SUSHY

Towards sustainable hybrid work: the study of hybrid work effects on well-being, productivity and environment

DURATION
01/02/2023 – 01/02/2027

BUDGET
€ 1 076 484

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The SUSHY project aims to evaluate the sustainability of hybrid work (with regard to its intensity). Adopting a multidisciplinary and longitudinal perspective, the project aims to assess the combined effects of hybrid work in terms of well-being, performance and energy demands. The project seeks to provide valuable insights to employers, policymakers, and academics on organizing and supporting hybrid work sustainably by mapping out its possibilities and limitations.

Hybrid work - that is the combination of multiple workspaces, including home – is expected to develop in Belgium over the coming years. This trend has been accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis and its associated restriction measures, and the subsequent 'future of work' that is now being designed by employees and employers. Supporting its development calls for new policies and regulations at different levels that are still largely missing since the mid- and long-term effects of structural hybrid work has not yet been comprehensively analyzed.

In this context, the SUSHY project aims to address three subquestions:

a. Under what conditions does hybrid work have a positive impact on the mental well-being of the employee?
b. Under what conditions does hybrid work have a positive impact on performance?
c. Under what conditions does hybrid work have a consistently positive effect on households and firms' energy demands in order to reduce carbon footprints?

To answer these questions, the project adopts an integrated longitudinal mixed-method design, structured in three phases:

- Phase 1: Large-scale employee survey. The first step consists in conducting a large-scale survey to quantitatively measure the effects of hybrid work practices on well-being, productivity and energy demands and to characterize hybrid work practice in Belgium. The survey will be administered to approximately 10,000 Belgian workers from different sectors in four points in time. The longitudinal approach allows identifying patterns in the use of hybrid work, including the effects associated on the measured variables.

- Phase 2: Case studies. 15 organisations will be selected from the organisations represented in the survey according to contrasted hybrid work practices and experiences revealed in the survey. The case studies will rely on semi-structured interviews with key people (HR director, Facility manager, CFO…) offering an access to existing data on well-being (previous internal survey, social balance…), energy demands (bills, consumption monitoring…) and productivity (output monitoring, hours, absenteeism…).

- Phase 3: Digital diaries panel. The diary study – supported by the development of a digital application – will permit the collection of qualitative data (testimonials in the form of voice-recordings, short sentences) and quantitative data (domestic energy use in the form of figures or pictures of energy reading, numeric answer to Likert scales). Data will be collected over four distinct 1-month periods, varying seasons, among a panel of approx. 200 participants (100 employees working intensively in hybrid modes and a control group of approx. 100 employees working in a low-hybrid work setting). The digital diary study will allow collecting narratives on well-being and employee productivity but also by monitoring effective individual energy use and travel distance (through distance tracking sensors that participants will agree to put in their cars).

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In terms of expected results, SUSHY aims to provide new insights and data on the effects of hybrid work on worker well-being, performance and energy demands and to provide a global and nuanced view of the combined effects of hybrid work. The project will produce original data for Belgium, a country for which data is still lacking onto this context. The expected overall outcome lies in the identification of these patterns describing different uses of hybrid work: its frequency, but also the characteristics of people (age, gender, household, qualification, commuting, …) and organizations (sector, location, hybrid work policy, flexibility, mobility…) using it, and the impact in terms of well-being, productivity, and energy demands. Based on these patterns, organizations, and policymakers (incl. unions, federal and regional agencies) would define the appropriate (social, economic, environmental) regulations of hybrid work for Belgium, regarding its effective use and impacts.

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LINKS

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