to information, reduced visibility of some employees' contributions and the concentration of work among those who are more responsive or easier to reach.

Line managers respond by clarifying expectations and experimenting with collective routines, such as agreed communication norms, shared meeting practices, and common rules for availability and response times. However, perceptions of fairness remain highly contingent on managers' ongoing attentiveness to how visibility, workload and information access are distributed across the team. In this context, equity is dynamic and continuously produced through everyday managerial practices rather than formal rules.

Equity issues take yet another form in the Finnish municipality (Organisation E), where generational differences in digital skills and comfort with monitoring technologies shape how fairness is perceived and contested.

Equity tensions are not necessarily less pronounced in more flexible or autonomous hybrid work models, where reduced visibility and comparability of work can obscure emerging inequalities. For instance, in the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F), unequal workloads, unreimbursed costs and long working hours are harder to detect because hybrid arrangements limit peer comparison. The case of the Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G), which operates a remote-first autonomy-oriented hybrid model, highlights a further shift in how equity is experienced. While access to remote work is broadly

Equity is one of the biggest challenges in hybrid arrangements.

Line manager 1, Organisation D

equal, challenges emerge around digital visibility and inclusion in a predominantly virtual environment. Although the organisation uses workplace intelligence and working-time data to support well-being, line managers remain central to ensuring that remote employees are not overlooked and that voluntary office presence does not create new, informal hierarchies.

From the analysis of the case studies, a distinction emerges between public and private sector organisations. In public sector organisations, equity challenges are more often structurally embedded in rules, roles and access constraints, whereas in private sector organisations they are more likely to arise from differences in visibility, workload distribution and informal practices, requiring ongoing managerial calibration.

Survey evidence supplements these insights by showing that perceptions of fairness are generally positive but weaker in more constrained hybrid work arrangements, such as controlled and time-flexible arrangements. This supports the case study finding that structural limits on flexibility can generate perceived inequities that managers must manage but may not be able to fully address or resolve. The survey also highlights recognition as a key dimension of fairness, with higher levels reported in more flexible arrangements and lower levels in more constrained ones.

EWCS 2024 insights: perceptions of fair treatment and supervisor recognition

According to EWCS 2024 data, the share of employees who consider themselves to be treated fairly in the workplace is very large, with 85 % reporting being fairly treated always or most of the time. This is the case for 93 % of employees in fully flexible arrangements, 89 % of those in location-flexible arrangements, 87 % of those in time-flexible arrangements and 83 % of those in controlled hybrid arrangements. The results of a binary logistic regression show that supervisory status does not make a large difference in predicting the likelihood of reporting being fairly treated in the workplace. They

do confirm, however, that employees working in fully flexible hybrid arrangements, regardless of having a supervisory role, are much more likely to report being fairly treated than those in controlled hybrid arrangements (see Annex 1 for more detailed results).

Receiving recognition for work done is another important element of fairness in the workplace. Being recognised for work done has a positive impact on motivation, while a lack of recognition may impact workers' mental health (Eurofound, 2026). As shown in Figure 17, the share of supervisors who consider themselves recognised for their work is greater than that of non-supervisors. Moreover, perceived recognition is more prevalent among those in fully flexible and location-flexible arrangements, in particular among supervisors. The smallest shares are among those in time-flexible and controlled arrangements.

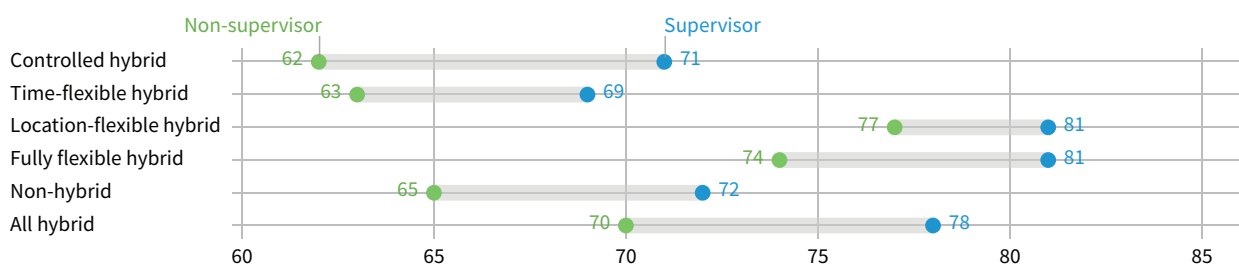
Managing occupational health and safety and psychosocial risks

A recurrent theme in the interviews with management representatives in all the case studies is that exposure to information from multiple platforms combined with the blurring of work-life boundaries in hybrid work at times generates digital overload and pressure for constant availability and immediate responsiveness, whether explicitly required or implicitly expected. The lack of uninterrupted focus time further intensifies stress and contributes to cognitive fatigue. These risks are not solely workload-related but also stem from the structure of digital work itself, including constant connectivity, fragmented attention and overlapping

Feelings of overload are not always easy to identify or address, which makes the prevention of stress and burnout less straightforward.

Line manager 2, Organisation F

Figure 17: Employees stating that they receive the recognition they deserve for their work according to supervisory status by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: The percentages of respondents who replied either 'Strongly agree' or 'Tend to agree' to the question 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about your job: you receive the recognition you deserve for your work?'

Source: EWCS 2024.

communication channels. These effects may be partially mitigated by individual employees' coping strategies.

Yet, in hybrid work contexts, managers often lack opportunities for direct observation of employees' working conditions, making such stress difficult to detect and address. In hybrid work settings, occupational health and safety management relies largely on employee self-assessment and disclosure, reflecting both legal constraints and the private nature of home-working environments. Line managers are generally unable to directly assess remote working conditions and have limited or no means of verifying regulatory compliance in home-based settings. As a result, they must rely on indirect indicators such as changes in performance, absenteeism or employee-reported concerns. This creates a predominantly reactive rather than preventative approach to risk management.

As physical observation and non-verbal cues are largely absent, line managers and team leaders face increasing demands in maintaining team cohesion and safeguarding individual well-being without regular in-person contact. Consequently, a central management challenge is the deliberate development of new practices and leadership competencies that mitigate digital overload, foster connection and knowledge sharing in digital spaces, and support the well-being of employees at risk of overwork. This includes developing skills in recognising indirect signals of strain, initiating sensitive conversations and managing boundaries in digitally mediated environments. This challenge is compounded by the fact that managers themselves are exposed to the same conditions and risks, so their ability to model healthy work practices is just as important.

The difficulty observing employee well-being was noted in the Polish R&D institute (Organisation A), where managers reportedly infer ergonomic or psychosocial problems from reduced productivity, self-reported discomfort or observable signs of disengagement. Formal risk assessments exist, but they largely shift responsibility to employees, leaving managers in a reactive role. Both the Slovenian telecoms operator and the Polish consultancy (Organisations B and C) face similar constraints, relying primarily on communication routines, regular check-ins and informal monitoring. The Slovenian telecoms operator (Organisation B) partially compensates for these limitations through staff surveys and collective feedback mechanisms, which help highlight risks but still require managerial interpretation and follow-up.

The Irish academic institution (Organisation D) adopts a more structured approach, combining mandatory training, formal self-assessment tools and managerial sign-off procedures. While this framework supports legal compliance, which is particularly important in an academic context, it does not fundamentally alter the distribution of responsibility. Employees remain accountable for their home-working conditions, and managers' roles remain largely supervisory rather than preventative, especially during periods of high work pressure. This illustrates the limits of compliance-based approaches in addressing everyday psychosocial risks.

The case of the Finnish municipality (Organisation E) highlights a different dynamic, in which challenges appear to be linked less to workload alone and more to the introduction of digital monitoring technologies. The interview material points to the increased visibility of work processes (which are not specific to hybrid work but stem from operational and reporting requirements) as a result of the tracking of tasks, time use and real-time location. This raises questions about trust, autonomy and acceptance, particularly across generations, rather than explicitly reported psychosocial stress.

Psychosocial risks are most pronounced in more flexible hybrid work arrangements. In the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F), hybrid work-related risks are formally addressed through the legally required *document unique d'évaluation des risques professionnels* (single document for assessing occupational risks, DUERP) ⁽²⁾, which includes measures targeting psychosocial risks and ergonomics. However, the interviewees mentioned persistent issues, such as heavy workloads, burnout, anxiety, work-life imbalance and an intense work pace. Beyond periodic DUERP updates, risk monitoring relies mainly on regular manager-employee meetings and a biennial external 'barometer' assessing stress, autonomy and work-life balance, indicating a gap between formal compliance and everyday experience.

With its fully flexible hybrid work arrangement, the case of the Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G) illustrates a more proactive, yet still manager-dependent, approach. The organisation employs workplace intelligence – combining working-time data, office sensors and HR information – to identify patterns that may signal overload or disengagement. Here, the key challenge for line managers and team leaders lies in setting the boundaries around the use of these rich data in a context where its collection inherently increases the

⁽²⁾ Under Articles L.4121-1 and L.4121-2 of the Code du travail, employers in France are required to take the necessary measures to ensure the physical and mental health of employees, to assess all occupational risks to which workers may be exposed and to formally record the results of this assessment in the DUERP. Because this statutory obligation expressly refers to mental health, psychosocial risks fall within the scope of this mandatory risk assessment. Psychosocial risks commonly include work-related stress; harassment, including sexual harassment; workplace violence; burnout; excessive workload; lack of autonomy; deficient management practices; and interpersonal conflicts within teams. These categories of risk are formally recognised in French occupational health and safety doctrine and guidance, notably by the Institut National de Recherche et de Sécurité.

visibility of employees' work and approximates surveillance. This creates a tension between performance monitoring and identifying risks of overwork and burnout, with the data used to detect such risks and, in turn, to support managers in initiating timely conversations about employee well-being and sustainable work practices.

From the case studies, a common pattern emerges: while digital tools and formal frameworks provide partial support for managing health and safety risks, effective risk prevention ultimately depends on managerial awareness, capability and proactive engagement. Public sector organisations tend to rely more on formal compliance frameworks and self-assessment procedures, whereas private sector organisations more often experiment with data-driven or informal approaches. However, in both contexts, responsibility for occupational health and safety (including identifying and addressing psychosocial risks) remains with the employer, even where work is performed remotely and direct oversight is limited. This places managers in a key operational role, with employees required to follow guidance and actively contribute to organising safe and healthy home workstations.

The sheer volume of change is overwhelming, and that's where the stress comes from.

HR expert

The management challenges of ensuring employee well-being identified in the case studies were echoed in the expert interviews. Some experts situated these challenges within a broader context of continuous and accelerating change, characterised by new ways of working associated with hybrid models, rapid digitalisation and the need for reskilling in areas where

managers themselves may lack expertise, undermining their ability to lead with confidence.

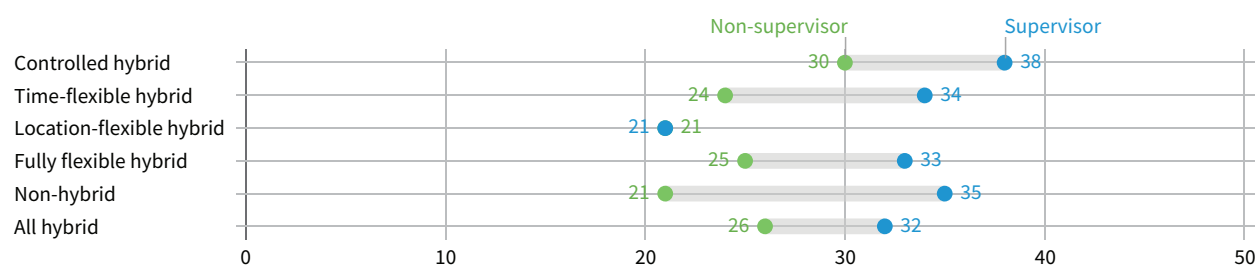
The survey evidence presented below complements these findings by shedding light on how hybrid work affects not only employees but also managers themselves. Supervisors are generally more likely to report experiencing work-related stress. At the same time, they tend to be better informed about workplace stress prevention measures and occupational health and safety risks than non-supervisory employees, suggesting that this awareness does not necessarily translate into equally high levels of awareness among non-supervisors and that information may not consistently cascade throughout the workforce.

EWCS 2024 insights: supervisors' exposure to stress and awareness of health and safety risks and work-related stress prevention measures

Even in contexts where managers successfully leverage data-driven systems to address employee well-being at an early stage, the heightened responsibility placed on supervisory roles within hybrid work arrangements raises the important question of how managers themselves experience stress.

The EWCS 2024 data show that employees in supervisory roles are generally more likely to report work-related stress. This difference is apparent across the various hybrid work types, with the exception of location-flexible hybrid work arrangements, which showed no significant difference between supervisors and non-supervisors (Figure 18). The share of those experiencing stress is greatest for supervisors and non-supervisors in the controlled hybrid group and smallest among the non-supervisors in non-hybrid roles and those in location-flexible hybrid arrangements regardless of whether they have a supervisory role. The results of a binary logistic regression show that both supervisory status and type of hybrid work arrangement have strong effects in predicting the likelihood of experiencing stress at work. The likelihood

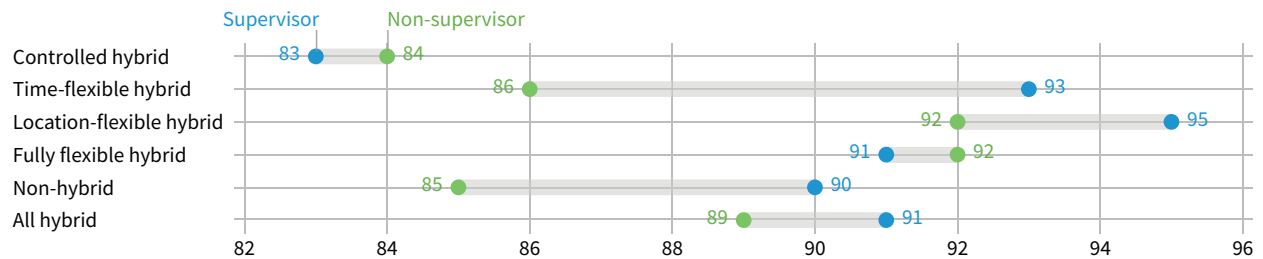
Figure 18: Employees experiencing stress at work according to supervisory status by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: The percentages of respondents who replied either 'Always' or 'Most of the time' to the question 'How often do you experience stress in your work?'

Source: EWCS 2024.

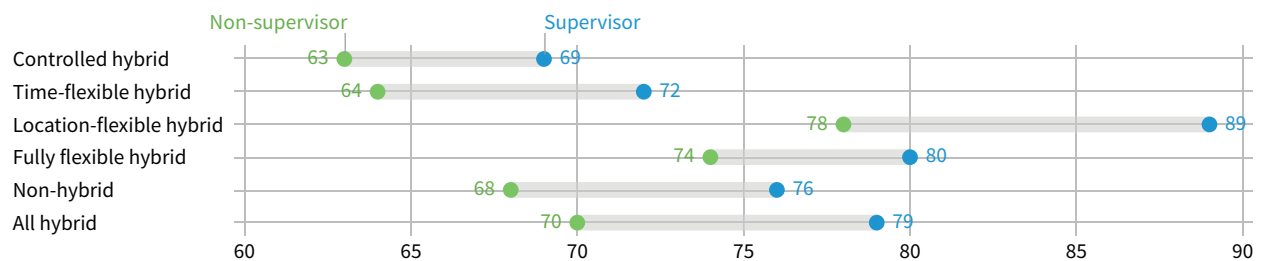
Figure 19: Employees who feel well or very well informed about occupational health and safety risks related to their job according to supervisor status by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: The percentages of respondents who replied either 'Well informed' or 'Very well informed' to the question 'Regarding health and safety risks related to your job, how well informed would you say you are?'

Source: EWCS 2024.

Figure 20: Employees who feel well or very well informed about the prevention of work-related stress according to supervisor status by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Note: The percentages of respondents who replied either 'Well informed' or 'Very well informed' to the question 'How well informed are you about the prevention of work-related stress at your workplace?'

Source: EWCS 2024.

of reporting stress at work is 2.7 times greater for supervisors in controlled hybrid arrangements (see Annex 1 for more detailed results).

The EWCS data indicate that, overall, hybrid employees tend to be better informed about occupational health and safety risks related to their job and about work-related stress. This is particularly true if they are supervisors. However, those in controlled hybrid work arrangements stand out as being less informed not only than their counterparts in other hybrid arrangements but also than non-hybrid employees. On the one hand, as shown in Figures 19 and 20, supervisors and non-supervisors in location-flexible arrangements are most likely to report being well or very well informed about occupational health and safety and the prevention of work-related stress. On the other hand, supervisors and non-supervisors in controlled hybrid work arrangements are the least likely to report the same. Lower levels of autonomy and more hierarchical communication structures in controlled hybrid work arrangements may weaken employees' engagement with organisational communication, which results in lower levels of information about occupational health and safety and the prevention of work-related stress reaching them.

Changing role of the line manager and its implications

The evidence suggests that hybrid work is associated with a broader transformation of line management, marked by a shift away from direct presence-based control towards mediated coordination and more people-focused management. Across the organisations studied, two interrelated dimensions of the line manager's role emerge. One is that line managers increasingly act as coaches and facilitators of communication and cohesion, supporting employees in structuring work, maintaining connections and sustaining engagement in dispersed settings. The other is that they take a more active role in clarifying expectations, setting goals, tracking progress and following up on results, using digital tools and regular check-ins to ensure that work is completed as agreed. These dimensions mean that, in hybrid settings, line managers play a more active role in connecting people, organising work and ensuring that tasks are carried out. This transformation increases reliance on managerial judgement and discretion, while also intensifying demands: managers must simultaneously enable autonomy and maintain oversight, which contributes to higher workloads, greater role complexity and rising capability requirements, as discussed further below.

Line managers as coaches and architects of communication and cohesion

Across the case studies, informal coordination that previously occurred spontaneously now requires intentional managerial intervention. At the Polish R&D institute, the Slovenian telecoms operator and the Polish consultancy (Organisations A, B and C), line managers actively structure communication through anchor days, regular scheduled meetings and informal digital practices, enabling teams to maintain cohesion without constant availability. Here, managers increasingly act as facilitators, ensuring that communication flows remain inclusive across locations.

progress; instead, they must rely more heavily on digitally mediated coordination through clearly defined tasks, monitored outputs and progress tracking against agreed timelines.

When employees see that leadership is people oriented and values results over physical presence, it fosters trust and engagement regardless of whether work is done remotely or in the office.

HR manager, Organisation B

Maintaining a sense of community requires more proactivity from the manager.

HR manager, Organisation E

This role becomes more challenging in organisations where informal ties are weaker or unevenly distributed, most notably at the Irish academic institution (Organisation D) – where managers struggle to compensate for the erosion of spontaneous interaction, particularly between units and during onboarding – and at the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F), where integrating fully remote employees poses additional challenges.

Across these contexts, the managerial role increasingly resembles that of a coach. Rather than directing work through proximity or formal hierarchy, line managers are expected to help employees structure their tasks, manage boundaries and remain connected in dispersed settings. According to the HR manager interviewed in the Finnish municipality (Organisation E), hybrid workplaces put greater emphasis on people-focused competencies, particularly when employees are not co-located, as managers must communicate deliberately, build trust at a distance, and support well-being and engagement. As a result, leadership requires greater proactivity and empathy, with interactions and check-ins needing to be planned rather than left to chance. The expert interviews strongly echo this finding, emphasising that hybrid work demands new relational and communicative skills, including active listening, feedback and emotional awareness.

Line managers as coordinators of outcomes and accountability

In all the organisations investigated, hybrid work reshapes the role of line managers by altering the basis of managerial oversight. Line managers can no longer rely on physical co-presence to assess engagement or

At the Polish R&D institute and the Slovenian telecoms operator (Organisations A and B), line managers emphasise the importance of clearly defined tasks, regular follow-ups and thorough documentation, supported by digital tools such as time-tracking and workflow systems. Although these tools are formally presented as supporting coordination rather than monitoring, they nonetheless increase the visibility of employees' work. As a result, accountability is increasingly mediated through digital systems, with employees expected to make their activities visible, explain how they use their time and demonstrate the completion of agreed tasks.

In more flexible hybrid work settings (e.g. Organisations C and D), accountability – understood as responsibility for agreed outcomes and the ability to demonstrate progress – is organised less through formal monitoring and more through shared routines and output-based expectations. Managers rely on regular meetings, planning cycles and check-ins to maintain oversight. However, where organisational frameworks are less clearly defined, as in the Irish academic institution (Organisation D), responsibility for coordinating accountability – such as clarifying roles, setting expectations, monitoring progress and documenting decisions – shifts more strongly to the line manager level. While these are core managerial functions, their execution becomes more discretionary, as managers must determine how to define, monitor and enforce accountability in the absence of clear organisational standards.

The expert insights further suggest that hybrid work does not eliminate managerial control but transforms how it is exercised. Line managers remain responsible for ensuring that work is completed, yet must do so without direct visibility of employees' activities. This places them in a mediating role between organisational expectations of accountability and the need to support employee autonomy, highlighting an ongoing tension between trust and control in hybrid work arrangements.

Line managers under pressure: expanding discretion and intensifying demands

While hybrid work redefines managers' roles in coordinating outcomes and accountability, it also reshapes the conditions under which these roles are performed, expanding discretion while intensifying demands and increasing job complexity.

In all the organisations investigated, line managers play a central role in negotiating hybrid work arrangements. They determine eligibility for remote work, its frequency and the conditions under which it is permitted, while also interpreting productivity expectations and mediating tensions around fairness, responsiveness and availability. These expanded responsibilities significantly increase the scope and complexity of the managerial role.

The common challenge for managers is often that they are not given sufficient time and support to manage people and that they have their own work to do.

HR expert

The expert interviews provide critical insight into the consequences of this intensification. Many managers lack sufficient time and organisational support to fulfil their expanded people-management role alongside ongoing operational responsibilities. This situation risks widening the divide between managers who proactively adapt to hybrid leadership and those who struggle with or resist the changing role. Experts also highlight a growing trend: declining interest in leadership positions, with more employees opting for specialist or individual contributor paths, which may reflect the increasing pressures associated with leadership in a hybrid work environment.

Across all organisations, line managers reported spending more time planning, following up, documenting decisions, articulating expectations and monitoring progress, while also needing to maintain engagement and motivation without regular face-to-face interaction.

At the Polish R&D institute (Organisation A), managerial work intensifies as managers absorb disruptions created by digital constraints and security rules. When remote access is restricted or IT support is delayed, line managers must reorganise tasks, adjust deadlines and justify continued on-site presence.

Where hybrid work is embedded within strong governance structures, as in the Slovenian telecoms operator (Organisation B), managerial demands have shifted towards interpretation and alignment. Feedback mechanisms provide guidance but require managers to

reconcile employee input with organisational policies and translate it into workable practices.

In more flexible hybrid settings, such as the Polish consultancy (Organisation C), intensification is driven by continuous adjustments to work arrangements. Managers establish communication norms, clarify expectations and check in frequently, strengthening trust but increasing time and emotional effort.

In the Irish academic institution (Organisation D), system bottlenecks and access issues increase the need for coordination, reinforcing managers' role in maintaining continuity under pressure.

Managerial roles expand further in more flexible hybrid work arrangements. In the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F), limited visibility of working hours requires managers to rely on personalised communication to detect overwork or burnout. In contrast, the Finnish municipality (Organisation E) is presented with the opposite challenge: extensive digital monitoring provides visibility but raises concerns about trust and autonomy, requiring managers to balance oversight with reassurance.

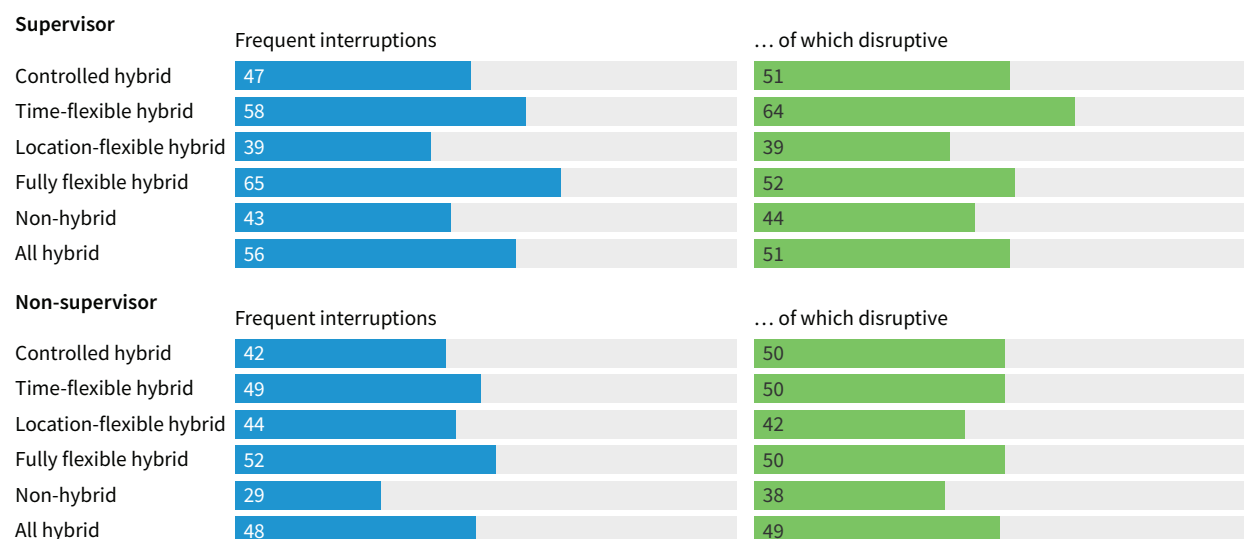
In the Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G), operating a fully flexible remote-first hybrid work arrangement, line managers must support employees in navigating a complex digital environment while using working-time data proactively to assess well-being. They are also expected to create meaningful reasons for office presence, manage fluctuating occupancy, and foster collaboration and cohesion.

The EWCS 2024 survey evidence complements these findings by highlighting how the intensification of managerial roles in hybrid settings is closely associated with increased cognitive demands and varying levels of management quality. Hybrid employees, particularly those in supervisory roles, report having to perform complex tasks and make complex decisions to a greater extent, confirming the case study observation that managing hybrid employees entails greater responsibility, coordination and problem-solving. These demands are especially pronounced in more flexible arrangements, where managers must continuously adapt work processes and respond to evolving conditions.

 **EWCS 2024 insights: frequent interruptions, cognitive demands and management quality**

Frequent interruptions

The survey data show that hybrid work, especially in more flexible arrangements, is associated with more frequent and often disruptive interruptions, particularly for supervisors. This suggests that flexibility can come with heightened expectations of availability and responsiveness, which may blur the intended boundaries between focused and collaborative work.

Figure 21: Employees reporting frequent interruptions to perform ad hoc tasks according to supervisory status by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)

Note: The percentages of respondents who replied either 'Very often' or 'Fairly often' to the question 'How often do you have to interrupt a task in order to perform an ad hoc task?'

Source: EWCS 2024.

The EWCS 2024 asked respondents how often they have to interrupt a task to take on an unplanned task; it followed up by asking if such interruptions are beneficial, neutral or disruptive. Being exposed to frequent disruptive interruptions adds to one's work intensity and can be detrimental to health and well-being. The EWCS 2024 data indicate that employees with a hybrid work arrangement are more likely to experience frequent interruptions, especially if they are supervisors in a time-flexible or a fully flexible arrangement (Figure 21). This suggests that greater flexibility may increase expectations of responsiveness and availability, which makes employees more likely to receive unexpected requests. Furthermore, when such frequent interruptions are reported, they tend to be considered disruptive by larger shares of those in hybrid work, especially by supervisors in fully flexible (52 %) or time-flexible arrangements (64 %). This indicates that supervisors in fully flexible and time-flexible arrangements tend to experience greater work intensity due to more frequent disruptive interruptions.

Binary logistic regressions were conducted to examine whether being in a supervisory role across the various hybrid work arrangements predicts the likelihood of reporting interruptions and disruptive interruptions, while controlling for age, gender, occupation, sector and workplace size. The results show that supervisory status and hybrid work type significantly predict reporting disruptive interruptions (see Annex 1 for detailed results).

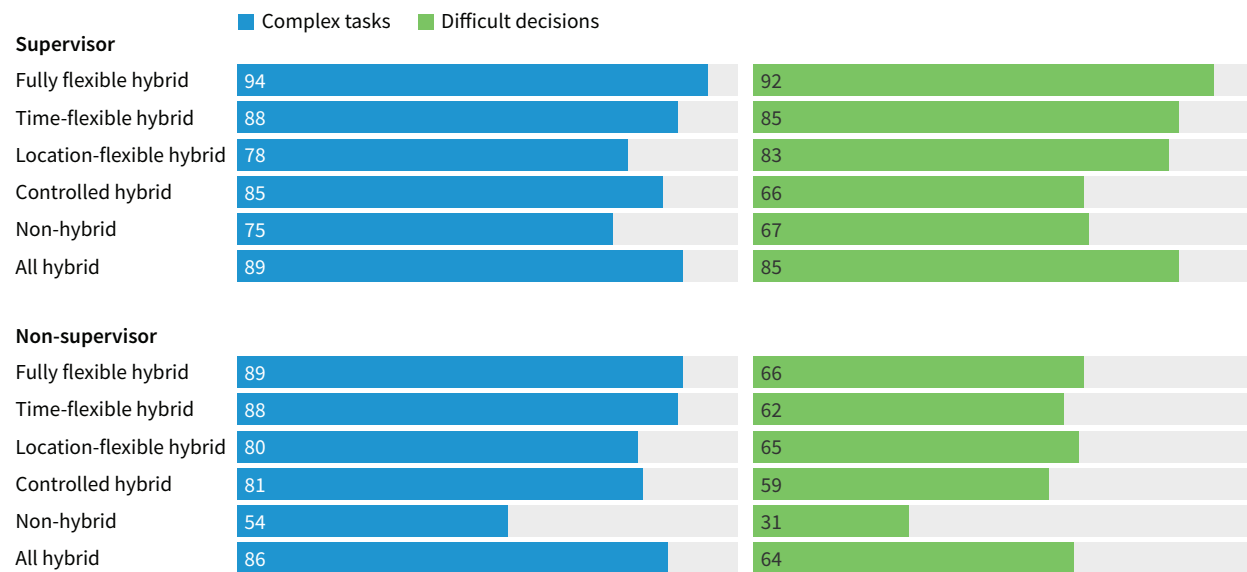
Cognitive demands

Undertaking complex tasks and making difficult decisions can be seen as part of the learning opportunities at work, an element of the job quality dimension of skills and discretion (Eurofound, 2026). However, a meta-analysis of the differential effects of workload and cognitive demands found that cognitive demands are positively related to learning and motivation but negatively related to strain (Kubicek et al., 2023). Having to constantly undertake complex tasks and make difficult decisions can lead to strain, fatigue and reduced quality of work output.

The EWCS data indicate that, first, hybrid employees experience more cognitive demands overall than their non-hybrid counterparts. Second, they show that supervisors tend to report greater cognitive demands than non-supervisors. Finally, the data indicate that supervisors in fully flexible arrangements and time-flexible arrangements are more likely to report cognitive demands than those in location-flexible and controlled arrangements.

According to the EWCS data, supervisors in fully flexible arrangements report handling more complex tasks and making more difficult decisions than those in non-hybrid jobs, probably reflecting the greater autonomy associated with such arrangements (Figure 22). When supervisors can determine both when and where work is performed, they assume greater responsibility for coordinating work, managing distributed teams and resolving operational challenges, exposing them to more complex situations requiring judgement.

Figure 22: Employees reporting selected cognitive demands according to supervisory status by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Source: EWCS 2024.

By contrast, supervisors in location-flexible hybrid arrangements report fewer complex tasks. While work location is flexible, fixed schedules may increase coordination demands, shifting supervisory work towards monitoring and synchronising dispersed employees rather than complex problem-solving.

Supervisors in controlled hybrid arrangements, with limited flexibility in both time and location, are the least likely of those in a supervisory role to report making difficult decisions. These more structured arrangements rely more on formal procedures and centralised decision-making, reducing the need for discretionary judgement.

Supervisors in time-flexible hybrid arrangements fall in the middle. Temporal flexibility is associated with higher autonomy in scheduling and work organisation, whereas limited location flexibility is associated with fewer coordination challenges. As a result, these supervisors may face more complex tasks and decisions than those in controlled hybrid arrangements but fewer than those in fully flexible systems.

Management quality

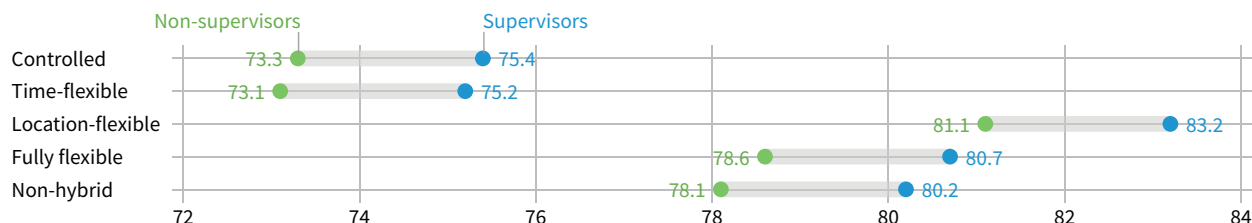
High-quality management is the backbone of any successful organisation. The EWCS contains a set of questions to assess management quality as experienced by employees. These questions cover issues of respect, cooperation, the discussion of private matters (psychological safety), feedback, development support and clarity. The replies to those questions were put together and analysed to create a management quality index, ranging from 0 (representing very low-quality management) to 100 (representing very high-quality management).

The data show that overall management quality is relatively high, with it being higher in fully flexible hybrid work organisations and highest of all in location-flexible hybrid work organisations. When controlling for gender, age, occupation, sector and workplace size, estimated marginal means indicate that management quality is lower in controlled hybrid and time-flexible work organisations than those reported by other employees, including those in non-hybrid situations (Figure 23).

The findings suggest that autonomy over location has a stronger association with management quality than autonomy over time, although this result should be interpreted with caution. Time-only flexibility often operates within organisational constraints (e.g. required availability windows, deadlines or coordination with others), making it more limited in practice. In contrast, location flexibility brings more visible benefits, such as reduced commuting and better work-life balance, which may be more readily attributed to management, leading to more positive evaluations. However, this interpretation remains tentative and cannot be directly triangulated with the case study evidence, as no organisation in the qualitative sample has a purely location-flexible arrangement. This finding should therefore be treated as indicative and warrants further investigation.

Regardless of the type of hybrid work environment supervisors operate in, they tend to report relatively higher-quality management than their counterparts in non-supervisory roles. It is also noteworthy that supervisors operating in location-flexible arrangements enjoy the highest level of management quality. This pattern further highlights the need for additional

Figure 23: Management quality index according to supervisory status and type of hybrid work arrangement (0–100)



Note: Estimated marginal means of the management quality index, calculated through a univariate regression; EU employees, controlling for gender, age, occupation, sector and workplace size.

Source: EWCS 2024.

analysis to better understand how different forms of flexibility shape perceptions of management quality. The higher ratings given by supervisors across all work types also point to a divide among employees, where those in managerial roles may experience or interpret

management practices more favourably than non-supervisory employees. At the same time, the room for improvement in terms of management quality is clear among those in controlled and time-flexible hybrid arrangements.

Summary

- The transition to hybrid work involves important organisational changes.** Across the organisations studied, hybrid work has led to a reconfiguration of where work is performed, with the case studies showing a shift away from the office as the default workplace towards a functional split: home for focused tasks and office for collaboration, at least in theory. However, large-scale physical redesign remains limited, as financial and strategic constraints often lead organisations to rely more on scheduling practices (e.g. anchor days) than spatial transformation. Survey data also highlight gaps, including limited access to dedicated home workspaces and the continued reliance on traditional office layouts. Digital infrastructures have grown in importance and act as key enablers, but the case studies reveal fragmentation, complexity and overlap between tools, while the survey data show an association between hybrid work and greater use of cooperation platforms, remote meeting tools, generative AI and algorithmic management tools. Communication has become more structured and intentional, with evidence from both the case studies and survey data showing that digital tools can sustain interaction, albeit often in more formalised ways.
- Hybrid work both amplifies existing management challenges and introduces new complexities in how work is coordinated and managed.** The case studies show that fragmented digital systems and dispersed teams are linked to more complex coordination, as managers must compensate for reduced informal interaction and uneven information flows. At the same time, hybrid work may introduce tensions between trust and monitoring, as managers shift from supervising presence to managing outcomes. The case studies suggest that digital visibility is often used as a proxy for performance, while the survey data point to the growing use of monitoring tools. Organisational constraints can also generate challenges around equal treatment and well-being. The case studies show that unequal access to remote work and resources are linked to perceived inequities, while reduced visibility may make it more difficult to manage stress and overload. The survey data support this, indicating that more constrained hybrid work arrangements are associated with lower fairness perceptions, greater cognitive demands and more stress, particularly for supervisors.
- Hybrid work reconfigures how line managers carry out their roles.** The case studies show a shift from supervision to facilitation, with managers acting as coaches who structure communication, foster cohesion and support well-being in more dispersed teams. At the same time, hybrid work moves managerial oversight from physical presence to outcomes, with greater reliance on task coordination and digital tools. The survey data reinforce this shift, highlighting greater use of digital systems and higher cognitive demands, especially in more flexible arrangements. The case study evidence points to an intensification of the managerial role in hybrid arrangements, with expanded responsibilities, greater complexity and increased pressure to balance accountability, autonomy and team engagement.

3 Management practices and good practice elements

The seven organisations studied adopted a range of management practices during their transition to hybrid work and, in some cases, transposed office-based practices to hybrid work settings with minimal or no adaptation, which ultimately intensified management challenges. Based on expert insights, the main risks arise when managerial discretion is not matched by sufficient training, guidance and organisational coherence, leaving line managers to absorb the increased complexity individually.

This chapter draws on expert insights to contextualise and inform a comparative interpretation of the practices and hybrid work arrangements investigated in the case studies. The approaches adopted in each organisation are assessed against management strategies and elements of good practice identified by the experts based on their experience studying or working closely with organisations transitioning to and operating in hybrid work settings. This perspective helps to situate the case study findings within a broader understanding of what is considered effective in practice, highlighting both strengths and areas where further development may be needed. In doing so, the analysis comes full circle by not only identifying key challenges but also pointing to potential solutions.

Balancing trust, autonomy and performance management

Insights from the experts consulted highlight the need to move towards trust-centred management in hybrid work environments, with a stronger emphasis on outcomes rather than control. While outcome-based approaches, such as management by objectives, are well established, hybrid work increases their practical relevance, as direct supervision based on physical presence becomes less feasible. In this context, managers are encouraged to delegate responsibility, empower their teams and prioritise outcome-based performance rather than monitoring working hours and physical presence. Trust emerges as the foundation of effective hybrid management, supporting increased

autonomy and, at the same time, reinforcing accountability.

Across the cases, this shift creates a core trade-off between giving employees autonomy over how and when they work, ensuring accountability for results and maintaining consistent performance management practices across teams.

At the Polish R&D institute (Organisation A), the hybrid work arrangement is formally controlled, limiting employees' discretion over working time and work location, with line managers exercising considerable oversight of individuals' daily work. Trust is primarily enacted through close supervisory relationships, sustained dialogue with line managers and monitoring task completion rather than through highly formalised output metrics. While performance objectives are typically defined, in practice, line managers often assess whether tasks have been completed and whether outputs meet expected standards based on ongoing interaction and professional judgement, rather than strictly against predefined, standardised performance criteria. This concentrates responsibility for evaluation, feedback and performance management in the hands of individual line managers and may result in making outcomes highly dependent on their managerial competence and interpretation.

Other organisations combine elements of autonomy, to varying degrees, with relatively tight forms of control. For instance, the Slovenian telecoms operator (Organisation B) maintains relatively strict expectations regarding office presence alongside monitoring based on key performance indicators, resulting in limited practical autonomy despite a discourse of trust. Here, trust is largely tied to achieving predefined performance targets. Similarly, the Irish academic institution (Organisation D) relies heavily on formal rules and mandatory office attendance, with trust remaining conditional and reinforced through compliance and enforcement. The Finnish municipality (Organisation E) adopts a more formalised approach by embedding autonomy within individual remote work agreements and time-tracking systems, seeking to balance trust with legal, administrative and operational accountability.

In organisations that grant employees greater autonomy over working-time arrangements and discretion over work location, performance management shifts more clearly towards output-based assessment. This is most evident in the French non-profit organisation and the Finland-based multinational

You need a high degree of trust as a manager – taking trust as the starting point and focusing far more on employees' results.

HR expert

Key learning points from the case studies and expert interviews

- ✓ **Hybrid work benefits from defining and assessing performance based on what is delivered (outcomes) and what the job actually requires (tasks), rather than on how long someone works or how visible they are online or in the office.** This requires organisations to design where and how work happens based on what specific tasks demand, ensuring that deep individual work, collaboration and coordination take place in the settings and formats that best support effective performance. By structuring work around task needs rather than uniform presence rules, organisations can create more purposeful, coherent and sustainable hybrid arrangements.
- ✓ **In hybrid work settings, organisations must pair flexibility with explicit outcome expectations, clearly defined boundaries and agreed quality standards.** Without this deliberate alignment between trust and accountability, hybrid arrangements risk drifting into ambiguity, where expectations are unclear and inconsistently applied, or into excessive monitoring and compliance-driven control – both of which undermine performance and the intended benefits of hybrid work.
- ✓ **Hybrid work arrangements, including those that provide higher levels of flexibility in working time and location, should be accompanied by safeguards to protect both employee and managerial well-being, alongside systematic risk assessment mechanisms.** Such measures are necessary to prevent hidden overwork, inconsistent expectations and adverse psychosocial outcomes, and to ensure that autonomy remains sustainable and equitable over time.

consultancy (Organisations F and G). In both cases, high levels of autonomy are accompanied by strong expectations of self-regulation and self-leadership, shifting greater responsibility for managing boundaries, workloads and performance onto employees themselves.

The Polish consultancy (Organisation C) also evaluates performance primarily on the basis of outputs, despite operating a less flexible hybrid arrangement within the boundaries of a structured 3–2–1 framework (three days in the office, two remote days and one floating anchor day agreed within the team). This is likely to reflect the nature of consultancy work, characterised by project-based deliverables, client-driven deadlines and measurable results, which lends itself to output evaluation regardless of the degree of flexibility.

From manager-led coordination to organisation-supported communication

The expert interviews consistently highlighted that, in hybrid work environments, effective coordination cannot rest solely on individual managers' efforts. Instead, organisations must actively support managers

by providing appropriate tools, technologies and infrastructure that enable managers to effectively oversee, guide and connect their teams.

This shift from manager-dependent coordination to organisation-supported communication represents a critical maturity step in hybrid work: while less mature and more controlled hybrid arrangements rely heavily on individual managers' efforts to sustain coordination, more advanced models embed communication practices, tools and expectations at the organisational level. These may include agreed communication norms (e.g. response times, channel use); shared digital platforms for information and workflow management; and formalised routines for meetings, check-ins and information sharing.

Under the controlled hybrid work arrangement at the Polish R&D institute (Organisation A), work coordination relies mainly on manager-led communication, such as frequent meetings, regular check-ins and written updates. While these practices help maintain continuity and shared understanding in hybrid work, they depend heavily on individual managers' availability and capacity, increasing coordination demands and the risk of managerial overload.

Most organisations (Organisations A, B, C, D and E) largely rely on communication routines developed in office-based settings, although with some variation in how far these practices are adapted to hybrid work. For instance, at the Polish consultancy (Organisation C), communication arrangements are deliberately designed and continuously adjusted, with clear rules governing channels, responsiveness and meeting structures to support flexible working. In contrast, at the Slovenian telecoms operator and the Irish academic institution (Organisations B and D), communication

Ensuring that team members align their activities and collaborate efficiently can be complex, particularly in less mature organisations that are still adapting to hybrid work.

Research expert

Key learning points from the case studies and expert interviews

- ✓ **Communication has always been central to performance and team cohesion. However, hybrid work changes how communication is organised and managed, increasing reliance on digital tools and more structured interaction.** Regular check-ins, clear rules on communication channels, and scheduled meetings or agreed interaction routines are essential to compensate for the loss of informal exchanges. This also requires training to ensure that employees can effectively use different communication tools and adapt to changing communication patterns. Organisations that plan and support communication at the organisational level, rather than leaving it to individual managers or employees, are better positioned to sustain coordination, inclusion and team cohesion over time.
- ✓ **In the absence of organisational coordination, hybrid work can amplify inequalities and fragmentation across teams and roles.** Differences in managerial practices, job characteristics and access to remote work may lead to uneven experiences of autonomy, support and visibility. To mitigate these risks, organisations should establish shared standards for onboarding, communication and inclusion, including clear eligibility criteria for hybrid arrangements and transparent decision-making processes. Regular team-level coordination norms (e.g. meeting protocols) can help reduce fragmentation and ensure that there is a good understanding of how the mix of teleworkable and non-teleworkable tasks shapes the feasibility of hybrid work across roles.

practices largely mirror pre-hybrid routines, with coordination closely tied to office presence, formal rules and attendance expectations. The Finnish municipality (Organisation E) similarly relies on structured and institutionalised communication practices, such as regular team meetings and mandatory one-to-ones, which provide stability but leave limited room for experimentation with hybrid-specific communication approaches.

In organisations with higher levels of employee autonomy over working time and discretion over work location (Organisations F and G), the importance of structured communication becomes even more pronounced. The French non-profit organisation (Organisation F) addresses the challenges of dispersed working through formalised monthly meetings and collective events, which aim to sustain coordination and monitor workloads and well-being, although levels of team cohesion vary across sites and agencies. The Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G) organises communication more deliberately: managers are expected to check in regularly with employees and use digital data to guide conversations about workload and well-being, although communication practices remain only partly standardised and often rely on team-level arrangements. This increases the need for proactive managerial involvement to ensure inclusion, feedback and the early identification of issues, while also placing greater demands on employees' self-management and autonomy.

Capacity building to support managerial role transformation

The experts consulted agreed that organisations must prioritise training and learning initiatives tailored to new ways of working and support managerial adaptation. They also noted that hybrid work has expanded the managerial role, a finding that is reflected in the accounts of the management representatives interviewed in the case study organisations. Hybrid work has increased managerial demands related to coordination, communication, workload, performance management and well-being. This role transformation has largely occurred without a corresponding and systematic investment in hybrid-specific leadership training, regardless of the hybrid work model adopted.

Today's managers must broaden their leadership toolkit, striking a balance between traditional methods and modern approaches that foster accountability and critical thinking.

Academic expert

With the right training and support, hybrid work can reach its full potential.

HR expert

In the controlled hybrid arrangement exemplified by the Polish R&D institute (Organisation A), managers assume extensive coordination and people-management responsibilities. While these have always been central to managerial roles, hybrid work amplifies their scope and complexity, as managers must coordinate work across

dispersed teams. Despite this expansion, managerial capability development remains largely informal, with no dedicated hybrid management training or structured capacity-building initiatives. Instead, managers rely on personal experience and discretionary judgement, increasing dependence on individual capacity and resilience.

Most of the other organisations (Organisations B, C, D and E) display a similar pattern. While some initial training or guidance was provided during the transition to hybrid work – most notably at the Slovenian telecoms operator (Organisation B) and through mandatory or optional programmes at the Irish academic institution (Organisation D) – these initiatives were generally generic, one-off or compliance oriented. In these organisations, training programmes, leadership development initiatives and internal guidance for managers continue to treat hybrid work as an extension of traditional management, with limited attention to hybrid-specific challenges, such as managing dispersed teams, ensuring fairness in flexibility or monitoring well-being remotely. Moving towards more mature hybrid systems involves a shift to organisation-supported approaches, such as structured training, shared coordination practices and clearer frameworks, which reduce dependence on individual managers and embed these capabilities more systematically.

Organisations operating more autonomous hybrid work arrangements (Organisations F and G) place greater demands on managerial capability due to higher levels of employee discretion and dispersed working. While the French non-profit organisation (Organisation F) relies primarily on targeted initiatives linked to well-being and psychosocial risk prevention, training on leadership in hybrid work settings remains fragmented and reactive – delivered on an ad hoc basis, rather than as part of a coherent, organisation-wide strategy. The Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G) more explicitly recognises leadership in a hybrid work setting as a distinct capability area, supported by more structured training and well-being monitoring; however, even in this case, there remains

scope to improve the provision of training targeting line managers.

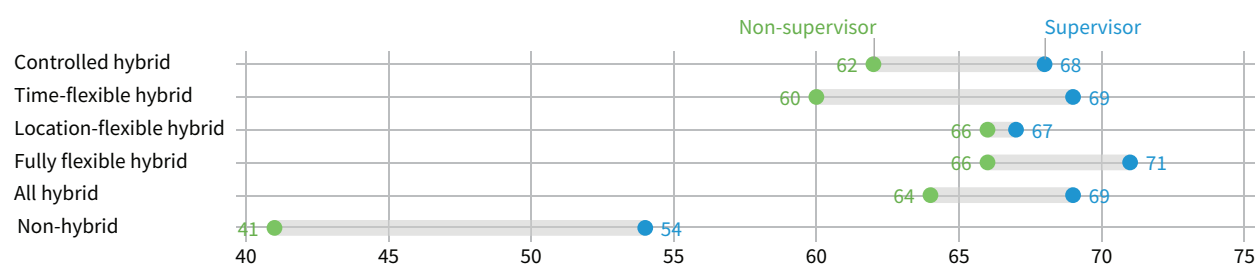
These qualitative findings suggest that, despite the growing complexity and scope of managerial roles in hybrid settings, access to structured and continuous training remains uneven and often insufficient. This pattern is further explored in the survey evidence below. The data show that both supervisors and non-supervisory employees in hybrid work arrangements are more likely to receive employer-supported training than their non-hybrid counterparts, with the gap between supervisors and non-supervisors being particularly pronounced in time-flexible and controlled hybrid arrangements.

EWCS 2024 insights: access to training

The EWCS 2024 shows that supervisors are more likely than their non-supervisor counterparts to receive training paid for or provided by their employers, regardless of whether they work in hybrid arrangements. The data also indicate that those working in hybrid arrangements are much more likely to undergo training paid for by the employer than those in non-hybrid arrangements (Figure 24). Three out of every ten supervisors in hybrid arrangements (more than 30 %) did not receive training paid for by their employers, although 9 % reported asking for training from their employers but not getting it, compared with 6 % among those in supervisory roles in non-hybrid work arrangements.

A binary logistic regression was conducted to examine whether being in a supervisory role in any of the various hybrid work arrangements predicted undergoing training paid for or provided by the employer in the year before the survey, while controlling for age, gender, occupation, sector and workplace size. The results show that supervisory status and the type of hybrid work arrangement significantly predict reporting undergoing training paid for or provided by the employer (see Annex 1 for detailed results).

Figure 24: Employees who underwent training paid for or provided by the employer in the year prior to the survey according to supervisor status by type of hybrid work arrangement, EU, 2024 (%)



Source: EWCS 2024.

Key learning points from the case studies and expert interviews

- ✓ **Hybrid work expands managerial roles faster than organisational support structures.** Across all the hybrid work types investigated, line managers and supervisors take on additional coordination, communication and well-being responsibilities, often without adequate organisational support. Organisations should formally recognise hybrid work coordination as a core managerial function and back it with adjusted workloads, clear role definitions and dedicated HR support.
- ✓ **Leadership of hybrid teams is rarely treated as a distinct capability area.** Most organisations rely on informal learning or generic leadership training, regardless of the type of hybrid work arrangement adopted. To address this gap, hybrid-team-specific leadership development should be introduced, focusing on managing dispersed teams, workload visibility, fairness and remote well-being.
- ✓ **Initial or one-off training is insufficient for sustained hybrid team management.** Where training exists, it is often limited to the transition phase or compliance requirements. Organisations should move towards continuous capability building through refresher training, peer learning and coaching.

Approaches to overcoming organisational and management challenges

The experts consulted for this study, drawing on their research expertise or direct experience supporting organisations in implementing hybrid work arrangements and adapting them to specific contexts, identified key elements of good practice that should underpin the design and implementation of hybrid work arrangements. These can be summarised in five key steps (Figure 25).

The analysis of the case studies shows that none of the organisations investigated fully implement all the elements identified by the experts as good practice. However, fully flexible and more mature hybrid work arrangements (most notably Organisation G in our case study sample) align more closely with the full approach. Controlled and time-flexible hybrid work arrangements tend to emphasise formalisation and predictability, often at the expense of experimentation, leadership capability building and systematic feedback loops.

While presented as a general framework, the relevance and implementation of these steps vary across hybrid work types: more controlled arrangements tend to rely on formal rules and centralised coordination, while more flexible arrangements place greater emphasis on

managerial discretion, team-level adaptation, and the deliberate establishment of communication norms, coordination routines, and practices that support collaboration and team cohesion (e.g. regular check-ins, clear use of digital tools and structured opportunities for interaction).



Step 1: Strategically embed hybrid work within organisational transformation

Based on expert insights, hybrid work arrangements should not be implemented in isolation but should be embedded within an integrated organisational strategy that aligns with digital transformation, people development and inclusion. Organisations that move beyond siloed thinking and enable cross-functional collaboration are better positioned to support hybrid teams; however, translating this strategic intent into practice remains a key challenge, as persistent silos often limit the full impact of hybrid work initiatives. Without such alignment, downstream efforts, such as workflow redesign or team-level co-design, risk remaining fragmented, inconsistent or only partially effective. Hybrid work should also be seen as an opportunity for broader work redesign. The hybrid work policy or strategy should be explicitly connected to how jobs are structured, how performance is assessed and how managers are trained to lead in hybrid settings.

Case study insights

Among the organisations studied, the Finland-based multinational consultancy (Organisation G) stands out as the only case where hybrid work is explicitly anchored in a formal, organisation-wide strategy. In this case, hybrid work is positioned as a core element of a broader transformation agenda encompassing business objectives, digital infrastructure, leadership practices and the redesign of physical workspaces. The strategy provides a coherent framework that aligns hybrid work arrangements with organisational performance, employee experience and spatial strategy. It is supported by continuous feedback mechanisms that enable regular review and adaptation.

None of the other organisations examined make an explicit or formalised link between hybrid work and a broader organisational strategy in a dedicated strategic document. At the Irish academic institution and the Finnish municipality (Organisations D and E), hybrid work is closely aligned with strategic objectives – such as service delivery, sustainability, retention and employer branding – but this alignment is articulated primarily through operational frameworks or managerial practices rather than through an overarching strategy document. In the other cases (Organisations A, B, C and F), hybrid work is framed mainly as a regulatory, operational or HR arrangement, embedded in agreements, charters or local practices, with strategic links remaining implicit rather than formally codified.



Step 2: Redesign workflows around tasks, outcomes and collaboration needs

Building on this strategic foundation, organisations must clarify how work itself should be structured. Managers, in collaboration with their teams, should design workflows that support both productivity and cohesion. A key element of maintaining team cohesion lies in deliberately aligning tasks with the most appropriate work setting and tools, distinguishing between activities well suited to remote work and those that benefit from in-person collaboration. According to

the experts interviewed, fixed anchor days, that is, predefined days on which employees are required to be physically present in the workplace, can constrain employee flexibility and fail to accommodate diverse work needs by mandating physical presence without concern for the nature of the work itself. This focus on place and presence can disrupt optimal workflow, particularly for tasks that benefit from uninterrupted, deep focus or asynchronous collaboration.

Instead, a task-centred, outcome-driven approach may be better suited to hybrid work settings, whereby performance is evaluated based on results, expectations are clearly articulated, dedicated time for deep focus is deliberately safeguarded from unnecessary interruptions and clear boundaries are defined.

This shift also has important managerial implications: it increases the need for precise task definition, clear prioritisation and the explicit communication of expectations, as managers can no longer rely on physical oversight to coordinate work and must ensure alignment through clarity rather than proximity.

Hybrid work works best when organisations stop asking where people should work and start asking what the work actually requires. Once that is clear, decisions about location, collaboration and autonomy become much easier and far more effective.

Consultancy expert

Case study insights

The introduction of hybrid work prompted organisations to reconsider how work was organised, although the extent of intentional workflow redesign varied across hybrid work types. In many cases, the organisations initially relied on existing office-based workflows that were extended into remote settings. This ensured continuity and minimised disruption but limited opportunities to optimise processes or fully realise the potential efficiency gains of hybrid work.

More deliberate workflow redesign was evident in organisations with greater flexibility and more mature hybrid work arrangements, particularly where teams systematically reflected on task interdependencies, coordination needs and meeting structures. In these organisations, team-level managers engaged in elements of job redesign by shifting the focus away from questions about how often employees should be physically present or how their productivity should be monitored towards more substantive considerations: what the core responsibilities of the role entail, which conditions best support effective task performance – whether at home or in the office – and how performance should be defined and evaluated. However, these considerations were largely confined to the team level and were not systematically embedded within organisation-wide strategy or policy.



Step 3: Co-design hybrid practices

Once core tasks, performance expectations and collaboration needs have been clarified at the organisational level, co-design should take place at the team level. Employees should be involved early in interpreting these task-based principles and applying them to their specific roles and workflows, ensuring that hybrid arrangements are grounded in the substantive requirements of the work while also taking into account individual needs and constraints as far as possible.

The experts consistently emphasised the value of such participation, noting that it fosters buy-in and flexibility by enabling teams to align hybrid practices with the actual demands of their work. Employee feedback should then be systematically gathered and used to refine arrangements over time, ensuring that hybrid

practices remain responsive to evolving task requirements and performance conditions.

Managers play a central role in facilitating this process, working collaboratively with their teams to translate the organisational hybrid-working vision into practical, context-specific arrangements. This structured approach enables managers and their teams to determine which tasks are best suited to remote work, which benefit from in-person collaboration and how coordination should be organised to support both performance and cohesion. It also helps to clarify mutual expectations and working arrangements within teams, making norms transparent, reducing reliance on informal 'visibility cues' (i.e. judging contribution based on physical presence or online activity) and ensuring equal treatment in how flexibility is applied across roles with differing task requirements.

Case study insights

Across the organisations investigated, consultation on hybrid work policies typically occurred through management-led processes, such as staff meetings, pilot phases and employee surveys. Despite these mechanisms, hybrid arrangements largely retained a top-down character, with organisational frameworks defining the boundaries within which flexibility could be exercised.

At the team level, some degree of co-design emerged in practice, as managers and employees worked together to interpret and adapt hybrid guidelines to specific workflows and task requirements. However, the extent of this discretion varied considerably across organisations and units, shaped by managerial approach, organisational culture and the rigidity of central policy frameworks. In larger organisations, scale and structural complexity further contributed to uneven participation and adaptation across teams.

Although feedback mechanisms were present in most organisations, ongoing co-design was typically episodic and dependent on managerial initiative rather than embedded as a systematic feature of hybrid work governance.



Step 4: Empower teams to experiment within clear parameters

The experts suggested that teams should serve as the primary unit of experimentation, empowered to test different coordination patterns, assess their effectiveness and share successful practices across the organisation. However, when experimentation remains informal or insufficiently supported, learning is likely to be uneven and fragmented. By contrast, a deliberate and structured

experimental approach can strengthen organisational learning, foster innovation and enhance teams' ability to adapt to the complexities of hybrid work.

In practice, successful experimentation involves structured learning loops (testing, reflecting and adjusting), documentation of outcomes, and mechanisms for sharing practices across teams, allowing local insights to inform organisation-wide improvement.

Case study insights

The degree to which teams were empowered to experiment with hybrid work arrangements varied considerably across organisations, reflecting an ongoing tension between organisational control and local autonomy. In most cases, organisations set high-level parameters – such as minimum on-site presence, eligibility for remote work or core working hours – and left line managers and teams to determine how hybrid work operated in practice within these constraints. This approach allowed adaptation to task requirements and team dynamics, but experimentation was often informal and uneven, rather than intentionally supported as a learning process.

This was particularly evident in more controlled hybrid work arrangements, where limited employee autonomy over working time and location, combined with fixed attendance requirements, curtailed experimentation. As a result, hybrid work quickly stabilised into standardised patterns, reducing opportunities for trial-and-error learning and systematic assessment of alternative approaches.



Step 5: Foster belonging and inclusion through intentional communication and connection

To sustain hybrid work over time, organisations must deliberately cultivate a sense of belonging and cohesion. The expert insights consistently emphasised that, in hybrid work settings, team belonging and effective communication are inseparable and must be deliberately designed rather than left to emerge organically. Belonging should be seen not as an automatic outcome of hybrid work but as a condition that must be actively maintained through continuous organisational and managerial effort. As physical distance reduces informal and spontaneous interaction, managers must intentionally create opportunities for connection that reinforce trust, shared values and team identity.

Purposeful in-person gatherings remain important for renewing collective purpose, while structured virtual practices – such as regular check-ins, informal online interactions (e.g. team chat channels or short social catch-ups) and inclusive asynchronous communication (e.g. regular pulse surveys and feedback forms, discussion forums and shared project updates) – help ensure that dispersed team members feel valued, integrated and connected to the organisation's mission.

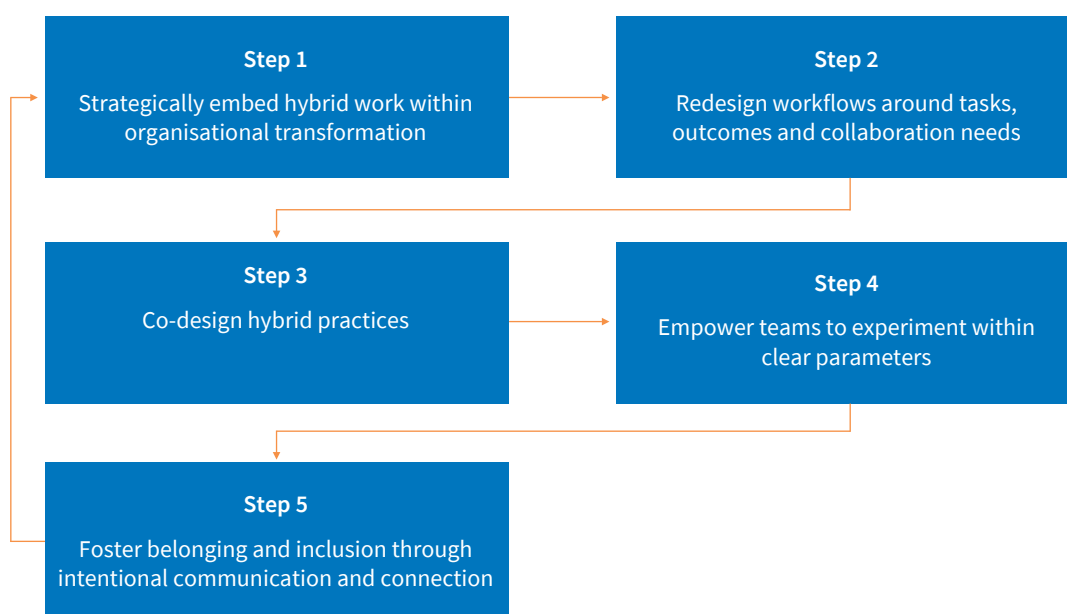
The five steps should be understood not as a rigid sequence but as interdependent dimensions of hybrid work maturity. While they are presented here in a logical order, organisations often adopt them incrementally and unevenly. In particular, fostering belonging and inclusion (Step 5) operates as a continuous layer that cuts across all stages, rather than as a final step, and must be embedded throughout the design and implementation of hybrid work arrangements.

Case study insights

Case study evidence shows that maintaining both belonging and effective communication is a persistent challenge across hybrid work types, as informal mechanisms for social connection, trust building and knowledge sharing become less frequent. In organisations where these dynamics were not intentionally addressed, hybrid work led to fragmentation, information overload and a weakened sense of team identity. Employees reported overlapping communication channels, unclear expectations around responsiveness, and blurred boundaries between work and personal time, especially in contexts where digital tools were introduced without clear guidance on their use.

In contrast, organisations that performed more effectively introduced integrated practices that combined intentional connection with structured communication. These included regular team meetings, structured one-to-one check-ins and the deliberate use of asynchronous tools supported by clear communication norms. Such approaches reinforced team identity, sustained trust and ensured inclusive access to information and decision-making. These practices were particularly important in more flexible and autonomy-driven types of hybrid work, where physical dispersion was greatest and deliberate design was essential to maintain cohesion and a sense of collective purpose.

Figure 25: Five essential steps for hybrid work implementation



Source: Authors.

Building line managers' capacity cuts across these five steps. It equips managers with the skills, judgement and organisational support needed to translate strategic intent into day-to-day hybrid practices, enable

bounded experimentation, design effective workflows, sustain team cohesion and implement inclusive communication routines.

Management competencies in hybrid work settings

The experts consulted emphasised the following capabilities required of managers in hybrid work settings. These capabilities are relevant across all hybrid work contexts, but their relative importance and application vary depending on the type of hybrid work arrangement. In more controlled arrangements, the required managerial skills are more strongly oriented towards coordination, clarity and operating within formal constraints, whereas, in more flexible arrangements, greater emphasis is placed on coaching, supporting self-management and managing dispersed teams, including remote communication and reduced face-to-face interaction.

✓ Strategic and adaptive management

Effective managers in hybrid work settings combine forward-looking thinking with adaptability. Rather than being expected to anticipate future workforce expectations, they rely on ongoing dialogue, regular feedback and clear organisational frameworks to balance, as far as possible, evolving employee preferences with organisational goals and operational requirements. A strategic orientation also includes encouraging experimentation with digital tools, using communication modes intentionally and drawing on the digital fluency of younger employees to support innovation and organisational resilience. In more controlled hybrid arrangements, this capability is often expressed through aligning hybrid practices with formal rules and ensuring consistency in implementation, while in more flexible arrangements it involves adapting practices to changing team needs and supporting continuous adjustment.

✓ Inclusive and well-being-oriented management

In hybrid work settings, managers must understand and accommodate diverse work preferences, communication styles and expectations across generations. As informal interactions are reduced, inclusion requires deliberate action, such as creating structured opportunities for connection, ensuring equitable participation and actively valuing diverse perspectives regardless of location or seniority. Line managers also need to remain attentive to employee well-being by monitoring digital interactions for signs of stress or disengagement – including changes in tone, responsiveness or participation – and responding proactively. This capability is particularly critical in more flexible and remote-first arrangements, where physical distance is greatest and the risks of isolation are higher, while in more controlled arrangements it tends to focus more on ensuring fairness and consistency in how flexibility is applied.

✓ Coaching and developmental capability

In hybrid environments, the managerial role shifts from task monitoring to coaching and facilitation. Managers should focus on development, feedback and empowerment to support employee buy-in and sustained performance. This shift is most pronounced in highly flexible hybrid arrangements, where employees have greater autonomy and require support in self-management and in setting clear boundaries around working time, availability and workload (e.g. when to be reachable, how to separate work and personal time, and how to manage interruptions). In more controlled settings, coaching complements, rather than replaces, more direct coordination and oversight.

Supporting managers' capabilities is important, but the effective functioning of hybrid work does not depend exclusively on them. It also requires the active engagement of employees and the development of their capabilities, clear team-level agreements and sustained organisational support in areas such as work design, communication practices and digital infrastructure.

Summary

- **The case study evidence shows that hybrid work is managed through different configurations of trust and control, increasing coordination demands and placing growing responsibilities on line managers.** This was particularly evident in organisations where hybrid work arrangements are largely left to managerial discretion and organisational support is limited. Across the organisations studied, performance oversight ranged from manager-led supervision and visibility-based monitoring to output-based evaluation and employee self-regulation, depending on the level of autonomy employees had over their working time and location. As work became less anchored in shared physical presence, the case studies highlight a greater reliance on formalised coordination and communication routines, requiring a shift towards more structured, organisationally supported systems to sustain alignment, inclusion and continuity. The evidence further indicates that these changes substantially expanded managerial responsibilities, while this role transformation was often not matched by systematic, hybrid-specific capability building. As a result, effective hybrid management often depends on individual managers' capacity and resilience. The expert insights suggest that the expanding expectations placed on line managers in hybrid work – spanning coordination, communication, well-being support and performance management – may be difficult to sustain in practice, particularly in contexts where training and organisational support are limited, raising concerns about the long-term attractiveness and feasibility of managerial roles.
- **Five steps for designing, governing and sustaining hybrid work arrangements were derived from interviews with the experts consulted for this study.** Hybrid work is most effective when strategic anchoring (Step 1), task- and outcome-based workflow redesign (Step 2), structured co-design of team-level practices (Step 3), guided experimentation within clear parameters (Step 4) and deliberate efforts to sustain belonging and connection (Step 5) are pursued in an integrated and mutually reinforcing manner. Building line managers' capacity cuts across these five steps.
- **The case study evidence suggests that no organisation fully reflects the complete set of expert-identified good practices.** Nevertheless, those with more advanced and highly flexible hybrid models, particularly Organisation G, show a closer correspondence to the overall approach. By contrast, more controlled or primarily time-flexible hybrid arrangements place greater emphasis on formalisation and predictability, often at the expense of experimentation, leadership development and systematic feedback mechanisms. The case studies further show that, where one or more of these elements is underdeveloped, hybrid work becomes heavily dependent on individual managers' discretion and skill. This reliance contributes to uneven implementation across teams, emerging equity concerns, heightened risks of digital overload or employee disengagement, and increased cognitive and coordination demands for line managers.

4 Takeaways, lessons learned and policy pointers

Prevalence and typology of hybrid work: EWCS 2024 evidence

About 24 % of the employees in the EU workforce can be classified as hybrid employees, combining remote and on-site work. When considering the degree of flexibility – defined in this research as employer- versus employee-controlled working-time arrangements and employer- versus employee-led choice over work location – hybrid employees can be grouped into four categories. Approximately 48 % are in fully flexible arrangements, characterised by medium to high autonomy over both working-time arrangements and work location. A further 17 % are in location-flexible arrangements, with medium to high discretion over work location but limited or no autonomy over working time. Around 13 % are in time-flexible arrangements, enjoying medium to high autonomy over working time but limited or no discretion over work location. The remaining 22 % are in controlled hybrid arrangements, where employees' autonomy is constrained in relation to both working time and work location.

The EWCS 2024 data suggest that the specific type of hybrid work arrangement makes a difference to various aspects of employees' working conditions. These findings are indicative of associations observed in the survey data and should be interpreted with caution, as the EWCS was not specifically designed to capture management practices or establish causal relationships.

The results can be summarised as follows.

- **Access to workspace.** Employees in fully flexible hybrid arrangements tend to have better access to an appropriate workspace both at home and in the office. In contrast, employees in more controlled hybrid work arrangements are more likely to lack a dedicated workspace at home and to share desks on-site.
- **Task interruptions.** Frequent task interruptions are more common in time-flexible and fully flexible hybrid arrangements. When interruptions occur, they are more likely to be perceived as disruptive in hybrid work contexts.
- **Use of digital tools.** Higher levels of autonomy over working time and discretion over work location are associated with greater reported use of generative AI tools, collaboration platforms and remote meeting tools. In location-flexible hybrid work arrangements, this also includes greater reliance on algorithmic management practices.
- **Colleague interaction.** Hybrid work, particularly when accompanied by greater employee autonomy over working time and discretion over location, is associated with the perception that technology enables more frequent interaction with colleagues. This may reflect the potential for hybrid work to amplify the role of digital tools in supporting communication, collaboration and social interaction among colleagues.
- **Stress patterns and social support.** Different hybrid work arrangements are linked to varying levels of stress and support from managers and colleagues. Employees in controlled hybrid arrangements tend to report higher stress levels, while those in time-flexible arrangements report weaker managerial support. Employees in location-flexible arrangements appear to experience more balance, reporting stronger managerial support, with no differences in self-reported stress between supervisors and non-supervisors. Across hybrid work arrangements, supervisors generally report higher stress. Overall, the proportion of employees reporting stress is greater among both supervisors and non-supervisors in the controlled hybrid group.
- **Perceived fairness.** Hybrid work is associated with more positive assessments of being treated fairly in the workplace, but this advantage is not evenly distributed among employees. In controlled hybrid work arrangements, supervisors report being treated fairly in the workplace less frequently than their counterparts in more flexible arrangements, suggesting they may face specific challenges.
- **Occupational health and safety information.** Hybrid employees, particularly supervisors, are more likely to report having sufficient information about occupational health and safety risks and work-related stress than non-hybrid employees. However, those in controlled hybrid arrangements report being comparatively less well informed than both other hybrid employees and non-hybrid employees. Location-flexible models show the highest shares of employees reporting being well informed. Across all arrangements, supervisors tend to be better informed than non-supervisory employees. This suggests that higher awareness at the supervisory level does not consistently cascade to employees, pointing to potential gaps in organisational communication and management capability.

Learning from the case studies

The case studies show that hybrid work both intensifies existing management challenges and adds new complexities, acting as a magnifying glass that amplifies underlying organisational strengths and weaknesses. Across the case studies investigated, dispersed teams and fragmented digital systems make coordination more complex, as reduced informal interaction often leads to uneven information flows. The case studies also show that hybrid work introduces new tensions between trust and monitoring. With fewer opportunities for direct observation of their staff, managers are required to rely more on communication and reported outputs. This requires greater trust in employees' autonomy but can also lead to increased use of monitoring or reliance on digital visibility as a proxy for performance. The case study findings further suggest that hybrid work can create challenges for workplace fairness and well-being, as unequal access to remote work and resources may contribute to perceived inequities, while reduced visibility, both physical and digital, makes it harder to detect stress and overload.

Rather than fundamentally transforming their work organisation, most organisations investigated had adapted incrementally, with existing management routines extended into hybrid settings. While this facilitates continuity, it limits opportunities for more fundamental job redesign and leaves managers without systematic support. In most cases examined, hybrid-specific management competences and skills were not formally developed, with managers relying on self-learning and individual judgement.

In most organisations investigated, over-reliance on managerial discretion contributed to uneven implementation, including variations in employee experience, inconsistent enforcement of attendance requirements and perceptions of unfairness. These patterns were observed across several of the case studies, highlighting the need for stronger organisational coordination, including clear and shared principles for applying hybrid work arrangements consistently across teams.

Another common feature across the organisations studied is the limited use of systematic feedback and monitoring mechanisms after hybrid work implementation. While consultation often takes place during the design phase, hybrid arrangements are rarely adjusted through continuous evidence-based evaluation. As a result, benefits are often assumed rather than measured, and emerging risks – such as disengagement, work intensification or the marginalisation of remote staff – are harder to detect. More structured yet lightweight approaches, such as regular feedback loops, pulse surveys and periodic assessments, could support continuous improvement.

The case studies of more flexible hybrid work arrangements illustrate both the potential and the risks of hybrid work. For instance, they demonstrate the full potential of hybrid work in terms of flexibility, employee satisfaction and employer attractiveness. Most notably, the fully flexible hybrid work arrangement adopted in the Finland-based branch of the multinational consultancy (Organisation G) investigated in this study illustrates how trust-based, outcome-oriented management and the flexible use of physical space allow work to align closely with individual roles, employee preferences and organisational objectives.

These more mature hybrid work arrangements, however, also expose vulnerabilities, including risks of overwork, isolation and inequality between more visible and less visible employees; digital overload and blurred work–life boundaries also remain recurring concerns. Addressing these weaknesses requires clear organisational 'rules of the game' that provide structure without undermining employee autonomy; proactive and systematic well-being management, including early detection mechanisms and low-threshold support services (e.g. self-referral well-being resources that do not require HR gatekeeping or medical certification); and sustained investment in hybrid competencies for both managers (e.g. coaching and workload monitoring) and employees (including skills related to organising work and digital literacy).

Expert insights in a nutshell

According to the experts consulted, hybrid work is a context-dependent and evolving form of work organisation rather than a one-size-fits-all model. It is therefore best shaped at the workplace level through dialogue between employers and employees. Effective hybrid arrangements do not rely exclusively on the capabilities of line managers but on the combined capabilities and responsibilities of both managers and employees, together with clear team-level agreements, appropriate work design and organisational support structures.

National regulatory frameworks can play an enabling role by establishing clear legal provisions on working time, occupational health and safety, data protection and the respective rights and responsibilities of employers and employees in hybrid work settings. However, the experts interviewed cautioned that overly prescriptive approaches may constrain the flexibility needed by both organisations and employees.

Hybrid work also requires balancing employee preferences with organisational needs, as not all jobs or workers can benefit from it equally. In this regard, the experts consulted emphasised that effective hybrid work strategies should be tailored to organisational and sectoral contexts, taking into account differences in tasks, digital maturity and organisational culture.

Furthermore, approaches that combine clear organisational frameworks with team-level alignment tend to be more effective than rigid top-down mandates, by shifting the focus from presence or control towards outcomes and how work is organised.

A central insight from the expert interviews is that hybrid work should be purpose driven. Organisations need to clearly define why and when physical presence is required, how in-person interaction adds value and how hybrid arrangements support both individual performance and organisational objectives. In this sense, hybrid work is not merely an operational choice but a strategic approach that can enable productivity, collaboration and employee well-being. It also provides an opportunity to redesign work rather than simply adapting existing practices.

From a good practice perspective, these insights can be synthesised into five interrelated steps for designing and sustaining hybrid work arrangements: strategically embedding hybrid work within organisational transformation; redesigning workflows around tasks, outcomes and collaboration needs; involving teams in structured co-design; empowering experimentation within clear parameters; and fostering belonging and inclusion through communication. These steps should be understood as a maturity framework rather than a linear process, with organisations adopting elements incrementally. Capacity building, for both managers and employees, cuts across all stages and is essential to support effective and sustainable hybrid work.

Avenues for future research and policy attention

The findings of this report point to several areas that remain underexplored in the existing literature and that would benefit from further investigation. These avenues emerge from the analysis and highlight questions relevant for both research and policy.

Onboarding and the integration of new entrants. The report suggests that onboarding is seen by some line managers as more challenging in hybrid settings, particularly for junior employees without established organisational networks. The experts interviewed reinforced this view, noting that hybrid work reduces opportunities for informal learning, observation and spontaneous mentoring, which are traditionally important for professional socialisation. How onboarding practices are adapted in hybrid environments and the potential implications for career development, performance and retention are areas for further study.

Work-life balance and gender equality. While gender was included as a control variable in the empirical analysis, it was not examined as a central dimension. Existing research suggests that hybrid work may have differentiated effects for men and women, particularly in relation to the distribution of unpaid care responsibilities. Further analysis could explore how hybrid arrangements interact with occupational and domestic gender roles and how organisational practices shape these outcomes.

Temporal dynamics and the governance of hybrid work. The report provides a cross-sectional perspective, but the case study evidence suggests that hybrid work arrangements evolve over time and may be subject to change or contestation. Organisations differ in the extent to which they maintain, expand or restrict hybrid arrangements. The factors shaping these trajectories, including managerial decisions, organisational priorities and technological developments, remain only partially understood. Longitudinal research approaches could provide further insight into these dynamics.

Collective governance and professional norms. The findings suggest that hybrid work arrangements are often shaped by managerial discretion, with limited evidence of collectively agreed norms. This may contribute to variation in implementation and employee experience. The role of collective governance mechanisms, such as works councils or sectoral agreements, in shaping hybrid work practices could be examined further.

Hybrid work in SMEs. The case studies primarily reflect organisations with more formalised structures and dedicated HR functions. Hybrid work in smaller firms, where arrangements may be less formalised and managerial roles more closely linked to ownership or senior leadership, is not visible in the current analysis. Further research could examine how hybrid work is organised and managed in these contexts.

Location-flexible hybrid work: an evidence gap. The location-flexible type of hybrid work arrangement identified in the survey analysis is not represented by a dedicated case study. Although elements of this arrangement are observed in specific departments across organisations, the absence of a full case study limits the ability of the qualitative strand to examine the organisational conditions and management practices associated with this model. This is particularly relevant given that this type of work arrangement is associated in the survey data with comparatively favourable outcomes, including higher management quality scores and stronger managerial support. Further research could explore this configuration in more depth to better understand the factors underlying these patterns.

Manager well-being and the sustainability of hybrid work. The report highlights an intensification of managerial tasks in hybrid settings, including increased coordination and communication demands. The implications for manager well-being and longer-term sustainability warrant further investigation. Additional research could examine how these changes affect managerial roles over time and what this may imply for organisational functioning.

Policy pointers

Adaptive labour frameworks and strengthened social dialogue for hybrid work

Public policy should provide enabling labour frameworks that support the modernisation of workplaces and work practices. Rather than imposing rigid one-size-fits-all models, appropriate frameworks can play a proactive role in shaping more flexible and outcome-oriented forms of work organisation. For example, Polish labour law explicitly provides for a ‘task-based working system’ (*system zadaniowego czasu pracy*), which allows working time to be organised around the completion of defined tasks rather than fixed hours. This legal provision demonstrates how existing labour law can facilitate performance-based, rather than time-based, work arrangements, thereby underpinning hybrid work models.

At the same time, policy frameworks should remain adaptable to sectoral and organisational realities and support the sustainable implementation of hybrid work through evidence-based guidance and practical toolkits. Public policy can further promote effective and context-sensitive implementation by reinforcing social dialogue, including stronger consultation rights and collective bargaining mechanisms.

Autonomy paired with clear governance and fairness safeguards

Autonomy is most effective when employee flexibility is grounded in clear, shared norms regarding availability, coordination and performance expectations. Insights from the case studies highlight the importance of transparent and consistently applied criteria for attendance, workspace allocation, workload distribution and performance evaluation, which are essential to prevent perceptions of arbitrariness and unequal treatment. This is particularly important in controlled hybrid work arrangements, where supervisors may accumulate additional burdens, such as increased coordination and administrative responsibilities.

Capacity building and digital governance

Hybrid work requires systematic capacity building for both managers and employees. Line managers need support in outcome-based management, inclusive remote communication, workload monitoring, trust building and early detection of stress or disengagement.

Organisations must also govern digitalisation responsibly. As hybrid work is associated with greater use of collaboration platforms, generative AI tools and algorithmic management practices, transparency, proportionality and employee involvement are essential.

Hybrid work maturity depends on organisational capabilities. Policymakers can play an important role in reducing capacity gaps, particularly in smaller or less digitally advanced organisations. This can be achieved by supporting targeted funding and policy initiatives that promote training programmes in hybrid leadership, digital management and inclusive remote work practices; promoting digital literacy and self-management skills among workers; and providing guidance on the responsible use of AI and algorithmic management in workplace settings.

Occupational health and safety in hybrid work settings: moving beyond ergonomics

Hybrid work arrangements call for a broader understanding of occupational risks. Risk assessment frameworks should incorporate a stronger psychosocial dimension, addressing issues such as work intensification, constant connectivity, isolation, blurred work–life boundaries, digital overload and managerial stress.

As hybrid work expands, occupational health and safety frameworks may need to evolve accordingly. Policymakers can support this process by clarifying how psychosocial risk assessment applies in hybrid work contexts and, where appropriate, adapt existing occupational health and safety frameworks to better reflect psychosocial risk considerations in hybrid work.

Company-level dialogue and tailored solutions remain essential to reflect specific organisational contexts. A balanced approach – combining clear regulatory guidance with flexibility for workplace-level implementation – can help ensure both effective protection and practical applicability.

References

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

Aboagye, E., Botha, W., Ljungberg H. T., Danielsson, C. B. and Jensen, I. (2026), 'Employee workspace preferences in a mandated hybrid work policy: A discrete choice experiment', *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, Vol. 52, No 2, pp. 147–159.

Business Insider (2025), 'The list of major companies requiring employees to return to the office, from JPMorgan and TikTok to Ford', Business Insider website, 16 July, <https://www.businessinsider.com/companies-requiring-return-to-office-rto-mandate>.

Cisco (2025), *Cisco global hybrid work study 2025: Navigating hybrid work strategies in evolving workplaces*.

Elliott, B., Bloom, N. and Choudhury, P. (2025), 'Hybrid work is not the problem – poor leadership is', *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 3 November.

Eurofound (2017), *Working time patterns for sustainable work*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2019), *Working conditions and workers' health*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2020), *Telework and ICT-based mobile work: Flexible working in the digital age*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2022a), *Telework in the EU: Regulatory frameworks and recent updates*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

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

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

Eurofound (2025a), *Understanding the management challenges in hybrid work: A literature review*, Eurofound working paper, Dublin.

Eurofound (2025b), *The hybrid workplace: Ensuring benefits for workers and organisations*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurofound (2026), *European Working Conditions Survey 2024: Overview report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Kubicek, B., Uhlig, L., Hülshager, U., Korunka, C. and Prem, R. (2023), 'Are all challenge stressors beneficial for learning? A meta-analytical assessment of differential effects of workload and cognitive demands', *Work & Stress*, Vol. 37, No 3, pp. 269–298.

McKinsey & Company (2023), 'Returning to the office? Focus more on practices and less on the policy', McKinsey & Company website, 14 February, <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/returning-to-the-office-focus-more-on-practices-and-less-on-the-policy>.

Murphy, K. (2025), 'Why big business wants you back in the office full-time', RTÉ website, 23 September, <https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2025/0923/1534732-return-to-the-office-mandates-employer-employee-control-power-productivity-innovation/>.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2020), 'Exploring policy options on teleworking: Steering local economic and employment development in the time of remote work', *OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Papers*, No 2020/10, OECD Publishing, Paris.

RTÉ (2024), 'Amazon mandates five days a week in office from next year', RTÉ website, 17 September, <https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2024/0917/1470423-amazon-mandates-five-days-a-week-in-office-from-next-year>.

Annexes

Annex 1: EWCS 2024 regression results

Binary logistic regressions were conducted to examine whether being in a supervisory role across the various hybrid work arrangements predicts the likelihood of reporting:

- technology allowing for more interaction with colleagues;
- support (from colleagues and from managers);
- being fairly treated at work;
- receiving recognition for work;
- work-related stress;
- being informed about health and safety risks related to the performance of the job;
- being informed about the prevention of work-related stress;
- (work) interruptions;
- disruptive (work) interruptions;
- cognitive demands, meaning the job involves (1) complex tasks and (2) making difficult decisions;
- undergoing training paid for or provided by the employer.

These regressions controlled for gender (female, male), age group (16–29, 30–54, 55–64, 55+ years), occupation (ISCO major groups), sector (NACE 2.0 main sections) and workplace size (1–9, 10–49, 50–249, 250+ workers).

For management quality, which is a continuous variable, a univariate regression was conducted to examine the effects of being in a supervisory role across the various types of hybrid work arrangements, controlling for gender (female, male), age group (16–29, 30–54, 55–64, 55+ years), occupation (ISCO major groups), sector (NACE 2.0 main sections) and workplace size (1–9, 10–49, 50–249, 250+ workers).

Technology allowing for more interaction with colleagues

The results show that supervisory status and the type of hybrid work arrangement significantly predict the likelihood of respondents reporting that technology allows for more interaction with colleagues. Supervisors are more likely to report technology allowing for more interaction than non-supervisors (odds ratio (OR) = 1.587), but the type of hybrid work arrangement also shows very strong effects, with those working in fully flexible arrangements being 2.2 times more likely (OR = 2.271) to report technology allowing for more interaction with colleagues than those in non-hybrid jobs. All things considered, supervisors in fully flexible hybrid arrangements are 3.6 times more likely to report technology allowing for more interaction with colleagues than non-supervisors in non-hybrid jobs. Those in controlled and time-flexible hybrid arrangements are less likely to report the same (OR = 1.408 and OR = 1.461), even if they are in supervisory roles (OR = 2.234 and OR = 2.318).

Table A1: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and reporting technology allowing for more interaction with colleagues

	Significance	Odds ratio
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	1.408
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.461
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.528
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	2.271
Supervisory role	< 0.001	1.587

Support

The results show that both supervisory status and the type of hybrid work arrangement significantly predict the likelihood of respondents reporting (1) that their colleagues help and support them when they need it always or most of the time and (2) that their manager helps and supports them always or all of the time. Supervisors are more likely to report receiving support from their colleagues (OR = 1.452) and from their managers (OR = 1.289) than non-supervisors. Those working in fully flexible arrangements (regardless of supervisory status) have a 31 % higher chance of receiving support from colleagues, while those in location-flexible hybrid arrangements are nearly 30 % more likely to receive support from managers than non-hybrid workers. Those in time-flexible hybrid

arrangements are 13 % less likely to receive support from colleagues and 40 % less likely to receive it from their managers. In sum, supervisors in fully flexible arrangements are 1.9 times more likely to receive support from colleagues and 1.5 times more likely to receive support from managers than non-supervisors in non-hybrid jobs.

Table A2: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and receiving support from colleagues and managers

	Significance	Odds ratio: support from colleagues	Odds ratio: support from managers
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	0.882	0.781
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	0.871	0.601
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	0.854	1.297
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.311	1.169
Supervisory role	< 0.001	1.452	1.289

Being fairly treated

The results show that, on the one hand, supervisory status does not make a large difference in predicting the likelihood of reporting being fairly treated in the workplace always or most of the time. On the other hand, employees working in fully flexible hybrid arrangements, regardless of having a supervisory role, are 2.1 times more likely to report being fairly treated than those in non-hybrid jobs (OR = 2.055). The likelihood of being fairly treated in the workplace is nearly 20 % lower for those in controlled hybrid arrangements (OR = 0.805).

Recognition

The results show that both supervisory status and the type of hybrid work arrangement strongly predict the likelihood of employees tending to agree or strongly agreeing with the statement 'You receive the recognition you deserve for your work'. Those in supervisory roles are 30 % more likely to receive recognition than those in non-supervisory roles. The chances of receiving recognition are more than 20 % lower for those working in controlled and time-flexible arrangements (OR = 0.775 and OR = 0.797) but 35 % and 60 % greater for those in fully flexible and location-flexible arrangements, respectively, than for those in non-hybrid jobs. Everything considered, supervisors in location-flexible arrangements are 2.1 times more likely to receive recognition than non-supervisors in non-hybrid jobs.

Stress

The results show that both supervisory status and the type of hybrid work arrangement strongly predict the likelihood of experiencing stress at work always or most of the time. Those in supervisory roles are 87 % more likely (OR = 1.874) to experience stress than those in non-supervisory roles. At the same time, the chances of experiencing stress at work are 43 % greater for those in controlled hybrid arrangements (OR = 1.427) and 20 % lower for those in location-flexible arrangements (OR = 0.792) than those in non-hybrid jobs. This means

Table A3: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and being fairly treated in the workplace

	Significance	Odds ratio
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	0.805
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.123
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.228
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	2.055
Supervisory role	< 0.001	0.945

Table A4: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and receiving recognition

	Significance	Odds ratio
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	0.775
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	0.797
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.614
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.349
Supervisory role	< 0.001	1.308

Table A5: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and experiencing stress at work

	Significance	Odds ratio
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	1.427
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.026
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	0.792
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.096
Supervisory role	< 0.001	1.874

that, all things considered, the chances of reporting stress at work are 2.7 times greater for supervisors in controlled hybrid arrangements than for non-supervisors in non-hybrid jobs.

Being informed about health and safety risks related to job

The results show that supervisory status has a small but statistically significant effect on the likelihood of being well or very well informed about the health and safety risks related to the performance of one's job. The type of hybrid work arrangement has a stronger predictive effect. Those in supervisory roles have a 16 % higher chance (OR = 1.155) of being well or very well informed about the health and safety risks related to their jobs than those in non-supervisory roles. At the same time, the likelihood of being well informed is 41 % greater for those in location-flexible arrangements (OR = 1.411) and 37 % lower for those in controlled arrangements (OR = 0.633) than for those in non-hybrid jobs. This means that, all things considered, the chances of being well or very well informed about the health and safety risks related to the job are 1.6 times greater for supervisors in location-flexible hybrid arrangements than for non-supervisors in non-hybrid jobs.

Table A6: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and being informed about the health and safety risks related to one's job

	Significance	Odds ratio
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	0.633
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	0.760
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.411
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	0.956
Supervisory role	< 0.001	1.155

Being informed about prevention of work-related stress

The results show that supervisory status and the type of hybrid work arrangement strongly predict the likelihood of being well or very well informed about the prevention of work-related stress in the workplace. Those in supervisory roles are 30 % more likely (OR = 1.302) to be well or very well informed about the prevention of work-related stress than those in non-supervisory roles. The chances of being well informed are 25 % greater for those in location-flexible arrangements (OR = 1.252) and 39.5 % and 35 % lower for those in time-flexible arrangements (OR = 0.605) and controlled arrangements (OR = 0.650), respectively, than those in non-hybrid jobs. This means that, all things considered, the likelihood of being well or very well informed about the prevention of work-related stress in the workplace is 1.6 times greater for supervisors in location-flexible hybrid arrangements than for non-supervisors in non-hybrid jobs.

Table A7: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and being informed about prevention of work-related stress in the workplace

	Significance	Odds ratio
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	0.650
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	0.605
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.252
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	0.891
Supervisory role	< 0.001	1.302

Interruptions

The results show that supervisory status and hybrid work type significantly predict employees reporting they have to interrupt a task to take on an unplanned task fairly often or very often. Supervisors are more likely to experience interruptions than non-supervisors (OR = 1.572). The type of hybrid work arrangement also shows strong predictive effects, with those working in fully flexible arrangements being more than twice as likely to report interruptions as those in non-hybrid jobs (OR = 2.419). All things considered, supervisors in fully flexible hybrid arrangements are 3.8 times more likely to report interruptions than non-supervisors in non-hybrid jobs.

Table A8: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and interruptions

	Significance	Odds ratio
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	1.509
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	2.051
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.498
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	2.419
Supervisory role	< 0.001	1.572

Disruptive interruptions

The results show that supervisory status and hybrid work type significantly predict reporting disruptive interruptions. Supervisors are more likely to experience disruptive interruptions than non-supervisors (OR = 1.241). The type of hybrid work arrangement also shows relatively strong effects, with those working in time-flexible arrangements nearly 1.5 times more likely to report disruptive interruptions than those in non-hybrid jobs (OR = 1.449). All things considered, supervisors in location-flexible hybrid arrangements are 1.8 times more likely to report disruptive interruptions than non-supervisors in non-hybrid jobs.

Cognitive demands

The results show that both supervisory status and the type of hybrid work arrangement significantly predict respondents reporting that their job involves complex tasks, on the one hand, and making difficult decisions, on the other. Supervisors are more likely to carry out complex tasks (OR = 1.879) and make difficult decisions (OR = 3.531) than non-supervisors. The type of hybrid work arrangement also has a very strong predictive effect, with those working in fully flexible arrangements being 3.1 times more likely to report performing complex tasks and 2.4 times more likely to report making difficult decisions than those in non-hybrid jobs. Those in location-flexible arrangements are, among the hybrid employees, the least likely to report performing complex tasks (OR = 1.480) while those in controlled hybrid arrangements are least likely to report making difficult decisions (OR = 1.558).

Table A10: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and performing complex tasks and making difficult decisions at work

	Significance	Odds ratio: complex tasks	Odds ratio: difficult decisions
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	2.256	1.558
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	2.937	1.995
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.480	1.998
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	3.119	2.360
Supervisory role	< 0.001	1.879	3.531

Training

The results show that supervisory status and the type of hybrid work arrangement strongly predict the likelihood of respondents undertaking training paid for or provided by the employer during the year before the survey. Those in supervisory roles have a 43 % greater likelihood (OR = 1.433) of undergoing training paid for or provided by the employer than those in non-supervisory roles. At the same time, the chances of undergoing training paid for or provided by the employer are slightly higher for those in location-flexible arrangements (OR = 1.596), similar for those in fully flexible arrangements (OR = 1.518) and controlled arrangements (OR = 1.513) and smaller for those in time-flexible arrangements (OR = 1.356). This means that, all things considered, the likelihood of undergoing training paid for or provided by the employer is 2.3 times greater for supervisors in location-flexible hybrid arrangements than for non-supervisors in non-hybrid jobs.

Table A9: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and disruptive interruptions

	Significance	Odds ratio
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	1.360
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.449
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	0.857
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.263
Supervisory role	< 0.001	1.241

Table A11: Association between (1) hybrid work arrangements and (2) supervisory status, and undergoing training paid for or provided by the employer

	Significance	Odds ratio
Controlled hybrid	< 0.001	1.513
Time-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.356
Location-flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.596
Fully flexible hybrid	< 0.001	1.518
Supervisory role	< 0.001	1.433

Management quality

The management quality index is calculated by standardising to 0–100 the sum of the answers to the question on the extent to which the respondents consider that their immediate boss:

- respects them as a person;
- is successful in getting people to work together;
- makes them feel comfortable about discussing personal and family issues;
- provides useful feedback on their work;
- encourages and supports their development;
- clearly explains decisions that affect them and their work.

Each variable was scored from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Estimated marginal means produced by a univariate regression indicate that those working in supervisory roles are more likely to report higher management quality regardless of their hybrid arrangement. Those in controlled hybrid and time-flexible hybrid arrangements are more likely to report lower management quality. Those in fully flexible arrangements, regardless of supervisory role or not, experience similar levels of management quality to those in non-hybrid arrangements. Those in location-flexible arrangements tend to report higher management quality, particularly if they are in supervisory roles.

Table A12: Estimates of management quality index by supervisory status and hybrid work arrangement

	Mean	Standard error	95 % confidence interval lower bound	95 % confidence interval upper bound
Supervisor	78.517	0.007	78.504	78.530
Non-supervisor	76.319	0.005	76.308	76.329
Controlled hybrid	74.208	0.008	74.192	74.225
Time-flexible hybrid	73.525	0.010	73.504	73.545
Location-flexible hybrid	81.956	0.009	81.938	81.974
Fully flexible hybrid	79.063	0.007	79.049	79.076
Non-hybrid	78.337	0.005	78.328	78.347

Annex 2: Experts interviewed

The following individuals with expertise on hybrid working were interviewed for this study.

Tuomo Alasoini (Finnish Institute of Occupational Health)

Prithwiraj Choudhury (Harvard Business School)

Mary Connaughton (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development)

Fiorella Crespi (Smart Working Observatory, part of the Digital Innovation Observatories at Politecnico di Milano)

Hanneke Grutterink (University of Amsterdam)

Lisa Handke (University of Erlangen-Nuremberg)

Andy Lake (Smart Work Network)

Christine McCarthy (TEC Leadership Institute)

Anne Megens (Werkgeversvereniging AWWN)

Vicky O'Neill (Ibec)

Joanna Tabor Błażewicz (Warsaw School of Economics)

Annex 3: Expert interview guide

I. Hybrid work models

1. What hybrid work models are currently in use across industries and organisations in the EU, and is there evidence of a broader trend toward a return to office-based working?
2. What regulatory constraints or legal considerations impact the implementation of hybrid work policies? Related to data privacy, cybersecurity or labour laws?

II. Management challenges in hybrid work

3. How do the previously discussed hybrid work models impact organisational outcomes such as performance, productivity, employee engagement and turnover, innovation and financial performance?
4. What are the main management challenges encountered by organisations with any type of hybrid work model?
5. Are there distinct managerial challenges for senior management and for line managers related to hybrid working? If so, which?
6. What are the limitations of applying conventional managerial practices, developed primarily for in-person work environments, in the context of hybrid work arrangements?

III. Strategies and good practice elements for effective management of hybrid working

7. How are management practices evolving in response to the transition to hybrid work?
8. How are managers' tasks, functions and skills requirements changing as they adapt to hybrid work environments?
9. What are the key elements of effective leadership in a hybrid work environment? Is there a leadership or management style that is most suitable for a hybrid work environment?
10. What are potential strategies to effectively address the key challenges faced by managers in the hybrid work adaptation process?
11. What are the areas of support that managers need in effectively organising and managing a hybrid workforce?
12. What are the consequences for organisations that fail to address the challenges of hybrid work arrangements?

IV. The future trends and their implications for policy and practice

13. What emerging trends do you foresee shaping the future of hybrid work?
14. What lessons from managing hybrid workforces can help social partners and public authorities support organisations in hybrid work?
15. What role do you see policymakers playing in shaping the future of hybrid work? And what recommendations would you offer to inform policy development in this area?

Annex 4: Interview guides for case study interviews

For HR managers

1. Hybrid work model specificities, adoption and implementation

- 1.1. Please describe the main features of hybrid work in your organisation. Based on the hybrid work model classification developed for this study, how would you categorise your organisation within this classification?
 - Please describe the process for developing, consulting with relevant employee groups (e.g. employees, employee representatives or (line) managers) and approving policies and regulations for the hybrid work model within your organisation.
 - When was it initiated and rolled out, and by whom? Which parties within the organisation were involved? Please briefly describe the level of involvement and influence of each party.
 - Was the roll-out divided into any parts/phases/pilot stages? If so, how was it divided, and what was the feedback from the first parts/phases/pilot stages? Was the selected hybrid work model adjusted? If yes, why?
 - How were consultations with relevant employee groups (e.g. employees, employee representatives and/or (line) managers) carried out?
 - What was the main driver behind the move to hybrid work?
- 1.2. Do you have plans to develop and expand policies or regulations for hybrid work in your company/organisation concerning hybrid work? If so, why and what changes do they involve?
- 1.3. Does your company have a strategy for hybrid work that is connected to other key strategies – such as digital transformation, HR, innovation or broader organisational planning? If so, how are these different areas aligned or coordinated?
- 1.4. Does your organisation have a broader strategy for hybrid work? How is this strategy aligned with other strategic areas such as HR, innovation or digital transformation? Are there plans to further develop or revise hybrid work policies, and if so, what changes are envisioned?

2. Challenges in implementing hybrid work within the organisation

- 2.1. Do you consider the national legal framework on hybrid work or telework to be a constraint or a support in implementing hybrid work within your organisation?
- 2.2. How does your organisation ensure compliance with working time regulations and occupational safety and health (OSH) requirements in the context of hybrid work arrangements? Do you provide any training, guidance, or resources to support safe and healthy remote working conditions?
- 2.3. How has hybrid work affected your company culture, and have you done anything specific to keep people connected and engaged?

3. Employee engagement and satisfaction

- 3.1. Based on your experience, what are the biggest challenges managers face in maintaining employee engagement and satisfaction in a hybrid work set-up?
 - What strategies have effectively kept employees motivated and connected to the organisation? Are particular demographic groups (e.g. new hires, senior employees) presenting more significant engagement challenges?
- 3.2. What tools – digital or otherwise – are used to measure employee engagement in a hybrid work environment, and how effective have they been?
 - Can you describe the tools used to gauge engagement? For instance, are you using AI tools? How frequently are these assessments conducted, and what key metrics do you focus on?
- 3.3. What programmes, initiatives or tools have been introduced to support line managers in fostering a sense of belonging and community among employees working in hybrid arrangements?

4. Supporting managers in daily work, people management challenges, their professional development and well-being

- 4.1. How have the tasks, functions, competencies and skill requirements for managers changed with the adoption of hybrid work models?
- 4.2. How does HR support line managers in managing hybrid teams, including day-to-day responsibilities, the use of technology and developing the people skills needed to lead effectively?
 - What (digital) tools or platforms does HR offer to streamline managers' administrative tasks, such as scheduling, tracking productivity or employee performance, and handling HR-related issues? How does HR facilitate effective communication between managers and their teams in a hybrid work environment?
 - What training or resources does HR provide to ensure managers are proficient with the digital tools needed for managing hybrid teams? How does HR assist managers in troubleshooting and resolving technology-related issues that may arise in a hybrid work environment?
- 4.3. How does HR support line managers in promoting equity and inclusion within the hybrid teams they lead?
 - How does HR guide managers in supporting employees who struggle with the remote aspects of hybrid work, such as time management or isolation? What strategies does HR provide for managers to address issues of underperformance or disengagement in a hybrid team? How does HR support managers in creating a team culture that transcends physical location and unites hybrid team members?
- 4.4. How does HR support the professional development and well-being of line managers in a hybrid work environment?
 - What specific training programmes or workshops are offered to enhance managers' skills in leading hybrid teams effectively, such as empathy, flexibility and digital communication? How are managers supported in promoting well-being within their teams?

5. Impact on employee turnover and retention

- 5.1. How do you perceive the impact of hybrid work arrangements on employee turnover and retention within your organisation?
 - Have you observed any significant changes in turnover rates since adopting the hybrid work? Have specific strategies or initiatives proven effective in retaining talent? Are certain groups of employees more likely to leave under this model?
- 5.2. What retention strategies have proven most successful in attracting and retaining talent in a hybrid work setting?
 - Can you provide examples of specific initiatives that have been effective in keeping employees engaged and committed to the company/organisation?

6. Promoting productivity, collaboration and learning

- 6.1. What strategies have been most effective in promoting efficiency, learning and collaboration within hybrid teams?
 - What challenges related to efficiency have arisen in a dispersed workforce, and what solutions have been implemented to address them?
 - Has the organisation implemented any measures to assess efficiency, customer satisfaction or other indicators of the hybrid model's impact?

For line managers

1. Understanding hybrid work models

- 1.1. Can you describe the hybrid work arrangement in your team/department?
 - How does this model balance remote work and in-office presence? Are there specific guidelines or policies that dictate how often employees must be in the office versus working remotely?
- 1.2. Were line managers actively involved in the design and decision-making process? If so, can you describe the involvement, designing and cooperation processes? If not, why? What were the main considerations or objectives behind the chosen hybrid work model?

- 1.3. What are your experiences with implementing a hybrid work model? What benefits do they see, and what challenges have you faced when implementing it?
 - To what extent do you and other line managers have flexibility to adapt the hybrid work model to their teams' specific needs or circumstances?
 - If you made any adaptations in your team, what did you change and why? How was that perceived by your team and other teams in the company?
- 1.4. What do you perceive as the key benefits of the hybrid work model for your team?
- 1.5. Does your company have plans to develop and expand policies, documents and/or regulations for a hybrid work model? If so, what changes do they involve?
 - Do you see a need for changes in policy or document provision? What changes would be necessary and why?

2. Management challenges in a hybrid work environment

- 2.1. What challenges have you encountered in managing hybrid work teams?
 - How do these challenges differ from those in a traditional office-based model? Can you share specific examples of situations where hybrid work created difficulties in management or team dynamics?
- 2.2. What challenges do you face in assessing employee productivity and performance in a hybrid work setting, particularly when it comes to ensuring that tasks are completed as expected and on time? What strategies do you use to maintain and monitor team productivity in a hybrid work setting? And how is the workload assessed and monitored?
 - How do you track the progress and performance of remote employees compared to those working in the office? Are AI tools used for monitoring purposes?
 - What challenges do you face in ensuring consistent productivity across different work modes?
- 2.3. How do you ensure effective communication, collaboration and learning within your hybrid team?
 - What tools or practices have you found most effective? How do you address potential communication breakdowns between employees?
 - What challenges have you encountered in ensuring inclusivity and equity within your hybrid team, and how do you address any potential disparities between in-office and remote employees?
- 2.4. How do you handle employee engagement and motivation issues in a hybrid work model?
 - What specific challenges have you encountered with keeping remote employees engaged? How do you foster a sense of team cohesion and belonging among dispersed team members?
- 2.5. How do you perceive your responsibilities regarding the occupational health and safety and the psychological well-being of your team in a hybrid setting? What challenges arise in managing OSH in these different work modalities?
- 2.6. To what extent do you encourage employees to explore and use digital tools, including generative AI, in their work? Does your approach to promoting the use of these tools differ depending on whether your team works in a hybrid model or primarily in the office? If yes, how?
 - Do you consider this part of your responsibilities as a line manager, or does it fall more within the remit of other organisational roles (e.g. IT, digital innovation, HR)? At the same time, how do you ensure that the quality, accuracy and reliability of outputs are maintained when such tools are used?

3. Support required by managers

- 3.1. How does your organisation currently support line managers in addressing the challenges of managing teams in a hybrid work environment?
 - What resources or initiatives have been provided to help you manage your hybrid team? Are there any gaps in the support you receive that could be improved?
- 3.2. What additional support would help you manage your team more effectively in a hybrid work environment?
- 3.3. What support does your organisation currently provide to help line managers manage hybrid teams?
 - Are there any additional resources, tools or initiatives that would help you be more effective in this role?
- 3.4. What training or development opportunities would you find most beneficial in managing a hybrid workforce?
 - Are there specific skills or competencies you feel need strengthening to manage a hybrid team effectively?

- 3.5. How do you balance the demands of managing a hybrid team with your other managerial responsibilities?
- As a line manager, has managing a team in a hybrid work environment increased your workload, added responsibilities or shifted your priorities? What strategies do you use to manage your time, support your team and oversee tasks effectively?
 - What kind of support does the organisation provide to you as a line manager to help maintain a healthy work-life balance and manage stress?

4. Changing roles and functions of managers in hybrid work environments

- 4.1. As a line manager of a hybrid team, how would you describe your leadership style? Has it changed since the transition to hybrid work?
- Do you believe that managing a hybrid workforce requires a different leadership approach – and if so, what kind of leadership style do you think works best in this context?
 - Have your responsibilities or daily tasks changed since the adoption of hybrid work? Are there new aspects you find particularly challenging or rewarding?
- 4.2. How do you see the role of managers evolving in the future as hybrid work becomes more prevalent?
- What trends do you anticipate will shape the future of management in hybrid work environments? How do you think organisations will need to further adapt and better support managers leading hybrid teams in this evolving role?
- 4.3. Based on your own experience, what advice or lessons would you share with other managers who are new to managing hybrid teams?

For employee representatives

1. Understanding the hybrid work model implementation. Policy consultation and involvement

- 1.1. From your perspective as an employee representative, how would you describe the hybrid work model in your organisation? Do you see any differences in how this model is understood or experienced by management compared to the employees you represent?
- 1.2. Can you describe how the hybrid work model or policy was introduced in your workplace? What were the main reasons or motivations communicated by management for its implementation, and how were employees involved or informed during the process?
- Were you consulted during the planning and design phase? How was feedback from employee representatives integrated into the final hybrid work policy?
 - Do you feel that the consultation process around the development of the hybrid work policy was sufficient and inclusive?
- 1.3. Were there any difficulties in reaching out to workers and involving them in the consultation process? How were employee representatives / trade unions involved in the decision-making process for implementing the hybrid work model?
- 1.4. How transparent was the organisation in sharing details about the hybrid work model with representatives? Were there any opportunities to influence or modify the proposed hybrid work arrangements? What were the primary concerns raised by employees regarding the hybrid work model, and how were these addressed?
- How did the organisation respond to these concerns? Were there any specific issues related to work-life balance, productivity, fairness or increased managerial control when working remotely?
- 1.5. Does any hybrid work discussion take place in your organisation? How do you perceive the level of involvement of employee representatives / trade unions in ongoing discussions about the hybrid work model?
- Are employee representatives regularly engaged in evaluating and adjusting the hybrid work policy? How responsive is management to suggestions or concerns raised by employee representatives?

2. Evaluation, support and continuous improvement

- 2.1. How is the hybrid work model evaluated within your organisation, and what role do employee representatives / trade unions play in this process?
- Are there regular assessments or feedback sessions involving employees and their representatives? What metrics or indicators are used to evaluate the success or challenges of hybrid work?

3. Impact on management, managers and employee perception

- 3.1. Have employees shared with you or other employee representatives any positive or negative feedback on how hybrid work affects communication and teamwork, workload and pressure, their productivity, motivation or job satisfaction, and overall well-being?
- 3.2. In your opinion, how do employees perceive the impact of hybrid work on management and managers?
 - Have there been any noticeable changes in management style or communication since the adoption of hybrid work? How do employees feel about the support and guidance they receive from managers in a hybrid setting?
- 3.3. In your view, how has hybrid work affected the relationship between employees and managers?
 - Have there been any challenges in maintaining trust and accountability? How do employees perceive the level of managerial oversight in a hybrid environment?
- 3.4. What are the most significant challenges that managers in your organisation face when it comes to implementing or managing hybrid work?
 - How do these challenges affect employee satisfaction and productivity? What role do employee representatives play in supporting managers to overcome these challenges?
- 3.5. What feedback have you received (if any) from employees regarding their overall experience with the hybrid work model?
 - How do employees feel about the balance between remote and in-office work?

4. Evaluation of the process and continuous involvement

- 4.1. Are there plans within the organisation to assess the current hybrid work policy? If so, what does the process look like? Are employee representatives involved in the ongoing assessment or adjustment of the hybrid work model?
 - How frequently are these assessments conducted, and who is involved? What role do employee representatives play in suggesting or implementing changes?
 - Do you have plans to propose any changes to policies or regulations for hybrid work in your company/organisation concerning hybrid work? If so, why and what changes do they involve?
- 4.2. In your opinion, what could be done to better support both employees and managers in a hybrid work environment?
 - What additional resources, training or policies would be beneficial? How do you see the role of employee representatives evolving as hybrid work becomes more entrenched in the workplace?

Getting in touch with the EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you online (https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en).

On the phone or in writing

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696,
- via the following form: https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/write-us_en.

Finding information about the EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website (<https://europa.eu>).

EU publications

You can view or order EU publications at <https://op.europa.eu/en/publications>. Multiple copies of free publications can be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local documentation centre (https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en).

EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1951 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu>).

EU open data

The portal <https://data.europa.eu> provides access to open datasets from the EU institutions, bodies and agencies. These can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes. The portal also provides access to a wealth of datasets from European countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transition to hybrid work, where employees split their time between working remotely and on-site. While this model offers greater flexibility, it also introduces new challenges for line managers and other supervisors, particularly in coordinating work across locations, managing performance without direct visibility, maintaining team cohesion and ensuring equitable access to information and opportunities.

This report examines how hybrid work reshapes work organisation and influences day-to-day management practices at the line manager level, focusing on changes in coordination, communication, performance management and employee well-being. It shows that hybrid work does not simply relocate work but requires more explicit and digitally mediated forms of coordination, increased managerial proactivity and more structured approaches to supporting teams without relying on physical co-presence. Building on Eurofound's previous research on hybrid work, the report seeks to inform policymaking by identifying specific management challenges and highlighting practical areas where policy guidance or support may be needed.

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

