

# Hybrid working 4.0

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experiment,  
learn



Wellbeing works.







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# THE NEW WORK CULTURE IS HERE TO STAY. NOW WHAT?

## A way out of the hybrid work paradox

- Wellbeing is at the centre of everything
- 5 levels of autonomy
- Working apart together

Hybrid working is here to stay and that is good news for both the enterprise and for the employee. It is however important to not simply reduce hybrid working to distance working, without paying attention to everyone's wellbeing. Because such an opportunity to revitalise and transform the work culture only happens once in a generation. That time is now.

More than two years after the start of the pandemic, COVID-19 is more or less under control in Belgium and almost all companies and organisations are operational again. But this immediately gives rise to a serious problem: the so-called office tigers want nothing more than to return to office full-time while the homebodies prefer to work 100% distance working. The remainder want a solution somewhere in between. The arguments of the tigers and homebodies are largely the same: need for focus time, cooperation, work-life balance. Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, calls this the 'Hybrid Work Paradox'.<sup>1</sup> In this white paper we seek a way out of this paradox.

## WELLBEING IS AT THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING

There is no readily available blueprint for the new hybrid working. Even the most forward-thinking and innovative companies have yet to fully understand what works and what does not. The success of a hybrid model will largely be determined by the specificity of the industry, business demographics, the available talent pool, the culture and DNA of the organisation, and customer expectations. One thing is certain, however: the wellbeing – including both physical and mental ergonomics – of employees and management plays a key part in this.

Research shows that employees with a high degree of hybrid work are less at risk of a burnout and experience more job satisfaction. Does that mean that companies that switch to hybrid working will automatically see their employees' wellbeing grow? No. However, a hybrid working environment does provide a good framework for improving wellbeing. Factors such as work-life balance, work intensification and technology overload barely differ between companies that apply hybrid working to a greater or lesser extent. The main lever for having enthusiastic and productive (hybrid) employees is and remains trust. Not a childish and naive trust, but a trust that is based on a solid foundation of good agreements and a clear and psychologically safe framework within the organisation.

## 5 LEVELS OF AUTONOMY



Ann Cattelain, CEO of Federgon



Joris Vandersteene, HR expert at FBE and vice-president at HRPro.be

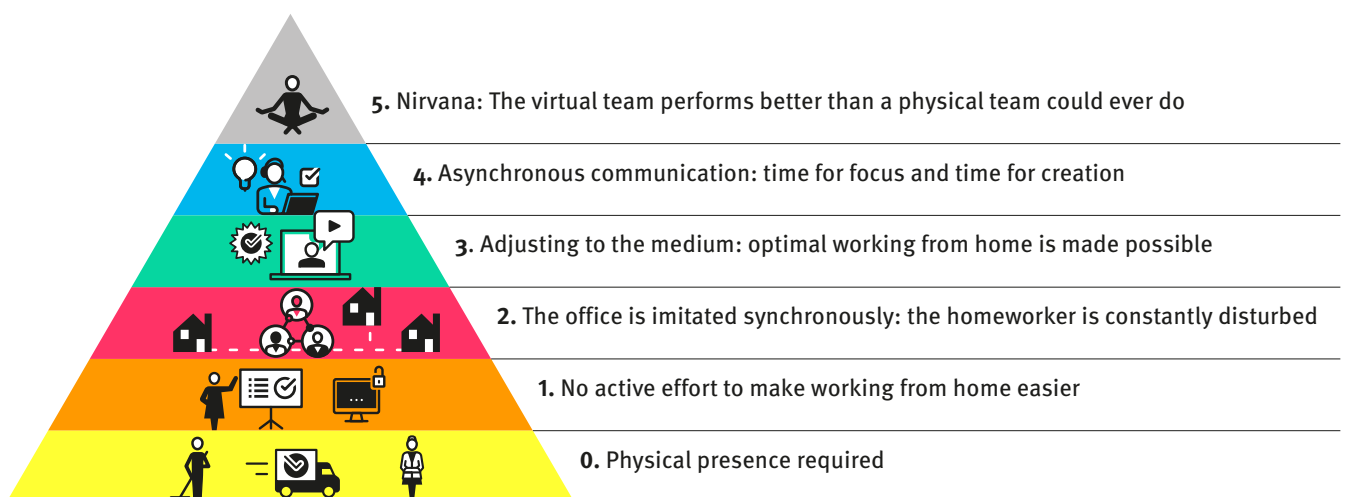
<sup>2</sup> Deci, Edward L. and Ryan, Richard M., The Self-determination Theory, 2000

<sup>3</sup> The American entrepreneur and founder of Automattic, Matt Mullenweg, speaks of distributed work. He should know. Since its founding in 2005, Automattic's 1,439 employees in 80 countries have worked without an office.

Scientists have found that every human being has three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competency utilisation and connectedness<sup>2</sup>. When these are fulfilled, employees are naturally well motivated and perform better. **The American entrepreneur and founder of Automattic<sup>3</sup>, Matt Mullenweg**, developed a model with five levels of autonomy. Actually, there are six, but the first level, level 0, is where you can only perform a task if you are physically on location. Level 5 is the nirvana. At that level, the virtual team performs better than any physical team ever could. Everything, both the culture of the organisation as well as the physical and technological environment in which the employee works, supports him in all his facets. Mullenweg describes his summum, freely translated, as follows: 'It is when everyone in the company has time for wellbeing and mental health, when people are doing their best and using the highest level of creativity to produce the best work out of their careers, and just have fun.'

Companies and organisations can only dream of that ideal level, right? 'The nirvana is never entirely attainable, but it is something to aim for. Today we stand at such a tipping point and can fundamentally question the way in which we organise our labour model', says **Ann Cattelain, CEO of Federgon** (the Federation of HR service providers) and **Joris Vandersteene, HR expert at the Federation of Belgian Enterprises and vice-president at HRPro.be** (the association of HR professionals). A series of studies, webinars and conferences indicate that companies were introducing some form of hybrid working anyway. They had little choice. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the mindset of employers and employees to such an extent that reverting to the old pattern is no longer an option – read our white paper 'Het nieuwe denken over het hybride werken' (translation: 'The new way of thinking about hybrid working').

On the understanding that employers may not reduce working in hybrid mode to structural home working or distance working. 'We must not fall into the trap of introducing compulsory distance working in times of



Source: <https://ma.tt/2020/04/five-levels-of-autonomy/>

lockdown as the new default', warns Ann Cattelain. 'Nor should we magnify the negative consequences of this compulsory distance working and use that as the starting point for the blueprint of the new model', adds Joris Vandersteene.

### Keep searching for flexibility

When we talk of 'massive, long-term, imposed working from home', we must assume 20 to 25% of the entire population. In 2020, 60% of factory workers and staff with executing functions (shop workers, healthcare professionals, police officers, rubbish collectors, etc.) went to their physical working environment most or all of the time <sup>4</sup>.

Digital communication and also collaboration can be relevant for this target group. As an employer, search for options to offer still more flexibility, the right level of autonomy and responsibility. Perhaps a particular employee has some administrative tasks that, bundled together, can be carried out at home. The fact that, as an employer, you already offer the flexibility will make employees feel good. Do not focus on the function, but search for the tasks that qualify for distance working. For example, under pressure from the COVID-19 crisis, the NMBS gave not only its administrative and managerial staff, but also the operational colleagues - planning, call centre, etc. - the opportunity to work from a distance. This increased the target group from 9% to 25%.

It is especially important to be very clear. Explain as transparently as possible why some can work from home and others cannot. Above all, make sure that distance working or working from home is not seen as a competitive advantage and do not forget anyone.

## WORKING APART TOGETHER

'The new working (from home) does not work. Ideas dry up, creativity disappears and we get tired of all that digital efficiency.' With this strong statement, Rik Vera, founder and partner of nexxworks, puts his finger on the spot. Hybrid working is much more than glorified distance working, let alone a hotchpotch of separate ideas and processes. It is also not an all-encompassing solution for all workforce ills. Hybrid working bridges the digital and physical world and combines the best of both worlds in a fluid model of working apart together. A model that, in a balanced way, combines the need for connectedness between colleagues mutually and between people and the organisation with attention for the unique, personal situation and wellbeing of the employee. Finally, hybrid working links that wellbeing to the creation of added value for the customer.



(...) There is broad agreement that the new way of working will be hybrid and asynchronous and that we must be able to determine for ourselves where and when we function best. Because it can. (...) What 'people' forget in this new way of working is that we, the privileged caste, make up only a quarter of the working population (that is an estimate) and thus, in this new way of working, we simply forget the vast majority of our fellow human beings. We make a casual abstraction of everyone who performs a job that requires being 'on the spot'. (...) I challenge the omniscient specialists of the new way of working to also consider that other part of the working population in their grand plans and to come up with a holistic solution, instead of simply extrapolating their own wishes as the new norm. It is a wide-ranging social issue that goes far beyond hybrid working.'

**Rik Vera**, business philosopher and founder and partner at nexxworks <sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Konings, Herman, Trendrapport 2022 – Wellbeing & connectiviteit, B-Tonic, 2021

<sup>5</sup> Vera, Rik, Het nieuwe werken werkt (nog) niet, De Tijd, 31 May 2021

<sup>6</sup> Read Rik Vera's complete post on LinkedIn (20-01-2022): [www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6889822012999655424/](https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6889822012999655424/)

# HOW TO MAKE IT A RESOUNDING SUCCESS?

- No efficient hybrid working without wellbeing
- Manager plays a crucial role
- Do the SWOT





Hybrid working is not nearly as new as you might think. Even before the corona pandemic erupted, many companies were already working within a hybrid labour model, albeit often in the primary form of distance working. Independent professionals or digital nomads were the pioneers. And for knowledge workers, working remotely a few days per week was the most normal thing in the world. According to Joris Vandersteene, HR expert at the VBO, the biggest post-corona change essentially comes down to ‘the fact that hybrid working will become possible for more people within more companies. Turning back the clock is not an option.’

### The experiment around distance working is only just starting

Jan Denys, labour market expert at Randstad Group <sup>7</sup>, says that today we are moving to the third wave of distance working. The first wave started around the turn of the century. Previously, the share of employees involved with types of working from home varied between 5% and 10%. It is only since 2000 that the share has increased (from about 10% to almost 20% between 2000 and 2019). This mainly concerned highly skilled people and by definition it happened voluntarily, for the most part occasionally and part-time. The initiative usually came from the employee him- or herself. That changed in 2020. During the lockdown, distance working suddenly became compulsory, structural and full-time. Moreover, it concerned a much broader group than just the highly skilled (increase from 20% to 40%). “Today we are on the verge of a new wave that combines the characteristics of the first and second wave. The voluntary aspect of the first wave has returned, but the structural element from the second wave remains. We will learn much about the phenomenon in the coming years. It is only after a few years that we can make more meaningful statements and that there is a better basis for any regulation.”

*Hybrid working will become possible for more people within more companies.*

Despite all the accrued experience with distance working, we know much less about hybrid working than we think. Neither the time nor the minds are sufficiently ripe to copy-paste a hybrid work strategy or a mainstream hybrid model. ‘The biggest mistake leaders can make today when creating a hybrid labour organisation is to opt for a standard approach’, emphasizes **Nate Dvorak** of the American research company Gallup <sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Denys, Jan, Het experiment rond telework start pas nu, Nationale TelewerkConferentie edition 1, VBO, 26-08-2021

<sup>8</sup> Dvorak, Nate, Create your hybrid workplace strategy, Gallup, 13 July 2021



After all, even the most forward-thinking and innovative companies have yet to fully understand what works and what does not. According to Dvorak, the success of a hybrid model will largely be determined by the specificity of the sector, business demographics, the culture and the DNA of the organisation and customer expectations. 'The best thing employers and management can do today is ask the right questions and seek answers that take into account the needs and objectives of their organisation (read the insert 'Towards a hybrid work organisation in 7 questions').' In short, there is no blueprint readily available for the new hybrid working. However, it is certain that the wellbeing of the employees and the management, both physical and mental ergonomics, plays a central role.

### **Towards a hybrid work organisation in 7 questions**

1. Why is hybrid working the correct path for our organisation?
2. How will the voice of our employees guide our approach?
3. Do we approach it step-by-step or go big bang?
4. What determines flexible time in our organisation?
5. How will we support our managers with the shift to hybrid working?
6. Where will costs rise, fall or shift?
7. How are we going to evaluate what works (and what does not)?

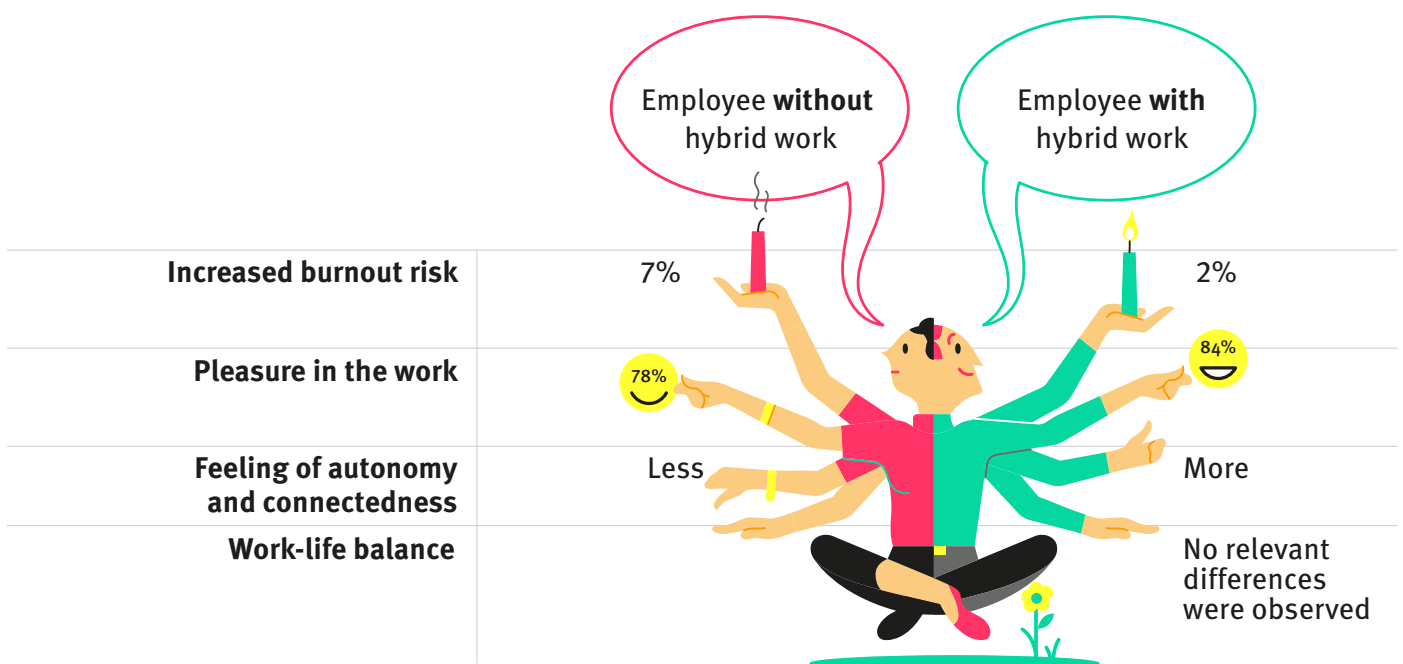




## NO EFFICIENT HYBRID WORKING WITHOUT WELLBEING

Research<sup>9</sup> shows that employees with a high degree of hybrid work are less at risk of a burnout and experience more pleasure in their work. Does that mean that companies that switch to hybrid working will automatically see their employees' wellbeing grow? No. However, a hybrid working environment does provide a good framework for improving wellbeing. Factors such as work-life balance, work intensification and technology overload barely differ between companies that apply hybrid working to a greater or lesser extent. The main lever in order to come to enthusiastic and productive (hybrid) employees is and remains trust. Not a childish and naive trust, but a trust that rests on a solid foundation of good agreements and a clear and psychologically safe framework within the organisation.

### Relationship between hybrid working and wellbeing

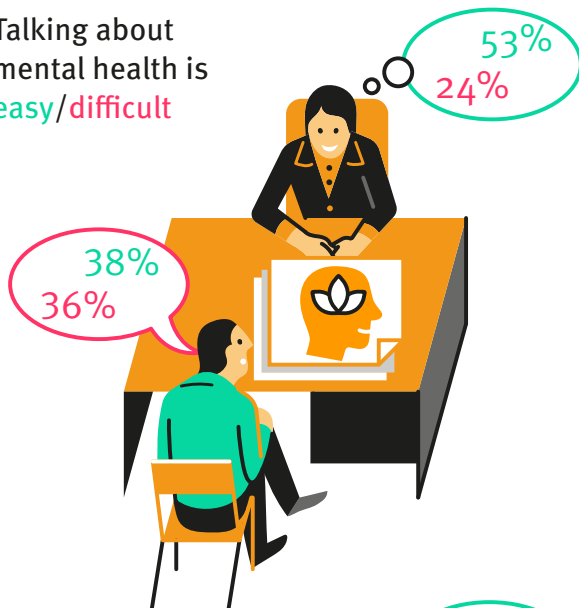


Source: IDEWE, NWOW en werknemerswelzijn, June 2021

## MANAGER PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE

However, the long-term research of the Antwerp Management School (AMS) shows that a third of employees find it difficult or impossible to talk with their employer or manager about mental health, work pressure or work-life balance. 'That lack of psychological safety lies at the heart of this,' explains **Dr. Kathleen Vangronsvelt**, 'while being able to talk uninhibitedly about these subjects is one of the most important ingredients for engagement, performance, satisfaction and commitment among employees.'

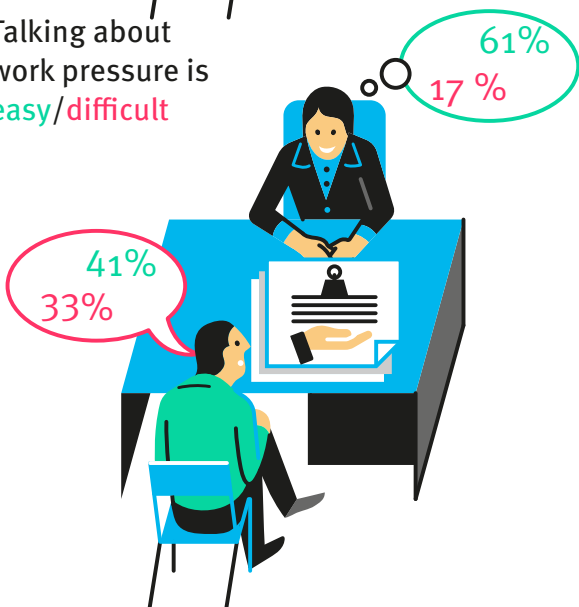
Talking about  
mental health is  
easy/difficult



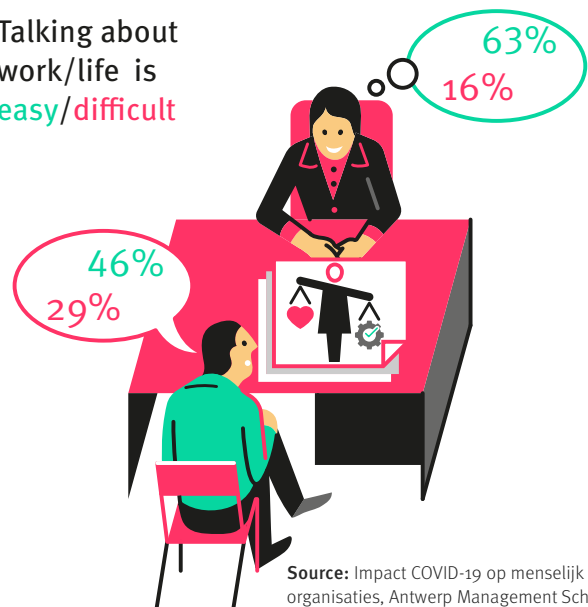
### Employees find it difficult to talk ...

... with the employer about mental health (36%), work pressure (33%) or work-life balance (29%). The employees who are able to do so (38%, 41% and 46% respectively) can testify how such conversations can strengthen the connection and trust between employee and employer. Employers in turn are more positive and talk more easily about mental wellbeing (53%), work pressure (61%) and work-life balance (63%)<sup>10</sup>.

Talking about  
work pressure is  
easy/difficult



Talking about  
work/life is  
easy/difficult



Source: Impact COVID-19 op menselijk kapitaal in organisaties, Antwerp Management School, 2022

The good news is that employees' trust in their managers was not affected by the corona pandemic. On the contrary, the trust is growing. Less good news is that not all managers are equally well equipped to take on this connecting role. And that they do not get the support they need from the organisation.



Dr. Kathleen Vangronsveld: 'Talking works, but you should not assume that every manager can do this on their own. Given the important role that management plays in creating psychological safety, as an organisation, it is no superfluous luxury to support and train them in conducting meaningful, connecting conversations with their employees.'

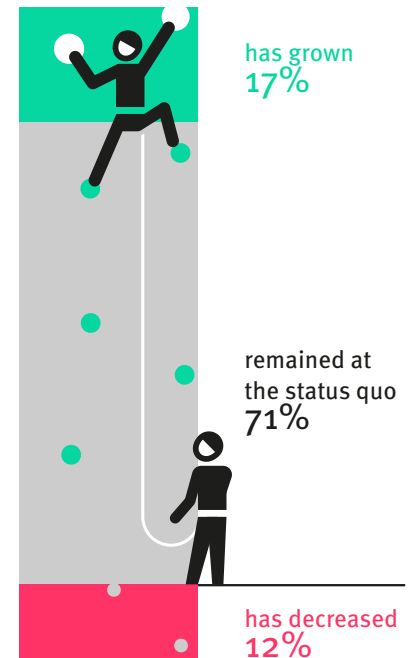
**Tip!** Working on connection remains fundamental. Cultivate real conversation in which you share stories with each other, about each other and the organisation. Who are we as a team, where are we going, how are we going to do that? In her book *Werk heeft het gebouw verlaten* (translation: 'Work has left the building') **Corporate anthropologist Jitske Kramer** unravels the power of this sort of camp fire conversation. Highly recommended!

## DO THE SWOT

We cannot repeat it often enough. According to **Isabel de Clercq (founder of connect/share/lead)**, reducing hybrid working to distance working (from home) cemented in rules draws attention away from the essence of hybrid working: encouraging the individual to think about job satisfaction and productivity; encouraging employees to continue to develop themselves because learning promotes independence and employability; or even: encouraging teams to enter into a dialogue about the tasks with which they create high added value for the customer. Provide clear guidelines within which teams may specify how they want to interact, physically and digitally, synchronously and asynchronously. 'If hybrid working does not fit with the values of your organisation, do not pretend that it does'<sup>11</sup>.

The pandemic lasted long enough to unlearn the old and, at the same time, long enough to realise that the old also had its good sides, and the new was not as great as we first thought. These are the words of business philosopher Rik Vera. In other words: know what you are getting into. Together with your employees(!), perform the SWOT analysis. Look critically at the past period. Identify where you have been colouring outside the lines, what worked well and what you want to keep. What is new, but needs further development? What should you best let go or get rid of? Perform this exercise at all levels of the organisation.

Employees' trust in their managers during the corona pandemic



**Source:** Impact COVID-19 op menselijk kapitaal in organisaties, Antwerp Management School, 2022

<sup>10</sup>. The employees and employers surveyed are not necessarily from the same organisations.

<sup>11</sup>. de Clercq, Isabel, *Hybride werken als circusattractie*, De Tijd, 27 July 2021

## Listen to the team

According to Joris Vandersteene (VBO) and Ann Cattelain (CEO Federgon), solving the hybrid work paradox will be the big challenge. Technology and policy must offer sufficient flexibility, but are not sufficient in themselves. Every manager must also ask themselves: how do I rebalance the social capital and the connection with the mission, the culture and the team? How do I help people to prioritise individual wellbeing and to work sustainably? There is no one size fits all approach for hybrid working, because the expectations of employees are constantly changing. The only way for organisations to solve the complex paradox is by embracing flexibility throughout their entire business model, starting with the team. 'The team determines the formula for hybrid working, taking into account three components: the individual employee, the team and the customer.'

### CORRECT



Consciously strive for an efficient mix of synchronous and asynchronous working. In a hybrid work culture, the location and time are determined by the type of work, the purpose of the activity, the desired level of interaction, the efficiency of communication and the personal preferences of the employees and internal and external customers. Dr. Kathleen Vangronsvelt brings it all together in a quadrant in which she links a typology of tasks with time and place. A task that requires a great deal of creativity from the team is best done physically at the same location. If you ask colleagues for feedback about a work document, ideally this should be done in their own time, away from the workplace (*focus on diversity of input*) so that we do not contaminate each other's input (*multiple layers, angles of information*).

Source: Kathleen Vangronsvelt,  
Antwerp Management School

		SPACE	
TIME		=	≠
	=	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on building relationships</li> <li>• Expansion and integration of information / creativity and innovation</li> <li>• Mutually dependent tasks requiring physical presence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the result</li> <li>• Exchange of information</li> <li>• Mutually dependent tasks requiring interaction</li> </ul>
	≠	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on continuity</li> <li>• Information must be available</li> <li>• Tasks which require specific material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the diversity of input</li> <li>• Different layers and perspectives (without influence)</li> <li>• Tasks that require different participants</li> </ul>





## WRONG

Thus hybrid working is all about making choices. For the best form, tools, communication and type of collaboration. These agreements can differ per project group or team. But what at first glance seems like a good agreement is sometimes unachievable in practice. An example: if you want to work with five people who are all in the office two days a week, the chance of finding a suitable day and time to meet is just 5%! <sup>12</sup>

Meeting with  
5 people

	5	4	3	2	1	0
5	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4	0%	0%	0%	2%	7%	20%
3	0%	0%	0%	3%	13%	40%
2	0%	0%	1%	5%	20%	60%
1	0%	0%	1%	6%	26%	80%
0	0%	0%	1%	8%	33%	100%

*The days when you work from home vs. the chance that your contact (X5) will be there for a physical meeting.*

**Tip!** The best policy is one that has support. Bottom line, employees have the best view on what works in the field. As a manager, it is therefore best to come up with a balanced hybrid working model in consultation with your team, taking into account what is realistic within the organisation.

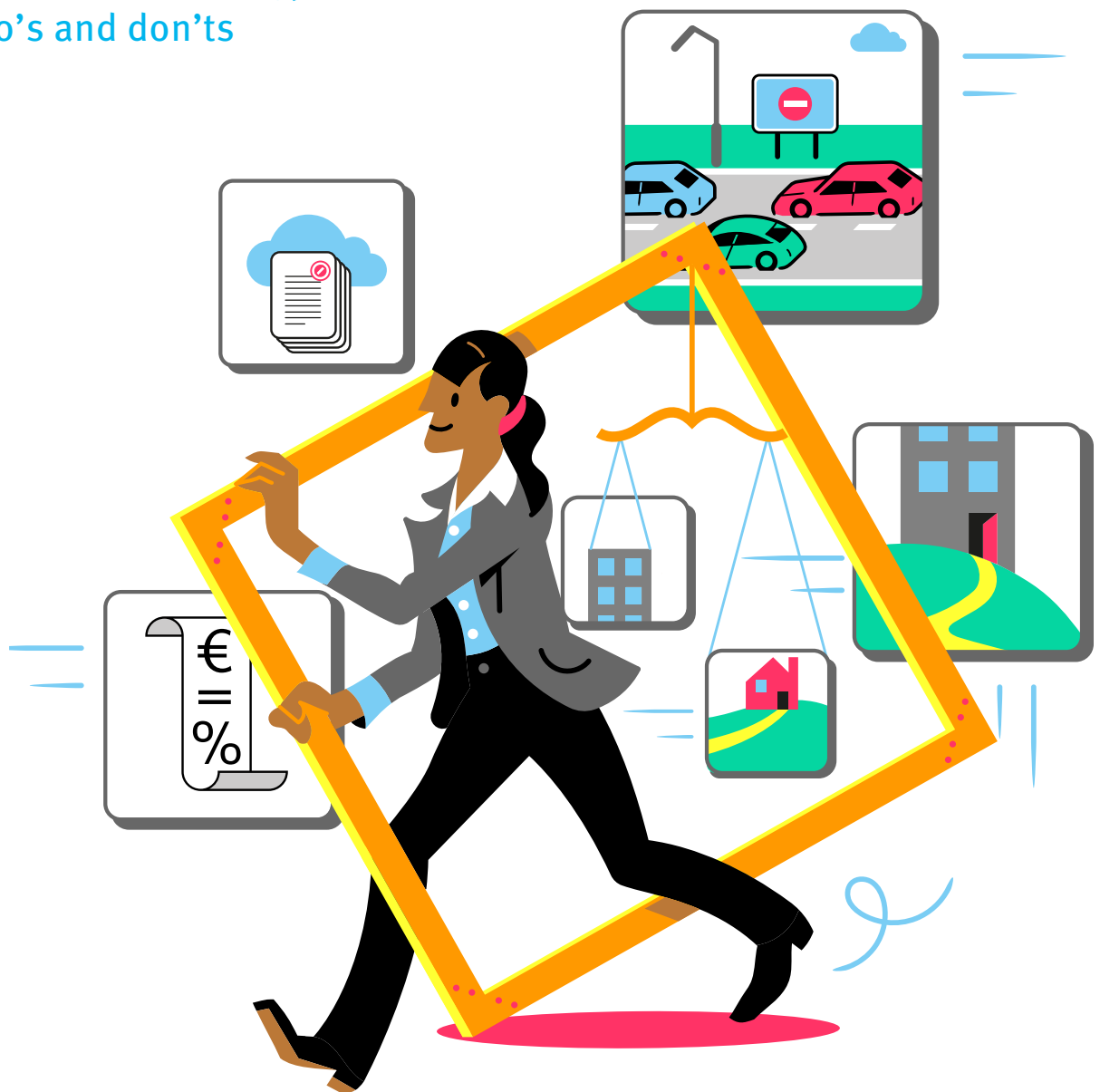
Corporate culture is makable. It is a question of creating the right context to allow your talents to excel. Of course, the wellbeing of your employees plays a major role in this. Opt for a holistic approach - physically, mentally and socially, as well as qua input. The division between work and private life is no longer relevant in this. Be careful not to glorify distance working. Working from home may do wonders for concentration, but the coffee breaks or brainstorming sessions in the office are at least as important for team spirit and for your own career opportunities.'

**Klaus Lommatzsch,**  
Founding partner at Duval Union and **Inge Van Belle,**  
co-founder of Herculean Alliance.

<sup>12</sup> Tubb, Chris, [www.linkedin.com/pulse/every-meeting-now-online-chris-tubb/](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/every-meeting-now-online-chris-tubb/)

# STRATEGIC, OPERATIONAL AND LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

- Distance working is not (yet) a right
- What about occupational accidents while working from home?
- Wanted: on-demand mobility
- Office becomes energy source
- 10 do's and don'ts



In the trend report *Wellbeing & connectiviteit*, trend watcher Herman Konings titles a chapter *Strategische kans voor je bedrijfscultuur* (translation: 'Strategic opportunity for your corporate culture'). In it, he states that the COVID-19 pandemic made health and wellbeing a higher priority in the workplace and he advises companies that want to introduce new initiatives and wellbeing benefits 'to take into account the new challenges facing the workplace today'. It is up to employers to integrate wellbeing tools into the daily activities to support the different needs of employees. Why not work with health professionals and wellbeing coaches to get an outside view on how best to support teams? Hire a mental health consultant. Experiment with flexible working hours and long-term remote working. Offer office environments that enhance the sense of resilience. 'All of this provides a strategic opportunity to maintain and strengthen your positive corporate culture.'

## DISTANCE WORKING IS NOT (YET) A RIGHT

Hybrid working transcends distance working, but this insight has not (yet) found its way into the laws and regulations. These focus on the concept of distance working whereby the teleworker is regarded as being an ordinary employee who works at another location for a number of days. He or she enjoys the same rights as the non-distance worker.

As an employer, you must agree to the distance working and the location, also from abroad (read the insert *Snakes in the foreign grass*). Furthermore, the employer must also equip the distance worker with the appropriate equipment and information technology. Distance working can be occasional or on a regular basis. Structural (i.e. non-occasional) distance working is only possible if both parties consent to it. In that case too, the employer and employee must set down a number of mandatory agreements on paper (read the insert *Agreements in the employment contract*). There are no mandatory agreements for occasional distance working, but the employer can include the arrangements in a company collective labour agreement or in the employment regulations.

For both structural and occasional distance working, the employee personally organises his or her work within the framework of the working hours applicable within the company. In practice, this means that the employee must work the number of hours provided for in the work schedule, but that he or she does not have to strictly observe it (an hour's interruption in the morning can be made up for in the evening, for example). As the employer, you can include the periods during which the employee may or may not work from a distant in the employment regulations.

**TIP !** Working from home in extreme weather conditions can be a solution for preventing economic and human suffering. When the RMI announces code orange or red, the home-working alarm is activated. But there should be agreements about this in your distance working policy.





Distance working is therefore always on a voluntary basis and as an employer you can never impose it. On the other hand, distance working is also not a right, not even in the event of a home-working alarm. In a situation of force majeure or for personal reasons that make it impossible to perform the work at the company location, the employee can request distance working. The employer can refuse this, but must motivate this decision (in writing).

### Agreements in the employment contract

Structural distance working is part of the employment contract. The collective labour agreement 85 specifies which agreements you must make:

- Where and when can employees work from a distance? You can also agree when employees must be present at the company.
- When are distance workers accessible?
- How can distance workers call on technical support?
- Which costs are reimbursed? Do not forget the maximum amounts set by tax and social security authorities. If you exceed these, the reimbursement is considered as a benefit in kind. There is a distinction between a reimbursement for the equipment / internet connection and for so-called office costs.
- Is there a distance working allowance (not compulsory)?
- To what extent may the equipment you make available as a company be used privately?
- How can you suspend or stop distance working?

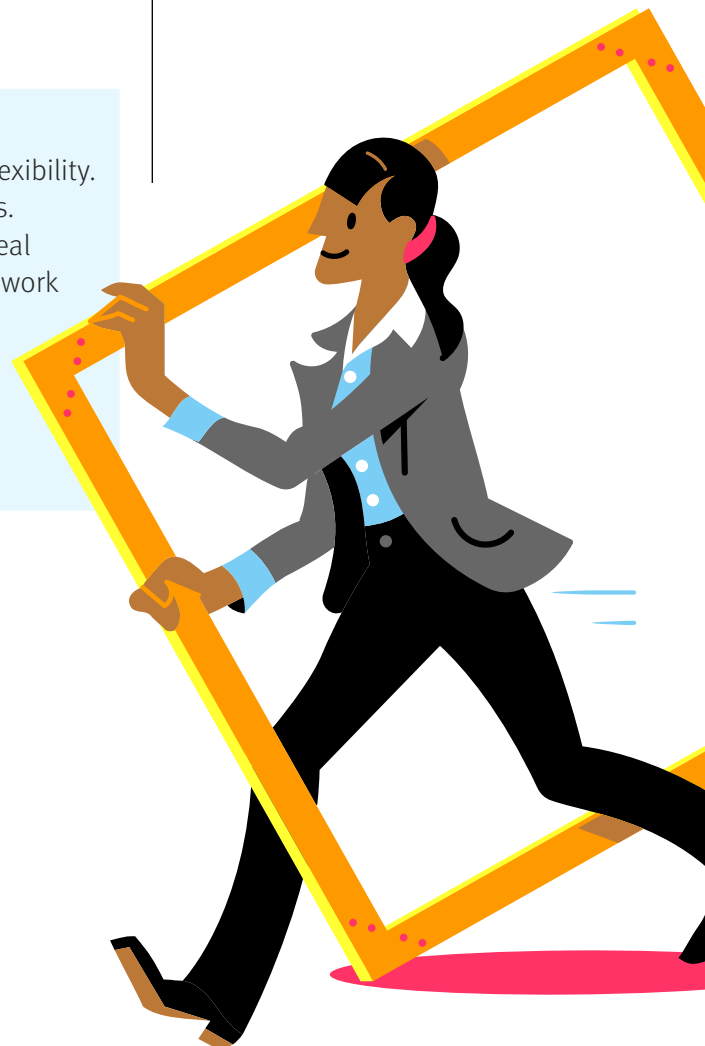
Because of the fundamental evolution in hybrid (tele)working, the federal minister of Work and Economy asked the social partners in the 'Nationale Arbeidsraad' (National Labour Council) to evaluate the existing distance working framework and to update it where necessary. Initiatives are also under development at EU and international level.

**Tip!** As the employer, you can deduct 100% of the rent for a co-working space or any other workplace as an expense in the accounts.

The existing collective labour agreements, laws and rules<sup>13</sup> provide a legal framework within which each organisation must set out its own specific agreements. The operational content is in your own hands. How and when do you organise meetings? How do you communicate within the team? Who is present at the office and when depending on the space available and the objectives of the team, the organisation? Specific agreements for a small 'cell' (i.e. a team of less than 50 employees) are more practical and workable and do not need to be ratified by the social partners<sup>14</sup>. And offer the hybrid working more chance of success. 'An additional inter-professional collective labour agreement to impose even more rules can only be counter-productive and it undermines the flexible search for the optimal formula', chorus Joris Vandersteene (VBO) and Ann Cattelain (CEO Federgon). 'The existing rules provide all the levers needed to create a customised hybrid work model in which employees achieve results in a sustainable way. With attention for the productivity and wellbeing of the company, on the one hand, and the motivation, involvement and wellbeing of the employees on the other.'

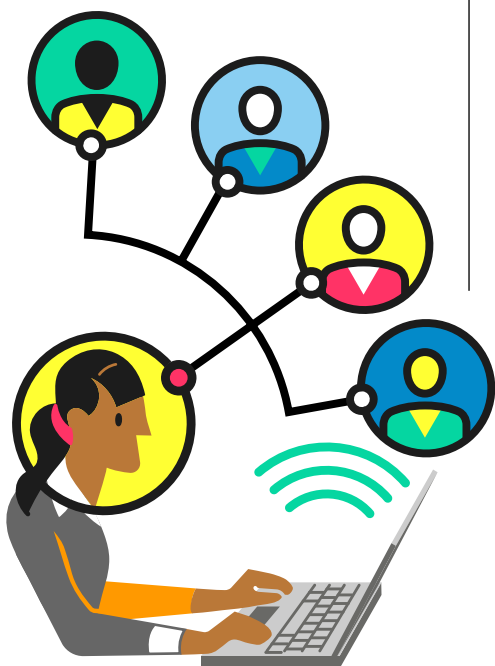
### To the four-day week?

More and more employers and employees are asking for more flexibility. For example, by being allowed to work more hours on fewer days. The four-day working week in the federal government's labour deal responds to this call. The employee is entitled to request such a work schedule (working 38 hours on four days each of 9.5 working hours). The employer can refuse this (provided that the refusal is motivated). The government expects the advice of the social partners in the National Labor Council on the four-day week as part of the labor deal in early May 2022.



<sup>13</sup> A clear overview of what is legally possible and what is required can be found on [www.telewerken.be/werkgever/wettelijk-kader/](http://www.telewerken.be/werkgever/wettelijk-kader/)

<sup>14</sup> BDO Belgium, Maak van hybride werken een businessopportunity, p. 6



## Snakes in the foreign grass

Working from abroad is a bit of an oddity. It can even be a way for the employer to attract talent without obliging them to travel a lot. Or for the employee to telework from his or her holiday home. This is less evident than it seems, because specific rules apply with regard to social security, taxes and insurance. Thus, as the HR department, do not take any chances. Here are a few pointers to consider:

- In principle, both parties are free to choose which **labour law applies** to their employment contract. Regardless of the choice, the employee remains protected by mandatory provisions of the law of the country where he/she teleworks.
- Which **social security is applicable** when an employee teleworks from multiple countries (this is called simultaneous employment) depends on various factors and should always be considered on a case-by-case basis. In normal circumstances, and within Europe, the employee is subject to the social security in a single Member State: the state of work. If an employee wants to telework from a country outside Europe, it is best to check whether there is a treaty between Belgium and that country that concerns the applicable social security.
- If an employee teleworks from abroad, check whether he or she needs a **work permit or residence card**. For EU citizens within Europe, this issue does not arise.
- The duration of the distance working determines the **taxation** with regard to the employee. Thus, it is important that the employee retains his or her tax residence in Belgium during the period of the distance working. If he or she works from a distance for short periods then, in principle, Belgian tax residency is not breached. However, if the employee teleworks for a long period of time, regularly or otherwise, it is best to check whether the distance working country considers the employee to be a tax resident.
- As an employer, in the event of long-term or regular distance working of employees abroad, you run the risk that a so-called **'permanent establishment'** of your Belgian company originates in that country. Check this risk before giving an employee permission to telework from a foreign 'home office'



## WHAT ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL ACCIDENTS WHILE WORKING FROM HOME?

A good work-life balance is essential for your workforce. But what if your employee falls down the stairs while working from home? Or slides off his office chair as he reaches for a document? Is that an occupational accident?

### Protecting your workforce

‘The occupational accident insurance protects your workforce against accidents at work and during commuting. It insures your workforce for any activities they carry out on your behalf anywhere in the world.’ says **Kris Van de Vijver, Lead Underwriter occupational accidents Baloise Insurance.**

This insurance covers medical expenses and pays for loss of earnings in the event of temporary or permanent incapacity for work. In the event of a fatal occupational accident, it pays for the funeral expenses and provides a replacement income to those who are economically dependent on the victim's salary.

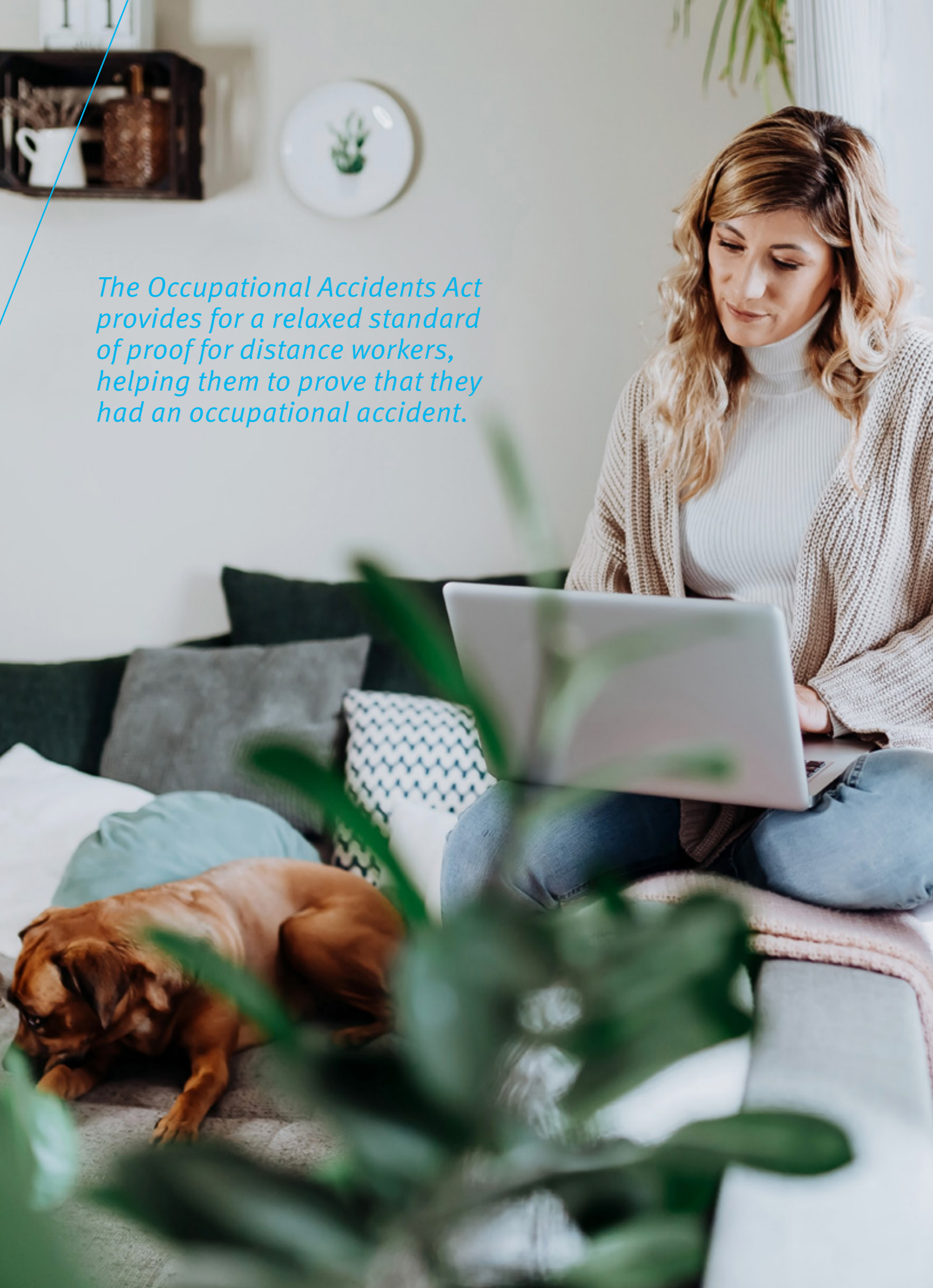
The occupational accident insurance is a compulsory insurance and part of compulsory social security in Belgium. The law sanctions employers who do not take out this insurance.

Four elements must be proven for an occupational accident to be considered as such, namely:

1. an employment relationship falling within the scope of the Occupational Accidents Act
2. the worker had an accident
3. the worker is injured
4. the accident occurred during and as a result of the execution of the employment contract.

These conditions also apply when employees work from home. The 4th condition in particular is important to be able to prove that the worker suffered an occupational accident: the accident occurs at a time when your employee is executing the employment contract. In addition, the accident must be related to the professional risks of the work or work environment.

*The occupational accident insurance protects your workforce against accidents at work and during commuting. It insures your workforce for any activities they carry out on your behalf anywhere in the world.*

A woman with long, wavy blonde hair is sitting on a couch, working on a silver laptop. She is wearing a white turtleneck sweater under a beige cardigan and blue jeans. The couch has several pillows, including a grey one, a white one with a black geometric pattern, and a teal one. A brown dog is lying down on the couch next to her. In the foreground, there are large green leaves of a plant, slightly out of focus. The background shows a white wall with a small shelf holding a white mug and a copper pot, and a circular framed picture of a plant.

*The Occupational Accidents Act provides for a relaxed standard of proof for distance workers, helping them to prove that they had an occupational accident.*

## Standard of proof has been relaxed for distance workers

A distance worker is someone who works from a place other than the company and uses the internet or a computer network for this purpose. The arrangements in this regard are laid down in writing in the employment contract or a business document. These agreements concern the days on which the employee works remotely, and where and how he or she can be reached on these days. Technical support and the costs (for example of the internet connection) may also be included in this.

The Occupational Accidents Act provides for a relaxed standard of proof for distance workers, helping them to prove that they had an occupational accident.

Have you, as an employer, included the agreements regarding distance working in the individual employment contract (structural distance working) or in a business document (occasional distance working, e.g., during a train strike)? In that case, the Occupational Accidents Act presumes that an accident is an occupational accident when it takes place at the location and during the hours stated in these written agreements. Have the location and/or hours not been recorded in writing? In that case, the presumption applies to accidents in the place where distance working is habitually performed and during the hours when the employee is habitually working at the company.

It is therefore important to make arrangements for distance working in advance (and in writing). Because if the structural distance working has not been included in the employment contract or the occasional distance working has not been validly requested in accordance with the business document, then this legal presumption does not apply. In that case, the employee must prove that the accident occurred during the execution of the employment contract.

For example, does the company allow employees to distance work from different locations or from a holiday address? Then include this in the written agreement.

The legal presumption also applies to distance working from abroad if this option is included in the written agreement. Please note: an accident during the journey between the employee's place of residence in Belgium and the address abroad is not an occupational accident.

According to the Occupational Accidents Act, the employee is also insured during his or her commute to take out food or go to eat at lunchtime and when he or she takes the children to and from school or child-care.



### Please note!

- the distance worker must prove the accident and the injury;
- the occupational accident insurer may prove that the distance worker's accident is not related to the execution of the employment contract. For example, a distance worker falls on the garden path when he or she takes private mail out of the mailbox or a distance worker burns his or her hand when ironing during their lunch break. In that case, the occupational accident insurer will refuse to treat the accident as an occupational accident;
- working from home on a laptop, without the possibility of connecting to the company via the internet or a computer network, or working from a satellite office is not distance working. The legal presumption does not apply in that case and the employee must prove that the accident occurred during the execution of the employment contract;
- an accident during the journey between two distance working places is not an occupational accident.



## SOUGHT: ON-DEMAND MOBILITY

Distance working is booming and yet the roads continue to clog up. The congestion is even still increasing. The ‘Mobiliteitskompas’<sup>15</sup> of Jobat, AMS and De Lijn shows that in 2020, approximately six out of ten employees in Flanders used the car to commute to work. A year later, that figure had risen to 67%.

There is still little talk of a major comeback for public transport in the new hybrid work world. Projections by the Federal Planning Bureau<sup>16</sup> also show that distance working is taking more people out of the train than out of the car. Much of this is to do with the standard train commuting season ticket which is not financially attractive for either the employee or the employer. That is why, in the third quarter of 2022, the NMBS will launch the so-called Flex Subscription<sup>17</sup>.

In fact, hybrid working has only reinforced the trend towards a more flexible interpretation of mobility. Solutions such as the mobility budget gave employers the opportunity to offer employees a customised mobility solution and, moreover, to use this in their employer branding.

New forms of working (and living) have thus also brought about a clear change in the mobility requirements. Employees are looking for on-demand customisation. They want more choice. A bike or scooter for short trips, the train to the city, the car for locations that are difficult to reach. Or if they have a lot of luggage. They expect mobility to be easy, efficient, accessible and, above all, fast. In other words, mobility equals flexibility.

Be that as it may, we would like to nuance the impact of hybrid working on mobility. After all, many employees who have to go to the company for their work are reliant on the car for their commute. This is also apparent from the Federal Diagnostics figures<sup>18</sup>. Focusing solely on distance working will not make the difference for this group of employees in terms of mobility and road safety. This shows that the trend towards more distance working should be used primarily to encourage employees to move around differently. ‘A strong HR policy within the company that pursues hybrid working is therefore best accompanied by a broader mobility policy that offers room for more flexible and sustainable forms of transport’, says Federgon CEO Ann Cattelain from experience.

**Tip! Let your employees try out some new mobility solutions first. Evaluate the evolution together with the works council and thus gradually bring your mobility policy into line with the new hybrid working.**



he new office of ERP software builder AFAS ‘becomes a clubhouse’. ‘It is inevitable that the architecture, but also the acoustics, the material, the air, the light, etc., have an impact on our wellbeing. (...) We can already gain a great deal from WELL Building, a globally recognised standard that focuses on health in the workplace. (...) With the latest gadgets, AFAS also ensures for a pleasant working environment. (...) Working in a green environment has a positive impact on creativity, but also on concentration and thus on productivity.’

**Marie-Lynn Hens,**  
Clubhouse Manager AFAS

<sup>15</sup> Calculate your own personal mobility score on [www.jobat.be/nl/mobiliteitskompas](http://www.jobat.be/nl/mobiliteitskompas)

<sup>16</sup> Planbureau, Telewerk en transportvraag: een evaluatie in het PLANET-model, [plan.be](http://plan.be), 20-11-2020

<sup>17</sup> More information about the modalities of the Flex Subscription can be found on [www.belgiantrain.be/nl/mobility-for-business](http://www.belgiantrain.be/nl/mobility-for-business)

<sup>18</sup> FOD Mobiliteit, Federale diagnostiek woon-werkverkeer, [https://mobilit.belgium.be/nl/mobiliteit/mobiliteit\\_cijfers/enquete\\_woon\\_werkverkeer](https://mobilit.belgium.be/nl/mobiliteit/mobiliteit_cijfers/enquete_woon_werkverkeer)







## OFFICE BECOMES ENERGY SOURCE

‘How useful is it to go to the office and answer emails or write reports on a computer?’ **Simon Kuper** wonders. The man has been working for the Financial Times from Paris since 1998. ‘You can do that elsewhere.’ Extend the line and office spaces will have a different look: more common areas and fewer desks. Tasks that can be done at home will be done at home or from another workplace. ‘A large company will soon have a smaller and cozier office, where, for example, the marketing department meets on Monday, the sales department on Tuesday, and so on. And where people occasionally meet up with colleagues from other departments. In that context, it will be important to ensure that the corporate identity and the feeling of belonging to a company are preserved.’

Our animal instinct makes people want to feel, smell and see each other. It is crucial that they meet each other in the workplace and go home with as much or with more energy. Otherwise the corporate culture is not right. Research by consultant BDO<sup>19</sup> confirms that 72% of people who want to return to the office do so in order to meet colleagues. Despite the operational and technical progress that many companies have made in a short period of time to make distance working possible, this technologisation also has a downside: the physical (social) distance is not fully compensated for by social networks, webinars or telemeetings. ‘All generations feel a new need for real, authentic meetings’, writes **Herman Konings** in his trend report.

In the future, employees will go to the office to do creative work, to brainstorm or to exchange ideas and information. While individual, asynchronous work will increasingly be carried out from home. ‘Co-creative processes are more likely to succeed in a physical setting than in a virtual vacuum’, says the trend watcher.

**Tip!** List what work can be done at home and what work needs to be done at the office. And adjust your office design accordingly.

<sup>19</sup> [www.bdo.be/nl-be/nieuws/2021/8-op-10-belgen-is-telewerk-nog-lang-niet-moe](http://www.bdo.be/nl-be/nieuws/2021/8-op-10-belgen-is-telewerk-nog-lang-niet-moe)





*72% of people who want  
to return to the office  
do so in order to meet  
colleagues.*



## Flexible vs. unreachable <sup>20</sup>

'Being unreachable occasionally, especially after working hours, is important', **Federal Minister of Civil Service Petra De Sutter** tweeted. Since February 2022, federal civil servants may no longer be called after normal working hours. She hopes that the civil service regulation can also inspire the private sector. According to **occupational psychologist Hans De Witte** (KU Leuven), 'limiting working hours makes sense: not only for the mental health of employees, but also because fresh employees are also more productive and have more ideas'. More and more companies are already including a 'right to disconnect' in new collective labour agreements for working from home. However, **labour sociologist Christophe Vanroelen** (VUB) warns that an overly rigid framework could run counter to the demand for more flexibility and autonomy. He is joined in this by his colleague **Ignace Glorieux** (VUB): 'Employers and management cannot demand that employees answer their emails during weekends or in the evening. But if you really cut them off digitally outside of working hours, you force people to work from nine to five. That cannot be the intention.'

All the figures and research point in the direction of the new office that bridges the physical and digital world of work and meets both the individual and collective needs of the individual and the organisation. According to Herman Konings, in times of hybrid working, the ideal office becomes a workplace that looks after us, rather than the other way around. In concrete terms? 'The office space will be able to understand things such as air impurity, pollutants and allergens and be intelligent enough to let fresh air in. If an employee has been sitting for too long or develops health problems, the technology in the office will pick up on this, resolve it or, if necessary, put him or her in contact with care devices or welfare services.'

## Open-plan offices for the chop?

Open-plan offices as a wall-less conglomeration of individual workstations feels so 2010. And, according to a growing number of behavioural biologists, architects, ergonomists and psychologists, they do not contribute to the peace and concentration necessary for our mental wellbeing. After a worldwide survey of more than 2,000 office workers, the office furnishing company Haworth <sup>21</sup> concluded that the design of the workspace and the ability to work in a focused manner have a consistent impact on staff job satisfaction and motivation.

Trend watcher Herman Konings: 'When concentration and creativity are key, what you need above all is a space that does not demand attention, but where there is peace and quiet, with healthy relaxation options and XL work tables that function like a big, white canvas.'



The success of the introduction of a hybrid labour model lies in the partnership between the organisation and the employees. The company provides the right context and the necessary facilities, and the management and teams take personal responsibility and make clear and achievable agreements with each other. Hybrid working is thus an and-and story: by meeting the changing expectations of both the market and of (potential) employees as an organisation, you create a dynamic balance between service and continuity for the customer and broker, on the one hand, and the personal preferences within the teams on the other.'

**Marc L'Ortye,**  
Member of the Executive  
Committee and CHRO  
Baloise Insurance

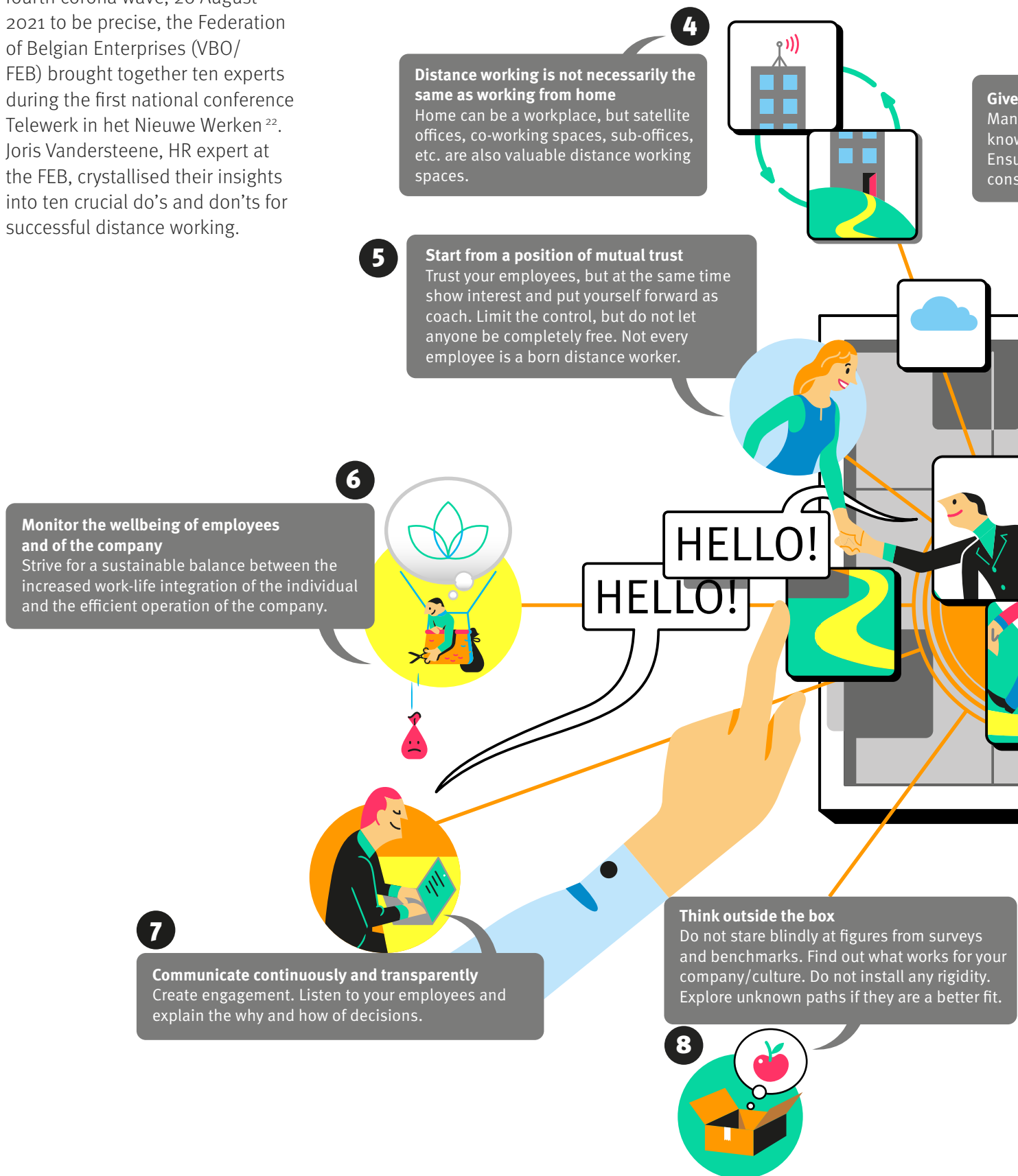
<sup>20</sup>. Delbeke, Korneel, We willen flexibel zijn, maar tegelijk ook onbereikbaar, De Standaard, 5/01/2022

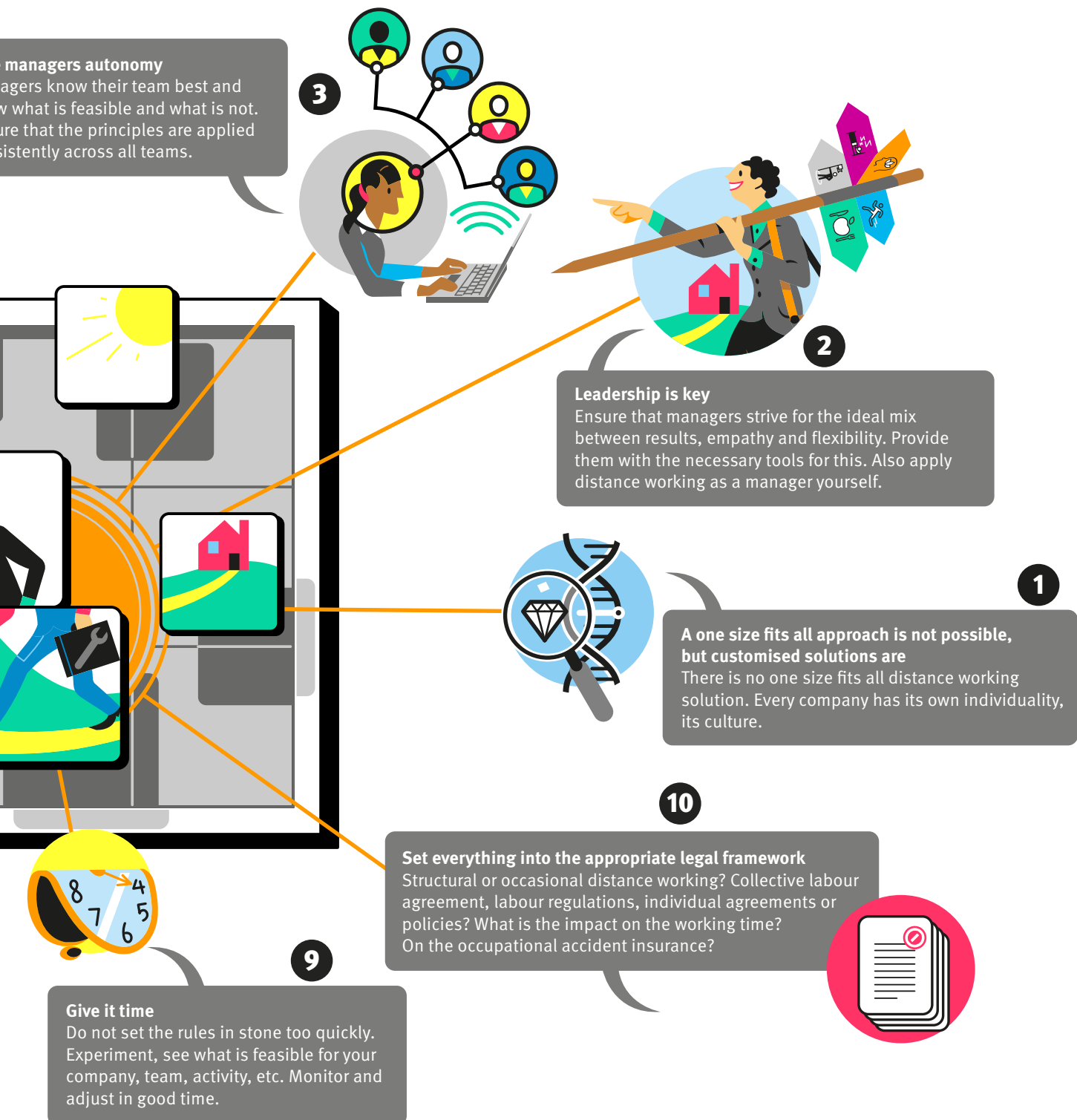
<sup>21</sup>. Haworth, Why We Can't Focus At Work, 2019



## 10 DO'S-AND-DON'TS

Somewhere between the third and fourth corona wave, 26 August 2021 to be precise, the Federation of Belgian Enterprises (VBO/ FEB) brought together ten experts during the first national conference Telewerk in het Nieuwe Werken <sup>22</sup>. Joris Vandersteene, HR expert at the FEB, crystallised their insights into ten crucial do's and don'ts for successful distance working.



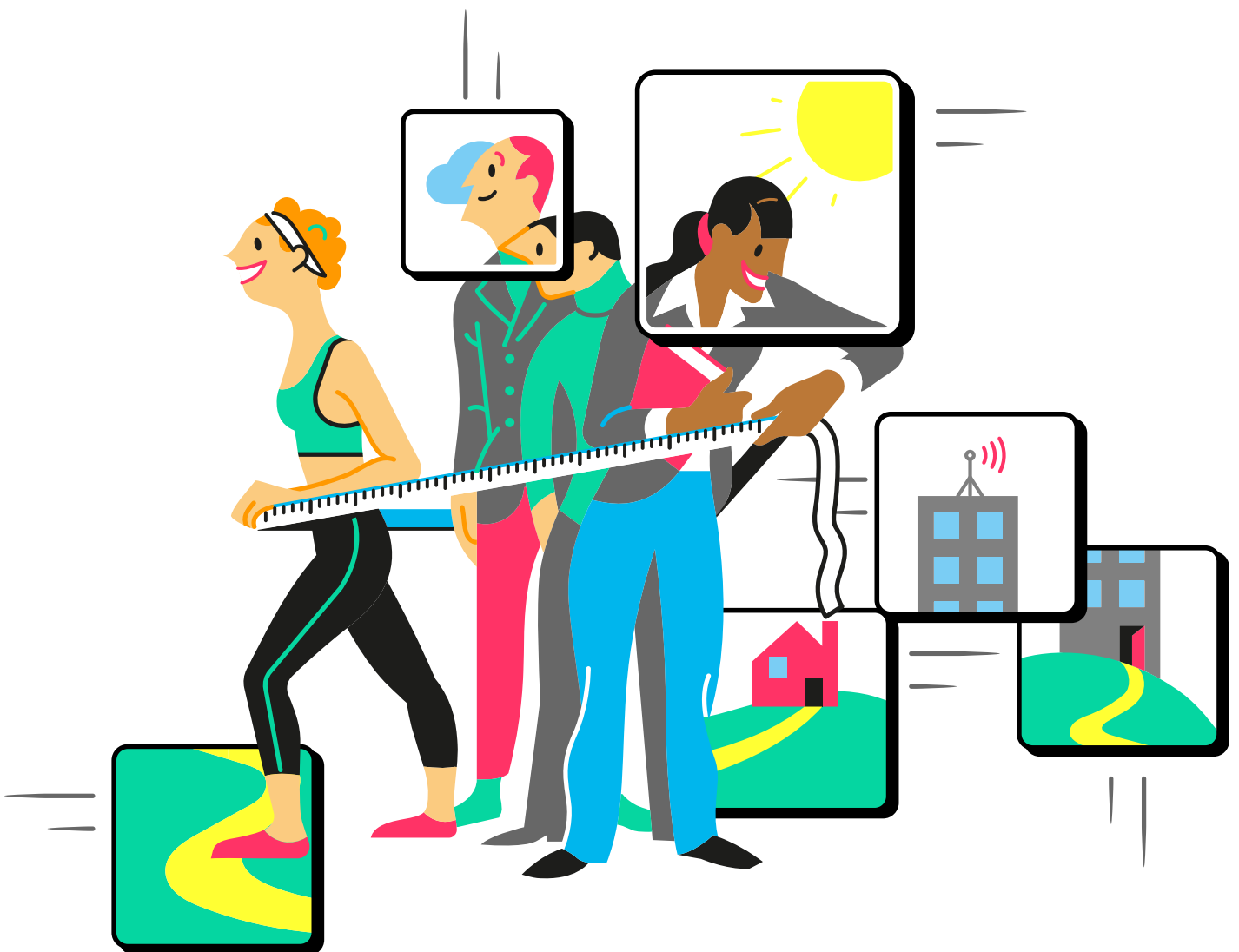


<sup>22</sup> View the story of the ten experts on [www.vbo.be/actidomeinen/hr-personeel/arbeidsorganisatie/telewerkconferentie-telewerk-in-het-nieuwe-werken-monica-de-jonghe/](http://www.vbo.be/actidomeinen/hr-personeel/arbeidsorganisatie/telewerkconferentie-telewerk-in-het-nieuwe-werken-monica-de-jonghe/)

# DISCOVER THE POWER OF B-TONIC

WELLBEING WORKS, REALLY!

B-Tonic helps organizations improve the wellbeing at work. We do that through advice, training and a whole set of scientifically based tests and scans. B-Tonic is the trusted advisor in optimising workable work within every organisation. Thanks to a strategic and sustainable welfare policy, we improve the mental and physical health of entrepreneurs and their employees.



As a strategic wellbeing partner, we work both preventively and in a solution-oriented manner. Thus, wellbeing becomes the lever for increasing the motivation, connectedness and also the productivity of the employees. Because employees who are motivated and who feel good about themselves automatically push a company towards success.

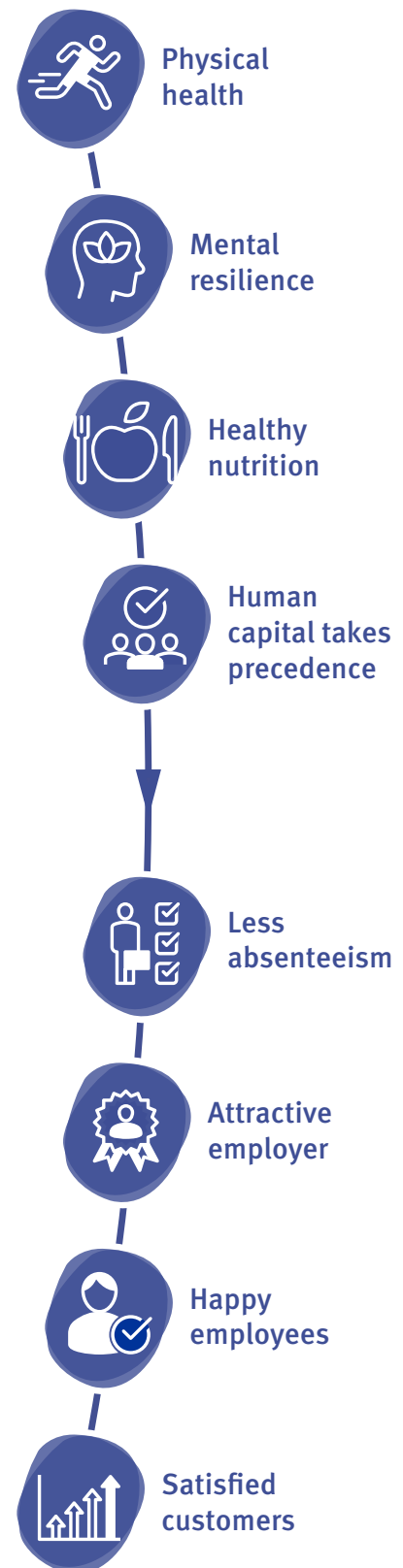
At the heart of the B-Tonic philosophy is our integral approach. After all, people are complex creatures and organisations must pay attention to their physical, mental and social wellbeing. That is why we are happy to develop approaches that are tailored to the specific demands and needs of a company.

### A healthy lifestyle is the best insurance

B-Tonic is a subsidiary and initiative of Baloise Insurance. As a key player in the Belgian insurance market, Baloise Insurance is committed to a sustainable future. It therefore keeps the finger on the pulse of everything that is going on in society. Because insurance is first and foremost about people. It was also this philosophy that inspired Baloise Insurance to establish the B-Tonic health platform. “As an insurer you have to move with the times: this means not just protecting material possessions, but also the wellbeing of individuals”, says **Noël Pauwels, Chief Distribution Officer and Member of the Executive Committee of Baloise Insurance**. “In addition to being a traditional insurance company, we also want to be a wellbeing company with a great commitment to everyone’s physical and mental health.”

With B-Tonic, Baloise wants to be closer to its clients, taking on an active role. The wellbeing platform is committed to making companies healthier, both physically and mentally, and preferably in combination with food. The goal of these programs is long-term behavioural change. Because employees who feel good both physically and mentally are more motivated and productive, helping to steer the organisation towards success.

“I like to compare Baloise Insurance with an umbrella. People flip it open to protect themselves against fire, damage to the house, their lives, etc. But under that umbrella, all there is, is you. And as long as you are not confident, that umbrella is susceptible to strong winds or heavy rain. Meaning all insurance policies are of secondary importance. The best insurance, therefore, is to feel good. While we cannot cover this feel-good factor with an insurance policy, we can facilitate it with a health platform like B-Tonic. And that is exactly what Baloise Insurance, as an insurer, wants to achieve” according to Noël Pauwels.





## OUR WELLBEING SOLUTIONS



### Wellbeing works.

Employees who feel good in body and mind are better employees and help steer the enterprise towards success. This science is the drive of Wellbeing Works.



### Wellbeing coaching.

Our certified coaches in a variety of fields can support both you as an entrepreneur as well as your employees via an online consultation.



### Wellbeing assistance.

Wellbeing assistance takes care of people during their most difficult days. We help and support companies and their employees when they are confronted with a major event.



### Advice and company scans.

To gain an accurate insight into the physical, mental and professional condition of your team and/or organisation, we offer quick and convenient tests and scans that will help you along the way.







## Wellbeing works

As an HR professional or manager, you will undoubtedly agree with us: people are the most important capital of an enterprise. Without good employees, no success - it is that simple. What is less easy is to provide these employees with a framework that motivates them to give their best every day. But let that be our superpower: with Wellbeing works we ensure that people feel good at work, both mentally and physically.

## Wellbeing coaching

Our certified coaches in a variety of fields can support both you as an entrepreneur as well as your employees via an online consultation.

Get advice, inspiration and support from our team of coaches and experts with their scientific expertise in their fields.

Our network of certified coaches includes change psychologists, stress and burnout experts, nutritionists, (sports) dieticians, exercise experts and occupational psychologists who can be deployed as a link between employer and employee.



## Wellbeing assistance

Wellbeing assistance takes care of people and provides assistance to people who do not feel good about themselves. Our bereavement, trauma and burnout counselling is unique in Belgium.

### More specifically, we offer the following services:

- **Burnout counselling:** support for burn-out and resumption of work after long-term absence
- **Psychosocial counselling:** support for stress, anxiety, burn-out, COVID-19-related problems and resumption of work after long-term absence.
- **Bereavement counselling:** help in processing the loss of a loved one.
- **Trauma counselling:** support in the event of complaints, negative feelings or stress reactions as a result of a shocking, traumatic event.

## Advice and company scans

Measuring is knowing. We all want our employees to be the most healthy and energetic version of themselves. However, it is not so easy to know where the 'growth margin' is right now, both at individual and at organisational level. To gain an accurate insight into the physical, mental and professional condition of your team and/or organisation, a number of quick and convenient tests or scans are presented that will help you along the way.

On the following pages you will discover two of our top programmes. Also know that B-Tonic is a registered service provider of the SME portfolio for advice and training. Invest in a sustainable welfare policy and get support from the Flemish Government, of up to no less than € 10,000!

In addition, B-Tonic also accepts workability vouchers ("werkbaarheidscheques"). Using such a voucher, you as a sole proprietor, SME, large company or social profit organisation with at least 1 employee on the payroll can receive support to map out bottlenecks regarding workable work in your organisation. Via the vouchers, Flanders finances up to 60% of your project, with a ceiling of € 10,000.







## WELLBEING AND SUSTAINABILITY GO HAND IN HAND.

B-Tonic helps companies implement the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) of the United Nations by 2030 and roll out a sustainable wellbeing policy with a view to promoting greater engagement between the various stakeholders, entrepreneurs, management and employees.

The 10 Good Work Goals follow the UN position that good work is a crucial condition for achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With its wellbeingworks.be online wellbeing platform, B-Tonic uses the Good Work Goals as a framework for the custom wellbeing programs that it develops.

With the 10 Good Work Goals, we advise companies on how to create work environments that value good employees and support good societies. We convey the message that putting people at the centre is essential to the health of the economy, society and the environment. The objectives stress that providing a good working environment is a demonstrable responsibility, not just in times of stability and prosperity, but also in times of crisis and recovery as is currently the case post-pandemic

## WHAT ARE THE GOOD WORK GOALS?

What are the Good Work Goals? The Good Work Goals play an important role within the theme of Welfare Economics. This involves creating work environments that promote quality of life, happiness and other wellbeing indicators. But what exactly are these Good Work Goals?

### 04 INCLUSIVE WORK

support diversity among the workforce

### 05 HAPPY WORK

focus on employee satisfaction and team spirit

### 06 BALANCED WORK

a good balance between working time and non-working time and positive relationships within and outside the company

### 03 RESILIENT WORK

help employees manage stress in a positive way and adapt to unexpected and/or important changes

### 07 SUSTAINABLE WORK

the work environment must facilitate environmental awareness and initiatives to limit the impact on natural resources and ecosystems

### 02 HEALTHY WORK

both physical and mental

### 08 SUPPORTIVE WORK

the work environment supports the personal and professional development of the workforce and guarantees correct compensation

### 01 SAFE WORK

prevention of accidents and of working conditions that may endanger the physical health of the workforce

### 10 RESPONSIBLE WORK

the working environment offers the workforce the opportunity to take initiatives for a better society and climate, for example through volunteer programmes

### 09 MEANINGFUL WORK

workers feel they are making a positive contribution to a broader societal purpose and the needs of all the stakeholders

# PROGRAMME 1

## PROGRAMMES

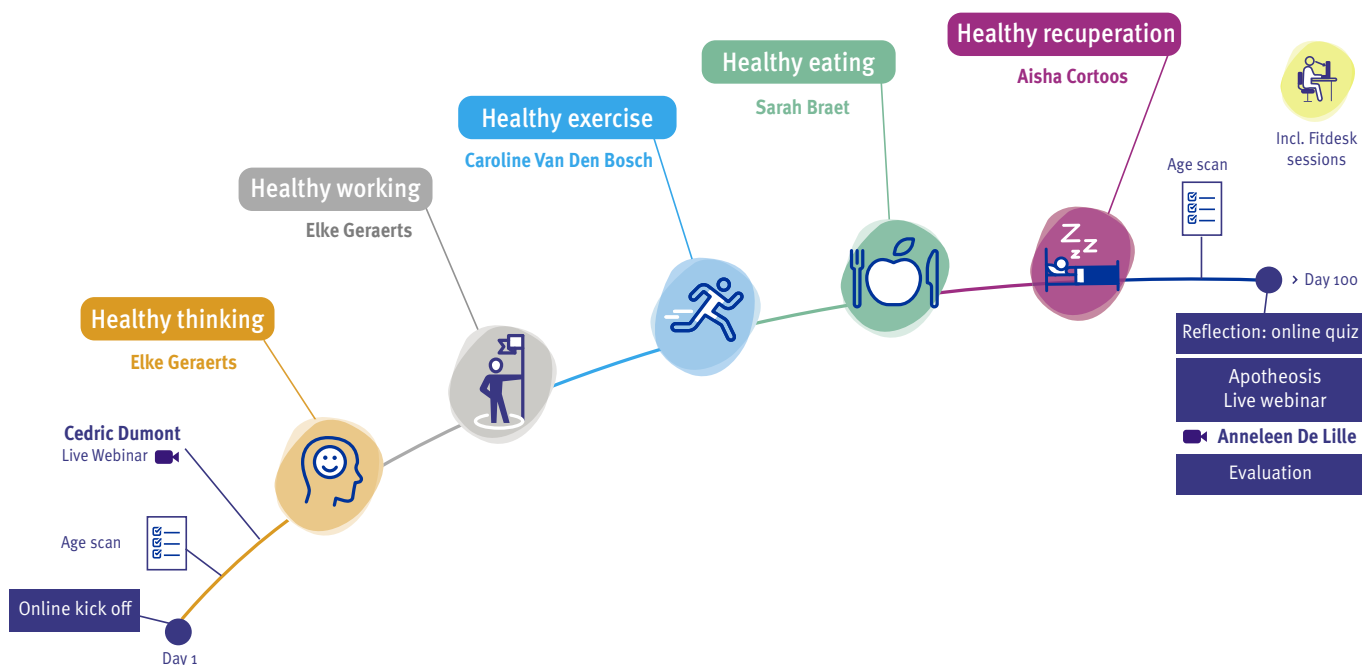
### TOWARDS AN ENERGETIC WORKPLACE IN 100 DAYS

With this fully renewed online wellbeing programme, we help you to live and work more energetically in 100 days. Together with 7 experts and coaches, we challenge you week after week to take control of your physical and mental health.

- ▶ A fully renewed online wellbeing programme that helps you to live and work more energetically in 100 days.
- ▶ 7 experts and coaches who challenge you week after week to take control of your physical and mental health.
- ▶ An integrated approach, based on our 5 pillars: healthy working, healthy thinking, healthy eating, healthy exercise and healthy sleep.
- ▶ Each module is made up of videos and exercises interspersed with Fitdesk sessions that you can also follow from home.

- ▶ **The next starting date: October 2022**  
**You can register at [www.wellbeingworks.be](http://www.wellbeingworks.be)**





## Meet our top experts



### Cedric Dumont

High performance psychologist, TEDx speaker and adventurer



### Elke Geraerts

Human capital expert, Doctor of Psychology



### Carolien Van Den Bosch

Trainer & Keynote speaker



### Sarah Braet

Specialist in the treatment of disturbed eating patterns, emotional eating and eating disorders



### Aisha Cortoos

Doctor of Psychology, sleep/stress expert and psychotherapist



### Anneleen De lille

Coach specialising in changes in habit



### Peter Duyck

Master of Physical Education and head trainer at Trace with 10 years of expertise in personal and small group training

# PROGRAMME 2

## 5-DAY ADVENTURE ENERGY BOOST CHALLENGE

'Energy Boost Challenge' is a 5-day 'back to basic' adventure around the Mont Blanc. Cycle (by e-mountain bike) and walk through the border triangle in a ground breaking way, in a close-knit team of 20 participants, from 10 to 14 June 2022.

We bring you in contact with professionals like you, passionate about what they do, and this at inspiring locations. People who like to be challenged in their thinking, who like to develop themselves by confronting physical challenges in a unique environment, do not want to miss this challenge!

### What will you get from this program?

- Finding the path to high performance
- Working by pushing your limits
- Transformational leadership
- Change management
- Communicate more effectively

### Our experts



**Cedric Dumont**  
High performance psychologist, TEDx speaker and adventurer



**Julie Brown**  
CEO Polar Experience



**Siviglia Berto**  
Managing Director B-Tonic and adventurer







**SAME  
PROGRAMME  
NEW DATE**

**23-27 JUNE 2023**

## **Programme**

DAY 1: June 10, 2022

E-mountain bike trail Orsières – La Peule (Switzerland)

**Inspiration session with Siviglia Berto**

**“The power of resonance & authentic entrepreneurship”**

DAY 2: 11 June 2022

Trekking La Peule (Switzerland) – Val Veny (Italy)

**Inspiration session with Cedric Dumont**

**“Cognitive reframing through daring”**

DAY 3: June 12, 2022

E-mountain bike trail Val Veny – Pointe Helbronner (Italy)

**Inspiration session with Julie Brown**

**“Adaptability in entrepreneurship”**

DAY 4: June 13, 2022

Crossing Italy through France along Mont Blanc

DAY 5: June 14, 2022

Breakfast session with Siviglia Berto & closing moment

## **► Every year in June**

### **► Do you want to join us this year?**

**Sign up quickly at [www.wellbeingworks.be](http://www.wellbeingworks.be).**

**There are still a few places available for the  
Energy Boost Challenge from June 10 to 14.**





## TEAMWORK MAKES WELLBEING WORK

The dedicated B-Tonic team is there to guide you and your employees to a healthy and happy lifestyle, both preventive and solution-oriented. Thus, wellbeing becomes the lever for increasing the motivation, connectedness and also the productivity of the employees. Because employees who are motivated and who feel good about themselves automatically push a company towards success.

We take wellbeing at work very seriously. That is why every day we let ourselves be advised, inspired and supported by organisations that we know are the authority in their fields. These structural partnerships provide the scientific basis on which our programmes can grow and flourish.

► **Also interested in a durable collaboration?**

Contact **Siviglia Berto**: [siviglia.berto@baloise.be](mailto:siviglia.berto@baloise.be)





*Investing in wellbeing should not be approached merely as a cost item, but rather as a lever for growth.*

# EPILOGUE

## A “before” and an “after”

“Within 30 years we will be talking about a before and an after.” These are the words of **Frederik Anseel, organisational psychologist and professor of management** at UNSW Business School in Australia<sup>23</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic thoroughly shook up our world of work and is a catalyst that cannot be underestimated and which will reshape the way we work in the coming decades. “We are at the beginning of a turning point. My guess is that in 30 years we will look back on this period as an acceleration towards a new world of digital working. An acceleration that will be non-linear.”

In any case, all experts agree that in this evolution towards the (new) hybrid work, we must not allow ourselves to be led/distracted by dogmas or prejudices. Or a longing for how much better things used to be. Today, we are largely in unknown territory - some more than others - and the best way to move towards this new hybrid world of work is with an open mind, guided by data and supported by all stakeholders inside and outside the organisation or company. Step by step and, above all, with the utmost flexibility. Daring to revisit a previous decision and make adjustments if new data bring us new insights.

Between all that searching and experimentation, we must continue to watch over the health of the company itself. About the wellbeing and job satisfaction of the employees – and do not forget the managers! – and how that wellbeing can contribute to the organisation’s efficiency and profitability. About how investing in wellbeing should not be approached merely as a cost item, but rather as a lever for growth. That message is at the heart of the story in our next white paper.



<sup>23</sup> Anseel, Frederik and Felps, Will, How has COVID changed the way we need to collaborate and innovate?, UNSW Business School, BusinessThink, 29-09-2021



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