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THE WORLD IS FLAT, AFTER ALL

Could the home and shared office work concepts replace
standard office work in the near future in Romania?

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Abstract

This master's thesis investigates the emergence of alternative work concepts that focus on flexibility and how they affect employed individuals and their ability to share knowledge with others.

The concepts of home office ("working from home") and shared offices ("co-working spaces") emerged as alternatives to standard on-site office work in the late 2010s and early 2020s due to prospects of increased flexibility, reduced costs and positive health effects, such as improvements in well-being ("social health") (Robelski & Keller, 2019; Nappi & Eddial, 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022; Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023). The master thesis investigated these expectations and the impact of alternative work concepts on productivity, communication and tacit knowledge transfers, which have only been recently studied in academic literature.

The master thesis used a qualitative research method that included an academic literature review and semi-structured interviews with employed individuals working at home as well as in shared offices in Bucharest, Romania.

The master thesis revealed that work settings, including home and shared offices, are more suitable for Romanian employees than standard office work due to their positive experiences, quick adaptation, and financial benefits outweighing the costs. The results of the semi-structured interviews confirmed the findings in the academic literature that including home and shared offices in professional life could improve the work-life balance, productivity, job satisfaction and well-being of employed individuals. Although home and shared offices enhance communication and collaboration, the study found that Romanian employees prefer on-site knowledge transfers because they better understand the newly acquired knowledge when meeting co-workers in person.

Overall, the study concludes that a combined home and shared office concept is the most suitable for employed individuals in Bucharest, Romania, as the benefits of each concept can compensate for the challenges of the other concept. However, tacit knowledge transfers can be better conducted on-site than over the Internet.

Problem definition

The increasing globalisation and the digitalisation of office work in the last decades, as the use of IT hardware and software, videoconferencing tools and digital workstations enabled employees to work with a high degree of flexibility and share knowledge regardless of the geographical distance and help businesses employ people irrespective of the geographical proximity to the corporate headquarters (Robelski & Keller, 2019). The lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic caused changes in how employees managed their schedules, work-life balance and knowledge transfers, as many employees and self-employed people had the chance to compare their pre-pandemic standard office work with remote work and flexible work (Nappi & Eddial, 2021; Harris, 2009; Masoudinejad & Veitch, 2023; Akhavan, et al., 2023).

The work concepts of working from home and co-working spaces, named "home office" and "shared office" in the thesis, have become the best-known and most popular forms of alternative, more flexible work concepts due to new opportunities for workers as well as dissatisfaction with standard office work (Robelski & Keller, 2019; Smékalová, et al., 2022). Whereas home office was implemented en masse due to the enforced stay-at-home orders during the COVID-19 pandemic, shared offices gained traction due to the desire of many small enterprises and small employees to reduce costs, have more flexible schedules and share knowledge with co-workers and business partners (Robelski & Keller, 2019; Adekoya, et al., 2022; Smékalová, et al., 2022; Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023). However, the implementation of either concept depends on how employers and employees can manage and overcome hidden costs, such as overcoming work-life boundaries, privacy issues, perceptions of ill-being in teamwork and improvement of ICT-based skills (Nappi & Eddial, 2021; Robelski & Keller, 2019).

As companies and self-employers replace the traditional, 40-hour-per-week private office work with alternative work models, could the alternative work concepts become the new way of work? Furthermore, could the home or shared office meet the needs of employees to a greater extent than the standard office?

The thesis aims to answer the research question, "Could home and shared office work concepts be better options for employees and their employers than standard office work?" and includes twelve expectations analysed in selected academic literature and the interviews conducted for this master thesis.

1. Theoretical framework

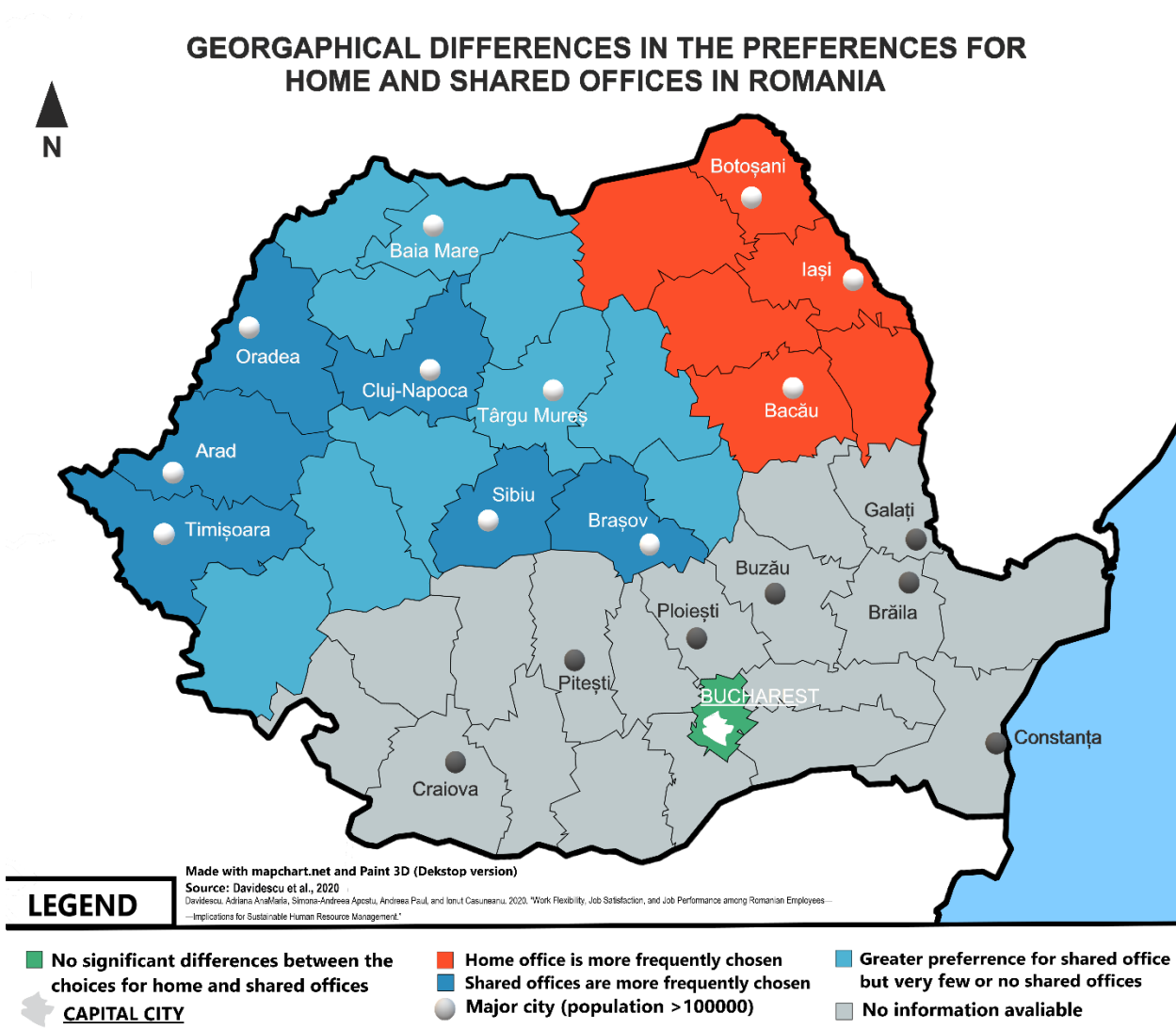


Figure 1 The spread of home and shared office in Romania, according to research by Davidescu et al. (2020). Note that neither centralised databases nor statistical data from the National Institute of Statistics about home and shared offices are available.

Home and shared office work are two new work concepts in the Romanian labour market, as less than two per cent of Romanian workers used the home office before the COVID-19 pandemic (and just 2. 5% in 2020, according to Eurostat), whereas shared offices were uncommon in Romania until the late 2010s, as shown in Figure 1 (Eurostat, 2023; Davidescu, et al., 2020; Săvescu, et al., 2022). The academic literature focusing on the home and shared office concepts in Romania tends to focus more on implementing alternative work concepts from an economic viewpoint than a geographical or spatial perspective. Concerning geographical differences in Romania, the home office is more common in the North-East

region (the historical region of Moldova). In contrast, shared offices are more widespread in Bucharest and the western and central counties (the historical provinces of Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş). However, the highest use of home offices since the end of the pandemic is in Bucharest and the neighbouring Ilfov county, in Bucharest's metropolitan area (Davidescu, et al., 2020).

Hybrid work arrangements are becoming more popular as people seek to maintain a better work-life balance, potentially affecting their residential mobility and consumer behaviour (Abreu, et al., 2019). Due to flexible work arrangements, mass use during the COVID-19 pandemic and a sudden increase in home office during the pandemic, alternative work concepts will most likely continue to be developed and implemented in the future, both in Romania and abroad (Eurostat, 2023; Săvescu, et al., 2022)

After the COVID-19 pandemic's onset, many organisations considered a shift towards a hybrid working model combining home office with either own or shared office, which would decrease their physical office space (Cooke, et al., 2022). While serviced offices can be a useful short-term solution, many companies hesitate to invest in them due to concerns about future flexibility and capital expenditure (Cooke, et al., 2022).

1.1. The choice for home offices

Home office emerged as a prevalent means of sustaining business operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, as direct human contact at the workplace was drastically reduced, resulting in a shift from on-site to remote work (Săvescu, et al., 2022). In Romania, the home office is legally considered distinct from remote work, as the latter involves performing typical tasks away from the employer's office by using IT hardware and software, whereas the home office involves physical or manual work (Vallasek & Mélypataki, 2020).

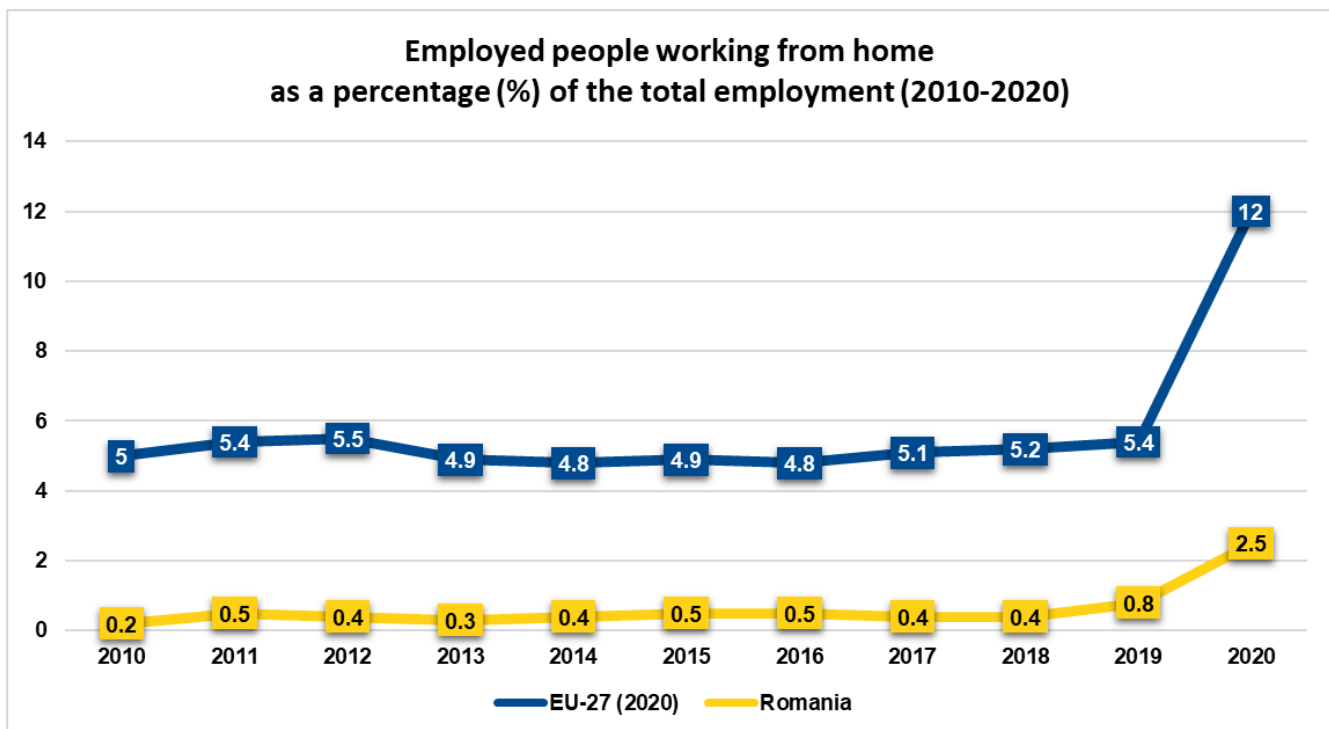


Figure 2 The share of people who work in the home office, both fully or partially, in Romania and the European Union. Source: [Eurostat, 2023](#)¹

According to statistical data on the home office from Eurostat, the proportion of employed persons working remotely in Romania increased only slightly from 0,2% in 2010 to 2,5% in 2020. These results are significantly lower than the EU average, where the percentage of the use of home office among individuals increased substantially from 5.4% in 2019 to 12% in 2020, whereas the percentages were more or less constant from 2010 when Eurostat started to measure the use of home office (Eurostat, 2023).

¹ Eurostat has collected data on the home office since 2010, both for EU members and non-EU member states, thus making a comparison between Romania and the other current EU member states possible for the whole decade, despite Croatia joining in 2013 and the United Kingdom leaving in 2016.

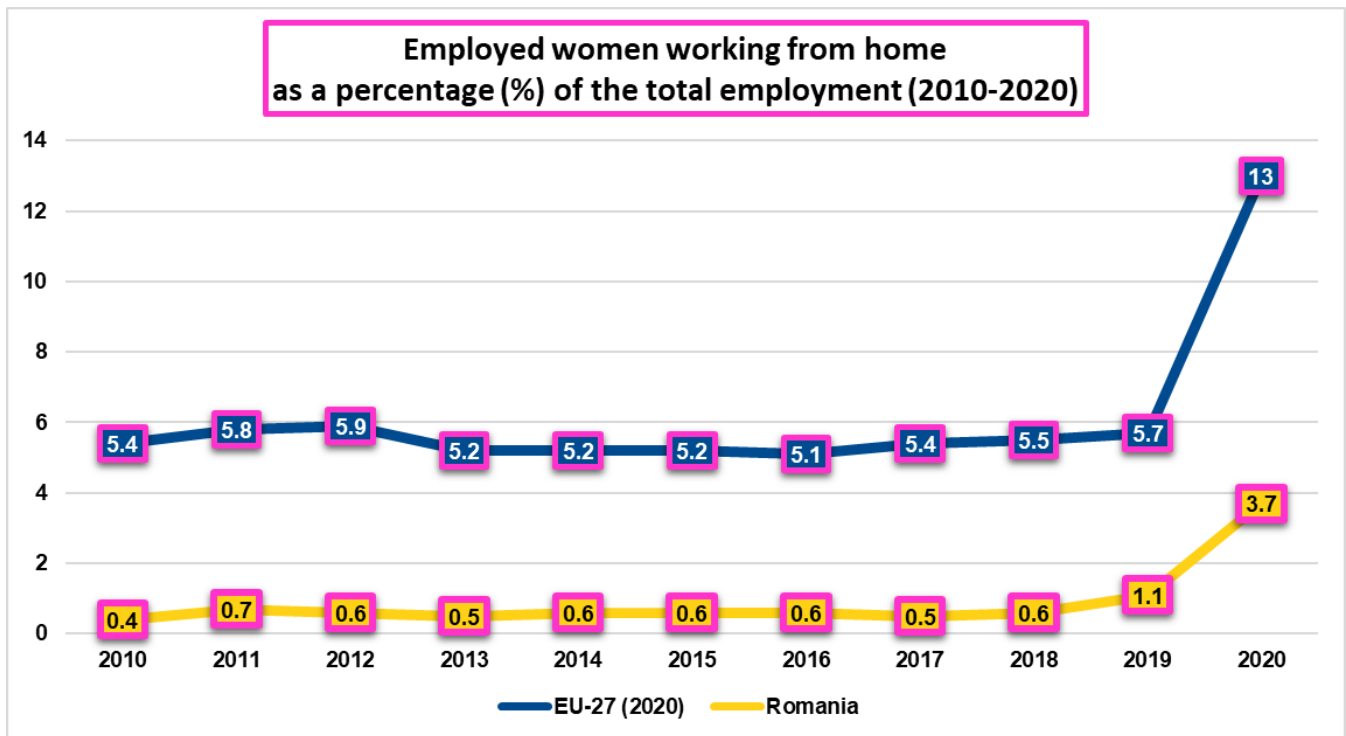


Figure 3 The share of women who work in home offices, both fully or partially, in Romania and the European Union. Source: [Eurostat, 2023](#)

The percentage of women who used the concept of working from home either fully or in combination with other concepts increased moderately during COVID-19. In 2020, 3,7% of women did so, compared to just 0,4% in 2010 and 1,1% in 2019. A more significant increase was observed in the EU-27, where the percentage of women opting for long-term home office work more than doubled from 2019 (5,7%) to 2020 (13%), breaking the constant trend seen in the 2010s. In Romania, women were less likely to work from home than their female peers in the EU-27, but the only difference in the trends between Romania and the European Union was a slower switch from home to shared offices. The percentage of employed females working from home in Romania and the EU-27 was higher than that of men or the average percentage (Eurostat, 2023).

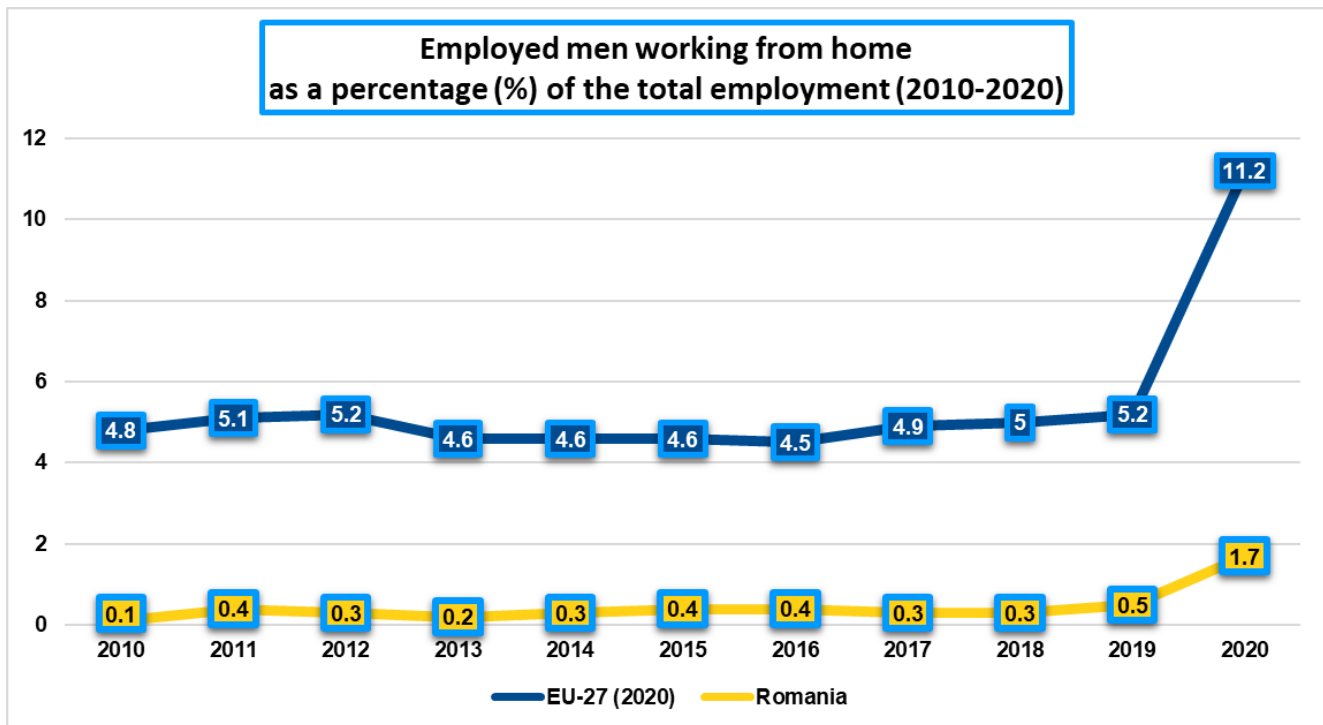


Figure 4 The share of men who work in the home office, both fully or partially, in Romania and the European Union from 2010 to 2020. Source: [Eurostat, 2023](#)

The number of women who used the concept of working from home either fully or in combination with other concepts increased moderately during COVID-19. In 2020, 1,7% of men worked from home, compared to just 0,1% in 2010 and 0,5% in 2019. A more significant increase was observed in the EU-27, where the percentage of women opting for long-term home office work more than doubled from 2019 (4,2%) to 2020 (11,8%), breaking the constant trend seen in the 2010s. In Romania, men were less likely to work from home than their male peers in the EU-27, but the only difference in the trends between Romania and the European Union was a slower switch from home to shared offices, the same trend that was reported for women. Notably, the percentages for women in EU-27 were slightly lower than the average and considerably lower than the averages for women (Eurostat, 2023).

Employed people working from home as a percentage (%) of the total employment in 2020

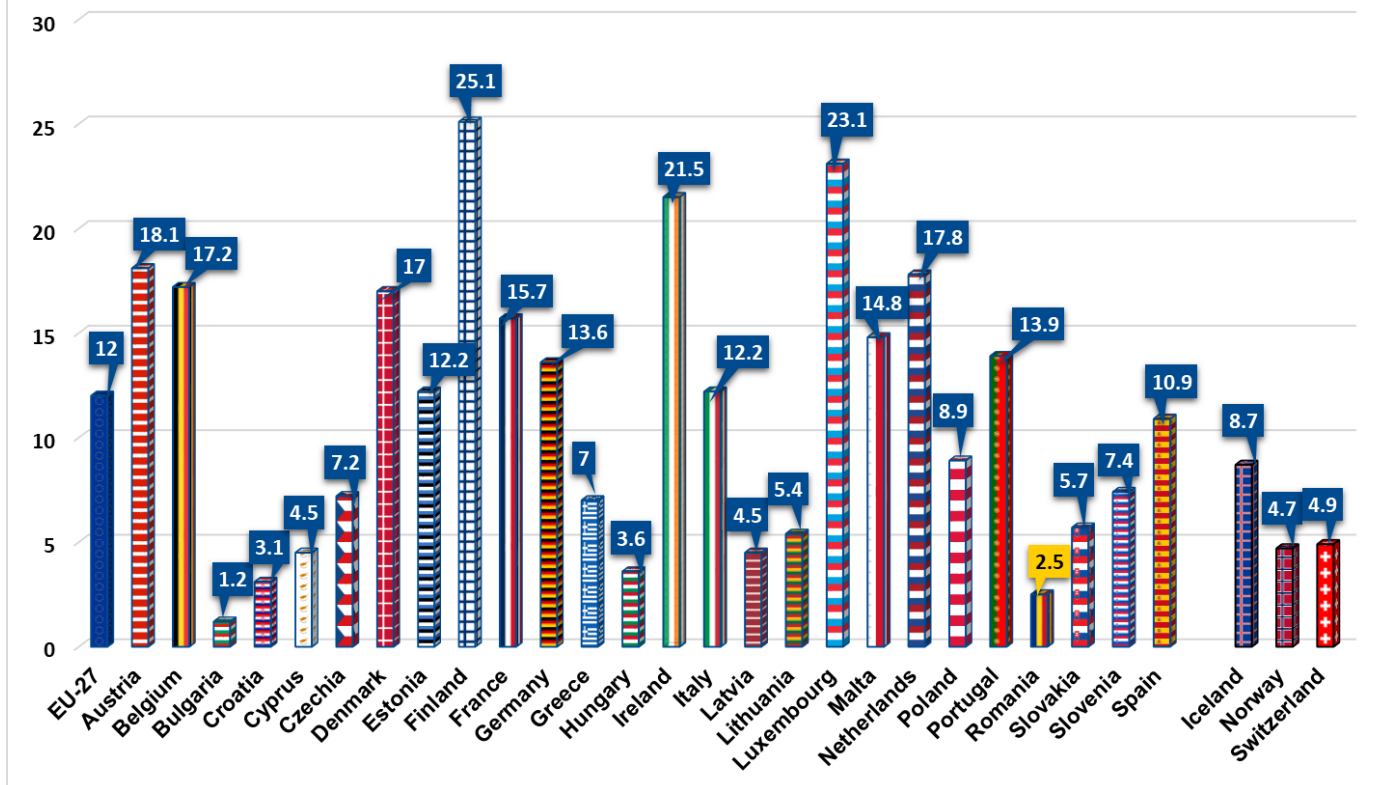


Figure 5 The share of people who work in a home office, both fully or partially, in Romania, the EU-27 member states and the EFTA countries in 2020. No statistical data was available for Liechtenstein and Sweden. Source: [Eurostat, 2023](#)

Compared to the EU and EFTA countries where data on home offices exist, Romania ranks 28th out of 29th countries regarding home offices among both genders (just above Bulgaria at 1,2%), which is significantly lower than the EU-27 average of 12% and considerably behind the highest-ranking countries Finland and Luxembourg with 25,1% and 23,1%, respectively (Eurostat, 2023). It is worth noting that Romanian workers have freedom of movement in all these countries, which belong to the

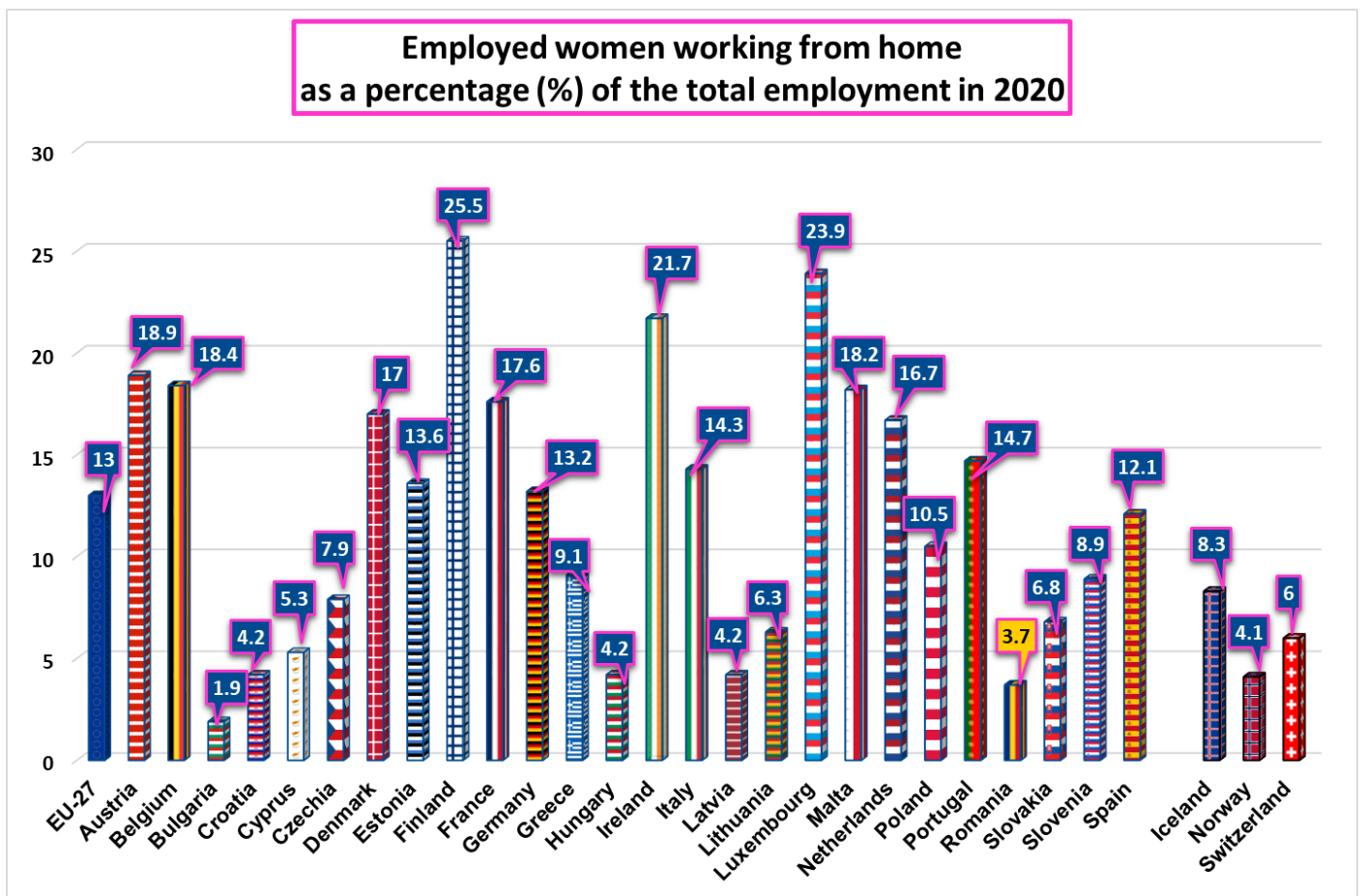


Figure 6 The share of women who work in a home office, both fully or partially, in Romania, the EU-27 member states and the EFTA countries in 2020. No statistical data was available for Liechtenstein and Sweden. Source: [Eurostat, 2023](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

When the percentages for women are considered, Romania still ranks 28th out of 29 countries regarding home offices among both genders (just above Bulgaria at 1.9%), which is significantly lower than the EU-27 average of 13%. Finnish and Luxembourgish women are most likely to work from home, with 25,5% and 23,9%, respectively, while Bulgarian women are least likely, at 1,9% (Eurostat, 2023).

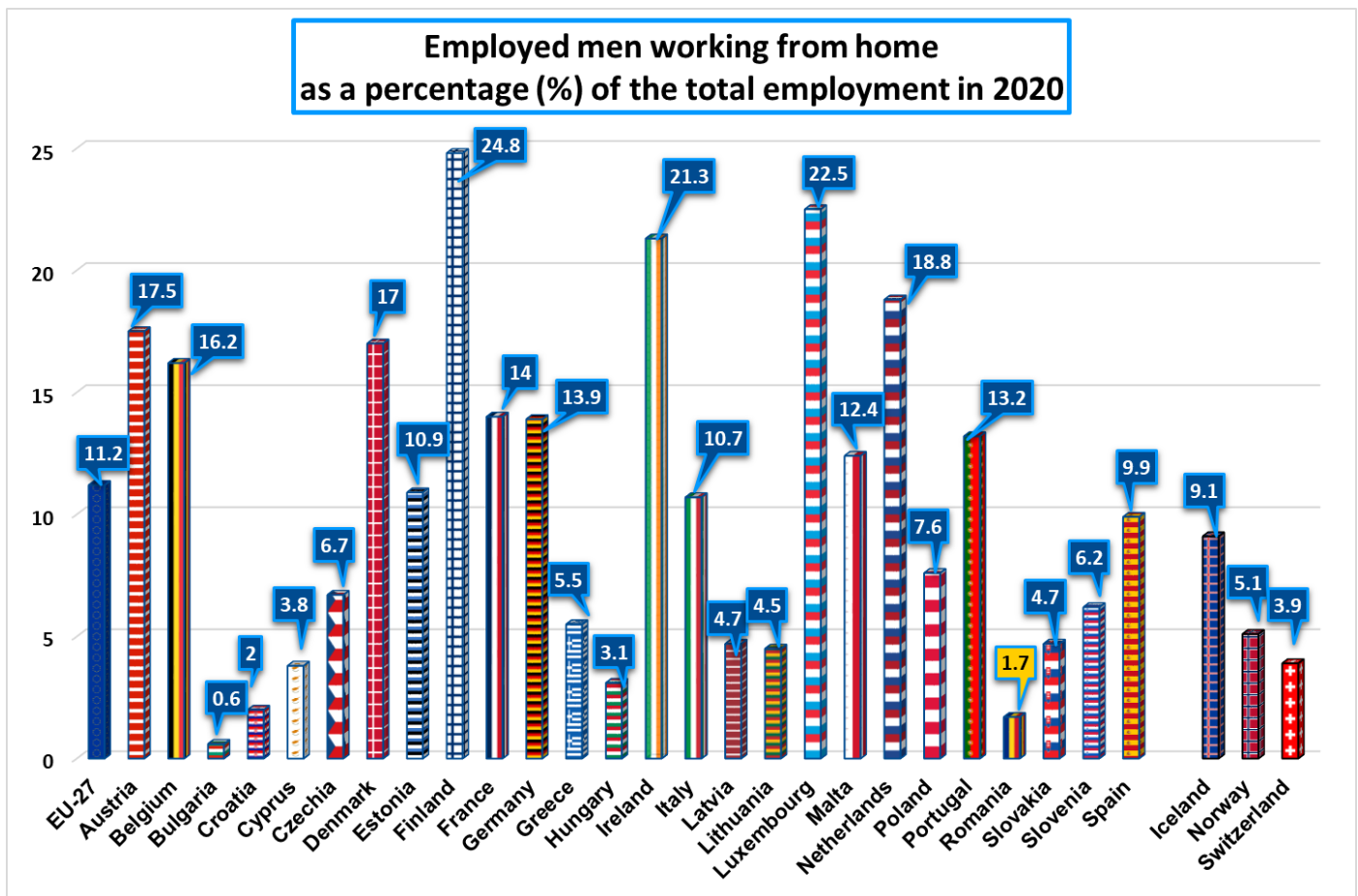


Figure 7 The share of men who work in a home office, both fully or partially, in Romania, the EU-27 member states and the EFTA countries in 2020. No statistical data was available for Liechtenstein and Sweden. Source: [Eurostat, 2023](#)

A similar situation is reflected in the percentages for men, where Romania ranks 28th out of 29 countries and significantly lower than the EU-27 average of 11,2%. Men in Finland and Luxembourg are the most likely to work at home, at 24,8% and 22,5%, respectively, whereas Bulgarian men are the least likely, at 0,6% (Eurostat, 2023).

Despite the lack of available data in Eurostat regarding occupational sectors for Romania, the academic literature focusing on shared offices in Romania provided insights into the occupational sectors of people more likely to use home and shared offices. Information and Communication Technology (including managers of logistics systems and software developers), finance, marketing, accounting and human resource managers are the occupational sectors in Romania with the highest possible use of a home office in Romania, where wages and educational levels are higher than the national average (Davidescu, et al., 2020; Mihalca, et al., 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022). There are no differences in the likelihood of

employees and self-employed individuals within these occupational sectors switching to the home office, and some of those who benefit from a home office tend to use a shared office for on-site work assignments (Davidescu, et al., 2020; Săvescu, et al., 2022). Similar results were reported in Germany and the United States of America, where most people who choose to work from home are employed in the service and informational sector, work in medium and large enterprises and earn more than average (Robelski & Keller, 2019; Kahn, 2022).

In Bucharest, Romania, many employees and self-employed individuals switched to the home office due to more opportunities for flexibility and the ability to balance professional assignments with doing home chores or leisure time within a flexible schedule (Davidescu, et al., 2020; Mihalca, et al., 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022). The Romanian employees who switch between working remotely and in person do not need the employer's approval, which is usually granted more often than not. (Vallasek & Mélypataki, 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when a lack of suitable office spaces at home and the removal of physical boundaries between work and personal lives have led to employees being unable to focus on work assignments, with more pronounced effects during and after the pandemic (Rietveld, et al., 2021). In Romania, employees reported difficulties adapting to autonomy, interruptions during work schedules, and unregular employee involvement in decision-making processes as unusually challenging coping with the home office (Davidescu, et al., 2020).

A major significant issue that was mentioned in academic literature was the challenge of finding a suitable space (Abreu, et al., 2019; Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023; Davidescu, et al., 2020; De Been & Beijer, 2014; Fan Ng, 2010). With no separate spaces to avoid distractions at home or undesired interruptions, employees and the self-employed are less likely to ask for a switch from working in an office to a home office. They may demand that employers provide them with technical equipment, coaching and personal and IT support for a better implementation of a home office (Masoudinejad & Veitch, 2023).

1.2. The choice for shared offices

The concept of a shared office, also known as co-working spaces in scientific literature, emerged as a flexible and teamwork-oriented work environment for employees who can rent a desk for a specific period (Merkel, 2019).

Before the pandemic, there was a rising concern for work-life balance, with research indicating a shift from the standard office setting to other locations, such as shared offices. Nevertheless, the pandemic underscored the necessity for more appropriate workspaces, resulting in a surge in demand for co-working spaces, combining the benefits of second and third places by offering necessary equipment and increased social interaction and meeting the demands of the employers and employees (Smékalová, et al., 2022).

Usually, shared offices are managed by an operator who allocates workstations for a fee, enabling diverse individuals to conduct businesses and exchange ideas in a shared workspace (Robelski & Keller, 2019). Many shared offices include digital workplaces that allow employees to work together and complete tasks regardless of location, using technology to share information and collaborate with team members within and outside the organisation (Papagiannidis & Marikyan, 2020). Shared offices can foster a sense of community and shared identity, which can lead to positive impacts on individual and organisational outcomes, as well as a sense of community and can influence their audiences through their narratives, policies, support programs, investors, or owners (Bouncken, et al., 2022).

Due to the novelty of the concept from the Romanian labour market perspective and the rarity of co-working spaces and flex offices in Romania, shared offices are not regulated in the Romanian legal system, and the legal regulations that are enforced in traditional, private offices tend to be enforced in shared offices (Davidescu, et al., 2020).

In Romania, the few existing office buildings and workspaces that offer shared offices are in Bucharest and the largest cities in western and central Romania, such as Arad, Braşov, Cluj-Napoca, Oradea, Sibiu and Timișoara, that have high standards of living (Davidescu, et al., 2020; Gheorghiu, 2016).

1.3. The effects of home and shared offices on employees

1.3.1. The effects of alternative work concepts on work-life balance

Work-life balance is usually defined as the outcome resolving the conflict between different social roles that a person takes on in work and private life (Smékalová, et al., 2022). In the early 2020s, employees in the European Union have been showing an increased interest in trying to find a balance between their well-being and workplace assignments, as the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the benefits and challenges of work concepts involving remote

work, disrupting the work-life balance of individuals differently depending on their job and work environment. (Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023; Săvescu, et al., 2022; Smékalová, et al., 2022).

COVID-19 had a profound impact on work-life balance, as productivity was negatively impacted by an intensification of the work pace and the removal of boundaries between professional and private activities, which decreased the focus on work assignments and quality of work outputs (Săvescu, et al., 2022). Nevertheless, improvements in the work-life balance of individuals who worked remotely during the pandemic were reported after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, as workers benefitted from more experience and companies (or office space owners) started to invest in internal or external psychological and community support facilities to help individuals working remotely or in shared offices (Davidescu, et al., 2020; Mihalca, et al., 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022). Whereas employees in shared offices were already accustomed to these facilities before the pandemic, the continuous functioning of such facilities during and after the pandemic helped users of shared offices transition to the pre-pandemic work-life balances smoothly (Orel, 2019; Hölzel, et al., 2023).

Differences in the work-life balance between men and women were reported in work concepts involving remote work, such as a home office or hybrid home-shared office, as women preferred balancing working with household chores and childcare (Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023).

For married employees and employees in cohabitating relationships, the limited access to childcare and family-work conflicts made family-work conflicts more widespread and influenced the relationship with family members negatively, thus making it necessary to address each family issue and adjust the work environment to accommodate those needs (Mihalca, et al., 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022; Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023). Successes related to the work environment adjustments were reported in Western Europe and North America, where employers started to open geographically dispersed offices closer to employees' residences, thus helping employees overcome the struggle to balance childcare and office work simultaneously and decrease the stress levels of female employees with children (Boeri & Van Ours, 2021; Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023).

For employees who work in shared offices, the administrators of shared offices and tenant companies provide services and facilities aimed at catering to the needs of office workers, such as social events and training and personal development courses, work efficiency, a casual environment, and information (Smékalová, et al., 2022). These facilities

tend to show positive effects on employee work-life balance due to the chance to gain access to new methods to improve their productivity and broaden their social network and leisure time activities (Morrison & Macky, 2017; Orel, 2019; Smékalová, et al., 2022). However, the success of these facilities of shared offices is conditioned by the creation of a culture of cooperation, active participation, and frequent knowledge sharing (Morrison & Macky, 2017; Orel, 2019).

1.3.2. The effects of alternative work concepts on productivity

In labour economics, productivity measures outcome or output compared to inputs for work assignments or available resources (Boeri & Van Ours, 2021). The effects of home and shared offices differ among individual workers and may be affected by both professional and personal circumstances, in addition to capabilities at the workplace (De Been & Beijer, 2014; Robelski & Keller, 2019; Boeri & Van Ours, 2021; Gerlitz & Hülsbeck, 2023). For example, whereas Romanian employees have to meet certain objectives and targets at the workplace, the amenities of office spaces (including home and shared offices), organisational or IT support and access to technological tools may increase or decrease productivity more than workplace requirements (Mihalca, et al., 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022).

The home office can increase productivity by allowing employees to work longer and take breaks less frequently, but it can also lead to fragmented work outputs with lower quality in shared offices (Săvescu, et al., 2022). In shared offices, higher occupancy rates and unintended restrictions on the ability of the employees to move between offices have a negative effect on productivity, whereas flexibility in the choice of office spaces, teams formed between members having similar paces and work and preferences, and collaborative team efforts all have a positive effect on productivity (Gerlitz & Hülsbeck, 2023; De Been & Beijer, 2014).

Gender differences are possible in reporting productivity issues, as female co-workers are likelier to experience more work interruptions than their male counterparts. Among productivity issues, difficulties in concentration were the most commonly reported negative cause of the loss in productivity and efficiency (Robelski & Keller, 2019). Additionally, cultural differences may impact employees' productivity when working in a shared office, as users from different cultures perceive stressors and distractions differently. Consequently, shared office

owners or company managers may have to customise shared offices to fit the perceptions of productivity issues in different cultures or countries (Gerlitz & Hülsbeck, 2023).

1.3.3. The effects of alternative work concepts on job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an important concept in analysing the effects of both standard and alternative work concepts, as it helps to determine if workers can thrive in their current work environment for an extended period, how workers react to payments, bonuses and job stability, and how their well-being impacts their performance on work assignments (Davidescu, et al., 2020; Mihalca, et al., 2021). Job satisfaction is closely tied to other measures in labour economics, such as adaptation, work-life balance and financial costs, as it shows whether workers are more likely to switch to a new job that promises greater flexibility and reduced commuting time or more likely to work under a standard work concept (Săvescu, et al., 2022; Smékalová, et al., 2022). Indeed, studies conducted in 2021 indicated that remote work could positively impact well-being by providing more autonomy and flexibility, leading to a better work-life balance (Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023).

In shared offices, gender-based differences were not found to affect job satisfaction levels. Instead, factors like the office design, proximity to natural amenities, and efforts by employers and shared office owners to promote a sense of belonging in the work community had a significant impact on employee satisfaction (De Been & Beijer, 2014; Robelski & Keller, 2019; Bouncken, et al., 2022). The ability of the employees to move freely between office spaces in shared offices was also found to increase satisfaction with privacy levels, avoiding noise distractions and finding co-workers that could offer professional support were reported to increase job satisfaction (De Been & Beijer, 2014).

1.3.4. Health effects of alternative work models

Although the home office provided a sense of safety for employees and their families, it also resulted in (Săvescu, et al., 2022). A home office can lead to challenges in mental and social health, such as feelings of uncertainty, fear, insecurity, anxiety, isolation, and stress can deteriorate the physical and mental health statuses of the employed individuals, whereas the difficulty in meeting personal and professional needs, and a lack of routines that exist in on-site work environments, such as physical exercise and team sports, can lead to a sedentary

lifestyle that is combined social isolation and feelings of loneliness and fatigue (Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023; Săvescu, et al., 2022).

The sudden shift from working in the office to home office had a strong emotional impact on the well-being of Romanian employees and self-employed individuals due to the health risks of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions, but also due to the unintended interactions with other family members while working remotely and the lack of incentives to do physical exercise and town walks, decreasing well-being and increasing stress levels (Mihalca, et al., 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022). In the United States, where home office represented an emerging work trend before the pandemic, employed individuals reported increased mental and social health levels (such as higher reported well-being levels) due to flexibility and pre-pandemic experiences in combining work assignments with leisure time activities (Kahn, 2022). Even if the COVID-19 pandemic brought mental and social health challenges to individuals who thrive on social interaction, it is possible that the reported health levels will become more positive (Săvescu, et al., 2022).

For shared offices, facilities, seminars and workshops in shared office spaces were credited with positive mental and social benefits due to providing a good working environment and fostering peer relationships that could benefit co-workers by participating in sports events together, sharing health advice and decreasing negative mental and social health consequences, such as fatigue or feelings of isolation (Robelski & Keller, 2019).

1.4. Financial costs of alternative work methods

The facilities of home and shared offices, such as remote work or lower rental costs for shared offices, offer the ability to minimise expenses related to travel and physical office ownership/rental. This approach has been widely recognised as advantageous for both employees and self-employed individuals (Papagiannidis & Marikyan, 2020; Săvescu, et al., 2022).

1.4.1. Financial costs of home office

When deciding to work from home, the employees should consider the expenses of setting up a home office for their employees and, if necessary, cover certain costs or offer financial aid for moving and installation (Fan Ng, 2010). On the one hand, employees can benefit from costs incurred by travelling less, eating at home, or, in the case of self-employed

individuals, renting physical offices; more than half considered that their wages were too low to reflect their efforts in adapting to the new office models (Davidescu, et al., 2020). On the other hand, a home office can bring additional costs with electricity and purchasing new devices. Some costs that employees may be forced to pay due to a lack of subsidies from the employer are per capita expenses for information technology and telecommunications services as part of the electricity and telecommunications bills (Nappi & Eddial, 2021).

1.4.2. Financial costs of shared offices

Shared offices have become more popular among self-employed people and freelancers who want to benefit from shared offices in marketing or creative labour activities due to lower costs than renting an office (Robelski & Keller, 2019). The rental costs of a shared office should consider various factors such as building-related and operating expenses, service provision expenses, means and equipment costs, and workforce costs (Nappi & Eddial, 2021). However, employees may face challenges in finding the best space that meets their specific requirements while preserving the core benefits of a standard office (such as connection, communication, collaboration, enculturation, creativity, and learning) if they choose a shared office with a cheap rent instead of a shared office with a well-designed layout aimed at accommodating individual needs or facilitating teamwork between team members with different cultural and personality traits (Nappi & Eddial, 2021; Cooke, et al., 2022).

1.5. Knowledge transfers in home and shared offices

1.5.1. The role of technology in alternative work methods

Digital workstations at home or in shared offices can help employees and the self-employed meet tasks at the workplace, incorporating a range of internal and external ICT business conferencing platforms which enable videoconferencing and big data analytics that deals with data storage and processing issues (Papagiannidis & Marikyan, 2020). Using digital workstations within shared offices instead of ordering equipment and contacting other workers for advice and help can ease the transition. (Robelski & Keller, 2019).

Home and shared offices offer advantages such as faster completion of knowledge-intensive tasks, access to newer technology, and the ability to engage in flexible work arrangements and scheduling (Davidescu, et al., 2020). Additionally, the integration of learning

tools into videoconferencing software can help employees achieve a better learning experience through accessibility regardless of experience in ICT and gaining more explicit knowledge (Harris, 2009).

The facilitation of knowledge sharing, efficient work implementation, and collaboration through digital workstations in home and shared offices can positively influence productivity, collaboration and cooperation in both individual and group assignments (Papagiannidis & Marikyan, 2020). However, technological hurdles need to be overcome, as computerising processes require the use of office devices or the purchase of personal devices with high data storage, which might require employees or self-employed to prefer a hybrid combination home-shared office or home-personal office to 100% home office (Papagiannidis & Marikyan, 2020).

1.5.2. Communication and collaboration through videoconferencing

Alternative work concepts focusing on remote teamwork allow the formation of teams from different geographical locations, no matter where they are based, while also allowing for more flexible scheduling that accommodates all collaborators. Additionally, remote work allows employees to share their knowledge during group meetings or one-on-one discussions with colleagues. (Papagiannidis & Marikyan, 2020). However, because the home office reduces the chances to interact with colleagues and transfer or receive tacit knowledge, the home office can limit the connections with peers when working remotely (Mihalca, et al., 2021).

Compared to home offices, nevertheless, shared offices include digital workstations with rapid internet connections and business communication tools that facilitate cooperation through videoconferencing, but also meeting rooms where co-workers can meet in person in spontaneous meetings (Abreu, et al., 2019). In shared offices, however, noise and frequent interruptions from colleagues can discourage on-site communication and shift the preferences of the employees from a combination of on-site and remote team meetings to full team meetings (Gerlitz & Hülsbeck, 2023).

1.5.3. Tacit knowledge transfers in alternative work models

In-home and shared offices, e-learning and e-collaboration frameworks are influential in the transfer of tacit knowledge, as training methods that are adapted to shared offices can help to maximise e-learning's potential for small businesses, traditional training and education

methods must be taken into account; and, if necessary, changed (Harris, 2009). Such a method is the personalisation strategy, which involves incorporating explicit knowledge into action and transforming it into tacit knowledge through learning by doing (Hayaeian, et al., 2021). However, any training at home and shared office success depends on organisational culture, collaboration, and knowledge sharing (Harris, 2009).

In shared offices, tacit knowledge transfers need, in addition to well-established workplace networks, an ability to maintain a general understanding of the aim and the output of the activities of the co-workers, as well as actively working together with colleagues on shared projects or tasks (Heerwagen, et al., 2004; Haynes, 2007).

Networking, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, and support from industry professionals and entrepreneurs, who are available within home and shared office, can facilitate the key processes of the personalisation strategy (coaching, mentoring, and sharing experiences) and help to achieve tacit knowledge transfers (Harris, 2009; Hayaeian, et al., 2021).

1.6. Policy recommendations

Several selected research papers included policy recommendations for employers and employees. For example, more action must provide adequate support to maximise the positive effects of home and shared offices, such as increasing collaboration and collaboration, improving efficiency, and reducing direct and indirect financial costs (Papagiannidis & Marikyan, 2020; Mihalca, et al., 2021). In the academic literature, the academic literature has issued recommendations for certain expectations of the master thesis as well.

According to selected academic literature, employers can take steps to accommodate the transition of employees to remote work. Employers are recommended to provide their employees with tangible and psychological resources to help employees cope with the unique challenges and uncertainties of remote work during the pandemic, which in turn would reduce the negative effects of removing the boundary between personal and professional life (Mihalca, et al., 2021).

According to Papagiannidis and Marikyan (2020), possible strategies for increasing productivity levels in the home office include but are not limited to improving communication with the employee's social network, maintaining a high level of mobility, compliance management, and social support to cope with stress management (Papagiannidis & Marikyan,

2020). However, decisions regarding which interventions or changes to increase productivity are most appropriate should be based on considerations of the most desirable levels of eliminating or isolating distractions or interactions from nearby individuals (Morrison & Macky, 2017).

Regarding job satisfaction, the research in the academic literature includes recommendations for employers to consider any psychological and environmental factors that employees face and could influence satisfaction with work assignments or communication to ensure employees are productive and satisfied (De Been & Beijer, 2014).

Regarding the use of technology in videoconferencing and remote work, the paper by Mihalca et al. (2021) recommends the redistribution of customer support and mentoring services so that highly skilled co-workers with a high proficiency technology receive support only when they need it while their less proficient co-workers are enrolled in courses about management skills, self-discipline, computer knowledge or improving confidence in managing remote work demands (Mihalca, et al., 2021).

The selected academic literature recommended tacit knowledge transfers to employers and employees. The research paper encourages collaboration with other organisations to share their experiences and achieve better experiential learning and tacit knowledge transfers. However, to effectively develop capabilities, it is essential to encourage the sharing of both tacit and explicit knowledge between employees (or business partners) and promote organisational learning, as well as the creation of a network of partners that offer e-learning support necessary an effective method of knowledge transfers (Harris, 2009).

2. Conceptual model

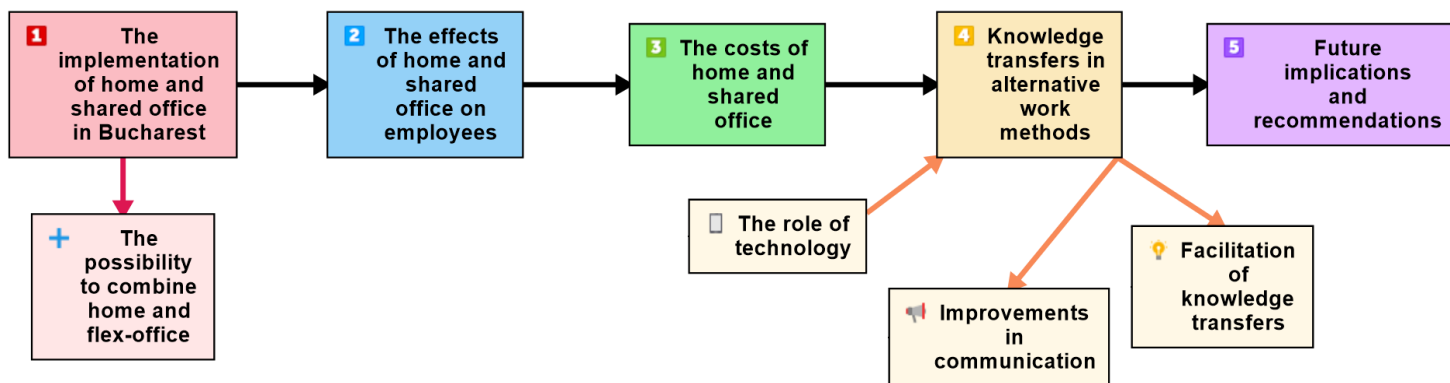


Figure 8 Mind map of the conceptual model of the Master thesis. The author’s own work, with MindMaps being used for generating the diagram.

The conceptual model of the Master's thesis includes five main components that explain and assess the use of home and shared office workspaces, both in the literature and in the answers of the interviewees, as detailed in Figure 1. The implication for future work environments.

1. The first component is **“The implementation of the concepts of home and shared office”**. The component explores the implementation of home and shared office in the Romanian labour market, as only a small percentage of employees used the home office model in Romania before the COVID-19 pandemic, and shared offices were uncommon in Romania until the late 2010s. (Săvescu, et al., 2022). This component will also include the first expectation of the Master thesis and see whether it is true or not:

- First expectation: The COVID-19 pandemic influenced the transition to home and shared office;
- Second expectation: Employees can easily adapt to changes in work and workspaces brought by social and technological developments.

A sub-component is **"the possibility to combine home and flex-office"**. It analyses the perceptions of the interviewee combining home office and co-working spaces and will include an assessment on whether the combination of both alternative work concepts can combine the benefits of both home and shared office without creating new challenges for the employees.

- Third expectation: The inclusion of the shared office (hybrid home-shared office models) component can provide greater benefits to both employees and companies in Bucharest compared to alternative work concepts exclusively based on the home office.

2. The second component presents the **“The effects of home and shared offices”**, with assessments on whether these concepts brought advantages (benefits) than disadvantages (costs) for the interviewees. Additionally, the analysis will present the results of several expectations on whether alternative work concepts can positively impact various aspects of work-life.

- Fourth expectation: Alternative work concepts can improve work-life balance;
- Fifth expectation: Alternative work concepts can improve job satisfaction;
- Sixth expectation: Alternative work concepts can improve productivity;

- Seventh expectation: significant mental and social health effects of home and shared offices exist;

The component will also include successful, real-world cases of companies with "home office" and "co-working spaces", as well as combinations between each concept and standard office work, where applicable. To assess the viability of the proposed mixed office, concepts such as learning outcomes, office costs, changes in ties to co-workers, IT costs, personal experience with home and flex office and possible improvements in knowledge transfers will be covered.

3. The third component, "**the costs of implementing home and shared office**," will include the experienced and perceived costs of implementing each or both work concepts in Bucharest. The component will take into account the experienced and perceived costs of implementing either or both work models, which can include expenses such as equipment and infrastructure upgrades, training costs, and potential disruptions to daily work routines.
 - Eighth expectation: The employees did not have to bear the financial costs of switching to alternative work methods;
 - Ninth expectation: The financial benefits of switching to home and shared offices exceeded the costs;
4. The fourth component involves the "**knowledge transfers in home and shared offices**". It analyses the role of technology in the implementation of home and shared offices, the effects of home and shared offices on collaboration and tacit knowledge transfers through ICT-based remote work arrangements (Robelski & Keller, 2019).
 - Tenth expectation: Technological advancements meet the needs of workers in home and shared offices;
 - Eleventh expectation: Home and shared offices can facilitate communication and communication and tacit knowledge transfers;
 - Twelfth expectation: Tacit knowledge can be transferred better in home and shared offices than in standard offices.
5. The last component, "**Future implications and policy recommendations**", discusses the possible impacts of implementing the home and shared office work concepts in Bucharest, with recommendations for both employees who wish that their companies implement either or both work models, as well as employers. No expectations were made for this

component, but the policy recommendations of the interviewees would be included in the results and then discussed and analysed in the "Conclusion" and "Discussion" chapters.

2.1. Code groups for the interview analysis

The codes for the master thesis are selected from the selected information from the academic literature in the second chapter (Theoretical framework) on the effects of home and shared offices, as well as the automatically-generated codes in Atlas. TI for the interview analysis. In some cases where the codes did not reflect the content of the quotes, the author coded manually. While more codes were selected by Atlas TI than the codes which could be generated from the academic literature, the author of the master thesis decided to create ten code groups for which the results could be assessed and compared to the academic literature. Statements in the interviews whose codes belonged to the following code groups were analysed:

- Adaptation;
- Work-life balance;
- Job satisfaction;
- Productivity;
- Health effects;
- Financial costs;
- Technology and telecommunication;
- Communication (between workers);
- Collaboration;
- Tacit knowledge transfers.

In the methodology chapter, the choice of the location, interviewees and interview questions, as well as the approaches to results analysis, are discussed.

3. Methodology

The master thesis focused on a qualitative research approach to gain in-depth information about the experiences of people who worked from home or in co-working spaces during or before the interview by means of semi-structured interviews (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

The feasibility of home office and flex office work is studied by means of qualitative research, which includes semi-structured interviews with employers and employees of

Romanian public and private institutions and self-employed people (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The interviewees were chosen with the cold acquisition and snowballing methods (Hennink, et al., 2020).

The research design consists of twelve semi-structured interview questions that aimed to collect the details about the advantages and disadvantages of each work environment, as well as experiences with work model combinations and recommendations. The fifteen questions used in the interviews were more or less the same, but they were slightly changed for each interviewee, depending on the mood of the interviewee, the direction of the interview and the willingness of the interviewees to answer certain questions, as shown in Appendix 1 from section 8.1.

The interviewer coded the answers with the AtlasTI analysis software for qualitative research, which were then coded into code groups for the result analysis. However, as the theoretical framework was not finished at the time of the first interview, the questions could not match the information from the theoretical group or the final code groups with Atlas. TI for the interview analysis.

The answers to these questions were later transcribed into Romanian and translated into English. Depending on the interviewee's responses, the interviewee asked several questions that were shortened if the interviewee gave relevant answers for multiple questions, such as an answer that included.

3.1. The choice for Bucharest, Romania

The city of Bucharest, located in Southern Europe and the capital of Romania, has benefited from some of the highest Internet speeds in Europe, growth in start-ups driven by the IT sector, a very competitive workforce in the IT, communication and engineering sectors and the successful implementation of business incubators with co-working spaces in former industrial platforms (Gheorghiu, 2016). However, home and shared office work are two new concepts in the Romanian labour market, as only a small percentage of employees used the home office model in Romania before the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, shared offices were uncommon in Romania until the late 2010s. (Săvescu, et al., 2022). Nevertheless, alternative work concepts started to gain traction, and many companies in Romania decided at the request of their employees (Davidescu, et al., 2020; Săvescu, et al., 2022). In light of alternative work concepts being relatively new phenomena in Romania and the recent events

during the COVID-19 pandemic, the author chose Bucharest, Romania, as the focus city for the master thesis.

3.2. The use of specific wording in the thesis

According to Law No. 81/2018 adopted by the Parliament of Romania, the home office in Romania is legally regarded as distinct from remote work, as the latter involves performing typical tasks away from the employer's premises using computing and communication equipment, while the home office has a broader definition and can also include physical and manual work (Parlamentul României, 2018).

Similarly to Romania, a home office is considered in Germany to be work regularly performed outside the company office. However, work assignments in the home office in Germany must be conducted with ICT devices and programmes, and the home office worker must not be self-employed (Robelski & Keller, 2019). While remote work and home office are less clearly defined in Romania than in Germany, both definitions have a clearer wording than the Hungarian one, where home office legally excluded telework. However, Hungarian business environment and labour market experts use the term interchangeably (Vallasek & Mélypataki, 2020).

However, the terms remote work and home office tend to be used interchangeably in public life and the business environment (Davidescu, et al., 2020; Mihalca, et al., 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022; Vallasek & Mélypataki, 2020). To ensure clarity and to be able to compare the results from the interviews with the findings in international sources, the master thesis used the term used by sources within the academic literature, "home office".

Shared offices have no legal definition in Romania. However, they represent a broader concept that involves both open-plan offices and flex offices. However, in Romania, spaces designed as shared offices (co-working spaces) tend to be used for both purposes. Moreover, the Romanian translation of the term "shared offices" ("birouri comune") is used instead of the translation of "co-working spaces", with the former term used by all interviewees. Therefore, the master thesis used the term 'shared offices'.

3.3. The choice of interviewees

ID	Occupational sector	Work model (environment)	Employee or self-employed?	Works/worked in the home office?	Type of shared office	Gender
1	TV procurer	Hybrid home and shared office	Self-employed	Yes	Open-plan office	Female
2	Talent acquisition specialist	Hybrid home and shared office	Employee	Yes	Flex office	Female
3	Web developer	Hybrid home and shared office	Self-employed	Yes	Flex office	Male
4	Logistics systems manager	Hybrid home and own office	Employee	Yes	None	Male
5	Human freelancers manager	Hybrid home and own office	Employee	Yes	None	Female
6	Software Developer	Hybrid home and own office	Employee	Yes	None	Male
7	Automation developer	Hybrid home and shared office	Employee	Yes	Flex office	Female
8	Business analyst	Home office	Employee	Yes	None	Male
9	Financial-accounting analyst	Hybrid home and own office	Employee	Yes	None	Female
10	Engineer	Shared office	Employee	Yes	Open-plan office	Female
11	Accountant	Hybrid home and own office	Employee	Yes	None	Female
12	Insurance agent	Home office	Employee	Yes	None	Female
13	Architect	Hybrid home and own office	Employee	Yes	None	Male
14	University employee	Hybrid home and own office	Employee	Yes	None	Male
15	Risk-assessor	Hybrid home and own office	Self-employed	Yes	None	Male
16	Sales agent and events organiser	Full-time standard office	Employee	Yes	None	Female
17	Financial analyst	Hybrid home and shared office	Employee	Yes	None	Female
18	Product promoter	Hybrid home and shared office	Employee	Yes	Open-plan office	Male
19	Software Developer	Hybrid home and shared office	Employee	Yes	Open-plan office	Male
20	Marketing Specialist	Hybrid home and own office	Employee	Yes	None	Male
21	Financial analyst	Home office	Employee	Yes	None	Female

Table 1 Relevant data about the participants in this research study. These details were released.

The interviewees were selected through the cold-acquisition and snowballing methods, as recommended in the research paper by Heerwagen et al. (2004), with some of them being found with the help of other interviewees who participated in the earlier-scheduled interviewees (Heerwagen, et al., 2004). They could participate in the interview after confirming that they used either of the two alternative work concepts: nineteen of them worked in a home office at the time of the interview, while the other two stopped working from home a few months before the interview. Additionally, eight interviewees worked in shared offices at the time of the interview, and all but one combined home and shared offices when they were interviewed.

The interviewees come from different occupational sectors identified in the research papers by Davidescu et al. (2020), Mihalca et al. (2021) and Săvescu et al. (2021), as more likely to work in a home or shared office. Nineteen of the twenty-one interviewees lived and worked in Bucharest. In contrast, the other two worked remotely for companies headquartered in Bucharest. They conducted some of their few work assignments in Bucharest, despite their residence not being in the Romanian capital. Nevertheless, they all showed good knowledge of the home and shared office trends in Bucharest and Romania.

The author tried to ensure a gender balance between men and women, with more women than men being invited to the interview to reflect the findings from Eurostat regarding the home office. Among the twenty-one interviewees that accepted to participate, 11 were women, and 10 were men, with the gender ratio of 1.1:1 reflecting the higher likelihood of women working from home (Eurostat, 2023).

When the interviewee officially invited the interviewees to participate in the interview, he shared informed consent forms with all the interviewees, which they signed. These legally binding informed consent forms detailed the circumstances in which the information provided by the interviewees would be used and included privacy safeguards that would prevent the identification of the interviewees based on the content of the master thesis or informed consent forms.

3.4. Interview Questions

The interviews included questions about the code groups considered the most relevant in the master thesis research after assessments included in the theoretical framework, as shown in Table 2.

Question		Explanation (reason)
First (1st)	"First of all, please tell me in which field you work and whether you work with on-site attendance and have your own office, whether you work from home, or in shared offices."	For the initial question, the interviewer sought to identify the interviewee's office work type, as well as the interviewee's occupational sector.
Addition to the first question	"During the interview, I will refer to the home office, working with flexible schedules and working in shared offices as "alternative working models."	At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer explained to the interviewees what 'alternative working patterns' meant, and if the interviewee asked, the interviewee would explain the concepts of home and shared office.
Second (2nd)	"Please tell me what advantages and disadvantages the [home/shared/hybrid work model] you practice brings you. Do you consider that these strengths and weaknesses affect your performance at work? "	The second question focused on the benefits and challenges of the work environments the interviewee worked in and the influence of these aspects on the interviewee's work performance. The values sought were "work-life balance" and "productivity".
Third (3rd)	"Was your experience with the alternative working model your own company's decision or the result of extraordinary circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic?"	The interviewee sought to identify the interviewee's reason for switching to a home office or shared office. The author expected that the interviewees would switch to remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic and shared offices due to better work-life balance and job satisfaction than standard offices.

<p>Fourth (4th)</p>	<p>"Compared to working at your own desk, do you consider that the alternative way of working has brought you benefits on an individual level, such as higher productivity or quicker resolution of work tasks?"</p>	<p>The codes sought in the fourth question were adaptation and productivity.</p>
<p>Fifth (5th)</p>	<p>"Also, do you feel that you have learned more or gained more experience through the alternative working method compared to standard office work?"</p>	<p>The interviewer sought to identify whether the switch to home and/or shared office led to better learning outcomes and knowledge transfers.</p>
<p>Sixth (6th)</p>	<p>"Do you consider that the alternative working model has helped you to feel better on-site, mentally or socially at work? Have you seen similar effects in your colleagues who have worked from home or in shared offices?"</p>	<p>The interviewer sought to investigate possible health effects that the switch to home and/or shared office led to better learning outcomes and knowledge transfers.</p>
<p>Seventh (7th)</p>	<p>"Have alternative working patterns helped you or your company to save time, and/or reduce travel costs to work? Have these advantages had an effect on workplace productivity?"</p>	<p>The interviewer sought to investigate possible effects that the switch to home and/or shared office had on financial costs and whether the costs improved/damaged productivity.</p>
<p>Eighth (8th)</p>	<p>"The following is a short yes/no question. Have you worked as a team with colleagues at work or collaborated with employees of partner companies via videoconferencing and/or spontaneous meetings?"</p>	<p>The eighth question was a preparatory question for the ninth, as the interviewer wanted to find out whether the interviewee worked in teams (for employees) or with business partners (for self-employed individuals).</p>

Ninth (9th)	"Do you consider that the transfer of information, ideas and knowledge during teamwork with colleagues was better achieved through videoconferencing or spontaneous meetings than through scheduled meetings in the office?"	The ninth question focused on whether home, shared, hybrid home-shared or hybrid home-personal office leads to improvements in tacit knowledge transfers by videoconferencing or spontaneous meetings.
Tenth (10th)	"Did you have to set up and get used to new technologies when home office (or flexitime or in shared offices)?"	The tenth question focused on whether interviewees had to buy, install, learn and use new software when switching to home or shared office.
Eleventh (11th)	"Were workplace problems solved more quickly through videoconferencing or spontaneous meetings than through working at your own desk?"	The interviewee wanted to see the role of technology, especially videoconferencing, in ensuring the functioning of home and shared office work models.
Twelfth (12th)	"Did you have to set up and get used to new technologies when home office (or flexitime or in shared offices)?"	The questions focused on IT support that the interviewees received during the transition from standard office work/no office work to alternative office work setting and focused on the variables within the code group "Technology and telecommunication" such as "Organisational support" and "IT problem-solving",
Thirteenth (13th)	"Did you receive technical support from your employer or colleagues when you encountered problems with the use of technology when home office?"	
Fourteenth (14th)	"What would you recommend to employees in companies who want to	The last two questions focused on the recommendations given by the

	implement alternative models of temporary or permanent work?"	interviewees to the employees and employers who wished to have a home or shared office implemented in their companies. The statements provided by the interviewees are analysed in the "Discussion" chapter in "Policy recommendations by the interviewees".
Fifteenth (15th)	"What would you recommend to employers who want to implement alternative models of temporary or permanent work?"	

Table 2 Table with the model questions for the interviews

3.5. Ethical approaches

For the interviewees to consent to the draft of the transcripts and use of relevant data in the research, the author of the master thesis issued informed consent forms in Romanian and English, which the interviewers and interviewees signed.

Full anonymity of the interviewees and their data was ensured to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation, thus avoiding any professional repercussions due to any unwanted analysis of the interviewees' identifiable data (European Parliament and Council, 2016). Moreover, no personally identifiable data was relevant to the research in the master thesis, as the thesis aimed to study work methods and not individual work performances.

The interviews were conducted in Zoom. The only characteristics of the interview that were mentioned at the beginning of each transcript, after the title, were the date and time of the interview (shown in both Dutch and Romanian time), the videoconferencing platforms that were used and the gender of the person, as the Romanian language has different pronoun and article forms for the male and female grammar genders. The author's choice to include the interview details was to serve as proof of the interviews taking place.

The transcripts would not be made public, even after the release of the master thesis, and only the master thesis commission and the interviewer would have access to the transcripts. The interview transcripts would be stored in the RUG repository until 2028 from the completion of the master thesis and in the interviewer's encrypted ProtonDrive until the completion of the master thesis and then permanently deleted.

4. Results

4.1. The implementation of home and shared offices in Bucharest

4.1.1. Major reasons for implementing home or shared office in Bucharest

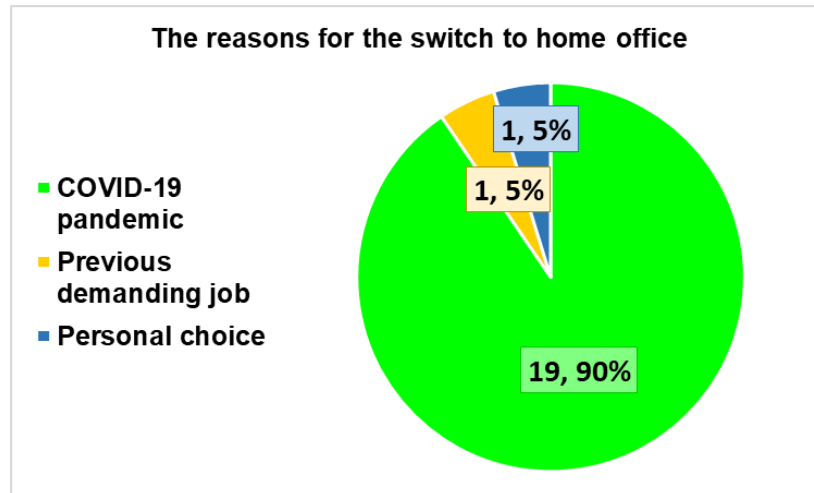


Figure 9 The reasons for the switch to home office, based on the answers of the interviewees

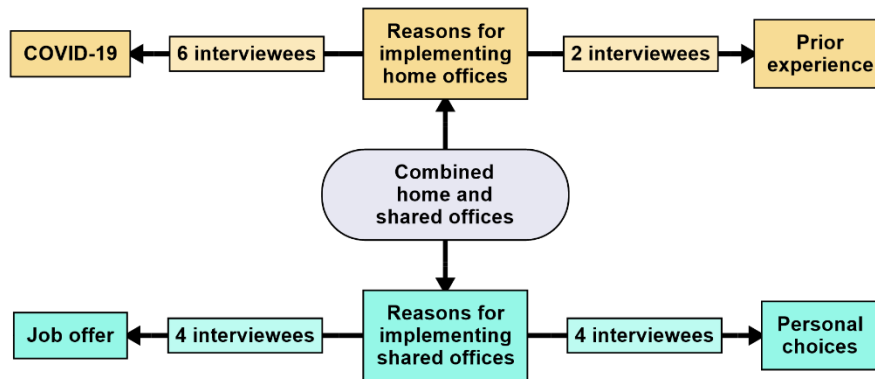


Figure 10 The reasons for the switch to hybrid home-shared office, based on the answers of the interviewees

Based on the answers to the third model question (or very similar questions), as well as answers of the interviewees to other questions, the interviews confirmed the first expectation of the master thesis that home office emerged as a prevalent means of sustaining business operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, as direct human contact at workplace was drastically reduced, resulting in a shift from working on-site to remote work (Săvescu, et al., 2022). As shown in Figure 9, almost all interviewees who started working remotely, except for the talent acquisition specialist and the web developer, did so because of COVID-19. Even the

interviewees who worked in shared office had to experiment with working from home: *“During COVID, anything you could work from home was working from home. Then it was that it was kind of going in all the companies...”* (7:3).

For the interview participants, the change from standard to alternative work concepts was influenced more by push than pull factors, especially due to COVID-19. For example, the human resources manager said: *“We continued with this work model after the pandemic because we saw an increased performance for our employees, having this way of working. Even today, this way of working is used for positions it fits, compared to the fixed-time and shared office work we were practising before the pandemic.”* (5:4). Nevertheless, some interviewees wanted to keep the new work concepts involving home office, thus marketing specialist said: *“...we used to go to the office every day, then the pandemic came and we only worked from home. After that, from say 9 months after the start of the pandemic, we started to have some offices again, we could go to the office, but it was strictly when we wanted... We didn't want to go back to the office five out of five, so implement this hybrid system.”* (20:4).

The talent acquisition specialist was a notable exception, as she experienced both models before the pandemic: *“Yes... I've been working for seven years, you know, and these seven years. I always had a hybrid work schedule, meaning I could work from home and a shared office, meaning a common office space where I had my office in an open space with other colleagues. It's the same now, you know...”* (2:1). Another exception was the opinion of the web developer, who experienced home office in the pre-pandemic period: *“I've been working from home for 15 years... Yes, the pandemic has caught me trained. I mean, I already had an experience behind me... And that's when I started working at home because I had nowhere to go... I was also doing websites in my spare time. It was the job, you know, so after it sold the network and the job fell out after 2009. That was it; I started the site.”* (3:1; 3:5; 3:16).

As shown in Figure 10, half of the interviewees who worked in hybrid home-shared office concept (the TV procurer, talent acquisition specialist, web developer and financial analyst) added the shared office concept on their own accord: *“The shared office was my own decision when I rented a shared space, so [having] a shared office was my own decision”* (1:7). The other interviewees who worked in a hybrid home-shared office or full-time shared office did not explicitly mention the cause of the switch to shared offices. However, since all five respondents (including the engineer) who did not state the reason for shared office were employees, the shared office concept was most likely implemented by the employer during the

employment period or offered by the employer in the work contract, confirming the findings in the research papers by Davidescu et al. (2020) and Smékalová, et al. (2022) from the theoretical framework.

Despite the lack of a link between COVID-19 and the implementation of shared office, COVID-19 still had a significant influence on the implementation of home office, since it was the reason for 90% of the interviewees and all the interviewees experienced home office. Therefore, the first expectation is met.

4.1.2. Adaptation to home and shared offices

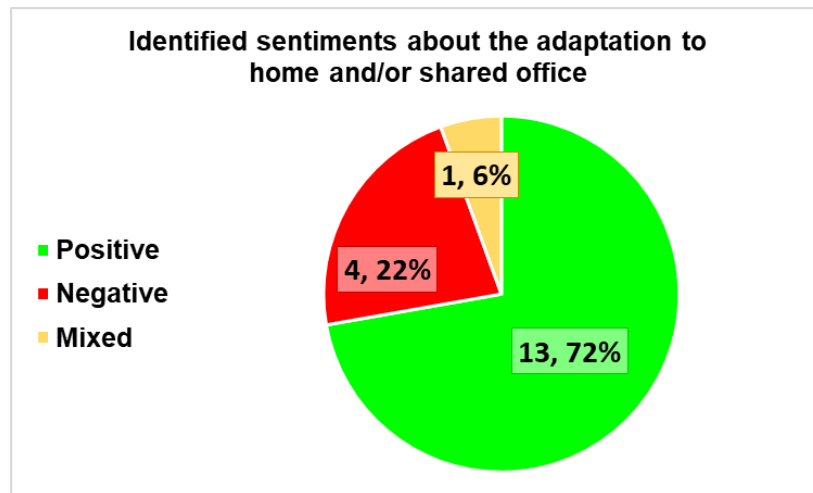


Figure 11 The percent of statements from the interviewees that contained positive, negative or mixed sentiments about the adaptation to alternative work concepts

As shown in Figure 11, thirteen of the twenty-one interviewees managed to adapt to the new models and switch to home office, hybrid home-personal office or hybrid home-shared offices, one adapted to shared offices but not home offices, and just five interviewees gave opinions with a negative sentiment for the whole work concept.

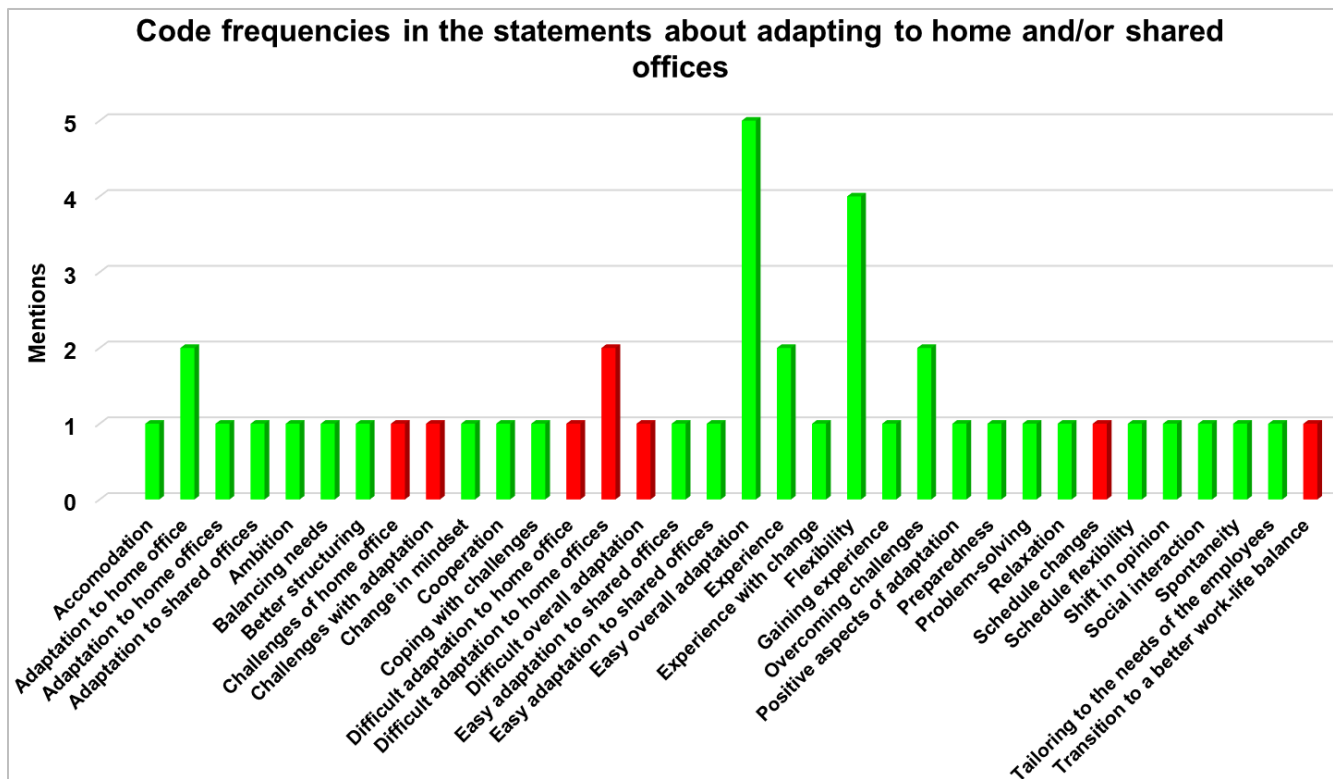


Figure 12 Code frequency in the statements about the adaptation to alternative work concepts

As shown in Figure 12, the most frequent codes were “easy overall adaptment” (to both home and shared office), “flexibility” and “overcoming challenges”, based on the answers of the interviewees. The talent acquisition specialist, web developer, logistics systems manager, human resource manager, automation developer, business analyst, financial-accounting analyst, engineer, accountant, architect, financial analyst working in a hybrid model, software developer and financial analyst working from home expressed positive sentiments (2:12; 5:3; 7:9; 8:10; 9:5; 11:1; 13:3; 17:4; 17:5; 18:2; 19:2; 21:4) . For example, the talent acquisition specialist adapted effectively to the new work environment and diversified her sources of learning, indicating her adaptability: “...After the pandemic, we moved our business online and now I conducted the interviews online... As a result, it takes me less time to find the right people than before. Moreover, working from home, I can do it when I need to focus. I know no one's going to interrupt me, nobody's going to bother me, I'm closing the door of the room where I have an office, and that's what's going on.” (2:12).

The human resource manager stated that her hybrid office work helped her adapt when working as part of a team, in addition to working individually: “The advantages of this alternative and hybrid work model are seen in the willingness to set the personal work

schedule according to individual needs and those of the company or organisation in which you work...because you can adapt to the needs of both colleagues and yours...You can better prioritise the activities you have to do and be much more structured in everything you do.” (5:3).

The automation developer team said that she and her colleagues had to adjust to the work habits of their colleagues from abroad, but their work hours were nevertheless tailored to their needs: *“Yes, at the current workplace, this thing is still happening because in the team, we are mostly from Romania, but we have colleagues from Malaysia and, at the same time, in the team a little bit larger, we also have colleagues from Costa Rica, and we had some meeting, for example, plus at 2:00, to the whole team. And yes, it was quite late for colleagues in his country, purely early enough for colleagues in Costa Rica, but we, as an idea, have no more. They have tailored to our hourly taste because we are more.” (7:9).*

In contrast, the programmer, engineer, sales agent and marketing specialist expressed negative sentiments. For example, for the engineer, returning to the office suited her better and helped her overcome fatigue: *“...but it seems to me that after a certain point, I mean after months and months, I don't know, it was fatigue somehow. And that's why, when we came back to the office, I liked this version better and it seemed to suit me better, you know, my style.” (10:4).* The sales agent had difficulties in adapting because some of her work assignments required on-site attendance: *“...during the pandemic it was more difficult, so to speak, because there are things you have to do only from the office.” (16:3).*

The TV procurer expressed a mixed sentiment, as found it easier to adapt to shared offices than home offices. She said that: *“I went to the office, and it was the mindset, so the mental, and now I'm working. Now I don't jump in the shower every day anymore; I jump to the fridge more often than to the shower, I eat more at home, and it's no longer this mindset. It's good now, I'm eating, I'm going to see, I'm sitting a little bit longer and "Come on you can work in an hour," it's not like the office...The combination gives you the flexibility you need, so basically, this idea of flexibility acquired with the pandemic is very important and good!” (1:18; 1:25).*

Overall, the interviews revealed that Romanian employees could adapt to alternative working models if provided with the necessary support and resources. Therefore, the second expectation, on the ability of the employees to easily adapt to changes in work and workspaces brought by social and technological developments, is fulfilled.

4.1.3. The combined implementation of home and shared office in Bucharest

Identified sentiments from the interviewees who worked both at home and in shared offices on the third expectation

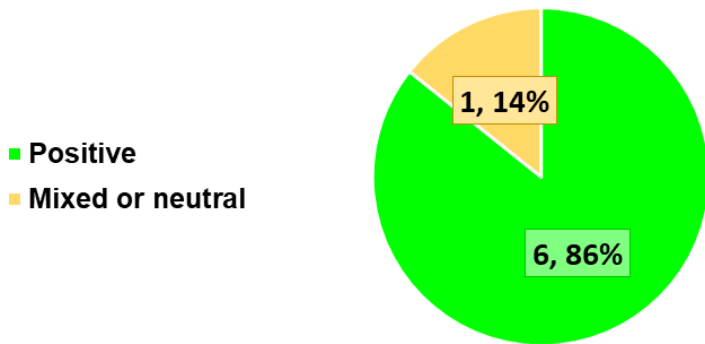


Figure 13 The percent of statements from the interviewees that contained positive, negative or mixed sentiments about the hybrid home-shared offices in Bucharest.

When the interviews took place, only a third of the interviewees worked in a hybrid (joint) home office-shared office. Therefore, this section only discusses the statements made by these interviewees. As revealed by the prevalence of codes with positive sentiments, as well as a 86% overall satisfaction with home and shared offices in Bucharest, most of the interviewees working in hybrid home-shared office managed to combine the two models in Bucharest without experiencing significant downsides.

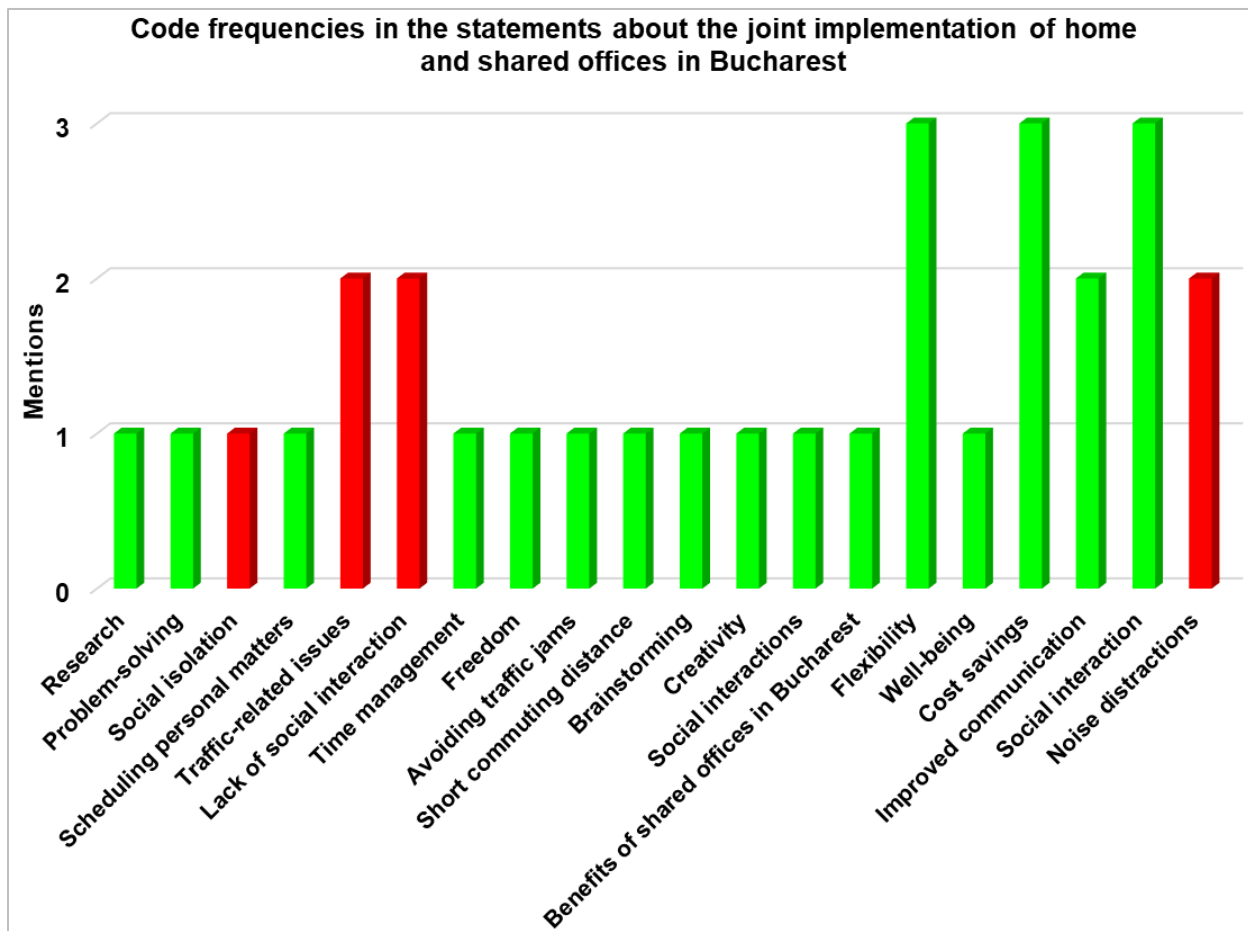


Figure 14 Code frequencies in the statements about the joint implementation of home and shared offices in Bucharest

The TV procurer endorsed the hybrid home-shared office work concept, as the benefits of the shared office could compensate for the downsides of home office:

“I’m going to take the present example. Now I work from home, so the office is home. There are advantages, but there are also disadvantages. The benefit would be that I gain time... so I have more time, research and work time itself, that I sit with my laptop and see them, but there are ... just as many downsides, if not a little more. The downside is that I work alone. Basically, I research, make the decision, nod that I don’t have that, who to counsel... and the other biggest drawback is that it is no longer... I have no direct contact with my clients.”
(1:5)

“Bucharest is...slightly suffocated. Sure, it helps you not to go.... well, the ideal is to solve things when you get a good job, to get to move with the house, besides a good job, besides the office, if I have to go on-site, the ideal is not to lose. So Bucharest is a small town

[in terms of area] compared to other European capitals. It's a small town, but...the people are used to going only with their car, so it was this community where we struggled with the means of public transport, and now everyone has the impression that you have to stay in the car... Bucharest is small; it has developed in its surroundings chaotically... You can do an hour and a half at peak hours, which are very long. Still, after seven to eight in the evening, especially after eight in the evening in winter, Bucharest is empty, so on-site sure it helps you work from home that you get lost at least two hours in traffic.” (1:13)

“The combination gives you the flexibility you need, so basically, this idea of flexibility acquired with the pandemic is very important and good!” (1:18)

The talent acquisition specialist said: *“For example, I live, Romania, where in the morning, for example, it is very crowded, and it is very difficult to get from one point of the city to the other, and then it's very good for me...I had a time when I was losing more than two hours on the way to the office house, and now I'm not going through this anymore, especially since I can later go to the office...But, look, if a courier or something has to come, I don't know; I'm at home, there's no problem. If he left unforeseen again, it's not the same thing anymore. You must leave the office, get together, and take vacation days to complete something...On the downside, the side would be the lack of interaction. Working from home, I work alone, and sometimes I need to tell a colleague.” (2:2).* Her opinion had a positive sentiment

The web developer cited flexibility, freedom and social interactions as the main advantages of hybrid home-shared office concepts:

“Obviously, more freedom because... I work when I want; if I wake up around 2:00, I work at 02:00 at night, when others sleep. Another strength is that I didn't give up on the crazy traffic in the city. As a result, I don't waste hours on the roads around...I've got an office somewhere near the house, and I go and work from the office...“It's shared with a friend...” (3:2; 3:3; 3:4).

The automation developer stated that her work concept was the optimal solution for people working in the ICT sector: *“It would help you a lot when you have meetings and maybe see yourself face to face with the person, when there's stuff with some, for example, a brainstorm, to make it easier to do on-site. So that's kind of a downside to working from home...But, okay, in an emergency or something, there are ways to get in place... when you first get hired in a new place, and you don't know the processes, you don't know anybody, it's nicer when you go to the office, and you know your colleagues than working from home all the time...”* and *“ regarding this stuff, because there are advantages of working from home and*

taking things from the office, honestly, that seems to me in the most optimal variant...It depends a lot on the person, and it depends a lot on the jobs you do” (7:2; 7:10).

The financial analyst mentioned improvements in time management and the ability to work in different locations as reasons for choosing to keep her hybrid home-shared office model: *“I would see many advantages in this working model...If I had to walk on-site every day, I would probably feel much more tired and waste a lot of time on the commute...I also like that you can work in other parts of the country...The alternative model has increased to save time, especially with commuting to work. I can say that you save more than an hour every day, and this positively impacts productivity.” (17:2; 17:7)*

The product promoter mentioned flexibility as the main advantage of his hybrid office work model : *“In big cities like Bucharest, you have, you save time in the morning ...On the other hand, the fact that we go to the office and we share, we see each other there and we have some time that we spend together...it solves this problem of socializing and talking together about certain issues...So you have to combine, and we combine the...the advantages of the two models...Flexibility after all given the fact that you're at home and you're not going to work, to have a shorter time...you're not wasting time on transportation and so on...On the other hand, when you get to the office you enjoy getting to the office, meeting your colleagues, and you change...” (18:2).*

The statement of the software developer made was the only one with a mixed sentiment. He made the following statement that contained both positive and negative sentiments towards the combination of home and shared offices in Bucharest: *“The advantage in working...as advantages of working in shared office, is much faster and more direct communication with people involved in the same project... As a disadvantage, personally, I think it's working in a big office, I mean 'open space,' where I have seventy people, there's constant noise, there's constant murmuring, there's a lot of laughter, there's a lot of noises that can distract you, with discussions that are not necessarily work-related...A lot of time is wasted, a lot of time can be wasted on cigarettes, far too much time than...than is necessary...Another advantage, however, would be socializing...One can take a lunch break together...One can also talk with colleagues about personal things.” (19:2).* His opinion had a mixed sentiment.

All interviewees who worked both at home and in a shared office gave positive and slightly positive answers. Moreover, they all named more benefits than challenges regarding

the hybrid home-shared office in Bucharest. When working from home, the interviewees cited less time wasted in traffic, flexibility and increased focus without distractions. However, the disadvantages of working from home include limited social interaction, no direct client contact, and potential difficulty collaborating with colleagues (1:5, 2:2, 7:2).

On the other hand, working in a shared office allows faster and more direct communication with colleagues, increased opportunities for collaboration and brainstorming, and socializing during breaks (17:2, 17:7, 18:2, and 19:2). However, working in a shared office can also be distracting due to noise and non-work-related conversations and activities (17:2, 19:2).

Overall, the interviewees preferred a combination of the two, where they can enjoy the benefits of remote work while still having the opportunity for on-site interaction and collaboration in a physical office setting (1:5, 2:2, 18:2, 19:2). Therefore, the third expectation which stated that the inclusion of shared office (hybrid home-shared office models) could provide greater benefits to both employees and companies in Bucharest compared to alternative work concepts exclusively based on home office is fulfilled, when the statements from the interviewees are considered.

4.2. The effects of the implementation of alternative work methods

4.2.1. The impact of alternative work concepts on work-life balance

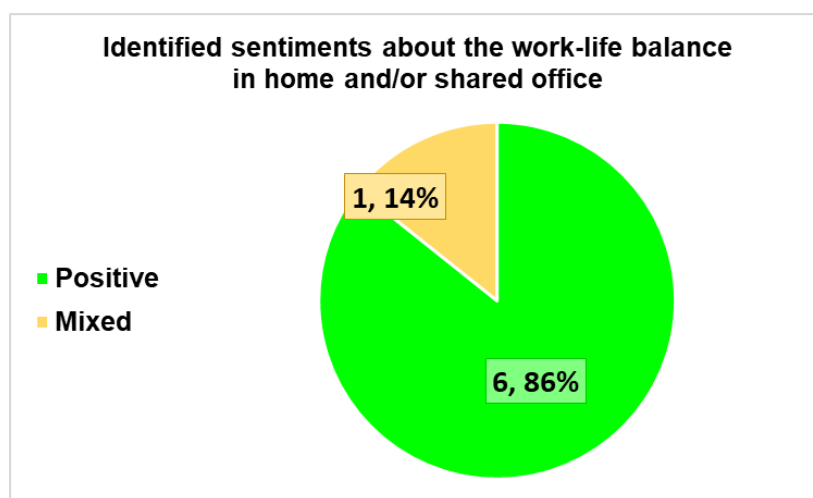


Figure 15 The percent of statements from the interviewees that contained positive, negative or mixed sentiments about the work-life balance in home and shared office in Bucharest

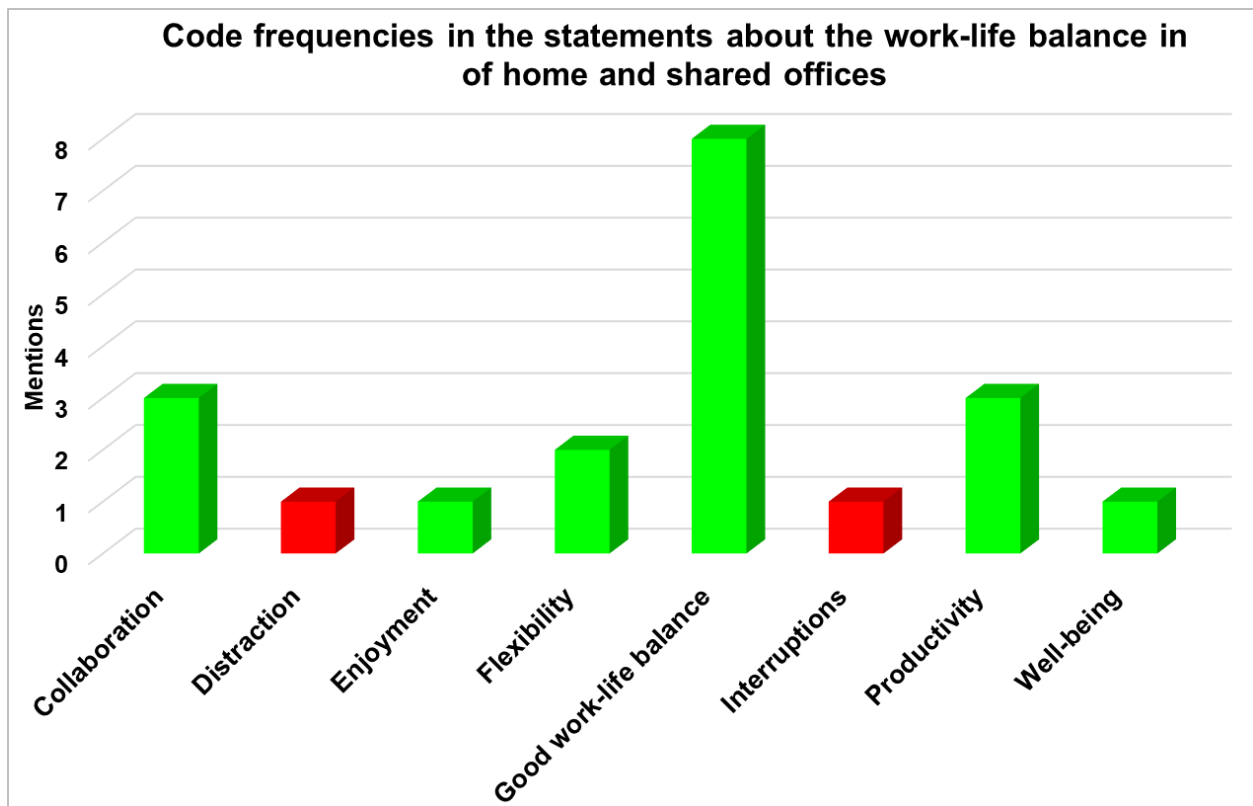


Figure 16 Code frequencies in the statements about the work-life balance in home and shared offices in Bucharest

The fourth expectation, that alternative work concepts improve the work-life balance of the employees and the self-employed, compared to standard office, is confirmed by the answers of the interviewees. While some participants stated that they experienced no significant impact on their productivity and well-being while working remotely, a few others felt a potential loss of perception in maintaining personal connections or supervision from senior colleagues.

As shown in Figure 15, the statements of the talent acquisition specialist, logistics systems management, accountant, architect, product promoter and marketing specialist indicated a positive sentiment. As shown in Figure 16, interviewees with positive sentiments emphasised on collaboration, flexibility, enjoyment, productivity and well-being (2:6; 4:2; 11:1; 13:2; 13:4; 18:4; 20:12). For example, the talent acquisition specialist acknowledged the need to have a constant pace a work everyday to avoid burn-out from unequal work inputs, based on the challenges her co-workers faced: *“From what I’ve noticed, colleagues who weren’t as*

used to me in working in the early days, after the pandemic, went into burn-out because they no longer respect this balance between personal life and work...Instead, it was seen how today, in 2023, things have been more balanced. Somehow I looked at my colleagues; they also learned not to send anymore. Or if they send messages, do not expect to receive a response. If they work one day to later, the next day they work less. So there's a balance.” (2:6).

However, the TV procurer expressed a mixed sentiment: *“The second thing from home means interruptions, children, telephones, maintenance visits, the president of the block, a neighbour who has a pipe broken, so there's a lot of fun, but fun in that English sense, it distracts you from work, not fun, so I don't go crazy after working from home, especially since my field of activity is an area with money with...Winter is easier to work from home, it's the day less, you gain more time, it's another biorhythm, maybe you want to go to bed faster... You may know how to turn off the lights faster, but... from the moment it comes, the day gets bigger, everything wakes up to life, and you don't want to stay in your cell anymore; you want to talk, you want to move...” (1:18).*

Although she acknowledged the challenges of maintaining work-life balance while working from home, she expressed a clear preference for shared office spaces: *“A shared office motivates you to do your schedule differently, so work... I could say that this thing at home is no longer a fixed schedule and leaves a bit to be desired. Before you knew it, you woke up, pac, you jumped into clothes, you jumped in the shower, you saw what you had to do with your family, you do that, I do that, I do this, I went to the office, and it was the mindset, so the mental, and now I'm working. Now I don't jump in the shower every day anymore; I jump to the fridge more often than to the shower, I eat more at home, and it's no longer this mindset. It's good now, I'm eating, I'm going to see, I'm sitting a little bit longer...” (1:18).* Her statement shows a mixed sentiment overall, with a negative sentiment for home office and a positive sentiment for shared offices.

4.2.2. The effects of alternative work concepts on productivity

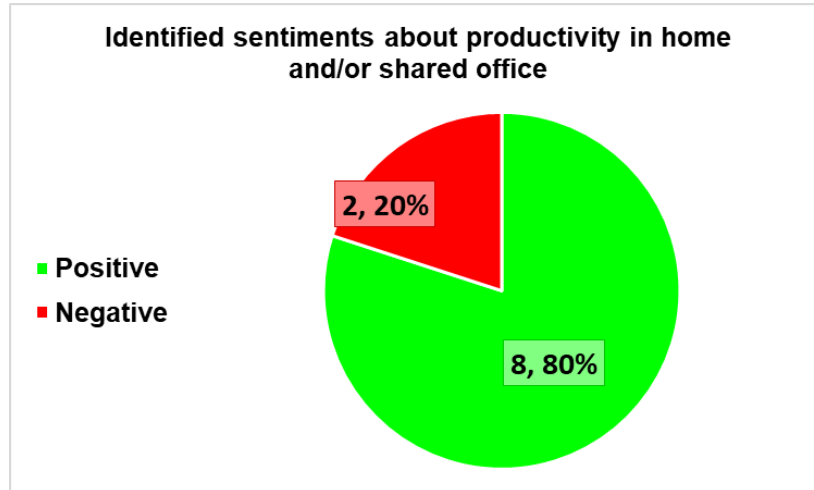


Figure 17 The percent of statements from the interviewees that contained positive, negative or mixed sentiments about the adaptation to alternative work concepts

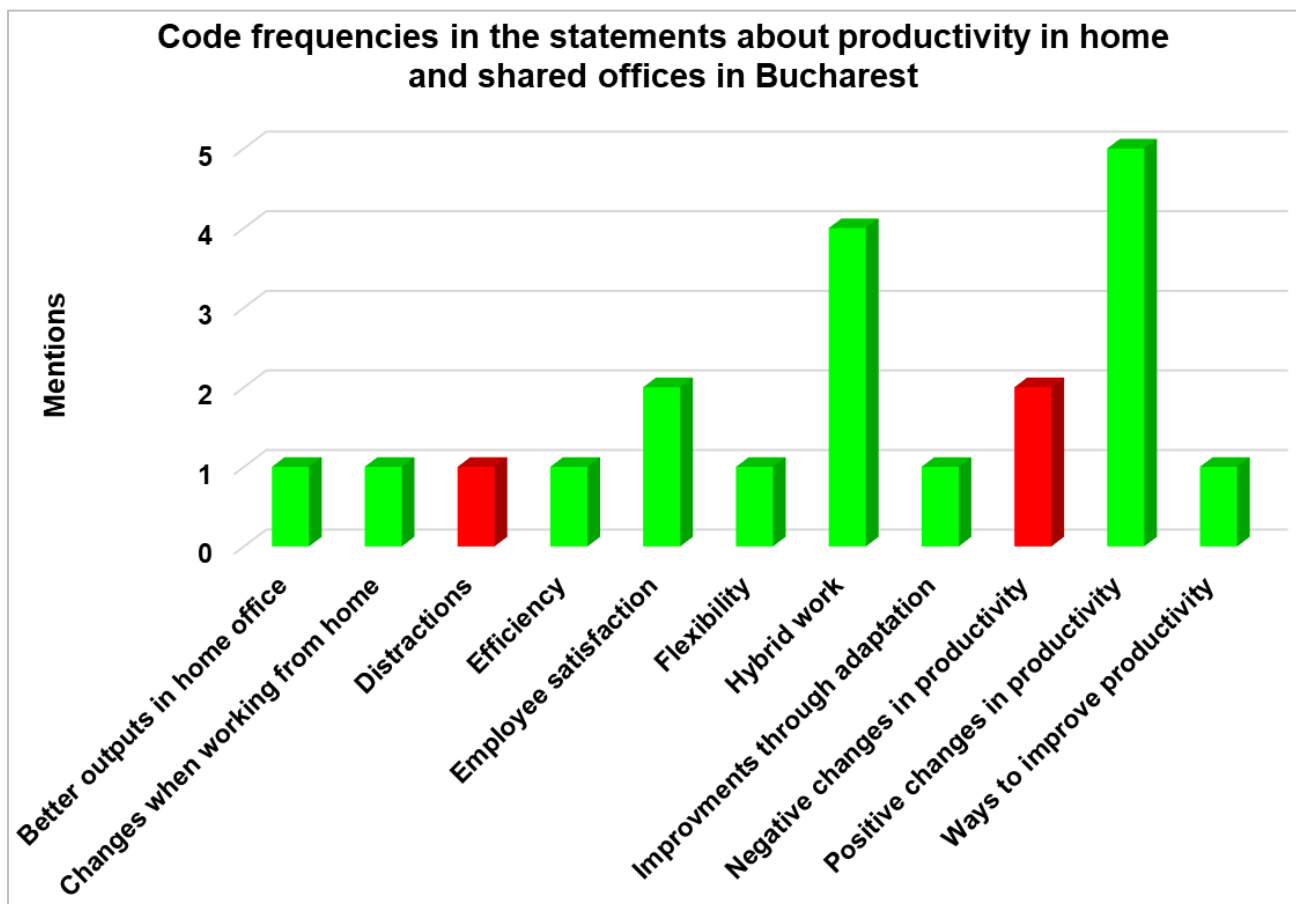


Figure 18 Code frequencies in the statements about productivity in home and/or shared offices in Bucharest

The interview analysis in Atlas.TI focused on the fourth expectation, “alternative work concepts can improve productivity”. The first-order codes for “productivity” were generated both manually and with Atlas.TI. As shown in Figures 17 and 18 and revealed by the statements of the interviewees, the statements of the talent acquisition specialist, web developer, human resource manager, business analyst, financial-accounting analyst, financial analyst working in a hybrid model and product promoter emphasized the flexibility and autonomy provided by the home office, but also the value of in-person collaboration, better outputs in home office and immediate assistance found in shared office environments (2:4; 3:4; 5:3; 8:5; 9:2; 17:3; 18:3; 21:4). The human resource manager benefitted from having less interruptions when working from home: *“When you know you can adapt your job to your needs and your colleagues, it's a plus for your performance. So, I only see the advantages of this way of working...So, yes, I can say there is higher productivity in this way of working, at least for me, because compared to office work from my office, there are not so many interruptions. But on the other hand, having your own office and using traditional work, daytime outages are much more common, and productivity is automatically much lower with this way of working...”* (5:3; 5:5). A similar view was shared by the architect: *“For me in the creative appearance it's important not to be distracted and to have all the peace and quiet and I do that better from home.”* (13:1). The web developer managed to spend more hours at work without decreasing his productivity: *“...I could work even eight hours, which doesn't usually happen to me at home.”* (3:4)

However, one interviewee was concerned about negative consequences on productivity caused by the lack of a good connection with work partners and on-site advice from them (6:3;. As shown in Figure 16, ten of the eleven interviewees who mentioned productivity made statements with a positive sentiment, but the statement of the TV procurer had a negative sentiment. The programmer said: *“I wouldn't say it improves performance at work; it even maybe shrinks it a little bit because it would be easier to discuss things and get help when you can ask someone physically in the office...”* (6:3). His sentiment was shared by the TV procurer: *“So on productivity, it didn't help me... Yes, that's really what I want to do [next], so I'm used to working from home now, it's a convenience, a comfort, but that comfort is seen in minus in productivity...If you don't have a team, if you don't know your team and if you don't do things right, to do well as a team, productivity is the first to suffer.”* (1:13; 1:26).

The interviewees who worked in home- and hybrid home-standard office arrangements generally expressed positive sentiments regarding productivity (5:3; 9:2). They highlighted advantages such as reduced interruptions, increased focus, better time management, and the ability to attend to personal matters without compromising work performance (5:5).

On the other hand, the interviewees who worked in home-shared offices acknowledged the physical convenience and reduced commuting time associated with working from home (1:13). However, they also highlighted limitations in terms of productivity, particularly regarding team communication, collaborative problem-solving, and the lack of immediate assistance found in a shared office environment (1:26; 6:3).

Therefore, the statements from the interviewees, even if not all respondents talked about productivity, confirm the fifth expectation, “alternative work concepts can improve productivity”.

4.2.3. The impact of alternative work concepts on job satisfaction

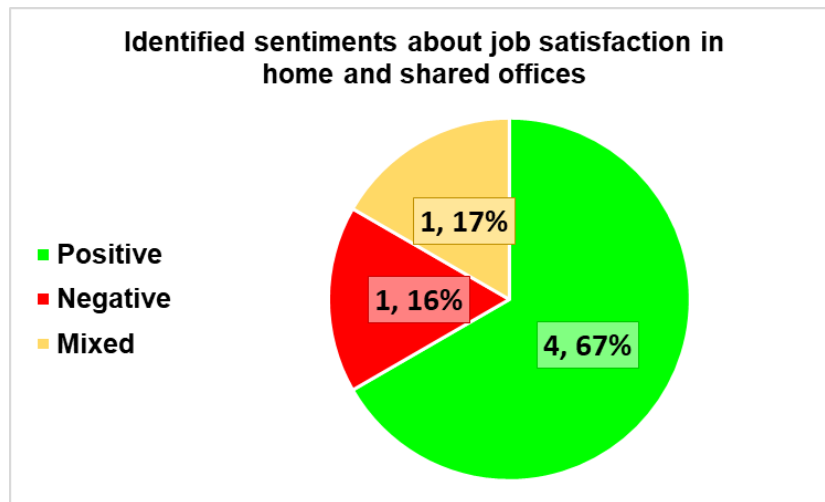


Figure 19 The percent of statements from the interviewees that contained positive, negative or mixed sentiments about job satisfaction in alternative work concepts.

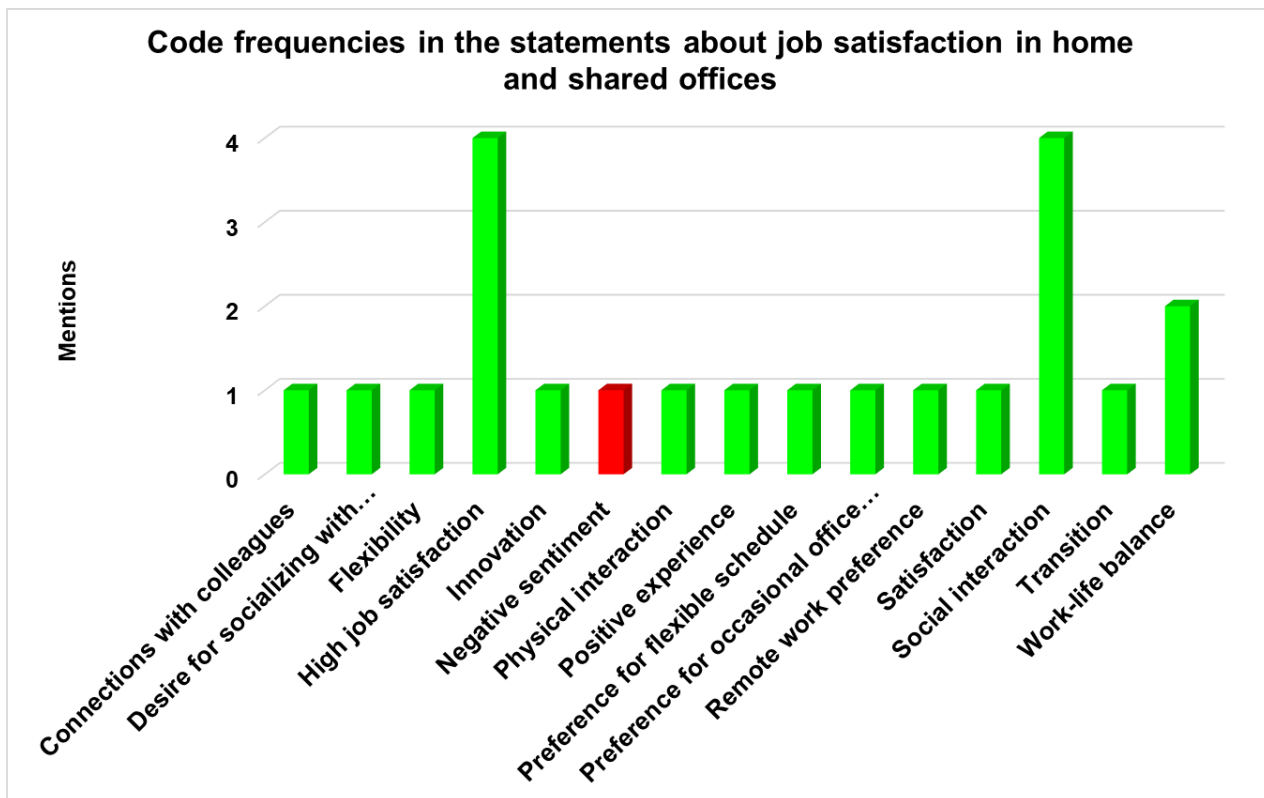


Figure 20 Code frequencies in the statements about job satisfaction in home and/or shared offices in Bucharest

The interview analysis in Atlas. TI for job satisfaction focused on the fifth expectation: “alternative work concepts can improve job satisfaction”. Relatively few interviewees gave answers that focused on job satisfaction, but a majority of those who did made statements with positive sentiments.

The two interviewees who worked in hybrid home-standard office, despite their different opinions and sentiments, preferred a flexible schedule that allowed occasional office visits for socializing with colleagues (5:12; 6:10). On the one hand, the human resource manager was very satisfied with her work concept: *“Yes, it was a positive experience, a very nice experience, and we still use this way of working with all our collaborators.”* (5:12). On the other hand, the programmer preferred going to the office occasionally to socialize with colleagues, but not towards the home office concept itself: *“Yes, I mean, with a flexible schedule, I can go to the office occasionally and know that you know your colleagues with us, go out with them after work for a beer if they were...because I did this six months after then, downhill after the 2020 pandemic, I didn't like working six months constantly, only from home. Why was the*

same look not good? I like this flexibility because I can go to the office when I feel like it, and sometimes I feel like it again, to interact with my colleagues.” (6:10). Therefore, his statement had a negative sentiment.

Compared to job satisfaction when home office, the sentiment towards working in a shared office was more positive. The answers of the interviewees and the codes shown in Figure 20 emphasised on more connections with colleagues (or business partners), better knowledge transfers, social interactions that offer brainstorming opportunities, and on-site technical support, which could not be provided in a full-time home office (2:2; 3:7; 18:2). For example, the talent acquisition specialist had a positive view of job satisfaction at the workplace and expressed satisfaction with the combination of home and shared office work: *“The advantages are numerous from my point of view. I only go to the office once a week, which allows me to...for example, I can first organise my schedule how I need it. At the moment, schedule actions that require on-site interaction.”* (2:2). The product promoter had a positive sentiment towards home office, believing it enhanced personal efficiency and collaboration, but also offers opportunities for relaxation at the workplace: *“you can extend your working time or anyway you come in much more rested and much, you're much more relaxed where you start.”* (18:2).

The TV procurer, however, had a mixed sentiment towards home office, recognizing the physical freedom it offered but expressing concerns about its impact on mental and social aspects. She emphasized the importance of avoiding isolation in the work environment: *“The benefit would be that I gain time... I have more time to work and research and to look for various fields and to understand and to see what is still being launched, to read about sports, to see who takes what medal, so I have more time, research and work time itself, that I sit with my laptop and see them, but they are... The downside is that I work alone. Basically, I research, make the decision, nod that I don't have that, who to counsel.... and the other biggest drawback is that it is no longer... I have no direct contact with my clients.”* (1:5).

Overall the statements of the interviewees confirm the sixth hypothesis, alternative work concepts can improve job satisfaction.

4.2.4. Health effects of home and shared offices

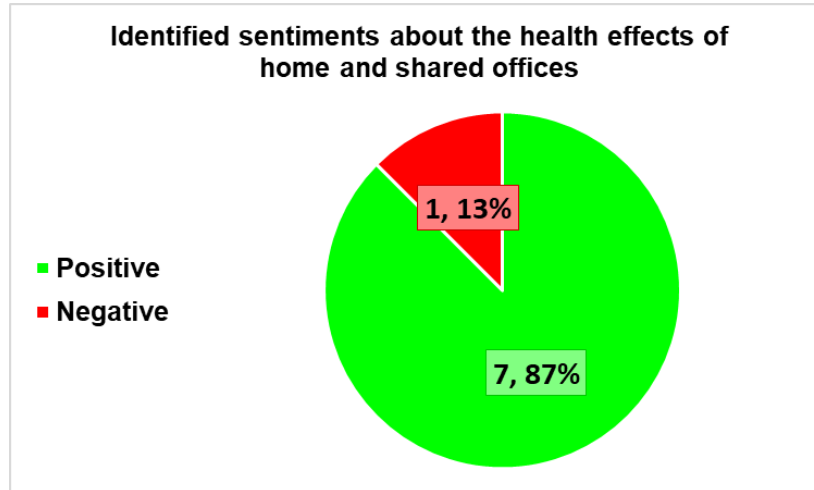


Figure 21 The percent of statements from the interviewees that contained positive, negative or mixed sentiments about the health effects in alternative work concepts.

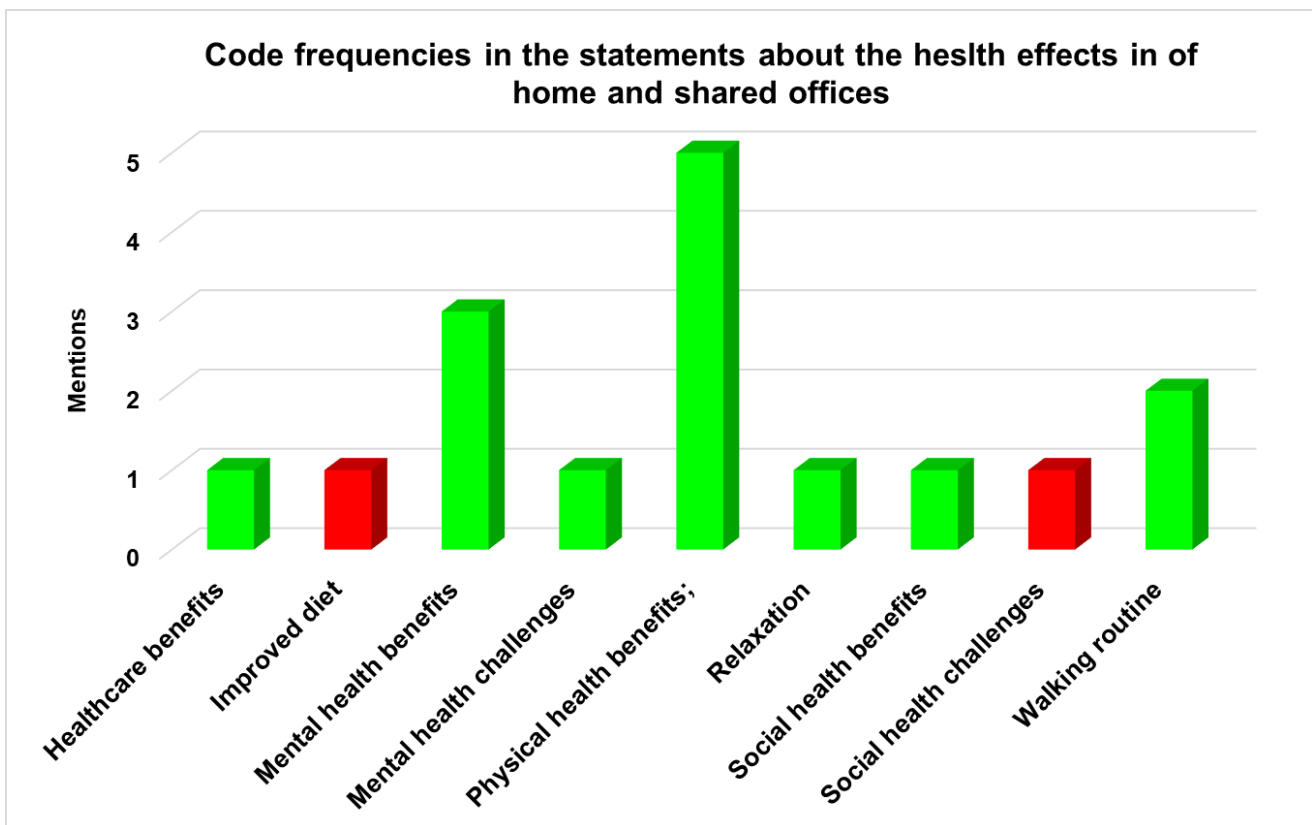


Figure 22 Code frequencies in the statements about the health effects of home and/or shared offices in Bucharest

Due to privacy concerns, few interviewees chose to speak about the mental and social effects of alternative work methods, as personal health is regarded as a private matter in Romania (Mihalca, et al., 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022). The physical, mental and social health effects were discussed in the sixth question, with the statements of the interviewees revealing physical, mental and social health benefits, as well as improved diets, walking routines and relaxation through breaks (1:11; 2:7; 3:9; 8:6; 17:6; 18:3). However, some answers revealed challenges in their health status (5:9). For example, the talent acquisition specialist emphasised on the physical health benefits of home office: *“Yes, clearly, another aspect helped me a lot, where it helps him financially to work from home, and not only financially, I don't know if you thought about it, he's on the food side. Look, for example, working more from home now it's much easier to have a healthy diet; I cook myself, I know what products I use, it's different than when...I don't know, we go to the office more often and order what kind of food...I had no possibility that my stomach greatly impacted what I ate with my colleagues. Now it's much better.”* (2:7).

The TV procurer discussed the social health benefits of both home and shared office: *“Physically, yes, on-site, it's clear that you have freedom of movement, you don't have a fixed schedule, you go where you want, you go back, where you want, so on-site, one hundred per cent is a mega gain. Mentally, mentally and socially, especially socially, it's not that good with the home office. Especially socially, we have to...you must not be the lone wolf, at least in my job. So mentally and socially, it's not that good with the home office; on-site, it's perfect.”* (1:11).

The web developer emphasised on the physical health benefits of shared offices: *“...because I'm from home to there to the office, door-to-door for minutes on foot. Which is very gratifying to me, and.... look, if you spend 10 hours sitting in a chair, a little movement does not hurt. So 20 minutes of a day...one way, 20 minutes back...it's just a gain for health, walking.”* (3:9). His statement had a positive sentiment.

The human resource manager expressed a negative sentiment due to the initial negative social health effects of home office on her co-workers, which did not disappear at the end of the COVID-19 restrictions: *“We started from the negativity, “No, we don't like it, we don't want to work in an alternative hybrid work environment”, to “Okay, that's how we want to keep working, and we're much better”, both mentally and socially. Mentally it was a problem... from a social and mental point of view, a change not necessarily in a good way.”* (5:9)

Based on the statements of the interviewees, home office physical benefits include reduced stress and improved eating habits, better dietary choices, decreased stress levels due to less traffic participation and the ability to engage in sports activities more frequently (1:11, 2:7, 3:9, 5:9, 8:6, 17:6, 18:3). However, some interviewees found mental and social health challenges, especially during the pandemic (1:11; 5:9; 17:6).

In comparison, shared offices are favoured for promoting mental and social well-being. They are seen as crucial for networking and maintaining a healthy social life, but also for opportunities for walking on foot and better coping with mental health issues (1:11; 2:7; 3:9; 17:6; 18:3).

Overall, the statements of the interviewees confirm the seventh expectation that significant mental and social health effects of home and shared offices exist.

4.3. Financial costs of implementing home and shared office

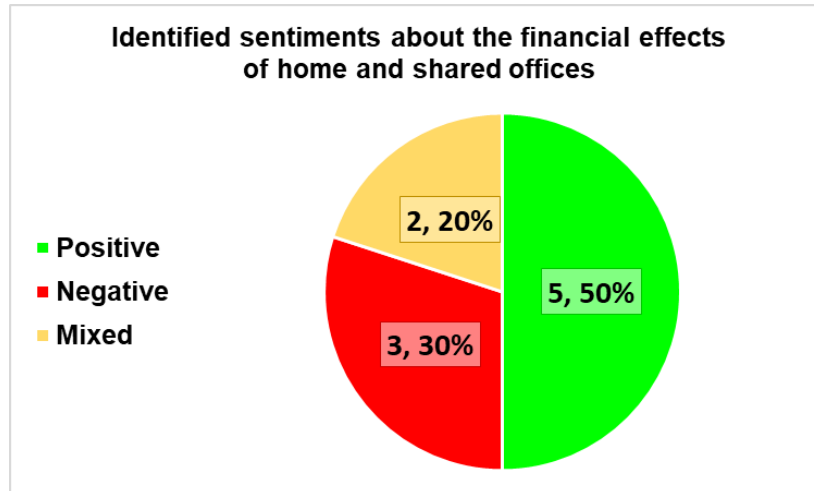


Figure 23 The percent of statements from the interviewees that contained positive, negative or mixed sentiments about the financial costs of alternative work concepts.

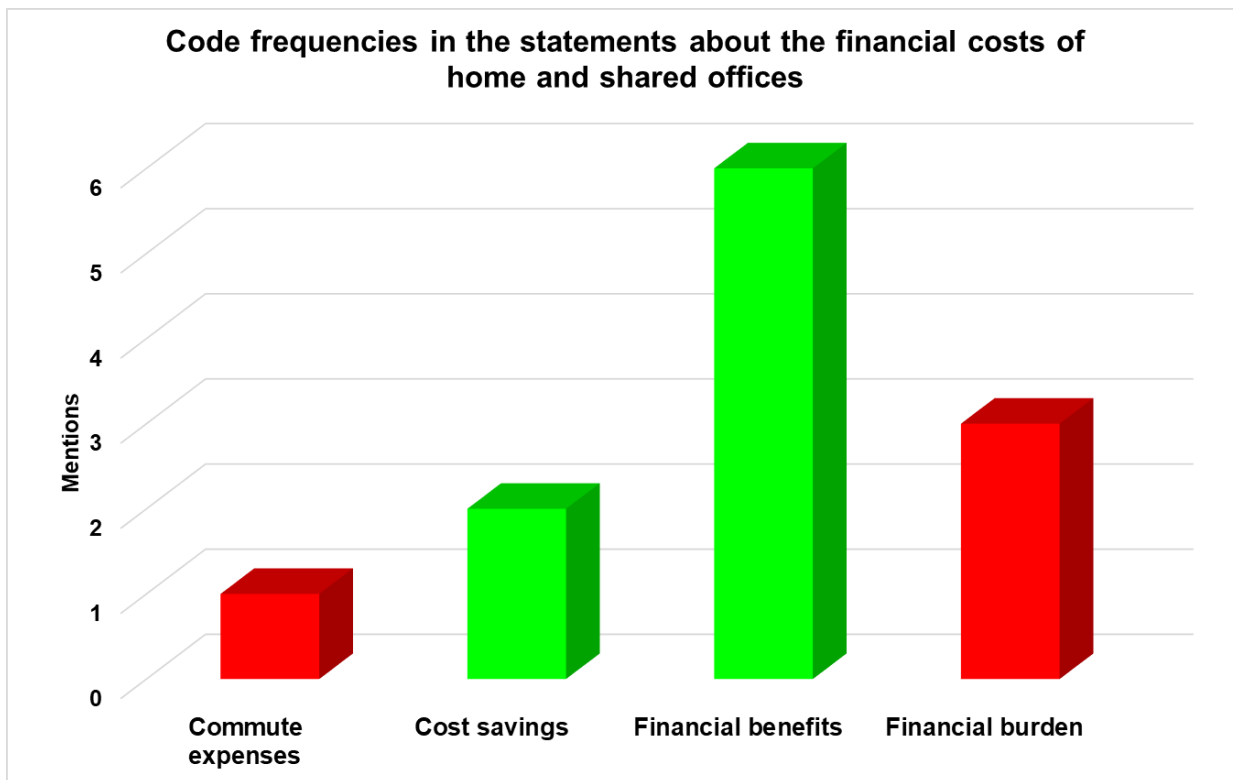


Figure 24 Code frequencies in the statements about the financial costs of home and/or shared offices in Bucharest

As shown in Figures 23 and 24 and revealed in the interviewee statements, half of the participants who discussed financial costs expressed positive sentiments and focused on both cost savings and financial benefits, whereas two other interviewees found some financial advantages in their work concepts, despite their statements with mixed sentiments (2:7; 4:12; 5:11; 8:18; 11:13; 18.5; 19:8). Based on the prevalence of codes with positive sentiments (8 out of 12) and only a minority of the interviewees expressing negative opinions, the eighth expectation, that the financial costs of switching to home and shared office were significant, is met.

4.3.1. Financial costs of home offices

The financial aspects of work concepts involving home offices (but not shared offices) due to the inclusion of cost savings on rent and other related expenses (5:11; 8:18; 11:13; 20:10). The human resource manager, the business analyst and the accountant expressed positive sentiments, as they benefited from reduced energy and water consumption, as well as savings from decreased commuting (5:11; 8:18; 11:13). For example, human resource manager said that the cost benefits of the hybrid work environment helped them a lot: *“Yes, they helped us. From energy costs to water consumption to this part of technology, of course, we have also allowed ourselves to reduce the number of trips to work, and these advantages with lower costs have helped us to devote more time to tasks at work. Somehow, these advantages did not affect employees' and employees' productivity. This part of the cost benefits has helped us perform our daily tasks and the cost control part much better.”* (5:11).

On the other hand, the logistics systems manager and the marketing specialist emphasized the financial burden of commuting, including fuel and transportation costs and additional expenses like meals (4:12; 20:10). The logistics systems had a mixed sentiment on financial costs, given his focus on other aspects of his home office concept arrangement: *“We can imagine that we each use a computer and need electricity, not just for equipment, but I did not ask myself the question. But, at the same time, we don't spend fuel to get to the office.”* (4:12). The marketing specialist, who talked about the financial costs that employees incurred when working in a hybrid home-standard office, expressed a negative sentiment: *“Commuting is not subsidised, I have to pay for it. That means travel on the metro or surface transport or season ticket and I would include here, if it's just the financial stuff and include the fact that even when you go to the office...nah, you have to eat something else for lunch, you buy*

something else from a canteen. Basically, you give more money than if you stay at home and in many cases you lose cheaper because you find something yourself or put something on the heating, semi-prepared food and so on. I mean the price for these things is included as a supplement.” (20:10).

4.3.2. Financial costs of shared offices

Most of the statements of the interviewees who worked in hybrid home-shared offices focused on home offices when they discussed financial costs (1:7; 18:5; 19:8). While some participants expressed negative sentiments regarding additional expenses resulting from peak-hour traffic and seasonal financial costs (1:7; 18:5), others highlighted the financial benefits of working from home, such as savings on commuting costs and improved control over dietary choices or savings in areas such as transportation expenses (2:7; 19:8).

The statements of the talent acquisition specialist and software developer had a positive sentiment. The talent acquisition specialist reflected on how working from home helped her financially, as well as improved her diet, as she spent less money on food when working from home: *“Yes, clearly, another aspect helped me a lot, where it helps me financially to work from home, and not only financially, I don't know if you thought about it, he's on the food side... I cook myself, I know what products I use, it's different than when... I don't know, we go to the office more often and order what kind of food...” (2:7).* Her statement had a positive sentiment.

The software developer mentioned different savings that were beneficial: *“When I was working from home, there were savings in gas consumption and time consumption, because I could start my schedule an hour earlier. Because when I worked from home, I would leave my bedroom and get to my office, open my laptop and I was ready. I wasn't wasting time wasting time in the morning. I could lose an hour and a half to the office, in the evening still 45 to 45 minutes to an hour and a half... So yes, it's more efficient to work from home, as long as my job requires me to have access to the phone and the internet, I mean access to email and the phone, so I can talk to business partners and colleagues.” (19:8).*

The TV procurer expressed a negative sentiment about the financial costs of alternative work methods. She complained about the additional financial costs resulting from peak-hour traffic: *“So they didn't help me. But, of course, it helps you, especially, so we are discussing Bucharest. Bucharest is a light city, slightly suffocated. Sure, it helps you not to go.... well, the ideal is to solve things when you get a good job, to get to move with the house, besides a good*

job, besides the office, if I have to go physically, the ideal is not to lose. So Bucharest is a small town [in terms of area] compared to other European capitals. It's a small town, but.... the world is used to going only with their car, so it was this community where we struggled with the means of public transport, and now everyone has the impression that you have to stay in the car.” (1:7). Her statement had a negative sentiment.

The product promoter said that the cost savings could be offset by different changes in the environment, such as the transition from warm to cold weather: “”. His statement had a neutral sentiment: *“In terms of costs now there's still a saving, but there's also an extra expense that you have, because in winter you have more light. More heat that you use in the house, so the costs so to speak are...maybe the individual costs are more than the costs that the employer has in the office, basically shrinking the work area.” (18:5). His statement had a mixed sentiment.*

4.4. Knowledge transfers in home and shared offices

4.4.1. The role of technology in meeting the needs of workers in home and shared offices

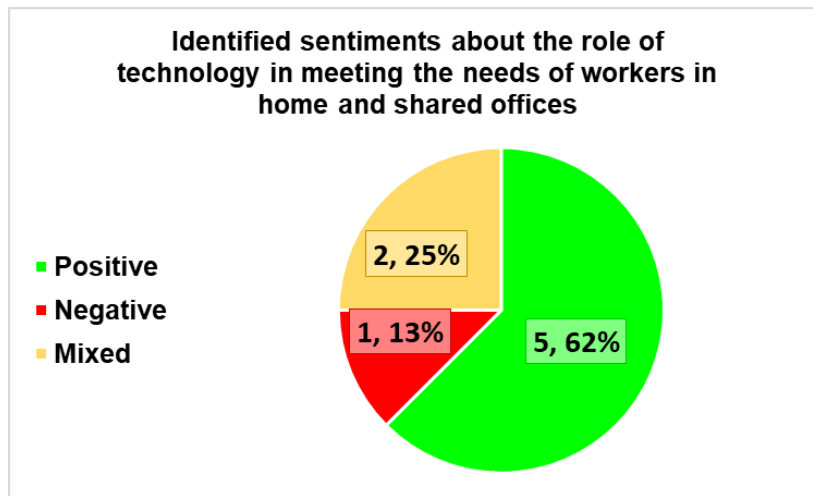


Figure 25 The percent of statements from the interviewees that contained positive, negative or mixed sentiments about the role of technology in alternative work concepts.

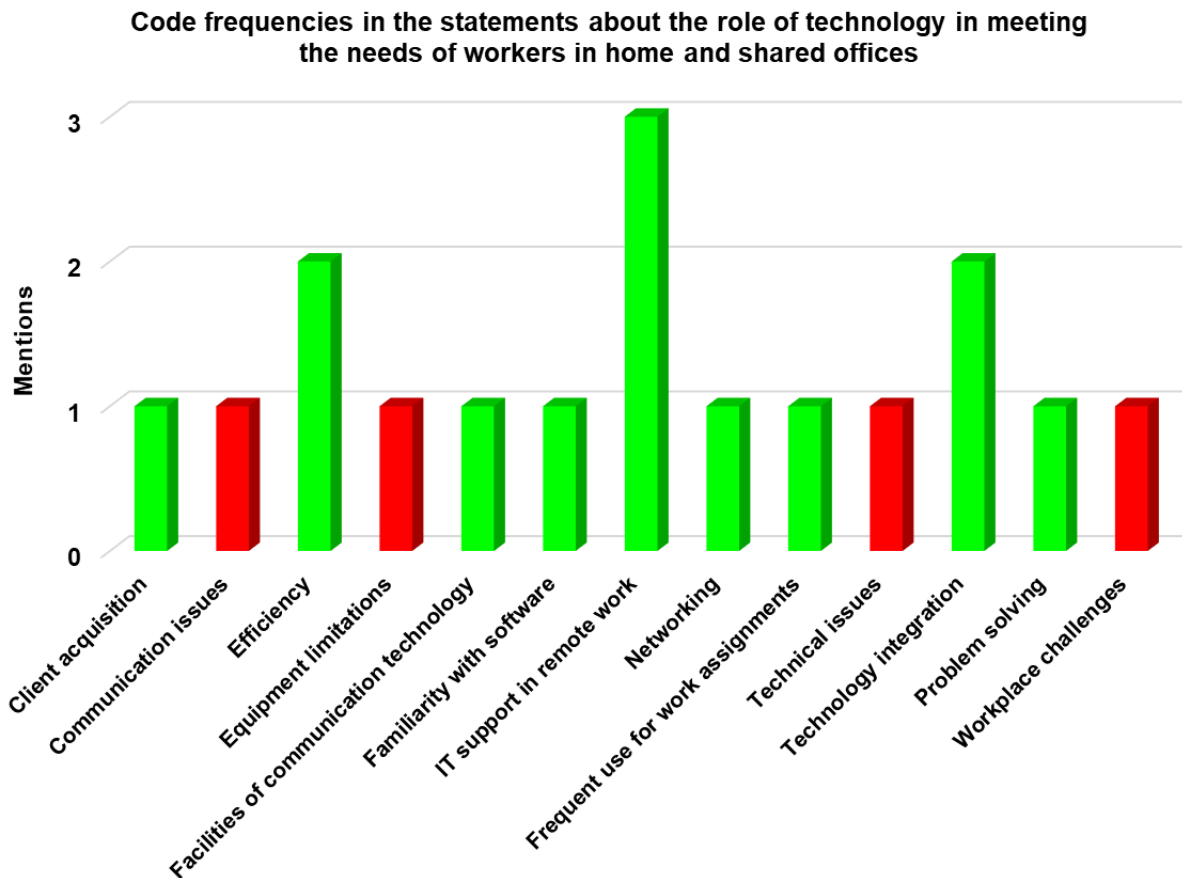


Figure 26 Code frequencies in the statements about the role of technology in alternative work concepts.

As shown in Figure 16, a majority of the respondents had a positive sentiment towards the role of technology in meeting the needs of users at workplace. For most interviewees, technology played a crucial role in facilitating remote work, enabling effective communication in virtual meetings, problem-solving, client acquisition, networking, and remote hiring through videoconferencing, improved equipment, and virtual collaboration tools (3:16; 4:9; 5:14; 8:12; 8:13; 11:8; 18:8; 18:9). However, the interviewees also mentioned challenges such as technical difficulties, reliance on personal devices, and the lack of IT support, the latter leading to a reliance on friends and colleagues (1:19; 2:13, 7:5, 19:3).

The results from the interviews show an overall positive sentiment towards the role of technology in implementing alternative work models. Nevertheless, the results confirm the tenth expectation, that technological advancements meeting the needs of users in the workplace. The role of technology played in the implementation of remote work and/or digital workstations depended on the specific circumstances and the support available to the interviewees and their peers (2:19; 5:14; 7:5; 8:13; 11:8; 19:3).

The web developer, logistics systems manager, human resource manager, business analyst, accountant and product promoter expressed positive sentiments. For most interviewees, IT hardware and software, as well as digital workstations, played a crucial role in facilitating remote work, enabling effective communication, problem-solving, and remote hiring through videoconferencing, improved equipment, and virtual collaboration tools (3:16; 4:9; 5:14; 8:13; 11:8; 18:8; 18:9). For example, the logistics systems manager discussed how his multinational employer utilized various means of communication, including video calls, to organize meetings and troubleshoot problems more efficiently: *“Faster, solved for sure, as we all know, in the applications we use, in video mode, we can do screen sharing, in which one or more people, one or more colleagues, can see and visualize what is happening in a certain computer system...Several colleagues can look at the presentation once or at us simultaneously, in which we show the errors or problems that may arise in computer systems...So, yes, at the moment when more people are looking to find a solution to a problem, we easily see faster, without writing e-mails, chatting or talking on the phone, we can identify the problem much faster, we can change something in the system with the problem,*

we can visually test all of us, and we can solve the problem very quickly.” (4:9). His statement was echoed by the human resource manager, who said that, for her, technology enabled efficiency and faster solutions to issues: “These long-standing issues were solved much better, faster and more synthesised on the topic I had to address. The solutions are much faster because these meetings we can organise whenever we have availability among the stakeholders, and we do not have to wait to meet on-site until we find a room. We simply have the virtual space. We found solutions to those urgent situations and situations that stretch over a longer time faster in this way, via videoconference or spontaneous meetings. We even practice these impromptu meetings very frequently; we are at the step of “Okay, can you now see you on this topic?”. “Yes, let’s see your video”.” (5:14).

The TV procurer, the talent acquisition specialist and the software developer expressed mixed statements (1:19; 2:13; 19:3). For example, the talent acquisition specialist explained that the role of technology in alternative work concepts depended a lot on the type of problems she faced, as she experienced frequent issues with communication at workplace, but the remote support from her peers and IT department was the best type of advice she could get: *“Yes, here it depends, you know, a lot on the type of problems if it was a problem that I could still afford to use my laptop or certain platforms. Look, we, for example, use a lot to communicate intently [the name of an online platform]; we were able to solve the problem, to contact someone to help me But for example, I had technical problems where I couldn’t use these communication platforms... and then I had to use my phone to write to a colleague, tell him what the problem was and ask that colleague to contact someone my name, to help me because I had no way to contact.” (2:13).*

The automation developer expressed a negative sentiment, as she spoke about the challenges she and her colleagues faced in having to bring their own laptop to the shared office: *“Everyone has a laptop and brings it from home depending again on the floor, or I don’t know how it’s organized when we were sitting on the 1st floor. For example, there, we already had monitors. We had workstations which were somehow better arranged than when we moved to another floor with another team where we had monitors ... They were necessary for our laptops, we didn’t have chargers at our disposal, and either you brought yours from home.” (7:5).*

As the majority of responses and codes have a positive sentiment, the tenth expectation, that technological advancements meet the needs of users at workplace, is met.

4.4.2. The impact of alternative work concepts on communication and collaboration

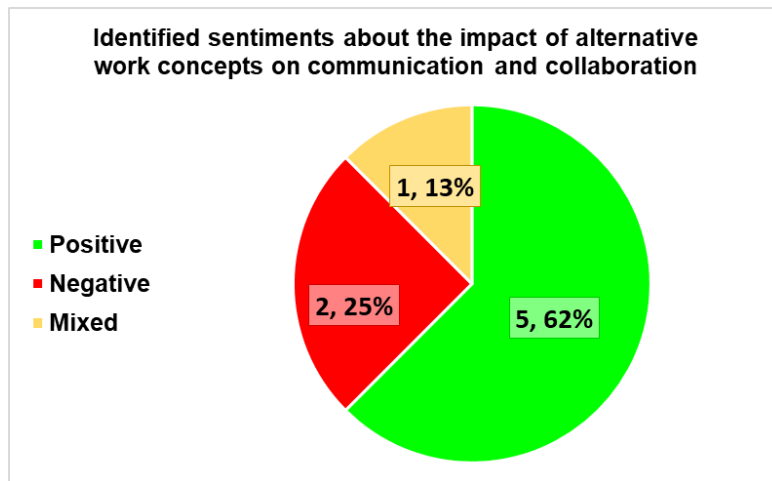


Figure 27 The percent of statements from the interviewees that contained positive, negative or mixed sentiments about the impact of alternative work concepts on communication and collaboration

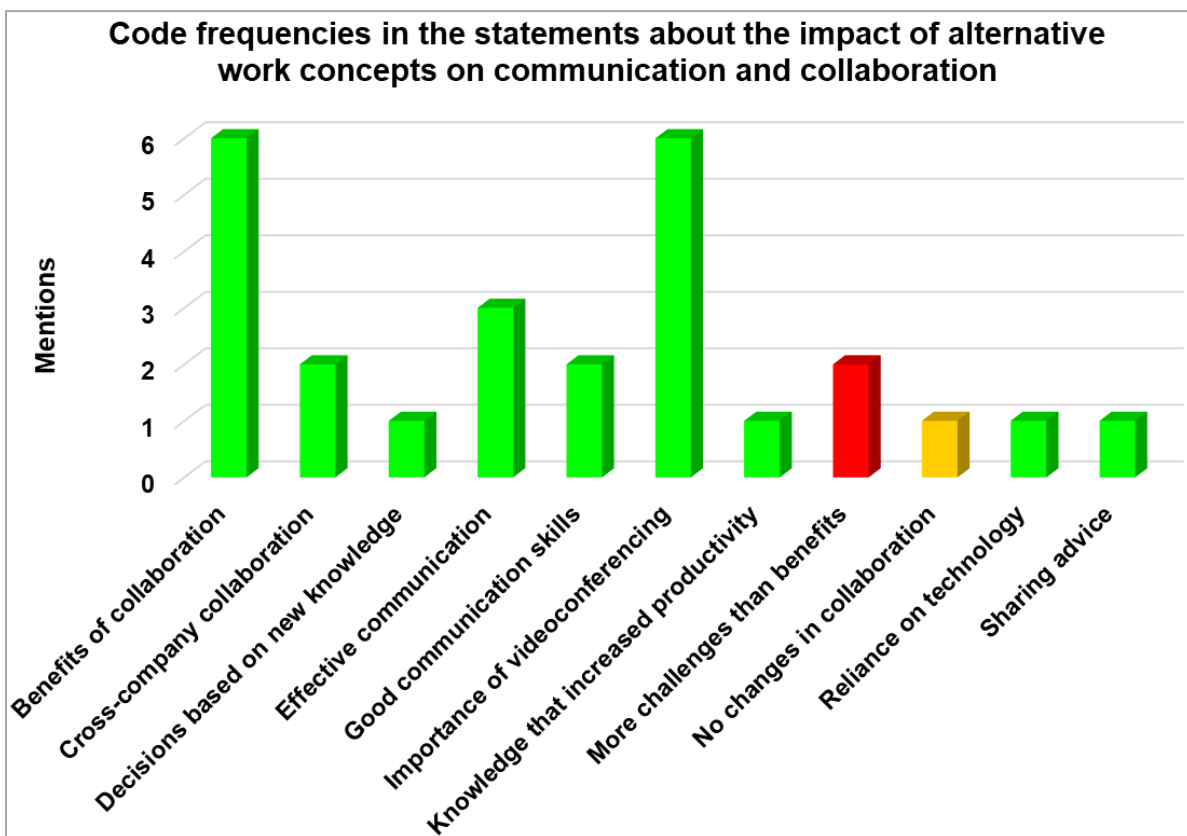


Figure 28 Code frequencies in the statements about communication and collaboration in home and/or shared offices in Bucharest

All interviewees who openly expressed their opinions said that collaboration is crucial for achieving successful outcomes in diverse work models, but differences emerged on the effectiveness of each model in enhancing communication. Some interviewees highlighted the role communication skills play in achieving good teamwork.

As shown in Figure 27, 62% of the interviewees who talked about impact of alternative work concepts on communication and collaboration expressed positive sentiments. For example, the TV procurer, talent acquisition specialist, logistics systems manager, human resource manager and product promoter expressed positive sentiments. As shown in Figure 28 but also revealed in their interview statement, they benefitted from intra- and cross-company collaboration and capability to share advice and take decisions during videoconferences. However, these benefits required good communication skills and a good knowledge of technology (1:16; 2:14; 4:7; 5:8; 18:7). All the above-mentioned interviewees except for the TV procurer considered that home offices helped to achieve better communication and collaboration.

On the other hand, the TV procurer expressed a preference for shared offices for better outcomes of business negotiation: *“these meetings in conference rooms with at least three or four people on the television side were productive because they came from different departments... when you get the okay by e-mail, yes, we make the contract [but] behind this yes there are, in fact, some meetings between people in television... When we were going to the conference room, we could talk directly and the one from sales and the one from purchases and the one from research with me... I could come to a price conclusion faster... The more heads there are at a table, the more heads there are, the more heads there are, the more easily in my field, you can get to a contract.”* (1:16).

On the other hand, the logistics systems said that home office helped him know his colleagues better through videoconferencing, especially in global teams, which helped them organize meetings and solve problems faster: *“Like I said about myself, yes, I saw in my colleagues, with whom I work in a team, we work in a multinational company, and I have colleagues from other countries as well. Our common language of communication is English. We got to know each other better not only through chat, phone or e-mail, and yes, through this video connection, through which we have been able to see each other, we can very easily organize our meetings and see and solve the problems that arise at the company level much faster.”* (4:7).

The statements of the programmer and financial-accounting analyst indicated negative sentiments. The programmer said: *“I wouldn't say... little would be... it didn't improve, it was the same or...slightly worse.”* (6:12). The financial-accounting analyst said: *“No...it's much harder through videoconferencing and communicating via email, on Teams and Outlook and so on it's much easier when we meet...”* (9:11).

The statement of the architect had a neutral sentiment. He said: *“As I said in the earlier question and with people from other companies, I think that meetings are flowing in the same way, not just us, but after this period with the pandemic, it seems to me that people in all companies have become very used to the online style of fighting, so that everyone comes to the same meetings, and it seems to me that they are even more so with people from other companies, maybe with your colleagues in your company, sometimes you need to be in the same place, to do, I don't know, to solve things more quickly. But with people from other companies it seems to me it's the same.”* (13:7).

Given the prevalence of opinions with positive sentiments, the eleventh expectation, that home and shared offices can facilitate communication and communication at work, is met.

4.4.3. The impact of remote work on tacit knowledge transfers

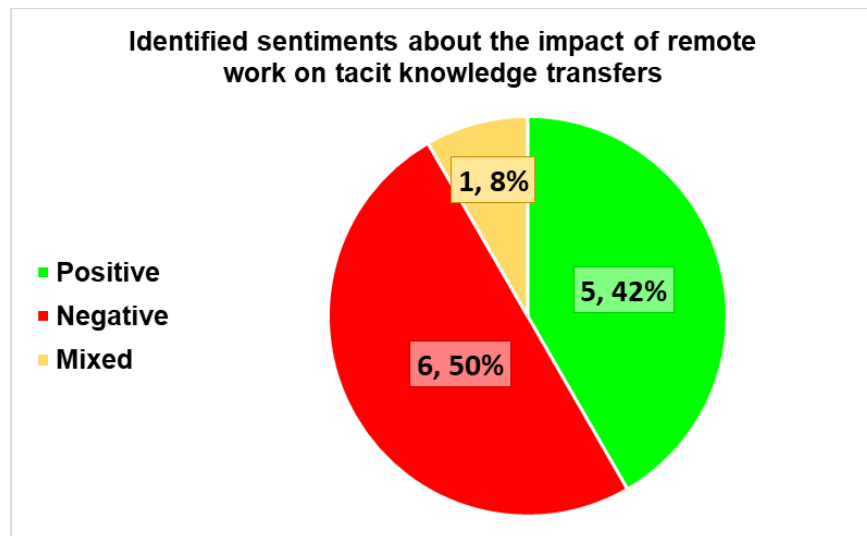


Figure 29 The percent of statements from the interviewees that contained positive, negative or mixed sentiments about tacit knowledge transfers in home and shared offices in Bucharest

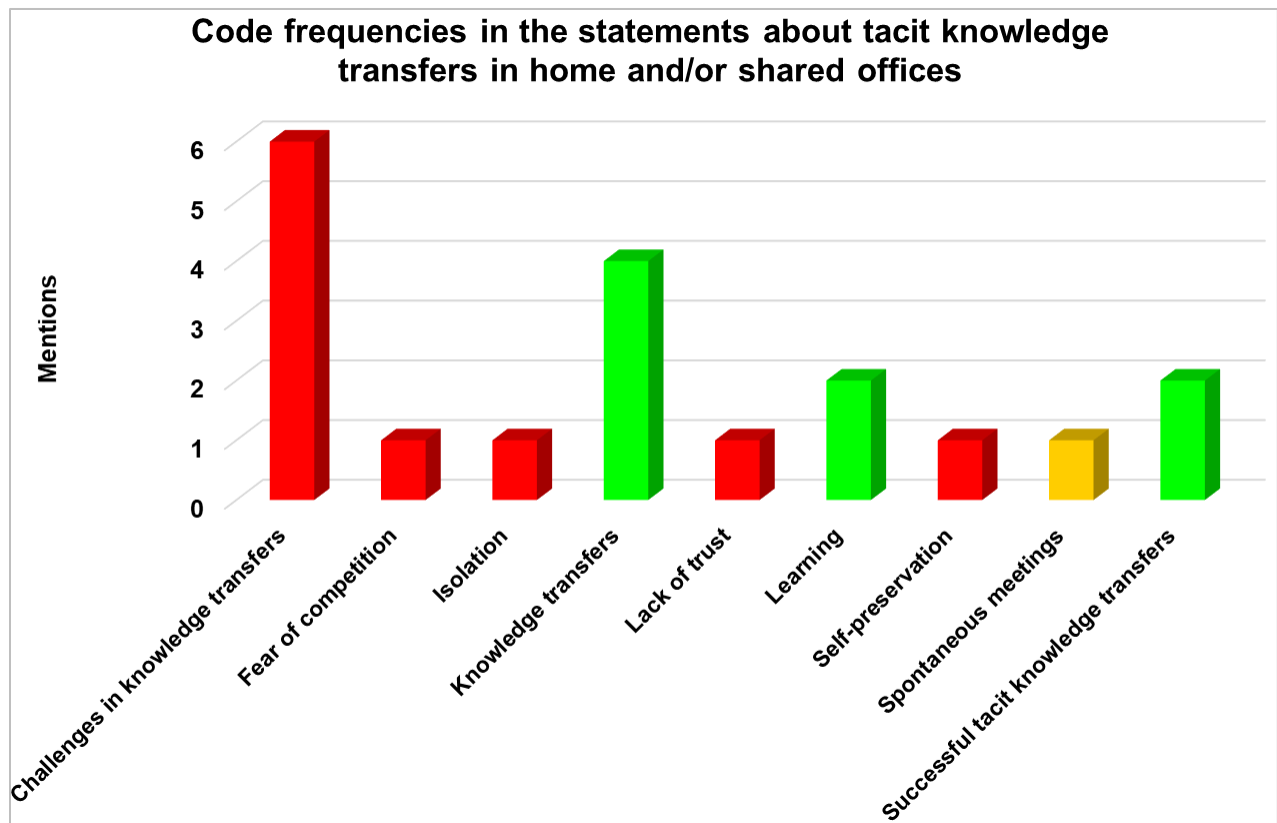


Figure 30 Code frequencies in the statements about tacit knowledge transfers in home and/or shared offices in Bucharest

Despite the numerous benefits of home and shared office concepts that the tacit knowledge transfers that the interviewees reported, half of the interviewees reported negative statements, as shown in Figure 29, and five codes with ten mentions in total had negative sentiments, as shown in Figure 30.

Overall, the employees who used home offices but not shared offices discussed the way remote work allowed for flexibility and increased efficiency but also presented some challenges in communication and knowledge exchange (4:10, 5:7, 9:13, 11:7). The interviewees who worked in shared offices talked about the opportunities for knowledge transfers in shared offices, but also complained about the comprehension of tacit knowledge transfers by their business transfers (1:18; 2:10; 3:6; 7:4 and 17:8).

The TV procurer, web developer, programmer; automation developer, insurance agent and software developer expressed negative sentiments (1:18; 3:6; 3:12; 6:12; 7:4; 12:5; 19:6). For example, the TV procurer said that she worked in a very niched field and didn't want to hire employees to protect her know-how: *“Yes, and not like everywhere else, but also no. If you*

work from home, like I am with my company, I work from home, you're the lone wolf, so here's a minus. The plus is that you've gained time, but if I'm wondering, I think I'd go back to the shared office, meaning there's no point in renting me if they haven't hired me; if you don't think so much to get employees. And in my field, it's not that I didn't grow up and didn't get employees, but my field is very, very... So I must protect my know-how because if you hire someone and learn, I teach them everything and leave afterwards, I lose a lot.” (1:18)

The talent acquisition specialist, human resource manager, financial-accounting analyst, accountant and financial analyst working in a hybrid model expressed positive sentiments in their statements (2:10; 5:6; 5:7; 11:7 and 17:8). For example, the talent acquisition specialist said: *“I have met colleagues over the years who find it much easier to make this transfer on-site to the office, colleagues to whom it is easier to do remotely... A mix to know the problems at the team level, since we are an international team, were solved by remote videoconferencing. They wouldn't have had any other way. But look, for example, smaller situations do not know how to communicate with each other about something related to the office in Romania. That's what I did spontaneously in the office, but things not necessarily related to the job. Spontaneous meetings, for example, about not knowing how not to decide whether we go into team building or not, such decisions.” (2:10).*

The human resource compared the benefits and challenges of transferring tacit knowledge in home and standard offices: *“Yes, I can say that yes, because I had to, not having my colleagues around me on the team, discover processes, things, working procedures, new topics, discover them and solve them, and I think I've gained more experience, working in this alternative way of working, than in the traditional way...It was comfortable; I can say that it was a little more difficult to share my knowledge with colleagues through this way of working, but I think the difficulty gave a moment of beginning when we started using this model of work in the organisation. After that, easy-easy we got used to this model of work and got used to each other and shared knowledge in this way of working. It is not so difficult now and does not affect the quality of sharing this knowledge. Yes, it's still a process. I see it as a more difficult process than the traditional work of being on-site with a colleague with whom I share my knowledge. But it is much more flexible and allows both the colleagues with whom I share the information and me; this work model allows us this part of the flexibility that we need, and the important thing is ultimately any way of working. The important thing is that we want to share and want to*

receive the information. The quality was not low, but the process was a little more difficult than the traditional model.” (5:6; 5:7).

The logistics systems expressed a mixed sentiment. He said: *“Not in the company where I work; we are all a team; everyone has a level acquired in years, and yes, we like to work together. So, opposite technical problems, we have no secrets; we help each other individually, each other that someone else can solve a problem because we can't be 24 hours out of 24 online to solve problems.” (4:10).* His first statement has a positive sentiment, but the second statement has a negative sentiment, as he was already used to tacit knowledge before the pandemic.

The interviewees who worked from home but not in shared offices emphasised the importance of good relations with colleagues in ensuring the good transmission and comprehension of tacit knowledge, even when challenges and doubts about the quality of the knowledge transfers exist (4:10; 5:7). However, difficulties in communication and knowledge transfers persisted where direct interactions for learning and asking questions were needed (6:6).

The interviewees who worked in both home and shared offices, despite being pleased with additional knowledge accumulation through "learning by doing", as new skills were learned for technical tasks, concluded that sharing their knowledge through remote work, such as videoconferences, was unsuitable for their work assignments and risky for their own employment status (1:18; 2:10; 3:6; 7:4 and 17:8). Two interviewees expressed positive statements (talent acquisition specialist and financial analyst working in a hybrid model), whereas the other three (TV procurer, web developer and automation developer) expressed negative and strongly negative sentiments.

Therefore, the twelfth expectation, that tacit knowledge can be transferred better in home and shared offices than in standard offices, is not met.

4.5. Policy recommendation from the interviewees

The interviewees were asked to issue guidelines on the implementation of home office. The interviewees who worked at home and in shared offices recommended that the employers understand the employee's needs and a work-life balance, as well as the need for flexibility, improved communication and high wages, when implementing alternative work methods.

The TV procurer recommended employers to make decision-making based on verified information and learning from others' experiences: *“Well, it depends on the field, if, for example, whether to take it that way... what if it's an accounting firm? God with mercy, I can work from home without any problem. If it's an IT company, probably yes, I don't know here, but in accounting, so I'm thinking about how I was at the television station, the accounting department, I think, had the most employees, I think there were not twenty of them there were a lot of them, so it was a whole floor, it was just the accounting department. The department can work from home. Research the same way, you can do it from home on your audience data, so it depends greatly on the field..”* (1:24)

The talent acquisition specialist endorsed implementing a flexible work model that offers more options to satisfy a wider range of needs: *“I recommend they confidently implement this form of... working because it has many advantages. Each employee has different needs and is not... if they are ambitious then to offer the same way of working for everyone, they will see that the advantages are not as great as when they adapt and offer more options to satisfy a wider range of needs. When you implement such a system of work, you allow people to somehow express themselves and find the best option for them.”* (2:15).

The automation developer recommended that employers offer facilities to incentivize employees to come to the office, allowing the employees to choose what works best for them: *“...don't necessarily force it, because every team works differently somehow....Like, make a really nice dining space and somehow make it easier to have places in the space near the offices where you can buy food if you don't bring a lunch box or daycare centers in the area for people who need that. It motivates you to go to the office if you know you have to get out of the house to take your child to daycare anyway.”* (7:10).

The financial analyst working in a hybrid model recommended that employers provide necessary conditions for home office and offer a small amount to cover expenses: *“The employer should also provide all the conditions for working from home. If they want to supplement, there are many cases where I have heard that those who work from home get a small amount to cover various expenses, such as electricity or internet...Another important aspect would be not to force employees to physically return after all. Everyone does what they want. If some are more comfortable just working at the desk, it's only natural that they come and do it. I have colleagues at my current job who sometimes confess to me that they don't like working from home, it just feels weird. Many have perhaps worked for years just from the*

office, and perhaps an interesting thing is that younger generations like me are only excited about this alternative work model. But maybe more experienced colleagues can adapt too..” (17:13)

The product promoter highlighted the advantages of the employees covering the costs of their employers, as well as offering them additional facilities: *“Well, first of all, but I say the main argument is that they are more productive and that basically if they work two days from home they have better productivity. In the two days they get rid of stress and they are more committed to the company. So it's, I see it as a part of as a motivational part to have the possibility to work from home as well. On the other hand clearly it is and it can also be a saving you make on travel and transport costs. It's important if you don't have your own car, if you have to take the metro, the trolley, change to get to the office. Then clearly that's also a very, very big advantage for an employee.”* (18:10).

The software developer emphasized that each company should assess its capabilities to determine if employees can adapt to home or shared offices and can work responsibly in these two models: *“a company with employees who could work from home, should get to know them or test them for a while, to see if anything changes or not, in my opinion.”* (19:16)

The interviewees who worked under a home-office work model recommended implementing necessary technology and effective communication and collaboration systems before switching to alternative work methods. They acknowledged that certain jobs may still require on-site attendance and highlighted the need for better organization in meetings.

The logistics manager suggested that employers allow remote work after evaluating its feasibility on the job market. He also stated that employees should be able to choose on whether they should conduct work assignments at home or in their standard office: *“Yes, I recommend companies evaluate every job for their employees and, if possible, because they work, say, static in the office, why couldn't they work the same things from home? We all know that at the moment, the trend is towards this digitalization...we work with electronic documents and electronic signatures, and, in this case, for companies, it will be much easier for companies to think about the evaluation and proposal of employees to work from home in a higher or smaller percentage; it depends on this thing, it depends a lot on the job that each employee has..”* (4:14).

The human resource manager recommended a sudden transition to new ways of working and emphasized the importance of employee responsibility for social and

communication aspects. She made the two following statements, one directed at the employers and the other directed at the employees: *“I would recommend that employers make this sudden transition to this way of working because people, if we make this transition gradually, will never get used to it anyway. If we do it step by step, instead when we do one thing and suddenly changing it to another method, that is the company's decision, which will be the new way of working. And just as suddenly, they will get used to it much faster, knowing they will all work the same way. So, I would recommend that this be done not in stages but started with a precise implementation date. Before doing that, I would also recommend that we look at the workstations very well and analyse which workstations can benefit from this work schedule.”* and *“And to the employees, I recommend they be open and open to this change. To know that the social part, the communication part, is not with the employer. It is not at present to physics; it is with them. I can maintain collaboration with colleagues by phone, through calls, messages, and videoconferences. They can meet physically and after work or do team building if they want to. Or they can make various appointments. But we must not be blocked by a standard way of working.”* (5:17; 5:18).

The programmer recommended spatial and cultural measures for ensuring good teamwork in home offices: *“To be flexible, I expect them to give you absolute freedom as an employee. I mean, I, for example, can or can't come to the office if I want to. But, on the other hand, I can go every day if I want to. I love that freedom. Secondly, however, it would be better for the team members to be from the same geographical area to see each other physically from time to time in the office because that helps in meetings and collaboration. I would add... come on, not necessarily to come to the office every day, but if there is a need for some time, it would be good, or more preferable, to be able to meet with him/her at the office.”* (6:17)

The business analyst recommended using hybrid working as a complement to office work rather than a complete substitute: *“I believe that they should pay extra attention to using hybrid working as something that can complement the office work experience rather than as a substitute, especially for younger employees that lack experience, it's really important to have that in-person ...so personally, I believe that remote work should definitely be omnipresent, let's say, in today's work environment, but it shouldn't be a full replacement for office working.”* (8:14)

The accountant recommended both employees and their employers to focus on efficiency issues during the implementation of home or shared offices: *“I do not see what the*

problem would be in proposing to an employer to allow him to work in telework or from home, given that he could argue that he maintains the same new results. For example, in order to make a proof of the work performed at the end of each day of teleworking, let us hand over an activity report in which each employee says what he has worked. This can be like a reinforcement of the fact that the results can be delivered on time exactly as if the work at the office were being carried out.” (11:12).

The architect emphasized the need for better work-life balance and suggested employers offer remote work as a no-cost benefit: “...*there may be jobs where you don't need to be physically at work but where the job allows you I think you can tell their employer, to pass on the benefits that I mentioned in the point above and that is that productivity doesn't decrease, in my view, when you work from home...It can even increase for certain stages and the fact that an employee that in relation to work-life, job and personal life better as well, will be more productive and I think that's a benefit that the employer can...I mean employers can offer it to employees at no cost to them but you will have happier and maybe more productive employees.” (13:10). The architect also recommended providing employees with necessary technology and making office work voluntarily: “*I mean you have to provide your employees with all the technology they need to do their work from the office, everything, including, apart from the hardware and all the software, which are things to work well so you can have your meetings online. Otherwise, employees don't think they're going to...and likewise, yes it's important, that's what I was going to say that employees don't think they're going to shy away from that style of working, but if there are some that still have to work from the office to give them that opportunity, make it somewhat optional, maybe don't force them.” (13:11).**

The financial analyst working from home emphasized the importance of cost savings and increased productivity when employees are not stressed: “*Bring them to the idea of cost savings and the fact that people are more productive when they are not stressed.” (21:13). She highlighted that quality work can be done from anywhere, and commuting to the (standard) office is no longer necessary: “Keep in mind that time spent on the road to be physically in the office is no longer feasible and that work well done can be done from anywhere.” (21:14).*

5. Conclusion

The goal of the master thesis was to explore the suitability of home and shared office as work methods that offer employees and the self-employed more benefits than standard office work. The qualitative analysis of the statements by the interviewees revealed that eleven of the twelve expectations were fulfilled. The sole exception was the expectation about the transfer of tacit knowledge, where a strong preference for on-site interactions was expressed.

The master thesis research found that the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the transition to the home office. In contrast, shared offices were implemented due to experiences of improvements in work-life balance and social networking opportunities (Smékalová, et al., 2022). Despite the reduction of direct human contact while working remotely, the interviewees managed to adapt to changes at workplaces brought about by implementing a home office (Săvescu, et al., 2022). The implementation of shared offices depended on the decisions of the self-employed and employers, whereas the employees had a greater say in the transition to the home office.

The answers of the interviewees who experienced shared offices confirmed inclusion of the shared office (hybrid home-shared office models) component could provide greater benefits to both employees and companies in Bucharest compared to alternative work concepts exclusively based on home office. The hybrid office work concepts could combine the benefits of both concepts while helping to compensate for the challenges brought by each work concept with the benefits of the other model: the limited social interactions could be balanced by spontaneous on-site team meetings, or noise distractions could be compensated by periods of remote work that offered more concentration than work remotely. Likewise, the interviewees who worked in hybrid home-standard offices advocated for a mix between the two concepts.

The alternative work concepts were found to improve work-life balance, productivity, job satisfaction and health. The need to pay attention to the needs and dynamics of each employee and individual work circumstances was emphasised, along with the importance of on-site interactions for improving concentration and physical, mental and social health (De Been & Beijer, 2014; Săvescu, et al., 2022; Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023).

The statements of the interviewees also highlight the complex relationship between financial costs, productivity, and well-being in the context of alternative work methods, which

must be analysed on an individual case basis, despite the overall greater effect of cost benefits than additional costs (Fan Ng, 2010; Papagiannidis & Marikyan, 2020; Nappi & Eddial, 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022).

Regarding the role of technology in improving results reflect a realistic perspective on the role of technology in the workplace, with both positive and challenging aspects being acknowledged. The interviews demonstrate that technology can meet the needs of users in the workplace but require careful consideration and evaluation on a case-by-case basis.

The interviewees had a positive sentiment towards alternative work concepts and their impact on teamwork and collaboration. While some acknowledged the benefits of on-site communication and brainstorming sessions in shared offices, others emphasised the efficiency and flexibility of online meetings in accommodating multitasking. Overall, the ability to collaborate effectively was considered crucial for achieving successful outcomes in diverse work models.

However, the interviewees revealed that on-site interactions are crucial for successful tacit knowledge transfers, which are essential for effective teamwork and business negotiations. While some interviewees acknowledged the benefits of remote work, others emphasised the necessity of shared offices for knowledge-sharing and problem-solving.

Based on the analysis of the interviews, the research question "Could home and shared office work concepts be better options for employees and their employers than standard office work?" receives a "yes" answer. While home and shared office work concepts can provide greater benefits than standard office work in Bucharest, on-site interactions are important for successful tacit knowledge transfers and effective collaboration, which are critical for achieving successful outcomes in different work models.

6. Discussion

Despite the lack of academic literature that deals precisely with the implementations of home, shared and combined home-shared offices in Bucharest, the statements of the interviewees tend to match the statements of academic literature discussing the benefits, challenges and effects of home and shared offices in the whole country or abroad.

The interview analysis showed that interviewees who expressed positive sentiments demonstrated remarkable short-term adaptability in their approach to remote work, both when working from the home office as well as when working from the office. The experiences of the interviewees that reveal the role of remote work in helping them adapt to the challenges of remote work and improve their skills by learning match the literature findings on adapting to the home office (Harris, 2009; Papagiannidis & Marikyan, 2020; Gerlitz & Hülbeck, 2023; Hölzel, et al., 2023). The interviewees who had access to shared offices confirmed the expectations in the literature, as they had to make efforts to settle into their work environments and take advantage of the existing workstations, networking, flexibility in time management and efficiency in organising meetings (Merkel, 2019; Davidescu, et al., 2020). When the two models are compared on the experiences of the interviewees, the home office leads to a more difficult adapted, but a combined home-shared office model can make up for the challenges in finding a network for business activities and support.

All interviewees who worked in a hybrid home-shared office, as well as the marketing specialist, considered that their model was possible, but a balance had to be found. They stated that each alternative work model can compensate for the drawbacks of the other work model, thus decreasing the disadvantages. While no precise studies about home and shared offices in Bucharest were found, the statements of the interviewees tend to match the studies conducted by Davidescu et al. (2020) and Săvescu et al. (2022) that showed the partial implementation of home office components more beneficial for employees and employers than the full-time home office, due to the combination of flexibility, cutting costs, and spontaneous social interactions (Davidescu, et al., 2020; Săvescu, et al., 2022).

Concerning the work-life balance of the interviewees, the challenges they reported when working in a full-time home office or home-won office models mostly related to freeing up time for house chores and childcare, matching the findings in the literature (Mihalca, et al., 2021; Davidescu, et al., 2020; Săvescu, et al., 2022; Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023). Nevertheless,

these interviewees considered that the flexibility that the home office brought improved their work-life balance, matching the findings in the academic literature by Brouwer and Mariotti (2023). When the interviewees who also worked in shared offices (at the time of the interviews) were asked, they confirmed the description of shared office activities in the journal papers by Morrison and Macky (2017), Orel et al. (2019) and Smékalová et al. (2022). Their statements reveal that the interviewees benefitted from community and organisational support as well as flexibility between meetings, work tasks and leisure times, matching the statements in the above-mentioned journal papers. The challenges of the interviewees working in shared offices were similar to those reported by the interviewees working in home or home-standard office models.

However, the opinions and experiences of those who consider home office more efficient than shared office strongly differ, as the former tends to cite the ability to avoid distractions at the workplace and spend more time on work assignments, whereas the other cites the ability to brainstorm, diversify sources of learning as the main stimuli for improving productivity. Compared to the findings in the literature, the interviewees were more positive about the fourth expectation, but their statements confirmed the recommendations in the literature about quiet concentration, time and space management and the need to set productivity indicators (Mihalca, et al., 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022; Gerlitz & Hülbeck, 2023).

The results from the interview analysis generally match the literature findings on the effects of alternative work models, such as home offices and shared offices, on job satisfaction. However, the expectations are only partly met for the interviewees who only experienced home office are considered. Their statements matched both the positive impact on job satisfaction detailed in the academic literature by Mihalca et al. (2021), Săvescu et al. (2022), Smékalová et al. (2022), and Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023, but also the challenges detailed in the same article. The factor with the greatest negative influence on job satisfaction reported by Romanian employees was the reduced opportunities for social interactions, which were compensated if work tasks were partly conducted in shared or standard offices.

When the home office is combined with shared offices, the statements of the interviewees match the findings from the literature on the positive effects of alternative work concepts on job satisfaction. These findings include improvements in work-life balance, increased autonomy and flexibility, and reduced commuting time, which were felt more strongly

as the interviewees became more experienced (Săvescu, et al., 2022; Smékalová, et al., 2022; Brouwer & Mariotti, 2023).

The statements of the interviewees who worked in shared offices also supported the positive effects (and the necessity) of the good management of shared offices, such as enhanced socialisation with colleagues, better knowledge transfer, brainstorming, and on-site support. These outcomes were mentioned in the academic literature by De Been & Beijer (2014), Robelski & Keller (2019), Bouncken et al. (2022), and Smékalová et al. (2022).

The responses of all interviewees who disclosed changes in health effects matched the findings in the academic literature, which indicate that home office during and after the COVID-19 pandemic generated changes in mental health, increased stress levels, uncertainty and fear, and a sense of isolation (Robelski & Keller, 2019; Davidescu, et al., 2020; Săvescu, et al., 2022; Akhavan, et al., 2023; Gerlitz & Hülsbeck, 2023). However, the positive health effects of the home office mentioned by the talent acquisition specialist, human resource manager, business analyst and product promoter align with the literature findings that highlight certain positive outcomes, such as reduced stress, improved eating habits, and increased opportunities for physical exercise (Mihalca, et al., 2021; Săvescu, et al., 2022).

Based on the statements of the interviewees who openly discussed financial costs, significant effects of the switch were identified. The interviews acknowledged the advantages of reduced energy and water consumption, cost-saving potential on rent and office maintenance, and savings on commuting costs are highlighted, matching the literature findings of Robelski & Keller (2019), Davidescu et al. (2020) and Nappi & Eddial (2021). However, there are also some additional costs, such as electricity, equipment, and peak-hour traffic, as reflected in the findings of Cooke et al. (2022) and Nappi & Eddial (2021). For the interviewees who openly discussed financial costs, the overall sentiment was mixed, leaning towards additional financial benefits and savings associated with alternative work than with standard office work. Nevertheless, individual circumstances and preferences may vary, with some individuals still preferring office-based work for personal reasons.

The statements of the interviews that acknowledged the way technological advancements could match the workers' needs in home and shared offices, such as faster problem-solving processes and outputs or more interactive communication that allows data sharing, align with the findings in the academic literature by Papagiannidis and Marikyan (2020), Davidescu et al. (2020), and Harris (2009). The statements of the interviewees and the

research papers of the four previously mentioned authors both confirm the crucial role of information and communication technology in enhancing work efficiency and the sharing of explicit knowledge, meeting professional needs.

The interviewees highlighted the positive impact of both home and shared offices on collaboration and communication, which is consistent with the findings of academic research papers by Robelski & Keller (2019), Davidescu et al. (2020), Mihalca et al. (2021) and Papagiannidis & Marikyan (2020), which showed that home office or in shared office spaces could facilitate teamwork and knowledge sharing, as well as discussions of shared knowledge in different group settings such as chats, more efficiently than in traditional physical offices. However, some interviewees also spoke about the challenges they faced in seeking advice from colleagues and the importance of teamwork and communication, which aligns with the challenges highlighted in Mihalca et al.'s research paper. Despite these challenges, the talent acquisition specialist, logistics systems manager, human resource manager and automation developer confirmed that videoconferencing can bring people from different geographical locations and cultures together, enabling diverse teams to cooperate effectively and demonstrate their unique cultural customs, as shown in the research papers by Gerlitz & Hülbeck (2023).

Regarding tacit knowledge transfers, the interviews acknowledged the importance of on-site interactions for effective tacit knowledge transfers, which is consistent with the findings in the research paper by Haynes (2007) and Heerwagen et al. (2004).

The interviewees recommended employers prioritising understanding employee needs, work-life balance, effective communication, and high wages. On-site interactions and teamwork are crucial for successful tacit knowledge transfers. Companies must provide the necessary technology and communication systems while also relying on responsible and mature employees. Finally, proper development for younger employees should be a priority.

While the policy recommendations found in academic literature differed from those provided by the interviewees, some interviewees did suggest providing employees with options and flexibility tailored to their preferences and productivity levels, which aligns with the academic literature's emphasis on minimising the negative impact of blurring the line between personal and professional life, as found in the academic paper by Mihalca et al. (2021).

6.1. Limitations of the study

Despite the lack of academic literature that deals precisely with the implementations of home, shared and combined home-shared offices in Bucharest, the interviewees' statements tend to match the statements of academic literature. Whereas publicly available data for home offices existed, no such data existed for shared offices, and the little available data concerned the business activities of certain business conglomerates rather than geographical or demographic data for academic research. Therefore, using academic research to describe the spread of shared offices in Romania and abroad was almost impossible.

Whereas publicly available data for home offices existed, no such data existed for shared offices, and the little available data concerned the business activities of certain business conglomerates rather than geographical or demographic data for academic research. Therefore, describing the spread of shared offices in Romania and abroad by means of academic research was almost impossible.

On whether the results of the research are representative of the situation of home and shared offices in Bucharest, Romania, the results should be treated with caution, as only a very small sample of interviewees was interviewed, 21 in total. The individual characteristics of the interviewees had a significant impact on their experience with home and shared offices, based on their answers.

Another major limitation of the study was that the research findings on home and shared offices in Romania were not as extensive as those in Western Europe and North America. This made it difficult to comprehensively discuss the facilities provided by these offices during the interviews, as they did not match the academic literature and Romanian labour market context. Although Atlas.TI found implicit matches between the statements from the interviews and code groups; the statements could not explicitly match the codes sought from the theoretical framework.

Additionally, some interviewees avoided sensitive questions and did not answer them to protect their private information. The response avoidance was most clearly seen when discussing health or financial issues.

As a result, not all interview responses could be analysed, and the percentage of the respondents who did not provide answers was slightly lower (or higher) than the percentage of positive sentiments for some expectations.

For example, such a hurdle in the theoretical framework was the lack of data for working from home for employees and self-employed individuals in Romania and data for the 15-to-24 years old age group, despite such data being available for the EU average and most of the EU countries (Eurostat, 2023). Therefore, a detailed analysis based on age groups or employment types (employee vs self-employed) that would enrich the comparison between Romania and the EU and provide more clarity in the theoretical framework of the home office was impossible. Also, the literature on Romania could not provide enough information on shared offices.

6.2. Avenues for further research

The master thesis, despite the study limitations, can help Romanian employers and employees find guidance (from a labour market perspective) on the implementation of home and shared offices in their companies. For Romanian decision-makers, the master thesis can help generate new policies and initiatives to implement the two models. Romanian researchers and university lecturers can use the findings and results in the master thesis to conduct a more in-depth analysis of aspects of home and shared offices that are not necessarily linked to labour market measures, such as health effects, international collaboration or the spread of co-working spaces in Romania.

6.3. Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest generated by this master's thesis.

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8. Appendices

8.1. First-order codes

The following codes were chosen for the analysis of the results:

- Codes related to adaptability, for the second expectation:
 - “Flexibility”;
 - “Difficulties in adapting to home office”;
 - “Shift in opinion due to more experience”;
 - “Overcoming challenges”;
 - “Easy adaptment with shared offices”;
 - “Preference for hybrid home-shared office”;
 - “Adaptation to home office”;
 - “Experience with change”;
 - “Challenges of home office”;
 - “Easy adaptment”;
 - “Social interaction”;
 - “Preparedness”;
 - “Experience”;
 - “Positive aspects of adaptment”;
 - “Coping with challenges”;
 - “Ambition”;
 - “Adaptation to home offices”;
 - “Adaptation to shared offices”;
 - “Balancing needs”;
 - “Better structuring”;
 - “Difficult adaptment to home offices”;
 - “Transition to a better work-life balance”;
 - “Schedule changes”;
 - “Spontaneity”;
 - “Gaining experience”;
 - “Difficult adaptment in home offices”;
 - “Problem-solving”;

- “Cooperation”;
 - “Difficulties in adaptment”;
 - “Accomodation”;
 - “Relaxation”;
 - “Challenges with adaptment”;
- Codes for the third expectation:
 - “Research”;
 - “Problem-solving”;
 - “Traffic-related issues”;
 - “Lack of interaction”;
 - “Social isolation”;
 - “Flexibility”;
 - “Scheduling personal matters”;
 - “Cost savings”;
 - “Freedom”;
 - “Short commuting distance”;
 - “Brainstorming”;
 - “Creativity”;
 - “Social interactions”;
 - “Benefits of shared offices in Bucharest”;
 - “Improved communication”;
 - “Social interaction”;
 - “Noise distractions”;
 - “Well-being”.
- Codes related to work-life balance, for the fourth expectation:
 - "Balancing home and office work",
 - "Childcare",
 - "Flexibility",
 - "Flexible schedule",
 - "Flexible work",

- "Flexible work schedule",
- "Flexible working",
- "Noise and distractions in shared office",
- "Office equipment",
- "Personal control",
- "Physical activity",
- "Physical environment",
- "Physical presence",
- "Reduced commute time",
- "Routine",
- "Stress-management",
- "Time management",
- "Work arrangements",
- "Work environment",
- "Work environment preferences",
- "Work flexibility",
- "Work from home",
- "Work from home policy",
- "Work schedule flexibility",
- "Work/Life Balance".
-
- Codes related to job satisfaction, for the fourth expectation:
 - "Connections with colleagues";
 - "Desire for socializing with colleagues";
 - "Flexibility";
 - "High job satisfaction";
 - "Innovation";
 - "Negative sentiment";
 - "Physical interaction";
 - "Positive experience";
 - "Preference for flexible schedule";
 - "Preference for occasional office visits";

- “Remote work preference”;
 - “Satisfaction”;
 - “Social interaction”;
 - “Transition”;
 - “Work-life balance”;
 - “Easy overall adaptation”.
- Codes related to productivity, for the fifth expectation:
 - “Better outputs in home office”;
 - “Changes when working from home”;
 - “Distractions”;
 - “Efficiency”;
 - “Employee satisfaction”;
 - “Flexibility”;
 - “Hybrid work”;
 - “Improvements through adaptation”;
 - “Negative changes in productivity”;
 - “Positive changes in productivity”;
 - “Ways to improve productivity”;
- Codes related to health effects, for the seventh expectation:
 - “Healthcare benefits”;
 - “Improved diet”;
 - “Mental health benefits”;
 - “Mental health challenges”;
 - “Physical health benefits”;
 - “Physical health benefits”;
 - “Relaxation”;
 - “Social health benefits”;
 - “Social health challenges”;
 - “Social health challenges”;
 - “Walking routine”;

- Codes related to financial costs for the eighth and ninth expectation:
 - “Cost savings”;
 - “Financial benefits”;
 - “Financial burden”;
 - “Commute expenses”.

- Codes related to technology and telecommunication, for the tenth expectation:
 - “Client acquisition”;
 - “Communication issues”;
 - “Problem solving”;
 - “Efficiency”;
 - “Equipment limitations”;
 - “Facilities of communication technology”;
 - “Familiarity with software”;
 - “IT support in remote work”;
 - “Networking”;
 - “Frequent use for work assignments”;
 - “Technical issues”;
 - “Technology integration”;
 - “Workplace challenges”;

- Codes related to communication and collaboration, that were used for selecting the results which matched the tenth expectation:
 - "Communication",
 - "Communication barriers",
 - "Communication challenges",
 - "Communication control",
 - "Company Culture",
 - "In-group mentality",
 - "Nonverbal communication",
 - "Nonverbal cues",

- "Openness to new experiences",
 - "Social disconnection",
 - "Social interaction",
 - "Social isolation",
 - "Spontaneous communication",
 - "Uncertainty",
 - "Understanding",
 - "Work meetings",
 - "Workplace issues".
- Codes related to tacit knowledge transfers, for the twelfth expectation:
 - "Learning";
 - "Knowledge transfers";
 - "Isolation";
 - "Fear of competition";
 - "Self-preservation";
 - "Lack of trust";
 - "Spontaneous meetings";
 - "Challenges in knowledge transfers";
 - "Successful tacit knowledge transfers".