

Acknowledgements and Research supporting

Thanks: To FCT, for the financial support; To all the organisations and interviewees who accepted to take part in this study; In parallel, to the research centres/higher education institutions that hosted and supported the EURECA Project; To the team of EURECA Project who enabled to fulfil the objectives and to achieve the outputs.

Research funding:

This study is part of a wider project funded by national funds through FCT -Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, I.P. under the EXPL/PSI-GER/0321/2021 project - EURECA: New career strategies for new European remote careers.

This work was supported by FCT, I.P., the Portuguese national funding agency for science, research and technology, under the Project UIDB/04521/2020.

WHEN COVID 19 CAME TO TOWN: REMOTE WORK AND HUMAN RESOURCES CHALLENGES BY THE ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES OF THE PORTUGUESE INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: The pandemic scenario from 2020 to 2022 has cast a spotlight on remote work (RW). Thus, this recent past has brought a new reality to organizations and a novel way of organizing work. The results of the qualitative study for the Portuguese case of the EURECA Project are presented here. The guiding question of this research was, 'What role does remote work play in addressing the new challenges in human resources/career management arising from the Covid-19 pandemic scenario in Portuguese institutions?' The study followed a case study approach, based on the assumptions of practice-based theory. Ten Portuguese organizations were surveyed, with input from their directors or human resources representatives. The results highlight the new challenges faced by the hybrid work model, such as communication and ICT, internationalization and HR, workforce diversity, and team leadership, among others. Practical implications are also discussed, and some recommendations for these organizational practices are presented.

Key-words: Remote work (RW), Human resources (HR) challenges, Organisational practices, Portuguese institutions, Case study.

Resumo: O cenário pandémico 2020-2022 colocou o holofote no trabalho remoto (RW). Assim, este passado recente trouxe uma nova realidade para as organizações e uma nova forma de organizar o trabalho. Apresentam-se os resultados do estudo qualitativo para o caso Português do Projeto EURECA. A pergunta condutora da presente investigação foi “Qual o papel do trabalho remoto para os novos desafios dos recursos humanos/gestão de carreira decorrente do cenário pandémico do covid-19 em instituições portuguesas?” Seguiu-se a abordagem do estudo de caso, nos pressupostos da teoria baseada na prática. Foram inquiridas 10 organizações portuguesas, nas pessoas dos seus diretores ou responsáveis de recursos humanos. Os resultados enfatizam os novos desafios enfrentados pelo novo modelo híbrido de trabalho, tais como comunicação e TICs, internacionalização e RH, diversidade da força de trabalho e liderança de equipas, entre outros. As implicações práticas são ainda discutidas e algumas recomendações destas práticas organizacionais apresentadas.

Palavras-Chave: Trabalho remoto (RW), Desafios dos recursos humanos (HR), Práticas organizacionais, Instituições portuguesas, Estudo de caso.

Codes JEL: A14 - Sociology of Economics; D23 - Organizational Behavior; L20 - Firm Objectives, Organization, and Behavior: General; H12 - Crisis Management; J29 - Time Allocation, Work Behavior, and Employment Determination: Other.

1. Introduction

The current work presents the organisational perspective of the EURECA Project (EURECA, 2022; Piteira et al., 2023a; Piteira et al, 2023b), discussing the role of remote work (RW) and the human resources (HR) challenges that have emerged from the covid 19 pandemic scenario. Some implications and recommendations based on the Portuguese institutions are also advanced.

In the wake of the pandemic, the EURECA Project embarked on a fascinating journey to unravel the intricate dance between career management strategies and the burgeoning field of remote careers. The project was fuelled by a vision to craft innovative strategies and interventions, tailored to the rich cultural tapestry of Europe's remote workforce. The aim? To empower these digital nomads to navigate their career aspirations amidst the whirlwind of distractions, stressors, and isolation inherent in remote work.

The pandemic served as a catalyst, accelerating the adoption of remote work across the globe. Prior to this seismic shift, many companies, particularly those in Central and Southern Europe, viewed this mode of operation with scepticism. However, the post-pandemic landscape paints a different picture, with an ever-growing number of companies likely to embrace this new way of working (Bartik, et al, 2020). Yet, this decision is not without its consequences. While ICT-based mobile work has the potential to foster inclusive labor markets, address regional labor shortages, and create and retain jobs, it also harbors risks. These include the potential exclusion of certain groups from the labor market, increased work intensity and stress, the expectation of 24/7 availability, and the blurring of work and private life boundaries (Eurofound, 2021; Burk, 2021).

This stark reality underscores the importance of effective management of remote careers. If neglected, we risk widening the existing gap. The EURECA project rises to this challenge, striving to identify the key ingredients of a fulfilling remote career. The previous goal was to ensure that all European remote workers, regardless of gender, have the necessary conditions to achieve full and productive employment and decent work. Organisations aspire to create a work environment that aligns with their personal and professional ambitions, and that enables them to contribute meaningfully to the mission and goals of their organisations. The present study recognizes that remote workers often feel sidelined when it comes to career advancement opportunities. Hence, EURECA project addresses the factors that should be considered in the career management of these workers. Thus, data collection and analysis were driven by the question: *What role does remote work play in addressing the new challenges in human resources/career management arising from the Covid-19 pandemic scenario in Portuguese institutions?*

Results advocate for the protection of labor rights and the promotion of adequate career progression opportunities. So, to foster policies that support HR departments and employees, and that encourage workers to develop clear, specific, and realistic career goals and action plans aligned with the organisation's strategy is the main concern. After all, workers who are motivated, engaged, and productive are those who have a clear roadmap to their career aspirations. Moreover, the inclusivity is stressed. The career strategies must be oriented to teams development by training new skills they need to propel their career development in this new scenario of remote/hybrid work.

The current paper is structured in 6 sections. Following the introduction (section 1), section 2 summarises the theoretical assumptions that have guided this work. The third one describes

the methods and procedures. Then the findings of the case study are presented (section 4). Section 5 discusses the results and presents the practical implications of the results, with some organisational advices. Finally, the conclusions and a critical analysis of the challenges of RW are presented (section 6).

2. Theory

Remote work is not a new concept and did not emerge solely due to the pandemic scenario. Since the 1970s, various designations and approaches have surfaced. In Europe, it began to be referred to as telework, while in North America, the term 'telecommuting' was introduced by Nilles (1975). Regardless of the numerous definitions of organizing this work design, a central idea persists: the opportunity that organizations provide for their workforce to carry out tasks remotely, outside their conventional physical spaces, using communication equipment and technologies (Piteira, 2020; Piteira et al., 2023a).

The concept must also be updated considering recent times. Many authors argue that the coronavirus pandemic has triggered a significant transformation in remote work (Piteira et al., 2023a). A new debate has emerged regarding its effects on the labor market, workplace, and organisational practices, as well as strategies for potentially addressing these challenges (Tursunbayeva, Di Lauro & Antonelli, 2022). As noted by Arunprasad et al. (2022, cited in Piteira et al., 2023a), the literature on remote work has identified factors for managing a remote workforce. Through bibliometric analysis of research published in Scopus journals and critical literature analysis, the authors presented a framework that organizations can use to manage a remote workforce, focusing on employee engagement, collaboration, and organisational agility. These findings highlight technology orientation, leadership, HR management practices, external processes, and organisational culture as critical implications for managing the remote workforce.

2.1. Definition of RW

RW is related to the strategy of making work and labour relations more flexible (Piteira, 2020). It is the possibility of employees working remotely with the use of IT devices and office equipment "outside the employer's workplace..." (Wontorczyk & Rożnowski, 2022). It is a modality frequently used in crisis scenarios (Contreras, 2020; Sapo & Spinks, 2002).

2.2. Organisational (Dis)advantages of RW

Greer and Payne (2014), Dyczkowski (2012) and Piteira (2020) pinpointed some (dis)advantages of RW, such as: 1. Advantages: greater organisational performance and productive flexibility; reduced costs; for HRM: easier recruitment and outsourcing; greater retention and stability of qualified staff.; 2. Disadvantages: high initial investment in equipment/technology, weakening the organisational culture; loss of control over work processes.

2.3. Trends of RW

Remote work can guarantee a win-win situation for employers and employees (Popovici & Popovici, 2020). RW will help drive economic growth, in a post-Covid-19 world, with the help of new public policies (Gupta, 2020).

2.4. RW and HRM/Organisational Challenges

Some examples of the new challenges by RW in HR practices are: flexible working preferences, smart working practices (Adekoya, Adisa & Aiyenitaju, 2022), new strategies to leadership, people's physical and mental recovery in the post-pandemic (Sharma, 2022). Some changes on the labour market, workplace, and organisational practices, as well as on the strategies related to the ways in which these challenges are also mentioned (Tursunbayeva, Di Lauro & Antonelli, 2022). The highlighting of the technology orientation, leadership, HRM practices, external processes and organisational culture were some of the other concerns identified (Arunprasad et al., 2022; Tursunbayeva, Di Lauro & Antonelli, 2022).

3. Method and Procedures

In line with the previous goals, a qualitative research was developed. This has provided insights into the perceptions of organisations on the issues under investigation, using the case study design (as recommended by Yin, 1994 and Stake, 1995). The research process followed four phases by: (1) defining the objectives and the empirical field to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the organisational perspective; (2) selecting the empirical field to ensure representation from each category of size, activity sector, and nature of the capital/mission in both Portugal and Italy (a brief description of the portuguese institutions is given in table 1); (3) conducting interviews with directors/HR managers; (4) analysing the data, interpreting the results, and generating case studies for comparative analysis.

Table 1. Brief description of the empirical field (portuguese institutions)

Institutions	Brief description
AERLIS	AERLIS - Business Association of the Lisbon Region, is a non-profit Association, of public utility, created in February of 1992, the offices are in Oeiras, Sintra and Carregado. AERLIS is the Vice-President of the General Council of CIP (Confederation of Portuguese Business) and Vice-President of BECC (Business European Capital Cities). AERLIS operates in six main areas: Members' representation; Information; Internationalization; Vocational training; Business support; Regional development. (AERLIS, 2024, https://www.aerlis.pt/en/business-association-of-the-lisbon-region)
<i>Ulisses*</i> *It is a fictional name according to the organisation's request. This ensures anonymity and data protection.	Is a trade and investment agency, belonging to the government entities. It is focused on the development of a competitive business environment that contributes to the globalisation of the Portuguese economy. As a reputable business-oriented agency, with specialised professionals in Portugal and a global network in over 50 countries, <i>Ulisses's</i> mission is to increase Portugal's competitiveness and reputation, by fostering structural investment and promoting the internationalisation of Portuguese companies. The <i>Ulisses</i> Global also includes the Global Parques, the Industrial Parks Management entity, which advises on the best location for investment projects.
Auchan Group (Portugal)	The group operates in the retail business. One of the largest retailers operating in Portugal (and abroad). The Auchan key numbers at 31/12/2022: 12 countries; 2101 points of sale under the Auchan banner; 160 407 employees; 32,9 billion of consolidated revenue excluding taxes; 1,3 billion of EBITDA (Auchan Group, 2024a, https://www.auchan-retail.com/en/who-we-are/#our-company/) Auchan Group in Portugal by numbers (31/12/2022): 32 Hipermercados;

	<p>4 Supermercados; 46 My Auchan (lojas de ultra-proximidade); 1 loja My Auchan Saúde e Bem Estar; 17 lojas franchisadas; 30 gasolineras; 50% de mulheres em cargos de liderança; 88% de volume de compras com fornecedores de produto nacionais; 93% de resíduos valorizado; 15 lojas com Certificação Ambiental. (Auchan Group, 2024b, https://www.auchan-retail.pt/quem-somos/#a-nossa-historia).</p>
El Corte Inglés	<p>El Corte Inglés Grandes Almacenes SA is the Portuguese retail company that has been part of the El Corte Inglés Group (a world reference) since 2001. The Lisbon warehouses were the first one outside of the Spanish capital. The company has developed a policy of diversification through the creation of new commercial formats, such as Hipercor, Supercor, Sfera, Bricor, Viagens El Corte Inglés, Seguros and Informática El Corte Inglés, among others. The company is committed to innovation and technology with new initiatives, alliances, business lines and services. In 2022, the El Corte Inglés Group generated global revenues of 15,327 million euros, achieving an EBITDA of 951.4 million euros, according to the contribution made by each of the main lines of activity. (El Corte Inglés, 2024, https://www.elcorteingles.pt/empresa/quem-somos/?_gl=1*1bs7v9o*_up*MQ..&gclid=EAlaIqobChMI1qLz7avOhAMVPKHoCR2PJARQEAAAYASAAEgKolvd_BwE)</p>
GELPEIXE	<p>Gelpeixe is a company in the frozen food industry and trade, recognised for the highest quality of its products. Its aim is to cover the entire national market and strengthen the conditions for expansion into the European market, on the basis of sustained growth. Gelpeixe was born and developed within the Tarré family. While still maintaining a family structure, it has relationships with all its stakeholders that go far beyond professional ones. Rebranding is one of its business strategies. (GELPEIXE, 2024, https://www.gelpeixe.pt/hist%C3%B3ria)</p>
IAPMEI	<p>In the scope of the Ministry of Economy and Maritime Affairs and covering all fields of industry, except tourism, the mission of IAPMEI is to promote competitiveness and business growth through the management of instruments and programs aimed at strengthening SME innovation, entrepreneurship and business investment. A strong proximity policy is carried out by central services and a regional network of business development centres all around the country. The institution help the companies in the business assistance, business financing and qualifications and certification. IAPMEI, 2024, https://www.iapmei.pt/SOBRE-O-IAPMEI/English-version.aspx).</p>
Integrity/Devoteam Cyber	<p>Integrity is founded in 2009 by four professionals with the purpose of becoming a reference in the field of technology consulting and auditing focused on cybersecurity, providing a specialized and innovative service to its clients, ensuring the protection and security of their most precious asset - information - against possible incidents and losses. In 2023 Integrity adopts the name and brand Devoteam Cyber Trust as the conclusion of the Rebranding stage that began in 2021. Its mission is to ensure its clients a secure digital journey, combining its vast experience, best practices, and technology with the most innovative approaches in the market. The management team, structure, and integrity relationship with clients have remained the same since the beginning. Devoteam is a leading consulting firm focused on digital strategy, tech platforms and cybersecurity. By combining creativity, tech and data insights, the company empower their customers to transform their business and unlock the future. With 25 years experience and 10,000 employees across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Devoteam promotes responsible tech for people and works to create better change. (Integrity/Devoteam, 2024, https://www.integrity.pt/history.html)</p>

IPDJ	The Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, I.P. (IPDJ)'s mission is to implement an integrated and decentralised policy for the areas of sport and youth, in close collaboration with public and private entities, namely sports entities, youth and student associations and local authorities. The IPDJ is involved in defining, implementing and evaluating public sports policy, promoting the generalisation of sport, as well as support for regular and high-performance sport, by providing technical, human and financial resources. The preservation of ethics in sport is also one of the IPDJ's essential scopes. Likewise, the IPDJ aims to boost support for associations, volunteering and the promotion of citizenship, leisure activities, non-formal education, information and the geographical mobility of young people in Portugal and abroad. It is also proposed to revitalise youth tourism, particularly with regard to the network of Youth Hostels and the Youth Card, in order to increase mobility, with gains in efficiency and economy. (IPDJ, 2024, https://ipdj.gov.pt/miss%C3%A3o-e-atribui%C3%A7%C3%B5es)
ISCAL	Lisbon Accounting and Business School (ISCAL) is a public higher education institution, part of the Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon. It is dedicated to the creation, transmission and dissemination of knowledge, culture, science and technology, and knowledge of a professional nature, through the articulation of study, teaching, research and experimental development. Heir to the “Aula de Comércio” (The Commerce Class) founded by the Marquis of Pombal in 1759, ISCAL currently has: 3,465 Students, 12 Courses; 206 Professors and a rate 97% of students` Employability. The Institute is the second largest of the Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon. (ISCAL, 2024, https://www.iscal.ipl.pt/en)
Wellow Group	The company operates in the areas of Human Resources, Outsourcing, Energy & Telecommunications and Mediation. Founded in 1999 and in over 20 years we have (re)started many times to become what we are today: a business group of 12 companies, 6 commercial brands and 15 services. Some indicators of the company: 320 internal employees; 56.987 training hours; and a rate of 7.5 in the climate assessment (0-10). (Wellow Group, 2024, https://wellowgroup.com/en/).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted trying to have a representative sample of Portuguese institutions. All interviews were recorded and subjected to qualitative analysis following the principles of practise-based theory. This set of interviews comprised the human resource managers and/or directors of companies/public institutions. Two cases studies were generated (Portugal and Italy). The Portuguese case comprised 10 organisations. The interviews were guided by a pre-existing script, informed by the research goals of the EURECA project, with the flexibility to introduce new questions during the conversation. The interviews, each spanning about 60 minutes, were meticulously recorded. The data collection from these conversations were then dissected, illuminating the key points of each section. These categories were then juxtaposed to unearth similarities and differences. The selection was guided by a compass of criteria etched by the EURECA project team, pointing towards size (big/SME), product (manufacturing/service), mission/capital ownership (private/public).

The interviews data were analysed following the content analysis procedures, reducing the huge information collected, and highlighting the key points of each section, and then compared to find similarities and differences. Qualitative analysis was carried out in agreement with Bardin's (1997) guidelines and regarding coding procedures, ensuring quality, and fulfilling the criteria for content analysis (completeness, representativeness, homogeneity,

pertinence and exclusivity). Consequently, to display and compare the data, co-categorical matrices were generated.

4. Remote Work and HR Challenges by the Organisational Practices: The Portuguese Case Study

The Portuguese case includes a total of 10 organisations, with data collected in 2023. The sample is presented in the table 2.

Table 2: Sample description

Institutions	Portugal
Size	Big: 7; SME: 3
Product	Manufacturing: 1; Service: 9
Mission	Private (n=6): AERLIS (Business Association of the Lisbon Region); Auchan Group (Service/Retail); El Corte Inglés (Service/Retail); GELPEIXE (Manufacturing); Integrity (IT); Wellow Group (Service). Public (n=4): <i>Ulisses</i> * (*Fictional name for a public institution in the trade and investment); IAPMEI (Institute for the Support of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises); IPDJ (Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth); ISCAL (Lisbon Account and Business School).

Firstly, the data aimed to understand how RW evolved with the 2020-2022 pandemic lockdown. The EURECA Project attempted to determine whether RW was a new mode of work that emerged from the crisis caused by the pandemic, or whether it was already a common practice among these organisations. Thus, the usage of RW in recent years was investigated, comparing the trends before, during, and after the isolation imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. These data are presented in table 3.

Table 3: RW trends in Portuguese institutions

Institutions	Before 2020 lockdown	Lockdown (2020-2022)	After lockdown (2022 onwards)
AERLIS	No	Yes	Hybrid
<i>Ulisses</i>	No	Yes	Hybrid
Auchan Group	Occasionally	Only in the functions that could be performed remotely	Hybrid
El Corte Inglés	No	Only in the functions that could be performed remotely	Hybrid
GELPEIXE	No	Only in the functions that could be performed remotely	Occasionally
IAPMEI	No	Yes	Hybrid
Integrity	No	Yes	Hybrid

IPDJ	Occasionally	Yes	Hybrid
ISCAL	No	Yes	Presential; RW by exception
Wellow Group	Occasionally	Yes	Hybrid

In the Portuguese case, only one organisation was technology-based. This organisation was the one where RW was most likely to be implemented. Before the lockdown, most organisations (seven in total) did not practice RW, although it was occasionally employed in necessary situations, as mentioned by three interviewees. All organisations embraced RW, except for those in manufacturing and retail sectors (which were not under lockdown), due to some roles and tasks that could not be performed remotely.

As we moved past the lockdown (from 2022 onwards), a trend towards a hybrid model emerged. Most organisations leaned towards a system that offered employees a choice - not entirely remote, to maintain a connection with the organisation, but a blend of office days and remote days. RW, which was generally adopted by these organisations post-lockdown (2020-2022), marked a significant shift from their previous almost exclusive reliance on face-to-face operations. Consequently, this hybrid scheme has become the norm for roles that can be performed remotely.

4.1. Practices of RW

Once the use of RW had been characterized, it was aimed to understand how organisations defined RW from a management perspective. According to the Portuguese data, the concept of RW is associated with autonomy, flexibility, self-management, and the use of communication technologies. Consequently, the hybrid model is defined as the option to work some days in the office and others remotely. Following this definition, the mixed model between RW and face-to-face work is the trend. As empirical evidence, some practical examples are provided by the organisations studied.

Examples:

- There is no concrete definition or written policy as each worker is self-managing (AERLIS).
- The hybrid scheme was validated in the years 2020 and 2022 through a questionnaire distributed to employees who preferred teleworking, in accordance with the legislation. There are several rules and supports in place for RW. (*Ulisses*).
- Out of 8,000 employees, only 600 are remote (headquarter employees), while the others are in a face-to-face regime. The remote employees follow a hybrid system with two days a week at home. There are flexible hours, except for the security and receptionist roles. The administrative staff is required to work 8 hours a day, while the rest of the employees have flexible hours. On the other three days, the employees work at the location closest to their residence, also with flexibility. This hybrid model includes both online and face-to-face training, as well as designated times for face-to-face meetings as defined by the teams and managers (AUCHAN Group).
- Board meetings are held in person with directors and administrators present. The company covers travel and accommodation costs when they need to be in Lisbon (Integrity).

- There are 450 workers eligible for RW. The hybrid system is coordinated with the head of area management, team manager, and in agreement with the employee. They work based on objectives, but there are no metrics for controlling time remotely. Metrics for the remote system do not exist at the level of measuring working hours. On-site flexibility is provided in accordance with the labor code (El Corte Inglés).
- RW initially covered only 10 per cent of employees. Currently, it is implemented for 2-3 days a week, and the future plan is to use it only in emergency situations. The current decision was to start transitioning those on RW back to a fully face-to-face regime. There was a sense of prejudice and distancing in terms of human relations, leading to a detachment from the company culture. The company, characterized by its small structure and many informal relationships, operates like a family business (GELPEIXE).
- RW was initiated in 2019, governed by the basic legal rights and obligations. There are no distinct policies. The RW regime is for an indefinite period and is agreed upon with the director of each department in each organisational unit. However, to maintain contact, there are times when they must travel to the office at least once a month. There are 15 employees in RW (in accordance with the labor code), while the others are in a hybrid regime and come to the office 2 to 3 times a week (IPDJ).
- After the lockdown, everyone returned. The RW regime is used in specific situations, given the operational circumstances. The need to resort to RW is well-understood by everyone, and they know how to adapt. For example, during periods of online classes due to adverse weather conditions, or some specific family situations, the interest of the employee, or from an individual request, if it does not jeopardize the mission of the organisation. There are situations in which some employees switch to teleworking, but not all at the same time. It depends on the situation and the employee. Currently, there is no one working full-time remotely (ISCAL).
- On a permanent basis and in rotation, 25% of the remote workers are in roles compatible with the characteristics of the jobs. In this department, two people are on a biweekly rotation for RW. All employees are equipped with laptops. They have flexible hours with fixed bands, working 35 hours per week with adjustable hours from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, including two fixed bands from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm and 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm. RW is allowed with freedom in the workplace as long as the necessary means are available (IAPMEI).
- Employee self-management is key. As long as employees deliver results, there is no formal policy, and each team organises itself in its own way. So far, we have received positive feedback. The perspective on RW is natural as long as it allows the objectives of the organization and the team to be met. It's a self-regulatory ecosystem with positive results (Wellow Group).

4.2. Future of Remote Work and Human Resources Challenges

The topic of who determines and assumes responsibility for RW within the organisation was also analysed. Table 4 below outlines the functions/departments who make decisions regarding RW.

Table 4: Responsibility of RW

Institutions	Organisational decision-makers of RW
AERLIS	Executive Director in alignment with the Head of Human Resources.
<i>Ulisses</i>	Management board and HRD under the labour commission.
Auchan Group	HRM Department

El Corte Inglés	Heads of Departments in alignment with HRM
GELPEIXE	HRM and heads of each area.
IAPMEI	HRM and Top Management Board.
Integrity	Company Direction and Senior Management
IPDJ	Governing board authorising and opinion of the HRM division
ISCAL	Presidency of the institution and prior opinion of a middle management level and final decision-making by the Presidency.
Wellow Group	HRM and all leadership levels of each brand. HRM defines the transversal policies, and each brand implements them according to its business area.

The role of HRM is to liaise between the organisational chairmanships, top management with the middle levels. The decision-making of RW policy is on the top/board of the organisation advised by the HR, and then lined up with the middle levels, ensuring the execution/operationalisation of the RW.

According to the Portuguese data, the concept of RW is linked to autonomy, flexibility, self-management, and the use of communication technologies. Hence, the hybrid model is also defined as the possibility of choosing to work some days in the office and others outside it. Following this definition, the mixed model between RW and face-to-face is the trend.

The flexibility of time and place that comes with the design of RW can be a motivating factor for workers. It can help reduce absenteeism, increase resilience, and allow for the reorganisation of work processes, making it easier to complete some tasks. It was also pointed out that the time and money saved on travelling and the ability to provide oneself with a more comfortable work environment increased the well-being of workers. Furthermore, organisations can recruit talent from around the world, enabling them to expand and internationalise. Using the right technological tools, work can be more effective, and communication can be faster, enabling more meetings to be held with more teams/employees. Accordingly, new HR practices and policies are emerging.

However, some disadvantages were pointed out, namely issues associated with culture, loss of identity and disconnection from the organisation. RW increases loneliness and psychosocial risks by decreasing emotional connections, interactions, and socialisation with colleagues, sustaining the state in which employees do not know each other. The available forms of communication also contribute to these problems as they are distance-based and provide less possibility for interaction. This may also result in a sense of inequality and less control over the work process. Thus, there should be greater emphasis on making team management and leadership more effective. Legislation has not kept up with this evolution, however, and hence there is a lack of legal frameworks for both RW and hybrid models and their associated problems.

4.3. Career Management and Remote Work

Another topic under research was the relationship between CM and RW. Firstly, the perception of what strategic career management (SCM) means for each organization was pinpointed. Table 5 presents a summary of the data.

Table 5: SCM by the institutions' perception

Institutions	SCM's Perception
AERLIS	Strategic career management is done by flexibly in project-based organizations where people come, go, and leave. There is no formal structure, and the short-term strategy is based on salary progression, training, and specialized recruitment.
<i>Ulisses</i>	Career management is defined in the internal regulations, and there is a progression according to the number of years at each salary level. Promotion is based on annual performance evaluations, which result in progression to higher career levels with the objective of a corresponding salary increase.
Auchan Group	Strategic career management from the company's perspective is the intersection between the expectations and wishes of employees, their talents, and the needs of the company. Every employee has their own unique talent, and careers can be both vertical and horizontal. People need different stimuli for their development, self-satisfaction, and self-realization. All employees are evaluated using the nine-box model, which assesses performance and potential. Employees are ranked based on this evaluation, which influences salary review and recognition. Talented employees or those with key or critical functions are followed up with development plans that include training, coaching, mentoring programs, assessments, launches, new challenges, and new responsibilities. They climb a nine-step ladder that crosses performance with the employee's potential and are assessed by both the manager and the top manager.
El Corte Inglés	Identify the competencies required to create talent in each area of the business. Teams must acquire knowledge to develop these competencies. Valuing employees who already belong to the company and building and betting on their future is important. Choosing and developing the future, professional and internal growth, internal valorisation, opportunity for progression, training and technical and academic skills, creating good leadership, career management, motivating new generations, and creating a career plan to know where to go are all important aspects of designing progress in technical areas, marketing and e-commerce, career plans, and increasing salaries. This is something that is required by the new generations and is being developed because they feel this need and provide feedback to younger employees.
GELPEIXE	There is no formal career plan in place. Instead, key roles are identified, and challenges are provided to employees to help them grow. Specialized training and postgraduate courses are offered to employees to invest in their development and skills. Internal mobility opportunities are available, and career progression is based on monthly performance evaluations in operational areas and 360° performance evaluations. Employees can also provide self-assessments and feedback if they would like to have another function or training. Managers collect information to identify people with growth potential and develop their skills, even if it is for other areas.

IAPMEI	Career management in public administration is characterized by certain constraints. However, internal employees are given the opportunity to occupy senior positions in cases of retirement.
Integrity	The career plan for employees in technical areas is linked to their profile. The strategy plan is still in action, although the basic definitions are already embedded in the company's strategy and have not yet been put into practice.
IPDJ	Strategic career management is not possible at IPDJ. Although it existed in 2007, it stopped in 2012. Until 2006, the institute was a pioneer in career management, but since then, people have not progressed in their careers for 18 years, and a competition was opened. From law 12A until now, career management is done by CIAGAP. Training is mandatory and can be invested in. Career management encompasses training but must encompass growth within a shorter period of 10 years. Additional practices include collaborative work and mobility within the service. Investment in professional and personal training, performance evaluation, social responsibility, salary updates where possible, and certification of the Portuguese standard to reconcile professional, personal, and private life training.
ISCAL	Strategic career management does not really exist, especially in public administration. There is no career process for teachers as we know it. Instead, they need to obtain degrees, produce scientific work, and constantly update their knowledge to access higher career levels. To manage career prospects, there is a competition plan every 4 years for higher career levels. Non-teaching staff do not have a career concept as such and are governed by CIAGAP evaluation systems. They obtain points for career advancement, but with quotas that discourage membership. There are no managerial positions that allow vertical mobility, and there is no chance of growth and upward mobility. Instead, the organization focuses on managing the motivation of each employee so that they realize that they are part of something bigger and feel good about working here.
Wellow Group	The career progression model is based on a Y-shaped structure with 6 levels of development, each with its own competencies, salary ranges, and associated benefits. There is the possibility to progress through the levels vertically and laterally. Vertical progression involves moving up the career ladder until you reach the level of specialization or senior leadership within the same area. Lateral progression involves spending your career progressing within the same level, changing teams, projects, brands within the group, and functions while maintaining the same level of skills and functions. This allows you to have a challenge that allows you to apply and develop your skills in other ways. In the remote or face-to-face system, this management is the same. The important thing is to have the skills; the focus is on the person and not the function of the person. The important thing is the skills of the person and the way in which the person executes and operationalizes those skills.

The Portuguese scenario of SCM comprises two distinct realities: public administration and private organisations/companies. For the public group, there is no SCM in the strict sense. It is confined to the government's legal framework, bureaucratic constraints, and its implementation. Only two issues emerged on this topic: progression and salary. However, most public institutions have seen career progression frozen since the financial crisis at the time of the troika intervention. This had implications for the overall public HRM system, including performance assessment and remunerations. The private group presents advances in this area, with models under development and concerns for the area of soft skills, team

development, career plan and progression opportunities, and talent attraction and retention. It is a challenging area that human resources are embracing as strategic for organisations. The mapping of SCM practices was another issue analysed. Table 6 provides some examples.

Table 6: Practices of SMC

Institutions	Practices of SMC
AERLIS	By internal mobility
<i>Ulisses</i>	The organisation has an international career system. The rules for applying for an international career are defined, and employees apply for it. They are subject to curricular evaluation and evaluation by jury interview, and the best are placed in international positions. There is also mobility of function and direction. There are two career paths: technical and administrative, and within these paths, people can change direction according to the needs of each directorate at any given time.
Auchan Group	Yes, <i>zigzag</i> routes and internal mobility are available. You can change markets, shops, or functions at headquarters, work abroad, and even switch between companies owned by the same shareholder.
El Corte Inglés	The international career at the Iberian level includes an internal mobility program. If you study, you can apply for vacancies in sales, supermarkets, shops, and central services, such as back office. There is an internal communications portal, a selection program, and feedback is provided. Progression is highly valued, and there are assessment programs to identify the best talents and train new team leaders. Direct progression is possible, and you can expect new career opportunities, future bosses, and a new center in Porto city.
GELPEIXE	By internal mobility
IAPMEI	There is no defined strategic career management policy. However, there is a policy that allows staff to work temporarily in other organizations without any hindrance. Assignments in the public interest are also available, and vacancies are filled for temporary periods. There is mobility and an international career path available through competition or unpaid license.
Integrity	Now, there is no operationalized strategic career management policy. However, there is a policy that allows for international career opportunities, mobility between companies and within the group, and trajectories. Performance evaluation and salary bands are more defined according to the level in which the person is included. Evaluation and performance management are still being defined, and many of these processes already exist but informally and without registration. I hope this helps!
IPDJ	Work and mobility are foreseen by <i>Law 35</i> between services and within the service's organic unit. However, public policies do not exist. Certification in professional and family life is available, and there is help for mobility between services and within the service. International applications and unpaid license are also available, and mobility to go outside within the European Union is possible.
ISCAL	No, there is no applicable strategic career management policy for the school. The school is an organic unit of the polytechnic, and everything that is strategic management is located in the services of the polytechnic that

	achieves an integrated management of the units that compose it. Mobility within services and between services of the organization is available, and there is help in the transition to this mobility. Support in the transition to other options is also available, facilitating this option. Currently, there is a highly committed team, and it took 7 years to slim down the people and find resources that identified public managerial functions, mission, less managerial regime in the school with responsibility, strategic objectives, and periodic monitoring. The regime is more based on autonomy and responsibility, which is difficult to find those with an interest in responsibility and greater autonomy. International mobility is not available.
Wellow Group	Yes, there is internal mobility, communication of all offers and projects, and bands internally. There are always open internal recruitments, and there is frequent change/mobility between departments and between brands. It is a model that does not categorize people only according to functions. People according to preferences can assume different positions and competences. Looking at levels and competences can give greater support to the vacancy that arises. There is more agile mobility, greater assertiveness, greater internal recruitment, and possibility of greater elasticity and mobility. The career management model is designed to make mobility more agile and less difficult to integrate into new vacancies. There is higher assertiveness that is not only based on previous experience. It is a decentralized career management model.

Once again, we find the dichotomy between public and private systems. Mobility was the most mentioned practice in this group (3 in international mobility and 1 in national mobility). This practice was also mentioned in private sector organisations, alongside salary progressions and international career management. The role of the HRM system in CM was another subject that was explored. Table 7 summarizes this data.

Table 7: HRM and CM

Institutions	HRM and CM
AERLIS	There is no formalised career management policy. Executive Director makes the assessment in conjunction with the opinion of the Human Resources Officer.
<i>Ulisses</i>	Yes, according to the rules defined by the public administration.
Auchan Group	Yes
El Corte Inglés	Yes, HRM is a strategic focus.
GELPEIXE	Yes
IAPMEI	Yes
Integrity	HRM policies are still being defined, and a lot has been done informally. Career management is a strategic point, and formal policies will be starting soon. However, there is no performance management process, and employees do not work by individual objectives
IPDJ	Yes, conditioned by legislation.
ISCAL	No
Wellow Group	Yes, the two in symbiosis.

As can be seen, most organisations confirmed the importance of HRM in CM. Public organisations stressed the standards imposed by the legal framework, and private ones reinforced the critical role of HR and the strategic focus. The decision-makers in the definition of the CM were also identified (see table 8)

Table 8: CM Decision-Makers

Institutions	CM Decision-Makers
AERLIS	It does not occur, executive director and human resources officer.
<i>Ulisses</i>	Management board and human resources department on the basis of the regulation.
Auchan Group	HRM and team leaders.
El Corte Inglés	HRM as a strategic actor.
GELPEIXE	HRM and administration with support from the leaders of the different areas.
IAPMEI	HRM Department, always with the agreement and follow-up of the member of the Governing Board responsible for human resources.
Integrity	HRM and always liaising with departmental managers.
IPDJ	Directors and managers in conjunction with human resources.
ISCAL	President himself, -to be more in touch with this issue-, and organisationally with the HRM officer, there's a collaboration between the two.
Wellow Group	HRM and leaders of the representative brands.

In consonance with the data of table 7, it is possible to reinforce the role of HRM as an executive area of top management and for the policies operationalization defined by the organisational presidencies. The important concerns pointed out in the CM were varied (table 9). According to the respondents, the most important concerns for employees in terms of career were:

- Public organisations: work-life balance, salary and career progression, flexible working hours, recognition, and transparency.
- Private organisations: training, salary and career progression, collaboration between departments, performance evaluation, recognition, and the need for proximity.

The common aspects, as can be seen, are salary and career progression and the need for recognition.

Table 9: Relevant concerns of CM

Institutions	Relevant concerns of CM
AERLIS	Several staff members are already at the top of their career. From what I understand of the internal structure, there are a number of directors who work with internal staff who are already at the top and are heads of department. Career management includes departmental improvement, more willingness and pleasure to work, promotions in the context of salary progression, investment in performance, and sense of well-being in the organization. Several employees are at the top of their career, and there is an internal structure that includes head categories, progression, executive relationships, performance improvement, and salary issues.
<i>Ulisses</i>	Transparency in career development and the rules for making choices when employees see fit are important.
Auchan Group	Recognition and the opportunity to do what employees enjoy.
El Corte Inglés	Recognition and opportunity for growth - that someone sees them that someone invests in them.
GELPEIXE	Create and give challenges to employees, especially younger ones, to provide them with valorization and retention. To remain a company that provides security but is attentive to the needs of the market, promote new challenges and new ways of working, and give meaning to employees and their work in order to retain them. One of the biggest challenges of career management is the constant need for challenges, especially in younger people.
IAPMEI	Career progression is available at the level of job advancement. However, there is no prospective career plan. Valuing career progression is important.
Integrity	The employees value investment in the technical area, training and certification.
IPDJ	Every year, a satisfaction questionnaire is carried out to assess work-life balance and climate. However, there is an intellectual weight given to ageing population, and public policies do not allow for the recruitment of qualified labor. Psychologists are used to work on all these issues of the population they deal with. Compensation valorization, flexibility in career management, and intellectual complexity are important, especially in the universe of women and elderly. Availability, priorities, and availability changes and career management changes are also important. For example, timetables adjusted to pre-retirement would be a good option, as well as knowledge transfer and youth recruitment. However, youth recruitment is limited due to a lot of legal bureaucracy.
ISCAL	Remuneration is arguably low, and people tend to think of remuneration when they consider a career plan. They are too far down to think beyond remuneration, and you lose out to another organization for 100e or 200, especially non-teaching staff. Of the 30 non-decent staff, 25 would say money is the main driver of career management. In a lecturer, prestige is the main driver of career management. Career progression being recognized and being in a recognized institution is more important than moving up the pay scale. However, if you can do it, of course, you do. Prestige is the most valued, where they lose monetary value but the prestige and association with certain faculties make them change.
Wellow Group	The objective is increasingly for the employee to know where they want to go

	and actively work to trace this trajectory. Obviously, the organization should also participate in this process with the employee. HRM considers that the most important thing is for employees to realize that they have this openness and flexibility and for those who want to seize this openness and opportunity. From the HRM perspective, it is important not to take for granted what is most important but to let employees have the openness to indicate it. Collaborative management, honesty, intellectual openness, proximity, and adaptability are important from the employee's perspective.
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The main problems in strategic career management identified by the companies were also analysed. Table 10 describes this issue.

Table 10: CM Problems

Institutions	CM Problems
AERLIS	Initially, the biggest challenge was the lack of autonomy in decision-making. The main challenge was to launch them into decision-making. Work has been done in recent years to give them autonomy, responsibility, and value the decisions made to prepare them to be leaders as they are today.
<i>Ulis</i>	Budget constraints are authorized each year, and activity plans and budgets are validated, which one has to respect. However, this does not always allow the ambitions and expectations of employees to be achieved, given the government's budgetary perimeter.
Auchan Group	There are difficulties in team self-assessment, and there is a need to invest in leadership. Leaders need to be pushed to grow teams and get more feedback. There is a feeling that leadership does not meet expectations. There is a need for more constructive evaluations, difficulty in stipulating the development plan, and identifying failures and strengths. Teams need to be demanding of themselves, and leadership needs to give a constructive assessment to draw up a development plan and identify the gaps and how to identify the strengths and how to pull them further. Finding solutions for development is the role of leadership.
El Corte Inglés	Design a career plan and study to accompany the market, accompanied by a salary study. Make communication more transparent and put market data out there. Design a balance and challenge to know if they are within the market and make that information transparent to the work teams. The challenge is to monitor the market and do a salary study, and to have more transparent communication for the teamwork.
GELPEIXE	The fact that there is not a career plan well defined. Within the reality of the company they create challenges and strategies for progression.
IAPMEI	Public administration staff. Most of the employees are senior managers. People with career prospects and evolution and would like it to be a more concrete process.
Integrity	Not identified, given the non-implementation of the policy yet. It is anticipated that categorisation of people may promote comparisons and feelings of injustice.
IPDJ	There are no strategic policies, no career management, too much bureaucracy, recruitment is organised, there are no objectives and there is no vision for the future. There is an "administrative" career management with the options

	available to the employees and that they can manage.
ISCAL	There is a complete lack of mechanisms to manage careers and give a career perspective. It is difficult to motivate someone who has been paid the same for 8 or 20 years and the perspective of the organisation, which is small, is that there is no change. Public administration is very lacking in career management.
Wellow Group	All methodologies work well in some things and less well in others. Having a knowledgeable public makes the weaknesses higher than what could be the positive consequence or the positive impact. Internally, the difficulty is there. Having a knowledgeable audience creates higher fragility and very opinionated people. On the other hand, having an unaware audience creates more operational people. In another context of action, the great difficulty is to value what is written on the computer or on paper, and it becomes something that people understand as something that adds and that has adherence to what they live in their day-to-day. We speak for a group and not for autonomous and specific companies. There is difficulty in valuing HRM practices while maintaining the equity of practices between groups. Very opinionated people or others who do not participate in decisions keep it cohesive and equitable and respond to what is intended.

The main problems for public organisations are budget constraints, bureaucracy, lack of career management plans, and no strategic policies. In the private sector, some concerns include promoting autonomy and responsibility, transparency in assessment, team self-assessment, investing in leadership, adjusting career plans, controlling feelings of injustice, fair salary packages, effective strategies for progression, and equity of practices between groups. Following these concerns, the main challenges of managing careers in a RW context (see table 11) were also discussed.

Table 11: Challenges of CM on RW

Institutions	Challenges of CM on RW
AERLIS	In contexts where communication is shorter than in face-to-face interactions, it can be more difficult to assess the relational component of communication, especially in remote work arrangements. Assessment of relational component more difficult to assess in remote context.
<i>Ulisses</i>	To create team spirit and help teams get to know each other and share experiences, it is important to ensure equal treatment between teleworking and face-to-face regimes. The challenges lie on the administrative and HRM side, where it is important to keep a close eye on the managers who maintain a connection and communication with teleworking employees. People tend to feel greater adherence in face-to-face events, as they feel the need to be together in person.
Auchan Group	Imagine that 100% remote assessment has to be adjusted - assessing soft skills and potential is more demanding for leadership in 100% remote work arrangements.
El Corte Inglés	When given responsibility, autonomy, and the capacity to reinvent themselves, employees do not see any inconveniences or problems. They also benefit from increased inter-help and great proximity to their colleagues. By studying the business climate and providing constant accompaniment, they are able to foresee and maintain the importance of their connection with the company,

	which helps attract new talent. However, the challenge remains to not lose team spirit and connection with the company, and to strive to overcome these challenges even in a remote context.
GELPEIXE	It depends on the functions and objectives. There are functions that make perfect sense, while others may not make as much sense. For example, project work makes sense in functions where greater autonomy is given to the employee and where working hours have no impact on performance because the important thing is the results. However, roles that require supervision, control, and a more fixed workstation can be very challenging to evaluate employees and establish metrics for their career development. Job evaluation with the need for control is the most complicated.
IAPMEI	We need to learn how to make the most of remote working when it comes to team management and then take a step up to career management. But first, we all have to learn how to manage teams remotely. We do, but we all still need to improve. The question of mandatory coffee hour is a test to see progress and what works best. There is progress to be made and improvements to be implemented. Teams are differentiated in terms of skills and composition. The current team is exclusively composed of senior management people with different skills and professional experiences, and some age differentiation. Therefore, there is a way forward here. Team meetings manage the hybrid issue between team members at home and members in attendance.
Integrity	Anticipating more individual monitoring and feedback will always be a challenge to manage careers, especially in the reality of remote work, which requires more adjustment to this new reality.
IPDJ	Challenges - does not identify the same rights, obligations and mechanisms for equality.
ISCAL	It does not have enough time to analyse either from a time point of view or from a resource point of view.
Wellow Group	If there were companies in which the 100% face-to-face and 100% remote models coexisted in different parts, it is believed that it would be difficult because they would be two highly distinct processes. However, the hybrid process does not see this difficulty, and equity is easily maintained.

As remote work is a new reality, organisations are still learning how to best use it and adapt career management. It is indeed a new challenge from the point of view of organisational learning. There are no big differences between private and public organisations. In summary, the aspects mentioned were: individual monitoring of employees, new forms of communication, new socialization tactics, working on employee identity, managing autonomy, promoting mutual help among colleagues, retaining talent, strengthening the sense of belonging, promoting equality, monitoring career development, and strengthening leadership and teamwork. Finally, it was asked how organisations envisage career management for remote workers in the future. Table 12 presents the trends of career management on the remote work.

Table 12: Trends of CM on the RW

Institutions	Trends of CM on the RW
AERLIS	Soft skills and relational issues overlap with technical skills, team building, and

	managing difficulties in distance communication. The future transformation of the concept of careers will involve more specialization, and remote working will accelerate this transformation. This will lead to a huge change in the paradigm of societies, including where people will live, greater international and geographical mobility, and demographic changes in countries and companies. There will be a change in the culture of recruitment and assessment, which will not be equal and will be more specialized, leading to greater notoriety of employees. A change in recruitment policy and career concept is expected. High mobility of employees between companies is also expected. The reality of remote work will remain as a point of employee valorization.
<i>Ulisses</i>	The adaptation to remote work will depend on the company's flexibility in the face-to-face and remote work relationship.
Auchan Group	To adjust the competencies to be assessed and interpersonal relationships, we need to readjust them for the remote context. We should also foresee the continuation of the remote context and stronger remote context leadership.
El Corte Inglés	Continue to invest in employee needs, the digital transformation process (new apps, new ways of working, and preparing teams), and team training.
GELPEIXE	Project management foresees distributing work in the team and rotating the leader to assess who has the skills of a leader. This applies to the most complex and autonomous functions. It foresees a future in which technological evolution will accompany and may promote remote work from a perspective not yet identified.
IAPMEI	Remote work is here to stay, and while you don't believe in 100% remote work, it is here to stay. You know an organization with which you have a close relationship that has a large part of its workforce teleworking and only meets face-to-face once a week. In career planning and management, they will have to take into account hybrid work with a greater number of people teleworking, for example, 50% or more. But what is curious is that some private companies that have been teleworking during the pandemic and have continued are now reversing the trend. They have not ended remote work but have more days of face-to-face work. One possible reason is more consistency in the teams and personal interaction. People talk in a more relaxed way, which brings them closer together and strengthens very important relationships.
Integrity	It does not foresee differences for face-to-face and remote in the future.
IPDJ	The political part is associated with it. If there are no changes in public policies, there will be a continuation of the gap in career management in relation to public policies in public institutions. If not adapted by policies and legislation, and if the remote work legislation is changed, the rules will be specific, such as the case of mobility to the interior of the country and coworking centers. This is already defined by law, which provides an incentive for people to live and work remotely in the interior of the country.
ISCAL	In the public administration, it will be the same. It is realized that there is an opportunity to legislate better to take teleworking seriously and to better differentiate the two regimes. It is admitted that if it has not changed now, there are doubts that it will change in the future.
Wellow	Maintain the stability of the model and make the model as objective as possible

Group	- autonomous, digital, on-time, and transparent. Calibrate assessment and objectives and results, ease access to information and individualized context, and know where I am, where I want to go, and how to correct the “faults” and enhance the skills.
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The collective sense is that organisations are not going back only to the presential way anymore. The career management in the remote work mode will become the same as in the face-to-face form. A transformation in the concept of careers is taking place due to the new reality of remote work, which is leading to emerging new recruitment policies, mobility, and employee valorization. Technologies play a critical role in this process, as well as digital transformation. There will have to be a lot of investment not only in the technological component but also in soft skills related to leadership, teamwork, communication, adaptability, autonomy, responsibility, and mobility. Similarly, new policies and legislation are needed and will regulate the new work paradigm, given the growing number of remote workers. The hybrid regime is the new model in the design of future work. It ended by listing the **potential problems** identified by the organisation in the strategic career management of employees working remotely (table 13).

Table 13: Problems of CM on the RW

Institutions	Problems of CM on the RW
AERLIS	Strategic management is not difficult to do as long as tasks are fulfilled on time. However, small things that can be solved in person cannot be done online, such as more “intensive” communication in person. But it is not difficult to manage careers and work remotely, and the feedback is positive.
<i>Ulisses</i>	None identified.
Auchan Group	As well as the challenges of remote work, maintaining relationships at a distance, developing new skills, leading in a remote working context, and health and wellbeing issues are also different and require new tools to assess the physical and mental wellbeing of employees.
El Corte Inglés	To ensure that no one is left behind, it is important to be more alert to less “reactive” employees and have the ability to react constantly. A leadership school for managers can be designed to develop soft skills, and training and awareness can be provided to promote closeness, humanization, and recognition that is desired by the different teams.
GELPEIXE	It depends on how you have the HR tools organised. If there are ways to monitor and measure the evolution of people, you can create new evaluation plans and training for this context. Particularly here, we don’t have differentiated status.
IAPMEI	There is no differentiation - public administration framework. They have not yet been able to make this differentiation.
Integrity	Resizing teams to achieve closer monitoring even in a remote context can be a solution to problems associated with the disadvantages of remote working, such

	as monitoring people at a distance.
IPDJ	Not identified.
ISCAL	Lack of mechanisms and tools for career management.
Wellow Group	The model is very manual, which requires a lot of information collection and analysis from different sources. This can lead to a loss of efficiency due to delays and a propensity for human error when handling so much information from so many different sources. It is more methodological than a perception or treatment of employees and their careers. It is more at the level of methodology and not properly of the results that come from it.

These data are matched with the concerns already pointed out above, as well as the advantages associated with remote work. These include physical distance, disconnection from the culture and organisation, poor sense of belonging, communication, absence/weakness of career management mechanisms, more rigid information processing, problems with leadership and teamwork, isolation, and employee health and wellbeing.

5. Results Discussion and Practical Implications

Based on empirical evidence, it was possible to obtain a definition from the Portuguese case (Piteira et al., 2023a): Remote work and the hybrid model of work design. These definitions corroborate the latest literature. In parallel, the dimension of the (dis)advantages of RW in the post-pandemic scenario was also updated. The trends/prospects of RW raised by the empirical results are matching with the current literature. Finally, some implications for HRM derived from the new configurations of work design were also underlined by the the presented case. Table 14 summarises the empirical evidence and matching it with the theoretical framework previously presented.

Table 14: Empirical (post the pandemic Covid-19) and theoretical evidence of RW

Empirical Evidence	Theoretical Evidence
<p><i>Remote Work: Definition and application</i></p> <p>It is linked to autonomy, flexibility, self-management and the use of information and communication technologies. Less control of work process. Possibility of employees to choose the place and the time/days to work. New concept of hybrid work design: Fulfilling objectives and goals and work deadlines, therefore the location and time is indifferent.</p>	<p>Strategy of making work and labour relations more flexible (Piteira, 2020).</p> <p>The possibility of employees working remotely with the use of IT devices and office equipment “outside the employer’s workplace...” (Wontorczyk & Rożnowski, 2022).</p> <p>Modality frequently used in crisis scenarios (Sapo & Spinks, 2002; Contreras, 2020).</p>
<p><i>Organisational (Dis)advantages of RW</i></p> <p>Advantages: employee motivation; effectiveness in resource management (less office expenses and logistics, more working time efficiency, etc.); ease in organising tasks and</p>	<p>Advantages: greater organisational and productive flexibility; reduced costs.</p> <p>For HRM: easier recruitment and outsourcing; greater retention and stability of qualified staff.</p>

<p>work, wider recruitment; less absenteeism; better quality of work-life/more comfortable work environment.</p> <p>Disadvantages: organisational disengagement; loss of cultural identity; employee isolation; problems with teamwork and leadership; communication barriers; lack of control over work processes.</p>	<p>Disadvantages: high initial investment in equipment, weakening the organisational culture; loss of control over work processes.</p> <p>(Greer & Payne, 2014; Dyczkowski, 2012).</p>
<p><i>Trends of RW</i></p> <p>Mixed model between RW and face-to-face, such as the trend is a hybrid work design. The hybrid scheme (some days at home and others in the company), for the functions that can be carried out remotely, is the prevailing one.</p>	<p>Remote work can guarantee a win-win situation for employers and employees (Popovici & Popovici, 2020).</p> <p>RW future will to help drive economic growth, in a post-Covid-19 world, with the help of new public policies (Gupta, 2020).</p>
<p><i>RW and HRM/Organisational Challenges</i></p> <p>HRM policies must be conceived in this new work scheme. Issues such as new logistics and equipment, hard/soft skills, and new competencies, as well as behavioural and social factors are emerging. International HRM will be an emerging strength area of organisations with the challenge of managing workforce diversity. In parallel, the adjustment of the legal framework to this new reality, producing new legal norms/laws.</p>	<p>Flexible working preferences, smart working practices (Adekoya, Adisa & Aiyenitaju, 2022).</p> <p>New strategies to leadership, people's physical and mental recovery in the post-pandemic (Sharma, 2022).</p> <p>Changes on the labour market, workplace, and organisational practices, as well as on the strategies related to the ways in which these challenges (Tursunbayeva, Di Lauro & Antonelli, 2022).</p> <p>Highlighting the technology orientation, leadership, HRM practices, external processes, and organisational culture (Arunprasad et al., 2022; Tursunbayeva, Di Lauro & Antonelli, 2022).</p>

Source: Cit in Piteira et al. (2023a)

Returning to the research question - *What role does remote work play in addressing the new challenges in human resources/career management arising from the Covid-19 pandemic scenario in Portuguese institutions?* - as observed in the present case, remote work (RW) has played a critical role. It enabled organisations to function during lockdowns, preventing a global shutdown. Due to this event, practical implications for organisations have been numerous and diverse. As empirical evidence has emphasized, these implications can be classified into four dimensions: 1. Society; 2. Organisations; 3. Teams/Groups; 4. Individuals.

Societal issues include the need for a new legal framework to regulate and protect remote work practices. Organisations grapple with concerns related to culture, structure, work design, technology, change management, and HR policies. Team/group issues highlight communication, leadership, and performance. Implications for individuals include balancing work and personal life, dealing with isolation and socialization challenges, acquiring new skills and training, and managing careers.

Considering these challenges, human resources and career management are confronting new scenarios and requiring new policies and practices. Organisations and decision-makers are tackling novel problems and working on solutions that are better tailored and more effective for this emerging reality.

5.1. Organisational Advices

Since 2022 and the easing of quarantine restrictions and the Covid-19 threat, the world of work has changed, bringing new challenges for HRM and pushing this management area to critically reflect on its role in organisations. New policies and practices are being claimed as necessary, questioning the ability of HRM to provide an effective solution to the new problems brought by the new RW and hybrid work designs.

In Portugal's case, the HR challenges arising from the new RW design were several. Because of autonomy, flexibility, and self-management, many challenges will be posed to HRM, such as career management, recruitment, talent attraction and selection, performance evaluation, training, teamwork, information systems, and knowledge management, among others. Based on the results, 10 advisory points are summarised below:

- (1) management of different work schedules and workplaces, taking into account the asynchronies generated;
- (2) promoting leadership and team management in different workplaces;
- (3) finding effective forms of communication between people who are far away, fostering proximity and strengthening the relationships between them;
- (4) working on culture and creating new strategies to foster a sense of belonging to the organisation;
- (5) updating technological tools that facilitate the two ways of working, as well as the information and knowledge management for organisations;
- (6) implementing new legislation adapted to the new labour dynamics resulting from RW and hybrid regimes;
- (7) identifying and resolving the new problems of workers' well-being (physical and psychological);
- (8) identifying and resolving the new problems associated with the balance between professional and personal life;
- (9) identifying new (and more) possibilities of internationalisation of HR and challenges associated with workforce diversity.
- (10) rethinking career management and defining new strategies and models in this new design (RW/hybrid model)

6. Conclusion

The tapestry of results reveals a time before the crisis, a span of about two years, when most organisations remained aloof from the concept of remote work. However, as the crisis unfolded, human resources practices found themselves morphing to adapt to this new reality. The result? A hybrid work model, a blend of remote and face-to-face work, now thrives in most of the organisations studied. But this evolution did not come without its set of challenges. New frontiers opened in the realm of information systems, career management, training, and performance evaluation, among others. This new paradigm of work design, therefore, ushers in a fresh wave of challenges for organisations and management. It's a brave new world, and we're here to navigate it.

The EURECA project provided an opportunity to conduct a qualitative study to understand the opinions and perceptions of HR professionals regarding the adoption of remote work practices post-pandemic. Remote work has gained significant traction in recent years, and the COVID-19 pandemic further fuelled this trend. However, in the post-pandemic era and into the foreseeable future, organisations are gravitating towards a hybrid work model, where employees split their time between working from home and the office. Only those operating as fully remote companies are likely to maintain their pre-pandemic mode of operation. On the other hand, even organisations that would prefer a fully in-office environment recognize that returning to the pre-pandemic norm is no longer feasible.

Generally, hybrid work is seen as a benefit by both employees and employers. Employees appreciate the flexibility and work-life balance that remote work can provide, while employers appreciate mainly the cost savings opportunity. Hybrid work is considered a new model of managing employees based on a mix of remote and in-presence periods, and it represents the new challenge for HR departments, as they need to develop new policies and practices to manage hybrid workers effectively. One of the key points is connected to the risk of isolation for those who work mainly from home. So, the challenge is ensuring that hybrid workers feel connected to the organisation and have the same opportunities for career development as in-office workers. This can be difficult, as in remote mode, workers may not have the same level of face-to-face interaction with their colleagues and managers.

HR departments can address this challenge by developing new communication and collaboration tools that make it easier for hybrid workers to stay connected with their colleagues and managers. For example, they can use video conferencing tools to facilitate virtual meetings, instant messaging platforms to enable real-time communication, and project management tools to help teams collaborate on projects. These challenges are opportunities for people and organisations to change and develop. A new journey for human resources and career management is just beginning.

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