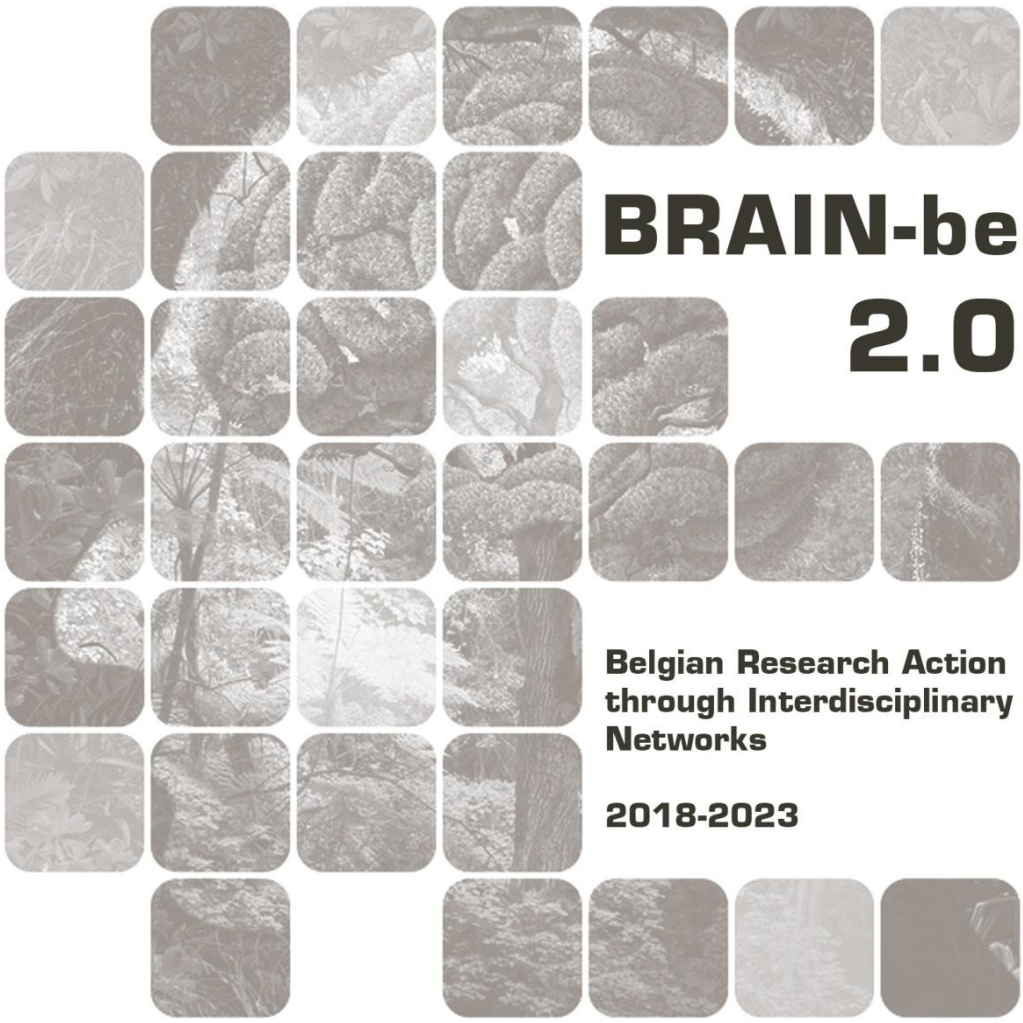

COLORBEL

Evaluating Collective Working-Time Reductions in Belgian Companies

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Pillar 3: Federal societal challenges

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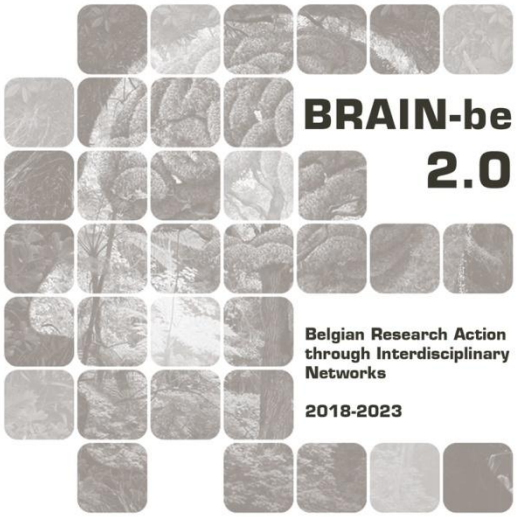

NETWORK PROJECT

COLORBEL

Evaluating Collective Working-Time Reductions in Belgian Companies

Contract - B2/234/COLORBEL

FINAL REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Context

In recent years, and particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a renewed wave of interest in management-led initiatives for collective reductions in working time (RWT) across Europe and beyond. In Belgium, however, the uptake of such initiatives has remained very limited. This is especially notable given the existence of a federal financial incentive since 2004 – a scheme offering temporary reductions in employer social security contributions, specifically a "target group reduction" – to encourage voluntary collective RWT amongst organizations.

Objectives

The COLORBEL project had two primary objectives. First, it organized a six-month pilot trial of collective RWT to assess both the level of interest among Belgian organizations and the effects of such arrangements on wellbeing, productivity, employment, and the environment. Organizations received free scientific support, with the option of additional paid guidance from an expert partner. To take part, they had to reduce working time by at least two hours per week – either for all employees or based on an objective criterion – while maintaining full wage levels during the trial. The trial was accompanied by systematic data collection to enable pre-post and, where possible, difference-in-differences analysis. Second, the project explored key drivers and barriers that influence whether organizations consider implementing collective RWT, with particular attention to the perceived adequacy of existing policy incentives. This part of the project relied on a mixed-methods approach, combining a systematic literature review with semi-structured interviews among RWT adopters, drop-outs, and non-adopters in Belgium.

Conclusions

Our findings indicate that current interest in collective RWT among Belgian organizations remains limited. Despite an extensive recruitment campaign, only one organization participated in the official pilot trial. However, three additional organizations initiated their own in-house trials, and over the course of the project, around 25 organizations expressed genuine interest. To better understand this limited uptake, we analyzed the main drivers and barriers. These include competitiveness concerns, employee wellbeing and recruitment/retention needs, work culture, internal and external support, spillover effects, macro-level trends, and competing organizational priorities. Importantly, many of these factors proved to be context-dependent, meaning that they can act as either enablers or obstacles depending on the characteristics and circumstances of each organization. Additionally, successful adoption seems to depend on an "and-and-and" logic: multiple enabling conditions must align, and missing even one often leads to delay or abandonment of RWT implementation.

The findings offer relevant input for policy, in line with the project's aim to assess the potential and limitations of collective RWT and the adequacy of current support measures. They highlight areas where targeted adjustments could lower the threshold for voluntary uptake, including: improving clarity and visibility around collective RWT and existing incentives, sustaining appropriate financial and practical support, addressing legal and informational uncertainties, and reconsidering the alignment between the incentive's design and objectives as well as its limited fit with trial-based approaches.

Keywords

Collective working-time reduction, four-day workweek, pilot trial, target group reduction, labour market policy

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, collective reductions in working time (RWT) have resurfaced on the policy agenda, both internationally and in Belgium. Accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis, a growing number of companies in countries such as the UK, Spain, Portugal and Germany have trialled or adopted RWT arrangements such as the four-day workweek, often without public intervention and with reported positive outcomes in terms of productivity and employee wellbeing. These international trends have raised renewed interest in the feasibility and desirability of reducing working time in Belgium.

In this context, the 2021 Employment Conference (*werkgelegenheidsconferentie* or *conference pour l'emploi*) – organized by the federal Minister of Employment and involving extensive input from social partners – resulted in an Action Plan adopted by the Council of Ministers in February 2023. One of the measures included in this plan focused specifically on the evaluation of the target group reduction for collective RWT. This refers to the federal financial incentive introduced in 2004, which offers temporary reductions in employer social security contributions for organizations that voluntarily implement collective working-time reductions under defined conditions. The original goal of the measure was to support voluntary uptake of collective RWT by easing its financial impact on employers, and this in view of improving work-life balance and employment sustainability.

To support the implementation of this Action Plan, and to complement previous administrative analyses, the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO), in coordination with the Federal Planning Bureau (FPB), launched a targeted call for scientific research. The aim was to generate evidence-based insights into the potential effects of collective RWT across four key dimensions: employment, productivity, worker wellbeing, and the environment. In addition, the project was expected to assess the adequacy of the existing financial support mechanism and provide policy-relevant recommendations.

The Ghent University-led COLORBEL project was selected to address the above-mentioned research questions. The project consisted of two main components. First, it coordinated a six-month pilot trial, giving interested organizations the opportunity to voluntarily test collective RWT. Participating organizations could qualify for the existing federal financial incentive, depending on whether they met the eligibility criteria. All received free scientific support, with the option to access additional guidance from an external expert during the preparation and implementation phases (at their own expense). Participation in the trial was contingent on specific eligibility criteria, including a minimum two-hour reduction per week, applied collectively or according to an objective criterion, and with full wage retention during the trial.

Second, the project examined the broader organizational drivers and barriers influencing interest in collective RWT. This was done through a combination of literature review and semi-structured interviews with a range of organizations (RWT adopters, drop-outs, and non-adopters). The project was carried out between December 2023 and June 2025, in collaboration between Ghent University and the Federal Planning Bureau.

2. STATE OF THE ART AND OBJECTIVES

A collective reduction in working time (RWT) is increasingly being explored as a promising and relevant labour policy in contemporary industrialized societies. Its rising popularity is attributed to its myriad potential benefits in various areas. First, RWT can serve as a policy tool to combat unemployment through work-sharing. A review of collective RWT implementations in Europe during the 1980s and 1990s was conducted by Bosch & Lehndorff (2001), uncovering empirical evidence of positive employment effects. However, the researchers underline that the success of these effects hinges on specific conditions, including negotiations on wage compensation, active training policies, and work reorganization. Second, RWT has the potential to enhance employees' wellbeing, encompassing both physical health aspects like reducing stress, burnout, fatigue, and improving sleep, as well as subjective wellbeing aspects, including increased levels of happiness, life satisfaction, job satisfaction, and a better work-life balance (Hanbury et al., 2023; Kallis et al., 2013; Voglino et al., 2022). While several review papers support positive wellbeing effects, other authors have found no positive impact on health or job and life satisfaction. Third, RWT policies can yield environmental benefits by reducing income levels and hence consumption levels – the "income" effect – and by promoting less environmentally-intensive uses of the additional non-working time – the "time use" effect (Antal et al., 2020). An examination of the empirical literature on RWT and environmental indicators suggests that the potential positive effect primarily arises from the income effect. Fourth, reductions in working hours are often accompanied by increased productivity, contributing to the financial viability of RWT policies with full or partial pay retention. Lastly, RWT policies can promote greater gender equality by enhancing female participation in the labour market, thus improving gender equality in employment, and by redistributing household and caregiving responsibilities between men and women, thereby enhancing gender equality in the household (Rubery et al., 1998; Schultz & Hoffman, 2006). However, it is important to recognize that RWT policies are not a one-size-fits-all solution. The specific characteristics of the policy, including the level of implementation, compensation, reference base, and productivity expectations, play a crucial role in determining their effectiveness in various domains. Trade-offs must be considered since not all advantages can be simultaneously achieved (De Spiegelaere & Piasna, 2017). Ultimately, the actual benefits will depend on the chosen characteristics and the presence of complementary regulations and conditions.

The above-mentioned benefits explain the growing interest in RWT over the past few decades. Notable RWT pilots include the national-level 35-hour workweek in France (1998-2008), sectoral trials in Iceland's public sector (2015) and ArcelorMittal in Germany (2016), as well as management-led initiatives like Perpetual Guardian in New Zealand (2018) and Microsoft Japan (2019). More recently, the COVID-19 crisis further fuelled public interest in RWT due to the unemployment crisis it initiated and the heightened focus on mental health, work-life balance, and employee wellbeing in its aftermath. Following an earlier wave of management-led initiatives since 2015 (with prominent examples such as the Swedish elderly care home (Svartedalen experiment) and Perpetual Guardian), a new wave of RWT pilot trials at the organizational level has emerged since 2022, with multi-company pilots taking place in the UK (2022), the US, Canada and Ireland (2022), Australasia (2022), Spain (2022), Portugal (2023), South-Africa (2023) and Germany (2024).[1] These programs involved

[1] When referring to the growing interest in RWT, we refer specifically to employer-driven reductions implemented within individual organizations. Working time has historically decreased at multiple levels and modalities – including sectoral agreements and national legal reforms, such as Belgium's reduction of the

numerous companies voluntarily implementing RWT with full pay retention and typically received support from external expert partners – usually non-profits – in the program's setup and rollout.

Research findings from these programs consistently reveal positive effects, primarily in the domains of wellbeing (covering health aspects, satisfaction measures, and work-life balance) and several key business metrics (including subjective performance and productivity evaluation, revenue, hiring, absenteeism, and resignations). However, while some results are discussed for the environmental domain and gender equality, they are somewhat less pronounced. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge several limitations in the research conducted in the context of RWT trials. Participation is typically voluntary, which leads to sectoral and self-selection biases: organizations that opt in often share characteristics such as financial stability or openness to innovation. This results in limited diversity and may restrict the generalizability of findings to other sectors or contexts. Methodologically, most studies lack randomized control groups or comparable untreated units, making causal inference difficult.[2] Observation periods are often short, which limits insights into long-term effects – though follow-up studies are ongoing. Finally, the high public visibility of many trials combined with the awareness among firms and employees that they are being observed may lead to trial-specific behaviour, limiting conclusions about how such changes would hold under a permanent policy. Despite these limitations, the research conducted to date on these trials remains a suitable approach given the voluntary, organization-level nature of RWT implementation.

While numerous European countries are actively embracing four-day workweek experiments, Belgium appears to be joining the wave at a slower pace. Over the past two decades, there have been a handful of Belgian trials at the organizational level, such as the public broadcaster VRT (2016-2020) and Auto 5 (2017), which aimed primarily to prevent redundancies and generate new employment opportunities. Additionally, the General Headquarters of FGTB (2006) and the women's organization Femma (2019) implemented RWT to enhance working conditions and promote a healthier work-life balance. More recently, in September 2023, Tryangle also introduced a four-day workweek, while AFAS software announced plans to implement a four-day workweek at its Belgian branch sometime in 2025.

Moreover, it is striking that this seemingly limited interest has persisted despite the implementation of a federal financial incentive system in Belgium since January 2004. This system offers employers a (temporary) reduction in social security contributions, in particular a "target group reduction" (*doelgroepvermindering* or *réduction groupe cible*) for collective RWT, contingent on their adoption of reduced working hours below 38 hours per week, whether through a four-day workweek or other means. The system initially supported around 25000 to 30000 full-time equivalents (FTEs) per quarter in its early years, but usage declined to approximately 5000 FTEs per quarter between 2008 and 2019. Since 2019, there has been a modest increase, reaching just under 10000 FTEs per quarter. This stands in contrast to most other countries where recent RWT trials have been launched, as they generally lack comparable public financial support. Although some exceptions exist – such as a the subsidy

standard weekly working hours from 40 to 38 in 2003 – contributing to a long-term downward trend since the Industrial Revolution. Although this trend has somewhat slowed in recent decades, the voluntary, employer-initiated working time reductions examined here reflect a renewed wave of interest in many European contexts.

[2] It is worth noting, however, that a large share of RWT trials has been evaluated by the same research team (affiliated with Boston College and University College Dublin), which has ensured consistency in the design and collection of survey-based outcome measures across cases.

scheme in the Valencian government's program since 2022, and partial financial support in the Portuguese trial of 2023 (including scientific follow-up and expert support offered free of charge to participating organizations) – the Belgian system is notable for being a long-standing, structural measure. This international contrast raises important questions about the utility and adequacy of Belgium's federal support system in supporting the uptake of RWT.

In light of the growing international interest in collective working-time reduction and the limited uptake observed in Belgium – despite the existence of a federal financial incentive system – this project primarily addresses two key research objectives. The first focuses on evaluating the implementation of RWT through a pilot trial, while the second aims to explore the broader organizational conditions and policy-related factors – including the perceived adequacy of the incentive system – that may support or hinder RWT adoption.

The **first research objective (RO1)** of this project is to conduct a scientific evaluation of the impacts of RWT in Belgium. To achieve this, the research team aims to carry out a pilot trial – hereafter also referred to as the "COLORBEL trial" – by recruiting a group of organizations and companies that (i) qualify for the incentive system, (ii) represent a range of sizes and sectors, and (iii) are willing to implement a collective working-time reduction (in the form of a four-day workweek or otherwise) with a substantial reduction in working hours while maintaining full pay for (at least) a six-month trial period in 2024. By combining administrative and survey data collected at three different time points – prior to, during, and post the pilot trial – the team aims to quantitatively and causally assess the effects of the RWT trial on various indicators spanning four key domains: wellbeing, productivity, employment, and the environment. In addition, the team aims to scrutinize whether the impacts across these four domains exhibit gender consistency – as traditional gender roles are often found to be persistent – and whether they depend on the context in which the initiative was implemented (e.g., presence of a collective labour agreement (CLA)). To complement and enrich these quantitative analyses, the study will also gather qualitative data regarding the four domains, as well as broader trial expectations and experiences, through interviews with both employees and employers. It is important to note, however, that the extent to which these objectives can be fully achieved depends on the final number of participating organizations. Several scenarios were anticipated in advance – ranging from minimal to broad participation – with corresponding adjustments to the methodological approach planned as needed.

In anticipation of potential recruitment challenges for the pilot trial described under RO1, the project was also designed to include a **second research objective (RO2),** focused on understanding the broader conditions that support or hinder RWT adoption in Belgium. The goal of RO2 is to identify the drivers and barriers to the adoption of RWT policies within Belgian organizations, with specific attention to the role of supporting measures – most notably the federal financial incentive system established in 2004 and the use of pilot trials as potential enablers of implementation. To this end, the research team aims to develop a comprehensive analytical framework based on two complementary analyses. First, a literature review is conducted to synthesize existing knowledge on factors influencing RWT uptake at the organizational level, particularly from the employer's perspective. Second, this framework is verified and enriched through semi-structured interviews with Belgian organizations, represented by high-level individuals such as founders, C-level executives, and HR managers. These interviews target three groups: (i) organizations that implemented an RWT trial, either through participation in the COLORBEL trial or independently ("adopters"), (ii) organizations that had

expressed interest in the COLORBEL trial but ultimately did not implement RWT ("drop-outs"), and (iii) a stratified sample of non-adopting employers with no prior engagement in the COLORBEL project, selected to reflect relevant characteristics of RWT adopters abroad ("non-adopters"). This multi-perspective approach allows the team to identify both enabling factors and barriers operating at different levels, including perceptions of the financial incentive system and RWT trials – such as which features are seen as helpful or limiting, and how they may support or hinder adoption. By integrating insights from literature and fieldwork, the project aims to provide a grounded assessment of the policy and organizational factors that shape RWT implementation in Belgium.

Together, these two research objectives are intended to support Belgian policymakers by generating empirically grounded insights into the implementation of collective RWT and the conditions under which it may be more or less feasible. The project aims to contribute to understanding the role of financial and institutional support measures and to identify practical levers and perceived barriers within organizations. In doing so, it also seeks to enrich the broader international evidence base on the pathways and challenges of introducing collective RWT in diverse national contexts.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Objective 1 (RO1): Evaluating the impacts of RWT through a Belgian pilot trial

3.1.1 Sampling procedure

3.1.1.1 Selection criteria

For the pilot trial, we aimed to recruit companies and organizations willing to implement collective working-time reduction (RWT) meeting the following criteria: RWT with substantial reduction in the weekly working time (min. 2 hours) and with full pay retention. Additionally, the RWT should be implemented for either all employees or part of the employees according to an objective criterion (e.g., a particular department, age cutoff), and for (at least) a six-month trial period starting in May or June 2024. The six-month trial phase would be proceeded by a two- or three-month preparation phase. Additionally, they were informed about the guarantee of data protection and privacy, and about the fact that participation was voluntary and reversible at any time.

3.1.1.2 Services and incentives offered

In return, participating companies and organizations could expect three elements: scientific support, expert guidance, and the target group reduction for collective RWT.

First, the scientific support would be provided for free by researchers involved at Ghent University and the Federal Planning Bureau. The support would come down to a report providing results, aggregated at sectoral level, on the effects of RWT on four key domains (wellbeing, productivity, employment, and the environment). These results would follow from the various waves of data collection, as further detailed in Section 3.1.2.

Second, the expert guidance would be provided by Autonomy, an independent think tank from the UK who also provided guidance during the well-known 2022 UK-trial that involved 61 organizations.[3] The guidance track would consist of five group workshops and an individual consultation session during the preparation phase, and four group troubleshooting sessions as well as optional check-in sessions with the dedicated point of contact (in case of urgent issues) during the trial phase. All workshops and sessions would be provided online and in English. This guidance track was optional for a fixed fee of 1020 euros (incl. VAT) per organization, and conditional upon participation of at least five organizations.[4]

[3] To identify the most suitable expert partner for providing guidance, a comparative analysis was conducted. Five organizations, both Belgian and international, with relevant experience or a demonstrated interest in supporting RWT implementation, were invited to submit quotations. These quotations were evaluated based on multiple criteria, including: the scope and structure of the offered services (e.g., number, content, format – online vs. in-person –, and scheduling of group workshops and individual sessions across different phases), language options (with a preference for bilingual offers in Dutch and French), geographic location (priority given to Belgian organizations, followed by European ones, due to cultural alignment and familiarity with Belgian administrative systems), previous experience in guiding RWT trials, price, and conditional terms (such as minimum participation requirements in the trial for the offer to remain valid). Ultimately, Autonomy was selected, as their proposal offered the best balance of quality and cost, along with substantial prior experience in the field.

[4] Due to the public interest nature and academic value of the COLORBEL project, Autonomy was able to provide reduced prices.

Third, the target group reduction for collective RWT is a federal measure that grants employers who reduce the working hours of their staff by at least one full hour per week a fixed reduction in employer's social security contributions for a period of one to four years. The reduction varies between 400 and 1000 euros per employee per quarter, and the total amount of reductions that can be received (i.e. the duration of receiving reductions) depends on the new weekly working hours following the reduction and the introduction of a four-day workweek.[5] The measure is applicable for the private sector and autonomous public enterprises, but not for the public sector. Additional conditions for receiving the target group reduction include the collective nature of implementation – it must not depend on an individual decision by either the employer or the employee –, the use of objective criteria – the measure must apply to all employees or to a clearly defined group based on objective characteristics (e.g., age, department) –, and the requirement of indefinite duration – the reduction does not apply to pilot projects or temporary trials.[6] The collective RWT system can be implemented either through a collective labour agreement at sectoral or organizational level, or by amending the work regulations. Moreover, the measure does not require automatic wage retention for employees affected by the collective RWT system, except when the system results from a universally binding collective labour agreement concluded within the competent joint committee.

Note that the trial participation criteria (described in Section 3.1.1.1) do not fully align with the eligibility conditions for the federal target group reduction described above, as the trial criteria impose stricter requirements in certain respects: a minimum working time reduction of two hours per week (compared to one hour) and mandatory wage retention in all cases (whereas the target group reduction only requires this under certain contractual conditions). These choices were made to ensure a sufficient reduction to observe meaningful effects and to preserve the trial's experimental character (without wage retention, a collective, top-down reduction in working time would amount to a structural shift downwards in the work–income ratio – comparable to part-time work, but imposed collectively rather than chosen individually). The wage retention criterion created a real trade-off for employers, enabling insight into the cost structure of reduced working time – insights that may inform future negotiations on cost-sharing under permanent implementation. A final consideration for the selection of trial participating criteria, was alignment with the design of comparable trials abroad.

3.1.1.3 Recruitment campaign

To get the recruitment call out, we launched a dedicated website and organized recruitment events. These efforts were promoted through various channels, including our own outreach efforts as well as

[5] If weekly working hours are reduced (without introducing a four-day workweek), the employer receives 400 euros per quarter per affected employee, for 8 to 16 quarters depending on the new weekly hours (8 quarters if ≤37h, 12 if ≤36h, 16 if ≤35h). If only a four-day workweek is introduced (without reducing weekly hours), the reduction is 400 euros per quarter per affected employee for up to 4 quarters. If both are combined, the amount increases to 1000 euros per quarter per employee, for a maximum of 4 quarters. Furthermore, the measure applies to (i) full-time employees, (ii) part-time employees who switch to full-time work after the introduction of the collective RWT system, and (iii) part-time employees whose wage must be adjusted due to the implementation of the collective RWT system (i.e. when the system results from a universally binding collective labour agreement), provided their normal average weekly working time is at least 28 hours.

[6] An attempt was made to apply more flexibility to this requirement (i.e. to disregard or waive it) within the context of the COLORBEL project, but this was not possible. Therefore, organizations were advised to refrain from claiming these reductions during the trial period and to postpone their application until after the trial, i.e. once they are certain about maintaining and permanently implementing collective RWT. In principle, this does not affect the total amount of reduction in employer contributions they can receive.

media coverage. The recruitment phase roughly took place during a period of 3 months (from December 2023 until February 2024), with a little bit of activity before and afterwards as well. Figure 1 presents a detailed timeline of the recruitment campaign.

On the one hand, the bilingual website 4dayweek.be was launched, available in both Dutch and French. Beyond providing basic information on the pilot trial (phases of the trial, benefits of participation) and presenting the research teams involved, the website provided useful links and references to relevant real-life cases of RWT. Additionally, a FAQ-page was included on the website, where questions were handled that popped up throughout the recruitment phase from various organizations. Questions ranged from clarification of the type of RWT (in particular that the experiment concerned an actual reduction in working time rather than a compressed workweek), implementation formats, eligibility criteria and withdrawal options for employers, to legal implications (e.g., impact on pension, annual leave, and the so-called "RWT-days" (*ADV-dagen* or *jours de RTT*)). Moreover, the website provided an activities-tab, providing a calendar of all upcoming recruitment events, as well as the possibility to consult the slides of the presentations of all (guest) speakers of the general webinars (after the event took place). Finally, the website provided contact information, including both a general and individual mail addresses, allowing interested parties to reach out to the researchers for further information about the project, to register for a recruitment event, or to sign up for the pilot trial.

On the other hand, a series of recruitment events were organized. First, two general webinars took place for the broad public, i.e. basically anyone who was interested in the topic. The goal of these webinars was to get the recruitment call out. Beyond clarifying the context of the COLORBEL project, and providing information on the services and incentives offered and selection criteria for the pilot trial, each webinar included national and international testimonials. The first webinar (early December) included testimonials from the Portuguese multi-company pilot in 2023 (by Pedro Gomes), the Belgian organization Femma (by Jeroen Lievens) and the French organization Elmy (unfortunately, the speaker of the organization had to cancel last-minute, but the slides were provided afterwards on the website 4dayweek.be). The second webinar (early February) included testimonials from the Belgian organization Tryangle (by Griet Deca) and the French organization LDLC (by Laurent De La Clergerie). The webinars attracted 162 and 109 participants respectively. In addition to representatives from interested organizations, attendees included researchers, HR-experts, representatives from social secretariats, and journalists.

Subsequently, two targeted sessions took place for interested organizations only. In the first week of March, the kick-off session took place. The goal was to repeat the key information of the pilot trial, to introduce the specifics of the expert guidance track – as the selection of the expert partner took place in January, this information was not priorly known in detail –, and to allow for particular questions and concerns of the organizations with respect to the pilot trial. In the second week of March, the legal info session was held to clarify administrative complexities related to collective RWT and the pilot trial. Experts from the Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour & Social Dialogue (*FOD WASO* or *SPF ETCS*) and the National Social Security Office (*RSZ* or *ONSS*) were invited to provide further insights into the legal framework for implementing collective RWT and the conditions for obtaining the target

group reduction. A total of ten organizations took part in the kick-off session, and this number narrowed down to seven for the legal info session.[7]

Throughout the entire recruitment phase, the visibility of the COLORBEL project and the recruitment call, together with the website and the various recruitment events, were brought to the attention via outreach efforts of the researchers involved. This included posting LinkedIn messages via the personal accounts of the researchers and via the account of the Federal Planning Bureau, and including the recruitment call in the February edition of the newsletter of UGent @ Work. Additionally, we contacted major trade unions in Belgium (ACV/CSC and ABVV/FGTB) with the question to help promote the project and pilot trial by sharing the information through union publications or other channels, and by encouraging employee representatives to discuss it further with management. Furthermore, we reached out to ETION & Be-Impact – networks for value-driven and impact entrepreneurs respectively – to feature the call in their newsletter, and to HR Square & ZigZagHR – platforms for HR professionals – to promote it through their newsletter, a LinkedIn post, an interview, or a magazine article. These efforts lead to various LinkedIn posts (including those by ZigZagHR and Be-Impact), magazine articles (such as those by ABVV and ZigZagHR), and a compiled list of mail addresses of impact entrepreneurs for direct outreach. Finally, the recruitment call was also shared through traditional media channels: different members of the research team provided additional information through interviews on the Flemish public broadcaster's TV program *De Markt* (VRT) and on NRJ Belgique radio.

Beyond the researchers' proper outreach efforts, the project was picked up by various media channels in all regions of the country. Examples include newspaper articles (*De Tijd, Het Nieuwsblad, Het Belang van Limburg, L'Echo, La Libre, L'Avenir, Metro, Sudinfo*), magazine articles (*HRMagazine*, *Trends Tendances*), news articles (VRT NWS, RTL Info), TV programs (*Journaal Laat* (VRT), Canal Z), a radioshow (*De Wereld Vandaag* (VRT Radio 1)) and a podcast (*Het Kwartier* (VRT Radio 1)).

The intensity of media coverage and of visits of the website correlated with the recruitment events, with peak-coverage just before or after an event (see Figure 1). Moreover, the media coverage peaked just after an important political event that took place during the recruitment campaign: in preparation of the elections of June 2024, the PS (*Parti Socialiste,* the socialist party in the French-speaking part of Belgium) prominently seized on the topic of RWT by making a 32-hour workweek with full wage retention a cornerstone of their campaign.

[7] While the majority of these organizations attended the sessions live, a smaller number were unable to participate, but reviewed the session recording afterwards.

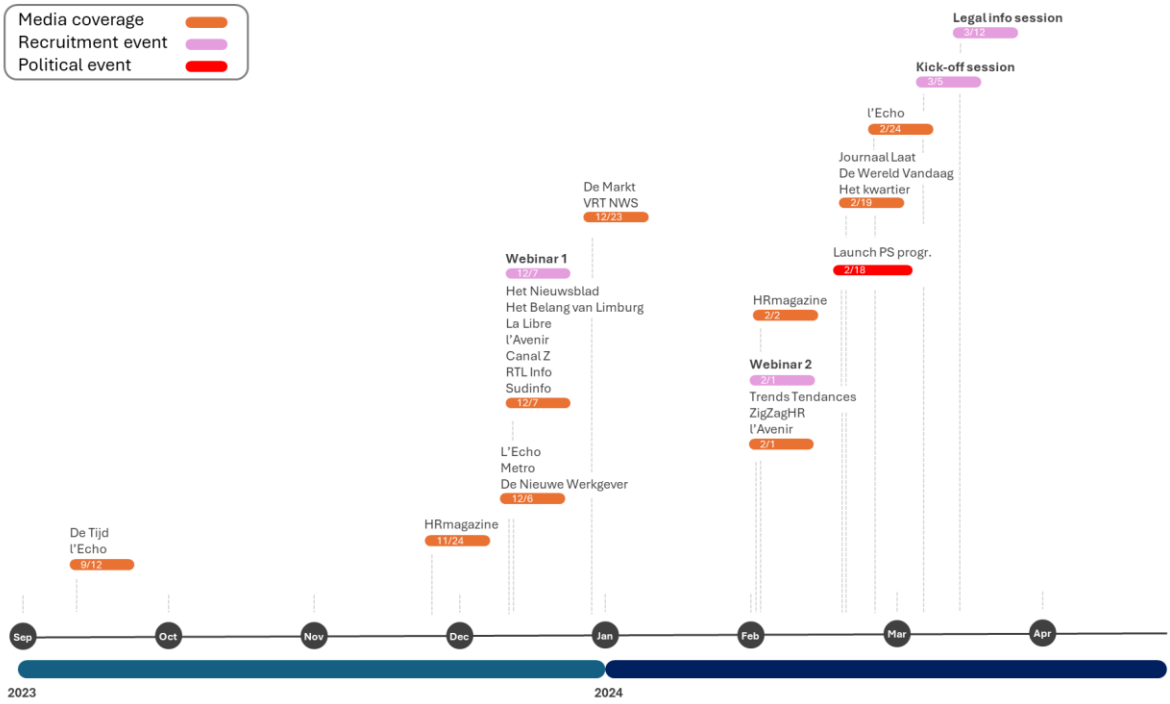

Figure 1: Recruitment campaign timeline.

3.1.2 Research design

3.1.2.1 Data collection

Objectives and set-up

The primary objective of the data collection efforts in the context of RO1 was to assess the impact of the RWT trial across four key domains: wellbeing, productivity, employment, and the environment. Accordingly, the central aim was to assemble a coherent and relevant set of metrics pertaining to each of these domains. In addition to this core set of outcome variables, supplementary data were collected to support the planned statistical analyses (as detailed in Section 3.1.2.2), particularly for use as control variables or, where applicable, for matching or weighting procedures. A third objective of the data collection was to obtain a comprehensive descriptive profile of the organizations and employees participating in the pilot trial.

To meet these objectives, data were collected across three key dimensions: type, source, and timing. Both quantitative (surveys and administrative records) and qualitative data (interviews and focus groups) were gathered. Data came from three sources: existing administrative databases at the organizational level, newly collected data from employers, and newly collected data from employees. Collection took place at three time points: before the trial (baseline), during (midpoint), and by the end (endpoint). In total, nine data collection activities were scheduled for each participating organization (see Figure 2): three employee surveys, two rounds of employee interviews or focus groups, one onboarding survey with the employer, and three employer interviews. Each of these is described in more detail in the sections below.

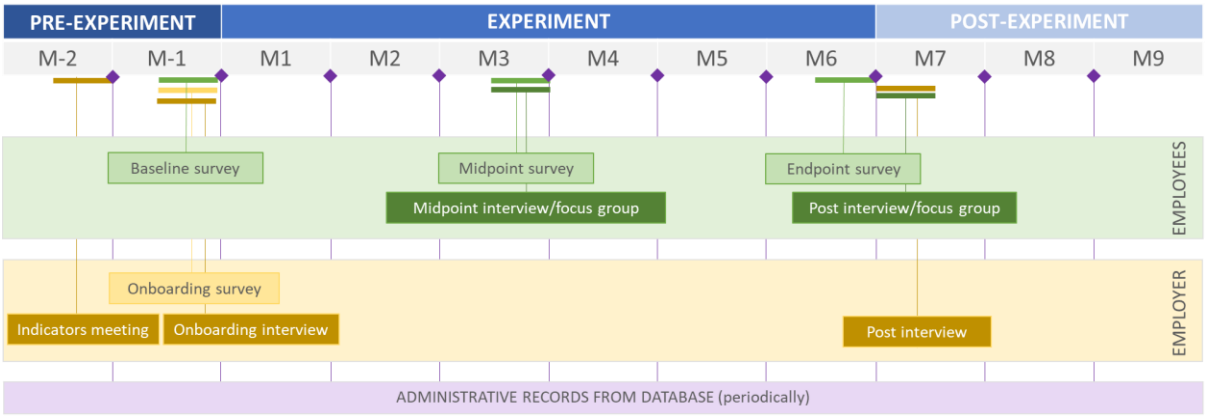

Figure 2: Data collection activities across the trial period (RO1).

Employer data collection

Before the start of the trial, an **indicators meeting** was held with each participating employer. The contact person representing the employer was typically the individual who had been most involved in preparing the trial and had initiated contact with the research team. The purpose of this meeting was twofold. The first purpose was to explore what relevant data were already being collected within the organization – either automatically (e.g., through HR or payroll systems) or manually (e.g., internal surveys) – in relation to the four target domains. This helped reduce the need for additional data collection and respondent burden. However, it was recognised from the outset that such internal data would likely vary widely in format, scope, and quality across organizations. Consequently, these data were not expected to support cross-organizational analysis but could provide valuable complementary

insights at the individual organization level. Second, and more importantly, the meeting aimed to increase employers' awareness of their own internal data sources, which could support in-house evaluation efforts after the trial, even in the absence of continued scientific support.

During the meeting, a structured overview of potential indicators was discussed across the four domains: productivity (e.g., output, revenue, KPIs, cost measures), employment (e.g., resignations, new hires, number of (spontaneous) applications, turnover, absenteeism), environment (e.g., energy use, commuting, business travel), and wellbeing, though the latter was less frequently addressed as such data are typically not collected automatically. For each indicator identified as relevant and available, additional details were recorded, such as the level at which the data were collected (organization vs. employee) and the reporting frequency (e.g., monthly). Based on this discussion, agreements were made on which administrative records from internal databases would be shared with the research team, and how frequently.

After the indicators meeting, the employer filled out the **onboarding survey** – estimated to take around 10 minutes –, designed to gather standardised information on organizational characteristics and initial choices made regarding the working-time reduction – referred to as "the shorter workweek". The survey covered topics such as the role of the respondent (i.e. representative of the organization), organizational size, and the presence and role of employee representation bodies (including trade unions, works councils, or committees for prevention and protection at work). It also collected information on existing working-time arrangements (including the use of RWT-days), the organization's motivations for participating in the trial, and the expected implementation format – including the composition of the target group (and, if only a subgroup was included, the intention for broader rollout in the future) and the way freed-up hours would be organised. The survey was intended to ensure a consistent and comparable set of baseline data across all participating organizations. Additionally, an **onboarding interview** – estimated to take about 1 hour – was conducted to contextualise these survey responses and gain deeper qualitative insight into the organization's background, motivations, internal decision-making processes, and staff reactions. The conversation also explored the broader preparation phase and expectations regarding the trial's potential impact across key domains such as productivity, wellbeing, and work organization. After the end of the trial, a **post interview** – again estimated to take about 1 hour – was conducted to evaluate the actual implementation and perceived effects of the shorter workweek. This follow-up interview revisited the initial expectations, discussed the trial's outcomes and challenges, and reflected on changes in organizational culture, performance, and longer-term intentions.

Employee data collection

Regarding employee data, three waves of employee surveys were administered. The **baseline survey** – the most comprehensive of the three, with an estimated completion time of 35 minutes – was launched during the two weeks prior to the start of the trial. It began with a set of socio-demographic and job-related questions, covering variables such as household composition, education level, income, contract type, working hours, function level, and remote work arrangements. A few additional items were included on personal characteristics, such as commuting behaviour and pro-environmental attitudes. These variables were only collected at baseline and served primarily as descriptive indicators and potential control variables in subsequent analyses.

The core of the baseline survey focused on collecting metrics across the four key domains: wellbeing, productivity, employment, and the environment. These metrics are presented in detail in Annex Table A, which indicates for each item: (i) the survey waves in which it was included (baseline, midpoint, and/or endpoint); (ii) the measurement instrument used (validated scale, adapted item(s), or self-composed); and (iii) whether it aligns with one of three key literature sources used to inform metric selection (see explanation below).

For wellbeing, the selected metrics drew primarily on three frameworks: the Work Ability conceptual model from the Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (Ria et al., 2019), the Job Demands–Resources model (Schaufeli, 2017), and recent empirical analyses of large-scale four-day workweek trials supported by 4 Day Week Global (Fan et al., 2023). Metrics included both outcome variables – such as work engagement, burnout risk, job satisfaction, work ability, and organizational commitment –, as well as explanatory variables – such as workload, work intensity, autonomy, task variety, and coworker support. Additional measures covered work–life balance (e.g., work–family conflict, satisfaction with work-life balance in general and with task division at home in particular), health (e.g., WHO-5, GHQ-12, fatigue, sleep quality, physical activity), and general subjective wellbeing (life and family satisfaction).

For the employment domain, metrics such as turnover intention, absenteeism (frequency and duration), and presenteeism were included, again drawing on the same literature sources. Given the potential for flexible or secondary jobs to interact with reduced working time, weekly hours spent on a secondary job were also recorded. Regarding the environmental dimension, selected items focused primarily on commuting and personal travel: car use, public transport, remote work, and holiday travel.[8] Finally, a self-rated measure of productivity was included.

Beyond these four domains, a subset of questions specifically addressed experiences with the RWT trial. These covered the format of freed-up time, perceptions of the preparation phase (e.g., information received, involvement, preparedness), and expectations around changes in a series of work experiences (e.g., workload and productivity). Respondents were also asked about their overall satisfaction with the RWT trial being implemented.

The baseline survey concluded with questions on time use, including satisfaction with leisure time in general and perceived time adequacy for 36 different activities. Respondents indicated for each activity whether they wished to spend less, the same, or more time on it. The list spanned domains such as paid secondary work, personal care, time with family or friends, hobbies, trips, volunteering, caregiving, and household tasks.

The **midpoint survey**, estimated to take 15 minutes, was collected during a two-week window halfway through the trial. It repeated a limited number of core metrics relating to the key domains (in particular productivity, pace of work, workload, intensity of work, work–life balance, mental health, sleep, and fatigue) and included the same general satisfaction question on the RWT trial. Its key added value, however, was a revised version of the time-use block. Rather than asking about time adequacy, participants were asked to report the extent to which they had actually used their freed-up hours

[8] When combined with data on commuting mode and distance, information on remote work enables estimates of the potential greenhouse gas emission reductions associated with RWT.

(resulting from the shorter workweek trial) over the past working week for each of the 36 activities, using a 3-point ordinal response scale: “not at all,” “a bit,” or “a lot.”

The **endpoint survey**, launched during the final two weeks of the six-month trial and estimated to take around 25 minutes, aimed to comprehensively recollect all key metrics across the four domains that were included in the baseline survey. Only a minimal subset of socio-demographic and job-related variables was repeated, focusing on changes (e.g., in working time arrangements). The revised time-use question was again included, now asking participants to reflect on how they had used their freed-up time over the course of the entire trial (rather than over the past working week). This block used the same 3-point scale as in the midpoint survey. In addition, several particular trial evaluation questions were added: participants were asked to reflect on their actual experiences during the trial – including changes for the same series of work experiences discussed in the baseline survey (a.o. workload and productivity) –, personal and organizational influence, and their ability to adhere to the reduced working time. Respondents also identified factors that had made it difficult to reduce their working time (e.g., workload fluctuations, communication challenges), as well as techniques they had used to manage the change (e.g., reducing meetings, prioritizing tasks). Finally, a question assessed participants’ desire to continue the reduced working time arrangement beyond the trial.

As for practical arrangements for the three employee surveys, the survey link was distributed via the organization’s contact person, who received the link one week before the intended data collection window and was asked to forward it to all employees. Additionally, respondents were asked in each survey to provide their email address, which served as a pseudonymised unique identifier, allowing the research team to link survey responses across the three waves.

Beyond the survey collections, additional insights were gathered with employees through qualitative interviews, conducted either in focus groups (where sufficient participants were available within an organization) or through individual interviews.[9] Recruitment was based on an opt-in question included in the baseline survey, which asked employees about their willingness to take part in an interview or focus group. Two rounds of qualitative data collection were organized.

The **midpoint interviews** – estimated to take about 1 hour – were held after the first few months of implementation and focused on employees’ initial adaptation to the shorter workweek. They explored how participants experienced the freed-up time, early effects on their work and personal lives, and whether the trial met initial expectations. These conversations also covered practical and organizational changes that had been introduced and how well they supported employees in working more efficiently or experiencing work-life improvements.

By contrast, the **post interviews** – again estimated to take about 1 hour – were conducted after the full trial period and focused more broadly on overall reflections. While still revisiting changes in work and time use, these interviews placed stronger emphasis on evaluation: how employees assessed the overall experience, what unexpected outcomes arose, and how individual and organizational challenges had been dealt with. The interviews concluded with participants’ main takeaways from the trial and their reflections on what, if anything, could have been done differently.

[9] Although focus groups were initially considered, none were ultimately conducted. All qualitative insights discussed henceforth refer to individual interviews.

Procedures and confidentiality

For all interviews, both with employees and employers, the conversation began with a short explanation of the interview's purpose and estimated duration. Participants were then asked for their consent to record the interview for transcription purposes. All interviews were conducted online via MS Teams and were recorded. Additionally, post-hoc fieldnotes were made immediately after each interview to document key insights and contextual observations. Similarly, all surveys – both those administered to employers and employees – opened with an introductory section outlining the survey's purpose and estimated completion time. This was followed by a GDPR-compliant consent form informing respondents of their rights, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidential handling of their data.

In terms of data confidentiality, a formal Data Management Plan (DMP) was developed by Ghent University. This document detailed the types of data collected, procedures for data documentation, ethical and legal compliance (including GDPR), as well as the storage, backup, and preservation strategies for both short- and long-term data handling. Furthermore, bilateral data confidentiality agreements were established between each participating organization and both institutions responsible for the COLORBEL project – Ghent University and the Federal Planning Bureau – ensuring clarity on roles, responsibilities, and access restrictions for all shared data.

3.1.2.2 Data analysis

The analysis plan for RO1 was developed around the three primary streams of data collection: quantitative employee data, quantitative employer data, and qualitative data gathered through interviews and focus groups. Each stream served a distinct purpose within the broader objective of evaluating the effects of the RWT trial across the four key domains (wellbeing, productivity, employment, and the environment).

Analysis of quantitative employee data

The primary focus of the data analysis was on the employee survey data, collected across three waves (baseline, midpoint, and endpoint). Two analytical scenarios were foreseen, depending on the structure of participation across organizations and the extent of treatment differentiation within them.

The first – and methodologically preferred – scenario envisioned the construction of a quasi-experimental framework, allowing for a Difference-in-Difference (DiD) analysis. This approach would estimate the causal impact of the RWT intervention by comparing changes in outcome metrics before and after the intervention, between a treatment group (employees experiencing reduced working hours) and a control group (employees without such a reduction). In practice, this control group could have consisted of employees from the same organization who were not subject to the RWT policy – a structure permitted by the Belgian financial incentive system, which allow employers to implement the measure selectively (according to an objective criterion). Alternatively, the control group could have been constructed from comparable employees in other participating (or non-participating) organizations, provided they were not exposed to the intervention.

In cases where treatment and control groups were not directly comparable, propensity score matching or inverse probability weighting methods would have been applied to improve balance and reduce selection bias. Furthermore, multivariate DiD models would have included relevant control variables drawn from the baseline survey – such as particular socio-demographic characteristics and job attributes. The analytical framework was also informed by theoretical models discussed earlier, in particular the Job Demands–Resources model (Schaufeli, 2017) and the Work Ability model from the Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (Ria et al., 2019). These models offer conceptual guidance for structuring the analysis of wellbeing outcomes, identifying relevant mediators, moderators, and control variables for the various outcome metrics.

The second-best scenario, applicable when no adequate control group could be constructed, involved a within-group pre-post comparison of key outcome metrics among employees exposed to the RWT policy. While such an approach does not allow for causal inference, it remains valuable in offering descriptive insights on the evolution of key metrics, as well as potential variation across subgroups – in particular, by gender, sector, and implementation method.

Analysis of quantitative employer data

The employer survey was designed to ensure a consistent and comparable set of baseline data across all participating organizations. Its analysis served primarily a descriptive purpose, aimed at drawing up organizational profiles to contextualise employee outcomes. The data offered insight into variation in sector, size, working-time arrangements and the potential role of employee representation, as well as implementation formats and organizational motivations.

Analysis of qualitative interview and focus group data

The qualitative interviews with both employers and employees were designed to complement the quantitative data by providing deeper, context-rich insights that go beyond measurable outcomes. Two primary aims underpinned the qualitative component. First, interviews served to capture broader organizational context and sector-specific challenges not reflected in the survey data – offering a fuller profile of participating organizations, particularly valuable when comparing multiple cases. Second, they aimed to elicit more open-ended perspectives on the rationale behind the choice to adopt RWT, as well as expectations, perceived experiences, and implementation processes – allowing for a more nuanced understanding of both the preparation and execution phases of the trial.

Depending on the eventual level of participation in the trial, the analytical approach would vary. In the case of limited participation, interview material would be interpreted in an exploratory manner, primarily to enrich and contextualize the survey findings at the individual organizational level. If a larger number of organizations took part, a more systematic and methodologically grounded analysis – such as thematic coding – would be applied, especially to explore recurring motives, expectations, and reflections across cases. In either scenario, qualitative insights would help illuminate the implementation dynamics of RWT and, where relevant, inform the interpretation of quantitative results.

Reporting strategy

This report is designed to provide aggregate insights across participating organizations on the effects of the RWT trial, structured around the four target domains. Where possible, subgroup analyses were planned for key differentiating factors such as sector, gender, or implementation method. In addition to this overarching report, individual reports were planned for each participating organization, benchmarking their results against sector-level aggregates.

However, in all cases, reporting was conditional on ensuring adequate sample sizes to guarantee anonymity. Where disaggregation could lead to the identification of individual organizations or employees, data were excluded from public reporting in line with ethical and GDPR standards.

3.2 Research Objective 2 (RO2): Identifying drivers and barriers to RWT adoption in Belgian organizations

3.2.1 Literature review

To the best of our knowledge, no existing review study provides a comprehensive overview of the drivers and barriers associated with the adoption of RWT policies from the employer's perspective. To address this gap, we conducted a literature review focusing on employer-led RWT initiatives, that is, cases in which RWT policies were implemented at the organizational level. Consequently, we excluded instances of individual RWT (e.g., voluntary part-time work) and RWT policies implemented at a broader level than individual organizations (e.g., France's introduction of the 35-hour workweek in 2000).

3.2.1.1 Source selection criteria

To identify relevant literature, we applied a set of general selection criteria across three key areas: type of literature, timeframe, and content focus. First, with respect to the type of literature, we included both peer-reviewed journal articles and grey literature (e.g., policy reports, industry analyses, and relevant media sources such as newspapers) that provided insights into employer-led RWT initiatives. We confined our search to English-language publications only. Second, regarding timeframe, we restricted our review to studies published from 2000 onward to ensure contemporary relevance. Finally, to ensure alignment with the objectives of this review, we only included sources that explicitly examined the drivers and/or barriers to RWT adoption from the employer's perspective.

3.2.1.2 RWT policy-specific inclusion criteria

Within the selected literature, we applied additional criteria to determine which RWT policies were relevant for inclusion. Our review includes both empirical cases of RWT implementation and hypothetical evaluations of such policies. Empirical cases include both direct, permanent implementations as well as pilot programs, whether adopted by a single organization or through collective pilot initiatives involving multiple employers. To narrow the scope of the review, we applied three specific criteria regarding the RWT policies. First, we excluded opt-in policies, meaning that the RWT initiative had to be uniformly applied across multiple or all employees rather than left to individual discretion. Second, we excluded policies involving a fully proportional reduction in pay, as our focus was on RWT models that maintained at least some degree of pay retention. Third, only policies that reduced working hours by at least one hour per week were considered.

3.2.1.3 Search strategy

Our literature search combined two complementary approaches: a structured database search, and a targeted search and snowballing approach.

First, a structured database search was conducted using two databases: Web of Science and Scopus.[10] The search strategy involved two distinct queries, each combining overarching terms that represented a broader set of keywords. These overarching terms – such as "drivers" or "barriers" – acted as shorthand for multiple related keywords, which were connected using the Boolean operator "OR". For

[10] Two additional databases, Google Scholar and JSTOR, were initially considered for performing the same queries. However, Google Scholar returned an unmanageable number of records, making systematic screening infeasible, while JSTOR's advanced search options were too limited to accommodate the structured queries used in this study.

instance, the term "drivers" encompassed keywords including "driver", "motivation", and "incentive".[11] Boolean operators were then used to systematically combine these overarching terms. The first query included the terms "working-time reduction", "employer", and "drivers OR barriers," all connected with the Boolean operator "AND". The second query combined the terms "working-time reduction" and "business case" with the Boolean operator "AND". These searches aimed to capture literature addressing the motivations and challenges employers face in implementing RWT policies.

The first query returned 24 and 61 unique records (in Web of Science and Scopus respectively), while the second query yielded 1 and 2 unique records (in Web of Science and Scopus respectively). After removing duplicates, a total of 67 unique records were retained. Titles and abstracts were screened based on the inclusion criteria described above. Following this screening process, 4 relevant studies were retained for further analysis.

Second, we employed a targeted search strategy, starting from known RWT pilot programs from recent years (both single-company and multi-employer initiatives). We identified relevant studies – primarily policy and research reports – analyzing these pilots. To further expand our literature base, we used a snowballing technique, drawing from both (i) studies on these pilots and (ii) well-established, highly cited publications in the RWT literature. After applying the inclusion criteria, this combined approach resulted in 14 relevant cases.

3.2.1.4 Selected cases

Table 1 provides an overview of the 18 cases retained for analysis. For each case, it includes a brief description, the type of RWT examined (either an actual implementation or a hypothetical evaluation, meaning employers' perceptions of such policies), the research method and sample used (e.g., surveys, interviews, or researchers' interpretative analysis after conducting a pilot), and the source(s). Additionally, it specifies whether drivers and barriers are discussed explicitly (i.e. referred to using terms such as "reasons" or "motivations" for drivers, and "challenges" for barriers), implicitly (i.e. inferred indirectly from the context), or not at all.

Most cases (N = 15) involve actual RWT implementations, with single-company pilots (N = 9) and multi-company pilots (N = 4) making up the majority. Additionally, most cases (N = 15) are situated in Europe. While nearly all cases (N = 17) discuss drivers, barriers are mentioned in fewer than half (N = 7). This trend is expected, given that most cases focus on actual RWT implementations at the organizational level. Employers who adopt such policies are likely to have clear motivations for doing so, which naturally leads to a more prominent discussion of drivers. In contrast, barriers are likely underreported – whether consciously or unconsciously – in these cases. This is partly because they are inherently less relevant for companies actively engaging in RWT trials, as their decision to proceed suggests that the perceived drivers outweigh potential barriers. Additionally, a form of positive reporting bias may be at play, as many sources emphasize successful trials, potentially due to strategic or promotional considerations.

[11] The complete list of keywords associated with each overarching term ("drivers", "barriers", "working-time reduction", "employer" and "business case") is provided in Annex Table B.

Case	Description	Type	Research method & sample*	Drivers	Barriers	Source(s)
1	Survey with employers on advantages & limitations of RWT to 32 hours (2023, Valencia - Spain)	Hypothetical evaluation	Interviews with managers: stratified random sampling by sector and number of workers, such that the sample is representative of the profile of the productive structure of the Valencian Community's companies (N = 371)	Implicit	Implicit	Elias (2023)
2	Report for the EU on the role of social dialogue, digitalisation & restructuring in Belgium (2018, Belgium)	Hypothetical evaluation	- Desk research: practitioners papers, scientific papers, reports, surveys, social dialogue documents etc. linked to digitalization, restructuring or social dialogue between May & July 2018 - Interviews with experts: trade unions, employers' organizations, academics & other complementary structures (N = 15)	N/A	Implicit	Beuker et al. (2018)
3	Report written by the CIPD addressing the knowledge gap in employer perspectives to inform organizations & policy makers of the challenges & opportunities of a move to shorter working hours (2022, UK)	Hypothetical evaluation & actual RWT***	Survey with senior HR decision-makers in the UK (N=2000)	Explicit	Explicit	Boys (2022)
4	Master thesis on identification of managerial practices & strategies when reducing weekly working hours within an organization (Sweden, 2023)	Actual RWT (multiple companies)	Interviews with managers (N = 6)	Explicit	N/A	Karmfalk & Ekermann (2023)

5	Report on employers' perspectives on RWT & eco-social implications (Hungary, 2020)	Actual RWT (multiple companies)	- Interviews with executive or HR managers (N = 10) - Researchers' analysis on likelihood of RWT by analyzing characteristics of the companies in the sample (constructed through a combination of purposive & snowball sampling)	Explicit	Explicit	Hidasi et al. (2023)
6	UK pilot (2022)	Actual RWT (multi-company pilot)	- Pre-pilot interviews with a selection of company seniors from the sample of companies participating in the pilot (N = 70)** - Researchers' interpretative analysis after conducting the pilot (i.e. based on full experience: guidance track (workshops, coaching & mentoring), surveys, interviews, ...)	Explicit	Explicit	Lewis et al. (2023)
7	South-African pilot (2023)	Actual RWT (multi-company pilot)	- Interviews with a selection of company managers from the sample of companies participating in the pilot (N = 29)** - Researchers' interpretative analysis after conducting the pilot (i.e. based on full experience: guidance track (workshops, coaching & mentoring), surveys, interviews, ...)	Explicit	N/A	4 Day Week Global (2023)
8	Portuguese pilot (2023)	Actual RWT (multi-company pilot)	- Various company-level questionnaires (initial (N = 106), intermediate (N = 39), final (N = 31), and exit in case of drop-out (N = 50)), filled out by a business leader or HR director of the companies participating in the pilot (N = 120)** - Case studies based on	Explicit	Explicit	Gomes & Fontinha (2024)

			interviews with company leaders (N = 10)			
9	German pilot (2024)	Actual RWT (multi-company pilot)	- Interviews with a selection of company leaders, top management and project initiators from the sample of companies participating in the pilot (N = 45)** - Researchers' interpretative analysis after conducting the pilot (i.e. based on full experience: guidance track (workshops, coaching & mentoring), surveys, interviews, ...)	Explicit	Explicit	Backmann et al. (2024)
10	13-person wholesale company (2021, Hungary)	Actual RWT (single-company pilot)	Interview with the manager both before and one year after implementation	Implicit	N/A	Venczel (2024)
11	IIH Nordic (2017, Denmark)	Actual RWT (single-company pilot)	Self-reported evaluation of workplace experience by employee (post-hoc, anecdotical)	Explicit	N/A	Reyes (2019)
12	Perpetual Guardian (2018, New Zealand)	Actual RWT (single-company pilot)	[Source A] Thematic analysis based on: - Focus groups & semi-structured interviews with 45 employees - Analysis of relevant organizational documents - Collection of public statements and conversations of the company's founder/director prior to and throughout the trial period [Source B] Interpretative analysis based on secondary sources	Explicit	N/A	Source A: Delaney & Casey (2022) Source B: Gomes (2021)
13	Femma (2019, Belgium)	Actual RWT (single-	[Source A] Analysis of relevant organizational	Implicit	N/A	Source A: Mullens &

		company pilot)	documents [Source B] Researchers' interpretative analysis after conducting the pilot (i.e. based on full experience: preparation phase, surveys, interviews & focus groups, ...)			Glorieux (2023) Source B: Mullens & Glorieux (2024)
14	Microsoft (2019, Japan)	Actual RWT (single-company pilot)	[Source A] Interpretative analysis based on secondary sources [Source B] Descriptive analysis of secondary sources	Explicit	N/A	Source A: Statham & Smith (2021) Source B: Gatlin-Keener & Lunsford (2020)
15	Unilever (2020, New Zealand)	Actual RWT (single-company pilot)	Interpretative analysis based on secondary sources	Explicit	N/A	Statham & Smith (2021)
16	Software DELSOL (2020, Spain)	Actual RWT (single-company pilot)	[Source A] Descriptive analysis of secondary sources [Source B] Interview with HR manager (informal)	Implicit	N/A	Source A: New Economics Foundation (2020) Source B: El Pais (2022)
17	groupe LDLC (2021, France)	Actual RWT (single-company pilot)	Excerpt from company-provided documentation (universal registration document)	Implicit	N/A	Groupe LDLC (2021)
18	AFAS software (2025, the Netherlands & Belgium)	Actual RWT (single-company pilot)	Excerpt from company-provided documentation (press release)	Explicit	N/A	AFAS (2024)

** Only the research method relevant to identifying drivers and barriers is reported; other methods used in the study are omitted if they did not contribute to these findings.*
*** The maximum sample size is mentioned, including both (i) companies that ran through the full pilot, as well as (ii) companies that dropped out along various phases of the pilot.*
**** 16% of the sample has reduced working time in past five years, of which 10% kept pay the same, while 6% also reduced pay. Cases of pay retention are most likely linked to Covid-19 job retention furlough schemes.*

Table 1: Summary of selected cases for literature review.

3.2.1.5 Analysis

The analysis of the 18 cases for this literature review proceeded in two successive steps. The first step consisted of a systematic, detailed extraction and classification of all motives – both drivers and barriers – related to the implementation of RWT. For each case, the relevant motives were identified

and recorded into separate lists for drivers and barriers. These lists were then analyzed iteratively, grouping similar motives into meaningful, high-level categories. To guide this categorization, a stakeholder-based approach was applied throughout: each motive was classified according to whether it primarily concerned employees, employers, or society. A separate category was reserved for broader external influences that do not align with a specific stakeholder group. The categorization process continued until theoretical saturation was reached, i.e. when no new categories emerged from additional cases.

Because several motives intersected multiple thematic areas, we applied a primary–secondary classification scheme: each motive was assigned to one primary category and, where relevant, to up to two secondary categories. This ensured that overlapping or multi-dimensional motives could be accurately represented without compromising the structure of the framework.

The second step of the analysis involved synthesizing these findings into a summarized classification framework. This framework aggregates the results by indicating, for each case, whether at least one motive was classified (either as a primary or secondary classification) under a given category. The full motive-level classifications are provided in Annex Table C and Annex Table D, while the summarized framework itself is presented and discussed further in Section 4.2.1.

3.2.2 Interviews with Belgian companies

3.2.2.1 Sampling procedure

We aimed to include two main types of organizations for the interviews: those that adopted an RWT arrangement (whether through a trial or immediate full implementation), and those that did not. Within the group of non-adopting organizations, an additional distinction was considered relevant, namely: whether or not the organization had been previously involved in the COLORBEL project. This distinction allowed us to differentiate between non-adopters who had already engaged with the project – either during the initial recruitment phase or through spontaneous contact after the trial had already started – and those who had no prior involvement. For the former, conducting semi-structured interviews was considered a more robust and valuable approach to capturing their perspectives on RWT, rather than relying solely on anecdotal impressions gathered through informal exchanges (e.g., by email, phone, or MS Teams). This led to the identification of three relevant organization groups to be included for the interviews:

- **Adopters (I)**: organizations that implemented an RWT trial, either through participation in the COLORBEL trial or independently.
- **Drop-outs (II)**: organizations that had expressed interest in the COLORBEL trial but ultimately did not implement RWT.
- **Non-adopters (III)**: organizations with no prior engagement in the COLORBEL project and no implementation of RWT.

To sample organizations for these three groups, two different methods were applied: convenience sampling for the first two groups (adopters and drop-outs) (A), and stratified random sampling based on organizational typology for the third group (non-adopters) (B). Table 2 summarizes the recruitment outcomes per group and method, with both sampling approaches further detailed in the following sections.

Organization group	RWT trial implemented?	Involvement COLORBEL trial (RO1)?	Sampling method	#organizations contacted	#organizations participating
I Adopters	Yes	Yes	Convenience sampling (RO1)	4	4
II Drop-outs	No	Yes	Convenience sampling (RO1)	21	8
III Non-adopters	No	No	Stratified random sampling	207	19
Total					**31**

Table 2: Criteria, sampling method and recruitment results by organization group.

(A) Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling was applied to the pool of organizations that had expressed interest in the COLORBEL project at any stage, either during the initial recruitment phase or later through spontaneous contact after the trial had started. As detailed in Section 4.1.1, this pool consisted of 25

organizations. Among them, 4 organizations proceeded to implement an RWT trial: 1 within the COLORBEL trial and 3 independently. These were categorized as adopters. The remaining 21, who did not proceed to implementation despite earlier interest, were categorized as drop-outs.

To recruit adopter and drop-out interviewees, we contacted the primary person(s) we had previously interacted with in each of the 25 organizations. Email invitations were sent in October 2024, explaining the aim of the follow-up interviews, namely to better understand motivations, barriers, and – where applicable – experiences related to RWT. We emphasized the value of their participation given the limited research in this area, as well as the importance of their unique position as organizations that had already expressed interest in RWT. To further encourage participation, we offered to share the final report of the project with those taking part in the interview. Additionally, the invitation mail clarified that the interview would last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and could be held either in person at their office or online via MS Teams. Interviewees could choose to participate in Dutch, French or English, depending on their preference. It was explicitly stated that all information would be treated with strict confidentiality and that data would be processed in accordance with GDPR regulations. If no reply was received within a week, a follow-up reminder was sent.

Of the 25 organizations contacted, all 4 adopters agreed to participate (100% response rate), while 8 out of 21 drop-outs responded positively (38% response rate).

(B) Stratified random sampling based on organizational typology

For the group of non-adopters, relying on open calls or general outreach would have risked considerable self-selection – particularly if interest in RWT varies systematically across sectors, organizational sizes, or other structural characteristics. To mitigate such risks, a more targeted and systematic sampling strategy was adopted. The aim was to select Belgian non-adopting organizations that are potentially open to RWT implementation, based on structural similarities with organizations abroad that had previously adopted RWT. To this end, we developed a stratified random sampling approach based on an organizational typology. The sections below detail the construction of this typology (B1) and how it was subsequently used to guide the sampling process (B2).

(B1) Organizational typology construction

The primary objective of constructing an organizational typology was to enable targeted sampling of Belgian non-adopters that share sectoral and size-related characteristics with organizations abroad that have already implemented reduced working time. To achieve this, we performed a cluster analysis on international adopter data, followed by a stepwise refinement process to ensure the resulting typology was sufficiently specific and practical for sampling purposes.

Data sources

The typology construction was based on two complementary datasets containing organizations that had adopted RWT either through self-initiated changes or participation in national pilot programs. The first dataset was retrieved from 4dayweek.io, a public website where organizations can be listed as adopters of shorter workweeks. The second dataset was compiled from three recent national RWT trials conducted in Spain, Portugal, and Germany.

4dayweek.io dataset (N = 330)

The 4dayweek.io website includes organizations registered either through self-submission or by the site's founder. It features a wide range of shorter and/or flexible workweek formats. These include variations such as a 32-hour, four-day week at full or partial pay, 9-day fortnights, seasonal shorter workweeks (e.g., "Free Fridays" in summer), or traditional five-day weeks with highly flexible hours. To ensure alignment with the RWT definition applied in this project, we applied two filters: only organizations that (i) had implemented a four-day workweek format, and (ii) limited full-time working hours to a maximum of 36 hours, were retained. Additionally, only organizations with complete information on both sector and size were included. After filtering and data cleaning, the final sample comprised 330 organizations.

The data provided by the founder of 4dayweek.io included, beyond basic identifiers (name, description, and website), detailed characteristics of the workweek model implemented (e.g., format, hours-per-day structure, designated day off when applicable), and additional information on working time arrangements (such as vacation days and the use of telework or flexible hours).

Country trial dataset (N = 107)

The second dataset was composed of organizations that participated in recent national pilot trials on reduced working time in Europe, in particular Spain, Portugal, and Germany. Although differing in implementation details, all three pilots shared the key features that it concerned a voluntary set-up, real reductions in working hours, and full wage retention.

- Spain (N = 21): This subset includes participants in the Valencian regional subsidy program, launched in 2022. The program provided financial compensation to companies committing to a reduction in weekly working hours, provided that they meet a series of requirements (such as full wage retention and minimal staff coverage rate). Compensation was offered on a declining scale over a three-year period. We collected data on organization size, sector, and the year in which the subsidy was granted.[12]
- Portugal (N = 41): In 2023, Portugal launched a national pilot targeting private-sector firms. Participation was voluntary (and reversible), and no financial support was provided. However, the government ensured that technical assistance was provided by an expert partner (4 Day Week Global), while the scientific monitoring of the project was carried out by the University of Porto. Participants were required to implement real working time reductions with full wage retention. The Portuguese data used in this study comprised both trial participants (N = 21)

[12] Sectoral information was described using a categorical variable with 12 sector labels (e.g., "Consulting", "Marketing", "Transports/Logistics"). To enable harmonized analysis and align with the Federal Planning Bureau (FPB) dataset – which uses the NACE-classification –, these sector labels were manually mapped to the corresponding ISIC (International Standard Industrial Classification) sections using ChatGPT. Size was originally recorded as the number of employees and was converted into the same nine-category size classification used in the FPB dataset (with the following categories: < 5; 5-9; 10-19; 20-49; 50-99; 100-199; 200-499; 500-999; > 1000), to enable straightforward stratified sampling based on the constructed typology.

and pre-trial adopters (N = 20). Available variables include size, sector, region, profit orientation, and motivations for participation.[13]

- Germany (N = 45): This pilot, launched in 2024, also featured a six-month trial with similar participation criteria as the Portuguese trial (actual reduction, full pay retention) as well as an additional criterion (active involvement and support of key decision-makers in the organization, such as top management and work councils). Participating firms paid a fee in exchange for support from an expert partner (Intraprenör, the German country partner of 4 Day Week Global) and for scientific follow-up (jointly provided by Intraprenör and the University of Münster). Data included size, sector, and profit orientation.[14]

All datasets were harmonized to produce consistent, anonymized case-level records with two key variables: organization size and sector.

Cluster analysis

To develop an actionable typology for sampling non-adopters, we performed a cluster analysis using two key variables: organization size and sector. The analysis was conducted separately for the two datasets – the 4dayweek.io dataset and the country trial dataset. In each case, we applied hierarchical clustering using Ward's linkage method and squared Euclidean distance as the distance metric. The optimal number of clusters was determined through a combination of graphical inspection (dendrogram analysis) and numerical criteria, specifically the Duda–Hart (DH) index and the Variance Ratio Criterion (VRC) index.

For the 4dayweek.io dataset, the five-cluster and six-cluster solutions were identified as the most informative, while for the country trial dataset, the three-cluster and ten-cluster solutions came out as the best options (see Table 3). Rather than selecting a single solution for each dataset, we considered the structure and consistency across these four solutions in parallel. This approach allowed us to identify recurring groupings and patterns, thereby acknowledging that clustering outcomes are partially dependent on the underlying dataset and sample composition.

In support of this analysis, we visualized the sectoral and size compositions of each cluster per cluster solution using relative frequency plots and bubble charts. Annex Figures I-IV display the size and sector distributions for all clusters per cluster solution, while Table 4 provides a descriptive overview of the clusters per cluster solution. These visualizations highlighted that clustering was driven primarily by sector, with size playing a secondary – though still meaningful – role. Most clusters were composed of a small number of ISIC sections, often concentrated within a single domain of activity, whereas size

[13] Sectoral information was described using a categorical variable with 9 categories (e.g., "Professional, scientific and technical activities", "Information and communication", "Human health and social work activities"). These were matched to ISIC sections using ChatGPT. Size was recorded as a continuous variable (number of employees) and was recoded into the same nine-category size classification used in the FPB dataset, to enable straightforward stratified sampling based on the constructed typology.

[14] Sectoral information was recorded as a categorical variable with 16 categories (e.g., "Professional services", "Health care or social assistance", "IT & Telecoms"). These were matched to ISIC sections using ChatGPT. Size was already recorded as an 8-category categorical variable (with values such as 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 1000, etc.) and was recoded into the nine-category size variable used in the FPB dataset, to enable straightforward stratified sampling based on the constructed typology.

distributions tended to be more mixed (some clusters covering only a particular range of sizes (e.g., primarily small or primarily large), while other clusters cover the whole range of sizes).

Across all four clustering solutions, several consistent sectoral groupings emerged, often reflected in similar clusters across the solutions. One of the most recurrent groupings comprised social and community-oriented services, typically bringing together organizations in ISIC sections P (Education), Q (Human health and social work activities), R (Arts, entertainment and recreation), and S (Other service activities). This pattern was particularly evident in cluster 5 (I), 6 (II), 2 (III), and clusters 3, 6 and 7 (IV) (see Table 4).

A second recurring cluster grouped together technology- and finance-oriented firms, encompassing ISIC sections J (Information and communication), K (Financial and insurance activities), and L (Real estate activities). This was clearly visible as a stand-alone cluster – in cluster 1 and 2 (II), and 2 and 5 (IV) –, and combined with another cluster – in cluster 2 (I) and 1 (III) (see Table 4).

A third structure frequently grouped professional and support services, including organizations in ISIC sections M (Professional, scientific and technical activities) and N (Administrative and support service activities). This grouping appeared consistently, for instance as a stand-alone cluster – in cluster 3 (I), 3 and 4 (II), 1 and 4 (IV) –, and combined with another cluster – in cluster 2 (I) and 1 (III) (see Table 4).

A fourth commonly observed cluster included manufacturing and utilities, combining organizations in ISIC sections C (Manufacturing), D (Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply) and F (Construction). This structure was found as a stand-alone cluster – in clusters 9 and 10 (V) –, and combined with another cluster – in cluster 4 (I), 5 (II), 3 (III) and 8 (IV) (see Table 4).

Finally, trade-related sectors, such as ISIC section G (Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles) and H (Transportation and storage), appeared most commonly grouped with manufacturing and construction activities, especially in cluster 4 (I), 5 (II), 3 (III) and 8 (IV) (see Table 4).

Several ISIC sections were either absent or nearly absent from the datasets and were therefore not represented in any cluster. In particular, section I (Accommodation and food services) appeared only once and was excluded from further analysis. The following sections were entirely absent and thus also excluded: A (Agriculture, forestry and fishing), B (Mining and quarrying), E (Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation), O (Public administration and defence; compulsory social security), T (Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities for own use), and U (Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies). Based on the recurring patterns identified in the clustering phase, we constructed a first version of the typology consisting of four broad categories, primarily structured along sectoral lines (see Table 5). However, while analytically coherent, this four-category typology remained too coarse for sampling purposes. The categories captured large and diverse sectors and did not differentiate between organizations by size – an essential dimension for our stratified sampling.

Sol	Dataset	N	# Clusters	Decision criteria
I	4dayweek.io	330	5	VRC-index (1st best solution) & dendrogram (granular)
II	4dayweek.io	330	6	DH-index (1st best solution) & dendrogram (granular)
III	Country trials	107	3	DH-index (2nd best solution) & dendrogram
IV	Country trials	107	10	DH-index (3nd best solution) & VRC-index (3rd best solution)

Table 3: Characteristics and decision criteria per cluster solution.

Sol	Cluster number	Freq (abs)	Freq (rel)	Description
I	1	82	25%	Small & Medium-Sized Tech/Finance Companies
	2	58	18%	Large Tech/Finance & Professional/Support Services
	3	101	31%	Small & Medium-Sized Professional/Support Services
	4	18	5%	Manufacturing & Trade Organizations (all sizes)
	5	71	22%	Social & Community Services (all sizes, primarily SME)
II	1	82	25%	Small & Medium-Sized Tech/Finance Companies
	2	34	10%	Medium-Sized Tech/Finance Companies
	3	24	7%	Medium & Large-sized Professional/Support Services
	4	101	31%	Small & Medium-Sized Professional/Support Services
	5	18	5%	Manufacturing & Trade Organizations (all sizes)
	6	71	22%	Social & Community Services (all sizes, primarily SME)
III	1	62	58%	Tech/Finance & Professional/Support Services (all sizes, primarily small & SME)
	2	24	22%	Social & Community Services (all sizes, primarily medium)
	3	21	20%	Manufacturing, Utilities & Trade Organizations (all sizes, primarily medium to large)
IV	1	14	13%	Medium & Large-sized Professional/Support Services
	2	1	1%	Very large Tech Companies
	3	3	3%	Very large Social & Community Services
	4	27	25%	Small Professional/Support Services
	5	17	16%	Small & Medium-Sized Tech/Finance/Accommodation/Real estate/Transportation Companies
	6	19	18%	Medium & Large-sized Social & Community Services
	7	5	5%	Small Social & Community Services (Education & Other services)
	8	10	9%	Small & Medium-sized Trade & Construction
	9	3	3%	Very large Manufacturing
	10	8	7%	Medium & Large-sized Manufacturing and Utilities

Table 4: Frequencies and description for each cluster per cluster solution (I, II, III and IV).

Category	Name	ISIC classification section (letter)	Size
I	Social & Community Services	P, Q, R, S	All
II	Professional / Support Services	M, N	All
III	Tech / Finance Companies	J, K, L	All
IV	Manufacturing & Utilities; Trade Organizations	C, D, F, G, H	All

Table 5: Four-category typology (step 1).

Stepwise typology refinement

To develop a more practically usable typology, we refined the initial four-category typology through a stepwise process, based on the observed frequency distributions of sector and size across the datasets. First, we calculated the weighted sectoral distributions within each of the four categories, drawing from both the 4dayweek.io and the country trial datasets. The weights corrected for differences in sample size between the two datasets, enabling the construction of a combined and harmonized adopter dataset with a frequency distribution proportionally reflecting both sources.

The results of this analysis, presented in Table 6, served as the basis for two key refinements. First, we excluded original category IV – an aggregate of manufacturing, utilities, and trade-related sectors – due to its relatively low representation in the data (9%) and the high internal heterogeneity of the grouped ISIC sections. The diversity of these sectors made this category unsuitable for targeted sampling. Second, we introduced further differentiation within the remaining three categories by splitting off subcategories for individual ISIC sections that were sufficiently prominent across the data. Specifically, we identified three sectors that consistently accounted for at least 10% of the combined sample: section J (Information and communication; 26%), section M (Professional, scientific, and technical activities; 32%), and section S (Other service activities; 10%). These were extracted as separate categories, resulting in a more fine-grained and analytically coherent structure.

ISIC classification section		**Relative frequency (weighted across datasets)**	
Letter	**Name**	**Share of section**	**Share of category (four-category typology)**
C	Manufacturing	4%	9%
D	Electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply	1%	
F	Construction	1%	
G	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	3%	
H	Transportation & Storage	0.5%	
J	Information and communication	26%	31%
K	Financial and insurance activities	4%	
L	Real estate activities	1%	
M	Professional, scientific, and technical activities	32%	38%
N	Administrative and support service activities	5%	
P	Education	4%	22%
Q	Human health and social work activities	3%	
R	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	5%	
S	Other service activities	10%	

Table 6: Relative frequencies per section (ISIC classification) and category (four-category typology). Weighted frequencies were calculated based on sample sizes of 330 (for the 4dayweek.io dataset) and 106 (for the country trial dataset) (one observation from the latter dataset was excluded as it corresponded to a rarely occurring sector).

Category	Name	ISIC classification section (letter)	Size
I	Social & Community Services	S	All
II	Social & Community Services	P, Q, R	All
III	Professional / Support Services	M	All
IV	Professional / Support Services	N	All
V	Tech / Finance Companies	J	All
VI	Tech / Finance Companies	K, L	All

Table 7: Six-category typology (step 2).

Table 7 presents the resulting six-category typology. With this typology in place – offering sufficient refinement along the sectoral dimension and a clearer delineation between dominant activity types – the typology was now deemed suitable as a foundation for a first step of stratified sampling. At this stage, we proceeded to assign the total number of interviews to be conducted across the six categories. This step was taken prior to introducing additional size-based differentiation, as sector composition was considered the primary structural feature driving variation across adopter organizations.

Given practical constraints – including the need to balance the number of interviews with adopters, drop-outs, and non-adopters, as well as the limited overall research capacity – it was decided to target a total of 14 interviews for the non-adopter group. This number was sufficiently high to allow for meaningful variation across sectoral categories, while also remaining feasible from a logistical and resource perspective. The distribution of these 14 interviews across the six categories was guided by the weighted average frequencies of each category in the combined adopter dataset. These frequencies were calculated after excluding organizations in category IV of the original four-category solution, which had been dropped due to low representation and internal heterogeneity.[15] Based on this distribution, the following allocation was made: 2 interviews for categories I and II, 5 for category III, 1 for category IV, 3 for category V, and 1 for category VI.

In a final refinement step, we introduced size differentiation into the typology. For categories assigned only one interview (IV and VI), no further stratification was applied; instead, we assessed the full size distribution of organization sizes within each category to define a reasonable sampling range and avoid targeting extreme outliers. Figure 3 illustrates the weighted size distributions across the full size range for both categories, based on the combined adopter dataset. In category IV, the vast majority of organizations had fewer than 200 employees, with only around 5% exceeding 1000. Based on this distribution, we imposed an upper cap of 200 employees for sampling in this category. In category VI, nearly half of the organizations fell within the 20–49 employee range, while another 18% were in the 5–9 range. Reflecting this concentration, we limited the sampling range for category VI to organizations with 5 to 49 employees.

For the four categories that were assigned more than one interview – that is categories I, II, III, and V – we introduced further stratification by size, resulting in two size-based subcategories for each. This

[15] The weighted average frequencies – calculated using sample sizes of 312 for the 4dayweek.io dataset and 84 for the country trial dataset – were respectively: 11%, 13%, 36%, 6%, 28%, and 6% for categories I through VI of the six-category typology.

step was essential to ensure that variation in organizational size, which appeared to be meaningful across adopter organizations, was adequately reflected in the sampling of non-adopters.

To keep the typology manageable and consistent with the structure of the FPB dataset, we restricted the stratification to three size brackets: less than 20 employees, 20–49 employees, and 50 or more employees. Accordingly, only two cut-off values (20 and 50 employees) were considered. For each of the four categories, we determined both (1) which of the two cut-off values to use, and (2) how many interviews to allocate to each resulting subcategory, in a single step. More specifically, this decision was made by comparing the possible interview allocations to the weighted size distributions observed in the combined adopter dataset, aiming for the closest possible alignment between interview shares and empirical frequencies. The underlying weighted size distributions across the 3 size groups are visualized in Figure 4.

In category III (assigned 5 interviews), a cut-off of 20 employees yielded a reasonably close match: three of the five interviews were allocated to organizations with fewer than 20 employees and two to those with 20 or more, resulting in a 60%–40% split that mirrors the weighted distribution (58%–42%). In category V (assigned 3 interviews), the same cut-off allowed for a workable allocation of two interviews to the smallest size bracket and one to the 20+ group. While the resulting 66%–33% split deviates from the 50%–50% distribution in the data, it still offered a reasonable balance and ensured that organizations with fewer than 20 employees – representing half the sample – were sufficiently represented.

We applied the same logic to categories I and II, each assigned two interviews. For category I, the size distribution was nearly evenly spread across the three brackets, which made both cut-off options yield similar results and made it difficult to meaningfully align interview allocation with the data with any of both cut-off values. For category II, the two candidate cut-off values led to distributions of 40%–60% and 62%–38%, respectively – both roughly equidistant from a 50%–50% split. In both cases, we opted for a cut-off of 50 employees, allowing for some flexibility in sampling smaller organizations while still ensuring representation of firms with 50 or more employees.

By splitting each of these four sector-based categories into two subcategories based on size, we arrived at a final typology consisting of ten categories, combining both sector and size dimensions. Table 8 provides an overview of this ten-category typology and the number of interviews assigned to each category.

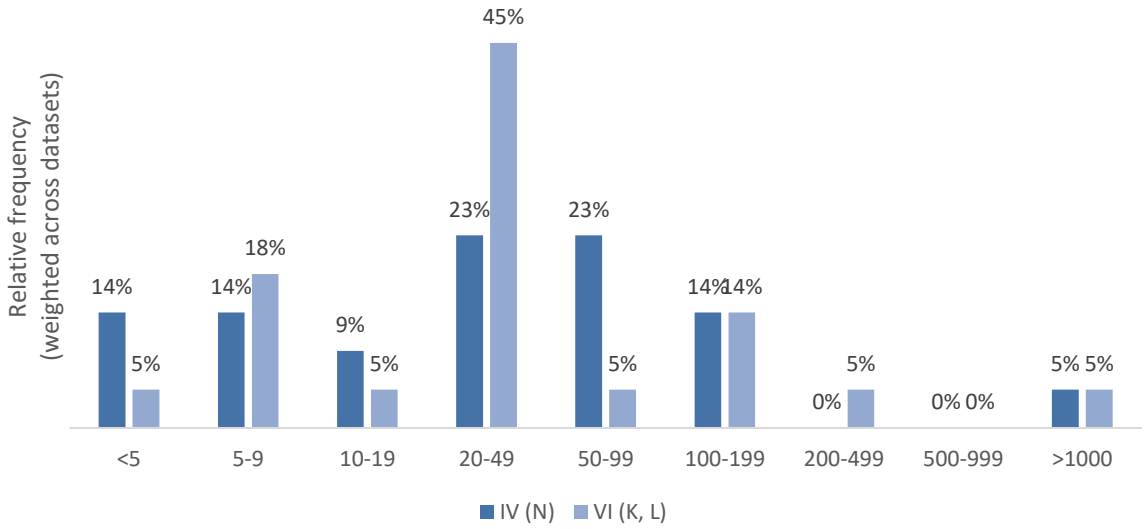

Figure 3: Organization size distribution (9 classes) for categories IV and VI of the six-category typology (see Table 7). Weighted frequencies were calculated based on sample sizes of 312 (4dayweek.io dataset) and 84 (country trial dataset) (after excluding sections belonging to category IV of the four-category typology).

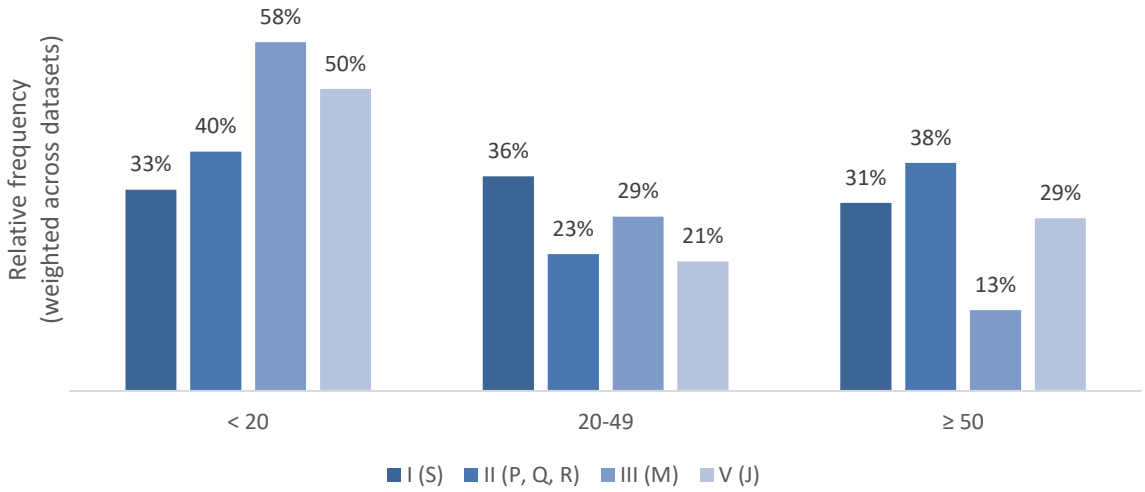

Figure 4: Organization size distribution (3 classes) for categories I, II, III and V of the six-category typology (see Table 7). Weighted frequencies were calculated based on sample sizes of 312 (4dayweek.io dataset) and 84 (country trial dataset) (after excluding sections belonging to category IV of the four-category typology).

Category	Name	ISIC classification section (letter)	Size	# Interviews
I	Social & Community Services	S	< 50	1
II	Social & Community Services	S	≥ 50	1
III	Social & Community Services	P, Q, R	< 50	1
IV	Social & Community Services	P, Q, R	≥ 50	1
V	Professional / Support Services	M	< 20	3
VI	Professional / Support Services	M	≥ 20	2
VII	Professional / Support Services	N	< 200	1
VIII	Tech / Finance Companies	J	< 20	2
IX	Tech / Finance Companies	J	≥ 20	1
X	Tech / Finance Companies	K, L	5 - 49	1

Table 8: Ten-category typology (step 3).

(B2) Sampling procedure

The organizational typology described above – consisting of ten categories (I to X), each defined by sector and size (see Table 8) – served as the basis for a stratified random sampling procedure to recruit interviewees among non-adopter organizations. In total, three sampling rounds were conducted, resulting in 19 interviews. Table 9 summarizes the sampling outcomes.

		Category (ten-category typology)											
		I	**II**	**III**	**IV**	**V**	**VI**	**VII**	**VIII**	**IX**	**X**	**Other**	**Total**
Sample round 1 (9/12/24)	# sampled	10	10	10	10	30	20	10	20	10	10	0	140
	# contacted	8	9	9	9	12	19	4	11	9	8	0	98
	# interviewed	1	2	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	9
Sample round 2 (6/1/25)	# sampled	0	0	0	10	29*	0	10	20	0	10	1**	80
	# contacted	0	0	0	10	19	0	10	10	0	9	1	59
	# interviewed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	3
Sample round 3 (5/2/25)	# sampled	1**	0	0	15	29*	0	15	0	0	0	0	60
	# contacted	1	0	0	15	24	0	10	0	0	0	0	50
	# interviewed	1	0	0	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
Total across rounds	# sampled	11	10	10	35	88	20	35	40	10	20	1	280
	# contacted	9	9	9	34	55	19	24	21	9	17	1	207
	# interviewed	2	2	1	4	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	19
Required		1	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	1	1	0	14

"Other" refers to an organization whose sector-size combination does not correspond to any of the ten categories defined in the ten-category typology.
** Sampled frequency which was intended to be higher, but turned out to be lower due to miss-classification of particular organizations (real type deviating from type sampled in FPB dataset).*
*** Unintentionally sampled frequency due to miss-classification of particular organizations (real type deviating from type sampled in FPB dataset).*

Table 9: Target frequencies and sampling outcomes (per sample round) by category (ten-category typology) and in total.

First sampling round

In the first sampling round, a random sample of organizations was drawn within each of the ten types defined by the organizational typology. This was done using a dataset provided by the Federal Planning Bureau, which included information on sector (ISIC classification), size (in nine standardized size classes), and the geographic location of each organization's headquarters. The sampling was stratified by both typology and region, with the aim of ensuring a balanced representation across Belgium's

three regions: Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels.[16] For each type, we sampled ten times the number of interviews ultimately required. For example, for category V (which required three interviews), a total of 30 organizations were sampled – 10 for each of the three regions. In total, this first round resulted in a sample of 140 organizations.

The sampling process produced a list of CBE (Crossroads Bank for Enterprises) numbers corresponding to the selected organizations. For each, publicly available contact information was retrieved manually, primarily through the organization's website. Priority was given to obtaining personal contact details of C-level staff, such as CEOs or HR directors; if not retrievable, general company email addresses were used. In addition, LinkedIn was used to identify and contact relevant individuals, using a premium account to allow for personalized outreach when profile settings permitted to do so.

Some organizations were excluded at this stage due to missing or untraceable contact details (e.g., no website nor email address), or because they were single-person enterprises, which were deemed unsuitable for the interview objectives. These cases were treated as sample attrition. After this filtering step, 98 of the 140 sampled organizations remained eligible for contact.

Each of these 98 organizations was subsequently contacted by email and/or LinkedIn. Messages were sent in the language corresponding to the organization's region (Dutch for Flanders, French for Wallonia, and both Dutch and French for Brussels-based organizations). The message briefly explained the project's aim, stated that the interview would take approximately 30 minutes, and offered flexibility in interview format (online or in-person) and language (Dutch, French, or English). It also emphasized that participation was voluntary, responses would remain confidential, and data would be processed in line with GDPR regulations. As an incentive, participants were offered a copy of the final project report. A follow-up reminder was sent one week after the initial message if no reply had been received by then.

Ultimately, nine interviews were conducted in this round, corresponding to a response rate of approximately 9%. As expected, the majority of organizations did not respond, and a few explicitly declined participation due to lack of time or interest.

Second sampling round

Because the initial round yielded only nine interviews out of the fourteen required, a second sampling round was conducted. For each category in which the target number of interviews had not yet been met (categories IV, V, VII, VIII and X), we repeated the same sampling approach and selected the same number of organizations as in the first round. This resulted in 80 newly sampled organizations, of which 59 were contacted.[17] The contact procedure remained identical to the one used in the first sampling round. This second round led to three additional interviews (5% response rate), bringing the total to twelve.

[16] As explained in the section on typology construction, the underlying datasets were harmonized to align with the variables and measurement levels available in the FPB dataset – specifically, sector based on the ISIC classification and size as a categorical variable with nine classes. This made it straightforward to apply the typology for stratified sampling in the FPB dataset.

[17] The slightly lower attrition rate was due to the application of a stricter minimum size threshold (a minimum of five employees, as opposed to one in the first round).

Third sampling round

A third and final sampling round was conducted for the remaining categories that had not yet reached their interview targets (categories IV, V and VII). For category V, we again sampled 30 organizations, as in previous rounds. For categories IV and VII – where no successful interviews had been secured in the prior rounds – the sample size was increased from 10 to 15 organizations each. The same contact procedure was followed. This final round yielded a total of seven additional interviews, bringing the total number of non-adopter interviews to nineteen – exceeding the original target of fourteen. This higher number of completed interviews was largely coincidental, driven by an unexpectedly high response rate (14%) in this final round. As a result, the final distribution of interviews across categories closely matches the initially intended distribution based on the ten-category typology (see Table 9), with each category reaching the required number of interviews or more – except for one category (V), which has one interview fewer than planned.

3.2.2.2 Research design

To complement the literature review and better understand the practical drivers and barriers organizations experience with RWT, a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to ensure that key topics would be consistently addressed across respondents, while still allowing interviewees the freedom to guide the conversation and introduce themes they considered important. The goal was to establish a dialogue rather than conduct a rigid question-and-answer session.

Three slightly adapted versions of the interview guide were developed for the three types of organizations in our sample (adopters, drop-outs, and non-adopters). While the core structure and overarching themes remained the same across all versions, specific emphases and subtopics varied in function of relevance and interview length. For instance, interviews with non-adopters were shorter and therefore omitted less pertinent subthemes, while interviews with adopters included additional questions on the current implementation and operational details of RWT in their organization. Moreover, each version was translated into Dutch, French, and English to match the preferred language of the interviewee.

The interview was structured in three main sections. The first focused on background information, covering both the interviewee's role in the organization as well as the organization itself (e.g., main activities and sector orientation, size and composition of the workforce, organizational structure, client base, continuity of service provision, and typical challenges faced by the organization). The second section focused on RWT and formed the substantive core of the interview. It included an introduction to the concept of RWT – defined as an *effective* reduction in the number of weekly working hours, *collectively* implemented for all or a clearly defined group of employees – with care taken to distinguish it from compressed workweeks. This was followed by questions on drivers, barriers, and the influence of specific contextual factors – such as the financial incentive system and the COLORBEL trial. For adopters and drop-outs, this discussion of contextual factors also included organizational roles (e.g., HR, employees, management, unions) and relevant international pilots. The section concluded with a discussion on the future outlook. For adopters and drop-outs, questions in this section were tailored to emphasize actual experiences with implementation or discontinuation; for non-adopters, discussions of drivers and barriers remained hypothetical in nature. The third and final section provided interviewees with the opportunity to raise any remaining points or reflections they considered important.

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer verified that the organizational type matched our classification (e.g., confirming that adopters had effectively trialled RWT, or that non-adopters had not), explained the broader context of the COLORBEL project, and clarified that this interview was part of the project's second research objective. For the drop-out group, the recruitment process was briefly explained, specifically noting that their selection was based on stratified random sampling (given the more particular and potentially unexpected nature of their inclusion). For adopters and non-adopters, the rationale for their invitation had already been clearly communicated by email, as their participation followed logically from their earlier involvement or interest in the trial phase (RO1) of the project. Interviewees were informed about the expected duration of the interview (60 to 90 minutes for adopters and drop-outs; approximately 30 minutes for non-adopters), and consent was requested to record the interview for transcription purposes. Recordings were made either directly

through MS Teams or, in the case of live interviews, using smartphones or tablets. All data were handled confidentially and in full compliance with GDPR regulations.

Interviews were conducted either in person at the organization's premises or online via MS Teams, depending on availability and preference. The language of the interview – Dutch, French, or English – was determined by the interviewee. A Dutch-speaking team member conducted all Dutch and English interviews, while a French-speaking team member led the French interviews.

Transcription was performed using the software Notta.AI (with the 'intelligent verbatim' setting), followed by careful verification against the recordings by native speakers wherever possible. The transcripts were then analyzed using an inductive thematic approach inspired by the Collaborative Qualitative Analysis (CQA) framework developed by Richards & Hemphill (2018). This six-step method addresses both the analytical and collaborative dimensions of qualitative research and explicitly aims to enhance rigor, transparency, and trustworthiness – particularly when working in research teams. One of the main advantages of this approach lies in its facilitation of investigator triangulation, which improves interpretive depth and mitigates individual bias.

While our analysis was inspired by CQA, we adapted the approach pragmatically due to time constraints. In a first collaborative round, three researchers from the COLORBEL team met to align on the key research questions to be kept in mind during the coding process and to define the parameters of an inductive, integrated analysis. No pre-defined categories were applied, as – to the best of our knowledge – no established conceptual framework exists in the literature specifically addressing drivers and barriers to RWT from employers' perspective. Additionally, clear agreements were made on what to code and how (e.g., selective, theme-relevant coding; mix of descriptive and process codes), and the software MAXQDA was used to support the analysis.

Each researcher then independently coded three interviews – ensuring variation across group types and languages –, after which a group discussion took place to refine emerging codes and themes. This discussion led to the decision to construct three codebooks in parallel, aligned with the study's core research questions: the first and most essential codebook focused on drivers & barriers, while two additional codebooks were created to capture insights related to the financial incentive system and the COLORBEL trial, respectively.[18] To ensure no relevant material was overlooked, a temporary 'varia' codebook was also set up to store excerpts that did not yet fit into an existing category. Given the time constraints of a single-day team meeting, a preliminary version was collaboratively developed for the drivers & barriers codebook only – prioritized as the conceptually broadest of the three, and therefore most valuable to refine collectively. This version comprised high-level codes (L1) as well as second-level codes (L2), which represent subcategories directly nested under the corresponding L1-codes.

Following this team meeting, full coding of all interviews was carried out by a single researcher. For the drivers and barriers theme, the analysis built on the collaboratively developed preliminary codebook, while the two other codebooks – on the financial incentive system and the COLORBEL trial – were developed from scratch during the coding process. This coding procedure was highly iterative:

[18] A codebook is a comprehensive and systematic compilation of codes, their definitions, and examples, developed to guide the consistent coding of qualitative data. It serves to enhance transparency, reliability, and interpretive coherence throughout the analytical process (Macqueen & Mclellan-Lemal, 1998).

codes were added, merged, or deleted as insights evolved. In a second collaborative round, all four researchers from the COLORBEL team convened to critically review the resulting working codebooks. This discussion led to a substantial streamlining and logical restructuring of the codes, resulting in more concise and coherent versions. The outcome was a final version of each codebook, consisting of clearly defined themes and subthemes.

Finally, one researcher conducted a detailed analysis of each final codebook. For every high-level theme, definitions were written, content descriptions were refined, and illustrative excerpts were selected. Alongside the qualitative interpretation, two forms of descriptive post-hoc analysis were carried out: (i) interview coverage, reflecting how widely each theme was discussed, and (ii) coding frequency, indicating the relative salience of each theme in the dataset. These metrics were reported both overall and per organizational group, allowing for group comparisons while still maintaining an integrated analysis.

Table 10 documents the evolution of the three codebooks (from the preliminary to the final versions) in terms of segment count and number of codes at the two highest levels (L1- and L2-codes). The main findings from the detailed thematic analysis are presented in Section 4.2.2.

Version	**Date**	**Drivers & barriers**			**Incentive system evaluation**			**Trial evaluation**		
		Seg.	*L1*	*L2*	*Seg.*	*L1*	*L2*	*Seg.*	*L1*	*L2*
Preliminary codebook	21/3/25	0	10	26	0	0	0	0	0	0
Working codebook	15/4/25	1348	10	76	109	21	0	76	16	0
Final codebook	30/4/25	1380	8	31	105	6	16	180	2	11

Table 10: Number of coded segments, L1- and L2-codes per version and type of codebook.
Note: The number of coded segments includes all individual code applications, including overlapping or double-coded segments. As such, the total does not reflect the number of unique segments.

4. SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

4.1 Evaluating the impacts of RWT through a Belgian pilot trial (RO1)

4.1.1 Recruitment results

Throughout the recruitment campaign, a diverse set of organizations expressed interest in the trial. As is typical for such initiatives, a funnel effect occurred: the number of interested organizations declined over time and across successive steps. The blue bars in Figure 5 illustrate this progression. Between December 2023 and February 2024, 18 organizations demonstrated concrete interest by engaging directly with the research team through at least one email, online meeting, or phone call – although most had multiple contacts. Of these, 10 organizations attended the kick-off session (either live or via the recording), and 7 subsequently participated in the legal information session.

Following the kick-off, a pre-subscription survey was sent to assess both their intention to join the COLORBEL trial and their potential interest in the paid expert guidance offered by Autonomy. Three organizations confirmed their intention to participate, two of which also opted for the expert guidance. However, since the minimum threshold of five participating organizations (set by Autonomy) was not met, the guidance track could not be offered, and organizations had to prepare independently. Ultimately, two of the three organizations withdrew at the last minute, in the week prior to the start of the trial – despite initial data collection already performed for both (including employer indicator meetings and, in one of both cases, also employee baseline surveys). As a result, only one organization remained in the final trial sample. However, it is worth noting that three of the initially interested organizations proceeded with their own internally organized RWT trial, outside the COLORBEL project.

Most organizations that withdrew from the recruitment process communicated their decision briefly via email or phone. When no clear reason was provided, the research team followed up to ask for clarification. Several recurring themes emerged across these responses. Some organizations cited internal constraints, including lack of support from decision-makers or limited internal alignment. Others referred to financial considerations, often linked to concerns about the subsidy scheme or anticipated costs. One organization explicitly mentioned high inflation as a factor, while others hinted at unfavourable timing or external circumstances, possibly reflecting broader economic uncertainty. However, it should be noted that these insights are anecdotal in nature and were not gathered through a structured methodology: they provide exploratory input, but do not allow for systematic analysis. A more in-depth and methodologically grounded analysis of organizational decision-making was conducted through follow-up interviews as part of RO2 (see Section 4.2.2).

After the formal recruitment phase had been rounded up, an additional seven organizations reached out to request information – particularly on how to implement (a trial of) collective RWT (see yellow bar in Figure 5). This brought the total number of organizations expressing sincere interest to 25. Although these organizations were too late to participate in the COLORBEL trial, the research team responded to their questions as thoroughly as possible, drawing on the practical experience gained throughout the project. As with the 17 organizations that had shown interest during the recruitment phase but ultimately did not take part, these post-trial contacts were also invited for a follow-up interview as part of RO2 (see Section 4.2.2).

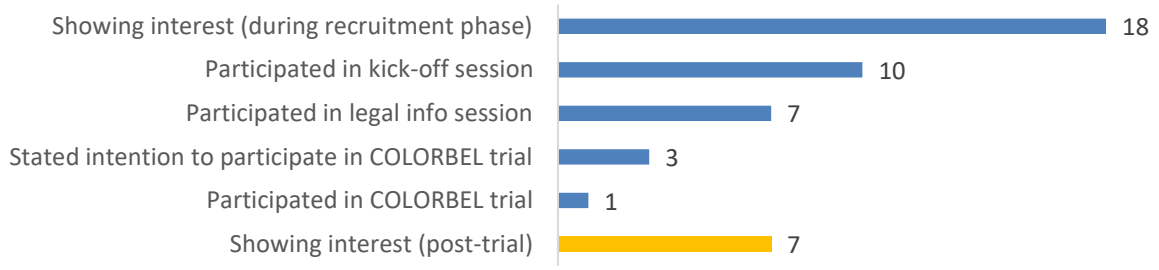

Figure 5: Evolution of organizational interest over time: drop-out during recruitment phase (blue) and post-trial interest (yellow).

Table 11 provides descriptive statistics for the 25 organizations that expressed sincere interest, including those engaged during the recruitment phase as well as those who reached out post-trial. As outlined earlier, one organization participated in the COLORBEL trial, three conducted their own in-house RWT trial, and the remaining 21 ultimately did not proceed with implementation.

The sample spans a diverse set of sectors. The most represented are human health and social work activities; professional, scientific and technical activities; and arts, entertainment and recreation – each accounting for 16% of the total. These are followed by the information and communication sector and the manufacturing sector, each representing 12%. In terms of size, while the majority are smaller organisations (68% have fewer than 50 employees), nearly one in three have more than 200 employees, showing that larger players are not insignificant in the sample. Furthermore, the sample reflects a balanced distribution across Belgium's three regions and includes organizations of varying ages. Regarding legal status, the non-profit sector is somewhat more prevalent (60%) than the private sector (36%).

Characteristic	n	%
Sector (ISIC classification section)		
Human health and social work activities (Q)	4	16%
Professional, scientific, and technical activities (M)	4	16%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation (R)	4	16%
Information and communication (J)	3	12%
Manufacturing (C)	3	12%
Other service activities (S)	1	4%
Real estate activities (L)	1	4%
Transportation & Storage (H)	1	4%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	1	4%
Financial and insurance activities (K)	1	4%
Construction (F)	1	4%
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security (O)	1	4%
Size		
< 10	7	28%
10 - 49	10	40%
50 - 199	1	4%
≥ 200	7	28%
Legal form		
Private sector	9	36%
Non-profit sector	15	60%
Health funds & insurers	1	4%
Age		
≤ 5 years	3	12%
6-10 years	8	32%
11-20 years	3	12%
21-30 years	4	16%
> 30 years	7	28%
Region		
Flanders	8	32%
Wallonia	8	32%
Brussels	9	36%
RWT trial adoption		
COLORBEL trial	1	4%
in-house trial	3	12%
no trial	21	84%

Table 11: Descriptive statistics of interested organizations (N = 25).

4.1.2 Reflections from pilot data collection

As outlined in the previous section, one organization proceeded with full participation in the RWT pilot trial and completed all nine planned data collection activities described in Section 3.1.2.1. This organization, a nonprofit specialized in the prevention and management of psychosocial risks, implemented a 20% working time reduction across its entire workforce. For full-time employees, this was organized as an additional day off on Fridays; for part-time employees, the reduction primarily took the form of shorter workdays.

The organization counted twelve employees, all of whom completed the baseline and midpoint surveys, while eight responded at endpoint. In addition, three employees participated in midpoint interviews and two in endpoint interviews. On the employer side, the onboarding survey was filled out, and all planned interviews – the indicators meeting, onboarding interview, and post-trial interview – were successfully conducted.

While a small number of drop-out organizations contributed to early stages of data collection (e.g., indicators meetings and even baseline employee surveys), they discontinued participation before actually implementing the RWT trial.

Due to the limited number of fully participating organizations and the small employee population within the adopting organization, the collected data cannot be reported in this document without risking the identification of either the organization or its staff. Moreover, the absence of a control group and the small sample size inherently limit the analytical possibilities; as such, the data do not support reliable causal inference. In line with the reporting strategy described in Section 3.1.2.2, these data are therefore excluded from public reporting. However, an individual feedback report was provided to the participating organization, summarizing (changes in) key outcome metrics observed across the trial period.

4.2 Identifying drivers and barriers to RWT adoption in Belgian organizations (RO2)

4.2.1 Literature review results

This section presents the main results of the literature review. Table 12 presents the classification framework, indicating for each case whether at least one driver or barrier was identified under each category. The following subsections (4.2.1.1 and 4.2.1.2) discuss the key categories of drivers and barriers in more detail, while Section 4.2.1.3 reflects on methodological considerations that emerged during the analysis.

				Case																
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Driver Categories	1	Employee Wellbeing		X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X
	2	HR Management		X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
	3	Operational Performance		X	-		X	X			X	X			X		X	X		X	
	4	Financial Performance			-			X							X						
	5	Strategic Positioning			-		X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X			X
	6	Societal Change			-		X	X	X	X			X			X	X		X		X
	7	Contextual Drivers			-	X		X	X												
Barrier Categories	1	Employee Wellbeing					-			-		X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2	HR Management		X		X	-			-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	3	Operational Performance		X	X	X	-		X	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	4	Financial Challenges		X			-	X		-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	5	Strategic Positioning	5.1 *Competitiveness*		X		-	X		-		X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			5.2 *Flexibility*				-			-		X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			5.3 *Customer Concerns*				-			-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			5.4 *Other Priorities*				-			-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			5.5 *Organizational Fit*			X	-		X	-		X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	6	Implementational Challenges	6.1 *General*				-			-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			6.2 *Administrative*				-			-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			6.3 *Format*				-			-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			6.4 *Pilot-particular Challenges*				-		X	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	7	Internal Resistance & Governance Barriers				X	-			-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	8	Economic Context			X		-	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The colour shades of the categories represent the stakeholder: pink categories pertain to employees as a stakeholder, yellow categories to the employer, green categories to society, and blue categories to no particular stakeholder. The case numbers in this table correspond to the case numbering defined in Table 1.
"X" indicates that at least one motive mentioned in the case is classified under this (sub)category, either as primary or secondary (sub)category (the complete list of motives per case, as well as the primary and secondary classification(s) of motives, are detailed in Annex Table C and Annex Table D).
"-" signifies that no drivers (in the upper section of the table) or barriers (in the lower section of the table) were discussed for that particular case.

Table 12: Drivers and barriers classification framework.

4.2.1.1 Drivers

The analysis revealed seven main categories of drivers. The first category, *employee wellbeing*, emerged as a significant employee-centred motivation. Eight cases (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 14, and 15) explicitly mentioned improvement of or commitment to employee wellbeing. Additional motives in this

category included enhancement of worker relationships (case 1), addressing mental health concerns (cases 8 and 16), and promotion of work-life balance (cases 7, 8, and 16).

Next, four distinct employer-centred drivers were identified. *HR management*, mentioned in nearly all cases, emerged as a primary driver, encompassing both retention of current employees – including reduced absenteeism (cases 5 and 16) – and recruitment of new staff. This driver demonstrated particular significance in contexts of intense labour market competition or when worker retention was crucial, such as during economic growth periods or when expansion was planned (case 5).

Operational performance constituted the second employer-centred driver, with organizations implementing RWT to enhance productivity and efficiency. Specific mechanisms included improved coordination during downtime (case 1), reduced stress-related issues (case 4), fewer unplanned absences (case 5), and implementation of more efficient work processes (cases 9 and 14).

The third employer-centred driver, *financial performance*, reflected expectations of reduced non-personnel costs (case 5) and increased profits (cases 5 and 12). The fourth, *strategic positioning*, captured organizations' aspirations to drive workplace innovation (cases 9, 14, and 15), prepare for future changes (case 4), and secure pioneering benefits in terms of reputation and talent management (cases 6 and 9).

Societal change emerged as a distinct driver category, where organizations aimed to challenge overwork culture (cases 6 and 14), redefine work priorities toward wellbeing (case 4) and work-life balance (cases 7 and 18), and emphasize time outside work (cases 10, 13, and 18). Environmental sustainability goals were also noted (cases 5 and 16).

Finally, *contextual drivers* encompassed external factors: RWT may be inspired by successful implementation by other organizations (case 6) or a rational response to a pandemic (case 6), in case of reduced economic demand (case 3), or when booming economies or large fluctuations make competition on the labour market more intense (case 5).

4.2.1.2 Barriers

Regarding barriers, the analysis identified eight main categories, with six overlapping with the driver categories and two additional employer-centred categories. Moreover, two categories were further split up into subcategories.

The first category, *employee wellbeing*, while predominantly a driver, emerged as a potential barrier. This can be the case when employees experience increased stress from condensed schedules or struggle with self-organization under new arrangements (case 9).

Next, six distinct employer-centred barriers were identified. Challenges relating to *HR management* emerged as a significant barrier, revealing an interesting paradox: while employee attraction and retention serve as primary drivers, RWT implementation could lead to staff shortages or increased hiring needs (cases 1 and 9). Additional HR-related challenges included ensuring policy fairness (case 8) and managing employee adaptation difficulties (case 3).

Concerns relating to *operational performance* constituted the second employer-centred barrier, and primarily focused on maintaining productivity levels (cases 1, 2, 3, and 8). Additional operational

challenges included managing workload fluctuations, adhering to project timelines, and developing appropriate performance measurement systems (cases 6, 8, and 9).

The third employer-centred barrier, *financial challenges*, emerged when profits were threatened, especially when productivity improvements failed to offset increased labour costs – particularly when higher levels of compensatory hiring were required than initially anticipated (cases 1, 5, 8, and 9). The fourth, *strategic positioning*, encompassed competitive pressures (cases 2 and 5), concerns about reduced flexibility (case 9), anticipated customer impacts (cases 8 and 9), perceived misalignment with organizational culture (cases 3 and 6), and competing strategic priorities (cases 8 and 9).

Implementational challenges emerged as a fifth distinct barrier category, reflecting concerns about organizational and administrative complexities (cases 8 and 9) and difficulties in determining appropriate RWT formats (case 8). Additional challenges specific to multi-company pilots included insufficient preparation time (case 6) and suboptimal pilot timing (case 8). The sixth employer-centred barrier, *internal resistance & governance barriers*, arose when senior leadership or works councils failed to support implementation efforts (cases 3, 8, and 9).

Finally, the *economic context* emerged as an external barrier category, with organizations showing hesitancy to implement RWT during periods of political instability, high inflation, or widespread workforce shortages (cases 6, 8, and 9).

4.2.1.3 Methodological considerations and limitations

Several methodological considerations and limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the results of the literature review described above.

The first consideration pertains to the classification framework. While distinct categories were identified, both within the drivers and barriers classification, they exhibit considerable interconnectedness, particularly in cases where motives serve multiple organizational objectives. For instance, employee wellbeing initiatives often correlate with improved HR management outcomes, which in turn may influence operational and financial performance metrics. Similarly, strategic positioning often intertwines with societal change objectives, such as when organizations simultaneously pursue competitive advantage and broader social impact. To accurately take this interconnectedness into account, we used a primary-secondary classification system for the motives (as explained in Section 3.2.1.5).

A second consideration relates to organizational heterogeneity. The applicability and relevance of specific driver and barrier categories may vary significantly based on organizational characteristics such as size, industry sector, and departmental structure. This heterogeneity suggests that the framework should be interpreted with consideration for context-specific factors rather than as a universal model.

A third limitation concerns the nature of the analyzed motives. The review encompasses both actual RWT implementations and hypothetical evaluations, which may introduce variation in the depth and validity of reported motives. Additionally, temporal aspects of data collection – whether during preparation, pilot implementation, or post-implementation phases – may influence the reported motives. This temporal variance should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Finally, response bias must be acknowledged as a potential limitation. Stated motives may be influenced by social desirability bias, particularly regarding the emphasis on altruistic drivers (such as employee wellbeing or environmental goals) versus profit-oriented motivations (such as improved efficiency or reduced costs). However, the interconnected nature of various benefits (e.g., improved employee wellbeing potentially leading to enhanced productivity) suggests that such distinctions may be less clear-cut in practice.

4.2.2 Results from interviews with Belgian companies

4.2.2.1 Participants

Table 13 presents descriptive statistics for all interview participants across the three groups (N = 31), covering organizational, interviewee, and interview-related characteristics. Organizations are well represented across a range of sectors, with the largest shares in human health and social work activities (26%), professional, scientific and technical activities (23%), and other service activities (16%). Organizations of all sizes are included, with approximately 60% employing fewer than 50 people. A broad spread is also observed in organizational age, legal form (non-profit and private), and region. Notably, most non-profit organizations in the sample receive subsidies.[19] In terms of regional distribution, the majority of interviews were conducted with organizations based in Flanders (55%), which is also reflected in the distribution of interview languages. Among the four adopter organizations, a variety of RWT schemes was observed, both in terms of scale – from modest weekly reductions of around two hours to more substantial cuts of around 20% – and format, including a full day off per week, shorter workdays, or a combination of a half or full day off with extended hours on the remaining weekdays.

All interviews took place between November 2024 and March 2025, with durations ranging from 20 to 95 minutes (on average 41 minutes). Most interviews were conducted and recorded online via MS Teams, while 16% took place in person at the organization's headquarters. Interviews were primarily held with a single (primary) interviewee; in around 20% of cases, a second participant was also involved.

Finally, regarding the general tone of the interviews, it is notable that within the group of non-adopters, several participants expressed particularly strong views on RWT – either clearly supportive or strongly critical. This likely reflects the self-selective nature of participation: organizations that voluntarily engaged in the interviews may have done so because they held a pronounced stance or specific interest in the topic. This limitation is discussed in Section 4.2.2.5, along with other methodological considerations.

[19] Based on data records from the CBE, 80% of non-profit organizations participating in our interviews receive subsidies.

Characteristic	n	%
ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS		
Sector (ISIC classification section)		
Manufacturing (C)	2	6%
Transportation & Storage (H)	1	3%
Information and communication (J)	3	10%
Real estate activities (L)	3	10%
Professional, scientific, and technical activities (M)	7	23%
Administrative and support service activities (N)	1	3%
Education (P)	1	3%
Human health and social work activities (Q)	8	26%
Other service activities (S)	5	16%
Size		
< 10	6	19%
10 - 49	12	39%
50 - 199	6	19%
≥ 200	7	23%
Legal form		
Private sector	16	52%
Non-profit sector	15	48%
Age		
≤ 5 years	5	16%
6-10 years	6	19%
11-20 years	4	13%
21-30 years	3	10%
> 30 years	13	42%
Region		
Flanders	17	55%
Wallonia	8	26%
Brussels	6	19%
INTERVIEW CHARACTERISTICS		
Group		
Adopter (I)	4	13%
Drop-out (II)	8	26%
Non-adopter (III)	19	61%
Format		
Live	5	16%
MS Teams	26	84%
Language		
Dutch	19	61%
French	9	29%
English	3	10%
Number of interviewees		
One	25	81%
Two	6	19%
INTERVIEWEE CHARACTERISTICS		
Sex		
Male	17	55%

Female	14	45%
Organizational role		
Owner / founder	6	19%
Top management / director	13	42%
HR-director	12	39%
Knowledge financial incentive system		
Yes	3	10%
No	28	90%

In cases where two interviewees were present, the reported "interviewee characteristics" refer to those of the primary interviewee – typically the main contact person, and the one who led most of the conversation. The characteristics sector, size, legal form and region were retrieved from the CBE; all other information was derived from the interviews.

Table 13: Descriptive statistics of interview participants (N = 31).

4.2.2.2 Drivers & barriers codebook

Table 14 presents an overview of the final themes and subthemes (L1- and L2-codes) from the drivers & barriers codebook.[20] Before discussing these (sub)themes in detail, several important clarifications need to be made regarding the structure and interpretation of the codebook.

First, contrary to what might be intuitively expected, the codebook is not organized at the highest level according to the distinction between drivers and barriers. This was a deliberate decision taken during the group discussion after the initial coding phase (first collaborative round), where it became clear that many themes or arguments could function as both drivers and barriers for implementing RWT, depending on the context. For example, the theme *competitiveness* contains both concerns about RWT potentially undermining a company's competitive position (e.g., due to reduced customer service levels or higher costs), as well as arguments presenting RWT as a competitive advantage (e.g., an attractive element in employer branding). Similarly, the subtheme *employer appeal* includes both perspectives: some employers see RWT as a valuable tool to attract and retain staff in a tight labour market, while others fear it will exacerbate existing hiring challenges, requiring additional compensatory recruitment in a context where suitable candidates are already scarce.

Second, a related discussion emerged regarding an alternative way of structuring the codebook: by the level of analysis – individual (employer or employee), organizational, or societal. While this dimension was deemed analytically relevant, we ultimately opted for a thematic structure, which was more suitable for capturing the content of the interviews. However, where relevant, the level of reference is made visible within the structure. For example, the theme *work culture* includes subthemes that relate to the individual level (e.g., *employer's perspective*), the organizational level (e.g., *in-house culture*), and the societal level (e.g., *societal acceptance*).

Third, as clarified in Section 3.2.2.2, the dataset includes interviews from all three groups: adopters (group I), drop-outs (group II), and non-adopters (group III). While no separate group-specific analysis was conducted, certain (sub)themes were found to be more prominent in specific groups. To report these differences, we carried out two types of post-hoc analyses: interview coverage and coding frequency. On the one hand, Table 15 and Figure 6 present the interview coverage of themes, both overall and per group, indicating how widely each theme is discussed. On the other hand, Table 16

[20] The detailed version of the drivers & barriers codebook (final version), including a definition for each L1- and L2-code, is added in Annex Table E.

presents the coding frequency per theme, both overall and per group, reflecting the relative salience of themes in the dataset.[21]

1 Competitiveness	**5 Support**
1.1 Productivity	5.1 Inside support
1.2 Costs	5.2 Outside support
1.3 Customer service	**6 Spillovers**
1.4 Competitive positioning	6.1 Alignment pressures
2 Work organization	6.2 External narratives
2.1 Team dynamics & interaction	6.3 Policy experience spillovers
2.2 Role & task fit	**7 Global trends**
2.3 Admin & legal conditions	7.1 Changing workforce preferences
2.4 Organizational control & measurability	7.2 Labour market dynamics
2.5 Workforce scheduling	7.3 Macro-economic pressures
2.6 Incentive	7.4 Digitalization
3 Job quality	**8 Alternative needs**
3.1 Employee experience	8.1 Organizational concerns beyond RWT
3.2 Employer appeal	8.2 Employee needs already met without RWT
3.3 Risk of habituation effects	8.3 Competing in-house initiatives
4 Work culture	8.4 Non-priority of RWT for employees
4.1 Employer's perspective	
4.2 In-house culture (organizational level)	
4.3 Societal acceptance	
4.4 Inter-organizational culture (employers level)	
4.5 International differences	

Table 14: Drivers & barriers codebook (final version): L1- and L2-codes.

L1-code	I (n = 4)	II (n = 8)	III (n = 19)	Total (n = 31)	Total (%)
Competitiveness	4	8	19	31	100%
Work organization	4	7	16	27	87%
Job quality	4	6	19	29	94%
Work culture	3	8	18	29	94%
Support	4	7	15	26	84%
Spillovers	3	8	17	28	90%
Global trends	2	7	15	24	77%
Alternative needs	2	6	18	26	84%

Note: segments were not directly coded with L1-codes, but with associated L2- or lower-level codes. An interviews is considered to contain a segment for a given L1-code if it includes at least one segment coded with any of the L2- or lower-level codes clustered under that L1-code.

Table 15: Drivers & barriers codebook: number of interviews in total and per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) & non-adopters (III)) containing at least one segment coded with each L1-code.

[21] Equivalent tables and figures at subtheme level are included in Annex Table F, Annex Table G and Annex Figure V.

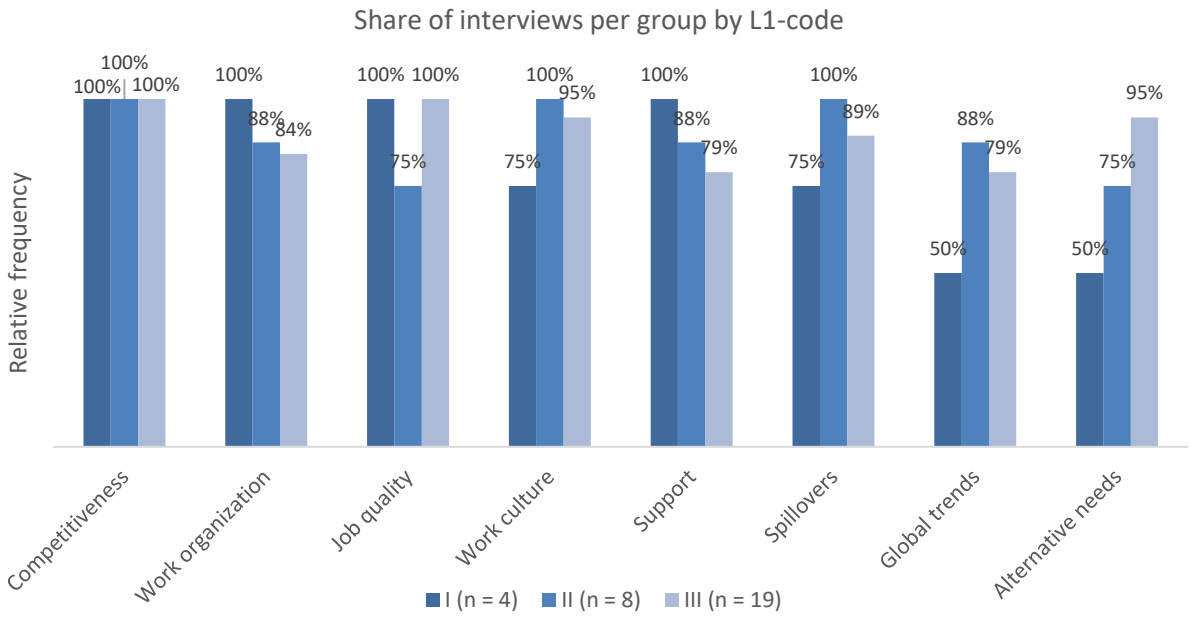

Figure 6: Drivers & barriers codebook: share of interviews per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) & non-adopters (III)) containing at least one segment coded with each L1-code.

L1-code	I (n)	II (n)	III (n)	Total (n)	Total (%)
Competitiveness	45	58	158	261	19%
Work organization	68	53	54	175	13%
Job quality	50	48	70	168	12%
Work culture	29	80	117	226	16%
Support	33	112	42	187	14%
Spillovers	32	54	77	163	12%
Global trends	6	18	41	65	5%
Alternative needs	3	36	96	135	10%
Total (n)	266	459	655	1380	100%
Total (% of all segments)	19%	33%	47%	100%	

Note: segments were not directly coded with L1-codes, but with associated L2- or lower-level codes.
"Total (%)" refers to the percentage relative to all coded segments.

Table 16: Drivers & barriers codebook: number of coded segments in total and per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) & non-adopters (III)) for each L1-code.

The final codebook consists of eight themes, each comprising two to six subthemes. As Table 16 shows, *competitiveness* and *work culture* were the most frequently discussed themes, accounting for 19% and 16% of all coded segments respectively. In contrast, *global trends* was the least frequently mentioned, representing only 5% of coded segments. Figure 6 confirms the broad relevance of *competitiveness*, which was discussed in interviews across all three groups. It also shows that *work culture* and *spillovers* were especially prevalent among drop-outs (100% of group II interviews), while non-adopters most frequently addressed *job quality*, *work culture*, and *alternative needs* (discussed in 100%, 95%, and 95% of non-adopter interviews respectively). Conversely, *global trends* and *alternative needs* were least frequently discussed by adopters (50% of adopter interviews). Due to the limited sample size of the adopter group (n = 4), these shares should be interpreted with caution, as

each participant strongly influences percentage values (e.g., 100% when 4 out of 4 mention a theme, 50% when only 2 out of 4 do).

Competitiveness

Theme *competitiveness* captures how organizations expect RWT to affect their ability to remain viable and successful in a competitive environment. It brings together reflections on productivity expectations, cost and funding structures, customer service (including continuity), and competitive positioning. This theme was coded in all 31 interviews, making it the most universally present theme in the dataset. The group-level interview coverage was also complete (100% across adopters, drop-outs, and non-adopters), underlining the perceived centrality of competitiveness when considering RWT (see Table 15 and Figure 6). In total, it accounts for 19% of all coded segments, further confirming its salience across cases (see Table 16).

Productivity is one of the most densely populated subthemes, covered in 94% of all interviews and fairly evenly spread across the three groups. Interviewees frequently referenced a productivity premise, that is the basic assumption that existing output levels must be maintained if work hours are reduced. This was most often phrased in variations of “the work has to be done”, reflecting the widespread concern that the same amount of work simply needs to be completed in less time, as well as expressions referring to a results-oriented work culture, where productivity is judged by output rather than time or presence. However, views diverged on whether such a shift is achievable. Many interviewees expressed belief in productivity gains – for example via digital tools or better work planning – and some even perceived RWT as providing an incentive to improve organizational efficiency, while others voiced disbelief or uncertainty – for example by pointing to tight baseline staffing and rigid service formats. These opposing expectations make productivity a contested domain, where the feasibility of RWT hinges on whether efficiency gains are seen as realistic or not.

Subtheme *costs* – covered in 90% of interviews – includes a range of financial considerations that influence the perceived viability of RWT. Many interviewees pointed to concerns about financial capacity, often framed in terms of a lack of financial slack. Organizations argued that without buffer room (e.g., because of low profit margins), they cannot absorb short-term losses or invest in transitional adjustments. In addition to these general concerns, several specific cost-related barriers emerged. A prominent issue was the presence of output-based funding models, particularly for organizations whose revenues are tightly linked to hours worked or services delivered. This includes both billable hours models (e.g., in accounting, where every hour worked must be justified for invoicing) and billable services models (e.g., in care, where income is often tied to outputs like client consultations or trajectories). In such contexts, reducing working hours directly impacts income, leaving little room for manoeuvre. Another challenge stemmed from revenue dependence: organizations reliant on subsidies, grants, or external investors often felt constrained in their ability to influence income streams, and reported further challenges related to the applicability and effectiveness of existing incentive systems. Labour cost pressures were also frequently cited (especially by non-adopters): several interviewees feared that maintaining output under RWT would require additional hiring, leading to higher wage bills. At the same time, the pressure to align wages fairly for part-time workers raised further financial complications. While a few interviewees mentioned potential cost offsets in the long run, these were much less frequently cited. Overall, this subtheme was primarily perceived as a barrier, with few interviewees seeing financial structures as enabling RWT.

Subtheme *customer service* – covered in 77% of interviews – emerged as another concern, particularly in sectors where continuity is essential. Many interviewees referred to continuity as a business necessity, linking it to rising expectations of availability and responsiveness toward clients or end users. For some, RWT raised fears of reduced availability and erosion of client trust. Others believed customer service could be maintained or even improved under RWT, some of them pointing to operational measures aimed at safeguarding continuity, such as rotating day-off schedules. A few interviewees also mentioned more flexible or adaptive forms of RWT to ensure continuity, such as being on call or occasionally working during the scheduled day off. However, such arrangements may be considered as undermining the core idea of RWT. While the tone ranged from cautious optimism to scepticism, this subtheme embodies a clear concern with respect to reputational and relational risks, especially in services like care or consultancy.

Compared to the other subthemes, *competitive positioning* was less frequently discussed (covered in 26% of interviews), but reveals valuable strategic reflections. Some interviewees – primarily adopters – viewed RWT as consistent with their organizational values or mission and saw it as a possible competitive advantage. Others – particularly non-adopters – argued that RWT could become attractive if it offered a clear advantage over other employers, but that such a positioning benefit was currently not evident. Still others – again mostly non-adopters – raised concerns about sector misalignment: they feared that unequal adoption of RWT would result in imbalances in job attractiveness across organizations or sectors. In this view, RWT offered by others could introduce competitive pressure, but in a negative sense – forcing them to consider it not out of intrinsic motivation, but because they would risk being left behind in recruitment or retention. In these cases, RWT was seen less as a proactive strategy and more as a defensive response to labour market dynamics.

In sum, *competitiveness* is not merely a barrier or enabler in itself, but a domain in which multiple practical and strategic concerns converge. While some organizations regard RWT as an opportunity – aligned with their mission, underpinned by expectations of productivity gains, or confidence in maintaining service quality – others face significant uncertainty. This includes doubts about whether productivity can realistically increase, constraints posed by inflexible funding models, or fears of compromised service continuity.

Work organization

Theme *work organization* addresses the structural, procedural, and interactional aspects that shape how RWT could be implemented in practice in the organization. It includes team dynamics and informal collaboration, the alignment between roles and reduced hours, legal and administrative conditions, systems for control and measurability, workforce scheduling logistics, and whether RWT is seen as a broader opportunity for organizational improvement. This theme was coded in 87% of all interviews, with full coverage for adopters, and 88% and 84% coverage for drop-outs and non-adopters respectively (see Table 15 and Figure 6).

Team dynamics & interaction is one of the most widely discussed subthemes within *work organization*, appearing in 61% of interviews (primarily among adopters and non-adopters). It relates to how communication, coordination, and cohesion are affected by RWT. Several interviewees referred to the need for or the undertaking of deliberate efforts to align schedules and maintain team awareness – for instance through clearer agreements, more systematic and asynchronous documentation, and

improved (in)formal communication –, and the need for a different type of leadership. At the same time, many interviewees expressed concern about the impact of reduced co-presence on workplace cohesion, and about informal office time (including breaks) and social interaction being reduced or affected. The importance of shared in-person moments to preserve team spirit, spontaneous knowledge exchange, and a sense of belonging were underscored. Additionally, interviewees mentioned how RWT prompted them to rethink the organization, frequency and content of meetings – including efforts to shorten or streamline them, and to limit attendance to only those whose presence was essential. While some interviewees framed the resulting shifts as an opportunity to improve team routines and meeting culture, a large fraction of interviewees perceived this subtheme as a practical worry or point of attention, particularly where team presence and informal cohesion were already under pressure.

Role & task fit, discussed in 48% of interviews, concerns how well specific jobs, tasks, and individual working styles align with reduced working time. Several interviewees described how individual work habits – such as strong planning skills, focus, or flexibility – can support a smooth transition, while others noted that perfectionism or scattered work habits made RWT more difficult. Moreover, RWT is perceived to enable or encourage more focused work time. At the same time, time-critical tasks and roles tied to continuous processes or specialized expertise were often seen as difficult to adapt or delegate, making them a barrier – particularly where continuity or ownership was key, such as in client-facing or project management roles: “There’s a project manager ... I can't just put different project managers on the job, if one of them would only work four days a week ... that's where mistakes are going to happen.” Some interviewees explicitly mentioned that RWT was perceived as unfeasible for directors or founders, due to the nature of their responsibilities or the expectation of full availability. While a few saw the shift as an opportunity to reassess task priorities, improve role clarity, or adopt more efficient and focused workstyles, the majority of reflections framed this subtheme as a barrier, tied to structural constraints or unequal capacity to adapt.

Admin & legal conditions came up in 32% of interviews (primarily among adopters and drop-outs). This subtheme captures the formal and regulatory factors that affect the feasibility and pace of implementing RWT. Several interviewees described administrative complexities, both in relation to the incentive system and to the formal adjustments required for contracts, wage structures, or benefit entitlements – particularly in relation to pension rights, meal vouchers, or vacation days. These uncertainties led many adopters to avoid making formal contract changes during the trial phase. Others pointed to legal or regulatory constraints that limited their room to manoeuvre – such as mandatory training hours that reduce available job time, or detailed reporting obligations linked to subsidy schemes. Some also noted the difficulty of navigating sector-specific rules, especially when operating under multiple joint sectoral committees (*paritair comité* or *commission paritaire*). One non-adopting interviewee also remarked that implementing RWT would largely amount to formalizing existing practices, since many employees already work a few hours less per week in practice. A few interviewees reported gradually learning to deal with these constraints, but most framed this subtheme as a challenge, highlighting how regulatory and administrative uncertainty can slow down or complicate the formalization of RWT.

Organizational control & measurability, referenced in 29% of the interviews, refers to how interviewees experienced the need for structure and tracking under RWT. Some described how the system encouraged, required, or allowed for more deliberate planning, clearer agreements, or

limitations on formal overtime – either as a condition for implementation or as a positive side effect. At the same time, while many acknowledged the importance of tracking, few had concrete monitoring systems in place to assess the effects of RWT. While some referred to informal evaluations or efforts to track worktime or wellbeing, many acknowledged that no structural monitoring had been put in place, even when it was originally intended. This lack of systematic follow-up contributed to uncertainty about causality: several interviewees (all adopters) expressed doubt about whether observed effects – positive or negative – could be confidently attributed to RWT.[22] While some saw increased control as a benefit of the system, limited capacity and difficulties in monitoring outcomes or drawing credible causal conclusions were often seen as challenges – and as such offer areas for future improvement –, particularly when it came to evaluating success or making the case internally.

Workforce scheduling, discussed in 29% of interviews (primarily among adopters and drop-outs), refers to coordination challenges and practices involved in organizing staff schedules under RWT. Interviewees highlighted two main issues. First, RWT was said to increase scheduling complexity and rigidity, particularly in contexts where rosters were already difficult to manage – such as in shift-based environments, interdependent teams, or organizations with many part-time workers (e.g., in the care sector). Several noted that the system reduced the available buffer for absences and heightened the pressure to ensure sufficient coverage. Second, RWT required new or adapted rules around the planning of time off, covering both regular vacation days and the additional time off under RWT. Examples included fixed day-off policies, rotation systems, or guidelines to prevent long weekends, often introduced to ensure fairness, prevent misuse, and preserve business continuity. A few interviewees simply described how they dealt with these challenges in practice, but the majority framed workforce scheduling as a constraint or at least a significant operational hurdle, especially in organizations already under scheduling pressure.

Finally, subtheme *incentive* – which appeared only in 10% of interviews (all drop-outs) – points to organizations that saw RWT as a trigger to rethink the way of working towards improved efficiency. One interviewee captured this perspective by calling RWT “a dream opportunity to rethink work processes”. While rather the exception than the rule, such reflections illustrate how RWT can serve as a starting point to rethink broader organizational routines – planting a small seed that may eventually lead to more far-reaching change.

Overall, *work organization* emerges as a domain where concrete implementation challenges often take centre stage. While some interviewees pointed to gains – e.g., in structure, focus, or collaborative routines –, most segments emphasized the operational and procedural hurdles involved in translating RWT into day-to-day practice in the organization. These ranged from difficulties in adapting roles and schedules to legal uncertainties and the lack of systems to track outcomes.

Job quality

Theme *job quality* describes how RWT is expected to play a role in the overall quality of jobs, considering both employee and employer perspectives. Even more explicit than in other themes, it’s a theme of opposites, in that it includes strong arguments that can serve either as driver or barrier for RWT. The importance of the theme becomes clear through the interview coverage metrics: the theme

[22] However, this uncertainty did not stem from the absence of monitoring alone: it was likely also related to the broader context of being young, growing, and changing organizations, where multiple developments coincided and would have complicated causal interpretation regardless.

was coded in 94% of all interviews, with full coverage for adopters and non-adopters, and 75% of coverage for drop-outs (see Table 15 and Figure 6).

Employee experience, discussed in 74% of interviews, captures how RWT is perceived to affect the daily realities of workers, both positively and negatively. Across all groups, interviewees frequently linked RWT to changes in wellbeing. Many expressed a strong belief that RWT enhances wellbeing, often viewing this as a central motivation or explicit driver for adoption, with some also suggesting that improved wellbeing could positively influence other outcomes. Several interviewees also referred to RWT as a strategy to reduce absenteeism – whether as a hope, expectation, or already observed effect. At the same time, a degree of scepticism persisted, particularly among non-adopters, who questioned whether RWT would truly benefit employee health or wellbeing. Similar dynamics were observed with respect to work-life balance: RWT was widely associated with the desire to improve balance between work and private life, although a few raised concerns about possible risks – especially if compressed hours were to lead to extended working days or more overtime. These concerns were echoed in reflections on work pressure, voiced across all three groups, with interviewees warning of increased stress, workload compression, or feasibility issues under RWT. Lastly, one interviewee mentioned that RWT had created room for informal or peer-led training opportunities, though such examples were rare. Taken together, employee experience stands out as one of the more prominent driver-subthemes – while barriers were present, many viewed RWT as a potential lever for improving wellbeing and work-life balance.

Employer appeal, discussed in 71% of interviews, refers to how RWT is expected to affect the organization's attractiveness to current and potential employees. Across all three groups, many interviewees believed RWT could strengthen both retention – e.g., by improving motivation and reducing turnover – and recruitment, serving as a distinct selling point in a competitive labour market. This belief was often mentioned in connection with ongoing recruitment and retention (R&R) challenges, with several interviewees framing RWT as a potential game changer. At the same time, a few expressed scepticism, either stating that recruitment considerations played no role in their thinking, or openly doubting RWT's ability to attract new talent. Some also raised concerns about compensatory staffing needs and the risk of RWT encouraging supplementary jobs – either seen negatively, as a stepping stone to a full job switch, or more positively, as a way to retain skilled workers who combine their main role with meaningful self-employed side work. Beyond R&R, interviewees also reflected on how RWT interacts with broader salary and benefits configurations. In several cases, RWT was perceived as a valuable addition to the compensation package, especially in sectors with limited room for financial incentives. Others saw it as a form of wage leverage – either as a long-term alternative to wage increases for full-time workers, or a short-term means to boost the financial position of part-time staff. However, the introduction of RWT also raised questions about benefit trade-offs. Employers noted that RWT might come at the expense of other benefits such as telework, flexible hours, overtime opportunities, or specific types of leave (e.g., RWT-days). Several explicitly stated that they "can't do it all", pointing to the difficulty of offering RWT alongside a full set of other employee perks. Taken together, employer appeal emerges as a relatively strong driver for RWT – especially in the context of recruitment and retention pressures. While trade-offs and doubts remain, many organizations clearly saw RWT's potential as a meaningful tool to enhance their attractiveness as an employer.

Finally, subtheme *risk of habituation effects* refers to the concern that the initial benefits of reduced working time – such as increased wellbeing or employer appeal – may fade as employees adapt, potentially limiting its long-term impact for both employees and employers. While less frequently discussed (it was only referred to in 23% of interviews), the topic came up across all three groups and included both actual observations of habituation (among adopters) and anticipatory concerns (among non-adopters and drop-outs). Several interviewees worried that employees might quickly adjust to the new arrangement, start taking it for granted, or view it as an acquired right rather than a valued benefit. This concern was especially voiced in relation to younger workers, with some employers noting a perceived shift in expectations. One employer explicitly framed this risk as an argument in favour of reduced working time with proportional wage reduction – i.e. part-time work –, suggesting that the freed-up time should remain something employees continue to value, rather than normalize. Although not a dominant subtheme, habituation was consistently framed as a worry.

In conclusion, *job quality* is a highly salient theme, bringing together some of the strongest arguments in favour of RWT, alongside concerns that may temper its long-term promise. Improvements in wellbeing, work-life balance, and employer attractiveness were widely cited as key motivations and potential upsides, making this theme one of the clearest driver narratives in the broader debate around RWT. At the same time, concerns about increased work pressure, compensation trade-offs, or fading benefits over time reveal that positive effects are not guaranteed and may be fragile if poorly managed.

Work culture

Theme *work culture* refers to the values, beliefs, norms, and practices – shaped at the level of the employer, organization(s), society, and broader international context – that influence how RWT is perceived and evaluated. It encompasses employers' individual convictions and motivations, internal organizational norms and dynamics, prevailing societal beliefs and misconceptions, dominant perceptions among peer organizations, and cross-country differences in (work) attitudes and institutional frameworks. Many of the same ideas reappear across subthemes, but at different levels of analysis – highlighting how similar beliefs and assumptions can operate simultaneously at the individual, organizational, and societal level. Similar as for *job quality*, this theme was coded in 94% of interviews: it is fully covered for drop-outs, and covered for 75% and 95% of interviews in case of adopters and non-adopters respectively (see Table 15 and Figure 6). Moreover, it accounts for 16% of all coded segments in total, that is the second largest number (after theme *competitiveness*), which further underscores its prominence.

First, *employer's perspective* is by far the most widely prevailing subtheme within theme *work culture*, covered in 87% of interviews. It captures how personal convictions, values, and assumptions of decision-makers (the interviewees) shape their position on RWT. For many adopters and drop-outs, support for RWT is rooted in visionary leadership – whether directly tied to reduced working time or as part of a broader philosophy on how work should evolve. These visions often relate to fostering wellbeing at work, for example supported by a belief in the digital transformation or the promotion of alternative time policies more generally. Interviewees expressed a desire to lead by example, to bring about societal change, to create the kind of workplace they would want to work in themselves, or to embody the type of boss they would wish for themselves. Several also voiced a firm belief in RWT as part of the future of work. Alongside this leadership mindset, a number of interviewees across all groups were driven by personal motivation – ranging from long-standing interest to experiences

that shaped their view more recently, such as recovering from burnout. Several had actively read up on or studied the topic out of personal interest, further deepening their engagement. In multiple cases, interviewees also had personal experience with part-time work, either prior or current, reflecting a pre-existing affinity with the idea of reduced working time. In many of these cases, the decision-maker's personal motivation directly fuelled the initiative in the organization. In contrast, more critical orientations were mainly found among non-adopters. Some explicitly questioned the value of RWT, expressing ideological resistance – such as linking it to union agendas – or favouring policies that reward working and earning more rather than less. Others framed their reservations more strategically, doubting whether RWT offers real added value – in particular for the organization – and seeing part-time work with proportionate wage reduction as a more reasonable and sufficient alternative. A few also expressed first-mover reluctance, hesitating to pioneer a model that still feels unfamiliar or untested. Finally, feasibility doubts also coloured employer perspectives – most frequently in relation to sector-, job-, or size-specific constraints. Many interviewees stated that RWT might be feasible in other contexts, but not in their own, often pointing to experienced structural characteristics or operational realities that, in their view, made implementation unrealistic. Moreover, expressions of doubt about how far working time can be reduced – often raising the question of whether the lower limit has been reached – further reflect deeply ingrained worktime norms that are difficult to challenge. Overall, the *employer's perspective* subtheme emerges as a highly influential factor – serving as a powerful driver when shaped by belief or curiosity, but equally acting as a barrier when marked by scepticism, reluctance, or deeply held counter-convictions.

Moving one level higher, subtheme *in-house culture (organizational level)* – covered in only 19% of interviews – captures how internal workplace norms, values, and dynamics influence RWT feasibility. Some adopters and drop-outs described dominant work valuation norms – particularly around time versus output. These appeared in two contrasting forms: a results-oriented work culture, often tied to implicit expectations of overtime and constant availability ("Because there is still this mindset within our organization (…) that working full-time is not meant to be counted down to the last minute"), and a time-is-money mentality, in which every hour is seen as financially accountable ("every hour worked is valuable"). Several interviewees noted that implementing RWT successfully would require a compatible company culture and employee mindset – or even a shift in both. One interviewee also referred to lingering stigma around reduced working hours and the fear of being perceived as unwilling to work: "There's a bit of a fear of: will this be accepted? Or will people look at me strangely, thinking I'm someone who doesn't want to work much?" This subtheme illustrates how workplace-level beliefs and routines can constrain the perceived viability of RWT from within the organization.

Still one lever higher, subtheme *societal acceptance* – covered in 39% of interviews and relatively evenly distributed across the three groups – reflects similar subjects as subtheme *in-house culture*, but situated at the societal level, as well as some additional subjects. Some interviewees described broader cultural norms around work valuation – such as time- or results-driven mindsets – as well as perceptions of societal stigma around working less. One interviewee explained: "(…) You get the feeling you're seen as… well, I don't want to say a freeloader, but more like someone people look at and think: 'Don't you want to work or something?' That's what I mean by the societal norm." These perceptions were closely linked to societal worktime norms, particularly the dominant full-time norm, which interviewees observed not only across society but also in specific sectors (e.g., construction) and among employees within their own organizations. References to gendered work norms (e.g.,

women's working patterns) appeared as well, albeit more indirectly. Additionally, several interviewees pointed to limited awareness, persistent misconceptions, or a general lack of public support for RWT. In short, this subtheme highlights how broader societal ideas around work can shape or constrain an employer's willingness to consider RWT.

Subtheme *inter-organizational culture (employer level)*, though covered in only 10% of interviews, highlights the relevance of peer dynamics between employers. This subtheme refers to how the perceived stance of other organizations influences a given employer's own view of RWT. Several interviewees observed hesitation or resistance among peers, which may have reinforced their own doubts, creating a climate of caution or inertia around RWT adoption. Peer effects thus act as an indirect but tangible barrier – especially in sectors where few are willing to take the lead.

Finally, subtheme *international differences* – addressed in 29% of interviews – captures how interviewees compared domestic work culture, norms and infrastructure with that of other countries. Specific references were made to work practices or norms in countries like Scandinavia, Spain, Germany, China, or Southern European contexts. These comparisons varied in tone: some were neutral (e.g., different worktime schedules in Scandinavia or similar work ethic in Germany), others more value-laden (e.g., praising more modern approaches in Scandinavia, or criticizing conditional leave systems in China). Beyond work-specific norms, interviewees often invoked broader cultural or institutional differences, such as varying life philosophies or attitudes toward work-life balance, or more supportive policy frameworks (e.g., child care or leave systems) abroad. These interviewees typically used these particular contrasts to underscore a perceived lack of cultural or infrastructural fit for RWT in Belgium – thereby framing international examples more as distant benchmarks than realistic templates.

In sum, *work culture* is a deeply layered theme, with beliefs, assumptions, and norms operating at multiple levels – from individual convictions to organizational routines, societal discourse, and international comparison. What unites the subthemes is the recognition that cultural context powerfully shapes how RWT is evaluated. The employer's perspective clearly emerged as a key driver or barrier, depending on personal stance. But even where individual motivation was strong, perceived cultural constraints at the organizational or societal level often complicated implementation. While cultural norms can enable forward thinking in some settings, they more often appeared as subtle yet persistent barriers. This suggests that shifting work culture, or even fostering the belief that such a shift is possible, may be one of the most difficult yet decisive conditions for making RWT feasible.

Support

Theme *support* refers to the actors – both internal and external – that influence the uptake and feasibility of RWT. The theme distinguishes between inside support (originating from within the organization) and outside support (stemming from formal institutions and other external stakeholders). Inside support includes the alignment and attitudes of leadership (top-down) and employees (bottom-up) across different hierarchical levels, while outside support primarily refers to guidance, incentives, or barriers emerging from governmental structures (politics, law and regulations, financial support) or social secretariats. Overall, *support* was discussed in 84% of all interviews – specifically in all adopter interviews (100%), 88% of drop-outs, and 79% of non-adopters – and accounted for 14% of all coded segments – making it the theme with the third highest volume of coded content –, underscoring its relevance across groups (see Table 15, Table 16 and Figure 6).

Subtheme *Inside support* was covered in 52% of all interviews – primarily among adopters (100%) and drop-outs (88%), but less frequently among non-adopters (26%). It refers to support for RWT originating within the organization itself, both from leadership (top-down) and employees (bottom-up).

Several interviewees highlighted the importance of securing support across different levels and roles within the organization to ensure successful implementation. As one put it: “To make change happen, you need allies inside the organization”; another emphasized, “You really need to find consensus on several levels first.”

Regarding bottom-up support, a distinction can be made between direct employee support and the role of trade unions. Many interviewees underscored the importance of employee involvement – describing early, open communication as essential, and framing staff engagement as a powerful story for successfully rolling out RWT. At the same time, some acknowledged that such engagement could be challenging, especially when anticipating resistance or scepticism among certain employees. Several interviewees detailed how employees were involved across different phases: from decision-making (e.g., referenda), to the preparation stage (e.g., individual feedback on the RWT format), and during implementation (e.g., introduction of self-organizing teams). One interviewee, however, noted that staff had not been engaged at all. A recurring topic was the preference for full staff implementation: many interviewees expressed a clear preference – or even a perceived necessity – for collective uptake, often phrased as “either everybody or nobody.” Still, some organizations faced partial resistance from only a handful of employees (e.g., because of fear for increased work pressure), which often influenced the final decision on implementation. Regarding trade unions, a few interviewees described them as key initiators or important enablers, while others encountered barriers – either due to fragile union-employer relations or lukewarm union interest. In many cases, however, unions played no role, either because the organization was too small to require formal union involvement or because discussions hadn’t reached that stage due to resistance from other actors higher up in the organization.

Turning to top-down support, many interviewees similarly stressed its importance. Examples included backing from the board of directors, executive committee, founders, and the (senior) management team. Such support could act as a strong, explicit driver of RWT – particularly when top-level stakeholders were proactively in favour – or as a critical barrier, when key decision-makers were reluctant or opposed. Some interviewees reported strong support from senior leadership (e.g., the CEO or HR manager), sometimes following rounds of internal persuasion. Others described more mixed reactions – for instance, partial support within the board or executive committee. In a few cases, lack of top-down support led to serious delays or even cancellation of the initiative, as with a change-resistant director (who was eventually replaced for unrelated reasons), or a single opposing executive who blocked the project. Notably, in small or founder-led organizations, RWT decisions were sometimes made unilaterally, where a committed founder implemented the initiative without needing higher-level approval.

Subtheme *outside support* was covered in 81% of interviews and fairly evenly spread across the three groups. It refers to all forms of support or resistance encountered outside the organization that influenced the consideration or implementation of RWT initiatives. This includes a vast array of institutional actors as well as external stakeholders.

Government was by far the most frequently cited institutional actor in discussions on outside support, with interviewees highlighting various roles it plays in enabling, obstructing, or shaping RWT initiatives. First, political positioning was raised in 29% of interviews, often framed as fragmented or hesitant. Some interviewees mentioned explicit political opposition – for instance, linked to prominent political actors or particular parties – while others pointed to the initiative's perceived association with specific political families or regions, which weakened its perceived broader legitimacy. Second, several interviewees emphasized the importance of law and regulation. For some, a clear legal framework and structured top-down process were seen as prerequisites for implementation, whereas for others, the absence of such structures posed a practical barrier. Third, financial support – either in the form of subsidies or cuts in social security contributions – was frequently discussed. In non-profit sector organizations, where financial viability depends largely on subsidies rather than profit margins, subsidies were described as essential to RWT feasibility, with continued support from public authorities considered a key dependency. In other cases – particularly raised by non-adopters –, more general incentives were seen as useful facilitators or stimulus. Beyond these levers, some interviewees called for broader governmental efforts – including symbolic uptake within public services, national coordination, institutional guidance, and public sensitization. Nonetheless, frustrations with the government – to varying degrees related to reduced working time policies – were common, particularly among drop-outs and non-adopters. These included perceived complexity and slowness of the Belgian government system, as well as a lack of coherent work-life policies – especially with regard to childcare coverage, after-school care, and generational imbalances in leave systems (particularly in the care sector). Taken together, interviewees' reflections point to a wide range of expectations toward government, but also to significant gaps between those expectations and current institutional realities.

Beyond government, social secretariats were mentioned in 23% of interviews and were seen to play an ambivalent role. While some interviewees appreciated their support – such as legal advice – many raised doubts about their preparedness to deal with RWT-related complexities. Several reported feeling better informed than their social secretariat, often being the ones to initiate contact or provide explanations themselves (rather than vice versa). Others described confusion around key terminology (e.g., RWT versus compressed workweek), incomplete or incorrect information, and limited awareness of relevant initiatives such as the COLORBEL trial. In many cases, organizations had deliberately postponed contractual adjustments – either to avoid administrative hassle or to prevent unintended effects on benefits like vacation days or meal vouchers – meaning that social secretariats were not always aware a trial was underway. Next to social secretariats, the COLORBEL trial itself was often appreciated as a motivating form of external support – with some interviewees citing it as a trigger for increased interest in RWT or valuing the simple fact of being supported. A final institutional actor mentioned was employer representation bodies, though only rarely and often critically. Some interviewees described limited knowledge on RWT within sectoral committees, while others felt poorly represented by broader employer organizations, whose public stances on RWT did not match their own views or context.

A final source of outside support stems from external stakeholders, such as investors or members. Several interviewees noted that these actors can indirectly shape how RWT is perceived within the organization, as accountability, signalling considerations, or the need to maintain their support may influence whether RWT is deemed feasible or strategically appropriate.

In short, support proves to be a decisive factor in the RWT journey – both inside and outside the organization. Successful implementation often requires coordinated backing across multiple levels and spheres: top-down, bottom-up, and externally. When alignment is present, support can act as a strong enabler or even a clear driver; when fragmented or absent, it quickly turns into a barrier. This theme highlights that RWT is rarely a standalone choice: it depends on a broader "and-and" story of internal readiness and an enabling external environment.

Spillovers

Theme *spillovers* covers external dynamics that indirectly influence organizations' perceptions, openness, and decision-making regarding RWT initiatives. This includes pressures to align practices with related entities, the shaping of internal views through external narratives – including role models, media exposure, and public discourse –, and the influence of prior experiences with related policy instruments. This theme was discussed in 90% of interviews, with full coverage among drop-outs (100%) and 75% and 89% coverage among adopter and non-adopter interviews respectively (see Table 15 and Figure 6).

First, *alignment pressures* – covered in 42% of interviews – refers to the implicit or explicit pressure organizations face to align with broader structures – whether internally, across affiliates, or externally, within networks and sectors. These pressures can function both as enablers and constraints.

On the one hand, organizational alignment emerged as a key factor, especially for interviewees from organizations embedded in larger structures. For some, being part of an international group facilitated uptake: when headquarters or affiliates abroad had already adopted RWT, Belgian entities could follow their lead more easily. In contrast, other interviewees – particularly from smaller affiliates – saw this structure as limiting, expressing hesitation to initiate RWT alone without group-wide endorsement. Similar dynamics were observed in umbrella or network organizations, where alignment was viewed as crucial to avoid internal disparities or unfair competition. Moving together as a sector or network was often seen as a condition for feasibility, with support from the coordinating body considered helpful or even necessary. Intra-group alignment pressures were particularly clear in one case where RWT was postponed until a restructuring rendered the unit independent – removing the need to align with sister organizations. Post-merger harmonization emerged in another case, where a larger organization had absorbed a smaller one already offering RWT; the new, unified entity felt compelled to maintain and extend this benefit to avoid dissatisfaction among legacy employees. Finally, inter-organizational dependency shaped perceptions in one organization operating within a tightly integrated production chain. In this context, being a link in a larger system – interwoven with partners across sectors and borders – meant schedule changes could not be made unilaterally, underscoring how alignment pressures can emerge both within and beyond formal organizational boundaries.

On the other hand, systemic alignment pressures within or across sectors were mentioned by a handful of drop-outs and non-adopters. Several interviewees – working in the care and social sector – argued that RWT should be addressed at the sector level, for example through joint committees. Others noted that cross-sector misalignment could create risks – from reduced competitiveness (as previously discussed under theme *competitiveness*, subtheme *competitive positioning*) to unintended effects on clients. While mostly framed as barriers, a few suggested they would feel compelled or enabled to adopt RWT if it became a broader labour market norm.

A second prominent subtheme is *external narratives*, covered in 84% of all interviews and fairly evenly spread across the three groups. It refers to how role models, media exposure, and public discourse shape perceptions on RWT's desirability and feasibility.

Role models – ranging from international cases (e.g., Sweden, Spain, France) to domestic examples (e.g., Femma) – were frequently mentioned. Some interviewees discovered these cases out of personal interest, through reading HR literature or specialized books (e.g., *De strijd om tijd*), drawing inspiration from network platforms like LinkedIn, or consulting dedicated websites (e.g., 4dayweek.be). While often cited positively, as inspiration for an in-house initiative or to convince higher management, role models could also be mentioned critically – such as the 35-hour week in France. Several interviewees emphasized the importance of contextual fit: for Belgium, Germany was seen as a more relevant benchmark due to similar work ethics, while the UK was considered more comparable than Portugal in terms of labour market structure. In addition to citing examples, interviewees from all groups underlined the value of best practices and research evidence as drivers or prerequisites for RWT. One adopter highlighted the need for such studies to help objectify the debate. Yet others noted the current literature's limitations, pointing to inconclusive findings or the lack of long-term results.

Media exposure was another factor shaping awareness – positively by planting an initial "seed" about RWT or the COLORBEL trial, but also more ambiguously. Interviewees cited receiving mixed signals or being confused due to misleading headlines (e.g., coverage of "4-day week" pilots that were actually compressed schedules), and one adopter even avoided press exposure to prevent pressure from unions in affiliated organizations.

Finally, a recurring issue across interviews was terminological ambiguity. Several interviewees confused reduced working time with related concepts, most often the compressed workweek – likely due to recent governmental promotion of the latter (in 2022). The term "four-day workweek" commonly triggered assumptions of compressed schedules rather than a real reduction in hours. This confusion was especially common among non-adopters, despite prior clarification via mail and at the beginning of the interview, and occasionally reappeared later in the interview – highlighting how ingrained the association is. Similar mix-ups occurred in adopter and drop-out cases: in one organization where RWT was introduced following its earlier adoption at the foreign headquarters, both the director and employees of the local affiliate initially assumed the plan referred to a compressed schedule. Another interviewee mentioned their social secretariat misunderstood the initiative in the same way. Others equated RWT with part-time work, or framed it as "four-fifths work," reinforcing how dominant the full-time norm (38-hour, five-day workweek) remains. A few also believed RWT could only be implemented as a rigid four-day week, unaware of more flexible options.

Finally, the subtheme *policy experience spillovers* captures how prior exposure to related policy measures can shape openness to RWT. One interviewee, for instance, was already familiar with an age-based target group reduction scheme and therefore quickly recognized and understood the similar financial incentive for collective RWT – making her more receptive to the idea. Although raised by only one interviewee, this example illustrates how prior knowledge of or engagement with existing government incentive schemes can facilitate awareness and uptake of related measures.

In sum, spillovers highlight how organizational decisions around RWT are shaped by a wider web of external reference points and structural interdependencies. Alignment pressures can act as either

strong enablers or barriers, depending on how they position the organization within a larger whole. Similarly, exposure to role models, media narratives, or prior policy experiences can reinforce existing scepticism or trigger curiosity and change.

Global trends

Theme *global trends* captures large-scale societal, economic, and technological developments that shape how organizations perceive the feasibility and desirability of RWT, despite lying largely outside their control. These include changing workforce preferences, labour market dynamics, macro-economic pressures and digitalization. This theme was discussed in 77% of interviews – specifically in 50% of adopter interviews, 88% of drop-outs, and 79% of non-adopters – but accounts for only 5% of all coded segments, making it the least prominent theme across the dataset (see Table 15, Table 16 and Figure 6).

Subtheme *changing workforce preferences* – with a coverage of 58% of interviews the most frequently mentioned subtheme within this theme – captures how evolving employee attitudes and demographic shifts influence organizational views on RWT. First, many interviewees noted a growing emphasis on work-life balance, both within their organization and in society more broadly. This shift was reflected in rising demand for part-time work as well as a general revaluation of time over career or salary. Second, several interviewees pointed to a generational shift: younger employees were described as placing greater importance on free time, with some interviewees explicitly contrasting this with their own generation's mindset. While some saw this shift as an opportunity – arguing that RWT could help meet new expectations or support retention – others viewed it with concern, fearing inflated demands or a loss of appreciation for work. Finally, some interviewees connected RWT to the challenge of an aging workforce. Here too, views diverged: some believed RWT could enable people to work longer by improving sustainability and satisfaction over the life course, while others questioned whether such measures were realistic or financially viable within the broader pension system.

Subtheme *labour market dynamics* – discussed in 29% of interviews – reflects how perceived tightness or slack in the labour market shapes thinking around RWT. Several interviewees, especially non-adopters, saw tight labour market conditions as a direct barrier: with staffing already stretched, reducing working hours was seen as unfeasible or even misleading. Some interviewees described the idea of offering RWT in such conditions as a "false promise" – not because of unwillingness, but because of practical infeasibility. Yet others framed RWT as a potential lever to improve recruitment, especially in high-turnover sectors like care. Others remained undecided, citing these competing arguments. Beyond tightness, unemployment was raised as a second labour market concern. In this context, one interviewee viewed RWT as a potential work-sharing mechanism to help create additional jobs, while another considered it unrealistic – questioning the logic of reducing working hours in sectors already facing redundancies.

Subtheme *macro-economic pressures* – also covered in 29% of interviews (mainly non-adopters) – reflects broader concerns tied to public finances, inflation, and global competitiveness. Some interviewees expressed doubt about the financial sustainability of RWT, especially under subsidy-dependent models, raising concerns about austerity, shrinking budgets, or high inflation. One interviewee pointed out increased pressure on specific sectors – such as international development – where organizational legitimacy and efficiency are increasingly scrutinized. Finally, several interviewees questioned the broader appropriateness of pursuing RWT amid geopolitical and

economic uncertainty, arguing that it could undermine competitiveness at the national or European level. In their view, RWT risks being counterproductive – seen as a luxury, or as something that comes at the expense of economic competitiveness, which they consider the more urgent priority.

Digitalization – covered in only 10% of interviews – refers to the influence of technological changes on an organization's perceived feasibility of RWT. Rather than serving as a clear driver or barrier, it is most often perceived as an area of uncertainty. One interviewee saw potential in AI or digital tools to support efficiency gains, while another felt such technologies offered little relevance for their context. In addition, the need for better understanding of digital impacts was highlighted as a prerequisite before seriously considering RWT.

Overall, global trends emerged as a less prominent but still meaningful theme – mainly shedding light on drop-outs' and non-adopters' perspectives. Its primary contribution lies in how it situates RWT within broader societal and economic developments. Changing workforce preferences stood out as the most consistent and positively framed influence, with many interviewees identifying shifting values around work-life balance and generational change as long-term drivers of interest in RWT. By contrast, labour market tightness and macro-economic pressures more often acted as barriers, raising doubts about feasibility in times of staff shortages or fiscal uncertainty. Digitalization, while less frequently mentioned, was mostly seen as a source of ambiguity – its role depending on how future efficiency gains and organizational readiness unfold.

Alternative needs

Theme *alternative needs* refers to organizational – often employee-related – needs or realities that reduce perceived relevance of RWT. It refers to reasons for not actively considering or pursuing RWT, beyond feasibility or ideological opposition. This includes more urgent organizational concerns, preferences for other measures, employee needs already met through existing systems, competing in-house projects, and a general absence of demand from staff. Though discussed in 84% of interviews – especially among drop-outs (75%) and non-adopters (95%) – the theme accounts for only 10% of all coded segments, making it the second least prominent theme in the dataset (see Table 15, Table 16 and Figure 6).

The most frequently cited subtheme, *organizational concerns beyond RWT* (65% of interviews), includes both prioritized challenges and preferred alternative measures. Employers often pointed to unmet employee needs they saw as more pressing than RWT – such as demand for flexibility, longer vacation clusters, the RWT-days system, overtime arrangements, or even compressed workweeks. Some mentioned a preference among employees for financial benefits over time off – such as when part-time workers were expected to prefer higher pay over reduced hours, or when employees showed more interest in exchanging holidays for salary bonuses –, sometimes noting that this tendency can be particularly pronounced during certain life stages (e.g., young employees who are paying off a mortgage and raising children). In a few cases, interviewees described highly driven staff teams – where protecting employees from overwork was the primary concern, not reducing hours. Other organizational priorities included tackling retention or recruitment issues, securing subsidies (especially in times of high inflation), and navigating weak institutional work-life policies. Some voiced broader societal concerns – such as the need to sustain welfare for future generations, address sustainability and equity challenges, or tackle the root causes of the work-life rat race – which they felt were more urgent or structurally relevant than pursuing RWT. Several employers raised

alternative strategies to address employee needs – some of which were already in place – such as added flexibility in how time off is scheduled, additional extra-legal holidays, or creative arrangements like shorter work years with full wage compensation instead of shorter workweeks. Others proposed hypothetical options, including for example "full-rights part-time work," where employees would retain full long-term benefits (e.g., pension rights) despite working reduced hours. Additional suggestions targeted recruitment and retention, such as dedicated campaigns or career development programs. Still others emphasized the need for individualized support tailored to specific life stages or personal situations, arguing that such targeted approaches may better meet employee needs than collective arrangements like RWT.

Subtheme *employee needs already met without RWT* – discussed in 42% of interviews, exclusively among drop-outs and non-adopters – describes situations where organizations felt that core worktime, flexibility, or pay-related needs were already adequately covered. Examples include generous leave policies, longstanding reduced weekly working hours (e.g., sub-38-hour workweeks) resulting from organizational or sectoral labour agreements, and internal policies enabling shorter work years. Several interviewees also pointed to the availability of plenty of flexible part-time schemes – such as parental leave, career breaks, time credit, and gradual retirement – as viable alternatives. In addition, many organizations cited existing flexible schedules and telework arrangements already in place, alongside competitive pay and perks, as reasons why RWT was not seen as necessary.

Competing in-house initiatives – mentioned in 16% of interviews across all groups – refers to internal projects or change processes that took precedence over RWT. Interviewees referred to strategic shifts (e.g., CRM rollouts, digitalization) or explorations of other time policies (e.g., unlimited vacation or commuting-time compensation). Such competing priorities were especially common in younger or growing organizations, where structural foundations are still being built and flexibility efforts are directed toward broader organizational maturity, rather than towards RWT.

Finally, the subtheme *non-priority of RWT for employees* – covered in 29% of interviews, exclusively among drop-outs and non-adopters – captures statements that RWT simply wasn't a topic among staff. Several interviewees said it had never been raised, wasn't on employees' radar, or didn't reflect their actual preferences.

Overall, *alternative needs* emerged as a low-salience but telling theme – particularly among drop-outs and non-adopters –, highlighting that the absence of interest in RWT often stems from competing priorities rather than outright opposition. The theme shows how RWT can be sidelined when other issues are perceived as more urgent, when employee needs are met through existing systems other than RWT, or when internal agendas dominate attention. While not a barrier in the strict sense, these conditions reduce the relevance of RWT within organizational decision-making, especially in contexts where staff do not actively demand it. The theme underscores that in the broader picture of RWT uptake, not all resistance is active: sometimes, it simply reflects a lack of felt need.

4.2.2.3 Incentive system evaluation codebook

Table 17 provides an overview of the final L1- and L2-codes from the incentive system evaluation codebook.[23] As with the drivers & barriers codebook, post-hoc analyses were conducted to examine how the findings vary across different organizational groups. Table 18 and Figure 7 present the interview coverage of themes, while Table 19 reports the coding frequency per theme.

Compared to the drivers & barriers codebook, this codebook is considerably more limited in scope. Table 19 shows that it comprises a total of 105 coded segments, in contrast to 1380 coded segments in the drivers & barriers analysis (see Table 16). In addition, Table 18 indicates that the themes addressed in this codebook were discussed less consistently across the interviews, with total interview coverage ranging from 16% to 55%. This is notably lower than the thematic coverage in the drivers & barriers codebook, which ranged from 77% to 100% (see Table 15).

As was the case in the drivers & barriers analysis, the incentive system evaluation codebook is not structured according to a strict division between positive and negative assessments at the highest level. Some L1-codes (themes 4 to 6) explicitly reflect concerns or negative evaluations, while others (themes 1 to 3) contain a mix of positive and negative perspectives, further differentiated at the level of the L2-codes (see Table 17). Given the more compact structure of this codebook, we adopt slightly different terminology than in the previous section: the L1-codes are again treated as thematic categories and referred to as “themes”, whereas the L2-codes represent common types of statements or perspectives within the theme, rather than constituting full-fledged subthemes in their own right.

[23] The detailed version of the incentive system evaluation codebook (final version), including a definition for each L1-code, is added in Annex Table H.

1 Value judgements	**4 Perceived risks & hurdles**
1.1 Positive appreciation	4.1 Limited duration & future risk
1.2 Sceptical views	4.2 Uncertain policy longevity
2 Perceived adequacy of incentive amount	4.3 Funding model (in)compatibility
2.1 Insufficient	4.4 Need for trial first
2.2 Substantial	**5 Alternative priorities**
3 Incentive relevance for decision-making	5.1 Other priorities matter more
3.1 Not a motivator	5.2 Suggested policy alternatives
3.2 Nice-to-have, but that's it	**6 Lack of awareness**
3.3 Explicit motivator	6.1 Information barriers
	6.2 Perceived complexity
	6.3 Missed opportunity sentiment

Table 17: Incentive system evaluation codebook (final version): L1- and L2-codes.

L1-code	I (n = 4)	II (n = 8)	III (n = 19)	Total (n = 31)	Total (%)
Value judgements	2	3	12	17	55%
Perceived adequacy of incentive amount	2	4	8	14	45%
Incentive relevance for decision-making	2	2	4	8	26%
Perceived risks & hurdles	1	3	7	11	35%
Alternative priorities	0	0	5	5	16%
Lack of awareness	0	2	4	6	19%

Note: segments were not directly coded with L1-codes, but with associated L2- or lower-level codes. An interviews is considered to contain a segment for a given L1-code if it includes at least one segment coded with any of the L2- or lower-level codes clustered under that L1-code.

Table 18: Incentive system evaluation codebook: number of interviews in total and per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) & non-adopters (III)) containing at least one segment coded with each L1-code.

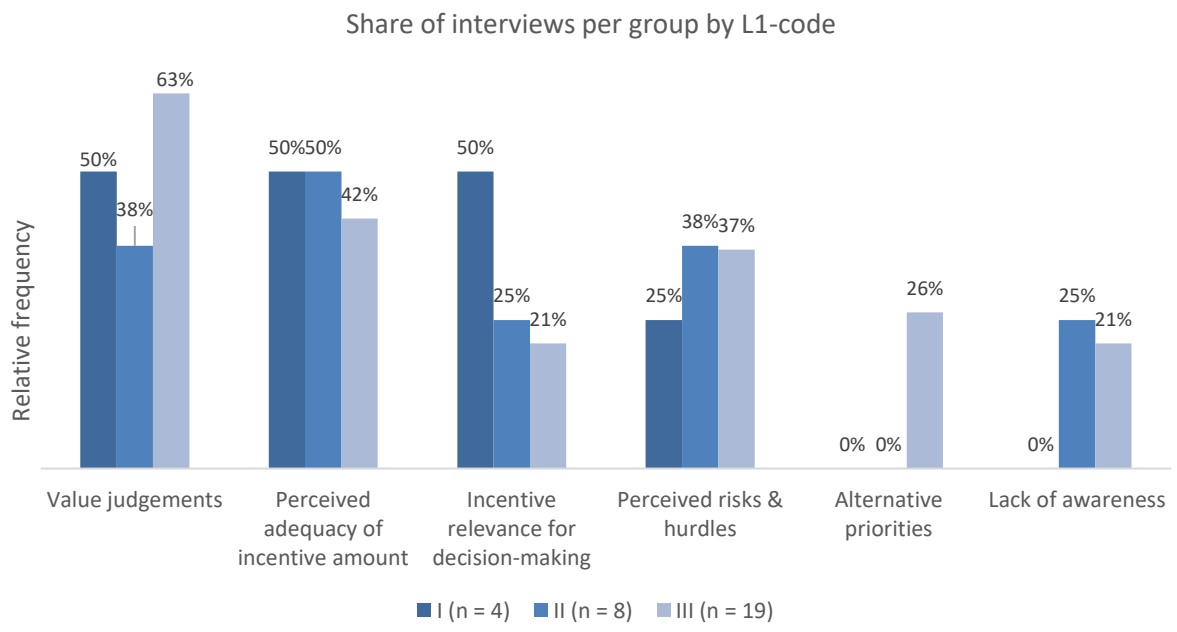

Figure 7: Incentive system evaluation codebook: share of interviews per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) & non-adopters (III)) containing at least one segment coded with each L1-code.

L1-code	I (n)	II (n)	III (n)	Total (n)	Total (%)
Value judgements	2	8	23	33	31%
Perceived adequacy of incentive amount	2	8	15	25	24%
Incentive relevance for decision-making	2	3	6	11	10%
Perceived risks & hurdles	1	4	14	19	18%
Alternative priorities	0	0	6	6	6%
Lack of awareness	0	5	6	11	10%
Total (n)	7	28	70	105	100%
Total (% of all segments)	7%	27%	67%	100%	

Note: segments were not directly coded with L1-codes, but with associated L2- or lower-level codes. "Total (%)" refers to the percentage relative to all coded segments.

Table 19: Incentive system evaluation codebook: number of coded segments in total and per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) & non-adopters (III)) for each L1-code.

Before turning to a detailed discussion of the themes, it is worth noting that only three interviewees (i.e. less than 10% of the sample) were aware of the financial incentive system prior to their engagement with the COLORBEL project. This observation in itself highlights the limited general awareness of the measure.

The first theme, *value judgements*, captures participants' overall assessments of the incentive system, ranging from broad approval to conceptual critique. Positive evaluations encompass both general support and strategic considerations. On the one hand, interviewees referred to the incentive as interesting, beneficial, or helpful – describing it as a bonus, an advantage, or a form of recognition for trying new things. On the other hand, some emphasized its usefulness in convincing key stakeholders, either internal (such as higher management) or external (such as subsidy providers), to support RWT implementation. In line with this, a few interviewees noted that the relevance of the incentive may depend on leadership preferences – particularly on how strongly financial considerations weigh in internal decision-making, and on the stance taken by financial directors.

Critical perspectives, voiced exclusively by non-adopters, include both principled objections and conceptual concerns. Some interviewees expressed ideological disagreement with the policy direction, describing the measure as "absurd" or arguing that incentives should encourage more work, not less. Others questioned the underlying rationale of the incentive, raised doubts about who ultimately bears its cost, or voiced concerns about policy obsolescence – i.e. the risk that regulations introduced for a specific purpose or in response to a particular context may remain in place even after that context has shifted and the original rationale is no longer valid.

Theme *perceived adequacy of incentive amount* reflects how participants assessed the financial size of the incentive. A majority of interviewees – especially among non-adopters – felt that the amount was insufficient to have a meaningful impact. Some described it as too small to matter or negligible, using phrases like "peanuts," "basically nothing," or "a band-aid on a bullet wound," and argued that it was not enough to compensate for costs or serve as a true incentive to consider RWT. However, several adopter and drop-out interviewees held a more positive view. They described the amount as substantial, citing expressions such as "it's not nothing", "that was fine, that was generous", or "I had run a quick simulation (…) and I was actually surprised by how large the budget would be. I know it would only be temporary, but I thought: this could really help absorb those initial shocks."

Theme *incentive relevance for decision-making* examines the extent to which the incentive played a role in organizational decision-making regarding RWT. Most interviewees – across all three groups – indicated that, although appreciated, the incentive did not serve as a key motivator or turning point. It was generally regarded as a helpful extra, but not decisive. Illustrative quotes include: "It's a nice bonus, but it's not the main reason for doing it", "It wasn't like we did the trial because there was an incentive – we were already planning to do the trial, and the incentive was simply a nice extra", and "It was never one of the reasons I would have done it. Had we taken the step and the incentive came with it, that would have been a nice extra – but not decisive." One adopter did, however, identify the incentive as an important factor in their decision, stating: "The second thing – and I want to be honest about this – we definitely had the social security contribution discount on our radar as well. So yes, we absolutely took it into account, because it gave us a certain advantage as a company."

Theme *perceived risks & hurdles* gathers statements pointing to doubts, perceived risks, or structural constraints associated with the incentive system – particularly among drop-outs and non-adopters. A key concern was the incentive's limited duration. Many organizations expressed uncertainty about the long-term financial sustainability of RWT, fearing that once the incentive ended, they would no longer be able to maintain the reduced schedule. This concern was especially acute among organizations dependent on external funding or subsidies, who feared a reduction in subsidy levels due to decreased working time, thereby threatening their financial viability. These findings underscore the importance of aligning subsidy policies with RWT measures, particularly for organizations that rely on them for their financial viability.

In addition to these duration-related concerns, some interviewees raised broader issues around the longevity of the policy framework itself, fearing that the government might withdraw or reverse the measure. Others questioned the system's fit with specific funding or business models. This included principled objections to relying on public funding, perceived incompatibility with billable hours structures (suggesting a better fit with lump-sum models), and the view that financial incentives are less relevant in non-profit or subsidy-based settings – an observation that stands in contrast to statements from other subsidy-reliant organizations who welcomed the financial support.

Finally, one interviewee noted that the incentive's benefits did not outweigh those of participating in a trial. Specifically, they regretted that the incentive applied only to definitive RWT implementations, and not to trial phases.

Raised exclusively by non-adopters, theme *alternative priorities* captures the view that other, non-financial challenges stand in the way of considering RWT – thereby diminishing the relevance of the incentive system. Examples include operational constraints, concerns about service continuity, or production capacity. As one interviewee put it: "(…) because there are actually quite a few other factors at play besides just the financial support." The theme also includes statements from organizations that felt other forms of policy support – such as the guidance and assistance provided during the COLORBEL trial – would be more relevant or helpful than financial incentives alone.

Finally, theme *lack of awareness* summarizes comments from drop-outs and non-adopters who faced difficulties in accessing, understanding, or even becoming aware of the incentive system. Some described a general lack of communication around the policy, or noted that they had only found information in Dutch – highlighting a possible misunderstanding or confusion about the availability of public information in other languages. Others reported confusion about technical aspects, such as

calculating the expected amount, applicability for part-time workers, or the extent to which employers could shape the format of RWT themselves. Moreover, a few interviewees expressed regret upon learning – often during the interview – that the incentive system had already existed for some time. These reflections point to missed opportunities and suggest that broader dissemination and clearer communication could have increased engagement.

4.2.2.4 Trial evaluation codebook

During the interview analysis, it became apparent that participants shared reflections both on the specific COLORBEL trial (i.e. the pilot organized within the scope of this project) and on the general value of conducting an RWT trial, whether in-house or as part of another external initiative. To account for this distinction, the trial evaluation codebook was divided into two sub-codebooks: one capturing comments specifically related to the COLORBEL trial (A), and another reflecting views on RWT trials more generally (B). As expected, there is notable overlap between the two.

Table 20 presents an overview of the final L1- and L2-codes used in this codebook.[24] As with the previous codebooks, post-hoc analyses were conducted: Table 21, Figure 8 and Figure 9 display the interview coverage per theme, while Table 22 shows the corresponding coding frequencies.

Like the incentive system evaluation codebook, this codebook is more limited in scope compared to the drivers & barriers codebook: it contains 180 coded segments, in contrast to 1380 in the latter (see Tables 16 & 22). The themes were also discussed less consistently across interviews, with total interview coverage ranging from 6% to 52%, compared to 77% to 100% in the drivers & barriers codebook (see Tables 15 & 21). As before, the L1-codes are referred to as themes, while the L2-codes specify recurring elements or concrete references within each theme. These L2-codes provide additional detail but do not represent subthemes in an analytical sense. Finally, as with the previous codebook, some themes are rather positive (e.g., *appreciated features*) or negative (e.g., *hurdles*), while others (e.g., *value judgements*) include a mix of perspectives.

[24] The detailed version of the trial evaluation codebook (final version), including a definition for each L1-code, is added in Annex Table I.

(A) Particular COLORBEL trial	(B) Trial in general
1 Value judgements	**1 Importance**
1.1 Nice opportunity	**2 Preparatory demands**
1.2 Sceptical view	**3 Implementation design choices**
1.3 Non-decisive for RWT implementation	3.1 Format
2 Assessment of provided support	3.2 Implementation approach
2.1 Recruitment events & website	3.3 Trial duration
2.2 External guidance (particular expert org.)	**4 Staff dynamics**
2.3 Scientific support	4.1 PT staff implications
3 Appreciated features	4.2 Employee adoption
3.1 Appreciation of COLORBEL team contact	4.3 Pilot group selection
3.2 Interest in research value	**5 External guidance (any expert org.)**
3.3 Appreciation of opt-out flexibility	5.1 Perceived usefulness
4 Hurdles	5.2 Cost of guidance
4.1 Time-related challenges	5.3 Cultural fit
4.2 Perceived effort and cost	**6 Not just a pilot**
4.3 Informational barriers	6.1 Transformative decision
4.4 No access to incentive during trial	6.2 Long-term viability concerns
	6.3 Lock-in fear
	7 Take-aways from RWT engagement
	7.1 Key lessons learned
	7.2 Unintended organizational benefits

Table 20: Trial evaluation codebook (final version): L1- and L2-codes.

L1-code	I (n = 4)	II (n = 8)	III (n = 19)	Total (n = 31)	Total (%)
(A) Particular COLORBEL trial					
Value judgements	2	5	1	8	26%
Assessment of provided support	3	5	0	8	26%
Appreciated features	1	5	10	16	52%
Hurdles	3	3	2	8	26%
(B) Trial in general					
Importance	1	1	0	2	6%
Preparatory demands	3	2	0	5	16%
Implementation design choices	4	1	4	9	29%
Staff dynamics	4	1	3	8	26%
External guidance (any expert org.)	0	4	0	4	13%
Not just a pilot	3	4	4	11	35%
Take-aways from RWT engagement	2	3	0	5	16%

Note: segments were not directly coded with L1-codes, but with associated L2- or lower-level codes. An interviews is considered to contain a segment for a given L1-code if it includes at least one segment coded with any of the L2- or lower-level codes clustered under that L1-code.

Table 21: Trial evaluation codebook: number of interviews in total and per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) & non-adopters (III)) containing at least one segment coded with each L1-code.

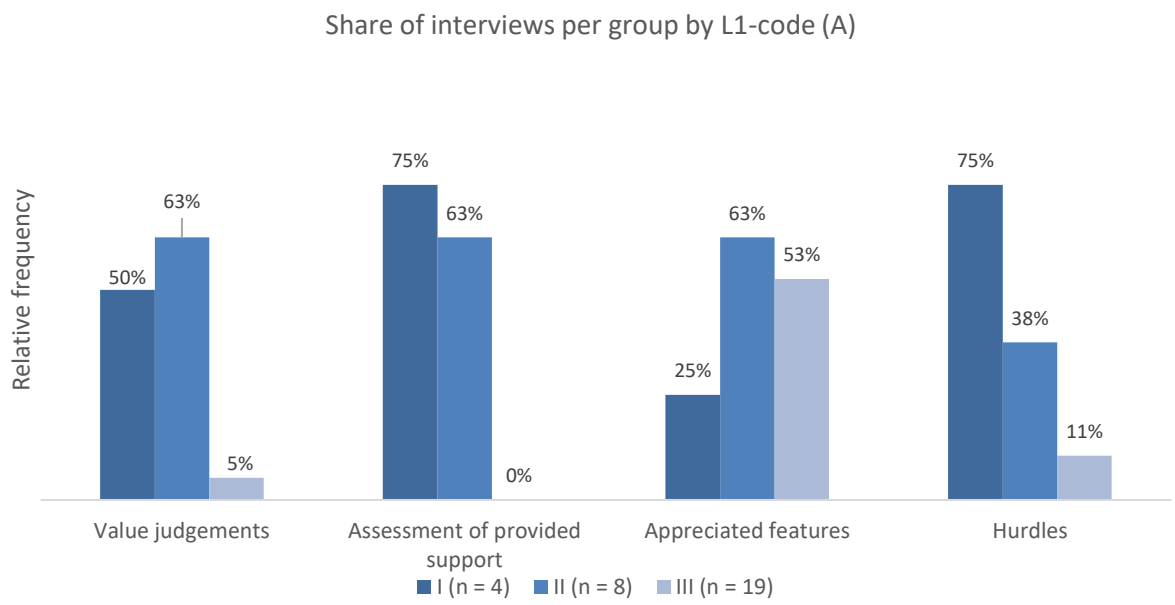

Figure 8: Trial evaluation codebook (sub-codebook (A) Particular COLORBEL trial): share of interviews per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) & non-adopters (III)) containing at least one segment coded with each L1-code.

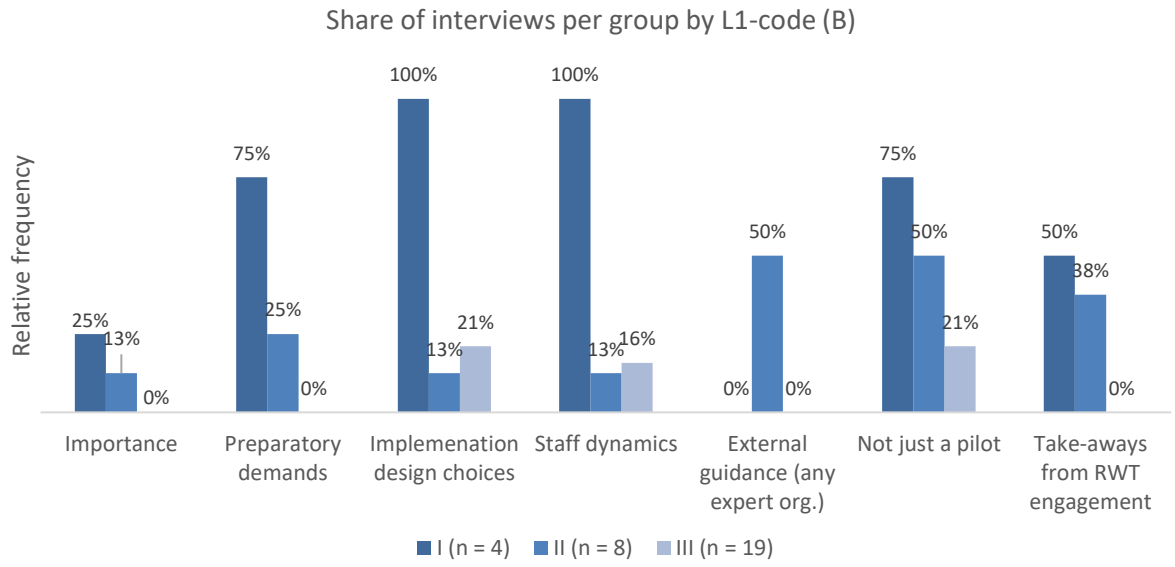

Figure 9: Trial evaluation codebook (sub-codebook (B) Trial in general): share of interviews per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) & non-adopters (III)) containing at least one segment coded with each L1-code.

L1-code	I (n)	II (n)	III (n)	Total (n)	Total (%)
(A) Particular COLORBEL trial					
Value judgements	3	7	1	11	6%
Assessment of provided support	5	17	0	22	12%
Appreciated features	1	14	12	27	15%
Hurdles	6	16	3	25	14%
(B) Trial in general					
Importance	2	1	0	3	2%
Preparatory demands	3	4	0	7	4%
Implementation design choices	6	2	6	14	8%
Staff dynamics	13	2	3	18	10%
External guidance (any expert org.)	0	7	0	7	4%
Not just a pilot	3	13	10	26	14%
Take-aways from RWT engagement	15	5	0	20	11%
Total (n)	57	88	35	180	100%
Total (% of all segments)	32%	49%	19%	100%	

Note: segments were not directly coded with L1-codes, but with associated L2- or lower-level codes. "Total (%)" refers to the percentage relative to all coded segments (across both sub-codebooks (A) and (B)).

Table 22: Trial evaluation codebook: number of coded segments in total and per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) & non-adopters (III)) for each L1-code.

(A) Particular COLORBEL trial

Theme *value judgements* – primarily discussed by adopters and drop-outs – reflects participants' overall attitudes toward the COLORBEL trial. Responses ranged from clearly positive (e.g., describing it as a useful, interesting, or welcome opportunity) to more sceptical or ambivalent views. Some interviewees, for example, valued the potential for knowledge exchange but did not see the trial as a decisive factor in their decision-making process – summarized by one participant as "I don't feel like it would really have been like a game changer".

Theme *assessment of provided support* gathers feedback on the different forms of support offered as part of the COLORBEL trial, and was addressed exclusively by adopters and drop-outs. A central element was the option for external guidance, particularly the group-level support facilitated by Autonomy. While the prospect of peer learning was widely appreciated – some even describing it as the most valuable part of the trial –, several interviewees perceived its added value as minor or limited. This impression was based on their observations of the participating organizations during general webinars and targeted sessions, which they felt belonged to very different sectors or contexts. Two drop-outs also noted that the pricing of the group offer seemed reasonable, especially compared to the pricing of individual offers.

Another frequently discussed component was the recruitment phase, including webinars, sessions, and the website. Participants described the webinars as inspiring and helpful in generating internal interest or securing higher-level buy-in. However, one participant raised challenges with bilingual delivery, as parts of the content (e.g., testimonials) were offered only in one language, making it harder to follow for those less proficient in the other language. Additional positive mentions included the kick-off session – particularly Autonomy's talk, which helped reduce initial hesitations – and the availability of video content on the website. Lastly, the scientific component included in the trial received mixed feedback: while some interviewees valued being part of a research project, others felt

they could manage data collection independently or questioned the added value of their participation – particularly in cases where they represented a smaller organization.

Theme *appreciated features,* which includes input from adopters, drop-outs, and even some non-adopters, covers aspects of the COLORBEL trial that were explicitly valued. Most notably, the support and accessibility of the COLORBEL team were highlighted as key strengths. Participants valued having a reliable point of contact throughout the project, someone they could turn to with practical questions or doubts. This appreciation was also reflected indirectly, for instance, in requests for ongoing support or for future updates on new trials, and in repeated expressions of interest in receiving the project results. In some cases, this was even cited as a reason for participating in the interview. Beyond individual support, several interviewees emphasized the broader societal relevance of the trial. Participating in a project that could inform evidence-based policymaking and reveal real-world advantages and disadvantages of RWT was considered a meaningful contribution. Lastly, the option to opt out of the trial at any moment was seen as an important source of flexibility and reassurance.

Theme *hurdles* – discussed mainly by drop-outs and a few adopters – captures the challenges that discouraged or complicated participation in the COLORBEL trial. The most frequently mentioned barrier related to timing: many interviewees described the preparation window as too short, citing feelings of being rushed or under pressure. Example statements include: “we were a bit pressed for time”, “it was indeed very short notice”, “we came very late (…), it felt very rushed”, and “it just felt too quick (…), I needed to take a pause.” Some mentioned specific organizational circumstances that compounded this challenge – such as staff shortages, onboarding of new employees, or internal changes related to mergers. Conversely, a few interviewees noted that the timing of the trial aligned well with an existing interest in RWT, either at the organizational or personal level.

Informational gaps were another hurdle. Some participants noted that they had not heard about the trial through any official channels or felt they lacked sufficient information to secure internal approval. Concerns about the workload and costs associated with scientific data collection were also raised, particularly regarding the expected time commitment for staff. Finally, one interviewee mentioned the inability to combine trial participation with access to the financial incentive system as a factor that added to their hesitation and influenced the final decision to step back.

(B) Trial in general

Theme *importance* reflects how several adopter and drop-out organizations emphasized the value of running a trial phase before moving toward full RWT implementation. Rather than immediately adopting RWT in a definitive form, trials were seen as a low-risk opportunity to test feasibility, gain practical experience, and generate internal support.

Theme preparatory demands, also voiced exclusively by adopters and drop-outs, concerns the substantial preparation work that an RWT trial often entails. Interviewees described this preparatory phase as time-consuming and resource-intensive, requiring internal negotiations, alignment, and administrative hassle. In addition to the burden itself, the uncertainty of where and how to begin was mentioned as a practical barrier. Amongst others, this was raised by the sole participant organization in the COLORBEL trial, where the need for a more inclusive and thorough preparation processes to tailor RWT to employee needs was raised – however, at the same time, they also questioned whether too much planning might stifle momentum, preferring a more agile “learn-by-doing” approach. Moreover, it is worth noting that this theme closely aligns with the timing-related challenges

perceived with respect to the COLORBEL trial, as discussed under the theme *hurdles* in the corresponding sub-codebook.

Theme *implementation design choices* brings together uncertainties, preferences and decisions – primarily from adopters and non-adopters – on the structural setup of an RWT trial. These included design aspects such as format (e.g., staggered vs. collective days off, employee involvement in co-shaping the format), implementation approach (e.g., starting with a modest reduction of hours and expanding after evaluation), and trial duration (e.g., ensuring sufficient time for adjustment and meaningful evaluation).

Theme *staff dynamics* includes insights – mostly from adopters and non-adopters – on staff-related implications that influenced or emerged during trial consideration or setup. A major point of discussion concerned part-time employees: how their work patterns would or should be adjusted under a new full-time standard (i.e. whether or not to "scale up" to the new full-time work norm), the fairness and feasibility of wage corrections, and how format differences (e.g., shorter days vs. full days off) might affect employee experiences and perceived equity. Adopters also described divergent experiences in terms of employee adaptation: some reported quick adjustment, while others noted a more gradual transition. Finally, views diverged on whether a pilot group was desirable. In some cases, it was seen as necessary for testing feasibility in a controlled way (especially in larger organizations), while others – especially smaller organizations – preferred a collective switch rather than segmentation.

Theme *external guidance* – raised only by drop-outs – covered perspectives on working with external expert partners (e.g., Autonomy in the COLORBEL trial). Views ranged from enthusiasm about the added value of expert support to scepticism about its perceived usefulness (for all employees) or cost-effectiveness, particularly if the offer was perceived as not sufficiently tailored. A few interviewees also noted the importance of cultural alignment between the supporting party and the participating organization or country context.

Theme *not just a pilot* stood out across all three interviewee groups. It captures the widespread perception that an RWT trial is not merely a temporary, low-stakes or reversible experiment, but rather a transformative decision with lasting implications. Interviewees described it as "phenomenal", "very impactful," "not something you do at random," or a "chain reaction" that affects many organizational processes. Many expressed concern about potential lock-in: once employees experience a trial, expectations shift, and reversing course becomes socially or practically difficult. As one interviewee put it: "I think I'd be afraid that it's not reversible. If you do something like that, I think you can't really turn it back around anymore. Or at least, employees would definitely find that difficult." Another recalled: "Another concern of my colleagues was that 'there will be no way back'". Adopters echoed this sentiment – though often with a positive connotation – stating that going back would be unthinkable. As two interviewees explained: "I don't know how they [the founders] could hold it back, to be honest", and "Nobody would want to go back (…). I think it would cause a scandal (…). They're used to it." Finally, some drop-outs and non-adopters expressed longer-term viability concerns, particularly its financial sustainability once financial incentives are withdrawn, as well as broader uncertainties around its potential long-term impact on organizational functioning.

Finally, several *take-aways from RWT engagement* also emerged from the interviews. Both adopters and drop-outs reported key lessons learned – some tied to the experience of actual trial adoption,

others to the mere exploration of RWT. Lessons included the importance of giving employees a say I the format, and the insight that preparation has its value but that adaptation along the way is equally valuable. Interviewees also highlighted that the perceived suitability of certain formats (e.g., four-day weeks) vary across roles and employment types. In some organizations, the same format was preferred collectively for both full-time and part-time staff, while in others, certain roles – particularly directive or leadership positions – were seen as less compatible with formats involving regular full days off, due to their high levels of responsibility or need for continuous presence. In some cases, RWT consideration also prompted surprising internal shifts – such as a change in employee attitudes or organizational priorities. For example, one organization observed employees warming up to the idea of RWT after initial resistance, while another found that financial concerns (e.g., overtime compensation) were a stronger driver of employee preferences than anticipated, ultimately becoming a barrier to adoption.

Unintended positive side effects were reported as well. The consideration or trial of RWT often catalysed broader reflections on work culture and efficiency. Interviewees noted improvements in meeting practices, increased awareness of workload distribution, a stronger focus on wellbeing and productivity, and the greater respect for existing flexible work arrangements across different employment types (e.g., full-time vs. part-time). In some cases, these adjustments were maintained even if RWT was ultimately not adopted, or were preserved after the trial period ended – underscoring the value of the trial process as a catalyst for organizational learning.

4.2.2.5 Methodological considerations and limitations

In interpreting the findings resulting from the interview analysis, a couple of methodological considerations and limitations should be taken into account.

First, the approach used to recruit non-adopter organizations relied on a custom-built typology, developed to enable stratified random sampling based on sector and size. This sampling approach was intended to produce a sample of non-adopting organizations broadly representative of the types of organizations that have adopted collective RWT abroad. While this approach served the purpose, it has some limitations – particularly with respect to representativeness. One of the underlying datasets (4dayweek.io) was based on self-registration and lacked formal verification, raising questions about data reliability. Similar concerns apply to the second dataset, which was based on selected trial data from three specific countries and may not fully reflect the broader population of RWT-adopting organizations. Moreover, the construction of the ten-category typology followed a pragmatic and data-driven path: although it started with cluster analysis, subsequent refinements were made stepwise, without following a validated methodology. Moreover, the choice of clustering criteria – sector and size – was primarily guided by data availability and the practical need for observable and comparable characteristics. However, it is likely that other, less tangible factors (e.g., organizational culture or leadership style) also influence openness to RWT, but these could not be accounted for due to data limitations. That said, this typology served only as a supporting tool for recruitment rather than as a central object of analysis, which mitigates its methodological weight within the broader study.

Second, for the group of non-adopters, stratified random sampling was applied to enhance diversity, but participation remained voluntary. As a result, the sample is still subject to self-selection bias, with several interviewees expressing particularly strong – either supportive or critical – views on RWT, suggesting a pre-existing interest in the topic. A similar issue of self-selection applied to the drop-out group, although this is less concerning: most of the organizations that had progressed furthest in the trial or demonstrated the strongest interest – whose perspectives were therefore particularly relevant – ultimately took part in the interviews. For adopters, all eligible cases (4 out of 4) participated, meaning that no self-selection bias was present for this group.

Third, each interview primarily reflected the perspective of a single individual within the organization. In some cases, interviewees even explicitly noted at certain moments that they were expressing their personal views rather than speaking on behalf of the entire organization. As such, it remains uncertain to what extent their responses represent the organization's broader position. Perspectives on RWT may vary depending on the interviewee's role – particularly their position and involvement in shaping or implementing worktime policies. While most interviewees held senior roles (e.g., founders, directors, or HR managers) – increasing the likelihood that they were well-informed and in a position to influence RWT-related decisions –, their perspectives may still reflect position-specific or partial viewpoints.

Fourth, despite the use of a collaborative qualitative analysis (CQA) approach – intended to integrate multiple perspectives and reduce the risk of individual researcher bias – some interpretive bias may remain. While joint coding rounds helped align interpretations across researchers, all involved had prior familiarity with RWT, which may have shaped a shared analytical lens. This reduced the likelihood

of inconsistent or idiosyncratic interpretations, but not necessarily the influence of shared assumptions among researchers.

Finally, thematic overlaps in coding emerged throughout the analysis. The final codebooks showed considerable interconnectedness between themes, both within and across codebooks. This outcome is consistent with the multifaceted character of the topic and aligns with findings from the drivers & barriers framework constructed based on literature review (see Section 4.2.1). Despite iterative efforts to streamline the coding – by limiting the number of overlapping codes per segment where possible –, substantial overlap remained. This reflects the complex reality of organizational decision-making around RWT, where boundaries between factors are often fluid rather than sharply defined.

4.2.3 Aggregation: comparing literature review and interview findings

When comparing the results from the literature review with those from the interviews, both overlap and new insights emerge. Before delving into the comparison, it is important to highlight a key methodological distinction that helps explain some of the differences. The literature review primarily focused on cases that discussed drivers of RWT adoption (17 out of 18 cases), with only limited attention to barriers (covered in 7 out of the 18 cases). In contrast, barriers were far more prominently featured in the interview analysis. This is partly due to the composition of the interview sample: approximately a quarter of the organizations interviewed (8 out of 31) were drop-outs – i.e. organizations that initially expressed interest in the trial but ultimately decided not to proceed. While they had clear motivations to consider RWT (i.e. drivers), their experiences also reflected concrete barriers that proved decisive. Moreover, over half of the interviewed organizations (19 out of 31) were non-adopters – i.e. organizations that were not involved with the trial of RO1 –, with some explicitly opposed to the idea of RWT. These groups brought forward a broader and more critical perspective on the constraints to implementation.

To begin with, many findings from both analyses closely align. The interview insights often reinforce the results of the literature review, though often expressed through slightly different terminology or structured under different categories (in the literature review) and themes (in the interviews). For instance, the literature review's categories of *employee wellbeing* and *HR management* correspond closely with the interview theme of *job quality*. Similarly, the categories of *operational performance, financial performance* or *financial challenges*, and *strategic positioning* are largely reflected in the *competitiveness* theme from the interviews, while several specific elements from the *operational performance* category also appear under the theme of *work organization*. However, in many of these cases, the interviews go further by adding depth, nuance, and concrete examples. For example, the literature review categories of *contextual drivers* and *economic context* largely align with the interview theme of *global trends*. However, the interviews also brought to light additional dynamics within this theme, including shifting workforce preferences and the influence of digitalization – topics not explicitly addressed in the reviewed literature. A similar enrichment occurs within the barrier category of *internal resistance and governance barriers*: while many insights align with findings from the interview theme of *support*, the latter also highlights the role of external actors (e.g., social secretariats, employer associations, and other stakeholders) and underscores the importance of employee engagement through bottom-up support. The subcategory of *pilot-particular challenges* (from the literature review) was also explored in more depth through the interviews, especially due to the contributions of drop-out organizations during the trial evaluation (RO1). These organizations offered first-hand insights into practical difficulties encountered during implementation planning, and were captured across both the drivers & barriers codebook and the trial evaluation codebook.

Beyond deepening existing categories, the interview analysis also introduced several new dimensions that were not covered – or only marginally addressed – in the literature review. One notable contribution lies in the theme of *spillovers*. While the importance of role models was already acknowledged in the literature review under *contextual drivers*, the interviews added further nuance by revealing the influence of alignment pressures, the significance of terminological confusion, and the role of best practices and evidence-based results. Another unique contribution emerged through the theme of *work culture*. Although the literature review captured elements such as visionary leadership and the drive for societal change under the driver category *societal change*, the interview

theme went further by identifying work culture at multiple levels – as an organizational, inter-organizational, and societal factor –, and highlighting that cultural dynamics can act as both enablers as well as barriers. In some cases, a lack of cultural alignment at any of these levels was sufficient to derail the entire RWT initiative. Likewise, the theme of *work organization* introduced new insights on topics such as team dynamics, internal coordination, and the perceived complexity of legal and administrative adjustments – some of which are specific to the Belgian context. These aspects were only partially addressed by the *operational performance* category in the literature review. Lastly, the theme of *alternative needs* added a new layer to the understanding of non-adoption. While not expressing strong opposition to RWT, many organizations indicated that other priorities or pressures made the implementation of RWT less relevant in their current context. This theme draws attention to a dimension that has received relatively limited attention in earlier analyses – particularly given that the majority of cases in the literature review focus on positive examples and enabling factors, rather than on reasons for disinterest or disengagement.

A final added value of the interview study lies in its ability to disaggregate findings across different types of organizations, that vary in their level of interest in and engagement with RWT. This allowed for a more granular understanding of how various themes play out in practice. For example, two post-hoc analyses – one based on the coverage of themes in interviews and another on coding frequency – revealed that themes such as *work culture* and *spillovers* were particularly salient among drop-outs, while *work culture, job quality*, and *alternative needs* emerged most strongly among non-adopters. These insights not only enrich the overall understanding of drivers and barriers for RWT adoption, but also offer practical guidance for policy: they help identify where key barriers are concentrated and, accordingly, where tailored policy efforts may be most effective in addressing concerns and supporting different types of organizations along the RWT adoption spectrum.

5. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section synthesizes the project's key findings and presents policy-relevant insights into the factors affecting the adoption of collective working-time reduction (RWT), along with the strengths and limitations of the existing financial incentive system. The recommendations are based on insights from both the pilot trial (RO1) and the drivers and barriers analysis (RO2). The section concludes with several important reflections to contextualize the role that public policy can realistically play in this area.

5.1 Key findings

A primary finding of the pilot trial (RO1) is that **current interest in RWT among Belgian organizations remains limited**. Despite a comprehensive recruitment campaign – including a dedicated website, general webinars, targeted sessions, and widespread media outreach – and sincere interest expressed by approximately 25 organizations throughout the project, only one engaged fully in the pilot trial. However, three additional organizations from this group conducted independent in-house trials and were subsequently included in the interviews for RO2, thereby contributing qualitative data relevant to that research question. Given the scale and complexity of implementing RWT, as well as the relatively short timeframe, this limited uptake was not totally unexpected. An additional consequence of the small sample size was that it precluded robust causal evaluation of RWT's effects on wellbeing, productivity, employment, and environmental outcomes, thereby limiting the project's ability to causally analyze these impacts and to assess the effectiveness of the financial incentive system in achieving broader policy objectives.

In anticipation of the possibility of a limited uptake, the aim of the second research objective (RO2) was to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind organizations' decisions to adopt or – in particular – refrain from adopting RWT. Drawing on a systematic review of literature and qualitative interviews, the key findings highlight a complex interplay of factors shaping organizational engagement with RWT. These factors encompass **eight core thematic areas** involving multiple stakeholders, including employees, employers, and society at large. First, key themes include **competitiveness**, relating to concerns such as productivity and cost considerations; **job quality**, covering employee wellbeing and recruitment and retention challenges; and **work culture**, which encompasses the values, beliefs, norms, and practices shaped by the employer, organization, society, and broader international context that influence how RWT is evaluated. Additional themes include **work organization**, involving team dynamics and workforce scheduling; **support**, which covers both internal factors like leadership commitment and employee alignment, and external influences such as government policies, financial incentives, and guidance from social secretariats; and **spillover effects**, referring to alignment pressures in mergers or multi-branch organizations, as well as external narratives shaped by role models and media. Finally, two less pronounced themes are **macro-level trends**, including changing workforce preferences and economic pressures; and **alternative organizational needs**, describing priorities or realities that make RWT less relevant or urgent.

Another critical finding following from the qualitative data analysis (RO2) is the highly **contextual nature of these factors**. Many elements of the various (sub)themes do not function uniformly as either barriers or enablers; rather, their impact varies according to organizational context and framing. For example, constraints viewed as prohibitive in some organizations may be perceived as manageable or even motivating in others. Moreover, several barriers frequently described as structural by employers – such as concerns over organizational size or sector suitability – are not insurmountable. Empirical

evidence from international cases demonstrates successful RWT adoption across a wide spectrum of organizational profiles, indicating that these challenges may be contingent on context rather than inherent limitations. This underscores the pivotal role of internal perspectives and organizational narratives in decision-making, and points to the potential for policy to reframe RWT adoption beyond structural considerations by leveraging cultural and informational strategies.

However, the qualitative findings from the interview analysis discussed above – focusing on core themes and contextual factors – should be interpreted carefully in light of methodological constraints. These include limited representativeness (arising from using a custom-built, non-validated typology), self-selection bias, and partial organizational perspectives, since most interviews reflect the views of a single individual whose opinions may vary depending on their role – for example, an owner or CEO may have different views than a HR manager or "HR champion."

A salient interpretation emerging from the key findings discussed above is that the implementation of RWT rarely hinges on a single factor. Instead, a combination of conditions must be met for organizations to move forward. This **cumulative nature of preconditions** helps explain the significant drop-out during the recruitment phase of the trial (RO1) and the limited adoption in Belgium overall. The specific preconditions may vary across organizations, but interview and trial data point to several recurring themes. First, employers must be convinced of the added value of RWT – whether in terms of employee wellbeing, reputational positioning, competitive advantage, or other strategic motivations. They then need to trust in its operational and financial feasibility, including issues such as workload redistribution, the possibility of recruiting additional staff, expected productivity gains, and assessment whether the organization has sufficient internal capacity to manage and sustain the change process. Finally, the broader context needs to be favourable – and this both internally (e.g., support across hierarchical levels) and externally (e.g., enabling policy frameworks, political signalling, (macro)economic context or timely opportunities). When one of these conditions is missing or perceived as too uncertain, the implementation process frequently stalls or is abandoned altogether.

To better understand this finding of layered requirements, it is useful to draw on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 2003), which suggests that potential adopters assess innovations along five perceived characteristics: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. The decision to adopt RWT is thus not based on one single criterion, but rather on the overall perception of these five dimensions. If any one of them is rated too negatively by the decision-maker, the innovation may be rejected. This further reinforces the finding that RWT requires a compound, multi-dimensional readiness before organizations are willing to proceed.

Viewed through the lens of Diffusion of Innovations theory, RWT remains at a very early stage of adoption – both in Belgium and in most other European countries.[25] Implementation is currently limited to "innovators" and some "early adopters": organizations typically marked by a higher tolerance for uncertainty, greater financial and social capital, and a more autonomous or mission-

[25] When referring to RWT as being in an early stage of adoption, we refer specifically to employer-driven reductions implemented within individual organizations. Working time has historically decreased at multiple levels and modalities – including sectoral agreements and national legal reforms, such as Belgium's reduction of the standard weekly working hours from 40 to 38 in 2003 – contributing to a long-term downward trend since the Industrial Revolution. Although this trend has somewhat slowed in recent decades, the voluntary, employer-initiated working time reductions examined here reflect a renewed wave of interest in many European contexts.

driven setup. These actors tend to adopt RWT not because all conditions are met, but because they are structurally or culturally predisposed to experiment, even amid risk or ambiguity. This highlights that, beyond the previously discussed preconditions (such as perceived value, feasibility, and timing), adoption at this stage also hinges on specific organizational traits. While not strict requirements, characteristics like financial flexibility, a pioneering mindset, or strong leadership support act as informal enablers – further narrowing the pool of likely adopters. These traits serve as contextual filters, helping explain why the perceived threshold to implement RWT remains high for most organizations.

5.2 Policy recommendations

Building on the key findings of this study, the following policy recommendations identify areas where targeted measures could support the voluntary adoption and effective implementation of collective working-time reduction among interested organizations. These recommendations respond directly to the project's mandate to provide policymakers with evidence-based insights on the advantages, limitations, and adequacy of existing support schemes. In particular, they focus on: improving understanding and transparency, recognizing the value of financial and practical support mechanisms for organizations expressing interest, clarifying legal ambiguities and informational challenges, and strengthening the alignment of financial incentives with RWT objectives.

First, there is a clear need to **raise awareness** – both in society more broadly and among organizations specifically – about the existence of RWT, what it precisely entails, and how it differs from related concepts. During the project, it became clear that RWT is not widely known, seldom discussed, and often misunderstood. To begin with, interviews revealed frequent confusion between RWT and the compressed workweek, a distinct model that received specific policy support in 2022. Clarifying these definitions is a basic but crucial step, especially given the persistent ambiguity in public and organizational discourse. Beyond correcting misconceptions, awareness efforts should also focus on highlighting the reasons why RWT may be worthwhile, such as potential benefits relating to employee wellbeing, recruitment and retention, or innovation in work organization. These messages are most impactful when accompanied by practical examples, role models, or evidence-based results. This was precisely the approach taken in our general webinars, which featured testimonials from organizations in both Belgium and abroad that had implemented reduced working time, sharing their experiences – including both advantages and challenges. In addition to informing about RWT in general, more visibility is needed for the concrete support measures that already exist, such as the financial incentive system or participation in pilot initiatives – like the one organized in this project. Communication on these measures should not only promote their existence, but also provide clarity on what they entail, such as participation conditions and expected benefits. Awareness could be raised through dedicated campaigns or through the organization of research and trial projects (such as the present project), which themselves contribute to visibility and further dissemination. In addition, public endorsement and storytelling by early adopters – particularly from the same sector and, ideally, from within Belgium – could further strengthen societal awareness. By sharing their motivations, implementation experiences, and outcomes, these peer narratives help normalize the idea of RWT, reduce perceived risks, and inspire other organizations to explore its relevance.

Second, **continued provision of support measures** – both financial and practical – can play an important role in RWT adoption. Financial concerns were among the most frequently mentioned barriers in our interviews, especially for organizations that rely on subsidies. For some of these

organizations, the decision to maintain or withdraw from RWT initiatives depends critically on whether subsidy providers offer continued support, either through sustained funding or through adjusted output expectations. In practice, however, such continued support was typically not guaranteed or was perceived as unlikely by the organizations involved in this project. Beyond financial aid, the opportunity to participate in a trial was often perceived as highly valuable. Trials offer various types of support that organizations otherwise lack: a designated point of contact for administrative questions, guidance during both preparation and implementation phases, and opportunities to exchange experiences with peers. They also offer concrete insights into the potential costs of RWT, enabling more informed decisions at the organizational level about how such costs might be managed – e.g., through partial pay adjustments or by foregoing future wage increases. These elements are especially important for organizations experiencing first-mover hesitation or lacking internal experience with similar transitions – an especially relevant consideration in the Belgian context, where few established examples currently exist. Such forms of support are often the tipping point for hesitant organizations to move forward, and they simultaneously contribute to the growing body of evidence and good practices around RWT, thus creating a virtuous cycle of awareness and legitimacy.

Third, **clarifying certain legal ambiguities** can help remove hesitation and strengthen confidence among organizations. One specific point of confusion concerns the perceived contradiction between the financial incentive system and the "wage norm law" (*loonnormwet* or *loi sur la norme salariale*). This ambiguity has created doubts among organizations about the legal feasibility of pursuing RWT while receiving incentives. Clear legal communication is needed to resolve this perceived tension and reduce the associated hesitation.

Fourth, **ensuring that information is accessible and clearly structured** will be key. Beyond general awareness-raising, organizations need correct, clear, and easily retrievable information on both RWT in general and the associated support measures offered. This includes not only the core definitions and inspiring examples, but also detailed explanations of the legal and administrative implications. For RWT in general, this means clarifying the possible implementation methods (e.g., through collective labour agreements or adjustments to internal work regulations) as well as legal requirements (e.g., schedule changes in work regulations). For the financial incentive system, organizations need clarity on eligibility criteria (e.g., scope, minimum reduction thresholds, impact on wages, applicability to part-time versus full-time workers), expected benefits (e.g., duration and size of reductions), and related contractual implications. This information should be made available through two complementary channels. First, a centralized, easily accessible online portal and a dedicated helpdesk can offer direct support to organizations. In fact, this proved to be one of the key strengths of the COLORBEL project: interested organizations greatly valued the opportunity to consult the project team with any questions related to RWT throughout the entire process. Second, indirect channels – primarily social secretariats – should be better informed and equipped to advise the organizations they support. These intermediaries are often key administrative partners, especially for SMEs, yet appear largely unfamiliar with the RWT framework. The relevance of targeting these actors became clear during the project, as several social secretariats actively sought information on RWT – evidenced by their participation in our general webinars and in the targeted legal info session. Educating these actors – e.g., through webinars or trainings – can turn their current role from a passive or discouraging presence into a valuable enabling force.

Fifth, **both the alignment between the design and the intended goal of the financial incentive system for RWT, and its limited fit with trial-based approaches,** should be reconsidered. As discussed in the previous recommendations, the financial incentive system for RWT is seen as important by some organizations and as a nice-to-have by many others, though it remains poorly known and suffers from a lack of accessible information. In addition to these issues, a further point of attention concerns the way the system is currently used and how this aligns with its intended purpose. In particular, the system allows working time to be averaged on an annual basis, enabling organizations to apply the incentive either for structural weekly reductions (e.g., a 36-hour workweek) or for additional leave days – often through arrangements like RWT-days. In practice, early adopters (2004–2005) primarily used the system to grant extra holidays without reducing actual weekly working hours. This logic traces back to the introduction of the 38-hour workweek in 2003, where RWT-days were used to maintain a 40-hour weekly schedule while reaching a 38-hour average over the year. This flexible use remains dominant today, with the system often functioning as a form of vacation support rather than a lever for structural worktime reduction. While flexibility for employers seemed to be a central feature of the measure's original design, this flexible use may not fully align with emerging (international) discussions on structural reductions in weekly working time – such as in the context of a four-day workweek. To the degree that promoting lasting structural RWT is, or becomes, a policy goal, it may be appropriate to reconsider whether the current eligibility criteria and application rules of the system support that goal effectively. Additionally, the current financial incentive systems does not fit a trial-based approach to working time reduction as the financial compensation only applies for working time reductions introduced definitively. Policy makers could contemplate adapting this requirement to ensure a better fit.

5.3 Final reflections

The above recommendations outline a range of policy levers that can meaningfully support organizations considering collective working-time reduction. At the same time, it is important to contextualize these insights and to temper expectations about the reach and impact of such policy interventions. This final subsection highlights a few important reflections to better define the potential role of government in shaping the conditions for RWT adoption.

First, the impact of policy support will always be bound by the fundamental condition that organizations must see some relevance or potential in RWT to begin with. Our interviews showed that for some organizations, RWT is simply not perceived as addressing any urgent need or strategic priority. In those cases, interest does not emerge – either because there are no pressing workforce or organizational challenges that RWT could solve, or because other goals take precedence. In the terminology of our qualitative coding, these cases fall under the theme *alternative needs*. When this is the case, the policy conversation largely ends before it begins. It is therefore important to acknowledge that there is a minimum threshold of perceived relevance that must be attained before policy can play a supporting role. That said, this perceived relevance is not fixed. Through long-term awareness-building and gradual shifts in the way work-time norms are framed and discussed, policy can also help shape how organizations understand the potential value of RWT – even among those that currently see no clear benefit from it.

Second, for those organizations that do show interest, the findings highlight that policy support is most effective when it operates as part of a mix rather than as a standalone measure. The so-called "and-and-and" story – i.e. the idea that multiple conditions must be fulfilled simultaneously –

underscores that no single policy lever, such as the financial incentive system or the provision of a pilot trial like the one in this project, will suffice to support adoption on its own. Instead, the aim should be to offer a coherent and complementary set of measures that collectively reduce the perceived threshold for adoption. In terms of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, this means contributing positively to the five dimensions along which potential adopters evaluate an innovation: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. Organizations do not assess these dimensions in isolation, but form an overall impression based on their combined effect. Hence, even if a policy intervention does not improve all five dimensions, it may still shift the balance in favour of adoption – particularly if the remaining dimensions are seen as sufficiently positive. Moreover, policy can also support the earlier stages of the innovation-decision process – particularly the knowledge stage, which is the first of five stages identified in the Diffusion of Innovations theory. This is especially relevant in the Belgian context, where RWT has yet to reach widespread visibility or mainstream consideration. In this regard, the COLORBEL project made an important contribution. The recruitment phase for the pilot trial significantly increased visibility for RWT in Belgium, helping to initiate public and organizational conversations where previously the topic had remained marginal or niche. As such, the project helped to trigger a first wave of awareness that future policy measures can build on.

Third, although somewhat beyond the core scope of this report, a broader reflection is warranted on how RWT and its accompanying support measures align with other work-time and work-life policies in Belgium. Some interviewees questioned the added value of RWT policies in light of the extensive existing frameworks for individual working-time reduction, such as parental leave, time credit systems, early retirement options, and age-related leave arrangements (particular for the care sector). While this may suggest a perceived redundancy, it also offers an opportunity to clarify the distinct value proposition of RWT. Whereas many of the other instruments aim to improve work-life balance at the level of the individual employee, the type of RWT discussed in this project is a collective approach that comes with specific organizational and social benefits – such as improved internal coordination, team cohesion, and shared ownership of working-time strategies. Others indicated that existing work-life policies, in particular childcare systems, are perceived as outdated or insufficiently flexible to meet the realities of combining work with caregiving. In such cases, these issues are seen as more urgent policy priorities than RWT. Yet here too, RWT need not be seen as an unrelated or competing policy. On the contrary: it may function as a complementary tool that supports work-life balance by freeing up collective time and making it easier for employees to manage care responsibilities. These concerns should not be dismissed, but rather seen as a prompt for more integrated thinking about how RWT aligns with broader frameworks on time, care, and work.

Finally, RWT can be implemented at various levels, from individual employers to sectoral agreements and national legal reforms. This study focused specifically on employer-driven RWT, where implementation occurs within a single organization and is initiated by the employer. While this lens provides valuable insights, it is important to interpret the findings of this study within this particular context. Broader models – such as RWT introduced through collective labour agreements at sectoral level or legislative reform at national level – were outside the study's direct scope, although some participating organizations operated in sectors where shorter workweeks had already been agreed upon collectively. Notably, several of the barriers identified in employer-led approaches – such as concerns about being a first mover, the need for internal and cross-sector alignment, and fears of unfair competition – may be less prominent under sector-wide or national frameworks. These

observations suggest that coordinated approaches to RWT could help mitigate some of the structural challenges encountered at the employer level, and merit further exploration in future policy discussions.

6. DISSEMINATION AND VALORISATION

- Webinar EWTN (European Work-time Network) (18/06/2025; online)
- Presentation ISEE (International Society for Ecological Economics) - Degrowth 2025 Conference (24-27/06/2025; Oslo, Norway)

7. PUBLICATIONS

No formal publications have been produced to date.

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ANNEXES

Annex Tables

Annex Table A: Key metrics collected across multiple employee surveys (baseline, midpoint, and/or endpoint).

Domain	Metric	Survey			Source			Measure*
		B	M	E	I	II	III	
Productivity	Productivity	X	X	X		X		based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG)
Wellbeing (at work)	Work engagement	X		X		X		UWES (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale) (ultrashort version; 3-item scale)
Wellbeing (at work)	Burnout risk	X		X	X	X	X	BAT-12 (Burnout Assessment Tool) (adapted version; 4-item scale)
Wellbeing (at work)	Organizational commitment	X		X		X		adapted from Allen & Meyer (1990) & Khajuria & Khan (2022) (3-item scale)
Wellbeing (at work)	Learning opportunities	X		X	X			adapted from Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (2023) (2-item scale)
Wellbeing (at work)	Work ability	X		X		X	X	WAS (Work Ability Score)
Wellbeing (at work)	Work smart	X		X			X	based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG) (4-item scale)
Wellbeing (at work)	Work stress	X		X				based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG)
Wellbeing (at work)	Satisfaction with main job	X		X	X	X	X	based on Eurofund EQLS wave 4 (2016)
Wellbeing (at work)	Satisfaction with salary at main job	X		X				based on Eurofund EQLS wave 4 (2016)
Wellbeing (at work)	Satisfaction with vacation policy at main job	X		X				based on Eurofund EQLS wave 4 (2016)
Wellbeing (at work)	Satisfaction with collegiality at main job	X		X				based on Eurofund EQLS wave 4 (2016)
Wellbeing (at work)	Satisfaction with job content at main job	X		X				based on Eurofund EQLS wave 4 (2016)
Wellbeing (at work)	Satisfaction with responsibility at main job	X		X				based on Eurofund EQLS wave 4 (2016)
Wellbeing (at work)	Variety	X		X	X	X		adapted from Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (2023) (3-item scale)
Wellbeing (at work)	Emotional load	X		X	X	X		adapted from Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (2023) (2-item scale)
Wellbeing (at work)	Physically demanding work conditions	X		X	X	X		adapted from Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (2023) (2-item scale)
Wellbeing (at work)	Pace of work	X	X	X	X	X		based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from

										Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG)
Wellbeing (at work)	Workload	X	X	X	X	X				based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG)
Wellbeing (at work)	Work intensity	X		X	X	X	X			adapted from Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (2023) (2-item scale)
Wellbeing (at work)	Autonomy	X		X	X					based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG)
Wellbeing (at work)	Relatedness (co-worker support)	X		X		X				based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG)
Wellbeing (at work)	Perceived supervisor support	X		X	X	X				adapted from Rhoades et al. (2001) (3-item scale)
Wellbeing (at work)	Control (work sequence)	X		X		X	X			adapted from EU LFS (2019)
Wellbeing (at work)	Control (work content)	X		X		X				adapted from EU LFS (2019)
Wellbeing (at work)	Control (workplace)	X		X		X				adapted from EU LFS (2019)
Wellbeing (at work)	Control (worktime)	X		X		X	X			adapted from EU LFS (2019) (7-item scale)
Wellbeing (work-life balance)	Work-life balance (ease of combining work hours with social and family responsibilities outside of work)	X	X	X	X					based on Eurofund EWCS (2021)
Wellbeing (work-life balance)	Work-family conflict	X		X	X	X				adapted from Matthews et al. (2010) (6-item scale)
Wellbeing (work-life balance)	Satisfaction work-life balance	X		X						based on Eurofund EQLS wave 4 (2016)
Wellbeing (work-life balance)	Satisfaction with division of paid work between me and my cohabiting partner	X		X						based on RWT survey developed for investigation at Femma by Franne Mullens (VUB)
Wellbeing (work-life balance)	Satisfaction with division of household chores between me and my cohabiting partner	X		X						based on RWT survey developed for investigation at Femma by Franne Mullens (VUB)
Wellbeing (work-life balance)	Satisfaction with division of childcare responsibilities between me and my cohabiting partner	X		X						based on RWT survey developed for investigation at Femma by Franne Mullens (VUB)
Wellbeing (work-life balance)	Overwork (working during free time to meet work demands)	X		X						based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG)
Wellbeing (work-life balance)	Experience of sufficient leisure time	X		X						based on RWT survey developed for investigation at Femma by Franne Mullens (VUB)
Wellbeing (health)	General health (subjective rating)	X		X			X			based on Eurofund EQLS wave 4 (2016) & RWT trial surveys

									developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG) (2-item scale)
Wellbeing (health)	Mental health (positive aspects)	X	X	X			X		WHO-5 Well-Being Index (World Health Organization) (5-item scale; average is reported)
Wellbeing (health)	Mental health (negative aspects)	X		X			X		GHQ-12 (General Health Questionnaire) (12-item scale; average is reported)
Wellbeing (health)	Physical health (number of days per week with ≥ 30 minutes physical activity)	X		X			X		based on Zwolinsky et al. (2015)
Wellbeing (health)	Sleep (insomnia or general sleep difficulties)	X	X	X		X	X		based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG)
Wellbeing (health)	Overall fatigue	X	X	X			X		based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG)
Wellbeing (general)	Satisfaction life as a whole	X		X					based on Eurofund EQLS wave 4 (2016)
Wellbeing (general)	Satisfaction family life	X		X					based on Eurofund EQLS wave 4 (2016)
Employment	Turnover intention	X		X		X			based on Cho et al. (2009)
Employment	Absence (frequency)	X		X	X	X			adapted from Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (2023)
Employment	Absence (duration)	X		X	X	X			adapted from Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (2023)
Employment	Presenteeism	X		X					based on Van Waeyenberg (2023)
Employment (different)	Second job (number of hours per week)	X		X					adapted from Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (2023)
Environment	Car usage for private purposes	X		X					based on WWF Footprint Calculator (2022)
Environment	Public transport usage for private purposes	X		X					based on WWF Footprint Calculator (2022)
Environment	Trips <= 200 km from home (frequency)	X		X					self-composed
Environment	Trips in Europe (> 200 km from home) by car (frequency)	X		X					self-composed
Environment	Trips in Europe (> 200 km from home) by train or bus (frequency)	X		X					self-composed
Environment	Trips in Europe (> 200 km from home) by plane (frequency)	X		X					self-composed
Environment	Trips outside of Europe (frequency)	X		X					self-composed
Environment	Remote work (frequency)	X		X					self-composed
Trial evaluation	Satisfaction with trial	X	X	X					self-composed
Trial evaluation	Workload (expectation (B) / evaluation (E))	X		X					self-composed
Trial evaluation	Work quality (expectation (B) / evaluation (E))	X		X					self-composed

Trial evaluation	Productivity (expectation (B) / evaluation (E))	X		X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Pace of work (expectation (B) / evaluation (E))	X		X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Work intensity (expectation (B) / evaluation (E))	X		X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Evaluation of trial preparation phase (7 items)	X			self-composed
Trial evaluation	Trial influence (my work)			X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Trial influence (atmosphere at work)			X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Trial influence (my personal life)			X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Trial influence (the organization)			X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Trial compliance (reduced working time in general)		X	X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Trial compliance (shorter workdays in particular)			X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Trial compliance (less (half) workday(s) in particular)			X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Factors making it challenging to effectively reduce working time (10 items)			X	self-composed
Trial evaluation	Techniques used to reduce worktime (12 items)			X	based on RWT trial surveys developed by research team from Boston College & University College Dublin (4DWG)
Trial evaluation	Wish for continuation if given the option			X	self-composed
Time use	Time use for activities (Perceived time adequacy (B) / use of freed-up time during past week (M) / use of freed-up time during trial in general (E)) (36 items)	X	X	X	adapted from BTUS 2022 (Belgian Time Use Survey) and RWT survey developed for investigation at Femma by Franne Mullens (VUB)

**The measure refers to a single-item scale, unless mentioned otherwise.*
"B", "M" and "E" refer respectively to the baseline, midpoint, and endpoint survey.
Source I, II, and III refer respectively to the conceptual model on work ability presented by the Werkbaarheidsmonitor Vlaanderen (Ria et al., 2019), the Job Demands-Resources model (Schaufeli, 2017), and the quantitative analyses performed for a large fraction of the four-day workweek experiments organized by/with the support of the non-profit organization 4 Day Week Global (4DWG) (Fan et al., 2023).

Annex Table B: List with keywords per overarching term used in the structured literature search.

Overarching term	Keywords
Working-time reduction	Working-time reduction
	Reduction in working time
	Reduction in worktime
	Reduction working hours
	Reduction in workhours
	Reduction in working week
	Reduction in workweek
	Reduction in work week
	Reduced working time
	Reduced worktime
	Reduced working hours
	Reduced workhours
	Reduced working week
	Reduced workweek
	Reduced work week
	Shorter working time
	Shorter worktime
	Shorter working hours
	Shorter workhours
	Shorter working week
	Shorter workweek
	Shorter work week
	Four-day working week
	Four-day workweek
	Four-day work week
	4 day working week
	4 day workweek
	4 day work week
Drivers	Driver
	Drivers
	Motivation
	Motivations
	Motivator
	Motivators
	Motive
	Motives
	Reason
	Reasons
	Incentive
	Incentives
	Stimulus
	Stimuli
	Trigger
	Triggers
Barriers	Barrier
	Barriers
	Hurdle

	Hurdles
	Obstacle
	Obstacles
	Challenge
	Challenges
	Hindrance
	Hindrances
	Boundary
	Boundaries
	Limit
	Limits
Employer	Employer
	Employers
	Organization
	Organizations
	Organisation
	Organisations
	Company
	Companies
	Enterprise
	Enterprises
	Firm
	Firms
	Manager
	Managers
	Business leader
	Business leaders
Business case	Business case
	Management-led
	Productivity-led

Annex Table C: Detailed motive extraction and classification (drivers).

Case	Motive (driver)	Employee Wellbeing	HR Management	Operational Performance	Financial Performance	Strategic Positioning	Societal Change	Contextual Drivers
1	improved employee retention		P					
1	improved changes in human capital & creativity		P					
1	improved involvement of workers in the company	S	P					
1	improved relationships among workers & between workers and managers	P	S					
1	improved coordination between teams & within teams	S	P					
1	improved coordination in downtime			P				
1	maintained or improved productivity			P				
3	to increase employee wellbeing	P	S					
3	demand for products & services has reduced							P
3	to help with recruitment & retention		P					
4	to be frontrunners in the industry regarding sustainability					P	S	
4	to lead the way for other organizations by changing the way of working for the benefit of employee wellbeing	S				P	S	
4	reduction of stress-related issues/risks		S	P				
4	try to make change for the better of the organization's employees	S	P					
4	efficiency as a key driver			P				
5	wellbeing	P						
5	environment						P	
5	reductions in non-personnel costs & associated environmental benefits [when closing down the business for one additional day]				P		S	
5	reductions in unplanned absences		P	S	S			
5	increases in (employer-managed) worktime flexibility			P				
5	increase in efficiency			P				
5	to retain employees		P					
5	alternative to significant salary increases				P			
5	to preserve/increase profits				P			
5	to increase company attractiveness		P			S		
5	to increase productivity			P				
5	in case of intense competition on the labour market or when losing workers is undesirable, e.g., because of booming economies or large fluctuations		P					S

5	in case of intense competition on the labour market or when losing workers is undesirable, e.g., because of desires to grow		P		S	
6	inspired by other 4-day week examples					P
6	pioneering benefits: maximize competitive advantage of having a 4DW including benefits for reputation, recruitment & retention		S		P	
6	employee-focused organization: commitment to staff wellbeing	S	P			
6	to improve over previous initiatives (e.g., game rooms, chillout zones)	S	P			
6	rational business response to covid pandemic					P
6	response to industry-wide problems of overwork				P	
7	concerns for employee wellbeing and work-life integration	P				
7	concerns about recruitment & retention of talent		P			
7	to address challenges for particular occupations that are stressful, creative, and/or in demand		S		P	
7	to rethink the position of work in wider society & develop a better global balance in the modern economy				P	
8	concerns about workers' mental health	P				
8	need to improve talent retention & recruitment		P			
8	need to address post-pandemic stress & improve workers' quality of life	P				
8	improve the quality of service			P	S	
9	to enhance employer attractiveness		P			
9	to improve employee retention, recruitment		P			
9	to improve job satisfaction	P				
9	to stand out from competitors				P	
9	to improve employee health (including health, wellbeing, and work-life balance)	P				
9	productivity growth (through more focused & efficient work schedule, optimized workflows, better concentrated employees)			P		
9	strategic move to improve how work is done				P	
9	future orientation (aligning with future work trends & aspiring to be pioneers in adopting new work practices and schedules)				P	
10	means of motivating employees beyond the traditional monetary compensation		P			
10	to promote a work culture that values time away from the workplace				S	P
11	implementing the company philosophy ("fulfil your digital potential")				P	
11	core belief to create the best working environment that enables & nurtures the nest of breed professional in the market				P	
11	to increase retention & employee satisfaction		P			
11	to attract top talent		P			

12	to improve productivity			P			
12	profit motives				P		
13	criticizing the full-time work norm present in today's society					P	
13	inspiring others to think differently about work					P	
13	means to help change (gender) inequality					P	
13	making visible how time can be spent differently & how important time outside of paid work is					P	
13	raising awareness on actual time use					P	
13	observation that both men & women are struggling to combine paid and unpaid work in a healthy way					P	
14	desire to drive innovation in how work is organised (workstyle innovation)		S		P		
14	desire to measure performance on output not time				P		
14	supporting new ways of working that can unlock greater productivity			P	S		
14	improving staff wellbeing to support creativity and reduce staff turnover	S	P				
14	to address the karoshi problem (="overwork death") among the Japanese labour force	S				P	
15	desire to drive innovation in how work is organised (workstyle innovation)		S		P		
15	desire to measure performance on output not time				P		
15	supporting new ways of working that can unlock greater productivity			P	S		
15	improving staff wellbeing to support creativity and reduce staff turnover	S	P				
16	to improve mental health [while maintaining output]	P					
16	to lower absenteeism [while maintaining output]		P				
16	to reduce the carbon footprint [while maintaining output]					P	
16	a way of reinvesting profits in the community in which it is situated					P	
16	to promote work-life balance	P					
17	keeping with the company's human values: committed to the continuous improvement of employee working conditions	S	P				
17	drive to combine wellbeing at work and collective performance			P			
18	to encourage employees to pay extra attention to themselves, informal care, children, volunteer work and others who need it	P				S	
18	to free up time for what really matters in life (given contemporary "rat race times")				S	P	
18	hope to contribute to a new movement of great work-life balance, attractive employment practices and a new vision of work					P	

The case numbers in this table correspond to the case numbering defined in Table 1.
"P" and "S" refer to primary & secondary classification respectively.

Annex Table D: Detailed motive extraction and classification (barriers).

Case	Motive (barrier)	Employee Wellbeing	HR Management	Operational Performance	Financial Performance	Strategic Positioning				Impl. Challenges				Int. Res. & Gov. Barriers	Economic Context
						Competitiveness	*Flexibility*	*Customer Concerns*	*Other Priorities*	*Organizational Fit*	*General*	*Administrative*	*Format*	*Pilot-particular Challenges*	
1	reduced productivity			P											
1	increased hiring needs (need for compensatory hiring)		P		S										
2	decreased productivity rate			P											
2	reduced competitiveness in the global market competition					P									S
3	the work in the organization is not amenable to less hours									P					
3	there is no appetite [for RWT] among the senior leadership team													P	
3	the way of working [under RWT] does not suit everybody in the organization		P												
3	inability to achieve the sample volume of work or output as before			P											
3	the task requires someone to be present			P											
5	being under excessive competitive pressure in your market of goods or services					P									S
5	RWT overly threatens profits (e.g., because of particular characteristics of the sector)				P										
6	organization not sufficiently prepared													P	
6	difficulties in measuring performance			P											
6	struggles with "the great resignation"														P
6	RWT considered not to be right for the organization									P					
8	uncertainty because of economic conditions / macroeconomic issues (e.g., international political instability, high inflation)														P
8	complexity of implementation										P				
8	required investment (e.g., hiring)				P										
8	preference for other benefits								P						
8	timing of the pilot's start is not ideal (overlap with other projects, internal changes)													P	

8	difficulties with clients						P				P	
8	no approval from headquarters								S		P	
8	legal concerns (e.g., framework for new work formats)								P			
8	reduction in productivity			P								
8	customer perception						P					
8	work hours & workload			P								
8	fairness & equity towards employees		P									
8	misunderstanding from some colleagues		P									
8	costs associated with the project				P							
8	format of the workweek									P		
8	success or productivity measures			P								
8	reconciliation with peak workloads			P								
9	excessive workload leading to condensed schedule and increasing employee stress	P										
9	any long-term changes require collective bargaining decisions								P		S	
9	RWT model demotivating employees who struggle with self-organization, leading to limited availability for clients and lack of flexibility for both organization and its customers	S					S	P				
9	increased organizational demands								P			
9	increased administrative complexity								P			
9	financial unsustainability (productivity boosts not sufficing to compensate for increased hourly wages)				P							
9	reduced flexibility or adaptability in responding to unpredictable events						P					
9	less staff availability, equivalent costs and increased coordination needs		P		S				S			
9	unfinished tasks & longer project timelines			P								
9	economically challenging times											P
9	challenges in organizing the 4DW implementation								P			
9	rejection of participation by works council								S		P	
9	infeasibility of implementation (after internal revision)								P			
9	staff shortage in small organization (due to long-term sick leave)		P	S								
9	other priorities							P				

The case numbers in this table correspond to the case numbering defined in Table 1.
"P" and "S" refer to primary & secondary classification respectively.

Annex Table E: Drivers & barriers codebook (final version): name and definition for L1- and L2-codes.

Code	Definition
1 *Competitiveness*	Covers how RWT is perceived to impact an organization's ability to remain competitive. This includes: expectations and concerns related to productivity, financial feasibility and cost management, implications for customer service continuity and quality, and strategic positioning within or across sectors. It brings together both enabling conditions and perceived risks that shape whether RWT is seen as strengthening or weakening competitive advantage.
1.1 Productivity	Covers how expectations, assumptions, and experiences around productivity affect the feasibility of RWT. This includes the foundational premise that productivity must be maintained or increased to compensate for reduced hours (including the belief that results-based work organization is key) and (dis)belief in or concerns about whether and how efficiency gains can realistically be achieved across roles and sectors.
1.2 Costs	Refers to the financial feasibility of RWT from the organization's perspective, particularly its capacity to absorb or offset associated costs. This includes general reflections on financial room for manoeuvre – ranging from the presence of slack to concerns about viability – as well as specific barriers. These include external revenue dependence (e.g., reliance on subsidies or grants), constraints imposed by output-based funding models, and labour cost pressures (such as the need to adjust wages for part-time workers). The code also includes reflections on how some of these costs might be compensated or offset.
1.3 Customer service	Covers how RWT intersects with expectations and requirements around customer service, including continuity, availability, responsiveness, and service quality. This includes reflections on rising client demands and the central role of customer service in maintaining business viability. The code captures both concerns about how RWT might compromise service delivery and statements expressing confidence that service levels can be safeguarded or even improved through internal adjustments and safeguards.
1.4 Competitive positioning	Captures how RWT is perceived to affect an organization's position within the competitive landscape. This includes alignment with the organization's broader strategic mission, the idea that its potential as a financial differentiator could be a strong driver (though not yet realized), and perceived risks of sector misalignment – either within or across sectors – that could undermine competitiveness or employer appeal.
2 *Work organization*	Refers to the structural, procedural, and interactional aspects of how work is organized and managed within organizations, which can either enable or hinder the implementation of RWT. This includes team dynamics and informal collaboration, the alignment between roles and reduced hours, legal and administrative conditions, systems for control and measurability, workforce scheduling logistics, and whether RWT is seen as a broader opportunity for organizational improvement. It captures both constraints and opportunities embedded in the internal organization of work.
2.1 Team dynamics & interaction	Covers how communication, coordination, meetings, cohesion & informal interaction are managed or affected under reduced working time. Includes both formal structures (e.g., meetings, workload updates) and informal

	processes (e.g., team cohesion, social interaction during breaks) that contribute to effective collaboration and organizational functioning.
2.2 Role & task fit	Covers how the nature of specific roles, tasks, and individual workstyles affects the feasibility of RWT. This includes challenges tied to time-sensitive tasks, the need for continuity or specialized expertise, and roles seen as requiring constant availability (e.g., directors). It also reflects how individual employee habits – such as planning skills, focus, or perfectionism – can either support or hinder adaptation.
2.3 Admin & legal conditions	Covers the formal, legal, and procedural factors that influence the feasibility and implementation of RWT. This includes administrative workload, legal and regulatory constraints (including sector-specific rules), and contractual adjustments. Formalizing RWT through contract changes can be particularly complex, due to uncertainties around benefits, entitlements, and compliance requirements.
2.4 Organizational control & measurability	Covers how RWT introduces or requires greater structure, such as clearer planning, limits on overtime, or control through scheduling. It also includes efforts – or the lack thereof – to monitor, evaluate, or quantify (the effects of) RWT, whether through formal systems or informal assessments. Gaps in tracking and evaluation can hinder learning and make it difficult to causally assess impact.
2.5 Workforce scheduling	Refers to challenges and practices related to organizing staff schedules under RWT, including increased rigidity and complexity (e.g., in case of shift work) and the need for thoughtful coordination of time off (both standard vacation days as well as the additional time off due to RWT).
2.6 Incentive	Covers how the consideration of RWT is perceived as an incentive or opportunity to rethink the way of working in the organization, a.o. with respect to improving efficiency.
3 *Job quality*	Covers how RWT is expected to influence the overall quality of jobs, from both employee and employer perspectives. This includes perceived impacts on wellbeing, work-life balance, absenteeism, and personal development; implications for recruitment, retention, and the broader compensation package; as well as concerns about the long-term durability of benefits due to potential habituation.
3.1 Employee experience	Covers how employees perceive and are affected by RWT in their day-to-day work and broader working lives. Includes reflections on wellbeing, work-life balance, work pressure and stress, absenteeism, and personal development opportunities.
3.2 Employer appeal	Perceived impact of RWT on how attractive the organization is to (potential) employees. Covers beliefs, expectations, and observed effects regarding employee retention and recruitment, as well as salary & benefits configuration, including challenges and strategic considerations.
3.3 Risk of habituation effects	Refers to the risk that initial benefits from reduced working time (e.g., increased wellbeing or appeal) may diminish as employees adapt to the new arrangement, reducing its long-term impact for both employees and employers.
4 *Work culture*	Refers to the values, beliefs, norms, and practices – shaped at the level of the employer, organization, society, and broader international context – that influence how RWT is perceived, evaluated, and (not) supported. It encompasses employers' individual convictions and motivations, internal organizational mindsets and workplace dynamics, prevailing societal beliefs and misconceptions, dominant norms among peer organizations, and cross-

	country differences in work attitudes and institutional frameworks. These cultural dimensions can act as drivers, barriers, or framing mechanisms in the consideration of RWT.
4.1 Employer's perspective	Refers to how employers' personal values, beliefs, and convictions shape their stance toward RWT. This includes visionary leadership (e.g., where employers view RWT as a future-oriented solution or a lever for societal change) as well as personal interest (such as engaging with the topic out of intrinsic motivation or belief in its positive spillovers). It also captures more critical orientations, strategic reservations (e.g., questioning added value or fearing first-mover risks) and feasibility doubts (e.g., when RWT is seen as incompatible with specific sectors, roles, or organizational sizes, or when limits to worktime reduction are perceived).
4.2 In-house culture (organizational level)	Captures how internal workplace norms, values, and dynamics influence RWT feasibility. This includes dominant work valuation norms (e.g., time-based vs. results-based work culture and a "time is money" mentality), the presence of stigma toward reduced working hours, and the belief that there is a need for a mindset shift or specific employee types to enable RWT.
4.3 Societal acceptance	Refers to the broader cultural and political climate outside the organization, which shapes the perceived legitimacy and viability of RWT. Beyond dominant work valuation norms (e.g., time-based vs. results-based work culture and a "time is money" mentality) and stigma toward reduced working hours, this includes entrenched worktime norms (e.g., dominance of full-time work), misconceptions or low awareness about RWT and lack of societal support.
4.4 Inter-organizational culture (employers level)	Focuses on how dominant norms and perceptions among peer organizations impact the perceived feasibility of RWT – in particular, the experience of a strong fear of first-mover disadvantage.
4.5 International differences	Encompasses observed and perceived differences in work culture between countries, often cited as a benchmark or counterpoint to domestic norms. These include variation in outlook on life, in particular with respect to work-life balance priorities, cultural norms around work, and policy infrastructure such as childcare or leave systems.
5 *Support*	Refers to the actors – both internal and external – that influence the consideration or implementation of RWT. It distinguishes between inside support (leadership and employee alignment within the organization) and outside support (guidance, incentives, or barriers stemming from government (including politics, regulations and financial support), social secretariats, employer representation bodies, or external stakeholders).
5.1 Inside support	Refers to support for RWT arising within the organization itself, including both leadership (top-down) and employee-level (bottom-up) engagement. Top-down support covers strategic endorsement by senior management, boards, or founders, while bottom-up support includes employee involvement, staff-wide adoption, and the role of trade unions. The definition captures internal dynamics of support, resistance, or hesitation, and the perceived need for alignment across levels for successful implementation.
5.2 Outside support	Refers to all forms of support or resistance encountered outside the organization that influenced the consideration or implementation of RWT initiatives. This includes interactions with institutional actors such as government bodies, subsidy providers, social secretariats and employer representation bodies, as well as external stakeholders like investors or

	donors. These external actors could facilitate, complicate, or shape organizational decision-making with respect to RWT, primarily through political positioning, legal frameworks and support, financial incentives, or expectations of accountability.
6 *Spillovers*	Covers external dynamics that indirectly influence organizations' perceptions, openness, and decision-making regarding RWT initiatives. This includes pressures to align practices with related entities, the shaping of internal views through external narratives – such as role models, media exposure, and public discourse –, and the influence of prior experiences with related policy instruments. Spillovers can act as drivers, prerequisites, barriers, or sources of confusion, depending on the perceived credibility, relevance, or familiarity of the external elements.
6.1 Alignment pressures	Refer to the structural needs for coherence with internal and external organizational entities or systemic environments when considering RWT. This includes organizational alignment within (inter)national groups, networks, or affiliated organizations, as well as systemic harmonization pressures within or across sectors. Such alignment considerations can act as drivers or barriers for RWT initiatives, depending on the perceived feasibility, comparability, and strategic consistency across entities.
6.2 External narratives	Refers to the influence of external stories, examples, and discourse on how organizations perceive and evaluate RWT. This includes the role of inspirational role models and case studies, media exposure, and dominant terminology in shaping internal views on feasibility, desirability, and implementation. Such narratives can serve as sources of inspiration, legitimation, confusion, or hesitation.
6.3 Policy experience spillovers	Refers to how prior exposure to related policy discussions or experiences – such as sector-specific arrangements or similar age-based incentives – informs an employer's awareness or thinking around RWT.
7 *Global trends*	Captures large-scale societal, economic, and technological developments that shape how organizations perceive the feasibility and desirability of RWT, but which lie beyond their direct control. These include shifting workforce expectations and demographic changes, labour market tightness and slack, fiscal and economic pressures at national and international level, and the impact or uncertainty surrounding digitalization and technological innovation.
7.1 Changing workforce preferences	Captures how evolving employee expectations and demographic shifts influence organizational perspectives on RWT. Rising work-life balance prioritization and changing generational mindsets increasingly position RWT as a desired employment condition, creating a bottom-up driver for change. In parallel, the challenges associated with an aging workforce – particularly the need to enable longer working lives – lead organizations to view RWT either as a facilitator for sustainable careers or, conversely, as a risk factor that could intensify workload pressures and undermine workforce retention. Additionally, concerns about the broader financial sustainability of pension systems – driven by demographic aging – form a contextual backdrop against which RWT considerations are evaluated.
7.2 Labour market dynamics	Refers to how prevailing labour market conditions shape organizational perspectives on RWT. Tight labour markets are often seen as a barrier, as organizations fear that reducing working hours could exacerbate staffing shortages, although RWT is also viewed by some as a means to attract or retain employees. Similarly, in contexts of unemployment, RWT is

	considered either as a potential strategy to redistribute work or as infeasible due to economic constraints.
7.3 Macro-economic pressures	Refers to broader macro-economic trends beyond the organization's control that influence the perceived feasibility and risks of adopting RWT. This includes public sector austerity, where shrinking government budgets constrain available funding and subsidy opportunities, as well as international competitiveness concerns, where global market dynamics heighten perceived risks to European, national or sectoral economic positioning.
7.4 Digitalization	Refers to the influence of technological changes on an organization's perceived feasibility of RWT. In particular, the (lack of) opportunities for AI-based efficiency improvements are discussed, as well as the need to understand the impact of digitalization on the organization as a prerequisite for considering RWT.
8 *Alternative needs*	Refers to organizational (employee-related) needs or realities that make the introduction or prioritization of RWT less relevant. Beyond the simple non-prioritization of RWT, this includes: alternative organizational concerns prioritized above RWT and/or for which RWT is not considered a solution (such as unmet employee demands, recruitment and retention challenges, and financial concerns), alternative measures prioritized above RWT (such as individualized policy needs rather than collective solutions, increased flexibility, and policy and incentive measures), already satisfied needs that reduce the added value of RWT, and the prioritization of other in-house projects.
8.1 Organizational concerns beyond RWT	Covers organizational challenges and priorities deemed more urgent or relevant than implementing RWT, as well as alternative measures considered more fitting. This includes unmet employee needs, workforce retention issues, financial and institutional barriers, and broader societal concerns. Furthermore, it encompasses preferred alternatives to RWT, such as individualized solutions, measures for employee needs (such as other time-off options and increased flexibility), career support, and collaborative or policy-based measures.
8.2 Employee needs already met without RWT	Refers to employee needs (relating to worktime & renumeration) already being fulfilled via existing systems, making RWT redundant. These include: worktime & workplace flexibility, generous leave systems, existing part-time arrangements, alternative types of RWT already implemented, and generous pay & perks (such as salary & bonuses).
8.3 Competing in-house initiatives	Refers to internal organizational projects or change processes that currently take precedence over RWT. This includes alternative time policies under development, operational changes, or strategic transformations (e.g., CRM upgrades, digitalization). Such competing priorities are particularly common in young or growing organizations, where structural foundations are still being built and flexibility efforts are directed toward broader organizational maturity (rather than RWT).
8.4 Non-priority of RWT for employees	Situations where RWT is not seen as a demand among staff, either due to absence of expressed interest, or perceived lack of added value. Includes quotes showing no initiative from employees or feedback that it's not an active topic.

Annex Table F: Drivers & barriers codebook: number of interviews in total and per group (I (adopters), II (drop-outs) & III (non-adopters)) containing at least one segment coded with each L2-code.

Code	I (n = 4)	II (n = 8)	III (n = 19)	Total (n = 31)	Total (%)
Competitiveness					
Productivity	4	7	18	29	94%
Costs	3	7	18	28	90%
Customer service	4	7	13	24	77%
Competitive positioning	2	0	6	8	26%
Work organization					
Team dynamics & interaction	4	3	12	19	61%
Role & task fit	3	4	8	15	48%
Admin & legal conditions	3	4	3	10	32%
Organizational control & measurability	4	2	3	9	29%
Workforce scheduling	2	4	3	9	29%
Incentive	0	2	1	3	10%
Job quality					
Employee experience	4	4	15	23	74%
Employer appeal	4	5	13	22	71%
Risk of habituation effects	2	3	2	7	23%
Work culture					
Employer's perspective	3	7	17	27	87%
In-house culture (organizational level)	1	3	2	6	19%
Societal acceptance	2	4	6	12	39%
Inter-organizational culture (employers level)	2	0	1	3	10%
International differences	0	4	5	9	29%
Support					
Inside support	4	7	5	16	52%
Outside support	4	7	14	25	81%
Spillovers					
Alignment pressures	2	2	9	13	42%
External narratives	3	8	15	26	84%
Policy experience spillovers	0	0	1	1	3%
Global trends					
Changing workforce preferences	2	6	10	18	58%
Labour market dynamics	1	2	6	9	29%
Macro-economic pressures	1	1	7	9	29%
Digitalization	0	1	2	3	10%
Alternative needs					
Organizational concerns beyond RWT	1	5	14	20	65%
Employee needs already met without RWT	0	1	12	13	42%
Competing in-house initiatives	1	2	2	5	16%
Non-priority of RWT for employees	0	3	6	9	29%

Note: segments were typically coded using lower-level codes rather than directly at the L2 level. However, in several cases (6 out of 31 L2-codes), the L2-code itself was used to code one or more segments.

Annex Table G: Drivers & barriers codebook: number of coded segments in total and per group (I (adopters), II (drop-outs) & III (non-adopters)) for each L2-code.

Code	I (n)	II (n)	III (n)	Total (n)	Total (%)
Competitiveness					*100%*
Productivity	19	27	63	109	42%
Costs	7	15	53	75	29%
Customer service	16	16	34	66	25%
Competitive positioning	3	0	8	11	4%
Work organization					*100%*
Team dynamics & interaction	24	9	22	55	31%
Role & task fit	8	16	10	34	19%
Admin & legal conditions	17	7	4	28	16%
Organizational control & measurability	16	5	11	32	18%
Workforce scheduling	3	12	6	21	12%
Incentive	0	4	1	5	3%
Job quality					*100%*
Employee experience	24	20	36	80	48%
Employer appeal	24	24	32	80	48%
Risk of habituation effects	2	4	2	8	5%
Work culture					*100%*
Employer's perspective	20	57	99	176	78%
In-house culture (organizational level)	2	7	2	11	5%
Societal acceptance	4	8	7	19	8%
Inter-organizational culture (employers level)	3	0	1	4	2%
International differences	0	8	8	16	7%
Support					*100%*
Inside support	22	72	6	100	53%
Outside support	11	40	36	87	47%
Spillovers					*100%*
Alignment pressures	18	14	31	63	39%
External narratives	14	40	45	99	61%
Policy experience spillovers	0	0	1	1	1%
Global trends					*100%*
Changing workforce preferences	4	14	19	37	57%
Labour market dynamics	1	2	12	15	23%
Macro-economic pressures	1	1	8	10	15%
Digitalization	0	1	2	3	5%
Alternative needs					*100%*
Organizational concerns beyond RWT	2	12	55	69	51%
Employee needs already met without RWT	0	9	29	38	28%
Competing in-house initiatives	1	10	2	13	10%
Non-priority of RWT for employees	0	5	10	15	11%
Total (n)	266	459	655	1380	
Total (% of all segments)	19%	33%	47%	100%	

Note: segments were not directly coded with L1-codes, but with associated L2- or lower-level codes. "Total (%)" refers to the percentage relative to all L1-coded segments.

Annex Table H: Incentive system evaluation codebook (final version): definition for L1-codes.

Code	Definition
1 Value judgements	Captures participants' overall opinions on the incentive system, ranging from positive approval to conceptual criticism. Positive appreciation includes general supportive remarks about the incentive's helpfulness, added value, or symbolic encouragement – even when not decisive –, as well as comments on its potential to convince internal stakeholders (e.g., management) or external actors (e.g., subsidy providers). Sceptical views cover reservations or disagreement with the system, including fundamental opposition to the policy's direction (e.g., favouring incentives for more work instead of less), as well as conceptual concerns about fairness, rationale, cost distribution, or the risk of outdated regulation.
2 Perceived adequacy of incentive amount	Reflects how organizations assess the financial size of the incentive, including whether it is large enough to make a meaningful difference. Covers cases where the amount is seen as too small to matter or not covering costs (e.g., for compensatory hiring), as well as instances where the incentive is perceived as substantial.
3 Incentive relevance for decision-making	Captures how the incentive factored into the organization's decision-making process – typically as playing no role or as being supportive but not decisive, and only occasionally mentioned as a direct motivator.
4 Perceived risks & hurdles	Covers doubts, risks, or conditions raised by organizations when evaluating the incentive system, including financial uncertainty after the incentive ends, fears of abrupt policy changes, mismatch with business or funding models, and the preference to first conduct a trial without claiming the incentive.
5 Alternative priorities	Captures statements from organizations indicating that challenges other than financial ones (relating to operational priorities or practical constraints) create hesitation or hinder consideration of RWT, or that other forms of policy support are seen as more relevant than the financial incentive system.
6 Lack of awareness	Captures the ways in which organizations experienced barriers to accessing, understanding, or becoming aware of the incentive system – including challenges related to information availability (e.g., lack of communication, difficulty obtaining correct information), perceived complexity, and expressions of regret or surprise upon learning about the system's long-standing existence.

Annex Table I: Trial evaluation codebook (final version): definition for L1-codes.

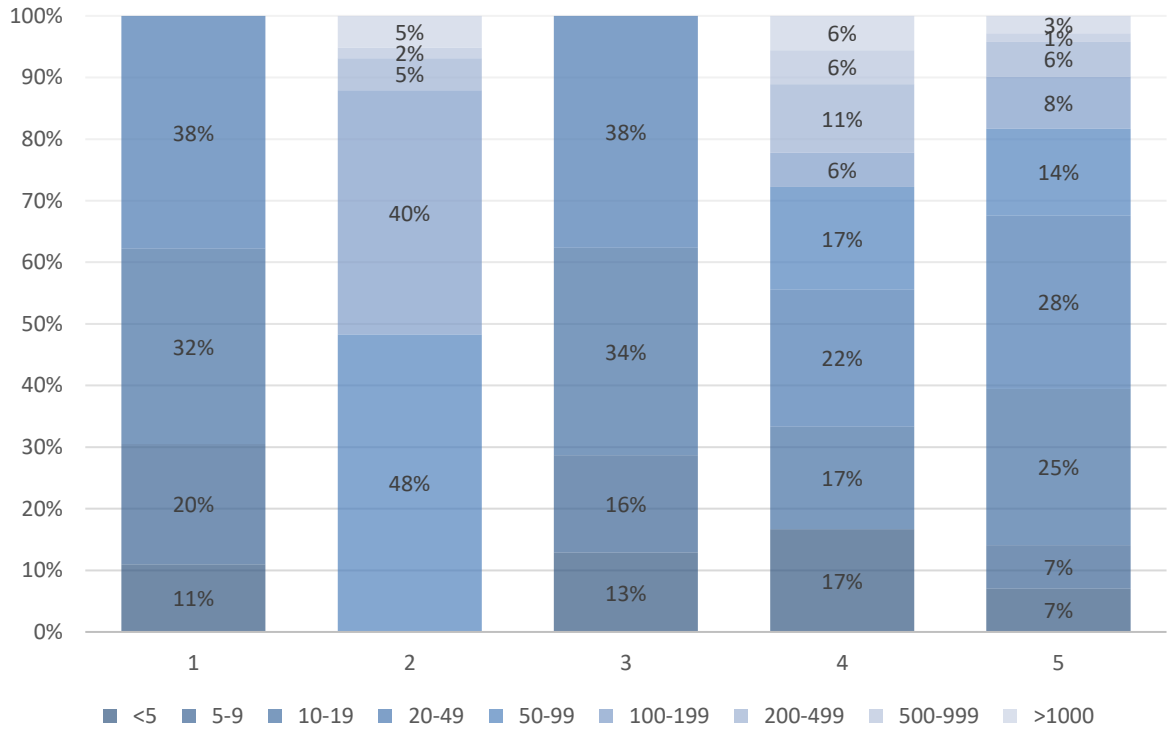
Code	Definition
Sub-codebook (A) Particular COLORBEL trial	
1 Value judgements	Covers participants' overall attitudes toward the COLORBEL trial itself, ranging from broadly positive assessments (e.g., seeing it as a useful or interesting opportunity) to more sceptical or ambivalent views (e.g., a case where the trial was considered helpful but ultimately not decisive in the decision to implement RWT).
2 Assessment of provided support	Captures how organizations evaluated the different types of support made available through the COLORBEL trial – including recruitment-oriented elements (targeted sessions, general webinars and website), hands-on external guidance by the selected expert partner (specifically the potential for or lack of peer learning opportunities and the pricing of the offer), and scientific follow-up. Encompasses both appreciation and critical reflections regarding usefulness, accessibility, relevance, cost, and perceived added value.
3 Appreciated features	Captures the aspects of the COLORBEL trial that employers explicitly valued, including their positive experiences with the project team (e.g., accessible and trustworthy contact, openness to future collaboration, interest in follow-up information), appreciation for the trial's contribution to real-world insights or policy-relevant knowledge, and the flexibility to withdraw from participation if needed.
4 Hurdles	Captures obstacles that complicated or discouraged participation in the COLORBEL trial. These include time-related issues (e.g., (in)convenient timing, tight timelines and limited preparation time), perceived resource burdens (e.g., costs, required reporting effort), informational shortcomings (e.g., lack of awareness about the existence of the trial or lack of clarity needed to convince decision-makers), and the fact that financial incentives could not yet be claimed during the trial phase.
Sub-codebook (B) Trial in general	
1 Importance	Captures how organizations express the importance of running a trial phase before a full rollout of RWT. Statements reflect the perceived value of trials as a necessary step to assess feasibility, gather experience, and build support, rather than fully and directly adopting RWT all at once.
2 Preparatory demands	Captures concerns about the substantial effort and complexity involved in preparing an RWT trial. Interviewees describe the preparation as time-consuming and heavy, often requiring thorough internal alignment, negotiation, and clarity on numerous implementation aspects. The perceived burden and uncertainty about how to begin are frequently mentioned as practical worries or deterrents.
3 Implementation design choices	Refers to organizational uncertainties, preferences and decisions regarding how to set up the trial structurally. It

	includes the format of the trial, implementation approach and duration.
4 Staff dynamics	Captures staff-related aspects that influenced or emerged during the trial consideration and set-up. It includes the selection of pilot groups (which sometimes raised uncertainties or preferences for full-team rollout instead), reflections on the implications for part-time workers (e.g., wage correction challenges, unequal experiences) and the degree and nature of employee adoption (e.g., smooth transitions vs. gradual adjustment).
5 External guidance (any expert org.)	Refers to interviewees' views on the involvement of external expert partners in the context of RWT trials. It captures how such support is perceived in terms of usefulness, affordability, and contextual fit. While some respondents considered external guidance beneficial for structuring or legitimizing the process, others questioned its added value, raised concerns about cost, or highlighted potential mismatches with their organizational or cultural context.
6 Not just a pilot	Refers to the perception that an RWT trial is not merely a temporary or low-stakes experiment, but rather a consequential decision with lasting organizational implications. Interviewees often view the trial as a gateway to structural transformation, involving major shifts in work organization and policy. Concerns centre on the anticipated long-term impact, uncertainty about future financial sustainability, and the perceived irreversibility of the change once employees adapt to it.
7 Take-aways from RWT engagement	Covers the positive effects and key insights reported by interviewees following their engagement with RWT, whether through a trial implementation, full implementation, or mere consideration. These take-aways include both lessons learned – practical and organizational – and unintended yet valuable side effects for the organization that shaped internal processes, perspectives, or culture.

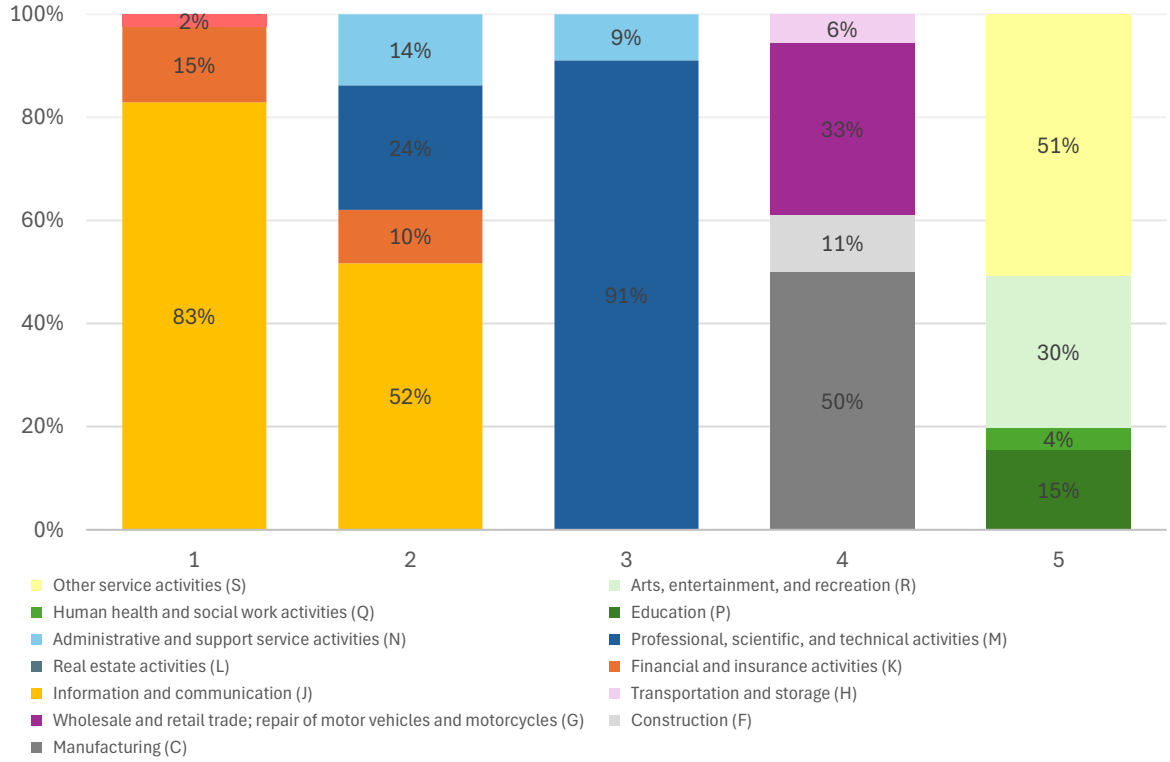
Annex Figures

Annex Figure I: 4dayweek.io dataset (N = 330) – 5-cluster solution: cluster profiles.

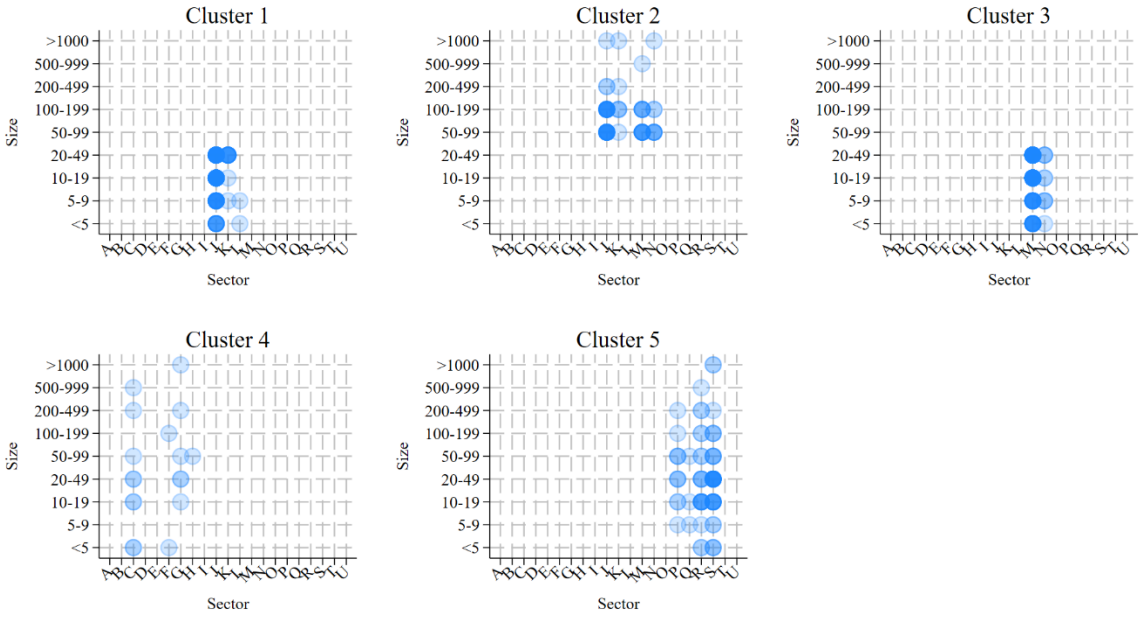
Distribution of organization sizes per cluster (4dayweek.io dataset, 5-cluster solution).



Distribution of organization sectors per cluster (4dayweek.io dataset, 5-cluster solution).

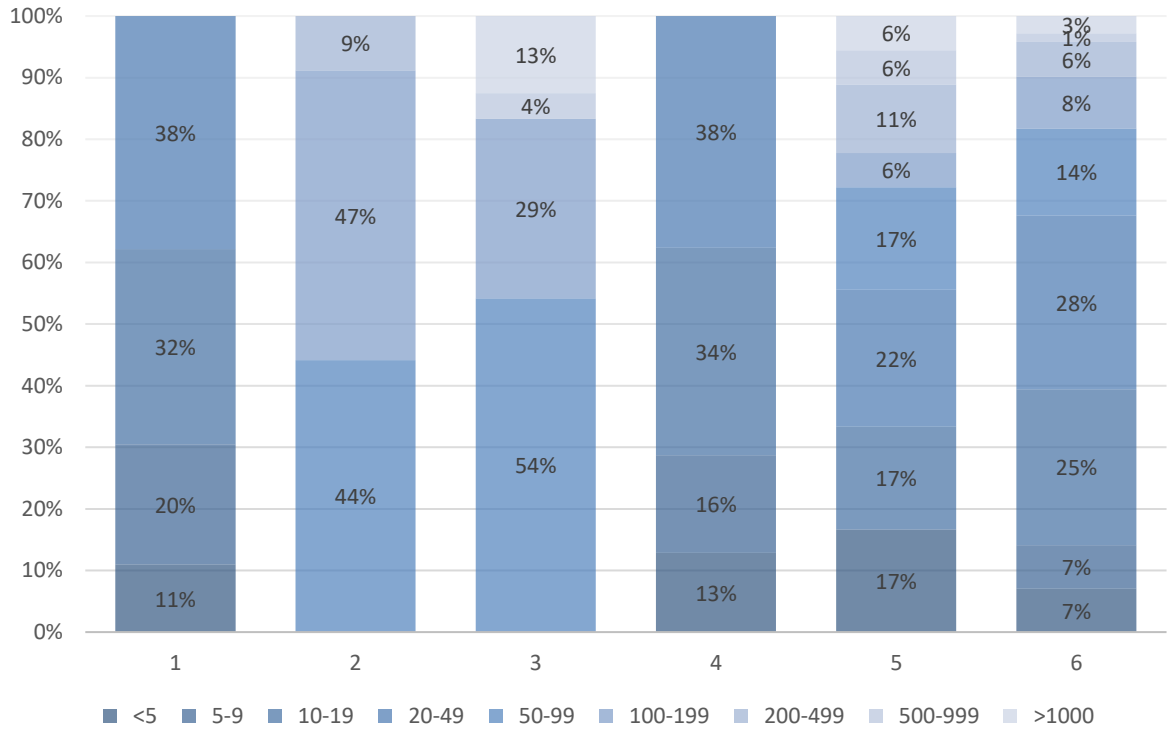


Bubble plots of sector-size combinations by cluster (4dayweek.io dataset, 5-cluster solution).

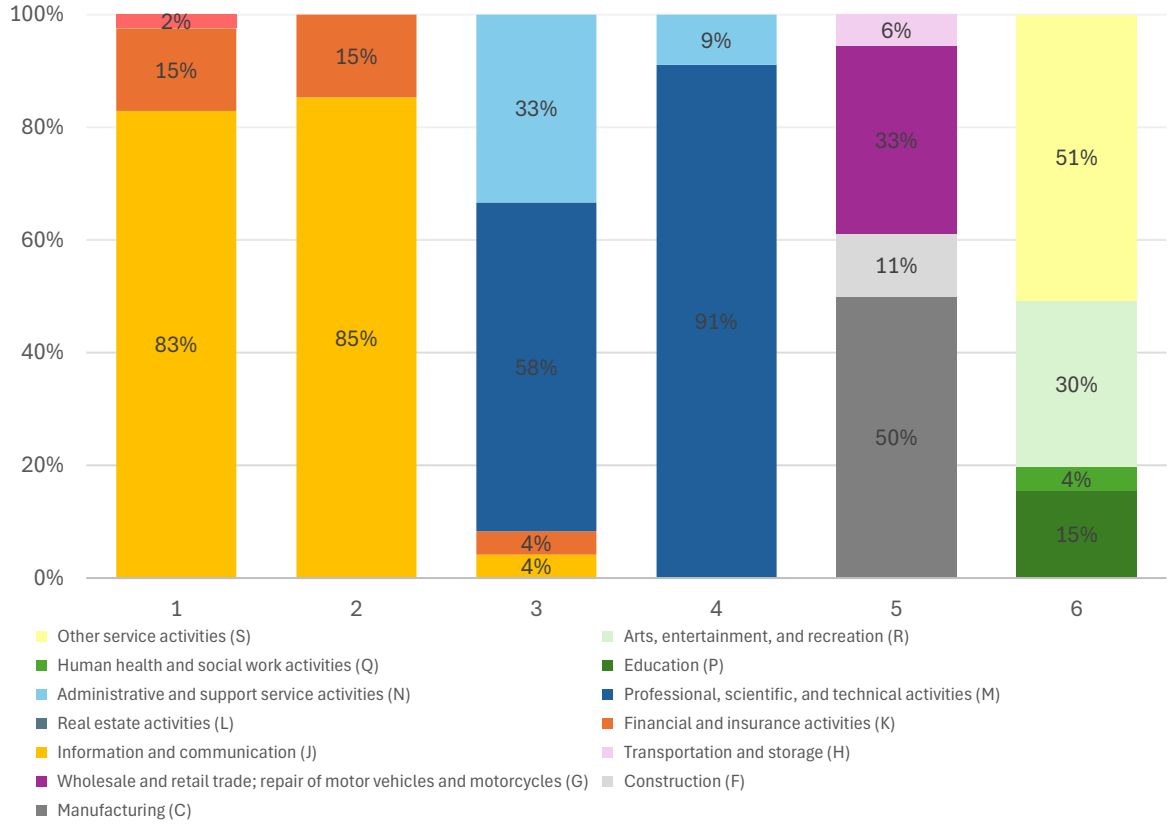


Annex Figure II: 4dayweek.io dataset (N = 330) – 6-cluster solution: cluster profiles.

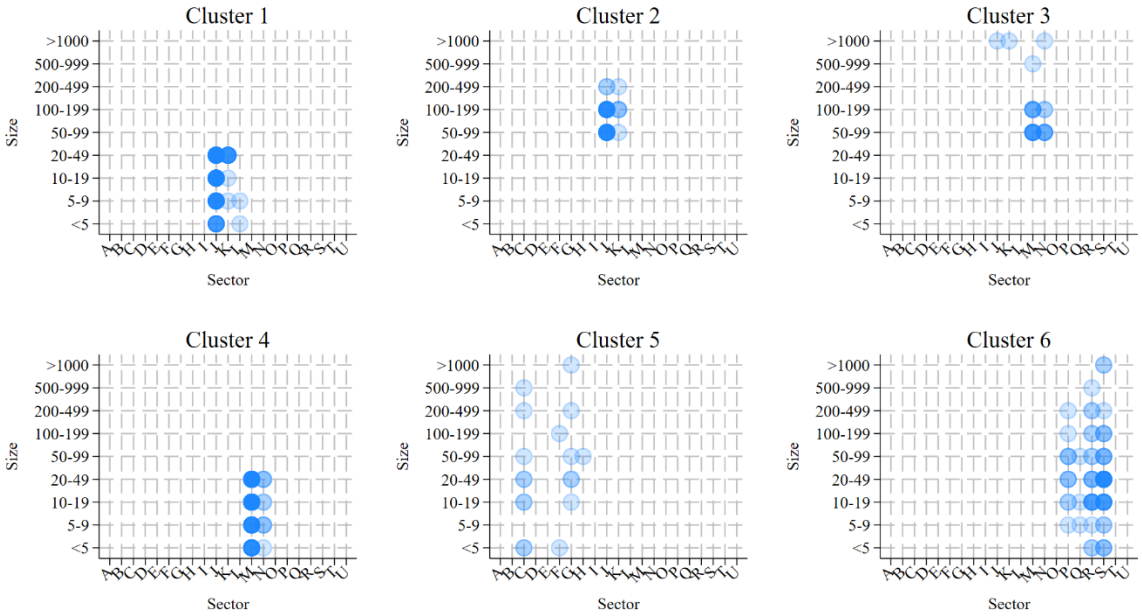
Distribution of organization sizes per cluster (4dayweek.io dataset, 6-cluster solution).



Distribution of organization sectors per cluster (4dayweek.io dataset, 6-cluster solution).

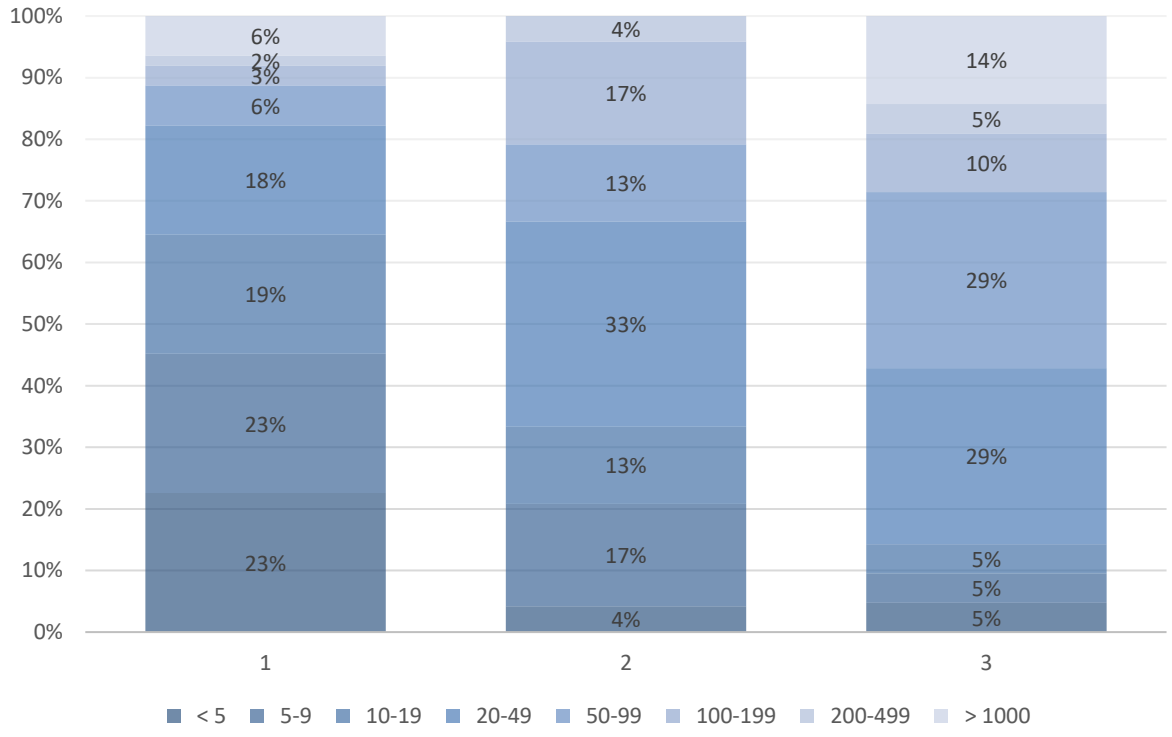


Bubble plots of sector-size combinations by cluster (4dayweek.io dataset, 6-cluster solution).

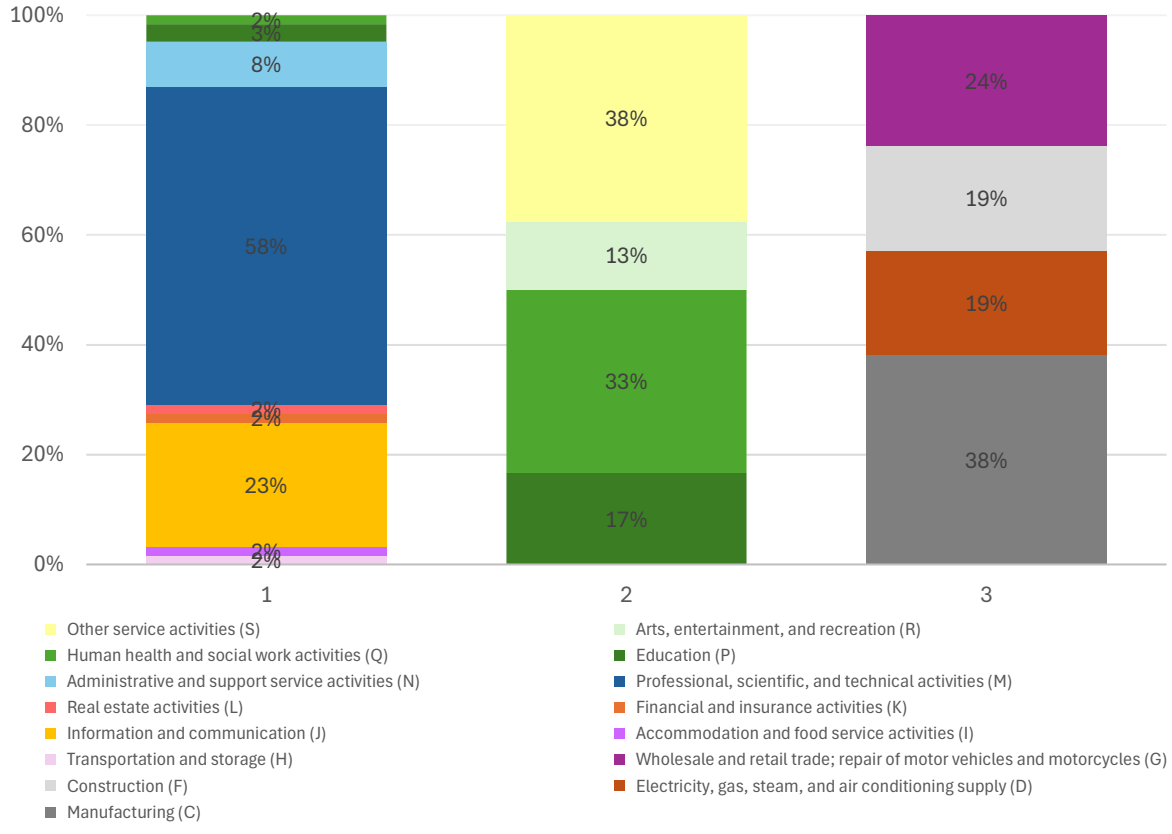


Annex Figure III: country trial dataset (N = 107) – 3-cluster solution: cluster profiles.

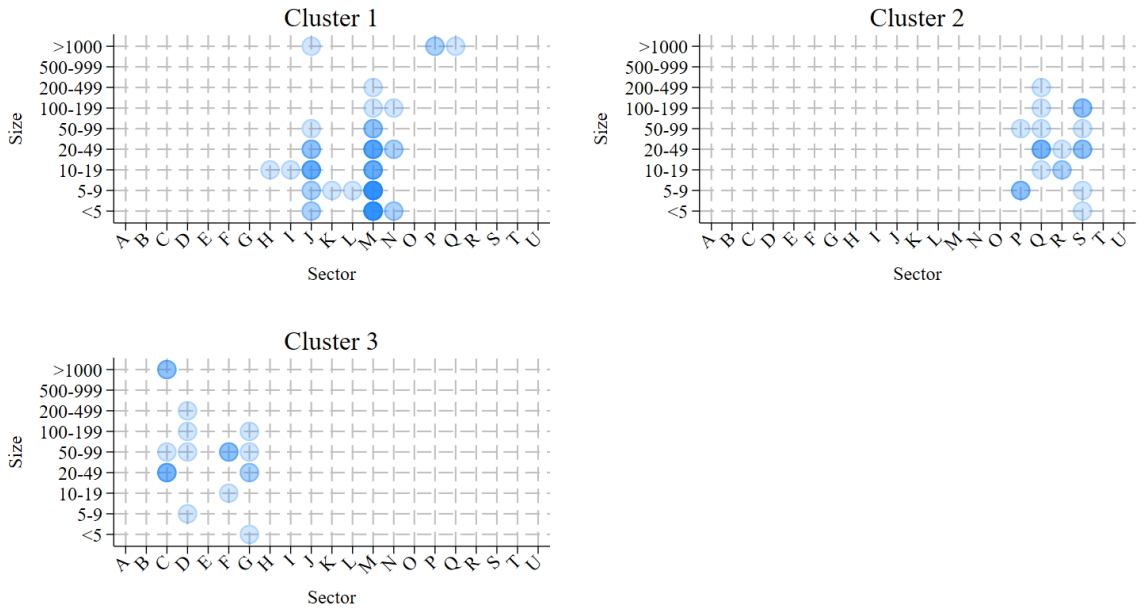
Distribution of organization sizes per cluster (country trial dataset, 3-cluster solution).



Distribution of organization sectors per cluster (country trial dataset, 3-cluster solution).

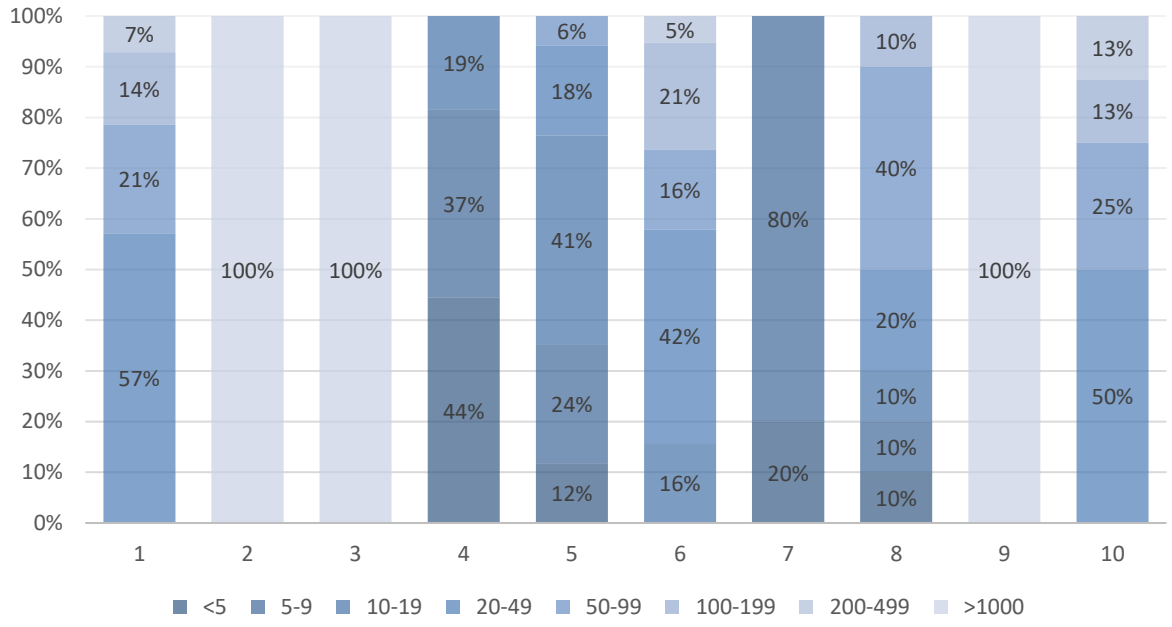


Bubble plots of sector-size combinations by cluster (country trial dataset, 3-cluster solution).

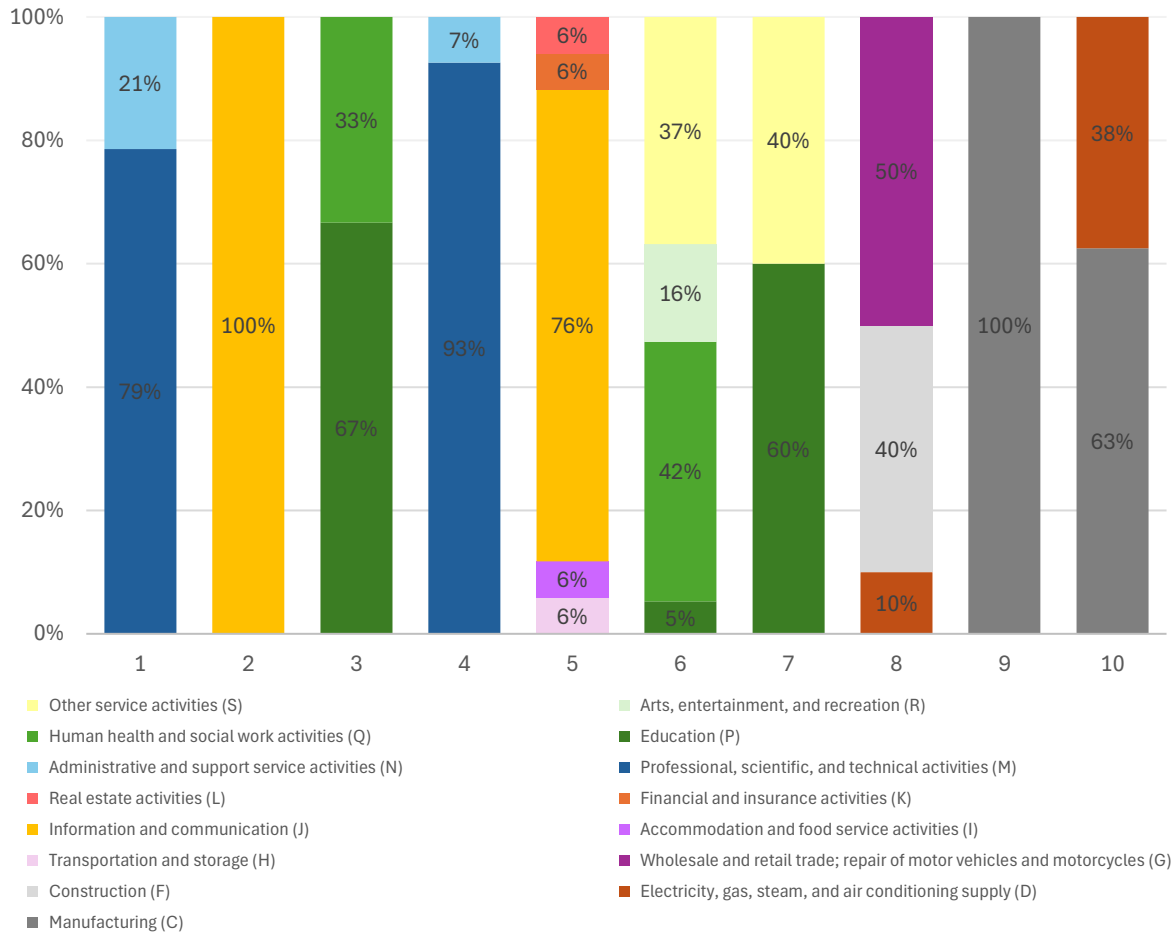


Annex Figure IV: country trial dataset (N = 107) – 10-cluster solution: cluster profiles.

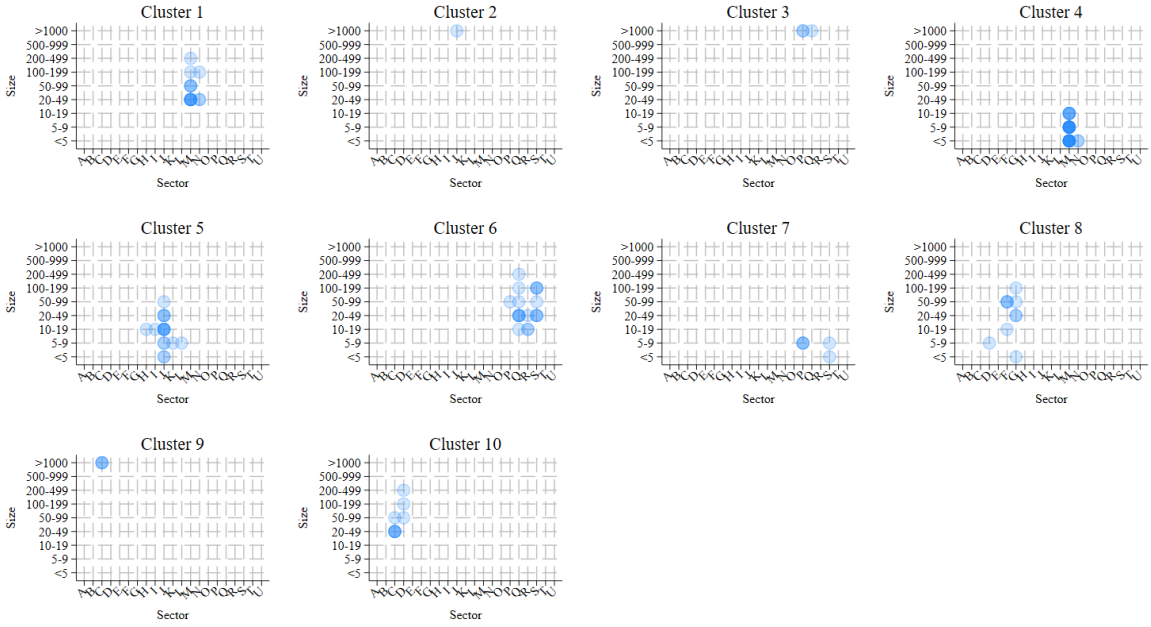
Distribution of organization sizes per cluster (country trial dataset, 10-cluster solution).



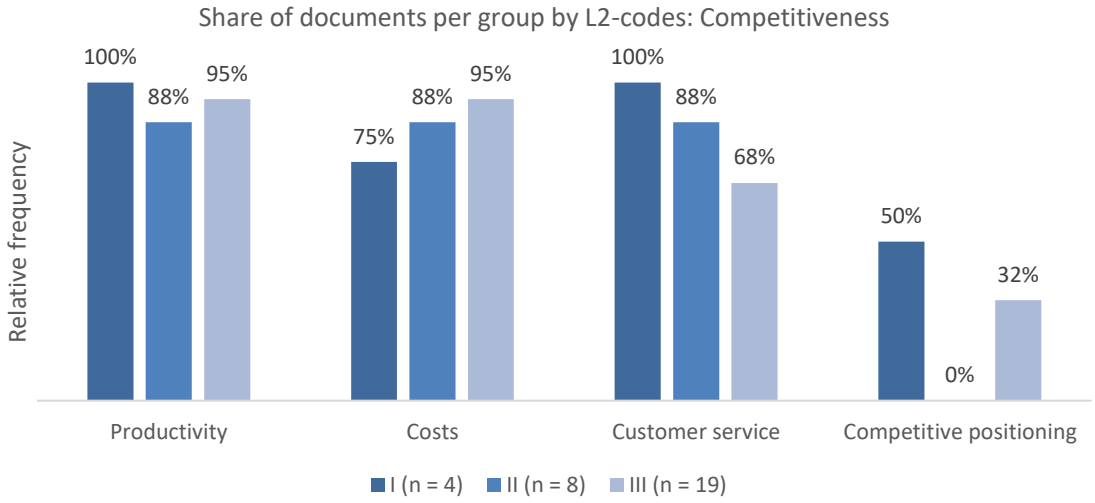
Distribution of organization sectors per cluster (country trial dataset, 10-cluster solution).

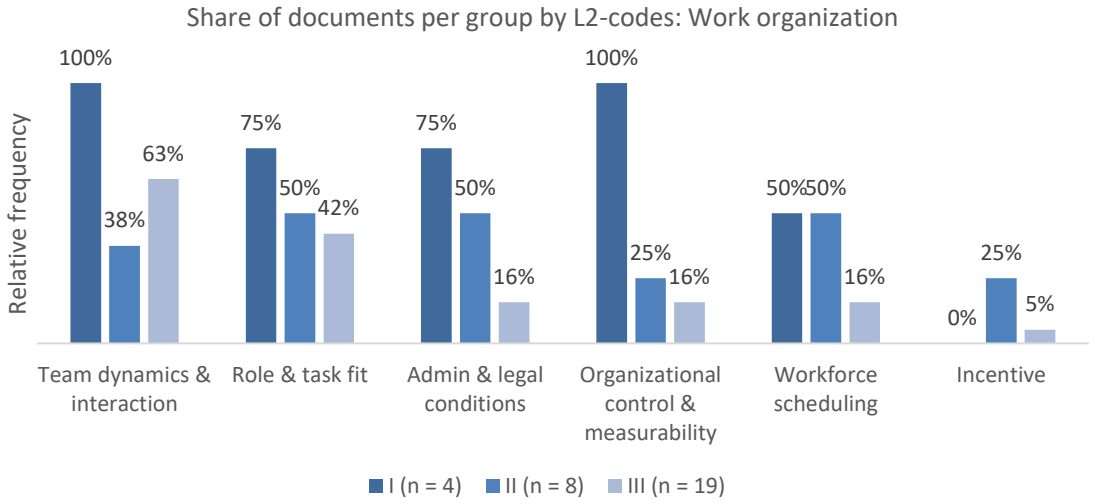


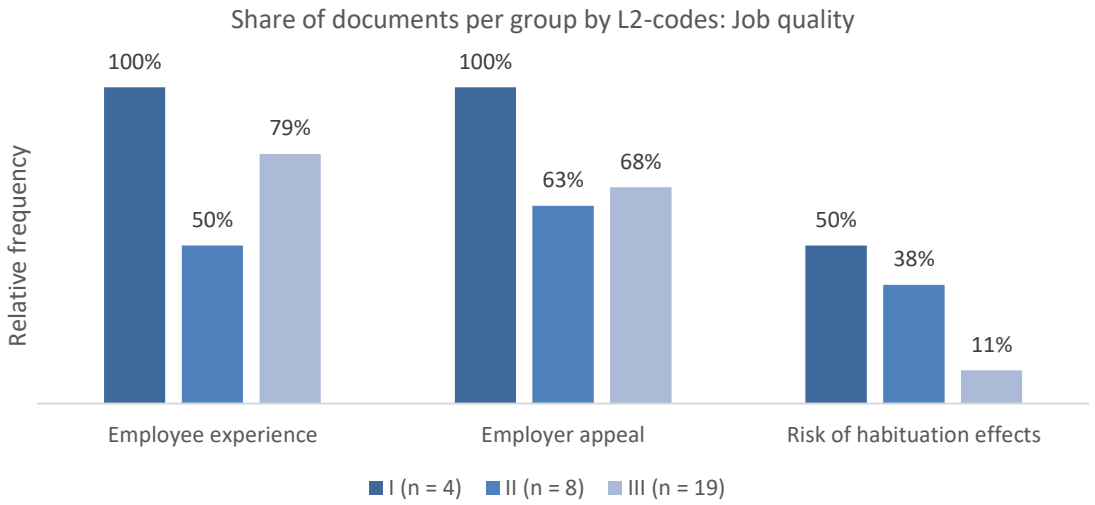
Bubble plots of sector-size combinations by cluster (country trial dataset, 10-cluster solution).

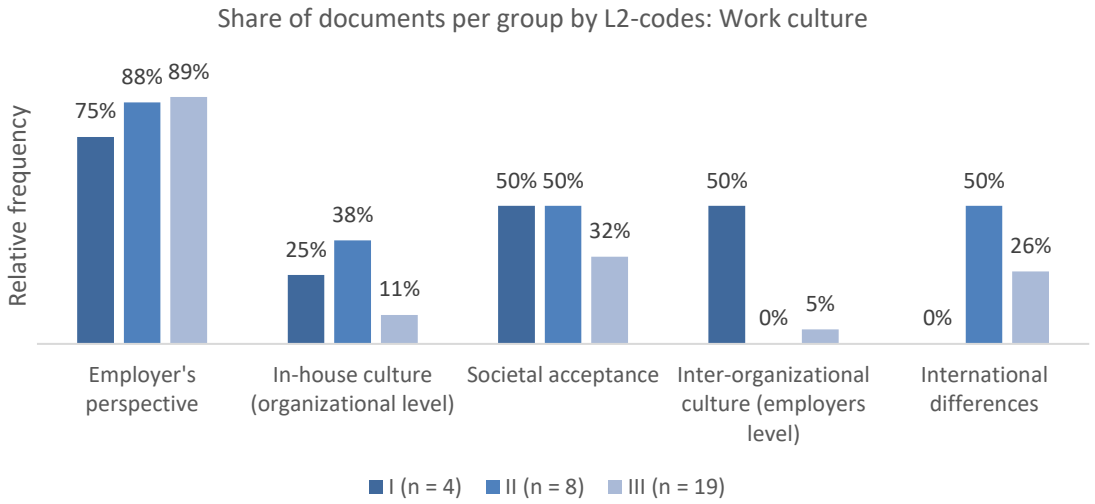


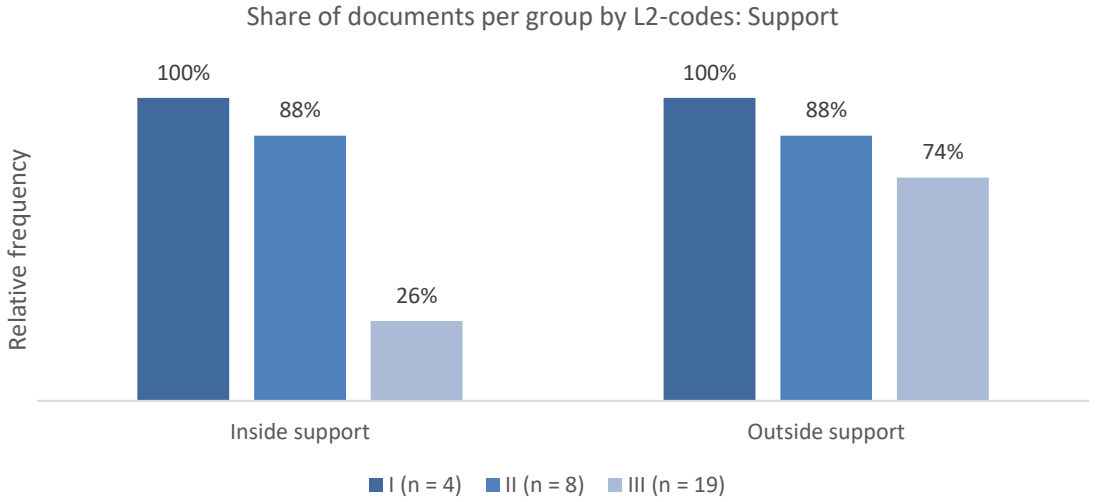
Annex Figure V: Drivers & barriers codebook: share of interviews per group (adopters (I), drop-outs (II) and non-adopters (III)) containing at least one segment coded with each L2-code (split-up panel per L1-code).

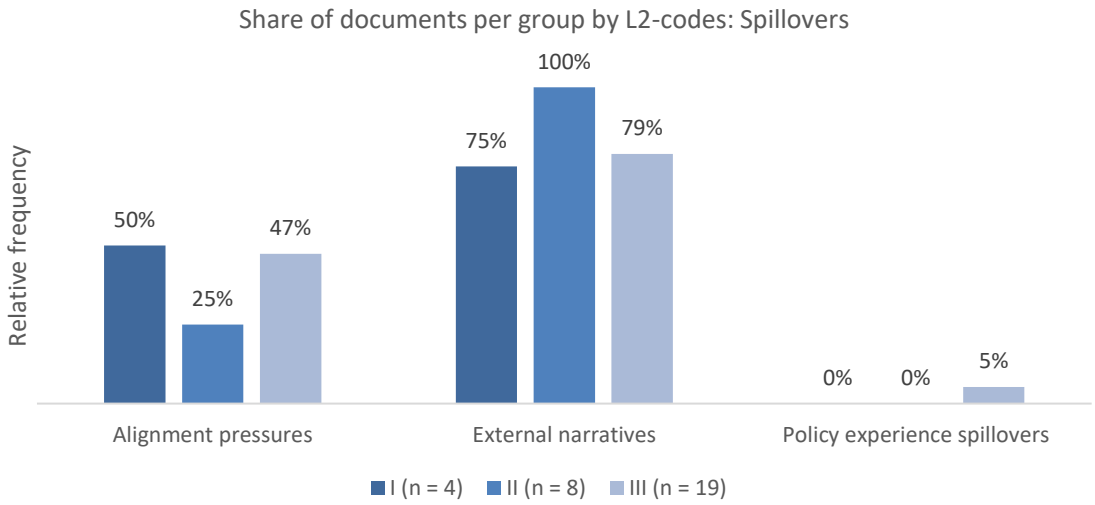


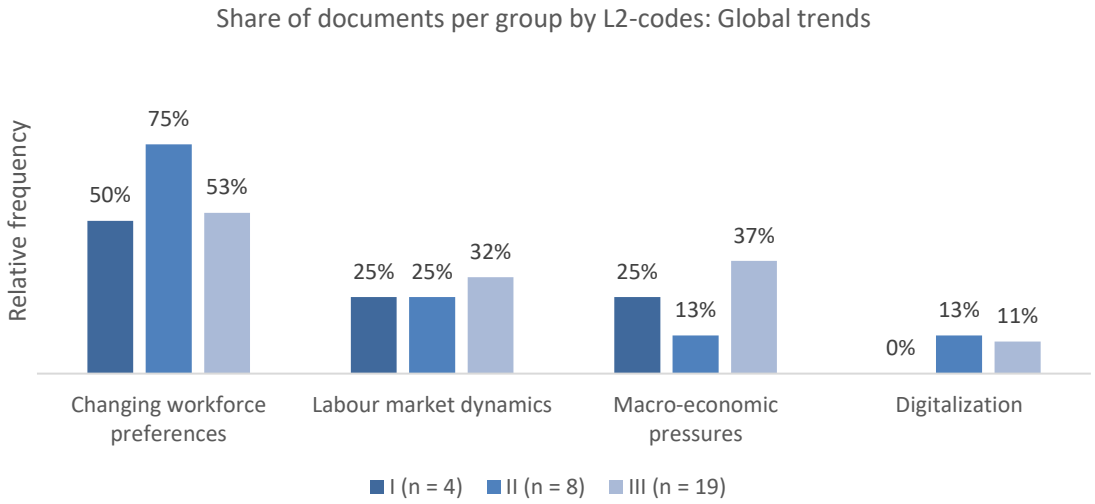


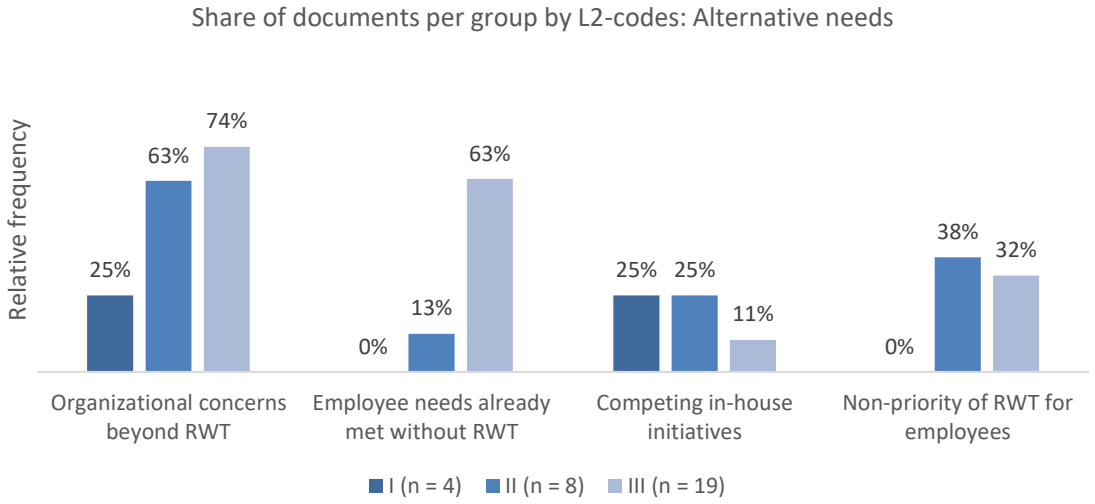

Share of documents per group by L2-codes: Job quality
Relative frequency
100%
50%
79%
100%
63%
68%
50%
38%
11%
Employee experience
Employer appeal
Risk of habituation effects
I (n = 4)
II (n = 8)
III (n = 19)


Share of documents per group by L2-codes: Work culture
Relative frequency
75%
88%
89%
25%
38%
11%
50%
50%
32%
50%
0%
5%
0%
50%
26%
Employer's perspective
In-house culture (organizational level)
Societal acceptance
Inter-organizational culture (employers level)
International differences
I (n = 4)
II (n = 8)
III (n = 19)


Share of documents per group by L2-codes: Support
Relative frequency
100%
88%
26%
100%
88%
74%
Inside support
Outside support
I (n = 4)
II (n = 8)
III (n = 19)


Share of documents per group by L2-codes: Spillovers
Relative frequency
50%
25%
47%
75%
100%
79%
0%
0%
5%
Alignment pressures
External narratives
Policy experience spillovers
I (n = 4)
II (n = 8)
III (n = 19)


Share of documents per group by L2-codes: Global trends
Relative frequency
50%
75%
53%
25%
25%
32%
25%
13%
37%
0%
13%
11%
Changing workforce preferences
Labour market dynamics
Macro-economic pressures
Digitalization
I (n = 4)
II (n = 8)
III (n = 19)


Share of documents per group by L2-codes: Alternative needs
Relative frequency
25%
63%
74%
0%
13%
63%
25%
25%
11%
0%
38%
32%
Organizational concerns beyond RWT
Employee needs already met without RWT
Competing in-house initiatives
Non-priority of RWT for employees
I (n = 4)
II (n = 8)
III (n = 19)

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