

The Impact of Hybrid Work Models on Employee Engagement and Productivity: A Comparison Between Albania and The European Union

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Abstract

The study examines the impact of hybrid work models on employee engagement and productivity during the period 2020–2025, with a focus on Albania and the European Union. To assess the impact of hybrid work on employee engagement and efficiency in Albania and to compare it with practices in the EU, the study uses a mixed methodological approach which analyses existing literature and secondary statistical data. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid models, which combine work, have increased significantly and have changed the way companies manage time, performance and employee collaboration. The hybrid model is now widespread across Europe, with a considerable number of employees working remotely at least one day per week. This is the result of the adaptation of organisational structures and the use of technology to support workplace flexibility. The adoption of hybrid work has increased gradually in Albania due to a lack of digital skills and the relatively low use of technology in workplaces. Although Albanian employees work more hours per week compared to the European average, this has not always led to increased productivity, which has created challenges in management and organisational structures. The results of the study show that hybrid models increase employees' self-control and flexibility, increase their satisfaction and engagement, reduce interruptions and improve efficiency in specific activities. The strength of these effects is determined by organisational culture and digital infrastructure. This study provides a theoretical and practical framework for managers and policymakers, offering methods to improve hybrid work models and to increase organisational performance.

Keywords: Hybrid work, mixed methodological approach, employee engagement, productivity, workplace flexibility, organisational performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Hybrid work has become central to contemporary work organisation models. This has been particularly evident following the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Bloom, 2023; Angelici & Profeta, 2020; OECD, 2022).

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In response to this shift, companies have been compelled to modify technology, managerial structures, and collaboration practices to enhance employee performance and engagement (Eurostat, 2023; ECB, 2023; Monitor Magazine, 2023).

The hybrid model has gained widespread recognition across the European Union, creating new flexibility in the labour market (Barrero et al., 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). However, in Albania, the process has been slower, facing challenges related to traditional organisational culture, technology adoption, and digital skills (CNA, 2024; OECD, 2024).

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of hybrid work on professional motivation and employee performance during the period 2020–2025, by comparing practices and outcomes in Albania and the EU. The methodology employed allows for the identification of relationships between hybrid work models and employee performance, while also examining moderating factors such as organisational culture and digital infrastructure, which influence the strength and direction of these correlations (Bloom, 2023; OECD, 2022).

The objective of this analysis is to provide a clear framework that can assist managers and policymakers in adjusting policies and practices to more effectively implement hybrid work, thereby maximising investment in tasks and performance within a modern and flexible work environment (Bloom, 2023; Angelici & Profeta, 2020; OECD, 2022).

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining the analysis of existing literature with secondary statistical data. Through a descriptive quantitative approach, indicators related to the assumption of responsibilities and employee outcomes are analysed and interpreted.

The study's methodology aims to highlight the effects of the hybrid work model on employee performance and efficiency in Albania and to compare them with the experience of the European Union during the period 2020–2025.

The analysis is based on reports and statistics published by Eurostat, the European Central Bank (ECB), CNA, Monitor Magazine, and OECD, which provide information on the prevalence of remote work, digital capacities, and the use of technology by Albanian companies (Eurostat, 2023, 2025; ECB, 2025; CNA, 2024; Monitor Magazine, 2023; OECD, 2022, 2024).

Through this approach, the study identifies the relationships between hybrid work models and organisational performance, analysing the role of factors such as digital infrastructure and organisational culture.

Hybrid models are considered as the main variables, while work engagement and employee productivity represent the outcomes. This methodological combination allows for understanding the impact of hybrid work in the EU and Albania, identifying the main barriers, and deriving results and conclusions.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Evolution of Hybrid Work Models

Although remote work is not a new phenomenon, the COVID-19 pandemic made it widespread in many countries around the world. While remote work was primarily limited to high-tech sectors before 2020, many companies adopted the hybrid model,

which combines office-based work with work from home (Bloom, 2023; Angelici & Profeta, 2020). Individual flexibility is balanced with the need for physical collaboration and the maintenance of organisational culture, making it an ideal model (Bloom, 2023; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

According to Eurostat (2023) data, the percentage of employees working partially from home in EU countries increased significantly after 2020. However, adoption in Albania has been more gradual and has focused on sectors such as finance, information technology, and public administration. Remote work in Albania has remained relatively limited even after the pandemic. According to data, around 3% of employees work entirely remotely. Approximately 5% use a combined or hybrid model, while 92% of employees continue to work solely in the office (Eurofound, 2022).

This situation indicates that the hybrid model is not as widespread in Albania compared to some EU countries, where over 25–30% of employees continue to work at least partially from home (Eurostat, 2023). In Albania, hybrid work spread mainly during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021). However, after the pandemic, many companies returned to the traditional office-based work model.

Nonetheless, some sectors, especially those with higher digital intensity, continue to use this model. Studies on digitalisation show that information and communication technology (ICT) is the sector with the highest adoption rate. Around 31.6% of companies use digital platforms and online work methods (AKAFP, 2022).

Besides this sector, flexible work models are also observed in financial and banking services, public administration, and certain professional services, but to a more limited extent (ETF, 2022). The OECD (2022) emphasises that this shift requires new managerial policies and investments in digital infrastructure.

3.2 Hybrid Models and Employee Engagement

Work engagement is a positive psychological state that encompasses energy and dedication to work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The hybrid work model provides employees with greater autonomy in managing their time and tasks, which is reflected in increased satisfaction and involvement in the work process (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

According to studies, workplace flexibility is positively associated with employee satisfaction; on average, it has an effect of approximately 18–20% (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Employees who have used hybrid models reported an average engagement level of 4.2/5, compared to 3.7/5 for employees working exclusively in the office, a statistically significant difference (t-test, $p < 0.05$). Subjective performance in the hybrid group is also higher, with an average effect of +0.25 SD (Cohen's $d = 0.25$) (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

However, task orientation can be negatively affected by the lack of social interactions and by unclear boundaries between private life and work (Galanti et al., 2022; Dutcher, 2012).

The OECD (2022) emphasises that company culture and management style are essential for maintaining employee engagement in hybrid models. Furthermore, PwC (2020) and Angelici & Profeta (2020) found that managers and employees have differing opinions regarding operational efficiency and effective engagement; only 30% of employees agree, while 44% of managers assert that engagement has increased. These conclusions are based on international studies as well as specific cases such as Italy.

3.3 Hybrid Models and Productivity

A key component of an organisation's performance is productivity. According to Bloom et al. (2015), working from home can increase output by reducing interruptions and absenteeism.

Bloom (2023) suggests that the hybrid model provides an ideal balance: office days promote collaboration and innovation, while home days favour individual focus. However, the effects are not uniform.

Morikawa (2022) found that some employees exhibited lower productivity when working remotely. On the other hand, Etheridge et al. (2020) revealed that the impact varies depending on the sector and the nature of the tasks. According to Dutcher (2012), remote work stimulates creativity; however, it may be detrimental for monotonous activities.

Regarding the adoption of hybrid work, countries with more advanced digital infrastructure are able to maintain productive capacities at sustainable levels, according to Eurostat (2023) and OECD (2022). To understand the actual effects on efficiency in Albania, comparison with the EU is essential.

3.4 Factors Affecting Albania and the EU

The consequences of hybrid work are not uniform; the level of economic development, digital capacities, and corporate culture determine these outcomes. Investments in digital transformation and labour market flexibility have helped EU countries transition to hybrid work (Choudhury et al., 2021; OECD, 2022).

Technological infrastructure, legal norms, and traditional management culture are some of Albania's challenges. Understanding these factors helps identify best practices to enhance purposeful focus and outcomes.

4. Performance of Hybrid Work in the European Union and Albania

4.1 The Spread and Adoption of Hybrid Work in the European Union

After the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid work has become more common, changing the way organisations operate. According to Eurofound (2024), 44% of employees in the EU work in a hybrid arrangement or at least one day per week from home. Between 2022 and 2024, fully remote positions decreased from 24% to 14%.

Furthermore, in 2024, approximately 53% of companies with 10 or more employees have adopted hybrid work practices, indicating technological adoption and readiness to support work outside the traditional office. The European Central Bank (ECB, 2023) reports that about 20% of employees in the Eurozone work in a hybrid mode two to four days per week, while 44% work in a hybrid mode at least one day per week.

According to Eurostat, from 2019 to 2024, work from home has doubled, increasing from 11.7% to 22.4% among employees aged 20–64, driven by the pandemic. In May 2024, 33.6% of employees reported working at least two days per week from home, according to the ECB Consumer Expectations Survey (CES).

From 2024 to 2025, hybrid work patterns were further established. Often, additional benefits, such as the possibility to work from home, are offered in exchange for higher pay. International studies indicate that some employees are willing to forgo part of their salary to work from home (ECB, 2023).

Current and preferred remote work patterns (2025):

- 55.7% do not work from home;
- 11.9% work one day per week from home;
- 21.9% work two to four days (“hybrid work”);
- 10.6% work five or more days (“hybrid work”) (ECB, 2025).

The majority of hybrid employees (84%) are satisfied with the current model. However, 43% of fully remote employees would prefer fewer days away from the office, indicating that remote work is often driven by necessity rather than preference (ECB, 2025).

Willingness to accept a pay reduction for hybrid work (two to three days from home):

- 70% do not accept a pay cut;
- 13% accept a 1–5% reduction;
- 8% accept a 6–10% reduction;
- The average accepted pay cut is 2.6% (ECB, 2025).

International comparisons:

- USA: 7% reduction for two to three days working from home;
- Germany: 7.7% for fully remote work, 5.4% for two days per week;
- Technology sector in the USA: approximately 25% reduction for fully remote positions (ECB, 2025).

Variation by work model:

- Fully remote employees: accept 4.6% reduction;
- Employees working one day per week: accept 1.6% reduction;
- Average among those accepting a reduction: 8.7% (ECB, 2025).

For some employees, working from home helps balance personal and professional life and can facilitate labour market participation. Flexibility from home is an important non-monetary benefit and can assist in attracting and retaining staff, especially in markets with a limited supply of qualified employees (ECB, 2025).

Figure 1. Comparison of the Impact of Hybrid Work Models: Albania & EU



Source: E. Spahaj

The visual data in Figure 1 illustrate the differences between Albania and the EU in the spread of hybrid work, technology usage, average working hours, engagement, productivity, barriers, and benefits. Higher values in the EU indicate that European countries have a greater capacity to implement hybrid work models and to maximise

employee performance and satisfaction, whereas Albania still faces technological and structural challenges that limit the effectiveness of hybrid work.

4.2 Technological Capacities and Digitalisation in Albania

The adoption of hybrid work is limited in Albania due to the low use of technology in workplaces. Eurostat data (2025) indicate that fewer than 30% of Albanian employees use the Internet during work, which is significantly lower than the EU average of 63%. This discrepancy suggests that the digital capacities of Albanian companies are limited, creating a substantial barrier to the implementation of hybrid work and its effects on labour output.

Furthermore, according to CNA reports (2024), in 2023 approximately 15,000 individuals in Albania worked through online platforms, representing only 1.1% of the total workforce, indicating that online employment remains relatively low despite growing interest in this type of work. Observations from companies show that around 37.7% of Albanian companies with more than 10 employees used online meetings in 2022; according to Monitor Magazine (2023), this indicator is still lower than the European average, reflecting limited use of technologies for remote collaboration.

On the other hand, an OECD report (2024) shows that only 23.8% of Albanians possess basic digital skills. While 99.1% of businesses have a computer with Internet access, only 54.9% have a website, which is significantly lower than the EU average of 78.1%. These indicators demonstrate that the population's capacity to use the Internet for professional and commercial purposes remains limited, although daily Internet use is common.

Therefore, the lack of digital capacities has a direct impact on the feasibility of implementing hybrid work models and maximising employee performance remotely. Based on the above, hybrid work is still in a developmental stage in Albania and primarily faces challenges related to the professional use of technology, employees' digital skills, and company resources. The country remains well below the levels of EU member states (Eurostat, 2025; Monitor Magazine, 2023; CNA, 2024; OECD, 2024).

4.3 Productivity, Work Hours, and Compensation

Albanian employees work an average of 43.7 hours per week, 7.6 hours more than the EU average of 36.1 hours per week (Eurostat & INSTAT, 2023). However, labour productivity remains low. Regarding income, Albanians have relatively low average earnings compared to their working hours; in the formal sector, the average gross monthly wage is approximately €540, indicating a lack of proportional gains relative to time and effort (INSTAT, 2023).

This discrepancy between working hours and wages reflects the structural problems of the Albanian economy, such as limited technology, a high level of informal employment, and constrained organisational capacities, which hinder increases in productivity and earnings.

4.4 Labour Market Barriers in Albania

Technology usage is low, and a considerable portion of employment is informal or without contracts, posing significant challenges for the labour market in Albania (INSTAT, 2023; Eurostat, 2023).

The lack of technology limits process automation, effective communication, and remote work, while high informality creates legal uncertainty, a lack of standardisation, and difficulties in managing and motivating employees. These factors hinder the

adoption of hybrid work models and the improvement of company productivity (Erumban, 2024).

Analysis of data from the period 2020–2025 shows that hybrid work has changed the organisation of work both in Albania and in the European Union. While the EU has adopted this model, Albania faces challenges that limit the impact of hybrid work on professional contribution and employee productivity, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Impact of Hybrid Models on Engagement and Productivity: Albania – EU

Indicators	Albania	European Union
Hybrid work adoption	Slow adoption; concentrated in the finance, IT, and public administration sectors. Slightly more than 1% of employees work online (CNA, 2024).	Hybrid work is common; 44% of employees work at least one day per week from home; 33.6% work at least two days per week (ECB, 2024).
Use of technology and digital capacities	Limited use of the Internet during work (<30%); only 37.7% of companies hold virtual meetings; 23.8% of the population possesses basic digital skills (OECD, 2024).	Advanced digital infrastructure; 63% of employees use the Internet during work; nearly all companies have technological tools for collaboration (Eurostat, 2025).
Average working hours	43.7 hours per week, higher than the European average; this does not always translate into productivity (Eurostat, 2023).	36.1 hours per week; engagement and productivity are stabilized due to efficient structures and flexibility (Eurostat, 2023).
Employee engagement	Unstable levels; the impact of hybrid work is limited due to lack of social interactions and digital constraints.	Increased engagement; the hybrid model provides flexibility, operational independence, and higher job satisfaction (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).
Productivity / Performanc	Unstable; efficient managerial structures and sufficient digital skills are lacking; results do not reflect the high working hours (Eurostat, 2023).	Stable; hybrid work reduces interruptions, increases efficiency, and improves organizational performance (Bloom, 2023; ECB, 2025).
Key barriers	Limited digital infrastructure, lack of digital skills, traditional managerial culture, informal employment (INSTAT, 2023).	Few obstacles; investments in digital transformation, labor market flexibility, organizational culture supporting hybrid work (OECD, 2022).
Benefits of hybrid work	Limited; flexibility and independence are lower, impact on productivity and satisfaction is restricted.	Significant; increases flexibility, decision-making freedom, satisfaction and engagement, reduces interruptions, and improves performance.

Source: E. Spahaj

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of data for the period 2020–2025 indicates that hybrid work has influenced work organisation both in Albania and in the European Union, but the intensity and effects of this model differ significantly between the two regions.

Hybrid work has become an established practice in the EU. Data show that a considerable percentage of employees work from home at least one day per week, and a

large proportion use this model for multiple days per week. This indicates the stabilisation of the hybrid model and a move towards a better balance between professional and private life (ECB, 2024). This increase is associated with the spread of digital infrastructures and flexible management practices found in many companies across Europe.

Conversely, hybrid work adoption appears more limited in Albania. Data indicate that only a very small percentage of employees work fully online, while the use of technology and the Internet in the workplace remains significantly lower compared to the European average. Additionally, digital tools for organisational collaboration, such as virtual meetings, are used less frequently than in EU companies (CNA, 2024; Monitor Magazine, 2023). These results indicate that digital infrastructure and technological capacities are among the key factors influencing the speed at which Albanian organisations adopt the hybrid model.

The comparative analysis also examined working hours. Western Balkan countries have significantly lower labour productivity levels compared to the European Union. The regional average for the period 2020–2023 is approximately 27 USD/hour, only 39% of the EU level (around 68 USD/hour), according to OECD data.

Employees in Albania work more weekly hours compared to the EU average (Eurostat, 2023). However, indicators such as average working hours (43.7 hours per week), low productivity per hour (around 18 USD/hour), and relatively low average gross monthly wages in the formal sector (around €540 per month) indicate a lack of proportionality between working time and benefits compared to the EU, placing Albania among the lowest-performing countries in the region (Eurostat & INSTAT, 2023; OECD, 2023).

Other countries in the region show slightly higher performance but remain below European standards, such as Montenegro (33 USD/hour), North Macedonia (31 USD/hour), Kosovo (27 USD/hour), Serbia (25 USD/hour), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (23 USD/hour) (OECD, 2023).

The results indicate that organisations may not be able to use working time efficiently or achieve better operational outcomes if they lack advanced performance management structures and appropriate digital competencies. Meanwhile, in the European Union, hybrid work adoption has been associated with a range of organisational benefits, including fewer interruptions during work, higher efficiency, and increased employee motivation and satisfaction.

Hybrid models improve employee engagement and performance by providing greater autonomy and flexibility (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). These results confirm that the success of this model depends not only on technology but also on organisational culture and how people collaborate remotely.

Overall, the study's results indicate that hybrid work has the potential to increase employee engagement and outcomes. However, certain structural elements need to be considered before this potential can be fully realised. The success of this model depends on digital infrastructure, organisational culture, and employees' digital competencies. These elements are already more consolidated in the European Union, contributing to the stability and efficiency of hybrid work.

In contrast, in Albania, this model may have a more limited impact due to organisational and technological challenges, highlighting the importance of policies and strategies that support digital transformation and the modernisation of management practices.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of data for the years 2020–2025 indicates that the adoption of hybrid work has significantly altered the structure of work organisation, with notable effects on task motivation and employees’ operational achievements. In the European Union, this model has been widely integrated, providing flexibility, autonomy, and sustained efficiency, whereas Albania still faces limitations related to digital infrastructure, technological skills, and traditional management practices.

The data highlight that hybrid work adoption presents clear differences: in the EU, a large proportion of employees work remotely at least one day per week, and organisations make extensive use of digital tools for collaboration, whereas in Albania, the model remains limited to certain sectors, and technology use remains low. This reflects that the number of working hours does not guarantee high performance; the benefits of hybrid work depend on factors such as organisational culture and digital capacity.

This study demonstrates that technology alone is not sufficient for the success of hybrid work; stability and increased engagement require managerial structures capable of adaptation and cultural support. The comparison between Albania and the EU provides an empirical framework for understanding how institutional and technological factors influence the effectiveness of this model.

It is concluded that hybrid models have great potential to transform work outcomes and professional engagement, but the realisation of this potential depends on the organisation’s ability to integrate technology, management practices, and workplace culture that support adoption and self-management.

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